

that true freedom demands the possession of property and claims that small possessions inevitably diminish 'spiritual freedom.' We do not forget that the same author earlier claimed that at the Malvern Conference Dr. Temple nailed the Red Flag to the ecclesiastical mast, a view which he appears to share with Mr. H. G. Wells.

The divergences among Christians regarding social matters are still wide, but the effect of prayer should be to bring them within one orbit of practical co-operation. And in this respect the Pope's Christmas blessing should be an inspiration to many: 'May Our benediction also descend on those who although not members of the visible body of the Catholic Church, are near to Us in their faith in God and in Jesus Christ, and share with Us Our views with regard to the conditions for a peace and its fundamental aims.'

THE EFFECTS OF SCHISM

[The following pages were written in response to a request from a group of Anglican Papalists for some account of the 'official Roman doctrine' regarding the practical consequences of separation from visible unity with the Catholic Church. They are here offered in the hope of providing a complement to the writer's article on 'Membership of the Church' (BLACKFRIARS, September, 1941).

As membership of the Church is an analogical concept which admits of many manners and degrees, so correspondingly is privation of that membership. In this essay we abstract altogether from such diversities and degrees of privation, and confine ourselves to the consideration of the results of factual loss of external communion with the *Catholica*. The question is not, therefore, 'Who is in schism?', but 'What is the practical outcome of being in schism?']

* * * * *

JESUS CHRIST is Prophet, Priest and King. He teaches, he hal-
lows, he governs. The Church, continuing in space and time what
'He began to do and to teach,' inherits that threefold power and
authority, without some participation in which *nulla est salus*. It
will be convenient to treat our subject under this threefold heading
of (1) the Church's teaching authority (*potestas docendi* or *magis-*
terium), (2) her power and authority to impart the means of grace
(*potestas sanctificandi*), and (3) her power and authority to order
and govern herself, *i.e.* the faithful (*potestas regendi*). Each
of these may be considered both (a) actively, and (b) passively.

Where does the schismatic stand with regard both to the active *exercise* of these powers and to the passive *reception* of the graces and benefits which they convey?

(1). *Potestas Docendi (Magisterium)*.

Schism is not the same as heresy, though commonly the two go together. A schismatic¹ as such does not necessarily deny or doubt any article of the Catholic faith. Schism is distinguished from heresy precisely by the fact that it does not constitute a rejection of the Church's *magisterium* but a breach with her visible fellowship. Nevertheless, the schismatic, by the very fact that he is in schism, and in greater or less degree, is deprived of the benefits of the Church's teaching office. And that both actively and passively.

(a) *Actively*. 'How shall they preach unless they be sent?' To teach in the name of the Church and on behalf of the Church requires commission from the Church and recognition by the Church. Though called directly by God to the apostolate, St. Paul was nevertheless careful to 'see Peter' and to obtain the 'right hand of fellowship' from 'the pillars of the Church'—*i.e.* from the ecumenical authority. That fellowship, that authorisation and commission to teach, the schismatic necessarily lacks, and precisely because he is in schism. Because he is in schism, a schismatic diocesan bishop is unable to exercise the infallible 'solemn' magisterium of the Church by teaching in general councils in consort with the Pope and

¹ It is important to remember in reading Catholic theology that the words 'heretic' and 'schismatic' are always to be understood of those who are consciously and wilfully such, or declared to be such by the Church's authority, unless the contrary is stated or implied. In the *Summa Theologica*, II-II, xxxix, 1, St. Thomas Aquinas explains why *intention* to be separated from the Church and to refuse her government and fellowship is of the very essence of schism properly so called. Without such knowledge and intention (which of course admit of degrees) the breach with the Church is not a fully human act; therefore is not fully internal; therefore is not complete. Hence theologians are agreed that merely material heresy or schism do not completely disrupt the subject's adherence to the Church, though most of them will not allow the term 'member of the Church' to be applied to them owing to their factual and external separation. (See *e.g.*, Billot, *De Ecclesia Christi*, Vol. I, 4th edition, pp. 288 *sqq.*, and BLACKFRIARS, Sept., 1941.) Similarly, for Canon Law, a schismatic is one who 'refuses to live under the Roman Pontiff, or who declines to hold communion with the members of the Church subject to him' (Codex of Canon Law, Canon 1325, § 2). It is unquestionably unfortunate and misleading to have to use the term schismatic to include all the baptised who live and worship outside the visible fellowship of the Church, whether their separated condition is intended or not. Latterly the terms *dissidents*, *acatholici* and *fratres separati* have come increasingly into use. But the first two are too ambiguous for the purposes of this article; and the last, though admirable in its theological exactitude, is too cumbersome for repeated use in the plural, and altogether too bizarre in the singular!

the other bishops of the ecumenical Church. Neither can he exercise the 'ordinary' *magisterium* with respect to his own flock, for he lacks the commission and recognition from the Church as a whole which alone can enable him to do so. What is true of schismatic diocesan bishops is *a fortiori* true of schismatic priests, ministers or lay-teachers.

