

Membership in the Church: Fundamental Questions

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A pressing question before the Church today is precisely "Who is a member?" The importance of this matter, which seems on the surface to be rather obvious, stems from two scandalous but simple facts. First, the division of Christianity into competing sects has created the difficulty of defining the relationship of these sects to the true Church. Second, modern Catholics who deny even the most basic of Church teachings often confuse the issue by refusing to admit that they have left the Church. It is in this context, then, that F&R publishes the following rigorous, careful and technical treatment of Church membership by William H. Marshner. The argument demands and deserves careful reading and rereading with full attention to the notes. It is true that the casual reader will find certain traditional attitudes toward Church membership reinforced by the author's conclusions. But the painstaking student of this article will find much more, for presented here are basic distinctions which go far toward ending the confusion about who is a member in good standing of the Catholic Church and who, in fact, is not.

This article attempts to resolve certain arcane questions concerning Church membership-questions which are directly relevant, however, to a dangerously confused issue in contemporary ecumenism. All theologians (at least, I know of no exceptions) recognize that certain spiritual treasures native and proper to the Roman Catholic Church (e.g. Scripture, Sacraments, infused faith) are verified both in particular persons and in denominational structures lying outside her visible frontiers. Hence the Second Vatican Council rightly observed that ecumenical approaches to non-Catholic Christians are not based on sentimentality but on the solid fact that the separated brethren already participate, to a greater or lesser degree, in those treasures. But many theologians have attempted to draw from this fact radical implications for ecclesiology itself. They do not hesitate to maintain that the Church must be understood henceforth as a concentric affair, within which the Roman Catholic body is only the innermost circle; that non-Catholic denominations are, therefore, "elements" within the total reality of the Church; and that the separated brothers themselves are thus in some way (or in some degree) already "members" of the Church. Whereupon both the Church and her membership become at least as much invisible as visible; the traditional Bellarminian ecclesiology collapses, and, with it, much that was firmly settled in the authentic teaching of recent popes, especially Pius XII.

I suggest that an adequate, critical evaluation of this viewpoint requires a deepened understanding both of "participants" and "In-embers", especially the latter. It is indeed a fair question whether recent theology has anywhere clarified the precise notion of "member of the Church" (*membrum ecclesiae*). A cursory acquaintance with the literature suffices to show that few theologians are currently interested in the topic. For, after accepting with little comment the teaching of *Mystici Corporis* as to who is, and who is not, a "member", they pass hurriedly along to what their major concern usually turns out to be, namely, the sense of St. Cyprian's formula, "outside the Church there is no salvation;" whereupon ingenious alterations are usually made in the notion of "Church", or even in the notion of "human nature".¹ It is here argued, however, that little fruitful discussion of this formula is possible until certain fundamental questions as to what

¹ See, e.g., K. Rahner, *Die Gliedschaft in der Kirche nach der Lehre der Enzyk. 'Mystici Corporis'* in *Schriften zur Theologie II* (Einsiedeln: Benziger), 1956; English trans. by Karl-H. Kruger, *Theological Investigations II* (Baltimore: Helicon Press), 1963, pp. 1-88.

ecclesiastical membership is have been raised and answered.

These questions are as follows:

- 1) Is membership in the Roman Catholic Church a real relation or a relation of reason?^{2, 3}
- 2) Is this same membership a relation to the Roman Catholic Church insofar as she is specifically identical with the Mystical Body of Christ [i.e., with reference to the identity of particular component members of both (ed.)], or rather insofar as she is reduplicatively distinct from it [i.e., with reference to distinctions made between two entities which are said to be 'doubles' of each other (ed.)]?
- 3) Does it make any real difference how we answer the first two questions?

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: A RELATION OF REASON

Membership is a term which ordinary language uses analogically to name (among others) these three quite different relations: a) that of organic parts to the organic body of which they are parts; b) that of participants to the group-activity in which they participate; and, c) that of legally recognized or credentialed persons to the social organization in and by which they are recognized. It is easy to show that each of these relations is necessarily of reason.

As to type *a*, if one says, "This hand is a member of my body," one must take *body* as naming a higher-order particular, that is, the set of which certain lower-order particulars such as *these hands* or *these feet* are the members. Such a statement reverses the metaphysical reality. The body is not in fact a set, nor are its members entities distinct from it. Having no *esse* (act-of-being) of their own, these organic parts cannot be subjects of a real relation to the man whose members they are. When, therefore, discourse treats them as such subjects and thereby treats the whole man as a sort of set, the relation is of reason.

