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The Church as the Body of Christ: An Inquiry into the Ecclesiology of Cyril of Alexandria and Yves Congar

ElRaheb Kyrillos ElMacari Ibrahim

ABSTRACT

In 1973, the Roman Catholic and Coptic Orthodox Churches began an on-going dialogue with the intention of restoring the communion severed in the aftermath of the Council of Chalcedon (451). With the objective of advancing this dialogue by highlighting the challenges and opportunities involved, my study aims at exploring the extent to which these two bodies share a common theological understanding of the nature of the church. It is crucial that both traditions reflect on how they understand that which they are trying to bring into unity.

To enable a detailed study, just two figures are examined, one central to each tradition: Cyril of Alexandria (376-444) remains a fundamental authority in the Coptic Church of Alexandria; Yves Congar (1904-1995) was a theologian central in the developing Roman Catholic understanding of the church. One of my main conclusions is that a vision of the church as the “body of Christ” is central for both theologians. Hence, using scholarly methods of historical humanistic inquiry and textual analysis, the research investigates how far the conceptions of Cyril and Congar are informed by a common account of Christ as a union of the divine and human whose effects are somehow extended to the members of the body of Christ (the church). This core investigation is accompanied, first, by exploration of Cyril’s and Congar’s discussion of the Holy Spirit’s role in the church, and their sacramental theology. At the end of the thesis I assess how this argument may aid the ongoing conversation between the two ecclesial traditions that are my concern.

**The Church as the Body of Christ: An Inquiry into the Ecclesiology of
Cyril of Alexandria and Yves Congar**

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the requirement
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Statement of Copyright

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INTRODUCTION

καὶ αὐτὸν ἔδωκεν κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα τῆ ἐκκλησία, ἥτις ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ

and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, which is His body

(Ephesians 1:22-23)

The ecumenical movement is believed to have begun in 1910 in Edinburgh at the World Mission Conference. The emergence of this movement, accompanied by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), ‘which was enormously influential not just on the Catholic Church, but also on virtually every other Christian tradition,’ has made the twentieth century the ‘the century of the Church’.¹ The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the Coptic Orthodox Church are no strangers to this ecumenical movement. Historically, the Council of Chalcedon (451), which is not recognized by Copts, marks the beginning of a division that has lasted over the last sixteen centuries or so. Nonetheless, in 1973, Pope Shenouda III of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria visited Pope Paul VI of the Roman Catholic Church in Vatican City, the first such visit in 1600 years. Their interchange triggered a still on-going process of relational restoration between the two traditions (resulting most recently in a Common Declaration in 2017).

Aiming at advancing the inter-church dialogue between the Catholic and Coptic Orthodox Churches, I will, in this thesis, pose the following questions: First, is there a

¹ Adam DeVille, “Church,” in eds. Paul McPartlan and Geoffrey Wainwright, *The Oxford Handbook of Ecumenical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 224.

common theological understanding of the nature of the church in which dialogue between these two bodies can be rooted? It is vital that both bodies reflect on how they understand that which they are attempting to bring into unity. This is a theological and philosophical question. However, in order for the Coptic Church to effectively and imaginatively participate in this dialogue, she needs to return to its sources using current intellectual and theological scholarly methods. Second, can the Catholic recovery of early Christian theology that has occurred over the past century combine Coptic devotion to key early Christian figures to produce a common theological understanding of the church?

I will offer an initial answer to this question by focusing on just two key figures (so as to enable detailed comparison): Cyril of Alexandria (376-444) and Yves Congar (1904-1995). The former is a theologian foundational for Christian thought in both East and West, as well as one of two or three central points of reference for Coptic Orthodox thought; the latter one of the key Roman Catholic theologians of the twentieth century, whose work on the recovery of early Christian theology, the nature of the church and on ecumenical relations with other Christian communities was foundational for the Catholic Church's Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965. But prior to giving a more detailed description of what follows, I will shed some light on the background of the two theologians.

Cyril of Alexandria

Thought to be born around 376AD, and after his mother's death, Cyril was looked after by his uncle Theophilus, the 23rd Patriarch of Alexandria, who ensured that his nephew receives some of the best education available in Egypt at the time. It is thought that Cyril was familiar with both Greek and Latin and was well acquainted with Plato, Aristotle, Porphyry,

and Plotinus.² Furthermore, it is also argued that Cyril spent five years of his life at the desert of Nitria where he was studying the Old and New Testaments.³ However, this hypothesis has been challenged by McGuckin on the basis that Cyril himself does not make any reference to it in his communication with the monks,⁴ and the fact that Severus of Antioch one of his Cyril's most faithful proponents 'was doubtful of it'.⁵ Subsequent to that, 'Cyril dwelt with the Patriarch in his cell,' where he was studying the work of the Alexandrian and Cappadocian Fathers.⁶ After the departure of his uncle, Cyril was elevated to the see of Alexandria and became a successor of St Mark in 412AD. However, the Nestorian controversy which broke out around 428AD remains a turning point in his legacy and marks a substantial shift regarding the intent of his writings.

Cyril left a rich heritage of literature. His works fill ten volumes of Migne's edition (MG 68-77) and can be divided into pre and post 428AD (the outbreak of the Nestorian controversy). During the first phase his focus was on exegesis and polemics against the Arians, while the second can mostly be characterized by a "refutation to the Nestorian

² Alexander Kerrigan, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Interpreter of the Old Testament* (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1952), 9-10. For Cyril's biographies please refer to: Alexander Kerrigan, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Interpreter of the Old Testament* (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1952), 7-12; Lionel R. Wickham, *Cyril of Alexandria Select Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), xi-xxviii; Pierre Éviéux, in *Cyrille d'Alexandrie: Lettres Festales I-VI*, SC 372 (Paris: Les Éditions du Certf, 1991), 11-72; Norman Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 3-63; John A. McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and The Christological Controversy: Its History, Theology, and Texts* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 1-125; Susan Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy: The Making of a Saint and of a Heretic*, OECS (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 15-73.

³ *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria, Arabic text (Xe 1.), translation in English by B. Evetts in Patrologia Orientalis*, I, 427, cited in Kerrigan, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Interpreter of the Old Testament*, 10. See also, Pierre Éviéux, in *Cyrille d'Alexandrie: Lettres Festales I-VI*, SC 372 (Paris: Les Éditions du Certf, 1991), 14-17.

⁴ McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and The Christological Controversy*, 3.

⁵ CSCO 101, p. 252, cited in McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and The Christological Controversy*, 3.

⁶ *Patrologia Orientalis*, I, pp. 428, quoted in Kerrigan, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Interpreter of the Old Testament*, 11.

heresy.”⁷ However, drawing on the work of Jouassard,⁸ Kerrigan divides each phase into two sub-groups.⁹

With the objective of tracing the developments in Cyril’s ecclesiological thoughts, I will focus on three key documents from different periods: the *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch* (between 412-423AD), his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (425-428AD), and *On the Unity of Christ* (c. 438AD). A chief motif of the first one is the unearthing of the mystery of Christ in the major characters of the Pentateuch. However, in his commentary on John, Cyril is responding to the claims of the Arians and, more importantly, is covering the relationship between the humanity and the divinity in Christ and the implications of this union, where some of the passages were written after Cyril had heard of the Nestorian teachings.¹⁰ As for the final one, it appears ‘from its maturity’, to be one of the last treatises written by Cyril in relation to the Nestorian controversy.¹¹ Other works will be cited as necessary, but consideration of these will form the core of my extensive discussions of Cyril himself.

Yves Congar

Born in Sedan, France to a Christian family in 1904, Congar used to listen to his mother reading him the Gospel and *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis during his childhood. However one book that helped instil in him a ‘poetic ecclesial vision’ was *Le Mystère de l’Église* by Humbert Clérissac, which he had found in his mother’s library.¹²

⁷ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology, Vol. 3, The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature From the Council of the Council of Nicaea to the Council of Chalcedon*, 14th printing (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 2001), 119.

⁸ G. Jouassard, *L’activité littéraire de saint Cyrille d’Alexandrie jusqu’à 428. Essai de chronologie et de synthèse* (Mélanges E. Podechard, Faculté de théologie de Lyon, 1945), 159-174.

⁹ For a detailed analysis of this breakdown, please refer to Kerrigan, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Interpreter of the Old Testament*, 12-21.

¹⁰ Cf. PG 74, 344 B and 737 B, Jouassard cited in Kerrigan, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Interpreter of the Old Testament*, 16.

¹¹ McGuckin, in Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, (Chr. un.) trans. John McGuckin, Popular Patristic Series (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press), 49.

¹² Elizabeth Teresa Groppe, *Yves Congar’s Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 15-16. For Congar’s biographies please see: Aidan Nichols, *Yves Congar*, Outstanding Christian Thinkers

In 1925, he joined the (Dominican) Order of Preachers and was sent to the Dominican House of Studies, *Le Saulchoir*. And it was there that Congar discovered his Christian mandate: “It was while meditating upon the seventeenth chapter of St. John’s Gospel, that I clearly recognized my vocation to work for the unity of all who believe in Jesus Christ.”¹³ However John 17 also revealed to him the inseparability of the ecumenical mission from the ecclesiological one.¹⁴ Hence, in 1937 he founded an ecclesiological series aiming at retrieving forgotten historical Catholic themes, namely that of *Unam Sanctam*, and his monograph *Chrétiens désunis* ended up being the first of the 77 volumes published under the umbrella of this series.

With the outbreak of WWII (1940), Congar joined the French Army as a reserve officer and was captured by the Germans and imprisoned until 1945. After being released, Congar resumed his academic work, and was a prominent figure in the *Ressourcement* (return to the sources) movement that took place in France in 1940’s and 1950’s, aiming at better understanding of the Church Fathers and the application of their understanding of Christianity to the modern era.¹⁵ During this period Congar wrote his famous monograph *Vraie et fausse réforme* (1950), which became an impetus for the summoning of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).¹⁶ However, his work came under scrutiny, and in 1954 he was asked to stop teaching and then was exiled from France, where he spent some time in Jerusalem.¹⁷

(London: Chapman, 1989); Elizabeth Groppe, *Yves Congar’s Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 15-50; Joseph Famerée and Gilles Routhier, *Yves Congar* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2008).

¹³ Congar, Preface to *Dialogue between Christians*, trans. Philip Loretz (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1966), 3.

¹⁴ Puyo, *Une vie pour la vérité*, 75.

¹⁵ Gabriel Flynn, “Ressourcement, Ecumenism, and Pneumatology: The Contribution of Yves Congar to Nouvelle Théologie,” in eds. Gabriel Flynn and Paul Murray, *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 224. For a study of Congar’s contribution to this movement please refer to the chapter cited in this footnote.

¹⁶ Cf. Congar, Preface to the second revised edition of *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l’Église*, *Unam Sanctam*, no. 72 (Paris: Cerf, 1968), 8 n. 2.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Teresa Groppe, *Yves Congar’s Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 18-23. See also François Leprieux, *Quand Rome condamne. Dominicains et prêtres-ouvriers* (Paris: Cerf, 1989).

Yet, when Vatican II was convoked by Pope John XXIII, Congar was invited to participate in the council as a *peritus* (expert) and his contribution cannot be overestimated in relation to drafting critical documents such as *Lumen gentium* and *Unitatis redintegratio*. Hence, “Congar became *the* theologian of Vatican II *par excellence*,”¹⁸ and the Council was designated as ‘Congar’s Council’ by the American theologian Cardinal Avery Dulles, SJ (1918–2008).¹⁹ Finally, in November 1994, he was appointed to the College of Cardinals. And he departed this life in June 1995.²⁰

Congar wrote 1,790 items ranging from books to articles and from book reviews to collections of essays.²¹ Groppe, following van Vliet, suggests that his scholarly journey can be divided into four phases.²² First, 1931–1944, is a period characterized by a strong Christocentric approach of the church where she is conceived as the body of Christ in Congar’s thought. As for the second phase, 1944–1959, Congar attempts to promote the role of the laity within the church and delineate her essence and structure, where the church is perceived in terms of hierarchy and communion. During the third stage, 1959–1968, which remained Christocentric in essence, Congar stresses the role of the church in the world and describes her in sacramental and communal (people of God) terms. Finally, 1969–1991 represents the pneuma-centric stage of his career where the church is described as *communio spiritualis structurata* and a *templum Sancti Spiritus*.²³ and the Holy Spirit is designated as a co-institutor of the church.²⁴

¹⁸ Fouilloux, “Frère Yves,” 398 and 400; trans. Dupont, “Friar Yves,” 81 and 83. In Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 25.

¹⁹ Flynn, “Ressourcement, Ecumenism, and Pneumatology,” 219.

²⁰ Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 26.

²¹ Pietro Quattrocchi, “General Bibliography of Yves Congar,” in Jossua, *Yves Congar*, 189–241; Aidan Nichols, “An Yves Congar Bibliography 1967–1987,” *Ang* 66 (1989): 422–66, cited in Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 32.

²² Cornelis van Vliet *Communio sacramentalis: Das Kirchenverständnis von Yves Congar—genetisch und systematisch betrachtet* (1995), cited in Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 33.

²³ Van Vliet, *Communio sacramentalis*, 229–83.

²⁴ Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 32–35.

In order to properly analyze the development of Congar's ecclesiology (which is a theme not well covered in existing scholarship, especially regarding her Christological aspect), I will begin by examining his publication *Chrétiens désunis* (1937) and end by considering his 3 Volume monograph *Je crois en l'Esprit Saint* (1979–1980), while considering other publications such *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat* (1953) and *Sainte Église: Études et approches ecclésiologiques* (1963) as appropriate so that the whole spectrum of Congar's development may be seen.

For both Cyril and Congar the perception of the church as the “body of Christ” is central. Consequently, I will examine how far the conceptions of Cyril and Congar are informed by a common account of Christ as a union of the divine and human whose effects are somehow extended to the members of the body of Christ. For both theologians it seems that, by virtue of the incarnation, a mystical solidarity between Christ and humanity has been established. However, Congar's account makes use of language from the Council of Chalcedon (in 451) that stresses the distinction between the divine and human modes in Christ, the very Council that led to the split between Rome and Alexandria. It is, then, important to see how far parallel conceptual structures underlie this distinction, or whether we have irreconcilable positions. Cyril's theology was used and honoured by all sides at Chalcedon, and an investigation of his thought will enable the exploration of a Christological commonality between the two churches.

This core investigation will be accompanied, first, by exploration of Cyril and Congar's discussion of the Holy Spirit's role in the church. Cyril suggests that the Holy Spirit does not only unite us to God but also to one another, “that all of us who receive *one* and the *same* Spirit (I mean the Holy Spirit) are mixed together, so to speak, with one another and with

God.”²⁵ This passage is used by Congar to develop a very similar argument. Second, both authors perceive the Eucharist as the means of uniting the Christians and thus constituting the church. These themes form an essential complement to the main consideration of the study.

At the end of these investigations the question of whether and how the threads that link Cyril of Alexandria and Yves Congar might be used to shape the on-going dialogue between the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria and the Roman Catholic Church will also be explored.

SYNOPSIS

In chapter one, I argue that the Cyril’s account of the church is deeply intertwined with his account of the Incarnate Word; which can be typified by the concept of the second Adam. This theme reveals the mystery of our incorporation into Christ and portrays him as the source and the first-fruits of a recapitulated humanity.

In the following chapter I examine the developments in Congar’s Christological ecclesiology with the objective of identifying its parallels with that of Cyril. Duly, I show that the French theologian’s Christology was indirectly informed by that of the Alexandrian Fathers through the intermediation of Aquinas and Möhler. Accordingly, the mystery of incarnation acts as the underlying principle for Congar’s Christological ecclesiology, and it served him well during the early stages of his career. However, I also identify two developments in Congar’s ecclesiology. First, his departure from a more institutionally focused ecclesiology to a communion ecclesiology. Second, his immigration from a Christocentric to pneumacentric account of the church. I also show that these transformations, somehow, came at the expense of his Christology. Hence, I conclude that the explicit overlap between the ecclesiology of the two theologians lies in the portrayal of the church as the body

²⁵ *Jo.* 11.11 (PG 74, 561; Pusey II. 736); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, trans. David R. Maxwell, Ancient Christian Texts. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 305.

of Christ which emphasizes the interdependence of the church and its members on the Incarnate Word through their mystical participation in him.

In the next two chapters, I explore Cyril and Congar's pneumatological ecclesiologies. In order to undertake this task, an investigation into some aspects of the relationship between the Son and Spirit into Cyril's Trinitarian account was required. Based on the findings, I suggest that his pneumatological account is inseparable from his Christological one. This may be due to his adherence to the formula "*from the Father through the Son and in the Spirit,*" which governs his Trinitarian approach. As for Congar, it suggests that despite his deep entrenchment into the pneumatology of the Greek Fathers, and particularly that of Cyril, and in his attempt to put more weight to the role of the Holy of Spirit by incorporating modern biblical scholarship to his theology, Congar was actually growing away from the Church Fathers, the very same sources who inspired his 'Ressourcement' endeavor. Hence, there remains much in common between the two ecclesiologies, but accompanied by some tension, that was, to a great extent, loosened up in his post *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* writings.

In the final two chapters, aiming at identifying the relationship between the sacraments and the church, I attend to the sacramental theology of the two theologians. I argue that for both theologians, the Eucharist is central for participating in the body Christ and in retrospect actualizing the church. On the one hand, Cyril's sacramental theology revolves around the Eucharist and the Holy Spirit, which trigger our two modes of participation in Christ and with one another and is designed to meet our corporeal and psychic needs. On the other hand, I suggest that though Congar speaks more explicitly about baptism and the Eucharist because he was writing at a much later period than Cyril, after normalization of the hierarchical order of the 'seven sacraments', the Eucharist remains, to him, the most prominent out of the seven sacraments. Furthermore, his sacramental theology has undergone a shift from an Aristotelian

philosophy and Aquinas' sacramental theology to a more participatory one, which serves his communion ecclesiology better and brings him closer to Cyril. Nonetheless, the most significant overlap in the two theologians' ecclesiology remains their delineation of substantial lineage between Christ, the Eucharist and the church.

CHAPTER I: Cyril's Christological Ecclesiology

Introduction

Cyril of Alexandria did not write a work devoted exclusively to the church. Nevertheless, his ecclesiology can be extracted from his vast literary corpus. During his early writing career and especially in his commentaries on the Old testament, Cyril sets out the foundation of his ecclesiology: the church is conceived as a 'holy space', where man meets God, and this encounter involves an exchange in which manhood is being transformed and recreated.¹ The church is the body of Christ, and while this biblical notion was used by many of the church fathers prior to Cyril, "La doctrine du corps mystique atteint chez saint Cyrille le plus haut degré de perfection auquel elle soit parvenue dans l'Église d'Orient."²

Cyril's account of the church is inseparable from his account of the Incarnate Word; showing that this is so is the overall goal of this chapter. The following passage from Cyril's *Commentary on the Gospel of John* demonstrates the set of interrelated themes that together constitute the core of Cyril's Christological ecclesiology:

He also reveals another profound mystery to us when he affirms for our benefit that the Word "dwelt in us": We *were all in Christ*, (πάντες γὰρ ἡμεν ἐν Χριστῷ) and the shared properties of our human nature were taken up into his person. That is why he is called the *last Adam*. (ἔσχατος Ἀδάμ) He gives all the riches of his tranquility and glory to our *common nature*, (τῇ κοινότητι τῆς φύσεως) just as the first Adam gave corruption and shame. Therefore, *the Word "dwelt in" all people through the one man* so that when the one man 'was designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness,'³ this honor might extend to all humanity (εἰς ὅλην ἔρχεται τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα τὸ ἀξίωμα)... Is it not therefore perfectly clear to all that he came down into that which was in slavery, not to do anything for himself but to give himself to us 'that by his poverty, we might become rich'⁴ and that we might ascend *by likeness with him* (ἀνατρέχοντες διὰ τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁμοιότητος) to his own exceptional dignity and be shown to be gods and children of God through faith? He who is by nature Son and God 'dwelt

¹ Norman Russell, "The Church in the Commentaries of St Cyril of Alexandria," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 7 (2) (2007), 75.

² E. Mersch, *Le Corps mystique du Christ*, tome I, (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1936), 487.

³ Romans 1:4.

⁴ 2Corinthians 8:9.

in us.’ Therefore, in his Spirit ‘we cry Abba! Father!’⁵ The Word dwells in the one temple, taken from us and for us, *as he dwells in all people*, so that *having everyone in himself* he might reconcile *everyone in one body* with the Father,⁶ as Paul says.⁷

This passage reveals the relationship between the incarnation and the church by displaying the mystery of our mutual abode with Christ by virtue of which we become one in Christ and are reconciled with the Father. Moreover, the passage shows us the foundation of Cyril’s soteriology: the exchange in which Christ’s descent enables our ascent, and the corporate dimension of the incarnation which makes possible that ascent. In addition, these two facets of the mystery are embodied in the conception of the second/last Adam.

It is, once again, this knot of themes that I will explore through this chapter in order to show how Cyril’s ecclesiology is rooted in his conception of the incarnation. Cyril’s literary *corpus* is vast, and in order to focus my study I will discuss mainly three treatises: his thirteen books of *Glaphyra* which discusses passages from the Pentateuch and appears to have been written between 412 and 423; his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, written c. 425-9; his *On the Unity of Christ*, which was written after 433 and seems to be one of the last of Cyril’s anti-Nestorian writings.⁸ I will, first, explore Cyril’s theology of the mystery of incarnation, and the solidarity of Christ with humankind which springs forth from this mystery, This will involve some discussion of how Cyril’s Christology develops, in particular demonstrating how the ‘hypostatic union’ and ‘one incarnate nature of God the Word’ formulae come to be central to his thought. Second, I will explore the notion of the second Adam as the head of and new beginning of a restored humanity in the three tractates. Third, I will analyze the centrality of Christ’s deified flesh in relation to his role as conjoiner and mediator between

⁵ Romans 8:15.

⁶ σκηνοῖ δὲ ὁ Λόγος ὡς ἐν πᾶσιν, ἐν ἐνὶ τῷ δι’ ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐξ ἡμῶν ληφθέντι ναῶ, ἵνα πάντας ἔχων ἐν ἑαυτῷ, “ἀποκαταλλάξῃ πάντας ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα,”

⁷ *Jo.* 1.9 (PG 73, 161-164; Pusey I. 141-2); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, trans. David R. Maxwell, Ancient Christian Texts. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 64.

⁸ McGuckin writes: “It was in his final years, when he was able to look back on the course of the whole Nestorian controversy, that Cyril composed the treatise “On the Unity of Christ.” It has justly been regarded as one of the most mature theological works,” in Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, (*Chr. un.*) trans. John McGuckin, Popular Patristic Series (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press), 30.

humanity and divinity. Finally, I will examine the participation of humanity in Christ's salvific acts, by virtue of humanity's incorporation in him, and yet without compromising Christ's individuality.

Incarnation

The Alexandrian Christology takes into consideration before and above every other regard the contemplation of the Eternal Word. Descending from the mysterious heights, the incarnation of the Word is perceived as a kind of episode in and event of His life and an operation proper to Him. The Alexandrians never change the direct object of these considerations when passing from the Son to Christ. It's constant pre-occupation was the preservation of the absolute unity and the total identity of the Word before and after the union with the flesh.⁹

Cyril perceives the incarnation as a mystery: "For as I said, deity was circumscribed in humanity. This is the *mystery* that came to be in Christ."¹⁰ His incarnational thoughts emerged from his soteriological concerns. "But it was his good pleasure to save the whole human race in him *by means of the incarnation.*"¹¹ And on John he writes: "Now it is clear to everyone, I think, that the Only Begotten, though he was God from God by nature, *became a human being* for these reasons: to condemn sin in the flesh, to kill death by his own death, and to make us children of God, giving new birth in the Spirit to those on earth, thus elevating them to a dignity beyond their nature. It was of course a very good thing to recapitulate (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι) in this way and restore (ἀρχαῖον ἀναλαβεῖν) the fallen race, that is, the human race, to its original condition."¹² Hence, the incarnation is a soteriological act involving the restoration of the human nature, which was destined to decay, to its original status. Cyril realized that a proper articulation of this redemptive process entails

⁹ Joseph Lebon, *Le monophysisme sévérien: Étude historique, littéraire et théologique sur la résistance monophysite au concile de Chalcédoine jusqu'à la constitution de l'Église jacobite* (Louvain: Universitas Catholica Lovaniensis, 1909), 178.

¹⁰ *Glaph.* 8 (PG 69, 413); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2: *Exodus through Deuteronomy*, trans. Nicholas P. Lunn, Vol. 138, *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 26. Cf. *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 734 d), *On the Unity of Christ*, 76: "And so, to say that he assumed the form of a slave expresses the whole *mystery* of the economy of the flesh."

¹¹ *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 721 e), *On the Unity of Christ*, 59.

¹² *Jo.* 9.1 (PG 74, 273-6; Pusey II. 482); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, trans. David R. Maxwell, *Ancient Christian Texts*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 186.

the upholding of three truths: first, it is truly *God the Son* who became man, here the emphasis is on the full divinity of the Son: second, the Son of God is *truly Man*, here the emphasis is on the full and complete humanity of the Son: third, The Son of God *truly is* man, here the emphasis is on the ontological union between the person of the Son and His humanity.¹³ But how does Cyril perceive the coming together of these two realities in Christ?

In his article “Christological Models in Cyril of Alexandria,” Norris suggests that Cyril posits two Christological models. First, the ‘subject-attribute’ one which insists on the single subjectivity of the Word in all actions and expressions carried out by Christ and to whom all human attributes have been predicated. Accordingly in the μία φύσις formula Cyril, “find[s] a form of words which at least partly succeed in calling attention to the character of his model.”¹⁴ Secondly, there is the composite model, which involves the coming together of two ‘unequal natures’. “So if we consider, as I said, the mode of his becoming man we see that two natures have met (ὅτι δύο φύσεις συνῆλθον) without merger and without alteration in unbreakable mutual union.”¹⁵ Accordingly, Cyril introduces the term εἷς ἐξ ἁμφοῶν to accentuate the ‘inseparability of the natures’.¹⁶ However, though Edwards argues that he concurs with Norris’ proposition that the ‘one nature of the Word enfleshed’ formula substantiates the ‘subject-attribute’ model, the former contends that Norris’ ‘compositional’ model is ‘no more than an alternative formulation’.¹⁷

¹³ Thomas G. Weinandy, “Cyril and the Mystery of the Incarnation,” in eds. Thomas G. Weinandy and Daniel A. Keating, *The Theology of St Cyril of Alexandria: A Critical Appreciation* (London: T&T Clark LTD, 2003), 30. Other major works on Cyril’s Christology include: John A. McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy: Its History, Theology, and Texts* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2004); Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition, Vol. 1, from the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon*, Second, Revised Edition, trans. John Bowden (London & Oxford: Mowbrays, 1975) and Jacques Liébaert, *La doctrine Christologique de saint Cyrille d’ Alexandrie avant la querelle Nestorienne* (Lille: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1951).

¹⁴ R. A. Norris, “Christological Models in Cyril of Alexandria,” *Studia Patristica* XIII (1975), 267.

¹⁵ *First Letter to Succensus*, ep. 45, ACO 1.1.6. 153, 17.

¹⁶ Norris, “Christological Models in Cyril of Alexandria,” 262-263.

¹⁷ Mark Edwards, “One Nature of the Word Enfleshed,” *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 8, No. 2, (April 2015), 291.

For Cyril, the incarnation involves the union of two different realities as a salvific act or life-giving transaction. The power of divinity heals and transforms the fallibility of humanity. Commenting on Genesis 15: 7-17 Cyril writes: “It is evident that, owing to its great strength and invincibility in a fight, a young bull serves on occasion as a fitting likeness to Christ’s deity. At other times, with respect to his human nature, and because he is under the law, he is termed a heifer.”¹⁸ Concerning the salvific aspect of the mystery and commenting on the burning bush he writes: “Since the Word of God was by nature life (ζωή κατά φύσιν), how can one doubt that he imparted life to his own temple, and rendered it imperishable and stronger than death.”¹⁹ Hence, it is in the coming together of the supernatural and the natural²⁰ that the mystery of human transformation and salvation lies. While, this is brought to light in Cyril’s early writings, Cyril’s Christology in the *Glaphyra* is neither as developed nor as thorough as it is in his other two treatises, as will be shown throughout the rest of the chapter. In his commentary concerning the transformation of the flesh as a result of its coming together with divinity, for instance, he writes:

The flesh, when it became his, had to participate in the immortality that comes from him. Fire can put the visible manifestation of its natural activity into wood and practically *transform* the wood—in which it resides by participation—into itself. It would be downright absurd if fire could do this, but the Word of God, who is over all, is thought not to bestow his own good activity—that is, life—to the flesh.²¹

Subsequently, The fragile passivity of Christ’s humanity, after its transformation in the aftermath of the union, is used as a tool to demonstrate the incomprehensible power of God in a suitably ‘fragile’ and approachable medium for other fallible and fragile human beings.

¹⁸ *Glaph.* 3.8 (PG 69, 128) *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.1: *Genesis*, trans. Nicholas P. Lunn, Vol. 137, The Fathers of the Church (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 144.

¹⁹ *Glaph.* 8 (PG 69, 413); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 26.

²⁰ Cf. *Jo.* 1.9 (PG 73, 160; Pusey I. 139-40); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 63: “I think this is the reason why the holy Evangelist says that the Word of God became “flesh,” indicating the whole creature by the part that is affected. That way, one can see the wound and the medicine at the same time, the patient and the physician, that which fell into death and the one who raised it to life, that which is overcome by corruption and the one who drives corruption away, that which is seized by death and the one who is stronger than death, that which was deprived of life and the one who supplies life.”

²¹ *Jo.* 1.9 (PG 73, 159; Pusey I. 139-40); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 63.

