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RAYMUND FAJARDO ALCANTARA

The Ecclesiology and the
Theology of Ministerial
Priesthood in Fulton J. Sheen

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SEPARATA

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The Ecclesiology and the Theology
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Presentation

Abstract: This is a theological analysis directed towards elucidating the notion of the Church and ministerial priesthood in Sheen's writings. His view of the Church's nature as the *prism* of the diffusion of Divine Life serves as the theological basis for understanding his notion of the evangelizing mission of the Church. In line with Sheen's ecclesiology, his theology of ministerial priesthood is elaborated within the theological framework of the so-called *Divine Equation*. In the analysis of Sheen's theological ideas in reference to Vatican Council II, certain similarities and differences come to light, between his notion of the Church and priesthood, and some key conciliar teachings.

Keywords: Ecclesiology, Priesthood, Second Vatican Council.

Resumen: Este es un análisis teológico dirigido a dilucidar la noción de la Iglesia y el sacerdocio ministerial en el pensamiento de Sheen. Su visión de la Iglesia como *prisma* de la difusión de la Vida Divina es el fundamento clave para comprender su noción de la misión evangelizadora de la Iglesia. De acuerdo con su ecclesología, se elabora su teología del sacerdocio ministerial en el marco teológico de la llamada *Ecuación Divina*. En el análisis de su noción de la Iglesia y del sacerdocio en referencia al Concilio Vaticano II, sus ideas teológicas muestran ciertas similitudes y diferencias en comparación con algunas de las enseñanzas conciliares.

Palabras clave: Ecclesiología, Sacerdocio, Vaticano II.

In 1935, twenty-seven years before the Second Vatican Council, Fulton J. Sheen pointed out that the time had come when we would see the most intense and profound study of the Church since the Reformation. Sheen, an auxiliary bishop of New York who lived from 1895 to 1979, was famous both on radio and television. Above all, he was one of the most prolific North American Catholic writers of the twentieth century.

In a period of 54 years, he published more than 60 books, 62 booklets, and numerous articles. In order to discover the central theological themes in his works, we decided to initiate a scientific research on the notion of the Church and ministerial priesthood. Due to the scarcity of studies on his theological works, this investigation is a first attempt in elaborating not a fragmented but an integral view of his theology of the Church and priesthood.

In his writings, the adequate understanding of the ministerial priesthood is inseparable from the mystery of Christ and the mystery of the Church. Insofar as his notion of the priesthood (which is centered on the mystery of

Christ) has been developed in the context of his ecclesiological ideas, there is an essential and intimate relationship between his ecclesial and priestly vision. As a result, the study of his notion of the priesthood presupposes also an investigation of his vision of the Church. Although his ecclesiology or his theology of the priesthood can be analyzed separately, a better understanding of his notion of priesthood presupposes an adequate study of his ecclesiological vision. Hence, our research has been entitled: «The ecclesiology and theology of ministerial priesthood in Fulton Sheen».

Our study has three main objectives, which do not refer to three different studies but point to three perspectives of a single theme – Sheen’s ecclesiological-priestly view. To discover the theological foundation of his notion of priesthood, it is necessary first to examine his view of the Church, and of what he called the *Divine Equation*.

- a) As such, the first objective of our research is to identify and to understand Sheen’s view of the nature and mission of the Church.
- b) The second is to establish the Priesthood of Christ as the root and center of Sheen’s theology of ministerial priesthood.
- c) The third is to discover the development of Sheen’s ecclesiology and theology of priesthood in the light of the Second Vatican Council.

To achieve these objectives, the method of our research has been the theological analysis of his writings published from the 1920s to the 1970s. In this methodology, we have followed a deductive approach, beginning with a comprehensive presentation of his ecclesiology and theology of the priesthood followed by a detailed analysis of his theological perspectives before and after the Council.

Since his writings cover a wide range of subject matter and diverse fields, in our study of his ecclesiology and priesthood we have not focused only on his theological works, but have also taken into account his pastoral and philosophical writings so that our analysis would be more comprehensive.

This research is divided into five chapters. The first three chapters deal with Sheen’s life and works, his ecclesiology, and theology of ministerial priesthood. Due to the non-systematic nature of his theological reflections, his ecclesiology and theology of priesthood are elaborated in chapters II and III following a classical scheme to come up with a more adequate understanding of his ecclesiological-sacerdotal thought. The last two chapters present the development of his vision of the Church and priesthood in relation to the Second Vatican Council.

Chapter I outlines briefly the life of Sheen from his early childhood years, including his seminary life, up to the exercise of his diverse ministerial tasks

as pastor, evangelizer, and theologian. In this chapter, importance is given to the identification of the different influences in the shaping of his theological framework.

Chapter II discusses the notion of the Church's nature and her evangelizing mission. It examines its biblical and theological foundations. It also expounds the different dimensions of the nature of the Church as highlighted in Sheen's writings. Finally, it examines the role of Mary as the Mother and Model of the Church's evangelizing mission.

Chapter III explains how Christ as *Priest* and *Victim* is the basis for the adequate understanding of the identity and ministry of ministerial priesthood. Throughout this chapter, there is a continuous reference to the Priesthood of Christ from which the identity and ministry of ministerial priesthood only finds its true meaning.

Chapter IV discusses the theological perspective of Sheen on the theology of the Church and priesthood in relation with the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. It presents the underlying theological framework within the organic whole of Sheen's ecclesiology and theology of ministerial priesthood. In addition, a comparative study of Sheen's view of the Church and ministerial priesthood with the teachings of some conciliar documents is elaborated.

Chapter V deals with the theological analysis of Sheen's view of the Church and priesthood posterior to the Council. It seeks to discover some changes in Sheen's theological perspective after Vatican II. It also outlines a synthesis of the development of his theological thought from 1920's until the years following the Council.

As the structure of our study shows, we have taken into account the studies carried out by other contemporary authors on Sheen's writings in order to open up our study to a broader perspective, and to be able to present an exhaustive analysis of his vision of the Church and the ministerial priesthood.

Since our research deals with the theological analysis not only of the theology of priesthood in the writings of Sheen but also of his ecclesiology, we publish in this extract the second chapter of the thesis. This chapter will reveal his unwavering dedication to develop a *reasoned exposition* of the theology of the Church. It will also show a clear underlying organic unity in his writings most especially when dealing with the Church, Christ and the Priesthood. Above all, it will manifest Sheen's personal commitment to speak well of Christ and to live as a *loyal son* of the Church¹.

1. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Treasure in Clay*, pp. 239-259 and p. 378; Also cfr. ID., *Those Mysterious Priests*, pp. 143-147.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all those who guided me in the completion of this investigation. To the Faculty of Theology of the University of Navarre and my professors especially Prof. Dr. D. Ramiro Pellitero: it was a pleasure to work with you; a thousand thanks for all your guidance and assistance.

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Systematic reflection on the nature and mission of the Church took centuries to form as a distinct theological discipline. It was only in the beginning of the mid-20th century that theologians started shaping ecclesiology as a strictly distinct science with the impetus of multiple and diverse factors¹. In 1935, although Sheen insisted that the systematic study of the Church was little elaborated in the beginning of the modern era, he noted that the time had come when we would see the most intensive and profound study of the Church since the Reformation.²

Sheen never claimed to have written a treatise on ecclesiology³. A detailed examination of his writings, however, reveals his unwavering dedication to develop a *reasoned exposition* of the theology of the Church. Robert E. Barron has offered a clear characterization of Sheen's main work on ecclesiology⁴ describing it as a result of his profound immersion in one of the most interesting topics in ecclesiology: the vision of the Church as the «Mystical Body of Christ»⁵. Hence, although Sheen did not write any ecclesiological treatise, his theological writings about the Church is worthy of a systematic study and analysis.

Sheen's apologetical approach in explaining the mysteries of Christian faith serves as the underlying theological perspective of his *reasoned exposition* about the mystery of the Church. This theological framework enabled him to accentuate the relationship between Christ and the Church, between Christ and the Priesthood, and between the Priesthood and the Church⁶. It is within this same framework that in this chapter we will expound Sheen's theological reflection on the Church's nature and mission.

1. THE CHRISTOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

1.1. *Introduction*

Sheen's theological works can be described as more pedagogical rather than systematic. He himself admitted that his theological reflection about the Church was not intended to constitute a strictly theological treatise. His ec-

clesiology cannot be formally considered as systematic since there are numerous ideas and topics that are missing and not extensively elaborated⁷.

Although his theological works are not strictly systematic, there is a clear underlying organic unity throughout his writings most especially when dealing with the Church, Christ and the Priesthood. They have an organic pedagogical continuity due to his immersion and familiarity with the Sacred Scripture, with the teachings of the Church's Fathers, of St. Thomas Aquinas, and of some prominent theologians during his time⁸. Above all, such an organic unity is due to his personal commitment to speak well of Christ and his conviction to live as a faithful son of the Church and of Her teachings⁹.

The emphasis on the pedagogical reflection about the nature of the Church is evident in the writings of Sheen. In his work, *The Mystical Body of Christ* (1935), he attempted to provide a profound apologetics about the nature of the Church centered on the mystery of Christ within a Trinitarian theological framework¹⁰. Sheen's ecclesiological reflection was fundamentally intended «... to inspire further study on the subject and also to introduce the subject to those not familiar with it»¹¹. Even though his «... book is not a rigid theological proof of the Mystical Body, but rather a reasoned explanation»¹², his work constituted a serious effort to present a theological explanation about the Church as Christ's Mystical Body.

Sheen's initial reflection on the nature of the Church took into consideration and coincided with the publication of various treatises on ecclesiology dealing with the doctrine of the Mystical Body¹³. His familiarity with these treatises enabled him to know some of the prevalent theological trends during his time. Aside from his profound knowledge of these treatises, he was also aware of some theological errors that were spreading then regarding the understanding of the nature of the Church. Ultimately, his knowledge about those treatises and of those theological errors became one of the determining factors in the elaboration of his reflection about the nature and mission of the Church¹⁴.

Although Sheen had his own way of elaborating his theological reflections, his main insights about the Church fundamentally followed the line of thought of the doctrine of the Mystical Body and of the Christocentric ecclesiology¹⁵. He insisted on the vision of Church as the prolongation of the mystery of Incarnation¹⁶. As such, Sheen's ecclesiology has a clear Christological character, but it does not discredit the other theological aspects such as the Trinitarian¹⁷, the pneumatological¹⁸ and eschatological dimension¹⁹.

1.2. *Sheen's Theological Framework in the Explanation of the Doctrine of the Mystical Body*

The elaboration of Sheen's theological reflection about the Church took into account Emile Mersch's exposition of the doctrine of the Mystical Body, though both maintained their own unique characteristic and presentation²⁰. Sheen's ecclesiological reflection was born out of his study of St. Thomas Aquinas' treatise on the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ with the emphasis on the triple office of Christ as Teacher, King, and Priest, which offices are continued in the Church whose mission consists of teaching, governing, and sanctifying²¹.

By pointing out that the treatises on the Church during his time had begun to consider the Church «as she is in herself, and not as she is to her opponents»²², Sheen saw an opening of a new horizon in ecclesiology in the early 30's of the twentieth century. There was a beginning of the opening of the new horizon because he observed, «within the next twenty years we will witness a general revision of our *De Ecclesia* manuals, not because they are incorrect, but because they have served their day»²³. He claimed that the time had come so that «the Church will present herself to the world, not under the impersonal 'IT' as in the days when she struggled against heresy, but as the personal 'SHE' as she was known to Paul, under the title of «The Body of Christ»²⁴.

Sheen's pedagogical exposition of the doctrine of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ was rooted in the teachings of the Sacred Scripture, although his exposition was not a result of an in-depth biblical analysis used by other theologians²⁵. Sheen simply insisted that there is a similarity in the teachings of the Gospels and the doctrine of Paul. There is a similarity between them because both of them consider Christology and Ecclesiology as essentially united to each other²⁶. Commenting on the Pauline letters²⁷, Sheen explained:

St. Paul uses many other examples to show the unity of Christ and His Church; for example, he reminds us that the Church is God's Building, the foundation stone of which is Christ and in which we are a kind of living stones fitted into that temple. On another occasion he used the analogy of marriage, reminding us that the union of the Church and Christ is more intimate than the union of husband and wife, for the latter are only in the flesh, but the Church and Christ are one in the unity of spirit²⁸.

For Sheen, the fundamental question about the nature and mission of the Church as a prolongation of Christ's humanity arises from the correct understanding of the identity of Jesus Christ. He grounded the Church's identity and mission on the mystery of Incarnation, and consequently on the identity of Christ as true God and true man with two Natures, and one Person²⁹. Thus, he insisted, «as His human and Divine natures are one in the unity of His Person in the Incarnation, so too in His Mystical Life the Church His Body and He the Head are one Person, the Mystical Christ»³⁰.

By building a connection between Christology and Ecclesiology, Sheen overcame a vision of the Church as a mere social organization or a mere human institution. The Church should not be considered solely as a group of individuals sharing the same beliefs or convictions, but as a reality both visible and invisible, that is, as the Mystical Body of Christ. He considered it as a Christ's Mystical Body «... because it is made up of many members who have become incorporated to Christ by being reborn of the Holy Ghost»³¹.

Finally, since Sheen's Christological logic guided his ecclesiological insights he was able to distinguish Christ's mystical body from his physical or moral body. He explained that the Church is «... not the Physical Body of Christ, for that is now at the right hand of the glory of the Father»³². He also insisted, «neither is the Church a moral body of Christ, because the union between the Church and Christ is more intimate than the unity of members in a moral body like a club or a nation»³³. As such, when applying the word «body» to the Church the most appropriate term to describe it is the adjective «mystical». Moreover, although this vision of the Church as the Mystical Body is not explicitly emphasized by the Apostolic Fathers, according to Sheen, it is deeply grounded in the teachings of Sacred Scripture³⁴.

1.3. *Sheen's Biblical Foundation of the Doctrine of the Mystical Body*

A key description of the Church in the New Testament, which may be considered more than just an image, is the Church's designation as the Body of Christ. Sheen's biblical foundation of the doctrine of the Mystical Body is primarily taken from the Pauline Epistles.

In 1935, when Sheen explained the New Testament Church's image as a *body* he emphasized that the word «body» was used by St. Paul. His arguments supporting this affirmation were based on his studies of the Letters to

the Romans, to the Corinthians, and to the Colossians³⁵. Examining these Pauline texts, Sheen observed that «it is worth remarking that he (Paul) did not build his theory of the Church on the analogy of a living body, composed of head and members, in order to define the reciprocal rights and duties of the Head»³⁶. What Paul wanted to show was rather the fact that «the Church existed as a reality anterior to the comparison»³⁷. Sheen explained that Paul «... employed the analogy only to facilitate the understanding of the reality which is *one, hierarchical and possessed of solidarity*, like a living body»³⁸.

Furthermore, Sheen also insisted, «it must not be thought that the doctrine of the Church as the ‘Body of Christ’ differs from the doctrine found in either the Synoptics or St. John»³⁹. He explained that since they speak of one and the same reality there is no difference in the doctrine of the Mystical Body as it is found in the Synoptics, in John⁴⁰ and in St. Paul. «The different presentation of the Church in the three abovementioned sources is due rather to the audiences they had in mind in preaching the doctrine»⁴¹.

Sheen clarified that since those sources were directed to different audiences, «in the synoptics, ‘kingdom’ is used; St. Paul uses ‘mystery’ and John uses ‘life’»⁴². Although these three terms seem to be different, he expounded that «they apply to the same reality under different aspects»⁴³ as enunciated also in Mersch’s explanation of the Church as Christ’s Mystical Body⁴⁴.

Sheen underlined three key points referring to the use of the above-mentioned terms:

The first, that of ‘kingdom,’ expresses the economy of salvation in function of the prophecies and Messianic expectations of the hearers our Lord met in His customary preachings. The second term, ‘mystery,’ is a theology which opposes the immense splendour of Divine decrees to the narrowness and exclusive parochialism of our hearts. It is the word best suited to an apostle whose preoccupation was to vindicate the transcendence and infinite mercy of the Divine gift against the nationalism of the Jews and the short-sighted wisdom of the Greeks. Finally, the third term, ‘life,’ shows Christianity in its interior aspects, as closer to us than we are to ourselves⁴⁵.

Sheen’s understanding of these three different terms led him to the conclusion that they all refer to the same fundamental reality which is none other than the union of all the baptized with Christ as the Head. Thus, he insisted, «the doctrine of the ‘Body’ is therefore Pauline only in the etymological sense of the term, but it is equally Synoptic and Johannine as regards its reality»⁴⁶.

1.4. *The Church as a Body*

The study of the teachings of St. Paul served as one of the bases for Sheen's reflection on the image of the Church as a *Mystical Body*. His study of Pauline Letters⁴⁷ aimed fundamentally to discover the reason of St. Paul's use of the term «body» as well as to clarify its nature⁴⁸. He explained:

The term 'body' was used, therefore, merely to make it easier for the mind to grasp the unity existing between the head and members. A body is an organic whole, composed of an infinite number of cells and members, all directed by the head and all vivified by the soul and all directed to a common end, which is the conservation of the organism and its ultimate happiness. Now it happens that all these elements are in the Church in an eminent way⁴⁹.

Citing Ernest Mura's explanation of the difference of the human body and the *Mystical Body*⁵⁰ Sheen stressed that St. Paul employed the analogy of the human body in order «... to aid in understanding the supernatural organism of the Church»⁵¹. Hence, the use of the term «body» does not necessarily contradict the essential identity of the Church as a visible and invisible reality. It is rather with the analogy of the human body that the human intellect can comprehend the nature of the Church⁵².

After clarifying the reason for Pauline usage of the word «body» Sheen posed another significant inquiry: «But granted that the Church is a Body, it remains now to inquire: What kind of a Body is it? Is it the Physical Body of Christ, or is it a Moral body of Christ, or is it something yet other?»⁵³ Sheen construed that when speaking of the Church as a Body, «it is not the Physical Body of Christ, for that is now at the right hand of the glory of the Father»⁵⁴. The Church as a Body is not Christ's physical body because the physical body refers only to what Christ had assumed in order to live an earthly life⁵⁵.

