

# The Heresy that Men Can Belong to the Soul but not the Body of the Catholic Church

By Richard Joseph Michael Ibranyi

The Catholic Church is a divine institution and is referred to as the body of Christ:

“Now you are the body of Christ, and members of member.” (1 Cor. 12:27)

Some refer to the Holy Spirit as the soul of the Catholic Church because the Holy Spirit sanctifies the souls of the members of the Catholic Church:

“One body and one Spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling.” (Eph. 4:4)

Even though Pius XII was an apostate antipope, he teaches the truth in this regard:

Apostate Antipope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, 1953: “Let it suffice to say that, as Christ is the Head of the Church, so is the Holy Spirit her Soul.”

While the Holy Spirit grants graces to those outside the Catholic Church, these graces are assisting graces and not sanctifying grace. Only those who are inside the Catholic Church and thus only members of the Catholic Church get sanctifying grace which remits sins and the punishment due to sins. Hence Christ, who represents the body of the Church, made sanctifying grace available by his sacrificial death, while the Holy Spirit, who represents the soul of the Church, applies sanctifying grace to the souls of members of the Church.

I say represents the body and soul of the Church because Christ is not literally the body of the Church and the Holy Spirit is not literally the soul of the Church. These terms, then, are metaphors:

Apostate Fr. Joseph Clifford Fenton: “The terms body and soul with reference to the Catholic Church...are metaphors.”<sup>1</sup>

If it were literal, then ever time a member of the Catholic Church sins, then Christ would also be guilty of sin, as members of the Catholic Church are part of the body of Christ. Christ is the head of the Catholic Church and the Church is his body in a similar way that a president is the owner and head of a company and the company can be said to be his body (his possession). But that does not mean company is literally the owner or the companies buildings and members would be the owner himself.

Members of the Catholic Church who are in a state of grace belong to the body and soul of the Church. Members of the Catholic Church who are not in a state of grace (guilty of mortal sin) belong only to the body of the Catholic Church and are referred to as dead limbs that are still attached to the tree because they are still members of the Catholic Church.

However there is no such thing as a member of the Catholic Church who belongs to the soul of the Catholic Church but does not belong to the body of the Catholic Church. That would mean the body of the Catholic Church is either dead (soul-less), or it would mean that there are two Catholic Churches (A bodiless Catholic Church with only a soul and a Catholic Church with a body and soul). Even though Orestes Brownson was an apostate, he teaches the truth in this regard:

Apostate Orestes Brownson, 1874: “The body and soul of the church, though distinguishable, are not separable, we might say, no more separable than are the body and soul and the human and divine natures of our Lord... To assume that one can belong to the soul of the church without being in any sense really a member of the visible body of the church, would be to reject the entire Christian order as we have been taught it... What did the council, the fourth Lateran, that defined that out

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Use of the Terms Body and Soul, with Reference to the Catholic Church*, 1945.

of the church no one can ever be saved by the church. Did it mean the visible or an invisible church or the soul of the church, that is, the Holy Ghost apart from the body in which he dwells, and in and through which he operates? When the Holy Scriptures, the fathers, the popes, and councils speak of the church, in connection with salvation, they always, as far as we have observed, speak of the visible church, or the church in the concrete, not of an invisible church, or the church as a disembodied spirit.”<sup>2</sup>

Beware, then, of the salvation heretics who, in an attempt to place men inside the Catholic Church who are in fact outside the Catholic Church, have invented the heresy that men can belong to the soul of the Catholic Church but not belong to the body of the Catholic Church. In this way they say these men are inside the soul of the Catholic Church even though they are not inside the body of the Catholic Church. They say they are members of the soul of the Catholic Church but not members of the body of the Catholic Church. For example,

Apostate Rev. F. X. Schoupe, S.J., *Abridged Course of Religious Instruction for the Use of Catholic Colleges and Schools*, c. 1880: “[pp. 70-71] 37. ...In other words, no man can be saved if, by his own will, he remains *out of the Church*, or does not belong either to the *body* of the Church *or the soul of the Church*. By belonging to the *body* of the Church, we mean being a member of the Catholic Church. Those who belong only to the *soul* of the Church are those heretics who are in good faith observing the law of God as far as they know it. Even a pagan may belong to the Church; for as long as he keeps the natural law, the providence and grace of God will not be wanting to him; and by means of his faith in a god who has redeemed and will reward him, he will be led at least to the baptism of [implicit] desire, which will assure his justification; and so he will, belonging to the soul of the Church, obtain everlasting salvation.”