Nonetheless, Cyril insists that while human nature is weak and passible, in and of itself, in its union with the godhead, it becomes an *instrument* of omnipotent power i.e., an ‘omnipotent *instrument*’.²²

For how could his body possibly give life to us if it were not the *very own* body of him who is life?...Or how has ‘he condemned sin in the flesh’?²³ To condemn sin does not belong to someone with a nature like ours, under the tyranny of sin, an ordinary man. But insofar as it became the body of the one who knew no transgression, how rightly it could shake off the tyranny of sin to enjoy all the personal riches of the Word who is *ineffably* united with it in a manner beyond all description. Thus it is a holy and *life-giving thing*, full of divine energy. And we too are *transformed* (μετεστοιχειώμεθα) *in Christ*, the first-fruits, to be above corruption and sin...and this is why the mystery of Christ (τὸ Χριστοῦ μυστήριον) is truly wonderful.²⁴

Although, at first glance, Cyril appears to be speaking of two realities when he discusses the coming together of divinity and humanity (or flesh) in one single entity, his whole Christology revolves around the flesh being the Word’s *own*,²⁵ and becoming the Logos’ universal *instrument* of salvation. In fact, even though we speak of the two natures coming together, it is the Word, who is the single subject of all Christological activities, and who appropriates a humanity, makes it his own and radically transforms it by his own divine power. Thus, the following passage illustrates Cyril’s understanding of the union, where after drawing an analogy between the composite union of the soul and body, which forms a human being, and the union of the divine and human in Christ and alluding to its ineffability, Cyril writes:

For the soul appropriates the things of the body even though in its proper nature it is apart from the body’s natural passions... Yet [the Word] was united to the flesh endowed with a rational soul, and when the flesh suffered, even though he was impassible, he was aware of what was happening within it, and thus as God, even

²²John A. McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*, 185.

²³Romans 8:3.

²⁴*Chr. un.*(SC 97. 722 d – 723 d), *On the Unity of Christ*, 60-61.

²⁵Cf. *First letter to Succensus Ep.* 45, ACO 1,1,6. 152, 24; par. 4 “His flesh, indeed, was his *own* just as, for example, each of us has his own body (τὸ ἴδιον αὐτοῦ σῶμα).” And ACO 1,1,6. 153, 19 par. 6 “in fulfillment of God’s plan he made the flesh his *own* (ἰδίαν ἐποίησατο τὴν σάρκα οικονομικῶς),” in Wickham, *Cyril of Alexandria Select Letters*, 72-75.

though he did away with the weakness of the flesh, still he appropriated those weaknesses of his own body.²⁶

Having seen how Cyril presents Christ's humanity as the Word's own, now I will attend to the centrality of a key term in relation to the union, namely the hypostatic union, for Cyril's Christology.

Hypostatic Union

In eliciting the joining together of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ Cyril makes use of the expression ἕνωσις καθ' ὑπόστασιν,²⁷ Hypostasis (ὑπόστασις) can be defined as a: a- support, sustenance; b- being, substance, reality explicitly equating with οὐσία; c- substantive existence, subsistence; d- instance of a nature or constitution realized in an individual; e- particular concrete entity, individual.²⁸ McGuckin explains that, "etymologically it consisted of the prefix hypo- meaning 'underneath', and stasis-meaning 'standing', and it was thus a direct parallel of the Latin word Sub-stantia (substance/ousia). However, in the Trinitarian debates of the late fourth century, the trinity doctrine defined that God was one ousia expressed in three hypostases."²⁹ In addition, Cyril uses the term ἕνωσις for union, where the verb ἐνόω in Greek means to unify is derived from ἕν = one, so the outcome of this operation is a single concrete reality.³⁰ Finally, in his second Letter to Nestorius where he describes the mystery of incarnation, Cyril writes:

But instead we affirm this: that the Word substantially united to himself flesh (ἐνώσας ὁ λόγος ἑαυτῷ καθ' ὑπόστασιν), endowed with life and reason, in a manner mysterious and inconceivable, and became man, and was called 'Son of Man' uniting it substantially, not merely by way of divine favour or good will, yet

²⁶ *Scholia on the Incarnation*, 8 in McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*, 300-301.

²⁷ Cyril also uses the expression union according to the nature (ἕνωσις κατὰ φύσιν) to convey the same message.

²⁸ G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 1454-1455.

²⁹ McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*, 141.

³⁰ Cf. *Third letter to Nestorius*, 2nd Anathema, in *Select Letters*, 28-29: "Whoever does not acknowledge the Word of God the Father to have been substantially united (καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἡνωσθαι) with flesh and to be one Christ along with his own flesh, that is the same at once God and man, shall be anathema." See also, Cyril of Alexandria, "A Defense of the Twelve Anathemas against Theodoret." in *Three Christological Treatises*, trans. Daniel King, Vol. 129, *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 138: "If any do not confess that the Word from God the Father was united to flesh at the level of concrete existence (καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἡνωσθαι), and that Christ is one, together with his own flesh, that is, that the same individual is at the same time both God and man, let them be anathema."

neither with the assumption merely of an outward appearance; and that though the natures joined together to form a real unity (ἐνότητα τὴν ἀληθινὴν) are different, it is one, Christ and Son coming from them.³¹

So in opposition to Nestorius' moral or conjunctive union which, for Cyril, implies the existence of two sons in Christ and subsequently would jeopardize the conception of the singleness of the subject in Christ,³² Cyril appeals to the hypostatic union formula to elucidate the union of divinity and humanity that is realized in the person of Christ. This formula consolidates several aspects of the union together. It, first, accentuates the intrinsic and authentic (ἀληθινὴν) natures of the union in face of the extrinsic and moral union (συνάφεια) proposed by Nestorius.³³ Secondly, it upholds the biblical and creedal truth of the rootedness of all the actions carried out by Christ in the ὑπόστασις of the Logos, for soteriological reasons, since "Christology is, first of all, about what the Son of God did for our sake."³⁴

The expression hypostatic union (ἐνώσις καθ' ὑπόστασιν) neither appears in the *Glaphyra* nor in his *Commentary on John*. Which shows that the term was not utilized by Cyril prior to the outbreak of the Nestorian Controversy. However, the formula was extensively used by Cyril in the build-up and during the Nestorian Controversy. In his second letter to Nestorius, for instance, he uses it four times,³⁵ and in his third letter to Nestorius he uses it five times.³⁶ Moreover, it appears twice³⁷ in his commentary on the Epistle to the

³¹ Cyril, *Second Letter to Nestorius*, in *Cyril of Alexandria Select Letters*, trans. Lionel R. Wickham, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 5-7.

³² *Third letter to Nestorius*, 3rd Anathema, in *Select Letters*, 28-29: "Whoever divides the subjects (διαρεῖ τὰς ὑποστάσεις) in respect to the one Christ after the union, joining them together just in a conjunction involving rank i.e. sovereignty or authority instead of a combination involving actual union shall be anathema."

³³ Hubert Du Manoir, *Dogme et Spiritualité chez S. Cyrille d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1944), 125 and 130.

³⁴ Brian E. Daley, *God Visible: Patristic Christology Reconsidered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) 192.

³⁵ ACO 1,1,1. 26, 27 'ἐνώσας ὁ λόγος ἑαυτῶι καθ' ὑπόστασιν'; ACO 1,1,1. 27, 10-11 "ἐνώσας ἑαυτῶι καθ' ὑπόστασιν τὸ ἀνθρώπινον"; ACO 1,1,1. 28, 7 "ἐὰν δὲ τὴν καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἔνωσιν"; and ACO 1,1,1. 28, 21 "ὡὶ καὶ καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἐνωθεὶς ὁ λόγος γεγεννησθαι λέγεται."

³⁶ ACO 1,1,1. 35, 26 "ἠνώσθαι γε μὴν σαρκὶ καθ' ὑπόστασιν ὁμολογοῦντες τὸν λόγον"; ACO 1,1,1. 36, 24 "ἐνωθεὶς γάρ, ὡς ἦδη προείπομεν, ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος σαρκὶ καθ' ὑπόστασιν θεὸς μὲν ἐστὶ τῶν ὄλων"; ACO 1,1,1. 40, 3 "Ἐπειδὴ δὲ θεὸν ἐνωθέντα σαρκὶ καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἡ ἀγία παρθένος"; ACO 1,1,1. 40, 7 "ἐπειδὴ καθ'

Hebrews,³⁸ (which was written after the commentary on John in the build-up for the Nestorian controversy). Hence, Cyril uses it in order to refute the Antiochene suggested moral or prosoponic union.

Moreover we do not interpret the manner of connection as involving juxtaposition (τὸν τῆς συναφείας νοοῦμεν τρόπον) (this is insufficient for actual union)... Instead we deprecate the term ‘connection’ (συναφείας) as inadequate to designate the union... The Word of God, as we have already said, substantially [hypostatically] united (ένωθείς... καθ’ ὑπόστασιν) with flesh is God of the universe and rules the whole world.³⁹

However, in the aftermath of the endorsement of the formula of reunion in 433 and its ἐκ δύο φύσεων expression, which “was a late and reluctant accretion to Cyril's Christology,”⁴⁰ Cyril's portrayal of the union and utilization of the terms began to accommodate more for the humanity's continued existence within the union without a genuine alteration to his Christological structure:

The term union in no way causes the confusion of the things it refers to but rather signifies the concurrence in one reality of those things which are understood to be united. Surely it is not only those things which are simple and homogeneous which hold a monopoly over the term “unity”? For it can also apply to things *compounded* (συγκείμενα) out of two, or several, or different kind of things. This is the considered opinion of the experts in such matters... One cannot speak of things “united” when there is only one thing to start with: there must be two or more... They are not separated, as I have already said, in terms of individual distinctnesses, so they exist apart and distant from one another. On the contrary they are brought together into an indissoluble union, for, John says: ‘Word became flesh.’ (John 1:14)⁴¹

Here, Cyril emphasises the existence and distinctiveness of humanity within the union, though without confusion. Subsequently, he uses terms such as synthesis (σύνθεσις), and

ὑπόστασιν ένώσας έαυτῶι τὸ άνθρωπίνον”; and ACO 1,1,1. 40, 25 “οὐχ όμολογεῖ σαρκί καθ’ ὑπόστασιν ἠνώσθαι τὸν έκ θεοῦ πατρός λόγον ένα τε εἶναι Χριστὸν μετὰ τῆς ίδίας σαρκός.”

³⁷ Pusey III, 390.32 “ένωθείς καθ’ ὑπόστασιν,” and Pusey III, 395.15 “ένώσει τῆ καθ’ ὑπόστασιν.”

³⁸ “*The Commentary on the Letter to the Hebrews* was written during the period of anti-Nestorian polemics. The echoes of those polemics are heard in different orations.” In Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Letter to Hebrews*, Trans. D. Tsaghikyan (Yerevan: Ankyunacar Publishing, 2021), 10.

³⁹ *Third Letter to Nestorius* par. 5, in Wickham, *Cyril of Alexandria Select Letters*, 19-21; cf. Anathemas 2 and 3, cited in McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*, 213.

⁴⁰ Edwards, “One Nature of the Word Enfleshed,” 292.

⁴¹ *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 733 a-b and 735 d), *On the Unity of Christ*, 73 and 77.

composite or compound (συγκεῖσθαι).⁴² He also stresses that a union is not just ‘simple and homogeneous’ it can now hold opposing characteristics, as in the case of Christ. In addition, Cyril speaks of bringing together two different things to establish a single integrated entity. However, he stresses the indivisibility and permanence of this union, it is an ‘indissoluble union’. Finally, though Cyril is drawing on new vocabulary to expound the union, he does not alter the underlying principle of the Word’s singleness of subjectivity of all Christological acts.

In order to accentuate the single subjectivity within the Word incarnate and his ‘rootedness in the being of Godhead’,⁴³ Cyril appeals to the formula μία φύσις τοῦ θεοῦ λογοῦ σεσαρκωμένη.⁴⁴ According to John McGuckin, it “correctly laid the Christological stress on the mysterious making of *One* out of two things that had not been one before, ”⁴⁵ (namely Godhead and humanity).

Well, do we not say that a human being like ourselves is one, and has a *single nature*, even though not homogeneous but really *composed* (συντεθειμένου) of two things, I mean soul and body?...And if someone takes the flesh on its own, separating its unity with its own soul, and divides what was one into two, have they not destroyed the proper conception of a man?⁴⁶

Analogies

Realizing that the incarnation is a mystery that exceeds our human comprehension, Cyril uses different analogies like the Ark of the Covenant and the burning coal in Isaiah 6 to elucidate how

⁴² Cf. Cyril, *Second Letter to Succensus* (which was written post 433AD), par. 3 and 5. Cf. “We assert that the ‘Mediator between God and men’ (as the Scriptures say) is composed of (συγκεῖσθαι) the humanity which is ours in a state conformed to its proper definition, and of the Son born naturally of God – that is, the Only-begotten. At the same time we hold firmly that there has been a certain coming together and an ineffable concurrence into unity of two unequal and unlike natures.” *On the Incarnation of the Only Begotten*, (PG 75, 1208c-d), and cf. *Scholia on the Incarnation*. 8 (PG 75, 1377BC; ACO 1, 5, 220) quoted and cited in Norris, “Christological Models in Cyril of Alexandria,” 262.

⁴³ Cf. Andrew Louth, “Severus of Antioch: an Orthodox View,” in *The Dialogue between The Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches* (Volos: Volos Academy Publications, 2016), 60.

⁴⁴ This formula will be addressed in more details, including the scholarship related to it, in chapter 7.

⁴⁵ John McGuckin, “St. Cyril of Alexandria’s Miaphysite Christology and Chalcedonian Dyophysitism,” in ed. Christine Chaillot, *The Dialogue Between the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches* (Volos: Volos Academy Publications, 2016), 48. McGuckin then adds in *ibid.*, 44: “Cyril uses the *Mia Physis* phrase, therefore, to insist that the Christ was *One*; that the divine Word was *One* both *before* and *after* his incarnation; and that this *oneness* comes as a result of a *dynamic mystery*.”

⁴⁶ *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 736 b-c), *On the Unity of Christ*, 78.

two distinct things can be combined in one concrete entity, so as to make a singular subject.

He also likes to use the burning bush as a type for the incarnation.

The sacred scripture compares the divine nature to fire, because it is all powerful and is easily able to overcome everything, while it compares humans upon the earth to trees and grass in the field. Accordingly, it says. 'our God is a consuming fire,'⁴⁷ and also, 'As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.'⁴⁸

Now as fire cannot be endured by thorns, so also deity cannot be endured by humanity. Yet in Christ it happened that the deity became endurable. 'For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily'.⁴⁹ The fire then spared the thorns, and to the puny and extremely feeble wood the flame became endurable. For as I said, deity was circumscribed in humanity. This is the mystery that came to be in Christ.⁵⁰

Here we see two distinguishable elements namely fire and wood coming together where the fire, with its powerful capacity, refers to the deity and the wood to humanity and its limitations, nonetheless, the wood endures in a sign that Christ's humanity was not compromised in the aftermath of the union.

However, Cyril prefers the soul and body analogy to other material ones since it provides a spiritually dynamic portrayal of a profoundly spiritual mystery. Deity is not humanity just as soul is not flesh. They are both distinct and discrete realities that cannot be mixed. Here the analogy of the soul and the body depicts how two distinct realities can be mixed together without destroying or compromising the integrity of either. In fact, in the case of a human being, the 'mix' of the body and soul, constitutes an enhancement through creating a human being's life. For Cyril, the notion of the relation of the two is best described as a union (henosis).⁵¹

Well, do we not say that a human being like ourselves is one, and has a single nature, even though not homogeneous but really *composed* (συντεθειμένου) of two things, I mean soul and body?...And if someone takes the flesh on its own,

⁴⁷ Deuteronomy 4:24, Hebrews 12:29.

⁴⁸ Psalm 103:15.

⁴⁹ Colossians 2:9.

⁵⁰ *Glaph.* 8 (PG 69, 413); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2: *Exodus through Deuteronomy*. Cf. *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 737 b-c), *On the Unity of Christ*, 79.

⁵¹ Cf. *Scholia* 9; *Letter to The Monks*, par. 12 in McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and The Christological Controversy*, 198-199. See also, *Third Letter to Nestorius*, par. 8; *letter to Eulogius* (Select letters, 65); *First Letter to Succensus*, par. 7; and *Second Letter to Succensus*, par. 3.

separating its unity with its own soul, and divides what was one into two, have they not destroyed the proper conception of a man?⁵²

Cyril believes that the body/soul analogy elucidates a crucial Christological principle: a union of two things, which are discrete in terms of their respective natures, yet together they stimulate a new condition and new possibilities by virtue of their union. However this synthesis does not destroy the integrity of the respective constituents of the union. Deity and humanity are different in terms of their discrete natures. In becoming unified in the incarnation they constituted a *new condition*, that of ‘God-incarnate-in-history’, while preserving the integrity of two elements. In Cyril’s words: “He (the Word) underwent a birth and came forth as man from woman. This did not mean that he abandoned what he was, for even when he came in flesh and blood, even so he remained what he was, that is God in nature and truth.” Here, each and every single act of the incarnate Lord is, to Cyril, an act of God incarnate within history.⁵³ Furthermore, despite the distinctiveness of body and soul, they cannot be divided or separated without a man ceasing to be a man.

However, given Cyril’s acquaintance and utilization of Aristotle’s logic (discussed later), the use of the soul and body example is more subtle than it may at first appear: “Since there is the same relation between soul and body, artisan and tool, and master and slave, between each of these pairs *there is no partnership (koinonia)*; for they are not two, but the first term in each is one, and the second a part of this one.”⁵⁴ Here, for Aristotle, the soul is presented as the efficient cause of man’s deeds. It controls and uses the body, while the latter is perceived as an instrument (*ὄργανον*). This scheme perfectly matches Cyril’s Christological model where the divine Word is sole subject of all actions performed by Christ while the flesh is perceived as an instrument of human salvation. Thus, this analogy explains the unification of the two realities, while maintaining the single subjectivity of the pre-eminent

⁵² *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 736 b-c), *On the Unity of Christ*, 78.

⁵³ *Third Letter to Nestorius*, par.3, quoted in McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and The Christological Controversy*, 200.

⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* H 9. 1241 b 17-20.

constituent of the union. But if this is so, what are the implications of this transaction on the divine Word?

Kenosis

“And so, to say that he assumed the form of a slave expresses the *whole mystery* of the economy of the flesh.”⁵⁵ The dynamics of the incarnation, for Cyril, are perceived in terms of the biblical notion of self-emptying (Philippians 2.6-11).

Does it not follow that he receives the form of a slave and appropriates the characteristics of this self-emptying, and does not disdain this likeness to us? For there was no other way to honor the slave except by making the characteristics of the slave his very own so that they could be illumined from his own glory. *What is pre-eminent will always conquer, and the shame of slavery is thus borne away from us.* He who was above us became as we are, and he who is naturally free was in the limitations of our life. This was why honors passed even to us, for we too are called sons of God, and we regard his own true Father as our Father also. All that is human has become his own. And so, to say that he assumed the form of a slave *expresses the whole mystery of the economy of the flesh.*⁵⁶

So Cyril’s economy of incarnation is formulated through the biblical conception of self-emptying. By appropriating a flesh,⁵⁷ the Word makes the characteristics and limitations of humanity his very own. “The invisible one was made visible in the flesh; the immaterial one could be touched; he who is free in his own nature came in the form of a slave; life itself came in the appearance of death. All this followed because the body which tasted death belonged to no other but to him who is the Son by nature.”⁵⁸ Subsequently, he manifests his

⁵⁵ *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 734 d), *On the Unity of Christ*, 76.

⁵⁶ *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 734 c-d), *On the Unity of Christ*, 75-76.

⁵⁷ Grillmeier labels Cyril’s early Christology as a “verbal Logos-sarx framework” in which the soul of Christ only plays a physical factor but not a theological one. Christ is for all practical purposes only Logos and *sarx*. (Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition, Vol. 1, from the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon*, Second, Revised Edition, trans. John Bowden (London & Oxford: Mowbrays, 1975), 415-417.) However, there is enough evidence, not only in Cyril’s Commentary on John that he accounted for a theological role of the soul. In his Easter letter of 420 Cyril writes: “For according to the holy evangelist ‘the Word became flesh.’ Not by transformation into flesh, He does not say this. Then in place of speaking of man in his totality, he has named flesh.” (PG 77, 569). Cf. Herman Diepen, *Aux origines de l’anthropologie de saint Cyrille d’Alexandrie* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1957). Moreover, in his commentary on John 1:14 Cyril states: “Now to speak in this way should not appear strange or unusual to us, since sacred Scripture often refers to the entire living creature by the word ‘flesh’ alone, as in the verse of the prophet Joel, ‘I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh’ (Joel 2:28). Doubtless we should not suppose that the prophet is saying that the divine Spirit is to be supplied to human flesh alone unendowed with a soul, for that would be totally absurd. On the contrary, understanding the whole by the part, he names man by the flesh.” *Jo.* 1.9 (PG 73, 160; Pusey I.108) Hence, for Cyril, even prior to his Nestorius controversy, the word *sarx* denotes the full humanity of Christ including a rational soul.

⁵⁸ *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 723 e - 724 a), *On the Unity of Christ*, 61.

divine power through a new medium of passible and fragile conditions. Nonetheless, the Logos accepted these new conditions for the sake of our redemption. The Word receives these limitations in order to transfigure them for the sake of the human race “What is pre-eminent will always conquer, and the shame of slavery is thus borne away from us.”

Accordingly, the process of redemptive incarnation is perceived as an exchange “For he humbled himself that he might exalt that which was by nature lowly to his own high station; and wore the form of a servant, though he was by nature Lord and Son of God, that he might uplift that which was by nature enslaved to the dignity of sonship...He receives our attributes into himself, and gives back unto us His own.”⁵⁹ He assumes our condition so that we may participate in his prerogatives.⁶⁰

Cyril uses this biblical concept to counter the Antiochene claim that the Son was conjoined to the man born of Mary: “It seems to me that they have turned the mystery of the economy in the flesh completely on its head, for in their argument one cannot see how God the Word, born of God, and God by nature, abased himself to a self-emptying and humbled himself to assume the form of a slave. On the contrary, in their estimate a man is exalted into the glory of the Godhead.”⁶¹ Hence, the voluntary submission of the Logos to human weakness and suffering is for Cyril the very glory of the Gospel. Those who divide Christ, says Cyril, do not accept the ταπείνωσις. The death of a man, however righteous, cannot have any redemptive value. The Logos suffered impassibly (ἔπαθεν ἀπαθῶς).⁶² This paradox implies that Christ possessed one subject: the divine Logos. But why would Cyril be so adamant on this. In order to respond to this question Cyril’s account of salvation will be examined.

⁵⁹ *Jo.* 12.1 (PG 74, 700; Pusey III. 122).

⁶⁰ *On Matthew* 24:36 (PG 72, 444-445).

⁶¹ *Chr. un.* (SC 97. 730 a-b) *On the Unity of Christ*, 69-70.

⁶² *Scholia* 37 (Pusey 6, 574, and A.C.O.1.1.5. 50, 9) cited in Henry Chadwick, “Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy,” *Journal of Theological Studies*. N.S., II (2) (October 1951): 158-159; *On John* 19:26-27 (Pusey III, 91); *De recta fide ad reginas*, 42 (PG 76: 1393).

Cyril's Soteriology

Echoing his mentor Athanasius who writes, "He, indeed, assumed humanity that we might become God,"⁶³ Cyril writes:

But there was no other way to shake the gloomy dominion of death, only by the *incarnation* (ἐνανθρωπήσεως) of the only begotten. This is why he appeared as we are and made his own a body (ἴδιον σῶμα) subject to corruption *according to the inherent system of its nature* (κατὰ γε τοὺς ἐνόητας τῆ φύσει). In so far as he himself is life, for he was born from the life of the Father he intended to *implant his own benefit* (ἐμφυτεύσει τὸ ἴδιον ἀγαθὸν αὐτῷ) within it, that is life itself...second Adam to *transform* the nature of man in himself (ἀναστοιχειουμένης ἐν αὐτῷ τῆς ἀνθρώπου φύσεως) into a newness of life in *holiness* and *incorruptibility* through the resurrection from the dead. This was how death was destroyed since life "naturally" did not allow its own body to endure corruption since it was not possible for the Christ to be under its dominion according to the words of Peter.⁶⁴ This how the benefit of this achievement passed over even to us.⁶⁵

This rich passage reveals the relationship between the incarnation and salvation in Cyril's thought. Cyril posits the intimate union of the two realities (the incarnation) as a *salvific act or life-giving* transaction. The Logos, being life by nature, unites to himself a body destined for death and decay and, infuses his vivifying powers into it, so that death cannot prevail over it. Through our union with that human nature Christ then shares his vivifying power with humanity. The human nature is, therefore, not conceived as acting independently, but as the *instrument* of the Logos. The *subject*, that is the divine *Logos*, is unchanged but that *subject* now expresses its divine characteristics through the medium of a passible and fragile entity.⁶⁶

Hence, Cyril understand *communicatio idiomatum*,⁶⁷ as not being a matter of linguistic attribution alone; we must speak of a real exchange of properties within the person of Christ,

⁶³ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione* 54.3. (PG 25: 192).

⁶⁴ Acts 2:24.

⁶⁵ *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 772 b – 773 b), *On the Unity of Christ*, 125-126.

⁶⁶ Cf. McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*, 185-187.

⁶⁷ Manoir explains that an idiom (ιδιώμα) represents a characteristic that is peculiar to a certain nature and that it can be attributed to the one who possesses this nature. The unification of the two natures in Christ has allowed for an *exchange of properties* in Christ's hypostasis. One can say the Son of God is dead. Although death is a human attribute, it is here ascribed to the Word. Communication of idioms is nothing more than ascribing

where the Word confers upon his assumed flesh properties that do not typically belong to it. “For he was desirous that our weakness should be brought in touch with him, so that it should thenceforth have an end by being nullified by him.”⁶⁸ Moreover, Cyril uses the terms implantation, engrafting (ἐμφυτεύση) and transformation (ἀναστοιχειουμένης) to reveal the dynamic and transformative nature of redemptive incarnation.⁶⁹ However, is this human restoration of humanity circumscribed to Christ alone?

*The Corporate Aspect of the Mystery*⁷⁰

The mystery of Christ, for Cyril, outgrows the individuated boundaries of the person of Jesus Christ as it involves a collective aspect. Concerning the mystery of Christ Paul writes: “you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ (τῷ μυστηρίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ),... that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body (σύσσωμα).”⁷¹ Accordingly, Cyril identifies the mystery of Christ with the church that is composed of the Jews and the pagans in Christ. The Alexandrian theologian, for instance, conceives Jacob’s marriage to both Leah and Rachel as a type (τύπος) to the mystery of Christ, “when we apply this type to reality, we can see the mystery of Christ (Χριστοῦ κατόψει μυστήριον). These two women were summoned and connected to him [Jacob] via a spiritual (πνευματικῆν) marriage. The elder represents the Jewish synagogue (Ἰουδαίων συναγωγῆς) founded by Moses. The second was a young and pretty lady, meaning the church out of the pagans (ἡ ἐξ ἔθνῶν Ἐκκλησία).”⁷²

human properties to Christ-God, and divine properties to Christ-man, in Du Manoir, *Dogme et Spiritualité chez S. Cyrille d’Alexandrie*, 145.

⁶⁸ Timothy Aelurus, “Timothy Aelurus: Against the Definition of Chalcedon,” trans. R. Y. Ebied and L.R. Wickham, in *After Chalcedon: Studies in Theology and Church History*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta (18), (Leuven: Department Orientalistik, 1985), 151.

⁶⁹ Iain Torrance, *Christology After Chalcedon: Severus of Antioch and Sergius the Monophysite* (Norwich: The Canterbury Press Norwich, 1988), 89-90 and 100

⁷⁰ Jacques Liébaert, *La doctrine Christologique de saint Cyrille d’Alexandrie avant la querelle Nestorienne* (Lille: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1951), 182; Du Manoir, *Dogme et Spiritualité chez S. Cyrille d’Alexandrie*, 163-184 and 320-325; and McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*, 187-195.

⁷¹ Ephesians 3:4-6.

⁷² *De adoratione* 2, 6 (PG 68, 237).

Prior to Cyril, Athanasius had suggested that the created body of Christ was prepared ‘that *in him we might* be capable of being renewed and deified.’⁷³ Here Athanasius is alluding to the solidarity of mankind in Christ as a direct consequence of the incarnation. In line with his predecessor, Cyril posits a similar corporate approach to the incarnation where man is incorporated into to the Incarnate Word as a result of the incarnation. However, Cyril is consistent in his approach to the ecclesial and collective aspect of the mystery of Christ, in the *Glaphyra* he writes:

Now an ear of grain is certainly to be understood as being one, just as we ourselves, while we are not one ear of grain, are nevertheless brought together as a sheaf, that is, many ears bound into one. And this is necessary for our profit, and one that furnishes a figure of the mystery (μυστηρίου τύπον). For Jesus Christ is indeed one, yet he is also understood to be in the form of an abundant sheaf, and he is so because he possesses all believers within himself with regards to *spiritual union* (ἔνωσιν δὲ τὴν πνευματικὴν).⁷⁴

So, by virtue of our consubstantiality with the Son in his incarnation, each member of the body enjoys a mystical relationship with the head:

Just as God the Father knows his own Son, the fruit of his nature, and holds him to be a genuine offspring, and the Son in turn knows the Father and holds him to be true God, since he is begotten of him; so also we, since *we were brought into relation* (ὑκείωται) *with him*, are referred to as his offspring and called his children in accordance with his statement, ‘Behold, I and the children God has given me.’⁷⁵ We both are and are called genuine offspring of the Son, and on account of him kindred of the Father as well, *since the only begotten God, who is from God, became a human being, assuming our very nature, though without any sin.*⁷⁶

Hence, the incarnation triggers Christ’s affiliation to humankind: “Therefore, the slave is truly freed in Christ and ascends into *mystical unity* (ἐνότητα τὴν μυστικὴν) with the one who bore the form of a slave, while at the same time Christ is in us in the sense that we are like him *because of our kinship* (συγγένειαν) *with his flesh.*”⁷⁷ Re-iterating this view, Cyril says:

“Although he was life by nature, he died *for our sakes* according to the flesh in order to

⁷³ (CA 2. 47, Bright 117) in Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 171.

⁷⁴ *Glaph.* 12 (PG 69, 624); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 194.

⁷⁵ Isaiah 8:18.

⁷⁶ *Jo.* 6.1 (PG 73, 1045; Pusey II. 232); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 66-67.