As to the rather rare type *b*, one occasionally says, "He was a member of the hunt," or "She is a member of the wedding." The term of this relation (unless, perhaps, one is to supply mentally the word *party*) is an activity which requires by definition a plurality of participants;⁴ taken *fundamentaliter* [i.e., regarding the members as constituting the activity (ed.)], this activity simply is those participants *qua* participants, but taken *formaliter* [i.e., regarding the members as causing the action (ed.)] it is the action itself as distinct from the contribution of any one of its participants or even from that of all of them taken singly. Thus the *hunt* or the *wedding* names a term distinct from its participants only if taken *formaliter*, and, thus taken, it names no existent in reality. Hence this relation, too, is of reason.

The very common type *c* is now easily analyzed. To say, "George is a member of the Elks," is to relate George to a fictitious entity. Otherwise one falls into a social Platonism whereby the individual Elks are all "informed" by a subsistent universal called "The Elks' Club", or else (and

² The argumentation of this paper requires that the reader be familiar with the main outlines of the Thomistic theory of relations. Very briefly, a relation (e.g., fatherhood) is said to be 'real' if and only if its subject (this father), its term (this child), and its basis or fundamentum (in this case, the procreative power as reduced to act) are all given in the real. If any one of these three requirements is lacking, the relation is said to be 'of reason'. For a superb synthesis of the Thomistic texts, see John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Philosophicus I (Ars Logica)*, pars II, q. 17; a fine recent exposition both of the Thomistic theory and of John of St. Thomas' contributions to it is J.N. Deiby, *The Two Approaches to Language in The Thomist* 38 (1974) pp. 856-907.

³ For the sense of the distinction specificative/ reduplicative, cf. I. Salaverri, *De Ecclesia Christi in Sacrae Theologiae Summa I* (Madrid: BAC), 1962, no. 1006, p. 844.

⁴ It seems probable that certain recent theories of "Church", like certain Reformation ones, are modeled on this type of activity.

worse) one falls into a corporativism in which the organization alone is real, its members merely "moments" of it. But if social organizations lack an existence proper to themselves and distinct from that of their members, such organizations cannot be the terms of real relations. Of course, if one objects that the relation of the members to their officers is real, the point is well taken. But the officers are not the organization, and the real relation of the members to their officers (and *vice versa*) is but the *fundamentum* or basis for the relation of reason whereby both are referred to the *ens rationis* (mind-dependent being) called "the organization itself".

To distill a general rule as to why all three of the above-named relations are of reason, we may observe the following. In the natural order, it will never do to say "*x* is a member of *y*" where *x* and *y* are both particulars of the same logical order or type. One does not say, "My hand is a member of my foot" nor "George is a member of Sam," even if both are Elks. Rather, the expression to the right of "is a member of" is always at least one type higher than the expression to the left of it.⁵ Therefore, the expression which names the term of the relation can never name a real particular (or at least can never name it as a real particular), hence can never name what is properly said to exist as it exists (mind-independently).

In turning to the supernatural order, however, and particularly to the mysteries of Christ and His Church, one is not entitled to extrapolate freely the conclusion that membership is a relation of reason. For two anomalous cases at once appear.

First, as a supernatural instance of the members/ body relation, many particular persons are "members" of another particular person, Jesus Christ, Head of the Mystical Body. Leaving aside the important question of how such a membership can be reconciled with the rule requiring disparity of logical type, it suffices to observe here that this membership not only has real subjects and a real term but also a *fundamentum in re* (basis in reality), namely, the baptismal character at least, and probably also the infused virtue of faith. Hence the relation is real.

Second, as a supernatural instance of the juridical-person/ social organization relation, millions of persons are members of the Catholic Church. Here, however, it cannot be said that the Church is only a minddependent entity (*ens rationis*), and on two grounds. On the one hand, the visible Church finds her identity not in an abstract "moral person" to which her members figuratively ascribe their ecclesiastical acts, but rather in the Divine Person of Jesus Christ, whose mystical body she is, and without whom she, precisely as mere body, has no personality at all. On the other hand, just as each particular church, far from being an abstraction, subsists in the person of its bishop, so the Universal Church itself subsists in the person of the Roman Pontiff considered precisely as "Bishop of the Church", that is, as having a supreme and universal jurisdiction which is "truly episcopal, ordinary, and immediate".⁶ Hence, under either consideration, the members of the Church are related to a real term. But it remains to ask whether this relation has a *fundamentum in re*.

A DISTINCTION: PARTICIPATION AND MEMBERSHIP

By way of gathering evidence on this question, which is now the crucial one, we may look at two different questions: a) from what consideration of *Church* does the question of membership properly arise; and, b) who is said to have membership.

With few exceptions (e.g., Suarez), theological reflections on membership have derived ultimately from St. Robert Bellarmine's definition of the Church as the "assembly of men [*coetus hominum*] gathered together in the profession of the same Christian faith and in the communion of the same sacraments under the rule of legitimate pastors, and particularly the Roman Pontiff."⁷ Here the crucial terms are the first ones: by calling the Church *a coetus hominum*, Bellarmine was taking "Church" *fundamentaliter*, that is, defining it in terms of its human constituents, as opposed to taking it

⁵ For the theory of logical types, see B. Russell, *Mathematical Logic as Based on the Theory of Types* in C. Marsh, ed., *Logic and Knowledge* (New York: Putnam), 1956, pp. 59ff.