Of course it may happen that the content of their teaching is perfectly sound. They may be careful to teach only what is taught by the Catholic Church. They may check all they teach by the Vincentian Canon. But their teaching lacks authority, for they cannot teach as representatives of the universal Church or as commissioned by the *Catholica*. And the chances are, as history bears witness, that the schismatic teacher will soon be teaching contrary to the teaching of the Church, and there is no authoritative power to prevent or correct him.

(v) *Passively*. All this has its inevitable repercussions on the *taught*. They lack authoritative teaching which has the commission and sanction of the whole Church behind it; they lack guarantee that what they are taught is the teaching of the Catholic and Apostolic Church. It is true, of course, that a bishop or priest who retains visible communion with the Church may also teach erroneously; even a Pope may do so in a non-ecumenical capacity. But not for long. There is a constant check; authority will soon intervene. The schismatic has no such assurance. The schismatical condition of his pastors may soon lead him into the acceptance of false doctrine and into error concerning the faith; it deprives him of contact with the authorised channels of the *Ecclesia docens* through which the *Ecclesia discens* should receive the unsullied truth. Schism precisely blocks the channel.

(2). *Potestas Sanctificandi*.

This is *exercised* principally through the administration of the Sacraments, and *received* through their reception.

(a) *Administration of the Sacraments in Schism*. The Roman Church has constantly maintained, even in the face of weighty argument to the contrary, and against men of the calibre of St. Cyprian, the validity of Baptism administered by heretics and schismatics—and even pagans. (Always supposing, of course, due matter, form and intention.) She has consistently refused to 're-baptise' those baptised by such, and has formally anathematised those who deny the validity of such baptisms.² She has likewise maintained the

² Council of Trent, Session VII, Canon 4 (Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, § 860).

sacramental validity of marriage contracted by baptised Christians, whatever their 'denomination,' and her law even expressly exempts non-Catholic couples from some of the conditions which, for her own children, are indispensable for validity.³ She has also consistently recognised the validity of other sacraments administered by heretics and schismatics (even formally such; but always, of course, supposing adequate matter, form and intention) if they possess the appropriate episcopal or sacerdotal character.⁴

Nevertheless, to administer the Sacraments in a condition of schism is, as a general principle, always more or less irregular and illicit. (Not necessarily culpably so, but in objective fact.) I say 'as a general principle,' because reservation must be made in those exceptional cases of necessity (baptism and absolution of the dying) where this is expressly permitted.

The reasons for this are thus set forth by St. Thomas Aquinas :

'Spiritual power is twofold, the one *sacramental*, the other a power of *jurisdiction*. The sacramental power is one that is conferred by some sort of consecration. Now all the consecrations of the Church are immovable so long as the consecrated thing remains : as appears even in inanimate things, since an altar, once consecrated, is not consecrated again unless it has been broken up. [*i.e.* the sacramental character of Orders, which is a 'spiritual power, is indelible.] Consequently such a power as this remains, as to its essence, in the man who has received it by consecration, as long as he lives, even if he fall into schism or heresy : and this is proved from the fact that, if he come back to the Church, he is not consecrated [or ordained] anew. Since, however, a lower power [*i.e.* agent] *ought* not to *exercise* its act, except in so far as it is moved [so to do] by a higher power [or agent], as may be seen also in the physical order, it follows that such persons [*i.e.* those who fall into schism or heresy] lose the *use* of that power in the sense that it is not *lawful* for them to *use* it. Yet, if they do use it, because therein man acts only as God's instrument, their power is effective in administering the sacraments

'But the power of jurisdiction is conferred by human appointment [*i.e.* authoritatively and not instrumentally]. Such a power as

³ See the Codex of Canon Law, Canon 1099, § 2.