⁷⁷ *Jo.* 1.9 (PG 73, 161; Pusey I. 141); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 64.

conquer death for us and to raise our entire nature with him. (*We were all in him because he became human.*)”⁷⁸ Thus, the theological underpinning of our intrinsic incorporation in Christ, lies in the mystery of incarnation.

Moreover, Cyril draws out this account by interpreting a number of key biblical symbols of the church. In the parable of the true vine, for instance, Cyril focuses on the union between the vine and the branches, which are “united to him and fixed and rooted in him.” We are also portrayed as living stones⁷⁹ and Christ is our foundation. Cyril perceives this intrinsic relationship as the impetus of our spiritual nourishment and ecclesial edification: “If Christ were not our foundation, there would be no other way we could be built into this [holy priesthood]. So also here, on the same principle, he says that he is the vine, since the vine is the mother who nourishes the branches that come from it.”⁸⁰ Besides, in likening the body of Christ to the temple, he writes: “By virtue of assuming a human body, he belongs to us, but he has the Father in him...He says: I want you to be all in me as one body, and by means of this, I carry you all in myself as in one *temple*.”⁸¹

But how is this mystical relationship established? Cyril reads the second half of (John 1:14) as per the original Greek text ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν (dwelt in us):

He also reveals another profound mystery (τὸ μυστήριον) to us when he affirms for our benefit that the Word “dwelt in us”: We were all in Christ, and the shared properties of our human nature were taken up into his person... Therefore, the Word “dwelt in” all people through the one man so that when the one man ‘was designated Son of God in *power* according to the Spirit of holiness,’⁸² his honor might extend to all humanity. In this way, because of one of us, the words ‘I said you are gods, and you are all sons of the Most High’⁸³ might come to us as well.⁸⁴

The theme of the mutual indwelling of Christ and humankind, allows Cyril, in his tractates, to treat humanity as one lot in Christ. “And in one, that is, *in Christ*, ... the *common lot of*

⁷⁸ *Jo.* 2.1 (PG 73, 208; Pusey I. 185); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 82.

⁷⁹ 1Peter 2:5.

⁸⁰ *Jo.* 10.2 (PG 74, 333; Pusey II. 534-535); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 210-211.

⁸¹ *Thees.* XII (PG 75: 204).

⁸² Romans 1:4

⁸³ Psalm 82:6

⁸⁴ *Jo.* 1.9 (PG 73, 161-164; Pusey I. 141-2); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 64.

humanity (κοινὸς τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος ὄρος) was transformed to incorruptibility, just as in one, that is, in the first Adam, it was condemned to death and decay.”⁸⁵ At this point we need to discuss Cyril’s concept of Christ as the second Adam.

Second Adam

The theme of the second Adam is a biblical one introduced by Paul.⁸⁶ In Romans 5, Paul parallels Adam and Christ.⁸⁷ In 1 Corinthians, Paul stresses our incorporation into both Adam and Christ, but it is Christ who is the firstfruits (ἀπαρχή).⁸⁸ “The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven.”⁸⁹

The Adam Christ typology is extensively developed by Irenaeus of Lyon. He, “however, [took] an important step by combining the notion of recapitulation from Ephesians with the Adam-Christ typology of Romans and 1 Corinthians.”⁹⁰ But what does the term recapitulation mean for Irenaeus? ἀνακεφαλαίωσις, includes two aspects; namely restoring and unifying all things. In relation to the first process Irenaeus writes, “lorsqu'il s'est incarné et s'est fait homme, il a *recapitulé* en lui-même la longue histoire des hommes et nous a procuré le salut en raccourci, de sorte que ce que nous avons perdu en *Adam*, c'est-à-dire d'être à l'image et à la ressemblance de Dieu, nous le *recouvrons dans le Christ Jesus*.”⁹¹

This passage shows the close connections between the incarnation, the second Adam and the notion of recapitulation in Irenaeus’s theology. In the same vein Athanasius writes, “The Word of God came in his own person, because it was he *alone*, the Image of the Father, who could *re-create* man made after the Image... You know what happens when a portrait that

⁸⁵ *Jo.* 6.1 (PG 73, 1033; Pusey II. 220); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 61.

⁸⁶ Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15.

⁸⁷ Robett Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind: A Study of Cyril of Alexandria's Exegesis and Theology* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971), 94.

⁸⁸ (1 Corinthians 15:20 and 23)

⁸⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:47.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁹¹ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* (= *AH*) III 18, 1. “He became incarnate, and was made man, he commenced afresh the long line of human beings, and furnished us, in a brief, comprehensive manner, with salvation; so that what we had *lost in Adam*-namely, to be according to the image and likeness of God-that we might *recover in Christ Jesus*.”

has been painted on a panel becomes obliterated... The *subject of the portrait* has to come and sit for it again, and then the likeness is re-drawn on the same material.”⁹²

Although I have not attempted here to prove the relationship in detail, it seems likely that Cyril’s presentation of the second Adam theme draws on the work of these two predecessors. The preceding section of the chapter shows that by virtue of the mystery of incarnation a mystical connection between Christ and the human race has been established. Cyril finds in the notion of the second Adam a concept that expands this theme while tying it to the salvific aspect of his Christology.

For Cyril the incarnation is a restorative and transformative act. Through the incarnation Christ is reinstated as a second Adam, a head of humanity, a new beginning ἀρχή, a firstfruits ἀπαρχή, a firstborn πρωτότοκος and a new root ρίζα for humanity and by means of this relationship, the implications of his actions (such as the restoration of the spirit, holiness, life and incorruptibility) permeate humanity. This conception is a more integral theme in the *Glaphyra* than in the *Commentary on John*, probably because of the manner in which Cyril closely follows the text. Because Adam is such a central figure in the book of Genesis, Cyril writes at length regarding the implications of his fall and the restorative measures taken by Christ. However, the concept remains indispensable to Cyril’s other works as we shall see.

Before delving into Cyril’s handling of the subject, it’s important to examine how he reads Romans 5 in his *Commentary on Romans* (PG 74: 773-856). On Romans 5:11 he writes: “The ancient curse finally became ineffective, the curse which human nature endured in Adam as in a first fruit of the race and as in a first root.” Cyril then continues, the “Son came from heaven justifying by faith the impious, as God fashioning anew (μεταχαλκεύων) human nature to incorruption, returning it to what it was in the beginning. For in Christ all

⁹² *De Incarnatione* 13. For Athanasius, the Word alone can ontologically transfer and re-create the human nature in himself. Moreover, concerning our solidarity with Christ, he writes: “To man it was not possible to succeed in this; for death belongs to man; wherefore, the Word, being God, became flesh, that, being put to death in the flesh, he might quicken all men by his own power.” *Contra Arianos* (=CA) 1.44.

things are a *new* creation, for a *new* root has been established. He became a second Adam.” This is what is meant by “through one man sin entered the world,” for through sin death entered into the “first formed and into the beginning of the [human] race. Then the whole human race was successively taken possession of.” As a direct outcome of Adam’s sin “we have all become imitators of him.”⁹³ “Our forefather Adam did not preserve the grace of the Spirit ... it was necessary that God the Word ... become man, in order that ... he might preserve (διασώσῃ) the good permanently to our nature.”⁹⁴ These texts from his Romans commentary provide a basic background for the discussions found in the texts on which I will focus.

By virtue of appropriating flesh, the Word became incarnate and became a source of vivification and sanctification for the whole human nature. “St Cyril depicts Christ as the second Adam... by showing that he is life and he is the fullness of life to the extent that he contains in himself the source of life to all humanity.”⁹⁵ Commenting on Isaac’s blessing of Jacob, Cyril writes: “He is also considered to be a second Adam, and he was born as a second *root* for humanity. For what is in Christ is a new creation, and we are renewed in him for sanctification, incorruption and life.”⁹⁶ Here Cyril connects the incarnation, the notions of the second Adam and second root, our renewal in Christ and the type of spiritual endowment conferred upon us in one powerful statement. Moreover, in his commentary on John he writes: “In the same way that a plant could not sprout from the earth if it did not come from its own root (since that is the source of the plant’s growth), *so also it would be impossible for us, who have our Lord Jesus Christ as the root of incorruption, to sprout before our root.*”⁹⁷

⁹³ *On Rom.* 5:11 (Pusey III. 182-83), quoted in Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind*, 119-120.

⁹⁴ *Jo.* 2.1 (PG 73, 205-8; Pusey I. 184); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 82.

⁹⁵ E. Mersch, *Le corps mystique du Christ*, 512.

⁹⁶ *Glaph.* 3 (PG 69, 172) *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.1, 180. This notion of second root is repeated in *Glaph.* 1 (PG 69, 28) *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.1, 62-63.: “The Maker made prior provision for his own creatures, and prepared for us a second *root*, as it were, of a race that would raise us back to our former incorruption.”

⁹⁷ *Jo.* 5.2 (PG 73, 756; Pusey I. 695); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 310. The concept of Christ acting as a root for human race is addressed in Cyril’s commentary on the true vine (John 15). “Just as the root of the vine

Finally, in *On the Unity of Christ*, by putting the words in Christ's mouth, Cyril writes: "But you Lord have made me a *second beginning* for all on the earth, I am called the second Adam. In me you see the nature of man made clean, its faults corrected made holy and pure." Then expounding Christ words, Cyril states: "He did not invoke the Father's graciousness upon himself, but rather upon us. The effects of God's anger passed in to the whole human nature as from the original *rootstock*, that is Adam. (then he cites Romans 5:14) In the same way, however, the effects of our *new first-fruits*, that is Christ, shall again pass into the entire human race. (Then he cites Romans 5:15 and 1Corninthians 15:22) " ⁹⁸ Here we see again the solidarity of Christ and Adam and the rest of humankind. Moreover, we recognize the linkage between the second Adam and his replacement of the original root of humanity and the transmission of the soteriological effects of his actions upon the whole human race. In a similar vein he writes:

We are earthly beings insofar as the curse of corruption has passed from the earthly Adam even to us, and through our corruption the law of sin entered in the members of our flesh. Yet we became heavenly beings, receiving the gift in Christ. He is from God, from on High, and naturally God, yet he came down to our condition in a strange and most unusual manner, and was born of the Spirit, according to the flesh, [the mystery of incarnation] so that we too might abide in holiness and incorruptibility like him. Clearly the grace came upon us from him, as from a new rootstock, a new beginning. ⁹⁹

In this passage Cyril accentuates the uniqueness of Christ birth. So, Cyril perceives in the nativity of Christ a commencement for a new spiritual root for humanity. Therefore, Christ, as a second Adam, could not undergo a typical human birth. He needed to be born from the Holy Spirit and a virgin in order to act as new *root* for the human race. This concern is discussed intensively in this treatise:

serves and distributes the enjoyment of its own inherent natural qualities to the branches, so also the only begotten Word of God *imparts to the saints* a kinship, as it were, to his own nature and that of God the Father by giving them the Spirit, insofar as they have been united to him in faith and perfect holiness. He nourishes them for godliness and works knowledge in them of every virtue and good work. ⁹⁷ *Jo.* 6.1 (PG 74, 333; Pusey II. 535-536); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 211.

⁹⁸ *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 757 b-d), *On the Unity of Christ*, 106.

⁹⁹ *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 725 d-e), *On the Unity of Christ*, 64.

The Son came, or rather was made man, in order to reconstitute our condition within himself; first of all in his own holy, wonderful, and truly amazing birth, [He did not commit himself to assume flesh through the marriage bed, but rather from a holy and unmarried virgin, conceiving from the Spirit when the power of God overshadowed her]¹⁰⁰ and life. This was why he himself become the first one to be born of the Holy Spirit (I mean of course after the flesh) so that he could trace a path for grace to come to us.¹⁰¹

Cyril, like his predecessor Irenaeus,¹⁰² perceives the term recapitulation (ἀνακεφαλαίωσις) as a restoration of humanity to its original status. In the *Glaphyra*, he states: “By the term *recapitulation* he clearly refers to the reformation (ἐπανόρθωσις) of all things and the return of what has become corrupted to how things were in the beginning.”¹⁰³ This concept is repeated throughout the *Glaphyra*:

For in Christ we have in fact been *restored* to our original estate (Ephesians 1:7-12 is cited) The only begotten Word of God voluntarily came down into our estate, not that he might be ruled over by death along with us, through Adam transmitting deadness to him, ...but having manifested that nature which was subject to corruption, he might *transform* it into life. *This is the reason he became flesh.*¹⁰⁴

Cyril perceives Adam as a type for Christ, where the latter was incarnate in order to rectify humanity’s deformation that was caused by Adam’s error and restore the human nature to its original status. “For Adam was the *beginning* of the race, with respect to death, the curse and condemnation. But Christ was the complete reverse (πᾶν τοῦναντίον), bringing life, blessing and justification.”¹⁰⁵

The presentation of recapitulation as a restoration of humankind and its connection to the incarnation is also offered by Cyril in his commentary on John:

Paul expounds for us one true and general reason for the *incarnation* of the Only Begotten when he says that God the Father was pleased ‘to recapitulate all things in Christ,’¹⁰⁶ and that the term and the act of “recapitulation” refers to bringing back and taking up what had fallen into an unrecognizable end *to what it was in*

¹⁰⁰ *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 724 b), *On the Unity of Christ*, 62.

¹⁰¹ *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 724 c-d), *On the Unity of Christ*, 62.

¹⁰²“ But because the only-begotten Son came to us from the one God, who both made this world and formed us, and contains and administers all things, *summing up* [restoring] His own handiwork in Himself, my faith towards Him is steadfast, and my love to the Father immovable, the Lord bestowing both upon us.” *AH IV* 6, 2.

¹⁰³ *Glaph.* 1 (PG 69, 16) *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.1, 53.

¹⁰⁴ *Glaph.* 1 (PG 69, 29) *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.1, 62-63.

¹⁰⁵ *Glaph.* 1 (PG 69, 29) *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.1, 64.

¹⁰⁶ Ephesians 1:10

the beginning. It was of course a very good thing to *recapitulate* in this way and *restore* the fallen race, that is, the human race, to its *original condition*.¹⁰⁷

And finally in the third treatise, he writes: “We had become accursed through Adam’s transgression and had fallen into the trap of death, abandoned by God. Yet all things were made new in Christ¹⁰⁸ and our condition was *restored* to what it was in the beginning.”¹⁰⁹

Hence, Cyril conceives the restoration process in terms of transforming the human nature into a new condition that could not have been attained without the incarnation. “He also has this title (the Last Adam) since he came from Adam according to the flesh, a second beginning for those on earth, to *transform the nature of man* in himself into a *newness* of life in holiness and incorruptibility through the resurrection from the dead.”¹¹⁰

However, this transformational process, as previously mentioned, is a gradual and ongoing one. Commenting on Christ’s temptation on the mountain, Cyril writes: “By eating we were conquered in Adam, by *abstinence* we conquered in Christ. We won the victory over temptation in Christ for it had been lost in Adam and Christ as conqueror handed on to us the power to conquer.”¹¹¹ Then on John 7:39, he states:

The Only Begotten, then, *became human* for us so that in him, first of all, good gifts might return, and, second, so that the grace of the Spirit might be rooted and preserved firmly in our whole nature. It is as though the Only Begotten, being the Word of God the Father, *lends us the immutability* of his own nature, which we needed because human nature was condemned in Adam for not being able to remain unchanged.¹¹²

Finally concerning Christ resurrection he says: “This is how death was destroyed since life ‘naturally’ did not allow its own body to endure corruption since it was not possible for the

¹⁰⁷ *Jo.* 9.1 (PG 74, 273; Pusey II. 481); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 185.

¹⁰⁸ 2Corinthians 5:17.

¹⁰⁹ *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 756 d-e), *On the Unity of Christ*, 105.

¹¹⁰ *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 773 b), *On the Unity of Christ*, 126. Cf. *Jo.* 6.1 (PG 73, 1033; Pusey II. 220); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 61: “And in one, that is, *in Christ*, who was in the beginning (*ἀρχῆς*), and who was the first (*πρώτω*) to break the power of death and bring about unending life, the *common lot of humanity* (*κοινὸς τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος ὄρος*) was transformed to incorruptibility, just as in one, that is, in the first Adam, it was condemned to death and decay.”

¹¹¹ *On Luke* 4:1-2 (PG 72, 529).

¹¹² *Jo.* 5.2 (PG 73, 756; Pusey I. 694); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 310.

Christ to be under its dominion according to the words of the divine Peter.¹¹³ This was how the benefits of this achievement passed over even to us.”¹¹⁴ It is thus clear that Christ, first, did not defeat Satan on the mountain of temptation, nor, second, receive the Spirit, nor, third, conquer death for his own sake but for our benefit so that the effects of his actions might be transmitted to our entire race, and the human nature might gradually be restored to its original status. However, one of the elements of restoring humanity to its original status is the reinstatement of its unity, and this is exactly what Christ came to do.

Christ and the Church

The damages incurred by humanity through Adam’s transgression outgrew our inheritance of corruption; according to Augustine, they included our division and scattering over the world: “For Adam himself signifies in Greek the whole world, . . . , Adam therefore has been scattered over the whole world. He was in one place, and fell, and as in a manner broken small, he filled the whole world.”¹¹⁵ However, according to Cyril, Christ was able to counter this dispersion of the human race and to re-unite us again. “Christ, however, *gathered* (συνεισήγαγε) *us once again* and brought us all by faith *into one fold, the church*, and united us under one yoke and made everyone one: Jews, Greeks, barbarians, Scythians. He shaped them into ‘one new humanity.’ (Ephesians 2:14-15)”¹¹⁶ Besides, he writes in the *Glaphyra*, “Israel the firstborn, then, was a kinsman to those Gentiles, and yet they were set apart by the law, so as to be considered different. *In Christ*, however, the two became one. For he removed the dividing wall, having annulled the law with all its writings and the distinguishing mark of circumcision. We have been made into one new man,¹¹⁷ the Gentiles

¹¹³ Acts 2:24.

¹¹⁴ *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 773 a-b), *On the Unity of Christ*, 126.

¹¹⁵ Augustine, *On Psalm 96* (PL 37:1236). Cyril, on the other hand, ascribes our dispersedness to Satan. “Satan did not consent for us to remain in this condition, so *he scattered us* (μη συγχωρήσας) and led humanity astray in various ways from its nearness to God.” *Jo. 7* (PG 74, 69; Pusey II. 295); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 96.

¹¹⁶ *Jo. 7* (PG 74, 69; Pusey II. 295); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 96.

¹¹⁷ Ephesians 2:14-15.

sharing in the same body and soul as the people of Israel.”¹¹⁸ These two passages suggest that the division and scattering of humanity were the work of the devil, however, Christ came to reverse action and re-unite us into one, “to gather together in one (συναγάγη εἰς ἓν) the children of God who were scattered.”¹¹⁹ Moreover, the two passages link the unifying work of Christ to Ephesians 2:14-15 alluding to the new man that he created in himself, by uniting the two peoples into one in his flesh, a new man or a new humanity in reference to the Church, “gathered us once again and brought us all by faith into one fold, the church.” Accordingly, the unity of the Church is not an accidental characteristic, it is at its essence and its members are not just a group of autonomous individuals, but are united together (Jews or Pagans) into one body.¹²⁰ And this is the work of Christ because he alone can enact this unity, since “Christ is the *bond of union* (ὁ τῆς ἐνότητος σύνδεσμος) because he is God and a human being in the same person.”¹²¹ So, by virtue of the hypostatic union effected in Christ, the church’s unity is established and it is unbreakable since the Incarnate Word serves as its bond of union (σύνδεσμος). And this is why he descended into earth: “He appeared to people on earth in a form like ours, that is to say, the Only-begotten Word of God became man so as to ... *lead them together into spiritual unity* through faith and sanctification, finally make them worthy of forming a relationship with him, and thus join them through himself to the God and Father. That it was *for this reason that Christ became man.*”¹²² This leads us to the discussion of Cyril’s Christological ecclesiology.

Cyril’s Christological Ecclesiology

Concerning the unification aspect of recapitulation, Irenaeus writes: “Into this paradise the Lord has introduced those who obey his call, ‘*summing up in himself* all things which are in

¹¹⁸ *Glaph. 4* (PG 69, 201) *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.1, 204.

¹¹⁹ John 11:52.

¹²⁰ That is why the creed states: “One (μίαν) Holy Catholic (καθολικὴν) Apostolic Church.”

¹²¹ *Jo. 11.11* (PG 74, 560; Pusey II. 736); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 304.

¹²² *On Isaiah 43:5-7* (PG 75: 888-889).

heaven, and which are on earth,'¹²³ ... These things, therefore, he *recapitulated* in himself: by uniting man to the Spirit, and causing the Spirit to dwell in man."¹²⁴ For Irenaeus, a major objective of the incarnation is the establishment of humankind's union with God. "Who, because of his surpassing love towards his creation, condescended to be born of the virgin, he himself uniting man *through himself* to God."¹²⁵ By virtue of the incarnation a mystical union between Christ and humanity has been established, accordingly, he carried us all throughout his life on earth and beyond, and we became attached to him and formed one whole. "And they will be transplanted into Israel's place. They will be cut off from their natural wild olive tree and be grafted contrary to nature into the good olive tree."¹²⁶ Our union with Christ and with one another is at the essence of the realization of the church on earth. Cyril discusses our unification with Christ and with one another mainly in the *Glaphyra* and his commentary on John. However, he dwells on it more in his Johannine discourse because of its centrality to the gospel. Reference to John's gospel is even important in the *Glaphyra's* account of unification.

In the *Glaphyra*, for instance, Cyril says:

And Christ became one of us, springing forth from the holy Virgin like an ear of grain... Now an ear of grain is certainly to be understood as being one, just as we ourselves, while we are not one ear of grain, are nevertheless brought together as a sheaf, that is, many ears bound into one. And this is necessary for our profit, and one that furnishes a figure of the mystery. For Jesus Christ is indeed one, yet he is also understood to be in the form of an abundant sheaf, and he is so because he possesses all believers within himself with regards to *spiritual union*. Otherwise, how could the blessed Paul write, 'raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* [in Christ Jesus].'¹²⁷ Since Christ is one of us, we have become fellow members of his body (σύσσωμοι), and we have been richly blessed in our union with him through his body. Therefore, we say that we are all in him.¹²⁸ Christ, then, is like a sheaf containing us all within himself.¹²⁹

¹²³ Eph1:10.

¹²⁴ *AH V* 20, 2.

¹²⁵ *AH III* 4, 2.

¹²⁶ *Jo.* 1.9 (PG 73, 152; Pusey I. 132); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 60. Cf., Romans 11:24.

¹²⁷ Ephasians 2:6.

¹²⁸ John 17:11, 21.

¹²⁹ *Glaph.* 12 (PG 69, 624-625); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 194.

This passage is deeply informative with regard to Cyril's ecclesiology, the crux of which lies in the mystery of our incorporation in Christ. Cyril holds a consistent view of the church. For him, the church is the body of Christ whose constituents are joined together under Christ as her head. While presenting Joseph as a type for Christ in the *Glaphyra*, Cyril writes: "Joseph indicates Christ under the present economy and those who believe in him. For he himself is indeed the *head*, and we are the *body* and individually members of it.¹³⁰ Also he is the vine and we are like the branches that grow upon it,¹³¹ joined together in the *unity of the spirit* through sanctification."¹³² And through its unity with Christ, the church, the body of Christ, will be delivered from corruption:

So too God the Father instructed the Son concerning the *Church*...He was in effect indicating the *body* overcome by death so that through the power of God the Father, that is, through the Son, it might be delivered from corruption and be *restored* again to its *original condition*, namely to the blessed and incorruptible life of Christ.¹³³

Here, one can see the ease with which Cyril interchanges between the terms church and body. However, Cyril offers a more detailed elaboration in relation to the image of the church as the body of Christ in his commentary on John, where he writes:

When Christ cites the essential unity that the Father has with him and he has with the Father as an *image and type* of the inseparable friendship and concord and unity of kindred souls, he [Christ] wants us to be *blended* (συνανακτιρνᾶσθαι) with one another, so to speak, by *the power of the holy and consubstantial Trinity* so that the entire body of the church may be one, ascending in Christ by the joining and concurrence of two peoples into *one perfect whole*. As Paul says, 'For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in *himself* one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might *reconcile* both groups to God in *one body* through the *cross*, thus putting to death that hostility through it.'¹³⁴ Indeed, this is what he accomplished, since the believers in Christ were of one soul with one another and received one heart, as it were, by their

¹³⁰ 1Corinthians 12:27.

¹³¹ John 15:5.

¹³² *Glaph.* 6 (PG 69, 296) *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.1, 281.

¹³³ *Glaph.* 6 (PG 69, 296) *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.1, 329.

¹³⁴ Ephesians 2: 14-16.

complete likeness in godliness and by their obedience of faith and their virtuous mind.¹³⁵

This passage implies that the church is *in Christ*. “So that the entire body of the church may be *one*, ascending *in Christ* by the joining and concurrence of two peoples into *one perfect whole*.” And this is why Cyril cites John 3:13 “No one has ascended to heaven but he who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven,” at the prelude of this pericope. It is, also, clear that Cyril’s ecclesiology is both vertically and horizontally oriented.¹³⁶ Concerning the latter aspect, Cyril uses the term *συνανακτιρνᾶσθαι* which denotes mixing together to designate the strength and depth of the bonding of the members of the body in the Incarnate Word. Moreover, Christ calls for a type of union between believers that is similar to the one he experiences with his Father, which involves a mutual abode of the first and second Hypostases of the Godhead. That has been made explicit in Christ’s word ‘as’ (καθὼς) (John 17:21). Noticeably, It is a type of conjunction that exceeds human apprehension. How can autonomous human beings, possessing independent bodies, souls and wills, be ‘blended’ together? It is an operation that man, with his limited apprehensive capacity, cannot envisage, since it surpasses our own capabilities, and is effected by ‘*the power (δύναμις) of the holy and consubstantial Trinity*’.

Subsequently, while carrying the whole humanity in his body, Christ has reconciled us with God the Father. Cyril reads the expression I sanctify myself (ἐγὼ ἀγιάζω ἑμαυτόν) in John 17:19, according to traditional usage of the word sanctify, to mean consecrate or set apart.

He offered himself as a sacred and holy *sacrifice* to God the Father, ‘*reconciling the world to himself*’¹³⁷ and bringing into friendly relationship with him that which had fallen from it, that is, the human race. ‘For he is our peace,’¹³⁸ as it is written. Indeed, our *reconciliation* to God through Christ the Savior could have

¹³⁵ *Jo.* 11.11 (PG 74, 557; Pusey II. 733); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 303.

¹³⁶ in his article “The ecclesiology of communion: on the church as a vertically grounded, socially directed and ecumenically committed fellowship,” Tjorhon highlights that Ecclesiology of communion involves both a vertical communion with the Triune and a horizontal fellowship with other people.

¹³⁷ 2Corinthians 5:19.

¹³⁸ Ephesians 2:14.

been accomplished in no other way than through *communion* in the Spirit and sanctification.¹³⁹

This is a mystical and ontological relationship involving a fellowship with the Father and the Son;¹⁴⁰ whereby we are raised up, ascend with him into heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father,¹⁴¹ with him and in him [Christ].

Finally, Cyril highlights later in the same passage that our union with one another and with Christ and our participation in Christ is both spiritual and corporeal:

But here we want to point out a natural unity by which we are all connected with one another and with God. Perhaps we do not even fall short of a *corporeal unity* (I mean with one another) even though we are separated by different bodies, with each one of us withdrawing, as it were, into our own circumscribed hypostasis. After all, Peter is not Paul, for example, and neither could he be spoken of as such, nor is Paul Peter, even though both may be understood to be one by the union they have *on account of Christ*.¹⁴²

It has been illustrated so far that Cyril's Christological ecclesiology revolves around the incorporation of the church in Christ, and that this reality ensues from the mystery of incarnation. By uniting divinity and humanity in himself, the Incarnate Word has opened new frontiers for humankind and one of these is the restoration of the relationship between man and God the Father. Hence I will address the notion of Christ's mediation next.

Christ as Mediator

"Yet the law was weak, not being of such nature so as fully to effect a relationship with God."¹⁴³ "But now he has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also *Mediator of a better covenant*."¹⁴⁴ The notion of Christ's mediation's supremacy to that of Moses has been utilized by the Alexandrian theologian in the *Glaphyra* and commentary on John. However, in the latter, Cyril focuses more on the relationship between the divine and

¹³⁹ *Jo.* 11.10 (PG 74, 544; Pusey II. 722); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 298.

¹⁴⁰ 1John 1: 3.

¹⁴¹ Ephesians 2:6.

¹⁴² *Jo.* 11.11 (PG 74, 557; Pusey II. 734). See also Cyril, *Jo.* 10.2 (PG 74, 344; Pusey II. 544); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 215.: "The word of truth is simple and clear, but the opponent maliciously refuses to agree that Christ is the vine *corporeally* in that he grants his own life to the branches (that is, to us) just as the visible and earthly vine grants life to the branches that cling to it."

¹⁴³ *Glaph.* 10 (PG 69, 497); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 94.

¹⁴⁴ Hebrews 8:6.

human nature within Christ, and hence Cyril attributes the supremacy of Christ's mediatorship to the conjunction of the two natures within Christ, where he acts as a boundary (μεθόριον) between divinity and humanity.

In the *Glaphyra*, Moses' mediation is portrayed as prefiguring that of Christ. However, the former is superseded by the latter:

Moses, then, was indeed a mediator, yet he was so as a type and a shadow. The real mediator is Christ, to whom we *are firmly joined*, since it is true that he came down into our estate and *became a man* ... Not even the blessed Moses himself has access to the Father without Christ acting a *mediator*... For having forged a way for those who are called, he acts as a *mediator* and as one who associates with them. For it is impossible, as I said, that we should come to be with God the Father in any other way except through Christ's *mediatorship* alone.¹⁴⁵

In his commentary on John, Cyril perceives Moses as a type for Christ but still esteems the Son's mediatorship more than that of Moses:

In sum, everything that we have, they (the people of Israel) had in type... In addition, we say that Israel was called to sonship in type through the mediator Moses. Therefore, they were also baptized into him, as Paul says, 'in the cloud and in the sea.'¹⁴⁶ But those who rise to divine sonship through faith in Christ are baptized not into anything originate but into the holy Trinity itself through the Word who is the *mediator*. He joins what is human to himself through the *flesh* that was united to him, and he is joined by nature to the Father since he is by nature God.¹⁴⁷

Hence Christ's mediation outgrows Moses' functional and external mediatorship. Unlike the latter, the former is a mystical, natural and intrinsic mediation, that takes place ontologically and existentially within Christ's *hypostasis*. However, by virtue of our incorporation in him, the effects of this union outgrow the boundaries of the individual Jesus Christ and are imparted into the members of his body.

