

CHARLES CARDINAL JOURNET

Theology of the Church



IGNATIUS

THE THEOLOGY OF THE CHURCH

Charles Cardinal Journet

THE THEOLOGY OF THE CHURCH

Translated by
Victor Szczurek, O. Praem.

Appendices translated by
Michael J. Miller

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To the Little Brothers of Charles de Foucauld

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

Charles Journet's *Theology of the Church* is not a supplement to his monumental work *L'Eglise du Verbe Incarné* [The Church of the Word Incarnate], but rather an *abridgment* of the first two volumes of that work. The first appeared in 1941, the second in 1951—that is, before the Second Vatican Council. A third volume would later be published in 1969. Readers interested in the full, unedited texts will soon be able to refer to the *Oeuvres complètes*.¹

At first glance one might think that such an abridgement was made too soon; Journet himself, however, had already provided a response to such an objection in the preface of his new work. First of all, he expressed his thoughts many times on the general plan of the work, which he had considered very early on. Secondly, and most importantly, if the final cause of the Church (the greatest of the causes) is the Most Holy Trinity, to this “external” end is related the internal and proximate end—its common immanent good, its order. Hence the internal end of the whole is the immanent order among its parts, which is its *formal cause*. And it is the latter that he treats so extensively in the second volume of *L'Église du Verbe incarné*, where one finds the most important insights of this great Swiss theologian.

In the present work the brevity of the text hints at a catechetical style, so that the essentials can easily be understood and committed to memory and provide food for meditation; for the theology of Charles Journet naturally flowers into spirituality and prayer.

It is equally significant that, in combining the two volumes of his great work, the author understood the necessity of partially modifying the order of the whole in order to emphasize the theme of sanctity or holiness. This theme, in fact, may be called the chief insight of Charles Journet's ecclesiology. Chapter 7, then, must be considered—according to Journet's own wish—the center and axle around which the other parts of the work turn. This chapter develops a position that has the strength of a first principle: The

Church, which is not without sinners, is nevertheless without sin: “Sinners are members of Christ and his Church, but not in the same way as the just. The former *belong* to the Church in which one finds the just, but they are incapable in themselves of *constituting the Church*.”

The author consciously makes a distinction between the different ecclesiologies found at the time of the Counter-Reformation. In a text that dates from the same period as his article “L’Église du Christ, l’Église telle que la pense et la vit sainte Thérèse de Lisieux”,² we read:

One can consider the Church as distinct from Christ, as the Spouse of Christ. St. Thérèse knew that the principal reality of the Church, the interior force that vivifies her—I call it her “created soul”—is charity. I am speaking of the charity of Christ, that is: (1) centered on the worship instituted by Christ, which is to be continued in the celebration of the Mass and the administration of the sacraments; (2) guided by the voice of Christ and his vicar on earth. To sum up in a few words, the soul of the Church is “charity” insofar as it is “cultic and sacramental” and insofar as it is “directed.”

And a little farther on the author continues:

It seems inconceivable that a definition of the Church would not mention charity, love. The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ; she is the communion of saints. But how can one define Christ’s Mystical Body, how can one define the communion of saints without charity, without love? The Church, again, issues forth from the hierarchy; but what do the sacraments bestow if not grace and charity? Finally, listen to the words of our Lord: “I made known to them your name, and I will make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them” (Jn 17:26). It is vain to want to define the Church without including charity, whatever may be the theology, apologetic, or pedagogy one wishes to employ. This definition of the Church, where charity enters into primary importance, St. Thérèse came to proclaim to the world with such a force that henceforth all would have to hear it and so that it would not be possible, for whatever reason, to close one’s ears to it.

When he wrote these lines Charles Journet had no doubt that forty years later the young Carmelite saint would become a Doctor of the Church.

Journet proposes a profound analysis of the implications of such a thesis. He shows how the Church, holy and without sin, is disturbed by sin, how she repents for it and converts and asks her members to be purified and not to sin. Her vocation is to carry redemption into the midst of the world. She meets sinners everywhere. She does not content herself with touching them from afar; she places them in her heart to heal them by personal contact.

In truth, it is in our own heart that the Church and the world meet, Christ and Belial, light and darkness.

One sees how these theological views can enlighten the idea of asking

pardon, which is one of the marks of the present pontificate.

Analogous remarks can be made with regard to the notion of “witness”.

The definition of the Church, including charity as the central element, constitutes the focal point of Charles Journet’s ecclesiology. It is around this that the rest of the work is organized. We note especially the pages devoted to membership in the Church and the consequences in the field of ecumenism and missiology.

May this little work increase in many the desire to study the theology of Charles Journet, a great theologian whose work has still not received the attention that it deserves.

P. Georges Cottier, O.P.
Theologian of the Papal Household

FOREWORD

The present book is not a new work, but rather an abridgment of the first two volumes of my *L'Église du Verbe Incarné*. I have left out some of the long theological explanations. I was also able to shorten the texts of the Fathers and the Magisterium as well as—though more rarely—those of Sacred Scripture. I did, however, want to maintain the original structures and perspectives that allow the Fathers, Magisterium, and Sacred Scripture to be understood correctly and to show forth their profundity; for that is the very *raison d'être* of theology. In short, I wanted to render the doctrine more accessible without impoverishing it; to make it known to the common man without making it common.

I have rewritten entire pages; others I have summarized. The conclusions, however, have not been touched. I have adopted the practice of adding subtitles (in the style of a catechism), which allows one to interrupt one's study as he wills, to isolate specific passages, and to return to areas of particular interest.

After an initial presentation (chapter 1), the Church is joined to Christ (chapter 2) and to the Holy Spirit (chapter 3). She finds her supreme realization in the Blessed Virgin (chapter 4). She issues forth from the apostolic hierarchy, from which she receives her property and note of apostolicity (chapter 5). In herself, she is composed of a created soul (chapter 6), from which come her property and note of sanctity (chapter 7), and a body (chapter 8). It was necessary to clarify the notion of membership in the Church (chapter 9) before treating the property and note of Catholic unity (chapter 10). From here, one can quite easily proceed to the definitions of the Church (chapter 11).

The order of the whole had to be somewhat modified: this allowed me to give pride of place to certain areas of importance, such as the property and note of sanctity. I have simplified the sections on "Christic grace" and have expanded the section on its sacramental modalities. Instead of fatally coupling the origin of religious deviations to culpability, I believed it necessary to allow a place, in certain cases, for simple error: *God abandons*

only those who have already abandoned him—this principle, however, does not exclude the possibility of invincible ignorance. I also modified my presentation of Islam. I could not even dream of summarizing all that needs to be said concerning the theology of the history of salvation and, consequently, of the Church in her preparation before the coming of Christ, as well as her consummation and completion in the Homeland—the treatise on the Church usually ending with her last ends.

St. Thomas marveled at the manner in which our Savior desired to condense the immense message of Sacred Scripture, for the benefit of a “busied people”, *propter occupatos*, into three points: faith—in the revelation of the Father and of him whom the Father had sent—which we confess in the Apostles’ Creed; hope—in the promises of the Father; the unique precept of charity. Therefore, at the entreaty of Br. Reginald, he set out on the task of summing up in three points the whole of *the doctrine of salvation*. He was unable to complete his *Summa*, however, and the *Compendium* remains unfinished. Time will always be too short to speak of the mysteries that envelop it; but the message of the holy Doctor has endured. The completion of his work is not necessary to understand his thought: the choir of Beauvais has no need of a nave; and what cathedral has been finished? Where the text of the Common Doctor has stopped, his thought continues.

It is for the “busy Christian”, short of time or money, that the publishers of *L’Église du Verbe Incarné* have asked me to make this abridgment. How could I not be touched at such an invitation? Nevertheless, I did not immediately accept the task—on account of the many delays that it would entail, the effort required, the tediousness (ought I not confess?) that comes with reproducing (by shortening excessively lengthy discourses without distorting them), in a certain sense, a mystery, whose absolute simplicity is restored only by silent contemplation—the mystery of the Church: “the House of God”, “Christ poured out and communicated”, “the Gospel continued”. The completion of this work is due to the wonderful friendly assistance of the Rev. Fr. John of the Cross Kaelin, first prior of the Dominicans of Annemasse and ecclesiastical assistant of *Mouvement International des Intellectuels Catholiques de Pax Romana* (Pax Romana, the International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs).

Fribourg, October 1957

FOREWORD TO THE 1987 EDITION

This *Theology of the Church* of the great theologian Cardinal Charles Journet is now thirty years old. It is a classic. More than ever it has merited a second edition. Now, twelve years after the death of its author (1975), the task has been completed; an accomplishment that will bring joy to many Christians.

This work is an abridgment of the fundamental and beautiful work of the same author *L'Eglise du Verbe Incarné* in two volumes. Cardinal Journet has extracted the substance of *L'Église*, which was written more for theologians, and has republished it for a wider audience.

The reader will see the brilliance of the author's thought, a thought that is intellectually rigorous and deeply spiritual. And today, when clerics and laity alike are more concerned than ever with finding or deepening their theological culture, Cardinal Journet's contribution to ecclesiology must be made accessible once again.

To the present edition there have been added two appendices, written in the immediate wake of the Second Vatican Council, 1965 and 1966 respectively. Although these additions express only one particular viewpoint, they do not take away from the perennial value of the work as a whole. The secret of its freshness does not escape the reader, whether beginner or expert. Cardinal Journet loved the Church; and his knowledge, begged for in prayer, has been generously given for our joy: *Gaudium de veritate* (St. Augustine).

The Editors

PREFACE

The Church, “holy and immaculate”, is at the heart of Cardinal Journet’s theology. She was also the center of his life. For, it is in the Church, the Bride of Christ, that we meet Mary, his Mother, and the Word Incarnate—of whom the Church is the Body—the Eucharist, and the Holy Spirit, who is the very soul of the Church.

Fr. John of the Cross Kaelin, O.P., has published a “small edition” of the first major treatises of Cardinal Journet. It is easy to read; but it is not to be read quickly.

It is necessary to note, however, that this task is still not finished; for, in the sequence of the complete works, it concerns those written by Journet before the Council.

In that respect, we should mention that those who followed “Fr. Journet’s” courses at the Grand Séminaire in Fribourg have rediscovered in the document *Lumen Gentium* what they were taught many years before. I dare to say here that the Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council has been the confirmation, or “canonization”, of what we so often received and listened to with such wonder. For, if the catechism we learned as children—for our diocese, that of Bishop Besson—was so rich in doctrine regarding the great mysteries of our faith (the Trinity, Incarnation, and redemption) and the sacraments, it did lack one dimension: that of “Christ continued”, the Church.

It was for the priests at the Seminary of Fribourg, for the laity, monasteries, and many religious of Geneva that Cardinal Journet handed on what he himself—thanks, above all, to St. Catherine of Siena—had received: that kind of wonder before the Church—Spouse and Body of Christ, holy, without stain, immaculate.

In addition, I must also say something about what I myself witnessed. During the first years of the Second Vatican Council, and up until the last session, the manuscript of the third volume of *L’Eglise du Verbe Incarné* remained on the desk of Charles Journet. He knew very little of the Council’s proceedings. He had participated to some extent in the preparatory meetings

and had studied some of the schemas. But his deafness had hindered him from taking an active role, and he consequently asked Pope John XXIII to spare him the trips to Rome.

He had to follow the work of the Council from afar and, sometimes, not without anxiety. What he learned from visitors, reviews, and newspapers at times greatly perplexed him. He knew the Council only through the words of the journalists and early historians. What happened at the heart of the Council he only guessed, as by intuition.

There was, in my opinion, a chance, or a grace, so to speak, given him by Pope Paul VI—one of his most extraordinarily lucid moments—of being able to live within the “mystery of the Council” (Journet often called it “one of the greatest graces given to the Church in our day”): he was made cardinal and took a very active role in the final session.

Once made bishop and cardinal, he spoke and wrote less, and then in a more pensive manner. He once said—both seriously and with a smile on his face—that theologians “are able to write and speak more freely than bishops”. He knew that now he was to belong to the college of bishops and would be, however unworthy, a “part of the Magisterium”; hence he taught with more courage and confidence—as if that were possible!

I was a witness of the evolution of his thought, one which can be called a “deepening”. After the Council, he took up once again with very great confidence—as if more sure of himself—the third volume of his work on the Church.

A study ought someday to be conducted on the style, tone, and form of Charles Journet’s editorials for his review *Nova et Vetera*, before and after 1965. One would see how his reception of the episcopal mission influenced his theology (even though Pope Paul VI did not give him a particular diocese).

* * *

This work leads one to the very heart of the Church; not only to that which has been described and worked out by theologians, but even farther: to the heart of the Mystery of the Church—one, holy, Catholic, apostolic, and eternal.

Bishop Pierre Mamie

Bishop of Lausanne, Geneva, and Fribourg
1957

CHAPTER I

INITIAL PRESENTATION OF THE CHURCH

We shall speak first about the nature of the Church (I), then about her different states or successive ages (II).

I. The Nature of the Church

There are three points to be considered: (1) the manner of regarding the Church; (2) the different names given to the Church; (3) the Church as both mysterious and visible.

1. THE MANNER OF REGARDING THE CHURCH

The Church is a reality in the world. She makes herself accessible to all, but not all know her. One can, in fact, view her in three different ways; but it is the third way alone that reveals her true nature.

Three ways of regarding Jesus. During the time our Lord lived here among us, there were three possible ways of regarding him:

1. Many who met him were able to see in him only one man among others. They passed him on the roads of Palestine without realizing who he was. “They said, ‘Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?’ ” (Jn 6:42). Astonished perhaps, at times, by his preaching, they ranked him among the enlightened or among the political revolutionaries. None of these, however, saw past the mere externals.

2. Others looked upon Christ with a more penetrating vision. They were able to discern exceptional qualities in him. They perceived in his teaching a surprising wisdom for a man who had not been formally educated. In his

holiness of life they sensed something truly unique. In his deeds they saw a power that was not that of man. They thought him a prophet. “ ‘Who do men say the Son of man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets’ ” (Mt 16:13-14). They saw the miracle of Jesus but were blind to the mystery of Jesus. They did not know the source of his extraordinary power.

3. Finally, there were those who looked upon Jesus with the eyes of supernatural faith. They believed in the mystery of the Word made flesh, and the miracle of his life was made manifest to them. They alone truly knew Christ. “Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ ” (Jn 20:28).

Three ways of regarding the Church. 1. There is, first of all, the look of the superficial observer, the statistician, or the historian of religions who limits himself to a mere description of the Church. She appears to him as one religious society among others. It is, initially, relatively easy for him to distinguish her from other Christian religions or those that are nonChristian, to delineate her system of government, her structures, teachings, forms of worship, her sacrifice, sacraments, liturgical, and paraliturgical prayers.

2. A keener observer will penetrate more deeply. He will be able to recognize those exceptional qualities that distinguish the Catholic Church. He may even go so far as to discern in her steadfastness, in her unity and universality, in her effects of sanctity, an assemblage of extraordinary—to some extent miraculous—characteristics. While still a Protestant pastor and, as he says, wishing to judge only as a historian, Friedrich von Hurter saw in the medieval papacy a “spiritual power whose origins, development, growth, and influence comprise the most extraordinary phenomenon in the history of the world”.¹ He continues,

In casting a look over the ages, seeing how the institution of the papacy has outlived all the other institutions of Europe, how it has seen the birth and destruction of all the States, how, in the infinite metamorphosis of human affairs, it alone has preserved invariably the same spirit, ought we be astonished if many a man has regarded it as a rock, the immovable head of which is raised above the roaring waves of time?²

Henri Bergson had a similar intuition when, after having studied the mystics of various religions, he concluded,

Neither in Greece nor in ancient India had there been an integral mysticism. . . . The integral mysticism is, actually, that of the great Christian mystics. . . . No doubt, the majority of these

have passed through stages that from different angles resemble something of an ancient mysticism, but they have only passed through: gathering themselves in order to thrust forward anew, they have broken the dyke; an immense current of life lifts them up; from their new vitality breaks forth an energy, a boldness, a power of extraordinary conception and realization. Think of all that was accomplished by St. Paul, St. Thérèse, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Francis, Joan of Arc, and so many others.³

3. Finally, there is a third way of regarding the Church: with the eyes of faith. Then the Church is seen in her mystery, in her profound reality, as the Body of Christ, inhabited by the Holy Spirit, who directs her and dwells in her as her Guest. The Church, a mystery of faith. This is what the assembly of Christians solemnly proclaims each Sunday: “Credo unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam.” It is by the light of faith that one explains the exteriorly certifiable miraculous character of this religious society and grasps this living paradox which never ceases to astonish the world.⁴

2. THE DIFFERENT NAMES OF THE CHURCH

These different names designate different aspects of a reality that is one and the same but that is too rich to be circumscribed by one sole concept.

The people of God. Jesus appeared as the Messiah, the Son of Man announced in the Old Testament, who would gather together around himself the people of God. In biblical language, the Hebrew *Qahal Yahvé* was the people of God, chosen from among the infidel nations to adore and serve the Most High. The Church of God (ἐκκλησία του Θεου), the Church of the New Testament, is its correspondent. It represents the new government of humanity, where God intends to establish his reign: the Holy People or New Israel of messianic times.⁵ The Church is the Israel of the New Alliance. She is the inheritor of the promises made to Abraham, which found their fulfillment in the new order inaugurated by Christ and realized at Pentecost. “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy” (1 Pet 2:9-10).

The Church. Jesus himself (Mt 16:18; 18:17) and, afterward, St. Paul, St. James, and the Acts of the Apostles give the title “Church” (assembly / convocation) to the new people of God. The *Roman Catechism* has this to say regarding such a title:

Under the word “Church” several important mysteries are included. In this “calling forth”, which the word *Ecclesia* (Church) signifies, we at once recognize the kindness and splendor of divine grace. This helps us to understand that the Church is very unlike all other human societies. They rest on human reason and human prudence; but this Church rests upon the wisdom and counsel of God. For he called us forth by the interior inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who penetrates into the hearts of men through the external work and ministry of his pastors and evangelists.⁶

The Church, the assembly of those who have been called, is often opposed to the synagogue. Indeed, the Church is never given this title; but the synagogue was always the prefiguration of the Church, the people of God assembled around Christ who is to come. It is the synagogue’s refusal that opposes it definitively to the Church.

Thus, the aspect that revelation underlines primarily by the word “Church” is that of a multitude, provided with divine graces, convoked around Christ, freely responding to that call and forming a supernatural hierarchical organism. The Church—“the one who is called”. She is found wherever one gathers in the name of Jesus, that is to say, according to his design and desire: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20), and Paul, writing to Philemon, greets “the church in your house” (Philem 1:2).

The Body of Christ. To this reality, which Jesus calls “my Church”, St. Paul gives still another name: the Church is the *Body of Christ*. By this title is revealed to us the hidden nature of the bonds that join the Church to Christ. They complete each other, as do the head and body in a man.

God, writes Paul, “has made him [Christ] the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all” (Eph 1:22-23). And, on the other hand, he says, “and you have come to fulness of life in him, who is the head of all rule and authority” (Col 2:10).

The head and the body have the same life and same destiny. Together with Christ, who is God, the Church, which is a creature, forms an organism that is spiritually one. She was born by an outpouring of grace—the source of which is found in Christ, by an effusion of Christic and Christ-conforming grace.

Under this aspect, the Church is none other than “Jesus Christ poured out

and communicated”.⁷ More boldly still, the Apostle says that the Church is Christ: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ” (1 Cor 12:12). Does not even Jesus identify himself with the Church when, having overwhelmed Saul, he says to him “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? . . . I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” (Acts 9:4-5).

The Bride of Christ. Another image, frequently used in Scripture, is closely associated to the image of a body: that of “Bride” (or “Spouse”). As a bride has for her head a bridegroom—two persons being closely united in one and the same human life, the same flesh—so the Church, considered here as a moral person distinct from Christ, has him for her Head. “Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church” (Eph 5:28-29).

What Scripture desires to bring out most of all is that the Church is chosen by Christ to be his Bride as a woman is chosen by a man to be his; that she is asked to give her consent freely to this wonderful engagement; that she is, as a result of her consent, purified from her filth by being elevated to an extraordinary equality with her Spouse; that he wishes to have children only through her, or at least by her intercession.

The Kingdom of God. The Church, as revelation has made known to us, is the “Kingdom”. “Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them, ‘The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, “Lo, here it is!” or “There!” for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you’ ” (Lk 17:20-21).

The Kingdom is the portion of the universe over which God reigns, where he is obeyed out of love, where his will is accomplished “as it is in heaven”. Without a doubt, the notion of Kingdom is eschatological; it concerns the end of time; but it is precisely with Christ that eschatology has entered into time. On one hand, the Kingdom already exists on earth; on the other hand, it is already in heaven. In placing “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” in the hands of Peter (Mt 16:19), Jesus clearly signifies that the Kingdom will not be able, in its present state, to cease being a hierarchy.

“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Lk 12:32). The little flock is the Church, still exiled on earth. She

encloses in her heart the grace and truth that emanate from Christ (Jn 1:17); she already participates in the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4); she is already the temple of God, with the Holy Spirit already dwelling in her (1 Cor 3:16). She is already the Kingdom, but in a pilgrim and crucified state. Nevertheless, she need not fear. One day, the sun of eternal life, concealed in her as in a fog, will shine forth in its fullness and put to flight all her trials and transfigure her corporeal body. The sorrowful Kingdom will become glorious. Do not fear, little flock, for you who possess eternal life in your sorrow will soon possess it in glory!

The City of God. The Church is also called the *City* insofar as she is a living community, in the bosom of which lives the Lord. This city is, here below, likened to a camp: “and [they] surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city” (Rev 20:9); but in heaven it will be the definitive residence of God among man (Rev 21:3) and our true home, for “here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come” (Heb 13:14). In the Apocalypse, the image of the holy city expresses

an absolutely transcendent vision of the *Queen*, the “*New Eve*”, both in time and in eternity, in insisting especially on her definitive eternal phase, but without omitting the spiritual and permanent aspects of her phase of formation in this life. The two phases are, moreover, absolutely cast in the same vision, and the line that separates them has in no way been marked out; it is not even hinted at; at the very most, there is a line, a part of a phrase, here and there, that is applied exclusively to heaven or to the earthly state. . . . But taken as a whole, the vision abstracts completely from the *fieri* and the *factum esse*. None of this should surprise us, for the synthesis is absolutely the same as that of the *Eternal Life* about which the fourth Gospel speaks. And the Apocalypse itself constantly puts forward, as one of its essential motifs, the idea of the union between heaven and earth, between the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant.⁸

St. Augustine himself said:

This City is said to come down from heaven because the grace by which God created it is heavenly. . . . It has been coming down from heaven since its beginning, from the time when its citizens began to increase in number as they have continued to increase throughout the period of this present age, by the grace of God that comes from above by means of the “washing of rebirth” in the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. But through the judgment of God, which will be the last judgment, administered by his Son Jesus Christ, the splendor of that City will be made apparent, by God’s gift. So great will that splendor be, and so new, that no traces of age will remain, since even our bodies will pass from their old corruption and mortality into incorruption and immortality.⁹

Primary definitions of the Church. Defined according to the function of her

uncreated Causes—Christ, the Holy Spirit, God—the Church is the Body of Christ, the Spouse of Christ, the flock of Christ's sheep, the Gospel continued, the dwelling place of the Spirit and of the Holy Trinity; the home, the tabernacle, the city, the people, the Kingdom of God. Defined according to her created elements, the Church is the community assembled in God by Christ: glorious in heaven (Church Triumphant), but first by faith and charity that progress in the world (Church Militant) and complete its purification in purgatory (Church Suffering). In a word, the Church is the communion of saints.

The primary definitions—the most lofty, most scriptural, most divine—must be made more precise by secondary definitions, which are more proportioned to the complexity of our human condition.

3. THE CHURCH MYSTERIOUS AND VISIBLE

Already the Church appears to us as a reality at the same time mysterious and visible. She is mysterious by the life that animates her and that is totally divine. She is visible by the brilliance that shines forth from that life and by means of which that life is announced and communicated to men¹⁰

The invisible soul of the Church forms her body. If the Trinity desires to make a dwelling for itself among creatures, if the Holy Spirit wishes to become the Principle, better still, the Guest of the Church, it is necessary that the men who are called to serve such lofty intentions be endowed with spiritual gifts, which are as an outpouring of the riches of the priesthood, the sanctity, and the kingship stored up for them in the sacred humanity of Christ, the Head of the Church. These gifts are, in the line of worship, the indelible characters imprinted on the soul of Christians by the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and, for certain persons, of Holy Orders; in the line of sanctity, the sacramental graces that confer and develop the supernatural life that configures the action of the Christian to the action of Christ; in the line of kingship, the jurisdictional direction received from the successors of the apostles, to whom it has been entrusted to lead to God the sheep of the Good Shepherd. In a word, these gifts are completely contained in the one gift of divine *charity*: when it is *sacramental* (that is, when it is conferred by the sacraments) and *directed* (that is, when it is enlightened in its journey by the directives of a divinely assisted Magisterium, directives that must be

interiorized—freely accepted by faith and obedience). Life with God, life in God, who cannot be but invisible and mysterious in his essence.

If the Holy Spirit himself is the uncreated Soul of the Church, that divine life will be like a created soul in her. It descends upon men from on high. It is incarnated in them. It animates them, gathers them in Christ, and transforms them interiorly. The permanent virtues and hidden powers that it confers on them will be for them the principle of a new mode of being and acting. Thence, both in the measure in which they allow themselves to be “animated” by the Spirit of God and by the gifts that he pours upon them, a change is produced even in their exterior condition and comportment. These external manifestations, taken together, are the body of the Church, that by which she becomes visible to the world.

The Church claims the whole of man, but precisely insofar as he is ordered to eternal life. How can one not marvel at the paradox of a Church that is at the same time mysterious and visible?

The beings of whom the Church is composed while on her earthly pilgrimage are neither simple bodies nor angels. They are men, whom she knows as such, endowed with bodies and souls. She does not divide them in half, keeping the spiritual part for God and disassociating herself from the corporal part. As the civil society can claim the whole individual person in view of his temporal life alone, the Church can claim the same person in view of the transmission and development of divine life. This division of man is not made, properly speaking, by a division of the body and soul, the former going to Caesar and the latter being reserved for God. It is made, rather, between one type of activities and works that has for its immediate end the temporal human life and another type that concerns itself immediately with the ultimate end, namely, our union with and incorporation in Christ.

And so, by reason of the nature of men whom she assembles together, the Church is visible; but her visibility is not that of human societies. It is the very mystery of her intimate life insofar as it shines through her body, insofar as it is expressed in activities whose source is divine. How otherwise could one discern the baptized infant from the unbaptized if not by the knowledge that one has of his actual Baptism? But if, as he ages, the baptized infant remains faithful to his vocation, his exterior comportment will allow something of that light which enlightens him to shine forth. If he becomes a saint, that hidden flame within him will be able, in a certain measure, to pass

outside and surround him with a bit of that radiance which, according to the [First] Vatican Council, miraculously manifests the divine character of the Church.

It is by visible hierarchical powers that Christ orders the hidden mysteries of his grace and his truth to be dispensed to men. Besides the reflection of evangelical sanctity in the comportment of her authentic children, the Church is visible in the hierarchical powers from which she issues forth: in the *teaching* of the word of God, revealed by the prophets, Christ, and the apostles, found in the Scriptures and the early apostolic preaching, transmitted and developed through the ages, like a never-changing and never-failing light; in the celebration of her *worship*, inaugurated by Christ and continued first of all by the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass, where the complete redemption, merited by the blood of Christ, is communicated to us, then by the dispensation and reception of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, finally by the liturgical offices and public prayers.

The Church is similar to Christ. It is fitting that the Church, intended for men and gathering them together, is, like man, at the same time invisible and visible, composed of a spiritual soul and a visible body. However, the Church has for her model, not man, but Christ; for, it is in Christ that divinity and humanity are united. And if it is true that the Church resembles man, it is because Christ himself, of whom the Church is but a prolongation in space and time, has resembled man: all of tradition, in fact, has compared the union of divinity and humanity in Christ to the union of soul and body in man. As, therefore, Christ has become the point of conjunction for the divine and human natures, so the Church has become the same for the divine supernatural elements—where grace dominates, by which we are rendered participants of the divine nature—and the natural element—which is the complete man, body and soul. And so Christ the individual, in whom the divine nature is united to an individual human nature (personal or hypostatic union), is the principle and model of the “total Christ”, in whom the divine nature is united to the collective human nature (union of grace and inhabitation).

Incarnation spirituality. One may oppose here two different spiritualities. A spirituality of *transfiguration* of matter by the spirit, which claims that the

spirit, that is, first of all the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts of grace, has for its end, according to the plan of Providence, not to reduce human realities, corporal things, and even the material world to nothingness, but, on the contrary, to penetrate them, for the sake of beginning here below to illuminate and transform them. From this point of view, the great Christian revelations regarding the mysteries of the Word Incarnate, the visibility of the Church that is his Body, the sacraments that are the instrumental causes of grace, the living teaching that is a sanctioned echo of Christ's own teaching, the Resurrection of Christ and the Assumption of the Virgin are intimately united and mutually enlighten each other. According to the second spirituality, however, that of *separation* of spirit and matter, one would tend to deny the mystery of the Incarnation: to separate in the Church the divine element (invisible Church) from the human (visible Churches) and to oppose grace and nature, faith and reason.

The authentic spirituality is one of transfiguration of matter by spirit, the visible by the invisible. It has been inaugurated by Christ: Wisdom "delights in the sons of men" (Prov 8:31), she "make[s] [her] dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive[s] [her] inheritance" (Sir 24:8). But such visibility is now only faintly realized. The visibility proper to the Church remains submerged, as it were, in the visibility of the surrounding society. The message of the prophets is loaded down with a political sense and mixed with the destinies of the nation.

It is in the evangelical epoch that the law of transfiguration is fully realized. It does more than just superimpose itself on existing visible structures. It penetrates to the very heart of the matter, to the heart of the sensible universe, at the moment above all when the Word becomes flesh in order to converse with us, when "the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily" in Christ (Col 2:9), when God reconciles to himself "all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20). Hence, in the mystery that we call precisely the mystery of the Incarnation, the law of incarnation finds its supreme realization. Around Christ is assembled the Church.

The evangelical period is still, no doubt, a time of faith and not of glory, a time of hope and not of visible possession, a time of signs and enigmas and not of evidence and immediate vision. But under these signs and enigmas the supreme realities are present; they are already given to us. Christ dispenses to us *his truth*, that is, the plentitude of his Gospel revelation, by means of the

apostles and their successors whom he promised to assist even to the end of time. He confers on us *his grace*, the richest of which comes by means of the evangelical sacraments. Indeed, under the species of the most mysterious of the sacraments, which he instituted at the moment of his death and rising up to heaven in glory, he left us *his own bodily presence*, with which Palestine had once been illuminated.

It is clear that the Church of the Gospels was visited to her very depths by the law of incarnation. She is more than a Church of signs and figures. She is the Church of the law of grace, which carries within herself the “incomprehensible riches of Christ”, in which Christ himself resides corporeally, in which the Spirit dwells so marvelously that one can say by comparison that until now “the Spirit had not been given” (Jn 7:39). In a word, she is the Church of the Word Incarnate, the Church of the end times: on the last day, God will not restore a new economy for his Church; rather, he will manifest and bring to light the powers of grace stored in her since the Incarnation and Pentecost.

The Church is primarily spiritual, secondarily visible. And so, at the moment when the Church reaches the highest degree of her own incarnation and visibility, she attains the supreme degree of her own spirituality. At the same time, she affirms her independence with respect to the temporal order and breaks with ethnic, political, and cultural solidarities.

It even seems that, in the evangelical age, the most profound movement of the Church enables her to render herself always more visible in order to stand in an always sharper contrast with the political powers and organizations. She never ceases to remind governments, in the name of the Gospel, of their exact duties as leaders in this world, a world that must be influenced and directed from on high by the light of the Gospel and that must respect, among other things, the divine freedom of souls. But she counts less and less on them for maintaining the Christian people in their orthodoxy and for converting the races to the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount.

The Church of the Word Made Flesh. The spirituality and visibility of the Church are no more opposed to each other than the soul and body of a man or, better, than the divinity and humanity in Christ. Her unity, catholicity, sanctity, and apostolicity are at the same time spiritual and corporeal. It is because it ignores this inseparable twofold character of the Church that

Protestantism, Lutheran and Reformed, has never succeeded in resisting the temptation to distinguish, by opposing them, an invisible and sole evangelical Church, on the one hand, and, on the other, visible, human, and sinful Churches.

The mystery of Christ is the mystery of an individual Being, uniting indissolubly in himself the Word (the invisible) and flesh (the visible). Similarly, the mystery of the Church is the mystery of a collective being, uniting indissolubly in herself the gifts of the Holy Spirit (the invisible) and corporeal realities (the visible).

In the mystery of Christ, and similarly in the mystery of the Church, faith embraces inseparably both the invisible spiritual elements and those that are visible and corporeal. It is an aberration to deny, with Zwingli, that “faith descends even to the sensible” and to claim that “nothing of the body falls under faith.” We believe on divine faith the mystery of Christ, indissolubly Word and flesh; and we believe on divine faith the mystery of the Church, indissolubly spirit and body. Such is the view of faith.

The union of the Word and flesh in Christ (here is the mystery of Christ, an object of faith) gives an incomparable splendor to his comportment among other men (here is the miracle of Christ, knowable by natural intelligence). Similarly, the union in the Church of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and corporeal realities (the mystery of the Church, an object of faith) gives an exceptional brilliance to her manner among other societies (the miracle of the Church, knowable by natural intelligence).

II. The Different States of the Church in the Course of Time

1. The first act of the Divine Omnipotence is that by which he *created* the universe out of nothing and by which he continues to sustain all things in their existence.

The second act of the Divine Omnipotence is still more amazing. It is that by which he seeks to enrich men with gifts so pure, so wonderful, that they are able to become, united with each other and with God, like a living collective dwelling place where God himself is pleased to *live*. When, at the end of time, the grand plan of God is accomplished, St. John sees the heavenly Jerusalem descending from heaven with God, prepared as a bride is

prepared for her bridegroom, and he hears a voice coming from the throne, crying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them" (Rev 21:3).

2. Has not God, from the beginning, constituted the Church such as she is today?

And does time have any other role to play than making endure an absolutely perfect Church?

The response is clear. The divine act that produces the Church has known several phases. They constitute what one may call the divine regimes of the people of God in the course of time, the divine regimes of the Church. We shall try to retrace these stages, which will allow us to know the Church in her progress.

1. THE AGE OF THE FATHER, OR THE REGIME PRIOR TO THE CHURCH

The world of creation. Revelation teaches us that our first parents, before the Fall, were established in the divine friendship. However refined may have been their human morphology, their physical makeup, their cultural development, the gifts of grace shown forth in them and a wisdom from on high enlightened them about the things of God and the meaning of life.

This grace of innocence descended from the Trinity without any mediation of an incarnate divine person; indeed, without the mediation of any hierarchy. Grace and truth came directly from heaven into the soul of the first man without any intermediary, and that which was true for Adam would have been true for his descendants as well. The law of innocence desired that the spiritual life be communicated from God to the soul and from the soul to the body. The grace that made man a child of God was in effect transfiguring. This is not to say that it bestowed upon Adam the conditions of a life of glory; rather, it flowed over the inferior realities and strengthened the triple natural domination, otherwise fragile and relative, of the soul over the body, reason over the passions, and man over the universe, to the point of excluding death and sickness, interior conflicting passions, and clashes between man and the world, which, without being any different from what it is now, seemed then like a paradise.

The age of the Father. One could say that, consequently, the grace of

innocence was marked by a fundamental character of *power*, in virtue of which it managed to eliminate forms of evil as significant as those of sickness and death, disordered passions, and the antagonism of the universe. It was marked still by a second character, that of *origin* and *freshness*: it inaugurated a new world, it did not include the memory of a wrong for which one must suffer, it was unaware of what is evil, it did not possess that experiential knowledge that the devil—who did not need to lie entirely—would promise to his victims and that would be, nevertheless, for men in the midst of such atrocious miseries, the food of a certain cultural progress and, given God’s mysterious goodness toward them, the condition of their spiritual richness, *felix culpa*.

These characters of the grace of innocence permitted the return by appropriation to the Father, in a time before our history, when the gifts of God had not been merited for men by the Passion of the Son. To the age of the Father, which is the age of creation in innocence, would succeed the age of the Son, which is the age of redemption and of the Spirit, the age of sanctification. Such is it summarized in the *Credo*.

That which survives from the world of creation. Nothing remains from the age of the Father save two things. On the one hand, there is human nature in the midst of the universe that supports it; but a nature that has destroyed in it the gift of grace and, as such, has been murdered by its own hands. On the other hand, there is the incomprehensible plan of God, which, after all that man has done, continues to desire to shower him with his divine love.

The grace of the age of the Father, the grace of the first Adam, the grace of innocence, would have been, in a certain sense, better than ours, and the first state of the people of God preferable to the Church. But, in a wider perspective, one sees that it is our grace that is the better, and the Church, assembled around the Second Adam, will surpass in splendor the first state of the people of God, who were assembled around the first Adam.

2. THE AGE OF CHRIST AWAITED, OR THE FIRST REGIME OF THE CHURCH

The world of redemption. Why did God permit the destruction of the state of innocence? We know the response: God only permits evil that he may bring about a greater good. To the regime of creation, which seemed perfect,

succeeded the regime of redemption, which, as a whole, would be better. These two regimes differed profoundly. The first totally excluded a visible mediator; the second would be essentially the regime of a mediator, awaited and then known, “the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:5-6). The first regime had given birth to the first form of the people of God; the following regimes would give birth to the Church properly so-called, to a people of God marked by the image of the redemptive Incarnation, called the “Body” of Christ, whose vocation would be to prolong in space and time the temporal life of the Savior.

The grace that was sent to souls after the Fall was in anticipation of the future Passion of Christ. In that sense it was already the grace of Christ. That is why it worked interiorly not only to begin to organize the new people of God, but even to bring it to perfection little by little, across the vicissitudes of history, toward that concrete and definitive status which would receive Christ himself. It tended to conserve in it the belief in the transcendence and goodness of God, the desire for the promise of deliverance made at the dawn of time, the touching witness of which we find even in salvation myths.

The law of nature and the law of Moses. It is necessary to discern in this long span of centuries two principal regimes. One is general, which pertains to all the Gentiles: it is the regime of the law of nature, where grace seeks to plant itself secretly in hearts, working in the manner of an interior instinct. The other regime is more particular and pertains principally to the Jews: it is the regime of the Old Law, where in addition to that secret impulsion that is far from being withdrawn—on the contrary, it is actually strengthened—there is an exterior law that is directed to a small people, chosen, not to be the only one saved, but to prepare the salvation for all the others. Under the first regime the visibility of the Church—because she is just sketching out her perimeters—is only vaguely manifested. Under the second, the Church utilizes the unique culture of Israel in order to begin to render herself sensible before man’s eyes. This people of God, in whom God will confide, whom he will rescue from captivity in Egypt, nourish in the desert, and lead to the Promised Land; this nomadic people, the political and cultural importance of whom was scarcely significant, who was entrusted with the promises of the world and who was the established guardian of the faith in the one true God, will prefigure the Israel of the Spirit, the Church indissolubly united to Christ and rendered by the Spirit just as the prophets had foretold: incapable of

infidelity, endowed by her Spouse with tenderness, love, fidelity to, and knowledge of God (Hos 2:19-20).

The double mediation of the sacraments and prophecy. It is by a mysterious foreshadowing from the beginning that *grace* is granted to men in anticipation of the effects of the redemptive Incarnation—the mystery of a God who becomes visible and descends into our flesh. Henceforth grace will be given in subordination to visible signs, exterior acts that theologians would already call sacraments, although they are not yet elevated, like the sacraments of the New Law to the dignity of instrumental causes of grace. Under the law of Moses, these signs will become more precise, recalling for the children of Israel the established covenant between God and their people (circumcision) and the tenderness of a love that delivered them from slavery in Egypt (Paschal lamb).

It is the same with the proclamation of divine *truth* as well. In the beginning, something of the primitive revelation could be transmitted to some extent by word of mouth. In particular, God, “who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4), interiorly enlightens each soul. With this regime, nevertheless, the knowledge of the true God and his salvific plan does not progress, but rather, on the whole, collapses. Then God raises up men who will have the mission of publicly announcing his message. These are the prophets. One could say that they even existed among the Gentiles, if one recalls, for example, the message placed in the mouth of Job the Idumean. But with Abraham, the father of believers, with the patriarchs and the prophets of Israel, the principle of a continuous and progressive prophetic teaching enters into history for the first time.

“*Abraham is better than I, but my state is better than his.*” The grace that descended on man in that age of expectation of Christ could have been more intense among some persons than that which is found among numerous Christians. The faith of Abraham was greater than ours, and the patriarchs, whose example is presented to us in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, are also our fathers in faith. But such faith was not able to reach that fullness which the grace of the New Law required. The saints before the time of Christ who lived outside of the chosen people, such as Melchisedek and Job, or those who were counted among them, like Moses, were truly children and friends of God.^{[11](#)} But this sonship and this friendship still lacked the intimacy that they would later possess when bestowed upon us by the Word made flesh.

We can recall here the words of St. Augustine that he used against the sophisms of Jovian: Abraham is better than I am, but my state is better than that of Abraham. The adoption before Christ is to the adoption after Christ as the stem is to the flower and as the life of the promise is to the life of fulfillment.

Mediation is a path, not an obstacle. And so, as the work of salvation is continued, the importance of a visible mediation appears more clearly. It is a sign of perfection and progress. It is not difficult to see what the reasons are for a law that is at once so general and so mysterious. The use of visible intermediaries does not mean that God ceases to govern man; rather, it signifies that his condescension is becoming more pressing and beginning to heal our nature wounded by sin. At the moment when that mediation is exercised, the direct and immediate solicitations of love, far from becoming rarer, are made more abundant than ever. We can formulate the principle that every exterior promulgation of the law is joined to a secret outpouring of grace. This is clear for those who have understood that the regime of visible mediation is presented from its beginning as a luminous shadow of the mystery of the Incarnation.

Two peoples become one. These two regimes where the Church is in her initial stage, like an unborn infant, are not yet perfectly Christian. Revelation is still incomplete, and grace is given only in consideration of the future merits of Christ. But both regimes tend toward a third: the regime of the New Law, which will confer upon them their full signification and to which they break forth like the dawn, like a plant to its fruit and an infant to adulthood, so that the unity of the three regimes in time is vital and dynamic.

The distinction of the three regimes is found everywhere in Sacred Scripture. St. Paul refers to it:

Glory and honor and peace for every one who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality. . . . For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness. . . on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. (Rom 2:10-16)

For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might

create in himself one new man in place of two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. (Eph 2:14-18)

3. THE AGE OF CHRIST PRESENT, OR THE FORMATION OF THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

Preparation for the Incarnation. Why was the Incarnation so delayed? Why did Christ come so late?

To the pagans who posed these questions by thinking that history, which had had no need of Christ until then, could very well have continued without him, the first Christian teachers responded that history, in fact, had never been without Christ and that his light had shone on the world before he raised it up to himself.

On a far more profound level the faithful of the New Law, who marvel at being the object of such a wonderful preference, recognize in that lasting patience of God the respect of the Creator for the creature, according to which time is necessary not only on the cultural level, to deploy the never-failing resources of his Spirit, but still more on the spiritual level to progress in the knowledge of the mysteries of redemption and in “the folly of what we preach [by which it pleased God] to save those who believe” (1 Cor 1:21). Humanity was not able to accept the Son of God immediately. Later one hears Jesus telling his apostles: “I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now” (Jn 16:12).

The visible mission of the Son is realized in Christ the Head of the Church. “But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman” (Gal 4:4). At a fixed time, not content with reaching out to men from the depths of his inaccessible light, God himself began to appear visibly in their midst and to cure their wounds by the sensible contact of his humanity. This is the age of the Son of God finally present. And it is truly the full advent of the religion of the Incarnation, which is perfectly accomplished first of all in Christ, who is the Head, before it is communicated to his whole Body, which will be the Church, so that two great complementary divine outpourings, two great “visible missions”,¹² will mark the perfect flowering of the religion of the Incarnation: the visible mission at the Annunciation, which concerns Christ the Head, and that on the day of Pentecost, which concerns his Body

the Church.

The time of the presence of Christ. The visible mission of the Annunciation will deploy its effects first of all in the human nature of Christ himself by immediately filling it with grace and truth and by gradually leading it to the Passion, death, and Resurrection. “Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (Lk 24:26). At the end, the age of the Son is complete: “It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you” (Jn 16:7).

Fully Christic grace. From the first moment of the Incarnation, the grace of the entire world is found in Christ as in its principle, and it is from his heart that it begins to be immediately poured out. There is no need to await the hour of his Passion in order to say to the paralytic: “Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven” (Mt 9:2). Henceforward grace is Christic in a strong sense; passing through the humanity of Jesus, it is richer and more complete than ever before: “But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (Mt 13:16-17).

What Bérulle wrote about Mary Magdalen becomes rigorously exact when applied to the New Law as a whole:

In heaven the highest degree of created love was lost, and it was lost by the greatest angel. And it is on earth, at the feet of Jesus, that this lost love must be mended; it must be regained in a higher degree, in a more excellent manner, in order to pay homage to the mystery of love, which is the Incarnation, and in order to render honor to the triumph of love, which is Jesus. . . . The grandeur and dignity of the mystery easily convince us that the grace that follows from it surpasses its previous limit, whether in paradise on earth or paradise in heaven. . . . The love founded on this new grace and dependent on the God-Man surpasses the love infused into the angels in heaven and rekindles on earth a greater flame of love than that which had existed in heaven.¹³

While pouring forth from Christ, this grace, nevertheless, remains, within him, more perfect than it could ever become in the Mystical Body as a whole. It is in no way weakened in him when communicated to Christians. “For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell” (Col 1:19).

The full outpouring of grace. The visible mission of the Word terminates in

Christ. It brings to perfection the Church of which he is the Head. Indeed, during the temporal life of our Savior, grace already began to be poured out on the Church, which he assembled around himself by his immediate sanctifying contact. It was also given from a distance to the entire world.

Nevertheless, the period of the full outpouring of grace, the period where all the spiritual riches contained in Christ flow out onto the Church and the world, only begins after the Passion, when Christ announces that, regarding all that concerns him, “it is finished” (Jn 19:30), when water and blood flow from his opened side (Jn 19:34), when he is glorified in his Person. Then the Spirit can be sent to form the Church, in her complete state, which, being the Body of Christ, will bring him to the world.

We will mention later that, while all the contemporaries of Jesus are either still in the age of expectation of Christ or in the age of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary condenses in herself alone the whole Church of the age of the presence of Christ.

4. THE AGE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, OR THE CURRENT REGIME OF THE CHURCH

The age of the Holy Spirit will complete, not abolish, the age of the Son. The Holy Spirit comes, not to abolish the age of the Son, but rather to extend its effects to the entire world. And as the goal of the age of the Son was to bring forth in Christ the fullness of grace, so the age of the Spirit has for its end the dispersing of that fullness to men, who will manifest its unimaginable possibilities the more they are differentiated in space and the longer they follow one another in time. In a certain sense, namely, in the order of extension or “explicitation”, it will be true to say that the age of the Holy Spirit will be the witness of works greater than those of the previous age: “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father” (Jn 14:12). “I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away” (Jn 16:7). But these works, which are greater on the visible plane, are but the consequence of that mystery which is much more hidden, much more holy, and much more profound. They are but a representation of the birth, life, and death of Christ, who has now ascended to the Father and entered into his heavenly existence so as to be able, in his glorious state, to aid fully the

earthly expansion of his Church.

Why did Christ have to leave us? It was part of God's plan that the Church would not be fully established until after the death, Resurrection, and heavenly exaltation of Christ. One can think of many reasons why.

First of all, the first fruit of redemption needed to be, through the Resurrection and Ascension, the raising of Christ into heaven—he who was sent to be the Head of the Church: “We see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death” (Heb 2:9). “[Now] Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. . . . For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ” (1 Cor 15:20-23). Christ's pilgrimage was not truly complete until, lifted up from the historical conditions of our life, he began to construct around him that “new heaven” and “new earth” which will one day be the true home of our glorified bodies.

Next, if the glorified Christ continued, as he did at Calvary, to desire the salvation of the world by means of the same act of redemption (which involved the shedding of blood), he would have to shorten his stay among man after his Resurrection and hasten to leave them, for fear that the spectacle of his triumph would cause them to forget the law of the Cross. Does he not invite us to live, suffer, and die with him before rising with him? It is, indeed, from heaven that he definitively rules his Church, but by means of the mystery of the Cross. The apparitions after Easter could represent only one moment in the economy of redemption.

Finally, if Christ had remained among us, he would have been able to touch with a sensible contact only a small number of men; but in leaving this world he would be able, by the intermediary of a hierarchy that he sends across space and time, to touch corporeally the whole of humanity.

The age of the Holy Spirit is the age of the Eucharist and the hierarchy. Two new mysteries will mark the coming of the age of the Holy Spirit: the mystery of the eucharistic presence and the mystery of the institution of the hierarchy.

In order that *he himself*, endowed with all the riches of the redemption, might continue to reside corporally among us, the glorified Christ renders himself present under the appearances of bread and wine. St. John links to the

Eucharist that life of the Christian in Christ and the life of Christ in the Christian, whereas St. Paul sees the Mystical Body itself: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me” (Jn 6:56-57).

And in order that he may continue to approach us with the same intimacy as during the days of his mortal life, Jesus leaves in our midst the mediation of the hierarchic powers and the sacramental rites, which prolong his *sensible contact* with the whole world, and under the species of which he will send the fullness of grace and truth: “Go. . . make disciples of all nations, *baptizing* them. . . , teaching them. . . . Behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:19-20).

It is at the moment, therefore, when the Church is carried to the highest point of visible mediation that the Spirit fills her with the purest spiritual riches—those that configure her most intimately to Christ, her Savior.

CHAPTER II

CHRIST, THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

It is exactly where Christ comes to gather the world together and recapitulate it in himself that the Church is born (I). The Church is carried along in the work of redemption, merit, and satisfaction accomplished by Christ: the line of mediation ascending from Christ, by which he gives the world to God (II). She issues forth from the major privileges of Christ as King, Prophet, and Priest: the line of mediation descending from Christ, by which he gives God to the world and pours out upon the Church the superabundance of his gifts (III).

I. The Church, the First-Born of the World Gathered Together in Christ

Christ makes us participate in the divine nature (1); he espouses humanity (2); he is incorporated into humanity (3); the recapitulation of the world in Christ (4).

1. GOD BECOMES MAN THAT MAN MIGHT SHARE IN THE DIVINE NATURE

The unique mystery of the redemptive Incarnation. The Church begins here below the mystery of the recapitulation of the world in Christ. God responded to the Fall with the redemptive Incarnation, the foyer of a new and better world. If we speak of the “redemptive Incarnation”, it is to unite in one expression the two movements of the one act by which the Word saves the world: (1) by taking on human flesh, and (2) by making peace through the

blood of his Cross.

The Incarnation begins our reconciliation. By the fact of the Incarnation Christ begins to reconcile God to man and man to God. Being at once true God and true man, he builds a bridge, in an extraordinary way, between heaven and earth. “It was necessary”, writes St. Augustine, “that a mediator between God and men have something in common with God and something in common with men; if he were in both points like men, he would be too far from God; if he were in both points like God, he would be too far from men; and in neither event could he be a mediator.”¹ He who is the mediator is both God and man; but, as a man he is greater than all other men: “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5).

The consideration of this mystery is constantly present in the Fathers. For them, God becomes man in order to make us divine, the Word is made flesh in order to inhabit all flesh. St. Athanasius sums up with an extraordinary force and insistence the complete work of our salvation in the mystery of the Word who becomes flesh in order to bring all flesh back to the Word: “The flesh being no longer earthly, but being henceforth made Word, by reason of God’s Word who for our sake ‘became flesh’.”² He continues: “Yes, I am from earth, being by nature mortal, but afterwards I have become the Word’s flesh, and He ‘carried’ my [afflictions], though He is without them; and so I became free from them.”³ So that, “as the Lord, putting on the body, became man, so we men are deified by the Word as being taken to Him through His flesh, and henceforward inherit life everlasting.”⁴

The whole of humanity is affected through the individual nature of Christ. In being incarnated in an individual human nature, formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin, the Word called all of human nature to be united to him, not, of course, hypostatically, but in a real, intimate, mysterious union nonetheless. His descent into humanity obtains its full efficacy only in the members who are united to him by charity. His descent has certain effects, nevertheless, on all men. From the first moment they obtain the use of reason it draws hidden prevenient graces over all of them. Moreover, if all men, even those who will refuse his love to the end of their life, are called to rise again, it is by reason of the Resurrection of Christ. Continuing the thought of the Fathers, St. Thomas wrote so well:

We are reborn by the grace of Christ that is communicated to us; but we are raised by the grace that, in bringing Christ to take on our human nature, conforms us to him by nature. This is why infants who die in the womb of their mother and who are not reborn by the gift of grace will rise nonetheless, in reason of the conformity of the nature that they have received with the nature of Christ.⁵

The whole of creation is raised up. In taking on a particular flesh and individual nature, the Word draws to himself the whole of creation, somewhat like the plucking of a harp string that makes all the others vibrate. At that moment creation received an amazing dignity and, as it were, a new destiny. It is in him, says St. Athanasius, that “the whole creation is created and adopted into sonship.”⁶ “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God” (Rom 8:19).

The only Son became the first-born of many brethren. It is to such a human nature, to the exclusion of all other creatures, that the Word is immediately united. Humanity presented him with its very best: flesh formed in the womb of the Virgin, the most beautiful flower from the root of Jesse. In assuming this particular nature, he contracted a mysterious relationship with the rest of humanity. He had always been the only Son of the Father, and he began to be the first-born among other sons, making men his adopted brothers and coheirs of his glory.

Scripture itself tells of these marvels. We read that those whom he foreknew, God predestined “to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren” (Rom 8:29); that:

it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying,

“I will announce thy name to my brethren. . . .

Here am I, and the children God has given me.” . . .

For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect. (Heb 2:10-17)

And that is why we are “fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17).

The theme of the only Son becoming the first-born, so dear to the Fathers of the Church, returns with St. Cyril of Alexandria: “He is the only Son by

nature, for he alone is born of the Father, God from God, light from light; and he is the first-born because of us, in order that all creation, grafted onto an immortal stock, might flourish anew under the action of him who lives forever. For all things have been made by him; and they continue to exist and subsist in him.”⁷

The descent of the Word into time marks the advent of a new world where all creatures are called to be born again, together with the Savior.

2. CHRIST ESPOUSES HUMANITY

All of humanity is invited to the marriage banquet. The whole of humanity, in principle, is wedded to Christ. All are invited to the wedding. But it is only in the measure that it responds to the invitation and that it consummates the marriage with Christ that humanity truly becomes Christ’s spouse, that is, the Church.

Considered as such, the Church forms a whole before Christ. He himself is in glory in heaven; she still lives in the midst of earthly trials. Nevertheless, she is not separated from him; she is immediately united to him. This distinction of persons between the two is a condition that is not part of a true marriage. And yet there is a conformity of nature, a similitude of appearance that is very similar to a true marriage. Having made her according to his own likeness, bone from bone and flesh from flesh, capable of becoming him and loving him, Christ cannot regard her as a stranger. He is in love with her beauty and united to her in love.

Foundations in Sacred Scripture. The scriptural image of the betrothal of Christ and the Church, far from being an elevated vision of things, ought to be regarded, rather, as an imperfect formulation of the mystery of that union. How can any image not fall short of the truth when it is used to transmit the messages that infinite Love addresses to us?

The inspired texts regarding this subject extend from the Old Testament prophets to the last lines of the Book of Revelation. We call to mind here two texts of St. Paul. The Church of Corinth is the virgin, the faith of whom must remain unchanged: “I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (2 Cor 11:2-3). The Apostle

writes to the Ephesians:

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one." This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the church. (Eph 5:25-32)

Texts of St. Augustine. St. Augustine does not comment on this scriptural passage; rather, he examines the first pages of Genesis.

When Christ slept on the cross, he represented, rather, he accomplished, that which was signified in Adam. In fact, just as while Adam slept a rib was taken from him to form Eve, so while our Lord slept on the Cross his side was pierced with a lance and the sacraments flowed out, by which the Church is made. For the Church, the Spouse of our Lord, came forth from him, as Eve came from Adam; just as one came forth from the side of him who slept, so the other came forth from the side of One who died.⁸

In espousing the Church, Christ gives her as a dowry all the nations, starting from Jerusalem, to which the remission of sins must be announced (Lk 24:47).

Christ is therefore the Bridegroom of the Church proclaimed in all nations, propagated and extended to the ends of the earth, beginning with Jerusalem. Of such a Church Christ is the Bridegroom. And you, what do you think? Of whom is Christ the Bridegroom? The Donatists? No, a million times no! No, my friend; no, my enemy! Let us consider the marriage, let us read the contract, and let us not argue. If you think that Christ is the spouse of the Donatist sect, I will reread the contract, and I will see that it is the Church, which is dispersed throughout all the earth.⁹

The apostles are only the friends of the Bridegroom; the Bride does not belong to them.

Before ascending into heaven, he entrusted the Church to them again. The Bridegroom, on the point of departure, entrusts the Bride to his friends. She will not love any of them as a spouse, but only as the friends of the Bridegroom. That, moreover, is all they want. They would not allow her love to wander astray; they would not want to be loved in place of the Bridegroom. See how each one acts to the other. Noticing that the Bride worries precisely on account of the friends of her Spouse, it is written: "I hear that there are divisions among you; and I partly believe it. . . . For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brethren. What I mean is that each of you says, 'I belong to Paul,' or 'I belong to Apollos,' or 'I belong to Cephas,' or 'I belong to Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Cor 11:18; 1:11-13). O my dear

friend! . . . He does not wish to be loved in place of the Bridegroom, in order that he may reign with him.¹⁰

If it is revealed that the Church is made in the image of Christ, that she becomes one with him, that he loves her and treats her as his own Body, one sees how vain it is to want to separate, in the name of Scripture, the cause of Christ from the cause of one visible Church.

3. CHRIST IS INCORPORATED INTO HUMANITY

All has not been said regarding the connection between Christ and the Church. Sacred Scripture shows us that the two form one organism, one moral being, one mystical person, the total Christ, of which he is the Head and she the Body.

The vine and the branches. We find the Gospel form of this teaching in the comparison of the vine and the branches. The Son of God is in the midst of men as a choice vine bearing both sterile branches, which are cut off, and fruitful ones, which will bear much fruit.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. (Jn 15:1-4)

Here we have the essence of the mystery of the union between Christ and the Church: the vine is of the same nature as the branches; it continuously communicates to them its life of truth and love, but it may be held in check by the freedom of the branches. All that St. Paul affirms concerning this mystery presupposes that, in reality, according to the word of the Teacher, Christians are called to live the very life of Jesus.

The Head and the Body. Christ, writes St. Paul, “is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col 1:18-20). And among other texts:

[Christ's] gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love. (Eph 4:11-16)

Christ and the Church are mutually perfected, therefore, as Head and Body, in a manner, nevertheless, in which Christ gives all and the Church receives all, and the perfection in Christ alone is no less than the perfection found in Christ together with the Church. On one hand, in fact, Christ is the qualitative and intensive perfection, or the fullness, of the Church: "And you have come to fulness of life in him" (Col 2:9), for "here. . . Christ is all, and in all" (Col 3:11). And, on the other hand, the Church is the quantitative and extensive perfection and, in this sense, the fullness of Christ. Paul can write: "In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church" (Col 1:24).

The Mystical Body. The use of the expression "Mystical Body" began in the ninth century in order to designate the eucharistic or sacramental Body of Christ, which one called "mystical": (1) because it is given mysteriously under the appearances of bread and wine; (2) because it brings to us the mystery of the Body sacrificed on the Cross once for all; (3) because it is the source of the mysterious Body of which Christ is the Head, that is, the Church. In the second half of the seventeenth century, in virtue of a phenomenon rich in theological importance, the same expression ("Mystical Body") shifted from the sacramental Body to the ecclesial Body, that is, from the Eucharist—called the "true" or "proper" Body of Christ—to the Church, the "mystical" Body of Christ.¹¹

Besides recalling through its earliest historical meanings that the Eucharist is the Church's supreme sacrament of unity, the expression "Mystical Body" alerts us to the double transposition the word "body" must undertake in order to be applied, according to St. Paul, to the Church. In fact, now we pass from the natural body, where the organs are integral parts of a unique physical and substantial whole, to a common body, where each human person remains a substantial whole and the unity of the body is only moral and accidental, so that the corporal unity, transposed from a biological to a sociological plane,

necessarily loses some of its rigor. On the other hand, we pass at the same time from a natural to a supernatural level, so that the corporal unity receives a marvelous increase. And so the sense of the word “body” as applied to the Church is weakened under one aspect but is strengthened under another. It is at once too strong and too weak: the Church is morally one, and each of her members is redeemed for himself; but each member, living in the Holy Spirit the very life of Christ, is ineffably and divinely one.

One sole person. This unity is such that St. Paul, at times, considers Christ and the Church as one single person. “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:27-28). “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:12-13). And the perfect man that we must constitute (cf. Eph 4:13) “is the mystical Christ, composed of the Head and members, destined to one perfection, toward which one indefinitely approaches without ever reaching the limit.”¹²

All of the teachings of the Apostle have their immediate source in the episode where Saul discovers, by an unforgettable revelation, that it is Jesus himself whom he persecutes in the Christians (Acts 9:4-5). By means of his Mystical Body, Christ continues to live in Christians. Their prayers, deeds, sufferings, their very deaths become a continuation, as it were, of his prayer, deeds, sufferings, and death. St. Paul tells us that men refuse him their humanity and that, therefore, there is something lacking to the whole or “total” Christ (Col 1:24). Fr. Chardon writes that, by reason of the mystical subsistence that Jesus communicates to us in grace, “which unites us to him as members of a body to its head, his life becomes our life, his Spirit is the Spirit of our spirit, and his merits begin to belong to us; and while he hungers and thirsts with us and appropriates our sufferings to himself, we rise with him and dwell with him in heaven, wrapped in his glory.”¹³

4. THE RECAPITULATION OF THE WORLD IN CHRIST

What is the recapitulation? God “has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite [*recapitulate*] all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph 1:9-10). This recapitulation does not mean just that human things—and all earthly and heavenly things as well—will be restored, re-begun, put once again in their proper state, but also that they have been destined to receive a perfection previously unheard of, by the fact that they will be henceforth ordered under a better principle, namely, Christ. Christ, first of all, by reason of his human nature, sums up in himself all beings, re-inserts them into himself, as primitive humanity was inserted into Adam. And by reason of his hypostatic union with the Word, he joins all creation to his divinity. And so, when human, earthly, and heavenly things are reunited in the hereafter to form the glorified Kingdom, they will appear, not simply as transfigured creatures, but as joined so immediately to Christ that together they will be as the continuation of his Body. And at this time it will be brilliantly clear to the eyes of all that, if the Fall was permitted, it was so that, by the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation, the world of the redemption might be incomparably more beautiful than the world of innocence.

The cosmic character of the Church and the law of distinction of the spiritual and the temporal. This cosmic recapitulation already begins here below in the Church and by the Church. But, in order to understand how, it is necessary to remember that, like Christ himself during his earthly pilgrimage, the Church does not, during her temporal pilgrimage, absorb into herself all temporal realities.

On one hand, she indeed leaves outside of herself the immense universe of nature and culture, the rhythm of the formation and gravitation of the stars, the vast temporal flow of history.

All these things were, no doubt, required for the Incarnation to take place and for Christ to gather around himself his Mystical Body. Nevertheless, with respect to the framework of peripheries that compose the history of the cosmos and human culture, the Word made flesh and his Church appear “as a disproportioned metahistorical goal, freely ordered from on high and taking from history, with a divine discretion, only what is necessary”.¹⁴ Consider the event of the Word being born at Bethlehem. There is no place for him either in the designs of Caesar Augustus or in the inn. A poor rejected couple, some

shepherds, a multitude of angels: here are the firstborn of his Kingdom! It is not necessary for the theology of the Church to “forget the stable of Bethlehem”. It is necessary for it to shatter from the outset all dreams of spiritual imperialism.

The very *raison d'être* of the Church is to bring to men the blood of Christ, not the benefits of civilization. She can inspire and endorse, in the name of the Gospel, the multitude of temporal activities. Nevertheless, she never commits more than a ray of her light to that. This is evident when it is a question of scientific research, works of art or technology; but it is also borne out when it is a question of the duties of the social-temporal, economic, or political life. Without a doubt, all temporal work must be ordered to spiritual ends. To free itself from the loving attraction to divine ends would mean its immediate and fatal decline toward ones that are diabolic! But the temporal realm is ordered to an intermediate inferior end, which has its own specific value, and not purely as a means whose significance is measured only in connection with an end. It is in the measure that they escape from purely cultural purposes and are used as spiritual means that plain chant and liturgical languages and actions can enter into the very tissue of the Kingdom of God.

A law of distinction exists that in this life regulates the relations between the Church and things temporal. It is only in the next world that the whole of creation, the elements of nature and of culture, will reenter fully into the Church. Does not St. Paul show us visible creation awaiting its glory (Rom 8:19-22)? The Church, indeed, will later reabsorb, as it were, into herself the rest of the universe; and that is why her very existence always ends up, more or less, aggravating human establishments, “the closeness of eternity being dangerous for the perishable and that of the universal for the particular” (P. Claudel). But, for now, the order of cultural realities continues to unfurl according to its own ends, on a level inferior to that of the Kingdom of God, but running parallel to it and allowing itself to be enlightened and vivified by it, waiting, however, for the end of time before it blossoms forth definitively, before it pours out on the Kingdom—no doubt, in a very complete and sublime manner—its choicest fruits. To restore all things in Christ, to make Christ King, ought never to be an attempt—conscious or not—to suppress the distinction between what immediately belongs to Caesar and what immediately belongs to God, between what is Christianity’s and what is culture’s (even a Christian culture), between the things of the Church and

what belongs to civilization.

The confrontation between the two cities. On the other hand, God allows to subsist face to face with his Church, according to a law no longer of distinction but this time of opposition, the city of evil, the serpent that drives her into the desert. This opposition of light and darkness, of Christ and Belial (2 Cor 6:15), will be produced not only between Christians and their adversaries, but in the heart of each individual Christian—between what lifts him up to heaven and what drags him down to hell. To forget this law, more interior and crucifying than the preceding, is to take up the errors of the millenarians, who announce here below the coming of a kingdom that will manage to cleanse the earth of the darkness of evil and sin.

The Church reclaims the whole man and all men, but in view of eternal ends. She reclaims the whole man. The Church—just as the temporal city—reclaims the whole man, the integral man, body and soul. But while the temporal city can only claim man in view of immediate temporal ends, the Church requires him for ends that are supreme and eternal. Both divide among themselves the soul and body of man; and neither of the two has the right, here below, to be totalitarian. But whereas the one has permission to seize man in the name of provisional and subordinate ends, the other claims him on account of ends that are supreme and definitive. The legitimacy of their hold is verified by the conformity of their respective ends with the demands of the law promulgated by the Author of nature and grace. However, while the temporal city will always consult this law as a rule exterior to itself, the Church shelters within it, as her Guest and her Friend, the Master who directs it.

The Church also claims for herself all men. All men are not de facto members of the Church, but all are called to become one. Even those who have placed their hearts in the city of evil always remain, insofar as they still live in this world, in a position to return to Christ. St. Augustine loved to think that they would perhaps come to him before death: “We see what they are today; we do not know what they will be tomorrow.”¹⁵

The Church is the world being reconciled to God. And so, Christ, now glorious, works, from heaven above, to carry along in the wake of his poverty, his suffering, and his Cross all whom he touches by what is most

essential in them, and with them, the world in which they have been immersed. And this continual conformation of the world to the image of the pilgrim Christ, this progressive reconciliation of creation in the blood of his Cross, is the Church of the present time, our Church. “The Church is the world reconciled”, says St. Augustine¹⁶ who cites here John 3:17: “God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.”

II. The Church Redeemed by the Passion of Christ

We now consider the line of ascending mediation of Christ, where he prays, merits, and makes satisfaction, that the sinful world might be taken up in mercy by God.

1. THE REDEMPTION OF CHRIST, THE NEW ADAM

Ascending and descending mediations of Christ. From the moment the Word became flesh, he established at the heart of the universe a meeting point incomparably better than that which the first Adam had been. By reason of his humanity, all creatures naturally entered into a brotherly relation with him and found themselves elevated by a new vocation to participate in him, with the dignity of the sons of God. And moreover, in the measure that free creatures effectively obeyed this calling, they became by grace participants in the divine nature and began to form, around Christ, his Mystical Body.

In Christ, God and man, and hence the unique Mediator between heaven and earth, whose mission was one of reconciliation, two types of actions may be considered: (1) those that begin with his humanity and mount upward toward God: his prayer, adoration, offering, merit, supplication, sacrifice; and (2) those that descend from God to man through Christ: miracles, healings, illumination of the heart, forgiveness of sins, final resurrection of the dead, and so on.

These two types of activities of Christ are divine-human, or, according to theologians, *theandric*. There is, nevertheless, a profound difference between the two. The first type are actions that are intrinsically human: praying, suffering, dying. They receive their infinite and divine value from the infinite

dignity of the Person who accomplishes them. The second type are actions that intrinsically surpass the capacity of human nature, even the human nature of Christ considered in itself: pardoning sins, sanctifying, raising the dead. Here the humanity of Christ is an instrument of the divinity.

This distinction is important, for the two types of divine-human actions correspond to the two great ways by which Christ offers to men the graces of salvation. First, in the order of those actions that ascend from his humanity to heaven, he is Head of the Church in meriting and making satisfaction for her: one may speak here of an ascending or moral mediation. Next, in the order of the actions that descend from God to the world, he is the Head of the Church in lavishing upon her the graces and supernatural gifts that fashion her to his own image: theologians speak here of a mediation of causality, a descending or physical mediation. In the order of ascending moral causality, Christ, as man, is the principal cause of our salvation; in the order of descending physical causality, he is the instrumental cause.¹⁷ It is the former with which we are now concerned.

The solidarity in Adam and the solidarity in Christ. Without a doubt, it is through our responsibility, by our own personal fault, that we sin and thus prepare our future condemnation before the just judgment of God, who renders to each according to his works (Rom 2:6-8). And nevertheless, it is a revealed principle that the whole tide of our faults, without exception, was initiated by a first sin, which has had a universal impact and on which all other sins are still mysteriously dependent. At the same time, it is by a personal act that we believe, love, open to Christ the door of our hearts (Rev 3:20) and that we work out our own salvation in fear and trembling (Phil 2:12). Nevertheless, the whole multitude of these actions and salutary works, without exception, must be commanded by a supreme act of obedience and love, the impact of which will be universal and which will not cease to rule our actions from above and penetrate them by its influence.

Hence the words of St. Paul: "Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Rom 5:18-19). The Apostle also sees in the first Adam "a type of the one who was to come" (Rom 5:14). The same is taken up in 1 Corinthians 15, apropos of life and death: "For as by a man came death, by a man has come

also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (vv. 21-22); “Thus it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being’;¹⁸ the last Adam became a life-giving spirit” (v. 45).

Sin: the evil of man and an offense against God. The redemption introduced by the New Adam presupposes that there was on the part of man a mysterious refusal that we call sin.

Without mentioning the terrible catastrophes into which sin casts humanity—the moral wounds of a nature henceforth inclined toward evil, death with its cortège of sorrows—it is necessary to be attentive to what sin itself is, to what is concealed in its very depths, the catastrophes of which are but consequences.

Mortal sin appeared first of all as a stain, as an evil affecting man himself, whom it turned away from God, the infinite Good, in order to fix him in a temporary creature, a finite good, thus destroying in him divine grace and friendship. It is totally contrary to charity, by which man effectively chooses God as his last end, that which ultimately motivates all the steps of his life. Whence, whereas charity itself is always susceptible of growth and, consequently, is something absolutely infinite in man, sin, considered as a stain affecting man, will always be susceptible of measurement and will be something limited or finite.

Mortal sin, however, carries a second, more mysterious aspect, to which we are usually less attentive but which the saints perceived with clarity. Under this aspect sin appears as an offense against God, as an evil affecting him by depriving him of what is due him. For God, who is in reality the last end of all creatures, has a strict right to be loved above all, to be chosen as the Absolute, to whom, concretely, the life of every creature must be freely given. Sin infringes on this right. Of course sin cannot reach God in himself: he is by nature above all evil, for evil is not able to encroach on the infinite Good. The sinner, nevertheless, by his wicked choice, destroys God so far as he can. In man’s sinful act there is the desire that God be not God. This aggressive power of sin, ordinarily veiled from our eyes, is openly manifested at the hour of our Savior’s Passion, when God, become vulnerable by the human nature he assumed, comes to know, on account of sin, the pangs of agony and death.

The infinity of the offense and the infinity of the compensation. Each time,

therefore, a mortal sin is committed, the infinite right God has to our adoration and love is infringed upon; the injury is infinite. Here we touch upon the paradox of the relations between God and the world. God's sovereign domain over his creatures—unequal though they be: the atom, the angel, the human will—is equally infinite. If I give my adoration, my faith, and my charity, as well as my penance for my past sins, the gift is always finite, capable of being better; but if I refuse them, the refusal is always, in one aspect, infinite. The result (a strange mystery indeed) is that man is more powerful in evil than in good, that it is only in the line of evil that his work can be infinite.

No doubt, this infinity of the offense would have remained veiled from our sight if the mystery of redemption had not come to manifest it. It is so true that, outside of this relation with the mystery, the infinity of the offense could not be clearly known. Hence, we learn the depths of our evil only at the moment when we discover the remedy God has prepared for us. There is a certain proportion, in fact, between, on the one hand, the malice of our faults, which are finite and unequal by reason of their nature, object, and circumstances, but infinite and equal by the fact that each of them violates the forever infinite right of the Divine Majesty; and, on the other hand, the value of the satisfaction of Christ's actions, finite and unequal with respect to their nature, object, and circumstances, but equally infinite in dignity, by the fact that each one flows from the infinite Person of the Word. It was by meditating on the infinite profundity of the redemption, which Christ alone, as true God and true man, was able to render perfectly, that the Fathers were led to discover the infinite profundity of the offense made to God by sin. St. Cyril of Alexandria writes: "If Emmanuel had been a pure man, how would the death of a man have profitted human nature? Many of the holy prophets died without bringing anything to the human race, but the death of Christ has saved us."¹⁹ St. Augustine says the same: "We would not have been delivered even by the one Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ, if he had not been God."²⁰ And St. Thomas: "The sin committed against God has a kind of infinity from the infinity of the Divine Majesty, because the greater the person we offend, the more grievous the offense. That is why, for there to be equivalent satisfaction, an act whose efficacy was infinite was necessary, as coming from both God and man."²¹

More than deliverance, Christ brings redemption. It would have been easy

for God to raise up by one alone the humanity that the sin of one had led to such a catastrophe, to bring forth in the midst of humanity a just one who would have been the surety of lost humanity. But, in fact, the debt would not have been canceled. God would have eternally received from his creation more offense than glory. In a word, in St. Thomas' word, we would have been *delivered*, but we would not have been *redeemed*. "Certainly, it was possible for God to choose for us some other form of deliverance, for his power is without limit. And if he had, it would have been, without a doubt, perfectly suitable. But it would have been only a deliverance. It would not have been redemption; for we would have been delivered without the debt having been acquitted."²²

The truth is we have not been delivered by a pure man. The response has surpassed the promise; the New Adam has effaced the first. God, in fact, will receive more glory than offense from his creation. This is the foundation of the mystery of redemption.

2. THE MERIT OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

The paradox of redemption: God is bound in justice to show mercy. "Merit means reward, something given as payment, as the price for work or labor."²³ To say that Christ merited salvation for us is to say that God, who had let his Son present himself in the name of all humanity, had to grant him the redemption of the world as a payment due in justice.

Therefore, prior to all our advancements, there is a first step that is taken for us, once and for all. Beyond our heart's paltry gift exists a first gift, which is alone irreproachable, presented on our behalf by Christ, who incorporates us in the offering of his sacrifice, who hides our wounds, our ignorance, and our sins under the mantle of his purity and light, who unites our desire for deliverance to his own supplication and our cause, already lost, to his victory won in advance: a first gift that God could not refuse, since it came from his Son; a gift that God could not ignore, since it assumed an infinite dignity; a gift that God was obliged to accept on our behalf, having first accepted him who offered himself for us; a first gift to which *God was held in justice to respond by showing mercy to the world*. This is the mystery of redemption, the paradox of a mercy that is due and a justice that is gratuitous. There is mercy for men, but it is owed to Christ and could not be refused to him

without injustice. And there is justice for Christ, but one that is not owed to men, for they have nothing to give in exchange for their sins—nothing outside of Christ, who gives himself spontaneously to them in order to suffer for all.

The merit of Christ is diffused in his members. The great supplication addressed by Christ to God in order to merit our salvation has drawn down for us (without any right or previous merit of our own) a shower of grace that abounds in Christ and bursts forth from him. This grace that we have not merited depends on our openness to it. And if we welcome it into our hearts, we will be able, in turn, to merit before God, certainly not with a merit comparable to Christ's or a "rival" to Christ's,²⁴ but a merit dependent on that of Christ. The deeds we will accomplish, nourished by the divine life of a first grace freely conferred by God, will blossom into the fruits of grace. God orders them to obtain in this life a growth in charity and, in the world to come, the full blooming of a life of glory. It is as a reward for such works that heaven is promised in the Gospel: "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven" (Mt 5:12).

It is clear, says St. Thomas, that there is an infinite distance between man and God, and man receives from God all that he is able to render to God. Hence, between man and God there cannot be, strictly speaking, an equality, justice, a right to recompense, or merit; all such notions can only be used relatively or proportionately, so that man ought to offer to God, insofar as he is capable, the things that God himself never ceases to place in his heart.²⁵

Our merits are God's gifts. Only because God himself has willed it to be so can our acts, performed in grace, draw down upon us, as a reward that God cannot refuse to give, an increase in charity and a life of glory. If, therefore, God is obliged "in justice" to reward our merits, it is by reason of his own arrangement; and it is due to himself, not to us, that he is so bound.²⁶ hence the words of St. Augustine, "what we call our merits are the gifts of God"²⁷ and "when God crowns our merits, he is only crowning his own gifts."²⁸ Indeed, the merits of Christians in the state of grace are nothing but the merits of Christ, who is their Head, of whom they are the living members. As Cajetan writes:

The action by which we merit eternal life is less *our* work than the work that *Christ*, as Head, accomplishes in us and by us. . . . Hence the words of the Apostle: "I live, no not I, but Christ

lives in me” (Gal 2:20). The Christian may say in all truth: “I merit, no not I, but Christ in me; I fast, no not I, but Christ in me.” So it is with all the voluntary actions that the true members of Christ accomplish for God. Hence, the merit of eternal life is attributed, not so much to our works, but to the works that Christ as Head accomplishes in us and by us.²⁹

The Church merits in Christ an increase of love and the conversion of the world. The above having been said, one comprehends how the supreme unique supplication, by which Christ merited in justice before God the salvation of the world, can be passed on in successive waves to the whole Church, so that the life of the Body enters into, insofar as it is capable, the life of the Head. The grace that is meritorious in Christ does not lose its proper characteristic when communicated to Christians; however, it is only in Christ that its meritorious value can be infinite. Christ’s merit comes from himself; but the merit of the Church is by participation, in a secondary and dependent manner. It suffices, nevertheless, to associate the Church to the redemptive mission of Christ directly. The entire Church, at each moment of her life, is invited to take part in the intercession offered by Christ, an offering made once and forever, so that she merits (a derived and participated merit) an increase in her charity (merit *de condigno*) and the conversion of the world (merit *de congruo*: when God loves to do the will of those whom he loves).

3. THE SATISFACTION OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

The sorrowful satisfaction of Christ. Christ paid the price of his Passion not only in order to obtain the grace of salvation for men, but also to compensate for the infinite offense made to God by sin. His Passion is at once meritorious and satisfactory. These two aspects are both present in Sacred Scripture and always found together. “You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Pet 1:18-19). “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn 2:1-2).

Scheeben justly remarks that Christ “would have been able to merit grace and glory without having to suffer for us, but satisfaction absolutely required that he suffer; for, without abandonment of self, renunciation, and dejection,

the honor stripped from God would not have been returned to him; while merit demands simply that one do, for the love of God, something in his honor and for his glory.”³⁰ Nevertheless, Christ’s Passion and death have added an incredible depth to his meritorious work and, even more, to his adoration; for these allow Christ to merit our redemption by a supreme gift of his life and to adore God by a real destruction of his being before the Divine Majesty.

Its superabundance. The satisfaction made by Christ is not only infinite and, consequently, capable of compensating for the offense made to God, but, if we look at the relation between the whole order of redemption and the order of sin, we must say that it is superabundant. “But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. . . . But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Rom 5:15, 20).

The superabundance of Christ’s redemption is one of the major themes of the Christian message. It is the message of the *Exsultet*, and there is none more dear to the hearts of the baptized. We can clarify a few of its aspects:

1. This satisfaction will be truly superabundant with respect to the homage that God receives from Christ alone, in whom the whole of creation is, in a sense, summed up. “By suffering out of love and obedience, Christ gave more to God than was required to compensate for the offense of the whole human race. . . . And therefore Christ’s Passion was not only a sufficient but a superabundant atonement.”³¹ “Christ’s love was greater than his slayers’ malice: and therefore the value of his Passion in atoning surpassed the murderous guilt of those who crucified him: so much so that Christ’s suffering was sufficient and superabundant atonement for his murderers’ crime.”³²

2. Christ’s satisfaction is, moreover, superabundant by the fact that, thanks to him, God now receives from man himself more glory than opprobrium. Christians believe, in fact, that it was at his most sorrowful hours that the intensity of charity on earth surpassed that of hatred.

3. Finally, Christ’s satisfaction bestows on us better gifts than those we lost. Seen in this perspective, one can say that the state of redemption honors God more than the state of innocence did.

How Christ's satisfaction is communicated to his members. "And from his fulness have we all received, grace upon grace" (Jn 1:16). In passing from the Head to the members, from Christ to his Church, grace loses none of its properties. As it moved Christ to make satisfaction, so it moves Christians to follow him in the great act of reparation to God for the offenses of the world. That which Christ did his members try to do as well, according to his example: "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Pet 2:21). How could there be a symbiosis and synergy between the Head and Body if the work begun by the Head did not spread to the Body, if the suffering endured by Christ was not perfected in his disciples? "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (Col 1:24).

Nevertheless, the satisfaction communicated from Christ to his Church by a sort of outpouring is not equal in him and in the Church. In Christ it is perfect, infinite; in the Church it is imperfect, derived. Christ's satisfaction comes from himself; the Church's, from participation. It must be suspended from Christ's satisfaction, and it is by a favor that the Church possesses it. Christ's satisfaction was totally superabundant in the sense that he did not have to expiate for himself, since he was without sin. But the satisfaction of those who are united to Christ—those who are hidden in Christ, who have become, by charity, his living members—must be used to compensate, first of all, for the offenses they have caused by their own sins. It is only among the saints, totally purified by love, that the satisfactory sufferings begin to become truly superabundant and capable of redounding upon others. Transformed in Christ, like wood consumed in a fire, they do all that Christ did: they teach with Christ; they merit with Christ; they expiate with him for the living and the dead; with Christ they save the world.

4. THE APPROPRIATION OF CHRIST'S REDEMPTION BY THE CHURCH

The redemption of Christ is imputed, in principle, to all men. Christ's merit and satisfaction have been accepted by God in such a way that they *can* be reckoned for all men. They are *capable* of saving all. They are *imputed*, in principle, to all men. All have from Christ the right, even the obligation, to claim them. If they neglect that obligation, they rob Christ of something.

The valid foundation and the error of the Lutheran doctrine of appropriation. If we were to proceed no farther than the above statements, we would have to say that Christ is equally the Head of all men, that he forms with them all one single juridic person of which they are the body and he the head. And how would one speak of this juridic person? It would be necessary to say both that this person is justice in Christ and sin in men; that this person is saved if one regards the satisfaction offered for him, but condemned if one considers the condition of those for whom the satisfaction is offered. One could even attribute to the Head what is immediately true of the Body alone: so that one would say that Christ, remaining forever just, has been made sin for us (2 Cor 5:21) and that he has become a curse (Gal 3:13). One also could attribute to the Body what is immediately true of the Head: that men are already saved (in Christ) while they are still condemned (in themselves); that they are already justified while they are still sinners, *simul peccatores et iusti*, to use an expression of Luther.

Under this aspect and at this first instant of the work of redemption, the Lutheran teaching of justification would be true—and everyone knows that the greatest errors have never been anything but truths displaced. Let us not forget, however, that the work of redemption has, at this moment, just begun and that to stop at this stage would mean a break in its normal development. That is precisely what happens in the case of obstinate sinners. The doctrine of a purely juridical solidarity between men and Christ applies in reality only to those who refuse to welcome redemption into their hearts, who refuse to appropriate it to themselves.

According to the classic Protestant thesis, this appropriation of Christ's redemption is made by faith, which explains how a trust in Christ necessarily brings for the believer an absolute conviction of his own salvation. Men who are so appropriated to the redemption of Christ continue to be really and intrinsically sinners in themselves, while God only imputes to them the justice of Christ, covering them with the mantle of Christ. In a word, God regards them as just. Hence, the Church and Christ together, according to the Protestant, form one juridical person, and the justice of Christ passes to the Church just as the sin of the Church passes to Christ, who was made "sin" and "accursed" for us.

The Catholic doctrine of appropriation. The traditional teaching of the Church is very different. There is, indeed, an appropriation of Christ's justice

that incorporates men into Christ; but the direct effect of this justification is the bringing down of the justice of Christ, the grace and truth of Christ, into the hearts of men. The sin of men passes *juridically* to Christ, in the sense that he has agreed to suffer in order to expiate sin, but the justice of Christ passes *really* to his Church, so that, where sin abounded, grace abounds all the more. St. Paul, who wrote, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin”, also wrote, “so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21), as well as, “But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, *your spirits are alive because of righteousness*” (Rom 8:10; emphasis added).

And so, around the prayer, adoration, and offering of Christ are gathered all the prayer, adoration, and offering of the Church. On the supreme supplication and supreme suffering of Christ are suspended the supplication and suffering of the Church, his Body and his Bride. Consequently, one ought to say that the entire Church forms with Christ one sole mystical person, who adores, offers, and makes supplication.

III. The Church Is Formed by the Grace of Christ

We now consider the line of the descending mediation of Christ, by which he pours out on his Church a superabundance of his privileges as King-Prophet, Priest, and Holy One.

1. THE CAPITAL GRACE OF CHRIST

Capital grace. From the heart of Christ, true God and true man, mounts up to heaven an unimaginable supplication, which must have had its supreme moment when he gave himself in the sacrifice of the Cross and drew unto himself the supplications—whether formulated or secret, explicit or implicit—of all men, of the past, present, and future, in order to purify, transform, illuminate, and raise them up, on the wings of his own offering, to the Heavenly Father, even into the depths of the inaccessible Trinity. This is the line of Christ’s ascending mediation.

To such a call God responds by pouring out on the world, through the heart of Christ opened by a lance, the fruits of the redemption: “This is he who

came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. . . . And the Spirit is the witness. . . . There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree” (1 Jn 5:6-8). This is the line of Christ’s descending mediation.

This is why he is truly “the head of the body, the church” (Col 1:18), why “in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell” (Col 1:19), why the height of grace was destined to redound upon humanity to form the Church in its midst. This grace of Christ the Head that is poured out on the Church to form the whole Christ—Head and Body—is what is called the capital grace of Christ.

The three privileges of Christ’s capital grace. We can see in the capital grace of Christ three major privileges, three spiritual gifts that are in him as though mixed together in the eminence of a unique perfection, but which, in being diffused into the whole Body, will leave upon it three imprints. No doubt, these three imprints earnestly demand to remain together, but they appear, nonetheless, as really distinct from each other. They are the marks of Christ’s priesthood, kingship, and sanctity.

God uses Christ as an instrument in order to pour forth his treasures of capital grace. The holy humanity of Christ is, in the hands of God, as an instrument, an organ destined to transmit to the world the graces of salvation. But the words “instrument” and “organ” must be given an absolutely unique sense here. First of all, the humanity of Christ is a free instrument, the most free, the most loving, the most sensible that has ever been created. Moreover, from the fact of his union with the Word, his humanity is capable of carrying out our salvation by its own proper power. It holds the power par excellence vis-à-vis the powers that human ministers receive: while Christ’s humanity is an instrument “joined” to the divinity, as a hand is joined to a person, human ministers are “separated” instruments, as a tool is separated from the one using it.

The whole humanity of our Savior—soul and body, intelligence, will, and senses—was engaged in the activities by which he forgave sins, worked miracles, and laid the foundations of his Church in the world. His humanity operated, in each circumstance, by a free act. It heard the petitions of men; it responded to their questions; it decided to act; it chose the means, the place, and the moment: “When Jesus saw their faith he said to the paralytic, ‘Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven’ ” (Mt 9:2); “But Jesus, knowing their

thoughts, said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts? . . . But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins’—he then said to the paralytic—‘Rise, take up your bed and go home’ ” (Mt 9:4, 6). “While [Jesus] was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and besought him, ‘Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.’ And [Jesus] stretched out his hand, and touched him, saying, ‘I will; be clean’ ” (Lk 5:12-13).

Although there is only one Person in Jesus, only one “I”, only one “Someone”, to which are attributed, as to their responsible subject, all his actions, those that pertain to his human nature as well as those that pertain to his divine nature—the Person of the Word—Jesus does not lack a human life, a created conscience, a created liberty. This is what, under the influence of the Divine Omnipotence, will pour out the fullness of his riches on men, to the extent that they become participants, by a threefold influx, of his priesthood, his kingship, and his sanctity.

2. THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH³³

The priesthood of Christ. The redemption of the world was not obtained from God as a response to just any meritorious or satisfactory act of Christ’s life. It was by his death on the Cross that he saved us. This death was not only the most beautiful of martyrdoms; it was a true sacrifice. Christ, writes St. Paul to the Ephesians, “loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (5:2).

What is at the heart of the drama of the world is, in fact, an incomparable sacrifice, prefigured by the sacrifices of the ancient covenant but destined to replace them forever. Christ had been consecrated Priest in view of that perfect oblation in which he would be the victim as well. It was God himself who consecrated Christ, God who alone has the power to order all things:

So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

“You are my Son,

today I have begotten you”;

as he says also in another place,

“You are a priest for ever,

after the order of Melchizedek.”

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. (Heb 5:5-8)

The whole Epistle to the Hebrews explains how Jesus was constituted Priest for man’s sake, in order to offer himself up to death on the altar of the Cross.

The sacrifice of Christ. Jesus merited in a definitive manner eternal life and the reconciliation and the restoration of the world by one sacrificial act, that is, by an exterior religious act, a set rite, in which he gave the greatest proof of his love and on which he founded the new religion. The sacrifices of pagan religions (those in which there are no elements of immorality) and the sacrifices of the Old Law were but the shadow and figure of the one unique sacrifice, prophesied by Malachi and destined to extend its sanctifying power to all places and times: “From the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts” (Mal 1:11).

It follows that one cult and one liturgy are at the heart of Christianity. The blood-soaked Cross remains forever planted at the center of the true religion. It revives the souls that are perishing; it gives life; it strengthens hearts. “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn” (Zech 12:10); “On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness” (Zech 13:1).

“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” And Jesus did not deny it. There are some supplications that one resists from afar but are answered when near. Martha and Mary knew this. God also knows it. That is why the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And that is why, having

mounted the wood of the Cross with the plan of drawing all men to himself, our Lord desires that that very Cross be always near, as it is carried along on the river of time. The supreme sacrifice having commenced, he founded the mysterious institution that would permit it to convey and perpetuate its power. The bloody sacrifice is conveyed to us by the renewal of the unbloody rite, instituted at the Last Supper and around which the Church is formed. It was in order to multiply, not the supreme sacrifice, but the presence of that sacrifice among men that Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, broke it, and said, "This is my body which has been delivered up for you", adding the words, "Do this in memory of me"; and taking the cup, he said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Each time you drink of the cup, do this in memory of me." And St. Paul reminds the Corinthians that the meal of the Lord in which they take part is truly a sharing in "the table of the Lord" and the proclaiming of his death (1 Cor 10:21; 11:26).

The participation of the faithful in the worship inaugurated by Christ. The three sacramental characters of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders are derivations, in the souls of the faithful, of the supreme priestly power. Just as Christ himself had been consecrated Priest by the Father in view of the sacrifice, so the three sacramental characters will consecrate the faithful, permitting them to participate, under diverse titles, in the sacrifice of the New Law, taking part in the grand liturgy of which Christ is both the Priest and Victim.

Thanks to these sacramental characters, the Church with her priests³⁴ and laity is totally priestly, totally engaged in the celebration of the mysterious worship that was consummated once and for all on the Cross, certainly not in order to remain isolated, but, on the contrary, in order to be annexed and embodied, in order gradually to transfigure the worship of future generations as they come into existence.

It is true that all is perfected in love, not in worship; but Christian worship is the place of passage through which the double current of love mounts from earth up to heaven and from heaven down to earth.

3. THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH³⁵

Jesus, King and Prophet. Jesus is not only Priest; he is King and, during his

earthly life, Prophet. He has all authority to govern his Church, to direct her by teaching men—not only what they must do to be saved, but what they must believe as well. He said: “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (Jn 8:12). He dispenses the truth, preaches the good news, and teaches with authority (Mt 7:29).

The necessity of oral preaching. From the day of his Incarnation, all the graces of light, flowing from Christ’s divinity, are gathered in his intelligence before being poured out on all men, in order to enlighten and illumine them, both those who are near and those who are far off. He teaches from a distance only those who are far off; he teaches by personal sensible contact those who are near him. He “enlightens every man” (Jn 1:9). His teaching *from a distance* has for its purpose the preparing of souls to receive the fullness of explicit revelation or to make up for his absence, in a certain manner, by lighting the road to salvation. However, it is in his teaching *by contact* that the Gospel is announced to men. “Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see, and did not see it, to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (Mt 13:17). “How are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?” (Rom 10:14-15).

This contact will not be interrupted. Did this contact with the sensible Word, the living Word, come to a halt after the Ascension? Did Christ henceforth, after three years of preaching, cease to join to his work of interior illumination the guarantee of an exterior teaching?

He himself gave the response when he sent his apostles to the ends of the earth and to the end of time, giving them the command and power to teach and promising them his assistance. In order not to deprive man of the help that an external, living teaching affords, he left in their midst a visible authorized power, which would continue to speak in his name. The Father said: “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” (Lk 9:35). Jesus, in turn, would say: “He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me” (Lk 10:16). The spiritual kingship of Christ would be, like his priesthood, participated in by the Church.

As long as this world continues, the *interior* illuminations will not abandon the *preaching* of the Gospel, the exterior announcing of the good news. The exigency of this exterior preaching is inscribed in the very mystery of the Incarnation. What did the Eternal Word desire when he planned to become incarnate? He desired to retain, in the midst of the many human voices carrying human messages in which error and truth are mixed, one human voice carrying a message that is divine. He desired that, in such a way, the supreme, eternal, and divine salvation be proposed to men under a supremely human form, in the manner of an invitation, which would be often very gentle, sometimes threatening, but salutary. And by arranging that, after his departure for heaven, divine revelation would be transmitted to men by men, and to generations of men by other generations of men, he willed to bind men together in this world by divine chains.

Hierarchical and private prophecy. “You are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor 12:27). In this text, the members of Christ are not as above, in the passage where St. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to holiness of life, “those who share in the intimate life of Christ”, but rather those “who serve Christ by acting exteriorly on and through the Church”,³⁶ those who are entrusted with a mission to others.

Among them, St. Paul discerns, on the one hand, members who exercise certain permanent functions, we would say members of the hierarchy: “God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, . . . helpers, administrators” (1 Cor 12:28). In fact, in addition to the many lights of revelation and inspiration called to disappear with the apostles, there are other lights—which are attached to prophecy—that constitute the principal and positive contribution of the graces of assistance, on which the Church, as long as she lives in this world, can always count. By these prophetic motions Christ orders the movements of the jurisdictional power of the Church; he leads her where he wills; he leaves his imprint on the message she announces to the world.

In addition to these gifts pertaining to the hierarchy, the Apostle enumerates other, extraordinary gifts, joined more or less to the preaching of the Gospel, which can be given either to members of the hierarchy or to the simple faithful, who also can work for the edification of their neighbor and the building up of the Church: miracles, charisms of healing, gift of tongues, and so on.

Royal and prophetic role of the Church. Christ, therefore, leaves in the midst of the world a power that is a participation in his spiritual kingship and his prophecy. Thanks to him, the whole Church is royal. By her dependence on Christ, of whom she is the Body, and thanks to the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the Church perpetuates, in an oral and living manner, the royal and prophetic office of Christ. She is the depository of the living sources of Christian doctrine, the bearer of the fullness of revelation, the guardian of the deposit (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:14), the “pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). In her turn, but in absolute dependence on the apostles and above all on their Master, she is the “light of the world”.

4. THE SANCTITY OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH³⁷

Sanctity, the supreme privilege of Christ. Even greater than his priestly power and his role as Founder of the new cult, even greater than his spiritual kingship over intelligences, is the sanctifying power of Christ, which constitutes his supreme privilege as Head of the whole Mystical Body. He saves the Church as Priest, by consecrating her in view of the celebration of the worship of the New Law. He saves her as King, by illuminating her with the rays of prophecy. He saves her above all as the Holy One of divine holiness, by filling her with his grace, his charity, and his wisdom. His priestly and royal power are ordered ultimately to charity, which surpasses all the other spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:31; 13:13).

Sanctity, the supreme treasure of the Church. Even if all the members of the Church do not have an equal participation in the priesthood and kingship of Christ, even if all do not have the same functions with which to serve the community, participation in the love of Christ is offered to all without reserve. St. Paul recommended to Timothy and Titus not to lay hands on, that is, to pass on the hierarchical powers of the Church to, just anyone (1 Tim 5:22; 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9), but he writes to the faithful of Ephesus:

That according to the riches of his glory [God] may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God. (Eph 3:16-19)

Sanctity comes to us through Christ. Without a doubt the grace that sanctifies comes from the Trinity. The humanity of Christ acts as an instrumental cause in conferring such grace on us. But this instrumental cause is privileged. It is joined to his divinity. It possesses in it, in an eminent manner, all the gifts that it communicates to men. It is to the image of Christ that the grace of Christ configures the Church. What is grace? What perfections does it have in Christ?

What is grace? The Epistle of Peter teaches us a bold definition of grace when it says that the divine power, by the glory and virtue of Christ, who calls us, grants us “his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become *partakers of the divine nature*” (2 Pet 1:4; emphasis added). Grace, therefore, renders us participants in the divine nature by depositing in us the root of the operations that permit us to reach God in his infinity and as he is in himself, to know him as he knows himself with a ray of his light, and to love him as he loves himself with a ray of his love; it makes us do, in our own way, the same acts as God’s. By allowing us to share in the nature of God, grace makes us children of God by adoption, heirs of his Kingdom, which is to say, of his infinite beatitude.

How can grace, which is finite, make us participate in the very infinity of God? We can respond by an example: the eye, created finite, opens up on the infinity of the horizon. Grace is finite *constitutively*, *but tendentially* it leads immediately to the infinity of the Trinity.

The perfections that grace assumes in Christ. Grace in Christ takes on incomparable splendor and richness. On account of his union with the Word, grace can be said to exist in Christ as a plant rooted in a choice field and not in a foreign land, one that dwells in its homeland and not in a place of exile. Never has grace been so “at home” in human nature as it is in Christ: neither under the law of innocence nor under the law of nature nor under the Law of Moses. Theologians say that it dwells in him in a *connatural* way.

The created grace of Christ is also *complete* or *perfect* (*plénière*). It immediately reaches the highest level that Divine Wisdom has fixed for it, in view of Christ’s contact with the Trinity and his redemptive mission. This grace pre-contains in it, in an eminent degree, all the modalities, effects, and manifestations that it will bring to the world: “From his fulness have we all

received, grace upon grace” (Jn 1:16), for “in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col 1:19-20).