⁶ Vatican I, Const. Pastor Aeternus (Denz. 1827).

⁷ *De Controversiis* I (Ingolstadt, 1586), lib. iii, cap. 2, col. 1263.

formaliter as the Mystical Body or the structure (in socio-historical space) of salvation. It is only as taken *fundamentaliter*, after all, that the Church consists of human persons as members; taken the other way, it consists of structures and structured actions, both visible and invisible, whose final cause (and terminal effect) is the salvation of men in Christ Jesus. This is why criticism of Bellarmine's position and its derivatives as too "juridical", too exclusively "visible" or "ecclesiastical", and insufficiently "spiritual", "Biblical", "Patristic", or "ecclesial", are beside the point.⁸ The choice is not between a merely juridical definition and an adequately theological one, nor even between a nominal and a real one, but between taking the one Church *fundamentaliter* (whereby she includes her members as formal constituents) and taking her *formaliter* (whereby she includes them only as material cause).⁹

These two ways of taking the Church (together with the fact that the notion of membership flows logically and historically from only one of them) make possible a fundamental clarification. The question of membership, necessarily visible and juridical (and not merely conventionally so, as Rahner suggests¹⁰), has nothing to do with the question of participation, which follows upon the Church taken *formaliter* as the Mystical Body. "Membership" in the Church belongs only to those persons of whom she visibly consists. They also, and even thereby, *participate* in the Church, some salvifically, some not. But *participants* in the Church include also non-members-salvifically in the case of those who are "within" her by desire and *will (desiderio ac voto)*¹¹, non-salvifically in the case of those persons (and communions) who merely share some of her elements or goods.¹² This distinction between members and participants, with salvific and non-salvific possibilities for each, is one on which Fr. Rahner, for example, having replaced its only basis (the two ways of taking the

⁸ As to the Biblical evidence, a view of church membership as analogically political (hence a fortiori juridical) is already implicit in Paul's choice of the term *sympolitai* in Ephesians 2:19. Indeed, Paul's whole treatment of the gentile converts as "fellow citizens" rests upon his conviction that the ecclesia is in every important respect the true continuator of visible and corporate Israel. For Paul, "Church" is no more a mere activity, a "doing of church", as the phrase goes, than Israel was a "doing of Torah".

⁹ Of course these two ways of taking the Church cannot be divorced. If the Church *fundamentaliter* sumpta were a null set, the Church *formaliter* sumpta would lack a visible material cause and disappear from the earth. Because that eventuality is contrary to the salvific plan of God, membership is absolutely requisite for salvation for all those who know the Catholic Church to be the true Church or have known it at any time in their lives.

¹⁰ *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5 and 65-66. Rahner's assertion is that the restriction of the term "Church" to refer to the Roman Catholic Church, and the parallel restriction of the term "Mystical Body" to refer to that with which the Roman Catholic Church is specifically identical in the time between Pentecost and Parousia, is merely a matter of recent ecclesiastical usage, imposed by the Church's disciplinary authority and as such, of course, "dutifully" observed by him.

¹¹ Cf. *Mystici Corporis*, A.A.S. 35 (1943), p.242. The conclusion that those who are ordained to the Church *desiderio ac voto* are "within" the Church but not "members" of the Church follows from two considerations, one historical, the other logical. Historically, Pius XII's choice of terms is drawn from the mainstream theological tradition whose source is Bellarmine's statement that catechumens are not members of the Church but are "of the Church by desire" (*op. cit.*, cap. 3, col. 1266; cap. 6, col. 1276). The Pope could hardly have meant to say anything else without seriously misleading his readers. Logically, those ordained to the Church *voto* must be *intra* as opposed to *extra* ecclesiam, because if they were *extra ecclesiam* the Pope could not go on to say that they cannot be "secure" about their salvation—they would not have any salvation (*loc. cit.*). Pius XII, like his predecessors (and even like Vatican II, cf. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 14) insisted that "outside" the Church no one is saved at all. A universal negative does not admit of particular exceptions; it is contradicted by any such exception. Hence those said to have the *votum ecclesiae* must be *intra ecclesiam*, though not *membra eius*.

An exemplary case of how not to interpret a text is Fr. Rahner's essay, already cited. In the teeth of historical evidence, he takes the necessity of the Church for salvation to refer to a necessity of membership for salvation (e.g., p.44); then he takes those "ordained to the Church *voto*" to mean those who are in no sense "within" it, nay, to include even non-baptized pagans of good disposition but not in a state of grace (p.56)! And as to his logic, after citing all the papal statements about the *nulla salus*, he constantly refers to "salvation outside the Church" (pp. 38,39,40,41,44,46, 52 etc.).