The mediation of Moses, however, is ministerial, while the mediation of Christ is free and more *mystical* (μυστικωτέρα) since he touches the parties that are being mediated and reaches (διήκοντος) both, I mean the mediated human nature and God the Father.

As the Only Begotten of God, he is God by nature, not as though he were separated from the substance (οὐσίας) of his begetter but clinging to it, as he is

¹⁴⁵ *Glaph.* 10 (PG 69, 497-524); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 94-115.

¹⁴⁶ 1Corinthians 10:2

¹⁴⁷ *Jo.* 1.9 (PG 73, 156; Pusey I. 135-6); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 61.

also understood to be of it. He is also a human being, since he made himself like us and became flesh, in order that through him (ἵνα δι' αὐτοῦ) what was far separated by nature might be joined (συνάπτηται to God.¹⁴⁸

The objective of Christ's mediatorship is the bridging of the gulf between the two separated and disparate natures. This is why Cyril describes it as mystical (μυστικωτέρα).¹⁴⁹ The double consubstantiality of the mediator, with humanity and divinity, is foundational for the activation of this transaction. Liébaert, thus, suggests:

Il s'agit à présent de l'union rétablie entre Dieu et les hommes. Cependant, comme Cyrille insiste sur le fait que cette médiation du Christ est la conséquence directe de l'Incarnation... Par conséquent, « l'humanité » sera ici tantôt le genre humain et tantôt la condition humaine du Verbe incarné, tandis que la « divinité » désignera ou bien Dieu par opposition aux hommes, ou bien la nature divine du Verbe, par opposition à sa condition humaine.¹⁵⁰

In epitomizing Christ's mediation in the John commentary Cyril frequently uses the term μεθόριον or common frontier, alluding to the encounter of divinity and humanity in the person of Christ. The term is, however, not used in the *Galphyra*, indicating a development between the two treatises.

As he is related to the Father and the Father is related to him because of the identity of their nature, *so also we are related to him in that he became a human being*, and he is related to us. Through him, as through a *mediator*, we are joined to the Father. Christ is a kind of *boundary* (μεθόριον) between the highest divinity and humanity. He is both in the same person, *combining in himself, so to speak, these natures* which are so different. As God by nature, he is *joined* to God the Father, and as a true human being, he is *joined* to humanity.¹⁵¹

Finally, by virtue of being God and incorporating us in him, Christ is able to reconstitute our relationship with God the Father. And this affiliation culminates in the bestowal of the gift of sonship upon the human race: “*I will be brought into relationship with my sheep and my*

¹⁴⁸ *Jo.* 3.3 (PG 73, 429; Pusey I. 393); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 175.

¹⁴⁹ Zizioulas explains that, “all forms of mysticism seem to have to do with man's desire, and indeed deep existential need, to bridge the gap between what he in fact is or experiences and what transcends him. In religion this means bridging the gap between being human and the divine.” In John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York, NY: t&t clark, 2006), 291.

¹⁵⁰ Jacques Liébaert, *La doctrine Christologique de saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie avant la querelle Nestorienne* (Lille: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1951), 218.

¹⁵¹ *Jo.* 6.1 (PG 73, 1045; Pusey II. 232); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 67. See also Cyril, *Jo.* 9 (PG 74, 192; Pusey II.410); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 151 : “Since he sprang from the substance of God the Father, insofar as the Word is the Father's radiance and imprint, he is one with the Father, being completely in the Father and having the Father in him. But insofar as he became human like us, he joins himself with those on earth (but not with our sin) and has become a kind of *borderland* (μεθόριον), containing in himself the elements that concur in unity and friendship.

sheep will be related to me, in the same way that the Father is related to me and I am related to the Father.' Just as God the Father knows his own Son, the fruit of his nature, and holds him to be a genuine offspring, and the Son in turn knows the Father and holds him to be true God, since he is begotten of him; so also we, since we were brought into relation with him, are referred to as his offspring and called his children."¹⁵² Yet, by virtue of our mystical solidarity with Christ, we are not only reconciled with the Father, but we also participate in Christ's deeds.

Participation in Christ

How does our incorporation in Christ result in our salvation?¹⁵³ Well, by virtue of being in him in the aftermath of the incarnation, "and he likewise has us in himself in that he bore our nature, and *our body is called the body of the Word.*"¹⁵⁴ Accordingly, we participate in the Incarnate Word's prevalence over the 'passions of the flesh', death, resurrection, ascension and reception of the Spirit as a human being.

Cyril is not the first Alexandrian theologian to adopt this approach, his predecessor Athanasius had previously written: "For it was not the Word himself who needed an opening of the gates, he being Lord of all, nor was any of his works closed to their Maker. No, it was we who needed it, we whom he himself upbore in his own body (οὗς ἀνέφερεν αὐτοῦς διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος αὐτοῦ)—that body which he first offered to death on behalf of all, and then made through it a path to heaven."¹⁵⁵

Cyril makes a brief mention of this notion in his *On the Unity of Christ* where he says: "The Word was alive even when his holy flesh was tasting death, so that when death was

¹⁵² *Jo.* 6.1 (PG 73, 1045; Pusey II. 232); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 66.

¹⁵³ Actually, Cyril appeals to the theme of our salvation in order to prove the reality of the human race's incorporation in Christ. Commenting on John 14:20, he writes: "And *when* you see yourselves *living* like me [Christ], though you are of a corruptible nature, then 'you will *know*' with utter clarity that I, being life by nature, have *joined you through myself* to God the Father, who is also himself life by nature, thus putting you in communion, as it were, and making you *partakers of his incorruptibility.*" *Jo.* 9.1 (PG 74, 280; Pusey II.487); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 188.

¹⁵⁴ *Jo.* 9.1 (PG 74, 280; Pusey II.486); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 188.

¹⁵⁵ *De Incarnatione* 25.6. (PG 25: 140).

beaten and corruption trodden underfoot the power of the resurrection might come upon the whole human race. It is a fact that ‘For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.’ (1Corinthians 15:22)”¹⁵⁶ However, he properly addresses it in the in the *Glaphyra* and deals with it at more length in his commentary on John. In the former he writes:

And Christ became one of us, springing forth from the holy Virgin like an ear of grain...Now an ear of grain is certainly to be understood as being one, just as we ourselves, while we are not one ear of grain, are nevertheless brought together as a sheaf, that is, many ears bound into one. And this is necessary for our profit, and one that furnishes a figure of the mystery. For Jesus Christ is indeed one, yet he is also understood to be in the form of an abundant sheaf, and he is so because he possesses all believers within himself with regards to *spiritual union*. Otherwise, how could the blessed Paul write, ‘raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* [in Christ Jesus].’¹⁵⁷ Since Christ is one of us, we have become fellow members of his body (σύσσωμοι), and we have been richly blessed in our union with him through his body. Therefore, we say that we are all in him.¹⁵⁸ Christ, then, is like a sheaf containing us all within himself.¹⁵⁹

This passage reveals the connection between the mystery of incarnation and our incorporation in Christ. Consequently, Cyril alludes to our participation in Christ’s salvific acts by appealing to Ephesians 2:6 “raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly places [in Christ Jesus].” Hence, this is a clear illustration as to how our ‘becoming members of his body (σύσσωμοι)’ would result in our inclusion in his resurrection and seating at the right hand of the Father.

In his commentary on John, Cyril once again appeal to the same verse (Ephesians 2:6) to elicit the same connection.

In order to free from decay and death those condemned by the ancient curse, he became human and clothed himself with our nature, as it were, though he was life by nature. Thus the might of death was overcome and the power of decay, which had invaded us, was destroyed. And since the divine nature is completely free of inclination to sin, *he has borne us up with his own flesh. We were all in him*, inasmuch as he appeared as a human being. In order that he may kill our ‘earthly members’, that is, the passions of the flesh, and destroy the law of sin that rules in our members, and that he may sanctify our nature as well, he shows himself to be our example and guide to the way to godliness and the pure revelation of

¹⁵⁶ *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 764 d-e),*On the Unity of Christ*, 115.

¹⁵⁷ Ephesians 2:6.

¹⁵⁸ John 17:11,21.

¹⁵⁹ *Glaph.* 12 (PG 69, 624-625); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 194.

enlightened truth and unerring conduct. Christ accomplished all these things when he became human. It was necessary, then, to lead human nature to the height of every blessing and not only free it from death and sin but also to raise it to the heavens themselves and make humanity a companion and member of the chorus of angels.

What I said before I will now say again. He *places us in the sight of the Father* when he departs to heaven, since he is the *first fruits* of humanity. Just as he who is life by nature is said to die and rise again for us, so also he who always sees his own Father and is seen by him is now said to have appeared before his Father as a human being, that is, when he became human not for himself but for us. And this one thing was conspicuously missing in his *oikonomia* for us: our ascension to the very heavens, which happened first in Christ as the first fruits. He ascended to the heavens for us as a *forerunner*, as the divinely inspired Paul says somewhere... That is why Paul said of the Father, ‘he raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places [in Christ Jesus].’ (Ephesians 2:6)¹⁶⁰

Again, Cyril stresses the relation between our solidarity with Christ and our salvation in this passage. First, he highlights that the passion of the flesh is abolished because ‘*We were all in him*’. Similarly, we are freed from decay and the bondage of death on account of our existence in him. In relation to our participation in Christ death, Cyril writes “the Father gave his Son as a ransom for us, one for all, since *all are in him* (πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ), and he is greater than all. One died for all that all may live in him (ἐν αὐτῷ). Death swallowed up the lamb for all¹⁶¹ and vomited forth all in him and with him since we *were all in Christ* (οἱ γὰρ πάντες ἤμεν ἐν τῷ) who died (ἀποθανόντι) and was raised (ἐγερθέντι) and was raised for us and on our behalf.”¹⁶² Then as well, we participate in his resurrection, “we consider that the mystery of Christ’s resurrection extends to the whole of humanity, and we believe that first in him our entire nature has been freed from decay. All will rise in the likeness of him who was raised for our sakes and *has all people in himself*, in that he is a human being.”¹⁶³ We are, also, loved by the Father in him: “...(since the entire *human nature was in Christ*, trampling on the chains of death). In the same way he should be understood to receive the Father’s love not for

¹⁶⁰ *Jo.* 10.2 (PG 74, 432-433; Pusey II. 618-620); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 251-2.

¹⁶¹ Isaiah 25:8.

¹⁶² *Jo.* 2 (PG 73, 192; Pusey I. 170-1); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 76. See also, *Jo.* 2.1 (PG 73, 208; Pusey I. 185); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 82: “Although he was life by nature, he died for our sakes according to the flesh in order to conquer death for us and to raise our entire nature with him. (We were all in him because he became human.)”

¹⁶³ *Jo.* 4.2 (PG 73, 568; Pusey I. 520); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 232.

himself (since he was always and forever loved), but he received this love from the Father when he became human in order to bestow the Father's love on us."¹⁶⁴

Equivalently, we receive the spirit due to our presence in him.

The Father says that he who is God before time, begotten of him, has been begotten today so that *in him* the Father may receive us into *adoption*, since all of humanity is in Christ because he is human. Thus, he is said to give the Spirit to the Son, who has the Spirit as his own, so that *in him* we may obtain the Spirit... But since he became human, he had the *entire nature* in himself so that he might transform it to its original condition and set it all right.¹⁶⁵

However, the salvation narrative does not end there, we ascend into heaven, appear before God the Father and sit at his right hand side because the Word carried us in his holy flesh and we are elevated into adoptive sonship. Concerning this endowment Cyril writes:

We who bore the image of the earthly man could not escape corruption unless the call to *sonship* placed in us the splendor of the image of the heavenly man. We became *participants* (μέτοχοι) in him through the Spirit. However, we will not be sons of God unchangeably like he is, but we will be sons of God *in relation to him*¹⁶⁶ by the *grace* of imitation (ἀλλ' ὡς πρὸς ἐκεῖνον διὰ τῆς κατὰ μίμησιν χάριτος). He is the true Son existing from the Father, but we are adopted because of his love for humanity, and we receive as a share in grace the words "I said, 'You are gods, and you are all sons of the Most High.'¹⁶⁷... Being something by nature is different from being something by adoption, and being something truly is different from being something by imitation. We are called sons by adoption and by imitation. Therefore, he is Son by nature and in truth. We who are made sons too are compared with him. We enjoy the good that comes by *grace* rather than the honors that come by *nature*.¹⁶⁸

While emphasizing that we are adopted into Christ, he differentiates between what belongs to the Son by nature and what humanity has acquired by grace through participation in the Word of God. In this regard, Cyril focuses on the relationship between the head and the members of the body (the church) and perceives it as a participation μετοχή, μέθεξις.

He makes a clear distinction between that which is something by nature and those that are the same thing by grace (χάριτι) ; between that which is *participated in* (τὸ μετεχόμενον) and those that *participate in* (ἐν μεθέξει) it; between that which supplies itself to those in need and those that receive the abundance... They will

¹⁶⁴ Jo. 11.12 (PG 74, 565; Pusey III, 4); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 307.

¹⁶⁵ Jo. 5.2 (PG 73, 753; Pusey I. 692-693); *Commentary on John*, vol. 1, 309.

¹⁶⁶ "Everyone agrees that we have become *related* (συγγενεῖς) to him (God) due to the *flesh* in the mystery of Christ." Jo. 5.5 (PG 73, 869; Pusey II. 72); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 358.

¹⁶⁷ Psalm 82:6.

¹⁶⁸ Jo. 1.9 (PG 73, 153; Pusey I. 133-4); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 60.

receive the beams of the true light and be made to shine brightly by *participation* (μεθέξις) in the divine nature.¹⁶⁹

Accordingly, Cyril's soteriology does not only relate to our participation in Christ's salvific acts it rather involves our participation in the Son's prerogatives and goes as far as participating, according to our capacity as human beings, in his divine nature, where Cyril is considered as the most frequent user of the text of 2Peter 1:4 among ecclesiastical writers.¹⁷⁰

Individual vs. Collective Incarnation

Our salvation is, then, rooted in the mystery of our incorporation in Christ. This corporate representation of Christ serves as a major salvific theme in the Greek patristic tradition. This approach prompted some modern theologians like Harnack to wonder as to whether Christ possesses a common or an individuated nature in Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa's theology.¹⁷¹ This section argues that by developing the corporate Christology of his predecessors, Cyril, first, does not overlook the individuality of Christ and second, he appears to be intentionally bringing about a tension between the individual and collective approach within his Christology. Finally, by underscoring the process of transmission of the salvific effects from the head of the body to the rest of its members, Cyril is standing midway between Augustine who attributes our participation in Christ actions to the mysterious side of the person of Christ and Aquinas who interprets the Pauline notion of the headship of Christ through Aristotelian causality (as will be shown in the next chapter).

Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa

Athanasius writes: "For this end was he manifested," as John has written, "that he might destroy the works of the devil."¹⁷² And these being destroyed from the flesh, *we all* were thus

¹⁶⁹ *Jo.* 1.8 (PG 73, 112; Pusey I. 96); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 43.

¹⁷⁰ Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 192.

¹⁷¹ Louis Bouyer, *L'Incarnation et L'Eglise-Corps du Christ dans la théologie de saint Athanase*, vol. 11, Unam Sanctam (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1943), 125-126.

¹⁷² 1John 3:8.

liberated by the *kinship of the flesh*, and for the future *were joined, even we*, to the Word.”¹⁷³

Accordingly, the mystery of incarnation for Athanasius carries a collective character since the whole of humanity is joined to the divine Word and benefits from his actions. This universal approach is also found in Gregory of Nyssa where he portrays Adam in a corporate sense:

When the story says that ‘God made man’, humanity is indicated on account of the indefiniteness of the expression. For Adam is not now named together with the created object as the story does subsequently; the name given to the created human being is not the particular but the *universal*. Through the universal term of the nature, we are led to assume something like this: that in the divine foreknowledge and power the *whole of humanity* was included in the first creation.¹⁷⁴

Zachhuber notices that the human nature in this passage is referred to as ‘the universal as the whole or a totality which is one... even though this same whole also exists in many individuals. [Though] this last point is less emphasized in the present text.’¹⁷⁵. Hence, the collective dimension of a common human nature is apparent in both Athanasius and Gregory. So, in response to this approach Harnack writes: “Athanasius appears to, sometimes, express himself as if Christ’s humanity was not an individual but rather a universal one embracing all men. One cannot see but an abuse of platonic language that one can also be found in Gregory of Nyssa...”¹⁷⁶

Cyril of Alexandria and the Incarnation

Cyril on the other hand did not escape similar criticism from Harnack, who in his fourth edition of *Histoire des dogmes*, thought to have found in the writings of Cyril the affirmation of a union between the Word and the Universal human nature.¹⁷⁷ Cyril, at first glance, does

¹⁷³ CA 2.69.

¹⁷⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *Op. hom.* 16 (PG 44, 185 BC)

¹⁷⁵ Johannes Zachhuber, *The Rise of Christian Theology and the End of Ancient Metaphysics: Patristic Philosophy from the Cappadocian Fathers to John of Damascus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 59-60.

¹⁷⁶ Harnack, *Histoire des dogmes*, tome II, 7ed (Paris, 1924), 151. However, Louis Bouyer refutes Harnack’s claim in his monograph *L’Incarnation et L’Eglise-Corps du Christ dans la théologie de saint Athanase*, 92-131.

¹⁷⁷ A. Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, 4th edition, (1909), 167, cited in Du Manoir, *Dogme et Spiritualité chez S. Cyrille d’Alexandrie*, 317.

give the impression that Christ possesses a universal human nature. In his commentary on John, he writes:

He also reveals another profound mystery to us when he affirms for our benefit that the Word ‘dwelt in us’: *We were all in Christ*, (πάντες γὰρ ἡμεν ἐν Χριστῷ) and the shared properties of our human nature were taken up into his person. That is why he is called the *last Adam*. (ἔσχατος Ἀδάμ) He gives all the riches of his tranquility and glory to our *common nature*, (τῇ κοινότητι τῆς φύσεως) just as the first Adam gave corruption and shame. Therefore, *the Word “dwelt in” all people through the one man* (ἐν πᾶσι τοιγαροῦν ὁ Λόγος ἐσκήνωσε δι’ ἐνός) so that when the one man “was designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness,” this honor might extend to all humanity (εἰς ὅλην ἔρχεται τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα τὸ ἀξίωμα)... The Word dwells in the one temple, taken from us and for us, *as he dwells in all people*, so that *having everyone in himself* he might reconcile *everyone in one body* with the Father,¹⁷⁸ as Paul says.¹⁷⁹

While, phrases such as ‘by likeness with him, through the one man, the Word dwells in the one temple’ are indicative of Cyril’s preservation of the autonomy and individuality of Christ’s humanity. Phrases such as, ‘last Adam, common nature, we were all in Christ, having everyone in himself’ imply a collective incarnation. Hence, this passage contains a subtle tension between the common and individuated human nature of Christ, and this is a consistent theme in Cyril’s theology. However, in his attempt to appease this tension Cyril appeals to the notion of the church as the body of Christ in order to expound the process of the impartation of grace from Christ to the faithful in his accounts of Christ’s reception of the Spirit, crucifixion and resurrection.

In relation to the descent of the Spirit on Christ, Cyril writes:

Although he was life by nature, he died for our sakes according to the flesh in order to conquer death for us and *to raise our entire nature with him*. (καὶ ὅλην ἑαυτῷ συναναστήσῃ τὴν φύσιν) (*We were all in him because he became human*. (πάντες γὰρ ἡμεν ἐν αὐτῷ, καθὸ γέγονεν ἄνθρωπος) In the same way also, he received the Spirit for our sakes in order to sanctify our entire nature. *He did not come to help himself but to become for all of us the door, the beginning and the way* (καὶ θύρα καὶ ἀρχὴ καὶ ὁδὸς) to heavenly blessings.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ σκηνοῖ δὲ ὁ Λόγος ὡς ἐν πᾶσιν, ἐν ἐνὶ τῷ δι’ ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐξ ἡμῶν ληφθέντι ναῷ, ἵνα πάντας ἔχων ἐν ἑαυτῷ, “ἀποκαταλλάξῃ πάντας ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα,”

¹⁷⁹ *Jo.* 1.9 (PG 73, 161-164; Pusey I. 141-2); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 64.

¹⁸⁰ *Jo.* 2.1 (PG 73, 208; Pusey I. 185); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 82.

Cyril's usage of terms such as the *door*, the *beginning*, and the *way* highlights that Christ is treated as an independent and autonomous individual.¹⁸¹ However, Cyril juxtaposes this with the collective aspect of the redemptive incarnation when he uses expressions such as “to raise our entire nature with him” and “we were all in him because he became human” in the same passage. The following passage gives some sense of how Cyril handles this tension:

He ineffably united himself to our nature of his own will that he might *restore it first in himself* (ἐν ἑαυτῷ τε πρώτῳ) and *through himself* to that beauty that it had in the beginning (δι' ἑαυτοῦ πρὸς ἐκεῖνο πάλιν ἀναστοιχειώσας τὸ κάλλος). He was for us the *second Adam*, that is, the heavenly man. He was the *chief* of all and the *first fruits* (πρῶτός τε ἀπάντων καὶ ἀπαρχή) of those who are re-created to newness of life, that is, in incorruption and righteousness and sanctification through the Spirit. All this he did so that he might *convey his good attributes through himself to the entire race*. That is why, even though he was life by nature, he came to be among the dead, so that by destroying our death in us, he may refashion us into his own life.¹⁸²

By appealing to the notion of the body of Christ, Cyril is able to take into account the individualistic and collective aspects of his ecclesiology. He gives a clear sequence to the steps taken by the Incarnate Word in order to effect the process of the Spirit's impartation to the members of his body, the church. First, he ‘unites himself to our nature’. Then, he ‘restores it *first* in himself’.¹⁸³ Finally, he ‘conveys his good attributes through himself to the entire race’. This could only happen because we are all mystically related to him. This scheme is not only used by Cyril in his handling of Christ's baptism but also in dealing with his paschal events of crucifixion and resurrection. On John 19:40-41 Cyril writes:

The author says that this tomb is in a ‘garden’ and that it is ‘new’. This fact signifies to us in a type and sketch that Christ's death is the source that grants us entrance into paradise. He ‘entered as a *forerunner* (πρόδρομος) on our behalf’.¹⁸⁴ ...And the newness of the tomb signifies the strange and untrodden path, as it were, of the return from death to life and the renewal that Christ devised to counter decay. Our death becomes new in the death of Christ, transformed into a

¹⁸¹ Cf. *Jo.* 11.10 (PG 74, 544; Pusey II. 720-1); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 297, where he uses terms such as *firstborn*, the *beginning*, *door* and *way* to indicate the individualistic dimension of Christ.

¹⁸² *Jo.* 11.10 (PG 74, 545-8; Pusey II. 724); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 299.

¹⁸³ Cf. *Jo.* 9.1 (PG 74, 276; Pusey II.483); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 186: “Rather we believe that the Only Begotten became like us to bring about blessings for our entire nature *through him and in him first*, as the *first fruits* of humanity (ὡς ὅλη τῆ φύσει δι' ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ πρώτῳ καθάπερ ἐν ἀπαρχῇ τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος περιποιήσων τὰ ἀγαθὰ).”

¹⁸⁴ Hebrews 6:20.

kind of sleep with similar power and functions. Since we will live in the future, we are now ‘alive to God,’ according to the Scriptures.¹⁸⁵

For death reigned ‘from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam.’¹⁸⁶ And we have “borne the image of the man of dust,” enduring death by the divine curse just like he did. When the *second Adam* appeared to us, the divine man from heaven, and contended for the life of all, he purchased the life of all by the death of his flesh. He destroyed the power of decay and returned to life again. *We were then transformed (μετεπλάσθημεν) into his image so that we experience a new kind of death,* as it were—not one that dissolves us into decomposition forever but one that sends us a sleep that is full of good hope, *just like (καθ’ ὁμοιότητα) the sleep of him who has renewed this path for us, that is, Christ.*”¹⁸⁷

This passage depicts Cyril’s preservation of Christ’s autonomy, by appealing to such terms as *forerunner* (πρόδρομος) and *just like* (καθ’ ὁμοιότητα), while the collective aspect of his incarnation is highlighted through the transmission of the effects of Christ’s resurrection to the members of his body. Here we also see the successive steps that were undertaken so that humanity might overcome death. First, by virtue of becoming a man and a forerunner, the Incarnate Word steps, as a man, into a path that was never trodden by human beings. Subsequently, ‘our *death becomes new in the death of Christ*, transformed into a kind of sleep with *similar power and functions*’. But how does this take place? It is through the impartation of the effects and power of resurrection to human kind that, ‘*we were then transformed (μετεπλάσθημεν) into his image so that we experience a new kind of death,... just like (καθ’ ὁμοιότητα) the sleep of him who has renewed this path for us, that is, Christ*’. So, his victory as one of us has triggered the destruction of death dominion over mankind once and for all by the extension its effects to the rest of human race in virtue of our solidarity with him. “We have overcome decay and death because Christ rose as a human being for us and in our place, making his own resurrection the *beginning (ἀρχὴν)* of conquest over death. The power of that event (πράγματος δύναμις) will surely extend (διήκοι) to us as

¹⁸⁵ Romans 6:11.

¹⁸⁶ Romans 5:19.

¹⁸⁷ *Jo.* 12 (PG 74, 680-681; Pusey III, 105-6); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 355.

well since the one who conquered was one of us in that he appeared as a human being... (since Christ *conveyed that good to us as his own relatives*).”¹⁸⁸

In conclusion and in response to Harnack’s claim that Cyril’s Christology does not accommodate for an individuated humanity for the Incarnate Word, it has been depicted that Cyril does take into consideration the individual humanity of Christ. However, it is the effects of the redemptive incarnation and Christ’s salvific actions that bear universal implications.¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, it is clear that a certain tension arises between the individuated and common natures within Christ in Cyril’s writings, between saying “we are all in him” from the moment of incarnation and saying he “imparts to us” the effects of things Christ has accomplished for us. And this tension may be part of the ineffable mystery of incarnation. However, by appealing to the ecclesial theme of the body of Christ, Cyril is combining the particular and universal natures in Christ and epitomizing the impartation of divine treasures from the head to the members of the body. And this positions Cyril’s ecclesiology halfway between Augustine and Aquinas’ accounts of the body of Christ.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Cyril’s Christological outlook and its relation to the faithful has been assessed in the *Glaphyra*, his *Commentary on John*, and *On the Unity of Christ*. It is clear that his account of the church emanates from his Christology which revolves around the incarnation which is perceived, by Cyril, as a mystery and it stems from his soteriological concerns. Therefore, his Christology, ecclesiology and soteriology are deeply interwoven and our mystical solidarity with Christ is at the helm of Cyril’s ecclesiology. Moreover, there is an

¹⁸⁸ *Jo.* 11.2 (PG 74, 473; Pusey II. 657); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 268.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Du Manoir, *Dogme et Spiritualité chez S. Cyrille d’Alexandrie*, 320: “The unique incarnation of the Logos has a collective effect; the repercussions of which are to be experienced by those who are consubstantial with him according to the flesh; by virtue of it’s being a divine flesh,... the grace will be transmitted and the whole nature will be free from corruption. The life of the vine stock is transmitted in all the branches and the life of the head is transmitted in its members.”

obvious causality between this mystery and Christ's vocations as second Adam, conjoiner of and mediator between humanity and God, which are imbued with soteriological implications. These Christological roles and their relation to the incarnation have been addressed in the three tractates and it was found that there is no radical change of Cyril's approach to these topics. However, they are dealt with at more length in the second treatise. This may be due to the theological objective or the timing of writing the monograph or the biblical text that Cyril is exegetically commenting on. However, given the time frame in which it was written, *On the Unity of Christ* is more Christologically and linguistically developed than the other two discourses. Furthermore, it was found that several theological themes in Cyril can be traced back to Irenaeus of Lyon and Athanasius. In summary, the following sentence epitomizes the relationship between the incarnation and the church, where in his fourth sermon at the council of Ephesus, Cyril addresses the Theotokos saying: "Through you... churches have been established."¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ *Sermon IV*, PG 77: 992 C. (δι ἧς εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην Ἐκκλησίαι τεθεμελίωται).

CHAPTER II: Yves Congar's Christological Ecclesiology and the Alexandrian Tradition

Introduction

Yves Congar (1904-1995) wrote many treatises regarding the church, and his work has been the subject of study by many scholars.¹ Though he is renowned for his Pneumatological contribution within the Catholic tradition, his early Christological ecclesiology should not be overlooked. The aim of this chapter is to examine the development of Congar's Christological ecclesiology and assess whether it overlaps with that of Cyril of Alexandria. I will argue that Congar's Christology is heavily informed by that of Aquinas and Möhler and, consequently, also deeply informed by the Alexandrian tradition. The underlying principle of Congar's Christological ecclesiology is the mystery of incarnation. On this basis he not only likens the structure of the church to the hypostatic union of the Incarnate Word, but also justifies the need for human mediation within her. However, thinking that in his day this focus has shortcomings, Congar appeals to the idea of the church as a sacrament and subsequently as a communion in order to advance the role of the laity within the church. This shift in emphasis is accompanied by a gradual departure from the Aristotelian/Thomistic scheme of causality to an Augustinian/Cyrrillian notion of participation. However, this shift results in a significant tension. As he tries to assign a more integral role for the Holy Spirit in his Christology, and as he places more weight on a theology of participation, Congar also,

¹ Timothy I. MacDonald, *The Ecclesiology of Yves Congar: Foundational Themes* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1984); Thomas Ivory, "The Nature of the Church in the Thought of Yves Congar, O.P." (Ms. Art dissertation, University of Manitoba, 1986); Joseph Famerée, *L'Écclésiologie d'Yves Congar avant Vatican II: histoire et Église: analyse et reprise critique* (Leuven: Leuven UP, 1992); Gabriel Flynn, *Yves Congar's Vision of the Church in a World of Unbelief* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004); Essays in *Yves Congar Theologian of the Church*, ed. Gabriel Flynn (Louvain, Paris, Dudley, MA: Peeters Press, W. B. Eerdmans, 2005) and Robert Peter Cameron Brown, "Towards A Personal Ontology of The Church: The Church as Bride in the Theology of Congar and Bulgakov" (Ph.D. thesis, *Durham University*, 2013).

and surprisingly, actually departs from the traditional Christological focus of Thomas and Cyril.