Finally, Christ’s grace is *filial*. It is, in his humanity, an echo, as it were, of his divine filiation. He is the Word of the Father, continuously going forth from the Father’s heart. When one tries to discover the reason why the sentiment of divine paternity deepened in passing from the Old to the New Testament, one discovers the immediate dependence of the revelation concerning our adoptive filiation on the principal revelation concerning the natural filiation of Jesus. The teaching of St. Paul, says Fr. Lebreton, “is only a development of our Lord’s own words: If Christians are children of God, it is because they have been incorporated in the only Son and participate in his life”; he adds: “The divine filiation of Jesus Christ is the source from which flows the filiation of Christians, and if the latter appears to us, from the very first pages of the Gospel, so lofty and supernatural, it is because it derives, in effect, from the infinite fullness of Christ.”³⁸

The nature of sanctifying grace does not undergo a change as it goes forth from Christ to his Church. In both it is a participation in the divine nature; in both it is ordered ultimately to glory and the vision of God and presently to the salvation of the world; in both it seeks to make present the modalities proper to the New Law, modalities that were unknown in the state of innocence and the other preceding ages.

The action of Christ from a distance and his action by contact. It is in Palestine that Jesus founded his Church. Moreover, we know that he was present from the first moment of the Incarnation. But then it was by *action from a distance*. The rays of grace that shine forth from his heart reach all men scattered over the earth. This grace is capable of saving all who welcome it into their hearts. Once accepted, an initial and rough outline of the Church begins to be formed in secret, one that is still lacking the priestly and jurisdictional powers. It bears a resemblance to Christ only in an initial and incomplete manner.

But Christ became incarnate, not in order to act from a distance, but rather to touch the wounds of our human nature. “Because man, in deserting God,” writes St. Thomas, “had stooped to corporeal things, it was necessary that God should take flesh and by corporeal things should afford him the remedy of salvation. Hence, on John 1:14, ‘And the Word was made flesh’, St.

Augustine says (*Tract. 11*): ‘Flesh had blinded thee, flesh heals thee; for Christ came and overthrew the vices of the flesh.’ ”³⁹ It is the *action by contact* that founds the Church in her state of plenitude and perfection. It is the action by contact that Christ strives to multiply, in a certain sense, when he passes to the other side of the sea in order to heal the possessed man, when he travels the roads of Judea and Galilee, even to the borders of Phoenicia. It is this contact that he willed to continue in time, when, on the point of leaving us, he instituted a visible hierarchy in our midst; from his heavenly home he uses this hierarchy as a corporeal instrument in order to maintain this sensible contact with us (Mt 16:19). It is this contact that he wishes to extend to all the nations (Mt 28:19), even unto the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) and the end of time (Mt 28:20), and that continuously gives birth to his Church. It is this contact that, by means of the sacraments of the New Law—which are like the hands of Christ reaching out to us across space and time—confers on us (according to our proper disposition) the sanctity of Christ, with all the treasures that are his own.

Grace that is fully Christ-conforming. It is by the contact of the sacraments that fully Christic, fully Christ-conformed, and fully Christ-conforming grace comes to the Church.⁴⁰

Communicated by means of the sacraments, grace carries with it into the Church conditions of stability and solidity, analogous to those that created grace found in the soul of Christ united to the Word. It then finds in the hearts of men a *connatural* residence, a choice land. No doubt, the individual members of the Church can lose this grace; but the Church as such will never cease to be in love, will never cease to be the homeland of love.

Communicated by means of the sacraments, grace is *filial* as it has never been before. The name it plants in our hearts when we cry out to God is *Father* (Mt 6:9; Rom 8:15). It makes us *brothers* of the only Son (Heb 2:12-17) and his *coheirs* (Rom 8:17; Gal 4:7).

Communicated by means of the sacraments, grace is complete or perfect (*plénière*). It possesses a sevenfold sacramental perfection that allows the Church to carry out spontaneously the work of the Mystical Body. It confers on the Church both the weight of glory, which pulls her toward the Trinity, as well as the weight of the Cross, which draws her in the wake of Christ in order to join the world with him, through him, and in him: such is the meaning of the graces of initiation of Baptism (Rom 6:3-6) and of the Holy

Eucharist (Jn 6:57).

Such are the modalities of grace insofar as it is *sacramental*. Furthermore, in the Church, grace is *directed*; the faithful interiorize the directives of the jurisdictional powers: the powers of declaring dogma, to which one owes a theological obedience; the canonical powers, to which one owes a moral obedience.

Insofar as they are *sacramental and directed*, grace and charity are fully Christic and Christ-conforming. We would say then that they are the soul of the Church, the *created* soul of the Church, of which the Holy Spirit is himself the *uncreated* Soul.

The grace of the redemption is better than the grace of innocence. The grace of the Church is, therefore, a much more wonderful gift than that which our first parents possessed. However, while the grace of innocence was immediately transfiguring, in the sense that it put to flight all suffering, the grace of Jesus will transfigure all things only in the next life. In other words, the grace of him who willed to take on the sorrowful condition of man was not given principally to *eliminate* from our present life suffering and death or the conflicts of concupiscence and the attacks of the world. It was given that the trials in the night of faith and love might be *illuminated* and sanctified and might ultimately triumph.

That is to say that the Christ of glory wills to touch his Church only with the wounds of his Passion; that the grace he infuses in her is destined, first of all, to sanctify her, not to glorify her.

The profound hold but apparent precariousness of the grace of redemption. Is it true that the grace of the New Law is so profoundly rooted in humanity? Does not the collective behavior of Christians too often give witness to the contrary? We would say that, most certainly, the grace of the New Law is much more deeply rooted in humanity—even if we exclude here what personally concerns Christ and the Blessed Virgin—than we can ever imagine. To account for this, we must consider the marvels that grace works in the entirely surrendered souls of all the great saints: in them it can accomplish its work of transformation without hindrance; in them human nature, totally transparent, can completely “give God to God”; in them the transforming union and mystical marriage of heaven and earth are perfected here below. They are the roots of the whole Church. Their contact is capable

of regenerating the universe. “When a mystic spirit arises”, writes Bergson, “he carries behind him a humanity with a body already immensely increased and with a soul transfigured by him. . . . Not all of us will follow him, but all of us will sense that we ought to, and we will know the way, which we will widen if we travel it.”⁴¹

Outside of these cases of divine fullness—which are normal if not frequent—one would say that Christian grace works more urgently and concerns itself much more with saving souls with a minimum amount of work than with dispelling the carelessness, misunderstandings, and aberrations in which they are plunged; a little like the pre-Christian grace that saved the just of the Old Testament by tolerating with a surprising patience their errors about polygamy, dissimulation, and hatred of enemies.

Hence, where the outpouring of Jesus’ sanctity does not meet with an obstacle, men can say with St. Paul: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). And there is the Church of Jesus Christ, formed by his grace.

CHAPTER III

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH

The *visible* center around which the universe is recapitulated and around which the Church is gathered is Christ, considered in his humanity. What, then, is her *invisible and supreme* center?

1. Speaking of the relations into which the Church enters with Christ and the Holy Spirit, St. Thomas writes: “The head has a manifest preeminence over the other exterior members; but the heart has a certain hidden influence. And hence the Holy Spirit is likened to the *heart*, since he invisibly quickens and unifies the Church; but Christ is likened to the *Head* in his visible nature in which man is set over man.”¹ And again: “The heart is a hidden organ, the head is visible. The *heart*, therefore, can signify the divinity of Christ or the Holy Spirit; and the *head* the visible nature of Christ, vivified by the invisible divinity.”²

2. The hidden role of the Holy Spirit in the Church is even compared, by St. Augustine and St. Thomas, to that of the soul in a body: “Just as”, writes St. Thomas, “a man has only one soul and one body, composed of diverse members, so the Catholic Church forms one Body composed of many members: this *soul* that vivifies the Body is the Holy Spirit.”³

In the *Sentences*, the saintly Doctor explains that, just as the soul communicates life to the whole physical body, so the Holy Spirit infuses faith and charity into all of the Mystical Body: “The Holy Spirit is found in the just as the *soul* is in the physical body—it is the ultimate and supreme perfection of the entire Mystical Body.”⁴

3. In addition to the humanity of Christ, the Head of the Church, then, it is necessary to unite the Church to the very divinity of Christ, to the Holy Spirit, and to the whole Trinity. By the mystery of the missions of the Divine Persons (I), the Trinity is the Church’s *Principle*, her efficient *Cause* (II), the intimate *Guest* who resides in her (III), the *uncreated Soul* that vivifies her by

a transformation of love (IV).

I. The Missions of the Divine Persons, the Supreme Source of the Church's Life

In the Blessed Trinity reside the Sources of the Church's life. The omnipotent and immutable activity by which—in the depths of God and for all eternity—the Father engenders the Word, his only Son, by way of intellection, suddenly bursts forth into time at the moment of the Incarnation, resulting in, by the mystery of a personal and hypostatic union, Christ, who is the Head.

The omnipotent and immutable activity by which—in the depths of God and for all eternity—the Holy Spirit proceeds by ways of love from the Father and the Son, as from a single principle, suddenly bursts forth into time on the day of Pentecost, resulting, this time by the mystery of a union of grace and inhabitation, in the Church, which is the Body.

After the Incarnation and Pentecost, the whole Church—Head and Body—is established for all eternity: (1) in Christ the Head, by the mystery of the hypostatic union with the Word, and (2) in the Body, by the mystery of the union of inhabitation with the Holy Spirit.

As Christ, in the whole of his life (with the redemptive mission, that leads him to the Cross and Resurrection), is the consequence in time of the eternal and immutable generation of the Word, so the Church in the whole of her life (with the co-redemptive mission that leads her to the end of the world and the Parousia) is the consequence in time of the eternal and immutable procession of the Holy Spirit.

The visible missions of the Son and the Spirit. The Church is like an effusion into time, so to speak, of the life of the Trinity

The Son proceeds in eternity insofar as he is God; but he also proceeds in time, since he is visibly sent to be man and the Head of the Church: “When the time had fully come, God *sent* forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Gal 4:4-5; emphasis added). “For I proceeded and came forth from God; I came not of my own accord, but he *sent* me” (Jn 8:42; emphasis added).

The Spirit equally proceeds in eternity insofar as he is God; but he also

proceeds in time, since he is visibly sent to be among men and with the Church: “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth” (Jn 14:16-17). “The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things” (14:26). “It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you” (16:7).

There is a *sending* or *mission* of a Divine Person: (1) when One proceeds from Another; (2) and when One becomes present in the world in a new manner. The mission is visible when the Person is exteriorly manifested.

The unique visible mission of the Son is that of the Incarnation. The Holy Spirit is visibly sent on four occasions: first of all, on Jesus, but also for the Church he founds: at his Baptism (as a dove) and at the Transfiguration (as a cloud); then, directly on the Church: on the evening of Easter (Jn 20:22-23, as breath) and fully on the day of Pentecost (wind and flames).

There had never been a visible mission before the Incarnation; and there will never again be one after Pentecost. The visible missions inaugurate the last age of the world—that which the apostles call the “last days” (Acts 2:17), the “end of the times” (1 Pet 1:20), and the “last hour” (1 Jn 2:18). The Parousia will not inaugurate a new regime of divine love; it will not bestow upon the world a greater grace than that of the Incarnation and of Pentecost; rather, it will manifest in glory the grace that was sent into the world at the Incarnation and Pentecost.

The effusion of Pentecost is Christ-conforming. It is Christ, ascended to the Father, who, insofar as he is God, sends the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Jn 15:26). Hence, the whole role of the effusion at Pentecost is to pour out upon the world the superabundant riches of grace and truth enclosed in the holy soul of Christ. It follows that the grace of Pentecost is supremely Christic and Christ-conforming.

How we are reminded of the Pentecost depicted on the grand portal at Vézelay! The descending of the Holy Spirit appears as long rays coming forth from the open hands of Christ. They touch the apostles, who will be sent to all the peoples of the earth. The mission of the Spirit continues in the mission of the apostles. The fervor of Pentecost carries the Church along—and the world along with the Church—to the encounter of the Parousia of Christ in glory.

Jesus had said of the Spirit: “He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (Jn 16:14).

The invisible missions. Grace and charity are signs of the presence of the Trinity: “If a man loves me,. . . my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (Jn 14:23); and the intensification of grace signifies an intensification of the Trinity’s presence.

1. Grace and the Trinity, however, were given to the just before the coming of Christ. The Father comes into the hearts of the just by sending his Son and his Spirit. These are the invisible missions prior to Christ.

As Pope Leo XIII says in his papal encyclical *Divinum illud munus* (May 9, 1897),

There is no doubt that the Holy Spirit dwelled by grace even in those just who preceded Christ, as Scripture testifies concerning the prophets, Zechariah, John the Baptist, Simeon and Anna. “In fact”, writes St. Leo,⁵ “on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit *gives himself in view, not of beginning to dwell among the saints, but of bathing them in his profusion, not of inaugurating but of perfecting his gifts, not of making a new work but of increasing his largess.*”

The communication of the Holy Spirit that follows the coming of Christ was incomparably richer than the preceding ones; it surpassed them as a reality surpasses a deposit, and the truth mere images. That is why St. John (7:39) was able to say: “For as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

Immediately after Christ, mounting up to heaven, took possession of the glory of his reign, to which he so painfully gave birth, he poured out with great munificence the riches of the Spirit and gave *man a share in them* (Eph 4:8). As St. Augustine⁶ said, “*the special gift and sending of the Holy Spirit that was to follow the glorification of Christ was such as there had never been before, not that the Spirit had never been sent previously, but never in this way.*”

Since the coming of Christ, the Son and the Spirit continue at each instant to visit the Church invisibly. These visits do not have as their end the replacing or equaling those of the Incarnation and Pentecost. On the contrary, the former are immediately dependent on and supported by the latter. The former prolong the effects of the latter. These new visits are at the foundation of the constant renewals in the Church. They take place at the Baptism of infants, the conversion of sinners, the full entrance into the Church of the just, when holy souls advance to a new stage in the spiritual life, or at the passage from the charity of the exile to the charity of the homeland. Under these incomparable visitations of the Divine Persons, the Church (like Elizabeth), feeling the infants stirring in her womb, is filled with the Holy Spirit and

cries out in wonder: “*Et unde hoc mihi?* Why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”

II. The Holy Spirit, Efficient Cause of the Church

The supreme Cause of the Church is, *properly speaking*, the entire Trinity. One would say, *by appropriation*, it is the Holy Spirit; for, the Church, one and holy, is similar, by her *charity* and her *unity*, to the Holy Spirit: in effect, on one hand, he proceeds in God by way of *love*; and, on the other hand, proceeding from the Father and the Son as from one *unique* principle, he is, so to speak, the link between them. It is the Holy Spirit who, in Scripture, is designated as the efficient principle of the Church.

The Spirit animates the Church. On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit consecrates the Church and makes her known.

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4)

The Spirit preserves the Church in unity: “[May] the fellowship of the Holy Spirit [that is, the communion of which the Spirit is the agent] be with you all” (2 Cor 13:14).

The Spirit directs the diverse aspects of the Church’s life:

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit. . . . All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. . . . For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. (1 Cor 12:7-13)

In summation, the Spirit holds in his hand the destiny of the Church.

The Spirit is the supreme responsible subject of the Church’s activities. It is the Spirit, therefore, who, through the humanity of Jesus, forms the Church and introduces her to the world. But after having given all that is necessary for the Church to subsist in herself as a true moral or social person—

consequently she can act in the world without being dependent on the world—he did not detach himself from her. The Spirit keeps ties with the Church by a providence so particular, a solicitude so constant, a love so jealous, that he is himself the responsible subject of her activities. Just as all that a man does is ultimately imputed to his “I”, and all the actions of Christ are referred to the “I” of the Eternal Word, so, in a certain sense, all that the Church does is ascribed to the Holy Spirit, who is united to her, indeed, not intrinsically and hypostatically in the order of being, but extrinsically, causally, efficiently, in the order of acting. This fundamental difference affirmed, one can add that the Holy Spirit will govern the universal Church as the Word governed the individual human nature of Christ; and the union that binds the Spirit to the Church is an image of the union that exists between the Word and Christ. Whence the words of the Fathers, for example, those of St. Irenaeus: “Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and every grace; and the Spirit is truth”;⁷ or St. John Chrysostom: “If the Spirit were not there, the Church would no longer subsist; but if the Church subsists, it is clear that the Spirit is there.”⁸

Without a doubt, considered as man, Christ truly forms with the Church, by reason of the capital grace he communicates to her, one single mystical person, the total Christ: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:4). But if one traces back to the primary source of all grace, it is the whole Trinity and, by appropriation, the Holy Spirit, who will ultimately be responsible for the Church’s activity. He, the Spirit, will be the supreme efficient personality of the Church. This is why Scripture can link the life of the Church to the Holy Spirit more often than it does to the humanity of Christ. When he descends on the day of Pentecost, it is the Spirit, says Christ, who “will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged” (Jn 16:8-11).

The Spirit rules the Church by a special providence. The Holy Spirit, the supreme and transcendent personality of the Church, rules her according to laws of a very special providence.

Temporal societies, the human community, certainly do not escape Divine Providence. Providence moves men to assemble into a community by virtue of a desire that it draws out from the depths of our hearts and requires that we

continue the momentum of this desire by our free determination: but this natural community is concerned with a natural common good, very much bound to the flux of history and not called to subsist as such to the end of time. God governs human communities by allowing the divine impulse that moves them toward their natural end to be held in check or averted by the will of his free creatures; so that none of these communities, even the most perfect, can say that God is its supreme responsible subject.

For the Church it is different. It is God himself who forms her, sustains her, vivifies her. The Church will exist “so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Eph 4:14-15). The bond par excellence that unites his members will not be a simple convergence of human wills toward a temporal good; it will be a convergence of hearts, divinized by the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, toward the Kingdom of God; it will be, in effect, one of charity, which is an extension of Christ’s own charity and a likeness of that unity which exists among the Persons of the Blessed Trinity: “I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (Jn 17:20-21). The Church, no doubt, is realized in history, but she carries eternity in herself. She is the work of a unique providence that has its origin in the Deity, in the Holy Spirit, and that is effected by passing through the human nature, intelligence, will, and created liberty of Christ: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore. . . . And behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:18, 20).

This providence, indeed, will allow itself to be *held in check*, so to speak, in such or such a man, even in this or that ethnic group; but then it will find other outlets; it will extend to other men, among whom it may even appear in new modes; but this providence will never allow the frustration of its proper effect, which is to lead the Body of Christ to the Kingdom of glory by keeping it in truth and love. This providence will even allow itself to be *hindered* by imperfect dispositions, by a lack of generosity in men or in certain ethnic groups in which it nevertheless succeeds in manifesting itself, so that, according to different places and epochs, the Church’s charity will be more or less ardent, her message more or less preached, her entire collective

personality more or less brilliant. But never will this perfect charity that truly makes the Church the Bride of Christ be lacking to her. Never will she fall, in the essential message she has the mission to preach, into deceit or error.

The Holy Spirit moves and fills the Church. “The Holy Spirit, one and the same, fills and unites the Church by his influence.”⁹ He rules her in a million different ways.

a. He prepares her from afar. By means of the sacred humanity of our Savior, he sends the first rays of his grace, even into the deepest darkness, to illuminate minds, to bring them the first lights of faith, to dispose them to welcome in due course the message of his teaching Church: to warm hearts once again, to purify them, to prepare them to receive later the graces of consummation he gives only in the sacraments, in the Eucharist most especially. The Acts of the Apostles tells us how the Lord opened the heart of that merchant of purple goods from Thyatira, that she might be attentive to what St. Paul would say to her (Acts 16:14), or how the Gentiles were prepared for Baptism:

While Peter was still saying this, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, “Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. (10:44-48)

The Holy Spirit passes outside, in a certain sense, the borders of his Church (the Church in perfect act) to awaken those who sleep in the shadow of death and, if they accept the offers of his love, to etch out, as it were, among them a Church that is already his own (the Church in initiated act).

b. The Spirit enlightens the Church exteriorly by means of the powers of jurisdiction: whether he gives the *extraordinary jurisdiction of the apostles* to teach the world new revelations, or whether it is a question of the *permanent jurisdiction of the Church* to conserve with fidelity and explain with infallibility the deposit of apostolic revelation:

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority [he will not bring another doctrine than that of the Father, but like Jesus], . . . whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (Jn 16:13-15)

And again: “These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (Jn 14:25-26). Two actions of the Holy Spirit are noted here: first of all, to the *apostles* alone, who are incapable of bearing the entire truth, he teaches new revelations; then, he makes them—the apostles and their *successors*—retain, by an infallible memory, Christ’s teaching. Conscious of this prodigious assistance, the apostolic Church, assembled at the Council of Jerusalem, was able to give her judgment in the following words: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15:28). Finally, the Spirit assists the jurisdictional power even in its secondary and less essential message, indeed, no longer in an unchangeable manner, but in a prudential manner. It was the Spirit, for example, who, at Ephesus, assisted the priest and bishops in feeding the Church of God (Acts 20:28); and it is he who secretly renders hearts docile.

c. At the same time that he enlightens the faithful by the powers of jurisdiction, he penetrates their souls by means of the sacraments: it is in his name, as in the name of the Father and of the Son, that Baptism is conferred on the nations (Mt 28:19-20); it is he who descends upon all those on whom the apostles impose hands (Acts 8:17; 19:6); it is he who, united to Christ, makes the flesh of the Son of Man life-giving (Jn 6:63); again, it is he by whom sins are taken away (Jn 20:22-23). In opening a new way to his Church by means of the sacraments, the Holy Spirit fills the Church with graces that form her in the image of Christ and join her to Christ’s redemptive mission, drawing her collectively and fully in the footsteps of the Savior: “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom 8:11).

d. Nevertheless, while he uses the sacraments to pour out in abundance his most precious gifts and to give sacramental grace *ex opere operato*—that is, not independent of the subject’s dispositions but beyond them and proportionally to them, so that one receives double what he asked—the Holy Spirit, once the sacraments are received, does not cease to act immediately in men’s hearts. On the contrary, he enters them with more liberty and largess than ever before. He conserves and increases in them sacramental grace; when sin ravages grace, he works to revive¹⁰ it by rousing sinners to perfect contrition. He does not cease to purify, illuminate, and sanctify the faithful.

He moves them to the exercise of virtue. He seeks to raise them up, to carry them by his own power to the perfect acts that have been praised in the *Sermon on the Mount*, the beatitudes. He makes them to be true children of God: “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (Rom 8:14). He “helps us in our weakness” and “intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words” (Rom 8:26). His grace, which presses on from every side, is like the air we breathe, without which death by asphyxiation would immediately occur.

e. Finally, the Holy Spirit helps his Church in more exceptional ways. At decisive moments in her history, he brings unexpected reinforcements. He displays miracles of strength, light, and purity: in the hierarchy or in the faithful, raising up men and women—a Francis of Assisi or a Francis Xavier, a Catherine of Siena or a Teresa of Avila—who are so conscious of the eternal treasure of the Church that they can discern, with an infallible sense, the necessary remedy for the miseries of their time. These holy souls have such a radiance in their voice for announcing their message, they so clearly contrast the fruits of a life of wisdom and the fruits of death (that a life of lies brings), that the world, shaken from its lethargy, believes it is hearing the apostles once again. They perform miracles, discern spirits, and speak in tongues. These are the true prophets. They do not prophesy outside of the Church, nor do they add any new content to the full revelation made once and for all by Christ and the apostles. But, wonderfully schooled in the knowledge of this revelation, they prophesy in order to enlighten by its light the progress of their own epoch and the needs of humanity. In such souls reappear—under a form adapted to the new conditions of the Church’s life—the charismatic graces that, according to Scripture, were bestowed upon the first Christians.

These appearances of the Holy Spirit in the Church, these visitations, can at times be limited to miraculous assistance. Most often, however, the charismatic manifestations of the Spirit will themselves be but the external sign, the sensible repercussion, of an incomparably more precious supernatural effusion of grace and sanctity. Newman was correct when, searching for some principle that might shed light on the history of the Church, he thought of what happened at the first Pentecost—the times of miracles correspond to the times of sanctity.

Is it possible that the initiatives of the Holy Spirit for establishing exceptional missions in the Church might conflict with the jurisdictional

powers? It is evident that no opposition will be possible wherever the jurisdictional power is infallible: the Holy Spirit does not contradict himself. Conflicts can only happen (supposing a mission that is exceptionally authentic) with canonical directives in a fallible matter. Concerning the words of St. John of the Cross: “No, I have not disobeyed, but I merited these punishments”, Dom Chevallier writes: “The conflict of powers delegated to men had made a prison; the prison showed the extent of the power reserved to God; that was its *raison d’être*. If earth has its pettiness, it is this pettiness that, when God so desires, allows the greatest effects, and God always desires that one show himself worthy of final beatitude”, which is that of persecutions.^{[11](#)}

The dialogue between the Word and the Spirit, between the Bridegroom and Bride. The personality of Christ is, in virtue of the hypostatic union, the Word. The personality of the Church is, in virtue of a union of causality and efficiency, the Trinity and, by appropriation, the Holy Spirit.

When St. Paul, however, speaks to the Ephesians about the mystical union between Christ and the Church, he adopts the biblical image of the first marriage: “The two shall become one” (Eph 5:31). Christ and the Church, having become one by their love for one another, are, as such, the visible place where the Word and the Spirit come together—the two Divine Persons sent by the Father for the salvation of the world. Henceforth there will be, in the desert of our world, a new Eden, which is produced by the joint solicitude of the Son and Spirit, of the Word and Love. This living paradise is the mystical marriage of Christ and the Church. The words of the Apocalypse help to clarify. Jesus, who comes to his Church pure and radiant as the morning star, says: “I Jesus. . . I am the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star”; the Spirit who animates the Church responds: “The Spirit and the Bride say ‘Come.’. . . Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev 22:16-17, 20).

III. The Holy Spirit Is the Guest of the Church by the Presence of Inhabitation

The presence of inhabitation in heaven. “Beloved,. . . it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for

we shall see him as he is” (1 Jn 3:2). The same is found in St. Paul: “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood” (1 Cor 13:12). This is heaven.

God, no doubt, is present to the blessed by his causal and conserving action, which they need both for their existence and for all the gifts that are bestowed on them. But this causal presence, being necessarily presupposed, does not suffice to explain the special presence of inhabitation, the presence of encounter, by which God—who is in the blessed as well as all created beings—gives himself as a Guest to the blessed alone, to be intimately seen and possessed.

One can see what this unity of the Church and the whole world in God will be. It is not only a unity that results from a divine causal and conserving action. It is a more mysterious unity, provoked by an encounter of three Divine Persons distinctly known, loved, and possessed. There is a reciprocal encounter, where the elect are driven by vision and love toward the three Divine Persons; and where these three Divine Persons come to meet the elect and make their abode within them: “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them” (Rev 21:3). And no veil will hide them: “There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev 22:3-5).

Hence, we know that all that will appear unveiled in eternity is mysteriously inaugurated in time: “Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be” (1 Jn 3:2).

The presence of inhabitation here below. Already, here below, when the soul possesses charity, the Trinity comes to dwell in it: “If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (Jn 14:23). And again: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (Rev 3:20). God is present in this soul, not only causally because he produces in it faith and love, but also as one coming to meet this faith and love, as a Friend with whom the soul

converses and whom it keeps within itself.

St. Thomas would say that the Holy Spirit not only fills the souls with the effects of his power but also dwells in them by his substance.¹² The movement of the creature “does not stop at the gifts that come from God; it advances even to him from whom the gifts come”.¹³ “By the gift of sanctifying grace the rational creature is perfected so that it can not only freely use the created gift of grace, but also enjoy the Divine Person himself.”¹⁴ The production of grace results from the divine essence insofar as it is *common* to all three Persons; but the grace makes possible an encounter with the three Persons insofar as they are *distinct*.

When grace appears in a soul, God, who was already present in the depths of that soul as Creator (as root and principle of its being), becomes at that instant really and actually present in the soul, as the triune God who communicates all that he is in himself, as the Friend with whom one *may* dine, with whom one *may* converse. And if the divine life of grace in us does not remain simply in a *habitual* state, as it does in the baptized infant or in the sleeping just man, if it becomes *actual* by the exercise of faith and love, then the real presence we had not previously enjoyed becomes a real presence we do indeed enjoy: the mysterious dinner begins; the dialogue of love is established.

The presence of inhabitation is appropriated to the Holy Spirit. One speaks of the dwelling of the Trinity; we may speak, by appropriation, of the dwelling or inhabitation of the Holy Spirit, for it is he whom the love resembles that lures the presence of the Divine Persons into the loving soul. “God’s love”, writes St. Paul to the Romans in speaking of the love with which God loves us, “has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom 5:5). He exhorts the Corinthians: “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Cor 3:16); “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own” (6:19). St. John writes the same: “No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit” (1 Jn 4:12-13). Jesus himself said: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world

cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you” (Jn 14:15-17).

The relation between grace and the indwelling. 1. At the moment the soul possesses grace, it becomes the dwelling place of the Trinity. At the moment the soul becomes the dwelling of the Trinity, it possesses grace. The created gift of grace and the indwelling of the Trinity are thus simultaneous in time, but is there a priority between them in the order of nature? Must we say that the presence of grace calls forth the coming of the Trinity or, rather, that the coming of the Trinity brings forth the presence of grace?

Both statements are correct.

To regard the matter from below, that is, from the point of view of the soul that is to be purified, one would say that grace must precede the indwelling: “If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (Jn 14:23).

If the matter is viewed from above, that is, from the divine initiative, we must say that it is first of all God who comes into the soul in order to transform it: “But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you” (Rom 8:9); “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God” (8:14).

Absolutely speaking, it is clear that grace is ordered to the indwelling, and not conversely.

2. The presence of grace and the presence of the indwelling are correlative. They are intensified by the same movement. It is where grace, issuing forth from the hierarchy, is fully sacramental and directed, fully Christic and Christ-conforming, that the inhabitation of the Trinity finds its supreme perfection. In producing a new and definitive effusion of the gifts of grace, the coming of Christ needed to produce as well a new and definite profundity of the Holy Spirit’s dwelling: “ ‘He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, “Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.” ’ Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (Jn 7:38-39).

The full collective indwelling of the Spirit. “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20). More still than in an individual person, the Holy Spirit takes up his dwelling in the

whole Church, carried along by the wind of Pentecost. From this point of view, we would do well to single out the importance of the scriptural passages where the regional Churches, and where the universal Church herself, are represented as a collective dwelling place for God. St. Paul considers the Church at Corinth, which he founded and which others perfected, as a temple where God dwells, and the misfortune that befell this temple: “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are” (1 Cor 3:16-17). Farther on, one sees that it is the entire Church that is the living dwelling place chosen by God:

For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,

“I will live in them and move among them,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people. . . .
I will be a father to you,
and you shall be my sons and daughters,
says the Lord Almighty.” (2 Cor 6:14-18)

The same revelation is found in the Epistles to the Ephesians:

So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (Eph 2:19-22)

Without a doubt, there are some men who are in truth and love and who, nevertheless, are still invincibly ignorant of the true Christ and his true Church. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, already dwells in them. But the bond that unites them, whether to Christ himself or to others, still lacks a mysterious perfection. In these “other sheep, that are not of this fold” (Jn 10:16), who still belong *corporeally* to some aberrant religious formations but who are already *spiritually* and initially in the Church, the Spirit of Christ is present, in order to direct them secretly toward his flock, toward the only

Church where he can dwell on earth in fullness and liberty.

The full grace of Christ calls forth the full dwelling of the Spirit. And so, if one asks why the true Church is the dwelling place par excellence of the Holy Spirit, we ought to respond that, since the presence of grace and the presence of the indwelling are correlative, it is proper to assess the intimacy of the Holy Spirit's indwelling according to the perfection of charity. Now charity assumes—in the true Church—four principal characteristics: it is indefectible, directed, supreme, and sacramental.

The charity of Christ's Church is *indefectible*. The Church will never apostatize or lose charity. The gates of hell will not prevail against her; the divine assistance will always sustain her, even to the end of time. There is, therefore, in the midst of humanity, a sure, constant, and faithful dwelling, always ready to welcome the Holy Spirit, where he is celebrated and adored as a Guest—a Guest who comes, not to beg, but to give, to heal, to purify, to illumine, and to save. Such did Jesus do when he was received in the homes of men.

The charity of Christ's Church is *directed*, in the sense that errors never avert it from its path or hinder its momentum. The revelation of the Trinity, notably, is always pure in the interior of the Church, and this knowledge (*connaissance*), this explicit remembrance (*reconnaissance*) of the Trinity is required so that the dwelling place may attain a certain degree of perfection.

The charity of Christ's Church is *supreme*. If Christ has poured out his blood for all men, if he searches the world over for the most helpless sheep, it is to bring them to the flock of which Peter is the shepherd. Why? Because he willed that the place of the greatest love, where, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, he will come to continue in his collective Body the habitation among men that he inaugurated in his individual body at the Incarnation, be here and nowhere else.

Finally, the charity of Christ's Church is *sacramental*. Hence, as we said, grace and charity, when they come through the channels of the sacraments, are rich in powers that conform them most intimately to the grace and charity of Christ. In virtue of sacramental grace, the Church presents herself to the Holy Spirit as a “connatural” dwelling, as a loving place, having a constant and, in a certain sense, uninterrupted awareness—by reason, above all, of the prayers of the contemplative orders—of the Guest she shelters within herself; as a “perfect” dwelling that he uses to save the world and through which he

freely exercises his purifying, illuminating, and divinizing power. Can one not say with St. Cyril of Alexandria that, in a certain sense, before Pentecost the Holy Spirit had never dwelled among men?¹⁵

One would say that, on one hand, the charity of the Church being, since the coming of Christ, sacramental and directed, indefectible and supreme, the Trinity was able to come to dwell fully in the Church; but, on the other hand, and more profoundly, the Trinity, having determined to search out a dwelling among men, resolved to communicate itself more intimately to men in the last age of their history and, by the visible missions of the Word (at the Incarnation) and the Spirit (at Pentecost), to bring forth for this purpose a Church where charity would be sacramental and directed, supreme and indefectible.

IV. The Holy Spirit, Uncreated Soul of the Church

The Holy Spirit can be called the Soul of the Church, the uncreated Soul of the Church, under three different aspects.

1. He moves the Church exteriorly as a causal and efficient Principle. This sense is quite common. St. Augustine, in a sermon on Pentecost, explains that if the Holy Spirit, sent during the apostolic times, was often accompanied by the gift of tongues, it was in order to signify that the Church whom he consecrated would later speak all languages and be present to all nations:

Do you wish to have the Holy Spirit? Listen, my brothers. The spirit that gives life to each and every man is called the soul. You see what the soul does to the body. It vivifies all the members: it sees by the eyes, listens by the ears; by the nose it smells; by the tongue it speaks; it works by the hands and walks with the feet. It is present to all the members at the same time in order to give them life. . . . The functions are diverse; the life is common. And such is God's Church: in some saints she performs miracles; in others she preaches the truth; in certain saints she practices virginity, while conjugal chastity is kept in others. Each has its proper task, but all equally possess life. And that which the soul is to the body in a man, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ, which is the Church. The Holy Spirit does in the entire Church what the soul does in all the members of the body¹⁶

Pope Leo XIII, in his papal encyclical *Divinum illud munus*, referred—in part—to this text of the great doctor Augustine, declaring that “if Christ is the Head of the Church, the Holy Spirit is the Soul.” And Pope Pius XII, making this declaration his own, adds:

To this Spirit of Christ as to no visible principle is this also to be attributed, that all parts of the Body are joined to one another as they are with their exalted Head; for he is entire in the Head, entire in the Body, entire in the individual members. . . . He is the one who by his heavenly grace is to be held as the principle of every vital and in fact every salutary act in all the parts of any body¹⁷

2. *He is the Guest whom the Church is destined to receive.* The Church is made to receive the Spirit, as the body of a man is made for the soul. Under this new aspect, the Spirit is the supreme reason, the final cause, the Soul of the Church.¹⁸ He does not content himself with a purely causal relationship with the Church; he comes to dwell in her as in a home. The whole mystery of his work is to make her tend toward him as toward a Center, not one that is off in the distance, but, rather, one that is already present; not one that is absent, but already possessed; not unknown, but already tasted, as it were, in the night of faith.

But how can the Holy Spirit be, in a sense, experientially known and loved? How can he be tasted and touched in the Church? This is difficult to explain: that which charity accomplishes without difficulty, faith affirms as a mystery. One would say that, under a third aspect, the Holy Spirit is the Soul of the Church spiritually and by the transformation of love.

3. *The Holy Spirit, Soul of the Church: in heaven, by the transformation of knowledge effected by the beatific vision; here below, by the transformation of love effected by charity.* a. In heaven, the elect will seize God by the beatific vision and know him as they themselves are known (1 Cor 13:12). Now, how could they see God face to face, how could they know him as he is in himself, if they did not see him and know him through God himself? How would a created idea, as perfect as it may be, suffice to make God known, not in his created effects, but in his uncreated reality, in his mystery? It would be necessary in fact for the soul to be invested, so to speak, by God and for the divine essence itself to fulfill the role in the soul that our ideas play in the act of normal knowledge.¹⁹ Also, the soul of the elect, remaining *in itself* a created reality, infinitely distant from the Divine Reality, will be *spiritually* totally transformed in God, deified. Then God will really be the Soul of their soul and the Life of their life. He will be the one Soul of all. Then they will truly be “consummated in unity”, one with God and each other by grace, as the Father, Son, and Spirit are one by nature.

b. Now we know that the union of inhabitation or indwelling such as it is

realized in this life by grace and charity and in the obscurity of faith “differs only by condition or state from that by which God embraces the elect by endowing them with beatitude and bliss”.²⁰ Charity would not immediately lead to God if God himself were not spiritually its principle. Love spiritually transports the beloved into the lover and unites them in an affective union that is called a real union. But when it concerns God, already substantially present by his presence of immensity, the real union is achieved by love and no longer simply desired. “He who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 Jn 4:16). Charity is the cloud that contains the uncreated Gift. It brings about the real and possessive union with the Divine Persons. “The Holy Spirit is possessed by man and dwells within him, in the very gift itself of sanctifying grace.”²¹ “By the gift of sanctifying grace the rational creature is elevated to such a point that it can not only use the created gift but also enjoy the Divine Person; and so the invisible mission takes place according to the gift of sanctifying grace; and yet the Divine Person himself is given.”²² “By these gifts, it is to the Holy Spirit himself that we are united.”²³ And so God himself abides in us in order to be the root, as it were, of our act of love and to permit us to love him as he is in himself, in his infinite loveliness. Consequently, already in this life God is the Soul of the lover, the Life of that life which charity restores in us. He is the one and unifying Soul of all who love him with charity—above all, with that charity which receives its perfection from the sacraments (the Holy Eucharist in particular). The Divinity transforms the Church, certainly not by snatching away her proper finite being, but rather by rendering her divine in a spiritual manner, by making her capable of bearing herself toward God with a love proportioned to God, a love that touches God in the very mystery of his Deity. “He who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him” (1 Cor 6:17).

The testimony of the mystics. In its least degree, charity is already correlative to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. But the indwelling is not felt or experienced except by an excellent charity. The testimony of the mystics is of capital importance here.

a. St. John of the Cross described the intimate union by which the transformed soul becomes God spiritually. When a ray of the sun beats upon the window, he writes,

if the window is totally clean and pure, the sunlight will so transform and illumine it that to all appearances the window will be identical with the ray of sunlight and shine just as the sun's ray. Although obviously the nature of the window is distinct from that of the sun's ray (even if the two seem identical), we can assert that the window is the ray or light of the sun by participation.

The soul upon which the divine light of God's being is ever shining, or better, in which it is always dwelling by nature, is like this window. . . . God will so communicate His supernatural being to [the soul] that *it will appear to be God Himself and will possess all that God Himself has*.

When God grants this supernatural favor to the soul, so great a union is caused that *all the things of both God and the soul become one in participant transformation, and the soul appears to be God more than a soul*. Yet truly, its being (even though transformed) is naturally as distinct from God's as it was before, just as the window, although illumined by the ray, has an existence distinct from the ray.²⁴

And so the soul is “deified”.²⁵

The soul's will is changed into God's will; *it totally becomes the will of God*; not that the will of the soul is destroyed, but that it becomes God's will. And so *the soul loves God with the will of God, which is also its own will*; and she can love him as she is loved by him, *since she loves him with his own will, and by the very love with which he loves, which is the Holy Spirit*, who is given to the soul.²⁶

Having been made one with God, the soul is somehow God through participation. Although it is not God as perfectly as it will be in the next life, it is like the shadow of God. Being the shadow of God through this substantial transformation, it performs in this measure in God and through God what He through Himself does in it. For the will of the two is one will, and thus God's operation and the soul's [are] one. Since God gives Himself with a free and gracious will, so too the soul (possessing a will more generous and free the more it is united with God) gives to God, God Himself in God.²⁷

“The soul here loves God, not through itself but through Him. This is a remarkable quality, for [the soul] loves through the Holy Spirit, as the Father and Son love each other, according to what the Son Himself declares through St. John: ‘*That the love with which You have loved Me be in them and I in them.*’ ”²⁸

b. Tauler said concerning a spiritual person: “God draws the man into himself in such a way that the man becomes as *godlike* as that which is in God; all that is in this man is filled and formed in a transcendent manner, so that God himself performs this man's works. Such a man may be called *deiformed*, for whoever sees him sees him as God—certainly, ‘God’ only by grace”,²⁹ that is, he is identified with God, not according to his natural being

(which remains created), but spiritually. “He becomes really *by grace* what God is essentially *by nature*.”³⁰

At that moment the man is so deeply immersed in his unfathomable nothingness and becomes so small, so reduced to nothing, that he loses all that he has ever received from God; he returns it all to God, who is its Author; he rejects it as if he had never received it, and he becomes so annihilated and naked that it is as if he were nothing and had never received a thing. And so the created nothingness is plunged into the uncreated Nothingness. But that is a state that cannot be comprehended or explained. Hence the word of the prophet is verified: “*Abyssus abyssum invocat.*” The created abyss calls into itself the uncreated Abyss, *and the two abysses become one unity, one pure divine being*. There, the spirit is lost in the Spirit of God; it is drowned in the bottomless sea. And nevertheless, my sons, these men are in a better state than one can imagine or conceive. . . . They are totally confident and merciful toward all; they are neither severe nor hard, but lenient.³¹

“The little drop becomes one with the Word, it becomes the same being as the Word, although the drop keeps its *created essence*, but it has the full *unity of union*. This is what the Lord refers to when he says: ‘*Father, that they may be one as we are one.*’ And also when St. Augustine says: ‘*You will be changed into me.*’ My sons, one does not arrive here but by the way of love.”³² The Son gives his light to the soul; the Spirit gives his sweetness; the Father bestows “the full power over his Kingdom, over heaven and earth, even over himself, so that the soul becomes mistress of all that belongs to the Lord and so that God is in her *by grace* all that he is and has *by nature*.”³³

Scriptural foundations of this doctrine. The scriptural texts to which spiritual authors refer when treating this mystery are, first of all, those of the “priestly prayer” of the Lord, who asks that his disciples might be one as the Father is in him and he in the Father, that they might have in themselves the Love by which the Father has loved him since before the creation of the world, that they might be with him where he is in order to see his glory (Jn 17:20-26). Then there are the passages where St. Paul teaches that the Holy Spirit himself has been given to us (Rom 5:5), that God has sent into our hearts the Spirit of the Son to cry out “Abba! Father!” (Gal 4:6), that we are with the Lord one single Spirit (1 Cor 6:17). And the text where St. Peter (2 Pet I:4) reveals that the gifts of Christ render us sharers in the divine nature signifies, writes St. John of the Cross, “that the soul participates in God, performing in him and alone with him the works of the most Blessed Trinity. . . by reason of the substantial union between the soul and God.”³⁴

These authors, no doubt, do not cease to make more precise—for fear that

their teaching might be misunderstood—that, if the soul is one with God, it is *by a transformation of love and spiritually*, not *by nature and metaphysically*. Hence, that which they find most striking is not so much the created being of charity, its accidental side, which is finite, but rather charity’s “tendential” (*tendanciel*) and spiritual being, its reflecting side, which is infinite, its mysterious transparence that allows it to draw God himself into the subject who receives it.

One with God in order to love God in God, the Church will be one with him in order to love in him the world and all things.

CHAPTER IV

THE BLESSED VIRGIN IN THE CHURCH

We shall speak about the reason for the divine maternity, cause of all the other privileges of the Blessed Virgin (I), about the Virgin as the supreme incarnation of the Church (II), and about the place of the Virgin in the history of the Church (III).

I. The Blessed Virgin, Worthy Mother of God

The reason for the divine maternity. The redemption will be so powerful and so daring, so disconcerting for the devil, that it will assume, by the very human race that had sinned, the body of which the Redeemer will be made. It is necessary that the Second Adam be from the descent, the line, of the first; that he be the perfection of that of which the first Adam was the beginning (Rom 5:14); that the human race, made a sinner by the disobedience of one of its members, be made just by the obedience of another of its members (Rom 5:19); that Jesus be called our brother (Jn 20:17; Rom 8:29; Heb 2:17).

All of this, however, would not have been possible if the Son of God had not been born of a woman, if Mary, when the angel came to reveal to her the plan that she was to be the Mother of the Son of God, had not responded, in the full liberty of her heart, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (Lk 1:35; 38). Such is the reason for Mary’s divine maternity.

This divine maternity is decreed from all eternity at the same time as the Incarnation. The “ineffable God”, says Pope Pius IX, “from the beginning and before the ages, chose and prepared for his only Son one sole Mother, from whom, having taken a body, he would be born, when the fullness of

time had come.”¹

The divine maternity, cause of all the Blessed Virgin’s privileges. The concept of the divine maternity, if one considers it not in its pure materiality but *in the concrete perspective of the Gospel*, demands beforehand in the Virgin a fullness of grace. It is identified, in fact, with the concept of the “the worthy Mother of a Redeemer God”. It is because God desires to save us, to be born of our lineage, and to be our brother that he chooses Mary for his Mother. She will be therefore the Mother of a Savior God, and a mother not only in a corporeal manner. God wills—and this is the wonderful meaning of the message of the Annunciation—that she be his Mother freely, consciously, and with full knowledge of the cause; that she be his Mother more by soul than by body. To the woman who blessed her, Jesus revealed the true grandeur of his Mother: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Lk 11:28):² He wills that she be his Mother worthily, that is, that she be proportioned—insofar as that is possible for a pure creature—to the sanctity that he himself expects of such a mission. This is the reason why the Christ-conforming grace will come upon her and overshadow her.

Hence, the concept of *Theotokos*, the Mother of God, which Christians venerate, on which, from the very beginning, the infallible intuition of the Church has focused and from which are deduced—not by weak arguments of convenience but by an authentic unfolding—all the privileges of the Blessed Virgin and the fullness of Christ-conforming grace in her, is the existential, detailed, evangelical concept of “the worthy Mother of a Savior God”.

The relation between the doctrine on the Blessed Virgin and the doctrine on the Church. It is the grace of which Christ is the Source that is poured, on one hand, into the Virgin alone and, on the other hand, into the entire Church, so that one may in practice consider *Mariology* and *ecclesiology* as two parallel tracts, treating the same mystery: considered, on one hand, in its *exceptional* realization and, on the other, in its *common* realization.

In a more profound manner, however, one would say that the Virgin is in the Church; that she is, in the interior of the Church, the place toward which the Church continually tends. From this point of view, and properly speaking, it is necessary to say that *Mariology* is a part of *ecclesiology*, that it is that part of ecclesiology which studies the most excellent and unequalled aspect of the Church.

II. The Blessed Virgin, the Supreme Realization of the Church

From the side of Christ, the New Adam, comes forth the new Eve. She has two realizations: one privileged, the Blessed Virgin; the other common, the Church. The inferior realization is magnetized by the superior; the Church seems to be pulled toward the Virgin, without, nonetheless, ever being able to identify herself with her: as a polygon seems to be drawn toward a circle. We shall explain this, first, by considering the exemption from sin; then, the co-redemption; finally, the glorification of both the Church and the Virgin.

The purity in the Church and in the Virgin. The Church is made up of not only members who were initially *deprived* of grace, but also members who, having received it, have since *thwarted* it, at least in a venial manner: as if the purity of the Church were too lofty for our common misery and found in us only that which ought to be rejected. This is one of the reasons why the sanctity of the Church surpasses even the sanctity of each of her greatest saints.

The Church, in a manner different from us, is *totally* Christ's. She contains in herself sinners, many sinners, but she is without sin (Eph 5:25-27). When a Christian sins, it is not the Church who is divided in her heart between light and darkness; it is the soul of the sinner that is divided between Christ—in whom he keeps his faith—and Belial—to whom he gives his heart. And so the Church is always and totally exempt from sin. This is her profound law. She would like to see the same realized in each of her members, that each one would be ever and totally without sin. She tends to this as toward an end, inaccessible in this life. Later, however, the law of Christ and the law of his Church—to be always and totally without sin—will be the law of each of her members.

Here in this life it is also the law of the Virgin. The “end” or “limit” toward which the Church tends in the hearts of each of her members is attained in the Virgin. It is not true to say of any person, of any saint, that he is as pure as the collective purity of the Church. But this is true of the Virgin. Being a daughter of Adam by way of natural generation, she became an heir of original sin. But Christ's redemption, *purifying* for all men, is *preventive* or *preservative* for Mary. This is the dogma of the Immaculate Conception,

implicitly but really revealed in the fully evangelical notion of the Virgin as the worthy Mother of a Savior God.

And so *the law of total purity* is found in Christ as *in the source*, in the Blessed Virgin as *by participation*—where it is realized *personally*—and in the Church, where it is realized only *collectively*.

Co-redemption in the Church and in the Virgin. Only Christ's mediation is *redemptive*. That is to say, his mediation is primary; it alone is divine-human; it alone is, strictly speaking, infinite: "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tim 2:5-6).

The mediation of Christians, of the Church, of the Blessed Virgin, can only be *co-redemptive*. That is to say it is entirely dependent on that of Christ, that it draws all its value from that of Christ, that it exists in virtue of the bonds of friendship that move God to hear those who, being in Christ, ask in Christ's name. Hence the words of the Apostle: "In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (Col 1:24).

The conversion of Augustine hung on the prayers of Monica, and these latter on the prayer of Christ. That is not to say that Monica's prayers were useless; nor is it to say that what Monica bore Christ did not have to: Christ carried Monica, who carried Augustine. The redemptive mediation is one that bears completely the weight of the world; the co-redemptive mediation can bear very heavy tasks, but insofar as it is itself carried by the one redemptive mediation.

The *Christian's* individual co-redemptive mediation is measured by the intensity of his own fervor; it is deployed around him in concentric circles, according to the "order of charity"³ that gradates and orders the obligations of each person; it extends principally to his contemporaries: "Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day" (Mt 6:34).

The collective co-redemptive mediation of the *Church* is more vast. The Church's fervor is greater than that of each of her members; it is a force that comes to her on Pentecost and carries her along until the Parousia. The Church's supreme and immediate concern is the salvation of the world. At each hour of her existence, it is the weight of the humanity that is contemporary with her that she bears before God, at least in part. For God

most certainly sends out workers to the harvest; but he asks that we pray him to send more (Mt 9:37-38). One important part of the graces of conversion given to the world at each moment of its existence is the effect of the Church's intercession at that time.

The personal co-redemptive mediation of the *Virgin* is higher than that of the entire Church. It extends to all men of all time; it is prior to and contains all co-redemptive mediation, even that of the Church. In Mary the Church gets to the point toward which she was tending without being able to attain it by herself. In Mary the Church is fully the Church. In Mary the Church becomes co-redemptrix of all of whom Christ is the one Redeemer, namely, of all men, *whether they know it or not*. Just as the sun carries the earth, which carries the moon, though all the weight of the earth and the moon weigh ultimately on the sun, so the redemptive mediation of Christ bears the universal co-redemption of the Virgin, who in turn bears the collective co-redemptive mediation of the Church and the particular co-redemptive mediation of Christians; for, there are some souls that carry others, as a planet its moons. The total weight of salvation weighs ultimately on that moment of Christ's life when he entered into his agony and died on the Cross.

The doctrine of the co-redemptive mediation of the Virgin, which is developed only with the progress of the theology of redemption, only makes more explicit the supreme principle of Mariology: *Mary is the worthy Mother of the Redeemer, as Redeemer*. To the extent that it is elaborated, the theology of co-redemption invites us to reread, with a more attentive faith, the mysterious words of Jesus to his Mother and St. John, at the the blessed virgin, supreme realization of the church 95 foot of the Cross: "When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, 'Woman, *behold, your son!*' Then he said to the disciple, '*Behold, your mother!*' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home" (19:26-27; emphasis added). And how could one forget that this Woman is she who, in the vision of that same apostle, brings forth a male Infant (Rev 12), and who at Cana in Galilee obtains by her mediation Jesus' first miracle?

The glorification of the Church and of the Virgin. The mystery of the Resurrection, the glorification, and the Ascension are realized *primarily* in Christ, who is the Bridegroom: "He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent" (Col 1:18).

The same mystery is realized also—but in a *dependent* manner—in the

Church, who is the Bride: after Christ, with Christ, by Christ, she must rise, be glorified, ascend to heaven: “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. . . . For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order” (1 Cor 15:20-23).

The Bride without stain is the *Church*, considered, not in the blemishes of each of her members, but as a whole, a collectivity that leaves outside of her borders the stains of her sinful members. She is, as such, not without sinners, but without sin. The law of co-resurrection and co-glorification in Christ only concerns her, therefore, precisely insofar as she is a whole, a collectivity. It is when she has attained her full measure as a whole, as a collectivity, that is, at the end of time, that she will rise and be glorified in all her members who died in love, in order to be assumed into heaven: “In Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ” (1 Cor 15:22-23).

During the days when Christ was present on earth, the Holy Bride—without stain, immaculate—was totally recapitulated in the person of the *Blessed Virgin*. The law of co-resurrection and of co-glorification in Christ, therefore, was able to touch her personally. That is why his Resurrection, glorification, and Ascension anticipate the collective rhythm of the Church. If it is revealed, in effect, that for Christ’s members who are stained by original sin (which is a sin of nature, not of person) the law of co-resurrection in Christ is hindered and deferred until the end of the world, that is, until the moment when original sin is completely vanquished (insofar as it is a sin of the whole human nature): (a) by the cessation of generation that propagates it; and (b) by the resurrection of all those whom it would have condemned to death: “The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (1 Cor 15:26)—it is equally revealed that, for one of Christ’s members who was not stained by original sin, the law of co-resurrection and co-glorification in Christ will not be hindered or deferred and will be applied immediately in the framework of a personal human life, similar to the way it was for Christ.

The glorification of Christ immediately entails that of the Blessed Virgin (an initial victory over sin) and later will bring about that of the Church (the final victory over sin).

III. The Place of the Blessed Virgin

in the Time of the Church

The saints of the Gospels belong either to the age of expectation of Christ or to the age of the Holy Spirit. With the exception of the Holy Virgin, all the contemporaries of Christ can be classified either in the age of expectation of Christ or in the age of the Holy Spirit.

Zechariah and Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna, all appear in the days of expectation of Christ. John the Baptist and all the first saints of the Gospels are saints of the Old Law, at the moment when it begins to give way to the streams of light of the New Law. They may be likened to the morning star that appears during the night and announces the day without, nevertheless, belonging to it, but that continues to shine when the day itself appears.

It is only with the glorification and Ascension of Christ—who leaves us so that the Holy Spirit might come to take over for him (Jn 16:7)—that the saints of the Gospels pass into the third age of salvation, that of the Holy Spirit.

Hence the mysterious Gospel texts: “Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he” (Mt 11:11). And when Jesus quotes Scripture, prophesying that streams of water will flow from his side, the Evangelist adds: “Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (Jn 7:39).

It is the Virgin’s privilege to belong to the age of Christ’s presence. Chronologically, the Virgin appeared before Christ, and she will be present at Pentecost as well. She is a contemporary of the first saints of the Gospels, who live in the age of the expectation of Christ and the Kingdom; she is also a contemporary of the apostles, who live in the age of the Holy Spirit.

Qualitatively, however, the Virgin belongs neither to the age of Christ’s expectation nor to the age of the Holy Spirit. She has an age of the Church to herself, the age of Christ’s presence. That is to say, Christ’s grace is dispensed to her according to a law, a regime, that is proper to her alone; she is, in the whole line of the Church’s duration, the point, the pole, around which the attraction of Christ is felt with the greatest power; the law of conformity to Christ is realized more intimately in the single person of the Virgin than in the Church as a whole. The Virgin appears as a concentration

and an intensification of all the Church's grace at the moment she passes into the field of Christ's immediate attraction.

The collective grace of the whole Church is condensed and intensified in the Blessed Virgin. The immense collective, universal, and diffuse Yes, which, in the better part of it, humanity pronounces before the kindness of the Savior God, is suddenly condensed and intensified in one unique point that the Evangelist takes a long time to circumscribe and detail: "In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God. . ." (Lk 1:26-27). This is the very mystery of the relations between Christ, on the one hand, and the Virgin and the Church, on the other, of which St. Thomas speaks when he says that "at the moment of the Annunciation, the Virgin's consent was sought in the name of all human nature."⁴

The Woman clothed with the sun, Virgin and Mother, she who lasts as long as history, is the Church. But what takes place at the time of Christ? All the maternal and virginal dignity of the universal Church, all the joys and sorrows of her childbearing throughout the ages, are collected and brought to a supreme point in that precise moment of her pilgrimage when she, by the Blessed Virgin, gives birth to a Son, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron (Rev 12:5). The suffering of the Church in bringing forth members of Christ reaches its height in the Virgin bearing Christ for the drama of the Cross. Christian piety does well in linking together, at Christmas, the mystery of the carnal birth of Christ in time with the mystery of his spiritual birth in souls.

Finally, at the moment when Christ dies on the Cross, it is the co-redemptive compassion of the entire Church, dispersed throughout space and time, that is condensed and carried to a supreme point of intensity in the heart of the Blessed Virgin.

The Virgin at Pentecost. For the apostles, Pentecost is a baptism in the Spirit (Acts 1:5), that is, a departure in the Spirit. They receive the power to become Jesus' witnesses and martyrs, in Jerusalem, throughout all of Judea, in Samaria, even to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). They will overcome the obstacles of the diversity of languages, nations, and cultures in order to found a universal Church (Acts 2:4-11). This is the inauguration of the age of the Holy Spirit.

For the Virgin, hidden in the order of the grandeurs of sanctity, Pentecost

is not a place of departure in time, but rather, an end. She does not go forth in the power of the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel to the world. The visitation of the Spirit, having descended the first time upon her alone when her mission began at the Incarnation (Lk 1:35), will henceforth only announce and prepare her departure for heaven. She does not await a recommencement of her earthly life; rather, she sees its maturation, like the summer and the harvest time of all the graces that Christ himself deposited in her soul.

The entire Church is Marian. When we say that Mary is the supreme realization of the Church, we mean that Mary is, in the Church, more a Mother than the Church, more a Bride than the Church, more a Virgin than the Church. We mean that she is Mother, Bride, Virgin, *prior* to the Church and *for* the Church; that it is *in* her, above all, and *by* her that the Church is Mother, Bride, and Virgin. It is by a mysterious excellence that is diffused from Mary that the Church can truly be, in her turn, Mother, Bride, and Virgin. In the order of the grandeurs of sanctity, which are the supreme grandeurs, Mary is, around Christ, the first wave, as it were, of the Church, the *genetrix* of all others, until the end of time.

CHAPTER V

THE APOSTOLIC HIERARCHY

The divine power that gives birth and life to the Church emanates from the whole *Trinity*, Father, Son, and Spirit.

It then descends into the sacred humanity of *Christ*, King, Priest, and Holy One.

Finally, since the day of the Ascension, it is by passing through the *apostolic hierarchy* instituted by him that it continues to touch us in order to form in the world the Church in perfect, or complete, act [*acte achevé*]. By reason of this last link, the Church of God, the Church of Christ, is called *apostolic*.

It is where the Church is fully hierarchical, fully *apostolic*, that she is fully *holy*, fully *one and catholic*.

Apostolicity, sanctity, and catholic unity are, first of all, *mysterious properties*, inseparable from the Church's essence; they are, in addition, *miraculous marks* that make her known to the world.

In this chapter on the apostolic hierarchy, we shall speak, first of all, about the role of the apostolic hierarchy (I); then about its two types of powers, the powers of order (II) and the powers of jurisdiction (III); and finally, about apostolicity as a mysterious property and miraculous sign or mark of the Church (IV).

I. The Role of the Hierarchy

The chain of apostolicity. It is at the moment when God decides to pour out upon men his supreme favors, held in reserve for them from all eternity, that the law that will preside for the whole economy of salvation appears: namely, that, since the Fall, grace and truth will be communicated to us by means of visible things.

God becomes incarnate: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,

full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only-begotten Son from the Father. . . . And from his fulness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (Jn 1:14, 16-17).

The Word made flesh, in turn, sends his disciples into the world, adorning them with supernatural powers and promising them the Holy Spirit: “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you” (Jn 20:21); “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:18-20); “Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt 18:18). It will be necessary to ask in his name: “He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me” (Lk 10:16). “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives any one whom I send receives me; and he who receives me receives him who sent me” (Jn 13:20).

The Father, Christ, the apostolic body composed of Peter and the apostles and empowered with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:18), the people: such are the links in the chain revealed to us by the whole of the Gospels. One must believe, therefore, that an extraordinary force, of which the most beautiful effects had been retained until then in the depths of the Trinity, began—with the dawn of our era—to be deployed for the salvation of men, and that this force descends upon men in stages: passing, first of all, into Christ—veiled as he is from our eyes since the luminous cloud of the Ascension—then, from Christ into the apostolic body, which is to last until the consummation of the ages in order to teach and baptize the people. This extraordinary force, this spiritual power, which goes forth from God—having become, to a certain extent, visible through Jesus and continuing to be so through the apostolic body (whose members are constantly replaced as individuals, but which, nevertheless, subsists from one generation to the next as a unique living being), so that it can be called the virtue of apostolicity—is the proper cause of the Church, as fire is the proper cause of heat. It is always in act to form in the world what St. Paul calls the Body of Christ (Eph 1:23; 4:16): “Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord” (Eph 2:20-21). The complete Church is born and

flourishes only at the precise spot where the Trinity, through Jesus and the apostolic body, touches the earth; this is what is meant when we say that the Church is *apostolic*. The religion described in the Gospels is not egalitarian, but apostolic; it is not a religion without intermediaries, but rather, a religion with a hierarchy.¹

The reason for a hierarchy. This, indeed, is a great mystery. God could have acted alone. It was not necessary for him to include human nature—always limited, almost always sinful—in the work of saving the world. God foresaw well enough that, in having recourse to the ministry of men, he would all too often be badly served, that he would be providing many, moreover, with weapons to be used against his own kindness. “What!”, exclaimed Rousseau, “always human witnesses, always men to relate to me what others related to them! Always men between God and me!”² It is most certainly true that I find human nature placed between God and me: the human nature of Christ, sent by the Father, and that of the apostles and their successors, sent by Christ.

Who, however, has ever exalted the role of intermediaries in the religion Christ founded more than he himself did? We clearly see in the Gospels that his most immediate concern after having founded the Kingdom of God was not extending it himself but, rather, forming those who would work for this expansion. The closer he came to his death, the nearer Christ drew to Jerusalem and seemed to concentrate his attention gradually on the apostles, then on three of them, then on the first among them; in return, it would be their task, once confirmed, to render witness to him “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). It was to the apostles that Christ reserved the task of bringing Gentiles into the Church. They would perform—exteriorly—works greater than those of Jesus, but they would perform them through Jesus, now returned to the Father in heaven, from where he would assist them: “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father” (Jn 14:12). It was through them that Jesus willed to subject the world to himself: “I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor” (Jn 4:38).

Why, then, a hierarchy, the ministry of weak and sinful men?

A general response. The common response that is given to this question—

one that is both very general and very lofty—would apply, proportionally, to all modes of divine government, whether concerning the realm of nature or the realm of grace. It consists in calling to mind the fact that if God, who has a direct knowledge of all the beings of the universe, chose, nevertheless, to govern them by a chain of created intermediaries, it was because, instead of moving his creatures as if they were puppets, he willed to communicate to them not only being, but also a causal dignity,³ ruling the lesser beings by the greater, and these beings by ones still greater; infants by their parents, families by cities, disciples by their masters. “All [things] are yours”, says St. Paul, “and you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor 3:22-23). God related the following to St. Catherine of Siena: “It was in my power to endow men with all that is necessary for both their soul and body; but I desired that they be in need of each other and that they be my ministers in the distribution of graces and generosity that they themselves have received from me.”⁴

There exists, nevertheless, a more precise and immediate reason that justifies the Christian hierarchy.

The immediate response: two actions of Christ, one from a distance, the other by contact. In order better to understand this response, it would be helpful to recall that Jesus, during his life on earth, acted in two ways: (1) *from a distance* and (2) *by sensible contact*.

This is evident in the bodily cures that Christ performed. Jesus could accomplish these *from a distance*: as he did for the son of the royal official (Jn 4:46-54), the centurion’s servant (Mt 8:5-13), the daughter of the Syrophoenician woman (Mk 7:24-30), the ten lepers (Lk 17:11-19). More often, however, Jesus performed bodily cures by a more direct, *sensible contact*: he touched a leper in Galilee (Mk 1:41); at Bethsaida he spat on the eyes of a blind man and twice placed his hands on him (Mk 8:23-25); at Capernaum Jesus touched the eyes of two blind men (Mt 9:29); the same at Jericho (Mt 20:34); Christ allowed the woman with the issue of blood to touch the fringe of his garment (Lk 8:44); he touched the stretcher upon which lay a dead man (Lk 7:14); he took the daughter of Jairus by the hand (Lk 8:54); he removed the stone that lay upon the tomb of Lazarus (Jn 11:39), and so on. And how can we fail to observe, at the same time, that Jesus made it a point, sometimes to insist on the usefulness of sensible contact, for example, when he placed his fingers in the ears of the deaf man and spat and touched the man’s tongue (Mk 7:33); sometimes to allow his power to pass

through frail material instruments totally disproportioned to the curative effect obtained, for example, when he anointed the eyes of the blind man of Siloam with clay (Jn 9:6); and sometimes to use only his words, for example, when he commanded the paralytic to rise and walk (Mk 2:11) and Lazarus to come out of the tomb (Jn 11:43)? Why, finally, did he will to delay his coming, when his presence would have kept Lazarus from dying (Jn 11:21, 32), if not to teach us the privileged efficacy of his corporal presence?

Now what are the bodily cures if not first of all the signs of spiritual cures? As soon as Jesus appears, the rays of grace shine out from his heart to illuminate the world far and wide: he knows *from a distance* Nathanael under the fig tree (Jn 1:48-50) and, from an even greater distance, all the adorers in spirit and truth (Jn 4:23), all the sheep who are not of the flock of Israel (Jn 10:16). Nevertheless, he works more marvelously on those who *approach* him: he frees them from the devil and purifies them from their sins by a single word (Mk 1:25; 2:5; 5:8; Jn 8:11); he quenches their thirst (Jn 7:37); he comforts them (Mt 11:28); he absolves them (Lk 7:47-48); he brings them to repentance (Lk 22:61-62); he sets their hearts aflame (Lk 24:32) and brings them joy (Jn 13:23).

And so, during his earthly life, Jesus works in two ways: he sends out his graces from east to west—*from a distance*; but he communicates graces in a fuller manner to those whom he himself can touch *by contact*; it is here where the Church is born in complete and perfect act. She is privileged.

Preeminence of action by contact. This preeminence resides in the fact that our nature, in this life and insofar as it is fallen, is in need of a sensible shock, as it were, in order to be connaturally awakened to the life of grace. And this is why when Christ desired to communicate his supreme favors, he touched us in a sensible manner.

He touched us first by his natural appearances when he lived here among us. Hence our Lord's words to St. Angela de Foligno: "I was not just acting when I loved you; I was not feigning it when I served you; I was not far off when I touched you."⁵

Then he touches us under the appearances of the hierarchy.

The action of continued contact by the hierarchy. Now that Jesus has ascended into heaven, is the action from a distance the only one possible? Does his action by contact and the fullness of graces that this contact carried with it now come to an end? No. For, before leaving us, he willed that there

would always be among us men endowed with divine powers, by which the action that he exercises from heaven could be sensibly transferred to us and continue to reach us in the manner that is most proper to our nature—by way of direct contact. These are the hierarchical powers: far from substituting for the action of Christ, they are subordinate to it in order to convey it, in a certain sense, across time and space.

The hierarchy will no longer exist in heaven. The hierarchy was instituted in order to prolong the sensible contact by which Christ desired to touch our wounded nature in order to cure it. This is why the Fathers and Doctors constantly present its mediation as a remedy for our sin. It would have had no reason for being in the state of original justice.⁶ It will have even less reason to exist in the state of glory: all our infirmities will have vanished. Therefore, Christ's action from a distance will equal that by contact; it will be able to penetrate us with the same ease and connaturality. At that point the visible hierarchy will no longer serve a purpose.

But when fulfillment comes, the use of sacraments shall cease; for the blessed in heavenly glory stand not in need of the medicine of the sacraments. For they rejoice without end in the presence of God, beholding his glory face to face; and being transformed from glory into the glory in the abyss of the Deity, they taste the Word of God made flesh, as he was from the beginning and as he remains forever.⁷

Two types of hierarchical powers. The hierarchical powers are essentially ministerial, that is to say, they are transmitters. They would produce no effect if the power of the Holy Spirit and of Christ, Priest and King, did not come each time to touch and animate them.

There are two types of hierarchical powers: the powers of order, which transmit grace; and the powers of jurisdiction, which transmit truth.

II. The Power of Order

We shall speak of the power to worship common to all members of the Church (1); then, of the power of order (2); finally, of the role of the power of order in the Church (3).

1. THE POWER OF WORSHIP COMMON TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF

THE CHURCH

The power of order is nothing but the highest realization (reserved to the hierarchy) of the more general and very mysterious power of *worship* [*le pouvoir cultuel*], also called *sacramental power*, the two inferior realizations of which—conferred with Baptism and Confirmation—are accessible to all the faithful and, as such, leave their mark on the entire Church.

The supreme priesthood of Christ and the ministerial priesthood of Christians. The power of worship is a derivation in the Church from Christ's own priesthood; for, Christ is *the* Priest. He exteriorly manifested his sacerdotal power—mysterious and invisible in itself—when, instituting the cult of the New Law on the ruins of that of the Old Covenant, he gave to his death on the Cross the character of a definitive *sacrificial* offering, of a supreme liturgy, in which all the faithful henceforth were to participate and from which the beautiful fruits of grace would be poured out upon the world and enter the hearts of the faithful through the channels of Baptism, the Holy Eucharist, and the other *sacraments*.

There will be all throughout history, therefore, men incorporated in Christ the Priest, participating in the spiritual unction of his sovereign priesthood, drawn in the wake of his divine liturgy. The cultic mediation of the Head is transmitted to and diffused throughout the entire Body. Having been perfected in the Savior, it remains imperfect, or incomplete (*inachevée*), in his members. These latter must now work through him, with him, and in him for the salvation of the world. This cultic mediation entered into time in order to remain really and continually present there, not in order to be immediately torn away from it, leaving men with only a memory—even if the most divine of memories! This, then, is the mystery of the primary priesthood of the Head, giving rise to a purely ministerial and secondary priesthood of the members—of the Body, which is the Church. The Church will exist in her fullness only where the priesthood of Christ—through Christian worship—continues to be exercised.

Christian worship. The cultic acts of a Church, consecrated in order to continue validly in the world the worship inaugurated by Christ the Priest, are arranged in three concentric circles: (1) at the center is found the redemptive sacrifice; (2) then, the sacraments; and (3) finally, the public offices and

prayers of the Church.

First of all, the Church repeats the unbloody rite of the Last Supper, which possesses the power to convey to us the *unique bloody sacrifice*: “Do this in remembrance of me” (Lk 22:19). “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Cor 10:16). “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26).

Then, she provides for the valid dispensation and reception of the *sacraments*: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mk 16:16). “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19; emphasis added). Peter and John *lay hands on* the Samaritans who had already been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, that they might receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15-17). Paul lays hands on Timothy (2 Tim 1:6).

Finally, the Church institutes *public prayers*, sacramentals, and the liturgical office: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20). “All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren” (Acts 1:14).

Christian worship is messianic and eschatological. Christian worship is the cause of the very presence of Christ in the world, who acts in his members in order to perpetuate this worship.

The cult practiced in the Church. . . remains always the same and always consists in conferring a sort of perpetuity on the actions of Jesus. The cross is unceasingly raised up at Mass; the Savior’s death and Resurrection are continually being renewed in Baptism; the Redeemer’s blood still flows in the sacrament of Penance. In a word, Christ is the one who continually confers the sacraments through the ministry of his priests. The life of Christ is the perennial inspiration of the liturgical year. Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter are his own history that is perpetually unfolding among the Christian people.⁸

At the same time that it perpetuates the visitation of the suffering Christ, the Christian cult announces the Parousia of the glorified Christ. It is full of memories, but these memories are promises. If it commemorates the past, it is in order to hasten the future: “I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Mt 26:29). St. Paul writes: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the

cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26).

Christian worship must simultaneously bear the twofold mark of Christ's Cross and Christ's glory; it must be both messianic and eschatological.

The valid exercise of Christian worship presupposes a power to worship, conferred by consecration. All men, in order to be saved, must attach themselves in some way to the divine liturgy of redemption. All those who, in the secret recesses of their hearts, are touched by redemptive grace participate in the priesthood of Christ—in the sense that grace is the supreme fruit of his priesthood—even when they are invincibly unaware or ignorant of it.

If it is a question, however, of participating not only in the *effect* or the fruit but in the very *exercise* of this priesthood, a new spiritualization, a distinct power, is required. A traditional, immemorial, and constant usage, the foundations for which appear in Sacred Scripture itself, shows us that not all believers, even if they are saints, are able to pronounce, in a valid manner, the words of consecration over the bread and wine or lay hands on the baptized; all, again, are not able to be admitted to the Eucharist or the other sacraments. For example, in the *Didache* (9:5) it is written: "A person may neither eat nor drink of our Eucharist if he has not been baptized in the name of the Lord."

The essential acts of the Christian cult presuppose in those who perform them a power without which the acts would be inefficacious and invalid. This power is obtained by the effective reception of certain sacraments; that is why it is called sacramental power, or sacramental character. It consists in making someone sacred, in a *consecration*.

The power of worship in the baptized and the confirmed. If all the sacraments sanctify in the primary and principal sense that they confer grace, three of them—Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders—sanctify in another sense, in that they confer a cultic or sacramental power [*pouvoir cultuel*], a consecration.⁹

Baptism imprints on the soul the first of the Christian consecrations. If, as St. Paul declares, the baptized is incorporated into Christ to the point of becoming "one being" with him (Rom 6:1-11), it is no doubt first of all because, through Baptism, he dies to sin and is born to the supernatural life of grace; but it is also in reason of the cultic power that is then conferred on him. The baptized, in effect, has the power to *cooperate liturgically at the Sacrifice of the Mass*; he is able to be present not only as a spectator and

assistant, but also as an actor and participant. We find an element of this in the collective form of the prayers of the Canon, or even in the ancient practice of sending away the catechumens before the Offertory of the Mass. The baptized can *validly receive the other Christian sacraments*, which are like channels of grace. In the sacrament of Marriage, the baptized himself acts *as minister* and instrument of grace.

A second Christian consecration completes and perfects the baptismal consecration. This is given in Confirmation. It more immediately prepares the Christian for the valid reception of the other sacraments. It permits him to continue in the world, in the name of the entire Church, the public, exterior, and liturgical witness that Christ came to give to the Truth (Jn 18:37) and that, since Pentecost, will never be extinguished.

The third consecration is that of the power of order; this belongs to the hierarchical powers.

Distinction between the sacramental characters and the sacramental graces. These consecrations, without which Christian worship would cease—and consequently man would be deprived of the most precious graces and those that are most apt to conform him to Christ—are in themselves distinct from sacramental grace. The latter can be lost; the former cannot. This is why those sacraments by which a sacramental character is conferred cannot be repeated. Grace immediately transforms and perfects man in the line of moral sanctity and eternal life; the powers, or sacramental characters, immediately perfect man in view of the valid exercise of Christian worship. This exercise remains valid even when the ministers are themselves sinners.

Consecration for worship and moral sanctity. In the pagan world we see the notion of consecration gradually being substituted for the notion of moral sanctity and even claiming to supplant it.

Protestantism, by a contrary error, tends to eliminate the notion of consecration or sacramental power in order to replace it with moral sanctity.

The traditional doctrine, found both in the Orthodox Churches and in Catholicism, recognizes that the order of moral sanctity and that of consecration for worship are both, though for different reasons, essential to Christianity, which, far from setting them against each other, reconciles divinely in itself the notions of worship and morality, validity and grace, consecration and sanctity.

The priesthood of the faithful. Like the precious oil running down from the beard of Aaron to the fringes of his robes, the priesthood of Christ flows down by degrees to the entire Church—to both clerics and laity.

All souls who are in the state of grace already participate, *in a modified sense*, in Christ's priesthood, for grace is the fruit of that priesthood.

But those souls who, by consecration at Baptism and then by Confirmation, have been dedicated to Christian worship already participate, *in the proper sense*, in the priesthood of Christ, although not in a hierarchical manner. It is these who can truly sing to our Lord: "[He] loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father" (Rev 1:5-6), and understand the revelation of the Prince of the Apostles: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9). They have the power to intervene efficaciously in the great redemptive liturgy, instituted by Christ, as Head of the definitive Covenant, perpetuated by the ministry of successive generations.

When Scripture speaks of the baptized as those who are "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit" (Eph 1:13; 4:30), as the Body of the whole Christ, which, "joined and knit together by every *joint* with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in *love*" (Eph 4:16; emphasis added), it means—besides the seal of grace, which prepares the way to heaven—the seal of the powers of worship, which validly perfect here below the acts of worship of the Church Militant.

2. THE POWER OF ORDER

The nature of the power of order. In addition to the powers given by Baptism and Confirmation, there is a third, which is received through the sacrament of Holy Orders and which is not given to all. This is the power, on the one hand, to consecrate the true Body and Blood of our Savior and, on the other, to prepare the faithful to receive it by giving them the other sacraments, notably that of Penance, lest the priesthood of Christ on the Cross be extinguished in the world. This power can be exercised validly even by unworthy ministers. It resides in the soul as an indelible spiritual mark, so that the man who is once a priest is always a priest and the sacrament that confers this mark

cannot be repeated. Such is the essence of the teaching of the Council of Trent on the nature of the power of order¹⁰ With this power the hierarchy begins.

Scriptural foundations. The great tracts on this doctrine are visible in Sacred Scripture. The sacred text shows us Christ conferring on his apostles the reserved powers. He commands them to consecrate bread and wine into his Body and Blood (Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24-25), to remit sins (Jn 20:21-23), and to baptize all peoples until the end of time (Mk 16:15; Mt 28)—certainly, anyone may be the extraordinary minister of Baptism, but the very same traditional teaching tells us that this sacrament's ordinary ministers are those who have been ordained. The deacon Philip baptized Samaritans, but he was not able to lay hands on them in order to bring down the Holy Spirit upon them. This was a power reserved to the apostles, who sent Peter and John into Samaria (Acts 8:13-17). At Ephesus, it was Paul who laid hands on the neophytes in order to give them the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:6). St. James ordered the sick to send for the presbyters of the Church in order to receive from their hands the anointing in the name of the Lord (Jas 5:14).

Finally, Scripture speaks of the transmission and the permanence of the power of order. “Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophetic utterance when the elders laid their hands upon you”, writes St. Paul to Timothy (1 Tim 4:14). The prophecy pointed to Timothy (1 Tim 1:18), but the imposition of hands placed in him a gift that would be permanent. Whence the exhortation of St. Paul: “I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands” (2 Tim 1:6). Whence, again, the power that Timothy would then possess, to lay his own hands—but with discretion—on others (1 Tim 5:22). The same would hold true for Titus (Tit 1:5-9).

Patristic foundations. St. Augustine echoes the same teaching. Certain heretics thought that, if the power received at Baptism remained in apostates, it was not the same with the power of order, which permitted one to confer Baptism solemnly. St. Augustine responded that both powers are equally incapable of being lost: “Both are from sacraments; both are conferred by a consecration; one is received through Baptism, the other through ordination. This is why, in the Catholic world, it is forbidden to repeat them.”¹¹ The power of order is, therefore, for St. Augustine, an irremovable character that

subsists and endures efficaciously even in the unworthy. With St. Augustine, the doctrine of the sacramental characters is established for theology; but this doctrine was not his innovation. There is an unbroken chain of witnesses between St. Augustine and Sacred Scripture, passing through the *Didache*, St. Clement of Rome, and St. Ignatius of Antioch, that shows us the existence of a hierarchy ordered to the celebration of Christian worship. It was Tertullian who proved to be the innovator, when, having at first correctly reproached the heretics for transferring the sacerdotal power to the laity no longer by a consecration but, rather, by a simple “injunction”, later held that the power of order belongs to all men and that the laity can validly celebrate the Eucharist and forgive sins.¹²

Divisions and degrees of the power of order. The power of order is a multiple power that has three degrees: “In virtue of a divine institution, the sacred hierarchy comprises, in the line of order, bishops, priests, and ministers.”¹³

The apostles confide to the *deacons*, at Jerusalem, the ministry of tables (Acts 6:2-6). We see these same deacons preaching with Stephen (Acts 7) and baptizing with Philip (Acts 8:12). They are active in the Church of the Gentiles at Philippi (Phil 1:1) and at Ephesus (1 Tim 3:8-10). The apostles seem to have instituted them by the laying on of hands.¹⁴ Today, the ordination of deacons takes place by the imposition of the hands of a bishop and the following words: “Lord, send forth upon [him] the Holy Spirit, that [he] may be strengthened by the gift of your sevenfold grace to carry out faithfully the work of the ministry.”¹⁵

Priests have power over Christ’s *own* Body, that is, to consecrate the Holy Eucharist. This is their greatest function. If, at the moment of consecration, the priest does not say: “This is the Body of Jesus; this is the Blood of Jesus”, but, rather, “This is my Body; this is my Blood”, it is in order to confess that, at that awesome instant, his own personal mediation is but a pure instrument and that it is entirely effaced before Christ. The supreme function of the priest, such as it is, is to disappear, as it were, before Christ, whom he offers to God and whom he gives to the world. The priest’s secondary function concerns, no longer the real Body of Christ, but, rather, his *Mystical* Body: this function is one of bringing the people of God to the Eucharist. To this end God grants to priests the power to purify souls: from sin, by the sacrament of Penance (Jn 20:21-23); and from the remains of sin, by the sacrament of Extreme Unction (Jas 5:14). They are the ordinary ministers of

Baptism and can be the extraordinary ministers of Confirmation (and even of Order) by a special concession from the sovereign pontiff. Today, the ordination of priests is conferred by the first imposition of hands by the bishop, made in silence, and by the following words: “Almighty Father, grant to this servant of yours the dignity of the priesthood. Renew within him the Spirit of holiness. As a co-worker with the order of bishops may he be faithful to the ministry that he receives from you, Lord God, and be to others a model of right conduct.”¹⁶

Bishops receive the *fullness of the priesthood*. Without a doubt, when it is a question of consecrating the Eucharist the bishop and priest are equal. But the former alone is the ordinary minister of Confirmation and Holy Orders (even a schismatic bishop can validly confer these two sacraments). And if we must say of the sacerdotal power what is said of a living being, namely, that it reaches its perfection at the moment it reproduces another of its kind, then it is in the bishop that the fullness of the priesthood resides. It is through the bishop that the power that assures the permanence of the sacrifice of the Cross and the dispensation of the sacraments of the New Law is transmitted from the apostles, through the ages, by an uninterrupted succession—an apostolic succession. Today, the ordination of the bishop is conferred by the imposition of the hands of another consecrated bishop and the following words: “Bestow upon your priest the fullness of your ministry, and sanctify by the dew of the celestial anointing him whom you have adorned with supreme honor.”

3. THE ROLE OF THE POWER OF ORDER IN THE CHURCH

It is Jesus himself who, by his ministers, baptizes and consecrates. Jesus is a priest in a way no other will ever be. Those whom we call priests today are but the vehicles, as it were, of his irreplaceable priesthood, the dispensers of his redemption, the place of passage through which he willed this redemption to descend to his people. The power of order is a permanent quality that is in no way active by itself; rather, it is likened to an instrument, which always needs to receive from Christ the power to produce its effect. The divine power makes use of the power of order. It is not, as Protestants (like Karl Barth) and others—who see in the sacraments a work of magic and in the Incarnation a pagan veneration—say, that the power of order “uses” and

“brings under submission” the Divine Omnipotence. The priests are in the hands of Christ, who works from on high, a little like the pen in the hands of a writer, ready to be used, calling out, so to speak, for the free motion of the writer. The power of order is, in relation to Christ’s priestly power, a *purely instrumental* power. What passes to the world through it is not the poverty of the minister but the riches of Christ. And when the minister is unworthy, when the hierarchy is overrun by evil, when Judas dispenses Christ’s gift, the gift continues to be passed on. This gift will always find hearts open to receive it, a fertile and rich soil where it may take root.

The grandeurs of the hierarchy are at the service of the grandeurs of sanctity. What is of the greatest importance is the permanence, at the heart of the Church, of the unique sacrifice on which the salvation of the world depends. That Bread without which one does not have life, without which the Christian cannot live by Christ (as Christ lives by the Father) is continually offered to the hungry. It is for this that the power of order has been given to the Church. And if this power is reserved to certain persons, it is but a service for the others, and its supreme reason of being is to distribute to the world the most precious riches of divine life. In the presence of the Sacrifice of the Mass and the sacraments of the New Law there is no longer any inequality among Christians, other than that of their desire and their love, their hunger and their thirst. The only thing that counts is, not their hierarchical degree, but the degree of their poverty, their humility, abnegation, suffering, and magnanimity. It was not the power to strike the rock that satisfied Moses’ thirst in the wilderness of Zin, but the water that flowed out in abundance, which he drank with all the people. Equally, the power of order does not in itself sanctify those members of the hierarchy who possess it; rather, their sanctification is brought about by grace, which issues forth from the power of order and which the members of the hierarchy receive under the same conditions as all other Christians. The power of order and the power of jurisdiction belong to the grandeurs of the hierarchy, and the grandeurs of the hierarchy are at the service of the grandeurs of sanctity.

III. The Pastoral Power of Jurisdiction

We shall speak of the privileges given to the apostles for the duration of the

formation of the Church (1); of the supreme jurisdictional power given to Peter in order to center and conserve the Church (2); of the subordinated jurisdictional power that the apostles transmitted to their successors (3); of the pope, depositary of the sovereign jurisdiction over the universal Church (4); and of the diverse instances of the jurisdictional power and the different degrees of its assistance (5).

1. THE PRIVILEGES OF THE APOSTLES AS FOUNDERS OF THE CHURCH

The Church was formed primarily by Christ and secondarily by the apostles. Jesus, who gave himself up for his Church, desired to form her with his own hands. He is himself her “cornerstone” (cf. Mt 21:42; Acts 4:11), her foundation: “For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 3:11). He himself gave to her the life-giving sacraments and directly established her fundamental and lasting structure, according to which she would be ruled by him and lead all men to him.

This Church, however, whose essential elements are the immediate work of Christ, had to be hurled into the world, as it were, had to receive an initial impetus, a fundamental force that could carry her along to the end of the ages. Jesus willed that this force should pass through the Church herself, that it be transmitted to her through her first leaders. When he left this world, he sent his Spirit to the apostles and made them his associates in his work of forming and “planting” the Church. St. Paul writes to the Ephesians: “You are. . . members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Eph 2:19-20). In the Apocalypse, the Apostle John sees the eternal Jerusalem resting on the “twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rev 21:14). The apostles communicate to the Church the mark that she preserves until the consummation of the ages. This is the reason for their apostolic privileges, their extraordinary and exceptional jurisdictional powers. They received the power of order directly from Christ on Holy Thursday (Lk 22:19). What are, in the line of jurisdiction, their privileged apostolic powers?

The apostles are eye-witnesses of Jesus’ life and Resurrection. When Peter decided to fill the vacancy in the college of the Twelve left by the betrayer,

he declared: “So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection” (Acts 1:21-22). It was as “eye-witnesses of his majesty” (2 Pet 1:16) that the apostles made known the power and coming of Jesus Christ. And St. John writes: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life. . . that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 Jn 3). Hence, the apostles join us directly to Christ, whom they have themselves touched, with whom they lived, and for whom they burn with love, a love that will be sealed with martyrdom. Just as they are the princes of the hierarchy, so will they be the princes of charity.

The apostles promulgate certain sacraments. God alone, Author of grace, has the principal power of instituting the channels of grace, the sacraments (power of authority). Christ as man and Head of the Church possesses a derived power to institute them (power of excellence). This power is not communicated to the apostles; Christ himself instituted all the sacraments.

In addition, he *promulgated* those sacraments that would be the most difficult to believe in: Baptism, Holy Eucharist, Holy Orders, and Penance. He even announced Baptism ahead of time to Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-15) and the Eucharist to the Jews at Capernaum.

He left to the apostles, however, the task of *promulgating*, that is to say, making known and rendering obligatory, *the other sacraments*. Hence, Confirmation is fully known to us only through the Acts of the Apostles (8:17; 19:6); the Anointing of the Sick through the Letter of James (5:14); the dignity of Marriage through Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians (5:21-33).

The apostles have an exceptional prophetic knowledge of the substance of Christian revelation. Jesus had promised the apostles the Spirit, who would, on the day of Pentecost, “guide [them] into all the whole truth” (Jn 16:13). St. Paul writes to the Ephesians:

When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles

and prophets by the Spirit. . . . To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things. (Eph 3:4-5, 8-9)

And this is why the apostles could be entrusted with manifesting to the world the new truths, which, far from harming and contradicting the ancient faith, came to explain and deepen it, but which had until now remained unknown.

Formed by Christ, instructed by the Spirit, the apostles had, by means of revelation (*apocalypsis*) and as masters of Gospel teaching and the foundations of the Church, an exceptional and supreme knowledge of the mystery of Christ. This knowledge not only assumed in a superior intuition the explicit and immediately knowable meaning of the deposit left to the Church by the apostles, but it also surpassed in profundity all that the Church, assisted by the Holy Spirit, would be able to discover throughout her history by explaining and developing this principal deposit. This is not to say that the apostles carried with them the expressed formulation of all the dogmas that would be promulgated throughout the following ages and that they “concealed” this knowledge from their contemporaries; rather, they held under the light of faith the entire content of revelation, in the supereminent richness of an undivided prophetic illumination, which had been infused into them, which was impossible for them to transmit as such and which, consequently, they had to pass on to the faithful in a progressive and dynamic manner, conditioned by various historical circumstances. Their knowledge of the deposit of revelation was not entirely explicit but able to be made explicit (*immédiatement explicitable*). Let us suppose, for the sake of illustrating our thought, that the Corinthians, instead of moving St. Paul to speak about marriage or the Last Supper, had asked him if the Mother of God had contracted original sin: this same question that Julian posed to St. Augustine and that stumped the African Doctor, the Apostle would not have evaded. In the light that illumines the whole economy of salvation from on high, he would have been able to affirm both the universality of Christ’s redemption and the spotless sanctity of the Mother of God.

The future—one recalls what is found in the Book of Revelation concerning the destiny of the Church and what the Letter to the Romans says on the lot of the Jews—was known to the apostles (at least for those things that touch the *substance* of the mysteries of the faith). Normally, however, the details concerning *contingent events* were not known to them: the place of the Gentiles in the Church was not immediately clear to them; they were

ignorant of the exact time of the end of the world.

It is the incomparable dignity of the apostolic knowledge that the Church intends to safeguard when she condemns the error that states that “revelation, constituting the object of Catholic faith, was not completed with the apostles.”¹⁷ This doctrine is, moreover, one of the first that the early apologists defended. Toward the end of the second century, to the Gnostics who already were accusing the apostles of having “mixed legalistic ideas with the Savior’s own words”, St. Irenaeus responded that

It is unlawful to assert that they preached before they possessed “perfect knowledge,” as some do even venture to say, boasting themselves as improvers of the apostles. For, after our Lord rose from the dead, [the apostles] were invested with power from on high when the Holy Spirit came down [upon them], were filled from all [His gifts], and had perfect knowledge: they departed to the ends of the earth, preaching the glad tidings of the good things [sent] from God to us, and proclaiming the peace of heaven to men, who indeed do all equally and individually possess the Gospel of God.¹⁸

The apostles are helped by verbal or scriptural inspiration in order to teach the deposit that was entrusted to them. A miraculous assistance permitted the apostles to draw from the revealed deposit an *oral or written expression*, so faithful that one must say that God himself spoke by their mouth. “God making his appeal through us”, writes St. Paul to the Corinthians (2 Cor 5:20); and again: “Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast” (1 Cor 15:1-2). It follows that, though they took up the pen to announce the good news, it is God himself who ought to be regarded as the Author responsible for their writing: “No prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Pet 1:20-21).

The miraculous assistance of *inspiration*—reserved to the apostles and to those who, like Mark and Luke, wrote under the supervision of the apostles—signifies that the Holy Spirit, “so moved and impelled them to write, he so assisted them with writing, that the things he ordered, and those only, they first rightly understood, then willed faithfully to write down, and finally expressed in apt words and with infallible truth. Otherwise, it could not be said that he was the Author of the entire Scripture.”¹⁹

There is nothing above the Word of God. In a sense, it is the very action of God himself; but the mystery it contains, which will be fully *seen* only in

heaven and which remains an object of *faith* for us in this life, is given to men in different ways. The apostles, having received an eminent knowledge of this mystery by revelation and inspiration, were able to formulate something of the mystery: their message, whether oral or written, which contained the whole revealed deposit, can also be called the Word of God: the Gospel, the good news, tradition (*paradosis*).²⁰ As such, the apostles were the authors of this Word of God destined for all men. As long as they were living, the Church was, through them, “in the act of revealing” and above the “revealed” Sacred Scripture. But at the death of the apostles, the Church lost this privilege: she ceased to be above Sacred Scripture.

The extraordinary power of organization and government. Just as they were exceptional masters of teaching, so the apostles were exceptional masters of initiating (*entreprendre*). They were charged with executing Christ’s divine plan, with planting, organizing, and governing the Church. They were the Church’s founders, with respect to her appearance in time, as one founds houses that, once built, continue in time. Their power was of the executive order. They began missions, established local Churches everywhere, incorporated them into the universal Church, and gave them legitimate leaders. On this level all the apostles were equal: “You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Eph 2:20). As a wise architect Paul founded the Church at Corinth (1 Cor 3:10); he avoided bringing the Gospel there where Christ had already been known “lest [he] build on another man’s foundation” (Rom 15:20); each day he was weighed down with the concern for all the Churches (2 Cor 11:28).

The gift of miracles. Finally, unknown to the peoples to whom they announced a new Church, a folly to the Gentiles and scandal to the Jews, the apostles were in need of signs that would give credibility to their mission.

The most astonishing of these signs, to which they constantly referred, was the Resurrection of the Savior. This guaranteed the truth of Peter’s discourse at Jerusalem (Acts 2:32) and Paul’s sermons at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:30), Athens (Acts 17:31), and Corinth (1 Cor 15).

In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, however, they were given the power to make themselves heard in miracles (“the eloquence of God”, according to St. Augustine), to make the lame walk (Acts 3:6), to heal the sick, to cast out

demons (Acts 5:16), to speak in tongues (Acts 2:6), to touch serpents (Acts 28:3). All of this had been promised to them by Jesus (Mk 16:17-20).

The power to perform miracles would not completely die out in God's Church; but it was given then in abundance. According to Sts. Augustine and Gregory the Great, the early Church had need of miracles as a young plant needs water that it may plant its roots firmly in the soil.

Intransmissibility of the apostolic privileges. Such are the extraordinary powers, the privileges that are strictly apostolic, that the apostles possessed in view of founding the Church, of planting her in the world. These privileges disappeared with the apostles themselves. They are, in their essence, intransmissible.

2. PETER'S TRANSAPOSTOLIC JURISDICTIONAL PRIVILEGE

The apostolate was substantially the same among all the apostles: all could witness to Jesus' Resurrection, receive the revelation of the Christian truth, write canonical works, and, concerning the executive order, govern the Church of Christ. Peter, however, received in addition a unique privilege, which, on the level of jurisdictional power, placed him at once above all the other apostles.

Three important scriptural texts. We shall cite them in chronological order. In St. Matthew's Gospel (16:13-20), Jesus responds to Simon Peter's confession of faith: "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the power of death [gates of hell] shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt 16:18-19). Peter is the foundation upon which Christ will build his Church. The gates of hell, the powers of death, will not prevail against her. Peter will receive the power of the keys in order to open and close the Kingdom.

According to St. Luke (22:31-32), the apostles will be submitted to a great trial, but the Lord prays for Peter, and to Peter is given the task of strengthening the others: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren."

Peter, therefore, would have to sustain the other apostles.

The third text, John 21:15-17, is that of the appearance of Jesus at the Sea of Tiberias:

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

What the Catholic Church has read in these texts, for the last two thousand years, is that Jesus confers on Peter a sovereign spiritual jurisdiction, one that he will pass on to his successors, the Roman pontiffs.

Peter founded the Church in a new way. A new jurisdictional privilege is confided to Peter through the Gospel. He will found the Church not only episodically, like the other apostles (apostolic privilege), but in a permanent manner as well, which will set him apart, to a certain extent, from the apostles (transapostolic privilege).

We can imagine someone founding a building by laying its foundations. He himself dies, but the building continues to subsist. He founds the building episodically, as regards its appearance in the past.

One may also found a building by building upon the initial foundations, upon which the whole structure of the building weighs. This is to found the building structurally, at the moment, as regards its permanence in the present.

All the apostles worked to found the Church episodically: the *apostolic* privilege.

But Peter alone was called the rock upon which the one Church would rest, continually attacked by the powers of hell. He founded the Church structurally, with regard to her permanence in the present: the *transapostolic* privilege.

The apostolic privilege is temporary and not able to be transmitted; such is not the case with the transapostolic privilege.

The flock of Christ's sheep. The text of St. John obliges one to distinguish between the apostles *as apostles* and the apostles *as sheep of Christ*, separated from his visible presence since the Ascension and, hence, placed by

Christ under the care of Peter, the one pastor.

The apostles, as privileged sheep of Christ, are messengers, legates, *ambassadors* (according to St. Paul: 2 Cor 5:20; Eph 6:20) of Christ, to put into execution Christ's plan, to found local Churches and to incorporate them into the Church universal. But Peter, as pastor, is the visible center of coordination for the whole Church, the depositary of the supreme universal power, the substitute, the *vicar* of Christ in order to rule his sheep.

Peter received the mission to "strengthen his brothers" (Lk 22:32), and it is he, in fact, whom we see in the Acts of the Apostles governing the first steps of the universal Church (Acts 2:14, 38; 3:4, 12; 4:8; 5:3, 15, 29, and so on).

The role of pastor is irreducible to that of the sheep.

The transapostolic privilege is transmissible. Does this privilege given to Peter *endure*, or did it cease with him? Was it given to him alone, or is it also given to his successors in consideration for the future of the Church? Are they correct who reject the Catholic teaching on this matter, saying that neither the notion of duration nor the notion of successors is mentioned in the Gospel?

The response is clear. If the privilege given by Jesus to Peter alone is not the common and *apostolic* power to found the Church with respect to her appearance in the past, but rather the *transapostolic* and reserved power to found the Church *with respect to her permanence in the present*, it immediately becomes clear that this power must last—in the thought of Jesus as well as the Church—in order that the foundation might endure as long as the edifice. The notion of *endurance and succession* is necessarily implied in the *nature* of Peter's privilege from the moment it appeared that Peter was to found the Church as the rock upon which the whole structure rests.

We are obviously looking at this from the perspective in which Christ is he to whom "all power has been given in heaven and on earth" and that does not ignore the unfolding of history from his Resurrection to his return, from Pentecost to the Parousia.

The primacy of Peter is jurisdictional. "I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." The gift of the keys, writes Père Lagrange, is the investiture of power over the whole house; the Master keeps his sovereign power, but he delegates the exercise of this power to a majordomo. "And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he

shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. . . . And they will hang on him the whole weight of his father's house." This passage (Is 22:22, 24) is applied in the Book of Revelation (Rev 3:7) to Jesus himself. Jesus is the foundation as well as Peter; Jesus has the key of David, and Peter has keys as well: Peter's authority is that of Jesus. The measures he will take on earth, as the faithful majordomo, will be ratified in heaven, that is to say, by God.²¹

The jurisdictional power has two degrees. There is the *apostolic* jurisdictional power common to the apostles: "Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt 18:18). There is also the *transapostolic* power of Peter, to whom the following words were addressed individually: "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt 16:19). To Peter alone was it said that he would have the keys and be the rock.

A brief difference between Peter and Paul. What attitude ought one to take regarding the Jewish rites after the death of Christ? The difficulty arose when some apostles taught that the Old Law was no longer valid, while others believed that it continued to be applied here and there. A twofold question was posed to the apostles.

