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THE STATUS OF ST. ROBERT BELLARMINE'S TEACHING ABOUT THE MEMBERSHIP OF OCCULT HERETICS IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

St. Robert Bellarmine defended and consolidated, although he did not by any means originate, the teaching that actual membership in the Church militant depended exclusively upon those factors which Catholic theologians group together under the heading of the external or bodily bond of unity with Christ and with His Church. St. Robert held that all and only those who retained an outward and public Catholic profession of faith, an ecclesiastical communion in or access to the sacraments, and subjection to the rule of legitimate ecclesiastical superiors could rightfully and properly be designated as parts or members of the true Church of Christ on earth. A man who possessed these characteristics would remain a member of the Church, albeit an utterly unworthy one, even though secretly guilty of the sins of heresy or apostasy, and thus devoid of all supernatural life whatever.¹

With varying degrees of emphasis, the text books most frequently employed in American theological seminaries support St. Robert's teaching on conditions for membership in the Church on earth. Billot, Hervé, Tanquerey, and Van Noort are in substantial agreement on this point.² Since these manuals are used in the theological formation of a great many American candidates for the priesthood, it is only reasonable to conclude, in the absence of any contrary indication, that a very large proportion of American priests have been taught, and have made their own, the opinion which holds that a man who is united to the Church by the external bonds of unity remains a member of this society, even though he be an occult heretic.

Thus it is necessarily a matter of interest and of concern to the priests of the United States to find St. Robert's opinion about

¹ Cf. St. Robert's *De ecclesia militante*, c. 2.

² Cf. Billot, *Tractatus de ecclesia Christi*, 5th edition (Rome: Gregorian University, 1927), I, 296 ff.; Hervé, *Manuale theologiae dogmaticae*, 18th edition (Paris: Berche et Pagis, 1934), I, 455 f.; Tanquerey, *Synopsis theologiae dogmaticae fundamentalis*, 24th edition (Paris: Desclée, 1937), p. 671; Van Noort, *Tractatus de ecclesia Christi*, 5th edition (Hilversum, Holland: Paul Brand, 1932), p. 174.

requisites for membership in the Church subjected to a sharp and radical criticism by a competent theologian. Very recently Fr. Francis X. Lawlor, S.J., has written in *Theological Studies* and has "endeavored to show that according to the teaching of the encyclical [*Mystici corporis*], occult heresy is incompatible with membership in the visible Church of Christ."³ If Fr. Lawlor has been successful in his effort, and has actually brought forward valid evidence that St. Robert's teaching on this matter is even by implication opposed to the doctrine of the *Mystici corporis*, then it is manifestly the business of every priest who has hitherto followed St. Robert to reconsider his judgment on this particular point. At any event, it is now imperative to re-examine the question and to look at St. Robert's teaching against its own background, and ultimately to see what the encyclical *Mystici corporis* has actually taught about the point at issue.

The world of scholastic theology did not give any very detailed treatment of the question about requisites for membership in the Church until well into the fourteenth century. St. Robert and his contemporaries never thought of appealing to any scholastic authorities prior to Cardinal John de Turrecremata and Thomas Netter of Walden. The latter was one of the first proponents of the teaching later popularized by St. Robert himself. The former, although sometimes quoted in opposition to St. Robert and his followers, limited his explicit teaching on this particular point to the general statement that the faithful were within the Church and that heretics were not.

By the latter part of the sixteenth century, however, theologians had come to recognize two distinct sections of the teaching about requirements for membership in the Church militant. There were certain questions to which the Church itself had given definitive replies, questions to which certain Catholic dogmas were the only possible responses. Thus all of the Catholic theologians of their time and since have unanimously taught that a man may be a member of the Church militant if he is in the state of mortal sin, even of extraordinarily grave mortal sin, and that he may be a member even though he is not predestined to enjoy the beatific vision.

³ The article is entitled "Occult Heresy and Membership in the Church." The citation is from *Theological Studies*, X, 4 (Dec. 1949), 553.