In explaining further the earthly life of Jesus, Sheen declared that Jesus is the only person in the world who has a *pre-history*⁵⁶. Jesus has a *pre-history* because «the Eternal generation of the Son of God has its temporal counterpart in the earthly generation of the Son of man in the womb of the Blessed Mother, of whom was born Jesus Christ, possessed of a Divine Nature from eternity, a human nature in time, and of both united in the oneness of the Person of the Son of God»⁵⁷. As such, through the mystery of Incarnation the eternal Son of God walked on earth with a physical body, and through the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection this physical body was transformed into a *glorified* body.

Given that the physical body of Christ has already been transformed into a *glorified* body, when the term «body» is applied to the Church it does not signify the physical body of Christ, but rather refers to the *mystical* body⁵⁸. Sheen did not elaborate as to whether the *glorified* body of Christ is the same as his *mystical* body. Furthermore, he also clarified that the term «body» when applied to the Church does not refer to the *moral* body of Christ⁵⁹.

Sheen stressed that the view of the Church as Christ's Mystical Body forms part of the traditional doctrine of the Church⁶⁰. His contribution was only his personal approach of explaining the words '*Mystical Body*' when applied to the Church. He explained:

The conjunction of the words «Mystical Body» then does not stand for an abstraction; it refers to something visible and invisible, something tangible and intangible, something human and something Divine; it refers to a reality which is the subject of attribution, of properties and rights, to an organism with a supernatural soul, to a prolonged Incarnation, to the extension of Bethlehem and Jerusalem to our own days, to the *contemporary* Christ: the Church⁶¹.

For Sheen, the Church as a Mystical Body refers to a reality that is tangible but also intangible, but not something abstract. This Mystical Body fundamentally refers to an organic reality, which is both visible and invisible. This vision of the Church as a Mystical Body should not be understood as an abstract reality, and the term 'mystical' should not also be confused with *Mysticism*⁶².

Brandon Vogt⁶³ has made the observation that one of the misconceptions about the nature of the Church pointed out by Sheen was the vision of «the Church as an organization rather than an organism, as a '*what*' rather than a '*who*'»⁶⁴. Sheen insisted that the Church is not only a mere human organization since the unity among her members is not founded on human will. Such unity does not depend on the human will because «there is a hidden, mysterious, non-human, divine unifying power at work which is *Charity* poured in the souls of the Mystical Body by the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity»⁶⁵.

1.5. *Christ as the Head of the Body*

One of the Pauline teachings enunciated in the Letters to the Ephesians and to the Colossians⁶⁶ is the insistence on the Headship of Christ founded on his primacy and pre-eminence over the whole of creation⁶⁷. Sheen explained

that these two Pauline Epistles «make it clear that the creation of angels, of men, of all things was ordained to Christ as their Head»⁶⁸. Thus, «though His human nature is late in the order of time, in pre-eminence He has even been before all»⁶⁹. Through his Incarnation, Christ came relatively late into the world, but since «all things were created by Him and in Him» (Col 1:18) he was pre-eminent not only in the *order of existence* but also in *Divine intention*⁷⁰.

Christ's preeminence over the whole creation is founded on three reasons: by order, by perfection, and by power⁷¹. Following the teachings of St. Thomas, Sheen asserted, «by *order*, all things are IN Christ since He is the perfect image of the Father, and therefore He comprises the ideal and the model of all things possible»⁷². Secondly, he also affirmed that by perfection «all things are BY Him as the efficient cause (by appropriation)»⁷³. Finally, he highlighted that by power, «all things are FOR Him, because He is the author of nature and of grace»⁷⁴.

Sheen did not only insist on Christ's preeminence over the whole creation, but he also pointed out that Christ, as Head of the Church, existed before the Church. Christ pre-existed before the Church because «He is the only one in all the world who ever had a *pre-history* – a pre-history to be studied not in the slime and dust of primeval jungles but in the bosom of an eternal Father»⁷⁵.

Furthermore, Sheen elaborated that Christ as the Head of the Church does not refer to «the visible Christ»⁷⁶ but to «the Risen, Glorified Christ, seated at the right hand of the Father»⁷⁷. As such, Christ as the Head of the Church is no other than He «whose redemptive death won for us the outpouring of the Pentecostal Spirit which made us one with Him more truly than John was one with Him»⁷⁸. Now, if it is the glorified Christ who is the Head of the Church, it possible, continued Sheen, to explain the relationship between Christ and the Church, that is, between Christ as the Head and the Church as the Body.

Sheen might have explained such relationships from *below* or from the consideration of the human persons comprising the Church, but he preferred the explanation from *above*, that is, from the consideration of Christ. He compared the relationship between Christ and the Church to the relationship of the two natures in Christ. He pointed out that «the relation between the two is something like that which existed between the Divine nature of Christ and the human nature in the mystery of the Incarnation»⁷⁹. Just as in Christ, there is true human nature and true divine nature, in like manner «the Church has a human element and also a Divine element»⁸⁰. In the Church, «the human element is the regenerated humanity; the Divine element is our Head, the

Risen Christ»⁸¹. The human element is visible reality, while the divine is that which is invisible.

Now, in Christ, there is a human nature and a Divine nature in «the unity of the Divine Person of the Word»⁸². In addition, since these two natures are in the unity of the Divine Person «their joint action in the unity of the Word constituted what was called a theandric action»⁸³. Sheen highlighted that in the Church there is also a union between human element and a Divine element, though the union between them is not hypostatic⁸⁴. Since these two elements of the Church are one in Christ Jesus as the Head, Sheen concluded, «the actions of the Church are therefore theandric actions, inasmuch as they involve a human and a divine element, a visible and an invisible factor»⁸⁵.

1.6. *The Church as the Whole Christ*⁸⁶

The Pauline image of the Church as the Body of Christ presupposes the vital union between the Head and the Body⁸⁷. In like manner, in Augustine's doctrine of the Church as *totus Christus*⁸⁸, Sheen discovered that Christology and ecclesiology do not only intersect, but they are essentially connected⁸⁹. Such essential union between Christology and ecclesiology became a prominent part of the writings of Sheen. He declared:

Saul was about to strike the Church in the city of Damascus, in exactly the same way as the Government of Mexico persecutes the Church in Mexico and the Government of Spain has persecuted the Church in Madrid – and the Voice from heaven says: ‘Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?’ Christ and the Church, are they the same?⁹⁰

Since there is a *Divine Equation*⁹¹ between Christ and the Church, Sheen insisted that «the Church is a prolongation of the Incarnation by prolonging the theandric actions of the historical Christ»⁹². Although he was mindful of the clear distinction between Christ and the Church, he emphasized that they both constitute *one life*. Christ and the Church constitute *one life* because «the union between the Head and the Body, or between the Risen Christ and the Church, is vital and intense, for it is modelled upon the union of His Divine and human nature in the unity of His Person»⁹³. As such, Sheen asserted that «as a matter of historical record, our Lord did assure us that He and His new Body would be one: one, because the life of one is the life of the other as with the branches and the vine»⁹⁴.

Moreover, the Head and the Body do not only constitute *one life* but also *one (mystical) person*⁹⁵ because «Christ and His Mystical Body make but one Mystical Person»⁹⁶. In the mind of Sheen, the affirmation that Christ and the Church constitute one *Mystical Person* can be understood adequately by taking into consideration the phases of the complete life of Jesus⁹⁷.

According to Sheen, in the life of Christ there are three phases: His *Earthly Life*, His *Glorified Life* and His *Mystical Life*. With regard to the first, Sheen pointed out that after the Word became flesh in the womb of the Blessed Mother, «this earthly Life began in the manger at Bethlehem, continued through the obedience of thirty years at Nazareth, the three years of teaching, the three hours on the cross, the three days in the grave, and the forty days of Risen Life before ascending into heaven, leaving us an example to walk in His steps»⁹⁸. Christ's earthly life had ended at a relatively early age. Thus, for Sheen, Christ's earthly life was not a long life, rather «it was a Life in which everything was accomplished according to His pre-ordained plan, neither hastened nor retarded by the iniquity of men»⁹⁹.

Now «the second phase of the complete Life of Christ is pursued in heaven»¹⁰⁰. Sheen referred to such life as Christ's *glorified* life. It is a life which presupposes His Resurrection, His ascension into Heaven and being seated at the right hand of the Father¹⁰¹. Sheen pinpointed that «the creed of the Church too describes Christ in His glory as 'seated at the right hand of God'»¹⁰². For him, the glorification of Jesus is founded on two reasons. The first is his Divinity. He was glorified because He is the Son of God. 'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world. Again I leave the world, and I go to the Father' (Jn. 16:28). The second reason is Christ's *Kenosis*. Since He humbled Himself, he should therefore be exalted (cfr. Phil. 2:7-11)¹⁰³.

After Christ's *glorified* Life comes his *mystical* Life. Sheen emphasized that Christ did not leave us orphans. He did not leave us alone because, «he is still living in the world, moving amongst its poor, instructing the ignorant, comforting the doubtful, and healing the souls of men. Such is His Mystical Life in the Church»¹⁰⁴. In this way, Sheen clarified that «the new presence of Christ on earth in His Church is the third phase of the complete Life of Christ, and in order to demarcate it from His physical Life and from His Glorified Life, tradition has called it the *Mystical Life*»¹⁰⁵.

Comparing the *earthly life* and the *mystical life* of Christ, Sheen explained, «just as in His earthly Life He took a human body as an instrument for the exercise of His office as Prophet, King, and Priest, so now on Pentecost He assumes a new body, His Church, through the instrumentality of which He still fulfills the same triple role of teaching, governing, and sanctifying»¹⁰⁶. For

him, it was clear that the Church is the new Mystical Body of Christ, a new body, which is an instrument in exercising Christ's triple office¹⁰⁷. Ultimately, Sheen emphasized that Christ, as the Head, and the Church, as the Body, constitute one *mystical* person through the *action* of the Holy Spirit. As a consequence, although Sheen's vision of the Church was Christological it did not discredit the pneumatological dimension¹⁰⁸.

2. THE PNEUMATOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF THE CHURCH

The mutual relationship between Christology and Pneumatology is important for the adequate understanding of Sheen's ecclesiology. Although he focuses his attention on the centrality of the mystery of Christ in presenting the nature of the Church as Mystical Body, he never fails to assert the essential role of the Holy Spirit in the life and mission of the Church¹⁰⁹. Thus, Sheen's vision of the Church cannot be categorized as merely *christo-monistic*; neither it can be accused of being *pneuma-monistic*.

Sheen's ecclesiology is saved from falling into one-sided extreme position since his apologetical reflection about the Church is elaborated within the context of a Trinitarian theological framework¹¹⁰. His vision of the Church is elaborated in reference not only to Christ as the only begotten Son of the Father, but also in relation to the Third Divine Person. In the succeeding pages, we will present this pneumatological dimension of the Church by explaining how Sheen understands the role of the Holy Spirit as the vivifying principle of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ.

2.1. *The Holy Spirit as the Soul of the Church*

The Pentecost's depiction in the Acts of the Apostles has a special ecclesiological significance in Sheen's ecclesiology. It demonstrates that the Church is not a mere human organization but a *Living Body*¹¹¹. The Church as a *Living Body* signifies that it is like a living organism endowed with life by a vivifying principle. This vivifying principle (the Holy Spirit) is compared analogically to the *Soul* of the Church. Sheen explained:

In the glow of the Pentecostal gift the individuals, the cells of the Mystical Body, like the bones in the vision of Ezekiel, were drawn together into a living body, animated by the Eternal Spirit – the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.

All they had dimly guessed at and faintly perceived now became absolute certainty in the glow of the Pentecostal fire, all they had hoped for now became a reality. They saw the continuity of Nazareth and the Cenacle: for as Christ, who is the Head of the Church, was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, so now the Church, which is His new Body, is conceived by the same Spirit in the womb of humanity. The Church was now created in the strictest sense of the term: it had its head, Christ; its soul, the Holy Spirit, and its body, which we are.¹¹²

Such a vital role as vivifying and unifying principle constitutes as one of the key elements in understanding the pneumatological aspect in his ecclesiology. For Sheen, the birth of the Church is inseparable not only from Christ but also from the action of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the life of the Church comes primarily from *above*, not from *below*. It is not a product of men's initiatives but a consequence of a divine action.

Sheen's presentation of the Church's pneumatological dimension took as reference the teachings of St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas and of the Magisterium of the Church¹¹³. Sheen followed their teachings, and further elaborated them in a distinct way by not only by focusing on a *reasoned* explanation about the Church's identity, but also by responding to some controversial theological issues during his time.

The publication of his first book about Christ in 1934¹¹⁴ and about the Church and her mission in 1935¹¹⁵ and in 1964¹¹⁶ demonstrated his dedication to defend the mutual relationship between Christ and the Church, the Church and the Scripture against those who only accept the principle of *Solus Christus* and *Sola Scriptura* as the only rule of faith¹¹⁷. Sheen pointed out, in the first place, that there had been a spreading misconception of the Church as a mere human organization after the Reformation, and as its consequence the Church is considered as strictly opposed to Christ, as well as Christ opposed to the Church. Secondly, there are those who think that true Religion is no more than a direct and individual relationship with Christ in which all forms of mediation have no place. A religion that accepts only the principle of *Solus Christus* inevitably upholds the opposition between Christ and the Church¹¹⁸. Lastly, Sheen identified the spreading misconception of opposing the Church not only with Christ, but also with the Sacred Scripture¹¹⁹.

In response to those whose vision of the Church is a mere human entity opposed to Christ, Sheen declared that the Church is not a mere human organization but rather «it is a body animated by a living soul, the Spirit of God»¹²⁰. In addition, as a *living body*, the Church presents herself as the Mys-

tical Body of Christ. As such, there is no opposition between them nor will there be any contradiction. Thus, Sheen declared:

How often do we hear it said: «I do not want an organization between Christ and me,» or «True religion consists in union with Jesus of Nazareth without priest, or prelate, or sacrament.» Anyone who understands the Scriptures will see that the Church does not stand between Christ and me. The Church is Christ. It no more stands between Christ and me, than His feet stood between Magdalene and His forgiveness, or His hand stood between the little children and His blessing, or His Breast stood between John and the secrets of the Divine Life of Christ and my soul than His physical Body stands between me and His Divinity.¹²¹

The Church as a Mystical Body animated by the Holy Spirit can never be opposed to Christ. In the thought of Sheen, the Church is Christ, and Christ is the Church¹²². To oppose the Church to Christ, or Christ to the Church, is self-contradictory since their opposition intrinsically entails the destruction of Christ's identity and of the Church's nature. Ultimately, their opposition subsumes the disruption of God's plan of salvation to all men until the end of time¹²³.

With regard to the relationship between the Church and the Sacred Scripture, the key element in Sheen's explanation of its correct understanding is the inseparability between Christ and the Holy Spirit in relation with the Church. He insisted that although the Church is viewed as the Mystical Body of Christ, such vision does not deny or discredit the action of the Holy Spirit. The role of the Third Person of the Trinity in the Church as Christ's Mystical Body is vital and necessary since it is the vivifying principle that gives Her unity and life¹²⁴.

Since the Church is the Mystical Body of Christ vivified through the sending of the Holy Spirit during the Pentecost, Sheen insisted that Church «... can express itself only in a living way, and the living way is by a tongue and not by a printed word»¹²⁵. When he affirmed that the Church expresses itself not by a *printed word*, he wanted to emphasize that the Bible should not be taken as the only *fundamental rule of faith* which excludes any relation to the Church's life and mission¹²⁶. Claiming that there should never be an opposition between the Church and the Bible, Sheen affirmed:

The Church preceded the Bible and gave us the Bible; it can, therefore, hardly be alleged that the Bible is opposed to the Church, or the Church is opposed to it. Nor must it be believed that the Bible stands outside the Church

as an independent source; rather does it stand within the life of the Church. It is the Church which makes its meaning clear.

Within a Spirit-guided Church, whose authority is vested in a Living Voice, a written book may be of inestimable value, for the Church can testify to its inspiration. But without that Spirit-guided Church, a written book is useless, except as a witness to historical fact, or as the expression of human opinion. Get rid of the Living Voice and the book becomes a dead letter which every individual may twist and turn to his own conceits¹²⁷.

Sheen never intended to deny the Sacred Scripture when he said that the Bible as '*a written book is useless*'. What he wanted to say was that the Bible should not be taken as a source of divine Revelation absolutely separated or outside the Church. Thus, for him the Church stands as the true guardian and authentic interpreter of the Sacred Scripture. Given that the Church preceded the Bible, Sheen insisted that «the members of Christ's Mystical Body, therefore, derive their faith *mediately* from the Bible, and *immediately* from the Church». ¹²⁸

Finally, Sheen's insistence on the vital relationship between Christ and the Church enabled him to clarify the role of the Holy Spirit and the place of the Sacred Scripture in the life of the Church and to explain one of the controversial issues in ecclesiology in modern times: the Church's indefectibility¹²⁹. In the next topic, we will present and analyze Sheen's understanding of the Church's indefectibility with the aim of discovering why he gave special attention to it in his theological writings.

2.2. *The Holy Spirit and the Indefectibility of the Church*

Sheen's exposition of the indefectibility of the Church falls within his elaboration of the pneumatological dimension of the nature of the Church. His insistence on the vital relationship between the Church and the Holy Spirit enabled him to uphold and defend the indefectibility of the Church¹³⁰.

The Holy Spirit, as the unifying and vivifying principle, makes the Church essentially different from any other human organizations, institutions or society. Sheen considered the Church as «a Divine-human organism modelled upon the Incarnation and infused with the eternal Spirit of God»¹³¹. If the Church is not a mere human organization but it is a *Divine-human organism*, it follows that it should be indefectible in itself. As such, in the thought of Sheen the Church's indefectibility flows from Her very nature as a living body vivified by its Soul, the Holy Spirit¹³².