The first was *dogmatic*: namely, since the death of Christ, the ceremonies of the Old Law had lost all salutary value. On this point the apostles were unanimous.

The second question was *prudential*. The rites of the Old Law had lost their value, but Jesus himself had practiced them. They were permitted to survive for a little while, provided they did not cause any misunderstanding or scandal. The attitude to be taken can vary according to circumstances. It is on this prudential level that Peter, having sinned by an excess of condescension regarding the converts from Judaism, was corrected by Paul (Gal 2:11-14). If Peter sinned, it was not in observing the practices of the Old Law, for, being a Jew, he was allowed to do so; rather, it was in causing scandal among the Christian Gentiles out of fear of scandalizing the Jews. Paul himself made concessions to the Old Law, for example, regarding Timothy's circumcision. He was convinced for the moment, nevertheless, that a concession would be imprudent, disastrous even, and would compromise the work of the conversion of the Gentiles. Paul contested, not Peter's sovereign power,²² but his present behavior.

On what grounds did he resist Peter? It was with regard to the good order

of the Church in Antioch and the success of the mission among the Gentiles. This domain concerned the power given to the apostles as apostles. On this level, says St. Thomas, Paul was equal to Peter.

*The First Vatican Council's teaching on the primacy of Peter.*²³ It is clear from the words of Matthew (Mt 16:18-19) and John (Jn 21:15-17) that Peter “was established by the Lord Christ as the chief of all the apostles and the visible head of the whole Church Militant”. What Christ established for the good of the Church, he will conserve even to the end of the ages; it was, therefore, “by the institution of Christ himself and by divine right that blessed Peter would perpetually have successors with respect to his primacy”.

This primacy represents “the full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the universal Church”, which, far from eliminating the jurisdictional power proper to bishops, exists—like the royal power of Christ—to sustain and elevate it.

Among his other duties, Peter had to teach, to strengthen his brothers in the faith (Lk 22:32), and to found the faith of an infallible Church, against which the gates of hell could not prevail. It is clear that he had to be able, in certain circumstances, to teach infallibly, certainly not to bring forth new revelations, but to expound the deposit faithfully, revealed once and for all by the apostles. The definitions of the Roman pontiff—made in virtue of his supreme apostolic power to declare the teaching of faith and morals that must be accepted by the universal Church—are irreformable, by the reason of Christ’s assistance to his vicar, not by reason of the consent of the Church, which, no doubt, is always there, and not in order to establish definitions, but to accompany them. In these solemn circumstances alone can one say that the pope speaks *ex cathedra*.

A text from Soloviev.

The perfect circle of the universal Church needs one single center, not for her perfection, but for her simple existence. The terrestrial Church, called to embrace the multitude of nations, must—in order to remain a social reality—oppose to all *national divisions* a determined universal power. The terrestrial Church, which must enter into the current of history and be subjected—in her circumstances and exterior relations—to *unceasing changes and variations*, needs, in order to safeguard her identity, an essentially conservative, and yet active, power, unalterable in its essentials and supple in its forms. Finally, the terrestrial Church, destined to act and stand firm against all the *powers of evil* in the midst of an infirm humanity, must be provided with an absolutely firm and unbreakable structure, stronger than the gates of hell. Now, as we know, on one hand, *Christ had foreseen this necessity* of an ecclesiastical monarchy by conferring on one

alone the supreme and indivisible power of his Church; and we know, on the other hand, that *of all the ecclesiastical powers of the Christian world there is but one sole power* that perpetually and invariably maintains its central and universal character and which, at the same time, by an ancient and general tradition, is especially joined to him to whom Christ said: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” *The word of Christ cannot remain without effect in Christian history; the principal phenomenon of this history must have a sufficient cause in the word of God. Let anyone find, therefore, for the word of Christ to Peter, a corresponding effect other than the chair of Peter, or anyone discover for this chair a sufficient cause other than the promise made to Peter.*²⁴

John-Adam Moehler wrote: “*Tu es Petrus*. . . these words have a singular force. The scholar in his workroom can interpret them a million different ways. . . . Grammatical science can take away from me all hope of ever penetrating their meaning; for, history has revealed to me their secret.”²⁵

The mystery of the Incarnation in relation to the Eucharist and the primacy of Peter. What a union of apparently contradictory attributes! What a difficult saying seeking a welcome in our hearts! That Peter, who is one man and who can inhabit only one place, was chosen as head of the Church, which is divine and universal! Nevertheless, in Christianity, this saying is not seen as something strange or foreign to the faith. In a sense, we could say that it sounds to our ears like a familiar and expected message. It formulates a great mystery; but this mystery is in no way new. In one of its applications, it is the presence of a unique, breathtaking mystery in which Christianity consists: God willed that divine things be enveloped in feebleness, infinite things held fast in space and time. In Luke 1:26-27, at the moment of the Incarnation, we see that all the geographical and genealogical details have been massed together in order to announce to us the descending of Eternity into a moment, Immensity into a place, spiritual Liberty into the constraints of matter. The very Creator of the entire universe was born a small child on our planet and later declares that his flesh is food and his blood drink: these words were spoken in order to unite, but, seeming to many hard and intolerable, they divided. Finally, he proposes a mystery, no doubt inferior but analogous, and he chooses (we could not say his *successor*—this would be blasphemous) his *vicar*, that is, someone to be the authorized spokesman of his teaching and the depositary of a power until now unheard of—a weak man, whose misery Christ knew well and whose denials he publicly foretold. The Incarnation, the Eucharist, the primacy of Peter, these are the directed manifestations and stages, as it were, of one and the same revelation. There is a worldly wisdom

that immediately rejects this revelation. And there is another wisdom that begins to be Christian, begins to believe in the Incarnation, but then, a little farther on, becomes disconcerted before the mystery of the Eucharist or the mystery of the primacy of Peter and makes no further advancement. It seems to forget that God is God, that he passes through matter without being diminished, that, on the contrary, he makes use of matter and transfigures it.

3. THE BISHOPS, SUCCESSORS OF THE APOSTLES

The apostles simultaneously receive the intransmissible powers necessary to found the Church and certain transmissible powers necessary to conserve the Church. On the apostles—whom Jesus chose “to be with him” (Mk 3:14), to whom he revealed the meaning of the parables (Mk 4:11) and the writings of the prophets (Lk 24:45), to whom, having risen from the dead, he appeared during the following forty days in order to speak to them about the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3) and who were witnesses of his life and Resurrection (Acts 1:22)—on these the Savior poured out a secret force that would associate them in an exceptional manner with the foundation of his Church, giving them the task of setting her, in a sense, in the world with an initial impulse of life, a first fervor, that would carry her along until the end of time. They were also invested with privileges that may be called apostolic in the sense that the apostles themselves would be the *sole* depositaries of them. These privileges were intransmissible; and if the Church today is called apostolic, it is not because she possesses them, but rather, simply that she has issued forth from them. They have presided at her birth, as it were, and have left their mark on her forever. Such privileges were found in an equal degree in each of the apostles. As they were granted, however, for the sake of founding the one Church, governed by one visible head, these privileges tended by their own force to move the apostles—in that which concerns the government of the universal Church—toward a dependence on the supreme transapostolic power confided to Peter by the Savior.²⁶ Hence, the apostles themselves were ranked among the sheep of Christ, having Peter as their visible pastor. And when Peter died, they remained, with respect to the government of the Church, submitted to the supreme regular power of governing the Church, which Peter transmitted to his successors.²⁷

In these exceptional and temporary privileges of founding the Church,

however, were hidden, like a rose in its bud, the ordinary and permanent powers of conserving the Church—this Church that must endure “until the end of the ages” and that Christ has sent out “to all the nations”. The apostles, as such, were not only the founders of the Church, the causes of her becoming, but, above all, her first regular leaders, her first bishops. These permanent and ordinary powers are apostolic in the sense that the apostles were not the only, but the *first* depositaries of them, and these powers have for their mission the conserving of the work that the apostles established. Just as did the extraordinary intransmissible powers, these ordinary transmissible powers came to the apostles directly from Christ; but they were given to them in dependence on the superior power given to Peter to center the Church and found her with respect to her permanence in time. It was, in effect, *in order to insert them into the universal Church* that the apostles had an equal right to found particular Churches. Hence, the powers that the apostles transmitted to their successors could only be concerned with the conservation of the dependent and particular Churches. The powers, for example, that Titus and Timothy received certainly came from Paul by way of *origin* or transmission; but, being powers to rule the particular or local Churches, they were, by their very *nature*, concerned with the power to rule the universal Church. In short, the postapostolic powers of the episcopate flow from the transapostolic power of the sovereign pontificate.^{[28](#)}

The passing from the apostolic age to the postapostolic age. There is a ceasing of apostolic privileges and, in this sense, a *lower level (dénivellation)*, when one passes from the apostolic age to the postapostolic age, from the age of the revelation of the deposit to the age of its explication, from the age of the formation of the Church to the age of her conservation.

Despite this undeniable lowering, there subsists an infallible *homogeneity and continuity* between the *divine deposit*—as it is, on one hand, revealed once for all by the apostles alone and, on the other hand, as it is preserved throughout the ages by the divinely assisted Magisterium—and the *essential structure of the Church*—as, on one hand, she rises from her foundations and, on the other hand, as she dwells in the depths of her earthly pilgrimage; more profound still, between the mystery of Christ the Head and the mystery of the Church, which is his Body.

With respect to the jurisdictional level, the continuity between the apostolic period and the postapostolic period is assured by the presence, here

and there, of the transapostolic privilege, that is to say, the sovereign jurisdictional power over the universal Church. On this power over the universal Church depends, by its very nature, the episcopal power of ruling the particular or local Churches that Paul transmitted to Timothy and Titus and the apostles to their successors.^{[29](#)}

The apostolic succession: the mandate of Christ extends to the successors of the apostles. “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. . .; and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:18-20). The apostles were not able to go personally to all the nations in space and all generations in time. It is by the living mission they inaugurated and by the living preaching they began—whose force the power of Pentecost will carry along until the end of time—that they will touch all nations and every generation. It is this living mission, this living preaching, that will be assisted by Christ always, even to the end of the ages. The same Author who infallibly brings us the truth will infallibly guard it.

In the great prayer he makes before his death, asking that the Father’s work—which he has just accomplished once and for all but which must be diffused in time—be realized in those who, by faith and love, will be one in him, the Savior thinks first of all of his apostles: “As you did send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world” (Jn 17:18); then, in addition, he thinks of those who believe in the words of the apostles: “I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you” (Jn 17:20-21). And this prayer, which the Father could not but hear, asks for—and obtains—the unity of the knowledge of faith and love until the end of time: “I made known to them your name, and I will make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them” (Jn 17:26). Hence, there will be disciples who, through the word of the apostles, will believe in Jesus and who, knowing the Father’s name, will also be in his love. This will always be so. If the world must continue after the personal death of the apostles, their words, at least, will continue to prolong the infallible word of Jesus; their mission will continue to bring about unity in the knowledge of the Father and in love. To the intransmissible powers of the apostolate will succeed the transmissible powers of the episcopate.

The birth of the episcopate.

The idea that the episcopate represents the succession of the apostles is one that corresponds exactly with all the known facts. The first Christians were directed by the various apostles, to whom Christianity owes its foundation, as well as by other members employed in the service of the Gospel. As this personnel was, by its very nature, itinerant and ubiquitous, the founders were not long in conferring on some of the better instructed and commendable neophytes the fixed tasks necessary for the daily life of the community: the celebration of the Eucharist, preaching, preparation for Baptism, directing the community, administration of things temporal. Sooner or later the missionaries had to leave these young communities to themselves, and the communities' direction reverted totally to these leaders chosen from among them. Whether they had only one bishop at their head or many, the episcopate participated in the apostolic succession. It is equally clear that, through the apostles who had instituted it, this hierarchy reached back to the very origins of the Church and took its powers from those to whom Jesus Christ confided his work.^{[30](#)}

The rule of truth according to St. Irenaeus. Let us hear what St. Irenaeus said (c. 180-190) concerning the rule of truth:

It is within the power of all, therefore, in every Church, who may wish to see the truth, to contemplate clearly the tradition of the apostles manifested throughout the whole world; and we are in a position to reckon up those who were by the apostles instituted bishops in the Churches, and [to demonstrate] the succession of these men to our own times.^{[31](#)}

In this order, and by this succession, the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles, and the preaching of the truth, have come down to us. And this is most abundant proof that there is one and the same vivifying faith, which has been preserved in the Church from the apostles until now, and handed down in truth.^{[32](#)}

For how should it be if the apostles themselves had not left us writings? Would it not be necessary, [in that case,] to follow the course of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they did commit the Churches? To which course many nations of those barbarians who believe in Christ do assent, having salvation *written in their hearts by the Spirit* [2 Cor 3:3], without paper or ink, and, carefully preserving the ancient tradition. . . . Those who, in the absence of written documents, have believed this faith, are barbarians, so far as regards our language; but as regards doctrine, manner, and tenor of life, they are, because of faith, very wise indeed.^{[33](#)}

The episcopate is in charge of a particular or local Church. The episcopate, which assures the apostolic succession, appeared early on as the authority in charge of a particular Church, a local Church. The seven angels to whom St. John addresses his Apocalypse represent the bishops, insofar as they are in union with their respective Churches. Some fifteen years later (ca. 110), St. Ignatius of Antioch speaks of the bishop as he who exercises supreme power over each local Church: "Take care, then, to partake of one Eucharist; for,

one is the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, one the cup to unite us in his blood, and one the altar, just as there is one bishop assisted by the presbytery and the deacons.”³⁴

The bishops, says the Code of Canon Law [1917], “are the successors of the apostles and, *in virtue of a divine institution, they are placed at the head of the particular Churches*. They govern with an ordinary power, under the authority of the Roman pontiff.”³⁵

The powers of the bishop as pastor of his particular flock. The bishop is the pastor of the flock that has been entrusted to him. In addition to the power of order, which he possesses in its fullness, he has over his local Church a full, immediate, and ordinary jurisdiction.

Full, in the sense that he is the established guardian of faith and morals in his diocese, and, consequently, his duty consists in: (1) teaching the faithful the great revealed doctrines of the Christian faith and the moral imperatives of the Christian life; (2) transmitting the general directives of the Church, which so closely touch the truths of faith that human thought cannot refuse them without running into the more or less immediate and grave danger of one day misunderstanding the truths of the faith themselves; (3) giving, under his own responsibility, directives that he himself judges useful for assuring in his diocese a better reception of the Church’s message; so that in things that concern the salvation of souls (in *only*, and *all*, of these things), he has the sole authority to legislate, judge, and take disciplinary action. And if parish priests are called pastors, it is only in a vicarious and partial manner. “Properly speaking,” writes St. Thomas, “the bishop alone is the head of the Church; he alone wears the Church’s wedding ring; he alone possesses, in a personal capacity, the full power of dispensing the sacraments and the judicial power that others never possess but in a borrowed fashion. The priests who have the charge of souls are not true heads but the coadjutors of the bishops.”³⁶ The Code of Canon Law [1917] states: “Whether the bishops are separated or united in particular councils, they do not possess doctrinal infallibility. They are, nevertheless, under the authority of the Roman pontiff, true teachers and masters of the faithful entrusted to their care.”³⁷

The bishop’s jurisdiction is *immediate* in that he can come into direct contact with each member of his flock without being obliged to pass through a mediator.

Finally, his jurisdiction is *ordinary*. It belongs to the bishop as such, in the

sense that it is joined to his very office. The Lord Jesus, who is “the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls” (1 Pet 2:25), willed to put in charge of his sheep dispersed throughout the world, not only itinerant missionaries, but responsible leaders who would daily prepare for them the needed nourishment, *living their life*, sharing in their spiritual and temporal destiny, participating in all of their joys and sufferings. They, too, would be required to give their life, in one way or another, for the life of their sheep.

The bishops, says Cardinal Franzelin, have an *authority of particular providence* to preach and defend the measures of *the universal ecclesiastical providence*.

The bishop is head only in the name of Christ. The head of the local Church is the bishop; the Head of the Church is Christ. There are those who take offense at our holding to those two truths. They find the two to be irreconcilable. They believe (or at least they claim to believe) that, for us, the word “head” carries the same meaning in both statements. Hence they ask us to choose one or the other as head: the bishop *or* Christ. Where they juxtapose the two in order to set them against each other, the whole of Christian tradition subordinates in order to unite. Did Jesus himself not say to the apostles: “He who hears you hears me” (Lk 10:16)? Hence the words of St. Ignatius of Antioch to the Magnesians:

But for you, too, it is fitting not to take advantage of the bishop’s youth, but rather, because he embodies the authority of God the Father, to show him every mark of respect—and your presbyters, so I learn, are doing just that: they do not seek to profit by his youthfulness, which strikes the bodily eye; no, they are wise in God and therefore defer to him—or, rather, not to him, but to the Father of Jesus Christ, the bishop of all men.³⁸

And to the Ephesians he writes:

Hence it is proper for you to act in agreement with the mind of the bishop; and this you do. Certain it is that your presbytery, which is a credit to its name, is a credit to God; for it harmonizes with the bishop as completely as the strings with a harp. This is why in the symphony of your concord and love the praises of Jesus Christ are sung. But you, the rank and file, should also form a choir, so that, joining the symphony by your concord, and by your unity taking your key note from God, you may with one voice through Jesus Christ sing a song to the Father. Thus he will both listen to you and by reason of your good life recognize in you the melodies of his Son. It profits you, therefore, to continue in your flawless unity, that you may at all times have a share in God.³⁹

All has not been said regarding the jurisdiction of bishops: in addition to the

particular jurisdiction they individually possesses, they participate, collegially and together, in the universal *papal* jurisdiction.

4. THE UNIVERSAL OR SUPREME JURISDICTION OF THE POPE

The providential reason for a supreme jurisdiction. The local Church is not a whole, a collective person in the strict sense, a perfect society. She can only exist as a member of the universal Church, which alone is, in the strict sense, a whole, a collective person, a supernatural perfect society. The universal Church is the principal object of the divine solicitude. She it is whom Jesus called his Church (Mt 16:18), the one flock (Jn 10:16), his kingdom (Jn 18:36), who must go forth to all the nations. She is the one people made up of Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:14). In addition to the seven particular Churches to whom he addresses his Apocalypse, St. John personifies the unity of the Church's historical existence by the image of the Woman battling against the Dragon. She is in fact a person, the Bride of Christ (Eph 5:23; Rev 21:2, 9), his Body (Eph 1:23). She alone, and not the particular local Churches, has the promises of indefectibility (Mt 16:18); for, the latter, on account of their laxity, can be destroyed by fire (Rev 2:5).

Hence, the local Church lives in the universal Church, as a part in the whole, as a member in the body. But something naturally follows this fact. If there is for each particular Church a structural law, as it were, that the supernatural unity of belief and action cannot be maintained unless all are assembled around the bishop—who is, with respect to jurisdiction, the manifestation of Christ's authority and the continuation, so to speak, of his visible presence on earth—is this fundamental law not valid for the whole? How can it not be transposed from the level of the local Church to the Church universal? How can we assume that in the latter—which is made not from a material juxtaposition but from the organic ensemble of all the particular Churches—a larger, richer, and more difficult unity of belief and action could be maintained other than by the grouping of all around a single pastor, who will be—with regard to jurisdiction and in a much loftier manner than the bishop—the manifestation of Christ's authority and the continuation, so to speak, of his visible presence on earth?

Now, as we have said, Christ gave immediately to Peter alone a regular, transmissible transapostolic power, which made of his person the foundation

of the Church, which inserted him as a rock of foundation into the essential structure of his Church. That is to say that Peter received the care of the entire flock, the power of a supreme and universal jurisdiction. He to whom Peter transmits this power—as indispensable to the Church as the foundation is to the house that it sustains—is the pope, his successor in the chair of Rome.

The use of the particular power of the bishops is regulated, and at times limited, by the universal power. Being the depositary of the universal jurisdiction, which he receives immediately from Christ,⁴⁰ the supreme pontiff confers on the bishops their own jurisdiction.⁴¹ This subordination of the bishops' individual jurisdictional power explains the limitations that it, at times, must suffer in its exercise. It can happen, in fact, that what is required for the common good of the universal Church runs contrary to the immediate good of a particular Church. Here again the universal prevails over the particular; the good of the whole Body has precedence over an individual member; the splendor of the Kingdom of God in the world over the splendor of that same Kingdom in a particular diocese or province. At the Council of Trent, for example, certain fully orthodox bishops from Bohemia believed that, in their diocese, the Hussite heresy could be more efficaciously combatted by reestablishing the practice of Communion of the faithful under both species. The Council, however, considering the ends of the whole Church, adopted a contrary stance. Similarly, the pope could reserve for himself the right to grant certain dispensations, exempt certain religious from episcopal jurisdiction, and so on. It is evident that the modalities of this regulating influence are variable. They may lean toward more or less centralization. These are questions having to do with the particular period of time; nevertheless, nothing can be changed in the essential features of the hierarchy.

The collegial jurisdiction of the bishops united to the pope. In addition to the *particular* jurisdiction they possess *as individuals*, the bishops taken *collegially*, in virtue of a close union, *participate* in the universal jurisdiction that resides properly in the supreme pontiff. They exercise, conjointly with him, the acts of the supreme jurisdiction. In ecumenical councils, they are not mere theological consultants. They have the authority to make decisions. They declare for the entire Church what is to be believed and practiced.

The supreme and universal jurisdiction wholly resides first of all in the

sovereign pontiff, whence it is communicated to the episcopal college united to him: a little as the life that is in the heart is communicated, from there, to the whole organism. This jurisdiction may be exercised uniquely by the pontiff; it may also be exercised by him in union with the episcopal college dispersed throughout the world (ordinary Magisterium) or united in a council (solemn Magisterium). The power is one but has two dwelling places: one proper to the supreme pontiff, the other participated in by the episcopate taken collegially.

Scriptural foundations. The words of Jesus that invested his disciples with the task of evangelizing the nations (Mt 28) were too rich in meaning to have their whole signification manifested immediately, and only with time would one see the multiple powers these words conferred. They would assure to the apostles: (1) the extraordinary apostolic powers *to found* the Church; and (2) the ordinary transmissible episcopal powers *to govern* her: (a) by participating collegially in the universal jurisdiction of the supreme pontiff, and (b) by exercising a particular jurisdiction over the local Churches, as they do in the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Book of Revelation.

The collegial power is contained certainly (but not only) in the promise that Jesus made to all of his apostles: “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven” (Mt 18:18). These words, addressed first to Peter (Mt 16:19), are now made to the apostolic college. What can that mean if not that it participates in Peter’s power?

At the first council at Jerusalem, the decision was made simultaneously by all: “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15:28).

The witness of the past. It is clear that, in the past, the episcopate frequently made decisions concerning the Church universal, that it, on several occasions, defined the true faith and established the unity of discipline.

The episcopate’s ecumenical splendor throughout history is due, not to its own virtue, but to the virtue of the see of Peter, whose authority—whether silent or expressed—never ceases to sustain, broaden, and illuminate the episcopate.

This ecumenical activity can have a *regular* character when the bishops are dispersed throughout the world, each in his own Church (ordinary Magisterium); or it can take on an *exceptional* character, when they are gathered together at an ecumenical council (solemn Magisterium).

The one regime by divine right. “Simon, son of John, tend my sheep.” Peter is called to tend, not his sheep, but those of Christ. He is the *vicar of Christ*, not the vicar of the Church and the Christian people. The jurisdiction does not ascend from the Church to Peter but descends from Peter to the Church.

The relation between the Church and her Head is not the same as that between civil societies and the leaders whom they give themselves. In the latter, the authority derives from the consent of the people and their right to govern themselves, ascending, as it were, from the base to the summit of the political structure, and yet having as its principal source God, the Author of nature. The civil society chooses its own constitution and from there decides on the attributions of its leaders. The situation is totally different in the Church.⁴² Cajetan writes

In order to understand the nature of her regime, it is necessary to view her beginnings. She was in no way started by some individuals or by some community. She was centered around Jesus Christ, her Leader and Head—of the same nature as she, whence comes her life, perfection, and power. “*It is not you*”, he says, “*who have chosen me, it is I who have chosen you.*” Since her birth, therefore, the Church’s regime has been quite clear. The authority in no way resides in the community. It is not transported from the community to one or more leaders, as in the civil order. By its very nature and from the very beginning, it resides in a single recognizable prince. As this Prince is the Lord Jesus, who, yesterday, today, and forever lives and reigns, it follows that, by natural law it belongs to him (at the moment of his Ascension), and not to the ecclesiastical community, to choose a vicar—the role of whom is not to represent the ecclesiastical community (born to obey), or to command, but to represent him who is the chief Prince (by nature) of the ecclesiastical community. There we have what our Savior himself deigned to do after he rose from the dead and before returning to heaven: he elected, as St. John tells us, the one apostle, Peter, as his vicar. And just as he who, by nature, is the Prince of the Church, does not take his authority from the Church, no more does his vicar, who is answerable to him, not to the Church.⁴³

The jurisdiction of the pope is full, immediate, and proper or ordinary. The pope’s jurisdiction over the universal Church is truly pastoral, truly episcopal.⁴⁴ It is, in the universal Church, like the jurisdiction of the bishop in a particular Church, that is, full, immediate, and ordinary or proper.

*The successor of Peter is the bishop of Rome.*⁴⁵ In the Catholic perspective, when Peter arrives in Rome, he is, by the irrevocable and all-powerful promise of his Master, the foundation whose *raison d’être* is to sustain the Church against the assaults of hell; the landlord, so to speak, of the Kingdom of Heaven; the visible pastor, in the absence of Christ, of the latter’s lambs and sheep; in short, the vicar of Christ on earth, the depositary of a

transapostolic power over the universal Church.

When, therefore, he comes to Rome to establish not only his residence but his see, his chair—as James fixed his in Jerusalem—the particular Roman pontificate will be absorbed in the universal transapostolic pontificate, so that the same pontiff will be henceforth, by a single pontificate, both the Roman pontiff and the universal pontiff. By joining indissolubly together the Roman pontificate and the universal pontificate, Peter—by a precise mark—shows the future Church where the line of his successors will be found.

Let us note that it is one thing to speak about *the residence* of the pope and another thing to speak about his *see*. The residence can be moved elsewhere, as it indeed was during the Avignon papacy. The pope, by right, would remain the bishop of Rome, even if the city were destroyed.

That Peter came to Rome and was martyred there is a *historical fact* that historians of early Christianity no longer even try to question. However, the indissoluble joining of the Roman pontificate and the universal pontificate is in addition, for the believer, a *dogmatic fact*, which is supported by a superior certitude. We know that, even if Peter had never come to Rome, he would still have been able—from wherever he was—to transfer to the seat of Rome the transapostolic pontificate of the universal Church. This would entail—as Soloviev perceived so well—“the spiritual and mystical transmission of the supreme power” to the see of Rome.^{[46](#)}

The Roman Church, the humble name of the universal Church. “Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God” (Acts 2:22). Without a doubt, Jesus was more than just “a man attested by God”; he was, nevertheless, truly that. And if Peter wept bitterly after having denied this humble name of Jesus, it was because he remembered that his Master had become a Nazarene only in order to live among us and that it was, indeed, one of the sweetest names that his Beloved had had.

The *Roman Church* is, similarly, the divine Church’s name of servitude, her humble name, borrowed from a part of this earth; in order to save the world it was necessary that she, in her part, know the enslavement, so to speak, of time and space.

5. THE TASK OR INSTANCES OF THE JURISDICTIONAL POWER AND THE ASSISTANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The power of order is, in itself, infallible, but the power of jurisdiction will be fallible without divine assistance. Jesus entrusted to the apostles and their successors the task of tending his flock of sheep. By the power of order, which is transmitted by way of consecration, Christ renders his apostles capable of being the instruments of his omnipotence, in order to bring his eucharistic presence into the world and rain down upon souls his sacramental graces. By the pastoral or jurisdictional power,⁴⁷ which is transmitted by way of delegation, Christ gives his apostles authority over his sheep, in order to instruct them in the faith and to teach them to observe all that he himself commanded.⁴⁸

To pour divine grace into souls is possible only for God. Creatures can be used by him only as pure instruments, in view of ends that far surpass them. The divine sanctifying action is exercised *infallibly*, independent of their moral dispositions of sanctity or unworthiness. The ministers of the sacraments are pure transmitters of motions that come from Christ himself, motions that, in prepared souls, bud forth into graces.

On the contrary, to preach, teach, and direct are activities that are more connatural to man, in which he is able to take more of an initiative. The price of such a privilege will be that, in the same measure that the importance of their role increases, *fallibility* threatens to enter into the government of the Church. Also, in order that the Church be directed, and not misled, by her leaders, in order that she remain the salt of the earth, there is need for the help of a particular providence, of a prophetic gift, of an *assistance* of Christ and his Spirit: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. . . and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20). “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth” (Jn 16:13).

Human faltering and divine assistance. This assistance, moreover, does not dispense the leaders of the Church from effort, reflection, and trial and error. God sends them as workers into his harvest. He permits them to have all sorts of experiences, good and bad, which will be inscribed in his Church’s memory, in order to enrich her with the unfolding of the centuries. Never, however, can human falterings, narrow-mindedness, or even imprudence cause the Church to fail in the work entrusted to her by Christ. The grace of divine assistance, without destroying the freedom of the pastoral power or freeing it from the obligation to inquire, consult, reflect, or pray, directs the Church’s steps and infallibly brings her to the lofty ends that have been

assigned to her.

The prophetic light of assistance is postapostolic: “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20). It is distinguished from prophetic lights that are properly apostolic: whether the light of revelation (*apocalypse*), which manifested to the apostles alone the depths of the Christian mystery, or the prophetic light of inspiration (*theopneustie*), which allowed the apostles and the sacred writers to communicate the divine message to the early Church.

This light of assistance is given to the Church in order to conserve throughout the ages the evangelical deposit, to unfurl it, to bring it to fruition, to make it unceasingly descend into the minds and hearts of succeeding generations.

This same light proceeds not only in a *negative* manner, by preserving the Church from error, but, above all, in a *positive* manner. It permits the jurisdictional powers to imprint the seal of divine approval on utterances that were until then purely human, whether put forth by scholars or by men of action. It changes water into wine.

Three tasks or instances of jurisdictional power. One can see three distinct tasks or instances of the jurisdictional power, to which correspond three degrees of assistance of the Holy Spirit: (a) The principal task of declaring the divine deposit (*declarative power*); it is the voice of the Bridegroom, and not her own, that the Church makes heard; the obedience that is demanded is that of divine theological faith; the assistance is absolute. (b) The secondary task is that of protecting the divine deposit (*canonical power*); it is her own voice (the voice of the Bride) that the Church makes heard; the obedience demanded is no longer of the divine and theological order, but rather, of an ecclesial and moral order; the assistance is prudential. (c) One may distinguish a third task, which assures the empirical existence of the Church: one may speak then of a biological assistance. We shall briefly explain each of these points.

a. The declarative power is charged with transmitting from generation to generation the divine deposit received through the early Church. The apostolic deposit, the *paradosis*, was completed with the death of the last apostle. There is no question here of adding new *revelations*. All that Christ desired to say, he said once and for all by founding the Church, through

himself and through his apostles. The early Christians never faltered on that. The whole mission of the magisterial power of the Church is, therefore, to transmit the deposit to succeeding generations until the end of time. Hence the word *transmission*, *tradition*, *paradosis*, now takes on a new sense. We do not speak here of a transmission going from the apostles to the early Church at a time when they were receiving new revelations in order to instruct her. Rather, we are speaking of a transmission that occurred completely within the postapostolic Church, when there were no more new revelations, when there were only new explanations, new un-foldings of the deposit. It is the integral apostolic deposit, oral and written, that, with its true meaning, is *conserved* in the Church by a succession that is continued and *explained* by her.

The deposit is transmitted only by being explained. There are, in effect, two types of deposits: inert deposits, which (like an ingot of gold) are conserved as such; and living deposits, which (like a plant or a child) are conserved only when permitted to develop. If the evangelical deposit is treated, not as a document of the past that is offered to the curiosity of scholars, but as a mystery that, always penetrated more, must nourish contemplation and life, it will be ranked among the deposits that are conserved only by being developed. The Holy Spirit, said the [First] Vatican Council, has been promised to the successors of Peter in view of helping them “not by way of *revelation*, that they might reveal some new doctrine, but by way of *assistance*, in order that they might faithfully conserve and explain the revelation transmitted by the apostles, that is, the deposit of faith”.⁴⁹

Hence what was *explicitly* contained in the primitive deposit is continuously recalled by the Church’s living Magisterium; and what was contained only *implicitly* in the primitive deposit—in a still preconceptual or unformulated manner—is, at the mysterious moment when it is needed, explained and clearly formulated by the living Magisterium of the Church.

One could say, then, concerning the early Church—whose knowledge was inferior to that of the apostles—that she *did not know* in an explicit manner some of our present dogmas; but she did have explicit knowledge of others in which the latter were contained. One may speak of *new dogmas* if one clarifies that they are new, not with respect to their *content*, but with respect to their *formulation*; not by way of *extrinsic addition*, but by way of *living development*. As Soloviev writes

How unreasonable is he who, seeing in the seed neither trunk nor branches, neither leaves nor flowers, and hence concluding that all the others parts are only applied later and artificially from the outside, and that the seed has not the force to issue forth these parts, totally denies that the tree will appear in the future, admitting only the existence of the single seed. Just as unreasonable is the person who denies the most complex forms or manifestations in which divine grace appears in the Church and wants absolutely to return to the form of the early Christian community.⁵⁰

The role of the Magisterium—we insist here—will never be *to create*, but solely *to manifest* the inclusion of a truth in the primitive deposit. *Before* the infallible definition, everything that was contained in the revealed deposit only in an implicit manner was already, by that very fact, *really and in itself* revealed; *after* the infallible definition of the Magisterium, it becomes revealed *openly* and *for us* as well.

The Magisterium is not above the Word of God but above the interpretations that men give to the Word. To say that the Magisterium of the Church preserves and explains the primitive deposit, and Scripture in particular, is by no means to say that it is above Scripture. St. Francis de Sales responded to Theodore de Bèze: “It is not Scripture that needs guiding norms or exterior illumination, as Bèze thinks we believe; it is our interpretations. . . . We do not ask if God understands Scripture better than we, but if Calvin understands it better than St. Augustine or St. Cyprian.”⁵¹ And Bossuet to Paul Ferry: “We do not say that the Church is judge of the Word of God, but we assure you that she judges the different interpretations men give to this Holy Word.”⁵²

The assistance promised to the declarative power is proper and absolute. The highest task of the jurisdictional power is, therefore, to preserve intact among men the meaning of divine revelation and to explain its content authoritatively, according to the needs of the times. This is possible only with the help of the highest existing form of divine assistance. Such assistance does not preclude human effort, rather, it divinely consecrates it: somewhat like the miracle at Cana consecrated the servants’ efforts to refill the urns. In the supreme case, the divine assistance is *infallible in a proper sense and in an absolute manner*; in a proper sense, because it guarantees *every* decision that is made; in an absolute manner, because it guarantees such decisions as *irreformable*.

The assent of theological faith. It is on the very authority of God that we believe the message that he has his servants bring to us. It is God, his infinite Truth and Truthfulness, that is the *foundation* of our faith; he is the *principle* of our act of faith, for he it is by whom we believe; he is its *term*, for it is him, to him, and in him that we believe; he it is to whom we say “yes”, to whom alone we unconditionally submit our created intelligence. His messengers tell us about what he asks us to believe; without them, we would not know to what we should give our assent. They do not found the faith; they are the *necessary condition* of it. The “obedience of faith” (Rom 1:5) is truly theological.

To the proclamations of the declarative power the faithful owe the theological obedience of faith. They believe, not on the created authority of the Church, but on the uncreated authority of God, that which the Church, divinely enlightened, reads in the apostolic deposit.

That which is defined as irrevocable, without being defined as revealed. It happens that the Church defines infallibly and irrevocably as true—without, nevertheless, defining as revealed and as contained in the apostolic deposit—some doctrines and facts that appear to her to be necessarily connected with that deposit. But would this be possible if these doctrines and facts were not really contained in the deposit? We add the following clarifications concerning the declarative power.

b. The canonical power proclaims the secondary message of the Church. Its nature. (1) The supreme task of the Church is to manifest the revealed message, to make known the very voice of the Bridegroom: this is the *declarative* power, which recalls the immediately divine law. Her secondary task is, throughout time, to take all measures suitable to protect the evangelical message against the deviations that threaten it and to call down—here and now—the living waters of truth and grace onto the happenings of daily life: this is the voice of the Bride, the *canonical* power, which founds and promulgates the immediately ecclesiastical, mediately divine law. Its end is spiritual and supernatural, not temporal and human. The canonical power of the Church, like the power of temporal governments, comprises legislative, judicial, and executive powers. These powers, however, are both *spiritual* and *temporal*. They are, at times, *essentially diverse*. Their relation can only be a relation of proportion and analogy.

(2) The declarative power contains the canonical power as a tree its leaves, as something principal contains something secondary. It is inconceivable that Christ, who confided to his ministers the task of founding and conserving the Church, would have left them deprived of the powers necessary for the concrete and immediate execution of this plan. Without the canonical power, the Church as a visible, perfect, and supernatural society would never succeed in being finally established; she would remain perpetually incomplete. We can compare the role of the power of order and the declarative power to that of arteries; the role of the canonical power to that of less important capillaries.

Foundations in Scripture. It is in virtue of the divine will of Christ that the Church possesses a canonical power.

We see the apostles taking the appropriate disciplinary measures required by the circumstances of times and places. At the Council of Jerusalem, they decide to impose on the Christians of Antioch abstinence from meat that has been strangled (Acts 15:29). St. Paul wants the incestuous man of Corinth to be excommunicated (1 Cor 5:5). He governs the legal proceedings in this same Church and, for reasons of prudence, does not want temporal cases to be brought before pagan judges (1 Cor 6:1-5). He orders the women to cover their heads in religious assemblies (1 Cor 11:3-16). When he arrives at Corinth he will take care of other matters as well (1 Cor 11:34). He organizes in all the communities large collections for the Church in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8 and 9). He fixes the age and the qualities of widows whom one may entrust with a ministry in the Church (1 Tim 5:9-16).

Similar disciplinary measures will be necessitated in the future. Scripture not only shows us the exercise of the canonical power among the apostles, but it allows us to discover the transmission of this power to their successors (1 Pet 5:2; Acts 20:28-30).

The prudential assistance of the canonical power. The task of the canonical power is not to determine if something *is* or *is not* revealed, irrevocably defined, or of divine institution. Its task, rather, is to determine if something is *proper for bringing together* (or driving away) the spirit, heart, and entire life of what is revealed. It is clear that we are now in the realm of prudential decisions.

The necessary assistance of the canonical power will not, therefore, be

absolute. It will only be a *relative assistance*, having for its end the *guaranteeing of the prudential value of measures decreed by the canonical power*.

The measures of general order and the measures of particular order. The more important, universal, permanent, and urgent the decrees of the canonical power are, the more, consequently, they enter into the prudence and sanctity of the Church. On the other hand, the more particular, circumstantial, and temporary they are, the more they depend on the prudence of this or that minister of the Church and less on that of the Church herself.

Hence, the distribution of her decrees into measures *of a general order*—where the Church intends to engage fully her prudential authority: the important teachings, both speculative and practical, of the canonical powers, the laws and commandments of the Church, the important decisions related to worship and the dispensation of the sacraments, the permanent measures of canon law—and measures *of a particular order*—where the Church does not intend to engage fully her prudential authority: legislative applications, judiciary verdicts (validity or invalidity of a marriage), penal sentences, and so on.

The infallible prudential assistance and the fallible prudential assistance. Correlative to these two kinds of canonical measures, one must recognize two kinds of relative prudential assistance.

First of all, there is an *infallible prudential* assistance (in the proper sense), which divinely guarantees the prudence of *each* of the measures of general interest. Not only do these measures never prescribe anything immoral or pernicious that would harm the natural law or the law of the Gospel, but all the measures will be in addition wise, prudent, and beneficial. That is not to say that they will always be the wisest measures possible: ecclesiastical laws, even when decreed with the particular assistance of the Holy Spirit, are concerned with matters that are always changing; hence the possibility of certain workings and adaptations that are more perfect. One can speak here of forms and reforms of the Church.

Next, there is a *fallible prudential* assistance, which concerns the particular order. There is here a divine *assistance*, for the measures taken will be wise, prudent, and beneficial with respect to their general orientation and for the cases taken as a whole; but this assistance is *fallible*, for it does not guarantee

in the concrete situation the wisdom, prudence, and beneficence of each of the measures taken individually.

Divine faith and ecclesial faith. We must acknowledge the divine authority not only in itself, but also in the leaders whom it wills to give us.

To the message of the declarative power responds the Christians' absolute, theological assent (of *divine faith*), founded on the very authority of God, but conditioned by the proposition of the Church.

To the message of the canonical power responds the Christians' prudential, moral assent (of *ecclesial faith*), founded on the authority of the Church, divinely mandated and assisted.

The canonical decrees may be *practical and disciplinary* or *magisterial and doctrinal*. In the latter case, they demand an intellectual docility, an interior assent to a doctrine, proposed, if not as irreformable, at least as prudent and certain in the present circumstances.⁵³

c. The empirical existence of the Church. Below the level of the absolute decisions that *define* the revealed deposit, below the level of prudential decisions that *protect* it in the minds and hearts of the faithful, there is a place for another type of prudential decisions, which has for its end the task of safeguarding the *empirical existence* of the Church in history and determining her concrete relations with the ever-flowing current of political movements and cultural manifestations. There will be a host of different solutions possible at each moment of history. To judge their exact value, it would be necessary to consider more than the present period. It would be necessary to take a glimpse at historical events in their relations with the Kingdom of God. It would also be necessary to understand how the Divine Omnipotence utilizes our errors, our sins, and every form of evil. All this surpasses our sight, and the prudence of the canonical power will be uncertain here: "Che sarà domani?. . . Non sappiamo",⁵⁴ said Pope Pius XI apropos the effects of the Lateran Treaty.

The measures in question here are like the capillary vessels of the jurisdictional power. They indicate the route to be followed in regions that are uncertain and full of surprises. Their prudence, wisdom, and beneficence will not always be evident to all eyes. Sometimes they will even lack homogeneity, when the depositaries of the canonical power act in contrary ways "on each side of the Pyrenees", or even within their own boundaries,

and are persuaded that they are faithfully interpreting the desires of the Church herself and the supreme authority.

The divine assistance promised to the Church is sometimes limited here to assuring her physical and empirical existence. We know that, whatever happens, the Church will not vanish from the face of the earth. One may speak here of a *biological assistance*—an assistance that does not spare the Church the trials, the tribulations, and even the errors of government; she may even make use of the latter. Hence, one can understand the liberty with which some historians—who do not lack pontifical approbation (like Louis Pastor)—have been able to judge retrospectively the fortunate or unfortunate character of the politics of the popes.

We shall return to the distinctions between the power of order and the power of jurisdiction, between the absolute assistance of the declarative power and the prudential assistance of the canonical power, which is sometimes infallible and sometimes fallible, in chapter 7, where we will have to speak of the tendential sanctity of the hierarchical powers.⁵⁵

But first we ought to say something about the hierarchical and private forms of prophecy.

Hierarchical and private forms of prophecy. (1) The gift of prophecy passes from Christ into the Church under two different forms: first, under a *regular and hierarchical* form, which had for its extraordinary organs the apostles and which has today for its ordinary organs the depositaries of the permanent jurisdiction, namely, the sovereign pontiff and the bishops; next, there is a form of prophecy that is miraculous, temporary, and sporadic, that is, *private or individual* prophecy. It is because Vladimir Soloviev had been ignorant of the mystery of this double transmission and the nature of hierarchical prophecy that he did not recognize the presence of prophecy in the New Law and accused Christianity of abolishing it.

(2) The apostolic graces of the hierarchical order are: (a) the graces of *revelation* and *inspiration* given to the apostles in order to understand and express the truths of the divine deposit, to which it is forbidden to add anything; (b) the graces of *assistance* given to the postapostolic Magisterium, whether it be in an absolute manner for preserving and explaining the deposit or in a prudential manner for protecting the deposit and preparing us to receive it.

(3) Prophecies that are individual and not hierarchical are not given for the

sake of founding the faith; nevertheless, they have a considerable and continuous importance in the work of illuminating the Mystical Body of Christ. “No period of time has lacked persons endowed with the spirit of prophecy, not indeed for the declaration of any new *doctrine of faith*, but for the *direction* of human acts.”⁵⁶ Non-hierarchical prophecies are able to draw the attention of the jurisdictional power toward one or another aspect of the Christian message and, consequently, provoke decisions that would profit the whole Church: one is reminded of the declarations that resulted from private graces regarding the Blessed Sacrament and the Sacred Heart. They can give rise to invaluable initiatives that are up to the jurisdictional power to control but that it does not itself have the drive to, or neglects to, initiate: here one calls to mind the great founders of religious orders; the brave missionaries like Sts. Cyril and Methodius and St. Francis Xavier; the intellectual giants like St. Augustine, St. Albert the Great, and St. Thomas Aquinas; the exceptional calling of St. Joan of Arc; the “faith in the Spirit” that St. Paul lists among the charismatic favors and that represents either a miraculous gift of proposing things of the faith or an “intensity of trust in God that the Spirit gives for a short while in order to attempt a very difficult work, even a supernatural cure or a miracle”, even the “moving of mountains”.⁵⁷ Such prophecies can sustain the journey of an interior soul toward the summit of a life of love, and can work to produce in the Church great sanctity, which, in turn, marvelously illuminates her: think of the extraordinary graces given not only to St. Teresa but to almost all the great contemplatives. St. Thomas did not fail to notice this: “The gift of prophecy is given to some both for the good of others and for the enlightenment of their own heart; these are the ones in whom Divine Wisdom comes to reside through sanctifying grace and *makes both friends of God and prophets*.”⁵⁸

Prophecy is, in fact, often given to saints; but it is not sanctity. Sanctity may consist in suffering in faith and agony of heart the injustice of a situation or a state of things without supplying directly any means of modifying them; but then prophecy comes and clears up the crux of the problem.

(4) “Do not quench the Spirit”, writes St. Paul (1 Thess 5:19-21), “do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast what is good.”

It belongs to the hierarchy, assisted by the spirit of prophecy, to judge the authenticity of private prophecies. It is its duty to be prudent and even suspicious: “Beloved,” writes St. John, “do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone

out into the world” (1 Jn 4:1). All of St. Paul’s efforts, in 1 Corinthians 14, are directed toward regulating the manifestations that the Corinthians had indiscriminately attributed to the Holy Spirit.

It is futile to imagine a conflict between private prophecies, when they are authentic, and jurisdictional directives, when they are divinely guaranteed. But it is possible for private prophecies not to be authentic and for jurisdictional directives in a particular case not to be guaranteed. This is how misunderstandings and sufferings sometimes arise.

(5) As a general rule, the words, “He who hears you hears me; he who rejects you rejects me” extend to all the demands of the Church; and as we know, since the great temptations were put before Jesus, the Seducer seeks to turn away from their proper ends the most divine energies. If it happens that God, after having deposited in certain souls admirable gifts of the apostolate, does not send them at the final moment the sign they are waiting for from the authority of the Church in order to act, it is because he desires their flaming zeal to burn in secret. In order to form the hidden treasure of his Church, he needs the sacrifice of the most generous and fervent souls—who, perhaps, would have accomplished great things. The plant would not be able to blossom if it did not have some very precious roots that it buries in the earth.

Sometimes everything seems to call out for the mission of the Church, and the mission does not come. No doubt one can offer a sufficient explanation by means of the superior sense of opportunities that is proper to the Church. Newman vainly proposed great projects for the strengthening of Catholicism in England; only after his death was there a move toward their realization. But this example suggests to us another explanation. When the man who dreams of performing a great work of religion is very sensitive, he treasures this work as the fruit of his own art, he subjects it to subtle demands and feverish ardor. Now the works of God and of the Church are the fruits of reason and wisdom; and, furthermore, one ought not to be able to attribute them to caprice or even to the genius of the human artist. God, therefore, gives the artist the honor of presenting and announcing the work, but he reserves the fulfillment of the work to his Church—and often times it is carried out by the humblest instruments.^{[59](#)}

Fr. Clérissac continues, “It has been said that one must be able to suffer not only for the Church but at the hands of the Church as well. . . . In each case, the sure sign that we are keeping the fullness of the Spirit is by never admitting that we can suffer at the hands of the Church other than by suffering at the hands of God.”^{[60](#)}

Why should we be astonished at such behavior of the Spirit? If the Church is his, if he rules her as the person of the Word ruled the human nature of Christ, if he strives to reproduce with the whole Church, across space and

time, the plan of the temporal life of Christ, should we not be able to find in her—at least to a certain degree—that astounding mystery of the hidden life, that is, that mystery of an intelligence that comes to illuminate the ages and a love that comes to cast fire upon the earth, that dwells for thirty years in profound silence? What is the silence of one man—be it Augustine or Cyril, Thomas Aquinas or John of the Cross—when compared to the silence of Christ?

Conclusion on the jurisdictional powers. (1) The words addressed to Peter, “Tend my sheep” (Jn 21:17) and “Whatsoever you bind on earth” (Mt 16:19) concern—beside the power of order—several *powers*: the declarative power and the canonical power.

The words “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19-20) concern several *messages*: the revealed message and the secondary message.

The words “I am with you always” (Mt 28:20) concern several *assistances*: the absolute assistance and the prudential assistances.

The words “He who hears you hears me” (Lk 10:16) concern several *obediencies*: theological obedience and moral obedience.

(2) The Gospel, penetrated in its depths, manifests the hierarchical powers of order and jurisdiction, from which is born the Church, which is the place of sacramental and directed grace. The grandeurs of hierarchy are at the service of the grandeurs of sanctity. The jurisdictional order, as necessary, as divine as it is, is not the better and more divine part of the Church—all of its greatness derives from its destination, which is to serve love. Cajetan writes

Peter is minister of the Church, not because she is above him in power, but because he uses his power to serve her. Did not the Lord himself say that he had come to serve? When, therefore, the pope declares himself servant of the servants of God, he speaks in truth. But the Church is greater and better than the pope, as the end is greater and better than that which is for it. In the qualitative order, says St. Augustine, to be greater means to be better. The papacy is for the Church, not conversely. It is true, therefore, that the pope is not master, but servant, and that the Church, absolutely speaking, surpasses him in goodness and nobility, even though, under the jurisdictional aspect, he is her head.⁶¹

IV. Apostolicity, the Mysterious Property and Miraculous Mark of the Church

The divine power that supports the Church passes through the hierarchy and,

therefore, can be called apostolic. It confers on the Church an apostolic structure. This structure, mysterious in its roots, is miraculous by its brilliance.

1. Apostolicity comprises vertically a mediation and horizontally a succession. a. To confess that the true Church is apostolic is to confess that she depends on a spiritual power that resides in the Blessed Trinity, which then descends into the humanity of Christ, then into the twofold power—sacramental and jurisdictional—of the apostolic body, and finally to the Christian people. Where one finds this *mediation*, this chain, one finds the true Church, composed, we would say, of the just who will be saved and the sinners who will be damned. Where this mediation is lacking, the true Church is also lacking; which is not to say there is always an initial membership lacking (which is already salutary), but there is lacking, at least, the full membership in the true Church. No link in the chain may be suppressed or even changed: the Deity is eternal; Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8), and he will assist the apostolic body until the end. An eternal God, an immortal Christ, an indefectible apostolic body, and, finally, the faithful multitude: such is the evangelical order.

b. But how will the apostolic body be indefectible, if not through an uninterrupted *succession*? If it were to collapse and another institution, apparently identical, were to take its place, although initially it might seem that no change had taken place, in fact all would be changed completely, a change that would not be long in manifesting itself. The new institution would not inherit any of the mysterious privileges attached by Jesus to the apostolic body. Without the uninterrupted succession, the last link in the chain, on which the Church is suspended, would break and the apostolicity of the Church would be shattered.

Mediation signifies the vertical order of dependence; succession, the horizontal order.

The mysterious property of apostolicity. Apostolicity, considered as a property of Christ's Church, is defined as *the property that belongs to the Church from the fact that she is the result of a supernatural power, received from God, through Christ and through the apostolic body, preserved in an uninterrupted manner.* The apostolic body signifies here the hierarchical powers of order and jurisdiction; wherever these two are mutilated or absent,

apostolicity also will be mutilated or absent.

So considered, apostolicity is, like the Church, a mystery of faith. It is neither reason nor history but faith that teaches us that, from the depths of the Trinity, a divine power passes through Christ and the hierarchy to bestow salvation on the world and gather together the people of God. St. Paul teaches us that there is “one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all”, that there is one hierarchy that dispenses, by means of two conjoined powers, “one faith, one baptism”, and, finally, that the Church is “one body”, inhabited by “one Spirit” (Eph 4:4-6).

Of course we can verify historically the uninterrupted continuity, from generation to generation, of certain doctrinal teachings (the dogmas of the Church) and of certain exterior rites (the Mass and the other sacraments). But would it be possible to believe that these teachings are the infallible expression of the mysteries hidden in the heart of God, to believe that these rites communicate the power to perpetuate the unique redemptive sacrifice and to sanctify souls, without the divine virtue of faith? Although the hierarchical or apostolic powers are transmitted by means of visible rites and practices that can leave their mark on the visage of history, they nevertheless remain intrinsically outside the reach of historical, rational, and psychological investigation. And the hierarchical or apostolic character necessarily affecting the true Church will be no less mysterious than the Church herself. We believe in apostolicity as we believe in the Church: *Credo. . . apostolicam Ecclesiam*.

The properties are mysterious, the marks are miraculous. a. Considered in its principle, apostolicity is mysterious and an object of divine faith; but considered in its manifestations, it becomes a revealing sign of the true Church, somewhat in the manner that the life, death, and Resurrection of the Savior are under one aspect pure mysteries and, to the extent that they are visible, miraculous signs.

It is the same with Catholic unity and the sanctity of the Church: they are in themselves mysteries, and they are miracles by their repercussions.

b. Unity, sanctity, catholicity, and apostolicity are inseparable. These are different aspects of the same profound reality. Where one is found, the other three will always be found in the same measure.

c. In the measure that the dissident churches hold onto some Christian elements, in the measure that they have taken with them some fragments of

the true Church, one will find in them—in a mutilated and degraded state—something of the nature, properties, and notes, the *vestiges*, of her Christian grandeur.⁶²

2. *Apostolicity as a mark or miraculous sign of the true Church.* It is worth noting that apostolicity can become a sign of the true Church for two types of seekers:

(1) those who already believe that Jesus and the apostles have given to the world the definitive religion but who seek where they can find this religion nowadays; apostolicity is here a *mixed* sign that utilizes faith and reason; it is under this title that it appears in Tertullian's "prescription";

(2) those who are content with viewing the Church from without but with a certain amount of attention; here apostolicity is a *pure* sign that employs reason alone.

a. Apostolicity as a mixed sign, the argument from prescription. If one admits that Jesus and the apostles have brought to the world the definitive religion that comes from heaven, one of two things follows: either this religion will be *continued* in the world henceforth without faltering and will preserve intact its divine character; or, this religion will be *interrupted*, and what will succeed it will be of a human initiative and will come, not from above, but from below. The two signs of rupture are *dissidence*, which deviates from what is believed everywhere, and *innovation*, which deviates from what has been believed always.

Dissidence deviates from universality, from what is believed everywhere and by everyone, *quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*. Universality, in fact, can at times be a measure of orthodoxy for the one who believes that Christ's Church is sent to all peoples. Newman recounts, in those unforgettable passages of his *Apologia pro vita sua*, the upheaval that was produced in his soul when, having reflected on the situation of the Donatists of Africa and the Monophysites of the East who were at one time part of the Church, he believed that he recognized the same situation existing in his own time in the Church of England. It is not always the case that the number alone can resolve the question of truth. The universality we are considering here is, according to the words of St. Vincent of Lérins, that of the true adorers of Christ, or, according to the Gospel image, the true sheep of Christ. Where would we find them, if not where Peter is pastor?

Innovation deviates from antiquity, from what has been believed always, *quod semper*. Antiquity also is a measure of orthodoxy—for the one who believes that Christ does not cease to assist his Church. Antiquity holds fast to the substance of the Christian faith, not to its contingent forms. It excludes alteration, but not progress. In a moment of hesitation where would we find it, if not among the true sheep of Christ, of whom Peter is the pastor?

Communion with Peter will be, if not the *sole* criterion, at least the *supreme* criterion of true apostolicity.

The continuity of the hierarchy. If one believes in a divinely assisted hierarchy, the continuity of this *hierarchy* will indicate the place of true *doctrine*. It is this argument that was used by the first apologists. As Tertullian says,

If there be any heresies which are bold enough to plant themselves in the midst of the apostolic age, that they may thereby seem to have been handed down by the apostles, because they existed in the time of the apostles, we can say: Let them produce the original records of their churches; let them unfold the roll of their bishops, running down in due succession from the beginning in such a manner that [that first bishop of theirs] shall be able to show for his ordainer and predecessor some one of the apostles or of apostolic men,—a man, moreover, who continued stedfast with the apostles. For this is the manner in which the apostolic churches transmit their registers: as the church of Smyrna, which records that Polycarp was placed therein by John; as also the church of Rome, which makes Clement to have been ordained in like manner by Peter.⁶³

A little earlier, to the Gnostics who claimed that the apostles—in addition to the common teaching found in Scripture—taught that there was an esoteric wisdom reserved for the perfect, St. Irenaeus responded that the apostles would have instructed in that wisdom, first of all, those whom they had placed at the head of the Church and were to be their successors. What, therefore, is the tradition of the apostles? For anyone who desires to know the truth it will be easy to render account of it. It is manifested throughout the entire world; it is recognizable in each Church. And neither those bishops instituted by the apostles themselves nor any of their successors up to our present day have known anything that resembles the madness of the Gnostics. We can enumerate them.

Since, however, it would be very tedious, in such a volume as this, to reckon up the successions of all the Churches, we do put to confusion all those who, in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing, by vainglory, or by blindness and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings; [we do this, I say,] by indicating that tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the

two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul; and also [by pointing out] *the faith preached to men* [Rom 1:8], which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops. For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its preeminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the apostolic tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who exist everywhere.⁶⁴

After having listed the names of the twelve bishops of Rome, by whom “the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles, and the preaching of the truth, have come down to us”, St. Irenaeus passes to the Church at Smyrna—whose aged bishop (Polycarp) he had known in his early youth—established by the apostles themselves, then to the Church at Ephesus, founded by St. Paul and where St. John lived. After such proofs, “it is not necessary to seek the truth among others which is easy to obtain from the Church; since the apostles, like a rich man [depositing his money] in a bank, lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the truth: so that every man, whosoever will, can draw from her the water of life.”⁶⁵

Continuity of jurisdictional primacy. Is it necessary to posit several Churches? Apostolic though it be, a local Church can collapse (Rev 2:4-5). It is to the Church universal that the promises have been made. But during the great storms, when schism splits the world’s faithful in two, where do we find her? We know that this word “universal” needs to be taken in a qualitative sense, which designates the flock of Christ spread throughout the world. Christ directs it from heaven. But who in this world feeds it in his name? Peter is the one who received the promises. In the first pages of the Acts of the Apostles—a work written to show that the Holy Spirit is himself the principle of the entire Church—what do we find? Something totally new takes us by surprise: Peter’s authority over the Church. The apostles will disperse. Peter will leave Jerusalem. Soon afterward we will see the first Christian Churches, docile to the movements they have received, begin to lift their eyes on the Church founded at Rome by the apostles Peter and Paul. The power to rule the universal Church resides there. This power will have time to unfurl its potentialities. The sense of Jesus’ words to Peter will become clearer. The universal Church, the apostolic Church, will appear ever more explicitly the Church of Peter.

b. Apostolicity as a pure sign, or the miracle of the constancy of the Church. The divine foundations on which the Church rests confer on her a solidity, a stability, a constancy that neither the failings of her children nor attacks from

without can overthrow. The surprising, even miraculous, character of this constancy can, no doubt, escape one who has a superficial view of the Church; but it begins to reveal itself to anyone who looks with a little attentiveness and penetration. “Even the Church herself,” states Vatican Council I, “because of her catholic unity and invincible stability, is a very great and perpetual motive of credibility and an incontestable witness of her own divine mission.”⁶⁶ This constancy can be seen first of all in the Church’s hierarchy and consequently in the her doctrine and communion.

The constancy of the hierarchy. The Church offers first of all the view of an organized hierarchical body, composed of the pope and bishops, who, in exercising an unprecedented mission, govern for twenty centuries by an uninterrupted succession an ever-growing society that survives cultural upheavals, such as those that came with the Roman Empire, the barbarian invasion, the discovery of new continents, and the arrival of the modern world. In his work *Histoire du pape Innocent III*, which he wrote when he was still a Protestant pastor in Schaffhausen, Friedrich von Hurter considered the singular constancy of the papacy from the point of view of pure history, and not, as he himself said, from one that was dogmatic or polemic.⁶⁷ In every epoch some “great men”, some “prophets here below”, have come forth to predict the end of the hierarchy, the end of the papacy, the end of the Church. It was not the end of the Church; it was at most the end of a world, the end of a Christendom.

It is most necessary to admit that such constancy exceeds the forces of human prudence. In order to show this, one ought to give close consideration to the opposition that Pascal establishes between human societies and the Church.

The States would perish if laws were not often made to yield to necessity—but such is never the case with religion. So there must be either these compromises or miracles. It is not odd that one preserves and sustains oneself by bending; and that is not really continuity; and yet, ultimately they [i.e., the States] perish entirely. There is not one that has lasted a thousand years. But that this religion should always stand firm and unbending—that is divine.⁶⁸

Accommodations or miracles. The Protestant theologian Gaston Frommel did not flinch: “The political ideal that dominates a given period determines the form according to which religious unity is realized. From that general principle we deduce that the Churches of the future will live out the Christian

catholicity in conformity with the political ideal of their time”,⁶⁹ that is to say, under the democratic form of a “federated congregationalism”.⁷⁰ Such is, in effect, the fruit of human wisdom. But the perpetuity of the apostolic body, which will last until the consummation of the ages, represents, already in our day, such a defiance to the laws of time that its miraculous character is already perceptible.

Constancy of doctrine. The endurance of a doctrine formulated in the very beginning of the Christian faith and capable—without ever renouncing itself—of giving lofty, comprehensive, and pertinent responses to the burning questions that life poses and the adoption of this doctrine by men of all generations and conditions of life are not explained by some spontaneous or inevitable inclination of human nature, as, for example, one explains idolatry, considered either in its particularized forms (animism, fetishism, and so on) or in its more general forms (such as the various forms of pantheism). It is in fact a question of a doctrine, the least effect of which is the restoring to light, all at once, of all the highest rational truths that humanity had allowed to grow obscure: God is at one and the same time supremely distinct from the world and marvelously present to it; man serves society as an individual but is greater than she as a person, and so on; and the greatest effect of this doctrine is the putting forth at the same time mysterious proclamations, which totally surpass human intelligence and yet never contradict reason and are in line with reason’s most noble aspirations—for, belief in the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, grace, the sacraments, the beatific vision, even sin, is revealed as not *against* reason but *above* reason. This doctrine preserves its identity, certainly not as something dead, like a mineral, but as a living truth, definitive and yet unfurling without end the richness of its content, displaying to the eyes of the world an absolutely unequalled doctrinal continuity.⁷¹ Truth—ever ancient and ever new—rediscovering today the catacombs or returning to Africa after ten centuries, finds there the perceivable witness of its miraculous constancy. Opening the first council of the resurrected Christian Africa, Cardinal Lavigerie could say:

All has passed over our African land—generations, empires. The Church, exiled from these shores, met with changes of attitudes all over the world, with revolutions, migrations, and diverse ideas of peoples. She returns today to establish among us her peaceful dwelling and, digging the deep age-old soil, she finds there, in the monuments that she left, the splendid proof of her fidelity to preserve the truths of which she is the depositary.⁷²

The constancy of the social communion. One understands by this the uninterruptedness of a social bond that gathers together spiritually men who, nevertheless, try to divide the Church from within with schism and heresy: futile pretexts and specious pretexts, unconscious errors and obstinate errors, individual passions and national passions, the alleged unworthiness and above all—it must be said—the manifest unworthiness of too many clergy and too many Christians themselves; and men who threaten the Church from without with disintegration: violence and persecution or the seduction of the spirit of the world. Despite these attacks from within and from without, the Church preserves the principal form of her unity, the organic form: she has neither renounced this form in favor of the idea of a Church whose entire perpetuity would be invisible, nor has she exchanged it for the federated form proposed today by the Protestant dissident Churches.

Pascal emphasized on several occasions the surprising character of this perpetuity:

Since then we have witnessed the birth of schisms and heresies innumerable, the overthrow of states, universal changes; while this Church, adoring him who has ever been adored, has lived on uninterrupted. And what is wonderful, incomparable, and wholly divine is that this religion, which has ever endured, has always been an object of attack. A thousand times she has been on the verge of wholesale destruction; and each time that she has been in such a state, God has restored her by wondrous strokes of his might. This is amazing; and so is her continuance without yielding or bending to the will of tyrants.⁷³

The argument that the stability of the Church is knowable already by common sense. However desirable some comparative studies on the evolution of civil and religious societies may be, they nevertheless are not indispensable to bring about an invincible conviction of the transcendence of the Church—we are speaking not about someone who already believes that the Church is the Church of the Word Incarnate (we would be going in circles; and Hurter, Newman, and Soloviev were not yet Catholic when they admired the permanence of the papacy); rather, we are speaking about an observer who does not close himself off to spiritual realities, whose judgment is not biased, but who searches for the hidden reason for both the mobility of societies and the permanence of the hierarchy, doctrine, and communion of the Church. Won over by the sight of such a lofty constancy—especially in a world as restless as the West—it is with a new vision that this historian will read in the Acts of the Apostles the judgment of Gamaliel concerning the newborn Church: “For if this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail;

but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” (Acts 5:38-39).

c. The apostolic structure of the Church was foretold. 1. There is here a third way that may lead to the discernment of the true Church. Even in taking the New Testament texts in their most literal sense, one is forced to admit that they announce an organization of which the Church still offers us a faithful and living image after two thousand years. The force of the prophecy increases still more for him who penetrates the mystery of the Church.

The New Testament proclaims a hierarchy endowed with the *cultic* (*cultuel*) power to perpetuate Christ’s sacrifice until he comes again and to dispense the sacraments. The unique sacrifice that brings to earth an eternal redemption (Heb 9:12) will be transported across the ages by the repetition of the unbloody sacrificial rite of the Last Supper (Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24). The disciples will receive the power to remit sins (Jn 20:23), to confirm (Acts 8:17), and to ordain (2 Tim 1:6).

The New Testament announces a hierarchy endowed with a *pastoral* power to teach and to govern the faithful. The Gospel revelation made to the apostles must be proclaimed authoritatively by their successors to the people, until the end of the time (Mk 16:15; Mt 28:19). The power of Christ will come to them from one of them; he will be the pastor of Christ’s flock (Jn 21:15-19); he will strengthen them in the faith (Lk 22:32); he will establish the visible foundation (Mt 16:18) through which the entire Church will ultimately rest on Christ (1 Cor 3:2).

And hence we have the New Testament Church: a visible hierarchy, uninterrupted, endowed with a character that is both cultic and pastoral; which, thanks to the cultic power, acts instrumentally in order to dispense to men the redemption of Christ the Priest; and thanks to the pastoral power, it authentically dispenses to men the message—be it speculative or practical—of Christ the King; a hierarchy totally ordered to form and maintain in the world the Body of Christ, the Church (Eph 4:16).

Where is this fully realized? In the Church, where the ultimate foundation, which is Christ, and the secondary foundation, which is the hierarchy, are not opposed but ordered one to the other. In the Church, where, with regard to pastoral authority, one sees, not contradiction, but unity between the sovereign authority—which bears revelation—and subordinated authority—which preserves it; between universal authority inherited by Peter and

particular authority inherited by the other apostles.

2. The prophecy announces the realization; in return, as always and everywhere, the realization of the prophecy sheds light on the prophecy itself. We have already cited the words of Soloviev: “Let anyone find, therefore, for the word of Christ to Peter, a corresponding effect other than the chair of Peter, or anyone discover for this chair a sufficient cause other than the promise made to Peter.”⁷⁴ In an appendix to his book *La Légende du Grand Inquisiteur de F. M. Dostoïevski*, after having cited long anti-Catholic passages taken from various works of Dostoyevsky, Vassilij Rosanov writes:

All this is, perhaps, true, if we look at simple facts. But one cannot turn a blind eye to the concluding words spoken by Christ, that which is reported in the last chapter of St. John’s Gospel: *Tend my sheep*. This is the origin of the authority with which Dostoyevsky was annoyed in vain, a one-person (*unipersonnelle*), exceptional, and in no way collective authority. For this highly significant word was not addressed to the group of apostles. . . . Can one imagine how far this last testament of the Savior has been developed and will still develop, this testament that was brought out so well, which is so decisive, repeated three times, and—what is most important—just before our Lord ascended into heaven? *Truly these words resemble the cloak thrown by Elijah to Elisha*. . . . The Church was, is, and always will be with a dome of gold, with a summit, and will never become the flock of Chigalev.⁷⁵

Conclusion. The hierarchy is for the Church, not the Church for the hierarchy. The hierarchy does not exist for itself. When the Church passes from time into eternity, the hierarchy will cease to be. Then a new hierarchy—one that is already being formed in time—will rise up from the heart of the Church of heaven in order to shed its light on all, with the saints and angels. This will not be a hierarchy of signs and symbols, a hierarchy of exile—such as the one here below. It will be a pure hierarchy of sanctity, a hierarchy of the beatific vision and love.

CHAPTER VI

THE CREATED SOUL OF THE CHURCH

We shall speak in this chapter about: I. the created soul of the Church; II. the path of the Church; III. the communion of the Church.

I. The Soul of the Church

We shall treat the nature of the soul of the Church (1); charity insofar as it is cultic (2), sacramental (3), and directed (4); and the unity of connection and direction (5).

1. THE NATURE OF THE CREATED SOUL OF THE CHURCH

The Church, insofar as she issues forth from the hierarchy, is holy. It is from the hierarchy, from the powers of order and jurisdiction, that the Church here below issues forth in her perfect act (*dans son acte achevé*), fully blossomed and Christ-conformed (*christoconforme*). From the hierarchy the Church receives, as we have just seen, her apostolicity and her constancy.

The Church likewise receives her full sanctity from the hierarchy. The grandeurs of hierarchy are ordered to the ultimate grandeurs, which are those of charity: “If I have prophetic power,. . . but have not love, I am nothing” (1 Cor 13:2). Grace, charity, when coming from Christ through the contact of the sacramental and jurisdictional powers, acquires a richness, a plentitude, which makes up—on the level of created realities inherent in the Church—her supreme life-giving principle, her created soul.

The uncreated Soul and the created soul of the Church. 1. The Holy Spirit is

the Church's uncreated Soul. He moves her through Christ and the hierarchy in order to shower her with his gifts.

If he moves her only by passing through her, like the sun through a window, he will be only the Soul of the Church. But if he moves her as God moves a rose bush, by depositing in it the permanent vital power to produce roses, then there will be in the Church a created soul as well: this will be fully Christic and fully apostolic charity.¹

2. The connection between the uncreated Soul and the created soul of the Church, between the Spirit and the charity of Christ, is clearly outlined by the Apostle in his Letter to the Corinthians. Having spoken of the diversity of gifts, ministers, and works that constitute the Church, he adds: "All these are inspired by one and the same *Spirit*, who apportions to each one individually as he wills" (1 Cor 12:11, emphasis added). But these gifts are placed in a hierarchy. All, whatever they be—apostolate and prophecy as well as the gift of miracles and the gift of tongues—are subordinated to the one *supreme gift*, without which they would be nothing—these are the Apostle's own words—without which the Church, therefore, would not be: "Earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. . . . Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. . . . So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 12:31-13:1, 8, 13).

3. Charity, without which the Church "would be nothing". It is in examining this immense revelation, in which the Apostle sums up the whole spirit of the Gospel, that St. Thérèse of Lisieux writes:

I understood that if the Church had a body composed of different members, the most necessary and most noble of all could not be lacking to it, and so I understood that the Church had a *Heart* and that this *Heart* was *burning with love*. I understood it was *Love alone* that made the Church's members act, that if *Love* ever became extinct, apostles would not preach the Gospel and martyrs would not shed their blood. I understood that *love comprised all vocations*, that *love was everything*, that it *embraced all times and places*. . . . in a word, that it was *eternal*.²

Even though the ecclesiological significance of the Apostle's message is obvious, it was necessary for the saint from Lisieux to rediscover it, in a certain sense, at the threshold of our epoch in order to cry out to the world and remind those who forget that the charity of Christ is an essential component of the Church, that it is her soul, her created soul, and that it must

enter, as such, into the very definition that the catechisms give to the Church.

4. There is a correlation between the Holy Spirit and charity, between the uncreated Soul and the created soul of the Church. The Spirit dwells in his fullness only where charity is fully Christic. “Where the *Spirit of God* is,” writes St. Irenaeus, “there is the Church and *all grace*”,³ all of Christ’s grace. We do not ask, consequently, whether the Church, and the piety of the Church, is theocentric or christocentric. The Church is fully theocentric only to the extent that she is fully christocentric. Christ is her Head, her visible center; the Spirit, the Trinity, her invisible center.

The soul of the Church is charity insofar as it is cultic, sacramental, and directed. If the Church is a home, a temple where God begins to dwell from the moment of the Fall, but which does not become his residence completely until the Incarnation and Pentecost, when he prepares her for this dignity by an effusion of the grace of Christ—hitherto unknown—it is clear that one must regard this effusion as the Church’s supreme inherent principle of life, her created soul. We can define this soul by saying that it is a charity that is Christic and Christ-conforming, which has come, under the New Law, to full birth.

The life of the Church is ultimately charity, insofar as this charity is an outpouring of that of Christ and bears the threefold mark of his priesthood, his sanctity, and his royalty. It is a charity assembled around Christian *worship [culte]*, namely, around the perpetuation of the sacrifice of the Cross and the dispensation of the sacraments. It is brought to its closest resemblance to Christ’s charity by reason of its path through the *sacraments*; it is directed and orientated by the *jurisdictional* powers. In short, it is charity insofar as it is *cultic, sacramental, and directed*.

Before analyzing these three characters, we must—if we wish to avoid the confusion with which many are burdened—resolve a problem of ecclesiology.

Can charity be the soul of the Church? 1. This is the difficulty. Baptized sinners, if they keep their faith, are still members of the Church. Would it not be necessary, then, to define the Church by the spiritual element that is found in *all* her members, that is to say, by *faith*? Charity, which is found only in the just members, would not belong, therefore, to the very *essence* of the Church but, rather, to the Church’s *perfection*. It would not be the (created)

soul of the Church. (We add that similar reasoning would lead one to say that the Holy Spirit, which dwells only in the souls of the just, would not be, with respect to the indwelling, the uncreated Soul of the Church.)

2. Let us pose a simple question in order to demonstrate the inconsistency of the objection: Is it conceivable that the Church, the Church of the Gospels, might be deprived of charity for even a single instant, that she might be composed only of believers in the state of mortal sin? Clearly, it is not conceivable; it would be tantamount to saying that the gates of hell have prevailed against her. The concept of a Church of the Gospels without charity is a concept metaphysically inconceivable; it is a contradictory concept. On the other hand, nothing prevents the Church from being composed of the just alone, as she will be in heaven. In other words, charity, the charity derived from Christ, must enter into the very definition of the Church. The Christian sinner represents a state of privation, whereas the very notion of the Church cannot be defined as including a privation.

3. But how do sinners belong to the Church? Can they be at the same time deprived *personally* of charity as sinners and participate *collectively* in charity as members of the Church? Yes, this is the correct response.

Their membership in the Church depends on two elements:

a. spiritual values that reside directly in them, such as the baptismal character, theological faith, even theological hope: this link will not be bruised or broken except by the sin of *heresy*;

b. their will to remain in the Church, that is, their desire to hold fast to a charity that is cultic, sacramental, and directed, of which they are *personally* deprived, but which they continue to confess to be the intimate link of *ecclesial communion*; their union with the Church will not be broken except by the sin of *schism*, which sets itself against charity *insofar as it is the principle of ecclesial unity* and gathers together the just and sinners, in view of sanctifying them.

They are deprived of charity personally, as sinners; and they participate in charity collectively, as members of the Church. This participation, indirect and non-salutary, is nevertheless of inestimable value.

They are members of the Church: not *equally* with the just members, but *in dependence* on them.⁴

4. The charity of Christ, the charity we call cultic, sacramental, and directed, is therefore truly the soul of the Church. It is present in a direct, immediate, and salutary manner, and by itself, in the just. It is present in an

indirect, extensive, and non-salutary manner, and by influx, in the sinners who remain members of the Church and upon whom it flows back.

5. Where the charity of Christ is in its fullness, that is, where it is cultic, sacramental, and directed, the soul of the Church is whole; the Church, composed of the just and sinners, is in perfect, or complete, act.

Where the charity of Christ is not in its fullness, where there is lacking either the sacrifice of the Mass, the sacraments, the directives of a divinely assisted jurisdiction, the soul of the Church is imperfect, or mutilated; the Church is found only in an inchoate act or, more exactly, in a mutilated act.

6. These precise distinctions alone, to which we shall return,⁵ allow us, we believe, to root out errors that are forever being reborn.

It is not rare that one hears, “Baptized sinners belong to the Church but not to the Mystical Body of Christ.” Or, “The unbaptized just belong to the Mystical Body of Christ but not to the Church.” In this way, one ends up separating the Church and the Mystical Body of Christ.

In reality, the Church and the Mystical Body of Christ are coextensive. One belongs to the Church in the exact measure that one belongs to the Mystical Body, and vice versa. Baptized sinners belong to the Church—which is the Mystical Body—in a non-salutary manner; the unbaptized just belong to the Church—which is the Mystical Body—in a manner that is salutary but nevertheless initial, or mutilated.

We can now return to the three characters of full Christic grace—cultic, sacramental, and directed.

2. CHARITY INSOFAR AS IT IS CULTIC

Christic charity is centered on the sacrifice of the Cross. 1. Christ inaugurated the regime of the New Law by his death on the Cross, which is simultaneously the supreme act of worship and the supreme act of love. The cult, which is the container, so to speak, and love, which is the content, are inseparably united in it.

The charity that flows from Christ in order to form the soul of the Church will not be, then, a naked or abstract charity, but a cultic [*cultuelle*] charity; a charity that, unlike the charity of the terrestrial paradise, is here below absolutely inseparable from Christian worship. To suppress the Christian cult—to suppress the Mass or the sacraments—would be to suppress at the same

time charity, in its reference to the redemptive act of Christ; it would be to suppress charity insofar as it is Christian.

2. Cultic charity creates in the whole Church a profound inclination to remain at the foot of the Cross in order to offer to the Father “the pure, holy, and immaculate Victim”—who alone is capable of redeeming a lost world—and to offer one’s very self with Christ and through Christ. This charity never ceases to recall that if Jesus died for all, it is so “that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” (2 Cor 5:15). This charity is fascinated by the mystery of the Mass, which, under the appearance of the unbloody sacrifice, brings us, at each moment in time, the very presence of the unique bloody sacrifice, in which heaven and earth are pacified (Col 1:20). Is it not the exigency of love to give to the Beloved something that is worthy of him?

As the Lord calls the Christian to give witness with his blood, it is as a liturgical offering that the martyr will make of his body. The bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp, died at the age of eighty-six on a funeral pyre (ca. 156). Tied to the post—we refer here to the authenticated Acts of his martyrdom—he raised his eyes and said:

O Lord God Almighty, Father of thy beloved and blessed Child, Jesus Christ, through whom we have received full knowledge of thee, the God of angels and powers, and of all creation, and of the whole family of the righteous, who live before thee! I bless thee, that thou hast granted me this day and hour, that I may share, among the number of the martyrs, in the cup of thy Christ, for the Resurrection to everlasting life, both of soul and body in the immortality of the Holy Spirit. And may I, today, be received among them before thee, as a rich and acceptable sacrifice, as thou, the God who liest not and is truth, hast prepared beforehand and shown forth and fulfilled. For this reason I also praise thee through the everlasting and heavenly high Priest, Jesus Christ, thy beloved Child, through whom be glory to thee with him and the Holy Spirit, both now and for the ages that are to come, Amen.⁶

The entire prayer of the Church is cultic. It is insofar as it is cultic and referred to the redemptive sacrifice that charity inspires the prayer of the Church under two forms: the secret, silent, contemplative form and the open, collective, and liturgical form.

Both are evangelical. Christ, who says, “But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Mt 6:6), also said, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20). Both are required in order to form the one prayer of the Bride.

The silent prayer is invincibly drawn by the mystery of the real presence of

Christ into the center of time and the heart of the Mass, which never ceases to pour out on humanity the blood of the Cross. On the other hand, the liturgical prayers of the East and the West, those most ancient and those still in use today, are suspended, as it were, on the sacrificial prayer of Christ, on his adoration, his grace-filled works, his supplication for the world, showing forth the timbres of that cultic charity with which the Church is filled.⁷

3. CHARITY INsofar AS IT IS SACRAMENTAL

Contact with Christ and sacramental charity. In the world in which Christ chose to fulfill the work of redemption, he pours out the graces of salvation on man in two ways: (1) *from a distance and imperfectly* on those who are far off—this grace, which resembles that grace dispensed before the time of Christ, can only prepare for an announcement, an outline of the Church; (2) but *by contact and fully* on those who are near, and this grace is capable of establishing the Church in her perfection. This is the grace that, since the Ascension, continues to come to us by means of the sacraments of the New Law and which, for that reason, is called sacramental grace or sacramental charity. It is fully Christic, fully Christ-conformed, and therefore, fully Christ-conforming: “Those whom he foreknew he also predestined *to be conformed to the image of his Son*, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren” (Rom 8:29; emphasis added).

Sacramental charity is connatural, filial, and complete. We have mentioned the three marks of sacramental charity.⁸

Sacramental charity is *connatural*. It brings with it into the Church a fortification and stability, analogous to the fortification and stability that created grace finds in the soul of Christ united to the Word. The individual members of the Church may falter; but the Church as such will never cease to be in charity, to be the connatural residence and homeland of love. The grace of the New Law will eliminate neither death nor temptations nor trials; it is the lily among thorns. Nevertheless, it is more rooted and more inherent than the grace of innocence; it will never be lost; it will even come searching for sinful man, in order to justify him; it prepares him for a more glorious configuration, similar to that of Christ himself. No less marvelous is the work of transformation that it carries out in the souls of the great saints, in whom

are accomplished here below the transforming union and the mystical marriage between heaven and earth.

Sacramental charity is *filial*. The name it places in our hearts when we cry out to God is *Father*: “Pray then like this: ‘Our Father who art in heaven’ (Mt 6:9). This charity constitutes us as *sons* of God: “He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ” (Eph 1:5), and *brothers* of the only Son:

For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying,

“I will proclaim your name to my brethren. . . .”

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature. . . . He had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. (Heb 2:11-12, 14, 17)

This charity makes us *coheirs*: “And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom 8:17). Of course the grace of innocence made Adam a son of God (Lk 3:38); but this grace could not have the character of intimacy and sonship that it receives today from Christ. And Israel also had the filial adoption (Rom 9:4), but not to the degree that is given since the coming of Christ: “When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir” (Gal 4:4-7). St. Thomas would say that “Adoptive sonship is a certain participation of natural sonship”⁹ and that, if the inheritance is due only to sons, it is fitting that he who is the Son by nature should make us participate in his filiation by adoption.¹⁰

Sacramental charity is *complete* [*plénrière*]. It participates in the fullness that it has in Christ. Grace was given to Christ for two ends, one eternal and one temporal:¹¹ (1) in order to proportion his soul to the divinity through the beatific vision and love; (2) in order to proportion his soul to his redemptive mission. Christ’s grace, by passing into his Church, henceforth possesses two weights: (1) the weight of glory, which will turn her toward the divinity and develop within her the fullness of the indwelling of the Trinity; (2) the weight

of the Cross, which will lead her into the footsteps of Christ, in order to redeem the world with him. The sevenfold sacramental perfection will enable charity to accomplish spontaneously “the special effects that are necessary in a Christian life”¹² and in the formation of the Mystical Body. Like a light that, by passing through multicolored windows, takes on different hues, so grace and charity, by passing through each of the seven sacraments, take on different coloration and modalities. We must, however, explain further this perfect mark of sacramental charity.

Divisions of sacramental graces. The grace that dwells in the soul of the pilgrim Christ is continued in the grace that dwells in the Church during her pilgrimage. Sacramental grace is grace insofar as it perpetuates (to the extent that the nature of things renders it possible) the form of Christ’s sanctity in the form of the Church’s sanctity, the form of the Head’s sanctity in the form of the Body’s sanctity. It is bestowed on the Church by the seven sacraments, each of which has its own destination.

The most profound manner of dividing the sacramental graces is that used by St. Thomas when he placed the seven sacraments of the New Law in a hierarchy. According to this division, the sacramental graces can be placed in two principal categories:

First of all, there are those that are necessary for the perfection of the entire Mystical Body, *without however being necessary for the perfection of each of its members*. These are the graces destined to permit Christians either to fulfill faithfully the duties of the Christian hierarchy (sacramental graces of Holy Orders) or to sanctify the state of life of Christian marriage (sacramental graces of Marriage). The transmission of hierarchical duties and the continuation of the married state repair the wear, so to speak, that time inflicts on the Mystical Body. It is in this precise and limited sense that the two sacraments of Orders and Marriage may be contrasted with the other sacraments as sacraments of the public [*sociale*] life. In a more profound sense, all the sacraments are ordered to the public life; and the Eucharist, the sacrament par excellence of the interior life, is also the sacrament par excellence of the public life.

The second category comprises the sacramental graces that are necessary to the perfection of the entire Mystical Body and *to the perfection of each of its members*. These are subdivided into two groups. We can place in the first group the sacramental graces that are necessary to the Mystical Body only

with regard to the infirmities of its members—by reason of the surprises of sin, to which the members too often succumb. These are the sacramental graces of Penance—suitable for revivifying the broken and wounded members of Christ (no matter who they may be); the graces of Extreme Unction—suitable for delivering from the remains of sin (in view of their definitive encounter with God) those members of Christ who have been reconciled by Penance. The second group of graces are those that are necessary in themselves for the Mystical Body: the grace of Baptism, by which those who were “children of wrath” (Eph 2:3) are suddenly immersed “in [the] newness of life” of the Mystical Christ (Rom 6:4); the graces of Confirmation, by which the baptized are vested with power from on high—like the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 1:8; 19:6)—for the sake of lovingly perpetuating Christ’s exterior witness to the truth (Jn 15:27; 18:37); the graces of the Eucharist, by which the Christian can fully unite himself to Christ by a union of love: “He who eats me will live because of me” (Jn 6:57).

“The sacraments of the Church derive their power especially from Christ’s Passion, the virtue of which is in a manner united to us by receiving the sacraments. It was in sign of this that from the side of Christ hanging on the Cross there flowed water and blood, the former of which belongs to Baptism, the latter to the Eucharist, which are the principal sacraments.”¹³

The diversity of the sacramental graces. “Those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren” (Rom 8:29). Conformity to the glory of Christ presupposes conformity to his Passion, given normally by the Christian sacraments.

Baptism is the sacrament of initiation into the mystery of Christ’s Passion. That is its special modality. The grace that it communicates is a participation in that grace which, in order to redeem and save the world, moved Jesus into his Passion, death, and Resurrection. It tends to produce in us analogous effects, to move us into Jesus’ Passion, death, and Resurrection. The whole path, which calls for the death of the old man and the birth of the new within us—with, sometimes, its demands of heroism, is inscribed and pre-contained in the grace of Baptism (Rom 6:3-8).

The grace of *Confirmation* is likened to that of Pentecost. It will develop in us the initial gift of the Holy Spirit given at Baptism (Acts 8:17; 19:6). It

strengthens and fortifies us, principally in view (this is its specific modality) of requiring us to confess the faith with holiness—not simply privately and adventitiously, but rather as mandated by the Church in order to continue in space and time, in a cultic and liturgical manner, the public witness to the Truth that Christ came to inaugurate solemnly (Jn 18:37) and that henceforth must not cease. “He who is confirmed”, says St. Thomas, “receives the power of publicly confessing his faith by words, as it were by mandate, *ex officio*.”¹⁴ This is the *character* conferred by Confirmation; the *grace* of Confirmation permits one to fulfill the above-mentioned mandate in intimate union with Christ’s charity, “*ex sacramentali conjunctione ad Christum*”.¹⁵

The grace of *Penance* has for its specific modality the removal of sin in those who are baptized members of Christ. It creates in them shame and confusion for their ingratitude, sorrow for the offenses given to Love, adoration for the Mercy that pardons infinitely more than seventy times seven times, an insatiable need of purification and pardon, and, finally, an ardent hunger and thirst for the Eucharist, which, after one’s fall, brings the assurance of a renewal of intimacy.

Given to the Christian who, in sickness and danger of death, struggling with his final agony, *Extreme Unction* “saves him”, and “if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (Jas 5:15). Even if the sins have already been forgiven by the sacrament of Penance, nevertheless, they leave in us—in addition to the obligation to sorrow and compensation—certain traces and what one calls “the remains of sin”, namely, a certain weakness, a certain inclination to evil, and a difficulty to do the good, “from which man must be purified so that nothing remains in him when the soul leaves the body that can obstruct the soul in the perception of glory”.¹⁶ This is the object—the immediate but not the only one—of the grace of Extreme Unction and its specific modality. “Hence, it is clear that this sacrament is the last, that it somehow tends to consummate the entire spiritual healing, and that in it a man is, as it were, prepared for the perception of glory. For this reason it is named Extreme Unction”¹⁷

In conferring on the ministers the powers of *order*, the divine generosity does not refuse them the grace that alone permits them to exercise the powers in a holy manner.¹⁸ The acts of worship: offering the unbloody sacrifice and administering the sacraments, that they must continue, have to be carried out “in memory of Christ” in conjunction with Christ, in continuity, therefore, with that flame of charity which led Christ to inaugurate and institute them

for the glory of God and the salvation of men. This respect, this loving devotion, which needs to accompany the exercise of the cultic hierarchic powers, is the specific modality of the grace of Holy Orders.

The sacrament of *Marriage* unites the spouses not only on the level of natural affection but, better still, on the level of the life of grace insofar as they are members of Christ. This union is so lofty that the Apostle does not hesitate to link it to the indissoluble union between Christ and the Church: “This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32). “The mutual love of those joined together, the bonds of natural friendship, may be found outside of the sacrament of Marriage; but not the mutual sacramental love, which results from the conformity of the union of the spouses to that of Christ and the Church.”¹⁹ Here we have the specific modality of the grace of Marriage. It aids the spouses in the task of increasing Christ’s children and the number of the elect.

Before coming to the Eucharist, let us note that these sacramental modalities and colorations of grace, which make up the treasures of the Mystical Body of Christ, begin to appear “that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places” (Eph 3:10; cf. 1 Pet 1:12). These modalities are already present in the lowest of the justified Christians, but it is only in the great saints that they manifest their power here below; it is their witness to the effects of sacramental graces within them that the theology of the Church wishes to bring about and seeks to record in order to succeed in explaining better and in illustrating one of her most mysterious and most profound doctrines, on which still too little is known—that of sacramental grace, which alone is fully Christic and fully Christ-conforming.

The sacramental grace of the Eucharist. That which Baptism begins, the Eucharist seeks to consummate. The latter is the sacrament of the unity of the Church par excellence. It is the supreme occasion intended to make us enter into the Passion of the Savior.

The union of Christians to Christ is symbolized by the *union of assimilation*, that is to say, by the strongest union visible reality can offer. But there is a reversal here: material nutrition, which is inanimate, causes life only by being assimilated; while the Bread of which we now speak is Life and gives life by assimilating: “He who eats me will live because of me” (Jn 6:57).

It is by *Christ on the Cross* that Christians must allow themselves to be assimilated. The Passion began when Jesus instituted the Eucharist and gave it to his disciples: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Cor 10:16). The Apostle adds: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26). To proclaim the death and Resurrection of the Lord is to enter, while living, into the footsteps of his death and Resurrection.

Whence the *eschatological* character of the Eucharist. As Israel during its journey to the Promised Land was sustained by water from the rock and manna, so the Church, journeying toward the homeland, is mysteriously strengthened by Baptism and the Eucharist (1 Cor 10:1-5). The eschatological character of the Christian sacraments culminates in the Eucharist. It contains the Body of the Resurrected One, who promised to raise us up on the last day (Jn 6:39, 40, 54).

It is the *final* unity of the Church that will fully manifest to us the meaning of her *pilgrim* unity. St. Paul had said: “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor 10:17). At the end of the first century, this thought inspired one of the most ancient eucharistic prayers known: “We give thee thanks, our Father. . . as this broken bread was scattered over the hills and was gathered together and became one, so let thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy Kingdom; for thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever.”²⁰

The Eucharist is the home of all sacramental charity. 1. The sacraments of the New Law are directed toward the Eucharist as their crowning achievement. The *sacramental* grace they confer is an anticipation and pledge, as it were, of the grace that the Eucharist bestows, namely, perfect charity, from which results the unity of Christ’s Mystical Body. “By the hallowings of all the sacraments preparation is made for receiving or consecrating the Eucharist. . . . From the fact of children being baptized, they are destined by the Church to the Eucharist; and just as they believe through the Church’s faith, so they desire the Eucharist through the Church’s intention and, as a result, receive its reality”,²¹ at least in a certain measure.

It must be said that, in the Christian economy of salvation, *nonsacramental* grace is itself salvific only because it is a distant anticipation of

eucharistic grace; so that, of all those who have life in them and who will be saved, there is not one who will have it and be saved except in reason of his membership, more or less immediate, in the Mystical Body, which Christ from all eternity decided to unite to himself by the contact of his Eucharist:

“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me” (Jn 6:53-57).

In other words, in the Christian economy of salvation, the Mystical Body, which is formed around the Eucharist, is itself the center of convergence of all the graces bestowed on the world—even the graces that sanctify but are not sacramental—so that, if the Mystical Body were ever to disappear (which in reality is impossible), all graces would disappear at the same time. Hence it is impossible to conceive of the salvation of the world without the Eucharist and the grace that flows from it. This doctrine makes of the Eucharist the center and *raison d’être* of the other graces by which the Savior draws men to himself; some of these men, passing from unbelief or dissidence into the Church, discover this doctrine before ever having heard it explained.

2. Unity is the result of love, and the exceptional unity of the Church is the result of the exceptional love that the Holy Spirit communicates to men through contact with Christ. This exceptional love, which inaugurates in the midst of humanity an indwelling of the Holy Spirit—the intimacy and profundity of which was unknown to previous ages—is, by means of the Eucharist, communicated under its holiest and highest form, one that is most suitable to conform one to Christ. “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15:13). Along with the Body and Blood of Christ crucified, that which the Eucharist brings to Christians is the very fire of his charity, by which they become, body and soul, a likeness of Christ, a voluntary victim offered to God for the salvation of the world; by which is reproduced in them the states of Christ’s mortal life—his joyful and glorious mysteries and, above all, his sorrowful mysteries, his poverty, humiliations, the torture of his body, the agony of his soul. “Let us approach the Eucharist with a burning desire”, writes St. John Damascene, “and, with our hands in a cross, let us receive the Body of the Crucified One. Let us approach—eyes, lips, face. Let us unite ourselves to the divine coal so that the flaming desire that is in us, kindled by the ardor of that coal, consumes

our sins and illumines our hearts, so that, participating in the divine flame, we ourselves may be inflamed and made divine.”²²

All of the sanctifying grace of the world hangs, as it were, on the Church; and all of the grace of the Church hangs on the Eucharist.

4. CHARITY INsofar AS IT IS DIRECTED

The interior influx and the exterior teaching of Christ. 1. The Savior who secretly pours forth his love into the hearts of men teaches them from without, in order to open to them the way he asks them to follow. He awakens in the Samaritan woman the desire for living water; and the Lord explains to her that this water is a source of eternal life (Jn 4:10-14). The Lord allows his sheep to recognize his voice and calls them from without (Jn 10:3-5). He sets ablaze the hearts of the disciples and teaches them the prophecies (Lk 24:32). He leads them to prayer and teaches them the *Pater Noster* (Lk 11:1-4).

2. The mission of teaching with authority is entrusted to the disciples, whom Christ will assist until the end of time by the grace of prophecy.

There is, without a doubt, an inherent rectitude in virtue. It will never lead one astray. Faith, hope, and charity, in whatever subject they reside, are in themselves infallible.

Man himself, however, in whom are faith, hope, and charity, is not infallible. He can existentially accumulate—along with his faith, hope, and charity—all sorts of ignorance and impurity, which are dangerous for him and for others. To provide a remedy to this existential fallibility of the Christian there are prophetic lights that come from without, above all, those that are promised to the jurisdictional powers.

The powers of prophecy are at the service of the powers of charity. 1. It is the Holy Spirit who pours forth faith, hope, and charity into us. And it is the same Spirit who enlightens us from without by powers of prophecy. Between these two actions of the Holy Spirit there can be no true conflict. They are divinely “pre-tuned” to each other. The powers of sanctity require a route that they may follow; and the powers of prophecy point out the way: “Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God,” said Cornelius to Simon Peter, “to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord” (Acts 10: 33).

2. The powers of charity are the principal and most precious powers: “And

if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge,. . . but have not love, I am nothing” (1 Cor 13:2). The powers of teaching and of prophecy are, no doubt, absolutely necessary in this life, but they are secondary. They are at the service of the powers of charity. The former preserve the latter from error, which can destroy them: “Let what you heard from the beginning”, writes St. John, “abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father” (1 Jn 2:24). Furthermore, the powers of prophecy alone permit those of charity to attain to full development. It is only insofar as it is fully unfurled, fully blossomed, and insofar as it safely advances along the ways pointed out to it by the jurisdictional teaching (divinely assisted by Christ) that the charity of Christ can be the soul of the Church.

Interiorization of the jurisdictional directives. The divinely assisted jurisdictional directives that are proposed from without are of a different nature; they must be accepted in a different way.

To the absolute directives of the declarative power one owes a divine and theological obedience, founded on the very authority of God. To the prudential directives of the canonical powers one owes a moral and ecclesial obedience, founded on the authority of the Church, which is God’s Bride. If these latter directives are practical and disciplinary, they demand an intelligent execution; if they are speculative and magisterial, they demand an interior assent of the intellectual order.²³

It is love that inclines the intellect, be it speculative or practical, to adhere fully to the jurisdictional directives. The latter are fully incorporated and assimilated by love. They are no longer as though external and foreign. They are interiorized by love, which, by accepting them, defines, perfects, and directs itself. This is why we say that the soul of the Church is charity insofar as it is directed by the jurisdictional directives that it has interiorized.

5. THE TWOFOLD UNITY OF THE CHURCH: THE UNITY OF CONNECTION AND THE UNITY OF DIRECTION

The mystical unity of connection and the prophetic unity of direction. Insofar as it comes from the sacraments, charity incorporates us fully into Christ and assembles us around him. It is the principle of the fundamental and mystic unity of the Church, her unity of *connection*.

Insofar as it accepts and interiorizes in itself the jurisdictional directives, charity is the principle of the Church's prophetic unity, her unity of *direction*.

These are two complementary aspects of the total unity without which there would be no Church. The Church, mystically issued forth from Christ by means of the sacraments, and therefore fundamentally one, *una*, urgently demands to be a Church that is prophetically led by one unique direction, coming from Christ and his vicar, the pastor of his sheep; hence she demands to be *sub uno*. On the other hand, it is because the Church is under a unique prophetic direction, *sub uno*, that her mystical unity can blossom and become fully *una*.

The unity of communion. From the unity of connection and the unity of direction results the perfect and essential unity of the Church—her *unity of communion*.

The very special sin against charity that is called schism begins by refusing either the unity of connection among the members of the Church or the unity of direction and submission to the head of the Church. These two refusals are not independent of each other; the one implies the other.²⁴

II. The Route of the Church

Christians pulled along in the wake of Christ. The teaching of St. Paul. We have said²⁵ that sacramental and perfect charity is subjected to two different weights: the weight of glory, which turns it toward the divinity and the full indwelling of the Holy Spirit; and the weight of the Cross, which pulls it along in the footsteps of Christ, in order to redeem the world with him. This second point needs to be explained.

That charity inclines Christians to follow the route traced out by the Savior is one of the great notions of St. Paul. The stages of Christ's life, his suffering, death, and Resurrection, must be reproduced to a certain extent in his members. The Apostle expressly states that this will happen in virtue of the thrust of an interior force that will work within them what it worked in Christ: "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you" (Rom 8:11).