Other questions with reference to membership in the Church were open to free discussion. Our sixteenth and seventeenth century theologians took full advantage of that freedom. They offered theories which differed very sharply from one another, but which may be classified with some degree of adequacy under four general headings.

First there were those who, with the great Dominican Thomas de Vio Cardinal Cajetan and with the eminent Spanish Franciscan controversialist Alphonsus a Castro, made no effective distinction between membership in the church and subjection to it, and who thus classified all baptized persons, indiscriminately, as parts or members of the true Church.⁴ They held that the baptismal character constituted even a public apostate or heretic a genuine member of the Church.

St. Robert is by far the best known representative of the second group. Taking cognizance of the existence of two distinct sets of factors, the inward or spiritual and the outward or bodily bonds of unity, both of which tended to attach a man to Christ, St. Robert insisted upon and, as a matter of fact built his book *De ecclesia militante* around, the thesis that it is the outward bond alone, to the entire exclusion of the inward, which constitutes a man as a part or a member of the Church militant.⁵ In supporting this thesis, he followed the lead of Thomas Netter of Walden, of John Driedo, of Peter a Soto, and of Melchior Cano. Netter interprets St. Augustine in favor of his thesis that one who has destroyed within himself "the most true and most established faith of the Church, remains a son of the Church as long as he is not cast out from the communion of the sacraments."⁶ Although he makes no express reference to occult heretics, Driedo insists that "all of those who are held as visibly attached to the Church by the sacrament of faith, in a kind of peaceful way consorting bodily with the Christian people, are said to be within the Church until they are

⁴ Cf. Cajetan, *De comparatione auctoritatis papae et concilii*, c. 22, in Cajetan's *Scripta theologica*, edited by Fr. Pollet (Rome: Angelico, 1936), I, 142 f.; Alphonsus a Castro, *De iusta haereticorum punitione*, Lib. III, c. 24, in the *Opera Alphonsi a Castro* (Paris, 1571), column 1392.

⁵ Cf. *De ecclesia militante*, loc. cit.

⁶ *Antiquitatum fidei catholicae ecclesiae doctrinale*, Lib. II, a. 2, in the Blanciotti edition (Venice, 1758), I, 292.

cut off by the Church's judgment or until they leave it of their own accord, despising and persecuting the Church."⁷

Peter a Soto believed and taught that "neither grace, nor certainly any interior hidden virtue was required in members" of the Church, and that, as a matter of fact, nothing was requisite apart from "the public and legitimate profession of faith and the vocation."⁸ Cano insisted that "catechumens are not part of this Church, and that all of those who have the baptismal character are parts, unless they have been cut off by the public judgment of the Church after external heresy."⁹ Cano differed from Soto and from St. Robert in insisting upon the necessity of the baptismal character in a member of the Church. All of them, however, believed that a man is constituted as a member of the Church through the possession of the outward bond, and that true inward faith is neither requisite nor sufficient to establish a man as a member.

Francis Suarez is almost alone in his defence of the third opinion. Where St. Robert had taught that the outward bond of unity alone constituted a man as a member of the Church, Suarez taught, on the contrary that faith, the basic element of the inward bond, was the only absolute requisite. In perfect consistency with this position, he held that while a secret sin which destroys the virtue of faith puts a man out of the Church, a catechumen who has the virtue of faith should be counted as a member.¹⁰

Speaking of the thesis that both faith and some external bond are necessary to constitute a man a member of the Church, Suarez says that: *modus hic loquendi, de quo forte est tota quaestio magis quam de re, mihi non satis probatur.*¹¹ He describes his teaching on the membership in the Church of catechumens endowed with

⁷ *De ecclesiasticis scripturis et dogmatibus*, Lib. IV, c. 2, part 2 (Louvain, 1533), p. 517.

⁸ *Assertio catholicae fidei circa articulos confessionis nomine illustrissimi Ducis Wirtenbergensis oblatae per legatos eius Concilio Tridentino*, c. *De ecclesia*. Neither the pages nor the sections of this edition (Cologne, 1555) are numbered.

⁹ *De locis theologicis*, Lib. IV, c. 2, in the *Opera theologica* (Rome, 1900), I, 201.