After insisting on the undeniable truth of the Church's indefectibility, Sheen provided an explanation to adequately understand it. For him, it basically signifies the perpetuity of the Church until the end of time. This perpetuity connotes what he usually called as 'the unfailing life of the Church'¹³³. Such an unending life of the Church – Sheen pointed out – is not guaranteed by any human power but by the divine action of the Third Person of the Trinity. Thus, he asserted, «Pentecost is also the explanation of the words of our Lord that the Church would exist all days even to the consummation of the world»¹³⁴.

Now we need to clarify whether, in the thought of Sheen, the Church's perpetuity signifies that it will never undergo any type of change or any kind of development. Although he held that the Church would stand until the end of time, he also acknowledged that changes in the Church were possible. Recognizing the role of the Holy Spirit as the Church's vital principle, he affirmed, «the Church then is necessarily a living thing which grows and never dies»¹³⁵. As such, he declared that «she decays in parts here and there, but she never dies; she may be the 'ancient of days,' but never the antique, because she bears eternity within her»¹³⁶.

Evidently, the growths and *decays* in the life of the Church form part of the inevitable change in history. Thanks to Church's spiritual dimension, however, there is something in Her that never changes or never ceases. For Sheen, the affirmation of the Church's indefectibility presupposes not only the unchanging character of the life of the Church but also the changing and developing dimensions. As a divine-human organism, the Church undergoes changes but at the same time, she remains the same¹³⁷.

Furthermore, Sheen asserted that the Church's indefectibility had been put to a test in the past, at present it remained under a test, and in the future it will be put again to a test by three kinds of forces: the force of *body*, the force of *ideas*, and the force of *passion*¹³⁸. The force of the *body* refers to the power of the sword. This force marks the period of persecution in the Church. Sheen commented:

For three centuries the only answer the world had to Christianity was brute strength. Charity they met with the sword; gentleness with the rack; chastity with assault; prayer with curses; and forgiveness with stoning. And when pagan Rome finally sowed enough seeds of Christian blood to reap the harvest of its own salvation, its swords were blunted, its wild beasts were satiated, and the Church was stronger than ever¹³⁹.

The shedding of blood, instead of putting an end to the life of the Church, is the vital nutrient for her life's growth and continued expansion. The second

force is the attack on the Truths of faith or the Church's doctrines. This force does not attack the body directly but it attacks the mind. Sheen referred to this second assault as the *force of the ideas*. He explained:

In the course of time there was not a single article of the creed that was not attacked a thousand times. First the Divinity of Christ was attacked, then His Divine Nature, then His human nature, then His Person, then the Trinity, then His Blessed Mother, then the Primacy, the Eucharist and the Scriptures, and now in modern times even belief in God. And yet not a word of the Creed has been disavowed; not a single idea received from Christ has been scrapped; not a solitary belief has been rejected¹⁴⁰.

At the dawn of the modern era, the Church had to face a new force, an enemy that is still evident even in our time. This assault against the Church is no longer the attack in the *field of thought*, but it is the attack in the *field of action*. In 1935, Sheen pointed out that the Church, after surviving more than nineteen hundred years, was had been able to surpass the two forces. «Violence has ceased on a great scale; intellectual opposition has even ceased as the world settles down to a brain fatigue. Hence the time had come for the birth of the third force – the force of passion»¹⁴¹. Sheen explained the nature of this force:

The spirit of the world opposes her not because of the way the world thinks, but because of the way the world lives; not because the world cannot accept the Creed, but because the world cannot accept the Commandments.

In other words, the force of passion so characteristic of our era of carnality, manifested in a general softening of lives, weakening of wills, and the glorification of sex, is the new power which would kill the indefectible spirit of the Body of Christ. But this force will have a shorter life than violence, or ideas, because it will tell first against those who use it¹⁴².

The third force is evidently the weakest among them but, combined with the other two forces, becomes a very powerful enemy that the Church needs to withstand to maintain her indefectibility. The strength and power of these forces has been made clear in human history, with the rise and fall of many human institutions or empires¹⁴³. Nevertheless, with regard to the Church, instead of putting an end to her life and growth, they constantly serve as clear proof of the Church's indefectibility. It is because, unlike the other mere human organizations, the Church is essentially a Divine-human organism. Thus, Sheen declared, «if the Church were left to her human elements she would have perished long ago before this triple assault»¹⁴⁴.

Sheen's clear presentation of the Church's triumph against the *forces of body, of ideas* and *of passion* stresses the truth of her indefectibility. Sheen affirmed, «the secret of her immortal life is her eternal spirit which cannot be touched by the world, or destroyed by the world any more than the soul of an infant can be destroyed»¹⁴⁵. From this, it is evident that one of Sheen's purposes in emphasizing the indefectibility of the Church was to show that the Church is not only a human entity but also a divine reality¹⁴⁶.

The Church's indefectibility in Sheen's ecclesiology is one of the immediate consequences of his view of the Church's nature as the Mystical Body of Christ vivified by the Holy Spirit. As such, the emphasis on the Church's Christological and pneumatological dimensions also serves as the starting point to consider its eschatological dimension. In the next topic, we will present Sheen's key ideas regarding this particular dimension with the end of discovering its underlying theological foundations.

3. THE ESCHATOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF THE CHURCH

Although Sheen's elaboration of the nature of the Church is Christo-centric, it does not imply the denial of the Church's eschatological character. For him, the Church as the Mystical body of Christ is *actually* incorporated in Christ by faith, hope, and charity on earth, but not *definitively* since it will be perfected only at the end of time¹⁴⁷. There is already an *actual* incorporation of the Church into Christ since «it is made up of many members who have become incorporated to Christ by being reborn of the Holy Spirit»¹⁴⁸. This incorporation in Christ, however, is not yet definitive since the Church *on earth* in her *militant* state strives toward her fullness and perfection in the consummation of the world¹⁴⁹.

The vision of the Church as a Mystical Body has often been criticized for its tendency to overemphasize the Church's mystical dimension¹⁵⁰. Although Sheen's ecclesiology can be considered as akin to the theological current of the *Mystical Body of Christ*, his view of the Church is not merely mystical in character. In his reflection on the nature of the Church, he considered not only the historical dimension but also the eschatological aspect. His consideration of the Church's eschatological dimension is primarily centered on the mystery of Christ. For Sheen, it was only through the *Divine equation*, that is, a certain identification between Christ and the Church, that the Church can be considered as eschatological by its own nature¹⁵¹. By considering the Church's eschatological dimension, Sheen was able to identify its earthly and heavenly character.

3.1. *The Earthly and Heavenly Character of the Church*

Although the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ is actually growing and expanding here on earth since the day of the Pentecost, her final destination is not in this world. Her definitive end is where the glorified Christ is¹⁵². In this way, in reference to her final end and to Christ, the Head, the Church is a *heavenly* Church¹⁵³. However, at the same time in terms of her identity as a body, she is also an *earthly* Church¹⁵⁴.

As an *earthly* Church, she is in a militant state, stretching out through the whole world until she reaches her final destiny. For Sheen, the Church is in a militant state because her members are still in the process of working out their salvation and are «exposed to the weakness of will, the surprises of temptation, the attacks of the devil, and yet constantly striving to carry our treasure of grace in a frail vessel to the judgment seat of God»¹⁵⁵. Nevertheless, after passing through all these trials what awaits the Church is the state of the *fullness of the mystical Christ* in which God shall be all in all. From here, it is evident that the Church by nature possesses both earthly and heavenly dimensions¹⁵⁶.

It is clear that Sheen viewed the Church from the perspective of her identity as the Mystical Body of Christ and with reference to her definitive goal, that is, to be where the glorified Christ is¹⁵⁷. From the perspective of her nature, there is a *divine equation* between the Church and Christ¹⁵⁸. From the perspective of her final end, the Church's life is modeled according to the life of the *Mystical Christ*. Both perspectives demonstrate that the ultimate theological foundation is the mystery of Christ, as Sheen explained:

As the earthly Christ grew in age and grace and wisdom, so must the Mystical Christ grow, but neither can grow without a Body. The physical Body reached its perfect stature, humbled itself in death, and was exalted to glory; the Mystical Body must likewise grow, be humbled, and enter into its glory¹⁵⁹.

The *earthly* Church, like the earthly Christ who grows *in age and grace and wisdom*, is in the militant state, whose goal is to reach *the fullness of mystical life*¹⁶⁰. Here it is evident that, for Sheen, it is only when we contemplate the identity and final end of the Church centered on the mystery of Christ that we have the Church's earthly-heavenly character in view. Due to his insistence on the centrality of Christ's mystery, he was able to identify the existing unity between the *earthly* Church and the *heavenly* Church. Such unity, however, should be situated in a wider theological horizon, namely, that of the Communion of the Saints¹⁶¹.

3.2. *The Church's Three Divisions*

Sheen's vision of the Church endowed with both earthly and heavenly character enabled him to affirm that the visible Church on earth is only part and parcel of a much larger reality. Following the teaching of the Catholic Church¹⁶², he declared, «the Mystical Body in its entirety includes not only its members on earth who are still working out their salvation, but those who have died in God's favour but without payment of the last farthing of the debt of sin, and finally those who already have been received into eternal bliss and glory»¹⁶³. Sheen's usage of the term *Church* does not refer exclusively to the visible earthly Church because for him «there are three great divisions of the Mystical Body of Christ: 1) The Church Militant on Earth; 2) The Church Suffering in Purgatory; 3) The Church Triumphant in Heaven»¹⁶⁴.

Sheen called the members of the Mystical Body on earth as a Militant Church¹⁶⁵. The term *militant* basically refers to a state of *warfare*, which is not a battle against the cold sword of steel, but against the powers of darkness¹⁶⁶. This Militant Church has two essential characteristics: the state of being in constant battle on earth, and the goal of becoming one with the triumphant Church at the consummation of time. The first characteristic flows from the very nature of the earthly Church which is in herself constantly «struggling that the Love of Christ the King may reign in men's hearts»¹⁶⁷. The second is founded on the words of Christ declaring that His Kingdom is not after temporal or earthly victory, but rather everlasting and definitive victory¹⁶⁸. That is why, for Sheen, «it was to the Church militant our Lord directed most of His gospel that it might eventually become the Church triumphant in heaven»¹⁶⁹.

After having battled on earth as part of Christ's army, those in need of further purification before entering into the presence of the majestic and august presence of God constitute the *Suffering Church*, according to Sheen. This stage of suffering is known as Purgatory. It is a toilsome and painful thoroughfare, but it is a way that surely leads the poor souls to the land of eternal gladness. In Sheen's words:

The Church suffering is not a place of mere punishment like hell, but a place of 'urgent love, glad hope, and sure expectation'. There is a sacred rhythm of pain and joy in the lives of the poor souls, the pain of sin, the joy of their blessed hope. And by that they are *essentially* different from those who 'have no further hope'¹⁷⁰.

After passing through the militant and suffering stage, «finally, there is heaven, the place where the soldiers of earth who have fought the good fight, and kept the faith and have loved God, receive the reward of eternal happiness which is their due»¹⁷¹. Those who have fought the good fight and are crowned with eternal happiness in Heaven constitute the *Church Triumphant*. According to Sheen, «every second countless members of the Church militant and the Church suffering are passing into the joys of the Church triumphant, where the soul is set free to live in the depths of those things whose surface is but touched on earth: the fullness of Life, of Truth and of Love which is the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost»¹⁷².

The Church as a Mystical Body of Christ is thus made up of members who belong to the *Militant Church* on earth, to the *Suffering Church* in Purgatory and finally to the *Triumphant Church* in Heaven. Sheen considered them as three interconnected divisions forming one Mystical Body. Consequently, this led him to speak of the Communion of Saints.

3.3. *The Communion of Saints*

The *Militant*, the *Suffering* and the *Triumphant* Church are not absolutely independent from each other; rather they are essentially in communion with each other. In the writings of Sheen, their communion is founded on the centrality of Christ as Head of the Mystical Body and on the vital role of the Holy Spirit as the unifying and vivifying principle¹⁷³. He affirmed, «because the Church is an organism made up of many members, a unity possessed of one Spirit, it is possible for the members to share spiritual goods one with another, as the whole body shares the food which is taken into the stomach»¹⁷⁴.

Now according to Sheen, «the reciprocal relation and spiritual sharing of gifts and merits between these three who live the life of the same God, who worship the same Father who created them, the same Son who redeemed them, and the same Spirit who sanctified them is what tradition has called the *Communion of Saints*»¹⁷⁵. Here we observe that, in Sheen's references to the Communion of Saints, he did not develop the idea of the identity between the *communion of saints* and the Church herself (an identification which the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* would later enunciate clearly¹⁷⁶). Nevertheless, Sheen emphasized that the three components of the Church form part of, and constitute the Mystical Body of Christ as one living body. As such, «these three divisions of the Mystical Body of Christ are not independent, but there is a constant flux and flow between each of them because all are filled by the

same Spirit and all crowned by the same Christ»¹⁷⁷. This constant flux and flow of merit and communion among them happens in two directions: 1) in the communion between the Church triumphant and the Church militant, and 2) between the Church militant and the suffering Church.

According to Sheen, «the first stream flows between the Church triumphant and the Church militant on earth, for the angels and saints in heaven, in answer to our prayers, can intercede for us at the throne of God»¹⁷⁸. It should be noted here that in the thought of Sheen the intercession of the saints does not signify a negation or substitution of Christ's salvific actions. For, he asserted, «as in creation He communicated to artists and poets the power of being creative, so, too, in Redemption He communicated to angels and saints and to the members of His Mystical Body the power of prolonging His Redemption and dispensing its fruits»¹⁷⁹. Furthermore, the intercession of the Blessed Mary occupies a very special place and is more sublime than that of all the angels and saints due to her distinct and special role in God's plan of salvation¹⁸⁰.

The second line of communion is between the Church militant and the Church suffering. Sheen explained it thus:

It is indeed one of the most consoling doctrines of the faith that we can still help our loved ones after death, if they stand in need of help, and by doing so perhaps make atonement for our ingratitude to them during life. Death does not break the bond, for our fundamental unity with them is not because they shared our flesh and blood or our common worldly interests, but rather because they live by the same Spirit and are members of the same Body under the Headship of Christ¹⁸¹.

This means that if the members of the Church Militant and Church Suffering are vivified by the same Spirit and form one body under Christ as Head, then the poor souls in Purgatory can rely on the prayers of the Church on earth for them to proceed to their eternal communion with the all-embracing Love of God. Undeniably, those poor souls are in most need of prayers and suffrages for their time of merit has already passed. However, once they enter into the glory of the Church Triumphant they can in turn intercede for the militant members on earth¹⁸².

The question of purgatory, of praying for the dead, and of the saints' intercession is one of the major theological issues between Catholics and Protestants since the start of the Reformation¹⁸³. Although both Protestants and Catholics give value to the importance of Christian prayers, they differ in their views regarding the prayer for the dead and the intercession of saints.

The theological differences became tangible also in the North American continent due to the strong presence of both Protestants and Catholics¹⁸⁴. Aware of the fact that «some Christians labour under the illusion that since they have been redeemed by Christ there is naught for them to do»¹⁸⁵, Sheen defended vehemently the *Communio Sanctorum*. Thus, he maintained that although redemption is only accomplished in and through Christ, His redemptive act does not nullify the possibility of the communion of spiritual goods among all the members of His Mystical Body¹⁸⁶.

4. THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH'S MISSION

The first part of this chapter dealt primarily with the presentation and analysis of Sheen's vision of the nature of the Church. It exposed his view of the Church's nature as primordially Christocentric in character, although this does not preclude other theological dimensions as mentioned previously. Now, in Sheen's ecclesiology, the consideration of these diverse but interconnected dimensions of the Church's nature serves as the theological foundation for explaining the nature of the Church's mission.

In accordance with what Sheen calls the *Divine Equation*, the Church must be viewed not only as an institution but *Life*, that is to say, not only as a mere organization but above all as an organic body called to be an instrument of the diffusion of *Divine Life* and the continuation in the world of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word of the Father¹⁸⁷. Consequently, Sheen asserted that «the Church is missionary»¹⁸⁸. And as missionary by nature, the Church lives, grows, and expands to be the *prism* of the diffusion of *Divine Life* and to be the new living instrument on earth through which Christ continues to teach, to govern and to sanctify all mankind until the consummation of the world¹⁸⁹. It is within this framework of the *diffusion of Divine Life*¹⁹⁰ and of the prolongation of Christ's mission on earth¹⁹¹ that Sheen elaborated his theological reflection on the mission of the Church.

4.1. *The Church's Mission as Evangelizing Mission*

Sheen employed varying terms when speaking of the mission of the Church. He used the expressions «evangelizing the world»¹⁹², «announcing the Gospel» and «re-announcing the Gospel», preferring this last especially¹⁹³. The three terms, although constituting different verbal formulations,

basically refer to one same reality, that is, the evangelizing mission of the Church. In Sheen's language, the Church's evangelizing mission is characterized in terms of «prolonging», «continuing» or «carrying on» the triple office of Christ until the end of time¹⁹⁴. He insisted not only on the urgency of the Divine Command to the Church: 'Go and teach all the nations', but also on the necessity of evangelizing again: 'Go re-teach them'¹⁹⁵

In the thought of Sheen, the evangelizing mission of the Church can be understood in two ways: in general, or in a specific sense. In the broader sense, it refers to the whole missionary activity of the Church as an instrument of God on earth in diffusing and communicating the Divine Life to mankind until the consummation of the world by continuing Christ's *tria munera*¹⁹⁶. In a more particular way, the Church's evangelizing mission connotes several things: 1) In Sheen's writings before Vatican Council II, it signified generally as the kerygmatic proclamation of the Good News¹⁹⁷; 2) After Vatican II, it referred to the Church's mission of re-evangelizing territories that had been already evangelized but were turning again to the old culture of paganism¹⁹⁸; 3) It referred also to the establishment of the Church in foreign territories where people did not know Christ yet and whom Sheen called as the *potential members* of the Mystical Body of Christ¹⁹⁹; 4) Finally, it signified, more than a mere planting of the Church in mission lands, *reconciling the world to Christ*.