In order to signify the dynamic solidarity of Christ's destiny and that of his

members, St. Paul did not hesitate to forge new words: “If [we are] children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom 8:17). “This saying is sure: If we have died with him, we shall also live with him; if we endure, we shall also reign with him” (2 Tim 2:11-12). “Even when we were dead through our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ. . . . [He] raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:5-6).

All this proclaims that Christ’s history must be prolonged in that of Christians; it “expresses, in the order of supernatural *activity*, what is expressed in the order of *being* and of reality by the doctrine, so dear to Paul, that the Church is the continuation, the fullness, the *pleroma*, of the Savior”.²⁶

Christic grace aims to imprint on the Mystical Body the likeness of Christ’s interior states. Bérulle invites us to go beyond the passing events of Christ’s life, like the Nativity and the Passion, and encounter “the interior state of the exterior mystery”.

And so, “the *infancy* of the Son of God is a passing state; the circumstances of that infancy have passed, and there is no more infant; but there is something divine in that mystery that lasts in heaven and that effects a similar grace in the souls on earth, which Jesus Christ is pleased to allocate and dedicate to this humble and first state of his person.”

Likewise, what Christ “retains of his *Passion*” is life and glory; he no longer suffers. But what remains in him of this mystery “forms here on earth a type of grace, and it is up to the chosen souls to receive it”.

In other words, the successive states of the birth and Passion subsist in the glorious Christ, certainly not in themselves, but in the charity that illuminates them and that can, in a certain sense, give rise to them again in time and imprint them within the Mystical Body, so that “the mysteries of Jesus Christ, his infancy, his suffering, and the others, continue and live on earth, until the end of the world.”²⁷

More generally, there are all the intentions and all the interior sentiments of the Savior—his joys and sorrows, his poverty and purity, his humility and magnanimity—which Christic grace aims to reproduce in the Mystical Body. The Church invites her children to these by placing around them, for example, the elements of her liturgy, which will lead them annually to

traverse in their hearts the principal episodes of the Gospel drama; or, too, by inviting them to the different forms of the Christian life—secular or religious, active or contemplative, hidden or apostolic.

Christic grace and the inclination to martyrdom. If the life of Christ has as its supreme destination a witness to the truth by dying on the Cross, it is clear that sacramental charity secretly moves the Church herself to render the same witness at the price of her own blood, in other words, it inclines her to martyrdom.

The notion of martyr is essential to the definition of the present Church. 1. Erik Peterson writes

The martyr suffers with Christ as a member of the Mystical Body. To say that the martyr suffers *with* Christ is to say that the martyr's passion is something more than just suffering *for* Christ. Many soldiers die for their king; but the death of the martyr differs from that of the soldier. Not only does he suffer *for* Jesus; it is *by* the death of Christ that he is led to his own death. *The passion that leads Christ to death*—since he is the Son of man, God Incarnate—*operates in the whole Church as in his Mystical Body.* . . [28](#)

What is important to remember is that the possibility of martyrdom, which is a real possibility for us all, has its roots in the very reality of the baptism of Jesus' death, in which we have been baptized by the Baptism of water. We are all, says St. Paul, *baptized into the death of Christ* (Rom 6:3). What is also important to remember is that the possibility that we may be required to offer for Christ our own body and blood is founded on the fact that his body and blood, in which we share, have been presented to us in his chalice at Gethsemane. The Baptism of water and the baptism of blood come, therefore, from the Lord himself, and they are prefigured, as St. Cyril of Jerusalem says, by the blood and water that flowed from the side of Jesus. [29](#)

To sum up, the Baptism of water and, after it, the Eucharist bring about in each Christian a disposition to suffer and to die with Christ. They depute the Christian for a baptism of blood, if not as their most frequent effect, at least as one that is most normal. "I would like above all, my Blessed Lord, to spill my blood for Thee." This is the cry of the saint of Lisieux. [30](#)

2. That sacramental charity, by passing into Christians, produces in them an inclination to give their blood in witness to the Gospel, so that Christ's Passion is continued in that of the martyrs, is a truth that the liturgy proclaims, [31](#) that theology has always recognized, that the life of some

Christians (whose hearts are inflamed with love) never ceases to demonstrate, and that appeared with all its splendor in the account left to us by Acts of the Apostles concerning the death of St. Stephen. If this holy martyr returned to the very words of Jesus in order to show the incredulity of his fellow countrymen, in order to render his soul to God and to implore pardon for his executioners, it is certainly not because he intended to make a sacrilegious scene; rather, regarding Christ's actions as something to be imitated, and under the influence of an interior grace that moved him, he spontaneously recreated in the depths of his heart—and in circumstances as different as those that separate the death of the servant from that of the Master—those true words which, without his even thinking of it, found an echo in those of the Savior.

3. Not all can be martyrs. It is a privileged grace that God grants as he wishes.

But in a certain sense, we may or, better, we must all accompany the Lord in his Passion. And this is why the Cross is a symbol not only for the martyrs, but for the whole Christian life in general. It is not, therefore, by reason of an accidental historical development—as Protestant historians continue to believe—it is rather by reason of the very nature of things that the saints who have passed through every mortification and suffering are likened to martyrs. And although we may become neither saint nor martyr, nevertheless, we must all embrace some form of asceticism. At the heart of Christian asceticism there is for all of us who, in the words of St. Paul, strive to bear *the death of Christ* in our bodies (2 Cor 4:10) but one principle: the principle of compassion with Christ, mortification with him who, for us, was sent to death. He who said himself: *My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me* (Mt 26:39), knows our fear and our agony in the face of suffering and death. He knows that we tremble at the duty to imitate him; he knows that we are weak and that we do not want to take up the cross; he knows we are afraid of poverty, calumny, dishonor, blows, death. But in bearing our fearful flesh, he has, according to the words of St. Athanasius, by his apparent fear, delivered us from ours. In effect, all that is accomplished in the Church is accomplished in the certitude that, if Christ died, he also rose; so that along with the suffering of Christ the power of his Resurrection is communicated to the Church. We are baptized into the death of Christ, but we receive the Holy Spirit in Baptism. And this is why the ascetic and spiritual life of Christians is not only a mortification, but still and at the same time a victory, a “vivification”, a transformation in the Holy Spirit.³²

The co-redemptive mission of the Church. 1. The merit of Christ flows into his Church. In immediate dependence on Christ she can *merit* directly (condign merit) the increase of her own love. She can also merit, in a less direct manner (congruous merit)—if it is true that God often does the will of those who really and profoundly love him—the unceasing outpouring of divine favors upon humanity.³³

The Church can also, by Christ and in Christ, *make continuous satisfaction*

for sin, whether her members do penance for their own failings or whether they strive in addition to expiate and offer reparation to God for the sins of the whole world.

If there is a need for the meritorious and satisfactory works of Christ's members, it is certainly not, as we have said,³⁴ because of the insufficiency of Christ's own merit and satisfaction. On the contrary, it is because of the superabundance of his merit and satisfaction, which are placed in his living members.

2. The meritorious and satisfactory works of the Church represent the strictest aspect of her co-redemptive activity. The Church, however, can be called the co-redeemer of the world in a broader sense. Her prayer, founded not on her merit but on pure divine mercy, does not limit itself to her own children, known or unknown; rather, it is extended to the entire world in order to implore God "to gather all who are lost into the unity of the Church and to lead all the infidels of the world to the light of the Gospel".³⁵ The Church preserves through the ages the living revelation of Christ; she bears even to the ends of the world the truth of the Gospel message and the efficacy of the Christian sacraments. She is, through her sacramental charity, the salt of the earth.

Revealed foundations of the notion of co-redemptive activity. 1. The notion of a human activity that, once penetrated and enhanced by grace, can contribute in some measure—certainly not outside Christ's redemption, but on the contrary, in immediate dependence upon it—to the salvation of other men, appears in Scripture; it appears, of course in a manner still veiled and initial, already before the Gospel revelation; for example, in Abraham's prayer of intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:22-32) or, in a more general way, with the election of a people whose entire history was ordered to prepare the conversion of all others for the messianic times (Is 2:2-3).

2. It is clear that the book of Acts establishes a direct relation between the martyr Stephen and the conversion of Saul (Acts 7:58-60; 8:2-3). "My brethren," writes St. Augustine, "is it true or not that, before Saul had faith, the faithful had prayed for him? If you respond 'no', why then did Stephen cry out, '*Lord do not hold this sin against them*'? He prayed for Saul and for the other unbelievers, that they might believe. They did not yet have faith, and behold, thanks to the prayer of the faithful, they received it."³⁶

3. From then on, how could Saul not have understood the meaning of

intercessory prayer and the co-redemptive activity of Christians? To the Thessalonians, to whom he knew he had given much, he could write: “For what is our hope or joy or *crown of boasting* before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not for you? For you are our glory and joy” (1 Thess 2:19-20; emphasis added). He knew that there is a way of glorying that the Savior reprimanded: “When you have done all that is commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty’” (Lk 17:10); and another way of which the Savior approved, in which Paul desired that the Philippians partake: “*That in the day of Christ I may be proud* that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Even if I am to be poured as a libation upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me. . . . Therefore, my brethren, whom I love and long for, *my joy and crown*, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved” (Phil 2:16-18; 4:1, emphasis added). The servants are useless, but their service is useful: “We are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Cor 3:9). His work, his cooperation, contributes to the world’s salvation: “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. . . . I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor 9:19, 22). It is not only the preaching of the Apostle that is co-redemptive of men; it is also his own sufferings. Captive at Rome for the second time, he writes to Timothy: “Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which in Christ Jesus goes with eternal glory” (2 Tim 2:10). He had previously sent to the Colossians a mysterious text on co-redemption: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church” (Col 1:24). In another mysterious text, this one addressed to the Ephesians, it is all the faithful whom he invites to act “not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil” (Eph 5:15-16). How should these words be taken? Is not Christ the one Redeemer; did he not offer himself once for all the sins of the world (Heb 9:28)? Without a doubt, but his members must be united to him so that, through them, the thorns of time will continue to bloom into new roses for the Kingdom of God.

4. The Savior said: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Mt 9:37-38). Hence human effort, human cooperation, is required in two ways:

first, to persuade the Lord to send out laborers; second, to work as harvesters, to work in his vineyard (Mt 20: i).

5. In the encyclical *Mystici corporis*, Pope Pius XII wrote:

Dying on the Cross, he left to his Church the immense treasury of the Redemption, toward which she contributed nothing. But when those graces come to be distributed, not only does he share this work of sanctification with his Church, but he wills that in some way it be due to her action. This is a deep mystery and an inexhaustible subject of meditation, that the salvation of many depends on the prayers and voluntary penances that the members of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ offer for this intention and on the cooperation of pastors of souls and of the faithful, especially of fathers and mothers of families, a cooperation they must offer to our Divine Savior as though they were his associates.

A little farther on, citing the beautiful text of Clement of Alexandria,³⁷ the pope recalls that “it is for us to cooperate with Christ in this work of salvation, *from One and through One we are saved and saviors*’.”

Redeemed members and members who are co-redeemers. 1. Hence all who are sanctified by sacramental charity are by vocation co-redeemers with Christ. It is necessary, however, to make a distinction among them between the *imperfect* co-redeeming members and the *perfect*.

The first are those whom Tauler calls “the brave people”,³⁸ who still, perhaps, have to expiate and make satisfaction for themselves, but who already pray fervently for the unity of the Church, for the progress of the Gospel in the mission countries, for the conversion of sinners, for the sanctification of the world and the deliverance of their brothers who suffer in purgatory. These will someday become true co-redeemers, in one of those great trials common to all Christians. It even seems that at certain tragic epochs of history, visited by impiety and despair, by persecution, by war, by imprisonment and famine, God, by forcing entire populations to enter into these conditions of a heroic life, without special preparation and without distinction of persons, wills to increase quickly the number of co-redeeming Christians.

The perfect, eminent co-redeeming members are those whom Tauler calls “the true friends of God”.³⁹ They turn themselves “toward all the needs of Christendom, and they occupy themselves with devout prayer and holy desire, to ask God for whatever he wants to be asked for. They are concerned with their friends, with sinners, with the souls in purgatory. They provide in all charity for the needs of every person in all of Christendom.”⁴⁰ “God loves

himself in such men as these, and he performs all their works in them. . . . My children, if we did not have such persons, we would be in serious trouble.”⁴¹ “These are the ones in whom Holy Mother Church rests, and if they did not exist Christendom would not subsist one hour. For their existence alone, the sole fact that they are, is something more precious and more useful than all the world’s activity.”⁴²

2. “Each Christian”, affirms St. Catherine of Siena, “must cooperate in the salvation of souls.” But she knows that God addresses to certain souls a more formal command: “Father, I ask you to grant mercy to the world and to the Church. I beseech you yourself to bring to fulfillment what you yourself ask to be done. . . . Hear and grant the desire of your servants. Is it not you yourself who cry out in them?”⁴³

The same love produced analogous effects in Marie of the Incarnation:

My interior work was strengthened and my continual pursuits with the Eternal Father for the increase of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ in the poor souls who did not know him. . . . It seemed to me that I knew all the souls redeemed by the Blood of the Son of God, in whatever little corner of the world they might inhabit, and my love was carried to those who were the most abandoned in lands of the Savages, where I seemed to wander without ceasing.⁴⁴

3. This character of Christian charity, which Bergson admired so much and which he contrasts to that of Buddhism—which leaves the soul “stopped short in midcourse, detached from human life and yet not reaching one that is divine, suspended between two activities in the vertigo of nothingness”⁴⁵—this power of the great Christian mystics, elevated to such heights in God in order that it might take in the whole universe and united so closely to Christ Crucified in order to feel responsible for the entire world, was taught by St. John of the Cross to his disciples in the following way, as Father Elijah of the Martyrs relates to us:

He said that the love of a neighbor’s good is born from a spiritual and contemplative life. The supreme perfection of every creature in its hierarchy and degree is to progress and grow, according to its talents and resources, in the imitation of God; *and that which is the most admirable and most divine is to be God’s cooperator in the conversion and salvation of souls.* Here God’s own works shine forth, and it is the greatest glory to imitate them. These are the works that Christ our Lord called the works of his Father, the concerns of his Father. It is also a manifest truth that compassion for one’s neighbor increases to the extent that the soul is united to God by love. The more it loves, the more it desires that the same God be loved and honored by all. And the more it desires, the more it works—in prayer and all the other activities necessary or possible. So great are the fervor and the force of their charity that those who are possessed by God cannot limit their desire to their own salvation alone. They are not content with going to

heaven alone, and they strive by their sufferings, by their heavenly fervor, by their extraordinary entreaties, to raise up the multitude of humanity with them to heaven. This is the result of the great love they have for their God; it is the proper fruit and effect of perfect prayer and contemplation.⁴⁶

4. In this perspective the doctrine of St. Augustine and St. Thomas shines out in full splendor—according to which doctrine the precept of love is without limits. The greatest charity was proposed to all Christians as a veritable precept, and not simply as a counsel. This, of course, does not mean that it must be realized immediately in one's life, but it does mean that each one must at least, according to his own condition, tend toward a more ardent charity. How in fact could Christians fix a limit to their desire for sanctity when they know that their mission is to turn the weight of this world heavenward? Can they forget that they are required to pray without ceasing that God's name be glorified, that his Kingdom come, that his will be done on earth and in heaven?

And if it is the intensity and quality of charity that determine the co-redemptive value of one's life, one sees that, through the Blessed Virgin and in her, the Church was, more than ever after, the co-redemptrix of the world with Christ Jesus.

III. The Communion of the Church

First, we shall speak of the factors of unity (1); then, of the spiritual interdiffusion of charity (2); finally, of the communion of saints (3).

1. THE FACTORS OF UNITY

The perfect unity of the Church. Insofar as it comes from the sacraments, as we have seen, charity is the principle of the fundamental and mystical unity of the Church, her unity of *connection*. And, insofar as it receives jurisdictional direction, it is the principle of the secondary and prophetic unity of the Church, her unity of *orientation*. From these two inseparable aspects of the Church's charity comes her perfect unity, her *unity of communion*.

Intercommunion of Christians. Charity necessarily establishes relations of

intimate interdependence among those whom it incorporates in Christ. The closer the rays are to the center, the closer they are to each other.

“If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor 12:26-27). “For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Rom 12:4-5).

As we see, the unity of *likeness*, which puts Christians in possession of the same elements, must submit to a superior unity, the unity “by way of *bond and connection*. Charity alone, which is this bond and connection, can unite in such a way. Whence the words of the Apostle to the Co-lossians (3:14): ‘And above all these put on love.’”⁴⁷

It is to this mysterious interdependence of Christians that one can give the name unity of connection. It contributes to establishing the communion of saints.

The Holy Spirit, supreme principle of unity. 1. It is the Holy Spirit who moves charity; he gives it its mystical profundity and its prophetic orientation. He is the supreme principle of the unity of communion. Cardinal Cajetan says

The unity of the faithful is a unity of association. Each member acquires therefore a relative modality by which he exists as a part of a unique people, a unique city, a unique family. In that way he enters into a dependence on the whole: each part in effect depends on the whole. This dependence is noticeable in all that he does and becomes. When, in fact, the Holy Spirit moves the faithful to perform acts of the spiritual life—for example, to believe, to love, to sanctify others or even themselves, to obey, to command, to teach—he moves them not only simply to accomplish the acts, but to perform them in a certain manner, so that they become one, not independently, but as parts of a single whole.

For this it is not necessary to look for any other cause than a free disposition of that same Holy Spirit, who mentions, among other articles of our faith, *the One and Holy Church* and the *communion of saints*. . . . It is the Holy Spirit, in fact, who, bestowing his gifts as he wills (1 Cor 12:2) desires that the Catholic Church, that is to say, the universal Church, be one and that there not be several Churches. . . . The unity of such an ensemble represents, no doubt not absolutely, but in the order of social relations, the supreme good. . . , namely, the very being of the Church as forming a single whole.

By means of charity the Holy Spirit moves the faithful to want to be members of a single Catholic whole—which he vivifies himself—and thereby to make up the one Catholic Church.⁴⁸

Cajetan would never have dreamed of one defining the Church by abstracting from love.

2. That there are Christian egoists proves nothing against sacramental charity; it simply proves that such charity is at times opposed. That there are holy non-Christians open to the sufferings of others proves that such charity is beginning to take shape in them.

2. THE SPIRITUAL INTERDIFFUSION OF CHARITY

The spiritual aspect of charity. If one considers charity under a certain ontological aspect, one sees that it resides in a given Christian. If it is considered under another aspect, a spiritual one, one sees it diffused throughout the entire Church, not only (which goes without saying) in the sense that the charity of the Christian has for its object other Christians, but, in addition, in a secret manner as well, in the sense that the charity of that Christian communicates to others, as it were, its own active resources, and it in turn is apt to receive the resources of other Christians' charity. From such a point of view charity appears all-pervasive. In such a way it can, on the one hand, arouse all that is done with a feeble charity in the Church; and, on the other hand, it is itself strengthened by what is carried out in the Church with a more fervent charity. Let us listen below to what the "true friends of God" have to tell us regarding this.

Charity desires to elevate what is done elsewhere with little love. Charity is first of all *life-giving*. It takes hold of all that happens externally in the Church (provided that it is a question of something intrinsically good) in view of communicating to her a spirit of life. It compensates in the Church's balance for all the defects of attention and all the lack of love caused by negligent servants, who remain responsible for their own debits. "Ah, how many psalms and nocturnes have been recited, how many Masses prayed and sung, how many great sacrifices offered, the benefit of which is never received by him who performs them!" It is the same for these people as for those who "make flour and wine: it is not to them that the best is given; they eat rye bread and drink water."⁴⁹ But next to those men who have no fervor there are others who are overflowing vessels. Our Lord touches them with his finger, and his plentitude of gifts quickly overflows their rim and spills out. "They allow absolutely nothing to be wasted from what they do: no matter

how great or little is the good they do, neither the smallest pious thought or act of faith is squandered. They relate everything to God with an active love and offer everything to the Father of heaven.”⁵⁰ There is no work “however modest or small—a chiming of a clock or a flame of a candle”—that they do not use for the good of the Church, vivifying her from a distance by their love. In such a way the many exterior actions of the Church make but one singular good work, in which is manifested the Spirit who continuously guards the hearts of men. “It is from the interior that the exterior draws its force. It is as if you had a fine wine so strong that when a single drop of it was placed in a glass of water it would completely change the water into a great wine. So is it with respect to the interior life, one drop of which gives an exceptional strength to the exterior life.”⁵¹ The more ardent is the charity of some, the more it elevates above their own value the works carried out by others with a lesser degree of love, lending them a new life and radiance so that these works belong more to them than to those who actually perform them and so that God receives the works more from their hands than from the hands of their authors. From this point of view one could say that the charity of the Church begins, at each moment of her existence (if one considers it according to its intensity, like a series of circles within each other, in the purest, most crucified and most loving souls) to extend outward to all that the Church does. “Hence it is”, writes Tauler, “that I love the good that my brother does more than he himself does; this good is more truly mine than his.”⁵²

Charity desires to be raised up by what is done elsewhere with a greater love. Charity demands to be enriched with the treasures of other souls and with the very goods of Christ. It receives all that is around it or above it in order to make it its own. Love, says, Tauler, draws all things to itself. It carries in its vessel all that is good in the world. “That St. Paul was enraptured was because God willed that for him and not for me; but if I delight in God’s will, that rapture is worth more to me in St. Paul than it would be in myself; and once I truly love it as it is in Paul, that rapture and all that God does for the Apostle (from the moment I love it in him as much as if it were in me) is as truly mine as it is his.”⁵³ And if my charity equaled that of the Apostle, his privileges would belong to me—in a spiritual manner—just as intensely as they belong to him. “I must have the same dispositions toward someone who is on the other side of the ocean, even if he be my enemy. Such is the

solidarity that unites the spiritual [or mystical] body.”⁵⁴

This power of love that absorbs what is better done passes the boundaries of death. It is one of the reasons why the souls in purgatory participate in our own feeble riches and the exuberant riches of the friends of God who live in our midst: “ ‘Take pity, O Lord,’ they say, ‘on the poor sinners who have done some works and have lost them. Grant unto them the remains from our abundant table and finish converting them in purgatory.’ O Lord, grant them some crumbs: it is thus that the measure of those overflowing hearts spreads over all the Church”⁵⁵

In such a way “I can become rich from all the good that is found in all the friends of God, both in heaven and on earth, and even from him who is the head,”⁵⁶ that is, Christ. But it is spiritually, by acquiescence of love, not identically, that we possess the riches of Christ; and it is impossible that charity ever be in us as it was in Jesus.

It is about the intoxicating power of appropriating all goods of heaven and earth that St. John of the Cross sang: “Mine are the heavens and you, earth, are mine also. Mine are the nations. The just are mine and the Mother of God is mine, and all things are mine. God himself is mine and for me, because Christ is mine and all is for me. Ah, my soul! What do you ask for, what do you seek? Yours is all this and all is for you. Do not aspire for less! Do not stop at the crumbs that fall from the table of your Father!”⁵⁷

Each one is in the whole, and the whole is in each one. 1. Such men, no doubt, form a *part* of the Church, and in the quantitative order their sanctity is joined to that of the other saints in order to make up the *total* and perfect sanctity of the Church. But spiritually, it is the whole Church—with the saints, the Blessed Virgin and the apostles, Christ the Head, and God himself who dwells therein—which is reflected in their soul, as heaven and the stars are seen in a mountain lake.

The Church possesses and contains them; but, in turn, they possess and contain her entirely in their own heart.

And no one experiences what the Church is as much as they do; for, in fact, there is no other means of knowing her experientially than this mutual inclusion of love.

2. If one seeks the supreme reason for this intercommunication of charity, we believe it would be necessary to go back to that mystery of the Gift God makes of his infinite Love so that in this infinite Love each one may embrace

the whole Church and the entire universe. It is necessary that we be mysteriously and spiritually transformed in God, so that we might be able to seize, through God, all things—even those that belong to him most intimately, even his Christ, even his own Deity, in order to offer them to him as a gift; for, he loves us in such an incredible way that he desires to receive all things—even his own Christ, even his own Deity—from our hands. Let him who is astonished (or scandalized) hear once more the prayer of Jesus:

The glory which you have given me, I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and I have loved them even as you have loved me. . . . I made known to them your name, and I will make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them. (Jn 17:22-23, 26)

Let him who is astonished or scandalized hear as well the words of St. Paul: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me” (Gal 2:20). “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil 1:21). “For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Col 3:3-4).

3. Jacques Maritain wrote:

In this way, to consider that great City as living totally on the common good—which is the very life of God communicated to the multitude of the just and, at the same time, in search for those who are lost—*each stone is for the sake of the city*. But to consider each stone as a living being in itself, in its personal participation in this common good, from the very life of God that is communicated to it, or as one sought out personally by God, who desires to communicate his life to it, it is toward each one that all the goods of the city converge, in order to be poured out on him (according to his capacity to receive from their plentitude); and in this sense *the city is for each stone*. It is for each of the saints of God, writes St. Thomas⁵⁸, what is said in Matthew 24:47, *Super omnia bona sua constituet eum*.⁵⁹

3. THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

The communion of saints is one of the names of the Church. It is the Church, but considered from the point of view of the charity that is diffused in her by the Holy Spirit, which renders all her members closely dependent on each other and which introduces them into a vast spiritual family whose goods are mysteriously reversible.

The first time the communion of saints is mentioned in the Creed is through a beautiful text of Nicetas of Remesiana⁶⁰ (ca. 400), and it is meant, in fact, to be identified with the Church:

After having confessed the Blessed Trinity, you confess to believe *the Holy Catholic Church*. Is the Church anything other than the congregation of all the saints? Since the beginning of the world, in fact, the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, and all the just who were, who are, and who will be form one sole Church; for, sanctified by the same faith and the same life, marked by the same Spirit, they become one sole Body. Christ is the Head of this Body. I repeat, even the very angels, the virtues, and celestial powers are contained in this one Church, according to the revelation of the Apostle. Colossians 1:20: *Through him he should reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven*. You believe, therefore, that it is in this one Church that you will obtain *the communion of saints*. Know that it is the one Catholic Church diffused throughout all the earth to whose communion you profess to hold firmly.⁶¹

The profession of the “communion of saints” does not yet seem here to be detached from that of the “Holy Catholic Church”. But, from the fifth century, one sees it appearing separately in the Creed of the Gallican Church, and from the ninth century this usage will pass into Italy, Spain, and Africa.

When treating the article of the Creed: *I believe in the communion of saints*, the Roman Catechism declares that it is “like an explanation of the preceding article, which confessed the *one holy catholic Church*”.

To the same exact degree that they belong to the Church, the baptized sinner and the unbaptized just belong to the communion of saints.

The bond of this communion is charity. The intrinsic bond that unites men to each other is no less mysterious than that which unites them to Christ and to the other Divine Persons: “That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have *fellowship* with us, and our *fellowship* is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 Jn 1:3, emphasis added).

Origen would write: “If we are in a society with the Father and the Son, how can we not be with the saints, who are not only on earth but also in heaven? For by his Blood Christ has brought peace to all things in heaven and on earth, joining that which is of earth to that which is of heaven.”⁶²

And St. John of the Cross sings: “My Beloved, we will see in ourselves thy beauty.”

The bond of communion in charity is still present, although in an indirect and non-salutary manner, in the baptized sinner who does not totally rupture it by schism. It is already present in a salutary but initial, imperfect, and

fettered manner in the unbaptized just.

This communion overcomes the barriers of the world. This communion pulls down upon us the love of the saints, who pass their time in heaven by doing good on earth: “I will not be able to rest until the end of the world and as long as there are souls to save. But when the angel says, ‘time is no more’, I will rest, and I will be able to rejoice because the number of the elect will be complete.”⁶³ From another point of view, all of the Church’s victories, even the humblest and most secret, resound throughout the Church triumphant and provide for her an increase of light.

This communion binds us to those who, having died in love, remain nevertheless in a temporary exile from the beatific vision. The help we bring them comes to them in two ways:

(1) by reason of the *unity of charity*; for, all those who are in charity are as one body; so that the good of one is poured out upon the others, just as the hand or another member is useful to the whole body. In this way every good deed accomplished by anyone has value for each of those who are in charity, according to the words of the Psalmist: *I am become a sharer in all those who fear you and keep your commandments*—and the greater their charity, the more they will experience this communion, whether they be in paradise or in purgatory or here on earth; (2) by reason of the *direction of intention* by which I transfer to another the actions I accomplish, just as I can, for example, pay the debt of another in order that he might be released from it; this is the manner in which the suffrages of the Church profit the deceased: the living pay God now for the satisfaction owed by the deceased.⁶⁴

The communion in space and time. The interdependence of Christians united in Christ by sacramental charity is organized across space. It gives to each one, as we have said, the treasures of all and to all the treasures of each individual. It extends to the most abandoned Christians: if he dies in isolation, the Christian knows that he never dies alone; the whole Church is in him in order to send him back to God. This communion extends as well to Christian sinners: “From the fact that they are still in the Church, they are aided by spiritual helps to recover the grace and life they have lost, and they participate in those benefits of which those who are totally separated from the Church have been deprived.”⁶⁵ This said communion extends even to men who are only pending members of Christ, who have not yet accepted the secret grace that visits them.

This communion is organized across time. Every act of charity has unlimited repercussions. On the last day one will understand the incalculable repercussions, in the spiritual history of the world, of the words, actions, or

endowments of the saint (and, conversely, of the heretic). “Such a movement of grace, which saves me from grave peril, could have been determined by an act of love that happened either just this morning or five hundred years ago by someone completely unknown, whose soul mysteriously communicated with mine, and who in such a way received his wages.”⁶⁶

Every man who performs a free act projects his personality into infinity. If he gives from his feeble heart a penny to a poor man, that penny pierces the hand of the poor, falls, breaks through the earth, pierces the sun, traverses the firmament, and captures the universe. If, on the other hand, he produces an impure act, he might darken thousands of hearts he does not even know, which mysteriously communicate with him and which need him to be pure, as a traveler dying of thirst has need of the glass of water in the Gospel. One charitable act, one movement of true pity, sings divine praises for him, from Adam until the end of the ages. It heals the sick, consoles the hopeless, calms storms, redeems captives, converts the infidel, and protects the human race.⁶⁷

Christians are the center of the spiritual communion of the entire world. Identified with the mystery of the Church, the mystery of the communion of saints reunites in its profundity two revelations that could otherwise appear to be opposites: on the one hand, that of the powerful and delicate bonds that intimately unite Christians—whence the words of St. Paul: “As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, *and especially to those who are of the household of faith*” (Gal 6:10; emphasis added); and, on the other hand, that of the solidarity of each individual Christian and of all Christians together with the entire world of those who are searching, as well as those who are lost—hence the immense and extraordinary definition of “neighbor” that our Lord himself proposed in the parable of the Good Samaritan and according to which it belongs to each one of us to be a neighbor to the other (Lk 10:20-37). If it is necessary to give first of all, and more, to Christians, is it not precisely so that they might become worthy of their vocation, which is to be Good Samaritans to the entire world, and so that they might make supplication that the world might become (on a spiritual level) the Church?

The Apostles Creed. In confessing the Trinity, the Apostles’ Creed takes care to locate, in a way, each of the Divine Persons in the universe of visible things. The Father is located in creation; the Son in Christ; the Holy Spirit in the Church.

The final articles of the Creed, which treat of the Holy Spirit, must (according to the results of recent studies)⁶⁸ be joined as such: “*I believe in the Holy Spirit, who resides in the Holy Catholic Church, which is the*

communion of saints, for the forgiveness of sins, in view of the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.”[69](#)

CHAPTER VII

THE SANCTITY OF THE CHURCH

“The soul”, says St. Thomas, “is the principle and cause of the living body in three ways: (1) it is the *principle* from which the body’s movement emanates; (2) it is the reason the body exists, that is, its *end*; and (3) it is the substantial *form* of bodies, to which it gives life.”¹

One can consider the created soul of the Church insofar as it *informs* its body and communicates to it a life that is greater than the life of this world’s kingdoms: and in that case one joins to the soul of the Church—as we will do below—the property and the note of the Church’s *catholic unity*.

One may also consider the created soul of the Church insofar as it is *that for which* the body exists, insofar as it obliges the body to tend toward it and be spiritualized and insofar as it is itself compelled to open up more and more (being the created soul of the Church) to the influence and attraction of the Holy Spirit, who is the uncreated Soul of the Church. One sees what the relations of *sanctity* are with the soul considered as (here below) the final cause of the Church.

We shall divide the discussion into three sections: (I) sanctity insofar as it is *realized* in the Church (formal or final sanctity); (II) sanctity insofar as it is tendential in the sacramental and jurisdictional powers (virtual or instrumental sanctity); and (III) sanctity as a *property and note* of the Church.

I. Sanctity as Realized in the Church

Two axioms bring to light the sanctity of the Church: (1) *The Church is not without sinners, but she is without sin*; this first axiom separates the Church from the sins of those who visibly—or corporally—belong to her; and (2) *All that there is of true sanctity in the world is already the concern of the Church of Peter*; this second axiom joins to the Church the sanctity of those who

belong to her invisibly, or spiritually.

1. THE CHURCH IS NOT WITHOUT SINNERS; SHE IS NEVERTHELESS WITHOUT SIN

The Church separates in us the good from the evil. She retains the good and leaves the evil behind. Her frontiers pass through our hearts. The evil is, above all, that of mortal sin, which makes us lose charity; it is also venial sin, which runs contrary to the rays of charity in us.

The Church is not without sinners. 1. She is the Kingdom of the Son of Man, from which those who create scandals and commit iniquity will be driven away only at the end of time (Mt 13:41-43); she is the net that retains until the last day both good and bad fish (Mt 13:47-50). She does not banish sinners from her bosom except in extreme cases: “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Mt 18:15-17; cf. 1 Cor 5:1-5). The Church can, in certain places, leave her first love, as at Ephesus (Rev 2:4), or include only a few faithful persons who have not sullied their garments, as at Sardis (Rev 3:4), or allow herself to grow lukewarm, as at Laodicea (Rev 3:15). There are always many sinners in the Church.²

2. Sinners are members of Christ and of the Church, but not in the same way as the just. They *belong* to the Church in which one finds the just, but they are not capable alone of *constituting* the Church. The notion of “member” of Christ and of the Church is applied therefore to the just and to sinners, not in an equal or univocal manner, but in one that is unequal and transposed.

3. Sinners are members of the Church by reason of two elements (as we have already noted):³ (a) the spiritual values that still subsist in them: the sacramental characters, the theological virtues of faith and hope, the recognition of the Church’s hierarchy, and so on; and (b) the charity that resides in a direct, immediate, and salutary manner in the just alone but which continues to affect sinners by its influence in an indirect, extensive, and non-

salutary manner. It is the impetus of the Church's collective charity that sinners follow when they bring their children to Baptism, when they encourage them to frequent Holy Communion, when they accept new definitions that the Holy Spirit suggests to the Church, when they participate by their donations in the Church's missionary activity, and so on. They are moved by the collective charity of the Church, carried along in its footsteps and in its life, even when they themselves have personally lost charity. They continue to share in the destiny of the just in the way a paralyzed member still participates in the movements and actions of the human person.

A Christian could sin mortally, therefore, destroying the charity in himself, and continue to belong to the Church, but only in a visible and non-salutary manner, at least as long as he does not fall into schism, that is, as long as he does not revolt against the cultic, sacramental, and directed charity, insofar as, directly present in the just and indirectly in sinners, it brings forth the unity of the entire Church's communion.

4. Cultic, sacramental, and directed charity is ordered—among both the just and sinners—toward the full indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Among the just, in whom it is found directly and in itself, such charity is ordered to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which demands to be continually maintained and intensified. Among sinners, in whom it is found indirectly and by its influence, charity is ordered to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which demands to be recovered and possessed anew.

5. The Church continues to live even in her children who are no longer in grace. She wages war in them against the evil that destroys them; she strives to keep them in her bosom and to rally them continually in the rhythm of her love. The Church guards them as a treasure with which one parts only by force. It is not that she desires to take care of dead weight; but she hopes that by the power of patience, meekness, and pardon, the sinner who is not completely separated from her will convert some day in order to live with fullness. She hopes that the lethargic branch will not (thanks to the little sap that is left in it) be cut off and thrown into the eternal fire, but that it will flourish.

The Church is nevertheless without sin. 1. "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy

and without blemish” (Eph 5:25-27). This text speaks of the present Church, such as she comes forth from Baptism, the grace of which—along with the Eucharist and the other sacraments—has for an end the incorporating of the Church in Christ her Head, who suffered, died, and rose for her and who thus allows her to suffer, die, and rise with him.

The Apostle knew well that there are sinners in the Church, since he continually needed to reprimand those whom he had engendered in Christ; and yet in his eyes the Church is holy and immaculate. Hence, sinners belong to the Church, not by means of their sin, but by the share of sanctity they carry within them and that still binds them to the Church.

2. The same revelation of the Church’s purity is found in substance, but without naming the Church, in the First Epistle of St. John. The Apostle, having written that Christ hates sin and that there is absolutely no sin in him, adds that, “No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him” (3:6). “He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God commits sin; for God’s nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God” (3:8-9). “We know that any one born of God does not sin, but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him” (5:18). And in St. John’s third Epistle: “Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. He who does good is of God; he who does evil has not seen God” (v. 11).

And yet St. John himself knows that Christians sin: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 Jn 1:8). All the contradictions are lifted once one understands that the members of the Church sin, certainly, but to this extent they betray the Church; that the Church is not therefore without sinners, but she is without sins.

The Church is disturbed by sin. To say that the Church is without sin is to say that she never *consents* to sin; that it is not in obeying her, but in betraying her, that her children sin; that the more they sin, the less they belong to her.

This is not to say, however, that the Church is not *disturbed* by sin. Such a peace will be her privilege in glory; it will not be hers in grace. The Church has the mission to go search out her children in the clutches of sin, to battle continuously in order to push back in them and in the world the frontiers of sin, to repair the ruins left by sin by doing penance, by repenting, and by making satisfaction.

The Church is totally mixed together with sin. Not that sin is the stuff of which she is made, but that it is the adversary with whom she is matched until the end of time. A fear, a sorrow, a constant preoccupation with sin dwells in the heart of the Church.

The Church who does not sin, but repents and converts. 1. Certainly, the Church must humble herself, since she is the Church of him who humbled himself before his Father (Jn 5:19; 14:28), before men (Jn 13:14), and before death (Phil 2:8). But can one say that she must *repent, convert, and do penance*?

Our Savior, who was without sin, was able to *expiate* for the world. He could not repent or, properly speaking, do penance. But the Church contains some sinners who belong to her only partially and whom the divine action strives to separate from their sins through repentance and penance, so that they might belong to her always more perfectly. They do not sin by weeping for their sins. It is a greatness, born, no doubt, from the misery of which Jesus was always exempt; a greatness, nevertheless, of the Kingdom of God. Even the beginnings of repentance and what one calls imperfect contrition—where faith, hope, and fear are not yet inflamed by charity—are not sins. They are visits by the Holy Spirit, because of which the faithful, still deprived of charity, begin to participate more in the sanctity of his Church. In his sinful children who, at his instigation, renounce sin, it is truly the Church herself who repents and does penance.

2. How can the Church do penance if she does not sin? Does not repentance belong only to the sinner?

Yes, these are the same real beings, the same concrete subjects who have sinned and who do penance, but acting then through contrary deeds and dispositions and having successively opposing roles. These are the same baptized men who belong at once (but partially) to two opposing cities: at times they sin, and to this extent they become involved in the city of the devil; at other times they do penance, and here they take part in the city of God. They sin insofar as they are of the seed of the devil and serve as his instruments: “He who commits sin is of the devil” (1 Jn 3:8;cf. Jn8:44), and in this way they work to destroy the Church in themselves and in the world. And they do penance for these sins insofar as they are of the seed of God and the instruments of Christ, and in this way they work to build up the Church in themselves and in the world. It is in betraying Christ and his Church that they

sin; it is in the name of Christ and his Church that they do penance. And this is why one must say that the Church, who does not sin, does do penance. It is truly she who does penance, in and through her children—but for sins she has not committed, sins she forbids them to commit, which they commit only by opposing her and in ceasing, to that extent, to be her children.

The Church as a person takes the responsibility, therefore, for doing penance. She does not take the responsibility, so to speak, for the sin. If she resembles the sinful woman of the Gospel, it is only at the moment when she anoints the feet of Jesus with perfume. It is the members themselves—laity, clergy, priests, bishops, and popes—who, by disobedience, take responsibility for the sin; not the Church as a person.

3. One falls into a great deception—against which the Protestants seem to be without defense and which fascinates them during their ecumenical congresses—when one invites the Church as a person to recognize and proclaim her sins. One forgets that the Church as a person is the Bride of Christ, whom he “obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28), whom he has purified that she might be in his sight “in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27), that she might be the “household of God,. . . the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). When humility places magnanimity in peril, it ceases to be a virtue.

4. When the Church, docile to Christ, places the *Pater* on our lips, when she has us say to the Father: “Forgive us our debts” (Mt 6:12), it is truly in her name that we pray each day and ask for pardon, but for the faults committed in our name by us, and not in her name or by her. No one has understood this better than St. Augustine: “Even they who walk in the ways of the Lord say, ‘*Forgive us our trespasses*’, for the prayer and the confession are pleasing to our Lord; the sin, however, that occasions these is not.”⁴

The Church asks not to sin. The Church as such every day asks not to sin, not to falter in faith, not to fall into avarice, impurity, pride, despair, or hatred, to persevere in charity to the end. She knows that her prayer for herself is always heard; but she also knows that each of her children can fall, that evil exercises over each one of them a constant and, at times, terrible fascination, that entire groups, entire local Churches, can collapse in these trials (Rev 2:4-5). This prayer to persevere to the end and not to sin, which the Church addresses to God for herself, is sure to be granted; she offers up the same

prayer for each of her children, but this time fearing that it will never be sufficiently granted, begging all the while that each of them might be guarded from evil and that not one of them be lost (cf. Jn 17:12, 15).

In what sense does the Church ask to be purified? How should one understand that the Church asks to be purified? Either she asks for her children, which would mean purification in the proper sense: the purification from sin; or she asks for herself, in order to advance with every passing day to a purer and more intense charity, a charity that will be more profoundly rooted in her members. Imperfect contrition is not a sin, but the Church is purified when her members progress to perfect contrition. She is again purified when they progress from the charity of beginners to that of the advanced, and from the charity of the advanced to that of the perfect.

How does the historian define the Church? Historians who, by vocation, move about on the level of the positive and empiric sciences, arrive only at the externals of the Church. They include in her—without considering that she is the Bride and Body of Christ and the Kingdom that is not of this world—Christians, along with their activities, both good and bad. They portray in the same frame and on the same canvas the scandals of Alexander VI and the pontifical dignity with which he was endowed, the greatness of the saints and the crimes of those baptized members who have sullied and bloodied the world.

Historians (even non-Christian historians) ought to be conscious of the descriptive and limited character of their point of view and know that they would do well to consider the Church, now and then, not as pure historians, but as men—casting a glance upon her that, while still not attaining that penetration which comes with faith, is already able to recognize and appraise superior human values. And thus, on the whole and at her fundamental level (not only in her faithful members, but even in the sinful ones whose betrayals she condemns) the Church will appear to them as a holy and salutary reality for humanity.

Nevertheless, only the eyes of faith allow one to know the Church in her total reality. No Catholic ought ever to say that sinners are in the Church *because* of their sins. They are in the Church because of that element of holiness that is still in them. But are they not in the Church *with* their sins? Do they not bring their sins into the Church? This is the whole question.

How does the theologian define the Church? Two ways seem to open up here, but one of them is a dead end.

If one chooses to define the Church, not by what makes her precisely to be the Church, but by including in her the sins of her members, one would have to hold: (1) that she is in no way totally pure, totally holy, but rather mixed with stain and sin; (2) that consequently, she takes on a body, is incarnate, and becomes visible as the Church not only through and in what is pure and holy in the being and external behavior of her members, but also through and in what is impure and soiled in their being and external behavior; (3) that her own limits, precise and true, are therefore expanded not only by the virtues of her members, but even by their sins, provided there is no question of sins like schism or heresy, which would take away from them their membership in the Church; and (4) finally, that if Christ as an individual is the Head and the Church, along with the sins of her members, is the Body, one would be forced to say logically that the whole Christ—that is, the Head and the Body—sins in his sinful members. This is the theory of the Church as holy in the just and stained in sinners: the maculate Church.

But if, on the contrary, one defines the Church by what precisely makes her the Church, the Body of Christ, one would hold: (1) that although she contains numerous sinners, she is totally pure and holy, with no mixture of stain or sin; (2) that she takes on a body, is incarnate, and becomes visible not only, of course, through and in the being and behavior of her just children, but also through and in what remains pure and holy in her sinful children, that is, through by and in all that, in spite of their sin, is the result of a heavenly gift: on the one hand, the sacramental characters, on the other hand, divine faith, the fear of holy Justice, theological hope, sorrow for their sins, even when these actions and virtues are still deprived of the flame of charity; (3) that her own boundaries, precise and true, circumscribe only what is pure and good in her members, just and sinners, taking into herself all that is holy—even in the sinners—and leaving outside of her all that is impure—even in the just; it is in our behavior, in our life, in our own heart, that the Church and the world, Christ and Belial, light and darkness, confront each other; and (4) that the whole Christ—Head and Body—is holy in all of his members, the sinners and the just, drawing to himself all sanctity—even that of his sinful members—and rejecting all impurity—even that of his just members. Here we have the theory of the immaculate Church.

It is true that apostolic men could cry out at bad Christians that they were

staining the Church. We think, nevertheless, that their intention was less to defend the theological position of a Church stained by her members than to make Christians understand that they belong completely to the Church (which is true), that the world will hold her responsible for their faults (which is also true, but unjust), and that, in this sense, they stain her by staining themselves. Far from scandalizing, this paradox, on the contrary, overwhelms, when it has for its purpose the calling back of Christian sinners to the demands of their vocation.

The Church is immaculate. Those who hold that the Church is maculate appeal to a platonic way of thinking. They distinguish, on one hand, *ideal Christianity* and, on the other, *historic Christianity*; on one hand, the *ideal Church*—such as she is in the mind of God (such as she will be in eternity) and, on the other hand, the *historic Church*. Only the first is without stain or wrinkle; the second is a conglomeration, carrying in her both Christ and Belial.

Those who hold that the Church is immaculate insist on her resemblance to Christ. It is not only, they say, the *ideal* Christ, and such as he is in the mind of God, who is without sin, it also the Christ *of history*—here one touches on the very mystery of the Incarnation. Equally, it is not only the *ideal* Church that is without spot or wrinkle; it is also the Church *of history*, and that is precisely the mystery of the Church, here below the Bride and Body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit,⁵ Christ-conformed and God-bearer. She contains numerous sinners, but she is holy even in them; she brings into their hearts Christ, who wages war against Belial.

A progression in ecclesiology. The medieval tendency in ecclesiology was to strive, above all, to safeguard the sanctity of the Church and, hence, to separate sinners from her as much as possible, lest they stain her. They were considered to be *in* the Church but not *of* the Church. They were not truly and properly her Body. They were her members only in an improper and equivocal sense; they were less like members than malicious humors. In short, the bond that attached sinners to the Church was weakened. In an extreme case one finds the error of Quesnel, according to whom sinners cannot be members of the Church, nor can they have Christ for their Head.

The modern tendency, on the other hand, strives above all to safeguard sinners' membership in the Church. They are considered to be, truly and

properly, members of the Church. But since the distinction is not made between the sinner and the sin, their sin is brought into the Church while restoring them to membership. It would follow, then, that the sanctity of the Church, amalgamated with numerous mortal and venial sins, is no more than a relative sanctity. “The Church is holy like Anvers is rich and Louvain is learned.”

It is important today to take a decisive step. The just and sinners are in the Church only because of what is holy in their being, in their heart, and in their behavior—to the exclusion of what is sinful in them. The Church is totally holy in the just and in sinners: in the latter, the sanctity is imperfect, fettered; in the former, it is perfect, free. The just and sinners are truly and properly members of the Church; the just are members in themselves and in a salutary manner; sinners are members to a lesser degree and in a non-salutary way. “Christ continually looks down from heaven with a special love upon his immaculate Bride, *intemeratam Spon-sam*, who struggles in exile in this world.”⁶

2. ALL THERE IS OF TRUE SANCTITY IN THE WORLD IS ALREADY THE CONCERN OF THE CHURCH OF PETER

The first axiom, by separating Christ’s Church from the sins of those who physically belong to her, clears up the misunderstanding that prevents one from seeing her sanctity. The second axiom, in attaching to Christ’s Church the sanctity of those who spiritually belong to her (by desire), clears up the misunderstanding that prevents one from seeing that all the authentic sanctity existing in the world—be it in pre-Christian religions, Judaism, dissident formations—bears witness, in reality, (from afar or near) not in disfavor, but in favor of that Church which Christ has made his Body and Bride and has entrusted to Peter.

The two zones of the Church: one perfected, the other initial. The teaching of Catholic doctrine is that outside her immediate influence there is, with regard to sanctity, something that turns some toward the Church. Those who do not yet belong to her physically always lack either the plenitude of sacramental graces or the fullness of jurisdictional orientation; hence, their sanctity will never be perfect. They are able, nevertheless, to belong to the Church inchoately, spiritually, by the desire of theological charity. This imperfect

sanctity is authentic and, sometimes, profound. By its very nature (and not always consciously) it is ordered toward the fuller sanctity of the Church, like a stem to its flower and a flower to its fruit. Truly proceeding from Christ, it truly tends toward the perfection of his Mystical Body, which is not possible except where the hierarchy is complete and the primacy of Peter recognized. Consequently, it is to the plentitude of the Mystical Body that it bears witness—like the way in which things in exile bear witness to things of the homeland. The witness of the saints of the Orthodox churches, or the Protestant churches, or of Judaism, or of Islam or Hinduism, if their sanctity is authentic, would diminish the splendor of the Church's sanctity only if the latter taught that there was supernatural life and authentic sanctity only in those who belonged to her visibly and physically and that there was neither supernatural life nor authentic sanctity in those who belonged to her invisibly and spiritually, without knowing it, by the very current of grace they had received from Christ. She teaches the contrary.

The true goods of dissidents are already those of the Church. The supernatural goods that are found among dissidents or the unbaptized are, it is true, imperfect: they can form the Church in her initial and fettered state, but not in one that is perfect and complete. But the Church in her initial state is already the Church; the goods of dissidents and the unbaptized are her goods; they contribute to building her up. What is authentic in the religious experience of the dissident Lutheran, Anglican, and Orthodox already belongs to the Church; but what is still lacking in the said fettered experience, that is, its proper fullness, is also, then, lacking to the Church. In this perspective it is impossible to say that dissidents or the unbaptized are detaining true supernatural goods that the Church does not yet possess. “Catholicism is not one religious group; it is the religion, the one true religion, and it exults without jealousy in every good, even that which is produced outside of its boundaries, for this good is outside only in appearance; in reality it belongs to the Church invisibly. Does not all, in fact, *belong to us who belong to Christ?*”⁷

II. Sanctity insofar as It Is Tential in the Hierarchical Powers

The grandeurs of the hierarchy are at the service of the grandeurs of sanctity. The former, therefore, must be holy—not with a formal, final holiness; but one that is tendential, ministerial, or instrumental. They are holy not directly and in themselves; but indirectly and by their relation to the grandeurs of sanctity—similar to the way in which one says that a region or a food is healthy because it is favorable to health.⁸

The hierarchical powers contain the powers of order and the powers of jurisdiction.

1. INSTRUMENTAL SANCTITY IN THE POWERS OF ORDER

The power of order, which is one of the three sacramental powers, allows those in whom they exist to act as pure instruments, as pure channels, to transmit to souls prepared to receive it grace that comes down from God and from the Cross of Christ.

The persons who possess the power of order might lack holiness—and this surely will bring forth some difficulties in the practical order; but the power of order itself, which is a pure instrument in the hands of God, is not sullied or diminished. St. Augustine writes on John 1:33 (“He on whom you see the Spirit descend, and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit”): “When Peter baptizes, it is Christ who baptizes; when Paul baptizes, it is Christ who baptizes; when Judas baptizes, it is Christ who baptizes.”⁹

When one says that the sacraments work *ex opere operato*, this can be understood with reference to the minister and can signify that the personal dispositions of the minister do not have an influence on the effect of the sacraments. It can be understood more profoundly with reference to those who approach the sacraments and can signify that the sacraments transmit Christ’s grace, not independently of, but in dependence on our dispositions—not to the measure of our dispositions, but beyond, although proportionate to them; so that those who come with two receive four, and those who come with three receive six. “To him who has will more be given” (Lk 8:18).

2. THE MINISTERIAL SANCTITY OF THE POWERS OF JURISDICTION

The power of order is strictly instrumental; the power of jurisdiction is

ministerial only. The powers of jurisdiction are destined to communicate grace to souls, not by invading them, but by proposing to them from without speculative or practical directives that they have to accept and interiorize.

To force open, as it were, the doors of the soul in order to pour forth grace is possible only to God, and, as we have said, creatures can then be used by him only as pure *instruments*, in view of ends that totally surpass them.

But to propose to minds from without a speculative or practical message, even one of divine origin, is a work that appears more connatural to men and one in which they can take a large part of the initiative. The depositaries of jurisdiction act, then, more often as *secondary causes* than as pure transmitters. They will be, under this title, principals of initiatives and responsibilities.¹⁰

The necessity of assistance for the powers of jurisdiction. The price of such a privilege left to man will be that, in the same measure that the importance of their role increases, fallibility will threaten to enter into the Church's government. Whence the necessity—in order that the faithful be directed and not led astray by their pastors—of a particular providence, a prophetic help, and an assistance. This was, in fact, promised to the apostles: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,. . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:19-20).

The degrees of assistance. The assistance given to the declarative power is *absolute* and, in this sense, completely holy. There is no problem here.

The assistance given to the canonical power is *prudential*. It is *infallible* in measures taken in the general order: and in this sense such measures (without being necessarily the most prudent possible) will always be prudent and holy; they cannot lead one astray.

The same assistance is *fallible* for measures taken in the particular order and in the “biological” order: so that, taken together, these measures will be prudent, beneficial, and holy; but they can at times be erroneous, harmful, and misleading. Here we find a mystery.¹¹

Why is the assistance fallible in the area of particular and biological directives? Could not Christ have preserved the canonical power from all error and injustice even in these areas? Why does he permit those who must speak in his name to fail at times? This is his secret. It falls to us more to

observe it than to explain it.

The response to questions of this nature is that God would not permit evil to enter into his work of redemption unless he could draw forth from it a greater good. What are these goods? They remain hidden and appear only imperfectly.

It may be said, for example, that God, by leaving such a huge responsibility to his servants in governing the Church, honors in them (even to the extreme) the human condition. Allowing them to fall at times when coming in contact with concrete and changing realities, God invites them to learn by experience, to walk through history in order to teach the things that transcend history. He forces them to “exist with the people”, to use indulgence toward those who sin, since they are surrounded by weakness (Heb 5:2), to reflect on their misery, to distrust themselves, to supplicate humbly in order to obtain the lights of heaven.

It may also be said that the most terrible errors of the men of the Church were the occasion (by an unexpected grace) of the martyrdom of St. Joan of Arc or the transforming union of St. John of the Cross.

Speaking about the just who have been chastised by the error of the Christian community, St. Augustine wrote:

If they sustain this affront and injustice with great patience for the peace of the Church, without breeding any innovations of schism or heresy, they will teach men about true love and with what charity one must serve God. They defend even unto death and support by their testimony the faith they know to be preached in the Catholic Church. The Father crowns in secret those whom he sees in secret. Such a race seems rare; nevertheless, examples are not lacking. In fact, they are more numerous than one can believe.¹²

The Christian attitude in the presence of the possible failures of the canonical power. 1. It can happen that jurisdictional directives in fallible matters are *just in their content* but immoral in the intention of him who imposes them: the calculations of ambition can promulgate a just law. We can say, then, that under the aspect in which they are immoral, they constitute a sin of the people of the Church and are outside the Church, who is by her very essence without sin; and under the aspect in which they are just, they must be obeyed.

2. They can be, however, *intrinsically awry*, if they impose an error (the pre-Galileo decrees declaring that heliocentrism is contrary to the Bible), a sin, or an unjust penalty (Joan of Arc pronounced the bishop of Beauvais responsible for her death).

Insofar as *doubt* remains, the presumption is in favor of the juridical

authority. It would take exceptionally grave reasons to shake such authority.

If it becomes *evident*, however, that the particular prescriptions of the Church's fallible message impose an error, sin, or unjust penalty, they will already be annulled by the superior prescription of her infallible message—often expressly called to mind and always presupposed—according to which one will in no way be able to contradict the natural law or the law of the Gospel. Appealing to the tribunal of God (as did Joan of Arc) against decisions of this nature—deciding “*to obey God rather than men*”—will not be in any way to oppose God to the Church, but rather to oppose the will of the infallible Church—which is none other than the will of God—to the obvious (and already repudiated) error of her inferior tribunals and her ministers. When superiors, says St. John of the Cross, “have no one who dares advise or contradict them when they err. . . the Order should be counted as lost and totally lax.”¹³

In this sense, since it already contains the reprobation and repudiation of error and injustice from the moment they appear, the overall message of the Church is holy.

How the failings of inferior canonical proceedings are already repudiated by the superior canonical proceedings. 1. The fallible powers of the Church can never lead me astray by forcing me *to sin*, in spite of myself: in order for me to sin it is necessary that I will it.

They can, however, lead me into *error*. The error may be *speculative*, if it tells me that I must believe in geocentrism under pain of contradicting the inerrancy of Sacred Scripture. It may also be *practical*: torture, declared by Nicholas I to be against both the natural law and the law of the Gospel, was tolerated by Innocent IV in the tribunals of the Inquisition; some bishops might declare an unjust war to be just, as well as a just resistance to be unjust, and so on.

2. As soon as the failure of certain jurisdictional directives is *discovered*, these directives become invalid and already repudiated and annulled. If what they prescribe appears to be a sin or injustice to commit, it is all the more forbidden to obey them. If they strike me as an advantage I can renounce without sinning and if, at the same time, obedience (at the cost of a supportable sacrifice) permits me to avoid both scandal and worse evils, I ought to choose to obey.

Insofar, however, as the failure of the fallible jurisdictional directives

remains *hidden*, these directives belong—provisionally and conditionally—to the Church’s jurisdictional message. They would not appear, at that moment, as scandalous. They belong to the human element that is not yet evangelized. They are, in the New Testament, like a heavy weight, a mitigated replica of those errors and iniquities that, in the Old Testament, did not appear as such and that God, for this reason, allowed Israel to impute to him. As soon as the progress of truth and charity reveals their vice, they will be repudiated. As numerous as they are, these failures are, in the New Law, partial and precarious; and the principles capable of reducing them and clearing them out one day remain constantly active in the Church.

The Church herself is without spot or wrinkle. The message of the jurisdictional powers is *the tool*, not the subject, of the Church’s sanctity. Sanctity is fitting to it, not as its own, but “tendentially”, by reference to the Church’s own sanctity. This tendential, ministerial sanctity is pure and without admixture on the level of defined truths and universal laws. On the level of particular and biological directives, error and injustice—which are possible—are already repudiated as soon as they appear as such, so that they do not alter the sanctity of the Church.

One finds neither spot nor wrinkle nor stain in the Church considered as *subject* of sanctity, that is, in the believing and loving Church, composed of clerics and laity, of just and sinners—a human community issuing forth from the sacramental and jurisdictional powers, unified by charity that is cultic, sacramental, and directed, and where the Holy Spirit dwells in his fullness.

III. Sanctity as a Property and Mark of the Church

We shall speak of the nature of the Church’s sanctity (1); of the mystery of this sanctity (2); and of the miracle it represents (3).

1. THE NATURE AND DEFINITION OF THE CHURCH’S SANCTITY

Sanctity passes from Christ into the Virgin, the Church, and the faithful. Christ is holy. Insofar as he is God, he is holy by his very essence; he is sanctity itself, and, in this sense, he alone is holy with the Holy Spirit in the glory of the Father: *Tu solus sanctus*. Insofar as he is man, he is, first of all,

holy by the personal union of his human nature with the Word; this is incommunicable sanctity. Then, he is holy because he possesses as source and fullness the grace and truth communicated to men.

The Blessed Virgin, whom the angel greeted as “full of grace” and in whom is condensed the whole sanctity of the Church, is called All-Holy.

The Church is holy: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might *sanctify* her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:25-27; emphasis added).

The first Christians are called “saints” by the Apostle: “[Paul,] to all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be *saints*” (Rom 1:7; emphasis added). “All the *saints* greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household” (Phil 4:22; emphasis added; cf. Acts 9:32; 26:10).¹⁴

Sanctity is charity. “God is love (*agape*), and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 Jn 4:16). It is by touching the world with his love that God sanctifies it: “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). The Gospel reveals to us the supreme name of sanctity; it is charity, *agape*, love. The word “holy” (*sanctus*, *sancire* = to make sacred), in Greek *hagios* (root *hag* = pure), is adopted by theologians as connoting, on one hand, the idea of *purity*, on the other hand, the idea of *firmness*, of solidity, of consecration.¹⁵ But this purity and this firmness, as we know from the Gospel, are only derivations, the results, of God’s love for us and follow from our response of love to God; for, “the sun of ‘he *loves them*’ is reflected in the moon of ‘they love him’ and is always the same light.” Having noted the Dionysian definition of sanctity: exemption from all impurity and the perfection of purity, Benedict XIV adds: “But who does not see that such a sanctity requires the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, by which we are immediately related to God?”¹⁶ To say of the Church that her sanctity consists primarily in charity, insofar as it is cultic, sacramental, and directed, is, on the one hand, to exclude from her all the impurities of the body and spirit that are contrary to love; and, on the other hand, to include in her all the consecrations and sanctifications without which charity would be neither cultic nor sacramental nor directed.

How does one circumscribe and recognize the Church’s sanctity? One

does not *circumscribe* the Church blindly. One begins with revelation. It is by beginning with revelation that we define the Church—on the one hand, as hating sin even in her own members; on the other hand, as drawing to herself all the sanctity of the world.

It is also to revelation and to theology that one must turn when asking how the sanctity of the Church is *known*: Is faith required? Can reason alone know something? What can simple empiric observation perceive? The response to these questions will be:

1. The existence of the *mystery* of the Church's sanctity is affirmed for us by revelation. We cannot adequately know this sanctity except by supernatural faith. "Grace and sanctity are realities above nature."¹⁷

2. The existence of the *miracle* of the Church's sanctity—that is, the mystery of that ray with which the Church surrounds herself, by elevating in an extraordinary manner human values, of which she takes hold and which she incorporates into herself—falls by its very nature under the metaphysical view of natural intelligence, which persists, although often veiled or suppressed, in every man. Even when an individual fails to recognize it as a miracle, the same [metaphysical] view suffices at least to discern the exceptional moral quality of the human values that pass under the Church's influence: it was in this way, for an example, that the Catholic mystics held the attention of Henri Bergson.

3. The mystery and the miracle of the Church's sanctity escape, by their very nature, the purely empiric view, preoccupied as it is with the mere shell of things, incapable of plumbing their depths: similar to the way in which a cube, when seen from a certain angle, appears to be a flat surface.¹⁸

2. THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH'S SANCTITY

The sanctity of the Church is greater than that of each of her children. 1. The Church's sanctity differs from that of each of her children not only quantitatively, but qualitatively as well: she adds to their total a certain order, like that which a symphony adds to the sounds of the various instruments. In other words, the Church is holy, not as a simple aggregate, but insofar as they [her members] form a personal whole; her sanctity, although it exists in her diverse children (and not outside of them), is that of a personal whole.¹⁹

2. In a lesser degree, the sanctity of the Church is made from all the faith,

hope, remorse, holy intentions, and generous acts—in short, all authentic virtue—that exists in even her poorest children, who at other times are sinners. The Church’s sanctity, however, is made above all from the sanctity of the just—from whom sinners are suspended—and, even more, from the sanctity of the true friends of God—the great saints, known and unknown.

3. To these individual elements is joined an ordering and unifying element. The breath of Pentecost, sent by Christ, continues to animate the Church, bestowing upon her a sanctity, the fullness and continuity of which extends beyond that of each of her members; so that, the holier they are, the more they realize and proclaim that they are in the Church as disciples and not as masters:

Their humility, their occasional insufficiencies, something unfinished and accepted that is in them and is turned toward another, makes it sufficiently clear: they are saints in the environment in which they live; by means of Christ, from whom everything they have comes; and, consequently, their sanctity is, in its origin, common, before it is their own. Also, by its very essence, it bears witness to the Catholic sanctity of the Church and not properly to itself.^{[20](#)}

All of the Church’s sanctity is evangelical. Among the saints the Gospel is in a pure state. With the first Christian martyrs, later in Japan and Canada, then in Annam and Uganda, and in various places in our own day: blood does not cease to be poured out for the love of Jesus.

It is the Spirit of the Gospel that brings about the prayers of the liturgy, the rules of the founders of religious orders, and the advice of the great spiritual writers. The most personal saints, from diverse times and places, have felt themselves to be carried along by a power stronger than any one of them individually, which marvelously bound them to the others.

Many flowers were needed, says St. Ambrose, to make up the perfume of which the Gospel speaks. Today, only the Church—where the Spirit makes numerous flowers blossom—can pour out such perfume on the Lord’s feet: “No saint, in fact, can love as much as she, *for it is she who loves in all the saints.*”^{[21](#)}

Holier than each of her members, the Church is Jesus continuing in his members a life that began in himself and that will never end.^{[22](#)} The Church is “the Gospel that continues”.

3. THE MIRACLE OF THE CHURCH’S SANCTITY

The sanctity of Christ is miraculously manifested in the physical order and in the moral order. The mysterious sanctity of Christ is manifested exteriorly by his life among men in two ways:

1. His life itself, his behavior, his attitude, the whole of the Gospel message, which we have not ceased to live for the last two thousand years, all represent—to the eyes of those who know how to judge the quality of human values—a miracle of sanctity, a *moral* miracle.

2. Furthermore, in certain circumstances, Christ's sanctity abruptly breaks forth in his *physical* miracles. One thinks of the miracles that gave credit to his mission, for example Matthew 9:6, “ ‘But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins’—he then said to the paralytic—‘Rise, take up your bed and go home.’ ” And the miracles of his progressive glorification: the Transfiguration (Mt 17:2-5), the Resurrection (Rom 1:4; Acts 2:27), and the Ascension (Mk 16:19). These last miracles imprinted themselves deep within the memory of the disciples (2 Pet 1:16-18; Acts 2:24; 3:15; 10:40; 17:31-32; 1 Cor 15:—28, and so on).

The Church's sanctity is also miraculously manifested in the physical order and in the moral order. The Church's sanctity, mysterious and hidden, is exteriorly manifested as well:

1. *Physical* miracles are not lacking. They arise in the footsteps of the Church's holiest children. They appear as a response to a prayer, common at places of pilgrimage or where prayer is most fervent. In the end, the interior sanctity of the Church will burst forth in the miracle of the resurrection of the dead and the glorification of the elect.

2. Furthermore, the Church's sanctity is attested to externally by the permanent *moral* miracle that constitutes the transcendence of her behavior toward all human formations. Echoing the life of Christ, the life of the Church is, in its totality, a miracle: “The Church”, states the First Vatican Council, “is, in herself, by reason of her admirable propagation, her eminent sanctity, and her inexhaustible fecundity in all manner of goods. . . a perpetual motive of credibility and an unshakeable witness of her divine mandate.”²³

Three signs of the Church's sanctity. Three signs among others, three lines of force, show the visible Church as holy: (1) her constancy in confessing the grandeurs of God; (2) her thirst to join him in the hereafter; (3) her zeal to

give him to men.

1. What is, in effect, the Church? First and foremost, *a voice that does not cease to cry out to the world the grandeurs of God*. One finds her where it is understood, on the one hand, that God “dwells in unapproachable light” (1 Tim 6:16); but also that he is, on the other hand, so close that it is “in him [that] we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28):

—where, on the one hand, it is understood that God is infinitely good and powerful; and, on the other hand, that the horror of evil surpasses all human conceptions; that before being a question posed to God by man, evil is a question posed to man by God (Job 10:2; 38:1ff.); that we cannot plumb the depths of the mystery of evil without first ascending into the mystery of God;

—where it is understood that God is madly in love with man, revealing his whole secret to him: his paternity which has filled men from the beginning; his only Son, who was destroyed in order to ransom them from catastrophe; his Holy Spirit, who brings them redemptive graces and establishes in them the Church, where the three Divine Persons dwell (Jn 14:23);

—where that conviction resists the flow of human errors and the most subtle and most terrible of temptations, a conviction tested by the solemn approach of death and sealed (when necessary) by the outpouring of blood; and where those who confess the faith are carried along by the breath that comes from the Cross and leads to the Parousia—for, the faith of the Church carries the faith of each of her children.

2. What else is the Church? Above all, *a desire to be with God*. One finds her where one longs for the day when God will manifest his face and be all in all (1 Cor 15:28), when Christ will come to renew all things (Acts 3:21; Rev 21:5), to destroy death and resurrect humanity (1 Cor 15:42, 55), and to make a new heaven and a new earth, in which justice will dwell (2 Pet 3:13);

—where it is understood that the sorrows of our world are those of its giving birth to the freedom and glory of God’s children (Rom 8:21-22); where one begs each day that the Kingdom of God might arrive and, with it, the resurrection of the dead and the life of a new age; where it is understood that history is not the final judgment but that the final judgment judges history;

—where each life is regarded as a preparation for death and the latter as a door that opens suddenly onto the holiness of God: “We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the

body and at home with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:6-8); where one understands that it does not profit a man to win the world if he thereby comes to lose his soul (Mk 8:36), that the dwelling places of the present time are dwelling places of exile;

—where one grasps that, although our exile is visited by the mystical presence of God, the time for possessing the Divine Persons in the clarity of vision is prepared by a time of possessing them in the night of love; that at the evening of life we will be judged according to love; that they are correct who, unlike us, sell all in order to buy that love; that our worth is measured by the degree to which we begin to come under the influence of their effect;

—where one gathers around Christ, who “came to cast fire upon the earth” (Lk 12:49); where it is understood that God, who has given to men the bodily presence of his only Son, loves them so much that he leaves this bodily presence to them, veiled under the appearances of bread and wine, and that the graces of contact brought by Christ continue to come to us through the sacraments; where every generation calls blessed the Virgin Mother of Jesus and beseeches her to intercede—as in former times at Cana—for human misery;

—where sin is held in horror and regarded as the only true evil; where the Gospel exhortations to the narrow door, renunciation, the cross, poverty, chastity, and obedience are held in honor.

3. What, finally, is the Church? In the first place, *zeal, a movement to give God to men*. One finds her where the expectation of the Parousia and the imminence of eternity reveal the inestimable price of the present moment, of the movement of history, of man’s birth, labor, and death; where one believes that in eternity will be the harvest of what has been sown in time; where the zeal for heaven engenders a burning desire to convert the world;

—where men, knowing that Love has given his life for them, strive themselves to give their life (1 Jn 3:16) and their goods (17) for their brethren, to bear their brethren’s burden (Gal 6:2), and not to lie (Col 3:9); where the Gospel mission, begun by the Savior and his apostles, is perpetuated; where, in order to imitate the humiliations of the Son of God made equal to us, missionaries leave their homeland and adopt the customs of a foreign people in order to bring them the water of life in a vessel they may be able to recognize; where one embraces the condition of the poor, as did St. Vincent de Paul, or of the insane, as did John of God, or of the slaves, as did the Brothers of Our Lady of Mercy, or of the savages, as did the Jesuits of

New France, or of the lepers, as did Father Damien, in order to bear witness everywhere to the love of God which is in Christ Jesus; where the poor are clothed and fed, strangers cared for, the sick and the imprisoned visited (Mt 25:37-40);

—where the little ones are received in the name of Jesus (Mt 18:5); where the Lord's blessing (Lk 18:16-17) continues to touch them through Baptism; and where it is understood how terrible it will be for those who scandalize them (Mt 18:6);

—where sin is hated and the sinner restored; where one believes that error is to be detested and the one whom it leads astray, loved; where obedience is without meanness and commandment without pride; where one finds the magnanimity of carrying the treasure of God and the humility of bearing it in a fragile vessel (2 Cor 4:7), the innocence of the dove and the wisdom of the serpent (Mt 10:16), a profound fear of hell and a loving trust in Jesus, who desires to save us from it, a sense of what is lacking to non-Christians and of the graces that can warn them;

—where the sanctity of marriage and that of virginity are recognized (1 Cor 7); where the Kingdom that is not of this world remains capable of illuminating the cultural activities that it transcends.

Do not judge the Church according to what she is not.

Catholics are not Catholicism. The faults, incompetence, shortcomings, and stupor of Catholics do not involve Catholicism. The latter is not charged with furnishing an alibi for the negligence of the former. The best apologetic does not consist in justifying Catholics when they are wrong but, on the contrary, in marking these wrongs—both those that do not touch the substance of Catholicism and those that only serve to place in bold relief the power of a religion that is always living despite them. The Church is a mystery; she has her Head hidden in the heavens, and she is not seen adequately. If you seek that which represents her without betraying her, look at the pope and the bishops teaching faith and morals, look at the saints in heaven and on earth. Do not consider us sinners. Or rather, look at how the Church dresses our wounds and leads us hobbling along to life eternal. . . . The great glory of the Church is being holy with sinful members.²⁴

The Church's sanctity was foretold. The permanence of the Church's sanctity in the course of the ages until the end of the world was foretold. In addition, the miracle that she constitutes in herself represents the fulfillment of a prediction that fills the entire New Testament.

In a general way one could say: Jesus announces a new spiritual era for humanity: "The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship

him. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (Jn 4:23-24). This adoration is centered on the bloody sacrifice of the Cross: “I, ‘when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.’ He said this to show by what death he was to die” (Jn 12:32-33), the power of which is brought to us by the unbloody sacrifice of the Last Supper: “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me” (Lk 22:19). The true adorers must be born from Baptism: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (Jn 3:5); and are nourished on the Savior himself: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him” (Jn 6:56). They will be docile to those who come to teach them on behalf of the Savior: “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives any one whom I send receives me; and he who receives me receives him who sent me” (Jn 13:20); and the Savior’s prayer joins them: “I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word” (Jn 17:20).

Who would not recognize the fulfillment of this prophecy in the cultic, sacramental, and directed charity of the Church? And, without a doubt, the authentic charity of the world is not explicitly cultic, sacramental, and directed; but, we know that it is implicitly so and that, like a nebula centered on its nucleus, it organizes itself in order to form around the Church in perfect act the Church in incomplete and still fettered act.

It was predicted as well that the preaching of the faith would be accompanied by miracles (Mk 16:17-18); and, although they may be more necessary and more frequent at certain periods in history, miracles never cease to accompany the Church’s journey.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BODY OF THE CHURCH

We shall speak first of all about the nature of the Church's Body (I). Then, we will speak about three of its properties: it is coextensive with the soul of the Church; it is distinct from other temporal and religious formations; and it is transparent (II). Its fourth property is to be organic and differentiated (III). We shall speak finally about the City of God and the City of the World (IV).

I. The Nature of the Body of the Church

The Church is a Compound of body and soul. 1. There is a similitude of structure between the Church and Christ and between the Church and human nature.

Christ is not a juxtaposition of two realities, the one divine and the other corporeal. He is one unique being, where the Divine Person subsists in two natures, the one divine and the other human. It follows that the Divine Person of Christ and the created grace with which his human nature is adorned, while remaining profoundly mysterious, can be rendered sensible to our eyes, by reason of the corporal comportment of this human nature. Jesus can say to the Jews: "Which of you convicts me of sin?" (Jn 8:46).

On the other hand, our human nature, which Christ came to restore, is not a juxtaposition of two substances, either. It is one unique substance, one whole composed of a spiritual soul and a body. It follows that the soul, by its nature spiritual and invisible, is rendered sensible (in a certain sense) to our eyes, by reason of the body that it informs.

The Church is not a juxtaposition, either. She is composed of a soul and a body. Her uncreated Soul is the Holy Spirit, who, by dwelling in her, forms her with a created soul—which will be as an outpouring of the capital grace of Christ—and a Body—which will be as an extension in time and space of

the body and bodily actions of Christ; so that to curse this Body is to curse the very body of Christ: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:4). The result is that the very uncreated Soul of the Church and the created soul that emanates from it, while remaining profoundly mysterious, can, to a certain extent, become sensible to the eyes, by reason of the body and temporal comportment of Christians.

2. In these three cases, it is the property of the body, not simply to be visible, but to render visible, in a certain measure, the spirit that envelopes and animates it.

Like Christ, the Church, which is Christ’s Mystical Body, is composed of spirit and flesh, visible and invisible. When one says that the Church is the Mystical Body of Christ and that he himself is the Head of this Body, one is speaking about realities composed of spirit and flesh, invisible and visible. The Head, or Christ, is the Word insofar as he has descended into human nature; the Mystical Body, or the Church, is the Holy Spirit insofar as he has come to dwell among men; diffused by the Holy Spirit, it is cultic, sacramental, and directed charity, insofar as it vivifies human beings, transforming them from within, to such an extent that a change is produced even in their external condition and behavior.

When St. John says, “The Word was made flesh”, “flesh” signifies more than flesh alone; it signifies, namely, an integral human nature. It is true, however, that Christ took on flesh. When St. Paul says that the Church is the Body of Christ, “Body” signifies more than a simple body; it signifies, namely, a composite of body and soul, invisible and visible. It is true, however, that the Church possesses a body.

The corporal casing of Christ and the corporal casing of the Church. The flesh of Christ and the visible casing or body of the Church thus both signify, with certain necessary transpositions: (1) an element that is not accidental, temporal, or destined to disappear, but essential, permanent, and imperishable; (2) an element that expresses, albeit inadequately, the spiritual reality enveloped in it and that, therefore, reveals that reality and, at the same time, veils it; (3) an element that the presence of the soul renders organic and differentiated; (4) finally, an element that, in the measure in which it is informed by an inherent soul, is coextensive with it; so that, where the soul is, there is the body, and where the body is, there also is the soul.

As a result, the whole complex of exterior manifestations that are the Body of the Church is not made simply from the external activity of men, even if they are baptized. It is made from that part of their external activity which is informed by the created soul of the Church and tends immediately toward the Church's spiritual ends.

As a further result: it is impossible to speak of the soul of the Church without connoting her body; it is impossible to speak of her body without connoting her soul. No doubt, one can emphasize one more than the other; but one will find, here and there, they are same reality.

The union in the Church of the soul and body. Let us now consider the union of the spiritual and the corporal, of the invisible and the visible, one the one hand, in Tobias and, on the other hand, in his companion the angel.

In the angel, the union is *accidental*, belonging in no way to the very nature of the angel. It is *fortuitous* and without a future. It is *extrinsic*, the spirit moving the body as a foreign principle. An ecclesiology that imagined such a union of the spiritual and the corporeal, the invisible and the visible, the soul and the body, in the Church, would be, in fact, a complete aberration.

In Tobias, the union is *essential*; that is to say that it belongs to the very nature of man, who is neither angel nor beast, but an incarnate soul or animated body. The union is *permanent* and will be renewed in the life beyond, where the human condition will be changed, not abolished. The union is also *intrinsic*, the soul bringing about in the body the operations of life. Thus, in the Church, the soul is united to the body so that the Church—incarnate soul and animated body—may exercise, in a living manner, the operations proper to her, according to her nature as the Bride and Body of Christ.

To separate the created soul of the Church from her body, or (what amounts to the same thing) to extend the soul beyond the limits of her body (as do those who say that the unbaptized just belong to the soul of the Church, but not to her body) or to extend the body beyond the soul is to destroy the very notion of the Church.

Catholic spirituality is not a spirituality of separation from matter; rather, it is a spirituality of transfiguration of matter. The Church is inseparably mysterious and visible.

Constitutive elements and adjacent elements of the Church's body. Just as the

human is primarily in man and secondarily in the things man uses and on which he leaves his mark, so the Church is primarily in the being and exterior comportment of *men*—their corporeal and visible manner of existing, acting, working, insofar as these things are touched by the supernatural gifts. Here we have the *constitutive elements* of her body. The Church is secondarily in the *things* she uses and on which she leaves her imprint, so that they become, by reason of their visibility, like a prolongation of her presence. Here we have the *adjacent* (or auxiliary) *elements* of her body.

These diverse elements that protect the casing, or envelope, of the Church are not equal as revealers of her mystery. Grace is still hidden in a small baptized infant; it will shine forth later, if that child becomes a saint. The same goes for the adjacent elements: certain ones are more transparent and more apt to communicate the mystery; others are unwieldy and opaque.

The definition of the body of the Church according to these constitutive elements. One would say that it is the *visible and external comportment of men*—namely, their visible being, their visible acting, their visible work: (1) insofar as they manage—under the *motion* of the Holy Spirit—to prolong, as it were, in space and in time the visible comportment of Christ (causal and messianic aspect); (2) or insofar as it is *vivified* by fully Christic grace, that is, grace that is cultic, sacramental, and directed (formal aspect); (3) or insofar as it will serve as a casing (or envelope) and carnal residence for grace—which will blossom into glory—and, by grace, for the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Trinity (final and eschatological aspect). Each one of these three definitions implies the other.

Three types of visible activities that manifest the Church. They are:

a. *Prophetic activities.* In order that Christ's royal, magisterial, and prophetic preaching might continue here on earth, he transmits to his Church an extraordinary mission as herald. We know the essence of this mission only in the night of faith; but it is transmitted: (a) by acts of the jurisdictional *hierarchical* powers, insofar as they echo the messianic and prophetic teaching of Christ and (b) by the manifestations of *private* prophecy—certainly not destined to establish faith, but to direct human behavior—which is never lacking to any epoch. To prophetic activities are joined *signs and miracles*, which follow the preaching of the Gospel: the purpose of the Church's miracles is not only to announce to men the immediate closeness of

the Gospel mysteries; it is also to form across the ages a continuation with our Savior's miracles (messianic sense); finally, miracles are signs foreshadowing the Parousia of the Lord (eschatological sense).

b. *Cultic activities*, which can be drawn out in three concentric circles: (a) at the center one finds the unbloody rite of the Last Supper, which possesses the power to transport down to us the unique bloody *sacrifice*; (b) then we have the dispensing and receiving of *the sacraments*; and (c) finally, the *public prayers*, the sacramentals, the liturgical hours. The sense of all these activities is, at the same time, both messianic, insofar as they prolong the worship (or cult) inaugurated by our Savior, and eschatological, insofar as they prepare the coming of his Parousia.

c. *Activities of sanctity*, to which the two preceding activities are directed and which are the supreme activities of the Church. One can arrange them, as we have already said, in three lines, according to which the Church is: (a) first of all, an evangelical proclamation in the world of God's grandeurs; (b) first of all, an evangelical desire to direct the world toward the encounter of the Parousia and the coming in glory of God's Kingdom; and (c) first of all, an evangelical zeal to give God to the world.

The adjacent elements of the body of the Church. These are the things that she uses and on which she leaves her mark. We note three points of clarification:

1. We are not speaking about *civil*, *cultural*, and *temporal* things, immediately directed to the common good of society and therefore, by nature, outside of the essence of the Church; although they can be a prerequisite for her existence and would not be, then, outside her influence. We are speaking, rather, about visible *ecclesial* and *spiritual* things that the Church possesses as a supernatural person living in this world, without being of this world, and which she orders immediately to her specific ends;

2. We are not considering here the *actual use* that is made of these things: under this aspect, they are integrated into the activities that constitute the body of the Church and about which we are going to speak. We are considering, rather, these things as at rest, *in potency to be used*, in constituting a permanent reserve from which one may draw. A cathedral can be considered both insofar as it is taken and integrated into the activities of a liturgical cult and insofar as it is in itself, as a subsistent work, capable of serving at a desired time. The same goes for holy books—spiritual or

canonical works, and so on;

3. *It is true, nevertheless, that it is because the Church makes use of, or will make use of, these things that they have an ecclesial value.*

One can divide these elements into more categories. a. External goods that one may call *common*. They are either public (churches, rectories, orphanages, and so on) or private (private capital, and so on). In the measure in which they seem to be destined to procure evangelical ends, they will be transparent and manifest the body of the Church; in the measure in which they turn toward temporal ends, they will become opaque and veil the body of the Church;

b. Works of art or ecclesiastical goods insofar as they are *spiritualized by their artistic value*. The transfiguration effected in these works by art itself, as precious as it may be, remains, nevertheless, secondary, in comparison to the price of the transfiguration that comes to them from their assumption by the Church;

c. *Consecrated* goods, that is to say, specially “fitted for worship by consecration or benediction”¹: a consecrated or blessed church, a consecrated altar, decorations and objects consecrated or blessed in view of the cult, a blessed wayside cross or statue. By reason of the liturgical prayers of consecration and benediction, they are charged with spiritual significations. They become to the eyes of Christians like priceless vestments with which the Church is adorned in her mission as Bride;

d. *Literary* treasures. The above goods are both things and signs; literary goods are pure signs. They are not equal in value. We may distinguish: the Creeds of our Christian faith and the defined truths regarding faith and morals; the writings of the Fathers, Doctors, and other spiritual authors, in the measure that the Church sees her thought in them; liturgical arrangements; canonical decisions.

e. Holy books and the eucharistic species as such. They are two eminent signs, supremely necessary to Christians, and without which, says the *Imitation of Christ*,² life would not be tolerable.

With what certitude can we delineate the body of the Church? At times the certitude will be absolute, when it is a question of: the visible *teaching* of the revealed deposit; the visible celebration of the divine *worship*, centered on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the sacraments; the presence of *sanctity* in

the canonized servants of God. We, likewise, know with certitude that a given council is ecumenical, that a given man is pope, that a given writing is heretical, and so on.

More often our certitude in outlining the body of the Church will be of the moral order: that a given infant is baptized; that a given priest is validly ordained; that a given sinner is truly contrite, that a given life is one of heroic holiness; that given external goods are ordered to the ends of sanctity—we are able to know this with certitude sufficient to banish all reasonable inquietude.

In other circumstances one would have to be content with a more or less well-founded probability: what judgment should be made about the behavior of a mass of people, in whom faith and grace are mixed with human passions? What judgment should be made about ecclesiastical goods, legitimately possessed, but whose use can be tarnished with egoism, negligence, and a lack of zeal? In every one of these cases, the body of the Church ends right where the transparency ends.

II. Three Properties of the Body of the Church

(1) The body of the Church is coextensive with the soul of the Church; (2) it is distinct from other temporal and religious formations; (3) it is transparent.

1. THE BODY OF THE CHURCH IS CO-EXTENSIVE WITH THE SOUL OF THE CHURCH

a. The principle of co-extensivity and the created soul of the Church. The principle of co-extensivity is formulated, in the twelfth century, by Hugh of St. Victor, in these terms: “In every body there is one spirit. *There is nothing dead in the body, and nothing lives outside the body.*”³ This formula is paradoxical; it seems to take notice of neither those sinners who are in the Church as dead members nor those just who are not yet in the Church visibly, corporally, and fully. It needs to be understood correctly. What it means is this: In the measure in which I adhere to the body of the Church, I adhere to life; in the measure in which I separate myself from the body of the Church, I separate myself from life. The principle of co-extensivity can, therefore, be

formulated thus: (1) where the soul of the Church is, there also is the body; and conversely, where one finds the body of the Church, there one finds her soul; (2) the mode of the presence of the Church's soul determines the mode in which it vivifies her body; and conversely, the mode of vivification reveals the mode of the presence of the Church's soul; (3) where there appears something of the Church's soul, there appears also something of her body.

Before developing each of the above propositions, we must insist on a fundamental point: the principle of the co-extensivity of the body and soul is understood in dependence on a superior principle, that of the *innate inadequacy of the body for the soul and the spirit*: the body of the Church remains inadequate for expressing the soul and the mystery of the Church; even the body of Christ is inadequate for expressing the soul and the mystery of Christ.

Where the soul of the Church is, there is her body. In other words, where the capital grace of Christ is poured out in its fullness, where charity is full, that is to say, cultic, sacramental, and directed—presupposing the sacramental characters and the jurisdictional powers—there the body of the Church is perfectly formed; there also one finds in its fullness, without mutilation, both body and soul, the Church, the Bride and Body of Christ.

The mode of the presence of the Church's soul determines the mode in which it vivifies her body; conversely, the latter reveals the former. 1. In the *just members*, sacramental and directed charity resides in a salutary manner. Here below, however, it is capable of constant growth. This charity can always become more deeply rooted in souls, by making them participate more perfectly in the life of the Holy Spirit, by enabling them to produce acts ever more fervent. St. Thomas distinguishes three stages of this invasion into souls by charity: that of beginners, where, by realizing its essential role of uniting the soul to God, its energies are principally moved against the obstacle of sin that menaces it; that of progressives, where, the soul having become less vulnerable, charity tends principally to practice the Christian virtues and to submit the passions to its pacifying control; that of the perfect, where charity tends principally to union with the Lord and moves the Christian to be dissolved in Christ in order to adhere to God.

The least degree of charity, such as it is found in beginners, suffices to deliver the Church radically from the slavery of the flesh. The lower degrees

of love do not suffice, however, to account for certain courageous works of the Church as such, or for her sovereign liberty with respect to the world. One must call to mind the mystery, according to which each member of the faithful exists in the Church, not as a separated whole, but as a member of a unique people, so that sinners themselves are carried by the just, Christian beginners by the progressives, and the latter by the perfect. So, although arranged according to different degrees, the charity of the Church is nevertheless closely unified, the inferior degrees receiving a life-giving influx from the spiritual flame that burns at the higher degrees. This is how one explains the fact that, at critical moments of her history, one sees the Church spontaneously taking more magnanimous initiatives and committing herself to loftier paths than those for which simple common charity could have prepared her.

2. In the *sinful members*, cultic, sacramental, and directed charity remains present, but in a non-salutary manner, by the influence it continues to exercise over them, carrying them along, as it were, in the wake of the Church to which they still adhere. It is in this way that they can be said to participate—no doubt only imperfectly—in the external actions of the Church, which are inspired by the Holy Spirit and contribute in enlarging the body of the Church.

Where there appears something of the Church's soul, there appears something of her body. Even where sacramental grace is only imperfectly directed, as among the just of the Orthodox church; even where it is only partially sacramental, as among the just of the Protestant churches; or even where it is not at all sacramental, as among the just of the Gentiles; in short, where something of the Church's soul appears, there also appears something of her body. The just who, perhaps without even knowing it, already belong to the Church by the desire of their charity are not able to prevent that desire—as hidden as it is by its very nature—from being translated outward, in a sense, and from assuming a body. To be more exact, it would be necessary, with regard to such persons, to speak of a membership in the Church that is not *exclusively, but principally* invisible and spiritual. It is only in an abbreviated manner of expression that one ordinarily says that they belong invisibly to the visible Church.

b. The principle of co-extensivity and the uncreated Soul of the Church. We

said that to the extent that the body of the Church appears, to such an extent appears her created soul. We now add that, to the extent that her created soul appears, to such an extent appears her uncreated Soul, so that the principle of the co-extensivity of the body and the soul of the Church is equally valid for her uncreated Soul.

The work of Christ prepares the full coming of the Spirit. As long as Jesus had not been glorified and his work was not finished, the Spirit was not able to come (Jn 7:39). It is the love we bring to Jesus and our fidelity in keeping his word that pull down upon us the Father's love and allow the Divine Persons to descend upon us (Jn 14:23). The crowning of Jesus' work will be the sending of the Spirit, who renders testimony to him. The Spirit is, therefore, the Spirit of Christ and those who belong to Christ (Rom 8:9). It is at Christian Baptism that the Spirit begins to form from us all a single Body (1 Cor 12:13). The communion of the Body and Blood of Christ maintains and strengthens the unity of this one Body (1 Cor 10:17). The internal and created unity of the Church, whether considered in her body, in the faith infused in her at Baptism, or in her total being, is the sign of her having been invaded by the divine unity and infinity of the Three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, *one Lord*, one faith, one baptism, *one God and Father of us all*, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph 4:4-6; emphasis added). In short, where grace is fully Christic, the dwelling of the three Divine Persons is full.

Where the Church is, there also is the Spirit; where the Spirit is, there also is the Church. The Apostles' Creed shows us the Father residing in creation, the Son in Christ, and the Spirit in his holy Church.

There is no doubt that, for St. Irenaeus and the Fathers who followed him, it is this holy Church alone who possesses the *sacraments* of Christian Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, bringing with them Christian *faith and love*, and is kept in the truth by the *jurisdictional powers*. We shall try to translate, from the Latin version that has been left to us, the great text of Irenaeus, which expressly affirms the co-extensivity of the body of the Church and her uncreated Soul, the Holy Spirit:

The Spirit of God does not cease to pour forth faith into the Church, as into a beautiful vase [vessel]. It is like a precious liqueur that does not cease to rejuvenate the vase that contains it. It

is a gift that God confides to his Church in order to inspire and inform her and render her capable of vivifying all those who are her members. In her we are offered what Christ came to communicate to us, namely, the Holy Spirit, the pledge of incorruption, the support of our faith, the cause of our ascension to God. ‘*God*’, in fact, says the Apostle (1 Cor 12:28), ‘*has placed in his Church apostles, prophets, teachers*’, and hence, the whole of the Spirit’s activity—in which they have absolutely no share who, instead of running to the Church, take refuge from life by mad folly and a fatal behavior. *Where, in effect, the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and every grace*: for the Spirit is truth. Those who do not participate in the Spirit are not nourished with life at the breast of their Mother, and they do not know the very pure font that gushes forth from the Body of Christ. They dig into cracked cisterns; they drink polluted water from ditches and swamps. They shun the faith of the Church, from fear of being guided; they reject the Spirit, from fear of being instructed.⁴

Such also is the thought of St. Augustine: “The Catholic Church alone is the Body of Christ; Christ is her Head and the Savior of the Body. Outside of this Body, the Spirit gives life to no one.”⁵

The Spirit and the Church are, therefore, co-extensive, like the soul and body in a living being.

The animating influence of the Holy Spirit touches even baptized sinners, as well as the unbaptized just. 1. This influence of the Holy Spirit touches *baptized sinners*, not only by visiting them with thoughts of faith, fear, hope, and attrition; but also by a manner more mysterious: for, the collective impulses toward the common good of the Church, which the Spirit’s influence imprints on the just members—in whom they are received lovingly and efficaciously—are able, through these latter, to touch indirectly even the sinful members, insofar as they still adhere to the Church, and, consequently, to lead them along—undoubtedly, in a weak and non-salutary manner—toward ends that are divine nonetheless.

2. The Spirit’s influence is exercised even on the *unbaptized just*, but without being able to make all its power felt in them. Since the days of redemption, grace, wherever it is deprived—either totally or partially—of its cultic and sacramental perfection and its jurisdictional orientation, is not in its normal state and appears mutilated. It preserves its property of disposing the subjects in which it resides to receive—at times quite profoundly—the Divine Persons. It remains incapable, however, of establishing the created soul of the Church, which constitutes the Church in perfect act and permits the Holy Spirit to exercise freely on her his role as uncreated Soul.

2. THE CHURCH HAS HER OWN BODY, DISTINCT FROM OTHER

TEMPORAL AND RELIGIOUS FORMATIONS

The Church has her own body, distinct from temporal formations. 1. Let us imagine a kingdom or, better yet, the entire earth populated by faithful practicing Catholics. The same men lend their resources to both the city and the Church, both of which make use of these resources in order to take on flesh, as it were. But at no time do the Church and the city, however, merge into one common society. The Church keeps her own rhythm and visibility, essentially distinct from the rhythm and visibility of temporal, perishable kingdoms.

One could distinguish even in a saint the part that may be called his homeland and that which falls within the province of the Church. It is not the task of countries to give birth to saints; they can only furnish the matter; they can never bear more than geniuses and heroes. It is the Church of God in this or that country who alone gives birth to saints. Insofar as they are associated with a particular country, the saints work to save that country; and at times they take great pains in their efforts: more than anyone else, one thinks of St. Louis and St. Joan of Arc. For this reason, they belong first of all to the men of that country and its friends. But as saints, as belonging to the Church—and many went to great lengths to belong, as much as possible, solely to her: more than anyone else, one thinks of St. Benedict Joseph Labre and missionaries like St. Peter Damien—it is for the entire Church and the salvation of all men that they spend themselves. From this point of view, they belong to everyone, especially to those who are most fervent.

2. By her very nature the Church does not belong to one country more than another, to one race more than another, to one language or culture more than another. She uses the resources that come to her from the diversity of countries, races, languages, and cultures. Insofar as they serve her as instruments, these things are incorporated into her; they become her flesh and being. But insofar as they have their own destiny and subsistent law of aging, inherent in all things cultural, they disappear, one after the other, without being able to drag the Bride of Christ into their destruction. When the Word became flesh, he appeared in a small country, inhabited by a particular race of men, speaking a particular language; but, not once—even when he declared himself to be sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, or when he was moved at the imminent destruction of Jerusalem—not for a moment, did

he desire that his mission be in solidarity with the temporal destinies of that country, that race, that language. They were the things of this world, and his Kingdom is not of this world.

3. The divine Church, a visible supernatural society, could never identify herself with the nations, visible temporal societies. There is, strictly speaking, no French religious ideal, nor one that is German or Russian; or if there has been one, it is false—for it ceases, by the very fact that it is national, to be a religious ideal that is unique, supernatural, catholic, the Kingdom that is in the world without being of the world, independent of the people whom it sanctifies, as a light is independent of the objects it touches. The religion of nationalism (which confuses the Church with a country) and the religion of internationalism (which confuses the Church with a conglomerate of countries) are two ways of ignoring this fundamental truth.

The Church is the teacher of the nations. People, as individuals, present themselves before the Church with their hearts full of beautiful things that must live and other evil things that must die. Their most natural and most invincible tendencies will be, according to each individual case, either favored or contradicted by the Church: favored, if they are wholesome and generous; contradicted, if they are egotistical and dangerous. To each national temperament the Church is both kind and severe, friendly and hostile, sweet and bitter.

It is necessary, therefore, not to bring the Church to the people, but to bring the people to the Church. When they have been baptized in her faith and love and incorporated into her life, those who have up until then been enemies with each other can begin to turn back to each other. They will see themselves ruled by one law that dominates them all. They will understand that their profound dispositions, insofar as they are legitimate, predestine them to a double task: first and foremost, to manifest on the level of earthly kingdoms one or another of the cultural riches required for the historical development of humanity; secondly, to bring to that Kingdom which is not of this world some of their purer cultural acquisitions, which the Kingdom will use in order to manifest its hidden powers: there is nothing more beautiful, for example, than a national temperament transfigured by sanctity—St. Francis was Italian; St. Teresa, Spanish; St. Thomas More, English; St. Joan of Arc, French.

The Church has her own body, distinct from the bodies of other religious formations. One could say of every non-Catholic religious formation, insofar as it constitutes a historical, existential whole, that it juxtaposes indissolubly in its bosom two currents of elements: some, secretly attracted by the true Church of Christ; the others, on the contrary, moving away from her. It is this conflict of tendencies that—for the Catholic theologian—characterizes it, gives it its proper physiognomy, *its true body*.

One can isolate, however, in this religious formation, the elements that very secretly draw its members toward the Catholic Church. Hence, separated from the errors that plague them, these elements already belong—of course, in an initial and still impeded manner—to *the very body of the Catholic Church*.

The just who live in the Orthodox religion, in Protestantism, Judaism, Islam, in pre-Christian formations, belong visibly and corporally to these religions but invisibly and spiritually to the true Church. By these elements taken together, they contribute to the building-up of the body of these religions; but by the better part of these elements, they already contribute to the building-up—in an initial manner—of the body of the true Church. As we have already noted, such a membership in the true Church is, from then on, *principally*, but not *exclusively*, invisible and spiritual.

3. BY HER BODY THE ENTIRE CHURCH IS VISIBLE AND TRANSPARENT

The transparency in Christ and in the Church. If the Word became incarnate, it was in order that eternal Life might be manifested visibly in his flesh and pass to the world in greater abundance. If the Church as well possesses a body of flesh, it is in order that the Christic grace that is in her might shine forth in a sensible splendor and draw the attention of all. As such, one must say that the Body of Jesus and the body of the Church, which is his likeness, have *transparency* as their principal property.

Transparency presupposes the meeting of two elements: the one opaque and the other luminous; and the superiority of the latter over the former. They may be united essentially, like the soul and body in man. The soul, being stronger, shines forth through the body, making it transparent. The soul and the body in a certain sense exchange their properties: the soul becomes

somewhat visible, and the body somewhat spiritual.

And so, it can be said, *mutatis mutandis*: (1) that, on one hand, the divinity of Christ and his plentitude of graces shine through his visible comportment; (2) and, on the other hand, that the uncreated Soul of the Church and its charity shine through the Church's corporeal casing.