⁴ Reservation must, however, be made in the case of the Sacrament of Penance, for sacramental absolution, being a judicial act, requires not only valid orders, but valid jurisdiction for validity. Hence St. Thomas, as will presently be seen, says without qualification that heretics and schismatics cannot absolve. The question as to whether or not an Orthodox diocesan bishop (for instance) is deprived of the power of exercising and granting such jurisdiction by reason of his separation from the Holy See raises many complex issues that cannot here be discussed. However, the Church expressly grants the necessary jurisdiction to *all* priests for absolution *in articulo mortis*.

this does not adhere to the recipient indestructibly; and hence does not remain in heretics and schismatics. Therefore, they are able neither to absolve, nor excommunicate, nor grant indulgences, nor do anything of the kind [*i.e.* that requires jurisdiction for validity].

'Accordingly, when it is said that such persons have no spiritual power, it is to be understood as referring either to the second power [for in matters demanding jurisdiction they possess no power either for valid or licit administration], or, if it be referred to the first power, it must be understood not as referring to the essence of the power [or the validity of what they do], but to its lawful use.'⁵

The Sacraments are the possession of the Church, and they can lawfully be administered only in, by and for the Church. The essential power to administer the Sacraments exists, indeed, outside her visible borders; the right, the permission, the authorisation to make use of that power does not (save in the aforementioned exceptional cases where the Church expressly authorises it). That essential power—the priestly character—is not a personal possession of which the recipient may make what use he likes. It is a social endowment, entrusted for the sole purpose of the building up of the Body of Christ. Hence the use of that power apart from the visible communion of that Body, and without benefit to that Body, must always be attended with an element of abuse, even of sacrilege. The minister of the Sacraments as such acts, not as an individual, nor as a representative of any separated church or sect, but as a priest of the One Catholic Church. If he is not, in fact, a representative of that Church, nor is recognised as such by it, he is inevitably (however unconsciously and inculpably) 'acting a lie.' Moreover, if he administers the sacraments to schismatics, he is abusing the sacraments by giving them to those who are not entitled to them nor in a position to reap their full benefits.⁶ This leads us to the consideration of

(b) *The Reception of the Sacraments in Schism.* 'Of such great value is the unity of the Body of the Church,' declare Pope Eugenius IV and the Council of Florence in the Decree for the Jacobites, 'that the Sacraments of the Church profit only those who remain within it.'⁷ St. Thomas says of those heretics and schismatics who retain right matter, form and intention, that 'they indeed confer the

⁵ *Summa Theol.*, II-II, xxxix, 3. For patristic doctrine on the subject, see quotations in Darwell Stone and F. W. Puller, *Who are Members of the Church?* (Pusey House Occasional Papers, No. 9).

⁶ For fuller development of the doctrine in this paragraph, see the *Summa Theol.* III, lxiii, *passim*, lxiv, 4 *sqq.*, lxvii, 3 *sqq.*, lxxxii, 7, 9.

⁷ Denz.-Bann., § 714.

sacrament, but they do not confer that which the sacraments signify and effect (the *res sacramenti*), if they are manifestly cut off from the Church.⁸

These texts, and many others of the same sort that might be quoted, clearly have principally in mind *formal* schismatics; but the principles employed have their application, *mutatis mutandis*, and with necessary qualifications, to all who receive the sacraments outside the visible unity of the Church.

It is important to distinguish between the validity of a sacrament and its actual efficaciousness in producing the effects for which it is intended. A sacrament may be perfectly valid, *i.e.* it may possess all the power to 'effect what it signifies' *ex opere operato* (it is not a valid sacrament at all if it has not), and yet its effect may fail to be realised, either in part or wholly, through the presence of some obstacle on the part of the recipient.⁹ This is a commonplace of Catholic teaching, without which the whole theology of the sacraments would indeed degenerate into magic. Yet it has been strangely overlooked by certain Anglican writers who would seem to argue that the sacraments themselves achieve the unity of the Church irrespective of the dispositions and co-operation of the recipients.

Now the very fact of schism (quite apart from the wilful act of schism, which would render the reception of the sacraments completely ineffective) constitutes a grave obstacle to the realisation of (at very least) *all* the effects of *all* the sacraments. The very condition of being cut off from the visible fellowship of the Church frustrates part, at least, of the very purpose for which the sacraments exist.

Perhaps this is most evident in the case of the three sacraments which confer character. Sacramental character, according to St. Thomas, is essentially a spiritual power (*potestas spiritualis instrumentalis*) which enables the recipient to exercise particular spiritual functions in the visible life and worship of the visible Church—'in ordine ad cultum praesentis Ecclesiae.'¹⁰ Anyone who receives valid Baptism, Confirmation or Orders certainly receives the character which they convey, and indelibly. But so soon as he becomes cut off from the visible life of the Church, he is precluded from its

⁸ *Summa Theol.* III, lxiv, 9 ad 2.