¹² Cf. Vatican II Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 3.

Church) with his own theory of sign and significate, never achieves clarity.¹³

WHO THEN IS A MEMBER?

Bellarmino, followed by most theologians, stated three conditions. They are members of the Church who 1) profess the true faith and 2) partake of the Church's sacraments and 3) do both under the jurisdiction of the hierarchy in communion with the Pope. A fourth condition Bellarmine did not recognize, but it has become a unanimous conclusion and even *doctrina catholica* since his time, namely, the condition of valid baptism.¹⁴ Yet a fifth condition, which will be adopted here, is still debated among theologians, namely, the infused virtue of faith, which can also be *fides informis*.¹⁵

¹³ *op. cit.*, pp. 55-57.

¹⁴ On this point, see especially L. Billot, *Tractatus de Ecclesia Christi* (Sth ed., Rome: Gregorian University, 1927) I, 288ff.

¹⁵ The grounds for including this last condition were first effectively argued by Francis Sylvius, *De praecipuis fidei nostrae orthodoxae controversiis cum nostris haereticis, lib. iii, q. 1*, articles 2, 3, and 7, in Sylvius, *Opera Omnia* (Antwerp, 1698) V, pp. 236ff. With minor variations, Sylvius' position has been at least a respectable minority view among theologians ever since. F.X. Lawlor, S.J. (*Occult Heresy and Membership in the Church in Theological Studies* 10, 1949, p. 553) has argued that *Mystici Corporis*, by implication if not by direct statement, closed the question in Sylvius' favor. But his case is not cogently argued; cf. the reply by J.C. Fenton, "The Status of St. Robert Bellarmine's Teaching About the Membership of Occult Heretics in the Catholic Church" in *American Ecclesiastical Review* 122 (1950), pp. 207-221. Nevertheless, against Bellarmine and his heirs, I see at least one cogent reason for adopting Sylvius' condition, a reason which will emerge later in this essay. Meanwhile, however, I should like to voice the view that the question of whether infused faith is necessary for Church membership is much less clearly tied to the question of occult heresy than is commonly supposed. First, one could argue that heresy is precisely the profession of heretical tenets, whether culpably or inculpably. On that definition, a truly occult heretic would be a square circle. Alternatively, one could argue that the purely internal loss of supernatural faith is indeed heresy, in fact formal heresy, but that any heresy of its very nature will reveal itself. In other words, one could appeal to psychological considerations to show that an inner catastrophe such as the loss of faith cannot be long concealed, at least by one continually active and vocal in ecclesiastical affairs. (For this view, see Patrick Murray, *Tractatus de Ecclesia Christi* (Dublin: 1860), I, pp. 202f). At any rate, it is certainly possible to hold Sylvius' condition without committing oneself, one way or another, to the existence of "occult heresy".

It also seems to me that attempts to argue for or against Sylvius on the basis of the difficulties connected with the jurisdiction of an occultly unbelieving pope or bishop are fruitless. For a consideration of papal heresy, see, e.g., J.A. Mirus, *On the Deposition of the Pope for Heresy in Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* (1975), pp. 231-248. As to the general charge that criteria for membership must concern what is visible, but infused faith is invisible, therefore such faith is unacceptable as a criterion, I suggest that this would apply to baptismal character as well, where it is refuted by Salaverri (*op. cit.*, no. 1044).

Finally, in defense of taking infused faith as a requirement for membership, I advance here an argument which I do not consider conclusive, but which is certainly conducive. Infused faith, as a condition for membership, would forge a vital link between the Church taken *fundamentaliter* and the Church taken *formaliter*. As I argue below (note 18), the Church taken *fundamentaliter* names a real thing only if kept in relation to the Church taken *formaliter*—considered purely by itself, however, it is an *ens rationis*. But in fact it could never be taken in isolation if infused faith is a requirement for membership. Why? Because the Church taken *fundamentaliter* is defined only in terms of its members; but its members are defined in terms of several conditions, one of which is to be infused faith. But by infused faith the Church is grasped *formaliter*. Hence by virtue of the inclusion of this requirement, Church membership becomes a relation with two terms: the direct term is the Church taken *fundamentaliter*, but the indirect term is the Church taken *formaliter*. This is only a complicated way of saying what is obvious to common sense: the people of whom the Church visibly consists are always the people who believe she is the Church.