¹⁰ Cf. *Opus de triplici virtute theologica* (Lyons, 1621), De fide, disp. 9, sect. 1, pp. 160 f. Suarez, incidentally, insists that a catechumen who has the faith but who has never manifested it in any way remains a member of the Church.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

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the virtue of divine faith as something which *mihi tamen magis placet*.¹² Thus, since he merely states that his own position was more pleasing to him, that he did not consider the arguments against it conclusive, and that the whole dispute might well be a matter of terminology rather than of real import, it is easy to see that Suarez' denial of the necessity of the external bond of unity in a member of the Church was proposed only as a tenuous opinion.

The fourth opinion was given its adequate form by Francis Sylvius. It held that no man could be a member of the Catholic Church unless he possessed the outward bonds of unity, the baptismal profession of faith, the communion of the sacraments, and subjection to legitimate ecclesiastical authority, but taught, at the same time, that true internal faith was also required.¹³ The men who held this opinion differed from Suarez in denying membership in the Church to catechumens. They opposed St. Robert in teaching that occult heresy was incompatible with real membership in the Church. Sylvius added that no man could be a real part or member of the Church unless he had a certain *amor fraternitatis*, an affection for the Church and for its membership separable from and inferior to the theological virtue of charity.¹⁴ He believed that this *amor fraternitatis* constituted, along with faith itself, the basic inward bond of unity requisite for membership in the Church.

Both St. Robert and Suarez listed Turrecremata as an authority denying that occult heretics could be members of the true Church. St. Robert, however, very properly insisted that the section of Turrecremata's *Summa de ecclesia* which was generally supposed to refer to this question might possibly have nothing at all to do with it.¹⁵ Again St. Robert, and Suarez after him, list the Cardinal Hosius as teaching that occult heretics can be members of the Church. Here both were manifestly mistaken.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 160.

¹³ Cf. *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, 236 ff.

¹⁴ Cf. St. Robert, *op. cit.*, c. 10, column 134. The older theologians believed that what Turrecremata had said in his *Summa de ecclesia* (Venice, 1561), Lib. IV, part 2, c. 20, p. 393v, could be applied to this question.

¹⁵ Cf. *op. cit.*, a. 2, p. 237.

Hosius had encountered Brentius' contention that an occult heretic could not really belong to the true Church, but could only appear to belong. The Cardinal believed that he was answering this contention when he insisted that "Nothing prevents us from holding, for a true member of the Church, him in whom we acknowledge a public and legitimate profession of faith and vocation, even though he be not a true member in the eyes of God."¹⁶ Sylvius appeals to Hosius, and to Bannez and Lens as well, as authorities in support of his own thesis that "heretics and schismatics, however occult they may be, are not in the Church truly and absolutely, but only after a fashion (*secundum quid*), that is, according to outward appearance and according to the external reception of the sacraments."¹⁷

James Latomus had contented himself with an out and out denial of membership to all heretics, occult or otherwise.¹⁸ Later theologians, however, seemed somewhat embarrassed by the problem of the two different bonds of unity. All of the important writers except Suarez were ready to deny that a man could be a member of the Church if he possessed faith, that is, the basic element in the inward or spiritual bond of unity, without possessing the outward or bodily bond. Those who would not acknowledge, as St. Robert did, that a man who possessed the outward bond without any trace of the inward was actually a member of the Church, were driven to strain their vocabularies in an attempt to explain that such a person was still at least legitimately considered an apparent member. Stapleton insisted that the occult heretic belonged to the Church *secundum quid*, at least by reason of the sacramental character.¹⁹ Wiggers, choosing between the opinion of St. Robert and that ascribed to Turrecremata, states flatly that St. Robert's theory is more common and that it seems more consonant with the writings of the ancients.²⁰ He holds that occult

¹⁶ *Confutatio prolegomenon Brentii* (Lyons, 1564), c. 5, p. 455. Cf. Bernacki, *La doctrine de l'église chez le Cardinal Hosius* (Paris: Gabalda, 1936), p. 35.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, a. 7, p. 242.