Sheen distinguished between the terms «mission» and «missions»²⁰⁰. The first, «mission» (in singular), refers primarily to the mission of the Church itself as a participation in the mission of the Triune God. It refers to the role of the Church as the instrument or *prism* for bringing about and continuing God's plan of salvation among all mankind²⁰¹. The second term, «missions» (in plural), signifies all the varied and particular missionary activities of the Church. It refers to those concrete and varied undertakings through which the Church carries out its missionary mandate from Christ. In other words, the term «missions» refers to those various activities by which the Church goes forth into the whole world to carry out the task of preaching, shepherding, and sanctifying²⁰². For Sheen, the Church's primary field of operation was no longer the pagan or non-Christian civilization, but the entire world. Thus he declared:

The Christian civilization was once considered as 'inside' the reservation, and non-Christian civilizations 'outside', but today the fence has been broken down with the result that the distinction between 'foreign' and Christian', or Christian and pagan, is practically eliminated. It is the world of mass civilization which has to be reconciled to God. The hierarchy of France has spoken

of the 'mission' of France. Germany in 1936 called itself as a 'mission' land. So too is the United States. There are really no 'foreign' missions. The Church is missionary. Where there are sheep that are not of the fold, there is mission²⁰³.

Since the evangelizing mission of the Church in the writings of Sheen encompasses diverse meanings, the Church's mission can be considered as a complex activity. It entails complexity as it involves a wide range of activities such as preaching and witnessing²⁰⁴, enculturation and respect for human freedom²⁰⁵, inter-religious dialogue²⁰⁶, and promotion of social justice and development²⁰⁷.

The diversity of the Church's missionary activities together with the complexity of their interconnections makes the Church's evangelizing mission in Sheen's writings a difficult concept to define. Nonetheless, at the bottom of this multiple set of activities lies a central element that sums up the essence of the Church's evangelizing mission. In Sheen's ecclesiology, the evangelizing mission of the Church is the diffusing, communicating and expanding of God's Divine Life to all men and women until the consummation of the world through the exercise of Christ's *tria munera*.

Finally, Sheen's theological basis for the Church's activity as an evangelizing mission is the so-called *Divine Equation*²⁰⁸. If Christ is the Church and the Church is Christ, then it follows that the mission of the Church is none other than the mission of Christ. The evangelizing mission of the Church is ultimately characterized by its prolongation and participation in the salvific mission of Christ. Hence, the mission that the Church performs on earth is always in accordance with the salvific plan of the Father and with the mission of Christ to lead all men to the glorious Liberty of the sons of God²⁰⁹.

4.2. *The Trinitarian Dimension: The Church's Mission and The Divine Mission*

According to Sheen, the mission of the Church has been understood preferably in its socio-structural dimension, that is, the mere planting of the visible Church in mission territories. This planting of the Church is often identified with the establishment of a native clergy and hierarchy in missionary areas around the world²¹⁰. As a result, the emphasis on the spiritual dimension of the Church's evangelizing mission has been given inadequate attention. Sheen explained:

Planting the Church is a work of the Church, making it more cultural, more social, and more indigenous in missionary lands; but it is not the objective of the Church. The end of the Church is that charity of Christ by which the world is

reconciled to God. It is only through the Redemption of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit, or, in general, the reconciliation of the world to God that we have a hierarchy to plant. Furthermore, the planting of the Church emphasizes its visible structure; but the idea of the reconciling of the world to Christ emphasizes the invisible grace which informs that which is visible²¹¹.

Although Sheen did not deny the importance of establishing the visible Church in missionary lands, he preferred to speak of the establishment of the *charity of Christ*. In this way, he managed to avoid giving extreme consideration of the visible aspect of the end of the Church's mission. Sheen's insistence on Church's spiritual end enabled him to recognize, at the outset, the Trinitarian nature of the Church's mission²¹².

Sheen affirmed that the mystery of the Trinity is the primary foundation of the Church's nature and mission. The Church's mission is Trinitarian simply because her origin and nature are both Trinitarian²¹³. He explained:

The Church thus presents herself to the world as a copy of the society of persons within the Godhead itself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who share the fullness of the nature of God. Did not our Lord say: 'O Father, all My things are Thine, and Thine are Mine'? (Jn 17:10) 'All things which Thou hast given Me are from Thee. The words which Thou gavest Me, I have given to them' (Jn 17:78). And is not the Church a picture of the Trinity in its community of goods and attributes?²¹⁴.

Sheen's vision of the Church as the *copy* of the society of Persons of the Holy Trinity enabled him to assert that the Church forms part of divine salvific plan. In addition, given that the Church forms part of God's eternal plan of salvation, her mission has its origin in the Father's *diffusive Love*²¹⁵. Insisting on the essence of God as Love²¹⁶, he pointed out that the Church's mission flows from the Father's fecund love who calls all men and women to share in his *Divine Life* through Christ, His Incarnate Son²¹⁷. And since the glorified Christ is already seated at the Father's right hand, he continues to realize the divine salvific plan through the Church as his Mystical Body vivified by the Holy Spirit²¹⁸.

Although, for Sheen, the Church's mission is essentially a participation in Christ's evangelizing mission, it is clear that it is primarily rooted in the Father's *fecund Love*. Her mission is the continuation of the Father's divine plan to call all men and women to participate in his *Divine Life* until the end of time. Thus, the Church's evangelizing mission will last as long as the Good News has not been proclaimed to the last man or woman²¹⁹.

4.3. *The Christological Dimension*

Sheen's presentation of the so-called *Divine Equation* led him to affirm that Christ is the Church and the Church is Christ²²⁰. Thus the Church's mission cannot be separated from Christ and his salvific mission. In the writings of Sheen, the Church's mission has a clear Christological dimension for three basic reasons: by its origin, by its nature, and by its purpose.

As regards its origin, the Church received the missionary mandate from Christ after his Resurrection, at the moment of his ascension, to proclaim the Good News not only to the chosen people of God but also to all the nations (cfr. Mt 28,19)²²¹. By its nature, the Church's mission too has a Christological character since it is the prolongation of Christ's salvific mission²²². Her mission is to be the new living instrument on earth through which Christ continues to teach, to govern, and to sanctify until the end of the time²²³. Finally, by its purpose, the Church's mission is Christological because its end is not only the planting the Church's hierarchy in pagan territories, but also and above all the reconciling of the world to Christ²²⁴.

Sheen's insistence on both the visible and invisible character of the Church's mission underlines the fact that this mission is not invented by the Church herself or granted by any human organizations. The mission of the Church essentially flows from the fruit of the Divine Missions. The Church's mission is a participation in and continuation of the evangelizing action of Jesus. It is a mission derived from the mission of Christ and of the Holy Spirit according to the Father's salvific plan, whose fecund and diffusive love lies at the root of this mission²²⁵.

In Sheen's ecclesiology, there is a clear assertion of the essential relationship between the mission of Christ and of the Church. Thus he stated:

In summary, then, Christ who in His human body taught, governed, and sanctified, now continues to do the same in His mystical body, and her teachings are Christ's infallible teachings, her commands Christ's divine commands, and her Sacramental Life Christ's Divine Life. The Church, then, is the continuation of the Incarnation. It is not an institution like a bank, but a life, not an organization like a club, but an organism; not something for extending from the Apostles as men to us as other men, but something in which Divine Life descends first from God to Christ and then on to us in the Church²²⁶.

Sheen's vision of the Church as an organism in which the Divine Life flows from God to man presupposes the Church's mission and identity as essentially rooted in the salvific action of Triune God through the Incarna-

tion of the eternal Word of the Father. The Church on earth exists and lives because *She* has to continue communicating the Divine Life to all men and women. Thus the mission of the Church can only be understood adequately within the framework of its participation in the mission of the Triune God and in the context of its origin from the mission of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, according to the plan of the Father.

4.4. *The Pneumatological Dimension*

Although the Church's evangelizing mission, in Sheen's ecclesiology, is carried out in the world primarily as the continuation of Jesus' mission, this mission essentially flows from the action of the Holy Spirit. As such, the mission of the Church is not only Christological in character, but also pneumatological²²⁷.

Sheen's consideration of the pneumatological character of the Church's mission is based on two fundamental reasons. The first is the vital relationship between the Church's mission and the Holy Spirit. There is an essential relationship between the two because for Sheen the Paraclete is the unifying, vivifying, and energizing principle of the Church. Thus, he explained:

The Church is the Body of Christ, and Christ the Invisible Head of the Church, with Peter as His Vicar. But there should be some bond of union between the Head and the Body, for what would a Body be without a soul? In like manner, the Church itself must have a vivifying, energizing principle and that soul is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity²²⁸.

Since the Holy Spirit is the «soul» of the Church, the Church's mission cannot be separated from his divine action. Sheen declared that Christ, before returning to the Father, promised the Spirit of Truth (cfr. Jn. 14:17, 16:6-7), the Holy Spirit, whom He later sent to the first members of the nucleus of his Kingdom on earth to remind them of the things He had told them, to continue applying the merits of his redemptive work in the world²²⁹, and to bring about the sanctification of his Mystical Body²³⁰.

The Paraclete carries out the sanctification of the Church in the world because for Sheen «from the moment the Holy Spirit descended on the Mystical Body even unto the end of the age, the Church is committed unreservedly and absolutely to the ideal of holiness – the salvation of souls»²³¹. It is evident in Sheen's writings that the event of Pentecost shows the special role of the Holy Spirit in the Church's mission. Such a special role of the Holy

Spirit is the fulfillment of what Jesus promised to the Apostles, that is, «the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you» (Jn. 14:26)²³².

The second reason is the vital relationship between the mission of Christ and the mission of the Holy Spirit. There is a vital relationship between them because, for Sheen, it is the same mission of Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit continues to carry out in the Church and in the world. He asserted that «to the Holy Spirit has been committed for all time the sublime office of applying the merits of the Redemption of our Lord»²³³. Thus, it is the same redemptive mission of the Triune God, wherein Jesus Christ was crucified, died, and rose again, that is still operative today thanks to the Holy Spirit's enduring presence in the Church, Christ's Mystical Body.

Finally, Sheen defended the continuity between the mission of Christ and of the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is the fruit of the eternal love between the Father and the Son. According to him, «as the Father manifests His Divinity by sending His Son into this world, so likewise the Son made flesh, in order to render the last proof of His Divinity, asked the Father to send the Spirit, their mutual eternal bond of love»²³⁴. Given that the Holy Spirit is the mutual eternal bond of love between the Father and the Son, the sending of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost expresses the singularity and fullness of the gift of love to the Church by the Father and by the Son.

5. THE EXERCISE OF THE EVANGELIZING MISSION OF THE CHURCH

After identifying some key points of Sheen's vision of the nature of the Church's evangelizing mission, we now turn our attention to his comprehension of the exercise of this mission. In examining this view of the Church's evangelizing mission we shall see how Sheen developed the idea of the Church's mission as a participation in Christ's mission. We will examine, in particular, the exercise of the Church's evangelizing mission and its relationship with Christ's *tria munera*.

5.1. *The Prophetic Mission*

Sheen's vision of the Church's nature as the Mystical Body of Christ enabled him to view the Church's evangelizing mission as a participation in the mission of Christ²³⁵. When Sheen elaborated the mission of the Church

in detail, he admitted that he based himself on the idea of St. Thomas Aquinas about the Church's mission as a participation in the office of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King²³⁶. In the language of Sheen, the term «participation» basically signifies *prolongation* or *continuation*²³⁷. In this sense, the Church's prophetic mission is a *prolongation* of the mission of Christ as a prophet²³⁸.

In his book *The Mystical Body of Christ* (1935), he linked the prophetic mission of the Church with the identity of Christ not only as a human teacher, but also as true God²³⁹. He explained:

To understand just how the infallible Church prolongs the teaching office of Christ it must be borne in mind that Christ is God. Being God as well as man, He has the Wisdom of God. From all eternity as the Divine Word, He is the Thought of the Godhead, the abyss of knowledge which includes all that is known or can be known²⁴⁰.

If Christ as the Word incarnate is the *Wisdom of God*, his prophetic mission according to Sheen consists in communicating the Divine Truth to men through the *medium of His human nature*²⁴¹. Sheen affirmed that through Christ's human nature the Divine Truth is communicated to his hearers in a simple process of teaching. Christ used a process of teaching because he communicated his *Divine Wisdom* «conformable to the nature of man»²⁴². And He commanded and sent others *to teach in his name*²⁴³.

Aside from communicating the Divine Truth to men, Christ also willed that this Divine Truth should not be *forgotten*, *twisted*, and *misinterpreted*²⁴⁴. Sheen contended that «he (Christ) should have left a means to preserve His Truth, a channel to prolong His teaching, or an instrument to communicate His voice»²⁴⁵. This *means or channel* –as Sheen calls it– is none other than the Church, since «it is through the Mystical Body (the Church) assumed from the womb of humanity, and overshadowed by the Pentecostal spirit, that He prolongs and preserves and teaches those same eternal Truths»²⁴⁶.

Now it is in the context of the relation of Christ with the Church as the *assumed* Mystical Body that the Church's prolongation of the prophetic mission of Christ should be understood. The Church exercises her teaching office not by virtue of her own power or authority, but by virtue of the authority of Christ who is the only True Teacher²⁴⁷. Furthermore, such a mission is also guaranteed by the gift of the Holy Spirit through Christ²⁴⁸. Thus, according to Sheen, «he (Christ) promised to send to that corporate apostolic body under the headship of Peter, the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit that would recall all things

He had taught to their minds, the Spirit that would preserve them from error even unto the consummation of the world»²⁴⁹.

Finally, in Sheen's writings, the prophetic mission of the Church as participation in Christ's mission has two fundamental corollaries: the *infallibility of the Church* and the *infallibility of the Vicar of Christ*²⁵⁰. To explain the Church's and the Roman Pontiff's infallibility, Sheen first clarified the notion of infallibility. He construed its etymological meaning by saying that «infallibility, as the word itself signifies [*in* (not) *fallor* (am deceived)], means I am not deceived, or the power of not being misled into error»²⁵¹. In this way, he clarified that infallibility is rather a «negative than a positive gift». Taking as reference the teachings of First Vatican Council²⁵², he explained:

Infallibility is not *revelation* or the manifestation of a supernatural truth or mystery, or the impression of Divine ideas on a human mind. Neither is infallibility the same as *inspiration* or the infusion of light to judge ideas. Infallibility means Divine assistance for the prevention of error. It is a supernatural gift conferred upon the Church by her Divine Founder in virtue of which she is free from error in safeguarding, proclaiming, and explaining the deposit of Divine Truth confided to her care²⁵³.

With this explanation of the notion of infallibility, for Sheen «the Infallibility of the Church is nothing more than the Infallibility of Christ»²⁵⁴. He reasoned that «if Christ is God, and therefore infallible, then the Church which He founded under a visible Head and infused with His Spirit, must necessarily be infallible»²⁵⁵. He affirmed that when the Church teaches, it is Christ who is teaching²⁵⁶. Thus, «the notion of the infallibility of the Church derives from the teaching office of Christ and from the fact that He uses the Church as the *social instrument* of His teaching now, as He used His human nature as the individual instrument of His teaching while on earth»²⁵⁷.

As for the second aspect, Sheen claimed that the *infallibility of the Vicar of Christ* is derived also from Christ's infallibility. He presented a biblical basis for this affirmation. Commenting on the gospel text «He that heareth you heareth Me» (Lk. 10:16), he pointed out that «the infallibility of the Vicar of Christ, the Head of that Body, is merely the visible expression of the invisible Head who is Christ»²⁵⁸. Consequently, «when the Vicar of Christ, the successor of Peter, proclaims an infallible truth he does not make an absolutely new and personal pronouncement; he merely articulates the Mind of Christ»²⁵⁹. In this way, «he enunciates no new truth apart from Christ; he does not speak in his own right but only as the visible pledge of the unity of the Body of Christ in space and time»²⁶⁰.

5.2. *The Priestly Mission*

After examining Sheen's vision of the Church's mission as a participation in the prophetic mission of Christ, we continue exploring his idea of the mission of the Church as a *prolongation* of Christ's *priestly office* on earth. In the elaboration of this topic three points will be given attention: How does Sheen understand the priesthood of Christ? How is it possible that the Church participates in His priestly office? How does the Church exercise her priestly office as a participation in Christ's priesthood?

Charles P. Connor has noted that Sheen's understanding of the priesthood of Christ cannot be separated from the consideration of Christ's identity as the Incarnate Son of God, the Eternal High Priest who by his passion, death and resurrection inaugurated the New Covenant²⁶¹. Connor has pointed out that such a vision presupposes an adequate comprehension of the relationship between the priesthood in the Old Testament and the New. According to him, Sheen understood that «the New Covenant, wrought by Jesus Christ, the God-Man, in whom the hypostatic union of human and divine natures combined in one Divine Person, brought the Old Covenant to perfect fruition»²⁶².

Connor's observation on Sheen's vision of the priesthood of Christ is helpful in understanding Sheen's idea of the Church's priestly office. Given that Christ, the Eternal High Priest, is the Incarnate Son of God, for Sheen Christ's priesthood is that «by which His Divine Life is poured into the Mystical Body to sanctify it with the holiness of God»²⁶³. Sheen emphasized that it is only Christ who can sanctify the Mystical Body because «divine life is not an urge from the dust; it is a gift from heaven»²⁶⁴. The *divine life* is precisely a gift from heaven since «God alone is Divine Life»²⁶⁵.