Another heresy from this heresy is that they invented an invisible Catholic Church that extends outside the visible body of the Catholic Church, outside of the Catholic Church’s faith, hierarchy, priesthood, and sacraments. Here are a few examples of this heresy. For example,

Apostate Remy Lafort, S.T.D, *The Church*, contained in the *Nominal Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1908: “VI. The Necessary Means of Salvation: ...Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus. This saying has been the occasion of so many objections that some consideration of its meaning seems desirable. It certainly does not mean that none can be saved except those who are in visible communion with the Church... Thus, even in the case in which God saves men apart from the Church, He does so through the Church’s graces. They are joined to the Church in spiritual communion, though not in visible and external communion. In the expression of theologians, they belong to the soul of the Church, though not to its body.”

This invisible and bodiless Catholic Church does not require belief in the Catholic faith, submission to the Catholic Church, and the reception of Catholic sacraments, as pagans, Moslems, Protestants, and Talmudic Jews can belong to it.

Even though Pius XII was an apostate antipope, he correctly condemned this heresy:

Apostate Antipope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, 1943: “14. ...The Church is visible because she is a body. Hence they err in a matter of divine truth who imagine the Church to be invisible, intangible, a something merely ‘pneumatological’ as they say, by which many Christian communities, though they differ from each other in their profession of faith, are united by an invisible bond... 64. ...How grievously they err who arbitrarily claim that the Church is something hidden and invisible...”

“22. Actually only those are to be included as members of the Church who have been baptized and profess the true faith, and who have not been so unfortunate as to

---

<sup>2</sup> Contained in *The Works of Orestes A. Brownson*, by Henry F. Brownson, 1908, Vol. XX, Answer to Objections, p. 392f, from *Brownson's Quarterly Review* for October, 1874.

separate themselves from the unity of the Body, or been excluded by legitimate authority for grave faults committed. 'For in one spirit' says the Apostle, 'were we all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free'. As therefore in the true Christian community there is only one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, and one Baptism, so there can be only one faith. And therefore, if a man refuse to hear the Church, let him be considered—so the Lord commands—as a heathen and a publican. It follows 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."

The salvation heretics, then, invented a phantom Catholic Church as another way, another door, to enter heaven:

"Amen, amen I say to you: He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up another way, the same is a thief and a robber." (Jn. 10:1)

Even though Fr. Joseph Clifford Fenton and Robert Bellarmine were apostates, they teach the truth in this regard:

Apostate Fr. Joseph Clifford Fenton, *The Use of the Terms Body and Soul, with Reference to the Catholic Church*, 1945:

"There is no Church of God in this world in any way distinct from the one visible society which Jesus Christ instituted during the days of His earthly sojourn, and which He placed under the supreme and visible direction of St. Peter and his successors..."

"The men who have applied the terms body and soul of the Church to the distinction condemned by the Holy Father have twisted metaphors found in Scripture and in the *De Ecclesia Militante* of St. Robert Bellarmine into meanings which they were never meant to convey..."

"There is a tendency, however, to attribute every use of the terms body and soul of the Church in modern theological writing to St. Robert Bellarmine. Thus he is sometimes falsely represented as the source for the type of teaching condemned by Pope Plus XII. The truth of the matter is that paradoxically enough, the very terms which have been twisted to designate a distinction between a visible and an invisible Church appear in St. Robert's *De Ecclesia Militante* integrated into proofs that no such dichotomy exists.

"The saintly [RJMI: apostate] Controversialist employed the terms body and soul with reference to the Catholic Church much more extensively than the other classical ecclesiologists. The terms are metaphors, and St. Robert used them effectively and scientifically as metaphors. He used the analogy of body and soul to explain various portions of his teaching on the nature of the Church. We find each term used in three distinct meanings in the *De Ecclesia Militante*.