¹⁸ Cf. *De ecclesia et humanae legis obligatione*, c. 2, in the *Opera* (Louvain, 1579), p. 94r.

¹⁹ Cf. *Principiorum fidei doctrinalium relectio scholastica et compendiaria* (Antwerp, 1596), Controversia I, q. 2, a. 3, pp. 15 f.

²⁰ Cf. *Commentaria de virtutibus theologicis* (Louvain, 1689), *tractatus de ecclesia*, ad q. 1, a. 10, p. 111.

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heretics seem to be parts and members of the Church only in an imperfect way and, as it were, by way of analogy.²¹ Gregory of Valentia, somewhat hesitantly, and Adam Tanner, quite vigorously, also denied membership in the Church to these hidden heretics.²² Sylvius gave explicit utterance to the principle that guided all these men when he taught that "by reason of the inward [bond of union] a man is a member of the Church *simpliciter et absolute*, but by reason of the outward [bond] only *secundum quid et improprie*."²³

It must be recalled, however, that serious theological opposition to St. Robert's thesis on the status of occult heretics followed the line of the opinion elaborated by Sylvius rather than that of the one presented by Suarez. Despite Suarez' tremendous and well-deserved influence in the world of sacred theology, his opinion about conditions for membership in the Church was destined, for all intents and purposes, to die with him. No future theologian of any moment was to be found to teach that internal faith was the one actual requisite for membership in the true Church, and thus to hold that catechumens who possessed the faith were members of the Church and that occult heretics were not.

In the same way, the first of the opinions once current among Catholic scholars that were supported by Cajetan and by Alphonsus a Castro, did not survive the Counter-Reformation period. Thus only two of the four theories regarding membership in the Church have come down to our own time. The two surviving opinions are the one which was taught by St. Robert and that which was presented by Sylvius.

Both of these two opinions have been upheld continuously by competent theologians since the early part of the seventeenth century, when Adam Tanner declared his own teaching to be more widely received and John Wiggers wrote, on the contrary, that St. Robert's theory was more commonly held.²⁴ Strangely enough, Tanner seems to have been the last important theologian to have judged the teaching that denies membership in the Church to

²¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 112.

²² Cf. Valentia, *Commentaria theologica* (Ingolstadt, 1603), III, column 166; Tanner, *Theologia scholastica* (Ingolstadt, 1627), III, column 136.

²³ *Op. cit.*, a. 7, p. 242.

²⁴ Cf. Tanner, *loc. cit.*; Wiggers, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

occult heretics as more common than its opposite. The number of subsequent theologians who adopted the teaching set forth by Peter a Soto and by St. Robert was markedly greater than that of the men who preferred the teaching of Tanner and of Sylvius on this point, although the latter opinion never lacked strong support from very able ecclesiologists.

Thus, during the eighteenth century, St. Robert's teaching could claim the support of such eminent writers as Tournely, and Regnier,²⁵ while Sylvius' opinion was upheld by the tremendously influential Billuart.²⁶ During the nineteenth century such theological giants as Perrone, Cardinal Mazzella, Palmieri, and Cerci²⁷ agreed with St. Robert that occult heretics were members of the Church. In the most complete treatment given to this question in all the manuals of theology during the nineteenth century, however, Murray concludes by rejecting this teaching which, at the same time he admits is *longe communior*.²⁸ Tepe and Hurter followed Franzelin in declaring that the occult heretic is not properly and truly a member of the Church, but belongs to it only in appearance.²⁹ They thereby renewed in the nineteenth century a teaching which Hosius had proposed in the sixteenth. Franzelin, incidentally, popularized the process of distinguishing between formal and material heresy in treating of conditions for membership

²⁵ Cf. Tournely, *Praelectiones theologicae de ecclesia Christi* (Paris, 1765), I, 299; Regnier, *De ecclesia Christi*, in Migne's *Theologiae cursus completus*, IV, columns 1095 ff.

²⁶ Cf. *Summa Sancti Thomae hodiernis academiarum moribus accommodata sive cursus theologiae juxta mentem Divi Thomae, de regulis fidei* diss. 3, a. 2, in the edition of Paris, 1904, V, 97 f.