The transparency in Christ. The Incarnation will be, in the end, the mystery of Christ in glory: the Word bound to a flesh he does not destroy but rather transfigures and renders eternal, like the burning bush that is not consumed. Then Christ's flesh, although forever *inadequate* for his divinity, will nevertheless be *proportioned* to reveal it unequivocally to the eyes of the resurrected elect. This is the first degree of transparency.

The Incarnation here below was the mystery of Christ the Pilgrim, the Word bound to a mortal body. The Savior's earthly destiny, with his trials, sorrows, and death, was so *inadequate* to his divinity that it could only be temporary and unable to last for eternity; nevertheless, it was, in its own way, *proportioned* to the infinite sanctity of the Word, unequivocally showing, as much as possible, that it was in a changeable kingdom of sorrow. This is the second degree of transparency.

The transparency in the Church. It is by the grace of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity that the beatific love and vision will adapt the Church when her pilgrimage comes to an end. Her corporeal casing will no doubt remain *inadequate* to the glory and beatific charity in which the Trinity reveals itself; but it will unequivocally *express* these splendors. This is the highest degree of the Church's transparency.

Here below, the members of the Church are not totally pervaded by grace; they still bear in themselves areas of darkness. It will be relatively easy to recognize the Church's body in the manifestly pure actions of Christians and to separate from the body of the Church their manifestly sinful actions. It will be more difficult to discern what belongs to the Church—what contributes to forming her body—in the acts that are inspired and commanded by her but that deviate from their intended course through the mediocrity, imperfections, passions, and vices of Christians. The very body of the Church is nevertheless transparent. It is *inadequate*, indeed, to the mystery of the divine indwelling that it envelops; but it *expresses* sufficiently and without equivocation the hidden power of the Church. And we know that this power

is manifested exteriorly to the eyes of reason alone by the four notes of the Church.

We must clarify that the body of the Church exists only successively. It marches forth across death, the flux of generations, the ruins of culture. History does not offer us a complete image of it. One moment of the Church is not equal to all the moments of the Church; and this one moment expresses her essence less perfectly than her whole history taken together. This is equally true of a specific region of the Church, one particular rite, one form of the liturgy, or one regime of the Church. Each realization of the Church, nevertheless, brings forth and reveals to us her essence; however, at the same time, it enables us to see that this essence transcends each of her realizations and temporal successions. Here is one of the most divine and most praiseworthy aspects of the Church's catholicity. Whoever has understood this—be he in the most obscure corner of the world—has also understood that the spirit of the Church drives away from her heart the spirit of the nation, and that the spirit of catholicity extinguishes the spirit of the clan. Each rite, each liturgy—Latin, Byzantine, Slavic, or perhaps someday even Chinese—still more, each approved religious order, each authentic form of Christian life, at any given point of space and time, is like a door by which one enters directly and assuredly into the very heart of the Christian mystery and its infinite transcendence. One need only call to mind here that doors are not made to be looked at or compared but are rather to be thrown open decisively and that no one enters a house by two doors at the same time.

“All things are as veils that conceal God.” It was all throughout the public life of Jesus (and not only at the moment of his Transfiguration) that his comportment was transparent, manifesting exteriorly the sanctity of the mystery of the Incarnation. Is it not a scandal to our reason that some men of that epoch were able to meet Jesus, to hear his voice, to see his face, without always seeing, under the cinders of his humanity, the fire of his divinity? Were they lacking sufficient signs? Or were their hearts blinded? “For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light” (Jn 3:20-21). At that time, says the Gospel, “there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout. . . . And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ” (Lk 2:25-26).

What is said of Jesus' comportment can be applied proportionately to the Church's: it is a vessel of clay that carries a divine treasure, a shell under which beats a heart. Just as some passed by Christ without recognizing him, so too the Church at times goes unnoticed: sometimes because of perversity; but sometimes also because of invincible error, which can come from a host of causes, among which one ought to include even that seduction which influences magnanimous hearts with fragments of the Catholic splendor, scattered in the dissident churches.

Corporeal things will never be but an imperfect vehicle, an inadequate translation of spiritual realities. There was more brightness in the soul of Jesus than his body could contain, even on the day of the Transfiguration. There is also more brightness in the soul of the Church than her body can ever reflect, even when her body shines in eternity. Corporeal things here below are like transparent veils, which have the twofold role of revealing spiritual realities and shading the radiance. The world both reveals and hides the creating act; the humanity of Christ both reveals and hides the mystery of the Word and his love for men; the body of the Church reveals and hides the mystery of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in history. One of the reasons for this extraordinary fact is that God does not want to be found except by those who seek him. All things, wrote Pascal to Mlle. de Roannez, are "like veils that conceal God".⁶

III. The Body of the Church Is Organic and Partitioned

We shall recall the capital distinction between hierarchical activities and those that are not hierarchical (1). We shall then speak about the distinction between clerics and the laity, which is inscribed in the plan of the different states of life (2 and 3); and, next, about the other states of life (4). Finally, we shall take a look at the differences between the various states (5).

1. THE HIERARCHICAL ECCLESIAL ACTIVITIES AND THOSE THAT ARE NOT HIERARCHICAL

Two types of activities belong to the Christian, according to two different roles: the ecclesial or spiritual, insofar as he is a member of the Church; and

the worldly or temporal, insofar as he is a member of the human community.

Ecclesial or spiritual activities. 1. These activities are directed toward (as a determining object) the redemptive work of Christ and the common good of eternal life. We distinguish:

a. The *ministerial activities*, not immediately sanctifying, which belong to the priesthood and the kingship of Christ. There are two types:

(1) *Hierarchical* activities, which comprise: (a) cultic activities, which belong to the power of order; and (b) prophetic activities, which belong to the powers of jurisdiction.

(2) *Non-hierarchical* activities: (a) ones that concern worship and belong to the powers of Baptism and Confirmation; and (b) other prophetic activities, which belong to private revelation or prophecy.

b. The *immediately sanctifying activities* of faith, hope, charity, and the infused virtues, which belong to the sanctity of Christ.

The highest activities of the Church, those to which all others are ordered, are the sanctifying activities; and in virtue of the evangelical shift of values, they are not reserved to only a select few; they are offered to all.

2. The ecclesial or spiritual activities may be divided (from another point of view, which we shall add at the end of this chapter) into: (a) spiritual activities concerned with the *purely spiritual* (liturgical and sacramental life, and so on); and (b) spiritual activities concerned with the *temporal order*, whether it be in defending rights of the spiritual life that are threatened or in illuminating the temporal from on high.

Here, then, we have before us the realm of ecclesial or spiritual activities, the realm of the Church, where we are called to act *insofar as* we are Christians.

Worldly and temporal activities. These are directed toward (as a determining object) the good of culture and civilization. The Christian will have to act insofar as he is a member of the human community, but *as* a Christian.

2. THE CLERICAL STATE OF LIFE

If a state of life is a permanent and stable condition, “clerical” and “lay” must be considered states of life.

These two states are characterized by an unequal distribution among the

faithful of Christian activities, partially sanctioned by canon law, but founded more profoundly on the very nature of things, that is, on the needs of the Church's life.

Clerics are vowed to hierarchical functions. The clerical state is ruled and commanded by the primordial concern for assuring a good exercise of hierarchical functions. Most of the canons concerning clerics are devoted to the definition and the exact delineation of these diverse functions.

Clerics are vowed to sanctifying activities in a new way. The *fundamental* and supreme right that consecrates all men, and most especially Christians, to the search for sanctity is their destination, eternal life, the door to which is opened by Christ's redemption.

The search for sanctity joins a *new* and added right to the ministries charged with dispensing this redemption by the hierarchical powers. The hierarchical powers, destined to communicate charity, must, in effect, be exercised in charity. When the means of sanctity are handled by sinners, the scandal of the people is disastrous and catastrophe imminent.

To say that clerics are held to sanctity on two accounts means simply that there are two orders of sanctity superimposed: one of the laity and another of clerics. There is but one sanctity, which consists in the perfection of charity, to which all are called and in which numerous laity may surpass numerous clerics.

Clerics are exempted as much as possible from temporal and secular activities. One part of the activity of Christians belongs to the temporal or secular realm. The anchorites and contemplatives escape this necessity only for a time and under a certain aspect. Clerics are, to a certain extent, under the laws of their respective countries.

It is, nevertheless, in order that they might give themselves more to ecclesial activities that the Church strives to exempt them from things secular and temporal. She asks them usually to abstain from occupations that may be necessary and excellent, whether of the professional order (medicine, management of goods, commerce), the political order (administrative functions, representatives), or the military (participation in revolutions and civil wars). She claims for them personal immunity from military service and from civil offices and public works.

Clergy must “exist and suffer with the people”. To say that the clergy leave to the laity the greater part of Christian temporal activities does not mean that they may distance themselves from the people, from their lives, from their sufferings. Who could be with the people as much as Christ and the apostles were? “Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?” (2 Cor 11:29). Clerics must be with the people, feel in them their trials, in view of immediately communicating to them, not the things of culture or civilization, but the things of the Kingdom of God.

In certain circumstances, “to exist with the people” could justify the priest taking up worldly work, but this would always be for him only a means of evangelization. When Cardinal Suhard sent his priests into the factories, he hoped that this initiative would permit the “naturalization of the priest in that milieu where he had been but a stranger”.⁷ Mgrs. Chappoulie, one of the cardinal’s collaborators, explains what the latter desired: “It was necessary that the priests, in meeting the factory workers in their everyday life, in order to share in their trials and pains, become similar to them, as the Son of God, by his incarnation, became like unto men, his brethren. It fell to these priests to be the witnesses of the Gospel among their fellow workers.”⁸ He braved a great risk: “There was a great temptation for the priest to take up tasks that were not his own, ones that required the grace that comes only with the lay state. He would have to resist such tasks—even if it meant diminishing the immediate *efficiency*. For his specific role is not in any way to handle the temporal. His competency ends there.”⁹

The task of the priest is to bring to a lost world spiritual resources in all their fullness.

3. THE LAY STATE

This is a state of life constituted by a certain equilibrium of activities, which the Christian must perform, on one hand, on the ecclesial and spiritual (but non-hierarchical) level, and, on the other hand, on the worldly and temporal.

A. The laity are vowed to all non-hierarchical ecclesial activities. 1. The ecclesial life of the laity is made up of *ministerial activities*, some of which are *cultic*. The laity participate, in a non-hierarchical manner, in the priesthood of Christ. Through them, the Christian people is priestly in all its

members. The laity are made fit by Baptism to participate actively in the Sacrifice of the Mass; to contract marriage, of which they will be the proper minister; and to receive validly the other sacraments. Confirmation empowers them to confess the faith openly and to sustain the witness rendered to the truth by Christ the Priest. Some other ministerial activities that might fall to the laity are: they can receive the charismatic and *prophetic* gifts, destined, certainly not to establish the faith, but, for example, to suggest new solutions to problems of evangelization raised by an ever-changing world.

2. The lay life includes *sanctifying activities* as well, proceeding from fully Christic grace, that is, grace that is cultic, sacramental, and directed. It is open to all the depths of the contemplative life: it is to the Samaritan that our Savior revealed the mystery of God's gift. It was for Ana de Penalosa that St. John of the Cross wrote *The Living Flame of Love*. And St. Benedict Labre desired to be free to bring God to the streets.

These sanctifying activities—common to clerics and laity alike, and in which laity may at times surpass the clergy—are the most precious, those to which everything in the Church is ordered. Their Principle is the Holy Spirit, who diffuses the charity of Christ in the world.

3. How can the laity not be invited as much as clerics to exist and to suffer with the people, above all on an ecclesial level, in order to communicate to the people at every instant and in every way the treasures of the Sermon on the Mount and of Christ's redemption? Those of the laity who live in the married state will be, by their very nature, the very first representatives of the Church for their children. Those who live in other states of life will find other ways to encounter souls.

The role of the laity in the Church. Does not affirming constantly *the primacy, in the Church, of the powers of charity*, insofar as it is cultic, sacramental, and directed, and the *spontaneously apostolic and contagious character of such truly evangelical charity* allow us to resolve, moreover, in the loftiest, broadest, and most fruitful manner the question so much debated today concerning the role of the laity in the Church?

Catholic Action. 1. In a general sense, the Catholic Action of the laity is as ancient as Christianity. Pope Pius XI did not initiate it, he restored it: Catholic Action

is the cooperation of the laity in apostolic work, in the work of the apostles properly speaking,

the bishops being the successors of the apostles. This is Catholic Action's most divine, most glorious, and most charitable aspect. It is the renewal and the continuation of what existed in the first days of Christianity, when the Kingdom of our Lord was first proclaimed. For proof of this, it is enough to cast a glance on the literature of the early Church, on the inspired writings themselves, in order to see that a large part of the apostles marvelous success was due to the cooperation of the laity. . . . It was the magistrates, the soldiers, the women, the children, who came to the aid of the apostles, who increased their activity, giving them the means of penetrating into every corner of society, into the masses as well as into the very palaces of the Caesars. This is your work, the work that puts you on the front line in the Kingdom of our Lord, among the ranks of those blessed Christians, who are remembered so often by the Apostle himself in his letters, when he says: Salute so and so, because they have labored with us for the Gospel. This is your work. It seems to us, truly, that this return to the first days—a thought so beautiful, so consoling—not only contains excitement and an impulse to action, but it is, in addition, the most beautiful recompense you can have.¹⁰

2. In addition to the pope's technical definition, we can say that Catholic Action is a universal organization of spiritual activities performed by the laity—directed by the hierarchy—in view of promoting the Kingdom of Christ, in a manner appropriate to the new age of humanity.

a. The *ends* of Catholic Action are those of the Church, that is, the re-evangelization of the world and the restoration of the Kingdom of Christ—but considered concretely, from the point of view where they can be preached the most efficaciously to a humanity that, since the rupture of medieval Christendom, technological and geographical discoveries, and social revolutions, has entered upon a new age of its history, where it is in part *less* and in part *more* accessible to the Gospel message than in the past. It was the immediate preoccupation of bringing Christ to a transformed world that induced the pope to appeal to the laity and to unify their efforts. In this perspective we see how we can clarify theologically the mission that the hierarchy confides to the laity of Catholic Action.

b. The laity *act* in the line of Catholic Action only by responding to an invitation of the hierarchy, which calls them to its aid and sends them out to meet a world that it cannot even hope to reach without them. This is why the pope could say:

We have proclaimed publicly that We desire but one thing: *to see the faithful participate, in a certain manner, in the apostolic hierarchy of the Church*; and We have confirmed this desire in many subsequent documents, by declaring, among other things, that all those who work toward the development of Catholic Action are called by an altogether singular grace of God to a ministry not much different from the ministerial priesthood; for, Catholic Action is, at its heart, nothing other than the apostolate of the faithful, who, directed by their bishops, contribute their assistance to the Church of God and complete, in a sense, her pastoral ministry.¹¹

This call to the laity is justified, undoubtedly, by the lack of priests and the immensity of the task; however, in a more profound manner, still more by the fact that the laity alone can reach certain sectors of society or possess a certain *mode* of presenting the Christian message, necessary for its diffusion. And, no doubt, also because it is given to certain laity, placed at the heart of this changing world, to discern—almost prophetically—which of the world’s postulations are going to come into contact with the eternal riches of the Church.

It is clear that this call, issued by the hierarchy to the laity, at the threshold of our modern age, is capable of modifying—not in a theological sense, but in their concrete modality—the mutual relations of clergy and laity and of drawing attention to the importance of the activities common to both. Cardinal Verdier spoke thus to priests:

If the mission that the pope has given me—and through me to all of Catholic France—to organize this general action of Catholics is realized, your ministry will change slightly. Up until now you have remained uncontested masters, almost kings by divine right. You were in your church, obliging all your faithful to keep quiet—and they must keep quiet in Church, especially the women, as it is written in Scripture. You obliged your faithful to bow their heads before all you said. If, tomorrow, the laity is placed alongside the hierarchy to direct the external affairs of Catholic Action, you will then be constitutional kings. You will be obliged to hear the opinion of Parliament, which will always be gathered around you; and this will not always be easy. You have the mentality of dogmatic theologians; they have the mentality, perhaps, of members of Parliament. The spirit of collaboration is something very difficult. Perhaps what is required of you is more intellectual labor, more charity, more detachment from self and from your own mind. It is in no way required that we abandon our doctrine and our institutions. It is necessary that we watch over every last *iota* of dogma. But, from time to time, it is also necessary to lend a hand and do the everyday work together. Should such things be disturbing to you? No! Are such things difficult? Yes! But they are also elevating. And I ask you, Fathers, to beseech the good God, every day at Holy Mass, for a spirit of collaboration.¹²

c. This activity of evangelization assumes in Catholic Action, according to the exact sense of the word, a *determined form of organization*, a specific unity of convergence. In a larger and more profound sense, it is every work of the Church that is unified by the hierarchy; but not every one of a Catholic’s works belongs to Catholic Action. The unity of the latter is more definite. It results from precise jurisdictional direction, by which the hierarchical power brings about the concentration of lay activity for the evangelization of the modern world. It demands, therefore, a *collective* commitment: pure contemplatives and lives such as that of St. Benedict Labre do not belong to Catholic Action. But if organization is necessary for

Catholic Action, it goes without saying that, everywhere this organization exists only “in sign” and not “in truth”, there will be only a sham, a pretense, of Catholic Action. Being a call to the missionary resources of the laity, Catholic Action is *universal* in the sense that it contains, not every activity of the laity, but everything in their activity that can serve missionary ends. Being ordered to the evangelization of a world more and more unified in its efforts and its disasters, Catholic Action is elevated to a *world* project: in the face of monstrous organizations of the thirst for power, it is the witness to the world of the primacy and fecundity of things spiritual.

*Catholic civic action.*¹³ Certain spiritual and ecclesial activities of the laity reach from on high down to the political order, in order to defend the spiritual and to illuminate the temporal. They can, when they take shape in view of obtaining a concrete end, give birth to a civic Catholic action, which, being by nature ecclesial and transpolitical, touches the temporal only in the name of the spiritual values involved there and ought never to coincide with the action of a political party. The “Catholic parties” necessarily contain an equivocation, and equivocations always lead to unhappy endings. “The Church and all her representatives, in every degree of the hierarchy, cannot be a political party or practice the politics of a given party, which by its very nature pursues particular interests; or, even if it aims for the common good, it does so always through the prism of some particular views.”¹⁴ The pope continues: “Catholic Action will obtain all this more surely the more it avoids mixing, as We have said, in the interests of [political] parties, even those formed by Catholics—who are perfectly permitted to differ in opinion with regard to disputed questions left open to discussion.”¹⁵

B. In addition to ecclesial activities, the laity have, as Christians, to perform the greater part of worldly activities. 1. It is extremely important to distinguish the realm of ecclesial activities—even when they touch upon the temporal in order to defend the spiritual and illuminate the temporal—from the realm of activities that are in themselves worldly and temporal.

It is on the laity that the principal charge rests of carrying on, in a Christian manner, worldly and temporal activities. These are, insofar as they look to God as their last end, immediately directed toward goods that are not eternal life but that concern the things of time, the works of civilization or culture: the life of philosophic and scientific thought, the life of poetry and art,

political, social, economic, and technical life, and so on.

If I turn toward men to speak to them and to work in their midst, on the spiritual plane, I appear before them *insofar as I am a Christian*, and to that extent I involve the Church of Christ; and, on the temporal plane, I do not act insofar as I am a Christian, but I must act *as a Christian*, involving myself alone and not the Church, but involving myself totally and not partially or half-heartedly. I involve myself—I, who am a Christian, who am in the world and work in the world without being of the world, who, by my faith, my Baptism, my Confirmation, and so little as I am, have the vocation of pouring into the world—wherever I may be—a Christian vigor.¹⁶

To act *as a Christian* on the temporal plane; let us grasp all the force of this expression.

To make Christianity an abstraction, to put God and Christ on one side while I work in the things of this world, is to cut myself in two halves: one Christian half for the things of eternal life—and for the things of time, a pagan or semi-Christian, or ashamedly Christian, or a neutral Christian, which is to say infinitely weak or idolatrous of the nation or the race or the State or of bourgeois prosperity or of the anti-bourgeois revolution or of science or of art made into final ends. Such a division of self is only too frequent in practice. When we take note of what it represents in reality, when we apply the light of the intelligence to the formula, we see that it represents a death-dealing absurdity. In reality, the justice of the Gospel and the life of Christ within us want the whole of us, they want to take complete possession of us, to impregnate all we are and all we do, in the secular as well as in the spiritual order. Action is the epiphany of being. If grace takes hold of us and remakes us in the depth of our being, it is so that all our actions should feel its effects and be illuminated by it.¹⁷

2. The Christian influence here does not descend *from on high* onto the temporal realm without residing in it, as is the case for ecclesial activities that touch the temporal, whether to defend the spiritual in it or to illuminate the temporal itself. Rather, it works in the very thick of the temporal realm in order to set it aright, to regulate it, to communicate to it a human brilliance that it cannot know except in a Christian climate. One thinks of the way in which St. Louis and St. Joan of Arc were skilled in war. Here we have a movement that begins *from below*, by which Christianity is put to work in the civil life of the people.

They come from Christian initiatives in the midst of a worldly conscience. If the Church must not bind herself to a temporal ideal, believers act, not insofar as they are believers and in the name of the Church, but *as believers and insofar as they are citizens*; they are to struggle for a temporal ideal, in the battle for social justice and the progress of civilization. The social progress that is accomplished thus supposes at the same time certain technical possibilities and a more or less lengthy moral maturation. . . . It is not in virtue of a law that the Church promulgates on social-temporal matters; it is in virtue of a slow vital development that Christianity has, little by little, discharged from the moral conscience the necessity of slavery and has finally snuffed it out of existence.¹⁸

3. As Maritain wrote:

With regard to a work that must descend down to the final contingent realizations required for the service of the common temporal good, the competence of an activity of the purely spiritual order quickly reaches its limits. There is a judgment *of Catholicism* on the connections that art and literature maintain with ethics, and with the moral capacities of the average man; but this judgment is not enough to tell me what I must think of the works of Joyce or the poems of Rimbaud as works of art. There is a judgment *of Catholicism* on the duty to work for international peace and on the principles of social justice; but this judgment is not enough to tell me what I must think of the law of forty hours or the statute of the S.D.N. It is for me to judge *as a Catholic* (as much as possible with a Catholic intelligence, rather than with a Catholic party), but without claiming to speak in the name of Catholicism or pulling along in my path Catholics as such. We must understand well that it is not only because the Church does not want to be subservient to or compromised in temporal things that such a distinction must be made. It is also because the differentiations fixed to the nature of things are at stake here, and these explain precisely this will of the Church. And it is because, in the final analysis, honesty and integrity of action—of spiritual action on its spiritual plane, of temporal action on its temporal plane—suffer from a failure to take these differentiations into consideration.^{[19](#)}

Christians, as members of the earthly city, must “exist with the people”. We have stated that it is required of all the *members of the Church*, clergy and laity, to exist and to suffer with the people, in order to bring to them the redemption of Christ. That is for the ecclesial and spiritual order.

That is not all:

In the temporal order, Christians are asked, as *members of the earthly city*, to exist with the people and to suffer with them, with respect to the temporal ends of human history, and in order to work with them for its growth. It is clear that, for each Christian considered individually, there is no moral obligation to exist with the people in the sense that we here imply; to pose such an obligation would be to mix the planes, to confuse the religious and the social, the spiritual and the temporal. I say, however, that if, collectively speaking and in the majority of cases, the temporal formations of the Christian denomination fail to exist thus with the people, a profound disorder will arise in the world, one that will cost us dearly.^{[20](#)}

The appeal of Pius XII to the laity. On the occasion of the *Second World Congress for the Apostolate of the Laity*, October 5, 1957, the sovereign pontiff defined what is intended by the term “apostolate of the laity” in the strict sense: it is “the assuming by the laity of the tasks that follow from the mission confided by Christ to his Church”. In the wider sense, it designates “the apostolate of prayer and personal example”. The activity of Catholic lawyers, doctors, and engineers, giving by their life and the performance of their profession an example of a Christian life that is fully radiant, is “the best apostolate of the laity”.

The collaboration of the laity with the hierarchy “has been translated into a thousand different forms, from the silent sacrifice offered for the salvation of souls to the good word and example that compel the esteem of even the Church’s enemies, to the cooperation in the activities proper to the hierarchy (that can be communicated to the simple faithful)”—but the mandate of the hierarchy does not, however, make from this cooperation a hierarchical apostolate—“and to the courageous acts that cost one’s life but that God alone sees and that are not entered into any statistics. Perhaps this hidden lay apostolate is the most precious and most profound of all.”

It is clear: the concept of the lay apostolate goes beyond Catholic Action. The latter, in fact, cannot “claim a monopoly on the apostolate of the laity, for, side by side with it is the free lay apostolate”.

2. The concept of the lay apostolate can be enlarged still more and extended to the whole work of Christianizing the temporal realm. And hence—and in order to return to the distinctions already made—we can say that the body of the church is organic and partitioned. 263 says that the apostolate of the laity embraces the whole ensemble of the laity’s tasks, which the laity, enlivened by Christic charity, ought to accomplish, whether, *insofar as they are Christians*, on the *spiritual and ecclesial* plane or, *as Christians*, on the *temporal and worldly* plane.

There are, at the beginning of the letter, some “lay apostles” whom the sovereign pontiff discerns, in effect, among “the saints, such as the Emperor Henry II, Stephen, the creator of Catholic Hungary, and Louis IX of France”.

He notes “with joy and gratitude the extraordinary dynamism of the young generations of Catholics in cultural, social, and political works”, in Africa especially. He encourages the cooperation “with associations of Christian inspiration, and so on.”

The pontiff ends with two directives: “First of all, to collaborate with neutral and non-Catholic movements and organizations if, and in the measure that, they serve the common good and the cause of God. Secondly, to participate more in international organizations. This recommendation is addressed to all but particularly concerns men of science and farmers.”²¹

In addition to the “clergy” and the “laity” there are other states of life in the Church.

4. THE OTHER STATES OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

The principal states of life studied by theologians are, on the one hand, “marriage” and “celibacy” and, on the other, the “ordinary life” and the “perfect life”.

Marriage and the celibate life. 1. Jesus, the individual man, will die no more; death can no longer dominate him; his own body is imperishable. Jesus the perfect man, however, is made complete by being formed, every day, in the Church; his Body is built up anew in the midst of each generation; it is imperishable only by the uninterrupted accession of new Christians. How will these new Christians be led to Baptism and incorporated into the Church? There are two ways open to them. One is that of conversions coming from without, which never cease to increase the ranks of the faithful. The other is that of sacramental Marriage, the chief end of which is the begetting of children, whom it is necessary “to receive with love, to nourish with kindness, and to raise with piety”.²² And so the marriage of the faithful is called, by way of natural generation, to provide for the perpetuation of the whole Christ, until he attains to that awaited plenitude, on the day of the Resurrection, through the individual Christ. There is, therefore, in Marriage—and it is for this reason alone—an objective so firm, so lofty, so holy, that it claims an important part of the Christian’s external activities and changes from without his state of life. He will leave a state of life in which he was free, and he will enter into a state of life where he will be bound.

2. If, therefore, we consider the external activities that make up the body of the Church, we see certain Christians engaged in those that involve marriage and others who remain free. They are both of them stabilized in two different ways of living, two different states of life. The states of life are distinguished according to the attitude a person takes toward an exterior permanent obligation, according to which he either consents or refuses to give up his liberty.

Just as they correspond to distinct tasks, so the different states of life assume the particularities of each. We remain, therefore, absolutely free to choose our state of life. “There are”, writes St. Thomas, “some things a man may undertake in such a way that he even acts contrary to a precept of the pope (which precept, let us add, being clearly unjust, would be invalid), such as keeping continence and the other evangelical counsels.”²³

3. Not all the states of life are equal. Some are more perfect than others. They can be classified according to their level of perfection. All are ordered,

however, to some task of common usefulness; all are to be justified by their mode of serving the general good of the Church.

All things being equal, it is not the state of marriage that profits the Church the most. There is more perfection and happiness, as she herself declares it, in remaining keeping celibate than in living in the married state. The Church is here the simple echo of the Gospel: “The disciples said to him, ‘If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry.’ But he said to them, ‘Not all men can receive this precept, but only those to whom it is given. . . . There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it” (Mt 19:10-12). And St. Paul: “Now concerning the unmarried, I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy. I think that in view of the impending distress it is well for a person to remain as he is” (1 Cor 7:25-26).

The purity of the celibate is the purity of the body *drained*, in a certain sense, by the spirit; it is the *absorption* of the exigencies of instinct by those of the spirit. Virginity makes the body similar to the soul and the soul similar to God. When the number of the elect is complete, the law of reproduction will cease and the law of the spirit will manifest all of its power in the flesh of men: “For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Mk 12:25). The purity of married persons is the purity of the body *ruled* by the spirit, the *regulation* of the exigencies of instinct by those of the spirit.

4. At the time when Jovinian made virginity equal to marriage and professed that one cannot exalt the former without debasing the latter, St. Augustine²⁴ himself took up the challenge and fixed there the lofty traditional teaching that St. Thomas would later take up. The man who enters into the married state, say the Doctors, accepts the *tribulatio carnis* of which the Apostle speaks, that is to say, the involvement in exterior concerns. And nevertheless, that man’s choice is a good one; there is nothing disordered there; his reason is not surrendered. He follows the law, not of matter, but of the spirit if he accepts the bonds of marriage in view of very pure spiritual ends, which his reason, enlightened by faith, shows him and toward which he will be urged by the divine power of the sacrament of Marriage.

Theology, since the time of St. Augustine, calls these spiritual ends the goods of marriage. The first and foremost of these is the child, on whom depends, in part, the growth of the Body of Christ here below and, later, the

increase of the number of the elect. The second is the mutual complement that the common supernaturalized life brings to Christian spouses. The third good is the real, concrete, visible image—through a state of life—of the inseparable union between Christ and his Church; more intimately, it is the image, by a visible society of spouses, of that marvelous love where egoism is unknown, where sacrifice makes the law.

Finally, the Church's Doctors whom we are summarizing teach that marriage has become a remedy for the concupiscence that the original Fall unleashed; first of all, in the primary sense that the *act* to which concupiscence inclines can be without sin only in marriage; next, in the other, more lofty sense that divine grace, conferred by the sacrament of Marriage, strives constantly to choke the very *roots* of egoism and concupiscence. As a result, if in marriage sacramental grace offers a sure remedy against the fever of concupiscence, abstinence from marriage for the sake of the Kingdom, joined to the practice of spiritual works and the mortification of the flesh, cures that fever more efficaciously and more radically still.

The “ordinary” life and the “perfect” life. The different states of life have as their foundation the common good of the Church, which is the spiritual life. Marriage, by the way in which it uses them, spiritualizes the sensible inclinations placed in human nature in view of its propagation; the celibate denies them in order better to liberate the spirit. The obligation that constitutes the state of marriage is born from a commitment to exercise in a holy manner activities that are legitimate but not, however, the most lofty. The liberty that constitutes the celibate state is born from the desire to renounce the aforesaid activities for the sake of other, spiritual activities.

2. It is not, however, only apropos these precise activities that such a difference of attitude can be noticed. It is more generally apropos the principal exterior activities of Christians: there are those who seek (insofar as these things are legitimate and submitted to the law of the spirit) the possession of material goods, the accomplishment of the works of the flesh, the use of their own independence; others are moved to renounce all, even by binding themselves by vow, under the inspiration of love, to poverty, continence, and obedience.

Hence we have new states of life: the *ordinary* life and the *perfect* life. The latter is something more than just mere celibacy. It supposes that the attitude of renunciation extends not only to the work of the flesh but also to the

possession of material goods and the free disposition of one's exterior life. It supposes that this attitude of renunciation will be confirmed and stabilized exteriorly by a vow, so that the law that rules the state of the perfect life is the law of religious servitude, a servitude that frees one from many things, *servire Deo regnare est*.

3. We touch an essential point here: the attitude of Christianity toward the world. Here as elsewhere, it is important to keep the Catholic truth above diverse forms (often subtle or hidden) of error. Much light will be shed upon the question if one compares the "law of creation" and the "law of redemption".

The "law of creation" is *a law of conquest and domination of the world, by the integral exercise of all human activities, great and small, supported with infallibility in uprightness, thanks to the marvelous unction of the original grace.*²⁵ This is the law of innocence, the era of the peaceful possession of the kingdoms of the earth by the king of this world (Gen 1:26-28).

These times have now passed. The reciprocal relations of man and the universe will be henceforward ruled by a new law, a law where sorrows and disproportions appear.

Undoubtedly, the loftiest reason for such a change is that God permitted the catastrophe of the era of innocence only in view of establishing an era more ardent and more divine, where the efficacy of a grace thoroughly mixed with blood and tears would bring men so close to God that they would become conformed to the image of his only beloved Son. It remains that, even if redeemed humanity is carried toward God by a new impulse, the world, nevertheless, has ceased to be a peaceable dwelling for it. It has been changed into a place of exile. It is at the same time a place of dreadful temptations, of painful battles, of bitter sins—in short, it is a valley of tears. For, even if one holds that the redemptive grace is richer and more intense than original grace, one must certainly hold, nevertheless, that it does not bring with it that marvelous unction that bestowed peace on the body and passions of the first man. These are beings divided within themselves, where the body struggles against the soul, the passions against the reason, the fascination of the visible against the call of the invisible; these are beings wounded by the first sin, whom grace strives to carry along toward God. There is no more Adam, no more Garden of Eden. These are men saved in hope, men who bear in their trials the firstfruits of the Spirit, while awaiting the time of glory. There is the imperfect, sorrowful, dangerous world; one

that is the infancy, as it were, of a new heaven and a new earth, where it will be good to dwell (Rom 8:19-25).

Following upon the law of creation is the “law of redemption”. This is *the difficult management of the land of exile by the, not integral, but ordered, controlled, and purified exercise of human activities, unceasingly in conflict with each other*. It is a law of struggle and renunciation; for it has become impossible, without renunciation, to escape the tyranny of inferior things. Such is, for all men, the supreme rule of the Christian life; but there are two ways of living it out, just as there are two ways of approaching a summit of a mountain: following the main road or taking shortcuts.

4. More often, grace will content itself with *directing*—by elevating and purifying—the activities of man that are related to temporal goods. One could call this regime *the regime of the largest possible utilization of the world by Christians*. They will make use of marriage; they will be proprietors; they will dispose freely of themselves. They will seek (henceforth, however, under the shadow of the Cross) to fill the earth, to bring it under submission, to extend over it the rule of reason: for the first commandment of Genesis, even if changed in the conditions of its realization, has not been affected in substance. They will apply themselves to works of culture; they will work to weave the fabric of human history. Here is a task that remains providential. Often they will have to employ temporal riches, that is to say, means that are good in themselves—those that are legitimate and normal, but burdensome and charged with matter.

These means are the proper means of the world, the spirit seizes them only by abduction, as it were—they do not properly belong to it. The truth is, because of (and since) the sin of Adam, such means belong to the domain of the prince of this world. It is our duty to tear them away from him by the power of Christ’s blood. It would be absurd to ignore or reject them. They are necessary; they are part of the natural substance of human life. Religion must agree to accept their help. It is advisable, however, for the world’s own good, that the hierarchy of means be safeguarded and their just proportions relative.^{[26](#)}

It is when Christian wisdom utilizes rich temporal means that it charms a greater number of men; thus the regime of the greatest utilization of the world can be called the regime of the “common way”.

5. It happens, however, that divine grace, in elevating man’s activities, in a sense *absorbs* them, confiscating them for its own profit, so to speak. The regime that results is the *regime of the least possible utilization of the world by Christians*. They occupy themselves far away from the progress of culture

and the success of human history. They work more directly for the coming of God's Kingdom, for the expansion of the Body of Christ. They can choose to renounce marriage, property, and the free disposal of themselves. They prefer to use purely spiritual means and poor temporal means:

The cross is in them. The more they are free from, and devoid of, things material, the more efficacious they are; because they are pure means for the power of the Spirit. These are the proper means of wisdom; for, wisdom is not mute, she cries out publicly. It is proper for wisdom to cry out in such a way; it is necessary for her, therefore, to use different means in order to make herself heard. The error is to think that the better means for her will be those that are the most powerful, the most voluminous. The purely spiritual is a totally immanent activity; this is contemplation, the proper efficacy of which—in order to touch the heart of God—does not change one atom here below. The more one approaches the purely spiritual, the more the temporal means employed in its service are diminished; and this is the condition of their efficacy. Too subtle to be halted by an obstacle, they reach where the most powerful devices cannot. *Propter suam munditiam*—because of their purity, they traverse the world from pole to pole. They are not ordered to a tangible success; they do not contain in their essence an internal exigency of temporal success. They participate in the efficacy of the spirit, in order to obtain spiritual effects.²⁷

It is in the employment of poor temporal means that the greatest folly of the cross appears; also, the regime of the least utilization of the world is that of the “perfect way”.

The two regimes represent two exterior forms of authentic Christian life, two visible paths that lead one to the same end, namely, the perfection of charity—which is the love of God for God himself and all things because of God; for there is only one sanctity.

6. The “common way”, comprising the Christian usage of human things controlled by the cross, is more adapted to the whole of the faithful. It is not necessary to ask of them more than is possible, for fear that Satan might tempt them (1 Cor 7:5). Their vocation is not, normally, to renounce temporal goods. It is in using them without losing the eternal goods—“[dealing] with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the form of this world is passing away” (1 Cor 7:31). This vocation is attainable: God never commands the impossible. Still, it is a very lofty vocation. If any blame could be attributed to it, it would be of being too sublime for the multitude of men. But is it not the task of Christianity precisely to elevate humanity unceasingly beyond itself?

It is here that, at the heart of the Church, the social necessity of the role of the “perfect way” appears. How will the faithful as a whole elevate themselves to the Christian usage of exterior goods, of marriage, of liberty, if,

from their midst, there do not continually arise some Christians who, in order to affirm with a brilliant intensity the primacy of spiritual ends, choose to renounce completely these very goods? Only the love that moves one to renounce all can, in the Church, sustain that love which makes an instrument of all. And as for those who, being primarily engaged in the broader way of the legitimate use of earthly goods, marriage, and liberty, find themselves suddenly stopped short in their momentum and rejected by misfortunes as outcasts from life, if they cast a glance on the marvelous examples of renunciation that the Church makes shine forth around them in every epoch, are they not able to comprehend that God, who seemed to want to break them in his power or abandon them to life's trials, in fact is only calling them in his love to a holier and more sublime vocation, of which they themselves would never even have dreamed?

7. The "canonical state of perfection" or the "religious state" demands the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. It is made up of: the religious orders (solemn public vows) and the religious congregations (simple public vows). We may join to these the societies of private vows that observe the common life; also included are the secular institutes vowed to the body of the church is organic and partitioned 271 seeking Christian perfection and the practice of the three evangelical counsels, not by quitting the world, but by remaining in its midst "without the exterior assistance of the religious habit and the common life".

This state is made up of both clerics and laity. It is clear that, according to Pope Pius XII, in the activities belonging to the apostolate of the laity, the religious laity should make a choice: they will be vowed primarily to ecclesial and spiritual activities; with respect to those activities that are worldly and temporal, they will assume only what is required to carry the light of the Gospel there.

5. OTHER DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE STATES OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

1. Alongside the permanence of the states of life, one can distinguish in the Church the morally continuous permanence of certain exterior activities, certain tasks and sacrifices, such as from confessing the faith, suffering or dying for it. These manifestations of the life of the Church, short-lived when

considered in their singularity but lasting because of the constancy of their appearance, are what one calls—vis-à-vis the *states* of Christian life—the *conditions* of the Christian life.

It is thus that the different moments of the temporal life of Christ can be reproduced in the total Christ, which is the Church. Isolated but numerous souls (or even entire religious orders) take up the task of imitating as faithfully as possible, and prolonging in some way in space and time, some particular attitude or action of the Savior: the silence, the humility, the contemplation of his hidden life, his fasting for forty days in the desert, his vigils and prolonged nocturnal prayers, his preaching to the crowds, his kindness to the sick, his expiatory sufferings, and even his martyrdom on the Cross.

So the life of the Church, strongly unified by the Spirit of God, is itself differentiated in its functions: “If all were a single organ, where would the body be?” (cf. 1 Cor 12:19-30).

2. Just as in the human body the different members manifest the life of the whole and serve it, so in the body of the Church the exterior differentiations, states, or conditions of life are the manifestations and servants (always insufficient) of an immense and mysterious love. Every Christian understands this, but the saints live it. Where can one find a loftier understanding of St. Paul’s revelation on the Body of the Church than in these lines of St. Thérèse of Lisieux:

I would like to enlighten souls as did the Prophets and Doctors; I have the vocation of the Apostle. . . . I would like to be a missionary, not only for a few years, but from the creation of the world and unto the consummation of the ages. . . . At prayer, my desires caused me to suffer a real martyrdom; I opened the Epistles of St. Paul in order to search for some response. Chapters twelve and thirteen of the First Epistle to the Corinthians fell under my glance. I read there that all cannot be apostles, prophets, doctors, etc., that the Church is composed of different members, and that the eye cannot be the hand at the same time. The response was clear, but my desires were not satisfied; I was not at peace. . . . Without becoming discouraged I continued my reading and this phrase relieved me: *Earnestly desire the more perfect gifts; and I will show you a still more excellent way.* And the Apostle explains how all the more perfect gifts are nothing without *Love*, that Charity is the excellent way that surely leads to God. At last, I found repose! Charity gave me the key to my *vocation*. I understood that, if the Church has a body composed of different members, the most necessary, the most noble of all is not lacking to it. I understood that the Church has *a heart* and that this heart was burning Love. I understood that Love alone made members of the Church act, that if Love were to die out, the Apostles would no longer proclaim the Gospel, the Martyrs would refuse to shed their blood. I understood that Love held all vocations, that Love was everything, that it embraced all times and places, in a word, that it is Eternal!²⁸

IV. The City of God and the World

1. THE CITY OF GOD AND THE CITIES OF THE WORLD

The realm of the spiritual and that of the temporal. 1. It is important first of all to distinguish very clearly between the spiritual realm, where the Church is situated—the Kingdom that is not of this world—and the temporal realm, where culture, civilization, and the kingdoms of this world move about. However profoundly influenced by the spiritual it may be, the temporal is, by nature, distinct from it.

On the first level of activity, which is the level of the spiritual (taken in the most typical sense of the word), we act as members of the Mystical Body of Christ. Whatever there may be in the order of the liturgical and sacramental life, the work of virtues or contemplation, the apostolate or works of mercy, our activity *is aimed at eternal life as its determining object*—God and the things of God, the redemptive work of Christ to be preserved in us and in others. This is the realm of the Church herself.

On a second level of activity, which is the temporal level, we act as members of the earthly city, engaged in the cares of the earthly life of humanity. Whether it is of the intellectual or moral order, the scientific or artistic, the social or political, our activity, while it is, if it is just, related to God as its last end, *is directed in itself toward, as its determining object, goods that are not eternal life but that concern, in a more general way, the things of time*—the work of civilization or culture. This is the realm of the world.^{[29](#)}

2. Sometimes, therefore, under the motion of the supernatural powers of grace and the hierarchy, human resources and energies function as on a higher plane, as an *instrument* in the hand of an artist. Hence, they surpass even themselves, receiving wings, as it were, in order to fly, introducing man into the divine life, aiming immediately toward the ends of the Kingdom of God, constituting the very fabric of which the Church and Christianity are made. Sometimes, on the contrary, under the motion of the supernatural powers of grace and the hierarchy, human resources and energies function on their own plane, according to their own style, in the manner of a *secondary cause*, such as a plant under the rain and the sun. Hence, they are aided and illuminated in view of human tasks, receiving wings, as it were, in order to run, aiming immediately at the things of time, constituting the very fabric of which cultures and civilizations are made, in the measure (always partial) that they are Christian.

The distinction we have just made from the point of view of *efficient* causality can also be made from the point of view of *final* causality. It is clear that all the activities and works of the Christian must be directed to eternal beatitude as their end. Either, however, this direction is *direct and immediate*—and here we have the spiritual domain of the things that are of God alone, which constitute the Church, the Kingdom that is in this world without being of this world—or, this direction is *indirect and mediate*—it is necessary to render directly and immediately to Caesar the things that belong to Caesar; but, in the final analysis it is for God that one renders something to Caesar—here we have the domain of the things temporal and cultural. These have value in themselves; they are not pure *means*; they are *true ends, but intermediate and of lesser value [infravalentes]*.

These two realms are distinct, but they are not separate. The duality of the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world, of the Church and the city, the specificity of their ends and their activities, the impossibility of replacing one with the other, was recalled by Pope Leo XIII:

God has divided the care of governing the human race between two powers: one ecclesiastical; the other civil. The former is the attendant of things divine; the latter, things human. Each of them is supreme in its respective order; each is contained in precise limits, which are drawn by its very nature and its proximate end. Thus there is circumscribed a domain under which each, by right, exercises its own action.^{[30](#)}

Without a doubt, the Church and the city have each their own supremacy, *principatum*; in the management of their own affairs as well, neither obeys the other, that is, of course, within the limits traced out for it by its own proximate ends. It does not follow in any way that the two are separate; less still, that they are enemies.^{[31](#)}

It is necessary that there be between the two powers an orderly connection. . . . One can have an idea of the nature and scope of this connection only in considering the nature of each of the two powers and in weighing the excellence and nobility of their objectives: the one having for its proximate and principal end the concern of perishable interests; the other, the procuring of heavenly and eternal goods.^{[32](#)}

The general subordination of the temporal to the spiritual. Hence we see the two different realms, two different objects, two different common goods—the one spiritual, the other temporal. They are different, but one of itself is subordinate to the other. *The common good of civilization must, by its very nature, submit to the common good of life eternal, which is God himself.*

On both planes I will carry out my work well only by having, with regard to the object for which I am aiming, the required skill and weapons; *but where I act as a member of a city other than the Church of Christ, the Christian truth and life must penetrate my activity from within*; they must be the living soul and control the direction of all the knowledge and means of production I employ: whether the object toward which I am working—such as planting a vine or building a house—falls within the province of a *technique* independent of the Christian faith; or whether the work itself, however great may be the part of the technique entailed by it, is essentially of the *ethical* order, such as the things of the social and political realm, and consequently depends intrinsically on superior principles that Christian faith and wisdom assign from on high.³³

To act “insofar as one is a Christian” and to act “as a Christian”. Christianity, the Gospel, seeks therefore to be present on two planes of activity: the ecclesial and spiritual, and the worldly and temporal, but without destroying in any way their proper specificity. This is what one means in saying that the Christian must act, on one hand, insofar as he is a Christian (or, to the extent that he is Christian) and, on the other hand, as a Christian.

If I turn toward men in order to speak with them and act in their midst, we say that on the first level of activity—on the spiritual level—I appear before them *insofar as I am a Christian* and insofar as I involve the Church of Christ; and on the second level of activity—on the temporal level—I do not act *insofar as I am Christian*, but I must act *as a Christian*, involving myself alone, not the Church, but involving myself totally and not partially or half-heartedly; involving myself—I, who am a Christian, who am in the world and work in the world without being of the world, who, by my faith, my Baptism, and my Confirmation—little though I be—have the vocation of infusing the world where I am with a Christian life and vigor.³⁴

It is *insofar as* I am Catholic that I am asked to act as one sent by Catholic Action; it is *as a Catholic* that I am asked to act as a farmer, scientist, lawyer, poet, or politician.

Direct interventions of the spiritual in the temporal. The spiritual and the temporal having been clearly defined, it is now possible to determine the direct or indirect interventions of the spiritual in the temporal, principally in what concerns politics. This appears under two titles: the illumination of the temporal and the defense of the spiritual.

1. In the same way that the spiritual order is at the same time superior to the temporal and vitally connected to it, there is in the temporal—with regard to the temporal itself—an area of truths connected to revealed truths, of which the Church is the deposit and which orders from on high the temporal thought and activity of the Christian. It is thus that the encyclicals of Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI have elaborated the principles of a Christian, political, social, and economic *wisdom*, which does not descend to particular concrete determinations, but which is as a theological firmament for the teachings and activities most particularly involved in the contingencies of the temporal.³⁵

The *matter* to be enlightened is that of the kingdoms of this world; but the *ray* that falls upon it from the Magisterium, in order to illumine, purify, and safeguard it, is the direct concern of the Kingdom that is not of this world.

There are numerous pastoral instructions related to this end of illuminating the temporal, intended to enlighten the moral conscience of Catholic citizens on their public duties (safeguarding religious liberty, maintaining family structures and civil and international peace, establishing social justice, respecting the rights of the human person, rejecting violence, and so on), while leaving to them the responsibility of making the final practical decision. It is clear that the more perfect the ethical-political education of a population is and the more the Catholic citizens of a country are capable of acting as politically important persons, the more also the religious authority will be able to concentrate its efforts on its essential task, which is to lead souls to eternal life and to aid them in continuing the work of the redemptive Incarnation.

2. The other case of the impact of the spiritual on the temporal is connected to the defense of the spiritual.

a. There is an area of questions that are *mixed in themselves and by their very nature*, such as marriage, education, schooling, and so on. Under one aspect, they belong directly to the Church; under another aspect, they belong to the State. The Christian member of the Mystical Body “has to consider them, first and foremost, not as they affect the temporal order and the good of the earthly city (which, moreover, itself suffers detriment if the superior goods are violated), but as they affect the supra-temporal goods of the human person and the common good of the Church of Christ.”³⁶

b. There are some approaches, in themselves and ordinarily temporal, that *exceptionally and in virtue of concrete circumstances* directly and immediately involve the common good of the Church. The Christian will have to consider them first and foremost under this aspect. Exceptionally, they become spiritual. Catholic citizens perform them in the name of the Church, as instruments of the Church. Each time, therefore, that politics directly touch the altar—for example, through the promulgation of laws that illegitimately limit the Church’s freedom—the latter can herself seize the initiative of political action. These approaches belong to that which is called “civic action for the defense of values proper to the City of God but that are involved in the temporal”,³⁷ by which the Christian “intervenes in the political realm in order to *defend religious interests* and in the strict measure

required by that defense. This is not at all the same thing as *working for a political cause* that is directed by a certain conception of the temporal common good to be obtained.”³⁸

Christianity and Christendoms. In contrast to *Christianity* or the Kingdom that is not of this world, we can call *Christendoms* the civilizations, the cultural aggregates, that welcome—not hypocritically, but really—in a measure undoubtedly always very imperfect, the vivifying influence that Christianity exercises over them, both by its doctrine and by its spirit of love. One could say that Christianity remains, whereas Christendoms die. Christendoms pass under Christianity as clouds under the sun. We can distinguish two types of Christendoms: the medieval Christendom and the new Christendom, for the coming of which we are required to labor.

Medieval Christianity. 1. This began at the time Christianity was in the process of conquering all of Europe. The idea then came to Christians of grouping themselves together politically—that is to say, of founding a city constitutionally made of Christians; the quality of the Catholic Christian entering then into the very definition of the citizen as an integral part.

2. The Jews who did not convert, and the Gentiles were, by that fact, foreigners (that is not to say that they were necessarily enemies). With respect to medieval heresy, it now became a crime against the common law; for, here heresy is not viewed from the aspect of a *heresy* or *spiritual* fault that destroys faith previously accepted, but as *medieval* heresy, a *temporal* fault that destroys a constitutional statute.

3. The medieval city presents itself to our eyes as an aggregate of the spiritual and the temporal that is in no way required by the nature of things. What is required is the distinction between the spiritual and the temporal, and the subordination of the second, not their aggregation as constitutive elements of the notion of citizen. It would be permissible therefore to conceive another type of Christian city; but the medieval solution was suggested at that time by the historical circumstances.

4. Even in the medieval period, Christianity, which is spiritual, remained distinct from Christendom, which is temporal; the Church remained distinct from the State. The pope is head of Christianity: it was in order to assure his spiritual independence that he was, in addition, the prince of the Papal States. The emperor was theoretically the head of Christendom. But the failings of

some Christian emperors would cause the popes to join to their spiritual power (clearly necessitated by the salvation of the people)—and despite the dangers that such an alliance includes—a certain temporal power of ruling Christendom (as a substitute), above all, when Muslim power became a menace.

5. The Crusades were not armed missions. In their essence they did not appear as struggles of Christianity against Islam—Christianity did not seek to annihilate but to convert. The Crusades were struggles of temporal Christendom against Islam, struggles in which Christendom—mobilized by the pope insofar as he was the guardian of Christendom and encouraged by the pope insofar as he was the Vicar of Christ—defended its temporal welfare by temporal means. The cross that faced the crescent was not the one that saves East and West; it was a “temporalized” cross, like the cross on the Swiss flag.

6. St. Louis spiritualized the idea of the crusade. St. Francis did something even greater: he resurrected the idea of mission. Celano cites St. Francis: “Supreme obedience—where flesh and blood have no part—is that which, under divine inspiration, moves a brother to give himself over to the infidels in order to save their souls, and with the desire for martyrdom.” After St. Francis there came Plan-Carpin, John of Montecorvino, Odoric of Pordenone and a cloud of martyrs.

7. Medieval Christendom was a first attempt, however inadequate, at Christian politics, with a view to founding a temporal city, constitutionally composed of Christian souls. It disappeared with all its splendors—which were due to the grandeurs of people touched by the Gospel—and its defects—which were due to their wretchedness. Let us not try to resurrect it; let us await a new Christendom, a different application, to a different historical situation, of eternal evangelical precepts that touch on the temporal. Nothing is to be copied; everything is to be reinvented.

A new Christendom. 1. The new Christendom will have to take into consideration a twofold historical fact: (a) the fact (an unfortunate one at that) of the religious division and the diversity of beliefs in the midst of political societies, having for their proper end the common temporal good of all; (b) the fact (a fortunate fact) of the more complete differentiation that is produced in the course of time between the spiritual and temporal realms—each one autonomous with respect to the other, though not separate—such as

was taught by Pope Leo XIII.

2. Christian politics, in the actual conditions of the world, look to form a political unity out of all the inhabitants of a given region or country, in order to accord them all the rights of a citizen, by taking them as they are—whatever be their religious belief—and yet effectively directing them, under the impulse of an authentic evangelical spirit, toward temporal and political ends that Christianity has not disavowed and that it can recognize as legitimate.

3. A Christian politic refrains, then, from oppression of non-Christian citizens, whom it groups on the temporal plane with other Christian citizens, assuming they accept the fundamental practical precepts of a society of free men: respect for social peace, truth, justice, human dignity, fraternal friendship, the absolute value of good and evil. It practices “absolute tolerance”. It does not fall, however, into “dogmatic tolerance”, which regards as equally admissible in themselves all forms of belief and disbelief; it does not seek to advocate a minimum of common speculative doctrine for all citizens, believing or non-believing. A Christian politic proceeds from an authentic and integral Christianity; it nevertheless

asks all of good will to cooperate, all those who grasp in a more or less partial and defective (perhaps extremely defective) way, the truths that the Gospel knows in their fullness and who are thus enabled to give themselves in a practical way to this common work, and perhaps without being in the least generous or devoted. It is here that the Gospel text applies with all its force: *He who is not against you is with you* [Mk 9:39].³⁹

4. In his encyclical *Immortale Dei*, Leo XIII had treated the question of the civil tolerance of cults in a Catholic State. Afterward, Pius XII elaborated on the problem. In his *Allocution to Italian Jurists*, December 6, 1953, he envisaged a world community formed from peoples and States, “some Christian, others non-Christian, religiously indifferent, either consciously secular or even openly atheistic”; and it is according to such a community that he posed, in a new manner, the problem of the civil tolerance of cults:

Reality shows us that error and sin are found in the world in a large measure. God reproves them; nevertheless, he permits them to exist. Consequently, the assertion that moral and religious deviation must always be prevented whenever possible, because its tolerance is in itself immoral, cannot be valid in an *absolute and unconditional* sense. . . . Let us remember that Christ, in the parable of the weeds, recommended that we allow the weeds to grow with the wheat in the field of the world for the wheat’s sake (Mt 13:24-30). The duty of suppressing moral and religious deviations cannot, then, be an ultimate norm of action. It must be subordinated to norms that are *higher and more general*, which, in certain circumstances permit one—and even make it appear

to be a better course of action—not to prevent the error, in order to promote a greater good.

5. The city as such has duties toward God. If, in a society composed of Catholic, Protestant, agnostic, and atheistic citizens, it does not seem necessary and opportune to proclaim Catholicism the state religion, it remains nevertheless,

that a city so composed, yet having political and moral structures that boast of Christian inspiration, will be conscious of its doctrine and its morals and will express them publicly. . . . In this conception, civil society is organically bound to religion and cannot help but turn consciously toward the source of its being in invoking divine assistance and the divine name, as it is known by its members.⁴⁰

“The civil power, insofar as it represents the people, has to have, on the occasion of its most solemn acts or, for example, in time of public peril, recourse to the prayers of representatives of the religious confession(s) historically rooted in the life of the people.”⁴¹

6. It is clear what a task the coming of a new Christendom represents. We cite here some lines from *Humanisme intégral*:

It is impossible for a vitally Christian formation of the temporal order to occur in the same way and by the same means as other temporal formations and revolutions. If it takes place, it will be due to Christian heroism. . . . Christian heroism does not have the same sources as others; it proceeds from the heart of a God who has been scourged and ridiculed, crucified outside the gates of the city. It is time to take hold of again—as formerly in the medieval period—things of the terrestrial city, but in knowing well that its force and its grandeur are from somewhere else. . . . In this way a vitally Christian social renovation will be the work of sanctity, or it simply will not be. I am speaking of a sanctity turned toward the temporal, the secular, the worldly. Has the world not known holy leaders of people? If a new Christendom rises in history, it will be the work of such a sanctity.⁴²

7. To quote Maritain:

If the facts do not need to meet this expectation, if in the future the work of Christendom must develop in the midst of what Scripture calls the mystery of iniquity, as this mystery formerly developed in the midst of the work of Christendom, at least we are able to hope that in the new world an authentically Christian culture will arise, no longer grouped and assembled, as in the Middle Ages, into a body of homogeneous civilization occupying a small privileged portion of an inhabited land, but spread over the whole surface of the earth like the living network of centers of Christian life disseminated among the nations in the great supracultural unity of the Church. Instead of a fortified castle towering over the lands, let us think rather of an army of stars, streaming across the sky.⁴³

2. THE CITY OF GOD AND THE CITY OF EVIL

The two “mystical” cities. 1. It is immediately in relation to the *supreme and ultimate* ends that, in the grandiose Augustinian perspective, the two “mystical cities” are defined, contrary in spirit, different in their visible manifestations, opposed in their whole being: one is the city of God, or the Church, ordered immediately to the ends of life eternal; the other is the city of the devil, rebellious against the goods of eternal life: “Two loves have built two cities: the love of self unto the forgetfulness of God, the earthly city; love of God unto the forgetfulness of self, the heavenly city; one glories in self; the other glories in the Lord.”⁴⁴

2. The relations between the Church and the city of evil are ruled by a law of opposition: “For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will live in them’ ” (2 Cor 6:14-16). The Apostle primarily exhorts Christians not to be “mismatched” with infidels; but his demands do not stop there, they go even farther: “Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1). The opposition between the light and the darkness, between Christ and Belial, is from there transported to the very hearts of Christians.

3. The city of God, the Church, is without sin but not without sinners. All that witnesses in favor of the authentic gifts of the Spirit—among the just especially, but even among sinners—is found within and on the side of the Church and forms her being. And all that witnesses to sin—among sinners especially, but even among the just—is placed outside of and beyond the limits of the Church and remains foreign to her.

To speak, therefore, theologically and rigorously, the Church is opposed here below to the city of evil, not as the camp of the good against the camp of the wicked, but rather—by a more subtle distinction, “sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit” (Heb 4:12)—as the camp of Christ’s holdings against the camp of the Prince of this world’s; as the camp of what is good (in the wicked as well as in the just) against the camp of what is evil (in the just as well as in the wicked). The Church’s frontiers divide her children, clerics and the laity, into two categories, taking

into herself the pure part and leaving the impure outside; and they even strive to make a division in those who do not call themselves children of the Church, seeking all that is heavenly in them, in order to enclose it tightly within.

The third city. 1. In opposing, as we have just done, the Kingdom of Christ to the kingdom of the Prince of this world, the city of good to the city of evil, we place ourselves in immediate view of the *ultimate* end—hoped for or refused—which gives order to the whole book *The City of God*. It is accurate, no doubt; but it is not complete. In order to bring it to completion one must further distinguish the level of the human city, which contains all that belongs to the things of Caesar and things of culture, and specified by an immediate relation to the common temporal good, which cannot be but an *intermediate or secondary [infravalente]* end.

2. St. Augustine was not unaware of this third city, and even though he more often gives the name “earthly city” to the city of evil (a term that will not be lacking equivocations), he nevertheless has sufficiently marked out in his great work⁴⁵ the irreducible specificity of the human, cultural, or political city. He knew the value of philosophical wisdom and sought to take possession of what was true in the teachings of the ancient philosophers. He admired the grandeur of ancient Rome. For the people he wished an “earthly peace”, which he at times called the “peace of Babylon”. He did not doubt that it was a good: “When the defenders of a just cause triumph, who could doubt that such a victory is blessed and such a peace desirable? Here there are goods and undoubtedly, the gifts of God.”⁴⁶

3. The distinction between the “ultimate end” and the “intermediate or secondary end” is found only in an implicit state in St. Augustine. As soon as it becomes explicit, one is led to recognize, in addition to the two cities of the “mystical” order, one of the human, cultural, and political order; three cities in all: the *city of God*, where the devil has absolutely no part; the *city of the devil*, in the sin of which God has no part; the *human city*, in which the devil and God have a part.

4. The city of God respects the specificity of the human cities. Its influence does not try to use them as means, to assimilate them, and to change them into its own body; but rather it tries to aid them in their role as intermediate ends, to direct them according to the most intimate and most lofty exigencies deposited in their depths by the Creator, to render them more purely human:

“It is we who remind each and every man that only what is Christian is truly and fully human, and that which is anti-Christian is inhuman.”⁴⁷

The city of the devil strives, on the other hand, to ruin the human cities. It persuades them to set up their intermediate ends as ultimate ends, their earthly ends as supreme ends. This is certainly the way to pervert and distort them. The fact remains that the political city, by reason of its nature, resists to some extent enterprises of perversion, that it is not entirely led by the powers of evil, and that a little authentic good continues to subsist in it. One should still be able to distinguish the city of man and the city of the devil. Under Nero as under Domitian, at the time of the Epistle to the Romans as at the time of the Apocalypse, Christians should be able to recognize (this is the teaching of St. Paul) the part that God asks them to give to Caesar, insofar as he is the head of a human city; and the part (this is the teaching of St. John) that God asks them to refuse absolutely to that same Caesar, insofar as his face is that of the Antichrist and the instrument of the Prince of this world.

5. Because it did not *explicitly* use the distinctions of “ultimate end”, “intermediate end”, and “pure means”, the Augustinian teaching would not permit one to distinguish the human city *explicitly* from the two mystical cities.

The teaching would try at times to utilize as a means what is good in the earthly city in order to end by absorbing it into the city of God (this would be the origin of what has been called the “Augustinian politic” and the medieval errors attributing to the Church a “direct power” over politics). Sometimes, on the other hand, it would drive back into the city of the devil the *civitas terrena*, which claims to have the force of an end, and its organization with it (there were some “spirituals” who saw a work of the devil in the canonical legislation itself).

Instead of the three cities, it can seem that there are only two; although one senses the presence of the third coming to the surface in the very work of St. Augustine.

6. It is the perspective opened by St. Thomas that allows one to distinguish explicitly: the “ultimate end” absolutely speaking (the spiritual end of life eternal), and the “intermediate or secondary end”, which is ultimate only in a given order (the temporal end of human cities); it allows one to distinguish explicitly the subordination of the intermediate end and the subordination of the pure means; it allows one to distinguish explicitly between the three cities: that of God, that of the devil, that of man.

Let us not be mistaken. To make a distinction explicit, when it is related to the fundamental distinction by which are opposed nature and grace, grace and sin, is not simply “to add a precision”; it is to clarify in a new manner a host of problems that demand an immediate response and which one had truly resolved in the sense of the Gospel, but without yet possessing the logical instrument that alone would allow one to define them with a perfect clarity.

CHAPTER IX

MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

We shall speak of the first encounter with the Church (1); then of the sins of infidelity, heresy, and schism, which split the Church, and the punishment of excommunication (2); the diverse religious formations in their relation with the Church (3); Christian dissidents (4); atheistic formations (5); the axiom: “No salvation outside the Church” (6).

1. THE FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE CHURCH

The complete state and the imperfect states of the Church. A pure and simple presence of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling could not suffice to constitute the Church of the New Law; what is required is the *complete and perfect* presence, which began with the effusion of fully Christic grace. The complete indwelling of the Spirit and the perfect effusion of Christic grace are simultaneous.

Where charity is fully Christic, that is, where it is cultic, sacramental, and directed, the Church is in her *complete and perfect state*. This fully Christic charity is present in itself, directly and in a salutary manner, in the just members of the Church; by its influence, indirectly and in a non-salutary manner, in the Church’s sinful members.

Where charity is not fully Christic, that is, where it still needs to be cultic, sacramental, and directed, the Church can only be in an *imperfect and incomplete state*. It was so before the coming of Christ, but then that imperfection was not abnormal and represented only an *absence*; it is still the case in many places after Christ’s coming, but today this imperfection is abnormal and represents a *privation*.

The encounter with the Church is inevitable from the very dawn of the moral life. Considering what has already been stated, one could say that the Church,

like Christ of whom she is the Body, is present at all times and all places under one or another of her states.

We must say more: if no one, at whatever time and place in which he lives, is saved without Christ, and if to be in Christ is to form his Body, no one is saved without belonging in some way to the Church. The encounter, public or hidden, of the soul with the Church is inevitable. It happens from the dawn of the life of reason—and even earlier for baptized infants.

From the first moment when God, “who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4), begins to work on the soul through his truth and his love, it is instructed to accept or refuse this entry of God into it, and at the same time, to accept or refuse its membership in the Church.

The step that makes the unbaptized soul cross secretly over the threshold of the Church is the act of adhering by faith to the revealed message.

The content of the revealed message. St. Thomas distinguishes between the truths that are necessary to believe explicitly *since the promulgation* of the Christian faith, the two most fundamental of which are the Trinity and the Incarnation, and the truths that have *always* been necessary to believe explicitly, namely, that God exists and that his Providence extends to human destinies: “Without faith it is impossible to please [God]. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that *he exists* and that *he rewards* those who seek him” (Heb 11:6; emphasis added).

These two primordial truths, in fact, that of God’s existence and that of his Providence, when they are known, not by simple philosophical reason, but penetrated in their depths by divine faith, pre-contain and conceal within them the whole substance of the Creed. In the mystery of the being and existence of God is hidden the very mystery of the Trinity; in the mystery of the loving deeds of his Providence is hidden the very mystery of the redemptive Incarnation.

The first presentation of the revealed message. Normally, the Christian message is presented to the world by the voice of teaching: “Go. . . make disciples of all nations. . . , teaching them” (Mt 28:19-20); “He who hears you hears me” (Lk 10:16); “But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can

men preach unless they are sent?” (Rom 10:14-15).

That there is nevertheless access to justifying faith for the inhabitants of regions that the apostolic preaching has not touched there is no doubt. St. Thomas, who supposes a man raised in the forest in the midst of wolves, writes:

It belongs to Divine Providence to provide each man with those things necessary for salvation. If, therefore, the man of whom we speak follows the indication of his natural reason in his search for good and flight from evil, it is necessary to hold most certainly that *God would reveal to him by an interior disposition those things that are necessary to believe*—or that God would send him a preacher of the faith, as he sent Peter to Cornelius.¹

St. Thomas is thinking here of a conceptual presentation of the two primordial truths.

Ten years later, he delivers the theological speculation of the first human act of an unbaptized child: “The first thing that occurs to a man to think about is *to deliberate about himself. And if he then direct himself to the due end, he will, by means of grace, receive the remission of original sin.* But if he does not then direct himself to the due end, as far as he is capable of discretion at that particular age, he will sin mortally, through not doing what is in his power to do.”² If the child, under the very secret motion of grace—without which, by reason of the wound of original sin, the accomplishment of the natural law would be impossible³—turns at that state of his life toward what he sees to be the due end, let us say toward grandeur, he is justified. He belongs to Christ and to the Church. It is at the very interior of his first free act that he has encountered the Church.

There is, therefore, even for the unbaptized child, a first free act that leads to justifying faith or mortal sin. If it leads to justification, it is the sign that the two primordial truths of which the Letter to the Hebrews speaks are present and that they are believed. Are they present in a conceptual and conscious manner? It seems not. By following the analysis of St. Thomas one would be led to say that they are present only in a pre-conceptual and pre-conscious manner.

We would add that “the child who receives an irreligious or anti-religious education, if he chooses the honest good in his first free act, is practically and vitally carried along by the immanent dialectic of this act; but he is then, without knowing it, in disagreement with the register of speculative concepts that has been inculcated in him.”⁴ There is a discrepancy between what he

truly is and his manner of expressing himself. In order little by little to rectify this, he would have to make up for a lot of lost ground and straighten out many opinions and customs. He could seem for a long time still to belong visibly to aberrant religious formations, although he already belonged invisibly to the Church.

2. THE SINS THAT DIVIDE THE CHURCH AND THE PUNISHMENT OF EXCOMMUNICATION

Where charity is fully Christic the Church is in her complete state, perfected; where charity is not fully Christic the Church is in her incomplete state, imperfect. Even in her complete state, perfected, the Church contains, certainly not sins, but sinners. Membership in the Church, nevertheless, is incompatible with certain sins like infidelity, heresy, and schism. These are the sins that divide the Church: not in herself, but in the heart of their victims.

According to the grand theology of the Fathers and of St. Thomas, infidelity, heresy, and schism are sins by their very essence. To speak of an infidel, heretic, or schismatic of good faith would seem to them as strange as speaking of a liar of good faith, or a murderer of good faith.

We shall briefly define the sins of infidelity, heresy, and schism and say a few words about the punishment of excommunication.

The sin of infidelity. 1. Stirred by the secret considerations of grace to enter into the intimacy of the mystery of God, man cannot pretend to ignore this honor in order to withdraw into himself. He has “embarked”. He must either accept or refuse the invitation: to acquiesce to his divine destinies or to revolt against them and destroy his very self; to allow himself to be carried along toward the one true Church or to break with her by rejecting the revealed message: this is the sin of infidelity.

It will be all the graver the more the interior illumination of grace becomes concretely more intense and pressing and the more the revelation is made manifest by a more explicit phase of its development.

2. One can distinguish three sorts of refusals of revelation: the refusal to accept it, the refusal to progress in it, the refusal to persevere in it; hence three sorts of infidelity: simple refusal, refusal by regression, refusal by desertion.

a. The infidelity by simple refusal. This is the refusal to *welcome* divine

revelation at the very moment when for the first time it appears as sufficiently proposed. In a very similar manner the ancients could call it the infidelity of the “Gentiles” or of the “pagans”.

b. The infidelity by regression. This is the conscious and culpable refusal to follow the normal movement of *progression* of divine revelation when it passes from the phase of the “law of nature” to the phase of the “Mosaic law”, or to that of the “evangelical law”. This refusal is virtuous in appearance. It invokes fidelity to the stem in order to protect itself against the flower; it attaches itself to the promise in order to ignore the realization. It is for one such form of infidelity that Jesus, for example, reproached the Jews.

c. The infidelity by desertion. This is the culpable refusal to *persevere* in the divine faith first professed. Culpable refusal signifies (1) *conscious* refusal: there is no infidelity if the abandonment of a revealed belief is due to an invincible error; and (2) *unconditioned* refusal: there is no infidelity if entry into a superior phase of revelation is conditioned by the abandonment.

God, the First Vatican Council clarifies, helps the faithful persevere in the light and “abandons only those who abandon him”, so that one can never have an *objectively* valid reason for placing the Catholic faith in doubt. It remains true that the faithful can fall into invincible errors *by themselves* and, without losing the virtue of faith, be led astray as to elements of the faith.

The desertion of the Christian faith is called heresy. When it is total, one can give it the name of apostasy.

The sin of heresy. 1. Heresy is the sin of those who desert the true faith, more precisely, the faith of the New Law.

To the two elements that make up infidelity, (a) an *error* in matters of faith and (b) a true consent to what one knows to be an error in matters of faith (*pertinacity*), heresy adds a third: (c) the *desertion of faith in Christian revelation*—which breaks the unity resulting from the Christian faith, the most fundamental unity of the Church.

2. Often this desertion will be partial, in the sense, at least, that one rejects only some articles of the faith; and this will be, one thinks, in order to restore the Christian faith to its primitive purity.

Nevertheless, however varied be the heresies, they all begin by repudiating that which ought to be, since the coming of Christianity, the foundation of our faith: (a) *the Word of the first Truth* (this is the formal motive of all divine faith, that of the angels in the universe of creation, then, that of

Abraham and of the prophets), (b) *insofar as it is revealed to us by the Magisterium of the apostles and transmitted by the Magisterium of Peter and his successors* (this is today the wholly necessary condition of evangelical faith:⁵ where it is *culpably repudiated*, evangelical faith is no longer possible; where it is *invincibly unrecognized*—this can be the case in non-Catholic religious formations—faith remains possible, but mutilated and at risk in its elements and its deployment).

3. “There is. . . one Lord, one *faith*, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:4-6). One sole divine faith, principle of divine unity for all men.

In repudiating that faith, the heretic falls, on one hand, from the plane of supernatural faith into that of opinion; on the other hand, from the plane of supernatural unity into that of disintegration, even when he finds crowds who will follow him.

What qualifies heresy is, above all, the abandoning of the faith; and it is, consequently, the abandoning of the unity that founds the faith.

4. Heresy does not leave anything in the Christian whom it devastates except the indelible marks of the sacramental characters. In themselves they are ordered to grace; but this ordination is thwarted by heresy. The heretic is a being torn apart. He disavows by his freewill, and absolutely speaking, the signification of the sacramental character of the last line that attaches him to the Church.

5. Even secret heretics are no longer a part of the Church. They have not, perhaps, performed any exterior act capable of pulling down upon them a *canonical* sentence of excommunication; they are able, accidentally, to remain depositors of jurisdictional powers. They have, however, excommunicated themselves, in a manner more profound and in a sense *theological*, in the silence of their heart.

6. If it is true that heresy is a sin, and not an error, and that a doctrine of itself contrary to the faith becomes heretical only at the moment when there is found a Christian to sustain it with pertinacity, one ought not to speak of heresy and heretics except apropos a doctrine: (a) contrary to divine and Catholic faith, (b) sustained by a Christian, (c) with pertinacity.⁶ The first point is settled by the ecclesiastical Magisterium. The second can be easily determined.

It is the third point that presents a difficulty: *the criterion of heresy will in the end be culpability*. One is rejected, then, on the level of probability and

likelihood. Even in the clearest cases, we cannot go beyond the assurances of the moral order. The man who behaves like a heretic may be perhaps nothing but a psychopath. It is God who judges consciences, not canonists; the latter are not totally free of judicial error.

The ancient canonists enumerated the signs to which the ecclesiastical tribunals of their times returned in order to detect heresy, from which derived a purely jurisprudential and canonical notion of heresy, destined to underlie the theological notion. Even those who strove to use it cautiously were not guaranteed against errors, which were in fact numerous and tragic. In a sense all errors of Christians are tragic. In the system of medieval Christendom the errors in the matter of heresy, as well as those in the witch trials, were bloody and monstrous.

Today, the system of medieval Christendom is definitively over. One could, one ought, to continue to judge hereticalness, to say of a person that he is culpable of heresy, and to act accordingly: “As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him” (Tit 3:10-11). But in a regime of Christendom such as we hope to have, the consequences and the sanctions of heresy will be a return to what they were in apostolic times.

The sin of schism. 1. “Schism signifies a split. The split is opposed to unity. The sin of schism is therefore that which is in itself directly opposed to unity.”⁷

The unity of the Church undoubtedly presupposes faith; but it consists itself in charity. Heresy destroys this unity fundamentally, at its root, which is faith; schism destroys it directly, in its flower, which is charity.

In commenting on the prayer of our Savior “that they may be one even as we are one” (Jn 17:22), the Fourth Lateran Council defined the unity of the Church as “a union of charity in grace”.⁸ It is theological charity, insofar as it is cultic, sacramental, and directed, that makes the unity of the Church. The unity of the Church is mysterious, theological; it is not purely exterior, canonical, a simple unity of social comportment.

Schism is a sin against theological charity. It is the sin that destroys charity *insofar as it makes the unity of the Church*. “The sin of schism is a special sin: it divides the unity that charity creates, when the latter⁹ gathers together not only private persons by a bond of spiritual love, but the entire Church in the unity of the Holy Spirit”, says St. Thomas.

2. Not every sin against charity is schism, but every schism is a sin against charity. Schism is that sin against charity which consists in wanting to exist and to act, not as part of the Catholic Church, but as forming a separate whole.

The Christian who has lost charity by a first sin can still sin against charity by a new sin. He becomes a schismatic, not by destroying charity in himself, but at the moment when he begins to desire to overthrow that effect of charity which is the unity of the Church.¹⁰

Christic charity, which resides directly in the just members, continues to carry along the sinful members. It abandons them the moment they break with it insofar as it is the principle of ecclesial unity.

3. Ecclesial unity, or *the unity of communion*, contains, as we said above, the unity of *connection*, resulting from the entrance of sacramental charity and by which the Church is *una*. And it also contains the unity of *orientation*, resulting from the reception of jurisdictional directives and by which the Church is *sub uno*. There are, from this fact, not two sorts of schism, but two doors by which one may enter into schism. “To become schismatic one of two things suffices: either evading submission to a leader or evading communion with members”, writes Cajetan.¹¹

To refuse *connection* is to refuse to enter as a part into the dynamism of the spiritual life that Christ imparts from within to all of his Church and which passes through the just to reach extensively to the sinners. In other words, it is to refuse to participate in the unity of sacramental charity.

To refuse *orientation* is to refuse to enter as a part into the unity of the task that Christ assigns to his Church from without. In other words, it is to refuse to participate in the unity of direction imparted to the Mystical Body by the authentic jurisdictional route. This supposes more than disobedience; it supposes a rebellion. While believing by divine faith in the legitimacy of the jurisdictional power, I refuse, in such circumstances, to recognize it as my superior; I proclaim concretely my right to act as a separate whole.

4. The rejection of *connection* can be manifested in a certain measure by the refusal to receive the sacraments. The refusal of *orientation* is manifested in a more immediate manner by resistance to the hierarchical authority. One recognizes here the two signs that have traditionally served to denote schism.

St. Ignatius of Antioch concretized the two signs in submission to the bishop and fidelity to the Eucharist over which the bishop presides. Let us immediately clarify that it is insofar as a particular Church, ruled by her

bishop, is bearer of the unity of the universal Church, ruled by her sovereign pontiff, that one cannot quit her without schism.

It is important to remember that rejection, whether of the unity of connection or the unity of orientation—in other words, refusal of the unity of Catholic communion—cannot be an infallible sign of schism. It can result from an invincible error, being then an evil without being a sin. It is not a sin of schism unless it proceeds from a culpable will. Here, again, one is thrown back onto the level of the probable and the likely. The criterion of schism cannot, any more than that of heresy, be absolute.

5. There can be schism without heresy, and it is wrong to believe that the Vatican definition of pontifical infallibility automatically transforms schism into heresy.

Pure schism then, unmixed with heresy, remains possible. Practically speaking, however, schism is a fatal slope toward heresy, and one cannot remain schismatic for a long time without becoming a heretic. “There is not a schism that does not invent a heresy in order to explain that it was justified in leaving the Church”, says St. Jerome.¹² And St. Augustine writes: “Heresy is nothing but schism grown old.”¹³

Excommunication. 1. Excommunication is not a *sin* like infidelity, heresy, or schism. It is a *penalty* pronounced by the canonical powers against certain particularly grave sins, whether to safeguard the common good of the Church or to confront sin.

The plane, therefore, is changed in passing from schism to excommunication. Schism destroys a *theological order*; it breaks *the unity of communion in charity*; excommunication destroys a *canonical order*; it breaks the *unity of social comportment*, expressed in the past by inscription in the public registers. We ought not to conclude that it has only external and disciplinary effects. It has very grave internal and spiritual effects, but attained for certain canonical dispositions.

That canonical authority has the power to impose restrictions on sinners is expressed clearly in Scripture (Mt 18:17; 1 Cor 5:3-5; 2 Thess 3:14-15; 2 Jn, vv. 10-11).

2. The Code of Canon Law actually lists excommunication among the censures. “A censure is a penalty by which a baptized person who has committed an offense and is unrepentant is deprived of certain spiritual goods or goods connected with the spiritual until, receding from contumacy, he is

absolved” (can. 2241, §1, 1917 Code). There are three types of censures. Excommunication is “a censure that removes from the communion of the faithful with respect to certain effects stipulated by the Code” (can. 2257, §1, 1917 Code); it is called anathema when it is solemnly uttered according to the indications of the Roman Pontifical, §2.

3. Among the “spiritual” effects of excommunication, we list: (a) the eventual privation, after a condemnatory or declarative sentence, of jurisdictional powers; (b) a certain privation of help brought by the prayers of the Church, notably by the sacraments and indulgences; (c) the exclusion from participation in the sacraments—this is the most formidable penalty.

4. Are the excommunicated still in the Church?

They may be neither heretics nor even schismatics. In this case, by reason of the spiritual values that subsist in them, they remain in the interior of the *unitas communionis*, which, as we have seen, contains sinners and is torn only by heresy and schism. They are still children of the Church, but penalized children.

If one who has been excommunicated, such as Manfred in the *Divine Comedy* (*Purgatory* III, 133-38), is reborn by grace without finding time to be reconciled with the canonical authority, his body will be deprived of an ecclesiastical burial, but his soul will by no means be enslaved in hell.

5. Is an unjust excommunication invalid? Three cases may arise:

a. Excommunication may be merited by the sinner but pronounced in violence. It is then iniquitous from the side of the superior but just from the side of the one excommunicated; it retains its effect.

b. One may suppose an error of procedure that renders it juridically invalid and, therefore, without effect.

c. An excommunication pronounced through error against an innocent individual in no way takes away his greatest good, which is charity. It will not therefore deprive him of that spontaneous communion with the spiritual goods of the Church that is *founded on charity*. The man who enters into or grows in charity takes hold, in a sense (by reason of the intercommunication proper to charity), of everything that is done in love, no matter where—as each person profits, according to the condition of his eyes, from the light emerging from a single point.¹⁴ One could hold in addition, with some good theologians, that it would not deprive him even of the participation in the prayers that the Church makes for the *special intention* of her children. He is deprived of the public¹⁵ participation in certain goods, such as the sacraments

and the communion of the faithful: as long as he does not manage to dissipate the error of which he is a victim, he must accept this measure without rebellion. Then, says St. Thomas, his humility will be so precious before God that it will compensate by itself for all the harm done by the excommunication.

3. THE DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS FORMATIONS IN THEIR RELATION WITH THE CHURCH

We must distinguish those that are normal from those that are off course and abnormal.

Normal religious formations. There are three of them: two for the past, one for the present.

Grace was given to men, first of all, *by participation*, by reason of the Passion of Christ that *was to come*. This was the time of the expectation of Christ. At that time, the Church knew two ordinances, two regimes:

1. the regime of the *law of nature*. This is the regime where, on the one hand, grace is infused secretly into hearts by way of an impulse that seems natural and spontaneous, by way of an interior instinct;¹⁶ and, on the other hand, God regularly manifests himself to men in the phenomena of nature (Rom 1:20), which are like so many theophanies, so that one could speak in the precise sense of “natural religion”,¹⁷ or of “cosmic religion”.¹⁸ These two presences of God, the one in events, the other in hearts, are indicated in the discourse of the apostles at Lystra: “He did not leave himself without witness, for he did *good* and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your *hearts* with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17; emphasis added; cf. 17:26-28). One ought not to imagine, nevertheless, that prophetic revelations were absent from the regime of the law of nature. They are made in an intermittent manner to the men dispersed among the Gentiles (the Fathers cite the names of Abel, Noah, and Melchizedek; they even go so far as to attribute true prophecies to the Sybils); and they are made continuously to the patriarchs.

2. the regime of the *Mosaic law* is the valid regime for the Jewish people alone, from the time of the revelation of it on Sinai until the days of Christ.

These two provisional regimes were able to coexist in time, to be valid and

normal together—the one for the Gentiles (that is, the nations), the other for the Jews. They represented two legitimate ordinances of the Church, awaiting the Savior and secretly directed toward him. They have now expired.

The only normal regime today is:

3. the regime of the *evangelical law*, where grace comes from the Cross of Christ, no longer by anticipation, but by *derivation*.

The deviated religious formations and the actual multiplicity of religions. Insofar as divine revelation—preached first of all at the law of nature stage, then at that of the Mosaic law, and finally at that of the evangelical law—is accepted and professed under the motions of prevenient grace, it is the Church that appears, first in her period of preparation, then in her period of blossoming.

At each of these stages, however, revelation can be deformed; and certain of the deformations can be organized in view of being perpetuated and constitute so many beliefs that will themselves be proclaimed divine, sometimes with their sacred writings, their own professions of faith, theologies, and “miracles”, and which can drag along in their wake great crowds of people for generations to come. Here we have the origin of what is commonly called *the religions*. These appear to the eyes of the theologian as great religious deviations, great rendings of the Church.

One can order the religions existing today into three groups: religions of a pre-Christian origin; Judaism, from which we draw close to Islam; dissident Christian religions.

Is sin the principle of these deviations today, or can it sometimes be simply error? 1. That sin may be found at the origin of these deviations is without doubt: the sin of infidelity, the sin of heresy, the sin of schism; but sin is personal and intransmissible. What is transmitted is not infidelity, heresy, or schism, that is, not the *sin* of infidelity, the *sin* of schism. What is transmitted is a religious formation that sin has rendered more or less gravely aberrant and where truth and error are intermingled in a somewhat inextricable manner. This is the *heritage* or the *patrimony* of infidelity, the *patrimony* of heresy, the *patrimony* of schism.¹⁹ Those who receive this patrimony from their parents may not even be able to see the error.

2. It can happen that the one from whom a heresy takes its name never ceased to belong openly to the Church and that he erred without his error

having been shown to him: Jansenius died the bishop of Ypres.

It can also happen that the principal agitator of a heresy or schism, the consequences of which will be lasting and whose patrimony will be transmitted across generations, personally reconciles himself with the Church: such was the case, at least apparently, with Photius.

Can it happen that a founder of a religion, an aberrant religion, be in good faith? Can it happen that at the very principle of the religious deviation there is not a sin against the faith, but rather an invincible error in a matter of faith? It seems to us, having reconsidered the problem, that one must respond in the affirmative; and that such might have been the case, for example, with Muhammad, about whom we shall speak shortly. It is clear, however, that in such matters history can scarcely offer anything but conjectures.

When is the Catholic message sufficiently proposed? For the Catholic message to appear compelling, even to a delicate conscience, it is not sufficient for it to be known in its exterior form.

In his treatise *De Indis*, dated 1532, Francisco de Vitoria writes:

The Indians are not held to believe as soon as they have heard the preaching of the Christian faith, so that they would sin mortally against the faith from the sole fact that it is announced to them and that they are assured that the Christian religion is true. . . . They would be held to believe only if the Christian faith had been proposed to them with worthy witnesses to persuade them. Yet I do not hear that miracles have been performed among them or that they have been shown extraordinary examples of sanctity; on the contrary, they have been given a spectacle of scandals, horrible crimes, and innumerable impieties.^{[20](#)}

One should beware, states the theologian, of establishing the principle that, in countries where the Catholic truth is publicly preached, above all where it reigns almost exclusively and without rival, an error in matters of faith cannot be invincible. Suarez and the theologians from Salamanca teach that even in Catholic Spain it is possible for some non-Christians not to feel any doubt regarding the truth of their own religious communion.^{[21](#)}

According to the same theologian, “it is a historically observed fact” that some men of profound intelligence and even scrupulous conscience “take much time to see fully the Catholic truth and to follow it irrevocably. . . . The private life of Cardinal Newman before his definitive conversion offers us a very remarkable example of this.”^{[22](#)}

The wise conclusion of the same author:

Since the problem of responsibility or moral culpability is necessarily an individual question, one ought in no way to apply to all milieus one uniform measure; rather, one ought to try to bring a particular judgment to each individual case, taking into consideration as well the ease or particular difficulties each individual may encounter in the acquisition of the religious knowledge he is held to possess.²³

Religious deviations of a pre-Christian origin. 1. These represent, at their origin, deviations from the first ordinance of the Church, that is, from the regime of the law of nature. One could say that, taken together, they yielded to the temptation of immersing God in the world, ignorant as they were of the true notion of creation, and slid into either polytheism or pantheism.

2. These great religious bodies, in which truths and errors are mixed, can constitute patrimonies or legacies of infidelity. It would be unjust, however, to attribute to all their members the sin of infidelity, to see them all as “infidels”. The word “pagans” remains too much associated with ideas of idolatry and superstition. Let us speak—with the Gospel—of “nations” or of “Gentiles”; or as Scripture says “Greeks”, let us say “Hindus”, “Buddhists”, and so on.²⁴

3. Men grouped into these aberrant religions are not deprived of all divine help. It is certain that they are visited—by name and in secret—by grace.

If they consent to these prevenient motions, they can have true faith and belong initially, but already salutarily, to the true Church. St. Augustine liked to recall that Scripture witnesses, through Job’s situation, that there are elect among the Gentiles.²⁵ A secret instinct moves them then to separate, within the patrimony that was transmitted to them, the aspects of truth from those of error.²⁶ They will still belong corporally, that is, in a manner above all exterior and visible, to an aberrant religious formation; they will already belong spiritually, that is, in a manner above all interior and invisible, to the mysterious and visible Church.²⁷

If, on the contrary, they resist the prevenient grace, they succumb to the surrounding suggestions of infidelity, polytheism, and paganism.

The religious deviation of Judaism. 1. Israel, who, under the privileged ordinance of the law of Moses, is the Church waiting for Christ, will cease to be the Church as soon as it ignores Christ.

2. It is, above all, the people of the luminous cloud. The light of spiritual things is given to them in the cloud of the temporal; but the time will come when the light wishes to be disengaged from the cloud in order to give itself

equally to all people. The sin for some of them, the error for many, will be to think of keeping that light captive.

Israel is the bearer of a divine promise. “But the fruits will pass the promise of the flowers.” If the promise is divine, how would the realization be without surprise? A Messiah is awaited. It is the Son of God who has come, and in order to found a Kingdom that is certainly in this world, but not of this world. The sin for some, the error for a great number, has been the claiming of the promise itself in order to refuse that which is promised—the fidelity to the stem by refusing the flower. “Their minds were hardened; for to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed” (2 Cor 3:14-16).

3. There has been, however, once again, a “remnant” in Israel: The first days of the Church, when she was made uniquely of Jews and counted among her members the Virgin Mary and the apostles, are the most beautiful days of the Church of all time.

4. Let us say that there are some men found today in Judaism, as there may be later, who have been visited individually by divine grace. If they consent to it, they will be able to belong initially and in a salutary manner to the true Church more easily than the members of pre-Christian religions. One will see them inclining their heart spontaneously toward the Christian values of the Old Testament. One will see them, like the *Hassidim*,²⁸ have a passion for worship in spirit and in truth, for the religion of divine love, for the promises of a spiritual salvation presented in the Cross to all men, for an eschatology coinciding in its principal traits with the Parousia announced by the Savior. They will still belong corporally to Judaism, but will already belong spiritually to the Church.

If, on the contrary, they consciously resist the prevenient graces, they can fall either into “the infidelity by regression” and prefer the figure to the reality, the kingdoms of this world to the messianic Kingdom (henceforth transethnic and transcultural); or into “the infidelity by desertion”, like those Jews who no longer believe in their own prophets and are dragged along like flotsam by atheism.

5. What one ought not to omit in speaking of the religious deviation of Judaism is that it is radically insufficient, by itself, to define the religion of all Israel. It represents only one stage in its destiny. From the theological point

of view—and it is here that the theology of history is competent—it is impossible, without distorting perspectives, to bring a judgment on the people of Israel without following it from the time of the Old Testament, where it represents the supreme point of concentration of the Church in expectation of Christ; then, the time of the tragic misfortune that caused it to misjudge its Messiah; to the day when its re-assumption into the Church will be the sign of a “life from the dead” (Rom 11:15).²⁹

Islam. 1. It is in comparison with Judaism—more than with Christianity, of which Muhammad had too little knowledge to be able to reject it with full knowledge of the facts—that Islam is built. Muhammad turned away from the polytheism of his tribe. He fell in love with monotheism, which is said to have been revealed to him by Abraham and retransmitted by the prophets Isaac, Jacob, Moses. . . It is this monotheism that he desired to preach to his own people, the Arabs; but the monotheism of the Abrahamic revelation was represented at that time as the hereditary privilege of one people, the Jewish people, from which he felt, as an Arab, irremediably *excluded*. This drama of exclusion and rejection to the desert is at the profound spiritual origins of Islam.³⁰ How would Muhammad be able to resolve it? Revelation would come to his help. The exclusion began with Ishmael, who had been chased into the desert by Abraham himself, but who was not abandoned by God and became the father of a great people. (One might consider rereading this episode, not in the Koran, but in Genesis itself, 21:8-21.). Muhammad can also—in a manner obviously transhistoric, for the genealogy is impossible to establish—justify his Abrahamic origin and the authenticity of his prophetic mission with regard to the Arab tribes chased into the desert. He himself dreams of going to Jerusalem, the land of the prophets—the “Nocturnal Voyage” to the “Far Distant Mosque” (Koran 17,1) has been interpreted by certain Koranic interpreters as a transport in spirit, or even miraculous, to Jerusalem—for he is, after John the Baptist and Jesus, the last and the greatest of the prophets, the “seal of prophecy”. But, since his definitive rupture with the Jews, he understands that Abraham and Ishmael have personally already founded the Kaaba, and he prescribes that one should no longer turn toward Jerusalem to pray, but toward Mecca.

2.

The text of the Koran is presented as a supernatural dictation, recorded by the inspired prophet. . . . The prophet Muhammad and all Muslims after him venerate in the Koran a perfect

form of the divine Word. If Christendom is fundamentally the acceptance and the imitation of Christ, before the acceptance of the Bible, Islam, on the other hand, is the acceptance of the Koran before the imitation of the prophet. . . . It constitutes essentially the revealed code of a supranational state; a code, because it reminds the believers of the primitive pact of humanity with its Lord and the frightening judgment that awaits it, the decree that predestined it and the sanction that menaces it. In short historical anecdotes (allusions either to the past of the Jews and the Christians or to those of the Arab tribes or to the political present), the text provides a glimpse of unknown prophets, of chastised unbelievers; a whole series of social prescriptions are decreed as well: formulas confessing the one God, daily ritual prayer, annual fast, pilgrimage to Mecca, with rules concerning personal status, marriage, and successions.³¹

3. Neither Judaism after Christ nor Islam as such suspects the sense of the tragedy of original sin and the necessity of the mystery of redemption, of a recapitulation of all things around the Cross of Christ: and it is here that there is a deficiency, a “privation”, the irremediable character of which the Christian intensely senses from his first contact with Islam.³² They speak of the divine transcendence but do not know that the supreme name of this divine transcendence is Love, a God who has so loved the world that he gave, not simply more prophets, but his only Son: once with his Birth in a manger in Bethlehem, a second time with his death on the Cross in Jerusalem.

4. Judaism, however, unlike Islam, has been the bearer of true messianism; and if it failed to recognize its Messiah, it cannot part, nevertheless, with a momentum, deviated no doubt, but that leads it along, from adventure to adventure, until the day when it will finally discover, within this very world, the Kingdom that is not of this world, where its Messiah awaits it.³³

Judaism, the one after the deviation—and to a certain extent hardened by that very deviation—comes first; and Islam will be, after six centuries, its guarantor, as it were, with a renewed hardness. The authenticity of Israel’s prophecy, of the entire Bible, is clear for the Christian. The prophecy of Muhammad, on the other hand, poses many problems. Not that we are suspicious of his good faith; we grant that it is absolute.³⁴ But how strange it is, for example, for a Christian to think that the message suggesting to Muhammad a notion of divine transcendence incompatible with the Incarnation would be related to him precisely by the angel Gabriel, who, six centuries before, had announced the mystery of the Incarnation to the Virgin Mary!

5. Those who, within Islam, are open to the rays of that light which enlightens all men coming into this world can belong initially and in a salutary manner to the Church of Christ, which they perhaps combat out of

invincible ignorance. They will then be moved to substitute progressively the religion of love for the religion of the letter, and this will become perceptible to the best of them.³⁵ They will still belong corporally to Islam, but they will already belong spiritually, more and more, to the Church.

6. By its effort to rediscover the monotheism of Abraham, “Hanifism”,³⁶ Islam tended to become a religion of the law of nature; but, it is through Israel that it was not able to keep itself from seeking Abraham, and it is Judaism—Judaism after the deviation—that it ends up resembling more.

4. CHRISTIAN DISSIDENT RELIGIONS

The internal dialectic of a heretical church tends to transform it into a dissident church. 1. It is certainly possible to have totally heretical or totally schismatic churches, that is, churches all of whose members are in the sin of heresy or the sin of schism. Are they numerous? Are they lasting?

In separating themselves from the Church of Christ, they take away with them a part of her means of sanctification, what one may call the vestiges of the Church. These vestiges are held in check among those members who render themselves personally culpable of the sin of heresy or schism. But let us take a look at what happens among the children of these heretics and schismatics. They can be baptized validly. Then they will belong to the true Church as truly as the children she baptizes in her bosom. With the character of Baptism, grace and the infused virtues are conferred on them. They are neither heretics nor schismatics nor even in error.

What happens at the moment when, rising from the slumber of their infancy, they find themselves facing choices proposed to them by the Christian life? Before them, around them, what they encounter is a Christianity about which they are—unless by some miraculous presentiment—incapable of understanding that it indissolubly blocks the divine truth and the logic of a principle of death. Heresy has broken, on this essential point, the truth that is to be believed; schism, the truth that is to be done. By this breach darkness is mixed with the light. Henceforth, what will pass to successive generations, before they have even been able to commit any sin against faith or love, will be *the patrimony of heresy or the patrimony of schism*.³⁷ When, therefore, those who have been baptized in those churches reach the age of reason and deliberation, even if they preserve their soul from

every evil and keep it in the light of love, will remain incapable for a very long time, perhaps always, of discerning on this point truth from falsity; and they will begin their adult Christian life in accepting *en masse* the entire heritage of heresy or schism.

They will not simply by that fact become heretics and schismatics. St. Augustine writes

He who defends his own opinion, although it be erroneous and perverse, if he acts without obstinacy, especially when this opinion is not the fruit of his bold presumption but rather what has been inherited from his parents, who were seduced and carried away by error, if he scrupulously searches for the truth, prepared to surrender to it when it becomes known to him, ought not to be ranked among the heretics.³⁸

2. What has happened? We have imagined a church totally heretical; but, because of what it takes from the treasure of Christ's Church, because, too, of the free invitations of the Holy Spirit, who "contains all things" and who desires that all men be saved, we see that such a church tends to change. It is as if the concept of heretical church exploded under the interior pressure of Christian values that it still contained, in order to give birth to a new and original concept, namely, that of a church where, not the *sin* of heresy, but the *patrimony* or *heritage* of heresy is transmitted. It is clear that it is a question of an ambivalent patrimony, where light and darkness collide: sometimes helpful, since it contains Christian values; other times harmful, since those values have been distorted.

Let us say that the internal dialectic of a "heretical church" tends to transform it into something different and that, in a certain measure, the good here is stronger than the evil. Let us speak of a "dissident church". The advantage of using this term is that it does not prejudge the good or bad personal predispositions of the members of such a church.

The form of a dissident church. 1. We shall call "the form of a dissident church" the patrimony of values, the ecclesiological complex, under which a dissident church is organized.

2. The form of a dissident church is inhabited by the conflict of two antithetical tendencies: the tendency of the Christian principle and the tendency of the principle of error. Sometimes one progresses more than the other; but one never eliminates the other.

In certain cases the investment of the Christian principle will remain considerable and the principle of error, although it represents an incalculable

evil, will appear secondary by comparison: one would hesitate even to speak of *vestiges of the Church*; these are *immense parts of her heritage* that have been preserved. In addition, however, the principle of error profoundly ravages these Christian vestiges. There is an abyss, for example, between one church, like the Orthodox—which receives the near totality of the Christian teaching, confessing even that Christ has bequeathed to his Church a declarative and canonical jurisdictional power, but begins to err the moment it determines what the supreme subject of this power is—and a church that will be led, by its principle of error, to ignore the very nature and necessity of the sacraments of the New Law or to deny the divinity of Christ and the Trinity.