I will make this argument by, first, exploring the incarnational perspective of both Aquinas and Möhler, in order to show that an Alexandrian Christology undergirds theirs. Second, I will explore Congar's Christological ecclesiology in four texts that span his long writing career and reflect the development of his theology, while highlighting the reasons for his change of approach. Finally, I will show where Cyril and Congar's Christology and ecclesiology converge and diverge.

Thomas Aquinas and Cyril of Alexandria

In the 13th century, western theology was characterized by the growing influence of Aristotelian philosophy. A well-developed and complex concept of causality, whose essence is the 'generation and determination of one phenomena by another,' is a salient feature of this philosophy, and one that had a significant impact on theological discussions during this period.² Aquinas used the Greek philosopher's concepts and language in reinterpreting the writings of the Greek Fathers, but how far can we still say that Aquinas's Christology was informed by that of Cyril of Alexandria? Emery suggests that Thomas' theological roots can be conceived in two ways. First, one can assess the cited content of a certain author in relation to a certain subject. "On a second and *more profound* level, one must consider the use that St. Thomas makes of this author, the interpretation that he gives - that is, what the theological source *becomes* when it enters into the body of St. Thomas's reflection."³ In light of this, I will argue that Cyril laid the foundation for Thomas's account of the mode of union between the divine and the human in Christ, and the transformation of Christ's humanity into a salvific instrument of his divinity. However, despite their agreement on the vitality of our incorporation into Christ for our salvation, Cyril tends to appeal to Platonic notions of

² Emile Mersch, S.J., *The Whole Christ*, 3rd Impression (London: Dennis Dobson, 1962), 452-454.

³ Gilles Emery, *Trinity, Church and the Human Person: Thomistic Essays* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2007), 198.

participation, while Aquinas draws more on Aristotelian conceptions of causality. In the next few pages I explore the relationship between these two thinkers by examining in turn four themes: the hypostatic union; Christ's humanity as an instrument; the grace of Christ as head; the salvific implications of incorporation into Christ. Examining these four themes will show us both ways in which Aquinas seems to be dependent on Cyril, and ways in which the two Christologies share many parallels despite their different philosophical contexts.

Hypostatic Union

As depicted in the previous chapter, for Cyril the incarnation involves the union of two different realities as a life-giving transaction. The power of divinity heals and transforms the fallibility of humanity. "The Spirit of him who says, 'I am the life,' departed from the earthly flesh, and the living being fell into death through the flesh alone... That in us which was in the most danger had to be vigorously restored and called back to incorruption by being intertwined once again with life by nature."⁴ Hence, Cyril's incarnational theology attends to his soteriological concerns. The Logos did not need to appropriate flesh but he did so for our benefit. For Cyril the Word is the single subject of the incarnation event, "this is why all the sayings in the Gospels are to be attributed to the one *prosopon*, and to the one enfleshed hypostasis of the Word."⁵

Cyril argues that this hypostatic union does not detract from either the divine or human nature of Christ. On the contrary, through this union, the *Word confers upon His flesh the glory of the God-befitting energy.*⁶ At the same time by virtue of the economy, the Word also appropriates characteristics pertaining to the flesh to Himself. This process is called *communication of idioms.*⁷ The unification of the two natures in Christ has allowed for *an*

⁴ Cyril, *Jo.* 1.9 (PG 73, 159; Pusey I. 139); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 63.

⁵ *Third Letter to Nestorius*, para.8, quoted in McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and The Christological Controversy*, 20.

⁶ Cf. *Inc. unigen.* (SC 97. 707 a-b), 278; *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 777 d-e), *On the Unity of Christ*, 132-3.

⁷ Ezra Gebremedhin, *Life-Giving Blessing: An Inquiry into the Eucharistic Doctrine of Cyril of Alexandria* (Motala, Sweden: Borgstroms Tryckeri AB, 1977), 39-40.

exchange of properties in Christ's hypostasis. One can say the Son of God is dead. Although death is a human attribute, it is here ascribed to the Word. Communication of idioms is nothing more than ascribing human properties to Christ-God, and divine properties to Christ-man,⁸ while Christ remains simultaneously the God-man. However, for Cyril *communication of idioms* is not only a practice of speech or matter of us "saying" that the Son of God suffers, it is rather a matter of the properties themselves of both natures being true in Christ. In his *Second Letter to Nestorius* Cyril writes: "So it is we say that he both suffered, and rose again, not meaning that the Word of God suffered in his own nature but in so far as that which had become his own body suffered, then he himself is said to suffer these things, for our sake, because the Impassible One was in the suffering body." So suffering is predicate to the Word with two qualifications: it applies to the Word made flesh, and it happens economically ("it was the Only Begotten Son of God, God the Word who is of the substance of the Father, who suffered for us in the flesh as man (even though he is incapable of suffering in his own nature, in so far he is understood as God),⁹ for a salvific purpose of transfiguring mankind) not absolutely. Yet it remains that it is the Word who is the subject of suffering.¹⁰ Then Cyril adds his mysterious formula: The Logos suffered impassibly (ἔπαθεν ἀπαθῶς).¹¹

So for Cyril, communication of idioms, which is highlighted in Cyril's fourth and sixth anathemas, is a direct consequence of the hypostatic union and it consists of attributing all the actions, passions and peculiarities of divinity or humanity to the Incarnate Word. Cyril does not consider the humanity of Christ as the *subject* of the actions or passions of Jesus Christ but he contends that it is the Word who acts or suffers *in* or *through* his flesh (σαρκί).¹²

⁸ Hubert Du Manoir, *Dogme et Spiritualité chez S. Cyrille d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1944), 145.

⁹ *Scholia* 35, in McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and The Christological Controversy*, 332.

¹⁰ Cyril, *Second Letter to Nestorius*, para.8, quoted in McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and The Christological Controversy*, 203.

¹¹ Cyril, *Scholia* 37 (Pusey vi. 574, and A.C.O.I.1.5.50.9) cited in Henry Chadwick, "Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy," *Journal of Theological Studies*. N.S., Vol. II, Pt. 2 (October 1951): 158-159; *On John* 19:26-27 (PG 74, 664B, Pusey 3.91.23); *De recta fide ad reginas*, 42 (PG 76,1393B).

¹² Manoir, *Dogme et Spiritualité*, 148-149.

Aquinas and Nestorianism

Aquinas spent around four years in Orvieto, Italy, where he carefully read the acts of the councils of Ephesus, Chalcedon, and Constantinople II. “As a result he became sensitive to the importance of Cyril’s single-subject Christology...and he developed a more focused analysis and critique of Nestorianism as a form of heterodoxy.”¹³

For Nestorius the hypostatic union implies a unity of nature, so given that both human and divine properties are predicated of Christ, they have to be attributed to one nature. Thus, like his Alexandrian counterpart, Nestorius was facing a riddle. “Either there is a substantial union and one nature in Christ or there is an accidental union of two subjects and a distinction of natures in Christ.”¹⁴ In response to Nestorius’s views, Aquinas writes:

The heresy of Nestorius and Theodore of Mopsuestia ... *separated the persons*. For they held the person of the Son of God to be distinct from the person of the Son of Man, and said these were mutually united: first, “by indwelling,” inasmuch as the Word of God dwelt in the man, as in a temple; secondly, “by unity of intention,” inasmuch as the will of the man was always in agreement with the will of the Word of God; thirdly, “by operation,” inasmuch as they said the man was the instrument of the Word of God; fourthly, “by greatness of honor,” inasmuch as all honor shown to the Son of God was equally shown to the Son of Man, on account of His union with the Son of God; fifthly, “by equivocation,” i.e. communication of names, inasmuch as we say that this man is God and the Son of God. Now it is plain that these modes imply an accidental union.¹⁵

This passage is quite suggestive of Aquinas’ stance with regards to the mode of union in Christ. He perceives Nestorius’ union as “accidental” (of two entities sharing common properties). This accidental union can be formed by “by indwelling, by unity of intention, by operation, by greatness of honor, by equivocation.” Accordingly, ‘Christ is two subsistent entities joined or united by a kind of operational union, a moral synergy.’ And here the union is considered accidental to each ‘hypostatic subject or *suppositum*’ as it qualifies each subject

¹³ Thomas Joseph White, OP, *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology* ((Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 78:

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 80 and 82.

¹⁵ *ST III*, q. 2, a. 6.

but remains distinct from it.¹⁶ Emery adds that : “From the *Summa Contra Gentiles* onward, Thomas rejects the Antiochene Theology of *homo assumptus*...because it conceives the humanity of Jesus as a human being endowed with a proper hypostasis or subsistence besides the Word, which could constitute two suppositis in Christ (Nestorianism). Anathemas by St Cyril 2, 4, and 8.”¹⁷ But how then does Thomas perceive the coming together of the two natures in Christ?

Very much in line with Cyril, Aquinas describes the process of bringing together of the two natures as the hypostatic union. (*ST* III q. 2-15) This can be characterized as a natural union, in the sense that these two natures have been conjoined without confusion, in the Person of the Word. (a.1) Hence, the transaction does not involve any displacement of one nature by the other or any merging of the two natures together. Furthermore, “the personal union is not perceived by Aquinas in a Nestorian sense, as if one person were linked to a second union to form a team or partnership. [As in the case for Cyril], the incarnation, for Aquinas, involves the taking up by the Word of a second nature, and coming to express that nature as well. But, in this vein, talk of ‘personal’ union is thus acceptable, for, again, the natures are united precisely in the Person of the Word. (a.1)”¹⁸ “The Word of God does not have subsistence from the human nature, but rather *draws* the human nature to his own subsistence or personhood, for he does not subsist through it, but in it...He subsists through [*per*] the divine nature and not through [*per*] the human nature; rather, he draws it to his subsistence so that he would subsist in it.”¹⁹ Emery notices that like Cyril, who perceives the hypostatic union as ‘substantial appropriation’ by means of Which the Word ‘makes humanity his own’, Aquinas begins his Christology with the Word who appropriates a human nature and he even follows Cyril in his vocabulary, “Let the Word be set down as subsisting

¹⁶ White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 79 and 81.

¹⁷ *ScG* IV, c. 38, cited in Emery, *Trinity, Church and the Human Person*, 204.

¹⁸ Joseph Wawrykow, “Hypostatic Union,” in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IND: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 234.

¹⁹ *ScG* IV, c. 49.

in a human nature as in one made his very own (*in sibi propria facta*) by the incarnation.”²⁰ So Thomas’ scheme of hypostatic union is essentially Cyrillian, however the Latin theologian has developed it to accommodate for the Latin tradition. Yet, this mode of union remains fundamental to Aquinas’ theology and “its results determine the whole of Christology.”²¹

Aquinas perceives this union in terms of grace. He clearly distinguishes between the “grace of union” and the “habitual grace”²² that is proper to Jesus as man.²³ The grace of union is that grace (or “gift”) conferred upon Christ’s humanity by virtue of the incarnation, such that this humanity becomes the human nature of the Son of God. “For the grace of union is the personal being that is given *gratis* from above to the human nature in the person of the Word, and is the term of the assumption.”²⁴ In addition, by virtue of its proximity to the source of grace, the soul of Christ possessed the supreme degree of grace and “as perfectly as it could be had.”²⁵ Moreover, it was imperative that he would possess the maximum grace, so that it can be poured from him to others. Finally, he highlights that by virtue of its hypostatic union with the Logos the humanity of Christ receives an infinite grace and that person is infinite.²⁶

In conclusion, Cyril’s approach to the mode of union in Christ has informed that of Aquinas. Although Cyril expounds the transformation of Christ’s humanity, as a result of its union with the Logos, in terms of the communication of idioms, while Aquinas attributes this transformation to the ‘grace of union’, they both reach similar results with regards to Christ’s

²⁰ ScG IV, c. 41, cited in Emery, *Trinity, Church and the Human Person*, 202-203.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 202.

²² “Habitual grace, meanwhile, is that gift which pertains to all the saints insofar as they receive sanctifying grace from God. As such it is something created and finite which elevates the spiritual creature to share truly but imperfectly in the life of God.” Cf. (*ST* I-II, q. 110, a. 4; q. 111, a. 1 and 5) cited in White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 87.

²³ *ST* III, q. 2, a. 10; q. 6, a. 6; q. 7, a. 11.

²⁴ *ST* III, q. 6, a. 6, quoted in White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 87.

²⁵ *ST* III, q. 7 a. 9

²⁶ *ST* III, q. 7, a. 11, cited in White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 87.

humanity. This leads us to discuss how our two authors address Christ's humanity as an instrument (*organon*) of his divinity.

Christ's Humanity as Instrument of his Divinity

To understand Cyril's terminology we need to begin with his famous fourth century predecessor in Alexandria. Athanasius writes: "He, the Mighty One, the Artificer of all, Himself prepared this body in the virgin as a temple for Himself, and took it for His very own, as the instrument (*ἰδιοποιεῖται τοῦτο ὡσπερ ὄργανον*) through which He was known and in which He dwelt."²⁷ The term *ἴδιος* points to the closeness of the body to the Word. Louth explains: "For Athanasius the use of *ἴδιος* expresses the close union of God and man that takes place in the Incarnation, a close union necessary if the seriousness of man's fallen condition (understood as something interior, embedded) is to be dealt with."²⁸ So Athanasius uses this term to describe the type of union between the divinity and humanity in Christ, which is characterized by intimacy. But why did the Word united himself to a body and make it his own? According to Athanasius: "These points we have found it necessary first to examine, that, when we see him doing or saying aught divinely through the instrument of his own body (*αὐτὸν δι' ὄργάνου τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος*), we may know that he so works, being God, and also, if we see him speaking or suffering humanely, we may not be ignorant that he bore flesh and became man, and hence he so acts and so speaks."²⁹ However, the word did not cloth himself with a body only to manifest his divinity through it, but rather he has appropriated a body and deployed it as a universal instrument for salvation: "This He did out of sheer love for us, so that in his death all might die, and the law of death thereby be

²⁷ *De Inc.*, 8.

²⁸ Andrew Louth, "The Use of the Term *ἴδιος* in Alexandrian Theology from Alexander to Cyril," *SP* 19 (1989), 200.

²⁹ *Or. Ar.* 3:35.

abolished because, when he had fulfilled *in his body* that for which it was appointed, it was thereafter voided of its power for men.”³⁰

Few decades later and after the outbreak of the Nestorian controversy, Cyril, in his letter to the monks, highlights that Christ cannot to be reduced to an instrument like Moses since he is the Son of God. Cyril appeals to the following verses to support his view:

“For who in the heavens shall be compared to the Lord? and who shall be likened to the Lord among the sons of God?”³¹ He is “the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, and though Moses *was* faithful in all His house as a servant, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are.” (Hebrews 3:1-6)³²

However, building on Athanasius’ approach and language in perceiving Christ’s own body(humanity) as an instrument, Cyril writes: “Rather the body was made his very own (ιδία σαρκι) through a true union and thus served the function of an instrument (ὄργανον), in order to fulfill those things which it customarily does, sin alone excepted.”³³ For Cyril this fragile reality ‘the flesh’ is being used as a medium to convey or display the unlimited power of God that resides in him “For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”³⁴ Hence, this weak and passible tool ‘the flesh’ has become a salvific and powerful instrument due to its ineffable solidarity with the Word. Cyril substantiates his argument through several biblical examples. Commenting on Christ’s miracle of opening the eyes of the man born blind, Cyril states:

Even though he ordinarily accomplished whatever he wanted by a word, but he placed his hand on the bier, showing that even his *body* has life-giving energy (ἐνέργειαν). So also here, he smears saliva on the man, teaching that his *body* is the supplier of illumination even with a mere touch. That is because it is the *body* of the true light, as we have said.³⁵

Cyril also suggests that through the incarnation, the divine Logos takes on a flesh (human nature) which consequently becomes the ‘human’ reality of the one who is simultaneously

³⁰ *De Inc.*, 8.

³¹ Psalm 89:6.

³² *Lettre première aux moines d’Egypte*, P. G. 77: 32 B, 33 B. Chp.21, 22.

³³ *De incarnatione unigeniti* 692.17-20, in McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and The Christological Controversy*, 320.

³⁴ Colossians 2:9.

³⁵ *Jo.* 6.1 (PG 73, 964-5; Pusey II. 158); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 32.

God. This 'flesh' is lifted to a state of an unprecedented and extraordinary glory. Moreover, it becomes the economic instrument of the divine Logos. This transformation which occurs 'naturally' in Christ due to the divinity's appropriation of a human nature to itself, makes the flesh of Christ 'Life-giving'.³⁶ According to Cyril: "*And the flesh* itself was not sanctified on its own but by the presence of the Word, who was united to it. It was *transformed* in some way so that it had his own natural power, and it became the supplier *of salvation and sanctification* to all who *participate* in it."³⁷ Hence, due to its union with the divine nature, Christ's body has become a universal salvific instrument.

Echoing the Alexandrian Fathers, Aquinas perceives Christ's humanity as a salvific instrument of his divinity. However, he makes use of Aristotelian tools and language in developing this theme, where he uses the notions of *efficient* (divinity) and *instrumental* (humanity) *causalities*. This approach enables Aquinas to clearly distinguish between the divine and human natures within Christ (following the Chalcedonian definition) and to emphasize the role played by Christ as a man in human salvation. This feat can only be achieved by the Word of God. However, given the unity the Logos has with his human nature, the latter participates in Christ's soteriological acts, where the Word acts as the 'principal' or 'efficient' cause, while the human nature acts as the 'instrumental' cause. "Moved by the divine Person of the Word (like a brush moved by a painter), Christ's humanity truly produces or causes human salvation. So, Aquinas declares that Christ's humanity acts as the *conjoined "instrument" (organum)* of his divinity."³⁸ "giving life to bodies as well as to souls is attributed to the divinity of the Word as acting principally, and to the humanity [of the Word] as an instrument."³⁹ Here, drawing on Aristotelian logic,

³⁶ McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and The Christological Controversy*, 184-187.

³⁷ *Jo.* 11.9 (PG 74, 520; Pusey II. 699-700); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 287.

³⁸ Paul Gondreau, "The Humanity of Christ, The Incarnate Word" in eds. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow, *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IND: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 262-4.

³⁹ *De Ver.*, q. 29, a. 4, *ad* 1.

Aquinas draws a clear distinction between the roles played by the divinity and humanity of Christ. Later in the *Summa*, quoting John Damascene, Aquinas states:

As Saint John Damascene says, Christ's humanity is like "*the instrument of his divinity*." Now, the instrument does not produce the act of the principal agent by virtue of its own effectiveness, but only through the motion of that principal agent. That is why the humanity of Christ does not cause grace by itself, but only through the divinity to which it is united and that makes its acts to be salutary.⁴⁰

Torrell explains that for Thomas there are two types of instruments a separate and extrinsic one, like a tool or an axe, and an intrinsic one that is joined to the person, like his hand. And it is in the second category that Christ's humanity falls. It is an inseparable instrument of the Son of God.⁴¹ "It is through the intermediary of the joined instrument that the separate instrument is set in motion, such as the staff by the hand. Now, the main *efficient cause of grace* is *God* himself, for whom Christ's humanity is a *joined instrument* and the sacrament a separate instrument. That is why it is necessary that the salvific efficacy (*uirtus*) of Christ's divinity pass through his humanity in the sacraments."⁴² Here, the relationship between the divinity and humanity of Christ is understood in an Aristotelian way, the conjoined instrument (humanity) operates through the motion of the principle efficient cause (divinity). Finally, treating the humanity of Christ as a "conjoined instrument", allows Aquinas to, first, accentuate the closeness of the divinity and humanity in Christ. Second, to maintain the integrity of Christ's humanity. Third, to show the role it plays in the divine plan of salvation. It is the medium through which the divine Word executes it. Finally, to differentiate between the type of union enacted in Christ and our union to him, since we are "not conjoined instruments of the divinity."⁴³

In conclusion, Aquinas' portrayal of Christ's humanity as 'instrumental efficient cause' is crucial to his Christology as "it procures this properly divine effect through the motion of the

⁴⁰ *ST* III q. 112.

⁴¹ Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Vol.2: Spiritual Master*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 129.

⁴² *ST* q. 6.

⁴³ Joseph Wawrykow, "Grace" in eds. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow, *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IND: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 213.

divine nature and by participation in the divine operation.”⁴⁴ Moreover, while Athanasius and Cyril use the term ἴδιος to denote the intimacy of relation between the humanity and divinity in Christ, Thomas uses the term ‘conjoined’. Regarding this point Torell argues that:

According to Saint Cyril, Nestorius stated that the Word had assumed his humanity, not by way of personal union, but only in the way we might make use of an instrument. In that view, the man Christ was not truly God but only his *organon*, his instrument. Saint Cyril simply rejects that way of speaking about this subject. But Saint John Damascene, following Saint Athanasius among others, recognizes a portion of truth in Nestorius.⁴⁵

In his letter to the monks, Cyril did indeed reject the representation of the man Jesus as an instrument as proposed by Nestorius, “This is why we do not say that the temple born from the holy virgin was assumed in the order of an *instrument*, but rather we follow in the faith of the sacred scriptures and the sayings of the saints and we maintain that the Word became flesh.”⁴⁶ But here Cyril’s does not reject the instrumental scheme per se, but rather the degree of intimacy between the divine Logos and manhood in Christ as posited by Nestorius, which designates Christ’s humanity as a separate instrument rather than a ‘conjoined’ one:

So if anyone attributes to him only and solely the function of an instrument, he thereby denies, like it or not, that he is the Son in truth. Let us suppose, for argument’s sake, that we take a man. Let him have a son who is skilled on the lyre and is able to sing most beautifully. Would such a man consider that the lyre and this functional act of singing were on the same level as his son? Would not such a thing be the height of absurdity? For the lyre is taken up to demonstrate a skill, but the son, even without the instrument, is still the son of his parent. But if one argues that the one born of a woman was assumed for a service, so that wonders could be accomplished through him, and the proclamation of the evangelical oracles could shine out, then it follows that we ought to call each of the holy prophets also an instrument of the deity.⁴⁷

Here the overlap between Cyril and Thomas lies in the portrayal of Christ’s humanity not only as an instrument but rather as an intrinsic one analogous to a hand’s connection to a person. However, given his Chalcedonian background, Aquinas puts more emphasis on the distinction between the divinity and humanity in Christ. Furthermore, given his rootedness in

⁴⁴ Emery, *Trinity, Church and the Human Person*, 200.

⁴⁵ Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 129.

⁴⁶ *Letter to the Monks*, para. 23, in McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and The Christological Controversy*, 259.

⁴⁷ *Scholia*, 25, in McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and The Christological Controversy*, 320.

Aristotle, Thomas uses Aristotelian terms such as ‘*efficient cause*’ that are not typically utilized by Cyril. Finally, the influence of Greek Fathers on the Catholic theologian is so obvious with regards to this notion, which led Congar to Claim: “Even more than Aristotle, it was the Greek Fathers Cyril of Alexandria and John Damascene who gave him the idea of the holy humanity of Christ as an organ of divinity.”⁴⁸

Grace of the Head

“Grace is that which enables us to do what is beyond us, to be more than we are: to be gracefully.”⁴⁹ By virtue of becoming an instrumental cause of salvation the humanity of Christ is characterized by a universal dimension. Commenting on John 1:16, Cyril writes: “From ‘the fullness’ of the Son, as from an ever-flowing spring, the gift of divine graces gushes forth to each soul that is shown worthy to receive it. If the Son gives from his natural fullness then the creature receives.”⁵⁰ So, for Cyril, by virtue of being the Son of God, Christ possesses the fullness of grace. Subsequently, in the wake of the incarnation, he becomes the source or fountain from which the divine graces are imparted into the members of his body. “So also he maintains that he sanctifies himself for us, so that this act may *extend* (δραμόντος) to us in the first fruits of our renewed nature, and in him we too may be “sanctified by the truth,” that is, by the Holy Spirit. For the truth is the Spirit, as John says. (1John 5:6)”⁵¹

For Aquinas grace is present in the humanity of Christ under three forms: the grace of union, his personal grace, and the grace of the head.

Now we do not only find in the *head* of a natural body the sensitive power that allows it to see, hear, touch, and so forth; *but we also find in the head as in its*

⁴⁸ Yves Congar, *The Spirit of God: Short Writings on the Holy Spirit*, eds. Susan Brown, Mark Ginter, and Joseph Mueller, trans. Susan Brown, Mark Ginter, Joseph Mueller, and Catherine Clifford (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press 2018), 185.

⁴⁹ Philip McCosker, “Grace,” 207. Downloaded from <https://www.cambridge.org/core>.

⁵⁰ *Jo.* 1.9 (PG 73, 169; Pusey I. 148); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 67.

⁵¹ *Jo.* 11.10 (PG 74, 552; Pusey II. 727); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 301.

root that from which the senses flow into the other members. Thus, in Christ, the same habitual grace is called “grace of *union*” as is fitting to a nature united to divinity, “*capital* grace” as it pours forth on others for their salvation, and “*personal* grace” as it enables his humanity to do meritorious actions.⁵²

So according to Thomas the grace of the head is the same as the individual grace of the Savior. In this regard, Congar comments:

The ‘grace of union’ is also the ontological consecration of that human nature. Because it is ordered to a work of salvation and sanctification, the grace of union calls for a created grace which is given, as an operative principle, to Christ in the greatest fullness not only for himself in his individuality, but for all those whom he must save and sanctify.⁵³

Moreover, Aquinas attributes the universal salvific efficacy of Christ’s humanity to his vocation as the head of the church: “I answer that, as we have said above, grace has been given to Christ, not only as an individual, but as head of the church; that is to say, in order that it might *flow* from him into his members. *Thus the actions of Christ have the same relation both to himself and to his members,* as the actions of a man in the state of grace have to the man himself.”⁵⁴

The Salvific Implications of our Incorporation into Christ

Cyril suggests that in virtue of the incarnation Christ’s actions bear universal salvific implications: “Although he was life by nature, he died *for our sakes* according to the flesh in order to conquer death for us and to raise our entire nature with him. (*We were all in him because he became human.*)”⁵⁵ Besides, Cyril argues that we participate in Christ’s death and resurrection:

For while she [the Church] is in the world on account of her life in the flesh, it is as though she is hidden, not possessing any splendor in the world. She has in effect been buried with Christ. This, I believe, is what the most-wise Paul meant when he said to us, ‘For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.’⁵⁶

⁵² *De ver.*, q. 29 a. 5.

⁵³ *De Ver.*, q. 29, a. 5, *ad 7*; ST 3a, q. 7 and 8, cited in Congar, *Short Writings on the Holy Spirit*, 186.

⁵⁴ ST III, q. 48, art. 1, c..

⁵⁵ *Jo.* 2.1 (PG 73, 208; Pusey I. 185); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 82.

⁵⁶ Colossians 3:3

Let us then commend such a death of the Church which brings forth the principles of a holy life, a life that is *in Christ*.⁵⁷

Hence, Cyril conceives the soteriological effects of Christ's saving acts through talking about the faithful's participation in the life of Christ. Although Cyril here draws on the firmly Biblical language of a life "in" Christ, one can also see in his thought echoes of Platonic tradition.

On the other hand, Aquinas interprets the Pauline concept of the head through an Aristotelian metaphysical conception of the 'Principle of the Maximum', where "the first and maximum in a genus is the cause of all those contained in that genus."⁵⁸ Accordingly, Christ as head is a *first* and *maximum* cause of all those contained in the genus of creatures receiving the communication of beatitude."⁵⁹ This is reflected in his portrayal of Christ's resurrection as the efficient cause of our resurrection:

[Christ's resurrection] is the *efficient cause* [of our resurrection], inasmuch as Christ's humanity, according to which He rose again, is as it were the *instrument* of His Godhead, and works by Its power. And therefore, just as all other things which Christ did and endured in his humanity are profitable to our salvation through the power of the Godhead, so also is Christ's Resurrection the *efficient cause* of ours, through the Divine power whose office it is to quicken the dead... But just as the Resurrection of Christ's body, through its personal union with the Word, is first in point of time, so also is it first in dignity and perfection; as the gloss says on 1 Cor. 15:20, 23. But whatever is most perfect is always the *exemplar*, which the less perfect copies according to its mode; consequently Christ's Resurrection is the *exemplar* of ours. And this is necessary, not on the part of Him who rose again, who needs no exemplar, but on the part of them who are raised up, who must be likened to that Resurrection, according to Phil. 3:21: 'He will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of His glory.'⁶⁰

This rich passage reveals to us Aquinas' perception of the relation between Christ's resurrection and ours. Here Christ is portrayed as the new Adam who given his human nature, is destined to death. However, as a resurrected man he discloses to us the new destiny which

⁵⁷ *Glaph.* 6 (PG 69, 329) *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.1, 308.

⁵⁸ See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 2 (a), 1, 993b24–25.).

⁵⁹ John Emery, OP, "Aquinas's Christology of Communication," in *Thomas Aquinas and the Crisis of Christology* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria Univeristy, 2021), 182. Emery adds that, "in spite of the prevalence of the term "maximum" when referring to this metaphysical teaching, for Aquinas it is the priority of the principle, or the fact that it is "first," which determines how it is applied." *ST* III, q. 8, a. 1, c; III, q. 8, a. 4, c.

⁶⁰ *ST* I, q. 56, a. 1, ad 3.

awaits humankind.⁶¹ Christ is also an exemplar, but not just as someone whom we should follow, but as an exemplar whose actions have universal effects and who is able to transform or transfigure our human nature (Exemplary Causality). It is “an ‘ontological’ exemplarity because the being of the recipient, or effect, is like that of the cause.”⁶² Moreover, Christ’s resurrection reveals to us Christ’s divinity, which possesses the ‘power whose office it is to quicken the dead’. Finally, Thomas’s intensive reliance on Aristotelian tools and language is clear in his usage of notions such as ‘efficient causality, instrumental causality and exemplary’.