²⁷ Cf. Perrone, *Praelectiones theologicae* (Rome, 1835), I, 298; Mazzella, *De religione et ecclesia*, 6th edition (Prato, 1905), pp. 470 ff.; Palmieri *Tractatus de Romano Pontifice cum prolegomeno de ecclesia*, 2nd edition (Prato, 1891), pp. 47 ff.; Cerci, *Demonstratio catholica*, 5th edition (Paris, 1878), I, 72 ff. It must be admitted that the teaching of many of these men was considerably weakened by their use of a now discarded theory of the body and the soul of the Church.

²⁸ Cf. *De ecclesia Christi* (Dublin, 1860), I, 193 ff.

²⁹ Cf. Franzelin, *Theses de ecclesia Christi* (Rome, 1887), pp. 407 f.; Tepe, *Institutiones theologicae in usum scholarum* (Paris, 1894), I, 369 f.; Hurter, *Theologiae dogmaticae compendium*, 2nd edition (Innsbruck, 1878), I, 206 f.

in the Church. He thereby did a definite disservice to the cause of theology.³⁰

It is interesting to note that only one serious effort was made to advance the explanation of this teaching during the period intervening between the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries. This tentative was made by Peter Dens, who held that occult heresy excluded a man from membership in the Church when it was outwardly expressed, but not when it was merely internal.³¹

By far the greater number of theological text books which deal with the question and which have been written or have been in use during the first half of our own century strongly favor the opinion of St. Robert. D'Herbigny, Egger, Van Noort, Herrmann, and Saiz Ruiz speak of it as a more common teaching.³² Blanch holds that it is more probable and more common, while Archbishop Mazzella follows his illustrious namesake in designating the thesis as *longe communior*.³³ Tanqueray and De Guibert insist that St. Robert's opinion is taught commonly, and Pesch, Hervé, and Manzoni declare that it is taught more commonly.³⁴ Vellico believes that hardly any modern theologian holds with Suarez in denying that occult heretics are actually members of the Catholic Church.³⁵ Billot, Dieckmann, Zubizarreta, Bainvel, Vives, Felder, Schultes, Paris, Lercher, Crosta, and Casanova are among the other modern

³⁰ For a discussion of this point see Fenton, "Membership in the Church," in *AER*, CXII, 4 (April, 1945), 297 f.

³¹ Cf. *Theologia ad usum seminariorum et sacrae theologiae alumnorum*, 10th edition (Malines, 1880), II, 361.

³² Cf. D'Herbigny, *Theologica de ecclesia*, 3rd edition (Paris: Beauchesne, 1928), II, 268 f.; Egger, *Enchiridion theologiae dogmaticae generalis*, 6th edition (Brescia, 1932), 423 f.; Van Noort, *loc. cit.*, Hermann, *Institutiones theologiae dogmaticae*, 7th edition (Lyons, Vitte, 1937), I, 346; Saiz Ruiz, *Synthesis sive notae theologiae fundamentalis* (Burgos, 1906), p. 334.

³³ Cf. Blanch, *Theologia generalis* (Barcelona, 1901), pp. 294 ff.; Horatius Mazzella, *Praelectiones scholastico-dogmaticae*, 6th edition (Turin, 1944), I, 415 ff.

³⁴ Cf. Tanqueray, *loc. cit.*; De Guibert, *De Christi ecclesia*, 2nd edition (Rome: Gregorian, 1928), p. 148; Pesch, *Praelectiones dogmaticae*, 6th edition (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1924), I, 229; Hervé, *loc. cit.*; Manzoni, *Compendium theologiae dogmaticae*, 4th edition (Turin, 1928), I, 201.