It is clear, then, that to want to credit the Holy Spirit with the form of a dissident church and the interior conflict that corrodes it would be to commit blasphemy. That which comes from the Holy Spirit is, at the interior of this patrimony, the maintaining of the Christian element, the new outbreaks of its dynamism, the success of its advances. The principle of error, however, has its own dynamism and successes as well. It tends by its very nature to widen the division.

3. The dissident churches are as so many morsels of the Christian Church. Their Christianity is mutilated. It lacks, at the very least, that unique direction which descends from the kingship of Christ and which, in touching the earth, takes shape in the supreme jurisdiction—declarative and canonical—of the sovereign pontiff. That which they accept freely as the rule of their belief and life is, at the most, another rule, similar to the Catholic rule on certain essential points, divergent on other essentials. It is clear that this rule marks them with an original imprint and separates them from the organic, catholic, and ecumenical unity of Christ's Church.

The Anglican Church. 1. Newman recounted in his *Apologia pro vita sua* how, shortly after leaving the Church of England, he felt a great change at work in his way of considering that church. He felt, he writes, extremely astonished that he had been able to imagine previously that that church was a part of the Catholic Church:

For the first time, I looked at it from without, and (as I should myself say) saw it as it was. . . . As if my eyes were suddenly opened, so I saw it—spontaneously, apart from any definite act of reason or any argument; and so I have seen it ever since. I suppose, the main cause of this lay in the contrast which was presented to me by the Catholic Church. Then I recognized at once a reality which was quite a new thing for me. Then I was sensible that I was not making for myself

a Church by an effort of thought.

2. What does he think about the Anglican Church from then on? He speaks of it, he says, without “any disdain”. He reckons that, without being divine, it can be a great work nonetheless:

And so I recognize in the Anglican Church a time-honoured institution, of noble historical memories, a monument of ancient wisdom, a momentous arm of political strength, a great national organ, a source of vast popular advantage, and, to a certain point, a witness and teacher of religious truth. . . . But that it is something sacred, that it is an oracle of revealed doctrine, that it can claim a share in St. Ignatius or St. Cyprian, that it can take the rank, contest the teaching, and stop the path of the Church of St. Peter, that it can call itself the “Bride of the Lamb,” this is the view of it which simply disappeared from my mind on my conversion, and which it would be almost a miracle to reproduce.

That being said, it was nevertheless an “instrument of Providence” conferring upon him great benefits: “Had I been born in a Dissent, perhaps I should never have been baptized; had I been born an English Presbyterian, perhaps I should never have known our Lord’s divinity; had I not come to Oxford, perhaps I never should have heard of the visible Church, or of Tradition, or other Catholic doctrines.”

3. Passing then to the conduct one ought to have with regard to the Church of England, he concludes:

While Catholics are so weak in England, it is doing our work; and, though it does us harm in a measure, at present the balance is in our favour. . . . My own idea of a Catholic’s fitting attitude towards the National Church in this its supreme hour, is that of assisting and sustaining it, if it be in our power, in the interest of dogmatic truth. I should wish to avoid every thing (except indeed under the direct call of duty, and this is a material exception), which went to weaken its hold upon the public mind, or to unsettle its establishment, or to embarrass and lessen its maintenance of those great Christian and Catholic principles and doctrines which it has up to this time successfully preached.³⁹

Do not these last lines seem to indicate already an attitude of confidence that would be fitting for a Catholic to adopt a fortiori with regard to the Orthodox Church?

The Orthodox Church is not schismatic but dissident. 1. Certain theologians who make use of a relatively modern terminology regard the Eastern Churches as being truly *schismatic* and *heretical*. “Nevertheless,” they add, “in practice, for fear of hurting the faithful of these churches and in view of facilitating their access to the true Church, one could, without detriment to the truth, use the kinder titles *dissident churches*, *separated churches*.”⁴⁰

On the contrary, if one remains faithful to the terminology of St. Thomas, one will absolutely refuse today—not only for *prudential* reasons, but for *doctrinal* reasons as well—to describe Eastern non-Catholic churches and, similarly, Protestant churches as heretical or schismatic churches. The only terms that appear to be theologically exact are “dissident”, “separated”, or, more generally speaking, “non-Catholic” churches.

The members of a dissident church. 1. Among many of the members there can prevail movements of light that enlighten every man coming into this world. This light will bring them secretly to adhere to the *Christian teachings* that subsist within their own church, to reassess them, to live by them, to rectify them insofar as they have been threatened, distorted, or undermined, by reason, alas, of the drama inherent in dissident churches.

The better among them will be those just who allow themselves to be overcome by living faith and who belong initially, but already efficaciously and in a salutary manner, to the Church of Christ. In a beautiful text on the Psalms, St. Augustine himself taught that, outside the great Catholic Church, Baptism can still bestow the fruits of love: “I have already explained to you why the dove carries into the ark some leaves and fruits. This signifies that those who are baptized outside of the Church, like the trees that have been submerged outside of the ark, if they have not only leaves, namely, mere words, but also fruits, namely, charity, the dove brings them back to the ark, and they come to unity.”⁴¹ If then they join us, we speak of their *conversion*, more exactly, of their profession of faith, of their *entrance into the Church*. It is heretics, not dissidents, who require an *abjuration*.

2. It may happen, however, on the other hand, that certain persons among the dissidents *permit the spirit of schism or heresy to triumph within themselves* and rediscover then within their own church—in order create a weapon against truth—the *distorted teachings* that schism, heresy, or error deposited there at the beginning. These, sinning against the light, become heretical or schismatic dissidents.

3. Let us consider what a dissident church becomes, in the measure that it is represented by its just members.

These do not constitute a simple aggregate of persons, each of whom belongs by desire *in an isolated manner* to the Church of Christ. They form a *block* that has its proper physiognomy and that is connected as such to the true Church.

Let us suppose—this is the most eminent case—that this block belongs to the Eastern dissident churches, where the seven sacraments of the New Law are preserved. Let us suppose further that it contains in it great saints, men of profound prayer, and martyrs and that the requirement of confessing the faith during long and terrible persecutions has obliged it to embrace, with a very pure fidelity, all the authentic Christian teachings that have been accessible to it. Let us suppose, finally, that it subsists in a region where the Catholic Church is absent or practically reduced to helplessness and where, consequently, it alone or nearly alone “does our work”, to borrow Newman’s words.

In this case, from the lofty point of view of Catholic theology, what clearly appears is not at all some tendency of this block to form a communion that will *juxtapose* itself to the Roman communion, in order to constitute, alongside her, another legitimate branch of the Church of Christ; it is, on the contrary, a tendency to *identify itself*, in a manner more and more profound, with the Roman communion itself. The block will only lack, in order to coincide completely with the Roman Church, the full possession of that “unity of orientation” with which Christ certainly desired to endow his Church.

It seems, then, that what we need to ask for immediately is the sanctification of all the groups that bear the name Christian. Their union with the Church will follow as a consequence.

The separated churches and the Church from which they are separated. One ought to take care, when speaking of separated, dissident, or disunited Christian churches, not to rank the Catholic Church among them. One would immediately fall, perhaps unknowingly, into error.

1. From the Catholic point of view, there are the separated churches and the Church from which they have separated, the Church of Christ; the dissident churches and the Church from which they have dissented, the Church of Christ; the disunited churches and the Church with which they have broken unity, the Church of Christ.

To this Church of Christ belongs those authentic divine values that have been preserved in the separated churches, where they are mixed with error and subjugated to the very principle of their dissidence.

The task of Catholic “ecumenism” consists in this: on the one hand, determining theologically the status of the dissident churches as churches, as

well as their relation as churches with the true Church and her unity;⁴² on the other hand, continually inviting Catholics to dismiss from their life and from their heart, with a zeal ever more fervent, all that, by its very nature, obscures in the eyes of others and, first of all, in their own eyes, the immense mystery of the catholicity of their Church and hinders authentic evangelical hope for the conversion of the world.

2. It is a rather widespread view in the Protestant ecumenical movement that the very Church of Christ has been shattered by men's sin. According to this view, there no longer exists anything but fragments, more or less substantial, which are what we call the "separated churches": Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Protestantism. Henceforth, it is before us, in the future, that we must seek her. She appeals to us as an ideal to be obtained. She will be formed from the complementary contributions coming from the different Christian churches, which, insofar as they are not "beyond" coming to an agreement, must all be considered as still "separated". There is a refusal to speak of a *return* of the separated churches to the Church from which they separated.

5. ATHEISTIC FORMATIONS

We now consider political forms and cultural conquerors of *declared atheism*, present today in our world.

1. At the origin of this atheism there is a refusal of Christianity, a sin of apostasy. This is not a refusal of the true God, like the one that threw the people of old into paganism. It is a refusal incomparably more lethal: properly speaking, it is not an atheism, but an anti-theism; more precisely still, it is a rejection of the God of love, who gave the world his only Son. It is, therefore, an anti-Christianity, a sort of "religion of the Antichrist".

2. In studying *La Signification de l'athéisme contemporain* [The meaning of contemporary atheism],⁴³ Jacques Maritain underlines its most profound internal contradiction. By denying the transcendent God, absolute atheism intends to deliver man from all servitude, from all "alienation", from all "heteronomy". But the absolute rejection of transcendence has for a corollary the proclamation of absolute immanence. All movement of temporal existence is from then on absorbed into the flux of time. In addition, transcendent values: truth, justice, the distinction between good and evil, all

vanish. The truth at any given moment is that which is useful: what is vile today will be noble tomorrow. Man himself dies entirely, and there is nothing in him that can be saved. The absolute atheist is dedicated to the great Minotaur of history, a man-eating history.

One has broken with God, therefore, in order to proclaim total independence, the total emancipation of man; and one ends with an act of submission, an abdication before the all-powerful movement of history, before the blind god of history. For Hegel and Marx, it is history that is the last judgment; for the Christian, the Last Judgment will judge history.

3. We can distinguish several types of atheism. There are *pseudo-atheists*, who believe that they do not believe in God and who, in reality, believe unconsciously in him, because the God whose existence they deny is not God but something else. Between the conscious and unconscious, between the register of conceptual assertions and the secret dynamism of the preconscious life of the spirit, there can be in fact all sorts of divisions and discrepancies, schisms, fissions, and hidden contradictions.

There are *practical atheists*, who believe that they believe in God (and who perhaps believe in him with their minds) and who in their concrete behavior deny his existence by every one of their actions: they have made an idol of the living God.

There are also *absolute atheists*, who really deny the existence of that same God in whom the faithful believe and who are obliged to change their whole scale of values and to destroy in themselves everything that recalls his name. They do not forget God; they think constantly of him, in view of liberating themselves from him.⁴⁴

4. We know that the omnipotence of Divine Love sends forth illuminations of grace even into the depths of atheistic formations: whatever may be the efforts of propaganda, there is not a soul whom God does not call by name.

6. THE AXIOM: “NO SALVATION OUTSIDE THE CHURCH”

If it is true that there is no salvation outside of Christ, and that to belong to Christ is to form the Church, then it is clear that the axiom “No salvation outside the Church” will be present, in a latent manner, in all the texts of the New Testament.

According to the New Testament, salvation comes by being incorporated in

Christ and the Church. 1. The Gospel message is addressed to all men, Jews and Gentiles (1 Cor 1:24; Eph 2:14); it is destined to nations of all times (Mt 28:19-20); it is a great light for all who sit in the shadow of death (Mt 4:16). Those who receive it are with Christ (Jn 17:23); they are the branches of the Vine (Jn 15:4-5) and the members of Christ (1 Cor 12:12); they become conformed to him (Rom 8:29); Christ lives in them (Gal 2:20). Thus they become “his” Church (Mt 16:18), of which he is the Head and which is his Body (Eph 1:22-23), where one enters by Baptism (Mt 28:19; Eph 4:5). They are saved (Rom 1:16). To receive the message, to become one with Christ, to make up his Church, to be saved—these expressions are synonymous. Salvation is being incorporated in Christ and in his Church.

2. Similarly, to refuse the message, to be outside of Christ, outside the Church, and outside of salvation are all synonymous expressions. “If any one will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town” (Mt 10:14-15); “If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned” (Jn 15:6); “If he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Mt 18:17); “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (Jn 3:5). Outside incorporation in Christ and his Church there is no salvation.

3. It is stated expressly in the Acts of the Apostles that, outside of Christ there is no salvation: “This [Jesus] is the stone which was rejected by you builders, but which has become the head of the corner. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (4:11-12). It is expressly stated in St. Paul that the Church is the Body of Christ, for God “has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all” (Eph 1:22-23). It follows necessarily, therefore that outside the Church there is no salvation.

Three Gospel clarifications. Three remarks, suggested by Scripture, which shed light on the axiom

1. The axiom directly concerns those who, having been immediately enlightened by the preaching of the Gospel, refuse it (Lk 2:34; Jn 3:19, 9:39;

Mt 22:8-9). It concerns, more directly still, those who, having understood and accepted the preaching of the Gospel, renounce it by what would come to be called the sins of schism and heresy (1 Tim 1:20; 1 Jn 2:18-19; 2 Jn 10).

2. The axiom does not mean that every membership in Christ and his Church is salutary. On the contrary, Christian sinners, if they do not convert in time, will be damned (Mt 13:41-42; Mt 25:41; 22:12-14). Of what use would a Christian's faith be to him if he had not charity (1 Cor 13:2; Gal 5:6; Jas 2:14; Lk 13:9)?

3. The axiom does not exclude a membership in Christ and his Church that is still latent, tendential, and yet already salutary.

In fact, on the one hand, normally and by anticipation, all the just of the *earlier ages* belonged to Christ. It is the day of Christ that enlightens them as it enlightened Abraham (Jn 8:56). The Woman who gives the male child to the world (Rev 12:5) is summed up, as it were, in the Virgin Mary, the Church before Christ.

On the other hand, for the billions of beings, to whom, since the *New Era*, the apostolic preaching has never been made available and who live under an abnormal regime, victims of an invincible ignorance, the causes and degrees of which may vary with the individual, Christ makes up for the absence of an express and sufficient proposition of the Gospel message by illuminations and secret motions of his grace. For God, our Savior, "desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tim 2:4-6). Jesus "the true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world" (Jn 1:9); he said that he would draw all men to himself (Jn 12:32); that he had other sheep than those of Israel (Jn 10:16); and again, "he that is not against us is for us" (Mk 9:40). He is foretold by the Magi (Mt 2:1); he praises the faith of foreigners, like the centurion (Mt 8:10) and the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:28).

The mystery of the axiom. Thus, according to the New Testament, it is necessary to hold: (1) that there is no salvation without membership in Christ and his Church; (2) that certain sinners, deprived of charity, belong to Christ and his Church but in a sterile, non-salutary manner: they may be likened to that fig tree, the fruits of which one waits for each year before cutting it back; (3) that certain just persons, who do not yet belong corporally to Christ and the Church, belong, nevertheless, spiritually—in an initial, tendential, and

already salutary manner: they may be likened to those sheep of goodwill who, hindered by some forms of invincible ignorance, are on the way, without always knowing it, toward the one flock ruled by the one Shepherd.

The necessity of membership in Christ and in his Church, as Scripture has revealed, is a unique and simple mystery, but so profound that we can know it only by a series of complementary propositions, compelling the mind of the believer to go beyond, into the silent glance of faith. For those who do not advance so far, who separate the Church and the Body of Christ, membership in the Church and membership in Christ, or still more, who consider the Church according to the pattern of purely human societies, the axiom “No salvation outside the Church” immediately loses its light. It can then be only a slogan, seized by fanatics—of both extremes—in order to make it rigid or to renounce it.

The axiom among the Fathers. It was those who separate themselves from the Church by a sin of schism or heresy that the Fathers primarily had in mind when they declared certain persons outside of salvation: “Whoever follows one who creates a schism will not inherit the Kingdom of God” (St. Ignatius of Antioch). They have absolutely no part in the Spirit “who flee from life by a mad folly and fatal action. Where in fact the Church is, there is the Spirit of God” (St. Irenaeus). “Outside this house, that is, outside the Church, no one is saved; for, if anyone go outside, he shall be guilty of his own death” (Origen). “He cannot attain to the rewards of Christ who forsakes the Church of Christ. He can no longer have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother” (St. Cyprian).

The comparison with Noah’s ark, of which the Fathers made use, does not signify that every membership in Christ and the Church is salutary; and it does not deny that there are degrees of salutary membership. It needs therefore to be explained. One could say, for example, that there were some impure animals in the ark and that it was undoubtedly escorted by some good fish.

The desire for Baptism according to St. Ambrose. One finds a very important text in the discourse of St. Ambrose on the death of the emperor Valentinian II, who was assassinated in 392, before having been able to receive Baptism:

For me, I have lost him whom I was going to bring to life in the Gospel; *but he has not lost the grace he asked for.* . . . What do we have in our power if not will and desire, *nisi voluntas, nisi*

petitio? Then, just recently again, he manifested this same desire, *hoc voti habuit*, to become initiated before going to Italy, and he declared his intention to be immediately baptized by me. . . . Would he not then have the grace he desired, for which he asked? *Certainly, if he asked for it, he received it.* And this is why it is written in Wisdom 4:7: “But the righteous man, though he die early, will be at rest.”⁴⁵

The axiom in the Church’s Magisterium. A letter from the Holy Office to the archbishop of Boston, dated August 8, 1949, and made public September 4, 1952, summarized the previous magisterial teachings on this point:

In order for a person to obtain eternal salvation, it is not always required that he be visibly, *reapse*, incorporated in the Church as a member; but the minimum required is that he adhere to her by intention and desire, *voto et desiderio*. It is not always necessary, nevertheless, that this intention be explicit, as it is with catechumens. While a person is in invincible ignorance, God accepts even his *implicit intention*, so called because it is included in the good disposition of the soul, by which the man desires to render his will conformed to that of God.⁴⁶

Explanation of the axiom. The Church can be considered: (a) in the state of completion and flowering that she received from Christ by the mediation of the hierarchy; (b) in the normal state of her formation before the coming of Christ; (c) in the abnormal state of those who, after the coming of Christ, do not yet belong to her visibly and corporally, but only invisibly and spiritually, by desire.

Whence three distinct regimes: (a) the regime of manifest membership in the Church; (b) the normal regime of latent membership before Christ; (c) the abnormal regime of latent membership after Christ.

The regime of manifest membership. 1. The Church, which is the Bride and Body of Christ, is “in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,. . . holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27); and nevertheless, she contains sinners. There are scandals and workers of iniquity in the Kingdom of the Son of Man (Mt 13:41); the Kingdom of Heaven is like the net that takes in fish of all types: the good will be kept; the bad will be rejected; so will it be at the end of the world: the angels will separate the evil from the just (Mt 13:48-49).

2. How can sinners be members of the Church? We are speaking here about baptized sinners, in whom faith subsists, who have lost charity but who have in no way sinned by schism. They are members of the Church:

a. in a partial manner, through what subsists in them of divine gifts. By their sin, which represents their most secret choice, they are outside the Church and belong to the Prince of this world. There are sinners in the

Church, but they do not bring their sins inside her. The boundaries of the Church divide their heart.

b. in a real and true manner, for the cultic, sacramental, and directed grace, which is the undivided soul of the Church, is present in them through the influence that continues to be exerted on them through the Church's just members. In consequence, the dilemma is solved that proposed: either hold sinners to be true members of the Church, and then exclude charity from the definition of the Church; or, on the contrary, include charity in the Church's definition, and then deny that sinners may be true members of the Church.⁴⁷

c. not in a direct and immediately salutary manner, but in one that is indirect and not immediately salutary.

We can summarize all of the above by saying that they belong to the Church *visibly, corporally*, by a part of their heart; but not *invisibly, spiritually*, by the principal part of their heart.

3. Why does the Church contain sinners, and so many sinners?

It is, first of all, because she exists in order to go forth and bring redemption into the midst of evil. She encounters sinners everywhere. She does not content herself with touching them from afar. She presses them against her bosom in order to heal them by contact. She also agrees to "eat with tax collectors and sinners" (Mt 9:11).

It is, furthermore, because she knows that she is stronger than sin; for she carries within herself the light and the blood of redemption.

It is also because she fears that, in uprooting the weeds, she might tear out the wheat.

It is, finally, because the misery of the sinful members provokes the charity of the good members. "Be good," says St. Augustine, "and help the evildoers in two ways: exteriorly and interiorly."⁴⁸

The normal regime of the hidden membership before Christ. 1. Before Christ, the Church of Christ already existed—in a still confused, preparatory, outline form; still in a state of becoming, progressively more complete. From across the thoroughfares of the city of evil, she raised up to herself, gathering them by very secret ties, all those who, perhaps without knowing it, would be saved in the name of the future Christ. The normal regime of humanity was then a regime of hidden and tendential membership in the future Christ and his Church.

2. It was, in fact, by a consideration of the Blood of the future Cross (Col

1:20-21) that God, after the Fall, pardoned man and poured out onto the world the grace of salvation. This grace that preceded Christ but that would one day be merited through him, could already be called “Christic”, by *anticipation*.

It was indeed the Church of Christ that this grace formed before Christ; but this Church was in a state tendential to the Church in her perfect or completed act—like the light of dawn is to the sunrise, like the stem is to its flower. The highest graces that formed her were magnificent plants, but they had still not found the proper climate in order to blossom forth.

“Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see” (Mt 13:17). Abraham saw the day of Christ from a distance (Jn 8:56); nevertheless, incomparable though the sanctity of Abraham might be, the smallest in the Kingdom can say that “his state is better than that of Abraham.” Abraham would wait in limbo for the coming of Christ; it was then that the captive graces he bore suddenly would flourish in him.

3. We may distinguish two normal regimes of latent and tendential membership in the future Christ: that of the law of nature, where grace infiltrates secretly into hearts by a instinctive manner, and the more manifest one of the Mosaic law. These two are depicted on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel by the Sibyls and the prophets.

God does not gather where he has not first scattered seed. To the Greeks, to whom he gives less, he asks for less; to the Jews, to whom he gives more, he asks for more (Rom 2:6-16).

The two peoples are on the way toward Christ. They will be united in him as two sides of a cornerstone, in order to form in him one new people (Eph 2:13-22).

4. All the just of the law of nature and those of the law of Moses, whom an already Christic grace (by anticipation) vivified, were as parts of a cloud formation that awaits its center of condensation. They were carried, supported, finalized, by something that came into existence only after them, namely, Christ and his Church in perfect act. The Epistle to the Hebrews ends its eulogy of the ancient Fathers with these extraordinary words: “And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, *that apart from us they should not be made perfect*” (Heb 11:39-40; emphasis added).

The abnormal regime of hidden membership after Christ. 1. “There is one

mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:5).

The graces of salvation, merited by the prayer of Christ on the Cross, were first of all given to man *by anticipation*. When, however, the fullness of time came (Gal 4:4) and Christ appeared, it was through him, *by derivation* from his fullness (Jn 1:16), that grace went out to the world.

2. This derivation could take place in two ways: by contact or from a distance; as Jesus cured ailing bodies sometimes by contact and sometimes from a distance.

Christ acted *by contact* only on those who approached him. He communicated to them a privileged grace, fully Christic and Christ-conforming, one that made the Church blossom forth around him and constituted her in perfect act. It was in order to continue bestowing these graces on the world by contact that Christ, just before ascending into heaven, left the world a visible hierarchy.

It was, on the other hand, only *from a distance* that Christ acted on millions of his contemporaries, who did not know him but whom he visited secretly by rays of grace coming forth from his heart. This grace of illumination and love was intended for their salvation, but it did not have the privileges of the grace of contact. Wherever it was received, the Church was hidden, in tendential act.

3. The regime of graces by contact, which formed the Church in her perfect act, would become the normal and definitive regime of salvation for the entire world. It was intended by the Savior to be brought to all men, at all times (Mt 28:19-20).

4. The counter-offensive of the Prince of Darkness and the city of evil would occur here as well. The apostolic preaching, which the great surge from Pentecost had to carry by a single impulse to the ends of the earth in order to dissolve the block of pre-Christian religious deviations, would be hindered by resistance from without and, perhaps still more, by the miseries and scandals of countless Christians. New religious deviations, atheistic formations, arose. After twenty centuries, which have seen so many cultural exchanges, so many saintly missionary attempts, so many martyrs, the Church in perfect act is still only a small flock in Africa, America, the Far East, and even in the whole world.

5. The *supreme* plan of God is, no doubt, to turn all this resistance to some secret advantage for the final unity of his Church, one day to make all one, in

a manner more touching for all and more glorious for his mercy.

What, however, is his *immediate* design? We know that he desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4). Wherever the derivation by contact—the normal way since the coming of Christ—is hindered, the derivation at a distance, which knows no obstacle, continues to touch each man in secret, constraining him to answer either Yes or No to God's kindness.

This latter derivation, then, assumes, in addition to its proper and normal role—which is to prepare to receive the hierarchical action and to preserve its effects—an abnormal and *auxiliary* role, which is to communicate the necessary graces of salvation to those whom the graces by contact do not reach or reach only partially.

6. And thus, even in the midst of religious deviations, God is born in the hearts of true disciples who, without knowing it and perhaps even against their conscious plan, work to rectify those deviations and tend, by separating the true and the false in them, to dissolve them from within.

These just members still belong to their religious deviation in a manner that is above all visible and corporal; but, in a manner that is particularly invisible and spiritual, they already are in the Church. Our Lord, who knows those who are his own (2 Tim 2:19), makes no mistake here—they are saved.

7. It is the action of Christ *by contact* that communicates the fully Christic and Christ-conforming grace and that makes the Church appear in perfect and manifest act. The action *from a distance* communicates, in its auxiliary function, only an imperfectly Christic grace. By it the Church appears only in latent, initial, and tendential act.

Before the coming of Christ, when grace came from the Cross by anticipation, the tendential state of the Church was her normal state. *Since the coming of Christ*, when grace comes from the Cross by derivation, the tendential state of the Church is an abnormal state. The imperfection of the Church under the regimes of the law of nature and the law of Moses was, in effect, the simple natural imperfection of youth and growth. The imperfection of the Church under the regime of derivation from a distance represents, on the contrary, a diminution, a privation. Where the Church is in need of becoming perfected and fully developed, she is, in a measure more or less grave, mutilated and shackled. She seeks to be freed, completed, delivered.

The distinction between “Catholic” and “non-Catholic”. 1. The Code of

Canon Law distinguishes “Catholics” from the “non-Catholics”. Canonically the division is irreproachable; but theologically, it needs to be clarified: Can one, in fact, be saved without belonging to the Catholic Church? The theologian would say:

a. One calls *openly Catholic*—or simply “Catholic”—those who, just or sinners, openly participate in the unity of the Church’s communion, the former in a salutary manner, the others in a manner not salutary.

b. One calls *not openly Catholic*—or simply “non-Catholic”—those who, just or sinners, are openly outside the unity of the Church’s communion. If they are just, they belong to the Church in a secret and already salutary manner.

2. One frequently divides Christians into “Catholic Christians” and “non-Catholic Christians”. Here also an explanation is necessary. Let us distinguish:

a. The *openly Catholic Christians*—or simply “Catholic Christians”—who, just or sinners, belong openly to the Catholic communion.

b. The *Christians not openly Catholic*—or simply “non-Catholic Christians”—who, just or sinners, are openly outside the Catholic communion. If they are just, they belong to the Church in a secret and already salutary manner.

Conclusion. And so the Church, the Church confided to Peter, is at the same time more pure and more vast than we know. *More pure*, since she is, not certainly without sinners, but without sin, and the faults of her members do not sully her. *More vast*, because around her are assembled all in the world who are saved. She knows that, from the beginning of space and time, there are attached to her by desire, in a manner initial and latent, millions of people whom invincible ignorance has impeded from knowing her but who have not refused, in the midst of the errors in which they live, the grace of living faith that the God “who desires that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth” offers them in the secret of their hearts. She herself does not know them by name, but she senses around her their anonymous presence, and sometimes in the silences of her prayer, she hears mounting in the night the confused cadence of their march.

CHAPTER X

CATHOLIC UNITY

We shall now speak first about Catholic unity as a mysterious property of the Church, falling under the view of theological faith (I); then, about Catholic unity as a miraculous note of the Church, falling under the view of natural reason (II).

I. The Mystery of Catholic Unity

It is necessary to define Catholic unity (1); to recall that it is *in* this world without being *of* this world (2); to recall that it is, at the same time, already realized by its essence and always in a state of becoming by its dynamism (3); to recognize here its place in the missionary field (4).

1. DEFINITION OF CATHOLIC UNITY

To define the mystery of Catholic unity is to define the mystery of the Church herself, but under a specific aspect.

Etymological definition. The expression “Catholic unity”, in which one highlights two correlative properties of the Church—the unity due to her soul and the catholicity due to her body—is almost a redundancy: we have already said everything in speaking of catholicity. In fact, the Greek word *catholic*, being equivalent to the Latin term *universal*, signifies that which embraces and binds multiplicity—the *one* that, in communicating itself, gathers together the *diverse*.

The word “catholic” was applied to the Church for the first time by St. Ignatius of Antioch in his *Epistle to the Smyrnians*,¹ precisely in order to indicate the Church unified by Christ and spread everywhere throughout the

world:

Let all follow the *bishop* even as Jesus Christ does the Father, and the *presbytery* as you would the apostles; and for the *deacons*, reverence them as being the institution of God. Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Regard not as valid the Eucharist except it be celebrated under the presidency of the bishop or his delegate. Wherever the bishop shall be, there let the multitude also be; *even as where Christ Jesus is, there is the Catholic Church.*” In the *Martyrdom of St. Polycarp*, the expression “the catholic Church”, in the sense of a universal Church, appears twice: “The Church of God that sojourns at Smyrna to the Church of God that sojourns at Philmelium, *and to all the inhabitants [paroikiai] of the Holy and Catholic Church in every place. . .*”² A little farther on, it is declared that Polycarp now “glorifies God, the all-powerful Father, and blesses Jesus Christ, the Savior of our souls, the Governor of our bodies, *the Shepherd of the Catholic Church throughout [oikoumene] the world.*”³

The catholicity of the Church, unlike the dispersion of sects, would become a sign of her authenticity and her truth: the Catholic Church would signify the true Church.

Theological definitions. 1. One could say: *The Catholic unity, or catholicity, is the Church, insofar as it gathers together in the communion of one faith, one hope, and one charity that is cultic, sacramental, and directed (= unity) the dispersion of divided humanity (= diversity).*

Or again: Catholic unity is the unity of those who participate in the *priesthood* of Christ by the possession of cultic or sacramental powers; in his *kingship*, by docility to the jurisdictional powers (defining the faith and regulating discipline); in his *sanctity*, by grace that is fully Christian (centered on the eucharistic sacrifice, communicated by the sacraments, directed by the jurisdictional powers).

2. In making an appeal to the Scriptures, one would say: Catholic unity, or catholicity, is the mystery of the divine will deciding, in the fullness of time, *to recapitulate all things (= diversity) in Christ (= unity), the things of heaven and the things of earth* (Col 1:20).

St. John (Jn 11:51-52), having recorded the words of Caiaphas, adds: “He prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, and not for the nation only, *but to gather into one (= unity) the children of God who are scattered abroad* (diversity)” [emphasis added].

Or again: *Catholicity is the God of Love, who, through the Cross, embraces humanity.* This is almost word for word the revelation of the Savior: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (Jn 12:32).

Catholic unity is essentially a unity of charity. To define Catholic unity is, then, to define the Church herself, considered as a gathering together of divided humanity in Christ. And if it is impossible to define the Church without including charity, it is equally impossible to define the mystery of Catholic unity without making reference to love: “I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you. . . *that they may become perfectly one*, so that the world may know that you have sent me *and have loved them even as you have loved me*” (Jn 17:20-23; emphasis added).

2. CATHOLIC UNITY IS “IN” THIS WORLD WITHOUT BEING “OF” THIS WORLD

To say that Catholic unity is not “of” this world means that it belongs to the order of grace; to say that it is “in” this world means that it exists in the midst of our time and history.

Catholic unity is not “of” this world. 1. “I have given them your word; and the world has hated them because they are not *of* the world. . . . They are not *of* the world, even as I am not *of* the world” (Jn 17:14, 16; emphasis added). “You are *from below*, I am *from above*; you are *of* this world, I am *not* of this world” (Jn 8:23; emphasis added). The supreme law of Jesus’ adversaries is nature weighed down by sin; the supreme law of Jesus and his disciples is the grace that comes from above and removes the distortions of nature. “Jesus answered: ‘My kingship is not *of* this world; if my kingship were *of* this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not *from the world*’ ” (Jn 18:36; emphasis added). On the other hand, the power of Pilate over Jesus, although it was given from above, is a power of this world.

2. The kingdoms of this world are concerned with nature, with culture, with *the order of creation* (first article of the Creed). The Kingdom that is not of this world is concerned with the grace of Jesus and *the order of redemption* (second article of the Creed).

The latter is not built by destroying the kingdoms of this world: “Non eripit mortalia, qui regna dat caelestia”, sings the ancient poet. Its catholicity is the contrary of totalitarianism. It rivals unmercifully only the city of evil. If it borrows materials from nature and culture, it is in order to constitute itself

upon a plane that neither nature nor culture can occupy. It leaves intact the law of the cosmos, the arts and technology, families and cities, physical miseries of a wounded nature: hunger, thirst, the process of birth and aging, suffering and death—the miracles of the multiplication of the loaves and the resurrection of the dead are never more than episodic happenings. There is another hunger that needs to be satisfied, another life that must be resuscitated. *The Kingdom that is not of this world is catholic by its evangelical nature, by reason of its transcendence*: no human formation can hope to imprison it or ever pretend to identify it with itself. This Kingdom passes freely across such human formations just as Jesus did through the doors of the Cenacle. Such is the *essential and constitutive catholicity* of the Church.

3. Once established in the world, the Kingdom that is not of this world is like the sun, which seeks to *illuminate from on high—without in any way losing its identity or being diffused*—the whole order of the kingdoms of culture: whether *intrinsically*, if it is a question of activities that (however great the technical part used by them) are essentially of a philosophic and ethical order, such as moral, social, and political activities; or whether *extrinsically*, if it is a question of technical methods independent in themselves—but dependent on their usage—of the Christian faith. This is what we call the *radiant catholicity* of the Church.

4. Thus the Church is destined to touch men without exception in two very different ways: (a) in view of *incorporating* their activities that directly regard God and the things of eternity; (b) in view simply of *illuminating* their activities that directly regard Caesar and the things of time. She is catholic; she is not totalitarian.

Catholic unity is “in” this world.

1.

I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me *into* the world, so I have sent them *into* the world. . . that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (Jn 17:15-18, 21; emphasis added).

The Kingdom that is not of this world is nevertheless in this world. Its power comes from above, but in order to descend into the intimacy of our lives and

hearts of flesh. It delivers us from sin: we are not speaking here about a “guilt complex”, which is the concern of psychiatrists; we are speaking about true sin, about that catastrophe of the inner man, who, in rejecting love, is devastated; about that “nothingness of which I myself am the cause and which ravages my being and kills my God”,⁴ before which all human remedy is but a thing of derision. This power pulls us, not out of trials, but out of despair. It comes to fulfill, not our simple natural capacity for human happiness, but a much more mysterious capacity for becoming members of Christ’s Mystical Body and dwelling places for the Holy Spirit. It finds us in the mud and makes us children of God: “Once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light” (Eph 5:8).

2. To have some idea of the power with which the Kingdom that is not of this world plunges its roots into the very thickness of the world, it would be necessary to reflect upon what certain mystics, like St. John of the Cross or the Ursuline Sister Marie of the Incarnation, reveal to us about the purifications given by God to souls who give themselves to him without reserve. The presence of immensity, which penetrates even into the very depths of the universe, is quite small in comparison with the presence of grace and indwelling, which does not cease to grow ever more profound, by which God takes hold of his saints and, by them, all of his Church and the world in the midst of which she suffers.

Even through the most humble Christians—a baptized infant, a reconciled sinner—the Kingdom of God takes possession of temporal realities with an incredible power. Into these beings—often so different, or even completely opposite, in temperament, age, distance, social conditions, and cultural formations—it pours the grace that transfigures them interiorly, making them children of God and co-citizens with the angels, creating between them bonds of an intimacy, scope, and splendor such as could be revealed only after death.

3. The Church is so present at the very heart of the world that she has never ceased since her birth to irritate the eternal totalitarian pretension of the states. “The closeness of eternity is dangerous for the perishable, and that of the universal for the particular.”⁵ But that is not all: even in the great political and cultural revolutions that claim today to supplant it, Christianity is recognizable—whether in some of their aspirations (although, unfortunately, often distorted, anarchical, and driven by panic) for justice, goodness, and the absolute; or whether, on the contrary, in the terrible privilege it has of

unleashing on its adversaries the reign of the Deceiver's powers. Speaking of the propaganda that preceded World War I, F.W. Foerster wrote:

Why this prodigious fabrication of deception? Nebuchadnezzar never tried anything equal. It is only the coming of Christianity which has rendered necessary this genre of justification. . . . How mysterious are the designs of Providence, that it would be justifiably the highest truth ever descended onto the world which has set in motion this immense wave of lying.⁶

3. CATHOLIC UNITY IS ALREADY REALIZED BY ITS ESSENCE AND ALWAYS IN BECOMING BY ITS DYNAMISM

The mystery of the Incarnation, realized from the first moment, unfolds all the way to the Ascension. From the moment the Blessed Virgin pronounces her *Fiat*, the Word becomes flesh. The mystery of the Incarnation is accomplished. Jesus is fully himself, true God and true man, without possible progress in the line of this union, at each moment of his earthly life, from the moment of his conception to that of his Ascension. *In its essence, in its structure, the mystery of the Incarnation is realized.*

Under another aspect, however, the mystery of the Incarnation is not contained in only one of the moments of Jesus; it comprises the whole expanse of his earthly life, the whole time of his dwelling among us. From this point of view, there is more in the whole course of Jesus' life than in each of the moments of this life that one could isolate mentally. One would mutilate the mystery of the Incarnation by halting at Christmas; so it is just to say that, during the entire duration of Jesus' earthly life, the mystery of the Incarnation is *in a state of becoming with respect to its unfolding*. It is complete only with the Ascension.

The mystery of the Church, realized at Pentecost, unfolds all the way to the Parousia. On the day of Pentecost the Church is realized with her catholic unity. She possesses, on one hand, fully Christic grace and charity; and, on the other hand, members in whom is found, in a relation to this grace, a mysterious capacity common to all men and more fundamental than their diversities. *In its essence, in its structure, the mystery of the Church and her catholicity is realized* from the moment the Holy Spirit descends upon her to communicate life to her.

The Church, however, is sent to all peoples in space and time. The divine power of Pentecost does not cease to act on her in order to push her forward.

Insofar as there remains on earth one human creature who does not belong to her, or who belongs to her only imperfectly, the Church's catholic unity will be *in a state of becoming*, certainly not with respect to her essential structure, but with respect to *the dynamic accomplishment of her mission*. When the harvest is ripe, when the Church has traveled the route that leads from Pentecost to the Parousia, she will be totally realized, not only through the *specific catholicity of her structure*, but also through *the extensive catholicity of her unfolding*. By the light of this final catholicity, each of the fragments of the Church's past will reveal the historical significance of its part in the whole.

Extensive catholicity or the expansion of the Church. 1. The Church must be in travail, in space and time, until the hour of the Parousia, in order to secure her extensive catholicity. She must pray each day so that the Kingdom of God, already in our midst (Lk 17:21), will not cease to come (Lk 11:2). She must rend her heart for those who do not yet belong to her, like infants who are not yet baptized; for those who have secretly or openly broken with her by a personal sin of infidelity, heresy, or schism; for all sinners who have kept the faith but who have lost love; for the just in whom charity is not yet fully Christic; for her good members who should be better, and for the better who should be consumed in sanctity; for the souls who await deliverance in purgatory; for all of creation, which is waiting to "obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom 8:21). Without this interior straining, without this desire for divine glory that consumes her, without this zeal which is that of Christ and the apostles, the Church—who, we have sufficiently explained, is not made from the faults of her children—would not be the Church: "My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you" (Gal 4:19). "I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race" (Rom 9:1-3).

2. In becoming man, what the Word came to seek is, in fact, every descendant of Adam, every kind of human. Having commanded us to go even to the ends of the world, in order to awaken the powers deposited in the depths of every human heart to the life of grace, how could Christ not have inscribed such a burning desire in the very structure of the Church?

The expansion of the Church reveals her to herself. 1. The expansion of the Church could be defined as an unceasing integration of elements that, under at least one aspect, were foreign, or even opposed, to her. One can compare it to the growth of a mustard seed or the action of leaven in dough (Mt 13:31-33).

2. Let us imagine again a man of whom a brilliant intuition takes hold. It totally captures him, his reading, his experiences. Far from being diluted in these things, it imposes on them its sovereign form and transfigures them; but—and this is what we would like to focus our attention on—the brilliant intuition is stimulated in return by the materials it seizes. It finds in them the occasion to give substance to the potentialities that certainly belong to him as his own but that without such occasions would remain unused, perhaps even for a long time. Certain other materials would have been able to awaken other potentialities, which still lie dormant.

And so the Church, by contact with multiple resources of human persons, diverse ethnic formations, cultures, and religions, far from being diluted in the mass of these materials, seeks to take hold of them, in order to transform them in herself. She, however, is in return stimulated by them; she finds in them the occasion of giving substance to the potentialities that are her own but that without such occasions would remain in disuse and, if they had appeared in a different order, would have been awakened in a different order.

The values that are the spiritual treasure of the Church receive—at various epochs of history, in various conditions, in the midst of various peoples and cultures, and in various souls and families of souls—a special development, which, from the point of view of the effective realization of her living capacities, truly enriches the Church and reveals her to herself. For the Church, once again, is a living thing, which knows herself only by living and is not conscious of her own law and possibilities except by exercising them.⁷

The multiple potentialities of ecclesial grace. 1. All the legitimate diversity among men can serve the expansion of the Church. It is necessary that ecclesial grace be received in vessels that are unceasingly diversified through space and time, in order to manifest the superabundance of its potentialities.

This grace varies depending on whether the natures are masculine or feminine: with St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Catherine of Siena, lovers of one and the same light; with St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, who together ascended Carmel. It varies according to national temperaments: Francis of Assisi was Italian, Francis de Sales was Swiss; Joan of Arc was from Lorraine, Gertrude from Saxony; Thomas More was English; Ignatius,

Spanish. It has revealed and will reveal again other aspects in Slavic countries, in India, in the Far East. It varies according to families of souls and the diverse religious foundations. It varies again according to the times.

2. It is always the same sanctity, but the styles of sanctity change.

We should not speak of a new type of sanctity; this word would be equivocal; the Christian knows only one *type* of sanctity eternally manifested in Christ. But changing historical conditions can give place to new modes, to new *styles* of sanctity. The sanctity of St. Francis of Assisi has a different appearance from that of the Stylites; Jesuit spirituality, Dominican and Benedictine spirituality, all answer to different styles.⁸

3. The collective life of the Church gives rise to some analogous remarks. The Church of only the Jews gives way to the Church of the Jews and Gentiles; the Church of persecutions, to that of ecumenical councils; the Church of the Middle Ages, with her European expansion, to that of the Renaissance, with her planetary expansion; the Church of the sacred Christendom and the grand Pontifical States to the Church of the small Vatican City. All undergoes a transformation; and the mystery is that all endures: "There is one state of the Church for now, and another state for another time; but there is not another Church."⁹

The integration into the Church of Christian elements or "vestiges" that exist in dissidents can require some renunciations. In the movement of expansion, the Church constantly encounters, with an emotion of joy and sorrow, some religious formations where truth and error are inextricably entangled. Such are dissidents like the Orthodox, who are still very close, and the Protestants, who are more distant on many points; then Judaism; then Islam and pre-Christian religions.

In the presence of these religious blocks the task of the Church is to separate the resources of life that they possess from the errors that infect them. Sometimes the part of truth in them is immense, and the alteration can seem minuscule. In the great unfolding of the Orthodox liturgy, and in the traditional forms of Eastern monasticism, the Church will have, perhaps, close to nothing, or nothing at all, to dismiss or redress. At other times, the part contaminated by error will be greater. It will be necessary to proceed like the surgeon, who cuts open the wound in order to cure it. This does not happen without renunciations; but these are ultimately renunciations of shackles, and the suffering that accompanies such renunciations is one of

birth and deliverance.¹⁰

The pseudo-catholicity of the un-formed. In an insightful study, Olivier Lacombe notes that the traditional notion of catholicity is thrown into question today “in a most insidious and strict manner”.¹¹ One tries to construct a catholicity of the world *beyond all precise forms of belief and thought*. The attitude on the religious plane consists in reassessing myths, making nothing of differences between religions, sympathizing with all of them, holding all as relative. One is indignant toward the idea and fact of evangelization of non-Christian peoples; it is seen as an attack on their liberty and originality. Philosophy also is relativized; it is concerned only with a movement of itself that cannot be formulated, although perpetually generative of systems, and that animates it. Science itself is valuable more because of what it allows man to *do* together than because of the union of minds in the contemplation of scientific *truth*.

This Western relativism, this “spirituality beyond forms”, appeals to the *Upanishad* and Buddhism. “Thus the East finds itself, without having premeditated it, constructing the second half of the vise that must break the *form of catholicity* proper to the Church.”

To this “primacy of the un-formed” it is necessary to oppose the traditional notion “of a catholicity that integrates, without confounding and leveling, the universality of *faith* and the universality of *human nature*, meaning that of *reason*”. No natural or supernatural mystical experience can have any value if it goes against the *fact* that the Word became flesh a single time for all humanity, revealing his mystery by making use of human notions and bequeathing to his Church the power of infallibly interpreting his message.

Already, on the very level of nature, being appears—to the attentive gaze of the mind—as

profoundly structured. Prime matter alone is radically *unformed*. There is one *human nature*, formed, in which all men share, the development of which must be homogeneous, that is, faithful to lines of finality inscribed by God in our very nature or essence. There is one *universally human reason*: not preformed like some kind of mechanism or a bearer of infused knowledge and innate ideas, like an angelic intelligence; nevertheless, it is formable and capable of a natural philosophy of the human spirit, of an organic *philosophia perennis*, to the progress of which all cultures are called to contribute in one way or another, capable of saying something true and intelligible. . . .

And then, in accord with this underlying universality, but not in equal measure with it, rises the supernatural catholicity of *faith*. The Church is catholic, that is to say, universal—because

firstly, and above all, in *her* alone lies the salvation of the *whole* human race. The universality of faith, because it is transcendent, is marked first of all by its exclusivity (which in no way excludes, as we know, invisible membership in the visible Church). True supernatural transcendence is not that which we create or reveal in our own transcendent selves. It is necessary, therefore, that it disconcert us in filling us and that this wisdom be folly: its universality is founded on the privilege of places, times, and men elected by the diffusion of the Good News.

4. MISSIOLOGY

The missionary dynamism of the Church proceeds from the divine missions. One cannot understand the Church, her essential catholicity, her missionary dynamism, without having recourse to the lofty doctrine of “the missions of the Divine Persons”,¹² which are like the flowing forth of eternity into history, the eruption of trinitarian life into the fabric of time.

The Father begets the Son by an overwhelming impulse; and, as if the former could not contain the latter in the bosom of his eternity, he, in addition, *sends (missions)* him visibly into the world on the day of the Incarnation. Here is Christ with that impulse which will carry him all the way to his death and to his Ascension (Jn 8:42; Gal 4:4-5).

The Father and the Son, forming together but one sole principle, “spirate” the Spirit by an overwhelming impulse; and, as if they could not contain him in the bosom of their eternity, they, in addition, *send* him visibly into the world on the day of Pentecost. Here is the Church with that impulse which will carry her all the way to the Parousia (Jn 15:26; 16:13-15; Gal 4:6).

As the Word impels the humanity of Christ, so the Holy Spirit impels the Church (Jn 20:21-22; Rom 8:11).

Missionary dynamism echoes the essential catholicity of the Church. In the same way one says that Christ became day by day, for thirty-three years, what he was from the moment of the Incarnation—our Lord and Savior—so one could say that the catholicity of the Church must become *extensively* up to the time of the Parousia what she already has been *structurally* since Pentecost.

In this great movement of missionary expansion one can isolate mentally one particular domain that poses new and urgent problems. It is the domain of what is called “the missions”. “Missiology” forms a chapter in the study of the Church’s catholicity. One could study the principle, the goal, and the

milieu of “missionary activity”.

a. The principle of missionary activity. 1. Missionary activity has the Holy Spirit as its uncreated Principle and the theological virtue of charity as its created principle, inherent in the Church.

All the charismatic gifts of the hierarchy are in operation in the Church on her journey forward. Each one is first in its order. Each one is indispensable to her: the power of *jurisdiction*, to direct her steps from without; the power of *order*, to perpetuate her worship validly. These charismatic gifts, however, are at the service of the gift that surpasses all, namely, that of *charity*, which, thanks to the others, can be fully Christic, fully Christ-conforming. The very charity that led Christ to give himself as a victim for the sins of the entire world (1 Jn 4:9-10) has poured into the heart of his Church, in order to inflame in her the desire of saving the world from evil and reconciling it: “The world reconciled, that is the Church”, said St. Augustine.¹³

2. Through charity, which is her created soul, the entire Church is missionary. This participation of the whole Church in the missionary enterprise has been pointed out.

He is pleased to charge us who are his friends with the task of winning more friends for him. This is the privilege he grants to those whom he especially calls his “friends” in the discourse after the Last Supper. He wishes them to participate in a work that is par excellence his own: the acquisition of his people, the formation and growth of his Body. It is not for our system, for our idea, that we win supporters; it is for our God and Savior that we are going to make new friends by announcing to them his truth and his love. All apostles! That means, then, that charity seeks to increase in us and among us. . . .

When the Church goes forth to the conquest of the world, it is her authorized apostles, her preachers and pastors, who have the charge of establishing her where she is not and of ruling this new cell so as to lead it to its adult life. It is one thing, then, to be officially invested with this function by the missionary Church, and another to contribute to her success by spiritual (prayers, sacrifices) or material (alms) means, specially directed to that end. Every soul, however, that responds faithfully to the gratuitousness of divine love enters sooner or later into the missionary desire of the Church and of her Head, just as a Christian who reflects on his vocation as a member of Christ aspires to be united, according to his capacity, to the suffering Christ. . . . The Church also recognizes the missionary orientation of certain contemplative orders, devoid of every exterior apostolic activity: it is not in order to pander to a fashionable devotion that a cloistered Carmelite has been made the universal patron of the missions, side by side with St. Francis Xavier.

There is among all Christians enriched by grace an ordination more or less explicit to the missionary intention of the Church, which has the same extension as Christ’s saving will. The Christian who prays with the Church prays for the whole Church; when he unites himself to the

Sitio of the Church, it is to the ends of the earth that his aspiration carries.¹⁴

3. Because, however, of the enormous difficulties to be overcome, charity, in order to be the principle of missionary activity, must itself exist in the state of purity that it had among the apostles and that is called, therefore, *the apostolic state*.

If it is a question of building the Church, the foundation thereof is faith, living faith of course; and it is only by a superabundance of this faith in the missionary that it succeeds in spreading out with the degree of intensity required by the *incipient state*, which is that of the mission. It is not only a question of faith in the promises made by Christ to his apostles about recourse to prayer for the success of the supernatural work; it is a question of this *life of living faith in its fullness*, which is the condition of a certain apostolic preaching, which penetrates for the first time into an inert or hostile subject.

This virulent state of faith, this plenitude of contemplation: here, as we know, is the condition and principle of the highest form of Christian preaching; that which strives to elevate the faithful to the heights, to pour out on them that flood of light which, while pulling them toward the Divine Truth, disposes them more directly for the life of heaven. The audience, the missionary's flock, does not represent a land prepared thus; but the obstacle he opposes, being precisely of the order of faith and therefore radical, appeals on behalf of the missionary to a similar plenitude of the virtue of faith, supported by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And we are speaking here, formally, of the first theological virtue, the object of which makes known the intimate mystery of the first Truth, and not of that which is called *the spirit of faith*—by which one ordinarily means a particular act of the virtue of hope—which, among other things, animates the prayer of petition. The preaching of the contemplative is defined, in fact, by this overflowing plenitude. This way there is a cause proportioned to the awaited effect: an initial breakthrough of faith in the infidel, an eminent elevation in the Christian. From all sides, it is a regime where an object believed and loved prevails over a practical application, containing the latter in an eminent manner. . . . No doubt, one could not require from all missionaries that they be equal to apostolic contemplatives in this overflowing plenitude, and it is not necessary to scorn the action in the mission field; but, it seems to us that the *shade or tone* must be given by that apostolic spirit to the way it is defined by theology.¹⁵

b. The goal of missionary activity. It is: (1) in the night of this world, everywhere the Church still exists only in potency or in initial and hindered act; (2) to establish the Church in her complete act; (3) according to the exigencies of Catholic charity, that is to say, under indigenous forms. Let us consider these three points.

1. It is a question here, with the missions, of the *supreme ends* of the Church, of the conflict between the City of God and the city of evil, between light and darkness. "Missionary work aims at carrying the Kingdom of the resurrected Redeemer. . . to every region, even to the last little cottage and most obscure man of our planet."¹⁶ It is not to be said, then, that the task of

the missionary will not be “to save souls”.

2. In regions particularly menaced, where the Church exists only in potency or in initial, hindered, and mutilated act, the *specific end* of missionary activity will be to bring her into complete or perfect act. Since the coming of Christ, there is, in fact, now only one normal regime of salvation for the entire world, the regime of the law of the Gospel. This is the regime of a grace and truth that, coming from Christ by contact, that is, by means of the hierarchical powers of order and jurisdiction, is fully cultic, sacramental, and directed.

To the question of the *necessity of the missions*, it is not enough to respond, as some have done, that they are only necessary *relatively*, in order that the divine plan of salvation be accomplished better; on the contrary, it is necessary to reply that they are necessary *absolutely*, in order that the final plan of salvation be accomplished truly, that the law of the Gospel be promulgated, that men be snatched from an abnormal condition where the salvation of Christ is only accessible to them “by desire”, in a manner that is only inchoate, imperfect, and perilous: it is a question of the unshackling of grace held captive and of the purification of the errors that mutilate it.

For what do the missions strive, asks Pope Pius XI, “if not, in the vastness of those regions, to institute and establish the Church of Christ?”¹⁷ To institute and establish the Church is to bring her from potency to act, from initial and hindered act to one that is complete and perfect, in which alone grace is fully Christic. Then, that period of *mission* is followed by the period of “*pastoring*”.

The mission, from its beginning, knows that it will cease to be a mission in order to become an established Church: a full life, endowed with all its organs and using its liberty to inspire institutions and direct their work. What I would like to suggest is that the state of the mission lasts longer than it seems and that the mentality of the missionary is liable to give way too soon to that of the pastor.¹⁸

May the small flock already won not obscure the large flock still to be won!

3. It is a question of establishing the Church according to the exigencies of a Catholic charity, that is to say, under indigenous forms. The goal of missionaries, clergy or laity, is not to import foreign Christian populations with them; their concern is not to make a crusade. The crusade was an undertaking of Christendom; the mission is an undertaking of Christianity. The time of the crusade is past; the time of the mission remains. The goal of

missionaries is, without spilling anyone's blood but their own, to make the Church issue forth from the very midst of indigenous populations.

Being catholic, the Church of God is not foreign to any people, in any nation. It is fitting, therefore, that all people provide her with sacred ministers who teach the divine law to their own and lead them in the way of salvation. Wherever there is found sufficient indigenous clergy who have been duly formed and are worthy of their holy vocation, one could say that the work of the missionary is fortunately completed and that the Church there is truly founded.^{[19](#)}

There must be a Chinese Church: certainly not a Church that is mingled with the Chinese nation, but a Church that uses fully and freely, for the ends of the Kingdom that is not of this world, the resources of the Chinese nation.

The dialectic of charity consists, from then on, in requiring from the missionary the greatest amount of austerity in order to allow the evangelized peoples the greatest amount of their customs:

Can one conceive of a Church's hierarchy being entirely foreign? Would there be in this hypothesis only practical inconveniences—real, for sure, but only accidental? Strictly speaking—for example, in the exceptional case of the Churches at the time of the apostles—there is nothing opposed to the idea that the hierarchy be totally imported. Even then it is only a temporary state by nature: the apostolic age is an age of mission. We would be wrong, however, to believe that because the hierarchical powers of the Church are supernatural, it is absolutely indifferent to her constitution, as the Church militant, whether the bearers of these powers come from far or near, are missionaries or indigenous. . . . The apostolic precept of Christ makes us leave our own in order to proclaim him—as strangers—to other peoples in other countries; but, in the end, it is in order to raise in another place a Church of kinsmen, a unity in which is found again that very intimacy which we ourselves, for love of Christ, have renounced. . . . The whole purpose of our exile has only been to move men belonging to an earthly homeland other than our own into a new homeland that is of all places and that, nevertheless, is really theirs, which is not what it is for us, an exile. The *raison d'être* of Christ's exile is to prepare in his name the coming of a new family life. . . . The Christian priesthood is not bound to one race, caste, or magistracy. Every people, from the moment that it becomes Christian, has the privilege of providing itself with priests, that is, the privilege of presenting its young men for Christ's priestly consecration. Let us hear again the Epistle to the Hebrews: the priest is taken, *assumptus*, from the midst of the people. . . . Thus the *Christian priesthood*, unique in the sense that it derives from Christ himself through the apostles, that same priesthood, insofar as it is recruited from all people, marvelously expresses both the *unity* and the *catholicity* of the Church, of which he is a privileged agent.^{[20](#)}

The same author writes: “The episcopate is, by nature, indigenous; to the extent that it is not, this is a sign that the Church has not yet attained to the fullness of her age.”^{[21](#)}

And so, what moves the apostle to go out and *evangelize* the mission territories is the desire to save souls, to rescue them from the total or partial influence of the city of evil, in order to integrate them fully into Christ and

his Church. What will later move him to root his Church firmly in those new lands by the establishment of a hierarchy and indigenous works is always the desire to save souls in a way less precarious and less menaced. And what will move the indigenous *pastor* in his turn to establish his own post, to take up the direction of the new flock, is again the desire to save more souls and to configure them ever more intimately to Christ. Here as always in the Church, what carries everything along is charity.

c. The milieu of missionary activity. 1. One calls “missionary territory” the regions where, facing the city of evil, the Church does not yet exist in perfect act, at least under an indigenous form. Such are the regions inhabited by dissidents or, again, by people closed to Christianity.

2. The attitude of the missionary with regard to the cultural problem is twofold.

He must strive to put out of his mind the cultural forms in which he himself received Christianity, insofar as they are too particular to count as universal values of civilization.

He must also adopt, insofar as it is possible, the cultural forms of those around him, but without servility, without flattery, in every truth of life.

Definition of the missions. We shall offer two of them.

The foreign missions are the expansion movement of the Church (genus), considered in the effort that strives toward the creation of an indigenous hierarchy (difference).

The foreign missions are the expansion movement of the Church (form), in virtue of which, carried by the Holy Spirit, Christ and the apostolic charity of Pentecost (efficient cause), she enters into a region where she had previously existed only in potency or in initial and hindered act (material cause), in order to pass to perfect or completed act; then, to substitute for an imported hierarchy one that is indigenous (proximate end) and to open up to souls a free and stable way toward the profundities of Christ’s redemption (supreme end).

II. The Miracle of Catholic Unity

We shall present the fact of Catholic unity (1); we shall then note its different

aspects (2); finally, we shall consider the fact that it was prophesied (3).

1. THE FACT OF CATHOLIC UNITY

It is a joint fact of a miraculous character. 1. From the point of view of reason alone, when it is raised to the level where the spiritual values of art, morality, and metaphysics are revealed, Catholic unity appears, with a probability as compelling as the vision is penetrating, as a social fact of a human quality that is not only exceptional but utterly miraculous, which places on the Church the seal of divine approbation—*digitus Dei est hic*; and it guarantees the divine origin of its message, which, pregnant with the transcendent night of mystery, is not reasonable, or certainly not unreasonable, but supra-reasonable.

2. The behavior of a group is miraculous when, by its quality and its spiritual elevation, it appears transcendent in relation to the behavior that the resources of reason and human passions of themselves can animate.

We are far from knowing all the laws of the physical world; even farther are we from knowing all the possibilities of the moral world and the social world, where human freedom comes into play with its undefined resources.

Nevertheless, in certain facts of a given order, whether physical, moral, or social, the spontaneous intuition of the intelligence discerns—obscurely but irresistibly—a proper effect of God, an immediate touch from that Omnipotence, which alone can move being, human liberty, and the course of history from within.^{[22](#)}

3. Among men, separated by space and time, so different and opposed in infinite ways, Christ has created a communion of belief, of love, and of effort; one that is, no doubt, too pure and too lofty not to be constantly betrayed by the individual failings of each of his own disciples, but never renounced by them all. Against this communion are unleashed the cunning and the violence of the spirit of hatred, “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life” (1 Jn 2:16). This communion, since the time that it began to shine forth in the world, has in no way been abolished; and in accord with it—without violence, but as if by a preestablished harmony—is all the purity that existed in preceding periods and in countries that were absolutely ignorant of it. Only a force of divine cohesion can account for the constitution and the attracting power of such a center of universality. Since

Christ, before leaving the earth, desired to entrust all his sheep to Simon Peter, the theologian can predict that it is around Peter that the miracle of Catholic unity will have its full splendor. He knows, on the other hand, that, even those who reject the primacy of Peter through an invincible and inculpable error, if they really adhere to Christ by theological charity and thus begin to constitute a center of catholic unity, unknowingly draw near to the center of unity truly entrusted by Christ to his Church. In the same measure, their initial center of catholicity could shine forth from the splendor of a miracle: one recalls, for example, the Orthodox faithful who died as martyrs in the Bolshevik persecution or who survived it without betrayal. Nevertheless, even the bond of the dissident Orthodox Church remains imperfect. In the seventeenth century, it did not have the principle of internal unity to allow it to choose between Nikon and Avvakum. Today, as in the past, it remains oppressed by the dilemma: national church or universal church.

The miracle of Catholic unity among the Fathers. We shall content ourselves with two major testimonies, that of St. Irenaeus, around the year 200, and that of St. Augustine, around 400.

1. “The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth,” writes St. Irenaeus, carefully preserves what she has received from the apostles and their disciples, “as if occupying but one house. She believes these points just as if she had but one soul and one and the same heart; and she proclaims them and teaches them and hands them down with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth. And certainly, the languages of the world are different, but the power of the tradition [*paradosis*] is one and the same.”²³

The path of those who are children of the Church circumscribes the whole world, as possessing the sure tradition of the apostles, and grants us to see that the faith of all is one and the same, since all receive one and the same God the Father and believe in the same economy of the Incarnation of the Son of God; and we know the same gift of the Spirit and follow the same commandments and preserve the same form of ecclesiastical constitution and expect the same advent of the Lord; and we believe in the same salvation of the complete man, soul, and body. The preaching of the Church is true and certain, in which one and the same way of salvation is shown throughout the whole world. It is to her that the light of God has been entrusted. . . . The Church, in fact, preaches the truth everywhere, and she is the seven-branched candlestick that bears the light of Christ. . . . The Church has been planted like a paradise in this world.²⁴

What captivated Irenaeus was not the spectacle of a temporal *social force*

capable of unifying an immense mass of men; as far as that goes, the Roman Empire was more astonishing than the Church. Nor is it the spectacle of a *philosophical or religious force* that succeeded in claiming disciples almost everywhere in the world, as Gnosticism aspired to do at that time. It is the spectacle of a marvelous force that he calls the *power of transmission*, which comes from Christ and has for its mission the gathering together of men with regard to the doctrine and hope brought by Christ, the bringing to fruition of a transpolitical, transcultural, and properly *messianic* unity, and the planting of the garden of the Spirit in the midst of the errors and conflicts of this world.

To tell the truth, the splendor of this inner force that animates the Church could be perceived in the Twelve from the day of Pentecost. The miracle of Catholic unity was able to appear to all who had been capable of grasping the transcendence of the apostles' message and the Spirit who dwelled within them. The "speaking in tongues" was nothing but a manifestation of the transcendence and catholicity of the newborn Church; but in the measure that the Church is diffused in space and time, her catholicity shines forth as a victory of Christ over the Dragon, with an obviousness that excited St. Irenaeus and that, with the progress of history, seems to become more and more irresistible to all who have a soul to desire the Kingdom of God and eyes to see the signs of it.

2. The use St. Augustine made of the numerical superiority of the Catholic Church over the dissidents, around the year 400, remains a weak argument; but he never lost sight of the true nature of catholicity. It is not simple force of cohesion that he admires in the growth of the Church; it is the power of Christ, capable of raising up children of Abraham: "What had been promised to Abraham so long ago, namely, that all nations would be blessed in his descendents, has it not been accomplished? The promise had been made to one believer, and the world is now filled with millions of believers. Behold the mountain covering the face of the earth; behold the city of which it is written, *A city built on a mountain cannot be hidden.*"²⁵

And hear his commentary on the miracle of tongues:

The Holy Spirit continues to allow us to speak in tongues. At the time of the apostles, the Church was not yet spread through all the earth, and Christ did not yet have members in each nation who could speak its respective language. That is why, as a sign of what would soon need to happen, each of the apostles, by himself, spoke all languages; but now already, the total Body of Christ speaks nearly all languages. May the Church grow still more, that she might speak all languages. . . . I speak all languages. I am in the Body of Christ, in the Church of Christ. If the Body of Christ speaks all languages, all are mine: Greek, Syriac, Hebrew, all languages are

mine, for the unity of all peoples is mine.²⁶

Charity succeeds, therefore, in uniting together men who cannot even speak to each other, and it does this in a manner so profound that their differences actually become complementary.

The testimonies of Newman and Moehler. 1. The remarks of St. Augustine on the particularities of the geographic, ethnic, and political order, which are at the origin of sects and divisions, appeared particularly compelling to the mind of Newman, when he studied the birth of the heresies of the first centuries. He was overwhelmed when he suddenly perceived, as in a flash of lightning, an extraordinary resemblance between the particularity that was at the origin of these sects and that which was at the origin of Protestantism and Anglicanism. At the same time, the attitude of the Catholicism of the first centuries toward those sects seemed to him identical with the attitude of the Catholicism of the sixteenth century toward Protestantism and Anglicanism. He believed still, at that moment, that the Anglican Church had held onto antiquity, that is, fidelity to the apostolic tradition; but already the Roman Church appeared to him as the one possessing catholicity. Had the Church of Christ been torn, then? This impossible conflict was to be his martyrdom, until that day when, having completely reexamined the note of apostolicity (in a work he did not even finish and which was to be his last work as an Anglican), he saw with certitude that it is the privilege, not of the Anglican Church, but of the Roman Church.

2. The miraculous character of the Church's Catholic unity greatly struck Moehler. "The mystery of every authentic life", he says, "resides in the compenetration of contrasting elements."²⁷ *Contrasts* coexist in the unity of one and the same whole, as opposed to *contradictions* that divide the unity of a whole. The unity of the Church is powerful enough to take hold of men's legitimate differences and elevate them within herself to the rank of authentic contrasts and complementary elements: realism and idealism, mysticism and speculation, and so on. As soon as they escape the regulating force of the Church, however, these diverse elements enter into conflict with each other; the contrasts become contradictions. This is what happens, not only in heresies, as Moehler mentions, but also, we might add, in dissidences.

When asked if the Church did not need to unite herself to "heresies"—let us say dissidences—in order to form with them a richer and more elevated

unity, Moehler easily responded that in uniting herself to dissidences as such, the Church would be taking into herself, not contrasts, but contradictions. She encloses within her unity all contrasts, all Christian riches that, with the appearance of dissidences, enter into conflict with each other. The principles of dissidence, however, cannot be included in her.

It is fitting to illustrate this coexistence of contrasts, this power to “distinguish in order to unite”, which is, at every moment, the signature of Catholicism. It is equally fitting to show how, in dissidences, the more one seeks to expand, the more unity is dissolved. The Church is made for uniting in herself visibility and spirituality, body and soul, faith and reason, contemplation and action, hope and fear, hatred of error and sin and the love of sinners and of those who have strayed, authority and liberty, the Thebaid and the city, art and morality, the serpent and the dove, Christian property and Christian poverty, virginity and marriage.

2. ASPECTS OF CATHOLIC UNITY

One can consider in more detail, under the aspect of their exterior state, the unity of the Church’s worship, her unity of orientation, her unity of communion or charity.

Unity of worship. 1. That unity of worship—at the level that it is made in the Church—is a work that transcends the laws of the religious psychology of peoples and bears the character of miracle, one can show in the following manner.

The Christian cult is founded on the *mediation of Jesus*, true God and true man; but, left to its own devices, humanity is incapable of carrying the unity of its members to such a level or of maintaining it there.

a. It oscillates between two kinds of bewilderment: either confusing God and the world, the source of idolatry and pantheism; or separating God and the world, the source of errors so varied as atheism and acosmism, materialism and Manichaeism.

b. With respect to Christ, either it will imagine him as an intermediary in whom the divine and human natures are confused; or it will separate in him the two natures and imagine him either as a God or as a man. Now the unity of the Christian cult is formed precisely on the notion of a Mediator, true God and true man. The miracle is that such a notion might unite, in a stable and

intimate manner and in the same worship, Greeks and Latins, poets and theologians, ancients and moderns, millions of illustrious believers and millions of obscure believers.

It is of no use to object here to the unintelligent or superstitious practices that can be observed in small souls: the impure do not make the Church impure, nor do the superstitious make her superstitious. It is true that the dissident Orthodox Churches and, to some degree, Protestantism have preserved this belief in the Mediator, true God and true man; but it is not because of this that they are dissidents. Insofar as they dwell on these heights they participate in the aureole of miracle that circumscribes the true Church.

2. One could make analogous observations about sacrifice and the sacraments. Christianity forms the unity of cult, on one hand, by affirming the necessity for sinful man to acknowledge the infinite rights of God by a *sacrifice*; and, on the other hand, by banishing the *horror* of the ancient sacrifices. And, in the mystery of sacramentality, it avoids the two deviations that threaten the worship man must render to God: magic, on the one hand, which is a materialization and which forgets the transcendence of the divine condition and divine gifts; and, on the other hand, *false spiritualism*, which forgets the infirmity of the human condition and the messianic condescensions of the Incarnation.

The unity of orientation. One can consider the unity of orientation either on the speculative plane or on the practical plane.

1. It is quite amazing that the highest *truths of the natural order*—which philosophers have discovered only with the greatest of efforts—have been taught by the Church to the masses, to the learned and to the ignorant, to adults and to infants. The Church, however, proclaims a *higher wisdom*: the mysteries of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, of the redemption, of Christ's final Parousia, and so on. The miraculous character with which the mystery of the Christian message is surrounded can manifest itself in two ways. First, on the part of theology: insofar as it examines the depths of this message, it is struck by the extraordinary connection between dogmas that are, in appearance, very much opposed. For example, the dogma of the infinite evil that mortal sin represents (and here we already have the entire dogma of hell) allows one to understand the folly of a God who comes to die on the Cross in order to deliver us from it; and in return, the contempt of that crucified Love allows one to understand the depths of mortal sin.²⁸ Secondly, this Christian

revelation, so gratuitous, so transcendent, so foreign to our human exigencies that it can be welcomed only at the price of an inner submission that is like a *death* of the intelligence (“unless the grain dies. . .”), becomes then for us so illuminating, so indispensable, so connatural that it seems we would not be able *to live* any longer without it.

2. We come now to the unity of practical orientation. Two features can serve to illustrate the miraculous character of this unity: (a) the organic form of the Church, and (b) the nature of conflicts setting the Church in opposition to the State.

a. “The Church of God which is at Corinth. . .” The Church is one body, that is, undivided in herself and divided from all others. Her proper social form is organic, but this cannot be maintained except by the power of a miracle. Delivered entirely into the hands of men, the divine and original unity of the Church would be very quickly shattered. We would see the birth of autonomous churches, various dissidents, denominations, and so on. And then, when the need for unity was felt once again, the differences in matters of belief, of worship, of organization, all had become such that the only form of possible unity was no longer that of a living being, but of a colony, no longer the organic form of unity, but a federative form of unity.

b. Not less instructive is the history of relations between the Church and various States. Since her institution, “there has always been something wrong that ended in disputes, persecutions, and martyrdom.”²⁹ It is that the Church, the Kingdom that is not of this world, gives herself as an absolute society in this world. And the State, or the earthly city toward which the world is in progress, is also an absolute society; it tolerates the presence of the Church with difficulty. If the Church wished, she could be persecuted less. If she did not form an organic unity, but a federative unity, States would no longer accuse her as much of subjecting their own citizens to a “foreign power”. If she ceded to them on questions where the spiritual touches the temporal, if she withdrew into sacristies, if she contented herself with arousing individual sentiments, she would be left in tranquility or even nationalized. The miracle is that, being what she is, she has fit into the world now for some two thousand years.

The unity of communion in charity or the catholicity of sanctity. The whole mystery of the Church is an outpouring of the mystery of Jesus, and the whole miracle of the Church an outpouring of the miracle of Jesus. Now, the

sanctity of Jesus pulls human values toward itself, by reuniting them on the plane of the Sermon on the Mount (on the plane of faith in the exigencies, rigor, and tenderness of a God of love; on the plane of a permanent invitation to the gift of self for the salvation of men and the world). These human values are so numerous, so rich, and so different in space and time that the unifying power of Jesus' sanctity appears miraculous: here we have *the miracle of communion in Christic sanctity and charity*.

It is the sanctity of Jesus that draws to itself, by anticipation, all there is of holiness in the Old Testament. It is toward this that the purest elements in the premonitions or in the contours of pre-Christian religions or in the desires of present-day Judaism and Islam obscurely tend. This sanctity is what inflames the hearts of saints widely separated from each other by time, language, culture, gifts, and vocations. Whenever we draw near to the saints and observe that they are the sons of this immense family, the encounter overwhelms us. The center of this catholicity of sanctity is a charity that is cultic, sacramental, and directed; and the tombs of the many saints who, from various nations and all epochs, came to die at Rome seem to attest to the true destination and perpetual fecundity of the privilege of Peter. Wherever some authentic grace shines, however, whether in the midst of dissidents or among the Gentiles, the force of determinisms is shattered, and *already* the Catholic unity of sanctity is begun.

3. THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH WAS PROPHESED

We can consider the argument of prophecy in two ways: from a perspective where faith and reason are mingled and from a perspective that is simply rational.

Mixed perspective. 1. The veil that still covers today the hearts of Jewish believers when they read the Old Testament (2 Cor 3:15) is their firm belief that God desires to found by them the catholicity of a kingdom of this world. It is true, no doubt, and Jesus said it, that salvation comes from the Jews (Jn 4:22); but it is a salvation that is first of all spiritual, and what Jesus founds is the catholicity of a Kingdom that is not of this world (Jn 18:36). As soon as the hearts of Jews are converted to the Lord, that is, to Jesus, the veil is removed (2 Cor 3:16). They immediately comprehend that the prophecy of the Old Testament, notably that of the Servant of Yahweh, proclaims the

catholicity of a Kingdom that is certainly in this world, but not of this world.

Thus, to those who are able to read it according to the principal sense, which is spiritual and not temporal, the prophecy of the Old Testament proclaims and designates the Christian reality.³⁰ The Christian reality, however, by its sublimity, retrospectively illumines the Old Testament prophecy and reveals, to those who did not know how to read it, its true sense, which is principally spiritual and not temporal.

2. To those who accept the divine authority of the New Testament, one would say: If Christ who is God has proclaimed the catholicity of the spiritual Kingdom that issues forth from him, his promise will not be frustrated. There will be in some part of the world a catholicity worthy of Jesus, a flock of Christ's sheep, a Kingdom that is in this world without being of this world: it is there that his Church will be found.

Here again one can say that, on one hand, the prophecy of Christ concerning catholicity makes the Church manifest to those who can read its meaning. On the other hand, however, the Church's catholicity, such as it has existed for twenty centuries, retrospectively illumines for our eyes the content of the evangelical prophecy. There is here, not a circle, but progress: the prophecy of Christ prepares the first understanding of the Church, and the understanding of the Church opens the way to a new and more profound understanding of Christ's prophecy.

The simply rational perspective. From the simple point of view of reason, capable of appreciating moral and metaphysical values, the prophecy concerning Catholic unity appears miraculous. The argument would present two stages: the Old Testament announced Christianity; the Gospel announces the Church.

1. One would show first of all that Israel's messianic hope is itself an exceptional fact, which appears to have a divine origin and which remains, in fact, inexplicable by the mere interplay of natural causes.

The Christian reality also appears exceptional; it also cannot be reduced to the interplay of natural causes.³¹

The messianic prophecy of Israel throws its light upon the miracle of the Christian reality, in which it finds its fulfillment. In return, the miracle of the Christian reality confirms the divine origin of this prophecy; it enlightens retrospectively the obscure or ambivalent features.

2. One would then show that the prophecies of the New Testament, which

announce the Catholic unity of the spiritual Kingdom issuing forth from Christ, throw their light on the permanent miracle of the Church. In return, the permanent miracle of the Church, in fulfilling the New Testament prophecies, confirms their truth and retrospectively permits a clarification of their meaning.

This is the simply rational perspective that Pascal adopted and that has been treated in our own day by Père Lagrange in his work entitled *Pascal et les prophéties messianiques*.^{[32](#)}

CHAPTER XI

DEFINITIONS OF THE CHURCH

To the question that is the object of this book: *What is the Church?* we can now respond in a precise manner by two types of definitions: major definitions, formed according to her uncreated causes: God, the Holy Spirit, Christ; and minor definitions, formed according to her created causes: the faithful, the hierarchy, grace, and so on.

1. MAJOR DEFINITIONS

One could say that the Church is *the tabernacle of God among men* (Rev 21:3); *the house of God* (1 Tim 3:15); *the temple or the dwelling place of the living God* (1 Cor 3:5; 2 Cor 6:16). The Church is *the Trinity insofar as it is known, loved, and possessed here below in the night of exile and later in the light of the homeland* (Jn 14:23). The Church is *the Kingdom of God; the people of God* (1 Pet 2:9-10); *the city of God*.

The Church is *the Holy Spirit insofar as he visibly manifests himself in the world* (Acts 2:1-4, 17); *the Holy Spirit insofar as he is mysteriously received in hearts* (Rom 5:5; 8:13-16, 26-27; 1 Cor 6:11-19; Gal 4:6-7).

The Church is *the Body of Christ* (Col 1:24); not his individual body, but his social body, *his Mystical Body*. The Apostle writes of Christ: “[God] has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills [by God] all in all” (Eph 1:22-23). One could say, then, that the Church is *an outpouring, an expansion, an effusion of the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation*. She is *the complement, the completion, the fullness of the Word Incarnate* (Col 1:24), certainly not intensively—the sanctity of the Church, far from adding anything to Christ’s sanctity is but a participation in the latter—but extensively. She is, according to Bossuet’s definitions (which are very close to those of the Apostle), *Jesus Christ poured out and communicated; Jesus Christ the perfect man; Jesus in*

his fullness. Finally, the Apostle having established both of the two meanings of body and spouse (Eph 5:28-29), one would say that the Church is *the Spouse of Christ*: “The term ‘body’ ”, states Bossuet, “allows us to see how much the Church is Jesus Christ’s; the title ‘spouse’ teaches us that she has been estranged from him and that he has freely searched her out. Thus the title ‘spouse’ allows us to see unity through love and will; and the term ‘body’ helps us to understand unity as natural.”¹ To sum it all up: *The Church is the Gospel that continues*.

The Catechism of the Council of Trent has noted some of the major definitions of the Church. It recalls that the Church is the *Flock of Christ’s sheep, the Spouse of Christ, the Body of Christ, the House of God*. How does one explain, after that, that these titles are so often absent from our catechisms? These are the most lofty, the most comprehensive, the most scriptural, and the most divine definitions.

2. MINOR DEFINITIONS

One can consider the Church in her whole expanse or limit her to the New Law.

General definitions. 1. In thinking of the various conditions simultaneously in the Church at the present time and in the years to come, one could say: *The Church is the community that, under three simultaneous states, is gathered together in God by Christ: (a) in heaven, in the brightness of vision and in beatific charity, where the angels and the elect are (Church Triumphant); (b) before that, in the night of faith, by a charity that is being formed and is growing in this world (Church Militant); (c) is often perfected by being purified in purgatory (Church Suffering).*

2. Let us now consider the continuation of the Church that is in time.

a. From the point of view of the conflict between sanctity and sin, one would say: *The Church is the city of accepted divine love; the world is the city of refused divine love* (1 Jn 5:19). This is the Augustinian definition: “Two loves have built two cities: the love of self to the point of contempt of God, the earthly city; the love of God to the point of contempt of self, the heavenly city.”²

b. If one sets out now to distinguish the three normal regimes that the

Church has known in time, one would say: *The Church is the supernatural community, destined to the life of heaven, which God gathers together after the Fall: (1) first of all, under the universal regime of the law of nature; (2) then, under the privileged regime of the Mosaic law; (3) finally, under the definitive regime of the law of the Gospel.* St. Augustine writes: “The entire Church, spread out everywhere, is the Body of which Christ is the Head. It is not only the faithful *living now*, but also those *who were before us* and those *who will come after us, to the end of the world*, who together form his Body. He who has mounted to the heavens is its Head.”³

Definitions of the Church of the New Law. We ought to take care not to omit charity from the definition of the Church.

1. In seeking to define the Church in an analytic manner, where the principal elements necessary to her are numerated, one would say: *The Church is the community of men journeying in time (material cause) that Christ (efficient cause), in view ultimately of restoring the world (final cause), allows to participate: (a) in His Kingship, by the divinely assisted jurisdictional powers; (b) in his priesthood, by the sacramental powers or characters; (c) in his sanctity, by fully Christian grace (formal cause).*

Or again, under a slightly different formulation: *The Church is the community, destined to eternal life, that the Holy Spirit assembles from now on: (a) under one and the same Head, who directs her; (b) in one and the same worship, which consecrates her; (c) in one and the same interior communion, which sanctifies her.* These three points can be explained: (a) *the one Head who directs her* is, from the heights of heaven, Christ and, on earth, his vicar, assisted infallibly in order to define faith and assisted prudentially in order to regulate discipline; (b) *the one worship that consecrates her* is the worship instituted by Christ the Priest, in order to be continued by the valid celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the valid dispensation of the sacraments; (c) *the fullness of interior communion that sanctifies her* is the sanctity of Christ insofar as it is communicated by charity that is cultic, sacramental, and directed. In addition, the four causes of the Church have been designated: the Holy Spirit (first efficient cause); eternal life (final cause); the community of wayfarers (material cause); fully Christic grace (formal cause).

2. In seeking to define the Church in a shorter and more synthetic manner that orders in hierarchical fashion and infers many of her necessary elements,

one would say: *The Church is the community* (material cause) *assembled by faith, hope, and fully Christian charity, that is, by a charity that is cultic, sacramental, and directed* (formal cause). In baptized sinners who are neither heretics nor schismatics, this charity is present in an integral but indirect and non-salutary manner. In the unbaptized just it is present in a mutilated but direct and already salutary manner.

If one appeals to the four causes, one would say: *The Church is: (a) the community, (b) that Christ, by the hierarchy, (c) unites in fully Christic charity, (d) in view of assembling the world, first, in the blood of his Cross, then, in the glory of his Parousia.* We have touched on the four causes and at the same time the four properties of the Church: *apostolicity*, which is related to the efficient cause; *catholic unity*, which concerns the material and formal causes; *sanctity*, which is related to the final cause.

Comparative definition. The Church ought to be defined in relation to political society. The elements of such a definition are found, for example, in the papal encyclical *Immortale Dei* of Pope Leo XIII, November 1, 1885.

The notion of a *perfect society*, when transferred from the State to the Church (the Kingdom of God that is in this world without being of this world), must be clarified according to its proper sense, no doubt, but in a *transposed and analogous* manner.

The Church, in fact, differs essentially from the State: (1) *by her efficient causes*, which are not the natural and cultural initiatives of men, but Christ and the hierarchical powers of order and jurisdiction; these latter being divinely assisted, whether in order to define dogma (infallible declarative power) or in order to regulate discipline (prudential canonical powers: legislative, judicial, coercive); (2) *by her final cause*, which is not immediately the common perishable good of temporal peace, but immediately

the common imperishable good of the beatific vision; (3) *by her material cause*, which is not the capacity of men for assembling themselves in view of their own temporal interests, but their more secret capacity to be members of Christ; (4) *by her final cause*, which is not the festal gathering (*convivium*) of political cities, but the festal gathering of the city of the elect, of the angels and the Divine Persons (Heb 12:22).

Conclusion. The formula of St. Ambrose, “*Where Peter is, there is the*

Church; where the Church is, there is not death, but eternal life”,⁴ is a minor definition. The formula of St. Irenaeus, “Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and *where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church* and every grace”,⁵ is a major definition. The two types of definition are intermingled by St. Paul when, to the unity of the three Divine Persons—Holy Spirit, Lord, and Father—he joins the unity of the assembly of Christians, the unity of hope of their vocation, the unity of their doctrine of faith and of their Baptism: “There is one body and *one Spirit*, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, *one Lord*, one faith, one baptism, *one God and Father* of us all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:4-6; emphasis added).

CONCLUSION

One point remains to be treated, that of the realizations of the Savior's prayer for unity: "that all may be one".

Unity without the cloud of division. "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us" (Jn 17:20-21). The Apostle would later write: "Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 Jn 1:3).

It is in heaven, in the world beyond time, that our Savior's prayer for unity will be fully heard. Having been completely conformed to the Christ of glory, interiorly and ontologically transformed by the light of glory that will render possible the beatific vision and love, the blessed will see reflected in themselves, as in a pure and living mirror, the infinite and limitless unity that the Father, Son, and Spirit together eternally form. They will be one, not only in a finite and ontological manner, by the transformation of grace and glory, but still more, in an infinite and intentional manner, because they will see reflected in the most hidden depths of their being, completely in each one of them and completely in the entire ensemble—as the sun is completely reflected in a mirror and completely in each of its fragments—the inexpressible, adorable super-unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus says again, "The glory which you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one" (Jn 17:22-23).

Unity without limit, rendering impossible every cloud of division, where there will no longer be any evil or sin, no longer any dissent, no longer any sorrow, no longer any infirmity, no longer any death. Truly ineffable unity, which can be described here in positive terms and which we can indicate effectively only by negating all the constraints of our exile:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a great voice from

the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." (Rev 21:1-5)

Here we have the supreme fulfillment, the supreme realization of the Savior's prayer for unity. It is the realization of the Homeland.

The unity that divides but is not divided. 1. The Savior's prayer for unity however is already heard in this *exile of time* where according to the Apostle, "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7). For, after having said: "That they also may be in us", our Savior adds, "so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21). And after having said, "That they may become perfectly one," he adds, "so that the world may know that you have sent me" (Jn 17:23). He asks therefore for a unity that, from here below, can be a sign, that the world might believe, that the world might know.

Faith teaches us that what will appear uncovered and fully blossomed in the day of our homeland is, in fact, already realized obscurely and in its substance in the night of exile. From on high where he resides, Christ continues to act upon the world. Where he touches men through the contact of the sacramental and jurisdictional powers, he pours into them fully Christic and Christ-conforming grace, namely, grace that is sacramental and directed. This grace is intended to give men not only the vocation to be saved members by and in Christ, but also, if they are faithful, members who save other men by and in Christ.

At this very point, where grace is fully Christic and fully Christ-conforming, the Holy Spirit is given to the world as he has never been given before (Jn 7:39), the three Divine Persons come to dwell in men as they have never done before: "For through him we both [Jews and Gentiles] have access in one Spirit to the Father. . . . [You have been] built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Eph 2:18, 20-22).

Precisely at that point, the Church, which is here below the house of the living God (1 Tim 3:15), exists in manifest and complete act. She is one, not only in a finite and ontological manner, by the diffusion in her of fully Christic and fully Christ-conforming grace, but also in an infinite and

intentional manner, because the infinite and limitless unity of the Deity who dwells in her is reflected in the secret depths of her living faith and love, like the starry sky in a mountain lake, completely in each of the just and completely in them as a whole.

2. Her great saints alone belong to her completely. They are her closed garden, her sealed fountain. There is no longer in them a place for the devil's snares.¹ Inflamed by the Spirit whom Christ sends them, transformed into a flame of love in which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit communicate themselves, they receive a small taste of eternal life, but not perfectly, because the condition of this life does not permit it.² This very union, however, is heartrending for them; for, as great as their connection and union with God may be, they have neither repose nor satisfaction insofar as they do not see his glory, and they earnestly pray the veil that separates them from God might be broken: "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done."³

For the just who are not yet completely absorbed into the Church, the more that divine charity increases in them, the more also sorrow and confusion increase from the wounds of their old sins and from their daily shortcomings. They aspire to cross over the limits of the Homeland where they will finally see their own weakness vanquished, where they will finally be able to love God without any betrayal and without any division of their heart. They long for the time when they will see themselves no longer surrounded by the triumphs of the Prince of this world; when all the invincible ignorances that raise insurmountable barriers between souls of goodwill and the desire for Christ (who reclaims them for his Church) will be dissipated; when they will no longer see their loved ones die or small children suffer or lies reign or the earth covered with blood, hatred, and despair, or any man march to his own damnation. It is of all this they are thinking when they say the *Pater noster* or when they repeat the cry of St. Paul: *Maranatha*, "Our Lord, come!" (1 Cor 16:22), or that of St. John: "I Jesus. . . , I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star. The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let him who hears say, 'Come' " (Rev 22:16-17).

This Church, destined to bring redemption into the very midst of evil, will inevitably include many sinners among her members. She holds onto them by what there is in them of the divine gifts and insofar as there still remains some hope of rescuing them from definitive perdition. She is not, then, without sinners, but she is without sin, "in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish". Her frontiers

divide, in the very depths of each one of us, what is of heaven and what is of hell; they divide sinners in two.

3. *Such is, here below, the infallible fulfillment of Christ's prayer for unity.* It is the Church in perfect or complete act: more or less ardent in the course of the ages, according to the rhythm of the outpourings in her of the Spirit,⁴ but always bearing in her heart a center of inextinguishable love; more or less numerous in her numbers, but always one, by nature of a divine and Catholic unity. It is impossible that there not pass even into this world some sign of her mysterious unity, so that, if the world wanted, it would be able "to believe", it would be able "to know".

Mutilated or divided unity. 1. In the world of salvation, the Church in perfect act, huddled together around Christ, is the solid nucleus of the nebula. She carries along in her momentum all those in whom living faith and divine charity reside, all the just, all the saved, who are dispersed in the night of what is for them invincible error. They are like the envelopes adhering to the nebula.

If one were to attempt to range them according to the degree of the Christic perfection of their love—in imagining in them, by hypothesis, an equal intensity of charity—one would first encounter the just of the dissident Orthodox Churches, in whom grace is not fully directed; then, the baptized just of Protestantism, in whom grace is not fully sacramental; next, the just of the monotheist groups who do not even have Baptism: Protestant sects, Judaism, Islam; finally, the just of pre-Christian religions.

In all these just, whether they know it or not, grace secretly aspires to encounter its center, which is Christ, and to form around him the Church in perfect act. This is what we mean when we say that they belong to the Church in initial, latent, tendential act. In all of these just, however, some misunderstandings—for some, they are insurmountable misunderstandings—hinder the spontaneous movement of grace, preventing it from rejoining the one place where it can fully blossom. In them it is contradicted, mutilated; it will not achieve here below its full flowering, and the unity that attaches them to the Church, however profound and divine, is also contradicted and mutilated. Neither will it give here below its full fruits.

In virtue of the authentic movement of grace that is in them, these just strive, then, to join Christ and his one Church. In virtue, however, of their invincible ignorance, they remain faithful to their different religious

formations, where their faith is always in peril. Spiritually, to the eyes of angels and some men who can see, they are, initially, in the Church. Corporally, to the eyes of the world that do not go beyond mere appearances, and to their own blindfolded eyes, they belong to the dissident Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish, Islamic, Brahman, or Buddhist formations. What divisions, what a tragedy!

2. The more one believes in the value of the graces that secretly draw every man coming into the world to Christ and his Church, the more also one believes in the reality, in the expanse, in the hidden splendor of the Church in initial and tendential act: *she is as a third realization—but inchoate, incomplete, mutilated, divided—of the Savior's prayer for unity*; and the more, also, one suffers at the thought of so much ignorance (become invincible for so many men of goodwill), which so strongly prevents men from recognizing the true face of the Church. What a resurrection there would be for the entire world if, suddenly, the Church in tendential act could pass, with all her resources, into the full light of the Church in perfect act!

As for the world, it seizes the opportunity to become scandalized by the division of those who associate themselves with the same God and the same Christ, in order to deride the revelation of God and his Christ. Just as it seizes the occasions of the disputes and contradictions of philosophers in order to deny the truth.⁵

The coming. Will invincible ignorance always have the power to raise so harmful a barrier between the Church in tendential act and the Church in perfect act? Will there always be around the Church in perfect act so large a number of the just—such as those who today are called Orthodox, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and so on—who belong only spiritually to her, with a broken momentum, by being ignorant of her, sometimes even by fighting against her? Will the division of believers on the subject of divine revelation, and of even Christians on the subject of Christ and his Church, continue to the end of time to scandalize the weak and furnish easy pretexts (too easy!) for those who, in truth, seek neither God nor his Christ? How does one respond to these immense questions?

1. We know, alas, that the longer the divisions last, the more they tend to become entrenched.

All proceeds with time. The Church cannot conserve the living treasure of revelation except by unwrapping it. On the other hand, in the religious forms

separated from her, the principles of error necessarily produce their own consequences.

It is not only the persistence of the immense block of pre-Christian religions still active, it is not only the spectacle of the two-thousand-year irreducibility of Judaism, it is also the phenomenon of the extraordinary appearance of a post-Christian religion like Islam, which has lasted some thirteen centuries; it is also the phenomenon of the apparent success of formidable divisions like dissident Orthodoxy, which has lasted some ten centuries, despite a terrible persecution that is not yet finished; or like Protestantism, which has lasted, no doubt by undergoing modification, some four centuries—which obliges us to reflect anew on the mysterious response of the Master of the field to his servants: “No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest” (Mt 13:29-30); or the strange words of St. Paul to the Corinthians: “I hear that there are divisions [*schismata*] among you; and I partly believe it, for there must be factions [*haereses*] among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized” (1 Cor 11:18-19).

What does God desire from us through such humiliating defects and always bloody divisions as these? Do we need constantly to be caught again by adversaries, of whom many might be of good faith, in order to learn not to confuse on the practical level our miseries, our human practices, our narrowness of heart, our shortcomings, our sins, with that Church, “in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing that she might be holy and without blemish”, to whom we have given the better part of our heart, but in whom we are still very far from being completely absorbed? Do we need constantly to be aroused by new tests of our faith, in order not to fall asleep on the treasure of truths confided to us? “When the ardent restlessness of heretics”, writes St. Augustine (and what he says of heretics can be applied to dissidents as well), “is cast upon various aspects of the Catholic faith, then, in order to defend these aspects from them, one examines them with more attention, understands them with more clarity, teaches them with more zeal, and each question the adversary raises is an occasion to enlighten oneself, *et ab adversario mota quaestio, discendi existit occasio.*”⁶ Will we always need around us the presence of a vast Church in latent and tendential act to remind us constantly—like the Jews at the time of Jesus—that “many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the

outer darkness” (Mt 8:11-12)? In order to recall the in some ways infinite part that God—while always remaining the absolute Master of the universe—can allow evil to play in his work, it would be necessary to understand how unfathomable are his judgments and how incomprehensible his ways and to perceive the infinite abyss (here infinite is taken in a strict sense) of his Wisdom and his Knowledge.

2. If man, however, proceeds from catastrophe to catastrophe, the Holy Spirit does not cease to descend from one level to the next in order to raise him up. The saints tell us that the more desperate the times, the more marvelous the plans of God: “The Lord”, says St. John of the Cross, “has always revealed to mortals the treasures of his Wisdom and his Spirit; but now that malice reveals more of its face, God reveals them even more.”⁷

Will not the massive eruption onto the center stage of history—for the first time in the world’s existence—of what is called atheism (but which is really an anti-theism or, better still, an anti-Christianity) be ordered in the plan of the all-powerful God (who can use terrible evils as an occasion for bringing forth great goods) to prepare some vast regrouping of all believers? The lucid spirit of the great Dragon, of the Seducer of the whole world, can easily discern the true contours of the Church and the location of the Woman clothed with the sun. Is it not the case that (without intending it), in throwing the Beasts on the woman, and more savagely than in the past, the location of the true homeland is revealed to all of the true faithful?

Can we not apply to the dissidents, to all dissidents, what St. Paul announces to Israel, namely that it has been removed only for a time and that it will one day be reintegrated, resulting in a wonderful resurrection of the whole Church (Rom 11:12-15)—that this must take place, perhaps, long before the end of the world, even before the great apostasy, which will slightly precede the coming of the Savior (2 Thess 2:3); or, perhaps, at the very end of the world and just after the apostasy?⁸ Will there be a day, in our earthly time, when all the faithful of Israel, and all the faithful from the dissidents along with them, will be but one sole beloved City gathered around Christ, against which will march the armies of Gog and Magog?⁹

To tell the truth, the direct sense of this passage of the Apocalypse is slightly different: “When the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad earth

and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; but fire came down from heaven and consumed them” (Rev 20:7-9). The thousand years represent the entire duration of the messianic time, which lasts from the first coming of Christ as Savior to the second coming of Christ as Judge. The beloved City is the Church, gathered around Christ and attacked with him. Gog and Magog symbolize all the successive attacks of the Beast, who undoubtedly will experience their own crisis at the end of the world.

It is possible, nevertheless, that the believers from the four corners of the earth, perhaps under the terrible pressure of the assaults they will have to undergo, will suddenly see their hearts fully open to the transcendence and humanity (Tit 3:4) of the revelation that is in Christ Jesus. It is possible that our earth, before being engulfed in the universal apocatastasis (Acts 3:21), will see all the just whom it bears openly gathered for one last blossoming of Christian unity. Then, the whole Church in tential act will pass into the full light of the Church in perfect act. *This will be a realization, hitherto unknown here below, of the Savior’s prayer for unity.* Should one, in this case, hope for such a realization before the great apostasy, long before the end of the world? Should one rather defer it until after the apostasy just before the last instant of the world?

These are the secrets of the Savior and of his Providence over his Church. It is good for us to meditate on these secrets in our hearts, in order to be ever available for what he is pleased, in his goodness, to decide. One thing is for certain, that he will not be long in coming: “Yes, I am coming soon.”

It is also necessary for us to respond to him, together with the Spirit who fills the whole Church, in the supreme exertion of our common desire for the final Unity: “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev 22:20).

APPENDIX I

THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH ACCORDING TO THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL*

After a few introductory words about the conciliar experience, we will examine the scriptural names for the Church, for Christ as mediator between the Church and the Spirit, for the presence of Christ in his Church, for the hierarchical ministry, and for the entire Church—one, holy, catholic, and apostolic—which is at the same time a little flock and a people beyond numbering.

1. The Conciliar Experience

The new awareness of the mystery of the Church manifested by the Second Vatican Council has many effects, the first of which, no doubt, is a more precise, richer, and more solemn awareness of the very nature of the ecumenical councils, those milestones that mark off, each in its own way, the important stages of the Church's march down through the centuries. The words with which Paul VI opened the second and third sessions (September 29, 1963 and September 14, 1964) recall first of all the fact that the Council was convoked freely by the Supreme Pontiff and the assistance in governing the Church that he expects from it:

O dear and venerated Pope John, may gratitude and praise be rendered to you for having resolved—doubtless under divine inspiration—to convoke this council in order to open to the Church new horizons, and to tap the fresh spring water of the doctrine and grace of Christ our Lord and let it flow over the earth.