"1) The body is used to designate the Catholic Church itself. 'The Church is a living body.' St. Robert speaks of God the Holy Ghost as the *soul*, the correlative of this body. 'The Church is governed by Christ, as by its Head and its Spouse, and by the Holy Ghost as by its Soul.'

"2) The external profession of faith and the communication of the sacraments are called the *body* within the Church, or of the Church. The internal gifts of the Holy Ghost, faith, hope, charity and the rest constitute the corresponding soul.<sup>6 7</sup>

"3) Good Catholics constitute the interior part, and as it were the *soul* of the Church, while the wicked persons within the Church are its exterior part, and as it were the *body*.

“...Thus, since the Holy Ghost, dwelling within the Church, acts as the ultimate Principle of its corporate unity and life, His function within this society bears some resemblance to that of a soul within a living physical body. So it is that the metaphor soul is useful and effective in explaining His work in the Church of Jesus Christ.

“It is of course impossible to conciliate this use of the term soul with the expression ‘members of the soul of the Church.’ There are members of a body or of a society. There can be no members of the Holy Ghost. Furthermore the men and women in whom the Holy Ghost dwells through sanctifying grace do not constitute any social organization by themselves in this world...

“St. Robert used this analogy in the second chapter of his *De Ecclesia Militante*, the chapter in which he presents his famous definition of the Church. This chapter opens with the citation and the criticism of five formulae which the heretics had used to describe the true Church of Jesus Christ. Then follows the definition which has become classical in Catholic theology.

‘But it is our teaching that there is one Church, and not two, and that this one and true Church is the assembly of men 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 of the Roman Pontiff, the one Vicar of Christ on earth.’

The great Controversialist employs the terms body and soul in indicating the difference between his definition and the various formulae which had been offered by heretics.

‘Our teaching differs from all the others in this, that all the others require internal virtues to constitute someone as within the Church, and therefore they make the true Church invisible. But although we believe that all the virtues, faith, hope, charity and the rest are found in the Church, still, in order that someone be said to be absolutely a part of the true Church spoken of in the Scriptures, we do not think that any internal virtue whatsoever is required, but only the external *profession of faith* and the sensibly perceived communion of the sacraments. For the Church is as visible and palpable a society as the assembly of the Roman people or the kingdom of France or the Republic of the Venetians.

‘But we should remember from Augustine, *in the Breviculus Collationis*, in the third conference, that the Church is a living body, in which there is a soul and a body. The internal gifts of the Holy Ghost, faith, hope, charity and the rest are the soul. The external profession of the faith and the communication of the sacraments are the body.

‘Hence it is that some are of the soul and of the body of the Church *de anima et de corpore Ecclesiae* and thus both inwardly and outwardly united with Christ the Head. These are most perfectly of the Church, for they are like living members in a body, although even among these some partake more of life and others less... Finally others are of the body but not of the soul, as those who have no internal virtue, but who still profess the faith and communicate in the sacraments under the rule of the pastors by reason of some temporal hope or fear. Such persons are like hairs or fingernails or diseased fluids in the human body. Therefore our definition takes cognizance of only this last way of being in the Church, since this is required as a minimum in order that a person may be said to be a part of the visible Church.’...

“It was not St. Robert, but rather the followers of Luther and of Calvin who distinguished between a visible and an invisible Church. This was the very error [RJMI: heresy] which the great Doctor of the Church set out to overthrow.

“St. Robert speaks of the three theological virtues as the soul in or of the Church. Manifestly there can be no such thing as a "member of the soul of the Church" in this sense. Faith, hope and charity constitute neither a body nor a society...