³⁵ Cf. *De ecclesia Christi* (Rome: Arnodo, 1940), p. 543.

theologians who support this teaching.³⁶ The most important writers in opposition have been MacGuinness, Michelitsch, and Fraghi, the latter the author of a valuable dissertation *De membris ecclesiae* published a few years ago at the Angelico in Rome.³⁷

Fr. Lawlor's recent article has strongly bolstered this still unsubdued opposition to St. Robert's thesis. He contends that "though the question of occult heresy is not formally treated [in the *Mystici corporis*], there is nevertheless solid evidence that the encyclical demands such [internal] faith as an essential requirement for real membership in the visible Church."³⁸

Even though they may not agree with Fr. Lawlor, American theologians have every reason to be grateful to him for his statement on this question. Not only has he brought up a hitherto unheard of objection against the commonly received teaching about membership in the Church, but he has also stated, as clearly as they can be set forth, the older foundations of opposition to St. Robert's theory. His article should, and most probably will, prove to be an important contribution towards a settlement of the problem with which it deals.

In some future paper it may be possible to review the arguments which the classical theologians have employed to defend St. Robert's opinion on this point, as well as the arguments which have been used against it. At this time, however, it is our intention merely to look into the effect produced by the Holy Father's encyc-

³⁶ Cf. Billot, *loc. cit.*; Dieckmann, *De ecclesia tractatus historico-dogmatici* (Freiburg in Breisgau: Herder, 1925), II, 255 f.; Zubizarreta, *Theologia dogmatico-scholastica*, 3rd edition (Bilbao, 1937), I, 444 ff.; Bainvel, *De ecclesia Christi* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1925), pp. 109 f.; Vives, *Compendium theologiae dogmaticae*, 4th edition (Rome: Pustet, 1905), p. 83; Felder, *Apologetica sive theologia fundamentalis*, 2nd edition (Paderborn: Schoeningh, 1923), II, 45; Schultes, *De ecclesia catholica* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1931), p. 94; Paris, *Tractatus de ecclesia Christi* (Turin, 1929), p. 42; Lercher, *Institutiones theologiae dogmaticae*, 2nd edition (Innsbruck: Rauch, 1934), I, 427 ff.; Crosta, *Theologia dogmatica*, 3rd edition (Gallarate, 1932), I, 202 ff.; Casanova, *Theologia fundamentalis* (Rome, 1899), pp. 268 f.

³⁷ Cf. MacGuinness, *Commentarii theologici*, 3rd edition (Paris: Lethielleux, 1930), I, 227 ff.; Michelitsch, *Elementa apologeticae sive theologiae fundamentalis*, 3rd edition (Graz, 1925), pp. 329 ff.; Fraghi, *De membris ecclesiae* (Rome, 1937), pp. 90 ff. MacGuinness admits that St. Robert's teaching is "longe communior."

³⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 547.

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It must be admitted is quite forceful. He between the visible Church a "consequence" follows. He concludes his question [of occult heresy] proposed that it involves occulture but rather a paradox and the Mystical Body light of the recent encyclical of what he had proposed Robert's teaching, it is Fr. Lawlor other than as teaching has been rendered *Mystici corporis*.

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³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 542.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 554.

⁴¹ All three follow St. Robert's *logiae fundamentalis* (Rome: locis theologicis (Montreal: *Theologia fundamentalis* (Nantes) this doctrine as more probable presents it without qualification.

lical *Mystici corporis* upon the controversy about the possibility that an occult heretic can be a member of the true Church.

It must be admitted that Fr. Lawlor's judgment on this point is quite forceful. He speaks of "a dissociation, at least partial, between the visible Church and the Mystical Body of Christ" as a "consequence" following upon the defence of St. Robert's position.³⁹ He concludes his article with the remark that "When the question [of occult heresy and membership in the Church] is so proposed that it involves not merely a matter of suitable nomenclature but rather a partial dissociation between the visible Church and the Mystical Body of Christ, then it seems clear that in the light of the recent encyclical it is no longer safe doctrine."⁴⁰ In the light of what he had previously declared to be a consequence of St. Robert's teaching, it is difficult to interpret this last statement by Fr. Lawlor other than as at least an oblique charge that St. Robert's teaching has been rendered unacceptable among Catholics by the *Mystici corporis*.