Negatively applied, these conditions exclude from membership:

- 1) those not validly baptized, that is, those lacking the baptismal character;
- 2) those *publicly* professing either no creed or an incorrect one, that is, all manifest heretics and apostates, whether formal or material;
- 3) those who lack the infused virtue of faith, that is, all heretics and apostates who are formally such, including even the occult ones;
- 4) those who have refused obedience to the Pope and the bishops in communion with him, that is all schismatics, formal or material, all manifest heretics, and *excommunicati vitandi*;
- 5) those who have embraced a sacramental system other than that of the Catholic Church or who have been cut off from the Church's sacraments by the weightiest of excommunications, that is, (again) all manifest heretics and schismatics, and all *excommunicati vitandi*.

The same principles, positively stated, would yield the formula of *Mystici Corporis*: "Only those are really to be included as members of the Church who have been baptized and profess true faith, and who have not unhappily withdrawn from Body-unity or for grave faults been excluded by legitimate authority."¹⁶

Thus it is agreed by all (it is *doctrina catholica*) that Church membership is attributable or non-attributable to any given person not on the basis of any one condition but solely on the basis of the compresent totality of conditions. The member must be baptized *and* profess the faith *and* be subject to the Pope, and so on. But this is already to say that Church membership is a relation of reason. Its *fundamentum* is not any real property or relation of the individual Catholic, but the totality of such required properties and relations. In other words, if the required conditions are *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, and if we call each of these a real or first-order property of the individual, then the further "property" on which membership is based is the second-order property of "*having* all four properties *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d*." We are dealing with a set (*ens rationis*) of real properties, which set is itself considered a property. Hence the *fundamentum* of the relation called "Church membership" is an *ens rationis*, and the relation itself is of reason.¹⁷

This conclusion immediately explains why there are no "degrees" of membership. The real conditions requisite for membership, or most of them at any rate, admit of degrees. They can be fulfilled either fruitfully (and this in many degrees) or merely externally. But the totality of such conditions, however fulfilled, is simply the totality.

MORE DISTINCTIONS: MYSTICAL BODY AND CHURCH

We are now in a position to face the second fundamental question posed at the beginning of this essay: is membership a relation to the Church as *specificatively* identical to the Mystical Body of Christ or as *reduplicatively* distinct in concept (see pp. 55-56)? Indeed, the question forces itself upon us by reason of the following difficulty.

Difficulty: if Church membership is a relation of reason, it follows that "member of the Church" (*membrum ecclesiae*) and "member of Christ" (*membrum Christi*) cannot be synonymous terms, since the latter is a real relation (see page 57). Moreover, "member of the

¹⁶ A.A.S. 35 (1943), p.202.

¹⁷ The logical reflections necessary to reach this conclusion could be illustrated with a variety of examples. In conclusion, however, one must say with Mr. Russell that a property (such as Church membership) which is defined only in terms of the collection (a,b,c...) must not be itself a member of that collection. Hence such a property cannot be on the same level as the members of that collection but must be of a higher (or second) order. On higher-order properties and the collections in terms of which they are defined, see *Principia Mathematica*, Paperback Edition to +56, (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 37ff.

Mystical Body" (*membrum corporis mystici*) becomes ambiguous, since it could mean either. However, if the Roman Catholic Church and the Mystical Body of Christ really are "one and the same thing" (as *Mystici Corporis* insists and *Humani Generis* re-insists), it ought to follow that only *membra ecclesiae* are *membra corporis mystici* and hence *membra Christi*. But if so, the terms are really synonymous.

Solution: on the contrary, only the non-synonymity of these terms can preserve the truths of the faith. For, while a *membrum ecclesiae* is always necessarily a *membrum Mystici Corporis Christi* (even if a dead one), the reverse does not hold. For if every member of the Mystical Body of Christ, precisely in order to be such, had to be a member of the Church, it would follow either that the *votum ecclesiae* (desire for the Church) confers membership (which is contrary to the teaching of *Mystici Corporis* and, in any case, nonsense, since "desire" is always of an absent good), or that the *votum ecclesiae* is not salvific (which is at least *error in doctrina catholica*), or else that some are saved who are not members of Christ (which is heretical).

Further, this non-synonymity of memberships does not destroy the specificative identity of the Roman Catholic Church with the Mystical Body. All that is required for this identity is that no members of the Mystical Body be *extra ecclesiam* (outside the church). This the Church herself confesses in teaching that the *votum ecclesiae* can be salvific and hence, by implication, that those who have it are not *extra ecclesiam*. Therefore, the "members of the Mystical Body" and "those 'within' the Roman Catholic Church" are merely two names for one and the same set of persons. And this is all that is required for specificative identity.