In conclusion, for both Cyril and Thomas, the underpinning of our resurrection lies in the mystery of our ontological relationship with Christ. While the Alexandrian theologian reads it in Platonic terms, Thomas understands it in an Aristotelian way. However, the parallelism in the soteriology of the two theologians is obvious. Furthermore, this section clearly underscores how “Cyril furnishes Thomas with the foundation of his speculative Christology.”⁶³

Johann Adam Möhler

Having considered the parallels between Cyril and Thomas as one influence on Congar, I will now examine Möhler as another influence that also shows Congar’s thought to be informed by the Greek tradition, even if indirectly. Möhler’s theology of the church has gone from an extremely pneumatological ecclesiology in *Einheit* (1825) to a dominant incarnational model in *Symbolik* (1832–1838).⁶⁴ Pasquier adds: “we can say that in the *Einheit* the Church is presented as Pentecost without ceasing to be renewed, while at the *Symbolik* she appears as

⁶¹ White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 455.

⁶² John Emery, OP, “Aquinas’s Christology of Communication,” 184.

⁶³ Emery, *Trinity, Church and the Human Person*, 203.

⁶⁴ James Ambrose Lee II, “Shaping Reception: Yves Congar’s Reception of Johann Adam Möhler,” *New Blackfriars* 12142 (2016), 695.

an ‘uninterrupted Nativity’.”⁶⁵ But where did this shift of emphasis emerge, how did it develop and in what way did it serve Möhler’s theology? This section will argue that Möhler’s late ecclesiology is heavily informed by that of Athanasius, read however in a Chalcedonian manner. Moreover, this new approach is perfected in *Symbolik*. In addition, the appeal to the mystery of incarnation enables Möhler to defend the notion of the visibility of the church while concurrently explicating the relation between the divine and the human in her.

Emergence of Möhler’s Christological Ecclesiology

This new Christological pattern of ecclesiology can be traced back to his monograph on Athanasius, where he writes: “The church has always been highly esteemed by Catholics precisely because it is the dwelling place of God, filled with the Holy Spirit, the creation of the Son who remains with it and in it even to the end of the world.”⁶⁶ Here we see that Möhler links the church to Christ, who is the creator and upholder of the church till ‘the end of the world.’ But what are the patterns of this new ecclesiology?

By connecting the Son to the church, Möhler is underlining the interplay between the divine and the human while positing a structure that would unite the supernatural and the natural without confusion.

[What has just been said of the Spirit] holds also for the Son, even though Athanasius and, following his example, many other Fathers of the church looked upon him, once he became our redeemer, as the *unity of all the faithful*; for he is the different from us who are divinized *in him* to the degree that not even the humanity he assumed and with which he united himself in one person became of one nature with him as dissolved in him but remained forever distinct.⁶⁷

Reading Athanasius’ Christology through a Chalcedonian lens, enables Möhler to emphasize Christ’s relation to the faithful where he is their redeemer and their unifier. Moreover, the German theologian can establish an analogy between the hypostatic union in Christ and the

⁶⁵ Jean-Marie Pasquier, *L’Eglise comme sacrement: Le développement e l’idée sacramentelle de l’Eglise de Moehler à Vatican II* (Freiburg: Academic Press of Freiburg, 2008), 18.

⁶⁶ Michael J. Himes, *Ongoing Incarnation: Johann Adam Möhler and the Beginnings of Modern Ecclesiology* (New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997), 188-189.

⁶⁷ Möhler, *Athanasius der Grosse*, 290, quoted in Himes, *Ongoing Incarnation*, 189.

structure of the church, which is also composed of human and divine elements, that highlights the coming together of the infinite and finite elements of the church without confusion or alteration. Furthermore, relating the church community of the faithful to the humanity of Christ, allows him to argue that this community develops in a typical human way with the need for leadership and offices, but that the authority of these designated personnel comes from Christ not from the members of the community.⁶⁸

However, the relationship between the incarnation and the church outgrows the boundaries of analogy, it involves an ontological relationship that comprises human salvation. In this regard, Athanasius writes: “Union with a creature could not have made man divine.”⁶⁹ Möhler realized the necessity of the divinity of the Son for our salvation, where he highlights that the reality of the divinity of Christ was defended on the basis of the human need for redemption. “But the human being could not come to God through repentance. For could he participate in Being itself and raise himself above his nature? His restoration required the one who had created everything in the beginning, God the Logos...”⁷⁰ So, Arianism represented the isolation of God from the world, and the abrogation of the divine component in Christ.⁷¹

Hence, human salvation, for him, is perceived in terms of restoration. But where did he come up with this notion? Well, Athanasius writes:

The Word of God came in His own Person, because it was He *alone*, the Image of the Father, Who could *re-create* man made after the Image... You know what happens when a portrait that has been painted on a panel becomes obliterated... The *subject of the portrait* has to come and sit for it again, and then the likeness is re-drawn on the same material.⁷²

⁶⁸ Himes, *Ongoing Incarnation*, 201.

⁶⁹ Athanasius, *C Ar* II.69.

⁷⁰ Himes, *Ongoing Incarnation*, 206-7. Cf. *De Inc.*, 7: “But repentance would not guard the Divine consistency, for, if death did not hold dominion over men, God would still remain untrue. Nor does repentance recall men from what is according to their nature.”

⁷¹ Himes, *Ongoing Incarnation*, 191.

⁷² *De. Inc.*, 13.

Only the Word can restore our similarity to the *subject of the portrait*, since He alone possesses the divine attributes, and can transfer it ontologically to human beings.

Echoing Athanasius, Möhler writes:

The first human being was created by God in his image. The image of God is the Logos; in this [creation] he takes part. The human being is thus a copy of the Logos, and as the fullness of divinity is the Logos, he consequently sees in the Logos God himself. Apart from this image of the divine Logos in humanity, the human being is mortal; through the image in him, through his rational spiritual nature, immortal. If the human person preserves it in its purity, he lives the blessed, eternal, and true life. To know himself immortal, good, and blessed, and to be conscious of God, are one and the same.⁷³

This shows that, like Athanasius, the Catholic theologian perceives the notion of the image of God in a Christological rather than Trinitarian manner. Besides, the image of God implies the possession of divine attributes such as immortality. Through Adam's transgression, man lost this divine attribute and became mortal. Hence, human redemption is perceived in relation to the mystery of incarnation which was needed in order to recover to humankind what they had lost.

In this way Athanasius views Christ as beyond question the representative of redeemed mankind, but not as the representative, I must add. The entire church is *in him*, in his power; he is *the point of origin*, and as in the origin everything is contained, so the entire church is *in him*. If no objection is made to the expression, which can be grossly misunderstood, the church is, as it were, the *development of Christ in time*.⁷⁴

Thus it is clear that, in *Athanasius der Grosse*, Möhler's Christological ecclesiology began to take shape, where humanity's redemption is understood in relation to the Incarnate Word, although read in accordance with the Chalcedonian formula.⁷⁵ This structure enabled him to uphold the divine and human dimensions of the church without confusing or mixing them.⁷⁶ Furthermore, the journey that had begun in *Athanasius* finished in *Symbolik*.⁷⁷

⁷³ Möhler, *Athanasius*, 123, quoted in Himes, *Ongoing Incarnation*, 192.

⁷⁴ Möhler, *Athanasius*, 266, quoted in Himes, *Ongoing Incarnation*, 190.

⁷⁵ Cf. Himes, *Ongoing Incarnation*, 192, 209.

⁷⁶ Möhler, *Athanasius*, 290, cited in Himes, *Ongoing Incarnation*, 257.

⁷⁷ Himes, *Ongoing Incarnation*, 209-210.

By drawing on the mystery of the incarnation in *Symbolik*, “The ultimate ground for the visibility of the church is found in the incarnation of the divine Word.” He then adds: “If [the divine Word] had immersed himself in human hearts without assuming the form of a servant and so without ever appearing in a corporal way he would then have found only and invisible and internal Church.”⁷⁸ Hence the incarnation represents the establishment of the visible church. Moreover, the way the Son is related to humanity implicates the manner he is related to the church, since the latter was founded by Christ’s birth:

So from the point of view advanced here, the visible church is the Son of God appearing within mankind in *human form* in a continuous fashion, constantly renewed, eternally rejuvenated, his *ongoing incarnation*, just as the faithful are also called in holy scripture the *body of Christ*.⁷⁹

By appealing to the mystery of incarnation, where the divine acts and subsists through and in a human medium, Möhler can demonstrate that human mediation was necessary for the continuation of the work of Christ. Furthermore, by virtue of being the body of Christ, the visible church is perceived as a continuation of the incarnation including the tangible and visible aspect of the mystery. And though the church consists of human members, she is not simply human. Just as Christ’s humanity is united to his divinity, the divine and the human in the church are joined together inseparably and without confusion.⁸⁰ Accordingly, “if the church is the permanent incarnation of the Son of God, the living (lively) representation of Jesus Christ and the continuation of his redemptive work, one can say that she is the sacrament of Christ or the sacrament of redemption.”⁸¹

⁷⁸ Möhler, *Symbolik*, I:388, quoted in Himes, *Ongoing Incarnation*, 257.

⁷⁹ Möhler, *Symbolik*, I:389, quoted in Himes, *Ongoing Incarnation*, 259.

⁸⁰ Himes, *Ongoing Incarnation*, 258-60.

⁸¹ Pasquier, *L’Eglise comme sacrement*, 18.

Yves Congar

Aquinas and Möhler's theology underpin Congar's early Christological ecclesiology. He admits that he has been educated in the school of Thomas Aquinas: "I was trained in the Christology of Thomas Aquinas, which I loved. I would summarize it as a theology of essential grace and the foundation of the doctrine of the Mystical Body."⁸² Moreover, according to Kerr, "Congar takes the Thomist conception of theological methodology as normative...[and] he evidently sees it [Thomist theology] as exhibiting, embodying a sapiential-ontological theology."⁸³ On a different note, "Congar's dissertation at Le Saulchoir focused on the doctrine of the unity of the church in the thought precisely of Möhler." Congar also covers the German theologian thoughts in several articles.⁸⁴ But what does Congar's ecclesiological Christology involve?

Historical and Ecclesio-Political Contexts

Prior to drawing out Congar's Christological ecclesiology, it may prove helpful to sketch out the 19th and 20th century historical and ecclesio-political contexts in relation to the notion of the church as the body of Christ. In doing so, I hope to shed some light on the reasons for Congar's challenge to both its adequacy and compatibility with what he is trying to achieve, at certain stages of his career. Let's, first, take a step backward and look at the development of the relationship between the Eucharist and the church in the Catholic theology over time.

In Christian antiquity,

For them,⁸⁵ as for Augustine, on whom they are dependent either directly or through other writers, and whose formulations they endlessly reproduce, the

⁸² Yves Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, trans. David Smith (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), 85.

⁸³ Fergus Kerr, "Yves Congar and Thomism," in ed. Gabriel Flynn, *Yves Congar Theologian of the Church* (Louvain, Paris, Dudley, MA: Peeters Press, W. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 81 and 94.

⁸⁴ Yves Congar, "La Pensée de Moehler et écclesiologie orthodoxe," *Irénikon* 12 (1935), 321–29; Congar, "La Signification oecuménique de l'oeuvre de Moehler," *Irénikon* 15 (1938), 113–30, in Lee, "Shaping Reception: Yves Congar's Reception of Johann Adam Möhler," 693.

⁸⁵ Latin writers of the seventh century, eighth century and ninth century.

Eucharist corresponds to the Church as cause to effect, as means to end, as sign to reality.⁸⁶

However, unlike their Fathers who had focused on the relation between the Eucharist and the church, scholastics were more concerned with the link between the Incarnate Word and the Eucharist.⁸⁷ Accordingly, speaking of the ‘mystical body’ without reference to the Eucharist, and the development of ‘theories concerning the Church, outside the sacramental framework’ were normalized,⁸⁸ and the relationship between the two meanings of the “body” was perceived in analogous terms.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the *De regimine christiano* treatise (1301/2), by James of Viterbo has “set the pattern for primarily juridical and institutional accounts of the church, and ecclesiology and eucharistic theology increasingly grew apart.”⁹⁰ Consequently, a distinction between the “power of order and power of jurisdiction [was established] by the scholastics,... A bishop was [perceived as] a priest with added jurisdiction, to govern the church. Presiding at the Eucharist and governing the church had become separate responsibilities, as they never were in the early church.”⁹¹ Furthermore, the dispute with the Protestant led Catholics...to put the accent to the outward structure of the church and particularly the hierarchy.⁹²

By the 19th century, “the scholastic theology of the day was, however, being challenged by strong forces of renewal, still inspired by Möhler, which promoted a communal and organic understanding of the church and highly valued the image of the body of Christ.”⁹³

Congar himself commends the German theologian in *Sainte Église* for rediscovering the

⁸⁶ Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, trans. Gemma Simmonds and Richard Price (London: SCM, 2006), 13.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁸⁹ Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1988), 99.

⁹⁰ Paul McPartlan, “Ressourcement, Vatican II, and Eucharistic Ecclesiology,” in eds. Gabriel Flynn and Paul Murray, *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 394.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 397.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 395-396.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 400.

Christological sense and soteriological role of the church by emphasizing the restoration of communion between man and God.⁹⁴

In 1943, Pope Pius XII (1876-1958) issued an encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*, which portrays the church as the as the mystical body of Christ and though it is considered as “a major milestone on the way to Vatican II and *Lumen Gentium*... It tended simply to clothe the [hierarchical] pyramid in the scriptures rather than asking whether the scriptures might indicate a model for the church different from that of the pyramid.”⁹⁵ McPartlan also notices that 1Corinthians. 10.17 “For we, *though* many, are one bread *and* one body; for we all partake of that one bread,” was missing from the encyclical. This passage does not only tie the church to the Eucharist, but also alludes her communal dimension. Thus, the encyclical sets the notion of the mystical body in a juridical context.

A year later de Lubac published his book, *Corpus Mysticum*, which also appeals to the notion of the church as the mystical body but in a completely different context to that of Pope Pius XII. In it, he demonstrates that ‘the term ‘mystical body ‘had originally referred not to the church but to the Eucharist, and that the idea of the church as the body of Christ is incomprehensible without reference to the Eucharist.’⁹⁶

In this book de Lubac states:

Literally speaking, therefore, the Eucharist makes the Church. It makes of it an inner reality. By its hidden power, the members of the body come to unite themselves by becoming more fully members of Christ, and their unity with one another is part and parcel of their unity with the one single Head. This unity of the head and of all the rest of the body, the unity of Christ and of his Church – *He is her head, she is his body* – is more than what is normally called ‘*the whole body of the Church*’ or even ‘the body of Christ in general’. It constitutes a real being.⁹⁷

The ability of de Lubac to marry “the idea of the church as the body of Christ,..., to a pyramidal structure by Pius XII, in fact implies a rather different structure, namely a

⁹⁴ Yves Congar, *Sainte Église: Etudes et approches ecclésiologiques* (Unam Sanctam, 41), (Paris: Cerf, 1963), 38. Translation from French to English is undertaken by the author of this study.

⁹⁵ McPartlan, “Ressourcement, Vatican II, and Eucharistic Ecclesiology,” 400.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 401.

⁹⁷ de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 88-89.

communion structure of local churches.”⁹⁸ Furthermore, the Eucharist, “unites the bishops who preside at the Eucharist in their respective churches into one episcopate...it is the bishop (not the priest) who has ‘the fullness of the sacrament of order’ and exercises what the Fathers called ‘the supreme priesthood’.”⁹⁹ Finally, Ratzinger comments that de Lubac “put the idea of the Church in concrete terms as eucharistic ecclesiology”, noting that *eucharistic* ecclesiology is fundamentally the same thing as *communion* ecclesiology.”¹⁰⁰

In light of the above, Congar and other Dominicans such as Chenu, and Féret believed that a ‘revitalization’ of the church based on the rediscovery of ‘critical dimensions of ecclesiology lost’ was needed in the wake of “the defensive theologies of the post-Reformation period that limited theology to a deductive logical exercise, reduced faith to submission to authority, and envisioned the church as a hierarchical *pyramid*.”¹⁰¹ And one of the major works that he produced during this period was *Vraie et fausse réforme* (1950). However, “Rome received [*it*] with mistrust...the announcement of an Italian translation of *Vraie et fausse réforme* provoked the prohibition of any translations or a new edition.”¹⁰² Furthermore, By 1952, he was required to send all of his manuscripts to Rome for editing, down to the smallest review. Reflecting on this period he recalls, “I knew nothing from that quarter [Rome] but an uninterrupted series of denunciations, warnings, restrictive or discriminatory measures and mistrustful interventions.”¹⁰³ In 1954 “Congar was told to stop teaching and was prevailed upon to leave France together with Chenu, Féret, and Pierre Boisselot. Finally, ‘representatives of the Holy See explained that there was general concern with the overall direction of his theology. Congar accepted the disciplinary exile imposed on him with an interior resistance, for he believed that the theology endorsed by the magisterium

⁹⁸ McPartlan, “Ressourcement, Vatican II, and Eucharistic Ecclesiology,” 401.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 401.

¹⁰⁰ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (Slough: St Paul's, 1988), 7, 14.

¹⁰¹ Elizabeth Teresa Groppe, “The Contribution of Yves Congar’s Theology of the Holy Spirit,” 20

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁰³ Congar, Preface to *Dialogue between Christians*, 34, in Groppe, “The Contribution of Yves Congar’s Theology of the Holy Spirit,” 22-23.

was that of a single theological school, rather than the only legitimate manner of theological reflection.”¹⁰⁴

So, the notion of the church as the mystical body of Christ can be perceived in either hierarchal/pyramidal terms (as in the case of Pius XII) or in communional terms (as in the case of de Lubac and Ratzinger). But, in light of the historical and ecclesio-political contexts in which Congar was writing, especially during the turbulent period of (1947 -1956), it is easy to see why he treated the image of the church as the mystical body of Christ with its pyramidal connotations and implications with reservations.

Chrétiens désunis

In this section I will attend to Congar’s early ecclesiology in *Chrétiens désunis*.¹⁰⁵ I will argue that it is Christocentric in approach and that the underlying principle of his Christological ecclesiology is the mystery of incarnation. This enables Congar to expound the relationship between the divine and human aspects of the church and to explicate the urgency of tangible and human mediation in the church. Yet, the relationship between the Incarnate Lord and the church outgrows the boundaries of analogy as it is also ontological. However, by appealing to the notion of the church as the body of Christ, a tension between the individual and collective aspect of Christ arises. Nonetheless, the mystery of our incorporation in Christ remains vital for human salvation. Finally, in this section I will show how far Congar’s early ecclesiology is informed by that of Thomas and Möhler, and in retrospect by the Alexandrian tradition.

The Incarnation

Congar conceives the incarnation as a necessity for the establishment of the church:

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 23-24.

¹⁰⁵ Yves Congar, *Chrétiens désunis. Principes d'un oecuménisme catholique* (Paris: Cerf, 1937). Translation from French to English is undertaken by the author of this study.

For an *Ecclesia de Trinitate* to join and cooperate with an *Ecclesia ex hominibus*, it took the God from God and Light from Light to become a man. The *ex hominibus* et le *de Trinitate* can only meet in *Christo* since, “For *there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.*”(1Timothy 2:5)¹⁰⁶

He perceives the incarnation as the coming together of the divine Logos with an individuated human nature: “In Christ, humanity (an individuated human nature) is united to God (to the Person of the Word) *in persona*, in order to form a single divino-humain being, ontologically and substantially one.”¹⁰⁷ The transformational outcome of this mystery is interpreted in a Thomist manner:

He descended from heaven in order that He might fill all things,¹⁰⁸ the grace and the holiness which are present in fullness in him aspire to be spilled or spread and communicated to humankind. The principle of the new life which the Word, by assuming a flesh, has introduced into the world is analogous to the ferment which leavens the whole dough...The law of his incarnation is to reach, as principle of regeneration, all those to whom he is constituted as head and principle of life in God. So, it now pertains to realizing in Christ all human reality (*toute réalité humaine*) redeemed by him for the glory of the Father.¹⁰⁹

Thomas’ influence on Congar is clear in the fact that the latter adopts a similar Christological scheme to that of the former, where the Logos, who is the principle of new life, assumes a humanity, confers on it the fullness of grace and through which grace is imparted to the members of this body.¹¹⁰ However by appealing to this approach, a tension, similar to the one we have seen in Cyril, arises between the individuated and the collective (*toute réalité humaine*) humanity of Christ.¹¹¹

The necessity of the incarnation is also made manifest in the fact that

¹⁰⁶ Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*, 73.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 71.

¹⁰⁸ Ephesians 4:10.

¹⁰⁹ Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*. 120.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *Chrétiens désunis*, 120. See also *Chrétiens désunis*, 78-79: “This *divine germ* implanted in us (σπέρμα, 1 John 3:9) breathes through him, and as far as it is in him, it effectively aspires to *transfigure* all our being, as to render our corporeal being, pure, incorruptible and glorious. The logic of *grace* is the *transfiguration* of our nature, its perfect harmonization, and the drawing of perfection and immortality towards it. So, the divine germ that is conferred upon us tends to renew and transfigure our nature up to the level of his corporeal being.”

¹¹¹ Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*. 120: “Nous ne nous accomplissons et ne grandissons que comme membres de son Corps et par la vertu du Chef, a telle enseigne que notre croissance par lui est aussi bien *sa réalisation* en nous.” Cf. *Col.* 2:10 et *19 Eph.* 4:13.

the divine life is not communicated under a homogeneous and connatural mode and in conditions conforming to those of the celestial realm. It is mediated by a human mode, which has been adapted to the conditions of man and a sinning man... He gave in to the law of the salvific act of God in this respect, the law of incarnation.¹¹²

Finally, Congar, in line with Cyril, perceives the mystery of incarnation in terms of an exchange:

He enters into the train of human history, is made flesh, and is rendered visible and palpable and re-establishes his relationship with us 'by becoming what we are in order that we may become what he is.' From that moment on, the same law of incarnation governs all the works of divinization of man... so much as our divinization is not perfectly realized as much as God not all in all, God will come to us humanly, in the condition and logic of humanity.¹¹³

However, he understands the mystery in a Chalcedonian manner: "There are items that belong to (*revenaient au*) Christ as God and others that belong to him as man (because he was both God and man)."¹¹⁴ After assessing Congar's understanding of the incarnation, I will discuss his apprehension of the church to see how the two mysteries are related.

The Church

In *Chrétiens désunis*, Congar offers many definitions of the church. First, he defines the church as a "*communication and community of the holy and even properly divine realities, which represent the goods of the new covenant... She is as also the community of the people of God, the fraternal communion of those who are called, in the same Spirit, to the inheritance of the Father, to those who cling to the covenant and who form one entity in Christ.*"¹¹⁵ Second, "the church (on the earth) fully follows the logic of the incarnation: on the one hand, sensible and human and on the other hand divine, she is theandric like

¹¹² Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*, 80-81.

¹¹³ Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*, 86.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 96. However, it is worth mentioning that this sort of language can be found in late Cyrilline Christology (i.e., after the Formula of Reunion (433)). In his *Letter to Acacius of Melitene* (Cyril, letter [40] ACO I,1.4.20-30; PG 77,181-201, but, Wickham calls it letter 41), for instance, he writes: "The point is that some of the terms are specially appropriate to God (θεοπροπεϊς), some are specially appropriate to man (ἀνθρωποπροπεϊς) and some occupy an intermediate μέσην position, indicating the Son who is at one and the same time God and man." Cyril, *Letter to Acacius of Melitene*, para. 16 in Wickham, *Cyril of Alexandria Select Letters*, 52-53.

¹¹⁵ Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*, 63.

Christ.”¹¹⁶ Third, “the church, in its visible reality, is the *instrument* of realization of she actually is: the mystical body of Jesus Christ. Where the conjunction and the articulation of the two logics¹¹⁷ are equally found...The church is the place where the two Adams¹¹⁸ meet and form [not two] but one, the first being recapitulated and renewed in the second.”¹¹⁹ Finally, “the church is like a big *sacrament*, where all is sensibly projected and procures an internal unity of grace. But this earthly being does not exist except for its heavenly substance, just as the latter does not exist except in its human incorporation.”¹²⁰ In what follows I will expand on the relationship between Christ and the church, its soteriological ramifications, the connection between the divine and human elements in the church and its representation in a sacramental form.

Christ and the Church

In *Chrétiens Desunis*,¹²¹ drawing on the Chalcedonian formula Congar writes:

There are items that belong to Christ as God and others that belong to him as man (because he was both God and man). Likewise, in the church, there are elements that are ascribed to her as the family of God and community of the heavenly life and others predicated of the church as engaged in a journey and in a battle far from God, the Church is fulfilled humanely in a homogenous way to our world, as a militant church.¹²²

But does Congar reduce the relationship between Christ and the church to a mere analogy? For him, an ontological relationship between the head and the members of the body is vital since, “the communication of the Trinitarian life can only take place in Christ and cannot occur anywhere else. The church is the *body of Christ*, associated with the life of the One , and only One, who is capable of returning to the bosom of the Father.”¹²³ At the same time

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 86.

¹¹⁷ “Humaine en raison de sa condition terrestre, l’Église suivra la matière humaine en sa différenciation et sa dispersion; divine en son essence, elle incorporera cette matière humaine dans l’unité de Dieu et du Christ: ceci se réalisant par cela, le même mystère se retrouvant partout, qui est le mystère de son théandrisme,” in *ibid.*, 130.

¹¹⁸ The concept of the two Adams will be addressed at a later stage of this chapter.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 130.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 108.

¹²¹ Cf. Ibid., 86.

¹²² Cf. Ibid., 86.

¹²³ Ibid., 77.

he speaks of the corporate Christ as being formed in the church: “It is precisely in being incorporated into and identified with Christ that we realize his people; these people are not constituted except by the edification of the body of Christ, that is to say, by their (mystical) identification with Christ and in the selfsame identification.”¹²⁴ Thus, it is clear that an ontological relationship exists between Christ and the church where he is her head and principle and she is his body where his corporate dimension is formed:

The church is the ‘gathering’ in the unity of God – she, therefore, exists in Christ as in her principle: all that we are called to be (become), to receive, to inherit, is constituted in Jesus Christ, so much that the church (his body, his fulfillment) is able to properly manifest him, present (*expliciter*) him, and in a certain sense complete him, but not strictly speaking to add or to realize something that is not already in him.¹²⁵ ...all is given from on high, all is given in Christ.¹²⁶

These passages reveal how Congar has been informed by Thomas Aquinas’ Christology where the former appeals to the concepts of capital grace and fullness of grace in Christ. Furthermore they show the intertwined ontological relationship between Christ and the church, where her divine dimension, as descending from heaven,¹²⁷ is effected in Christ.

Ecclesia in Christo

Congar draws on St Paul to illustrate that by virtue of our incorporation in Christ, we receive a communication of life descending from on high in Christ.

In him, we are created anew and we become a new man, a new creation, we become the members of Christ, the organic parts of the whole body of which he is the head, in other words the origin/source (le principe vital) ; we are the body of Christ, he is the spirit that vivifies this body; we collectively are the manifestation of this vivifying Spirit in a visible organic reality ...The church is the visible reality of the lord, his σῶμα, a Christophany ‘une christophanie’.¹²⁸

Then, drawing on St John, he argues that the life that was from the beginning in the bosom of the Father is communicated to us as to sons; communicated in and by the Incarnate Word.

We cannot have life, true life, apart from him. So just as the branches are united to the vine

¹²⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 87.

¹²⁵ Cf. Aquinas on capital grace and the fullness of grace (*de Verit.*, q. 29; *Sum. theol.*, III a, q. 7 ans 8,)

¹²⁶ Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*, 119.

¹²⁷ Cf. Pasquier, *L’Eglise comme sacrement*, 95.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

stock receive life from the vine, we too have to abide in him, live in him, and receive in him the Father's life.¹²⁹ Accordingly, to be incorporated in Christ signifies that our divine life of faith and love mystically becomes the life of the dead and resurrected Christ, and that his mystery is, truly, lived by the church which is his body:¹³⁰

As Christ descended from heaven and the church is in him, she cannot but be catholic, since the principles of her unity are given to her by God, in Christ, in order to bring all the diverse human matter (God's creation) back into unity with God. Subsequently since Christ is one, his grace is one, his mystical body is one, and there is no salvation except by our incorporation in a sole Kyrios, that the church is rigorously one!¹³¹

Soteriology

In order to see even more clearly the parallels between Cyril and Congar I want to turn now to the relationship between Congar's vision of soteriology and his conception of the church as the body of Christ. Congar conceives salvation as a union with God, a communion and peace with him, who is the end and the consummation, and whom in him and through him all things are to be fulfilled.¹³² Christ is the principle of salvation, meaning that:

All the divine forces, all the efficient endowments (*dons efficacies*) of God which operate this union with him and this consummation in him for everything exist in him. Christ is the repository of this salvific and consumatory virtue which proceeds from God as a second creation and has to regenerate the world in view of a salvation in God and a return to unity with the One from whom everything comes. Christ constitutes for the whole world, a *mediator* and a *principle*, that is to say the *priest* and the *king* of the new infusion of the spiritual endowments that will be given, in him, to all humanity, the consummation, the definitive completion and plenary, the total good and the satisfaction, in short the peace.¹³³

All the means of achieving our salvation are given by the Father to the Son. However, in combining the causal theology of Aquinas with the participation theology of Augustine and Cyril a certain tension between the individual and the collective aspects of Christ surfaces.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 75.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 77.

¹³¹ Ibid., 121-124.

¹³² Ibid., 117.

¹³³ Ibid., 117-8. See also *ibid.*, 73-4: "Jesus est celui en qui le Père a mis sa complaisance; nous ne pouvons plaire à Dieu que s'il nous voit dans le Christ, et lui plaire vraiment que si, vraiment, nous sommes *dans le Christ*. Si vraiment « nul ne monte au ciel sinon Celui qui est descendu du ciel, le Fils de l'Homme qui est dans le ciel » (*Jean*, 3:13), nous ne pouvons accéder à Dieu que dans le Fils qui, étant depuis toujours auprès du Père, s'est fait homme et s'est sacrifié pour nous prendre avec lui : porte unique de la bergerie de Dieu (*Jean*, 10:1). S'il n'y a plus de condamnation, c'est seulement « pour ceux qui sont en Jésus-Christ » (*Rom.* 8:1)."