Moved by no earthly motives or particular circumstances, but as if by divining heavenly counsels and penetrating into the dark and tormented needs of the modern age, you have

gathered the broken thread of the First Vatican Council, and by that very fact you have banished the fear wrongly deduced from that council, as if the supreme powers conferred by Christ on the Roman Pontiff to govern and vivify the Church were sufficient without the assistance of ecumenical councils.¹

In that same freedom, likewise aware of his fraternity with all the bishops at the level of the episcopate, and at the same time conscious of his unique prerogative as the successor of Peter, the head of the apostolic Church and Vicar of Christ, Paul VI, decrees the continuation of the Council:

Let every one understand that the convocation of the council has been a free and spontaneous act on the part of our venerated predecessor of happy memory, John XXIII, an act which we have readily confirmed, knowing full well that the theme of this sovereign and sacred assembly would deal with the episcopate.² . . . The Pope has called the council into session in his capacity, which links him with all of you, as your brother, the bishop of historic Rome, and as the humble but authentic successor of the Apostle Peter—before whose tomb we are devoutly gathered—and therefore as the unworthy but true head of the Catholic Church and Vicar of Christ, servant of the servants of God.³

The council, at which those who are entrusted with hierarchical powers are solemnly assembled for a liturgical celebration, represents the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. This is the “conciliar experience”, sensed vividly from the very beginning of the second session, yet expressed even more fully by the Supreme Pontiff on the eve of the third session:

We are the Church as members of the Mystical Body of Christ, for God has granted us the inestimable favor of being baptized, of being believers united by love and constituting the consecrated and visible people of God. . . .⁴

“Stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1), we represent here the entire Church, not as delegates or deputies of the faithful toward whom our ministry is directed, but as fathers and brothers who personify the communities entrusted to the care of each one of us, and as a plenary assembly legitimately convoked by the Holy Father.⁵

Recapitulating in our persons and in our functions the universal Church, we proclaim this council ecumenical. Here is the exercise of unity, here the exercise of that *universality* by which the Church gives evidence of her prodigious vitality, her marvelous capacity to make men brothers and to welcome within her embrace the most diverse civilizations. . . . Here is the exercise of the *holiness* of the Church because here she calls on the mercy of God for the weaknesses and deficiencies of the sinners that we are. . . . Here, finally, is made manifest the *apostolicity* of the Church, a prerogative which is a marvel even to us, to us who have experienced our own weakness and who know how history bears witness to the frailty of even the most powerful of human institutions. . . . We know how inexplicably and how triumphantly the Church has endured throughout the ages, this Church which is ever living and always capable of finding in herself the irrepressible spirit of youth.⁶

The mysterious charity of the Church is present at the Council, not only hidden in the hearts of the friends of God who find themselves assembled there, but also in another way, for from the first days when the convocation was announced, the ardent supplications of the faithful have been converging from all quarters upon this decisive moment in the life of the Church. “Every member of the Mystical Body of Christ must consider this historic event of the ecumenical council as being of interest to him personally and must participate in it through an ardent and vigilant spiritual communion.”⁷

During the time when he lived among us, there were three ways of looking at Jesus: some only saw in him “this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know” (Jn 6:42); others thought of Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets (Mt 16:13-14); together with Thomas, still others finally were able to say to him, “My Lord and my God” (Jn 20:28). Similarly, there are three views that one can take of the Church assembled in an ecumenical council: that of the man in the street and the simple newspaper reader, that of the more astute observers who discern its exceptional importance, and finally the view of theological faith.

On these various levels one could speak of “conciliar experiences”. There was the experience of the “informative” and also “deformative” influence of the press and the communications media upon public opinion, with its repercussions upon the Council assembly. The faithful have been affected directly by the liturgical innovations, by the question of professing their faith freely whatever political regime they may be under, by the definition of the lay apostolate, and so on. They have been alarmed and sometimes disturbed by debates that were insufficiently explained and understood concerning the relationship between Scripture and tradition, between the supreme pontiff and the apostolic college, between the clergy and the laity. As at the time of Jansenism and Pascal’s *Provincial Letters*, theological problems have begun again to arouse strong sentiments, the desire for clarifications has been felt and, finally, the need to see the Christian people from many different regions represented at the Council by auditors. To be sure, that ultimately amounts to a genuine gain.

There has also been the experience of political passions and sensitivities. Where no neat distinction is made between the temporal and the spiritual realms, between the things that are Caesar’s and the things that are God’s, it is difficult for the Church to establish a hierarchy of the elements of truth and of holiness that she discerns beyond her visible boundaries without running

the risk of incurring the hostility of the world's populations against her own children who are dispersed in every place. She cannot rejoice in the faith of Israel without appearing to offend Islam or be glad about the faith of Islam without appearing to slight India, and so on.

There was also the experience of the presence of non-Catholic observers in the course of the presentations and discussions relating to the schemas of the conciliar constitutions. Herein no doubt is one of the major innovations of the present Council. It will be a powerful aid to the baptized in whom faith in the divinity of Jesus and in the supreme mystery of the Holy Trinity remains intact, helping them to realize—beyond the insuperable obstacles of today and the sacred certitudes that conscience forbids them to renounce—their deep, mutual desire to be absolutely faithful to the truth revealed in the Gospel. We should note that the fearful desire to avoid anything that might offend the non-Catholics at times led certain bishops to surprise their own flocks, for example during the discussion of a schema that dealt at length with the intercession of the Virgin Mary, when they balked at the term “mediation”, as though it were not the case that all intercession is mediation and all mediation, intercession.⁸

There was the experience of the positive and characteristic things brought about by the actual gathering of the fraternal members of the episcopal college, which Fr. Congar highlights by comparing what a consultation would be like between the pope and the worldwide episcopate at a distance—what he calls a “council in writing”—with the profound reality constituted by an ecumenical council.⁹

Then too, there was the experience of the encounter, within the very bosom of the Church, of her traditions and the sources of her life, both Eastern and Western.

Finally, this is the experience that has made it possible to distinguish precisely the central concern of the Council:

Cardinal Montini said, at the conclusion of the first session, that the Council had lacked a focus, a guiding purpose. All of the dogmatic theology, all of the moral theology, all of the discipline had been examined in the preparatory texts. It was only little by little, and more specifically in the final days of the first session, that the Fathers realized that the Church would not be one of the themes of the Council but, so to speak, *the* theme of the Council. Pope Paul VI, in the speech with which he opened the second session, specified that the object of the Council would be the whole Christ, *Christus totus*, that is to say, the Church under her four aspects: the awareness of the Church, the renewal of the Church, the unity of Christians, the dialogue of the Church with the contemporary world.¹⁰

But already we are touching upon the level of the faith perspective.

Beyond the merely exterior view that one can take of the Council, then, beyond the view of the more attentive and astute observers,^{[11](#)} there is the more secret and more privileged view of the fullness of faith that can be given to us from heaven, if we beg for it, and that alone will allow us to read in such an event the message of the Bride of Christ, whether she recalls through her solemn Magisterium the holy revelations in Scripture or the great dogmatic explanations of them or whether in her pastoral solicitude she tentatively seeks the best paths on which to meet the hearts of men.

2. The Scriptural Names for the Church

The supreme mystery of the faith, that of the Holy Trinity, which is evoked unceasingly and explicitly, dominates the entire teaching of the different chapters of the Constitution on the Church. The Church, from all eternity, is known and decreed by God, who wants all men, all of fallen mankind, to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. She is founded by his Son, whom he sends to die upon the Cross. She is enlivened, animated, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, who comes to make of her his dwelling place. The entire Church thus appears as the people gathered in the image of the unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, “de unitate Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti plebs adunata”.^{[12](#)} From the very first lines, the Constitution alludes to the three ages of the Church. After the original catastrophe, God, instead of abandoning humanity, comes to its aid for the sake of the future redemption by Christ; he will send his Son to humanity; then, at the threshold of the final age, the Holy Spirit; so that, as the Fathers have said, when the glorious consummation comes, “all the just from the time of Adam, ‘from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect’ will be gathered together with the Father in the universal Church.”^{[13](#)}

This unique reality is too rich to be encompassed with a single concept; we like to call it, as Jesus himself did, and after him St. Paul, St. James, and the Acts of the Apostles, by the very name of Church; the Pope, in opening the second session of the Council, alluded to the etymology of the term: “Truly it is fitting that this solemn and fraternal assembly, gathered together from the East and the West, from the regions of the South and the North, should be designated by the prophetic name of ‘Ecclesia’, that is, a coming together or a

meeting.”¹⁴ The Constitution likewise notes:

As Israel according to the flesh which wandered in the desert was already called the Church of God (2 Esd. 13:1; cf. Num. 20:4; Deut. 23:1ff.), so too, the new Israel, which advances in this present era in search of a future and permanent city (cf. Heb. 13:14), is called also the Church of Christ (cf. Mt. 16:18). It is Christ indeed who has purchased it with his own blood (cf. Acts 20:28); he has filled it with his Spirit; he has provided means adapted to its visible and social union. All those, who in faith look towards Jesus, the author of salvation and the principle of unity and peace, God has gathered together and established as the Church, that it may be for each and everyone the visible sacrament of this saving unity.¹⁵

To gather around Christ is tantamount to making up his Body, which is the Church.

By the name *Bride* or *Spouse*, Scripture means to bring out the fact that the Church is chosen by Christ, as one person is chosen by another person, that she is asked to enter freely into this wondrous covenant, and that as a result of this consent she is cleansed of her defilement and elevated to a marvelous intimacy with her Bridegroom. The Church is:

the spotless spouse of the spotless lamb (Apoc. 19:7; 21:2 and 9; 22:17). It is she whom Christ “loved and for whom he delivered himself up that he might sanctify her” (Eph. 5:26). It is she whom he unites to himself by an unbreakable alliance, and whom he constantly “nourishes and cherishes” (Eph. 5:29). It is she whom, once purified, he willed to be joined to himself, subject in love and fidelity (cf. Eph. 5:24), and whom, finally, he filled with heavenly gifts for all eternity, in order that we may know the love of God and of Christ for us, a love which surpasses all understanding (Eph. 3:19).¹⁶

Advancing through trials and tribulations, the Church is strengthened by God’s grace, promised to her by the Lord so that she may not waver from perfect fidelity, but remain the worthy bride of the Lord, ceaselessly renewing herself through the action of the Holy Spirit until, through the cross, she may attain to that light which knows no setting.¹⁷

As revelation presents her to us, the Church is a *Kingdom*, the Kingdom in which God in Christ triumphs over the wickedness of the world, in which God can reign over men already here below through the Cross of Christ and, later on, by the glory of Christ. The Kingdom, indeed, like its King, has two phases: one veiled and on pilgrimage, the other glorious and definitive.

To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us his mystery; by his obedience he brought about our redemption. The Church—that is, the kingdom of Christ already present in mystery—grows visibly through the power of God in the world.¹⁸

The mystery of the holy Church is already brought to light in the way it was founded. For the Lord Jesus inaugurated his Church by preaching the Good News, that is, the coming of the kingdom of God, promised over the ages in the scriptures: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk. 1:15; Mt. 4:17). This kingdom shone out before men in the word, in the works and in the presence of Christ. The word of the Lord is compared to a seed which is sown in a field (Mk. 4:14); those who hear it with faith and are numbered among the little flock of Christ (Lk. 12:32) have truly received the kingdom. Then, by its own power the seed sprouts and grows until the harvest (cf. Mk. 4:26-29). The miracles of Jesus also demonstrate that the kingdom has already come on earth: “If I cast out devils by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Lk. 11:20; cf. Matt. 12:28). But principally the kingdom is revealed in the person of Christ himself, Son of God and Son of Man, who came “to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mk. 10:45). . . . Henceforward the Church, endowed with the gifts of her founder and faithfully observing his precepts of charity, humility and self-denial, receives the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is, on earth, the seed and the beginning of that kingdom. While she slowly grows to maturity, the Church longs for the completed kingdom and, with all her strength, hopes and desires to be united in glory with her king.¹⁹

We should add that in handing over “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” to Peter (Mt 16:19), Jesus clearly indicates that his Kingdom could not, in its present state, do without a hierarchy.

The notions of Church and Kingdom of God are closely related to those of City of God and *people of God*. In biblical language, the Hebrew *Qahal Yahvé* was the people of God, chosen from among the unbelieving nations to adore and serve the Most High. The assembly of God, the Church of God is its counterpart in the New Testament. She is heir to the promises made to Abraham, which have come to fulfillment in the new order inaugurated by Christ and accomplished at Pentecost.

At all times and in every race, anyone who fears God and does what is right has been acceptable to him (cf. Acts 10:35). He has, however, willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness. He therefore chose the Israelite race to be his own people and established a covenant with it. He gradually instructed this people—in its history manifesting both himself and the decree of his will—and made it holy unto himself. All these things, however, happened as a preparation and figure of that new and perfect covenant which was to be ratified in Christ, and of the fuller revelation which was to be given through the Word of God made flesh. “Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. . . . I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts, and they shall be my people. . . . For they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord” (Jer. 31:31-34). Christ instituted this new covenant, namely the new covenant in his blood (cf. 1 Cor. 11:25); he called a race made up of Jews and Gentiles which would be one, not according to the flesh, but in the Spirit, and this race would be the new People of God. For those who believe in Christ, who are reborn, not from a corruptible seed, but from an incorruptible one through the word of the living God (cf. 1 Pet. 1:23), not from flesh, but from water and the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn. 3:5-6), are finally established as

“a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. . . who in times past were not a people, but now are the People of God” (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

That messianic people has as its head Christ, “who was delivered up for our sins and rose again for our justification” (Rom. 4:25), and now, having acquired the name which is above all names, reigns gloriously in heaven. The state of this people is that of the dignity and freedom of the sons of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in a temple. Its law is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us (cf. Jn. 13:34). Its destiny is the kingdom of God which has been begun by God himself on earth and which must be further extended until it is brought to perfection by him at the end of time when Christ our life (cf. Col. 3:4), will appear and “creation itself also will be delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God” (Rom. 8:21). Hence that messianic people, although it does not actually include all men, and at times may appear as a small flock, is, however, a most sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race.^{[20](#)}

The reality which Jesus calls “my Church” is referred to by St. Paul as well by the name of *Body of Christ*. The Church, which is a creature, makes up together with Christ, who is God, an organism that is spiritually one. She originates in a flowing stream of grace, the source of which is found in Christ; she is born of an outpouring of Christ’s grace that conforms souls to Christ. Considered under this aspect, the Church is nothing other than “Jesus Christ poured forth and communicated” (Bossuet). Even more boldly, the Apostle says that the Church is Christ (1 Cor 12:12). Does not Jesus identify himself with the Church when, after throwing Saul to the ground, he declares to him: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?. . . I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” (Acts 9:4-5). The Constitution, which presents here, as it were, an anthology of passages by St. Paul, recalls that Christ, having redeemed mankind, gathered men and women from among all the nations by the communication of his Spirit, in order to make them his Mystical Body. The life of Christ is communicated to his members by the sacraments: Baptism incorporates us into Christ, who has died and risen; the Eucharist consummates this union. The Mystical Body is organic and differentiated by reason of the multiplicity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit; an eminent grace is reserved for the apostles, to whom the charismatic gifts are subject, the same Spirit who guarantees the interconnection of the members awakens a mutual charity among the faithful. The Head of this Body is Christ, the image of the invisible God, in whom all things were created, in the heavens and on the earth, the firstborn from the dead, who holds the primacy in everything. All the members must be conformed to him, be associated with his sufferings in the course of their earthly pilgrimage, so as to be glorified later on with him. “In order that we might be unceasingly renewed in him (cf. Eph. 4:23), he has

shared with us his Spirit who, being one and the same in head and members, gives life to, unifies and moves the whole body. Consequently, his work could be compared by the Fathers to the function that the principle of life, the soul, fulfils in the human body.”²¹ Christ, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, fills with his divine gifts the Church, which is his Body and his fullness, so that she might increase and attain to all the fullness of God (cf. Eph 3:19).²²

Another one of her beautiful names, *the communion of saints*, evokes all the dimensions of the Church: on pilgrimage in time, being purified beyond time, and glorified in the heavens.²³

3. Christ, the Mediator between the Church and the Spirit

All of these beautiful scriptural names for the Church, the very name of Church given to her by Christ, refer her immediately to Christ. Without Christ, she would be as utterly unintelligible as the circumference of a circle without its center. This is the chief truth, proclaimed with emotion by the Supreme Pontiff on the threshold of the second session:

Christ [is] our beginning, Christ our life and our guide, Christ our hope and our end.

O let this council have the full awareness of this relationship between ourselves and the blessed Jesus—a relationship which is at once multiple and unique, fixed and stimulating, mysterious and crystal clear, binding and beatifying—between this holy Church which we constitute and Christ from whom we come, by whom we live and toward whom we strive.

Let no other light be shed on this council but Christ the light of the world! Let no other truth be of interest to our minds, but the words of the Lord, our only master! Let no other aspiration guide us, but the desire to be absolutely faithful to Him! Let no other hope sustain us, but the one that, through the mediation of His word, strengthens our pitiful weakness: “And behold I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world” (Mt 28:20).

Would that we were able at this moment to raise up to our Lord a voice that is worthy of Him! We still say to Him in the words of the sacred liturgy: “Thee, O Christ, alone we know. Singing even in our woe, with pure hearts to Thee we go: On our senses shine!” (Hymn of Lauds for Wednesdays).

As we thus invoke Him, He seems to present Himself to our rapt gaze with the majesty proper to the “Pantocrator” (all mighty)—the glorious Christ of your basilicas—O Brothers of the Eastern Churches, as well as those of the West.

We recognize ourself in the figure of our predecessor, Honorius III, who is represented in the splendid mosaic in the apse of the Basilica of St. Paul as a humble worshipper, tiny and prostrate, kissing the feet of a Christ of gigantic dimensions, who as a kingly teacher dominates and blesses the people gathered in the basilica, which symbolizes the Church.

This scene, it seems to us, is reproduced here before us, not as a painted image, but as a historical human reality which acknowledges in Christ the source of redeemed humanity, His Church, as it were, His extension and continuation, both earthly and mysterious. This recalls to our mind the apocalyptic vision of St. John: “He showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming forth from the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev 22:1).

It seems to us opportune that this council should have as its starting point this vision, or mystical celebration, which acknowledges Him, our Lord Jesus Christ, to be the Incarnate Word, the Son of God and the Son of Man, the Redeemer of the world, the Hope of humanity and its Supreme Master, the Good Shepherd, the Bread of Life, the High Priest and our Victim, the sole Mediator between God and men, the Savior of the world, the eternal King of ages.²⁴

Christ is the Head, the Church is the Body. God, desiring to save the world, first sends it, on the day of the Incarnation, his only Son, who becomes man in order to be the leader and Head of the Church. He then sends to the world, on the day of Pentecost, his Holy Spirit in order to form, under Jesus and round about him, the Church that will be his Body. The Word is the Advocate (1 Jn 2:1-2), who, in order to intercede, condescends to us in the supreme condescension of the Incarnation and the hypostatic union. The Spirit is the Counselor or Paraclete (Jn 14:16), who, in order to intercede, condescends to us by the union of grace and indwelling. “Now if the Church is here,” the Pope recalled at the opening of the third session, “here also is the Spirit, the Advocate, whom Christ promised to His apostles for the building up of the Church: ‘I will ask the Father and He will give you another Advocate to dwell with you forever, the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you shall know Him, because He will dwell with you, and be in you’ (Jn 14:16-17).”²⁵

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church is professed by the Constitution from the very beginning and constantly throughout the document:

When the work which the Father gave the Son to do on earth (cf. Jn. 1:4) was accomplished, the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that he might continually sanctify the Church, and that, consequently, those who believe might have access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father (cf. Eph. 2:18). He is the Spirit of life, the fountain of water springing up to eternal life (cf. Jn. 4:14 7:38-39). To men, dead in sin, the Father gives life through him, until the day when, in Christ, he raises to life their mortal bodies (cf. Rom. 8:10—ii). The Spirit dwells in the

Church and in the hearts of the faithful, as in a temple (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). In them he prays and bears witness to their adoptive sonship (cf. Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15-16 and 26). Guiding the Church in the way of all truth (cf. Jn. 16:13) and unifying her in communion and in the works of ministry, he bestows upon her varied hierarchic and charismatic gifts, and in this way directs her; and he adorns her with his fruits (cf. Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Cor. 12:4; Gal. 5:22). By the power of the Gospel he permits the Church to keep the freshness of youth. Constantly he renews her and leads her to perfect union with her Spouse. For the Spirit and the Bride both say to Jesus, the Lord: “Come!” (cf. Apoc. 22:17).²⁶

Christ, who is the Head, is God; the Church, which is the Body, is a creature. The life of the Head flows into the Body, but with a radical difference in level. Christ, on the one hand, is situated at the level of the hypostatic union; his divine personality is incommunicable, but in addition it calls down into his soul the fullness of communicable grace: charity, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and all the created gifts. The Church, on the other hand, is in the world without being of the world, just as Christ was, but she is situated immediately at the second level, that of the union of charity, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the created gifts. When the Holy Spirit comes upon her at Pentecost to enliven her [*pour l’animer*], it will not be so as to confer upon her gifts that are as yet unknown, but rather in order to shower upon her the fullness of the communicable graces of charity, indwelling, and the charisms, with which Christ had been endowed for the salvation of the whole world. The portal of the church in Vézelay illustrates this doctrine: the rays of the grace of Pentecost issue from Christ’s hands so as to be shed upon the apostles and the Church. Indeed, the grace of Christ, the Head of the Church—the *gratia capitis* which by nature is Christic and which conforms souls to Christ—is the starting point from which the Spirit will form the Church.

Based on these data, it is possible to propose an overview of the principal teachings of the Constitution on the Church. The order adopted in it, slightly different and more descriptive, but substantially the same, seems to have been dictated by pastoral concerns, which prompt it to address in the first place Christians as a whole, then to recall with regard to each group the goods that are common to all. After a first chapter on “The Mystery of the Church”, born of the Trinity, the Kingdom of God, the Mystical Body of Christ, a Church both visible and spiritual, the second chapter on “The People of God” shows the faithful: (1) united in a common priesthood—distinct from the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood—which they exercise through the reception of the sacraments; (2) gathered into a royal people, a holy nation, by their appreciation of the faith (*sensus fidei*) and the charismatic gifts; (3)

constituting “Catholic unity”, with its differentiations, its relations with non-Catholics and non-Christians, and its missionary thrust: themes that will be taken up again in the “Decree on Ecumenism” and the schema on “The Church and the World”. The third chapter, dedicated to the hierarchical constitution of the Church and especially the episcopate, treats the foundation of the Church by the apostles, their successors the bishops, who are singled out by the sacrament of episcopal orders, episcopal collegiality and the head thereof, the interrelatedness of the bishops within the college, and their functions in their particular Churches, where they are assisted by the priests and the deacons: this is the chapter that is connected with the “apostolicity” of the Church. The fourth chapter deals with “The Laity”, but in order to avoid defining them negatively, that is, by their lack of hierarchical powers, the chapter first repeats in their regard the description of the ecclesial riches that are common to all Christians, and, after that, their proper task of sanctifying temporal activities is assigned to them. The chapter sets forth the principles that will be developed in the schemas on “The Apostolate of the Laity” and on “The Church and the World”. The following chapters are more immediately concerned with the “holiness” of the Church. Chapter 5 on “The Call to Holiness” in the Church recalls the obligation of all Christians to strive for the perfection of charity, the oneness of sanctity amid the various states of life, the means of attaining holiness, and martyrdom, which crowns it. Chapter 6, on “Religious”, describes the state of life of those who seek to imitate Christ more closely by the practice of the evangelical counsels. Chapter 7 speaks of the eschatological character of our vocation and of our union with the Church in heaven. Finally, chapter 8 indicates the place of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the mystery of Christ and of the Church.

Whatever the sequence of topics may be, it is still evident that the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church is formed by an outpouring of the grace that is given to Christ in abundance.

4. The Presence of Christ in His Church

Before describing in detail the marks of the capital grace of Christ, we must emphasize, with the Constitution, an initial and fundamental resemblance between Christ the Head and his Body the Church. Apparent in both the

mystery of the Incarnation and in the mystery of the Church are the condescensions of Divine Mercy, which, in order to save men and not angels, presents to them divine things that are, not simply juxtaposed with human things, but indissolubly united with them.

The one mediator, Christ, established and ever sustains here on earth his holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity, as a visible organization through which he communicates truth and grace to all men. But, the society structured with hierarchical organs and the mystical body of Christ, the visible society and the spiritual community, the earthly Church and the Church endowed with heavenly riches, are not to be thought of as two realities. On the contrary, they form one complex reality which comes together from a human and a divine element. For this reason the Church is compared, in a powerful analogy, to the mystery of the incarnate Word. As the assumed nature, inseparably united to him, serves the divine Word as a living organ of salvation, so, in a somewhat similar way, does the social structure of the Church serve the Spirit of Christ who vivifies it, in the building up of the body (cf. Eph. 4:16).²⁷

What are, in technical terms, the three prerogatives of Christ, the Head of the Church, the three bounties of Christ's capital grace, which in being poured out upon the world constitute, not only the hierarchy, but the entire Church that is his Body? From Christ, who *reveals* or *announces* (as *Teacher and King*), authoritatively proclaiming what is to be believed and the things that are to be done in his Kingdom, proceed the teaching and governing powers of the *hierarchy* and, eventually, the illuminations of private prophecy for the *lay faithful*. From Christ the *priest* or *pontiff* [High Priest], who inaugurates a new form of worship by his sacrifice and his sacraments, proceed the cultic powers of Holy Orders for the *hierarchy*, and—for all the *faithful*—the cultic or sacramental characters of Baptism and Confirmation. Above all Christ is *holy*; he is, for all men without exception, the source of grace and of holiness. The only reason that he is a priest is to inaugurate the form of worship that obtains grace for us and transmits it to us; the only reason that he is a teacher and king is to open up for us the paths along which grace should be put into action [*les voies où doit s'engager la grâce*]. It is when we obtain grace through the sacraments and allow it to be guided by the teaching and governing authority, it is when grace is both sacramental and directed, that grace fully conforms souls to Christ. Behold in its fullness what one could call the created soul of the Church, upon which depends the full indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who is the uncreated Soul of the Church: "If a man *loves me*. . . we will make *our home* with him" (Jn 14:23).

The fact that the priesthood, the kingship, and the holiness of Christ flow down upon the Church, with all her members, to the extent to which they

belong to her—all receiving by a certain right some of what belongs to each, and each receiving some of what belongs to all—the Church as a whole continues her existence in the world as a mysterious community that is at the same time priestly, royal, and holy, a “kingdom [of] priests” (Rev 1:6), “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Pet 2:9).

From chapter 2 on, the Constitution insists that all share in these riches of Christ. Those who are baptized form a *priestly people*. They are consecrated so as to offer to God their activities along with themselves as a holy and living sacrifice.

Though they differ essentially and not only in degree, the *common* priesthood of the faithful and the *ministerial* or *hierarchical* priesthood are none the less ordered one to another; each in its own proper way shares in the one priesthood of Christ. *The ministerial priest*, by the sacred power that he has, forms and rules the priestly people; in the person of Christ he effects the eucharistic sacrifice and offers it to God in the name of all the people. The faithful indeed, by virtue of their *royal priesthood*, participate in the offering of the Eucharist. They exercise that priesthood, too, by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life, abnegation and active charity.²⁸

The common priesthood of the faithful is exercised in the sacramental life. Baptism confers upon them the power of participating validly in Christian worship and solicits from them the profession of their faith. Confirmation clothes them with power to make them authentic witnesses to Christ in their words and in their lives. The offering of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the summit of the Christian life, in which they participate through the reception of Holy Communion, consummates their union with Christ. Penance reconciles them with the Church. The Anointing of the Sick invites them to unite themselves to the Passion and death of the Savior. Certain men among the faithful receive by Holy Orders the power of shepherding the Church in Christ’s name. Finally, Matrimony gives to Christian spouses the grace to help one another in their journey toward God and in educating their children. Thus all Christians, whatever their state or condition, are called to advance, each according to his path in life, toward the same perfection of holiness enjoyed by their heavenly Father.²⁹

While they share in the priesthood of Christ, the Christian people are also endowed, so to speak, with *the kingship and the prophetic office* of Christ. When the faithful, governed by the Spirit and docile to the teaching office, are unanimous, from the highest dignitaries to the most humble laymen, in professing and meditating upon the revelation made to the apostles and

completed at their death, they are protected from error, they are sustained by a supernatural and infallible instinct that theologians call the sense of the faith, the *sensus fidei*.³⁰

It is not only through the sacraments and the ministrations of the Church that the Holy Spirit makes holy the People, leads them and enriches them with his virtues. Allotting his gifts according as he wills (cf. 1 Cor. 12:11), he also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts he makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church, as it is written, “the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit” (1 Cor. 12:7). Whether these charisms be very remarkable or more simple and widely diffused, they are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation since they are fitting and useful for the needs of the Church. Extraordinary gifts are not to be rashly desired, nor is it from them that the fruits of apostolic labors are to be presumptuously expected. Those who have charge over the Church should judge the genuineness and proper use of these gifts, through their office not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good. (Cf. 1 Thess 5:12 and 19-21).³¹

Thus the Church in her totality appears as the shadow cast upon humanity by the priesthood, the kingship, and even more by the holiness of Christ. God, says the Apostle, reconciled the world to himself in Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:19). And St. Augustine adds, “The Church is the world now reconciled.”³²

In his encyclical *Ecclesiam suam*, Paul VI speaks of the presence of Christ diffused throughout the Church as being something lived and experienced by the faithful themselves. After quoting a beautiful passage by St. Augustine,

Let us rejoice and give thanks that we have become not only Christians, but Christ. Do you understand, brothers, the grace of Christ our Head? Wonder at it, rejoice: we have become Christ. For if He is the Head, we are the members; He and we form the whole man. . . the fullness of Christ, therefore; the head and the members. What is the head and the members? Christ and the Church.

the Supreme Pontiff continues:

This, as we well know, is a mystery, the mystery of the Church. But if we give it our wholehearted attention, inevitably we will gain much spiritual profit, and the Church of our day would seem to be in the greatest need of such spiritual profit. Christ’s presence, His very life, will reveal its power and efficacy in our individual souls and in the whole Mystical Body; and this by the practice of a living and life-giving faith, so that, as St. Paul said in the passage from which We have already quoted, “Christ may dwell through faith in your hearts” [Eph 3:1]. It is through faith that we gain this awareness of the mystery of the Church—mature faith, a faith lived out in our lives. Faith such as this gives us a *sensus Ecclesiae*, an awareness of the Church, and this is something with which the genuine Christian should be deeply imbued. He has been raised in the school of the divine word, nourished by the grace of the sacraments and the Paraclete’s heavenly inspiration, trained in the practice of the virtues of the Gospel, and influenced by the Church’s culture and community life. He has, moreover, the tremendous joy of

sharing in the dignity of the royal priesthood granted to the people of God. The mystery of the Church is not a truth to be confined to the realms of speculative theology. It must be lived, so that the faithful may have a kind of intuitive experience of it, even before they come to understand it clearly. And the faithful as a community will indeed recognize that they belong to Christ's Mystical Body when they realize that a part of the ministry of the Church's hierarchy is to initiate men into the Christian way of life, to beget them, teach them, sanctify them, and be their leaders.³³

5. The Ministry of the Hierarchy

It must be said that the Church, like all living things, is the cause of herself and of her own life. Through the ministry of the hierarchy she is, subject to the movement of the Holy Spirit, like a sacrament, like an instrument of the fullness of Gospel salvation. She brings to men the most precious things there are: graces, colored by their passage through the sacraments and oriented by the directives received from the teaching and governing authorities. But those whom she engenders through her hierarchical powers are not outside of her. On the contrary, they are her best part, her aim, her reason for being—aside from the question of whether or not they have hierarchical powers. For, even more than an instrument or sacrament of salvation, the Church is the place where grace, charity, and the Holy Spirit himself dwell in their fullness. The grandeur of the hierarchy, which is the privilege of a few of her members, is at the service of the greatness of charity and of holiness that is offered to all.

As Paul VI said at the opening of the third session:

There are, as we know, two factors which Christ has promised and arranged in different ways to continue His mission, to extend in time and on earth the kingdom He founded and to make of redeemed mankind His Church, His Mystical Body, His fulness, in expectation of His definitive and triumphant return at the end of time.

These two factors are the apostolate and the Spirit.

The apostolate is the external and objective factor. It forms the material body, so to speak, of the Church and is the source of her visible and social structures.

The Holy Spirit is the internal factor who acts within each person, as well as on the whole community, animating, vivifying, sanctifying.

These two agents, the apostolate, which is entrusted to the sacred hierarchy, and the Spirit of Jesus, which uses the hierarchy as its ordinary instrument in the ministry of the word and the sacraments, cooperate with one another. Pentecost shows them wonderfully linked at the

beginning of the great work of Jesus, who though invisible remains ever present in His apostles and their successors.³⁴

The supreme fullness of hierarchical powers is conferred by Christ upon the *twelve apostles* whom he himself selected. They form a group, a band that Scripture calls the Twelve, of whom Peter is appointed the leader. They constitute a “college”, the “apostolic college”—not in the sense of or by reason of a perfect equality of all its members in every respect, since Peter alone is the shepherd of the sheep, but because of the will of Christ, who in uniting them to himself unites them with one another. They are sent first of all to the children of Israel, then to all nations. They are confirmed in their mission on the day of Pentecost according to the Lord’s promise: “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Their mission and their privilege is, first of all, to “gather together the universal Church, which the Lord. . . built upon blessed Peter their leader, the chief cornerstone being Christ Jesus himself.”³⁵

But they will have to propagate this Church that they have founded to the farthest limits of the earth and until the end of the world, and this second mission, which exceeds their capabilities, can only be accomplished by means of the divine powers that they will transmit to their successors in an uninterrupted chain.³⁶ It must be acknowledged, then, that the apostles had two sorts of hierarchical powers: on the one hand, the *extraordinary and nontransferable* powers that were conferred upon them in order to found the Church as to her appearance in time, in the same manner in which workmen build an edifice that survives them, and in this respect each and every one of them possessed equally, for example, the power to found local Churches, the charisms of divine revelation and scriptural inspiration, and so on; on the other hand, the *ordinary and transferable* powers that are required in order to continue, preserve, develop, propagate and found the Church as to her permanence through the ages, in the way in which the foundations support the building, and in this respect there is no more equality: one alone was established as the Rock, that is to say, as the visible basis, the ultimate if not the sole basis upon which the Church here below will never cease to rest; one alone was appointed the shepherd of all the sheep of Christ. Consequently, the Church is called apostolic in two ways: inasmuch as she was founded by the *extraordinary* powers of the apostles and inasmuch as she is heir to the

ordinary powers of the apostles; similarly we speak of one sort of collegiality among the apostles themselves and of another sort of collegiality among the successors of the apostles, the pope and the bishops.

After having recalled the prerogatives of the successor of Peter, one of the major concerns of the Council was to continue the work commenced at the First Vatican Council by describing the powers of the bishops and their relation to the supreme power of the pontificate.

To the pope and the bishops, the successors of Peter and the other apostles, is entrusted by divine institution the responsibility for shepherding the Church. Christ himself, the supreme High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the Father, is present to the world through the bishops, in order to proclaim through them the Word of God to all nations, to administer through them the sacraments of the faith to those who believe, and to rule and guide through them the New Testament people on their pilgrimage toward eternal beatitude.

In order to fulfil such exalted functions, the apostles were endowed by Christ with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit coming upon them (cf. Acts 1:8; 2:4; Jn. 20:22-23), and, by the imposition of hands (cf. 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6-7) they passed on to their auxiliaries the gift of the Spirit, which is transmitted down to our day through episcopal consecration. The holy synod teaches, moreover, that the fullness of the sacrament of *Orders* is conferred by episcopal consecration, that fullness, namely, which both in the liturgical tradition of the Church and in the language of the Fathers of the Church is called the high priesthood, the acme of the sacred ministry. Now, episcopal consecration confers, together with the office [*munus*] of *sanctifying*, the duty [*munera*] also of *teaching* and *ruling*, which, however, of their very nature can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head and members of the college. In fact, from tradition, which is expressed especially in the liturgical rites and in the customs of both the Eastern and Western Church, it is abundantly clear that by the imposition of hands and through the words of the consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is given, and a sacred character is impressed in such wise that bishops, in a resplendent and visible manner, take the place of Christ himself, teacher, shepherd and priest, and act as his representatives (*in eius persona*). It is the right of bishops to admit newly elected members into the episcopal body by means of the sacrament of Orders.^{[37](#)}

We will underline two points from this important passage, which seems to emphasize a rapprochement with the Eastern Church on the part of the Western Church.

1. *Episcopal consecration confers upon bishops their authority to teach and to govern.* Of course, this in no way alters the specific distinction between the powers of Holy Orders upon which the validity of Christian worship depends and the jurisdictional or proclamatory powers of the Church's government and Magisterium, which are responsible for presenting

to the minds of the faithful what is to be believed and what is to be done. Besides, the teaching and governing authority that the bishops possess is, by the nature of these powers, subordinate to the authority of the supreme pontiff. But until now there were two opinions among theologians. For some of them, episcopal consecration in and of itself conferred only the power of orders. This power was considered one of the normal prerequisites for the reception of the power of jurisdiction. The bishops possessed their power of jurisdiction by divine right, no doubt, but it was conferred upon them by either the express or implicit delegation of the supreme pontiff.

For other theologians, episcopal consecration conferred simultaneously the power of orders and the jurisdictional power to teach and to govern; it was only the exercise of this last-mentioned power that, in order to be valid, required the express or tacit consent of the episcopal college united to its head. It would seem that the Constitution favors the latter view, in its concern to take into account the liturgical texts for consecration, which confers upon bishops the mission, not only of sanctifying the Christian people, but also of teaching and governing them.³⁸ However this initial impression is held in check and attenuated, we might say instantly, by the clarifications made in the “Preliminary Explanatory Note”, which fix the sense in which the teaching of chapter 3 must be interpreted and which allow us to distinguish, among the effects of episcopal consecration, on the one hand, a power of sanctifying (*munus sanctificandi*) and, on the other hand, a duty of teaching and of governing (*munus docendi, munus regendi*), which can only be actualized and become a power (*potestas*) by virtue of a canonical determination of the hierarchical authority.³⁹ The Council’s intention is not to take either side but to try to synthesize the two views.

2. *Episcopal consecration confers upon bishops a grace of the Holy Spirit, imprints upon them a sacred character, in a word, confers upon them the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders.* The three degrees of the cultic power conferred in Holy Orders are the diaconate, the presbyterate, and the episcopate. It is certain that the most extraordinary of these powers is the power to consecrate bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ and that priests possess this power. With regard to the cultic effects of Holy Orders, the only thing that the episcopate can add is a power that is by no means more exalted but is rather more extensive, a lateral power over the Mystical Body, serving to draw its members closer to Christ by administering Confirmation and all of the sacred Orders without exception. One question

remains, that of the validity of episcopal ordinations *per saltus* [“in one leap”]. Does the episcopal order necessarily suppose the previous reception of the presbyteral order, or is it capable per se of making up for the presbyterate? Framing the question differently: Does the episcopate contain in and of itself the fullness of the powers of Holy Orders, and would it be capable of conferring immediately, for example upon a deacon or a layman, the fullness of the priesthood, with respect to both cultic and jurisdictional powers? This last point has been settled definitively. The *Apostolic Constitution on the Holy Orders of the Diaconate, the Presbyterate, and the Episcopate*, promulgated by Pius XII on November 30, 1947, prepared the way for the declaration of the present Council.

The supreme jurisdictional authority over the universal Church (the power to teach and to govern) resides, by the will of Christ and thus by divine right, in a twofold subject: (1) in the pope alone and (2) in the pope together with the episcopal college. Hence, for one and the same power there are two subjects, two exercises, which can be distinguished only inadequately, since the presence of the supreme pontiff is required in either case. Why this twofold exercise of the same power? The reason, without a doubt, is to be sought in the strict unity, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, in the universal catholicity that the Savior wished to give to his Church, which is everywhere one and everywhere present.

The free exercise of the supreme authority over the universal Church by the pope alone is recognized unceasingly by the Constitution. “For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, namely, and as pastor of the entire Church, has full, supreme and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.”⁴⁰ The proclamation of his infallibility, which was made at the First Vatican Council, is repeated and explained here:

This infallibility, however, with which the divine redeemer wished to endow his Church in defining doctrine pertaining to faith and morals, is co-extensive with the deposit of revelation, which must be religiously guarded and loyally and courageously expounded. The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful—who confirms his brethren in the faith (cf. Lk. 22:32)—he proclaims in an absolute decision a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals. For that reason his definitions are rightly said to be irreformable by their very nature and not by reason of the assent of the Church [*ex sese et non ex consensu Ecclesiae*], in as much as they were made with the assistance of the Holy Spirit promised to him in the person of blessed Peter himself; and as a consequence they are in no way in need of the approval of others, and do not admit of appeal to any other tribunal. For in such a case the Roman Pontiff does not utter a pronouncement as a

private person, but rather does he expound and defend the teaching of the Catholic faith as the supreme teacher of the universal Church, in whom the Church's charism of infallibility is present in a singular way.⁴¹

The Vatican II document also calls attention to the respect owed to papal teaching that is prudential rather than absolute:

This loyal submission of the will and intellect must be given, in a special way, to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he does not speak *ex cathedra* in such wise, indeed, that his supreme teaching authority be acknowledged with respect, and that one sincerely adhere to decisions made by him, conformably with his manifest mind and intention, which is made known principally either by the character of the documents in question, or by the frequency with which a certain doctrine is proposed, or by the manner in which the doctrine is formulated.⁴²

Yet, as we said, the main interest of the Constitution here concerns the simultaneous exercise of the supreme authority by the pope and the episcopal college. "The present ecumenical synod is certainly going to confirm the doctrine of the previous one [i.e., the First Vatican Council] regarding the prerogatives of the Roman pontiff. But it will also have as its principal objective the task of describing and honoring the prerogatives of the episcopate."⁴³

These prerogatives are traditional. The role of the [Second Vatican] Council will be to attain a new awareness of them, to enumerate them and above all to specify more precisely the canonical modes of exercising them, with a view to decentralizing the Church. Besides the *supreme pontificate* of the successor of Peter, there has always been in the Church, by divine right, a *subordinate episcopate*. Two kinds of authority can be distinguished in the latter: (1) the *collegial* authority of the bishops, insofar as they are associated with the supreme pontiff, to govern the universal Church, whether they find themselves *dispersed* throughout the world, as is the norm, or whether by way of exception they find themselves assembled around their leader in an *ecumenical council*; (2) the *personal* authority of each bishop over his particular Church: Titus is appointed in Crete, and Timothy in Ephesus. Having arrived at this latter point, the Constitution then speaks briefly about the "cooperators of the episcopal college", that is, priests and deacons.

The episcopal body, it says, inasmuch as it is joined to its head, the Roman pontiff, is with him, but never without him, the subject of the supreme teaching and governing authority over the entire Church. For it was not only to Peter but to the whole college of apostles that Christ entrusted the powers

of binding and loosing on earth what will be bound and loosed in heaven. The bonds of communion uniting the bishops among themselves, their traditional custom of gathering in synods to deliberate resolutions that they may take, and especially the celebration of ecumenical councils testify in history to the collegial character of the episcopacy. The function of the episcopal college as such is to assure the continuance of this Church, which Christ willed to be, not only one, but spread everywhere. The solemn expression of the collegial authority appears in ecumenical councils, while it is the prerogative of the pope to convoke such councils, to preside over them, and to confirm their decisions. Outside of a council, collegial authority is exercised when the pope calls for it or when the pope approves and accepts a collective action of the bishops, which is thereby promoted to the dignity of collegial action.⁴⁴ The episcopal body, exercising the supreme teaching authority with the pope, is infallible when it defines the contents of divine revelation.⁴⁵ Collegial union appears likewise in the mutual relations between the local Churches and the universal Church; furthermore, episcopal bodies or episcopal conferences can contribute, on the local level, to putting the collegial spirit into practice. A bishop, taken individually, has no jurisdiction over the universal Church, but since he is a member of the college, he must share the general concerns of the Church and notably her care for the missions.⁴⁶

The doctrine of a supreme authority residing entirely in the pope alone and entirely in the pope united with the episcopal college required very close study in order to prevent all misunderstanding, to prepare for its immediate applications without altering it, and thus to respond to the pastoral demands of a world in the midst of rapid technological, social, and political developments. A “Preliminary Explanatory Note” communicated to the Council Fathers by the superior authority establishes the intention and the meaning of the teachings in chapter 3.⁴⁷

The bishops, it says there, form a *college*, this word being used, not in the strictly juridical sense of a group of equals delegating their power to a president, but rather in the sense of a stable group, the structure and authority of which must be derived from divine revelation. This college is only *similar* to that of the apostles, because it does not imply the transmission of their extraordinary power to their successors or equality among the head and the members thereof.

Someone becomes a *member of the college* in virtue of: (1) episcopal consecration and (2) hierarchical communion with the head of the college and

its members. Consecration bestows an *ontological* share in the sacred functions (*sacrorum munerum*); tradition and the liturgy itself make this unquestionably clear. The use of the term “functions” (*munera*) rather than “powers” (*potestates*) is deliberate, because the latter term could refer to a power that is ready to be put into action (*ad actum expedita*). For such a power to exist, there must be an intervention, a canonical or *juridical determination* of hierarchical authority; a determination that is expressed either by assigning a particular office or else by designating the subjects over whom this power is to be exercised; a determination issued according to the *norms* approved by the supreme authority. The need for such a norm follows *from the nature of things*: in fact, it is a question of functions carried out by a *plurality of persons* who are called, according to Christ’s will, to cooperate in a hierarchical manner. Such a communion is not simply of a sentimental order; it is an *organic* reality that demands a juridical form and that must be animated by charity. Without such a hierarchical communion with the head and the members of the Church, the sacramental-ontological function (*munus sacramentale-ontologicum*)—which must be distinguished from the canonical-juridical aspect (*aspectus canonico-juridicus*)—cannot be performed.⁴⁸

Perhaps it would be possible to clarify these statements further by referring to the works of Fr. Bertrams.⁴⁹ You will recall that, according to the Constitution, episcopal consecration confers along with the office (*munus*) of sanctifying, the twofold office of teaching and governing. The function (*munus*) of sanctifying, which can always be put into action validly, is in itself and by its very nature a power (*potestas*). The function of teaching and governing consists of an internal and ontological quality—dependent, we might say, upon the second species of “quality”, the *potentia* of the ancient philosophers, which is ordered to action. This latter function does not bring about per se any communion with the episcopal body and its head; nor does it concretely determine its subjects. For it to be able to take effect, to be exercised validly, and to become a power (*potestas*), this function must also be “recognized” by the hierarchical communion with the head and the members of the Church.⁵⁰ This recognition, which adds an exterior, canonical element to its interior, ontological nature, is required by divine right because of the very nature of the Church. It seems that some progress has thus been made in understanding the charism of the episcopate.

The powers that the bishops have in their *respective dioceses* are “proper,

ordinary and immediate”, although their exercise can be limited by the supreme pontiff for the benefit of the Church or of the faithful. The habitual and daily pastoral responsibility of governing their diocese has been fully entrusted to them; therefore the bishops could not be considered merely vicars of the supreme pontiff. Far from being opposed by the supreme authority, their power is, on the contrary, proclaimed, confirmed, and defended by it. Defending the hierarchy’s independence, liberty, and dignity in various countries is, as Paul VI said at the opening of the third session, one of the most frequently occurring and most serious duties of the supreme pontificate.⁵¹

The immediate cooperators of the episcopal college are, first, the *presbyterate*, the members of which are dedicated to a variety of duties that allow them, in their respective ministries and places, to make the universal Church visible and to build up the Body of Christ. United with each other by the bonds of a close fraternity, they must act as fathers toward the faithful, whom they engender spiritually by the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the administration of the sacraments, and the preaching of the Gospel; and they must bring to all, believers and unbelievers, Catholics and non-Catholics, righteous and sinners, the testimony of the Gospel.⁵² Then there are the *deacons*, who will be restored in the Western Church as a permanent order; to them can be entrusted the functions of administering Baptism, reposing [*conserver*] and distributing the Blessed Sacrament, blessing marriages, bringing Viaticum to the dying, instructing the people, preaching, conferring sacramentals, and so on.⁵³

With the chapter on the hierarchical constitution of the Church and, in particular, the episcopate, is accomplished one of the tasks that was assigned to the Second Vatican Council by the popes themselves, a task announced by Paul VI at the opening of the third session:

The integrity of Catholic truth now calls for a clarification consonant with the doctrine of the papacy which will place in its splendid light the role and mandate of the episcopate. In its work of tracing the outlines of such a role and such a mandate, the council will be anxious about nothing except interpreting the thought of Jesus Christ at its true source and genuine origin.

We have already had the pleasure of recognizing in the bishops our true brothers, addressing them, as the Apostle Peter did, as “elders”, and gladly claiming for ourselves the equivalent title of “fellow elder” (1 Pet 5:1). We have had the pleasure of addressing to them the words of the Apostle Paul: “My partners in tribulations and consolations” (*cf.* 2 Cor 1:7). We have been anxious to reassure them of those religious convictions that characterize our relations with them:

esteem, affection, solidarity. We are bound by our duty to recognize them as the teachers, rulers and sanctifiers of the Christian people, the “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor 4:1), the witnesses to the Gospel, the ministers of the New Testament and, in a certain sense, the very reflection of the glory of the Lord (cf. 2 Cor 3:6-18).⁵⁴

6. The Entire Church Is Apostolic, One and Catholic, and Holy

Sprung from the hierarchy, the entire Church is fully apostolic, one and catholic, and holy, not only ideally, in the manner of a bodiless Platonic “form”, but existentially and concretely, in all her members, laymen or clerics, in the exact measure in which they belong to her. We should note here that the properties of the Church: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, are only aspects of her essence; that these marks are inseparable; that where one is found the other three are found to the same degree; and finally that these properties subsist in the separated Churches to the extent that the true Church still remains present in them.

The Church is *apostolic*, and that means that she is sustained in the world by a supernatural power issuing from God, passing through Christ, and then preserved by the apostolic body down to our day through an uninterrupted succession. The apostolic body signifies here the hierarchical powers of order and of jurisdiction (teaching and governing authority). Wherever these powers are incomplete or absent, apostolicity will be incomplete or absent.

Considered thus, apostolicity, like the Church, is a *mystery* of faith. Neither reason nor history but only faith teaches us that, having issued from the bosom of the Trinity, a divine power passes through Christ and the hierarchy so as to dispense salvation to the world and to gather the people of God. “There is. . . one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all”, St. Paul tells us; and there is “one Lord”; and one hierarchy that dispenses, by its two conjoined powers, “one faith [and] one baptism”, so that the Church may be “one body” wherein “one Spirit” dwells (Eph 4:4-6). The divine foundations upon which the Church rests confer upon her a solidity, a stability, a constancy that neither the faults of her children nor the attacks from outside have been able to overthrow: this, which can be verified objectively, is the marvel or the *miracle* of apostolicity.

In opening the third session, the Pope, on the one hand, *professed* that the sacred hierarchy is “the very instrument, born of the charity of Christ, and fashioned by Him to complete, to communicate, and to safeguard the integral

and fruitful transmission of the Treasures of Faith, of example, of precepts, and of favors bequeathed by Christ to His Church”,⁵⁵ and he hailed moreover the *miracle* of apostolicity, “a prerogative which is a marvel even to us, to us who have experienced our own weakness and who know how history bears witness to the frailty of even the most powerful of human institutions”.⁵⁶

The Church is *one and catholic*. The apostolic power sustains her in this world as a kingdom that is interiorly unified and coherent, which in essence is *in* this world but above the kingdoms of this world, above racial, ethnic, national, and cultural divisions. That is possible only because this kingdom is not *of* this world; it comes down from heaven to meet mankind (cf. Rev 21:2); it is, above all, the kingdom of truth and love. If the Church were not essentially the locus of charity, of the theological virtue of charity and of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, she would no longer be anything; it is St. Paul who tells us this (1 Cor 13:2). Charity is the internal and inherent form of her catholic unity; Paul VI, at the second session, spoke of the *Ecclesia caritatis*.⁵⁷ Charity is offered to all men, and it is received, often quite secretly, by the countless multitude of those who, gathered from all over the earth, shall be saved. But only beneath the fountain of the hierarchy is it given to us with the fullness of its *sacramental* riches and with the fullness of the jurisdictional guidance by the *teaching* and *governing offices* it needs in order to unfold; charity requires the same sacraments, the same creed, the same community [*communio sociale*]. If there is only one Church of Christ, said Paul VI, she must be one, and “this mystic and visible union cannot be attained except in identity *offaith* and by participation in the same *sacraments* and in the organic harmony of a single ecclesiastical *control* [*gouvernement*], even though this allows for a great variety of verbal expressions, movements, lawful institutions, and preference with regard to modes of acting.”⁵⁸

To all men, whatever their racial, ethnic, social, political, or cultural differences may be at the level of their *earthly life* and of the things of this world, God sends his Son on the day of the Incarnation, and on the day of Pentecost he sends the Spirit of his Son, in order to invite them to go beyond the realm of worldly activities and of the kingdoms of this world, to be open to the realm of the things pertaining to *eternal life* and to the Kingdom that, since it is in the world without being of the world, can be for them all a homeland that transcends ethnic, national, and cultural differences, a homeland that is unique and universal, organic and diversified. Entering into the catholic unity of the Church, the Kingdom of God, the Mystical Body of

which Christ is the Head and the Spirit of Christ is the uncreated Soul—this in itself will certainly not mean that they must put aside their legitimate and necessary worldly activities or detach themselves from their sound, intimate, and genuine loyalties in this age; on the contrary, it will be for them an invitation to carry the spirit of the Gospel into the heart of the world, so as to enliven even the most secret recesses in the order of earthly civilization, of temporal matters, of the things that are Caesar's. Behold, then, the immense multitude of lay Christians who are engaged in what is called the state of common life, where they maintain the use of marriage, of their goods, of their freedom—clerics, who are spared as much as possible the burden of temporal and secular activities, and those lay people who are committed to the state of chastity, poverty, and obedience make up only a very small number—behold, then, the immense multitude of lay Christians who are invited to work on two levels of activity: on the one hand, the level of the Church and the redemption of the world, the level of the spiritual Kingdom that, not being of this world, is one and universal, in short, the level of the *children of God* and of the things that are God's; and, on the other hand, the level of earthly demands, of secular matters, of the many kingdoms of this world, in short, the level of the *children of men* and of the things that are Caesar's. These two levels are of course not separate, but as long as this world lasts, they remain and must remain clearly distinct.⁵⁹

On the first level, that of the Kingdom that is not of this world, all lay people, by the powers or sacramental characters of Baptism and Confirmation, are invited, in union with the hierarchy, to continue here below until the end of time the valid celebration of the New Covenant worship inaugurated by the *priesthood* of Christ. The laity as a whole is invited, led, and guided by the directives of the hierarchical teaching and governing authorities, and sometimes driven by the struggles of private ownership, to spread in the darkness of this world the *royal* and *prophetic* light of Christ the Teacher, King, Prophet, who enlightens the minds of men. The laity as a whole is invited—and here hierarchical privileges fall away, all differences between clerics and laymen are dispensed with, for it is a question of the supreme matters that immediately concern the soul's eternal destiny—to enter into the very *sanctity* of Christ, to participate in the life of charity that is both sacramental and practical [*orientée*], that charity which is “the chief and root of the other Christian virtues: humility, poverty, religion, the spirit of sacrifice, fearless truth, love of justice, and every other force by which the

new man acts”.⁶⁰ After chapter 3, which was dedicated to the hierarchy, chapter 4 of the Constitution, entitled “De laicis”, proceeds to take up again with reference to the laity what was stated in general terms about the entire Christian people. The laity, it says, are members of the people of God, where there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female; all are now the brethren of Christ, who came to serve, not to be served.⁶¹ They have a share in the salvific mission of the Church; they have to bring the Church to those places where she is unknown or misunderstood and where she cannot become the salt of the earth except through them.⁶² They participate in the universal priesthood of the Church, in her prophetic mission, in her kingly service.⁶³ What is new here (it is evident in the Constitution on the Church as well as in the general orientation of the Council) is an awareness throughout the entire Church, no longer a secret and painful awareness, but an urgent sense, not that her essential catholicity is structurally inadequate for the challenges in the world, of course, but rather a sense of the immensity of the task to be accomplished, two thousand years after the coming of Christ, in order to catch up with the ever-growing multitude of humanity, to which nevertheless she has been sent by God, whether in virtue of her *hierarchical mission* of evangelizing and of baptizing all nations or in virtue of the indomitable flame and the *contagiousness of her charity*: “I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!” (Lk 12:49). On the brink of the great transformations of our technological age, the Church turns to her lay children, concerned less about *preserving* them from evil than about *sending* them into the midst of the dangers with God in their hearts, in order to bear witness to the Gospel.

At the second level, lay people have to act, no longer as members of the Church, of the Mystical Body of Christ, of the kingdom that is not of this world, but rather as members of earthly cities, of secular associations, of the kingdoms of this world; what is demanded of them, then, is to devote themselves to these temporal occupations with the spirit and the charity of the Gospel in their hearts and so, without in any way confusing—or divorcing—the world and the Church, the things that are Caesar’s and the things that are God’s, to work for the coming of a Christian temporal order, that is to say, one that is truly human, to work for a Christian economy, for Christian politics, that is, for a Christian culture that is truly, fully, and integrally human. The task of transforming and renewing the temporal order belongs immediately, not to the laity *in their capacity* as members of the Church—or

to the clergy—but rather to the laity, enlightened no doubt by the social doctrine of the Church, acting *as* members of the Church, but in their capacity as members of the temporal order.

But by reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will. They live in the world, that is, they are engaged in each and every work and business of the earth and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were, constitute their very existence. There they are called by God that, being led by the spirit to the Gospel, they may contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties. Thus, especially by the witness of their life, resplendent in faith, hope and charity they must manifest Christ to others. It pertains to them in a special way so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are so closely associated that these may be effected and grow according to Christ and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer.⁶⁴

The Constitution traces the nature of the Church and her missionary thrust back to her apostolicity and her catholic unity. Sent by the Father, the Son in turn sends the apostles to all nations to the ends of the earth. Sustained by the Spirit of Pentecost, the Church makes this mission her own; she preaches the Gospel, elicits the profession of faith, administers Baptism, incorporates men into Christ by charity. When she finds seeds of truth and of goodness in the hearts and minds of men, in their rituals and their cultures, she does not change them; not only that, she takes care to safeguard them, to develop and perfect them with a view to the happiness of mankind, the destruction of evil, and the glory of God. It is incumbent upon every Christian, according to his means, to spread the faith. Every one of them can baptize, yet only the priest can celebrate the Eucharistic Sacrifice for the building up of the Mystical Body of Christ. Thus the Church prays and works so that the whole world might attain the dignity of the people of God, the Body of the Lord, the temple of the Holy Spirit, and so that all honor and glory might be rendered to the Father and Creator of all things.⁶⁵

The Church in all her members, to the extent to which they belong to her, is *holy*: “without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. . . holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27). She would be nothing were she not the place where the cultic powers of Christ the Priest are poured out upon men, together with the enlightening powers of Christ the Teacher, King, and Prophet, and especially the gifts of a grace and a charity that is fully Christian and conforms souls to Christ only when it is sacramental and practical and that makes the Church the dwelling place where the Holy Spirit lives to the full.

The Church, whose mystery is set forth by this sacred Council, is held, as a matter of faith, to be unfailingly holy. This is because Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is hailed as “alone holy,” loved the Church as his Bride, giving himself up for her so as to sanctify her (cf. Eph. 5:25-26); he joined her to himself as his body and endowed her with the gift of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God.⁶⁶

The Church has her sinners, but it is not through their sins that they belong to her; rather, it is through what still remains in them of the divine gifts, by the sacramental characters, by the theological virtues of faith and hope, by their prayers and remorse; they, so to speak, hang upon the community of the righteous; they are in the Church provisionally, so as to be one day definitively reintegrated or else separated from her; they are in her in a way that is not salutary, as though paralyzed with regard to her most important and decisive activities; they belong to her in a bodily way, *corpore*, as the Constitution puts it, repeating here the words of St. Augustine, and not spiritually, *corde*.⁶⁷ By their sin, she is betrayed rather than manifested; she is as though veiled, obscured; she could appear soiled to the eyes of those outside her. And yet the Church does not drive forth sinners from her bosom, but only their sin. She keeps them within her in the hope of transforming them. She fights within them against their sins. It is because of the sins of sinners, among whom we are included, that she humbles herself, that she repents, that she does penance, that she is purified, that she asks each day in the Our Father for the forgiveness of our trespasses. But she herself, according to St. Paul, is without sin.

Christ, “holy, innocent and undefiled” (Heb. 7:26) knew nothing of sin (2 Cor. 5:21), but came only to expiate the sins of the people (cf. Heb. 2:17). The Church, however, clasping sinners to her bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal.

The Church, “like a stranger in a foreign land, presses forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God,” announcing the cross and death of the Lord until he comes (cf. 1 Cor. 11:26). But by the power of the risen Lord she is given strength to overcome, in patience and in love, her sorrows and her difficulties, both those that are from within and those that are from without, so that she may reveal in the world, faithfully, however darkly, the mystery of her Lord until, in the consummation, it shall be manifested in full light.⁶⁸

In the encyclical *Ecclesiam suam*, Paul VI takes care to explain what sort of reform the Council must bring about.

Obviously, there can be no question of reforming the essential nature of the Church or her basic

and necessary structure. To use the word *reform* in that context would be to misuse it completely. We cannot brand the holy and beloved Church of God with the mark of infidelity. We must consider our membership in her as one of our greatest blessings. . . .

When we speak about reform, we are concerned, not to change things, but to preserve all the more resolutely the characteristic features that Christ has impressed on his Church. Or rather, we are concerned to restore to the Church that ideal of perfection and beauty that corresponds to her original image. . . .

We must love and serve the Church as she is, wisely seeking to understand her history and to discover with humility the will of God, who guides and assists her, even when he permits human weakness to eclipse the splendor of her countenance and the holiness of her activity.⁶⁹

The same thoughts had been expressed by the Pope at the opening of the second session:

We have just spoken of the Bride of Christ looking upon Christ [as into a mirror] to discern in Him her true likeness; if in doing so she were to discover some shadow, some defect, some stain upon her wedding garment, what should be her instinctive, courageous reaction? There can be no doubt that her primary duty would be to reform. . . .

Yes, the council aims at renewal. Note well, however, that in saying and desiring that, we do not imply that the Catholic Church of today can be accused of substantial infidelity to the mind of her Divine Founder. Rather it is the deeper realization of her substantial faithfulness that fills her with gratitude and humility and inspires her with the courage to correct those imperfections which are proper to human weakness.⁷⁰

A little farther on, the Pope, thinking of the Christian communities that are separated from the Catholic Church, says:

If we are in any way to blame for that separation, we humbly beg God's forgiveness and ask pardon too of our brethren who feel themselves to have been injured by us. For our part, we willingly forgive the injuries which the Catholic Church has suffered, and forget the grief endured during the long series of dissensions and separations.⁷¹

The address that opened the third session stated: "Here is the exercise of the holiness of the Church because here she calls on the mercy of God for the weaknesses and deficiencies of the sinners that we are."⁷²

Chapter 5 of the Constitution, dealing with "the universal call to holiness" according to the ancient commandment repeated by the Savior, "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48), adds a reference to St. James: "But since we all offend in many ways (cf. Jas. 3:2), we constantly need God's mercy and must pray every day: 'And forgive us our debts' (Mt.

6:12).⁷³ In whatever walk of life they may find themselves, whether they are bishops, priests, or deacons or whether they are united in marriage, the faithful, docile to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and to the voice of the Father, are called to strive for the fullness of the Christian life and the perfection of charity, following Christ, poor, humble, and bearing the Cross.⁷⁴

A privileged sign of the Church's holiness, the importance of which the Constitution does not neglect to emphasize, is the witness of the greatest love given by the *martyrs*:

Martyrdom makes the disciple like his master, who willingly accepted death for the salvation of the world, and through it he is conformed to him by the shedding of blood. Therefore the Church considers it the highest gift and supreme test of love. And while it is given to few, all however must be prepared to confess Christ before men and to follow him along the way of the cross amidst the persecutions which the Church never lacks.⁷⁵

Another sign of the Church's holiness is the free observance of the *evangelical counsels*:

The Church bears in mind too the apostle's admonition when calling the faithful to charity and exhorting them to have the same mind which Christ Jesus showed, who "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant. . . and became obedient unto death" (Phil. 2:7-8) and for our sakes "became poor, though he was rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). Since the disciples must always imitate this love and humility of Christ and bear witness of it, Mother Church rejoices that she has within herself many men and women who pursue more closely the Savior's self-emptying and show it forth more clearly, by undertaking poverty with the freedom of God's sons, and renouncing their own will: they subject themselves to man for the love of God, thus going beyond what is of precept in the matter of perfection, so as to conform themselves more fully to the obedient Christ.⁷⁶

If one of the tasks reserved for the laity is to bring Christianity into the very heart of temporal activities, that of religious is, in a complementary vocation, to affirm publicly by the form of their renouncement that the Kingdom of God is not of this world. Chapter 6, "De religiis", deals with the state of life characterized by the profession of three vows and often called the state of perfection. The practice of the evangelical counsels, which come to us from the Savior himself, is especially conducive to intensifying charity, to leading souls more immediately into the Church and her mystery, and, consequently, to benefiting the entire Church. To those who take vows is entrusted the mission of working—according to their abilities and state of life, in monasteries, schools, hospitals, mission work, by their life of prayer or by their active life—for the establishment, the strengthening, and the expansion

of the Kingdom of God over all the earth.⁷⁷

In a way the religious state underscores the pilgrim character of the Church as she awaits the Second Coming of Christ and the perfecting of holiness. Chapter of the Constitution concerns the eschatological character of the Pilgrim Church and her union with the Church in heaven. The unity of the Church transcends the barrier between the two worlds.

When the Lord will come in glory, and all his angels with him (cf. Mt. 25:31), death will be no more and all things will be subject to him (cf. 1 Cor. 15:26-2). But at the present time some of his disciples are pilgrims on earth. Others have died and are being purified, while still others are in glory, contemplating “in full light, God himself triune and one, exactly as he is.” All of us, however, in varying degrees and in different ways share in the same charity towards God and our neighbors, and we all sing the one hymn of glory to our God. All, indeed, who are of Christ and who have his Spirit form one Church and in Christ cleave together (Eph. 4:16). So it is that the union of the way-farers with the brethren who sleep in the peace of Christ is in no way interrupted, but on the contrary, according to the constant faith of the Church, this union is reinforced by an exchange of spiritual goods. Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness, add to the nobility of the worship that the Church offers to God here on earth, and in many ways help in a broader building up of the Church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-2). Once received into their heavenly home and being present to the Lord (cf. 2 Cor. 5:8), through him and with him and in him they do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they acquired on earth through the one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5), serving God in all things and completing in their flesh what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his Body, that is, the Church (cf. Col. 1:24). So by their brotherly concern is our weakness greatly helped.⁷⁸

Then too, from her earliest stages on earth, we see the Christian Church—conscious of the power of the bonds of charity that unite all her members beyond death and aware that she is fundamentally one, though existing in three states simultaneously, a pilgrim Church, a purified Church, a glorified Church—celebrating the memory of the deceased with great piety, offering sacrifices and prayers for them, and placing herself in turn under the protection of their intercession. She has always believed that the apostles and the martyrs, who gave witness by their blood, remain closely united with us in Christ; in her veneration she has associated them with the Blessed Virgin Mary and the angels, and in the course of time she has joined to them the saints who imitated the virginity, the poverty, and the charity of Christ. In her liturgy she has professed the union, in Christ and in the Most Holy Trinity, of the Church on earth and the Church in heaven.⁷⁹ Precisely from this perspective of holiness it is possible to describe in intimate detail the relations between the Church and the Blessed Virgin Mary (chapter 8). All the holiness of the Church here below is condensed in the *fiat*, the Yes, of the Virgin

when she is confronted with the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word and later with the mystery of the redemptive death of Christ on the Cross: “She conceived, brought forth, and nourished Christ, she presented him to the Father in the temple, shared her Son’s sufferings as he died on the cross. Thus, in a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior in restoring supernatural life to souls.”⁸⁰ And all the holiness of the Church in heaven—with her solicitude for us and her power of intercession—was condensed in the Virgin Mary from the instant of her transfiguration and her assumption into glory:

This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfilment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation.⁸¹

Without intending to set forth a comprehensive doctrine on the Virgin Mary, the conciliar Constitution (chapter 8, nos. 52-69) begins by indicating the place that is hers both in the mystery of Christ and in the mystery of the Church (section 1). It then recalls the Virgin’s role in the economy of salvation: her presence in the Old Testament as the mother of the long-awaited Messiah, her virginal conception and the Virgin Birth, her presence during the childhood and then during the public life of Jesus, her own Immaculate Conception and her Assumption into heaven (section 2). By reason of the part she played in the drama of the world’s redemption, she became our Mother in the order of grace; she continues in heaven to intercede as advocate, helper, benefactress, and mediatrix; she is the type of the Church, which, like her, is virgin and mother (section 3). She is honored by the Church above all the saints as the *Theotokos* (section 4). She is the image and the firstfruits of the risen and glorified Church, the sign of hope for the pilgrim Church (section 5).

During his address at the close of the third session, the Supreme Pontiff underscores the importance of these declarations:⁸² “It is the first time, in fact—and saying it fills our souls with profound emotion—that an ecumenical council presents such a vast synthesis of the Catholic doctrine regarding the place which the Blessed Mary occupies in the mystery of Christ and of the Church.”

The grandeur of the Church’s hierarchy will pass away; the grandeur of the

Church's sanctity will not pass away. For those who can see the Church with the contemplative eyes of faith, the very essence of the Church is revealed as being marvelously related to the mystery of the Virgin's sanctity. This is the view of the Supreme Pontiff:

Truly, the reality of the Church is not exhausted in its hierarchical structure, in its liturgy, in its sacraments, in its juridical ordinances. The intimate, the primary source of its sanctifying effectiveness is to be sought in its mystical union with Christ; a union which we cannot conceive as separate from her who is the Mother of the Word Incarnate and whom Jesus Christ Himself wanted closely united to Himself for our salvation. Thus the loving contemplation of the marvels worked by God in His holy Mother must find its proper perspective in the vision of the Church. And knowledge of the true Catholic doctrine on Mary will always be a key to the exact understanding of the mystery of Christ and of the Church.

Meditation on these close relationships between Mary and the Church, so clearly established in today's conciliar Constitution, makes us feel that this is the most solemn and appropriate moment to fulfill a wish which, after we mentioned it at the end of the preceding session, very many council Fathers made their own, pressing for an explicit declaration at this council of the motherly role of the Virgin among the Christian people.

To achieve this aim, we have felt it opportune to consecrate, in this very public session, a title which was suggested in honor of the Virgin from various parts of the Catholic world and which is particularly dear to us, because it sums up in an admirable synthesis the privileged position recognized by the council for the Virgin in the Holy Church.

Therefore, for the glory of the Virgin Mary and for our own consolation, *We proclaim the Most Blessed Mary Mother Of the Church*, that is to say, of all the people of God, of the faithful as well as of the pastors, who call her the most loving Mother. And we wish that the Mother of God should be still more honored and invoked by the entire Christian people by this most sweet title.

The Blessed Virgin, in whom the entire Church was condensed during the time when Christ was present among us, espoused more intensely than anyone else the infinite desire that her Son had to save the whole world by his Cross. She intercedes with her Son—more insistently than at Cana—so that this vast desire might be fulfilled in all men and that all those who do not refuse it might have eternal life and might be *saved*; she is the Mother of all men without exception, whether they know it or not.

But for those who, like her, are openly members of the Mystical Body of which Christ is the Head, her ardent intercession takes on an additional nuance. She implores that they, too, might espouse, according to their abilities, the same desire for the salvation of the world that was in her heart; so that, according to their abilities, they might be docile to him who, as Head

of this Church of which they are the members, wishes to draw them along to desire with him, in him, and through him the salvation of all mankind; so that they might be, not only *saved* members, but also, with him, in him, and through him, *saving* members for their neighbors, that is to say, for all mankind.

The Virgin Mary, *Mother of all mankind*, is even more mysteriously the *Mother of the Church*. To invoke her under this title is to ask through her intercession for the most precious of graces that can be had here below, that of being conformed to Christ so as to suffer with him and to die with him for the salvation of the whole world.

Sprung from the hierarchy, the Church, as she presents herself with her mysterious nature to the eyes of faith (the theological virtue), is indeed and in all truth, concretely and existentially, apostolic, one and catholic, and holy, and she is so in all her members, to the precise extent to which they belong to her.

7. Little Flock or a Numberless People?

“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that *whoever believes in him* should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16-17). “There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:5-6).

All of humanity, beyond the multiplicity and diversity of its circumstances and worldly cares, is called to enter into this universe of Christ’s redemption, to form here below the Mystical Body of Christ, the pilgrim and crucified Church. The apostles, with the hierarchical powers of teaching and of baptizing, are sent by Christ himself to all peoples even to the ends of the earth; wherever they are received, wherever, thanks to the secret promptings of the Spirit, hearts open up to the ministry of the hierarchy, everywhere, then, that grace and charity—which are received through the sacraments of Christ and are practically oriented by the teaching and governing authorities, aided by Christ—can be fully Christic, fully conforming souls to Christ, there the Church, the organism of supernatural love and salvation, can exist in her fullness, and the Holy Spirit can dwell within her in fullness. “Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all grace: and the Spirit is truth”, said St. Irenaeus (*Adversus*

haereses III, 24). Such is *the pilgrim Church in the perfection of her act*; such is the normal and full system [*régime*] of salvation.

Apostolic preaching, which the impetus of Pentecost was to bring in a single movement to the farthest limits of the earth, would be hindered by resistance from without, by apparently insurmountable misunderstandings, and perhaps even more by the miseries and scandals of too many Christians. Divisions would occur; Christ and the Church would be torn—not in themselves, of course, but in the hearts of countless people who claim the name of Christian. After twenty centuries, which have seen so many cultural changes, so many holy missionary efforts, so many martyrs, the Church in perfect act—in Africa, in America, in the Far East, we might even say throughout the world—is still only a little flock.

God's *supreme* plan, no doubt, is to turn all of this resistance to some secret advantage for the final unity of his Church, to bring it about that some day all may be one in a way that is more moving for them and more glorious for his mercy. But what is his *immediate* plan? We know that he wills that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4). In those localities where the graces of salvation cannot reach them fully through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments, these graces will nevertheless overtake them secretly, enlightening and helping them by making use of the worthy traditions, the authentic teachings, and social customs of the milieux in which they live, ultimately compelling each one of them in his innermost heart to answer either Yes or No to the loving-kindness of a light that, without his necessarily knowing it, comes to him from Christ; so that those among them who become docile to this loving attention, without ceasing to belong visibly, *corpore*, to their own religious institutions, already belong really and spiritually, *corde*—perhaps without their knowledge—to the very Church of Christ, in a way that is already salvific, albeit not full, not fully developed.

Thus *the Church in her full and perfect act is surrounded by the Church that is as yet imperfectly realized*, depending, everywhere she finds them, upon the elements of sanctification and of truth that, having been given to her as her own, do not cease to belong to her and that can imperceptibly draw souls toward the fullness of her catholic unity.⁸³ She is like the center of the immense nebula of salvation, around which the spiral forms and rotates. She is a little flock, but one toward which even the most far-off sheep that Christ wishes to make his own are making their way: “Hence that messianic people,

although it does not actually include all men, and at times may appear as a small flock, is, however, a most sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race.”⁸⁴

One could describe in broad strokes the concentric areas in which the visible presence of the Church, at first manifest, gradually becomes less discernible and more hidden.

At the center of the spiritual universe of the redemption of the world appears *the pilgrim Church in her perfect act*.

This holy Council first of all turns its attention to the Catholic faithful. Basing itself on scripture and tradition, it teaches that the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and baptism (cf. Mk. 16:16; Jn. 3:5), and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through baptism as through a door. Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it, or to remain in it.

Fully incorporated into the Church are those who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept all the means of salvation given to the Church together with her entire organization, and who—by the bonds constituted by the profession of faith, the sacraments, ecclesiastical government, and communion—are joined in the visible structure of the Church of Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops. Even though incorporated into the Church, one who does not however persevere in charity is not saved. He remains indeed in the bosom of the Church, but “in body” not “in heart.” . . . Catechumens who, moved by the Holy Spirit, desire with an explicit intention to be incorporated into the Church, are by that very intention joined to her. With love and solicitude mother Church already embraces them as her own.⁸⁵

The Constitution then turns to address *non-Catholic Christians* to emphasize, not what they lack, but what they too possess.

The Church knows that she is joined in many ways to the baptized who are honored by the name of Christian, but who do not however profess the Catholic faith in its entirety or have not preserved unity or communion under the successor of Peter. For there are many who hold sacred scripture in honor as a rule of faith and of life, who have a sincere religious zeal, who lovingly believe in God the Father Almighty and in Christ, the Son of God and the Savior, who are sealed by baptism which unites them to Christ, and who indeed recognize and receive other sacraments in their own Churches or ecclesiastical communities. Many of them possess the episcopate, celebrate the holy Eucharist and cultivate devotion of the Virgin Mother of God. There is furthermore a sharing in prayer and spiritual benefits; these Christians are indeed in some real way joined to us in the Holy Spirit for, by his gifts and graces, his sanctifying power is also active in them and he has strengthened some of them even to the shedding of their blood. And so the Spirit stirs up desires and actions in all of Christ’s disciples in order that all may be peaceably united, as Christ ordained, in one flock under one shepherd. Mother Church never ceases to pray, hope and work that this may be achieved, and she exhorts her children to

purification and renewal so that the sign of Christ may shine more brightly over the face of the Church.⁸⁶

To raise the consciousness of the Church concerning herself and to devise a program of renewal were, according to the address of Paul VI at the opening of the second session, the two principal goals to be reached.

The council has a third object, one which may be called its *spiritual drama*. This too was put before us by Pope John XXIII. It is that which concerns “the other Christians”—those who believe in Christ but whom we have not the happiness of numbering among ourselves in the perfect unity of Christ, which only the Catholic Church can offer them. This unity, objectively speaking, should be theirs by Baptism.⁸⁷

The Pope continued by acknowledging respectfully the values of the original religious patrimony, common to all, that the separated Churches have preserved and even developed. At the opening of the third session, he declared that the work of restoring the unity of Christians is “something new, in contrast with the long, sad history which led up to the various separations”; he entreated the various separated Christian communities to consider the invitation to become integrated into the fullness of truth and charity willed by Christ as a fraternal one.

We gather together in our prayer and our affections all those members who are still parted from the full spiritual and visible wholeness of the Mystical Body of Christ; and in this yearning of our love and concern, our sorrow grows, our hopes increase.

O churches that are so far and yet so close to us, churches for whom our heart is filled with longing, churches that are the nostalgia of our sleepless nights, churches of our tears and of our desire to do you honor by our embrace in the sincere love of Christ!

O may you hear, sounding from this keystone of unity, the tomb of Peter, apostle and martyr, and from this ecumenical council of brotherhood and peace, the loving cry we send you! Maybe great distances still separate us, maybe it will be long before our full and effective meeting can be realized. But know for sure that already we hold you in our heart. May the God of mercies support our deeply felt yearning and hope.⁸⁸

The same emotion is apparent at the conclusion of the encyclical *Ecclesiam suam*:

That We, who promote this reconciliation, should be regarded by many of Our separated brothers as an obstacle to it, is a matter of deep distress to Us. The obstacle would seem to be the primacy of honor and jurisdiction which Christ bestowed on the Apostle Peter, and which We have inherited as his Successor.

Are there not those who say that unity between the separated Churches and the Catholic Church would be more easily achieved if the primacy of the Roman pontiff were done away with? We beg our separated brothers to consider the groundlessness of this opinion. Take away the sovereign Pontiff and the Catholic Church would no longer be catholic. Moreover, without the supreme, effective, and authoritative pastoral office of Peter the unity of Christ's Church would collapse. It would be vain to look for other principles of unity in place of the true one established by Christ Himself. As St. Jerome rightly observed: "There would be as many schisms in the Church as there are priests."⁸⁹

The unity of Christians, therefore, is one of the principal aims of the Second Vatican Council. A great hope has arisen, a sign of the times. The suffering of Christians who experience disunity—in plain view of the vast populations that are still without the Gospel and are threatened by atheistic ideologies—no longer seems tolerable. By the clearly discernible inspiration of the Holy Spirit, a great desire for unity has made itself felt among many of those who, having been validly baptized into Jesus Christ, acknowledge him as their Lord and Savior and call upon the Holy Trinity. They are nourished by the Scriptures; they are enlivened by the grace of faith, hope, and charity; they are visited by divine inspirations. All of these gifts come from Christ, lead to him, and belong to his sole Church, which alone possesses in their fullness the means of salvation. Consequently, after having declared that there can be no opposition between ecumenical activity and the apostolate of preparing non-Catholic Christians to be received individually into the Church, the Council, together with the last two popes [as of 1966] extends to Catholics as well the henceforth irreversible invitation to take responsibility for this ecumenical activity so as to bring it to completion in the fullness of charity and light.⁹⁰

Baptized Christians are a minority in the world. But the Church is still present even in *non-Christian* religious traditions [*formations*] by the values of truth and holiness that they retain, inasmuch as they do not refuse the graces—which all pass through Christ now—of this God who wills that all men be saved. And here we can distinguish two distinct groups: the religious traditions that hark back to the monotheism of Abraham and, then, the religious traditions that are outside of and foreign to the biblical perspective. The Council turns then to non-Christians.

Finally, those who have not yet received the Gospel are related to the People of God in various ways. There is, first, that people to which the covenants and promises were made, and from which Christ was born according to the flesh (cf. Rom. 9:4-5): in view of the divine choice, they are a people most dear for the sake of the fathers, for the gifts of God are without repentance (cf.

Rom. 11:28-29). But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Moslems: these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day. Nor is God remote from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, since he gives to all men life and breath and all things (cf. Acts 1:25-28), and since the Savior wills all men to be saved (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4). Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience—those too may achieve eternal salvation. Nor shall divine providence deny the assistance necessary for salvation to those who, without any fault of theirs, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, and who, not without grace, strive to lead a good life. Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is considered by the Church to be a preparation for the Gospel and given by him who enlightens all men that they may at length have life. But very often, deceived by the Evil One, men have become vain in their reasonings, have exchanged the truth of God for a lie and served the world rather than the Creator (cf. Rom. 1:21 and 25). Or else, living and dying in this world without God, they are exposed to ultimate despair. Hence to procure the glory of God and the salvation of all these, the Church, mindful of the Lord's command, "preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:16) takes zealous care to foster the missions.⁹¹

After addressing the entire world, Paul VI also, in his encyclical *Ecclesiam suam*, speaks about non-Christian religions:

Then we see another circle around us. This too is vast in extent, yet not so far away from us. It comprises first of all those men who worship the one supreme God, whom we also worship. We would mention first the Jewish people, who still retain the religion of the Old Testament, and who are indeed worthy of our respect and love.

Then we have those worshipers who adhere to other monotheistic systems of religion, especially the Moslem religion. We do well to admire these people for all that is good and true in their worship of God.

And finally we have the followers of the great Afro-Asiatic religions.

Obviously we cannot agree with these various forms of religion, nor can we adopt an indifferent or uncritical attitude toward them on the assumption that they are all to be regarded as on an equal footing, and that there is no need for those who profess them to enquire whether or not God has Himself revealed definitively and infallibly how He wishes to be known, loved, and served. Indeed, honesty compels us to declare openly our conviction that the Christian religion is the one and only true religion, and it is our hope that it will be acknowledged as such by all who look for God and worship Him.

But we do not wish to turn a blind eye to the spiritual and moral values of the various non-Christian religions, for we desire to join with them in promoting and defending common ideals in the spheres of religious liberty, human brotherhood, education, culture, social welfare, and civic order. Dialogue is possible in all these great projects, which are our concern as much as theirs, and we will not fail to offer opportunities for discussion in the event of such an offer being favorably received in genuine, mutual respect.⁹²

Although these grand perspectives are not new or unknown to theology, they have never been affirmed so plainly and so solemnly by the voice of the Church's Magisterium.

The little flock, beneath the fountain of the hierarchy, is the place where the Church can be present in perfect act, in the fullness of the grace poured out upon her by the sacraments and guided in practice by the preaching of the Gospel.

But all around, arranged in concentric areas in which she can be discerned to a greater or lesser extent, the Church nevertheless, in her imperfect act, remains present as the numberless people of the redeemed; and no one will be saved unless—be it only at the last moment and in the secret recesses of his soul, by an implicit act of faith and the theological desire for salvation—he has become her child.

Everywhere, in her perfect realization as well as in her imperfect realization, the Church includes sinners, yet everywhere she is without sin. Consequently she is at the same time more vast and more pure than we imagine.

She is the transcendent city, in which the love of God prevails over the love of self. Over against her, opposed to her, and sometimes in the hearts of the same individuals arises the other mysterious city, the city of the Prince of this world and of self-love prevailing over the love of God; this city raises today over the world the banner of a positive and absolute atheism, and never has its attack been so virulent.

Between these two ultimate, transcendent, eschatological cities travels the earthly city, which is immediately defined by the ties that are proper to human life, by the work of civilization and of promoting culture, by the demands of history's progress. For this last-mentioned city, the Church has a message:

The Catholic Church [said Leo XIII], that imperishable handiwork of our all-merciful God, has for her immediate and natural purpose the saving of souls and securing our happiness in heaven. Yet, in regard to things temporal, she is the source of benefits as manifold and great as if the chief end of her existence were to ensure the prospering of our earthly life.⁹³

If humanity, confronted today with weighty problems that burden and oppress it—problems of misery and hunger, of birthrates and overpopulation, of social inequalities and injustices, of racial hatreds, of the sudden attainment of independence by young nations, of mastering technology and

nuclear energy, of world peace—undertook to resolve them with the spirit of making love for the creature prevail over love for the Creator, all the progress, even the genuine progress, that it could accomplish would be vitiated in its fundamental orientation and ultimately would serve only to dehumanize mankind and to make it more unhappy.

APPENDIX 2

THE PROGRESS OF THE CHURCH IN TIME*

Let us consider the Church of the New Law. After the millennia in which, under the previous dispensations of the natural law, then the Mosaic law, she was prepared to receive the supreme visitations of the Word on the day of the Incarnation and of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the pilgrim Church is structurally completed. She has entered into what the apostles call the last days (Acts 2:17), the end of the times (1 Pet 1:20). What can her mission be from now on? Why does God make her remain in time?

1. The Church Is for the World and the World Is for the Progress of the Church

The first answer to be given to the question, “Why does God make the Church remain in time?” is obvious. The Church has the task of promulgating until the end of time the mystery of Christ’s redemption. As long as there is a world to save, Christ intends henceforth to save it by his Church of the New Law. He sends her out to all the nations, until the consummation of the ages, to proclaim the Gospel of the New Law, to sanctify them through contact with the sacraments of the New Law.

The Church saves men in a twofold way. She saves them first and foremost for eternal life by uplifting them, by drawing them to herself into the heart of her Kingdom, which, although it is *in* this world, is nevertheless not *of* the world. In addition, she saves them by illuminating for them from above the things of this world and the temporal life: “Non eripit mortalia qui regna dat caelestia” [he who bestows celestial kingdoms does not snatch away perishable things].

Consequently, it is quite true that the Church is for the world, with the

mission of lifting it up to herself, in much the same way that the teacher is for the student, the doctor is for the sick person, and parents are for children.

But it is also true in another, more mysterious sense to say that the world is for the Church, somewhat in the way that the earth is for plants, plants are for animals, and animals are for man. “All are yours; and you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor 3:22). The various ministries entrusted by Christ to his disciples: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, the Apostle [Paul] says again in an important passage at Ephesians 4:11-13, are intended “for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”. The final and ultimate reason why the world lasts and time continues is, therefore, to secure for the Church the respite she needs in order to reach her perfect stature, in which the fullness of Christ—what St. Paul calls the *pleroma*, or completion—is realized. Thus we find another important text written by the Apostle to the Colossians (1:24), “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his Body, that is, the Church.” Of course it would be ridiculous to suppose that one could complete the sufferings of Christ *intensively*; yet the Church, by allowing the sufferings of Christ the Head to permeate her, completes them *extensively* within herself, the Body.

2. The Church Makes Progress, Not by Going Beyond the Gift of Pentecost, but by Manifesting It

As with Christ, so too with the Church: neither makes progress by going beyond the initial supreme gift—the gift of the Incarnation in Christ’s case, the gift of Pentecost in the case of the Church. That would be quite impossible. Progress is made, rather, by a *successive manifestation* of the requirements of the initial gift. For us Christians, the events of the Incarnation and of Pentecost mark the center of time.

From the moment the Virgin pronounced her *fiat*, the Word is made flesh, Jesus is fully himself, true God and true man, with no progress possible with respect to this union. The mystery of the Incarnation is a fact; it is completed as to its *essence*, its *constitutive structure*. But viewed from another angle, the

mystery of the Incarnation embraces the whole unfolding of the life of Jesus; as to its *deployment*, it remains in a state of becoming and is not perfected until the Ascension.

It is similar with the Church. From the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descends upon her to pour out upon her the fullness of the capital grace of Christ, the Church of the New Law is perfect, completed with respect to her *essence*, her *constitutive structure*. But with respect to her *deployment*, she remains in a state of becoming; a path of progress opens before her.

This progress will unfold over the entire length of time from the first *parousia*, when Christ came to save the world, to the Second Coming, when he shall come to judge the world. During this final and decisive phase of her existence, the pilgrim Church is sustained by God's almighty hand. She is visited in secret by the illuminations of the Word and the outpourings of the Holy Spirit. These missions (now invisible) of the Word and of the Spirit revive in her, though without ever being able to equal the first refulgence, the treasures of grace deposited in her at the time of those supreme visible missions of the Incarnation and Pentecost. But at the same time, the Church is exposed to the attacks of the city of evil; she must confront challenges from the world and the Prince of this world; she must not only endure the assaults of flesh-and-blood adversaries, but also, as the Apostle says, she must contend against "the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12). She travels, as St. Augustine puts it, "between the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God".¹

This whole intervening time from the First Coming to the Second is designated in turn, in the Book of Revelation, by the names of "a thousand years" and "three and a half years". Because, on the one hand, the Church preserves within herself over the entire course of her history a divine and unalterable peace, the duration of her profound life is measured by the number of "a thousand years" (Rev 20:1-7), the symbol of peace and perfection. And because, on the other hand, the attacks of Satan that follow one another throughout the messianic age, however violent and fierce they may be, nevertheless have a precarious character and cannot prevail against the Church, they are measured by the period of "three and a half years" ("a time and times and half a time", Rev 12:14), since three and a half represents the perfect number seven broken in two.²

The pilgrim Church, which can only last in time by the perpetual

replacement of her members, can only be receptive to the truth and the faith, can only live in holiness and love by the unceasing descent upon her of the invisible missions of the Word and the Spirit. These missions, however, are not always produced in the same way. At certain moments they occur more intensely, more marvelously. Great effusions of light and of love, accompanied by miracles and prophecies, are poured out upon the Church. This may occur during times of peace, when discipline is more regular, when monasteries and convents are multiplied, when doctrine is preached and explained, when Christian life develops freely, when missionary work flourishes. And it may occur during the bleakest times, when persecution causes thousands of souls to apostatize and the Holy Spirit seems to want to make up for the visible losses suffered in numbers and territory by the intensity of the fervor of a few great saints and the frequent heroism of the martyrs. The reason for these rhythms escapes us. It will only be discovered in the splendor of the next world.

Here below, however, during the course of her already two-thousand-year pilgrimage, the Church of the New Law continually learns from the experience of her own weakness and of the power of God in her. She gains a fuller and more attentive awareness of the way in which Christ means to imprint upon her the likeness of his own battles, of his humiliations, of his paradoxical victories, and to prepare her silently for the momentous final struggles that await her at the manifestation of the Antichrist.

3. Can We Discern Any of the Hidden Laws of the Church's Progress?

The supreme law of the Church is the supreme law of her Head, the law of the Word made flesh, the law of the Incarnation, let us say a law of the illumination of the visible by the invisible, of the transfiguration of matter by the Spirit. As the Church goes on in time, the Holy Spirit who dwells within her works unceasingly, not to disincarnate her, of course, or to make her invisible—since in Christ's likeness, the Church is by her very essence mysterious and visible—but rather to transfigure the visible constituent element, to make it in a certain way transparent to the splendor of grace. So that—this is a paradox, and one could not possibly exaggerate its importance—since the coming of Christ the Church has appeared to be more *incarnate* and yet more *spiritual*, something more *visible* and yet more *independent* of

purely temporal things. In a word, she has become, so to speak, progressively more refined [*décantée*]. Then, too, as her history unfolds, it seems that the Church could gain a concrete and experiential awareness of these transformations that take place constantly within her and that by reflection she could discern some of the great laws or tendencies that her continuance in time obeys.

The law of tending toward an asymptote. At every stage of her existence, in all the places in which she is dispersed, the Church, at the same time that she advances in history, is careful to relive the events of the evangelical life of Christ. She is summoned to recapture both the exterior attitudes and the interior states of her Head, who is God in person, even though she can never attain them fully, since she is a creature. This fact subjects her to a mysterious vertical tension that Christ irrepressibly and constantly exercises upon her. One could speak here of an *asymptotic law of tending toward conformity with the Christ of the Gospels*.

The law of tending toward the eschaton. That is not all. Christ draws this Church to himself in order to incorporate her into himself; he will also lead her along after him to share his destiny. Besides the vertical tension by which she is suspended from her Head, the Church consequently will experience a horizontal tension that carries her off, following her Head, toward her final end and her glorious transfiguration. One could speak here of a *law of eschatological tension*. This is the reason for the extraordinary impetus that urges her, and with her all of creation, to go forth to meet her ultimate end and her glorification. “We know [says the Apostle] that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait for the redemption of our bodies” (Rom 8:18-23).

In the instinct that impels her to center her silent contemplation upon the mystery of the Eucharist and on the constant presence of *Christ in sacramental form* in her midst; in the confidence that spontaneously turns her heart toward the divinely assisted Magisterium that culminates in the *primacy of Peter*, the Church has no difficulty in recognizing the effects within herself of the law of incarnation that is supremely realized in Christ who is her Head. The Incarnation, and then as consequences thereof, the Eucharist and the primacy of Peter are the well-ordered manifestations, the stages, as it were, of

one and the same revelation. There is a “wisdom of the world” that turns aside from it at the outset; and there is also a “wisdom” that begins to believe in the Incarnation but that, a little farther on, when confronted with the mystery of the Eucharist or the mystery of the primacy of Peter, becomes disconcerted and balks at going any farther. This wisdom seems to forget, then, that God is God, that he comes through corporeal things, not by diminishing himself, but by using them and transfiguring them; this wisdom hesitates at the fullness of Christianity, believing that it has discovered a materialization.³

It is, once more, an effect of the law of incarnation that brings the Church to an ever more lucid, instinctive awareness of the fact that, although not without sinners, she is nevertheless without sin, that it is less and less fitting for her to include within herself the sins of her children—sins by which she is not manifested but, on the contrary, betrayed; the fact that it is more and more fitting to acknowledge that the boundary between her and the world runs through our own hearts, that Christ has loved her, “gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:25-27).

It will perhaps suffice here for us to have indicated a few of the laws that govern the profound life of the Church. We would like now to turn our attention for a moment to a more external aspect of her progress, which concerns her relation to the temporal powers.

4. The Relations between the Church and the Temporal Powers; the Law of Progressive Refinement [*Décantation*]

The things that are God's and the things that are Caesar's. At the time of the apostles the Church enters the world like a stranger. She only asks permission to announce here below a Kingdom that is not here below. In return, she invites her children to submit honestly to everything humane and legitimate that the authorities of this world may command. She knows full well that she radiates a virtue that is also capable of transforming and enlightening, little by little, the institutions of this world. But at that stage of development that is not her first and immediate concern; to her way of thinking it is only a secondary, subsequent, and long-term effect. It takes almost no time,

however, for the political authorities to start worrying. The temporal structures of the empire are too hardened by paganism to be receptive to Christianity. Persecutions break out. The Church presents to the world a hitherto unheard-of spectacle. She does not answer violence with violence.

The situation will change beginning with Constantine. A great new idea will appear and will seem to become feasible. Since the Christian life is not accepted in the pagan State, why do the Christians not try to join together in a Christian State, that is, in a State where the notion of citizenship would imply being baptized? The non-Christians, Jews or pagans, would not be regarded as enemies of such a State; they would be welcomed in law as having the title, not of citizens, but of foreigners. The Gospel distinction between the things that are Caesar's and the things that are God's will be safeguarded. It will never more be erased from the Church's memory. Yet the things that are Caesar's, while remaining clearly distinguished from the things that are God's, will be able to have a ministerial function with regard to the latter, and it will be possible to summon the institutional apparatus of the State for the purpose of ensuring the spiritual unity of the peoples and of defending them against their enemies, both from within and from without. Thus will be established, for better or for worse, in the light of the Christian faith, a certain fixed Christian temporal order that has been called "sacred Christendom" [*chrétienté sacrale*]. The involvement of spiritual authorities in temporal matters will increase, and, over the years, the consequences will weigh heavily on the spiritual life of the Church. Precisely when the dangers are the greatest, faced with the deficiencies of the Christian princes, the pope will consider himself obliged to join to his inalienable and spiritual title of Vicar of Christ that of the guardian of Christendom, in a precarious and temporal way: it was on the latter grounds that he took part in the crusades and in the repression of heresies. The vision of a sacred Christendom, which appeared at first as a grand undertaking that no doubt had to be tried, would end by seeming to be more harmful than helpful to the Church and more apt to disguise than to reveal her true nature. The essential catholicity of the Church is meant for all the peoples on earth; how could it not be veiled, for example, in the course of the crusades, in which the Cross of Christ, which extends its arms over the East and the West, was in some way reduced to a worldly symbol so as to become the standard for an enterprise that, however justified, necessary, or magnanimous it might appear, by its very nature depended only upon the Christian temporal order. St. Francis of Assisi would experience this

when, at Damietta, he left the camp of the crusaders to go preach to the Sultan.⁴ And how could the Church not seem to be compromised by the policies of too many “Christian” emperors, of too many kings who were “Catholic” or “*très-catholiques*”? How could she not consider herself betrayed by an unexpected event that would end by setting Catholic States against Protestant States and subjecting entire peoples to the ordeal of the wars of religion? The need for her to refine herself, to detach herself from the States, to make herself more independent of them, to proclaim more openly her true character, which transcends politics, ethnic group, or nation, will become absolutely imperative. One step forward is becoming aware of her own nature, which is at the same time visible and spiritual, apart from any one culture or political system.

The ancient States of the Church. Another example: Even to St. Bernard, the Papal States had seemed necessary in order to guarantee the free exercise of the spiritual power of the supreme pontiff, the vicar of Christ on earth. Later on, under Julius II—during that period of the Renaissance in which political authority was, not only becoming aware of its legitimate autonomy, but also losing its transparency and allowing itself to become intoxicated by the ideal of the will to power and of absolutism and, consequently, becoming more and more difficult to wield—the question would be knowing whether it was prudent to ask of it the same services that it rendered during the Middle Ages, and whether it was fitting, therefore—this was the thinking of Julius II—to endow the Papal States for this purpose with the utmost carnal splendor; or whether the hour had not come to defend the Church more discriminatingly than in the past by the weapons of the Spirit and to rely with greater purity of heart on the divine power to safeguard those human things who are indispensable to her.⁵ What would Pius XI say in determining the boundaries of the little Vatican City of today?

. . . a minimum of territory, therefore, that is sufficient for the exercise of sovereignty, the necessary territory without which sovereignty could not exist, because it would not have any means of support. It seems to Us, in short, that things are now at the point they reached in the person of St. Francis: he had just enough to keep body and soul together. So it was for other saints: the body was reduced to what was strictly necessary in order to serve the soul, to continue human life and, together with life, beneficial activity. It will be clear to all, We hope, that the supreme pontiff only has, in this matter of physical territory, precisely what is indispensable in order to exercise a spiritual power that was entrusted to some men for the benefit of mankind. We do not hesitate to say that We are pleased with this state of affairs. We are pleased to see Our material domain reduced to such restricted boundaries that can be said and also considered to be

*spiritualized by the immense, sublime, and truly divine spirituality it is destined to maintain and serve.*⁶

Thus the Church has been strong enough to do without the secular power; the papacy has been strong enough to dispense, not only with its political tutelage over medieval Christendom, but also over extensive papal states—something that neither Voltaire nor his friend Frederick could have imagined.⁷ This is an indication that the Church and the papacy over the course of time have become more visible, more incarnate, more subsistent, more autonomous, both as Church and as papacy. Conversely, we should note, such progress helps in turn to manifest in one respect even more the exceptional and supernatural character of their visibility and of their autonomy. Consider the words that Jesus spoke to Pilate: “My kingship is not of this world: if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over” (Jn 18:36); the words of Jesus to Peter: “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? . . . Feed my lambs” (Jn 21:15). It is true of so many other Gospel sayings as well, “The Word became flesh”, “This is my Body”: the progress of time allows us to discover little by little and in retrospect the hidden depths of their mystery.