As for the second point, on the manner in which Christ communicates the Divine Life to man after His Ascension into Heaven, Sheen explained that «He (Christ) will communicate it in the same way He communicated His Truth and His Power, namely, through His Mystical Body, the Church»²⁶⁶. It is in this corporative context that Sheen's vision of the priestly mission of the Church must be understood. For Sheen, the Church exercises her sanctifying mission not by virtue of her own power, but by virtue of her Head, Christ who is the Eternal High Priest. Thus, asserted Sheen, «since He (Christ) had chosen a human nature as the instrument for the sanctification of men during Historical Life, so would He use a corporation of human natures as the instrument for the sanctification of men until the end of time»²⁶⁷.

Lastly, Sheen explained the way in which the Church exercises her priestly office, by referring to the fact that the Church as the Mystical Body is made up of many members who have different functions and who do not enjoy the same authority²⁶⁸. There are particular members of the Church whom «Christ has chosen to be the living instruments for sanctifying souls with the merits of the Cross»²⁶⁹. Thus, just as «He (Christ) prolonged His Truth by appointing a visible Head»²⁷⁰ and as «He prolonged His Power by appointing an Apostolic Body of Bishops in union with that Head»²⁷¹, He also chose persons and things as «the channels for the giving of His Life»²⁷². In a particular way, Christ communicates and prolongs His Divine Life in the Church through the Sacraments²⁷³.

With regard to the use of persons and things as the channels of Divine Life, Sheen succinctly affirmed that «the things would be the matter of His sacraments, and persons the ministers of those sacraments»²⁷⁴. So, he argued, «in the whole of religious history there is nothing so full of wonder and wisdom as the sacraments of Christ—the ordinary means by which the Invisible Head sanctifies the individual members of His Mystical Body»²⁷⁵. The Church exercises her sanctifying mission primarily through the Sacraments because they are «the visible signs of the Invisible Grace by which our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ vivifies the members of His Mystical Body»²⁷⁶.

In Sheen's writings, the consideration of the importance of the Sacraments in the Church occupies a relevant and vital part, although he never spoke of the Church itself as a sacrament. He rather preferred to speak of Christ as «the living sacrament»²⁷⁷.

5.3. *The Kingly Mission*

Sheen's view of the royal mission of the Church was based on his understanding of the identity of Christ as King. Comparing the identity of Christ as a King and as a Teacher, Sheen maintained that what is true of Christ as Teacher is also true of Christ as King²⁷⁸. He asserted that Christ is King not by virtue of an act of legal appointment or by a special privilege, but by virtue of His own identity as the Son of God. Now, since Christ is King by his own authority as God, He has the power to choose the means of continuously exercising such power on earth even after his Ascension.

Sheen explained:

The ascension and glorification of Christ at the right hand of the Father did not mean that He relinquished His power and authority any more than He relinquished His truth. It only meant that instead of governing through

an individual human nature, He began to govern through co-operative human natures: His Mystical Body, the Church.

Now that He Lives in His Mystical Body, His power and authority remain the same; the only difference is that now He manifests it through human natures such as the apostles and those who have succeeded them even to our day, namely, the Bishops of the Church. They are to Christ in His glory much like His physical body was to Him during His earthly pilgrimage²⁷⁹.

In Sheen's writings, the theological foundation of the royal mission of the Church is the Kingship of Christ as true God and true man²⁸⁰. Sheen maintained that Christ's Kingship is divine, and consequently universal. Therefore, «when He came to earth in the form and likeness of man, He exercised the power and authority of God as King not only of men, but of all created things»²⁸¹. Moreover, aside from exercising his royal power over all creation, Christ willed that the exercise of his kingship should be continued through his Mystical Body, the Church. Hence, for Sheen, the Church's kingly mission is fundamentally the *prolongation* of Christ's ruling mission on earth²⁸².

Sheen identified three characteristics of the Church's authority as *prolongation* of the Kingship of Christ on earth: it is *impersonal*, *divine*, and *free*. «It is *impersonal* in its visible expression; it is *divine* in its essence; and it is *free* in its effect»²⁸³. In Sheen's terminology, the Church's authority is *impersonal* not in the sense that such authority cannot be attributed to a definite subject, but rather because in the Church «the lawfully constituted apostolic body does not possess authority in its own name, but only because it is representative of Christ Himself»²⁸⁴. As such, «the executive, judicial, and legislative functions of the episcopacy do not belong to any bishop as an individual person, however great the profundity of his learning or the sanctity of his life»²⁸⁵. Thus, it follows that «the human natures in the Church are impersonal in their office as governors; they are merely the instruments of the Mystical Personality of Christ»²⁸⁶.

Sheen further expounded his use of the term *impersonal* applied to the Church's authority using as reference Christ's own identity:

Our Blessed Lord in the Incarnation assumed a human nature but not a human personality. There was only one Person in Christ – the Person of God. Hence every action of His human nature, every command, every law, every precept, belonged to His Divine Person as the Word of God. Now this impersonal character of His human nature He has communicated to His corporate nature, the Church – His Mystical Body²⁸⁷.

Given that the authority of the Church is the *prolongation* of Christ's authority, Sheen holds that it should always be understood as a power that is «not from below, but from above»²⁸⁸. This authority coming «from above» implies that in the Church the bishops who are the successors of the apostles are «not chosen by the people, it is the Mystical Body under Christ's Vicar that chooses them»²⁸⁹. «Their authority therefore is not in a horizontal line with authority of priests and people; it is in a vertical line extending downwards from God to Christ and from Christ to the apostles and from the apostles to them»²⁹⁰. Such authority in the vertical line extending from God downward to the Church implies that «the apostles and their successors are merely the voice of Christ, the spokesmen of the Invisible Head, and the mouthpieces of the Word Incarnate»²⁹¹. Sheen continues, «it is therefore a great error to say: 'I do not want a Church, or a Pontiff, or a bishop to stand between Christ and me'»²⁹².

The second characteristic of the authority of the Church is its *divine* nature. According to Sheen, «this follows from the fact that those who exercise authority are merely the representatives of Christ; they have no rights over the Kingship of Christ and cannot alter either His laws or the end and purpose of their existence, namely, the salvation of souls»²⁹³. Consequently, «the Church, because her authority is Divine, must be intolerant: the two ideas are inseparable»²⁹⁴. Since Sheen believed that the divine aspect of the Church's authority and the need to be intolerant of doctrinal errors are inseparable, he reasoned that «if we are shocked at hearing that the Church must be intolerant about the truths committed to her it is because we have lost all respect for the uniqueness of truth»²⁹⁵.

Sheen observed that the terms *tolerance* and *intolerance* can be used with wholly different meanings. He clarified, «tolerance applies only to persons, but never to principles; intolerance applies only to principles but never to persons»²⁹⁶. Following this fundamental principle he affirmed that «the Church should be so intolerant of error, but that is not because the Church is narrow; it is only because she is a lover of truth»²⁹⁷. He also contended that the Church must be *tolerant*, *kind*, and *sympathetic* to the erring persons just as Christ had prayed for his persecutors on Mount Calvary²⁹⁸. Thus, «the Church will always accept a heretic back into the treasury of her souls, but never the heresy into the treasury of her wisdom»²⁹⁹.

The third characteristic of the Church's authority is what Sheen calls *freedom in its effects*³⁰⁰. In Sheen's writings, the term *freedom* does not mean the capacity to do what one likes to do or the capacity to rise above all law and restraint. *Freedom*, rather, connotes a voluntary submission to authority because it entails «obedience to the law»³⁰¹. Referring to the laws of the Church,

Sheen clarified that «they are limitations imposed on us by Christ..., but obedience to them is the gateway to freedom»³⁰². He argued, «if obedience to law is the condition of freedom, it follows that the more we obey the laws which make for our perfection, the more free we become; and the more we disobey those immanent laws which make for our development the more enslaved we become»³⁰³. «It follows then that the more I submit myself to the laws of Christ and His Church, which is the Kingdom of God on earth, the more my perfection grows and the more my freedom increases»³⁰⁴.

Finally, although Sheen did not explore the consequences of the inadequate notion of freedom in relation to the call of obedience to the Church's authority, he did speak of the «liberty of the children of God»³⁰⁵. Conscious of being free as children of God, he reasoned, «we obey only what Christ wills through the representatives of His Body, we think only what He thinks in the ambassadors of His Body, and we love only what He loves through the shepherds of His Body»³⁰⁶. Thus, he concluded that «the root of all the liberties of the Church is the most glorious liberty of all – *the freedom to become a saint*»³⁰⁷.

6. THE WORLD AND THE EVANGELIZING MISSION OF THE CHURCH

In Sheen's ecclesiology, the evangelizing mission of the Church presupposes the relationship between the Church and the world, between the Gospel and Christian life. An adequate understanding of the world and a correct vision of the role of the lay person in carrying out the Church's evangelizing mission are both necessary for a right conception of the Church-world relationship.

In this section, we shall examine Sheen's vision of the world in relation to the mission of the Church. Within the context of this vision, we will verify whether Sheen gives importance to the role of the laity in carrying out the Church's evangelizing mission.

6.1. *The World as the Locus of Church's Evangelizing Mission*

To explain the relation between the world and the Church's evangelizing mission Sheen began by pointing out the growing misconception of the relationship between the *divine* and the *secular* brought about by the inadequate understanding of the term «world»³⁰⁸. Such a misconception led to what he

called «the divorce of the Divine and the secular»³⁰⁹. According to Sheen, in order to avoid such a *divorce*, it is necessary to start with a right adequate comprehension of the term «world»: «biblically, it has two distinct meanings: the ‘world’ may mean the earth or cosmos or creation as the theater of redemption, or the ‘world’ may mean a ‘spirit’ that organizes men, movements, social and political order without God»³¹⁰.

Citing several biblical texts³¹¹, he affirmed, on one hand, that «world» signifies «*the theater of redemption*»³¹². On the other hand, taking as basis the text from 2 Tm 3:1-5; 1 Jn. 2:15; 1 Cor. 3;19; Rm. 12:2 Sheen asserted «world» could also refer to «*a spirit of worldliness, or the primacy of the ego over God*»³¹³. From the point of view of the first meaning, the world constitutes the place where the Church is called and commanded to be the instrument of Christ’s evangelizing mission. From the perspective of the second meaning, the world is a «spirit» or a mentality and way of life in which God has no place. In this sense, the Church should not conform to this *spirit*, but rather transform it into a *spirit* that recognizes God and tends towards God.³¹⁴

Sheen added, further, that in order to understand the Church’s attitude toward the world it is important to take into account two opposite movements that had taken place in history. These two movements had a significant role in the portrayal of the Church’s evangelizing mission. The first movement may be described thus: «*the Church went into the world*»³¹⁵ and the second may be described thus: «*the world came into the Church*»³¹⁶. This double affirmation was born of Sheen’s observations during the celebration of the Second Vatican Council. He commented that «for the first time in the history of the Church, the dust of the world mingled with the dust of Peter»³¹⁷. Hence, «as the Church was going into the world, the world was coming into the Church»³¹⁸.

Now, for Sheen, the world as the locus of the Church’s evangelizing mission means that the Church’s mission in the world consists not only in announcing the Gospel or planting the hierarchy in mission lands but above all *in reconciling the world to Christ*³¹⁹. Speaking about the mission of the Church, he said:

The end of the Church is that charity of Christ by which the world is reconciled to God...It is only through the Redemption of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit, or, in general, the reconciliation of the world to God that we have a hierarchy to plant³²⁰.

Sheen claimed that the time had come when «the distinction between ‘foreign’ and Christian’, or Christian and pagan, is practically eliminated»³²¹.

Now, «it is the world of mass civilization which has to be reconciled to God». This *world of mass civilization* constitutes the locus of the Church's evangelizing mission, wherein her task is to reconcile everything to God through the *redemption of Christ* and through the power of the Holy Spirit. He maintained that it was Christ's command that the Church should go to the world. With this divine mandate, for him «the entire world, therefore, is the mission of the Church, and those who think in terms of the world have the 'Catholic sense'»³²².

Sheen held that at present «there are really no 'foreign' missions» due to the fact that it is now hard to recognize the clear distinction between the Christian and the pagan world. This difficulty is the result of an existing current within the Christian world characterized by a return to paganism³²³. Still, though Sheen admitted that today in the Church there are no really *foreign* missions, he did allude to the mission *ad gentes* of the Church. Together with this reference to the mission *ad gentes*, however, he stressed the importance of re-evangelization³²⁴ and pastoral care³²⁵. Thus we can see in Sheen's writings – though not very clearly or explicitly – an attempt to consider three concrete milieus in which the Church carries out its evangelizing activities as identified later by Vatican Council II: 1) the mission in pagan territories, 2) the ongoing pastoral care for all the baptized, and 3) re-evangelization³²⁶.

Lastly, Sheen warned that in order for the Church's evangelizing mission in the world to be adequately carried out, it was necessary to guard against two extreme views of the relationship between the Church and the world: the *neurotic* and the *psychotic view*. According to him, «the psychotics would isolate the Church from the world»³²⁷, while «the neurotics would identify the Church with the world»³²⁸. Both views produce an adverse effect on the Church's mission of reconciling the world to Christ because they contribute, each in its own way, to «the divorce of the Divine and secular»³²⁹. Thus, for Sheen, it is the Church's urgent task and duty to avoid either extreme³³⁰. His insistence upon avoiding these extremes contributes, in a particular way, to a deeper appreciation and an adequate comprehension of the role of the laity in carrying out the Church's evangelizing mission in the world.

6.2. *The Laity in the Church's Evangelizing Mission*

In spite of the growing influence of *the divorce of the Divine and secular*, Sheen during his time continued to reaffirm the valuable contributions of Catholic authors who proffered an authentic vision of the Church's mission

in the world and, in particular, an adequate understanding of the role of the laity³³¹. He gave particular attention to the consideration of the laity's role in the Church's mission of carrying out the «reconciliation of the world to Christ»³³².

In elaborating this topic, we shall limit our discussion to three major points. First, we will explore why Sheen gives importance to the laity; secondly, we will identify the foundations of Sheen's theological view of the lay identity; thirdly, we will examine his pastoral suggestions regarding the diverse ways in which lay persons can fully exercise their role as *lay apostles* in the world.

In the period between the second and third sessions of the Vatican Council II, Sheen elaborated in his book *Missions and the World Crisis* (1964) a theological reflection on the laity in relation with the mission of the Church³³³. According to him, the role of the laity has grown in importance because of two factors: (1) a deeper understanding of the mission of the Church and a more positive understanding of the secular world; (2) the vital role of the Church's mission of combating the errors of communism³³⁴.

According to Sheen's classical ecclesiological approach, the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ is constituted by a union of two elements: human and divine. According to this theandric ecclesiology, «the human element is we, the regenerated humanity; the Divine element is our Head, the Risen Christ...»³³⁵. In this framework of the union of *regenerated humanity* with its Divine Head, the significance of the term *world* acquires a positive meaning. Understood as the totality of created reality susceptible to grace, the world may be taken as the locus for realizing the Church's mission. This mission involves the task of *reconciliation of the world to Christ*. Given that the Church has the mission of reconciling the world to Christ, a more active role of the laity (who form part of the fabric of the world) in the Church's evangelizing mission is not only desirable but also essential³³⁶.

The second reason for Sheen's affirmation on the importance of the laity is historical in character. In his view, in modern times the «lay apostolate is the answer to communism»³³⁷. He considered the *lay apostolate* to be one of the ways in combating Marxist ideologies because, according to him, «the very instrument that would defeat us must be the instrument that will save us»³³⁸. «Communism as a 'lay' movement must be answered by the lay apostolate»³³⁹. Thus Sheen declared that «if Communism gives the laity a sense of mission, then the Church must reaffirm the mission of the laity»³⁴⁰.

After identifying the vital role of the laity, Sheen continued offering a theological explanation of the laity's identity, with the idea of bringing about their full

and active participation in the evangelizing mission of the Church in the world. Here there are two preliminary ideas that should be taken into account. First, Sheen tried to present a theological explanation of laity's identity when the celebration of the Vatican Council II was still running its course. Therefore we find this theme less developed in the preconciliar portion of Sheen's theological production, although Sheen in his post-conciliar writings incorporated some key ideas on the laity expounded by Vatican Council II. Secondly, we ought not to search for Sheen's strict theological definition of a lay person. His attempts to describe the identity of the laity for part of the beginnings an era commonly called as «the century of the Laity», and which involved theological development and clarification during and after Vatican Council II³⁴¹.

Two particular questions will be examined with regard to Sheen's vision of the identity of the laity: 1) the manner in which the laity participate in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Christ, and 2) Sheen's understanding of the «lay apostolate» or mission of the laity in the secular world.

In Sheen's writings it is evident that he had no intention to give a strict theological definition of the laity, but rather a description and an outline of their functions. There are three essential elements in this description. First, the laity refers to all the faithful who participate in an extended way in Christ's royal priesthood:

Christ as priest is continued in the hierarchy and in the priesthood which is destined primarily for the sanctification of Souls, though the laity in an extended way share the 'royal priesthood'. Christ as King continues through the hierarchy, but in our modern times, to the laity. Thanks to Confirmation, the laity's work is not the sanctification of souls but the sanctification of the world or what Pius XII called *consecratio mundi*³⁴².

The lay Christian is not ordained as a bishop, a priest, a deacon, nor does he become a religious professing evangelical vows. The lay person, for Sheen, is clearly not a cleric, a religious or a religious cleric. Secondly, following the teachings of *Lumen Gentium* number 10 and 11, in his book *Those Mysterious Priests* (1974), laity meant all the *faithful* who «by baptism are united as members of the covenant made people with their King»³⁴³. Through the «common priesthood» they are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Christ. Thirdly, Sheen distinguished the laity from other Church faithful based on their «secular quality»³⁴⁴.