Congar acknowledges that drawing on the notion of the image of the church as the body of Christ, creates a tension between the individual and corporate Christ. In delineating the relationship between Christ and humanity, by epitomizing his role as king and priest, Congar writes:

In a certain way, these two functions of Christ represent opposite formalities, for as king, he is the principle and the first, and as priest, he is the mediator and the intermediary. But his manner of being principle is to give life and his way of being mediator, is to unite humankind to God by means of applying his *capital grace*. Therefore, the two realities are truly joined. The same thing happens in St Paul if we consider the double usage he makes of the metaphor of the body, since this body is sometimes the visible reality where Christ is the interior *pneuma*, and other times it is the trunk and the members of which have Christ as their Head.”¹³⁴

After discussing the descent of the divine element of the church, to us, in Christ, I will attend to the earthly aspect of the church.

Ecclesia ex hominibus

In line with Möhler’s ecclesiology Congar is able to justify the tangible and visible aspect of the church: “Truly, the Word became flesh, and, if this represents a theophany, a revelation of life (1John 1: 1-3), it’s a human theophany, a revelation under the very humble form of humanity, which is exteriorly similar to all the others.”¹³⁵ In the same vein, the church’s composition involves a human aspect:

Since the church is a gathering of *men* with the view of being the beneficiary of the goods of the new covenant, which are the patrimonial goods of God. Now, these heavenly goods are not given to us under a divine form in their complete condition, but under a human and an imperfect form.¹³⁶

This shows that, first, the structure of the church is composed of a divine element descending from heaven in Christ and a human element constating in human beings. Secondly, that the communication of divine goods takes place through a human median that is suitable to human beings. “But the divine life is not communicated to us under a homogenous mode, or

¹³⁴ Ibid., 118.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 81.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 78.

conditions that are conforming to the heavenly world. It is conveyed to us under a human mode, and adapted to the conditions of man and of a sinning man.”¹³⁷ But does this mean that we have two churches?

Congar certainly separates between the divine and human aspects of the church:

On the one hand, there is, in the church, a divine unity, an organism, members incorporated in the living body, Christ is the sole head, and the mystical body is formed by a unity of a simple life which resembles the substantial unity of a living body; on the other hand, there is a societal unity, an organization, authority and subjects, the visible bishop of the see of Peter, and the church as a body in the sociological and juridical sense of the word.¹³⁸

But, while this implies that there is a polarity within the church, the church is not separated into two entities:

There are not two churches. There is not, on the one side, a sort of a pure mystical body, community of spiritual souls, without a body; but what is organized is the human community of friends of God, and what is the mystical body is the ecclesiastical society itself. There is, between the two, an *organic junction* of a type similar to the one that exists between the soul and the body...or to the one that exists between the divine and human natures in Christ.¹³⁹

In order to elucidate the conjunction of these two spheres, Congar appeals to the analogy of the soul and the body within the human being: “The soul is the form (l’acte proper)¹⁴⁰ of the body, in this sense it does not exist except in an essential relation with the body, and is not revealed to us except by him. The body localizes the soul¹⁴¹ and expresses it and acts as the *instrument* of its proper life.”¹⁴² This is a clear example of the influence of Thomas, and

¹³⁷ Ibid., 80.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 96-99.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 100.

¹⁴⁰ L’ame est l’acte propre du corps; elle n’existe pas en dehors de lui, sauf dans l’état anormal et violent d’ame separee, ou elle garde d’ailleurs un rapport metaphysique a lui et porte en soi comme un appel ou un voeu ontologique de reunion. De plus; selon notre maniere humaine, l’ame ne nous est connaissable que dans le corps et par lui.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 102: l’*Ecclesia* chretienne, comme etant le Corps du Christ. L’Esprit qui en etait l’ame etait considere comme localise en l’Eglise de Dieu pour autant que celle-ci etait a Corinthe, par exemple, ou ailleurs (1Corinthians 1:2). L’Eglise est l’habitation et le temple de Dieu ici-bas. Elle est le lieu du salut et le reposoir de l’Esprit.

¹⁴² Ibid., 101.

in retrospect Cyril,¹⁴³ on Congar, because both theologians describe Christ's humanity as an instrument for salvation, while the French theologian presents the human aspect of the church in similar way to the one used by both of them to portray Christ's humanity. The relationship between the divine and the human in the church is perceived in a sacramental manner.

The Church as a Sacrament

A sacrament denotes the visible reality of that which contains an invisible mystery, where mystery refers to the communication of the supernatural life.¹⁴⁴ This definition can be applied to the church as posited by Congar.

In sum, the unity of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, is of a very special reality formed by people who are united by means of a supernatural life proceeding from God and from Christ, in a form of a communal life through which this supernatural life itself is procured and promoted. The church is like a *big sacrament*, where all is sensibly projected and procures an internal unity of grace.¹⁴⁵ But this earthly being does not exist except for its heavenly substance, just as the latter does not exist except in its human incorporation... There is no two churches, but the only and one church which is the body of Jesus Christ, is at once heavenly and human, substantially divine, but existing in men, and by means of human form.¹⁴⁶

The principle of the incarnation represents the underlying theme that governs Congar's portrayal of the church as a sacrament.¹⁴⁷ Since she is at the same time divine and human, the unity of these elements in the church can be compared to the theandric constitution of Christ. But also, she is a visible reality expressing and serving an invisible grace,¹⁴⁸ a tangible reality governed by an invisible principle: "God, and by appropriation the Holy Spirit, is the original cause, the actual principal of the church, of its unity, the formal interior cause (le principe

¹⁴³ Congar states in *Short Writings on the Holy Spirit*, 185: "Even more than Aristotle, it was the Greek Fathers Cyril of Alexandria and John Damascene who gave him the idea of the holy humanity of Christ as an organ of divinity."

¹⁴⁴ Pasquier, *L'Eglise comme sacrement*, 32.

¹⁴⁵ "The real unity of the Church is sacramental... The Church itself is the sacramentum unitatis. It is a visible human society informed by divine grace..." : Lacey, *Unity and Schism*, pp. 156-157, in *ibid.*, 108.

¹⁴⁶ Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*, 108.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 108: "On pourrait, pour exprimer ce que nous venons de dire dans ces dernières pages, faire appel aux catégories théologiques élaborées pour les sacrements, de *sacramentum tantum* (la seule institution ecclésiastique), *sacramentum et res* (la valeur de cette institution pour procurer la réalité spirituelle qu'elle signifie), *res tantum* (la pure réalité intérieure de l'Église, le Corps mystique)." This sacramental concept of *sacramentum* and *res* is much more developed in *Lay People in the Church*.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Pasquier, *L'Eglise comme sacrement*, 95.

intérieur ‘formel’).”¹⁴⁹ Besides, the sacramental relationship between Christ and the church outgrows the concept of analogy. The church, for Congar and in echoing Möhler, is an incarnation continued: “The subject of the current study being the capacity of the principles of the unity of the church is to extend the communication of the divine life, that is to say to *extend the mystery of incarnation* in the mystical body of Jesus Christ to the humankind,”¹⁵⁰ since, in line with Cyril,¹⁵¹ “The mystical Christ and the church truly form ‘one single flesh’ (une seule chair).”¹⁵²

Finally, although Congar does not heavily cite Cyril in this treatise, the Frenchman’s Christological ecclesiology is informed by that of the Alexandrian, where Congar writes: “Notre Église est celle d’Ephèse et de Chalcédoine, de saint Cyrille et de saint Léon.”¹⁵³

Lay People in the Church

For a long time the Catholic Church has overemphasized the institutional/hierarchical dimension of the church and this model was not free of deficiencies. Clericalism, for instance, tends to reduce the laity to a passive condition. Moreover, juridicism tends to amplify the role of human authority.¹⁵⁴ In *Lay People in the Church*, Congar acknowledges this flaw, “looking at it from the above point of view it would appear that lay people have only to receive.”¹⁵⁵ So, in response to this approach, and with the intention of showing that lay people are an integral and active constituent of the church, he wrote this monograph in 1954.

¹⁴⁹ Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*, 69.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁵¹ “And *our body is called the body of the Word*.” Cyril, *Jo. 9.1* (PG 74, 280; Pusey II.486); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 188.

¹⁵² Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*, 106.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁵⁴ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, expanded edition (New York: Image, 2014), 35-36.

¹⁵⁵ Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of Laity*, trans. Donald Attwatter (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1962), 108.

This section assesses Congar's ecclesiology in *Lay People in the Church*.¹⁵⁶ In it I argue that Congar's ecclesiology remains Christocentric with a main emphasis on the mystery of incarnation and its implications. However, this does not deter him from carving out an essential, cooperative and foundational role for the laity in the body of Christ. I also show that by appealing to the concept of the church as a sacrament, Congar is able to strike a balance between the notion of the church as an institution and its embodiment as a society and the visible human and invisible divine components of the church. Moreover, I also demonstrate that though Congar tries to remain faithful to Thomas' Christology of causality, he is gradually shifting to Augustine and Cyril's theology of participation, which better serves his purpose in this treatise. However, this gradual shift does not escape a tension that appears in his narrative of salvation.

The Incarnation

Congar does not conceive the incarnation as optional but rather as a necessity for human salvation. Building on Aristotelian philosophy, he writes:

Metaphysically, the relevant principle is this: so far as action does not coincide with its norm, a rule exterior to it is at work: a law or a pedagogy, so far as good does not fully reside in our freedom; an instruction, so far as truth does not fill the mind; a nourishing from without, so far as the fountain of Life does not gush forth from living person himself. Theologically and Christianly, we are here only interpreting God's design, the law of his saving economy.¹⁵⁷

Grounding his incarnational theology in that of Aquinas, Congar also writes:

From the moment that God takes on manhood in order to realise his design of grace and fellowship-taking it on not from the outside but by a *hypostatic union* in the very being – that manhood receives a dignity and power that put it above all creation, 'the firstborn over all creation.'¹⁵⁸ When God accomplishes his purpose with respect to creation, not from the height of his Godhead but by becoming man, he then ceases to exert his power only as God and exerts it also as *man*; and the manhood thus joined in him for the fulfilling of his purpose becomes the *universal and supreme cause* of all that depends on this design of

¹⁵⁶ Originally, Yves Congar, *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat* (1957).

¹⁵⁷ Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 105-6.

¹⁵⁸ Colossians 1:15.

grace.¹⁵⁹ Predestined to fulfill God's purpose and promise, Jesus Christ is established in the fullness to power and grace.¹⁶⁰

Congar is deeply informed by Thomas', and indirectly Cyril's, Christology. Thus the subject of the incarnation or the hypostatic union is the Word of God 'who takes on manhood' and hypostatically unites it to himself. The outcome of this transaction is the conferring of the fullness of grace on this humanity and elevating it to a unique dignity, Christ becoming the head of humanity. Furthermore, this manhood becomes an instrument 'the *universal and supreme cause*' of salvation. Hence, by appealing to the mystery of incarnation, Congar vindicates the necessity of human mediation for the communication of the divine life in the church.¹⁶¹

It [the saving economy]'s object that he shall be all in all, that his creation shall be temples and men the associates of his life; and to realize it he has adopted a means in our world, or more accurately, in the depth of *human nature*-the incarnation. So from the start he has joined the oneness of the communion we must have with him to the *means* of realizing it: the *mediation* of the man Jesus Christ.¹⁶² Thus in communicating his life to us, God acts not according to *his* mode, but according to *ours*.¹⁶³

On this incarnational foundation, we can now explore Congar's vision of the church in *Lay People in the Church*.

The Church

Congar's ecclesial scheme involves two dimensions: First, the church is perceived as the communion of faithful with God and with one another in Christ, i.e., the body of Christ.

Second, she also possesses the means of actualizing this body:

That the church, the same church, is both communion with God in Christ and the means for attaining this fellowship. That in her which is means to communion belongs to her earthly condition, and will pass away when Christ delivers up the

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Mersch, *Théologie du Corps mystique*, 53, 272, 382.

¹⁶⁰ Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 54.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 107. "This grace and this truth come to us through the exercise of a priesthood, of a hierarchical governance and teaching, and this is so because grace and truth are not fully 'interiorised' in us and to that extent we have to receive them from outside and above. So far from obscuring the unique mediation of the man Jesus Christ, sacramental and hierarchical mediation realizes it; that mediation is sign and cause, manifestation and ensurance that all is bound to come to us from high; it is the extension, or rather the sacrament, of Christ's mediation."

¹⁶² 1 Timothy 2:5.

¹⁶³ Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 105-106.

Kingdom to his Father that *God may be all in all*... Patristic ecclesiology which is followed fundamentally by St Augustine and Western scholasticism, conceives the church essentially as a fellowship in heavenly things, in Christ *through the sacraments*, preaching, acts of the visible ministry...¹⁶⁴

Maintaining this dual structure, Congar reiterates: “The church is men’s fellowship with *God* and with one another *in Christ*. She is also the totality of the means of this fellowship...From a fellowship aspect, the church is the *aggregate* of those who are ‘in Christ Jesus.’...She is *made up* of these persons as a nation is made up of its citizens or a body of its members.”¹⁶⁵

The church, then, encompasses a divine and a human aspect. However, concerning the latter, Congar highlights that she “is the aggregate of those who are ‘in Christ Jesus,’” in a sign that the church is actually made up of its members, and they form an earthly and human society together. But he underscores that at the human societal level the church has its own unique trait, “A human society has not got to make its members, it receives them from families...whereas the Church does not receive her members from families. The church exists antecedently to the faithful, to constitute them, and precisely as their mother.”¹⁶⁶ So, what differentiates the ecclesial community from other societies, is her ability to mystically convert the faithful into members of Christ’s body.

As mentioned above the church precedes the community of the faithful, but how can this take place if she is composed of its members? “The church precedes [the community of the faithful] by that in her which is on the part of God, or by that in her which pre-exists in Jesus Christ...In Christ, who in becoming man virtually takes on the whole human nature and contains the whole church.”¹⁶⁷ Hence, Congar attributes the precedence of the church to the reality of her divine component. But there is more given to the church in Christ than just her establishment:

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 103.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 22.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 24.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 24.

It is all bound up with the fact of Jesus, God incarnate. Fellowship with God, his indwelling, salvation, the Father's inheritance are already present and given to the world *in him*. The fullness of divine good things is no longer far away in the future: it is here, coming into the world just there when the incarnation took place and the passing of Jesus through his passion and resurrection. ¹⁶⁸

All heavenly goods are entrusted to us in Christ, he is the depository of the divine endowments and from him every grace flows into the members of his body. ¹⁶⁹

“We have this fundamental statement that there is a spiritual and real- real because spiritual- sacerdotal quality which, belonging properly to Christ, is communicated to all the members of his body (by baptism). ¹⁷⁰ Here we have a far-reaching characteristic of the structure of the divine economy: what is given to one alone on behalf of all is then *extended and communicated* to all.” ¹⁷¹ Here we see a very Thomist soteriological methodology where by virtue of being the principle of the new humanity and head of the church, Christ imparts his grace (from his fullness) into the members of his body. This approach is embodied in the concept of the second Adam. “The Christian mystery is the fulfillment of the *second Adam* in the substance of the first; the conjunction of the two; it is the entry of time into eternity, on the basis of eternity coming down into time; or a return of the creature to God.”¹⁷²

Although this notion appears in both *Chrétiens désunis* and *Lay People in the Church*, it is addressed at greater length in Congar's *The Mystery of the Church* (originally, 1941).

Informed by the Greek Fathers' theology, Congar appeals there to the concept of the second Adam. He argues that,

if we are reconciled with God in him, this is all because he is the head, the principle of the entire new order head and second Adam.... Christ is, as a second Adam, the source and the kingdom we are to inherit... Christ is, as Head, the

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 62.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Ibid., 102-103: “He is the fullness from which we draw all our spiritual existence...As regards the Pasch, we receive everything from the unique fact of Jesus Christ in his historical incarnation, *his acta et passa pro nobis*, as a well-spring of holiness outside ourselves at a certain moment in history. The church is the aggregate of the means whereby these waters reach us (before she is the community of men in whom is the truth and grace of Jesus),...[As regards to the Parousia, we, on the basis of what we have received, have to bring to God through Christ the modest riches of creation and of our free co-operation, or, if you will...”

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Hebrews 10:22.

¹⁷¹ Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 124.

¹⁷² Ibid., 65.

source of a new life and a new beginning, for the whole creation.¹⁷³ As second Adam, he is the source of a renewal which makes new men of all who are ‘in Christ Jesus’ (Ephesians 2:10)¹⁷⁴

But how did Christ become the head and the new Adam of humanity? Congar explains that these intrinsic prerogatives were conferred upon Christ by virtue of the indwelling of the fullness.¹⁷⁵ Hence Christ has become for mankind the source of renewal and of communication of divine life.¹⁷⁶ So in virtue of receiving from Christ membership as a body from its head, a new life, humankind is “recapitulated” in him.¹⁷⁷ Here, in line with the Greek Fathers, Congar argues that the ‘fullness of life’ is *restored* in Christ, the second Adam: “and the result of this restoration is simply the Church.”¹⁷⁸ This is a clear example of how the Greek fathers’ incarnational theology, including that of Cyril has helped shape Congar’s early Christological ecclesiology. Furthermore, Congar writes:

St Paul says that we are dead with, crucified with, buried with, raised again with, gone up into heaven with, set at God’s right hand with him: that which was done for us and *includes us* is precisely the passing of Jesus to his Father, his pasch... In his pasch, which is his sacrifice, Christ returns to God so that we may return *in him*; our sacrifice, our return, are possible only *in his*, which already contain them and give worth to them in advance. ‘No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven--the Son of Man...’ (John 3:13-15)¹⁷⁹

This passage reveals a couple of aspects concerning Congar’s ecclesiology in *Lay People in the Church*. First, he is perceiving, in line with Augustine and Cyril, salvation as one’s participation in Christ’s salvific act, where the members of the church are actively

¹⁷³ 2Corinthians 5:17.

¹⁷⁴ Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Church*, trans. A. V. Littledale (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1960), 66.

¹⁷⁵ Colossians 1: 18-19.

¹⁷⁶ Ephesians 1:23.

¹⁷⁷ Congar, *The Mystery of the Church*, 67.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁷⁹ Yves Congar *Lay People in the Church*, 150.

participating in Christ's Pascha: "Under one single sacrifice of Christ and his body, the Head and his members. That which on Calvary was enacted fully and openly in respect of the Head, is now enacted day by day, by the members joining their own sacrifice to that of their Head."¹⁸⁰

Second, the passage also represents a departure from a pure Thomist soteriological methodology. However, as shown above, Congar still expounds salvation using a Thomist method of causality and grace in the same treatise.¹⁸¹ Accordingly, while Congar is trying to synthesize the two approaches, a clear tension between the two methods surfaces in his theology of the church, where he is unable to integrate the salvific effects of means of grace with the church ecclesial communal aspect: "There are two subordinate common Goods in the church, fellowship of grace, and sharing in the means of salvation."¹⁸²

The Church as a Sacrament

I will now fill out Congar's early Christological ecclesiology by considering in more detail how he understands the church as a sacrament and the communal dimension of the church through a consideration of the church as temple "Traditionally the mystical body is not solely the order of inward holiness, the spiritual community of the saved; it is at the same time the *visible organism*, the order of means to salvation."¹⁸³ In an analogy to the mystery of incarnation, Congar sketches the sacramental structure of the church. She is composed of a divine and invisible element, but also an earthly and visible component. In his attempt to portray the church as a sacrament, he draws on the concepts of *res* and *sacramentum*.

The *sacramentum* is the sacramental rite, the outward rite, the visible institution; the *res* is the spiritual fruit that the sacrament hiddenly procures. Thus the church as Body of Christ is the reality in which he takes form in order to live and to act there; as institution, the Church is the visible form of his action, and as fellowship, of his life.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 210.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 124.

¹⁸² Ibid., 158.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 31.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 104.

Thus, the *sacramentum* is the outer sign of and the cause for the realization of the body of Christ. As for the *res*, it generally refers to the hidden grace. In this case, the *res* of the ecclesial sacrament does not correspond to the divinity of Christ, but rather, to the grace which always comes from his humanity. Or, the correspondence of the sacramental structure of the church to the theandric constitution of Christ, where the grace within the church corresponds to the divine element to Christ's divinity.¹⁸⁵

After addressing the notion of the church as a sacrament, I will attend to the visible and human component of this structure. According to Congar, *God's original plan*, as revealed in the Bible, is the bringing of mankind into fellowship with himself. Fellowship and oneness are two attributes of the concept of the temple, which is developed in the Old and New Testaments. God intends to dwell in a temple.¹⁸⁶ In *Lay People in the Church*, Congar writes: "Jesus Christ is the whole Temple and Kingdom, a first time by himself, and he will be so a second time with us, in whom and through whom he will have attained his full stature."¹⁸⁷ The concept of the temple reveals the Christological underpinning of Congar's ecclesiology and the significance of the role of the faithful as constituents. This image of the church, which is related to the image of the body of Christ,¹⁸⁸ is further developed in the *Mystery of the Temple*, where the representation of the faithful as living stones is addressed at length and where the influence of Cyril on Congar's ecclesiology becomes explicit.

Prior to quoting Cyril, Congar writes: "The apostles and after them the Fathers, were profoundly aware of the *mutual involvement* or cross reference between Christ and the

¹⁸⁵ The distinction that I use comes from Pasquier, *L'Eglise comme sacrement*, 135-6.

¹⁸⁶ Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 53 -54.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁸⁸ "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up... But He was speaking of the temple of His body." (John 2:19-21).

human race.”¹⁸⁹ Then he goes on to cite a key passage from Cyril that I quoted at least twice in the previous chapter of this thesis:

He also reveals another profound mystery to us when he affirms for our benefit that the Word “dwelt in us”: *We were all in Christ*, (πάντες γὰρ ἡμεν ἐν Χριστῷ) and the shared properties of our human nature were taken up into his person. That is why he is called the *last Adam*. He gives all the riches of his tranquility and glory to our *common nature*,... Therefore, *the Word “dwelt in” all people through the one man* ... The Word dwells in the one temple, taken from us and for us, *as he dwells in all people*, so that *having everyone in himself* he might reconcile *everyone in one body* with the Father,¹⁹⁰ as Paul says.¹⁹¹

What really concerns Congar in this passage is the mystical theme that ‘the Word “dwelt in” all people through the one man’. He states:

If God is truly to dwell in us, it is not enough for him to be in us, he must also be with us and we with him...Indwelling requires *mutual ‘belonging’*, a kind of union. [He] becomes present in a new way in communicating himself in a personal and different manner. His dwelling among us is nothing other than a communion, a communication to us of the status of sonship... Thus God’s dwelling in us all through one single man brings into being a single temple of filial life, of life with God, whose unique principle of construction and existence is he who came to be its corner-stone. From this living stone, which is the Son of God made flesh, the high priest of the epistle to the Hebrews, and from all the other living stones which are bound to this first stone by faith, there rises a unique temple, a unique worship of filial obedience and praise and a unique love in action, whose fundamental principle is none other than Jesus Christ, who is one in substance with the Father.¹⁹²

Building on the incarnational theology of Cyril and especially its corporate dimension, enables Congar to gradually shift the focus from the institutional aspect of the church to its communal side ‘His dwelling among us is nothing other than a communion’. This principle accentuates the cooperative nature of the relationship between God and man, ‘*mutual involvement; mutual belonging*’. Furthermore, despite the Christological underpinning of the concept of the temple ‘Thus God’s dwelling in us all through one single man brings into being a single temple of filial life, of life with God, whose unique principle of construction and existence is he who came to be its corner-stone,’ the faithful represent an integral

¹⁸⁹ Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple or the Manner of God’s Presence to His Creatures from Genesis to Apocalypse*, trans. Reginald F. Trevett (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1962), 183.

¹⁹⁰ Ephesians 2:16

¹⁹¹ *Jo.* 1.9 (PG 73, 161-164; Pusey I. 141-2); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 64.

¹⁹² Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 183-4

constituent of this temple, they are its 'living stones'. However, the faithful are not only constituents of this building, they are active participants in its construction: "He is the fullness from which we draw all our spiritual existence, but we too are his fullness, in whom, by whose *contribution and cooperation*, he fulfills himself. In other words, Jesus is the whole Temple and Kingdom, at first time by himself, and he will be a second time with us, in whom and through whom he will have attained his full stature."¹⁹³

Sainte Église

If *Lay People in the Church* represents a cornerstone in Congar's quest of integrating the lay people in the body of Christ, *Sainte Église*¹⁹⁴ is certainly a significant leap in the trajectory of his ecclesiology of communion. His ecclesiology here remains Christocentric and remains informed by the incarnational theology of Aquinas, Cyril and Möhler, however read through a Chalcedonian perspective¹⁹⁵ and with qualification to the notion of continued incarnation, but gradually the theme of communion becomes more central. As this theme grows in importance we see Conger move away from Thomas and closer to some aspects of Cyril's theology. However, tensions and problems remain.

In *Sainte Église* Congar perceives Christ as God existing in a human body and acting under the conditions of the human nature...where his humanity acts as a 'conjoined instrument' of his divinity.¹⁹⁶ Conceiving the incarnation from a Chalcedonian perspective, he writes: "In the unique reality of his concrete human aide (suppôt), he exerts human activities that properly fall under the human, and other activities, which properly fall under

¹⁹³ Yves Congar *Lay People in the Church*, 102-103.

¹⁹⁴ Yves Congar, *Sainte Église: Études et approches ecclésiologiques* (Unam Sanctam, 41), (Paris: Cerf, 1963). Translation from French to English is undertaken by the author of this study.

¹⁹⁵ Refers to the Christological definition of the Council of Chalcedon (451), which identifies two natures, divine and human, in Christ, though without mixture nor confusion nor change and allows for the ascription of certain activities carried out by Christ to his divine nature and other activities to his human nature though in communion with each other.

¹⁹⁶ Congar, *Sainte Église*, 75.

the divine principle of operation. In the second type of activity, his humanity is active, but it is utilized by God in order to perform the proper acts of this one [God]: It's an animated instrument that is conjoined to the being of God.”¹⁹⁷ Here we see how Congar adheres not only to Thomas' Christology but also to the Chalcedonian formula. However, he adds that: “All the activities of Christ are considered as *mysteria*, even those which proceed from him, according to his sole human nature, for they were the actions of the Incarnate Word.”¹⁹⁸ ...The slumber of Jesus was not uniquely the sleep of a man, it was the slumber of God.”¹⁹⁹ By recognizing that all activities of Jesus belong to the Incarnate Word and appealing to Augustine, does Congar acknowledge that the Incarnate Word is the principle of activities carried out by Christ? Well he writes: “In Christ the union of the two natures is a union in the being, *per esse, secundum esse*. This is why there is a transfer of (passage de) all the operations of the human nature to God as the subject of attribution. It is really, in Jesus Christ, God who sleeps, speaks, suffers and walks.”²⁰⁰ Accordingly, Congar's Christology is rooted in that of Thomas and Cyril in terms of attributing all of Christ's activities to the single subject of the Word.

However, Congar is highly critical of the way Cyril perceives the concept of *communicatio idiomatum*.

It is not a matter of ontological communication of divine properties to the human nature...there is no communication or exchange of properties between the two natures, it is the concrete subject of attribution who, being simultaneously God and man, carries out properties that are suitable to both the human and divine natures...that way all divine operations can be attributed to Jesus, the Incarnate Word, just as all the human operations of Jesus can be attributed to God.²⁰¹

Here, Congar does not only reject Cyril's notion of an exchange of attributes, he also distinguishes between Jesus and the Word in a language that is not usually found in Cyril.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 76.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Augustine Tract XV in *Joannem* (PL 34, 1512).

¹⁹⁹ Congar, *Sainte Église*, 78.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 82-83.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 82-83.

However, informed by Thomas' incarnational theology, Congar suggests that, on the one hand, by virtue of its personal unity with the divine nature, the human nature of Christ receives *an elevation and an efficiency that it would have not have possessed on its own merits*.

On the other hand, certain divine attributes of power and glory, which belong to Christ by virtue of his being the Incarnate Word, are somehow concealed or put on hold by the requirements of his human life and especially as a savior by means of the cross. But the communication of properties has for status just as the incarnation, the 'undivided, inseparable, ... non-confusion'.²⁰²

The Church

In *Sainte Église*, drawing on Möhler's *Symbolik*, Congar suggests that "the church is not any sort of corpse, but the body of Christ endowed with supernatural life."²⁰³ Then, based on Leo XIII's *Satis Cognitum*, he defines her as a, "created reality of a human form, and is indeed the *instrument* of God; yet, she is not like the humanity of Christ, conjoined to God in the being."²⁰⁴ However, the most relevant definition of the church to Congar's ecclesiological evolution in this monograph is:

As institution, sacrament or means of salvation, she is the visible reality of the operations where God is the proper efficient cause...As *communion* in the divine goods, and, therefore community of salvation, She participates in the beatific operation where God himself is its proper object of knowledge and love.²⁰⁵

This definition carries several nuances. First, it alludes to the notion of the church as a sacrament. Second, it covers both her institutional and communal aspects, which is central to Congar's ecclesiology. Third, Congar defines the church as a communion,²⁰⁶ which is

²⁰² Ibid., 82-83.

²⁰³ Ibid., 74.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 75.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 84-5.

²⁰⁶ Nisus writes in Alain Nisus, "La Genèse d'une ecclésiologie de communion dans l'oeuvre de Yves Congar," *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* Vol. 94, No. 2 (Avr.-Juin 2010): 311: "Mais c'est surtout à partir de 1950 que le vocabulaire de la communion fait son entrée dans ses écrits. Dans la préface de *Vraie et*

indicative of the gradual transformation of his ecclesiology and shows him shifting more and more to a language of participation.

In *Chrétien désunis* and *Lay People in the Church*, Congar portrays, in line with Möhler, the church as the continuation of the incarnation. However, in *Sainte Église*, he does not reject this notion but he qualifies it.²⁰⁷ He argues that:

This 'biologico-organique' designation of the church affirms a sort of communication of properties between Christ and the church. Moreover, in certain cases, some may develop the theme of the mystical identity between Christ and the church by accentuating (or pushing) its application especially regarding the prerogatives of the hierarchy... which confers upon them the rights of respect, obedience and authority that is worthy of Jesus Christ himself. We do not deny that the hierarchy possess certain powers of Jesus Christ; but 1) these powers are conditional and limited 2) the best way of positing them is not a 'biologico-organique' setting of the church as the body of Christ: but more of an institutional consideration, where her relation to Christ is like a cause, and the community of the faithful is its fruit."²⁰⁸

It is clear that Congar's main concern with presentations of the church as a continued incarnation is that it positions the hierarchy as intermediary between Christ and the laity; they become "the incarnational and apostolic link between Christ, the apostles, and the church," and acquire an elevated status within the church.²⁰⁹ Accordingly, he suggests that certain parallels and limitations exist regarding Christ's relation with the church.