Now, taking "Mystical Body" reduplicatively, the following must be said. "Roman Catholic Church" taken *formaliter* names the Mystical Body taken reduplicatively as *Body*.¹⁸ "Members of Christ" names the same Mystical Body taken reduplicatively as *Mystical*. Since the two notions of Mystical Body taken reduplicatively are conceptually distinct, there is no reason why *member* should not be an equivocal term, naming a real relation in *membrum Christi* and a relation of

¹⁸ The Church *fundamentaliter sumpta* is not properly identified with the Mystical Body (except, of course, indirectly insofar as the former is related to the Church taken *formaliter*). The reason for this is quite simple. The Mystical Body, even taken reduplicatively as *Body*, includes all the visible structures with which Christ has endowed His Church. Thus it includes the Pope as Pope. But the Church *fundamentaliter sumpta* does not include the Pope as Pope but only as another member of the Church along with all the others. Hence only the Church *formaliter sumpta* is properly said to be specifically identical with the Mystical Body and conceptually identical with the Mystical Body as *Body*.

In other words, the Church taken *formaliter* is a real, supernatural being, thanks to her Head, from whose fulness everything in her is derived, grace for grace and structure for structure. But the Church taken *fundamentaliter* and considered purely in abstraction from the Church *formaliter sumpta*, is an *ens rationis*. It is the mere set of members. It has no other definition. It is a logical construct made possible only by the living reality of the Church taken *formaliter*. Indeed, every one of the requisites for membership is derived from the nature of the Church taken *formaliter*. Baptismal character as a real share in the Priesthood of Christ, infused faith as a real conformity of the intellect to God Revealing, subjection to the Pope as a real relation to the Vicar of Christ (that is, to the Pope himself as term *in recto* and to Christ Himself as term *in obliquo*), profession of the true faith as an act founding a real relation to God as Prime Truth and to the Church as infallible teacher—all these requisites derive from the nature of the Church taken *formaliter* and as such are salvific. But these same requisites, taken now merely as members of the set by which membership is defined, are thereby taken in a sense no longer necessarily salvific. Baptismal character can be a mere vestige; infused faith can be *fides informis*, subjection to the Pope can be human obedience (with Christ no longer attained as term *in obliquo*), profession of the faith can be mere conformity to the Church as an earthly power. Thus, criteria originally derived from the Church *formaliter sumpta* acquire a meaning appropriate to the Church *fundamentaliter sumpta*—for of sinners, too, the Church really consists. And yet *formaliter sumpta*, the Church is without stain or wrinkle. How? Because the Church taken *formaliter* contains these same sinners only as material cause and precisely as that portion of her material cause which is relatively unformed. To put it simply, the sinner is a Catholic, but he is not a sinner *qua* Catholic.

reason in *membrum ecclesiae*.¹⁹

We may now answer our second question as follows: membership in the Church is a relation to the Church taken *fundamentaliter* as direct term and to the Church taken *formaliter* as indirect term, and this indirect term of the relation is conceptually identical with the Mystical Body as Body but conceptually distinct from the Mystical Body as Mystical.

INFUSED FAITH NECESSARY FOR MEMBERSHIP

On the basis of these distinctions, it is possible to explain the one reason which seems to me cogent for including infused faith among the requisites for Church membership. The argument goes as follows. There is no doubt that the baptismal character together with *fides informis* suffices to make one a member of Christ, even if a dead one. However, if baptismal character alone suffices for this, an important difficulty follows for the specificative identity of the Roman Catholic Church with the Mystical Body. As I have argued, this identity requires that all those who are members of Christ (at least in the era between his Ascension and Second Coming) be "within" this same Church but not necessarily as members of it. However, a formal heretic, schismatic or apostate both retains the baptismal character and is in no sense "within" the Church. Hence if baptismal character is a sufficient condition for membership of Christ, it will follow that there *are* members of Christ who are *extra ecclesiam*.

One might try to meet this difficulty by openly accepting the disidentity between the set of "members of Christ" and the set of "persons within the Church" on the ground that it does not really compromise the Church's status as the exclusive locus of salvation, since all these "members of Christ" outside the Church are necessarily dead.

But I fail to see how a real member of Christ, even if dead, can fail to be potentially alive. These members *extra ecclesiam*, however, are not only dead but necessarily so. No amount of prayer, not even the shedding of their blood for Christ, can save them. And yet *merely* by returning to the Church, they can be saved. To say the least, these people are in a class apart; and only by returning to the Church, within which they can be, once again, ordinary dead members, do they cease to be in a class apart. It seems much more reasonable to say that these people are no longer members of Christ at all—and the same conclusion seems to agree better with the phraseology of *Mystici Corporis*, which refers to precisely this class of persons as "completely severed members" (*membra omnino abscissa*).²⁰ To take words at face value, such persons are no longer members in any respect but precisely ex-members.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DISTINCTIONS

We may now turn to the third question with which this essay began. What difference does it all make? A lengthy and arid argument has been advanced to show that Church membership is a relation of reason. Then puzzles about the Mystical Body taken reduplicatively were resolved

¹⁹ Given this equivocality (or better: analogicity), it is neither necessary to posit with Journet (*Church of the Word Incarnate*, I, pp. 33ff) an "invisible membership" of the Church, nor to insist with Fenton (*AER* 110 (1944) p. 130) that those having the *votum ecclesiae* are only called members of Christ by "misplaced kindness".