⁹ It is *defined* doctrine only that those who *place* (actively) an obstacle in the way of the effect of a sacrament frustrate its effectiveness (*cf.* Denz.-Bann., § 441 and 849). But it will be clear from what follows that such obstacles to the *full* fruition of the efficaciousness of a sacrament can exist without voluntary interference on the part of the recipient personally.

¹⁰ See *Summa Theol.* III, lxiii *passim*.

legitimate use, and the purpose for which the character is given is frustrated.

Thus, the purpose of the character of BAPTISM, according to St. Thomas, is to initiate the recipient into that public life and worship of the 'present Church,' and to enable him to participate in the other sacraments administered in the Church. The Council of Florence declared, in accord with constant Catholic teaching, that Baptism makes the recipient a member of the Church,¹¹ and theologians are agreed that this is due to the character which it confers.¹² But schism precisely precludes the fruition of that initiation into the life of the Church, and so negatives the very purpose for which the baptismal character is conferred. It is true that the baptismal character (unlike that of Confirmation, and still more unlike that of Orders) is concerned more immediately with the personal sanctification of the individual recipient than with the social benefit of the Church at large.¹³ But it is concerned with the sanctification of the individual recipient precisely *by* initiating him into the grace-bearing Body of the Church, and by empowering him to share in the visible and social means of sanctification which the fellowship and ministry of the Church provide. Schism by its very nature closes the door which the baptismal character had opened.

What is true of the character of Baptism is *a fortiori* true of the character of CONFIRMATION—which empowers the recipient to take an adult and active part in the social life of the Church¹⁴—and still more of that of ORDER—whose purpose is wholly social and for the benefit of the Body of the Church. Schism, as we have already seen, of its nature prohibits the licit use—in the name of and on behalf of the Church—of the spiritual power conferred by Holy Orders.

The principal effect of the Sacrament of PENANCE is the restoration of grace lost by post-baptismal sin. But a secondary effect, consequent upon the first, is restoration to 'the sacraments of the Church and to the communion of the faithful.' This is expressly stated in the form of absolution used in the Latin Church. From this effect of sacramental absolution the schismatic is, by definition, debarred.

The efficaciousness even of the sacrament of MARRIAGE is, in an important degree, frustrated by schism. Marriage establishes

¹¹ Denz.-Bann., § 696.

¹² Cf. Billot, *op. et loc cit.*

¹³ Cf. *Summa Theol.* III, lxxiii, 3, 6.

¹⁴ *Summa Theol.* III, lxxii, 5, cf. Laros, *Confirmation in the Modern World.*

the family—the basic unit of civil society. Christian, sacramental marriage should establish the Catholic family—the basic social unit in the Church. Marriage ensures the perpetuation and propagation of the human race. Sacramental marriage should perpetuate and propagate the Church. Marriage is ordained not only for the begetting but also the upbringing of offspring. Christian marriage is ordained for the upbringing of offspring in the faith and practice of the one, visible Church. The grace of the sacrament is given to enable the recipients to fulfil these tasks.¹⁵ Yet by the very fact of being separated from the Church they are, in greater or less degree, precluded from fulfilling these purposes.

EXTREME UNCTION is, of all the sacraments, the least concerned with the visible social life of the *praesens Ecclesia*, for it is concerned precisely with passing from it and preparing for the passage to the *Ecclesia futura*.¹⁶ But for that reason it lacks something of its purpose if it concludes anything but a life lived in full communion with the *praesens Ecclesia*. And inasmuch as a secondary effect may be the restoration of health, its purpose will be frustrated if the restored life is not led in full fellowship with the Church and in participation of her social life and worship.

But it is the efficaciousness of the EUCHARIST which is most gravely compromised by the state of schism. The reality signified and effected by the Holy Eucharist—the *res sacramenti*—is, according to St. Thomas, ‘the unity of the mystical Body, without which there is no salvation; for to nobody is there any entry to salvation outside the Church, just as there was none at the time of the Flood for those outside the ark of Noah.’¹⁷ Hence the Holy Eucharist is ‘the sacrament of ecclesiastical unity, in accordance with the words of the Apostle: “We, though many, are one bread, one body; all who partake of one bread and one chalice.”’¹⁸ It is, before all things, the sacrament of fellowship and love, the effective sign of the unity of the faithful in Christ. ‘The unity of the mystical Body,’ says St. Thomas again, ‘is the fruit of the reception of Christ’s physical Body.’¹⁹ Schism is, by definition, a breach of that unity; consequently it is the very negation of the *res* of the Holy Eucharist.