Missionary expansion. The apostles and later the missionaries followed the routes that voyagers and the mingling of civilizations had opened up for them. It is indisputable that in one respect missionary expansion was bound up with the expansion of the colonizing nations. But the missionaries set sail in order to bring to the peoples of the world, not the “benefits of civilization”, but the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ. When they find themselves, in the Far East, in the presence of great civilizations—whether the Mongols with Jean de Plan-Carpin and the Franciscans in the thirteenth century or the Chinese and the Hindus with the Jesuits Matteo Ricci and Roberto di Nobili in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—what else can they proclaim but the message of a revelation that transcends all political and cultural organizations but that is capable also of making them sound and of illuminating them from on high? And when they find themselves in the New World in the presence of civilizations that are more unarmed and more vulnerable, like Bartolome de Las Casas at the beginning of the sixteenth century or, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, like the Jesuits in the Reductions of Paraguay, what else will they do but engage in a fight to the death against the tyranny of the colonizing powers and thus give witness, in

contrast to the behavior of the kingdoms of this world, to the transcendence of the Kingdom that is not of this world? In all respects, the heroism of missionary charity, in preaching a Gospel which indicts the scandals of the colonizers themselves, will prepare for the time when the radically pagan principle of *cujus regio illius religio* [the religion in a region is that of the ruler] will at last become intolerable to the conscience of the whole world.

The evangelical reversal of values. A sort of evangelical reversal of values can be observed in the facts that we have just reported.

The Kingdom of God [writes Jacques Maritain] comes about within; the seed is not built up externally; man must work at it, but it is not made by human hands. If I may say so, a sort of reversal in methods of taking action seems to be happening little by little before our eyes, in connection with a better understanding, in many minds, of the primacy of contemplation, from which action should proceed [*surabonder*].

The practical rule [*thème*] which, within Christendom, has for a long time seemed to be the most important to many men of goodwill, is that *human affairs must protect divine matters*. And man is made in such a way that, in a sense, that is very true; the importance of human means, even with regard to the propagation of the Gospel and the expansion of the Kingdom of God, must not be forgotten. That human affairs must protect divine matters is true, then; but is it *the most important* principle? Another *more important* practical rule, of which Christian souls seem to have an increasingly better understanding today, is that *it pertains to divine things to protect human affairs*, to protect them and to enliven them. Let God act! Have confidence in him! Rather than setting up walls and becoming entrenched behind fortifications, let Christians spread out through the fields of human endeavor; let them enter into the very depths of the world, relying on the power of God, which is the power of love and of truth. He it is who will save civilization; it is the divine matters that will save human affairs, at the moment when the human means of defending civilization become more and more inadequate with regard to the divine matters, for it is not by poison gas or incendiary bombs or by making a fortune on the stock market or by waging wars of disinformation that divine matters can be protected.⁸

On October 4, 1965, Pope Paul VI was invited to speak in New York at the United Nations on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of that global institution for the cause of peace and cooperation among the peoples of the world. He announced to them, in the name of One greater than he, of whom he is the spokesman, the principles of a higher wisdom that alone is capable of sustaining and inspiring the edifice of modern civilization: *recognizing* one another; *working with* one another; *never again opposing* one another; and, most importantly, *being for* one another.

The constancy of the Church. To say that in the course of time the Church disengages herself from that which surrounded her, that she is refined and

distilled from that which she is not and which was mistaken for her, does not mean that she changes her nature over time. It means that in the course of time (which is necessary for her as it is for all living things in this world) and under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, who instructs her by events and trials, her children progressively gain an awareness, an experiential awareness of her true nature and distinguish better between what makes up her visible element and what at first was offered to serve her but then claimed to be incorporated into her.

The result will not necessarily be that the members of the Church make progress in holiness, but at least they will progress in their awareness of the demands of holiness. The Church is still made up of the righteous and the sinners, but it seems, again under the law of progressive refinement, that it is less and less fitting to include in her the sins of her children, sins that she repudiates.

5. The Law of the Hidden Expansion of the Church through the Superabundance of the Love of Christ

Let us note briefly, in conclusion, a profound law of the Church's life, of which she has had an acute awareness through reflection only with the progress of the century, a law that one can regard as being complementary to the law of progressive refinement and that one can call, for lack of a better expression, the law of the hidden expansion of the Church through the superabundance of the love of Christ. On the one hand, the Church *is refined* and separated out from what she is not; on the other hand, she discovers how much the love of Christ (of which she is, however, beyond all doubt the privileged, plenary, and normal place of convergence here below) can at first glance seem to overflow her boundaries by spreading around her—in places where her true face is invincibly misunderstood—substitute graces, not of the normal sort, but already salvific, in places where she herself is already beginning to emerge from the darkness. Let us attempt to give a better expression to these views.

The progressive descent of the Spirit of Christ in the Church reveals to her ever more clearly the locus of her own visible element. The unique hearth of the world's salvation is situated beneath the fountain of the hierarchy, in the place where the sacramental and jurisdictional powers are exercised in their

fullness; where Christ, who is corporeally present within her, inundates her with the rays of his redemptive sacrifice; where her charity can be fully sacramental and practical [*orientée*]. This spiritual home is destined to gather in the course of time everything that will be saved for eternity.

Will not the fully realized Church always be a little flock? As the hearth of the world's salvation, as we said, the Church is sent to all nations until the end of the ages. But as the fully realized Church [*l'Église en acte achevé*], as the one, holy, catholic, apostolic, and Roman Church (and if one separates her from what is sinful in her own members, from that which certainly does not manifest but betrays her)—how restricted the Church then seems! Here now, before her eyes, the dimensions of today's world have opened up; solidarity has grown among all the peoples of the earth, caught up in the gears of technology; humanity is aware of entering at last, for its benefit or for its ruin, into the first and no doubt definitive phase of its henceforth universal history. But after two thousand years the Church, insofar as she is fully realized and with regard to the steps being taken by her faithful members in whom she is truly visible, seems to remain a little flock, just as in the early days. Should she then change her very nature? Could she be sent to announce to mankind some other message than the one about the unimaginable transcendence of a God who is One in three truly distinct Persons; about the folly of the redemptive Incarnation of God's only Son; about the mystery of the Mass, of the sacramental Christ and eucharistic transubstantiation; about the sacraments of the New Law, which mercifully dispense the grace of divine adoptive sonship? Could she be sent to proclaim to mankind some other moral requirement than that of the Cross that gives access even here below to the beatitudes of the Gospel or to announce some other alternative than that of the twofold eternity of heaven and hell?

Well, then, are the difficulties in evangelizing the world any less today than at the time of St. Paul? Will not the Church be distressed until the end of time by the thought of the immense multitude of those who are hostile to her or who merely regard her with indifference or who only approach her in defiance? Will she not have to appeal to God himself against the delays in the conversion of the world and to repeat the very same words of the entreaty of Blessed Marie of the Incarnation, the holy Ursuline nun of Quebec:⁹ “O Father, why do you tarry? My Dearly Beloved poured out his Blood so long ago! I present this claim in the interests of my Spouse. . . . You promised him

the nations as an inheritance, and you have not yet given them to him!” Will not the Church have to complain to Jesus himself about the impossible task that he entrusted to her before leaving her?

But the imperfectly realized, fettered Church can be an immense people. And yet, at the very heart of her uneasiness and her torment, the Church senses a mysterious confidence growing within her. It is true that the more aware she becomes of the demands of her mission, the more inadequate she feels. At the same time, however, she discovers something that she knew, of course, but without suspecting the whole extent of it: namely, that the love of her Savior, which descends upon her directly and in its fullness, nevertheless overflows in a certain way, passing beyond the visible means that are at her disposal so as to go throughout the world, preparing for her, by its kind attentions, secret and unwitting adherents, of whom she is unaware. To the extent that she becomes aware of being surpassed in this way, she spontaneously prays and begs that this beautiful mystery of mercy might continue to be accomplished. Thus is established around her an undefined zone in which souls already belong to her in a salutary way, where hearts can be open to her coming, where what she professes openly is obscurely anticipated, believed, and lived, where she is already present in a manner that is certainly not perfect and full, but nonetheless real and incipient. Our Savior’s words about the sheep that are not in the sheepfold but that are already his, that are attracted by the fold, take on for the Church, with the experience of the ages, a previously unnoticed resonance. While she is more pure than she may seem, since she refuses to legitimize the sins of her own children, she also senses that she is more vast than she may seem. She knows that her visible and plenary realization is only the nucleus of the immense galaxy of salvation. Not, of course, because of the merits of those men (too numerous, alas!) who follow “the broad way that leads to destruction”, but because of the staggering attentions of the love of God, she believes in the great number of those who will have belonged to her in secret, perhaps at the very last moment of their lives, and who will be among the elect. How could she forget that the Savior wills that all men be saved and that there are many rooms in his Father’s house (Jn 14:1)?

6. Conclusion

Progress is being made in the Church. Not by surpassing the initial gift of Pentecost. Rather, by a descent of this gift within her, as she makes her way through time (which is necessary to her as it is to all living things). The rhythm of this descent of the Spirit escapes us. It is punctuated by the great trials of the Church, the effusions of grace and the secret visitations of the Divine Persons. It causes the angels to marvel. To the Church of the early Christians, St. Peter writes that the prophets were ministers of “the things which have now been announced to you by those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look” (1 Pet 1:12). And St. Paul speaks of the mystery of salvation kept hidden for ages in God and which, *through the Church*, now makes known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places the infinitely manifold wisdom of God (Eph 3:10).

Assisted by the promptings of the Spirit, instructed by the lessons of experience, the Church gains a more conscious and more concrete awareness of her true nature. She disengages herself from elements that have ceased to be useful to her; she is refined; she becomes, on that account, more visible as the Kingdom that is not of this world, more transparent to the workings of grace. By virtue of a demand that comes from above her, she tends toward that form (without ever being able to reach it) of visibility and independence which was manifest in Christ Jesus, the Light of the world, whom the world knew not.

By distinguishing herself from her surroundings, from the national, historical, cultural settings in which she lives, by setting out a bit from the shore in order to teach the crowds, it becomes possible for her, through the progressive manifestation of the transcendence, the purity, the catholicity of her influence, to enlighten more effectively the peoples at the very level of their everyday life and of their worldly destiny.

After two thousand years, she experiences anguish at being, in her full realization, only a little flock, as in the early days. And opposite her, taking advantage of the opportunities provided by her failures as well as by her victories, contesting and dividing with her the hearts of men, the city of evil progresses, too, until the end of time; now it abruptly uncovers its face with the appearance of absolute atheism on the center stage of history.

Yet she does not despair. At the same time that she is conscious of her inability to convert the world, she gains a clearer awareness of the fact that the invitations of God (who wills that all men be saved) in some way go

beyond the visible means that she has at her disposal and, making use of anything outside that lends itself to this purpose, prepare all around her a zone of belonging where she herself becomes present, in a state of imperfection and incompleteness that is still salvific. There she is, then: all told a little flock and an immense people; a little flock insofar as she is fully realized, an immense people insofar as she is imperfectly realized. But this difference in levels, which could very well last until the end of the world—how could it not distress her heart? Against her own weaknesses, against the progress of the city of evil, against the wickedness of the age, she appeals to the hereafter, where the “groaning in travail” shall be no more, all earthly resistance shall be abolished, and nothing shall impede “the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom 8:21).

NOTES

Preface

¹ Parts of this French edition have already been published: cf. *L'Église sainte, mais non sans pêcheurs* (Saint-Maur: Éd. Parole et Silence, 1999), pp. xvi—319. This work also contains unedited texts from *L'Église du Verbe Incarné* that deal with the final cause and sanctity of the Church. [Back to text.](#)

² The text, dated January 15, 1957, is reproduced in Charles Journet's *Entretiens sur l'Église* (Saint-Maur: Éd. Parole et Silence, 2001), pp. 117-33. [Back to text.](#)

Chapter I

¹ *Geschichte Papst Innocenz des Dritten* (Hamburg, 1834), 1:56. [Back to text.](#)

² Ibid., p. 79. [Back to text.](#)

³ *Les Deux Sources de la morale et de la religion* (Paris, 1932), pp. 242-43. [Back to text.](#)

⁴ See below, pp. 225-26. [Back to text.](#)

⁵ Cf. F. M. Braun, O.P., *Aspects nouveaux du problème de l'Église* (Fribourg, Switzerland, 1942), pp. 33-34. [Back to text.](#)

⁶ Pt. 1, chap. 9, no. 3. [Back to text.](#)

⁷ Bossuet, *Lettre sur le mystère de l'unité de l'Église*. [Back to text.](#)

⁸ E.-B. Allo, O.P., *L'Apocalypse* (Paris, 1933), p. 339. [Back to text.](#)

⁹ *De civitate Dei*, bk. 20, chap. 17. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁰ The New Law, says St. Thomas, consists *principally* in “the grace of the Holy Spirit given to the faithful of Christ and *secondarily* in that which *disposes* to or *results* from that grace” (*Summa Theologica* [hereafter abbreviated *ST*] I—II, q. 106, a. 1). [Back to text.](#)

¹¹ In his article “La Paternité de Dieu dans l'Ancien Testament”, *Revue biblique*, 1908, p. 481, Fr. Lagrange, O.P., spoke of three distinct historical senses of the word “filiation”: (1) Yahweh is Father of Israel by giving it a

national existence and making it his preferred people; this is the collective sense; (2) consequently, all Israelites, insofar as they are members of their nation—even the disobedient—are sons of Yahweh: this is the broad sense; (3) finally, as one begins to distinguish between those Israelites who are faithful to the law and those who are not, Yahweh becomes the Father of only the just: this is the personal sense. The third sense is that which is used by the theologian when he says that the grace of adoptive filiation truly belonged to the just who preceded Christ, although it was not yet fully developed in them. The Pauline distinction between the law and adoption, servitude and Christian liberty, cannot be placed against this view. St. Paul knew that adoption already belonged to the Israelites: “They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises” (Rom 9:4), but they are still under a regime of servitude (Gal 4:1-2). One may also affirm, without contradicting him, that it is the Incarnation that confers adoption on us (Gal 4:5). [Back to text.](#)

¹² Within the life of the Trinity, the Son eternally proceeds from the Father; the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. There is, in time, a repercussion, as it were, of these eternal “processions” when the Son or the Spirit becomes present in a new and intimate manner, sent by the Father, or by the Father and the Son conjointly. These are what theologians call the “divine missions”, and they are called visible when they are enveloped in a visible reality and directly manifest the Son or the Spirit. In the mystery of the Incarnation—it is at the Annunciation where one finds a unique visible mission of the Son—the humanity of Christ is both sign and term of this mission. In the visible missions of the Spirit—of which Pentecost is the last—the visible reality (a dove, a luminous cloud, wind, tongues of fire) is only a sign of the mysterious visit of the Spirit. But the Son and the Spirit do not cease to be sent invisibly to the world, prolonging the effects of the visible missions in souls. [Back to text.](#)

¹³ Cited by H. Brémond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France* (Paris, 1929), 3:104. [Back to text.](#)

Chapter II

¹ *Confessiones*, bk 10, chap. 42, no. 67. [Back to text.](#)

² *Discourse III against the Arians*, no. 33, ed. Archibald Robertson, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 2d

series (1885; reprinted, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 4:412. [Back to text.](#)

³ Ibid., no. 34. [Back to text.](#)

⁴ Ibid. [Back to text.](#)

⁵ *IV Sent.*, dist. 43, q. 1, a. 1, quaest. 2 ad 5. [Back to text.](#)

⁶ *Discourse III against the Arians*, no. 9, in Robertson, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 4:399. [Back to text.](#)

⁷ *Thesaurus* 25. [Back to text.](#)

⁸ *Enarr. in Ps.* 126, no. 7. [Back to text.](#)

⁹ *Sermo* 183, no. 11. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁰ *Sermo* 218, no. 4. [Back to text.](#)

¹¹ Cf. H. de Lubac, S.J., *Corpus mysticum: l'Eucharistie et l'Eglise au moyen âge* (Paris, 1944), pp. 65 and 117. [Back to text.](#)

¹² F. Prat, S.J., *La Théologie de Saint Paul* (Paris, 1913), 1:413. [Back to text.](#)

¹³ Louis Chardon, *La Croix de Jésus* (Paris, 1937), p. 32. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴ Jacques Maritain. Cf. *Jacques Maritain, son oeuvre philosophique* (Paris, 1948), p. 59. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵ *De baptismo contra donatistas*, bk. 4, no. 4. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶ *Sermo* 96, no. 9. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷ One calls the *principal* cause that which produces the effect by its own power and the *instrumental* cause that which produces the effect by the power of a principal cause and which acts beyond its own capacities: the painter is the principal cause of the work of art; the brush is the instrumental cause. The *physical* cause is that from which the effect directly flows; it can be the principal cause (like the painter) or the instrumental (like the brush). The *moral* cause brings about the effect by its influence on the free physical cause. The former moves the latter to action by its persuasion, command, supplication, threats, etc. No created cause is able to produce its effect without being moved by the transcendent motion of God, the source of all that is and all that acts. This is why God is said to be the *First Cause*, and creatures *secondary* causes. But the created principal causes are moved by God, the First Cause, in such a way that they produce their own effect, not in the manner of instrumental causes. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸ That is to say, a man endowed with life by his soul (*psyche*), but with a purely natural life. St. Paul in this way contrasts the “psychic” man to the

“spiritual” man, he who lives according to the Spirit. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹ *De recta fide ad reginas*, no. 7. [Back to text.](#)

²⁰ *Enchiridion*, no. 28. [Back to text.](#)

²¹ *ST III*, q. 1, a. 2 ad 2. [Back to text.](#)

²² *III Sent.*, dist. 20, q. 1, a. 4, quaest. 2. [Back to text.](#)

²³ St. Thomas, *ST I—II*, q. 114, a. 1. [Back to text.](#)

²⁴ This is what Protestant theology never ceases to attribute to us Catholics. [Back to text.](#)

²⁵ Cf. *ST I-II*, q. 114, a. 1. [Back to text.](#)

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.* [Back to text.](#)

²⁷ *De Trinitate*, bk. 13, no. 14. [Back to text.](#)

²⁸ *Epist.* 194, no. 20. [Back to text.](#)

²⁹ *De fide et operibus adversus Lutheranos*, in the *Opuscula*, vol. 3, tract. 11, chap. 9. The work is dated May 13, 1532. [Back to text.](#)

³⁰ M.J. Scheeben, *Die Mysterien des Christentums* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1865), no. 67, p. 439. Cf. St. Thomas, *IV Sent.*, dist. 20, q. 1, a. 2, quaest. 2 ad 4: “Satisfactio debet esse poenalis.” [Back to text.](#)

³¹ St. Thomas, *ST III*, q. 48, a. 2. [Back to text.](#)

³² *Ibid.*, ad 2. [Back to text.](#)

³³ See below, pp. 105ff. [Back to text.](#)

³⁴ The Epistle to the Hebrews contrasts the succession of Levitical priests to Jesus, the Unique Priest. We should point out immediately that the power of “priests” today has for its end, not to supplant, but to render present the supreme mediation of Christ. He alone is *the* perfect Priest. All other priests are *his* priests, that is, mere short-lived ministers who serve only to dispense his eternal redemption in time. We shall return to this at greater length in chapter 5, on the derivations, in the Church, of the priesthood of Christ. [Back to text.](#)

³⁵ See below, pp. 115ff. [Back to text.](#)

³⁶ E.-B. Allo, O.P., *Première épître aux Corinthiens* (Paris, 1934), p. 332. [Back to text.](#)

³⁷ See below, pp. 207ff. [Back to text.](#)

³⁸ Jules Lebreton, *Les Origines du dogme de la Trinité* (Paris, 1919), p. 249. Cf. St. Thomas: “We become adoptive sons of God through the assimilation of the natural Son of God” (*IV Contra Gentes*, chap. 24). [Back to](#)

[text.](#)

³⁹ ST III, q. 1, a. 3 ad 1; the citation of St. Augustine: *In Joan. Evang.*, tract. 2, no. 16. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁰ See below, pp. 175-77. [Back to text.](#)

⁴¹ Henri Bergson, *Les Deux Sources de la morale et de la religion* (Paris, 1932), pp. 337-38. [Back to text.](#)

Chapter III

¹ ST III, q. 8, a. 1 ad 3. [Back to text.](#)

² *De veritate*, q. 29, a. 4 ad 7. [Back to text.](#)

³ *In symbolum Apostolorum expositio*. [Back to text.](#)

⁴ *III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 2, quaest. 2 and ad 1. [Back to text.](#)

⁵ *Sermon 77*, chap. 1. [Back to text.](#)

⁶ *De Trinitate*, bk. 4, chap. 20. [Back to text.](#)

⁷ *Adversus haereses*, bk. 3, chap. 24. [Back to text.](#)

⁸ *De sancta Pentecoste*, hom. 1, no. 41. [Back to text.](#)

⁹ St. Thomas, *De veritate*, q. 29, a. 4. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁰ This “revival” is possible for the sacraments that leave a “character” in the soul (Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders) or a “quasi-character” (Marriage, Extreme Unction). [Back to text.](#)

¹¹ *Introduction au Cantique spirituel de saint Jean de la Croix* (Paris, 1930), p. xxxviii. [Back to text.](#)

¹² *IV Contra Gentes.*, chap. 18. [Back to text.](#)

¹³ *I Sent.*, dist. 14, q. 2, a. 1, quaest. 1 ad 2. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴ ST I, q. 43, a. 3 ad 1. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵ “Certainly the holy prophets received in abundance the enlightenment and illumination of the Spirit, capable of instructing them in the knowledge of future things and in the understanding of mysteries; nevertheless, we confess that in the faithful of Christ, there is not only illumination, but also the very dwelling and abode of the Spirit” (*In Joan. Evang.*, bk. 5; PG 73, 757). [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶ *Sermo 267*, no. 4. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷ Papal encyclical *Mystici Corporis*. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸ “The soul is the principle and cause of the living body in three ways: it is *the principle from which the body’s movement comes*; it is *the reason for*

the body's existence, namely its end; as substance, it is the *animating form* of the body" (St. Thomas, *Commentary on the "De Anima" of Aristotle*, bk. 2, lesson 7). [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹ "It is necessary that God himself becomes the *form* of the intellect that knows him and unites himself to it, certainly not in order to constitute with it one unique *nature*, but in the manner in which the *intelligible species* is united to him who thinks" (St. Thomas, *Comp. Theol.*, chap. 105). [Back to text.](#)

²⁰ Pope Pius XII, *Mystic1 Corporis*. [Back to text.](#)

²¹ *ST I*, q. 43, a. 3. [Back to text.](#)

²² *Ibid.*, ad 1. [Back to text.](#)

²³ *1 Sent.*, dist. 14, q. 2, a. 1, quaest. 1. [Back to text.](#)

²⁴ *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, bk. 2, chap. 5, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1979), pp. 117-18; emphasis added. [Back to text.](#)

²⁵ *The Spiritual Canticle*, stanza 38. [Back to text.](#)

²⁶ *Ibid.* [Back to text.](#)

²⁷ *The Living Flame of Love*, stanza 3, verse 5, *Collected Works*, p. 641. [Back to text.](#)

²⁸ *Ibid.*, verses 5-6, *Collected Works*, p. 642. [Back to text.](#)

²⁹ *Sermons* (Vie Spirituelle), 2:224. [Back to text.](#)

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 212. [Back to text.](#)

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 225. [Back to text.](#)

³² *Ibid.*, p. 260. [Back to text.](#)

³³ *Ibid.*, 183; see below, p. 201. [Back to text.](#)

³⁴ *Spiritual Canticle*, stanza 38. [Back to text.](#)

Chapter IV

¹ *Ineffabilis Deus* (December 8, 1852). [Back to text.](#)

² Cf. St. Augustine, *De sancta virginitate*, chap. 3, no. 3; chap. 6, no. 6. [Back to text.](#)

³ St. Thomas, *ST II—II*, q. 26. [Back to text.](#)

⁴ *ST III*, q. 30, a. 1. [Back to text.](#)

Chapter V

¹ In St. Luke 10:18, Jesus says to the seventy-two who joyfully return from their mission: “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” M.J. Lagrange comments on these mysterious words: “There are no words stronger than these concerning Jesus’ intention to work for our salvation by means of those whom he invests with his authority. It is on this desire of his that the Church with her hierarchy rests” (*Évangile selon saint Luc* [Paris, 1921], p. 302). [Back to text.](#)

² J.J. Rousseau, *Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard* [Profession of faith of the vicar from Savoy]. [Back to text.](#)

³ Cf. St. Thomas, *ST I*, q. 103, a. 6. [Back to text.](#)

⁴ *Libro della divina dottrina* (Bari, 1912), p. 15. [Back to text.](#)

⁵ *The Book of Blessed Angela de Foligno*, Latin text (1925), p. 132. [Back to text.](#)

⁶ St. Thomas, *ST III*, q. 61, a. 2. [Back to text.](#)

⁷ *Imitation of Christ*, bk. 4, chap. 11. [Back to text.](#)

⁸ Émile Mersch, *The Theology of the Mystical Body*, trans. Cyril Vollert, S.J., S.T.D. (St. Louis, 1962), p. 518. [Back to text.](#)

⁹ Marriage and Extreme Unction also confer a sort of consecration, but it only pertains to a given situation: they consecrate Christians in view of the tasks of marriage and mortal suffering, respectively. Also, they are not repeated during the life of the spouses or the same danger of death. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁰ Council of Trent, sess. 7, cann. 9, 10, 12; sess. 14, can. 10; sess. 22, chap. 1; sess. 23, cann. 1 and following. [Back to text.](#)

¹¹ *Contra epistolam Parmeniani*, bk. 2, no. 28. [Back to text.](#)

¹² Cf. Pierre Batiffol, *L’Église naissante et le catholicisme* (Paris, 1911), p. 351. [Back to text.](#)

¹³ Code of Canon Law [1917], can. 108, §3. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴ Cajetan, *De modo tradendi seu suscipiendi sacros ordines*. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵ Pius XII, apostolic constitution of November 30, 1947. [The above wording is that of the Ordination of Deacons and Priests, Prayer of Consecration, *The Rites of the Catholic Church*, vol. 2 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), p. 58.] [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶ *Ibid.* [The above wording is that of the Ordination of Deacons and Priests, Prayer of Consecration, *The Rites of the Catholic Church*, vol. 2, pp.

44-45.] [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷ Decree *Lamentabili*, prop. 21 (June 3, 1907); DS 3421. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸ *Adversus haereses (Against Heresies)*, bk. 3, chap. 1, no. 1, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, rev. and arr. C. Cleveland Coxe (1885; re-printed, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 1:415. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹ Pope Leo XIII, encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* (November 18, 1893); DS 3293. [Back to text.](#)

²⁰ The word “tradition” is understood here as designating the whole message, oral and written, transmitted by the apostles to the primitive (first-century) Church (first sense). It may signify, in a second sense, the *tradition* of the *Scriptures*. Must one say, then, that the essence of the revealed deposit is partly in Scripture and partly in tradition (thesis of *juxtaposition*)? Or ought one to say, rather, that the essence of the revealed deposit is already entirely in Sacred Scripture, but on condition that it is clarified (as in the primitive Church) by the light of the apostles’ preaching, a preaching that is capable of manifesting the profound and authentic sense (thesis of *subordination* of the apostolic text to the apostolic illumination)? We prefer the second of the two theses. In a third sense, one calls *tradition* the transmission to us, by the divinely assisted Magisterium, of the deposit that the primitive Church received from the apostles. See also our *Esquisse du développement du dogme marial* (Paris, 1954), pt. 1. [Back to text.](#)

²¹ M.-J. Lagrange, *Évangile selon saint Jean* (Paris, 1925), p. 529. [Back to text.](#)

²² Paul’s multiple signs of deference to Peter have been noted: “The fact that in Galatians 1:18; 2:9, 11, 14, and 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5, Peter is called Cephas is certainly not the least significant” (F. M. Braun, *Aspects nouveaux du problème de l’Église* [1942], p. 88). [Back to text.](#)

²³ Constitution *De Ecclesia Christi* (July 18, 1870); DS 3050. [Back to text.](#)

²⁴ Vladimir Soloviev, *La Russie et l’Église universelle* (Paris, 1922), p. 131. [Back to text.](#)

²⁵ Cited by Pierre Chaillet, S.J., in his introduction to *L’Unité de l’Église de Moehler* (Paris, 1938), p. xxxv. [Back to text.](#)

²⁶ On the place of Peter among the apostles, see, for example: Acts 1:15; 2:14, 37; 3:1-7, 12; 4:8; 5:1-10, 15, 29; 8:14-24; 10; 11:4; 15:7; and so forth. [Back to text.](#)

²⁷ St. John was equal to Pope St. Clement with respect to the power of *executing* Christ's plan, for example, in founding local Churches. St. Clement was superior to St. John with respect to the *authority of governing the Church universal*. But St. John was able to compose *inspired canonical books*. [Back to text.](#)

²⁸ "If the divine condescendence willed the other princes [of the Church] to have privileges in common with him [Peter], whatever he did not refuse the others he gave only through him" (St. Leo the Great, PL 54, 150; cited by Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Satis cognitum* [June 9, 1896]). [Back to text.](#)

²⁹ On the level of *worship*, the continuity is assured by the transmission of the power of order; on the level of *sanctity*, by the presence of sacramental and directed charity. [Back to text.](#)

³⁰ Mgsr. Duchesne, *Histoire ancienne de l'Église*, 1:86. [Back to text.](#)

³¹ *Against Heresies*, bk. 3, chap. 3, no. 1, in Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:415. [Back to text.](#)

³² *Ibid.*, bk. 3, chap. 3, no. 3, in Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:416. [Back to text.](#)

³³ *Ibid.*, bk. 3, chap. 4, nos. 1 and 2, in Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:417. [Back to text.](#)

³⁴ *Letter to the Philadelphians*, chap. 4. [Back to text.](#)

³⁵ Can. 329,§i [1917 Code]. [Back to text.](#)

³⁶ *IV Sent.*, dist. 20, q. 1, a. 4, quaest. 1. [Back to text.](#)

³⁷ Can. 1326 [1917 Code]. [Back to text.](#)

³⁸ *Letter to the Magnesians*, chap. 3, no. 1. [Back to text.](#)

³⁹ *Letter to the Ephesians*, chap. 4. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁰ When one is created pope, the electors only designate the person. It is Christ who directly confers on the one elected his dignity and his power. The pope is vicar of Christ, not vicar of the Church; a political authority, on the other hand, is the vicar of the multitude. [Back to text.](#)

⁴¹ With respect to the apostles, it was by a special favor that Christ directly conferred their power on them. It is not the same with respect to their successors. This is why a schismatic bishop loses, *by his own act of schism*, his jurisdictional power; although the pope grants *in fact* certain jurisdictional powers to dissidents, for example the power for Orthodox priests to confer the sacraments of Confirmation and Penance validly. [Back to text.](#)

⁴² "The foundation of the Church as a society, unlike the formation of the

State, is carried out, not from *bottom to top*, but from *top to bottom*” (Pope Pius XII, allocution of October 2, 1945, AAS 1945, 256-62). [Back to text.](#)

⁴³ *Apologia de comparata auctoritate papae et concilii*, chap. 1, nos. 450-52. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁴ “Vere episcopalis”, Vatican Council I. On the meaning of this word, see above pp. 133-34. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁵ Vatican Council I defined that “it was by the institution of Christ himself and by divine right that blessed Peter would perpetually have successors with respect to his primacy over the universal Church” and that “the Roman pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter in that same primacy” (DS 3050). [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁶ Soloviev, *Russie et l’Église universelle*, p. 162. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁷ Taken in a wide sense, the *pastoral power* comprises both the power of *order* and the power of *jurisdiction*; taken in a strict sense, which we follow here, only the power of *jurisdiction*. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁸ See below, p. 220. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁹ Sess. 4, DS 3070. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁰ *Les Fondements spirituels de la vie* (Brussels, 1948), p. 152. [Back to text.](#)

⁵¹ *Œuvres complètes* (Annecy, 1892), 1:206. [Back to text.](#)

⁵² *Réponse au ministre Paul Ferry*, pt. 2, chap. 4. [Back to text.](#)

⁵³ See below, pp. 185-86. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁴ What shall befall us tomorrow? . . . We do not know. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁵ See below, p. 220. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁶ ST II—II, q. 174, a. 6 ad 3. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁷ E.B. Allo, *Première épître aux Corinthiens* (Paris, 1934), pp. 325 and 337. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁸ ST II—II, q. 172, a. 4 ad 1. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁹ H. Clérissac, O.P., *Le Mystère de l’Église* (Paris, 1918), p. 174. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 178. [Back to text.](#)

⁶¹ *Apologia de comparata auctoritate papae et concilii*, ed. Pollet, no. 517. [Back to text.](#)

⁶² This goes for Manichaeism and Arianism. See on this subject the study by Pierre Jean de Menasce, “Augustin manichéen”, in *Freudesgabe für Ernst*

Robert Curtius (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1956). For the vestiges of the Church, see below, pp. 307-8, 311, 334-35, 349-50. [Back to text.](#)

⁶³ *The Prescription against Heretics*, trans. Peter Holmes, chap. 32, nos. 1-2, in Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:258. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁴ *Against Heresies*, bk. 3, chap. 3, no. 2, in Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:415-16. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, chap. 4, no. 1, in Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:416-17. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁶ Sess. 3, constitution *De fide catholica*, chap. 3; DS 1794. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁷ See the text cited above, pp. 2-3. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁸ *Pensées*, ed. Brunschvicg, no. 614. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁹ *Études religieuses et sociales* (Saint-Blaise, 1907), p. 298. [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 308. [Back to text.](#)

⁷¹ If heresies nourish the desire to reduce Christianity to its origins, it is because they do not understand this profound law of life. For them, says Moehler, “Christianity is considered as a matter that has always been completely finished, definitive, and immutable. With that, they maintain the illusion of being able to find again a biblical or evangelical Christianity, as if the latter had been able to disappear during the last hundred or thousand years. What would we say of someone who, having lost his reason and yet held onto some scattered memories of his childhood, accused others of deviations and wanted to make them return with him to the state of childhood?” (*L’Unité de l’Église* [Paris, 1938], p. 61). [Back to text.](#)

⁷² *Œuvres du cardinal Lavigerie* (Paris, 1884), 1:94. [Back to text.](#)

⁷³ *Pensées*, ed. Brunschvicg, no. 613. [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁴ Soloviev, *Russie et l’Église universelle*, p. 131. [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁵ Translated from Russian into French by S. Tyszkiewicz, S.J., in *Nouvelle Revue de Théologie*, December 1952, pp. 1062-74. [Back to text.](#)

Chapter VI

¹ The Soul (capital “S”) designates the uncreated Soul; the soul (miniscule “s”), the created soul. [Back to text.](#)

² *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, trans. John Clarke, O.C.D., 2d ed. (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1976), p. 194. [Back to text.](#)

³ *Adversus haereses*, bk. 3, chap. 24, no. 1. [Back to text.](#)

⁴ Although ecclesial unity, absolutely speaking, is always that of charity (*formata*)—for the Church is always in grace—nevertheless, insofar as the Church resides in such and such an individual, she can be without charity (*informis*). Cajetan, I—II, q. 39, a. 1, no. 3. [Back to text.](#)

⁵ See below, pp. 205, 209, 244, 319-20, 358. [Back to text.](#)

⁶ *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, chap. 14. See below, pp. 189-90. [Back to text.](#)

⁷ P. Resch concludes his work *La Doctrine ascétique des premiers maîtres égyptiens du quatrième siècle* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1931), p. 263, by stating that this doctrine is Christian “by the faith that serves as its foundation, by pious practices, recitation of psalms, meditation on Sacred Scripture, and reception of the Eucharist, which nourish it. . . , finally and foremost, by the ideal that stimulates it and the end that it pursues, conformity to Jesus crucified and union with God.” [Back to text.](#)

⁸ See above, p. 62. [Back to text.](#)

⁹ *ST III*, q. 3, a. 5 ad 2. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁰ *ST III*, q. 4, a. 8. [Back to text.](#)

¹¹ St. Thomas, *ST III*, q. 7, a. 1. See below, p. 187. [Back to text.](#)

¹² St. Thomas, *ST III*, q. 62, a. 2 and ad 1. [Back to text.](#)

¹³ St. Thomas, *ST III*, q. 62, a. 5. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴ *ST III*, q. 72, a. 5 ad 2. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵ John of St. Thomas, III, q. 62; disp. 24, a. 2, no. 30; ed. Vives, 9:291. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶ St. Thomas, *IV Contra Gent.*, chap. 73. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷ *Ibid.* [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, chap. 74. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹ John of St. Thomas, III, q. 62; disp. 24, a. 2, no. 30; ed. Vives, 9:201. [Back to text.](#)

²⁰ *Didache* 9, 2. [Back to text.](#)

²¹ St. Thomas, *ST III*, q. 73, a. 3. The faith infused in infants by Baptism disposes them in an ontological and anticipated manner to believe the revealed message. We think that, likewise, the baptismal grace is as an *ontological pledge* and, therefore, a certain *ontological anticipation* of the eucharistic grace in which the unity of the Church will be

consummated. [Back to text.](#)

²² *De fide orthodoxa*, bk. 4, chap. 13. [Back to text.](#)

²³ See above, pp. 149-50. [Back to text.](#)

²⁴ See below, pp. 293-94. [Back to text.](#)

²⁵ See above, pp. 176-77. [Back to text.](#)

²⁶ Émile Mersch, S.J., *The Whole Christ*, trans. John Kelly, S.J. (1962), p. 131. [Back to text.](#)

²⁷ Cited by Henri Brémond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France*, 3:71. [Back to text.](#)

²⁸ *Zeuge der Wahrheit* (Leipzig, 1937), pp. 24-25. [Back to text.](#)

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25. [Back to text.](#)

³⁰ *Manuscripts autobiographiques*, Ms. B, fols. 2-3. [Back to text.](#)

³¹ “We offer Thee, O Lord, in the precious death of Thy just ones, this Sacrifice, from which martyrdom has taken its beginning” (Secret from Thursday after the Third Sunday of Lent). See above, p. 174. [Back to text.](#)

³² Peterson, *Zeuge*, pp. 26-27. [Back to text.](#)

³³ “By reason of the grace that is in him, the Christian can merit for others, in a *congruous* manner, the first grace [that of conversion]. . . . It is *congruous* and in harmony with friendship that God should fulfill the Christian’s desire for the salvation of others, although sometimes there may be an impediment on the part of those whose salvation he desires” (St. Thomas, *ST* I—II, q. 114, a. 6). [Back to text.](#)

³⁴ See above, pp. 44 and 46ff. [Back to text.](#)

³⁵ Litany of the Saints. [Back to text.](#)

³⁶ *Sermo* 168, no. 6. [Back to text.](#)

³⁷ *Stromates*, bk. 7, chap. 2. [Back to text.](#)

³⁸ *Sermons de Tauler* (Paris, 1930), 2:5. [Back to text.](#)

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 221. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 24. [Back to text.](#)

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 192-93. [Back to text.](#)

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 247. [Back to text.](#)

⁴³ *Libro della divina dottrina*, chap. 134, ed. Bari (1912), p. 298. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁴ *Écrits spirituels et historiques*, 2:314. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁵ Henri Bergson, *Les Deux Sources de la morale et de la religion* (Paris,

1932), p. 240. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁶ Testimony of Father Elijah of the Martyrs, counsel 6, in John of the Cross, *Obras*, ed. Silverio, 4:351 [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁷ Turrecremata, *Summa de Ecclesia*, bk. 1, chap. 60. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁸ II—II, q. 39, a. 2, no. 2. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁹ Tauler, *Sermons*, 2:189. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 193. [Back to text.](#)

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 184. [Back to text.](#)

⁵² Ibid. p. 207. [Back to text.](#)

⁵³ Ibid. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁴ Ibid. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 192. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 208. See above, p. 88. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁷ Counsels, maxims, and sayings, in *Obras*, ed. Silverio, 4:235. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁸ *Epist. ad Rom.*, 8, 29. See the text of Matthew 24:45-47: “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. Truly, I say to you, *he will set him over all his possessions*” (emphasis added). [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁹ Jacques Maritain, *La Personne et le bien commun* (Paris, 1947), pp. 76-77. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁰ Authorship of the *Te Deum* has been attributed to him. [Back to text.](#)

⁶¹ *Explanatio Symboli*, no. 10; PL 52, 871. [Back to text.](#)

⁶² PG 12, 437. [Back to text.](#)

⁶³ St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Novissima verba*, p. 81. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁴ St. Thomas, *Quodlibet* II, q. 7, a. 14; VIII, q. 5, a. 9. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁵ Roman Catechism, pt. 1, chap. 10, no. 26. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁶ Leon Bloy, *Méditation d’un solitaire*. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁷ Leon Bloy, *Le Désespéré*, pt. 2. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁸ P. Nautin, *Étude sur l’histoire et la théologie du Symbole* (Paris, 1947). [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁹ On the meaning of excommunication, see below, p. 295. [Back to text.](#)

Chapter VII

¹ *In Aristotelis librum De anima commentarium*, bk. 2, lesson 7, ed. Pirotta, no. 318. [Back to text.](#)

² It is defined by the Magisterium that the baptized sinner can still be a Christian—that is, a member of the Church: “If anyone says. . . that he who has faith without charity is not a Christian, let him be anathema” (Council of Trent, sess. 6, can. 28, Denz., no. 838). [Back to text.](#)

³ See above, p. 172. [Back to text.](#)

⁴ *Enarr. in Ps.* 118, *sermo* 3, no. 2. [Back to text.](#)

⁵ And not, as Luther said, the hospital! [Back to text.](#)

⁶ Pius XII, encyclical *Mystic1 Corporis*, AAS 1943, p. 210 (and 213, 215). [Back to text.](#)

⁷ Jacques Maritain, *Religion et culture* (Paris, 1930), p. 65. [Back to text.](#)

⁸ St. Thomas, *ST* III, q. 60, a. 1. [Back to text.](#)

⁹ *In Joan. Ev.* 6, no. 8. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁰ See above, p. 142. [Back to text.](#)

¹¹ See above, pp. 148-51. [Back to text.](#)

¹² *De vera religione* 6, 11. [Back to text.](#)

¹³ Testimony of Father Elijah of the Martyrs. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴ Cf. Benedict XIV, *De serv. Dei beatif. et de beat. canoniz.*, bk. 1, chap. 37, no. 7. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵ St. Thomas, *ST* II—II, q. 81, a. 8; Sândor M. Horvâth, O.P., *Heiligkeit und Sünde im Lichte der thomistischen Theologie* (Fribourg, Switzerland: St. Paul, 1943), see especially the tables, pp. 128ff. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶ Benedict XIV, *De serv. Dei beatif.*, bk. 3, chap. 11, no. 3. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, bk. 1, chap. 28, no. 14. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸ See above, pp. 2-3. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹ “The multitude *outside* of individuals is but an abstract concept; but the multitude *in* individuals is an existing reality” (St. Thomas, *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 16 ad 16). [Back to text.](#)

²⁰ Émile Mersch, S.J., *La Théologie du corps mystique* (Paris, 1944), 2:229. [Back to text.](#)

²¹ *Expositio in Lucam* 7, 46-47; PL 15, 1674. [Back to text.](#)

²² Cf. J.-P. de Caussade, *L’Abandon à la divine providence* (1928), 1:34. [Back to text.](#)

²³ Sess. 3, constitution *De fide cath.*, Denz., no. 1794. [Back to text.](#)

²⁴ Jacques Maritain, *Religion et Culture* (Paris, 1930), p. 60. [Back to text.](#)

Chapter VIII

¹ Code of Canon Law [1917], can. 1497, §2. [Back to text.](#)

² Bk. 4, chap. 11, no. 4. [Back to text.](#)

³ PL 176, 415-16. [Back to text.](#)

⁴ *Adversus haereses*, bk 3, chap. 24, no. 1. [Back to text.](#)

⁵ *Epistola* 185, no. 50. [Back to text.](#)

⁶ *Quatrième lettre à Mlle. de Roannez*, end of October 1956, ed. Br., pp. 213-15. [Back to text.](#)

⁷ Pastoral letter, April 14, 1949, *Le Prêtre dans la cité*. [Back to text.](#)

⁸ “Le cardinal Suhard, père de la Mission de France et de la Mission de Paris, *Documentation catholique*, no. 1161 (November 29, 1953), col. 1477. [Back to text.](#)

⁹ Cardinal Suhard, *Prêtre dans la cité*. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁰ Pius XI, discourse to the Fédération nationale catholique de France, June 12, 1929, *Documentation catholique*, vol. 23, col. 365. [Back to text.](#)

¹¹ Pius XI, letter *Laetus sane nuntius* to Cardinal Segura y Saens, November 6, 1929, *Documentation catholique*, vol. 23, col. 335. [Back to text.](#)

¹² Discourse of February 20, 1931, *Documentation catholique*, vol. 25, col. 588. [Back to text.](#)

¹³ See below, pp. 277-78. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴ Pius XI, discourse to the Catholic Italian Federation, December 18, 1927, *Documentation catholique*, vol. 14, cols. 708-12. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵ Pius XI, letter *Quae nobis* to Cardinal Bertram, November 13, 1928, *Documentation catholique*, vol. 21, col. 392. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶ Jacques Maritain, *Humanisme intégral* (Paris, 1946), p. 314. See also below, pp. 272-76. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷ Maritain, *Humanisme*, pp. 312-13. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸ Jacques Maritain, *Raison et raisons* (Paris, 1947), pp. 302-3. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹ Jacques Maritain, *Questions de conscience* (Paris, 1938), p. 183. [Back to text.](#)

- ²⁰ Maritain, *Raison*, p. 247. [Back to text.](#)
- ²¹ Taken from the French text in *L'Osservatore Romano*, October 7-8, 1957. [Back to text.](#)
- ²² St. Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, bk. 9, chap. 7, no. 12. [Back to text.](#)
- ²³ *IV Sent.*, dist. 38, q. 1, a. 4, quaest. 1. [Back to text.](#)
- ²⁴ *De bono conjugali*, against Jovinian; *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, against the Pelagians; and the corresponding passages from the *Retractationes*. [Back to text.](#)
- ²⁵ See above, pp. 14-16. [Back to text.](#)
- ²⁶ Maritain, *Religion et culture* (Paris, 1930), p. 73. [Back to text.](#)
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75. [Back to text.](#)
- ²⁸ *Manuscripts autobiographiques*, Ms. B, fols. 2-3. [Back to text.](#)
- ²⁹ Maritain, *Humanisme*, pp. 311-12. [Back to text.](#)
- ³⁰ Encyclical *Immortale Dei* (November 1, 1885). [Back to text.](#)
- ³¹ Encyclical *Sapientiae christianae* (January 10, 1890). [Back to text.](#)
- ³² *Immortale Dei*. [Back to text.](#)
- ³³ Maritain, *Humanisme*, p. 314. [Back to text.](#)
- ³⁴ *Ibid.* See above, pp. 259-60. [Back to text.](#)
- ³⁵ Maritain, *Humanisme*, p. 316. [Back to text.](#)
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 317. [Back to text.](#)
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 320. [Back to text.](#)
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 318. See above, pp. 258-59. [Back to text.](#)
- ³⁹ Maritain, *Humanisme*, p. 221. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴⁰ Maritain, *Raison*, p. 278. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴¹ Jacques Maritain, *L'Homme et l'État* (Paris, 1953), p. 163. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴² Maritain, *Humanisme*, pp. 131-33. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴³ Maritain, *Religion*, p. 48. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴⁴ *De civitate Dei*, bk. 14, chap. 28. In all of the present paragraph, the word city is obviously to be taken *analogically*, in order to designate a certain community of life and destiny. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴⁵ And elsewhere, for example, *Epist.* 138, no. 17. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴⁶ *De civitate Dei*, bk. 15, chap. 4. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴⁷ Pius XI, discourse of December 24, 1938. [Back to text.](#)

Chapter IX

- ¹ *De Veritate*, q. 14, a. 11 ad 1. [Back to text.](#)
- ² *ST I—II*, q. 89, a. 6. [Back to text.](#)
- ³ St. Thomas, *ST I—II*, q. 109, a. 3 and 4. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴ Jacques Maritain, *Raison et raisons* (Paris, 1947), p. 147. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁵ St. Thomas, *ST I—II*, q. 5, a. 3. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁶ Cajetan, *I—II*, q. 11, a. 1, no. 11. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁷ St. Thomas, *ST I—II*, q. 39, a. 1. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁸ Chap. 2; Denz. 432. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁹ *ST II—II*, q. 39, a. 1. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹⁰ Cajetan, in his commentary on this article of St. Thomas. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹¹ *I—II*, q. 39, 1, no. 5. See above, p. 186. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹² *Comm. ad Tit.* 3, 10. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹³ *Contra Crescon.*, bk. 2, no. 9. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹⁴ St. Thomas, *IV Sent.*, dist. 45, q. 2, a. 4., quaest. 1. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹⁵ The *private* participation could be permitted in certain circumstances. Cf. Cajetan, *II—II*, q. 70, a. 4, no. 3. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹⁶ St. Thomas, *ST III*, q. 60, a. 5 ad 3. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹⁷ John Henry Newman, *Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford*. New ed. (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1892), pp. 16-36. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹⁸ “For the archaic mentality, *Nature* is never exclusively *natural*. . . . The divine transcendence reveals itself directly in inaccessibility, infinity, eternity, and the creative force (rainfall) from heaven” (Mircea Eliade, *Traité d’histoire des religions* [Paris, 1949], pp. 47 and 49). [Back to text.](#)
- ¹⁹ See below, pp. 306-8. [Back to text.](#)
- ²⁰ *De Indis*, ed. Carnegie (Washington, 1917), pp. 248 and 250. [Back to text.](#)
- ²¹ E. Dublanchy, article “Bonne foi”, in *Dict. Théol. Cath.*, col. 1012. [Back to text.](#)
- ²² Ibid. Newman, writes Gerard Manley Hopkins, “always answered those who thought the learned had no excuse in invincible ignorance, that on the contrary they had that excuse the most of all people” (letter of September 22, 1866), *The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, ed. Claude Collier Abbott (London: Oxford University Press, 1935, 1955), p. 5. [Back to text.](#)

[text.](#)

²³ E. Dublanchy, article “Église”, in *Dict. Théol. Cath.*, col. 2167. [Back to text.](#)

²⁴ Expressions such as the “salvation of the infidels”, the “mysticism of the infidels”, the “salvation of the pagans”, and the “holiness of pagans” will always be awkward. [Back to text.](#)

²⁵ *De civitate Dei*, bk. 18, chap. 47. [Back to text.](#)

²⁶ The pilgrims of Pandharpur, for example, will not be divided in the eyes of God according to whether they have placed their hearts in the practice of pagan rites or in the chants of Tukaram: “We have fashioned a Vishnu from rock, but the rock is not Vishnu, adoration rises up to Vishnu. . . . The care of the universe is no trouble for God. . . . It is your glory, O God, to be called the Savior of sinners. The holy ones call you the Lord of those in despair. I have taken confidence in hearing it” (cited by Michel Ledrus, S.J., *L’Inde profonde* [Louvain, 1933], pp. 14, 25, 26).

“With respect to *religions that did not issue from the call of Abraham*, to which belonged and still belong a great part of humanity, we see myths and rites, speculations and rules of life proliferate.” That which divine revelation has not said, human effort has tried to express. Sometimes these constructions “remain open to the visitation of the living God and allow themselves to be assumed by his grace; sometimes they withdraw into themselves and set themselves up as experiences of salvation, in place of the Redemption through Christ. God alone here can know his own; for, it is a question of the secrets of the heart, more mysterious than the most intimate spiritual experience” (Olivier Lacombe, *Chemins de l’Inde et Philosophie chrétienne* [Paris, Alsace, 1956], pp. 29 and 34). [Back to text.](#)

²⁷ See above, p. 242. [Back to text.](#)

²⁸ Cf. P.-J. de Menasce, *Quand Israël aime Dieu* (Paris, 1931). [Back to text.](#)

²⁹ It is at the time of its fidelities that Israel is called the People of God. If it continues to be so after its refusal to recognize its Messiah—“they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable” (Rom 11:28-29)—it is insofar as a “reintegration” is promised to it. It is not that present-day Israel and the Church are “two separated branches from a single and unique people of God”; or that present-day Israel is ranked alongside the *Church-Body of Christ* like a separated part, in order to form

with her a more fundamental and more complete essential unity, that of the *Church as the People of God*. Cf. Paul Démann, “Israël et l’unité de l’Église”, in *Cahiers Sioniens*, 1953, no. 1. We accept neither this view on the situation of Israel nor the real distinction between the Church, *Body of Christ*, and the Church, *People of God*. [Back to text.](#)

³⁰ We borrow this view of the importance of the “exclusion” at the origins of Islam from a conference of M. Louis Massignon, given November 16, 1956, at the Aula of the University of Geneva. For the rest of our information we refer to Régis Blachère, *Le Problème de Mahomet* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952); and to the notes accompanying the two volumes of his translation *Le Coran* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1949 and 1951). [Back to text.](#)

³¹ Louis Massignon, *Situations de l’Islam* (Paris, 1939), p. 9. [Back to text.](#)

³² Translating Dostoyevsky into Arabic: Would this deviation be necessary in order to give rise to (in these surroundings) a sense of the tragedy of man and the secret desire of a redemption? [Back to text.](#)

³³ Messianism has passed from Israel to the Church, from a national formation to a transnational formation, from its state of preparation to its state of blossoming. See our *Destinées d’Israël* (Paris: Luf, 1945). From the point of view of the theology of history, one could, in the light of Pauline revelation, clarify, for example, the supreme reasons for *Israel’s dispersion*: see this word in the table of contents of the aforementioned book. From the point of view of the philosophy of history, one could say that the mission of Israel continues, no longer as a common ecclesial mission, but as a temporal mission: “It is Israel that is assigned, in the order of temporal history and with its own ends, the work of *earthly activation* of the world. Israel—which is not of this world—is there at the very depths of the world body, to irritate it, to exasperate it, to *move* it. Like a foreign body, like an activating ferment introduced into the body, it does not let the world rest. It prevents it from sleeping. It teaches it to be dissatisfied and restless, insofar as it does not have God, as long as there is no justice on the earth. It stimulates the movement of history” (Jacques Maritain, “L’Impossible Antisémitisme”, in *Questions de conscience* [Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1938] p. 66). [Back to text.](#)

³⁴ Even at those moments when, in the period of Medina, prophecy aids Muhammad in opportunely resolving his cases of personal conscience (cf. Blachère, *Problème*, pp. 109, 110, etc.), one can, strictly speaking, think that

there is a simple illusion there. [Back to text.](#)

³⁵ Louis Massignon cites some words of Hallâj: “If there had been thrown onto the mountains an atom of that which I have in my heart, they would melt. . . . When God takes a heart, he empties it of that which is not him; when he loves a servant, he invites the others to persecute him, in order that this servant might take refuge in God alone. . . . It is in the confession of the Cross that I will die” (*Le Dîwân* [Paris, 1955], pp. XVI to XXI).

On the interior attitude of Hallâj, see Louis Gardet, *Expériences mystiques en terres non chrétiennes* (Paris, Alsace, 1953), pp. 131ff. [Back to text.](#)

³⁶ Koran, 30, 29; 16, 121. [Back to text.](#)

³⁷ See above, p. 299. [Back to text.](#)

³⁸ *Epistola* 43, no. 1, cited by St. Thomas, *ST* II—II, q. 11, a. 2 ad 3. [Back to text.](#)

³⁹ Note E of *Apologia pro vita sua* (London, 1920), pp. 379-83. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁰ Martin Jugie, *Theologia dogmatica christianorum orientalium ab Ecclesia dissidentium* (Paris, 1926), 1:20. [Back to text.](#)

⁴¹ *Enarr. in Psalm.* 127, no. 13. Cf. *Contra Faustum*, bk. 12, chap. 20. [Back to text.](#)

⁴² M.-J. Congar, O.P., *Chrétiens désunis, Principes d’un “œcuménisme” catholique* (Paris, 1937), preface. [Back to text.](#)

⁴³ Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1949. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁴ Jacques Maritain, *Raison et raisons* (Paris, 1947), pp. 160 and 186. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁵ PL 16, 1368 and 1374. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁶ The Latin text is found in *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, vol. 127, no. 4 (October 1952), pp. 307-11. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁷ See above, p. 216. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁸ *Sermo* 15, no. 6. [Back to text.](#)

Chapter X

¹ Chapter 8, emphasis added. [Back to text.](#)

² Introductory address, emphasis added. [Back to text.](#)

³ Chapter 19, no. 2, emphasis added. [Back to text.](#)

⁴ Jacques Maritain, *Court traité de l’existence et de l’existant* (Paris, 1947),

p. 198. [Back to text.](#)

⁵ Paul Claudel, *Positions et propositions* (Paris, 1934), 2:83. [Back to text.](#)

⁶ *L'Europe et la question allemande* (Paris, 1937), pp. 3-4. [Back to text.](#)

⁷ M.-J. Congar, O.P., *Chrétiens désunis, Principes d'un "oecuménisme" catholique* (Paris, 1937), p. 317. [Back to text.](#)

⁸ Jacques Maritain, *Humanisme intégral* (Paris, 1946), pp. 133-34. [Back to text.](#)

⁹ St. Thomas, *Quodlibet XII*, q. 13, a. 19 ad 2. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁰ On these "vestiges", see above, p. 157. [Back to text.](#)

¹¹ Olivier Lacombe, *Chemins de l'Inde et Philosophie chrétienne*, chap. 1: "Catholicité" (Paris, Alsace, 1956). [Back to text.](#)

¹² St. Thomas, *ST I*, q. 43. [Back to text.](#)

¹³ *Sermo 96*, nos. 8 and 9. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴ P.-J. de Menasce, O.P., "Catholicité de l'Église et ordre de la charité", *Annuaire Missionnaire Catholique de la Suisse* (Fribourg), 1939, pp. 11-13. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵ P.-J. de Menasce, "Polarité de l'activité missionnaire", *Nouvelle Revue de Science missionnaire* (Beckenried), 1945, p. 82. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶ Pope Pius XII, AAS, 1944, p. 208. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷ AAS, 1926, p. 74. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸ Menasce, "Polarité", p. 82. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹ Pope Benedict XV, letter *Maximum illud*, AAS, 1919, p. 445. [Back to text.](#)

²⁰ Menasce, "Catholicité", pp. 14 and 15. [Back to text.](#)

²¹ P.-J. de Menasce, "Sur le nationalisme en pays de mission", *Nouvelle Revue de science missionnaire*, 1947, p. 1. [Back to text.](#)

²² "We do not know the positive limits of natural forces, but we do know certain of their negative limits. We do not know how far they go; we do believe to be able to affirm that they certainly do not go just anywhere. In combining oxygen and hydrogen, one will *never* obtain chlorine; in sowing some wheat, one will *never* obtain roses; and likewise, a human word will *never* suffice by itself to calm storms or raise the dead. . . . If anyone, in sowing wheat, believes that maybe roses will grow from its seeds. . . he is abnormal" (J. de Tonquedec, S.J., *Introduction à l'étude du merveilleux et du miracle* [Paris, 1916], p. 230). [Back to text.](#)

²³ *Adversus haereses*, bk. 1, chap. 10. [Back to text.](#)

²⁴ *Ibid.*, bk. 5, chap. 20. [Back to text.](#)

²⁵ *In Epist. Joan.*, hom. 1, no. 13. [Back to text.](#)

²⁶ *Enarr. in Ps. 147*, no. 19. [Back to text.](#)

²⁷ *Die Einheit der Kirche* (Tubingen, 1825), pp. 173ff. The author is contrasting here the words *Gegensätze* and *Widersprüche*. [Back to text.](#)

²⁸ One perceives here the assimilating power, the power of catholicity, of a very lofty synthesis. Father Jules Monchanin thinks that, since the danger for India is acosmism rather than atheism, it will not be converted and its values will only be saved by illuminating the world for it with divine life: the teaching of plurality of persons within the Absolute will allow India to understand the true distinction between “you” and “me” in creatures; the teaching of a redeeming sacrifice that does not reduce the world to smoke but sanctifies it without consuming it will lead India to understand the price of creation. Cf. “L’Inde et la contemplation”, *Dieu Vivant*, no. 3. [Back to text.](#)

²⁹ Paul Claudel, preface to *A la trace de Dieu*, by Jacques Rivière; in *Positions et propositions* 2:79. [Back to text.](#)

³⁰ This is the perspective adopted by St. Justin in his *Dialogue with Trypho*. See M.-J. Lagrange, *Saint Justin* (1914), pp. 24-66. [Back to text.](#)

³¹ Cf. the deficiency of the “explanations” of Spinoza or Renan. [Back to text.](#)

³² *Revue biblique*, 1906, p. 534. Some points of reference can be found in *L’Église du Verbe incarné*, 2:1278-88. [Back to text.](#)

Chapter XI

¹ *Lettre à une demoiselle de Metz sur le mystère de l’unité de l’Église*. [Back to text.](#)

² *De civitate Dei*, bk. 14, chap. 28. [Back to text.](#)

³ *Enarr. in Ps. 62*, no. 2. [Back to text.](#)

⁴ *Enarr. in Ps. 40*, no. 30. [Back to text.](#)

⁵ *Adversus haereses*, bk. 3, chap. 24, no. 1. [Back to text.](#)

Conclusion

¹ St. John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, strophe 40, verse 2. [Back to text.](#)

² St. John of the Cross, *The Living Flame of Love*, strophe 1, verse 1. [Back to text.](#)

³ Ibid., strophe 1, verse 5. [Back to text.](#)

⁴ See above pp. 69-76. [Back to text.](#)

⁵ “Those who do not love the truth use the pretext of dispute, of the multitude of those who deny it. And thus their error comes from those who do not love truth or charity; and thus they are not excused” (Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. B., no. 261).—In the presence of dissidences, it is easy to object that Christianity is “a tired river that makes a delta”. It is also easy to respond that Christianity, which is life, rises up in the midst of consequences; for the essence of a vital tendency, as Bergson says, “is to develop in the form of a sheaf of wheat”. It is eminently advisable, nevertheless, when one thinks of the Kingdom that is not of this world, to transcend mere images. [Back to text.](#)

⁶ *De civitate Dei*, bk. 16, chap. 11.—“Man, made for truth, is capable of it with such difficulty and moves so naturally toward the facile, that those who possess the principles of truth usually refrain from advancing very far, when they do not become entrenched in the accepted formulas—and it is indeed a great virtue to preserve and transmit formulas of truth—and those who are worried about advancing, by ignoring the principles or focusing their anxiety on them, quite often advance in error” (Jacques Maritain, *Réflexions sur l’intelligence et sur sa vie propre* [Paris, 1924], p. 305). [Back to text.](#)

⁷ *Maxims*, in John of the Cross, *Obras*, ed. Silverio, 4:232. [Back to text.](#)

⁸ Cf. “Le Royaume de Dieu sur terre”, *Nova et Vetera*, 1935, pp. 201-9. [Back to text.](#)

⁹ This is the vision of the end of the world that Vladimir Soloviev tries to describe in his *Courte relation sur l’Antéchrist*. [Back to text.](#)

Appendix I

* This journal article was published after Vatican II in the *Revue Thomiste*. [Back to text.](#)

¹ Paul VI, “Address at the Opening of the Second Session of the Second Vatican Council”, in *Council Daybook: Vatican II*, ed. Floyd Anderson (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1965), 1:143-50 at p. 144b [hereafter abbreviated “Second Session”]. [Back to text.](#)

² Paul VI, “Address at the Opening of the Third Session of the Second

Vatican Council”, in Anderson, *Council Daybook*, 2:6-10 at p. 8b [hereafter abbreviated “Third Session”]. [Back to text.](#)

³ Ibid, p. 6a—b. [Back to text.](#)

⁴ Ibid., p. 6a. [Back to text.](#)

⁵ Ibid. [Back to text.](#)

⁶ Ibid., pp. 6b—7a. [Back to text.](#)

⁷ Paul VI, “Letter to His Eminence Cardinal Tisserant”, translated from the French version in *DC 61* (1964), cols. 1153-56 (cf. 1154). [Back to text.](#)

⁸ In this regard, Fr. Antoine Wenger wrote in *La Croix*, September 18, 1964: “Long and regular usage by Byzantine preachers has endeared this title [of Mary Mediatrix] to us. I still remember the joy I felt in receiving from Sinai the oldest manuscript, dating from the early ninth century, containing the homily of St. Germanus of Constantinople in which the term *mediatrix* appeared for the first time. Although the term was new, the idea was ancient. Ever since St. Irenaeus, Mary has been called the *New Eve* and *Cause of Salvation*, and Greek homilists gradually attributed to her an intercession so thoroughgoing that it was the equivalent of a mediation. Later, it was our privilege to publish the magnificent discourse of John the Geometer of the tenth century. This author, who managed to penetrate the mystery of Mary more than any other, unfortunately remains unknown, or nearly so, even among specialists. He proclaims Mary assumed into heaven and Queen of the universe, the second Mediatrix at the side of the first Mediator.” [Back to text.](#)

⁹ Yves M.-J. Congar, *Le Concile au jour le jour: Deuxième session* (Paris: Éd. du Cerf, 1964), pp. 14ff. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁰ Antoine Wenger, *Vatican II: Chronique de la deuxième session*, “L’Église en son temps” (Paris: Éd. du Centurion, 1964), pp. 124-25. The four goals or ends of the Council are reduced to three ways in the encyclical *Ecclesiam suam*, dated August 6, 1964: (“Awareness, renewal, and dialogue are the ways that are opening up today before the living Church, and they form the three chapters of the encyclical”, Audience of August 5, 1964, translated from the French of *DC 61* [1964], col. 1095). “The dialogue presupposes a state of mind in us who have the intention of introducing and fostering it with all around us: the state of mind of someone who senses within himself the weight of the apostolic mandate; of someone who knows that he can no longer separate his salvation from the quest for the salvation of others; of someone who applies himself continually to the task of putting this

message that has been entrusted to him into circulation in the exchanges among men” (AAS 56 [1964], p. 644 [translated from the French of *DC* 61 (1964), col. 1082]). [Back to text.](#)

¹¹ Cf. Antoine Wenger, in *La Croix*, October 21, 1964: “Someone who is not attending the Council could not imagine the amount of theological and historical knowledge that is displayed each day in the various interventions of the Fathers. In this sense the Council is truly a worldwide encounter. We have experienced this, once again, on the occasion of the debate on the Eastern Churches.” [Back to text.](#)

¹² *Constitutio dogmatica de Ecclesia* [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church], *Lumen Gentium* (henceforth abbreviated LG), 4, in Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II*, vol. 1, *The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*, new rev. ed. (New York: Costello Publishing Co., 1996). [Back to text.](#)

¹³ LG 2: “Omnes justi inde ab Adam, ‘ab Abel justo usque ad ultimum electum’, in Ecclesia universali apud Patrem congregabuntur.” [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴ “Second Session,” p. 143a. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵ LG 9: “Sicut vero Israel secundum carnem, qui in deserto peregrinabatur, Dei Ecclesia jam appellatur (*II Esdr.* XIII, I; *Num.* XX, 4; *Deut.* XXIII, I ss.) [14], ita novus Israel qui in praesenti saeculo incedens, futuram eamque manentem civitatem inquit (cf. *Heb.* XIII, 14), etiam Ecclesia Christi nuncupatur (cf. *Mat.* XVI, 18), quippe quam ipse sanguine suo acquisivit (cf. *Act.* XX, 28), suo Spiritu replevit, aptisque mediis unionis visibilis et socialis instruxit. Deus congregationem eorum qui in Jesum, salutis auctorem et unitatis pacisque principium, credentes aspiciunt, convocavit et constituit Ecclesiam, ut sit universis et singulis sacramentum visibile hujus salutiferae unitatis.” [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶ LG 6: “Ecclesia. . . describitur ut *sponsa* immaculata Agni immaculati (*Apo.* XIX, 7; XXI, 2, 9; XXII, 17), quam Christus ‘dilexit. . . et seipsum tradidit pro ea, ut illam sanctificaret’ (*Eph.* V, 26), quam sibi foedere indissolubili sociavit et indesinenter ‘nutrit et fovet’ (*Eph.* V, 29), et quam mundatam sibi voluit conjunctam et in dilectione ac fidelitate subditam (cf. *Eph.* V, 24), quam tandem bonis caelestibus in aeternum cumulavit, ut Dei et Christi erga nos caritatem, quae omnem scientiam superat, comprehendamus (cf. *Eph.* III, 19).” [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷ LG 9: “Per tentationes vero et tribulationes procedens Ecclesia virtute gratiae Dei sibi a Domino promissae confortatur, ut in infirmitate carnis a

perfecta fidelitate non deficiat, sed Domini sui digna sponsa remaneat, et sub actione Spiritus sancti, seipsam renovare non desinat, donec per crucem perveniat ad lucem, quae nescit occasum.” [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸ LG 3: “Christus ideo, ut voluntatem Patris impleret, regnum caelorum in terris inauguravit nobisque ejus mysterium revelavit, atque oboedientia sua redemptionem effecit. Ecclesia, seu regnum Christi jam praesens in mysterio, ex virtute Dei in mundo visibiliter crescit.” [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹ LG 5: “Ecclesiae sanctae mysterium in ejusdem fundatione manifestatur. Dominus enim Jesus Ecclesiae suae initium fecit praedicando faustum nuntium, adventum scilicet regni Dei a saeculis in Scripturis promissi: ‘Quoniam impletum est tempus, et appropinquavit regnum Dei’ (*Marc.* I, 15; cf. *Mat.* IV, 17). Hoc vero regnum in verbo, operibus et praesentia Christi hominibus elucescit. Verbum nempe Domini comparatur semini, quod in agro seminatur (*Marc.* IV, 14): qui illud cum fide audiunt et Christi pusillo gregi (cf. *Luc.* XII, 32) adnumerantur, regnum ipsum susceperunt; propria dein virtute semen germinat et increscit usque ad tempus messis (cf. *Marc.* IV, 26-29). Miracula etiam Jesu regnum jam in terris pervenisse comprobant: ‘Si in digito Dei ejicio daemona, profecto pervenit in vos regnum Dei’ (*Luc.* XI, 20; cf. *Mat.* XII, 28). Ante omnia tamen regnum manifestatur in ipsa persona Christi, Filii Dei et Filii hominis, qui venit ‘ut ministraret, et daret animam suam redemptionem pro multis’ (*Marc.* X, 45). . . . Unde Ecclesia, donis sui fundatoris instructa fideliterque ejusdem praecepta caritatis, humilitatis et abnegationis servans, missionem accipit regnum Christi et Dei annuntiandi et in omnibus gentibus instaurandi, hujusque regni in terris germen et initium constituit. Ipsa interea, dum paulatim increscit, ad regnum consummatum anhelat, ac totis viribus sperat et exoptat cum Rege suo in gloria conjungi.” [Back to text.](#)

²⁰ LG 9: “In omni quidem tempore et in omni gente Deo acceptus est quicumque timet eum et operatur justitiam (cf. *Act.* X, 35). Placuit tamen Deo homines non singulatim, quavis mutua connexione seclusa, sanctificare et salvare, sed eos in populum constituere, qui in veritate ipsum agnosceret ipsique sancte serviret. Plebem igitur israeliticam sibi in populum elegit, quocum foedus instituit et quem gradatim instruxit, sese atque propositum voluntatis suae in ejus historia manifestando eumque sibi sanctificando. Haec tamen omnia in praeparationem et figuram contigerunt foederis illius novi et perfecti, in Christo feriendi, et plenioris revelationis per ipsum Dei Verbum carnem factum tradendae. ‘Ecce dies venient, dicit Dominus, et feriam domui

Israel et domui Juda foedus novum. . . . Dabo legem meam in visceribus eorum, et in corde eorum scribam eam, et ero eis in Deum, et ipsi erunt mihi in populum. . . . Omnes enim cognoscent me, a minimo usque ad maximum, ait Dominus' (Jer. XXXI, 31-34). Quod foedus novum Christus instituit, novum scilicet Testamentum in suo sanguine (cf. *I Cor.* XI, 25), ex Judaeis ac Gentibus plebem vocans, quae non secundum carnem sed in Spiritu ad unitatem coalesceret, essetque novus populus Dei. Credentes enim in Christum, renati non ex semine corruptibili, sed incorruptibili per verbum Dei vivi (cf. *I Petr.* I, 23), non ex carne sed ex aqua et Spiritu sancto (cf. *Jo.* III, 5-6), constituuntur tandem 'genus electum, regale sacerdotium, gens sancta, populus acquisitionis. . . qui aliquando non populus, nunc autem populus Dei' (*I Petr.* II, 9-10). Populus ille messianicus habet pro capite Christum, 'qui traditus est propter delicta nostra et resurrexit propter justificationem nostram' (Rom. IV, 25), et nunc nomen quod est super omne nomen adeptus, gloriose regnat in coelis. Habet pro conditione dignitatem libertatemque filiorum Dei, in quorum cordibus Spiritus sanctus sicut in templo inhabitat. Habet pro lege mandatum novum diligendi sicut ipse Christus dilexit nos (cf. *Jo.* XIII, 34). Habet tandem pro fine regnum Dei, ab ipso Deo in terris inchoatum, ulterius dilatandum, donec in fine saeculorum ab ipso etiam consummetur, cum Christus apparuerit, vita nostra (cf. Col. III, 4), et 'ipsa creatura liberabitur a servitute corruptionis in libertatem gloriae filiorum Dei' (Rom. VIII, 21). Itaque populus ille messianicus, quamvis universos homines actu non comprehendat, et non semel ut pusillus grex appareat, pro toto tamen genere humano firmissimum est germen unitatis, spei et salutis." [Back to text.](#)

²¹ LG 7: "Ut autem in illo incessanter renovemur (cf. *Eph.* IV, 23), dedit nobis de Spiritu suo, qui unus et idem in capite et in membris existens, totum corpus ita vivificat, unificat et movet, ut ejus officium a sanctis Patribus comparari potuerit cum munere, quod principium vitae seu anima in corpore humano adimplet." [Back to text.](#)

²² Cf. LG 8. [Back to text.](#)

²³ Cf. LG 49. [Back to text.](#)

²⁴ "Second Session", pp. 145a—b. [Back to text.](#)

²⁵ "Third Session", p. 7a. [Back to text.](#)

²⁶ LG 4: "Opere autem consummato, quod Pater Filio commisit in terra faciendum (cf. *Jo.* XVII, 4), missus est Spiritus sanctus die Pentecostes, ut Ecclesiam jugiter sanctificaret, atque ita credentes per Chr istum in uno Spir

itu accessum haberent ad Patrem (cf. *Eph.* II, 18). Ipse est Spiritus vitae seu fons aquae salientis in vitam aeternam (cf. *Jo.* IV, 14; VII, 38-39), per quem Pater homines peccato mortuos vivificat, donec eorum mortalia corpora in Christo resuscitet (cf. *Rom.* VIII, 10-11). Spiritus in Ecclesia et in cordibus fidelium tanquam in templo habitat (cf. *I Cor.* III, 16; VI, 19), in eisque orat et testimonium adoptionis filiorum reddit (cf. *Gal.* IV, 6; *Rom.* VIII, 15-16, 26). Ecclesiam, quam in omnem veritatem inducit (cf. *Jo.* XVI, 13) et in communione et ministratione unificat, diversis donis hierarchicis et charismaticis instruit ac dirigit, et fructibus suis adornat (cf. *Eph.* IV, 11-12; *I Cor.* XII, 4; *Gal.* V, 22). Virtute Evangelii juvenescere facit Ecclesiam eamque perpetuo renovat et ad consummatam cum Sponso suo unionem perducit. Nam Spiritus et Sponsa ad Dominum Jesum dicunt: ‘Veni’ (cf. *Apo.* XXII, 17).” [Back to text.](#)

²⁷ LG 8: “Unicus Mediator Christus Ecclesiam suam sanctam, fidei, spei et caritatis communitatem his in terris ut compaginem visibilem constituit et indesinenter sustentat, qua veritatem et gratiam ad omnes diffundit. Societas autem organis hierarchicis instructa et mysticum Christi corpus, coetus adspectabilis et communitas spiritualis, Ecclesia terrestris et Ecclesia coelestibus bonis ditata, non ut duae res considerandae sunt, sed unam realitatem complexam efformant, quae humano et divino coalescit elemento. Ideo ob non mediocrem analogiam incarnati Verbi mysterio assimilatur. Sicut enim natura assumpta Verbo divino ut vivum organum salutis, et indissolubiliter unitum, inservit, non dissimili modo socialis compago Ecclesiae Spiritui Christi, eam vivificanti, ad augmentum corporis inservit (cf. *Eph.* IV, 16).” [Back to text.](#)

²⁸ LG 10 (emphasis added): “Sacerdotium autem commune fidelium et sacerdotium ministeriale seu hierarchicum, licet essentia et non gradu tantum differant, ad invicem tamen ordinantur; unum enim et alterum suo peculiari modo de uno Christi sacerdotio participant. Sacerdos quidem ministerialis, potestate sacra qua gaudet, populum sacerdotalem efformat ac regit, sacrificium eucharisticum in persona Christi conficit illudque nomine totius populi Deo offert; fideles vero, vi regalis sui sacerdotii, in oblationem eucharistiae concurrunt, illudque in sacramentis suscipiendis, in oratione et gratiarum actione, testimonio vitae sanctae, abnegatione et actuosa caritate exercent.” [Back to text.](#)

²⁹ Cf. LG 11. [Back to text.](#)

³⁰ Cf. LG 12. [Back to text.](#)

³¹ Ibid.: “Idem praeterea Spiritus sanctus non tantum per sacramenta et ministeria populum Dei sanctificat et ducit eumque virtutibus ornat, sed dona sua ‘dividens singulis prout vult’ (*I Cor.* XII, 11), inter omnis ordinis fideles distribuit gratias quoque speciales, quibus illos aptos et promptos reddit ad suscipienda varia opera vel officia, pro renovatione et ampliore aedificatione Ecclesiae proficua, secundum illud: ‘Unicuique. . . datur manifestatio Spiritus ad utilitatem’ (*I Cor.* XII, 7). Quae charismata, sive clarissima, sive etiam simpliciora et latius diffusa, cum sint necessitatibus Ecclesiae apprime accommodata et utilia, cum gratiarum actione ac consolatione accipienda sunt. Dona autem extraordinaria non sunt temere expetenda, neque praesumptuose ab eis sperandi sunt fructus operarum apostolicarum; sed iudicium de eorum genuitate et ordinato exercitio ad eos pertinet, qui in Ecclesia praesunt, et quibus speciatim competit, non Spiritum extinguere, sed omnia probare et quod bonum est tenere (cf. *I Thess.* V, 12, 19-21).” [Back to text.](#)

³² St. Augustine, *Sermo* 96, 9. [Back to text.](#)

³³ Paul VI, encyclical *Ecclesiam suam*, August 6, 1964, in AAS 56 (1964), pp. 609-59. The passage cited is on pp. 623-24. The English translation is from the Vatican website, [http: www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam_en.html). [Back to text.](#)

³⁴ “Third Session”, p. 7a. [Back to text.](#)

³⁵ LG 19: “Apostoli autem praedicando ubique Evangelium (cf. *Marc.* XVI, 20), ab audientibus Spiritu sancto operante acceptum, Ecclesiam congregant universalem, quam Dominus in apostolis condidit et supra beatum Petrum, eorum principem, aedificavit, ipso summo angulari lapide Christo Jesu (cf. *Apo.* XXI, 14; *Mat.* XVI, 18; *Eph.* II, 20). [Back to text.](#)

³⁶ Cf. LG 20. [Back to text.](#)

³⁷ LG 21 (emphasis added): “Ad tanta munera explenda, Apostoli speciali effusione supervenientis Spiritus sancti a Christo ditati sunt (cf. *Act.* I, 8; II, 4; *Jo.* XX, 22-23), et ipsi adiutoribus suis per impositionem manuum donum spirituale tradiderunt (cf. *I Tim.* IV, 14; *II Tim.* I, 6-7), quod usque ad nos in episcopali consecratione transmissum est. Docet autem sancta Synodus episcopali consecratione plenitudinem conferri sacramenti Ordinis, quae nimirum et liturgica Ecclesiae consuetudine et voce sanctorum Patrum summum sacerdotium, sacri ministerii summa nuncupatur. Episcopalis autem

consecratio, cum munere sanctificandi, munera quoque confert docendi et regendi, quae tamen natura sua nonnisi in hierarchica communione cum collegii capite et membris exerceri possunt. Ex traditione enim, quae praesertim liturgicis ritibus et Ecclesiae tum Orientis tum Occidentis usu declaratur, perspicuum est manuum impositione et verbis consecrationis gratiam Spiritus sancti ita conferri et sacrum characterem ita imprimi, ut episcopi, eminenti ac adspectabili modo, ipsius Christi magistri, pastoris et pontificis partes sustineant et in ejus persona agant. Episcoporum est per sacramenta Ordinis novos electos in corpus episcopale assumere.” [Back to text.](#)

³⁸ See the conciliar schema of July 3, 1964, p. 86. [Back to text.](#)

³⁹ This “Explanatory Note” [in Latin: *Relatio super caput III textus emendati*] refers to the important passage from St. Thomas Aquinas, IIa-IIae, q. 39, a.3. The duty [*munus*] of sanctifying, which is already a power [*potestas*], can always be exercised validly; is it therefore sufficient in and of itself to represent “the ontological element” demanded by the duty [*munus*] of teaching and of governing? Or must we hold that episcopal consecration confers in addition a new ontological quality, which expressly consists of the duty [*munus*] of teaching and governing? This is the question being debated. Whatever the answer may be, the documents of recent popes that state that episcopal jurisdiction is derived from the pope must be understood to refer to “the juridical and canonical element” required in order that the *duty* of teaching and governing might be exercised as a *power* (cf. my *L’Église du Verbe incarné*, 3d ed. [1962], 1:737). [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁰ LG 22: “Romanus enim pontifex habet in Ecclesiam, vi muneris sui, vicarii scilicet Christi et totius Ecclesiae pastoris, plenam, supremam et universalem potestatem, quam semper libere exercere valet.” [Back to text.](#)

⁴¹ LG 25: “Haec autem infallibilitas, qua divinus Redemptor Ecclesiam suam in definienda doctrina de fide vel moribus instructam esse voluit, tantum patet quantum divinae revelationis patet depositum, sancte custodiendum et fideliter exponendum. Qua quidem infallibilitate romanus pontifex, collegii episcoporum caput, vi muneris sui gaudet, quando, ut supremus omnium christifidelium pastor et doctor, qui fratres suos in fide confirmat (cf. Luc. XXII, 32), doctrinam de fide vel moribus definitivo actu proclamat. Quare definitiones ejus ex sese, et non ex consensu Ecclesiae, irreformabiles merito dicuntur, quippe quae sub assistentia Spiritus sancti, ipsi in beato Petro promissa, prolatae sint, ideoque nulla indigeant aliorum

approbatione, nec ullam ad aliud iudicium appellationem patiantur. Tunc enim romanus pontifex non ut persona privata sententiam profert, sed ut universalis Ecclesiae magister supremus, in quo charisma infallibilitatis ipsius Ecclesiae singulariter inest, doctrinam fidei catholicae exponit vel tuetur.” [Back to text.](#)

⁴² LG 25: “Hoc vero religiosum voluntatis et intellectus obsequium singulari ratione praestandum est romani pontificis authentico magisterio etiam cum non ex cathedra loquitur; ita nempe ut magisterium ejus supremum reverenter agnoscatur, et sententiis ab eo prolatis sincere adhaereatur, juxta mentem et voluntatem manifestatam ipsius, quae se prodit praecipue sive indole documentorum, sive ex frequenti propositione ejusdem doctrinae, sive ex dicendi ratione.” [Back to text.](#)

⁴³ “Third Session”, p. 8b. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁴ Cf. LG 22. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁵ Cf. LG 25. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁶ Cf. LG 23. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁷ This “Explanatory Note” is usually printed after the Constitution on the Church; for instance, on pages 423-26 of the Austin P. Flannery edition of the *Documents of Vatican II*. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁸ The “Explanatory Note” specifies further that the supreme pontiff can carry out alone certain acts that are entirely beyond the competence of the bishops, for example, convoking and presiding over a council, etc. In his capacity as supreme pastor of the Church, he can exercise his power at any time, at will, as his duty may require. The college, in contrast, does exist at all times, yet it does not always act in a *strictly* collegial manner. It is not always fully functional (*in actu pleno*). Only occasionally does it carry out a strictly collegial act; and it can act in that way only with the consent of its head, by virtue of an act proceeding from the head in his own right. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁹ Wilhelm Bertrams, S.J., *De Relatione inter episcopatum et primum: Principia philosophica et theologica quibus relatio juridica fundatur inter officium episcopale et primum* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1963). [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁰ Although it is true that their function (*munus*) is theirs, in this case, too, thanks to their episcopal consecration, this function can only be exercised and become a power (*potestas*) by virtue of a hierarchical mandate. This mandate, among the separated Eastern Churches that exercise *de facto* power, can be

signified by legitimate customs that have not been revoked by the supreme authority of the Church. But the Council did not go into these questions, which are debated by theologians. [Back to text.](#)

⁵¹ Cf. “Third Session”, p. 9b. [Back to text.](#)

⁵² Cf. LG 29. [Back to text.](#)

⁵³ Ibid. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁴ “Third Session”, p. 9a. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 9b. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 6b—7a. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁷ “Second Session”, p. 147b. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 147b-48a. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁹ Cf. LG 13. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁰ “Second Session”, p. 147b. [Back to text.](#)

⁶¹ Cf. LG 32. [Back to text.](#)

⁶² Cf. LG 33. [Back to text.](#)

⁶³ Cf. LG 34-36. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁴ LG 31: “Laicorum est, ex vocatione propria, res temporales gerendo et secundum Deum ordinando, regnum Dei quaerere. In saeculo vivunt, scilicet in omnibus et singulis mundi officiis et operibus et in ordinariis vitae familiaris et socialis condicionibus, quibus eorum existentia quasi contextitur. Ibi a Deo vocantur, ut suum proprium munus exercendo, spiritu evangelico ducti, fermenti instar ad mundi sanctificationem velut ab intra conferant, sicque praeprimis testimonio vitae suae, fide, spe et caritate fulgentes, Christum aliis manifestent. Ad illos ergo peculiari modo spectat res temporales omnes, quibus arcte conjunguntur, ita illuminare et ordinare, ut secundum Christum jugiter fiant et crescant et sint in laudem Creatoris et Redemptoris.” [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁵ Cf. LG 17. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁶ LG 39: “Ecclesia, cujus mysterium a sacra Synodo proponitur, indefectibiliter sancta creditur. Christus enim, Dei Filius, qui cum Patre et Spiritu ‘solus Sanctus’ celebratur, Ecclesiam tanquam sponsam suam dilexit, seipsum tradens pro ea, ut illam sanctificaret (cf. Eph. V, 25-26), eamque sibi ut corpus suum conjunxit atque Spiritus sancti dono cumulavit, ad gloriam Dei.” [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁷ Cf. LG 14. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁸ LG 8: “Dum vero Christus, ‘sanctus, innocens, impollutus’ (*Heb.* VII,

26), peccatum non novit (cf. *II Cor.* V, 21), sed sola delicta populi repropitiare venit (cf. *Heb.* II, 17), Ecclesia in proprio sinu peccatores complectens, sancta simul et semper purificanda, poenitentiam et renovationem continuo prosequitur. ‘Inter persecutiones mundi et consolationes Dei peregrinando procurrit’ Ecclesia, crucem et mortem Domini annuntians, donec veniat (cf. *I Cor.* XI, 26). Virtute autem Domini resuscitati roboratur, ut afflictiones et difficultates suas, internas pariter et extrinsecas, patientia et caritate devincat, et mysterium ejus, licet sub umbris, fideliter tamen in mundo revelet, donec in fine lumine pleno manifestabitur.” [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁹ Paul VI, encyclical *Ecclesiam suam*, no. 46. (Latin original in AAS, pp. 629 and 630.) [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁰ “Second Session”, p. 147a. [Back to text.](#)

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 148a. [Back to text.](#)

⁷² “Third Session”, p. 6b. [Back to text.](#)

⁷³ LG 40: “Cum vero in multis offendimus omnes (cf. *Jac.* III, 2), misericordiae Dei jugiter egemus atque orare quotidie debemus: ‘Et dimitte nobis debita nostra’ (*Mat.* VI, 12).” [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁴ Cf. LG 41. [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁵ LG 42: “Martyrium igitur, quo discipulus Magistro pro mundi salute mortem libere accipienti assimilatur, eique in effusione sanguinis conformatur, ab Ecclesia eximium donum supremaque probatio caritatis aestimatur. Quod si paucis datur, omnes tamen parati sint oportet, Christum coram hominibus confiteri, eumque inter persecutiones, quae Ecclesiae numquam desunt, in via crucis subsequi.” [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁶ Ibid.: “Ecclesia etiam Apostoli monitionem recogitat, qui fideles ad caritatem provocans, eos exhortatur, ut hoc in se sentiant quod et in Christo Jesu, qui ‘semetipsum exinanivit formam servi accipiens,. . . factus oboediens usque ad mortem’ (*Philip.* II, 7-8) et propter nos ‘egenus factus est, cum esset dives’ (*II Cor.* VIII, 9). Hujus caritatis et humilitatis Christi imitationem et testimonium cum a discipulis semper praeberi necesse sit, gaudet Mater Ecclesia plures in sinu suo inveniri viros ac mulieres, qui exinanitionem Salvatoris pressius sequuntur et clarius demonstrant, paupertatem in filiorum Dei libertate suscipientes et propriis voluntatibus abrenuntiantes: illi scilicet sese homini propter Deum in re perfectionis ultra mensuram praecepti subjiciunt, ut Christo oboedienti sese plenius conforment.” [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁷ Cf. LG 44 and 46. [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁸ LG 49: “Donec ergo Dominus venerit in maiestate sua et omnes angeli cum eo (cf. *Mat.* XXV, 31) et, destructa morte, illi subiecta fuerint omnia (cf. *I Cor.* XV, 26-27), alii e discipulis eius in terris peregrinantur, alii hac vita functi purificantur, alii vero glorificantur intuentes ‘clare ipsum Deum trinum et unum, sicuti est’; omnes tamen, gradu quidem modoque diverso, in eadem Dei et proximi caritate communicamus et eundem hymnum gloriae Deo nostro canimus. Universi enim qui Christi sunt, Spiritum eius habentes, in unam Ecclesiam coalescunt et invicem cohaerent in ipso (cf. *Eph.* IV, 16). Viatorum igitur unio cum fratribus qui in pace Christi dormierunt, minime intermittitur, immo secundum perennem Ecclesiae fidem, spiritualium bonorum communicatione roboratur. Ex eo enim quod coelites intimius cum Christo uniuntur, totam Ecclesiam in sanctitatem firmitus consolidant, cultum, quem ipsa hic in terris Deo exhibet, nobilitant ac multipliciter ad ampliorem eius aedificationem contribuunt (cf. *I Cor.* XII, 12-27). Nam in patriam recepti et praesentes ad Dominum (cf. *II Cor.* V, 8), per ipsum, cum ipso et in ipso non desinunt apud Patrem pro nobis intercedere, exhibentes merita quae per unum Mediatorem Dei et hominum, Christum Jesum (cf. *I Tim.* II, 5) in terris sunt adepti, Domino in omnibus servientes et adimplentes ea quae desunt passionum Christi in carne sua pro corpore eius quod est Ecclesia (cf. *Col.* I, 24). Eorum proinde fraterna sollicitudine infirmitas nostra plurimum juvatur.” [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁹ Cf. LG 50. [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁰ LG 61: “Christum concipiens, generans, alens, in templo Patri sistens, Filioque suo in cruce morienti compatiens, operi Salvatoris singulari prorsus modo cooperata est, oboedientia, fide, spe et flagrante caritate, ad vitam animarum supernaturalem restaurandam.” [Back to text.](#)

⁸¹ LG 62: “Haec autem in gratiae oeconomia maternitas Mariae indesinenter perdurat, inde a consensu quem in Annuntiatione fideliter praebeuit, quemque sub cruce incunctanter sustinuit, usque ad perpetuam omnium electorum consummationem. In coelis enim assumpta salutiferum hoc munus non deposuit, sed multiplici intercessione sua pergit in aeternae salutis donis nobis conciliandis.” [Back to text.](#)

⁸² Paul VI, “Speech at the Closing of the Third Session”, in Anderson, *Council Daybook*, 1:303—at p. 306a-b. [Back to text.](#)

⁸³ Cf. LG 8. [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁴ LG 9: “Itaque populus ille messianicus, quamvis universos homines actu non comprehendat, et non semel ut pusillus grex appareat, pro toto tamen genere humano firmissimum est germen unitatis, spei et salutis.” [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁵ LG 14: “Ad fideles ergo catholicos imprimis sancta Synodus animum vertit. Docet autem, sacra Scriptura et Traditione innixa, Ecclesiam hanc peregrinantem necessariam esse ad salutem. Unus enim Christus est Mediator ac via salutis, qui in Corpore suo, quod est Ecclesia, praesens nobis fit; ipse autem necessitatem fidei et baptismi expressis verbis inculcando (cf. *Marc.* XVI, 16; *Jo.* III, 5), necessitatem Ecclesiae, in quam homines per baptismum tanquam per januam intrant, simul confirmavit. Quare illi homines salvari non possent, qui Ecclesiam catholicam a Deo per Jesum Christum ut necessariam esse conditam non ignorantes, tamen vel in eam intrare, vel in eadem perseverare noluerint. Illi plene Ecclesiae societati incorporantur, qui Spiritum Christi habentes, integram ejus ordinationem omniaque media salutis in ea instituta accipiunt, et in ejusdem compage visibili cum Christo, eam per summum pontificem atque episcopos regente, junguntur, vinculis nempe professionis fidei, sacramentorum et ecclesiastici regiminis ac communionis. Non salvatur tamen, licet Ecclesiae incorporetur, qui in caritate non perseverans, in Ecclesiae sinu ‘corpore’ quidem, sed non ‘corde’ remanet. . . . Catechumeni qui, Spiritu sancto movente, explicita voluntate ut Ecclesiae incorporentur expetunt, hoc ipso voto cum ea conjunguntur; quos jam ut suos dilectione curaque complectitur Mater Ecclesia.” [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁶ LG 15: “Cum illis qui, baptizati, christiani nomine decorantur, integram autem fidem non profitentur vel unitatem communionis sub successore Petri non servant, Ecclesia semetipsam novit plures ob rationes conjunctam. Sunt enim multi, qui sacram Scripturam ut normam credendi et vivendi in honore habent sincerumque zelum religiosum ostendunt, amanter credunt in Deum Patrem omnipotentem et in Christum, Filium Dei Salvatorem, baptismo signantur, quo Christo conjunguntur, imo et alia sacramenta in propriis Ecclesiis vel communitatibus ecclesiasticis agnoscunt et recipiunt. Plures inter illos et episcopatu gaudent, sacram eucharistiam celebrant necnon pietatem erga Deiparam Virginem fovant. Accedit orationum aliorumque beneficiorum spiritualium communio; imo vera quaedam in Spiritu sancto conjunctio, quippe qui donis et gratiis etiam in illis sua virtute sanctificante operatur, et quosdam illorum usque ad sanguinis effusionem roboravit. Ita Spiritus in cunctis Christi discipulis desiderium actionemque suscitatur, ut

omnes, modo a Christo statuto, in uno grege sub uno pastore pacifice uniantur. Quod ut obtineat, Ecclesia Mater precari, sperare et agere non desinit, filiosque ad purificationem et renovationem exhortatur, ut signum Christi super faciem Ecclesiae clarius effulgeat.” [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁷ “Second Session”, p. 147b. [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁸ “Third Session”, pp. 10a, 10b. [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁹ Paul VI, encyclical *Ecclesiam suam*, no. 110 (AAS, p. 656). [Back to text.](#)

⁹⁰ The conciliar *Decree on Ecumenism*, after an introduction, studies (1) the Catholic principles on ecumenism; (2) the practice of ecumenism; and (3) Churches and ecclesial communities separated from the Roman Apostolic See: first the Eastern Churches, then the Churches and ecclesial communities of the West. (See Flannery, *Vatican Council II*, 1:452-70.) [Back to text.](#)

⁹¹ LG 16: “Ii tandem qui Evangelium nondum acceperunt, ad populum Dei diversis rationibus ordinantur. In primis quidem populus ille cui data fuerunt testamenta et prom-issa et ex quo Christus ortus est secundum carnem (cf. *Rom.* IX, 4-5), populus secundum electionem carissimus propter Patres: sine poenitentia enim sunt dona et vocatio Dei (cf. *Rom.* XI, 28-29). Sed propositum salutis et eos amplectitur, qui Creatorem agnoscunt, inter quos imprimis Musulmanos, qui fidem Abrahae se tenere profitentes, nobiscum Deum adorant unicum, misericordem, homines die novissimo iudicaturum. Neque ab aliis, qui in umbris et imaginibus Deum ignotum quaerunt, ab huiusmodi Deus ipse longe est, cum det omnibus vitam et inspirationem et omnia (cf. *Act.* XVII, 25-28), et Salvator velit omnes homines salvos fieri (cf. *I Tim.* II, 4). Qui enim Evangelium Christi ejusque Ecclesiam sine culpa ignorantes, Deum tamen sincero corde quaerunt, ejusque voluntatem per conscientiae dictamen agnitam, operibus adimplere, sub gratiae influxu, conantur, aeternam salutem consequi possunt. Nec divina Providentia auxilia ad salutem necessaria denegat his qui sine culpa ad expressam agnitionem Dei nondum pervenerunt et rectam vitam non sine divina gratia assequi nituntur. Quidquid enim boni et veri apud illos invenitur, ab Ecclesia tanquam praeparatio evangelica aestimatur et ab illo datum qui illuminat omnem hominem, ut tandem vitam habeat. At saepius homines, a Maligno decepti, evanuerunt in cogitationibus suis, et commutaverunt veritatem Dei in mendacium, servientes creaturae magis quam Creatori (*Rom.*I, 21, 25) vel sine Deo viventes ac morientes in hoc mundo, extremae desperationi exponuntur. Quapropter ad gloriam Dei et salutem istorum omnium promovendam, Ecclesia, memor mandati Domini dicentis: ‘Praedicate

Evangelium omni creaturae' (Marc. XVI, 15), missiones fovere sedulo curat." [Back to text.](#)

⁹² Paul VI, encyclical *Ecclesiam suam*, nos. 107-8 (AAS, pp. 654-55). The *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, a document that was put to a vote [at Vatican II] and has not yet been promulgated [as of the writing of this article for the *Revue Thomiste*; the document was promulgated as *Nostra aetate* on October 28, 1965], consists of five sections, which, after a (1) preamble; deal with (2) Hinduism, Buddhism and other religions; (3) the Muslims; (4) the Jews; and (5) the brotherhood of mankind as excluding all discrimination. [Back to text.](#)

⁹³ Leo XIII, encyclical *Immortale Dei*, November 1, 1885. [Back to text.](#)

Appendix 2

*Published after the Second Vatican Council in *Angelicum*. [Back to text.](#)

¹ "Inter persecutiones mundi et consolationes Dei peregrinando procurrit Ecclesia" (*The City of God*, bk. 18, chap. 51). [Back to text.](#)

² E.-B. Allo, *L'Apocalypse de saint Jean*, pp. 161-65. [Back to text.](#)

³ Journet, *L'Église du Verbe incarné*, 3d ed. (1962), 1:526. [Back to text.](#)

⁴ "The *crusade* is an enterprise of Christendom; the *mission* is an enterprise of Christianity. The cross that the crusaders carry into battle against the crescent is the emblem of a temporal Christian formation, and that is why it does not exclude the sword; the cross of the missionaries is entirely spiritual, it excludes the sword: 'Put your sword back into its place' (Mt 26:52). The saint of the crusades is St. Louis of France; the saint of the missions, in the same century, is St. Francis of Assisi. The time of the crusades, which was the era of a form of Christendom, was temporary, and it has passed. The time of mission, which is the time of Christianity, is permanent; it subsists by itself" (ibid., 2:1238). [Back to text.](#)

⁵ "In an age when the world no longer had much respect or esteem, except for worldly power, when the general tendency in politics was to make the temporal authority prevail over the spiritual authority, when political considerations involved the former even in the discussion of purely religious questions, the popes were obliged to seek in the consolidation of their temporal power a support for their spiritual power, which had been thoroughly shaken" (Louis Pastor, *Histoire des papes*, 6:424). The consolidation of temporal power brought about certain benefits, like the

victory at Lepanto, which was to crush the expansion of Islam. But it could also obscure for some, on the eve of the Reformation, the spiritual character of the Roman Church. Gustave Schnürer, in response to Pastor, says that it would have been preferable to allow the papacy to “descend into the catacombs” and that such a humiliation would not have been too great a price to pay for the unity of the Church in the West (*L’Église et la civilisation au Moyen Age*, 3:546). [Back to text.](#)

⁶ AAS (1929), p. 108. [Back to text.](#)

⁷ “When the civil principality of the popes falls [Frederick II wrote to his friend Voltaire], we shall be victorious and the curtain will have come down. They’ll give the Holy Father a big pension. But then what will happen? France, Spain, Poland, in a word all the Catholic powers will not want to recognize a vicar of Jesus Christ who is subordinate to the imperial might. Each one, then, will create a national patriarch. . . . Little by little each country will stray from the unity of the Church, and each kingdom will end up having its own separate religion as well as its own language.” Quoted by G. Glez, “Pouvoir temporel du pape”, in *Dictionnaire théologique catholique*, col. 2672. [Back to text.](#)

⁸ *Questions de conscience* (1938), p. 269. [Back to text.](#)

⁹ *Les Écrits spirituels de Marie de l’Incarnation*, 2:311. [Back to text.](#)