In this connection it is interesting to note that three important theological manuals which have been published since the appearance of the *Mystici corporis* all teach with St. Robert that an occult heretic can be a member of the true Church. It would be astonishing to discover, at this comparatively late date, that Msgr. Parente and Fathers Yelle and Calcagno⁴¹ had all taught a doctrine incompatible with the teaching of a highly important papal document which had appeared prior to the publication of their works. It would be more than astonishing to find that these estimable theologians were engaged in teaching what is no longer safe doctrine.

In the only part of the *Mystici corporis* dealing directly with the question of membership, the Holy Father teaches that "Actually only those are to be included as members of the Church who have been baptized and profess the true faith, and who have

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 542.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 554.

⁴¹ All three follow St. Robert's teaching on this point. Cf. Parente, *Theologiae fundamentalis* (Rome: Marietti, 1946), p. 171; Yelle, *De ecclesia et de locis theologicis* (Montreal: Grand Seminary, 1945), pp. 50 f.; Calcagno, *Theologia fundamentalis* (Naples: D'Auria, 1948), p. 207. Parente teaches this doctrine as more probable, Calcagno as more common, and Yelle presents it without qualification.

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not been so unfortunate as to separate themselves from the unity of the Body, or been excluded by legitimate authority for grave faults committed." ⁴² This statement is incompatible with the individual position of Francis Suarez, who held that catechumens could be members of the Church, but it is quite compatible with the positions of both St. Robert and Francis Sylvius. Both of these theologians held that only people who conformed to the description which the Holy Father incorporated into his encyclical should be considered as real members of the Church. Sylvius and his associates, however, were convinced that these were not the only characteristics requisite for constituting a man as a member of the true Church of Jesus Christ on earth. The theory championed by St. Robert, on the other hand, held and holds that only these factors are necessary.

Strangely enough, Fr. Lawlor believes that the very paragraph of the encyclical within which the statement about membership is found contains evidence that "its teaching on the minimal requirements of real membership differs essentially from that of Bellarmine." ⁴³ He bases this claim upon the fact that the Holy Father cites in this paragraph two scriptural passages "which are taken from a context wherein are found exhortations to unity grounded on the truth that we are one Body vivified by one Spirit," ⁴⁴ and upon the Holy Father's assertion that "those who are divided in faith or government cannot be living in the unity of such a Body, nor can they be living the life of its one Divine Spirit." ⁴⁵

The fact that the Vicar of Christ speaks of one Spirit and one faith in the Christian community has, of course, nothing whatever to do with the question about the possibility of membership in the Church on the part of an occult heretic. All that the Holy Father teaches is that the members, who have at least the qualifications he has indicated in the first sentence of this paragraph, dwell within a community in which "there is only one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, one Baptism," and in which, consequently, "there can be only one faith." He makes no effort whatsoever to

⁴² From the *NCWC* translation, n. 22. The original text is to be found in *AAS*, XXXV (July 20, 1943), 202.

⁴³ *Op. cit.*, p. 547.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 548.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

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Even less verisimilitude appears in the claim that the *Mystici corporis* is incompatible with St. Robert's teaching by virtue of the fact that it denies that people who are divided from one another in faith and government can be living in one Body of this sort or can be living by its one Divine Spirit. The statement to the effect that a person completely divided from the Body cannot be living by the Spirit in no way involves the assertion or the implication that every one of those who lives in the Body, that is in the Church itself, actually lives the supernatural life in any degree whatever.

In the encyclical, the Holy Father speaks of schism, heresy, and apostasy, as sins which, of their very nature, separate a man from the Body of the Church. He thereby follows the traditional procedure adopted by St. Robert himself in his *De ecclesia militante*. The great Doctor of the Church devoted the fourth chapter of his book to a proof that heretics and apostates are not members of the Church. The tenth chapter of the same work is nothing more or less than a demonstration of the fact that *occult* infidels or heretics are really members. Thus, in utilizing the very procedure of St. Robert, the Holy Father can certainly not be considered as contradicting his special conclusion. In writing what St. Robert included in his fourth chapter, the Holy Father must not be considered as denying what the same great Doctor of the Church taught in the tenth chapter of the same book.