²⁰ A.A.S. 35 (1943), p.203. That the Pope is speaking only of formal heretics, schismatics and apostates is sufficiently obvious from the very choice of the word *membra*. Only those who were *membra* can now be *membra abscissa*. Nevertheless, Fr. Rahner, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-58, ignores this fact and offers two interpretations of his own. According to the first, the *membra abscissa* are the total class of persons said not to be members of the Church, including even catechumens. His second interpretation makes the *membra abscissa* all those who lack the *votum ecclesiae*, including even pagans not in a state of grace. Then he argues somehow that both interpretations amount to the same thing. A more thorough proof that this theologian simply does not know what *membrum ecclesiae* means would be hard to imagine.

primarily in order to defend the same conclusion. But what difference does it make? After all, even as a relation of reason this membership is still necessary for salvation in the case of all those who know the identity of the true Church. Therefore, if it were a real relation, how would anything be different?

To this question, oddly enough, there is a compelling answer. Let us get at this answer by assuming the contrary thesis. Let us reject the logic by which I argued that membership is based on a second-order property, itself an *ens rationis*. Let us assume that membership is based directly upon the real properties and relations (baptism, faith, and so on) which, taken concurrently, are the requirements for membership. These real properties will now themselves be the *fundamentum in re* for the same membership. Hence Church membership will be a real relation. What follows?

First, there will be no avoiding the conclusion that membership is divisible by five (or four, or however many requirements one recognizes). Every person validly baptized will be at least one-fifth a member of the Church. Material schismatics with true inward faith will be four-fifth members. Membership will be intrinsically a matter of degrees, and it will be little more than a matter of ecclesiastical (or ecumenical) politics how many fifths of the pie one is going to require before attributing membership.

Second, if membership is a real relation, there will be no way of avoiding a conclusion which is either heresy or proximate to heresy. To develop this argument, one need only reflect upon the kinds of things which can serve as *fundamenta* for real relations and then compare these kinds of things with the defined requirements for Church membership. Thus:

- a) baptism is an act; its "character" is a quality in the genus of passive potency. Here, no problem; both can found real relations. Also:
- b) infused faith is a supernatural *habitus*. It can found a real relation. Then:
- c) profession of the faith, considered as an *act*, can found a real relation;
- d) share in the Church's sacraments, if taken as a series of acts, can found a real relation; otherwise, taken as a potency or timentent, it falls together with baptismal character. However:
- e) subjection to legitimate pastors, especially the Roman Pontiff, is itself a real relation. It is not an act. A baptized infant is subject to the Pope without doing anything. An adult Catholic remains subject simply by doing nothing against the Pope. To be sure, an *act* of schism destroys this relation; but subjection itself is not an act impossible with schism; it is a relation whose *fundamentum* is impossible with schism. Thus what is at least the second most crucial requirement for Church membership is a real relation.

The trouble is that one real relation cannot serve as *fundamentum* for another (again, for the nature of real relations as opposed to those of reason, refer back to note 2). St. Thomas offered a thumb-nail proof of this proposition in the *Summa Theologiae* I, q.42, a.1, *ad 4um*, where the question was whether the Three Divine Persons, as Subsistent Relations, found a real relation of equality among Themselves. Aquinas answered in the negative, because if one relation could found another real relation, there would be a *processus in infinitum*.²¹ Moreover, the resulting infinity would not be merely a potential

²¹ The only task incumbent upon me here is to flesh out my own version of the proof that such an infinity really does result if one relation can really found another. I shall use the symbols aFb and cFd to mean "a is the father of b" and "c is the father of d" respectively. Fatherhood is our first real relation. Let us assume next that these two relations of fatherhood found a real relation of similarity between themselves. Thus:

1) aFb.S.cFd, where S stands for the relation of similarity. However similarity is not a single relation; it is a general term for an enormous number of different relations each founded on a precise respect (*ratio*) in which two or more things are called "similar". And the same will hold for the *rationes* of dissimilarity. Therefore, the relation between two fatherhoods, if it is to be real, must be similarity in some precise *ratio*. Let us just say that this is fatherhood. Then we must amend "1" to read:

2) aFb.FS.cFd, where FS stands for fatherhood-similarity. Thus fatherhood-similarity is our second real relation. Now let N stand for sonship, the converse relation to fatherhood. Sonship is a third real relation. It will follow that:

3) aFb:CD:bNa.dNc, that is, that any fatherhood has converse-dissimilarity to all sonships. Converse-

infinity, like the infinite divisibility of a continuum, but an actual infinity of real relations caused by real *fundamenta*, hence an infinite number of causes and effects. That no such infinity can exist, of course, was proved by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* (994a1), and the contrary has not been maintained by any respectable philosopher since then (except, perhaps, Leibnitz). Therefore, since an actual infinity cannot exist, it is impossible that one real relation should found another.²²

Now if membership is a real relation, subjection to the Pope cannot form part of its *fundamentum in re*. Hence schism will leave the *fundamentum* intact. Those who merely withdraw from Papal jurisdiction will still be members of the Church. Yet the contrary is at least implicitly defined.²³ Therefore, membership in the Church must be a relation of reason. This conclusion preserves the common faith of Catholics that to withdraw from Papal jurisdiction is to cease to be a member of the Church.