“St. Robert himself is authority for the statement that even in his time [1542-1621] certain Catholics [RJMI: Heretics] had postulated the existence of a twofold church. However it was not until the eighteenth century that men began to abuse his terminology to propound a thesis which was wholly distasteful to him. Charles du Plessis d'Argentre, Honoratus Tournely and Louis Legrand who contributed towards the use of the terms body and soul to designate a twofold Church no longer considered these words as metaphors, but thought of them as names for some realities which demanded an explanation in their own, right. Now that the Holy Father [RJMI: Un-Holy Father] has reproved the doctrine of the twofold Church, we may look forward to a decided improvement in popular ecclesiology.”<sup>3</sup>

The apostate Fr. Clifford pretends that the apostate Antipope Pius XII was the first one to condemn as heresy the opinion that there are two Churches when in fact this heresy was condemned by the Catholic Church's ordinary magisterium in AD 33 onward and by the Catholic Church's solemn magisterium many times during the first one thousand years of the Catholic Church. Hence not one Pope or Church Father ever taught that the soul of the Church exists outside the body of the Church. In fact, very few even mentioned the soul of the Church but only the body. St. Augustine was one such Church Father who spoke about the soul of the Church. And he says that the soul of the Church is only within the Church and thus within her body and without are all the unbelievers and schismatics and thus there is no Church that only has a soul in which unbelievers and schismatics can belong to:

St. Augustine of Hippo, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 393-394: “13...Let any one who is seeking after the delights of this world and the riches of temporal things under the Christian name, consider that our blessedness is within; as it is said of the soul of the Church by the mouth of the prophet, ‘All the beauty of the king’s daughter is within;’ for outwardly revellings, and persecutions, and disparagements are promised... For many heretics, deceiving souls under the Christian name, endure many such things; but they are excluded from that reward on this account, that it is not said merely, ‘Blessed are they which endure persecution;’ but it is added, ‘for righteousness’ sake.’ Now, where there is no sound faith, there can be no righteousness, for the just [righteous] man lives by faith. Neither let schismatics promise themselves anything of that reward; for similarly, where there is no love, there cannot be righteousness, for ‘love worketh no ill to his neighbour’.”<sup>4</sup>

Lastly, on this topic, Robert Bellarmine held the allowable opinion that catechumens (those preparing to enter the Catholic Church) can be baptized by desire or blood. In order to defend this opinion, he developed a theology that undermined and contradicted his correct teachings about the body and soul of the Catholic Church. He taught that catechumens belong to the soul of the Catholic Church but not to her body. Hence he extended the soul of the Catholic outside of its body and created another Church, the very thing he set out to refute. But he only did this for catechumens not for unbelievers. And he makes the same error regarding unjustly excommunicated persons.

Apostate Fr. Joseph Clifford Fenton, *The Use of the Terms Body and Soul, with Reference to the Catholic Church*, 1945:

---

<sup>3</sup> Contained in the *American Ecclesiastical Review*, 1945, Volume CX, January, pp. 48-57.

<sup>4</sup> c. 5.

“[Quote from Robert Bellarmine] ‘Again, some are of the soul and not of the body, as catechumens or excommunicated persons, if they possess faith and charity as they very well may’...

“St. Robert offers catechumens and excommunicated persons as examples of those who are not of the body of the Church, but who may be of the soul. He teaches explicitly that such people are not members of the Catholic Church. Yet, far from postulating the existence of some spiritual and invisible society or Church, in any manner distinct from the Catholic Church, to which such persons would belong and through which they could achieve their eternal salvation, St. Robert teaches distinctly that they can be saved by being of the Church by desire.

“Thus there is one, and only one necessary social vehicle of salvation. There is no society in any way distinct from the visible Catholic Church through which men may attain to the beatific vision. The men who are saved must be either actually members of this Church or desire to enter this society as members.”<sup>5</sup>

Fenton’s attempt to defend Bellarmine’s opinion as not creating another Church, a second Church, fails. Bellarmine, indeed, teaches there is a Church without a body and only a soul which catechumens and unjustly excommunicated persons belong to. And it is outside of the Church that has a body and soul.

I will now present the correct theology regarding the status of catechumens and unjustly excommunicated persons.

The faithful adhere to the Catholic Church as members and thus are inside the Catholic Church. Catechumens adhere to the Catholic Church as non-members and are said to be in the porch of the Church and thus not inside the Church. Just as a porch is not inside a house but is attached to the house, so are catechumens not inside the Church but are attached to the Church<sup>6</sup>:

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, 4th century: “[Prologue] 1. Already there is an odour of blessedness upon you [*competentes* - catechumens], O ye who are soon to be enlightened; already ye are gathering the spiritual flowers, to weave heavenly crowns; already the fragrance of the Holy Spirit has breathed upon you; already ye have gathered round the vestibule of the King’s palace; may ye be led in also by the King!”