Furthermore, there is no objectively acceptable reason for interpreting the Holy Father's pronouncements about the presence of sinners in the Church, and about the fact that many sins which drive divine charity from the soul do not destroy Christian faith, as meaning that every person who is actually a member of the Church possesses true and inward divine faith. Nor is there any justification for the process of interpreting the places in the *Mystici corporis* in which Our Lord or the Holy Ghost are represented as communicating life to the *singula membra* of the Church, as declarations that no man can be a member of the Church unless he possesses at least the true and inward divine faith. Unfortunately the English translations sometimes speak of this expression as meaning "each of the members." Such an interpretation is, however, quite incorrect. There is no place in the *Mystici*

corporis in which there is either a clear statement or a genuine implication that each and every member of the true Church must be in possession of true and inward faith, and that consequently an occult heretic cannot be considered as a true member of the Church.

Certainly the *Mystici corporis* did not incorporate the teaching of St. Robert about the membership of occult heretics into the Church into the body of pontifical doctrine. But, by the same token, neither did it in any way deny or discourage St. Robert's opinion on this point. Any advance towards a solution of the problem itself will have to be made, since the publication of the encyclical itself has made no direct contribution, along the lines of the evidence which has been under consideration by the classical theologians since the seventeenth century.

In this connection, however, it is well to remember that we have been limiting our discussion to St. Robert's teaching about the possibility that occult heretics might be real members of the Catholic Church. It is our contention that the *Mystici corporis* in no way either implied or involved a rejection of this particular section of St. Robert's doctrine. What we have said in no way applies to St. Robert's teaching on the conditions for membership in the Church when this teaching is considered altogether, as a unit.

St. Robert was perfectly in line with a then existent theological tradition in holding that a man could be a true member of the Catholic Church when he possessed the outward bond of unity with the Church, apart altogether from the inward bond. He believed that a man was a real member of the Church when he had this outward bond of union, even though he had no true and inward Christian faith whatsoever.

He differed, however, from other ecclesiologists of his time in his concept of the outward bond itself. He held literally and consistently that these factors which were capable of making a man a member of the true Church and sufficient to constitute him such were the profession of the Christian faith and the communion or reception of the sacraments, under the direction of legitimate ecclesiastical pastors, and ultimately, under the leadership of the Roman Pontiff. He definitely did not teach that the baptismal character was necessary for real membership in the Church.

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He definitely taught that those "who have not given their names
to Christ through baptism, but who follow other religions,"⁴⁶ are
not members of the Church. He also denied that catechumens, those
who were preparing for the reception of baptism, and thus for en-
trance into the true Church of Christ, were members of the kingdom
of God on earth. But, in the light of what he has set down towards
the end of the tenth chapter in his *De ecclesia militante*, it is obvious
that he considered an unbaptized man a true member of the Church
when that man lived in society as a Catholic and was accepted as
such, either by reason of a mistake about his status, or because the
man cold-bloodedly falsified his position, claiming to have been bap-
tized when he knew well that he had never received the sacrament.

It is manifest that this particular aspect of St. Robert's teaching
is unacceptable in the light of the *Mystici corporis*. It must be re-
membered, however, that St. Robert's faulty description of the
Church's outward bond of unity in no way militates against his
teaching about the possibility that occult heretics can be members
of the true Church, and in no way invalidates the arguments he em-
ployed in favor of that contention.

The opinion that a man devoid of faith can be a real member of
the Catholic Church is recognized, even by those who do not accept
it, as being more commonly held than its opposite. As a *doctrina
communior* it has a sort of privileged status in the field of Catholic
theology. A man should be armed with a particularly strong set of
reasons in order to attempt legitimately to destroy it.

It is, of course, the privilege of any theologian to prefer the argu-
ments advanced for Sylvius' thesis to those which tend to show that
occult heretics can be members of the Catholic Church. In the
present status of dogmatic theology, however, it is somewhat pre-
sumptuous to assert that any arguments which have hitherto been
employed on the other side have rendered St. Robert's position
untenable.

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⁴⁶ Cf. *De ecclesia militante*, c. 10.