Throughout this study, in both text and notes, I have indicated that the 'new' theology cited in the introduction is implicit in the confusions of Fr. Rahner's 1947 article, already cited. But the true inventor seems to have been Yves Congar, O.P. Already in 1939, in his book *Divided Christendom: A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion* (London: Godfrey Bles), Congar set forth, down to the details, the so-called "post-conciliar" innovations. In one sentence, his argument is this:

If we believe that the Catholic Church is the Church of Jesus Christ and veritably His Mystical Body, there is only one kind of recognition which we can, theologically speaking, accord to the Christian status of our separated brethren and the saved condition of the 'good heathen', namely, the recognition that these are in fact our brethren *and in some way members of the Catholic Church*. That is a conclusion which we cannot evade [p.223, emphasis added].

The structure of Congar's inference is clear: where there is participation, there must be some sort of membership. The new "ecclesiology", then, is not a response to Vatican II; it is a response to *that* inference. In the foregoing I have tried to show that such an inference is impossible. The argument began with a set of clear distinctions between three situations commonly described in terms of "membership", namely: appertaining to a body, participating in an activity, and belonging to a social organization. These distinctions made it clear that being a "member of Christ" and being a "member of the Church" are necessarily different relations, not alternative ways of describing the same. Then, given the fact that things denominated by relative terms can be considered either *fundamentaliter* or, *formaliter*, it was shown that the whole question of Church membership arises solely from the former consideration, and that this membership is a relation of reason. But, if so, it had to follow that membership is sharply different from "participation" in the Church, which is revealed from a consideration of the Church taken formaliter. Next, membership itself was defined, and, finally, it was distinguished from participation in the Church.

Membership in the Church and participation in her are indeed fundamentally different things.

dissimilarity is our fourth real relation. But conversedissimilarity will have E-dissimilarity to fatherhood-similarity, where E is defined as *the difference* (whatever it is) between the real relation of fatherhood-similarity and the equally real relation of conversedissimilarity. That is:

4)aFb: CD: bNa.dNc:: ED::aFb: FS: cFd.

E-dissimilarity is our fifth real relation. But E-dissimilarity will have Fsimilarity to converse-dissimilarity, where F is defined as *the element of similarity* (whatever it is) between E-dissimilarity and conversedissimilarity. Then F-similarity will have G-dissimilarity to E-dissimilarity. And then G-dissimilarity will have H-similarity to E-dissimilarity and Isimilarity to converse-dissimilarity, and so forth *ad infinitum*.

²² For a fuller discussion of this question, as it was debated between the Thomist and Scotist schools in the 17th century, see John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Philosophicus I(Ars Logica), Pars II*, q.17, a.3 (ed. Reiser (Turin: Marietti), 1930, 584b40-586a48). I have taken the liberty, in the proof of the *processus ad infinitum* presented above, of improving upon John's argument against the second Scotist counter-argument (*ibid.* 585b16-24, 586a1-19). John's argument is not sufficiently exact to be cogent by the standards of mathematical logic (but then neither is the Scotist claim).

²³ *Denz.* 430, 469, 2286 (new numbers: 802, 875, 3802).

The one is relational, the other qualitative; the one is univocal, the other analogical; the one admits of no degrees, the other admits of many. Hence neither one is a "kind", "level" or "degree" of the other. Stated in practical terms, it has been demonstrated that: a) those who fulfill the five conditions for membership in the Church constitute the total visible extension of the Mystical Body, not merely a part of it; b) those who fulfill these conditions fruitfully thereby also participate in the redemptive structure of the Mystical Body of Christ to an eminent and incomparable degree; c) the Church as identical with the Mystical Body includes not only member participants but also non-member participants, who through no fault of their own do not fulfill the conditions for membership (i.e., those in the Church *desiderio ac voto*); but, d) anyone who deliberately fails to fulfill any of the five conditions not only ceases to be a member of the Church but ceases by that decision to participate in the Mystical Body (i.e., is damned). Thus neither the fact appealed to by Congar, nor the ecumenical theology of Vatican II, entails any alteration whatever in the classical ecclesiology of St. Robert Bellarmine and the encyclical *Mystici Corporis* of Pius XII.