Heretic Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History*, 4th century: “Others he joined together about the basilica on both sides; these are the catechumens who are still advancing and progressing and are not far separated from the inmost view of divine things granted to the faithful.”<sup>7</sup>

Apostate Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Canonical Epistle*, 3rd century: “Canon 11. ...The station of the hearers is within the oratory in the porch with the catechumens...”

Apostate Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations*, Oration 49 (On Holy Baptism), 4th century: “XVI. ...As long as you are a catechumen you are but in the porch of Religion, you must come inside and cross the court and observe the Holy Things and look into the Holy of Holies and be in company with the Trinity.”

Hence catechumens do not belong to the body or the soul of the Catholic Church because they are not inside the Catholic Church, as the soul of the Church can never be separated from and thus exist outside of the body of the Church. They belong to the porch of the Church.

Members of the Catholic Church who are unjustly excommunicated are still members of the Catholic Church and thus are still inside the Catholic Church even though they are thought to be non-members and thus outside the Catholic Church. They belong to the body of the Catholic

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. See Footnote 3.

<sup>6</sup> See RJMI article *Catechumens, Religious Communion, and RJMI’s Former Heresies*.

<sup>7</sup> b. 10, c. 4.

Church and if they are in a state of grace they belong also to her soul. Hence it is erroneous to believe that they belong to the soul of the Catholic Church but not her body, as the soul of the Catholic Church can never extend or exist outside the body of the Catholic Church. Also, Bellarmine undermines and contradicts his correct teaching that only those who are in a state of grace can belong to the soul of the Catholic Church when he teaches that all unjustly excommunicated persons belong to the soul but not the body of the Church. If so, then unjustly excommunicated persons who are not in a state of grace because they are guilty of some mortal sin (such as adultery) would also belong to the soul of the Church, which he says can only apply to those in a state of grace.

You can also have a man who appears to be a member of the Catholic Church and is not either because he is a secret formal heretic or secret formal schismatic or an infiltrator. Hence while he appears to belong to the body of the Church, he does not. And hence he cannot belong to the soul of the Church. St. Augustine teaches that it is the heart that determines if a man is inside or outside the Catholic Church regardless if he appears to be outside or inside of the Catholic Church:

St. Augustine, *On Baptism, against the Donatists*, 400: “39. ...When we speak of within and without in relation to the Church, it is the position of the heart that we must consider, not that of the [his] body . . . All who are within the heart are saved in the unity of the ark, through which all who are in heart without, whether they are also in [their] body without or not, die as enemies of unity.”<sup>8</sup>

Hence it is not the position of the body of the man that matters but the position of his heart. If his body appears to be inside the Catholic Church but his heart is not, then he is outside the Catholic Church even if everyone believes that he is inside the Catholic Church, as is the case with a secret formal heretic or a secret formal schismatic or an infiltrator.

If the allowable opinions of baptism of desire and baptism of blood (which only applies to catechumens) were true, then they those baptized as such would have to belong to both the body of the Church and the soul also as long as they remain in a state of grace. Hence they would have to be members of the Catholic Church. That is the only theology that can defend these opinions without leading to one or more heresies. For the record, I do not hold these allowable opinions. I hold the allowable opinion that the reception of the sacrament of baptism is necessary for salvation for all men and thus with no exceptions, as this is the only opinion that does not lead to any heresy.<sup>9</sup>

(Also see in this book “Heresy 3 – Men can belong to the soul of the Catholic Church but not her body.”)

*For the glory of God; in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michael, St. Joseph, Ss. Joachim and Anne, St. John the Baptist, the other angels and saints; and for the salvation of men*

Original version: 1/2023; Current version: 1/2023

**Mary’s Little Remnant**

302 East Joffre St.

Truth or Consequences, New Mexico 87901-2878, USA

Website: [www.JohnTheBaptist.us](http://www.JohnTheBaptist.us)

---

<sup>8</sup> b. 5, c. 28.

<sup>9</sup> See RJMI book *The Baptism Controversy Revision*.