It is within the context of this secular character of the laity's identity that Sheen elaborated his view of the mission of the laity in the secular world. He

affirmed that the laity are called to carry out the mission of *the sanctification of the world*³⁴⁵. According to him, the «kingly power of the laity and their spiritualization of the temporal order» should not be neglected³⁴⁶. Every lay person in his own concrete situation in society has a vital role in reconciling the world with Christ from within³⁴⁷. Thus, he claimed, «without the laity, the Church would work only in sanctuaries and sacristies»³⁴⁸.

Finally, Sheen offered some concrete suggestions to facilitate the apostolate of the laity: 1) Adequate attention should be given to the *apologetic of sanctity* or the call to holiness; 2) Lay organizations require an explicit mandate from the hierarchy; 3) The laity should have adequate intellectual and spiritual formation³⁴⁹. These concrete suggestions are all indicative of Sheen's interest in fomenting the lay apostolate within the concrete historical context of daily living in the Church and in the world. Sheen's discussion of the laity's mission is likewise indicative of a developing ecclesial perspective, in which the laity are not be considered as passive members of the Church. Rather, they are active members of Christ's Mystical Body and sharers of the evangelizing mission of the Church in the world³⁵⁰.

7. MARY AND THE EVANGELIZING MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The role played by the Blessed Mother in the Church occupies a special attention in the writings of Sheen³⁵¹. Such special consideration is grounded on Sheen's insistence on the so-called *Divine Equation*³⁵². Within the framework of the theology of the *Divine Equation*, in this last section we will examine Sheen's presentation of Mary as the Mother as well as the Model of the Church's evangelizing mission.

7.1. *Mary as the Mother of the Church's Evangelizing Mission*

In the writings of Sheen, Mary occupies a unique role in the Church since she is the Mother of *the Divine Missionary*³⁵³. According to Sheen, since *Mary mothered the Divine Missionary*, the incarnate Son of the Father, it follows that she also has a special role in the Church's evangelizing mission³⁵⁴. Sheen called Mary as the Mother of the *Divine Missionary* because «He (Christ) who from all eternity was begotten of the Father is generated in time of the Blessed Mother without man but by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit»³⁵⁵. As such, the nature of Mary's motherhood is not «purely a corporal one»³⁵⁶. In other

words, Mary's motherhood is not only a maternity in relation with Christ as true man, but also in relation with Christ as the Son of God who after His ascension into heaven assumed a Mystical Body. Consequently, according to Sheen, this special kind of motherhood makes Mary «the prototype of motherhood», «the paragon of maternity», and «the loveliest of all the lovely mothers of the world»³⁵⁷.

For Sheen, the Blessed Virgin Mary is «the paragon of maternity» and «the prototype of motherhood» because She is not only the Mother of Christ as true God and true man, but also the Mother of «the Mystical Body of Christ», the Church³⁵⁸. He pointed out that «during His (Christ) earthly Life He promised to assume a new body after His Ascension into heaven...»³⁵⁹. This new body that Christ assumed during the Pentecost is none other than the Church, his Mystical Body, «a body which would be made up of the countless faithful who believed in Him»³⁶⁰. Sheen explained:

This means that in addition to the physical Christ whose Life began at Bethlehem and ended with the Ascension, there is also the Mystical Christ which began with Pentecost and which will endure through all eternity. Now if the fullness of Christ embraces not only His historical Life in Galilee but also His Mystical Life in the Church, then should not Mary be not only the Mother of the physical Christ, but also the Mother of the fullness of Christ or the Mother of the Church?³⁶¹.

Although Sheen did not explicitly address Mary as the Mother of the Church's evangelizing mission, his insistence on Mary's maternity in relation not only with the «physical Christ» but also with the «fullness of Christ» presupposes the role of Mary's Motherhood with regard to the Church's mission. In Sheen's ecclesiology, the Church's identity and mission are two inseparable realities. The Church's being defines her mission, and her mission demonstrates her identity. Now, since Mary is the Mother of the Church, it follows that Mary, the Mother of the *Divine Missionary*, is also the Mother of the Church's evangelizing mission³⁶².

Mary as the Mother of the Church's evangelizing mission means, for Sheen, that Mary is the Channel of all Christ's graces bestowed upon the Church. Following the words of Pius X in his encyclical *Ad Diem Illam Latissimum* (1904), Sheen called Mary the *Mediatrice* of all graces³⁶³. Now if in the language of Sheen the Church's evangelizing mission consists of reconciling the world to Christ³⁶⁴, it follows that Mary, as the *reparatrix*³⁶⁵ of fallen humanity, deserves to be honored as the Mother of the evangelizing mission

of the Church. Furthermore, Sheen, following the teaching of St. Albert the Great³⁶⁶, maintained that Mary is, after God, with God and under God the *efficient cause*, the *material cause*, the *formal* and the *final cause*³⁶⁷ of «the redemption and sanctification of the world»³⁶⁸.

7.2. *Mary as the Exemplary Model in the Church's Evangelizing Mission*

Reflecting on the mystery of Mary's divine maternity, Sheen envisioned her spiritual maternity as extending to all the adoptive sons of the Father³⁶⁹. This theological elaboration of Mary's maternity is especially significant because in it we see Sheen uniting two aspects of Mary's motherhood. He recognized the distinction between Mary's divine maternity in relation to Christ and her spiritual maternity with regard to her spiritual children, but he never separated these dimensions of her motherhood³⁷⁰. Rather he always referred to them together by using the expressions «the Mother of the Head»³⁷¹ and «the Mother of the Mystical Body»³⁷².

After affirming that the Blessed Virgin Mary is the Mother of God and the Mother of mankind – of all the redeemed³⁷³, Sheen offered a biblical reflection on Mary's motherhood, arguing that she should be honored as the Model in the exercise of the Church's evangelizing mission.

Looking at the mystery of the Mary's life as narrated in the Gospels, Sheen affirmed that «from the very beginning she was the apostle *par excellence* of her Divine Son»³⁷⁴. She is the apostle *par excellence* because She is the Mother of the *Divine Missionary*. As such, the Blessed Mother occupies the role of a model in the exercise of the Church's evangelizing mission. Moreover, She deserves to be honored as the exemplary Model because it was she «who first made Jesus known to His precursor John the Baptist on the occasion of her visit to Elizabeth; she it was who first made Jesus known to the Jews in the person of the shepherds, and to the Gentiles in the person of the Wise Men»³⁷⁵.

Another reason of Mary's special place in the evangelizing mission of the Church is her maternal presence not only during the birth of the Church at Pentecost but also at the start of her expansion. Sheen reasoned that «not only was it fitting that Mary be present as Mother at the birth of the Mystical Christ, but it was also fitting that she be present as Queen of the apostles on the solemn day when the Church begins preaching the Gospel to the world»³⁷⁶. Mary's maternal presence at the birth of the Church and at the beginning of the Church's mission to preach the Good News is not the product of the consensus and decisions of the Apostles but of the will of her Son, the

Divine Missionary. Thus, for Sheen, it is the *Divine Wisdom* who makes Mary the first Missionary and the model *par excellence* in the Church's evangelizing mission³⁷⁷.

Lastly, the Blessed Virgin Mary is the model *par excellence* of the evangelizing mission not only because «she brought into the world apostolicity itself»³⁷⁸ but also because she continues to cooperate with the Divine Missionary in dispensing the fruits of redemption to the whole world, after her Assumption into heaven³⁷⁹. Sheen explained, «the Assumption of Mary into heaven was the natural consequence of her Divine Maternity, the counterpart of her Son's Ascension and the beginning of another world wherein we live by faith, hope and charity»³⁸⁰. The mystery of the Assumption guarantees that Mary will continue exercising in Heaven the role of being the Model *par excellence* in the Church's evangelizing mission.

8. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SHEEN'S ECCLESIOLOGY: A SYNTHESIS

After analyzing in detail Sheen's theological reflection on the Church and the priesthood, we now offer in this section a synthesis of the development of his theological thought. It must be borne in mind that Sheen began reflecting on the Church and priesthood prior to the celebration of the Second Vatican Council, but lived long enough to experience the Council and introduce its ideas into his later theology. Thus this study is important in order to attain a view of the maturation of Sheen's theological ideas. We shall attempt two things in this section: to present a synthesis of Sheen's thinking on the Church and the priesthood, while at the same stressing that it underwent development in the course of time (and is essentially divisible into two periods, pre-conciliar and post-conciliar).

8.1. *From 1920 to Vatican II: The First Period*

The historical milieu extending from the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century until the convocation of the Second Vatican Council is the context for the first phase of the elaboration of Sheen's theological writings. Focusing now on this period, we will explore the general framework of Sheen's reflections about the nature and mission of the Church.

Committed to presenting a *reasoned exposition* of the truths of Catholic Faith, Sheen published his first theological book, *Life of All Living* (1929), to

start elaborating the idea of the Church as the *prism* of the diffusion of Divine Life. In his succeeding theological writings, his view of the nature and mission of the Church would be characterized by three fundamental features: the «descending» ecclesiological model, an apologetical character, and an emphasis on the Church's authority.

8.1.1. The Vertical Ecclesiological Perspective: An Impulse from Above

Although Sheen received his early theological formation principally through neo-scholastic manuals of ecclesiology, with their emphasis on the depiction of the Church as a perfect society, he was able to go far beyond this ecclesiological perspective thanks to his clear view of the importance of both the Church's visible and invisible dimensions³⁸¹. In 1935, with the publication of his book *The Mystical Body of Christ*, he highlighted several key ecclesiological ideas such as the Church as prolongation of Christ-Life, the Holy Spirit as the Soul of the Church, and the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church.

Sheen's ecclesiology, we could say, was a «from above» ecclesiology. Its approach was descending rather than ascending. Its starting point was the invisible reality of the Church³⁸². Thus his ecclesiology was grounded more in the older scholastic tradition, most especially St. Thomas Aquinas' view of the Church as Christ's Mystical Body³⁸³. Unlike the neo-scholastic ecclesiological manuals which were more juridical in character, Sheen's ecclesiology was more inclined to emphasize the organic dimension of the Church. The Church for him was a *Living Body* headed by Christ and vivified by the Holy Spirit³⁸⁴.

Under the influence of notable studies on the ecclesiology of the Fathers of the Church, published in the first quarter of the twentieth century³⁸⁵, Sheen proceeded to develop his own theological view of the Church as a Mystical Body. He strove, however, to avoid the erroneous exaggerations of the Mystical Body theology that tended to eliminate the distinction between the person of Christ and the human persons comprising the Mystical Body³⁸⁶. Charles P. Connor has noted that Sheen's vision of the Church was not a myopic view of the theology of the Mystical Body³⁸⁷. For Sheen, the Church understood as a Mystical Body is an organic reality which is both visible and invisible. In this way, the image of the Church as Mystical Body does not imply the elimination of the distinction between Christ and the Church.

Finally, Sheen's ecclesiology was not only characterized by Christ-centeredness but also by its pneumatological character. For Sheen, the Church as

a Mystical Body is not only inseparable from Christ but also from the action of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Soul of the Mystical Body. The Paraclete is the Church's vivifying and unifying principle. Consequently, the life of the Church comes primarily from *above*, not from *below*. It is not a product of men's initiatives but of God's divine action.

8.1.2. The Centrality of the Doctrine of the Roman Primacy

The prevailing ecclesiological reflections from the 1920's to the 1950's³⁸⁸ were mainly in line with the ideas enunciated by Pius XII in his encyclical *Mystici Corporis* (1943)³⁸⁹. The publication of Sheen's book *The Mystical Body of Christ* (1935) showed too that his ecclesiology was in line with the theological trend centered on the notion of the Mystical Body³⁹⁰. At the same time, this book and Sheen's subsequent writings also manifested that his theological reflections avoided certain extremist tendencies born within this ecclesiological trend³⁹¹.

In particular Sheen, in presenting his vision of the Church, distanced himself from other theologians who assigned a purely metaphorical significance to the expression «Mystical Body»³⁹². As a consequence, he took into account the hierarchical (tangible) structure of the Church and, in particular, the centrality of the doctrine of the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff³⁹³.

Sheen's reflection about the Church had important points of contact with the ecclesiology of Vatican Council I³⁹⁴. Congar (1905-1995) has commented that the ecclesiology of this Council was centered more on the «hierarchy», that is, the affirmation of the institutional structure of the Church and in particular of the Papal Primacy³⁹⁵. Sheen, for his part, claimed that the Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ in the analogical sense of the term, constitutes a *living organism* vivified by the Holy Spirit³⁹⁶. As a living body, the Church is both a *spiritual organism* and a *hierarchical* society which is not *democratic* or *aristocratic*³⁹⁷.

He insisted that in this hierarchical body Peter had been appointed by Christ as a visible head endowed with the primacy of true jurisdiction, and that the Roman Pontiff is Peter's successor by divine right³⁹⁸. He defended the doctrine of the Pope's infallibility using as a basis the dogmatic decree *De Fide Catholica et De Ecclesia Christi*³⁹⁹. It is thus evident that Sheen's ecclesiology intended to remain faithful to the teachings of Vatican Council I.

The insistence, in Sheen's ecclesiology, on the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff also reveals a certain inclination towards juridical categories. Adopting the perspective of Vatican I, Sheen's writings presented Christ as the *Invisible*

Head and the founder of the Church⁴⁰⁰. The Church was denominated by Sheen as the «mightiest kingdom» in which the *Visible Head* has jurisdiction over all the members⁴⁰¹. The Supreme Pontiff, as Vicar of Christ, was depicted by Sheen as the guardian of the *law of Christ*⁴⁰². The Bishops of the Church in union with Peter were portrayed by Sheen as «governors» with executive, judicial, and legislative functions⁴⁰³. The authority of the Church was presented by Sheen under the rubric of three powers: teaching, ruling and sanctifying⁴⁰⁴. Lastly, the four distinctive marks of the Church were taken by him as convergent signs demonstrating that the legitimate Church of Christ is the Roman Catholic Church⁴⁰⁵.

8.1.3. The Apologetic Approach

After discussing Sheen's «vertical» ecclesiological perspective and the centrality of the Papal Primacy, it is worthwhile to devote some attention as well to Sheen's methodological approach.

The publication of Sheen's book *The Eternal Galilean* (1934) and *The Mystical Body of Christ* (1935) coincided with a period of proliferation of numerous works about the Church. An examination of the structure and contents of the various ecclesiological treatises and manuals during the first quarter of the 20th century shows that there were basically two prevailing methodologies: the apologetic⁴⁰⁶ and the dogmatic approach⁴⁰⁷. Until the 1920's the exposition of the doctrine on the Church in the manuals and treatises of ecclesiology was almost exclusively carried out in an apologetic manner. Many of these books were commonly used as references during Sheen's theological formation years⁴⁰⁸. Consequently, Sheen's writings prior to Vatican II reflected how, in shaping his ecclesiology, he received the influence of the above-mentioned approach.

Indeed, Sheen's ecclesiological reflection included an attempt to elaborate a rational defense and explanation of the veracity of the Catholic Church as the Mystical Body of Christ. For him, the Church had been under attack by three kinds of forces: *the force of body*, *the force of ideas*, and *the force of passion*⁴⁰⁹.

His writings thus showed a serious effort to defend the Church against modern errors, most especially Communism (which he took to be the ideology of the *mystical body of the antichrist*) and secularism⁴¹⁰. Although he acknowledged that his reflection was not aimed at a comprehensive dilucidation of the mystery of the Mystical Body, it still represented a serious attempt to offer *a reasoned explanation*⁴¹¹. In this way, it was intended «to inspire further study on the subject and also to introduce the subject to those not familiar with it»⁴¹². He did not propose to demonstrate the mystery of the Church using the

natural light of reason. He accepted the presence of mystical aspects in the Catholic Faith that did not lend themselves to demonstration – aspects that are only accepted by virtue of the testimony and divine authority of the one who revealed them⁴¹³.

It can be said, however, that Sheen's apologetic approach manifested the rational nature of Catholic faith⁴¹⁴. He used the analogical method in explaining the *diffusion* of Divine Life, the *Divine Equation* between Christ and the Church, and the nature of the Church as Christ's Mystical Body⁴¹⁵. He took into consideration the so-called reasons of credibility, pointing out arguments in support of the infallibility of the Church in her role as teacher and guide to salvation. In sum, he used both intelligence and faith to portray the Roman Catholic Church as the prolongation of the incarnation of Christ, and as the faithful and authorized depository of His teachings until the end of time⁴¹⁶.

8.2. *From Vatican II to 1978: The Second Period*

As we have said, under the influence of some notable studies on ecclesiology in the first half of the twentieth century,⁴¹⁷ Sheen's theological view of the Church basically incorporated the ideas of the theology of the Mystical Body⁴¹⁸. However his later writings, published during and after Vatican II, contained some new theological perspectives. Basically, we could say that Sheen shifted toward a more dynamic vision of the Church, elaborating a program for a new missional approach and emphasizing the relation between the Church's mission and the world.

8.2.1. A Shift toward a Dynamic Vision of the Church

The dramatic shift in theological perspective that happened around the time of Vatican Council II produced important repercussions in Sheen's ecclesiology.

As we have noted previously, Sheen's vision of the Church prior to the Council was basically characterized by a vertical ecclesiological perspective. Influenced by theology of the Council, in 1964 Sheen further developed his reflection, complementing his previous vertical view with the horizontal perspective. This keener awareness of a Church immersed in history and in touch with humanity's ever-changing vicissitudes led Sheen to adopt a more dynamic view of the Church.

In Sheen's later writings, this dynamic ecclesiological perspective may be perceived in his insistence on the vision of the Church which is open and in dialogue with the world. Sheen contemplated the *huge mass of humanity* that lives outside the Church's visible fold and is also equally in need of Christ's salvation. Consequently, he developed a moderately inclusivistic soteriology. Without denying the necessity of the Catholic Church for salvation, he propounded the idea that the possibility of salvation cannot be denied for those who are ignorant of the Gospel message yet seek to do God's will⁴¹⁹.