Hence, according to St. Thomas, a formal schismatic cannot receive the effects of the Holy Eucharist, and the celebration of the

¹⁵ Cf. *Casti Connubii* (Encyclical of Pius XI).

¹⁶ Cf. *Summa Theol.* III, lxxv., 1 ad 4.

¹⁷ *Summa Theol.* III, lxxiii, 3.

¹⁸ *Summa Theol.* III, lxxvii, 2.

¹⁹ *Summa Theol.* III, lxxxii, 9 ad 2.

Holy Eucharist by a formal schismatic is a heinous sacrilege, an empty and hypocritical rite.²⁰ It is a profession of a union with the Church which does not exist, either externally or in internal intention. The case of a merely material schismatic is indeed different. His breach with the Church is primarily external, lacking full knowledge and consent. Nevertheless, there can be no complete internal unity with the Church which is not also external, for the Church herself requires—in accord with the will of her Founder—that unity must be external also. Hence, it would seem that, where some internal (at least implicit) intention of unity with the Church is present, the significance and efficaciousness of the Holy Eucharist is not entirely voided. But because that unity and fellowship with the Church is defective in the measure in which it lacks external and visible expression, to that extent the efficaciousness of the reception of the Holy Eucharist is frustrated. From the very nature of the case, there must always be something anomalous about the celebration and partaking of the Holy Eucharist in a state of schism, however innocent and partial and unintended that schismatic condition may be. For schism is, by definition, the very negation of that ‘ecclesiastical unity’ which is the reality signified and effected by the Holy Eucharist.

(3). *Potestas Regendi.*

Under this heading little need be said. For schism is, of its nature, a state of separation from the government and authority of the Church. St. Thomas explains :

‘The sin of schism is a particular kind of sin inasmuch as the schismatic intends to sever himself from that unity which is the effect of charity : because charity unites not only one person to another with the bond of spiritual love, but also the whole Church in unity of spirit . . . Now the unity of the Church consists in two things ; namely in the mutual connexion or communion of the members of the Church, and again in the subordination of all the members of the Church to the one head, according to Col. ii, 18, 19, . . . Now, this Head is Christ himself, whose vicegerent in the Church is the chief Pontiff. Wherefore those are called schismatics who refuse to live under the chief Pontiff, or who decline to hold communion with members of the Church who are subject to him.’²¹

St. Thomas here deals with schism from the moral standpoint, *i.e.* as deliberate conscious act rather than as bare fact. But he

²⁰ *Summa Theol.* III, lxxx, 7, 9.

²¹ *Summa Theol.* II-II, xxxix, 1.

accurately describes the nature of the fact of schism as separation from the ordered fellowship of the Church under the supreme leadership of the Pope.

It is clear that the state of schism precludes (a) any participation in the *exercise* of the ordering and government of the community of the faithful under the chief Pontiff.

It likewise precludes (b) any full *receptive* share in that governed and ordered life of the visible community. There may indeed be, as we have already seen, some internal submission to the Church's government. But that submission, even though it extend to the most meticulous observance of the latest decrees of Roman Congregations, can never be complete if it does not include visible communion. And visible communion cannot be unilateral. It requires not only recognition of the authority of the appointed pastors of the Church, it requires recognition *by* them.

* * * * *

In this skeleton treatment of a considerable subject, our attention has necessarily been confined to consideration of the effect of schism *on the schismatic*. Yet (as we observed in the previous article) the chief evil of schism consists in the injury which it does *to the Church* and to her divine mission in the world. That injury, as Fr. Congar has well shown in his *Chrétiens désunis*, is not quantitative only, depriving the Church of those whom Baptism has made her members, but also qualitative, frustrating the full actualisation of her Catholic potentialities. St. Thomas says that 'of all the sins against charity to our neighbour, the sin of schism seems to be the greatest, because it is [directly] contrary to the spiritual welfare of the multitude.'²² The reason for this is clear: the wilful schismatic is one who refuses fellowship with the brotherhood of love which God has appointed to unite and save the human race. To the extent that the schism is not conscious and wilful, the schismatic is not indeed fully guilty of that supreme crime against mankind. But the external effect is the same, whether schism be wilful or not; the schismatic is involved, whether or not through his own fault, in a situation which implies a repudiation of the life into which he was initiated at baptism, which is contrary to the express will of the Lord and Founder of the Church, and which necessarily hinders the Church's mission in the world.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

²² *Summa Theol.* II-II, xxxix, 2 ad 3.