Sheen's amplified vision likewise led him to conceive the non-exclusive role of the clergy in carrying out the Church's mission. In his book *Missions and the World Crisis* (1964) he expounded a theological reflection on the laity in relation to the mission of the Church. He presented the role and place of lay faithful in terms both of their participation in the life of the Church and as heralds of the Church's mission in the world⁴²⁰. He emphasized that «without the laity, the Church would work only in sanctuaries and sacristies»⁴²¹. In this integral vision of the missionary Church Sheen considered crucial the collaboration between the hierarchy and the laity.

Using as reference *Lumen Gentium* number 10 and 11, in his book *Those Mysterious Priests* (1974) Sheen stressed that the laity should not be considered as passive members of the Church⁴²². As sharers of Christ's priesthood, they participate in the exercise of the evangelizing mission of the Church in the world⁴²³. They are called in particular to carry out the mission of *the sanctification of the world*⁴²⁴. Every lay person has a mission in reconciling the world to Christ, from his own concrete situation in society. Thus Sheen could speak of the «kingly power of the laity and their spiritualization of the temporal order»⁴²⁵.

A further aspect of Sheen's more dynamic ecclesiological perspective after the Council was his notion of the Church as a servant Church. In Sheen's view, the Church had been tasked to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom of God not only by word but also by deed. In his later writings, therefore, Sheen argued for a Church which is a «Church of the Poor»⁴²⁶, a Church which is not self-absorbed but rather keenly aware of others' needs – a servant Church or a Church for others⁴²⁷. It is a Church that has a preferential option for the poor, although it is not an exclusive preference. Thus Sheen claimed that the Church is «meant to be the Church of all men or 'of the people'»⁴²⁸.

Finally, Sheen's more dynamic ecclesiological perspective led him to see new horizons for the missionary activities of the Church.

8.2.2. The New Church's Missional Approach

Sheen's new paradigm the Church's missional approach took its inspiration from Vatican Council II. As we have previously pointed out his renewed vision was especially influenced by the ecclesiological ideas of *Lumen Gentium* and the teachings of *Ad Gentes*.

Whereas a significant feature of Sheen's ecclesiology before Vatican II was its stress on the Christological dimension of the Church's mission (in line with his theology of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ⁴²⁹), Sheen's postconciliar writings focused more strongly on the Trinitarian foundation of the missionary activity of the Church. Following the teachings of *Lumen Gentium* and *Ad Gentes*, Sheen defined the mission of the Church as a reaching out, from the heart of the Trinity, towards all creatures in the universe. Due to this intrinsically expansive nature, Sheen held that «the Church is missionary»⁴³⁰ and that her mission in the world is to establish not only the visible Church in missionary lands, but also to establish *the charity of Christ* in all places.

Especially in his book *Missions and the World Crisis* (1964), Sheen dwelt not only on the need to carry on with the Church's mission of planting the Church in mission territories, but also the urgent necessity of *re-announcing* the Gospel. Conscious of the Church's somewhat reduced position in the modern world, Sheen worried about the reemergence of the culture of paganism even among Christian countries⁴³¹. He was keenly aware of the evolution of the relationship between the Church and the world, which he came to define as «the divorce of the Divine and the secular»⁴³². Sheen therefore issued an urgent call for a New Evangelization.

Lastly, within Sheen's paradigm shift regarding the Church's missional approach, we may point out his new understanding of the locus for ecclesial mission. In his postconciliar writings he emphasized that the missionary activity of the Church should not only be exercised «exclusively in those territories where there are non-Christians»⁴³³. He considered that to talk of *foreign missions* or missions in distant pagan lands was outmoded, since a progressive overlapping of Christian and pagan spheres of influence was taking place globally, rendering nearly impossible the clear distinction between the Christian and the pagan milieus⁴³⁴. In the modern world, held Sheen, the primary field of the exercise of the Church's missionary activities was no longer the pagan or non-Christian territories, but rather the entire world. This new idea of «mission» reveals how Sheen's view the Church's activity in the world experienced a shift or development after the Council.

8.2.3. The Church's Mission and the World

Vatican Council II's teachings regarding the «world» produced an impact in Sheen's own theological thinking. He reflects this in his book *Treasure in Clay* (1980), published, posthumously: «for the first time in the history of the Councils of the Church, there was a chapter on the 'The World' in which there was stressed *the unity of creation and redemption*; and the truth that dignity and freedom of the human person is inseparable from salvation»⁴³⁵.

We can identify two fundamental aspects in Sheen's evolved view of the relations between the Church and the world. Firstly, he became convinced that one of the objectives of the Council's call for reform was to strike a balance between the extremes of worldliness and churchiness⁴³⁶. For him, both radical positions, which he called the *conservative* and the *wordlings*⁴³⁷, had to be avoided. And that was precisely what the Council proposed to do: «what the Council did was to establish equilibrium or balance between these extremes – between evangelization and human progress, between soul-winning and society-saving, between divine salvation and human liberation»⁴³⁸. Sheen therefore considered that «the document on 'The Church and the World' brought forth some of the most balanced thinking from the Council»⁴³⁹.

The second aspect of Sheen's evolved Church-world theology was the consideration of the world as the locus for the mission of the Church. When thinking of the exercise of the Church's missionary activity, Sheen held that «it is the world of mass civilization which has to be reconciled to God»⁴⁴⁰. The challenge no longer involved, as in previous centuries, pristine territory where no missionary had ever set foot; now it was *the world of mass civilization*, the whole globe, that comprised the new territory where the Church's evangelizing mission needed to be carried out. Sheen recalled that the original divine mandate was that the Church should go to the whole world, reconciling it to God through the redemption of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, it was necessary to go back to the universalism implied in the original apostolic mandate: «the entire world, therefore, is the mission of the Church, and those who think in terms of the world have the 'Catholic sense'»⁴⁴¹.

Thus, in his later works Sheen emphasized that the Church's mission in the world consisted not only in establishing hierarchy in foreign mission lands but also in reconciling the world to Christ and helping to establish his universal reign. For this, it was necessary to avoid either demonizing the world or adoring it – extreme attitudes that Sheen called the *neurotic*

or *psychotic* views of the relation between the world and the Church⁴⁴². He proposed, on one hand, that the Church should not isolate herself from the world. On the other hand, he stressed that the Church should not identify herself with the world. Thus, according to him, «in the Second Vatican Council it was not schism or heresy that was the issue, but rather the Church and the world»⁴⁴³.

* * *

Inevitably, Vatican Council II's teachings about the Church and the world also provoked a certain shift in Sheen's theology of ministerial priesthood (especially his view of the priest's relation with the laity and with the world). We discuss this aspect in the body of the thesis, but merely enunciate it in the present extract (for reasons of space).

Notes

1. Cfr. SCHEFFCZYK, L., «Main Lines of the Development of Theology between the First World War and the Second Vatican Council», in JEDIN, H., REPGEN, K., and DOLAN, J. (eds.), *The Church in the Modern Age. History of the Church*, vol. 10, New York: Crossroad, 1981, pp. 260-298; cfr. HIMES, M. J., «The Development of Ecclesiology: Modernity to the Twentieth Century», in PHAN, P. C. (ed.), *The Gift of the Church: A Textbook on Ecclesiology in Honor of Patrick Granfield*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000, pp. 45-67; cfr. KOMONCHAK, J. A., «The Council of Trent at the Second Vatican Council» in BULMAN, R. F., and PARRELLA, F. J. (eds.), *From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigations*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 61-80; cfr. PONCE, M. C., *La Iglesia Misterio de Comunión*, Valencia: EDICEP, 2011, pp. 180-206; cfr. PELLITERO, R., *Ecclesiología*, Pamplona: EUNSA, 2017, pp. 37-45; cfr. AVIS, P. (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 1-12.
2. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ* (1935) Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2015, pp. 1-2.
3. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 9.
4. See the Barron's foreword in SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. IX. Here is the list of Sheen's main works: SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ* (1935), Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2015; Also ID., *The Missions and the World Crisis*, Dublin & London: Scepter Books, 1964.
5. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 9.
6. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 9.
7. *Ibidem.*
8. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 1-10.
9. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Treasure in Clay*, pp. 239-259 and p. 378; Also cfr. ID., *Those Mysterious Priests*, pp. 143-147.
10. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 209.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
12. *Ibidem.*
13. Cfr. DUPERRAY, J., *Christ in the Christian Life according to St. Paul*, New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1927; PLUS, P., *God in Us, In Christ Jesus, Christ in His Brethren*, New York: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1927; ADAM, K., *The Spirit of Catholicism*, New York: Macmillan, 1929; MARMION, C., *Christ the Life of the Soul*, New York: Benziger Brothers, 1931; JÜRGENSMEIER, F., *Der mystische Leib Christi als Grundprinzip der Aszetik*, Paderborn: Schöningh, 1933; MERSCH, E., *Le Corps Mystique du Christ. Études de Théologie Historique* (2 vols.), Louvain: Museum Lessianum, 1933; MURA, E., *Le Corps Mystique du Christ* (2 vols.), Paris: Blott, 1933.

14. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 2-3.
15. Cfr. D'HERBIGNY, M., *De Ecclesia* (vol.1), Paris: Beauchisne, 1928; ANGER, A., *The Doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. According to the Principles of the Theology of St. Thomas*, translated from the French by John J. Burke, London: Longmans, 1932; MERSCH, E., *Le Corps Mystique du Christ* (2 vols.), Louvain 1933; MURA, E., *Le Corps Mystique du Christ* (2 vols.), Paris: Blott, 1933.
16. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 48. It should be noted that the vision of the Church as a «prolongation of the Incarnation» or continuation of the Incarnation corresponded to the golden age of the theology of the Mystical Body. Subsequently, after the Second Vatican Council, in a certain sense it was superseded, since it does not speak of the pneumatological dimension of the Church. The Church, in any case, can rather be understood as «a universal sacrament of salvation» made possible through the «joint» or «double» mission of the Word and the Holy Spirit, as presented by the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Cfr. CCC 689, 774-776, 780.
17. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Divine Romance* (1930), Chicago: Biretta Books, 2014, pp. 14-15; cfr. ID., *Life of All Living*, pp. 40-42; cfr. ID., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 209-210.
18. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 49.
19. Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 27-28 and p. 43.
20. Mersch's ecclesiology was born of his study of the historical development of the Doctrine of the Mystical Body in Scripture and Tradition. Cfr. MERSCH, E., *Le Corps Mystique du Christ. Études de Théologie Historique* (2 vols.), Louvain: Museum Lessianum, 1933.
21. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 9.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 23. Here are some of the neo-scholastics manuals in Ecclesiology: cfr. LUDOVICO, B., *Tractatus De Ecclesia Christi, Sive Continuatio Theologiae De Verbo Incarnato, Tomus Primus*, Romae: Typographia Polyglotta, 1898; cfr. ID., *Tractatus De Ecclesia Christi, Tomus Secundus*, Romae: Apud Aedes Universitatis, 1922; cfr., DE GUIBERT, I., *De Christi Ecclesia Breve Schema*, Romae: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1926; cfr. DIBELIUS, O. *Das Jahrhundert der Kirche* (2nd ed.), Berlin: Furche, 1927; Also ZAPELENA, T., *Pars altera: Apologetico-dogmatica* (2nd ed.), Romae: Gregorian University, 1940.
24. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 23.
25. Cfr. MERSCH, E., *Le Corps Mystique Du Christ. Études De Théologie Historique* (vol. 2), pp. 216ff; Also cfr. PRAT, F., *The Theology of Saint Paul* (vol. 2), London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1926.
26. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 39.
27. Sheen refers to Eph. 4:15-16; Eph.2:19-22; 1 Cor. 3:9-16.
28. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 41.
29. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 13 and p. 23.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
33. *Ibidem*.
34. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 4.
35. Sheen refers to Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 28; 1 Cor. 10:16ff; Col 1:24.
36. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 37.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
39. *Ibidem*.
40. Cfr. Jn. 15:1ff.

NOTES

41. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 5.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
43. *Ibidem*.
44. Cfr. MERSCH, E., *Le Corps Mystique du Christ. Études de Théologie Historique* (2 vols.), Louvain: Museum Lessianum, 1933.
45. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 7.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
47. Sheen refers to Eph. 4:34; Col 3:16; Rom. 5:5; 1 Cor. 12:11; Eph. 4:7, 12; 1 Cor. 12:18-19, 28; 1 Cor. 12:24, 26; 2 Cor. 9:29; Col. 1:4, 9, 12; 2 Tm 2:10; Eph. 4:12 and 5:25.
48. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 37.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.
50. Cfr. MURA, E., *Le Corps Mystique du Christ* (vol.1), p. 108.
51. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 38.
52. Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 37-38.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
55. Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 15-16.
56. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of Christ* (1954), New York: Doubleday, 1958, pp. 1-6 and pp. 12-14; Also cfr. ID., *The Life of All Living* (1929), New York: Image Book, 1979, p. 31.
57. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 15-16.
58. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 30.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
60. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 7.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
63. Brandon Vogt is the Content Director for Bishop Robert Barron's Word on Fire Catholic Ministries.
64. Cfr. Vogt's Introduction in SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. XX.
65. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 38.
66. Sheen refers to Eph. 1:20-23 and Col 1:16-18.
67. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 53-54.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
70. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 42.
71. St. THOMAS, *Summa Theologica*, 3, q. 39, art. 1, c.
72. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 303.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 303.
74. *Ibidem*.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
76. It should be noted here that when referring to the «*visible Christ*» Sheen does not speak of Christ as a mere man denying his Divinity. The terms «*visible Christ*» refer to the earthly life of Jesus, which ended by his death on the cross. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Life of All Living*, p. 50. On the other hand, the use of the terms «*invisible Christ*» does not connote the denial of the historical Jesus who was born in Bethlehem, lived at Nazareth, taught in Galilee and Judea, and was crucified in Jerusalem. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 41.
77. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 41.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 41. It should be noted that in the writings of Sheen the sending of the Holy Spirit is essentially united with the mysteries of Christ's passion, death and resurrection, as well as his

ascension. Hence, the elaboration of Sheen's ecclesiology is not merely Christological but also pneumatological.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
80. *Ibidem.*
81. *Ibidem.*
82. *Ibidem.*
83. *Ibidem.*
84. Sheen calls this union as the *mystical union*. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Life of All Living*, p. 50. Also cfr. ID., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 302. Sheen insists that the union between Christ and His Mystical Body is not hypostatic union taking as reference the work of Michel D'Herbengy. Cfr. D'HERBIGNY, M., *De Ecclesia* (vol. 1), Paris: Beauchisne, 1928, p. 166. Sheen affirms, «the Mystical Union is definitely not a hypostatic union, for despite it we still retain our nature and independent personality with full responsibilities for our acts» (SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 297.).
85. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 44.
86. The vision of the Church as *Totus Christus* is not the original idea of Sheen. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Life of All Living*, pp. 50-51; Also cfr. ST. AUGUSTINE, *In Psalmo 90, Sermon 3*, P. L., vol. 37, p. 1159.
87. A detailed study on Pauline theology used as Sheen's reference: cfr. PRAT, F., *The Theology of St. Paul* Vol.1 (1926), Eugene: Newman Bookshop, 1958.
88. ST. AUGUSTINE, *Sermon 45*, P. L., vol. 38, pp. 265-266.
89. As Sheen reference cfr. MERSCH, E., *The Whole Christ*, pp. 413-414.
90. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 47.
91. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of All Living*, p. 55; Also cfr. ID., *The Divine Romance*, p. 54; cfr. ID., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 48-49.
92. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 45.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
94. *Ibidem.*
95. Sheen explains, «inasmuch as He (Christ) exists in Himself, He is a single Person; but inasmuch as He subsists mystically in His members, He fills the role of Personality. Thus united to us, Christ shares His Life by a kind of 'communication of idioms' somewhat akin to that which is established between His two natures». (SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 46.); Also cfr. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, 3, q. 6, art. 6; q. 7, arts. 11 and 13.
96. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 46.
97. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
99. *Ibidem.*
100. *Ibidem.*
101. Cfr. Jn. 20:1; Mt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:19; Lk. 22:69; Hb. 10:12-1.
102. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 17.
103. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
104. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
105. *Ibidem.*
106. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 19; cfr. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, 3, q. 42, art. 4; Also cfr. ID., *Summa Theologica*, 3, q. 3, art. 8; cfr. ID., *Summa Theologica*, 3, q. 59, art. 1, ad. 2; cfr., ID., *Summa Theologica*, 3, q. 59, arts. 1-4.
107. Cfr. St. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, 3, q. 59, arts. 1-4; Also cfr. Jn. 5:22; Jn. 14:2-3 and 15; Jn. 15:10; Jn. 18:37; Mt. 4:17; Mt. 25:31, 34, 41 and 46; Mt. 28:19; Mk. 1:15; Lk. 4:23.

108. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 19.
109. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
110. SHEEN, F. J., *The Divine Romance*, pp. 11-24.
111. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Life of All Living*, p. 49.
112. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 75.
113. Cfr. Here are some of the references used by Sheen in his theological reflection: LEO XIII, *Divinum illud munus* (May 9, 1897); ST. AUGUSTINE, P. L. T. 38, col. 123; ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, 1 q. 76, art. 1, ad. 4; ID, *De Veritate*, q. 29, art. 4; 3 and q. 8, art. 1, ad. 3 cited in SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 309.
114. SHEEN, F. J., *The Eternal Galilean*, New York: Appleton-Century, 1934.
115. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2015 (first published on December 1935, by Sheed and Ward, Inc.).
116. SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, Dublin & London: Scepter Books, 1964.
117. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 77.
118. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 49.
119. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 79.
120. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 74.
121. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 48 and p. 71. According to Sheen, the Holy Spirit is the energizing principle of the Church. Furthermore, it is the unifying principle between the Head, Christ and His Body, the Church. Moreover, since there is an existing bond of union between them, there should not be an opposition between Christ and the Church. Thus, the role of the Holy Spirit in the union of Christ as Head and the Church as a body is vital and necessary.
122. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Life of All Living*, p. 49; Also cfr. ID., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 49.
123. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Life of All Living*, pp. 42-43.
124. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 71.
125. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
126. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 78.
127. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 79.
128. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 77.
129. For further discussion on this topic: cfr. RODRÍGUEZ, P., «La Indefectibilidad de la Iglesia», *Scripta Theologica* 10 (1978), pp. 235-267. Also cfr. KUNG, H., *Infallible? An Inquiry*, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1971; cfr. HUGHES, J. J., *Infallible? An Inquiry Considered*, *Theological Studies* 32 (1971) pp. 183-207; cfr. SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Declaration regarding two works of professor Hans Küng* (February 15, 1975).
130. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 88-97.
131. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
132. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 89.
133. *Ibidem*.
134. *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.
135. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
136. *Ibidem*.
137. Sheen speaks of the possibility of some reform in discipline, but not a reform in Faith. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 110.
138. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 90.
139. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
140. *Ibidem*.
141. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
142. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
143. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 89.

144. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
145. *Ibidem.*
146. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of All Living*, pp. 49-52; ID., *The Divine Romance*, pp. 31-35; ID., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 43 and p. 74.
147. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 192.
148. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
149. Sheen did not use to the terms «Pilgrim Church». Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 27.
150. For a more elaborated discussion on this issue: cfr. ANTON, A., *El Misterio de la Iglesia: Evolución histórica de las ideas eclesiológicas* (vol. II), Madrid-Toledo: BAC, 1987, pp. 662-608; Also cfr. BARTMANN.B., «Katholische Bewegungen mit Hemmungen», *ThGl* 28 (1936), pp. 21-22; cfr. MERSCH, E., «Le Christ mystique, centre de la théologie comme science», *NRth* 5 (1934) pp. 449ff.
151. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of All Living*, p. 49; Also cfr. ID., *The Divine Romance*, pp. 33.
152. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 27-28 and p. 45.
153. Sheen calls the *heavenly Church* as the fullness of the *Mystical Christ*. It does not refer to the «Triumphant Church», but it is the Church when the three division of the *Mystical Body* becomes one Church in the end of time. Furthermore, the term *heavenly* should be understood not in a sense that the Church is already in heaven, but in the sense that the earthly Church tends toward her final and definitive destination in the consummation of the world (cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 201).
154. For Sheen, the visible Church on earth is only one part of a much larger reality of the Mystical Body of Christ. The earthly Church refers to the Militant Church. (Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 195).
155. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 192.
156. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 42.
157. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 43.
158. For Sheen, there is certain identification between Christ and the Church since he considered the Church as the prolongation of the Incarnation. (Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of All Living*, p. 55; Also cfr. ID., *The Divine Romance*, p. 54; cfr. ID., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 48-49).
159. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 43.
160. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 201.
161. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 195.
162. Cfr. COUNCIL OF FLORENCE, *Laetentur Caeli* (1439), in DENZINGER, H., *Compendium of Creeds*, pp. 335-336; Also cfr. CCC 954.
163. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 191.
164. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
165. It is to be noted here that Sheen does not yet apply the term «pilgrim» which is the word commonly used in the Vatican Council II. Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 48-51.
166. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 191.
167. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
168. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
169. *Ibidem.*
170. *Ibidem.*
171. *Ibid.*, p. 195.
172. *Ibidem.*
173. Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 191ff.
174. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
175. *Ibid.*, pp. 191-192.

176. CCC 946. «The Church is Communion of Saints».
177. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 196.
178. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
179. *Ibid.*, p. 198.
180. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 198. Sheen considers Mary as the Mother of the Mystical Body (cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 245ff). And following the teachings of Pope Pius X, Sheen also upholds that Mary is the Mediatrix of all graces in the world. (Cfr. PIUS X, *Ad Diem Illium Laetissimum* (1904) cited in SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 323.
181. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
182. Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 200-201.
183. For more details on this topic: cfr. KIRSCH, J. P., *Die Lehre von der Gemeins Heiligenmchristlichen Altertum*, Maguncia 1900; SWETE, H. B., *The Holy Catholic Church, The Communion of Saints. A Study in the Apostles' Creed*, London 1916, pp. 147-16; BADCOCK, F., «Sanctorum communion' as an article in the Creed», in *Journal of Theological Studies* (1919-20) pp. 106-128; BERNARD, P., and BOUR, R. S., «Communion des Saints», in DTC 3, Paris 1931, pp. 429-480; BAUDUCCO, F., «Comunione dei Santi», in *Enciclopedia Cattolica* 4, Vatican 1950, pp. 119-125; SCHMAUS, M., «La Comunion de los Santos», in *Teología Dogmática* IV (2 ed.), Madrid 1962, pp. 47-48 and pp. 569-576; REVUELTA, J., «La Comunion de los Santos», in GER 1, Madrid 1979, pp. 145-147; SWAIN, R. S., «Lutheran and Reformed Sacramental Theology, 17th-19th Centuries», in *Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, LEVERING, M., and BOERSMA, H. (eds.), Oxford University Press, 2015; ALLEN, M., and SWAIN, S., *The Oxford Handbook of Reformed Theology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 473ff.
184. Cfr. ALLEN, M., and SWAIN, S., *The Oxford Handbook of Reformed Theology*, pp. 154ff.
185. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 210.
186. For Sheen, «the redemption is reciprocal. Our Lord does not do everything and we nothing. Our Lord has redeemed us, but His redemption must be applied to our souls. He has filled the heavenly reservoir with Divine grace, but we must let that grace pour into our souls. But how can we do this except by becoming incorporated into His Life and His Death?» (SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 210-211).
187. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of All Living*, p. 49.
188. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, Dublin & London: Scepter Books, 1964, p. 79.
189. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 9; Also cfr. ID., *The Divine Romance*, pp. 34-35.
190. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of All Living*, p. 42 and p. 58.
191. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 9; Also cfr. ID., *The Life of All Living*, p. 42.
192. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 32; Also cfr. ID., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. 91 and p. 107.
193. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. 187.
194. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Divine Romance*, p. 34; cfr. ID., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 27-28; Also cfr. ID., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. 3.
195. It should be noted here that Sheen does not use the terms «New Evangelization». Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 32-33; Also cfr. ID., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. 5.
196. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of All Living*, pp. 56-57; Also cfr. ID., *The Divine Romance*, p. 34; cfr. ID., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 27-28; Also cfr. ID., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. 3.
197. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 2, pp. 32-33 and p. 63.
198. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. 3 and p. 5.
199. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 197 and pp. 200-201.
200. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 9; cfr. ID., *Mission and the World Crisis*, pp. 3, 49, 67, 79, 94, and 103.

201. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 9; Also cfr. ID., *The Divine Romance*, pp. 34-35. It should be noted here that Sheen does not speak of the Church as sacrament; rather he speaks more about the sacraments of the Church.
202. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of All Living*, pp. 56-57; Also cfr. ID., *The Divine Romance*, p. 34; cfr. ID., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 27-28; Also cfr. ID., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. 3.
203. SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. 79.
204. Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
205. Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 43-46 and pp. 200-202.
206. Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 31-38 and pp. 61-64.
207. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 180 and p. 183.
208. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of All Living*, p. 55; Also cfr. ID., *The Divine Romance*, p. 54; cfr. ID., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 48-49.
209. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Divine Romance*, p. 50.
210. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, pp. 199-200.
211. *Ibid.*, p. 200.
212. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 209.
213. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of All Living*, p. 42; Also cfr. ID., *The Divine Romance*, pp. 11ff.
214. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 209-210.
215. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Divine Romance*, pp. 14-15; Also cfr. ID., *The Life of All Living*, pp. 40-42.
216. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Divine Romance*, p. 10.
217. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of All Living*, pp. 40-41.
218. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 71ff; Also cfr. ID., *The Life of All Living*, pp. 48-49.
219. It is to be noted here that Sheen uses the term *prism* to describe different stages of God's gradual revelation. (Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Divine Romance*, p. 32; Also cfr. ID., *The Life of All Living*, p. 42.)
220. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of All Living*, p. 49.
221. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. 110; Also cfr. ID., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 32.
222. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Divine Romance*, p. 34.
223. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 9; Also cfr. ID., *The Divine Romance*, pp. 34-35; cfr. ID., *The Life of All Living*, p. 42 and p. 58.
224. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, pp. 200ff.
225. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Divine Romance*, p. 10.
226. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
227. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 71.
228. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
229. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 74.
230. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 31.
231. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 84.
232. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 75.
233. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 74.
234. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
235. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Divine Romance*, pp. 31-32; cfr. ID., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 33-34; Also cfr. ID., *The Life of All Living*, pp. 49-50.
236. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 9.
237. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of All Living*, pp. 50-51; Also cfr. ID., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 48.

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238. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of Christ* (1954), Doubleday, New York, 1958, pp. 629-633.
239. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Divine Romance*, pp. 34-36; Also cfr. ID., *The Life of All Living*, pp. 54-56.
240. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 113.
241. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 114.
242. *Ibidem.*
243. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 114.
244. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 115.
245. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
246. *Ibidem.*
247. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 119.
248. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 117.
249. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
250. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 117.
251. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
252. Cfr. VATICAN COUNCIL I, *Pastor Aeternus* (1870), in DS 3065-3074.
253. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 125-126.
254. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
255. *Ibidem.*
256. Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 116-117.
257. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
258. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
259. *Ibidem.*
260. *Ibidem.*
261. Cfr. CONNOR, C. P., *The Spiritual Legacy of Fulton Sheen*, New York: Alba House, 2010, p. 34.
262. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
263. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 147.
264. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
265. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
266. *Ibidem.*
267. *Ibid.* Sheen uses the terms «corporation of human natures» to signify the Church.
268. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 149.
269. *Ibidem.*
270. *Ibidem.*
271. *Ibidem.*
272. *Ibidem.*
273. Cfr. *ibid.*; Also cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of All Living*, pp. 67-68; cfr. ID., *The Divine Romance*, p. 35.
274. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 149.
275. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
276. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
277. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 150.
278. Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 113-114.
279. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
280. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of Christ* (1954), New York: Doubleday, 1958, pp. 20-21 and pp. 629-633.
281. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 31.
282. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of Christ*, p. 603.
283. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 136.

284. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
285. *Ibidem*.
286. *Ibidem*7.
287. *Ibidem*.
288. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
289. *Ibidem*.
290. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
291. *Ibidem*.
292. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
293. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
294. *Ibidem*.
295. *Ibidem*.
296. *Ibidem*.
297. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
298. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 140.
299. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
300. Cfr. *ibid.*
301. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
302. *Ibidem*.
303. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
304. *Ibid.*, pp. 143-144.
305. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
306. *Ibidem*.
307. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
308. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Those Mysterious Priests*, p. 5.
309. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 9.
310. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
311. Sheen refers to Jn. 1:10; 3:16; 4:42; Mt. 24;14 and Col. 1:20.
312. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Those Mysterious Priests*, p. 7.
313. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
314. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Treasure in Clay*, pp. 306-307; Also cfr. ID., *Those Mysterious Priests*, pp. 256-259.
315. SHEEN, F. J., *Those Mysterious Priests*, p. 5.
316. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
317. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
318. *Ibidem*.
319. SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, pp. 200-201.
320. *Ibid.*, p. 200.
321. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
322. *Ibidem*.
323. Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 78-79.
324. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 5.
325. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 4, and p. 136.
326. Cfr. VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Ad Gentes* (1965).
327. SHEEN, F. J., *Those Mysterious Priests*, p. 8.
328. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
329. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
330. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 8.
331. Sheen refers to these following authors: 1) Pope Pius XI cited in SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. 85; 2) Pope Pius XII cited in SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. 86; 3)

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- Pope John XXIII cited in SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. 83; 4) Cardinal Emmanuel Célestin Suhard cited in SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. 86; 5) Yves Congar cited in SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. 83.
332. SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. 80.
333. Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 78-87.
334. Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 80-81.
335. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 44.
336. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. 80.
337. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
338. *Ibidem.*
339. *Ibidem.*
340. *Ibidem.*
341. For further study about the laity and their mission: cfr. PELLITERO, R., Congar's Developing Understanding of the Laity and their Mission, *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 65 (2001) pp. 327-359.
342. SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. 165.
343. SHEEN, F. J., *Those Mysterious Priests*, p. 22.
344. Cfr. *Lumen Gentium* 31 as cited in SHEEN, F. J., *Those Mysterious Priests*, p. 22.
345. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. 165.
346. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 166.
347. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 167-168.
348. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
349. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 83-84.
350. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 86-87.
351. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 223ff.
352. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of All Living*, p. 55; Also cfr. ID., *The Divine Romance*, p. 54; cfr. ID., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 48-49.
353. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. v.
354. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 223
355. *Ibid.*, pp. 223-224.
356. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 224.
357. *Ibidem.*
358. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 225.
359. *Ibid.*, p. 225.
360. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
361. *Ibid.* It is to be noted here that when Sheen uses the terms *physical Christ* he does not refer only to Christ as mere man but as true man and true God.
362. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, p. v. and p. 79; Also cfr. ID., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 223-224.
363. Cfr. PIUS X, *Ad Dieum Illum* (1904), DS 3370-3371.
364. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, pp. 200-201.
365. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 323.
366. Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 322-323.
367. Sheen pointed out that, for St. Albert the Great, Mary is «the efficient cause of our regeneration because she begot our Redeemer, and because by her virtue, she merited by a merit of congruity this incomparable honor. She is the material cause, because the Holy Ghost through the intermediary of her consent took from her pure flesh and blood, the flesh and blood from which was made the Body immolated for the Redemption of the world. She is the final cause, for the great work of Redemption which is ordained principally for the glory

- of God, is ordained secondarily for the honor of this same Virgin. She is the formal cause, for by the Light of a Light so very deiform she is the universal exemplar which shows us the way out of darkness to the vision of the Eternal Light» (St. Albert the Great, *Quaest.*, q. 146, t. XX, p. 100., cited in SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 322-323).
368. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 230.
369. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 225.
370. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 229.
371. *Ibid.*, p. 230.
372. *Ibidem.*
373. It is to be noted that the Second Vatican Council teaches the maternity of Mary with respect to mankind, based on her divine maternity and on her cooperation through love in the birth of new members of the Body of Christ. Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 53, 56, and 60-62.
374. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 231.
375. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
376. *Ibidem.*
377. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 230.
378. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
379. Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 230-231.
380. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
381. DULLES, A., «A Half Century of Ecclesiology», *Theological Studies* 50 (1989), pp. 119-121.
382. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 3.
383. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 9.
384. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Life of All Living*, p. 52.
385. Here is the list of works used as Sheen's references. Cfr. MERSCH, E., *Le Corps mystique du Christ: Études de théologie historique*, Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1933; English Translation, *The Whole Christ*, Milwaukee: Bruce, 1938; ID., *La théologie du Corps mystique*, 2 vols., Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1944; English Translation, *The Theology of the Mystical Body*, St. Louis: Herder, 1951; cfr. BOUYER, L., *L'Eglise, corps du Christ, dans la théologie de saint Athanase*, Paris: Cerf, 1939; BARDY, G., *La théologie de l'église de saint Clément de Rome à saint Irénée*, Paris: Cerf, 1945; ID., *La théologie de l'église de saint Irénée au concile de Nicée*, Paris: Cerf, 1947.
386. PELZ, K., *Der Christ als Christus*, Berlin 1939. This book had been placed in the Index in 1940.
387. CONNOR P. C., *The Spiritual Legacy of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen*, New York: St. Paul Publication, 2010, p. 45.
388. Cfr. ADAM, K., Le mystère de l'Incarnation du Christ et de son corps mystique, *Études* 13 (1938) pp. 26-48; BEUMER, J., *Die Identität des Mystischen Leibes Christi und der katholische Kirche*, ThGl 44 (1954) pp. 321-338; BOVER, J., *El cuerpo místico de Cristo en S. Pablo*, EstBib 2 (1943) pp. 349-377; DE LUBAC, H., «*Corpus mysticum*». *Étude sur l'origine et les premiers sens de l'expression*, RechScRel 29 (1939) pp. 257-302; FENTON, J. C., *The extension of Christ's Mystical Body*, AmEccRev 110 (1944) pp. 124-130.
389. AAS 35 (1943) 193-248: DS 3800-3822.
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391. Cfr. WITTIG, J., *Leben Jesu in Palästina, Schlesien und anderswo*, München 1925. This book had been placed on the Index on July 22, 1925; HAUGG, D., *Wir sind dein Leib*, München 1937; WEIGL, E., *Die Heilslehre des bl. Cyrill*, Mainz 1905; SCHWEITZER, A., *Die Mystik des Apostol Paulus*, Tübingen 1920.
392. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 6-7.
393. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, pp. 53-70, pp. 123-127 and pp. 131-144.
394. Cfr. DS 2901-3075.
395. Cfr. CONGAR, Y. M.-J., *Bulletin d'Écclésiologie (1939-1946)*, RSRel 31 (1947) pp. 77-96; Also cfr. ID., *L'écclésiologie, de la Révolution française au Concile du Vatican, sous le signe de l'affirmation de l'autorité*, RSRel 34 (1960) pp. 77-114.
396. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Life of All Living*, p. 49; Also cfr. ID., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 7 and 75.
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399. Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 123-126.
400. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 56.
401. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 64.
402. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 69.
403. Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 134-137.
404. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 9 and 37. Also cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Divine Romance*, p. 34.
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409. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 90.
410. Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 2-3 and p. 50.

411. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 9.
412. *Ibidem.*
413. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *The Divine Romance*, p. 12. Also cfr. ID., *The Mystical Body of Christ*, p. 30.
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419. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Mission and the World Crisis*, pp. 201-202.
420. Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 78-87.
421. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 166.
422. SHEEN, F. J., *Those Mysterious Priests*, p. 224.
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424. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 165.
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436. *Ibid.*, pp. 304-305.
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442. Cfr. SHEEN, F. J., *Those Mysterious Priests*, p. 8.
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