Congar is able to draw several parallels between Christ and the church. Just as in Christ, and in line with the Chalcedonian definition, there are two unconfused natures, transpiring in divine and human operations, so also in the church, there are unconfused divine and human elements, resulting in divine and human operations.²¹⁰ However, there should be some limitation to this kind of concordance.

First, we have seen that all activities performed by Christ belong to the Incarnate Word. However, "We cannot say that, in the church, the ecclesial activities that fall under a human

fausse réforme, il écrit : « L'Église n'est pas seulement un cadre, un appareil, une institution, elle est une communion. » (Congar, *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'Église*, (1950), 9)."

²⁰⁷ James Ambrose Lee II, "Shaping Reception: Yves Congar's Reception of Johann Adam Möhler," 708.

²⁰⁸ Congar, *Sainte Église*, 86-7.

²⁰⁹ Lee, "Shaping Reception: Yves Congar's Reception of Johann Adam Möhler," 702-4.

²¹⁰ Congar, *Sainte Église*, 76.

reality belong to a divine anchor (suppôt). The church, the created reality of a human form, is indeed the instrument of God; yet, she is *not* like the humanity of Christ, conjoined to God in the being.”²¹¹ Second, the law of communication of properties does *not* apply to the church as it applies to the Incarnate Word. Third, of the two major theandric qualifiers, unconfused and undivided, only the first one is rigorously applied to the church.²¹² Fourth, “The solidarity between men and divinity which is realized in the church is not a *per esse* union, it is a *per operationem* (in activity) union, this is why it is called mystical.”²¹³ Finally, in Christ, there is indeed a divine nature. In the church, there is a participation in the acts of God, and because of this, a participation in the divine nature.²¹⁴

But does this mean that Christ’s relation to the church, can be reduced to parallelism and analogy?

Needless to say that there is no divine nature in the church, but only certain dispositions by means of which certain supernatural, divine activities have their immediate principle in her, and subsequently a quasi-nature, since the nature is the stable principle of the proper movements and operations of a being.²¹⁵

In his attempt to avoid the ‘biologico-organique’ structure of the church, which grants the hierarchy supreme power and authority, while trying maintain the connection between the deity and the church, Congar posits the concept of a quasi-nature. Hence, there exists an invisible divine element that acts as the principle or the cause of all the divine related operations within the church. So, is there a ontological relationship between Christ and the church or not? Is it a ‘subjective ontology’?²¹⁶ Congar is torn between two paths: He wants to abolish the ontological relation between Christ and the church because of its shortcomings and he cannot do so as this will strip the church of its *raison d’être*. What is for sure is that,

²¹¹ Ibid., 78.

²¹² Ibid., 78.

²¹³ Ibid., 83-84.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 84. Commenting on 2Peter 1:4, Congar notes: “Ce texte est plus eschatologique que ne le disent généralement les théologiens catholiques.” In *idid.*, 84.

²¹⁵ Congar, *Sainte Église*, 86.

²¹⁶ Also see, Robert Peter Cameron Brown, “Towards A Personal Ontology of The Church: The Church as Bride in the Theology of Congar and Bulgakov” (PhD. Thesis, *Durham University*, 2013), 57.

for Congar, there is a hidden divine element that acts as a principle for certain movements within the church.

The Church as a Sacrament

Congar's objective is "to maintain the hierarchical order of the church, but to restrict the territory of its governance to the realm of the historical, contingent, and external."²¹⁷

Accordingly, he further develops his sacramental approach of the church in *Sainte Église*, where he identifies the *res* with "the final communal reality, and that we see her united, (*secundum operationem*) according to the activity, to God as the object that she possesses and as the final endowment that she delights in."²¹⁸ Congar is shifting his ecclesiological focus and increasingly using the vocabulary of communion. In the past he mainly identified *res* with the grace of salvation.²¹⁹ At the same time, he identifies the *sacramentum* with "the means of salvation and communion, that one sees, (*secundum operationem*) according to the activity, and that are united to God who acts as her efficient cause."²²⁰ Hence, Congar is trying to promote the communal aspect of the church while upholding her institutional element. But how does he perceive these two aspects of the Church in *Sainte Église*?

Institution

The church is as institution, the sacrament or means of salvation, she is the visible relay of the activities for which God is the proper efficient cause. But under the new dispensation, the church does not exist under a purely prophetic condition, in a posture of anticipation to cease the opportunity, like the prophets of the Old Testament, to proclaim a salvation that is yet to come. But rather she is in an apostolic condition, in a pasture of instrument of communication of a good or a salvation that took place in Christ.²²¹

²¹⁷ Lee, "Shaping Reception: Yves Congar's Reception of Johann Adam Möhler," 699.

²¹⁸ Congar, *Sainte Église*, 84.

²¹⁹ It is worth mentioning though that in *Chrétiens désunis*, 104-108, Congar identifies *res* with both the grace of redemption and the internal unity of the church. Concerning the latter he writes: "the church is like a big *sacrament*, where all is sensibly projected and procures an *internal unity of grace*." This is indicative of Congar's inclination towards communion ecclesiology even at the early stages of his career. The notion of *res* will be addressed in greater details later in the research.

²²⁰ Congar, *Sainte Église*, 84.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 84-5.

The hierarchy's role is simply to link the faithful to or the mediation of the grace of the salvation for which Christ is the source. "In order to reproduce a divine act by its object, the recreated person in Christ is a living one possessing in himself the vivifying roots of this act, in order to produce a visible relay of the authority and efficiency of God, the ecclesiastic institution and its ministers are nothing else other than the means of its transmission."²²²

From where did Congar draw this communal approach? The theological school coming out of Germany has played a significant role. In commenting on Fr Pilgram and his *Physiologie der Kirche* (1860), Congar writes:

Pilgram develops a very beautiful phenomenology of the church as a communion. He inserts the hierarchical functions, the law, the essential attributes of the church, and to end, a real spiritual anthropology, rooted in the tradition of the Fathers. "The essence of the church consists of her being a city, a πολιτεία, is derived from a communion between God and man."²²³

Another German Theologian whose work has had a significant impact on Congar's communal thoughts is Dr. A. Rademacher and his work *Die Kirche als Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft. Eine Studie zur Soziologie der der Kirche* (1931). Developing his concept of the church as a communion, while distinguishing between communion and society, and commenting on Rademacher's book, Congar writes: "But communion (Gemeinschaft) and society (Gesellschaft) are united by close connections: communion is manifested in society and in this way finds its form of life; in a way that does not exist in a communion that is not produced in a society, neither does a society that does not, internally, have something of a communion."²²⁴ We have seen in *Lay People in the church* how Congar differentiates between a typical secular society and an ecclesial one. Here he takes it a step further by distinguishing between the visible ecclesial society and the invisible reality of communion,

²²² Ibid., 86-7.

²²³ Pilgram, *Physiologie de l' Église*, trans. Ph. Reinhard (Paris, 1864), 165, quoted in Congar, *Sainte Église*, 38-39.

²²⁴ Congar, *Sainte Église*, 460-1.

while connecting them in a sacramental manner. But what does it signify for the church to be a communion? Congar suggests that:

As *communion* in the divine goods, and, therefore community of salvation, the church participates in the beatific activities where God himself is its proper object of knowledge and love. Thus, in her members she is glorified, beatified, and divinized, not by an impossible communion of the divine ontology, that is a union in the being, but by a union according to the activity...the association in the properly divine beatitude by an act of knowledge and love, in which God is its present and own object, entails certain inclination of grace in us, to which these acts will truly come from us. These are supernatural 'habitus' of the grace.²²⁵

Bringing up the notion of 'habitual grace' reveals that the French theologian is still indebted to Aquinas in his Christological approach. However, the principle of communion enables Congar to tie the concept of fellowship with that of human salvation, instead of presenting the two as separate elements within the church. Moreover, he specifies that this communion implies a certain sort of active participation not in the being of God but rather in his divine activities. But does this mean that he has moved to a Pneuma-centric ecclesiology? Well, not yet!

The church as communion is made up of persons drawn by the heavenly Christ for the enjoyment of the inheritance of the saints and who receive from the Incarnate Word the necessary gifts of grace. These gifts are truly acclimatized and like grafted in the human being, and become in him/her a living root. In addition, the subject in whom these gifts are found are persons. So that, these supernatural activities truly come from people to whom the spiritual endowments have been grafted, a bit like a fruit coming out of its stem, and that the grace plays in them a role analogous to a 'nature', i.e., the principle of operation. In these vital supernatural acts, the persons 'created in Jesus Christ' are not instruments, but true subjects acting existing according to the quasi-nature which is the grace imparted to them by the Holy Spirit.²²⁶

This passage reveals that, first, Congar's ecclesiology is still Christocentric, where Christ acts as a unifier and a source drawing the faithful to himself and infusing his gifts of grace into them. Secondly, the laity are presented as members of Christ's body. But not as passive members, but rather as active subjects bearing fruits. Thirdly, the Holy Spirit appears as a major contributor in the infusion of the gifts of grace to the faithful. But Congar's

²²⁵ Ibid., 85.

²²⁶ Ibid., 86.

pneumatological dimension, in *Sainte Église*, does not stop there. “We participate in the activities of the life of God, we have, in the *Holy Spirit*, communion with him in the objects of his life, we do not participate in the being of God.”²²⁷ And the outcome of this communion is “as Christians we are not ‘Christ’ except in a mystical way, by *communion*, not in his being, but in his messianic activities: died with, buried with, ascended with seated with, and glorified with him.”²²⁸

These themes show the centrality of a communal conception to Congar’s more developed ecclesiology. Moreover, he posits an active participation of the laity in Christ’s salvific acts. And this is where his and Cyril’s soteriological ecclesiology converge. In addition, this represents a dramatic shift from his Aristotelian/Thomist theology of causality to a more Augustinian/Cyrrillian theology of participation. However, it is worth noting that, though Cyril makes intensive use of 2Peter 1:4 “you may be partakers of the divine nature” he does not make a clear distinction between the application of this verse in the current or in the eschatological era.²²⁹ On the other hand, Congar clearly states: “Ce texte (2Peter 1:4) est plus eschatologique que ne le disent généralement les théologiens catholiques.”²³⁰

I Believe in the Holy Spirit

In *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, published in 1979-1980, Congar’s ecclesiology experiences a dramatic swerve from a Christocentric to, as the title of the book suggests, a more Pneuma-centric one. And though this may be considered as the climax of his ecclesiology of communion, an ecclesiastical outlook which brings him closer to Cyril’s ecclesiology of

²²⁷ Ibid., 87.

²²⁸ Ibid., 87-88.

²²⁹ Cf. John J. O’Keefe, “Incorruption, Anti-Origenism, and Incarnation: Eschatology in the Thought of Cyril of Alexandria,” in Thomas G. Weinandy and Daniel A. Keating, *The Theology of St Cyril of Alexandria: A Critical Appreciation* (London: T&T Clark LTD, 2003), 203: “we can fairly conclude that the thought of Cyril of Alexandria did not revolve around eschatological themes. For Cyril, eschatology is essentially understood as that process by which we are delivered from sin and death, divinized, and made residents of an incorrupt and restored creation. This process of divinization can begin now, in this life.”

²³⁰ Congar, *Sainte Église*, 84.

participation, the theological maneuver has had a significant impact on his Christology. In trying to carve out a major active role to be played by the Holy Spirit in the life of the church, he substantially alters his Christology. And thus, while he becomes more Cyrilline in some important ways, he also now leaves behind other of Thomas and Cyril that are equally important! My aim in what follows is to describe this last phase in Congar's development and bring out the deep tensions that it embodies.

Congar now defines the church as a "a communion, a fraternity of persons. This is why a personal principle and a principle of unity are united in the church. These two are brought together into harmony by the Holy Spirit. Persons are the great wealth of the church."²³¹ Here we see that, first, the influence of Thomas still lingering in Congar's ecclesiology when he speaks of 'friendship'. Second, the laity are no longer marginalized but they are the constituents of this communion and they represent 'the great wealth of the church'. Third, he advances the ecclesial role of the Holy Spirit by portraying the Spirit as the principle of communion and unity.

The unity that is peculiar to the church has its reality in the church itself. But it has its foundation in God... It is also related to the mystery of the will of God (Ephesians 1:9-10; 3:3-9) in other words his plan of salvation. The person-church is the one total reality envisaged by this plan and it is at the same time the term of that plan. That reality and that term are the one 'mystical' body of Christ.²³²

Here, the sacramental representation of the church is apparent, since the reality (*res*) of the ecclesiastical unity has its foundation in God. Moreover, Congar attaches human salvation to the church and the communion of the members in the mystical body. "In reality, however-and the biblical Greek term *Koinonia*, translated by the Latin *communio*, requires us to see the matter in this light-it means the *participation* in the good things of the community of salvation together with the other members of that community."²³³ By appealing to the notion

²³¹ Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2. Tr .David Smith (New York, NY: The Seabury Press; London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983), 16.

²³² *Ibid.*, 20.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 59.

of participation, Congar is able to link the communal aspect of the church and the salvation of the believers. This represents a significant shift in his ecclesial soteriology; in earlier texts we find some tension between Thomas' narration of salvation and the notion of participation. But how did he come up with this scheme?

Did Augustine not open up a way for us when he spoke forcefully of our unity with Christ in his Body and claimed that we form a single total Christ one son with him and in him.²³⁴

As sons of God we are the body of the only Son. (*Ep. Ioan. ad Parth.* X, 5, 9 (PL 35, 2055))²³⁵

It is clear that Augustine has played a major role in shaping Congar's thoughts regarding the theme of participation. But the Greek Fathers - especially Athanasius and Cyril - have also informed Congar's account:

The Greek Fathers preserved the principle that God's work done *ad extra* were common to all three Persons, but at the same time spoke *more positively* about the connection between our created sonship and the uncreated sonship of Christ. They were able to do this because their teaching was situated within a logical framework of *participation* and exemplarity and of formal and not efficient causality. (Cf. Athanasius on our participation in the Son, *C Ar I*, 16 and 56 (PG 26, 45 and 129)).²³⁶

Congar also appeals directly to Cyril's writings with regards to our participation in Christ's Sonship:

Christ is both the only Son and the first-born Son. He is the only Son as God, but he is the first-born son by the saving union that he has constituted between us and him in becoming man. In that, we, in and through him, have become sons of God, both by nature and by grace. We are those sons by nature in him and only in him. We are also those sons by *participation* and by grace through the Spirit. (Cyril of Alexandria, *De recta fide ad Theod.* (PG 76, 1177))²³⁷

Not only does the congruence of Cyril and Congar's ecclesiology but also Cyril's direct influence on Congar become clear. But does Congar's Christology in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* exhibit similar conformity with that of Cyril and Thomas?

²³⁴ Ibid., 92.

²³⁵ Ibid., 105.

²³⁶ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 92.

²³⁷ Ibid., 105

In his attempt to assign a bigger role to the Holy Spirit in his Christology, Congar acknowledges that he is following a particular theological movement which had developed in prior decades and which bases its Christology on the work of the Third Person of the Trinity in the mystery of Christ.

The first move in this direction should perhaps be attributed to Heribert Mühlen who has worked assiduously to establish a firm connection between the mystery of the Church and, not the incarnation as such, but the baptism of Jesus, as anointed by the Holy Spirit in order to carry out his messianic ministry.²³⁸

Congar argues that traditional Chalcedonian Christology is not contradicted by these developments, but rather certain aspects of it are developed.²³⁹

Congar also sets out four different features of Mühlen's theology. First, it places the greatest emphasis on the anointing of Christ at his baptism by the Holy Spirit. Second, it rejects Möhler's theme of 'continued incarnation'. Third, according to Congar, it is 'quite close to the way in which Scripture speaks, that is, concretely and historically, where the term 'Christus' outgrows the limits of the noun 'Jesus' it carries another value, denoting-based on Hebrew- that he is the 'anointed one', which would be understood in a functional and ministerial manner. Finally, Christ's 'sanctification should not be attributed to the hypostatic union, but rather to the Holy Spirit'.²⁴⁰ Subsequently, and continuing to be informed by Mühlen, Congar states:

In the case of Jesus it is important to avoid Adoptianism. He is ontologically the Son of God because of the hypostatic union from the moment of his conception... We have however, as believers, to respect the successive moments or stages in the history of salvation and to accord the New Testament texts to their full realism. Because of this, I would suggest that there were two moments when the *virtus* or effectiveness of the Spirit in Jesus was actuated in a new way. The first was at his baptism, when he was constituted (and not simply proclaimed

²³⁸ Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit, Vol. 3*. Tr. David Smith (New York, NY: The Seabury Press; London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983), 165.

²³⁹ There are two conditions which are stipulated in relation to this approach. First, "Christology should not be separated from soteriology. The incarnation has an aim and that aim is Easter, the resurrection and eschatological fulfillment." Second, "God's work in human history is achieved in a series of events situated in time, which, once they have happened, *contribute something new and bring about changes.*" Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit, Vol. 3*, 165-166.

²⁴⁰ Yves, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit, Vol. 1*. Tr. David Smith (New York, NY: The Seabury Press; London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983), 21.

as) Messiah and Servant by God. The second moment was at the time of his resurrection and exaltation, when he was made Lord.²⁴¹

Congar is torn between two schools, the patristic and scholastic school that claims that Christ possessed everything (the fullness of grace, including his divine Sonship) from the very first moment of the virginal conception,²⁴² and the modern school which attributes the inclusion of something new to 'Jesus' at certain historical events to the Holy Spirit.

The event in the Jordan marks the beginning of the messianic era... This is what Jesus was in himself, as the *Unigenitus a Patre*. He was to become this and be proclaimed this for us, as the *Primogenitus in multis fratribus*. This event brought about no Change in Jesus himself, but it denoted a new *kairos* in the history of salvation. Jesus himself entered a new era, that of which Peter speaks in Acts 10:38. It was disclosed to Jesus by the voice 'from heaven'. At the same time, he also entered in a new way into his consciousness of being the Son, the Messiah and the Servant (see Luke 4:18)...The second decisive event leading to a new acquisition of Jesus' quality of son by virtue of an act of 'God' through his Spirit is, of course, Jesus' resurrection and glorification... In the second state he is seated at the right hand of God...He is penetrated by the Spirit...The communication of divinity took his humanity, united without separation to the Person of the Word, to the condition of the humanity of the Son of God.²⁴³

Congar's attempt to incorporate the two Christological schools creates a certain tension. On the one hand, Christ possesses everything from the outset of the conception, on the other hand, something is added to him, '[he] become(s) the *Primogenitus in multis fratribus*' 'The communication of divinity *took his humanity to the condition of the humanity of the Son of God*'. So does Christ possess everything from the beginning or is there something new that is introduced to his humanity? It is clear that something is added to Jesus at these events.

In the dispensation with the Trinity, 'the Father begets his Son incessantly, in a perpetual today.' He begets him in Jesus the man in accordance with the *stages* of the 'economy': conception, baptism-messianic anointing (see Acts 10:38), resurrection and glorification, *until* the humanity of Jesus is invested with the sovereign conditions with the humanity of the Son of God.²⁴⁴

Is this passage not unavoidably adoptionianistic?

²⁴¹ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit, Vol. 3*, 171.

²⁴² "According to non-historical theology and even for Thomas Aquinas, Christ *possessed everything from the time of his conception* and, in what are reported in Scripture as institutive events, there is simply a manifestation of others of a reality that is already there. The theophany at the baptism of Jesus is an example of this," in Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit, Vol. 3*, 165-6.

²⁴³ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit, Vol. 3*, 167-9.

²⁴⁴ Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit, Vol. 2*, 214.

Moreover, a second matter arises in Congar's Christology as a result of adapting Mühlen's theology. The French theologian writes:

The hypostatic union left his human soul, which was consubstantial with ours, in his human condition of kenosis, obedience and prayer. Jesus realized his relationship with the Father in and through the acts of his spiritual life as a son, the Spirit being the source of this in him. These acts include his prayer, his clinging in love to the Father's plan for him, and the works that the Father gave him to fulfill.²⁴⁵

It is clear that, here, Congar is not only separating between the Logos and the man Jesus, but also attributing certain activities solely to the latter. Is not this a departure from his previous single-subject Christology and a certain sort of new Nestorianism? It is thus clear that by appealing to Mühlen's theology, Congar is moving away from the traditional Cyrillian and Thomist Christology.

Conclusion

Through this chapter I have sketched a trajectory in Congar's ecclesiology. That ecclesiology was originally informed by that of Thomas and Möhler, rooted in the theology of the Alexandrian Fathers, and revolving around the mystery of the incarnation. This theology enabled Congar to expound not only the divine and human elements within the church, but also to defend the need for human mediation. Eventually, realizing that this approach positions the laity only as a secondary reality, Congar, without abolishing the role of the hierarchy, turns to the notion of the church as sacrament and communion. However, this shift has several consequences. First, it involves departing from a robust Christological approach to a more Pneuma-centric one. Second, in one aspect, it represents a divergence from the Thomist methodology to a *more* Cyrillian one, emphasizing the centrality of incorporation into and participation in Christ. But, and finally, by making so central the role of the Holy

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 166-7.

Spirit in his Christology and ecclesiology, Congar actually moves away from other central aspects of the traditional Christology shared by the Greek Fathers and Thomas!

Furthermore, it emerged from the first two chapters of the thesis that the common ground of Cyril and Congar's Christological ecclesiology can be found in their tying of the church to Christ by designating her as his [mystical] body, where he represents not only the head, but also the body itself and the faithful act as the members of this body (σύσσωμοι) (Ephesians: 3:6) by participating in it. In the next two chapters, I will examine both Cyril and Congar's pneumatological ecclesiology with the objective of figuring out whether the two theologians hold similar views regarding the role of the Holy Spirit in relation to the church and Christ.

CHAPTER III: Cyril's Pneumatological Ecclesiology

Introduction

In the first chapter I showed how Cyril's ecclesiology is rooted in his understanding of the mystery of incarnation. Then, in the second chapter I argued that Congar's early ecclesiology was also Christocentric and that, consequently, there is room for convergence between these two theologians; the notion of incorporation into and participation in the body of Christ provides a common foundation. In the next two chapters I consider pneumatology, and uncover something of a tension between the two thinkers. In this chapter I will argue that when Cyril talks about the Spirit's role in the body of Christians his account is inseparable from his Christology. Setting out Cyril's vision will require me to consider some aspects of the relationship between the Son and Spirit in the Trinitarian life. Once again, the two main works I will draw on are the *Glaphyra* (written between 412 and 423) and the commentary on John (c. 425-9). The latter work offers a more elaborate account, but there is much continuity between the two. In the next chapter I consider Congar, and suggest that although he was deeply influenced by the Greek fathers, and Cyril in particular, his ecclesiology demonstrates a shift from a Christocentric to a more pneumatocentric ecclesiology. This shift, one may argue, involves him in moving away from the very sources he claims as his own in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*. There remains much in common between the two ecclesiologies, but also some tension, that was, to a great extent, loosened up in his later writings.

Cyril of Alexandria

Cyril posits the main themes of his pneumatology in the following ecclesial passage:

It was impossible for us to be restored, once we had fallen because of the original transgression, back to our original beauty except by attaining an ineffable

communion and union with God. That is how the nature of those on earth was ordered in the beginning. No one could have union with God except through participation in the Holy Spirit, who implants his own attribute of sanctification in us and refashions into his own life the nature that was subject to decay. In this way he leads those who lack this glory back to God and to being conformed to him. The Son is the perfect image of the Father, and his Spirit is the natural likeness of the Son. That is why the Spirit refashions, as it were, human souls to himself and engraves the divine form into them and seals (ἀποσημαίνεται) them with the image of the essence that is highest of all.¹

The Holy Spirit is the principle of human sanctification. Hence, he leads us to union and communion with God and conforms us to the Image of the Father - the Son - since the Spirit is his 'natural likeness'; thus, regenerating us into our original status and 'seals [us] with the image of the essence that is highest of all'. In order to draw out the themes found in this passage, I will first consider how Cyril presents the Spirit as present in the Old and New dispensations. Then I take a step back to consider some of the most fundamental principles of his understanding of the relationship between Son and Spirit. Then I turn back directly to ecclesiology, considering the indwelling of the Spirit, the grace of sanctification, and the manner in which the Spirit shapes the church as a unity.

I: Old and New Dispensation, Cyril of Alexandria

Although Cyril is famous for his Christological orientation, his account of the difference between new and old dispensations lies mainly in the different ways in which the Spirit may be said to indwell, a distinction that is, however, dependent on the centrality of Christ in history. He addresses this topic in the *Glaphyra*, where he twice adduces to John 7:39 in order to highlight the contrast between the old and the new economy. However, given that this verse pertains to the fourth Gospel, Cyril gives an elaborate account of this subject in his commentary on John.

After claiming, in the *Glaphyra*, that the circumcision of the flesh acted as a type for the spiritual circumcision, he writes:

¹ *Jo.* 11.11 (PG 74, 553; Pusey II. 730-1); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 302.

And it was the occasion of partaking of the Holy Spirit and receiving circumcision in him, not one that causes pain in the flesh, but which purifies the spirit, not removing the filth of the body, but freeing us from diseases of the soul. When Christ came back to life, having annulled the power of death,...(John 20:22 and 7:39 are cited) the Spirit was also conveyed to us, and in him we have been circumcised with a spiritual circumcision performed without hands. This, in fact, is the kind of circumcision that is pleasing to God. (then he cites Romans 2:28-29)²

So, the spirit was given to the faithful after Christ's resurrection and this gift resulted in a spiritual circumcision that surpasses the fleshly one and that purifies the soul. This type of circumcision is, according to Cyril, more pleasing to God and it could have not been attained by the people of the Old Testament (OT) since Christ had not been crucified and resurrected yet. Then, in book 5 of the *Glaphyra* where Cyril compares church of the gentiles to the children of Rachel, he writes:

So he dwells within us through the spirit as I just said and not in Israel. That the Jews who lived before Christ's advent did not partake of the Spirit the most –wise John, speaking in a manner corresponding to the type, would make clear in saying, “for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”³

After Christ had been raised from the dead and set about reforming the nature of humankind in the divine image, he breathed upon the holy apostles first, saying, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’⁴ The divine Paul said in one place, ‘For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’⁵ Within Israel, then, there was a spirit of bondage. Yet within us who come forth from Rachel, from the church taken out of the Gentiles, there is the Spirit of God, which brings us to adoption as sons, making us into a spiritual house. So the offspring of Rachel are free.⁶

The passage shows, first, that under the old dispensation Israel did not fully possess the Spirit of God. Second, the sending of the Spirit followed the glorification of Christ. Third, the bestowal of the Spirit is accompanied by the gift of adoption instead of the spirit of bondage experienced by the people of the OT. Finally, in the two passages John 7:39 is always connected to John 20:22 to underline the rootedness of the sending of the Spirit in Christ. But

² *Glaph.* 3 (PG 69, 133); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.1, 149-150.

³ John 7:39.

⁴ John 20:22.

⁵ Romans 8:15.

⁶ *Glaph.* 5 (PG 69, 233); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.1, 231.

if John 7:39 plays such a central role in Cyril's comparison between the old and new dispensations, how does Cyril interpret this verse?⁷

Cyril begins by wondering, "How is it that "there was no Spirit" when there is clearly so great a chorus of prophets who are found to speak in the Spirit of the divine mysteries concerning Christ through long discourses?" and then points to Samuel, Elisha and David as OT characters led by the Spirit. Cyril appeals to the notion of the second Adam to differentiate between the type of the Spirit indwelling - a topic that will be addressed later in this chapter - under the two dispensations, and then replies to the question "why the outpouring of the Spirit did not take place before the resurrection?," by turning to the notion of the firstfruits:

Christ became the first fruits of the renewed nature at that time when, having no regard for the bonds of death, he returned to life, as we have just said. How then could those who come after the first fruits be brought to life before it? In the same way that a plant could not sprout from the earth if it did not come from its own root (since that is the source of the plant's growth), *so also it would be impossible for us, who have our Lord Jesus Christ as the root of incorruption, to sprout before our root.*⁸

So, the outpouring of the Spirit could not take place prior to Christ's incarnation, as he became the firstfruits of the new creation.

He continues:

Let us now consider (since I will take up the purpose of the statement) that in the holy prophets there was certainly an abundant and *torchbearing* Spirit, able to lead them to an understanding of the things to come and to a knowledge of things hidden. In those who believe in Christ, however, there is not simply a torch light from the Spirit, but we are confident that the *Spirit himself* dwells in us and takes up residence. Thus, there is good reason that we are called the *temples* of God, even though none of the holy prophets was ever called a divine temple.

How will we understand this, and what will we say when we hear our Savior Christ saying, "Truly, truly I say to you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he?"⁹ And what is the kingdom of heaven? Clearly, it is the *giving of the Holy Spirit*, according to the statement, "The kingdom of heaven is within

⁷ *Jo.* 5.2 (PG 73, 749-760; Pusey I. 690-698); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 308-312.

⁸ *Jo.* 5.2 (PG 73, 756; Pusey I. 695); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 310.

⁹ Mathew 11:11.

you.’¹⁰ The Spirit, after all, makes his dwelling in us through faith. Do you see, then, how he ranks the one in the kingdom of heaven before everyone born of women, even if that one falls short of the perfect?

Therefore, Christ says that the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven, that is, the one who is already baptized, even though that person is not yet outstanding in works, is greater than John himself in this respect alone: while the blessed John was born of a woman, that person has been born of God, as it is written,¹¹ and has become a participant in the divine nature,¹² having the Holy Spirit dwelling in them and now being called a temple of God.¹³

Under the new dispensation we receive ‘the Holy Spirit itself’ in contrast to the ‘torch bearing Spirit’ received by the prophets under the old regime, and we are ontologically transformed into divine temples, which was considered an unattainable feat under the old dispensation. Furthermore, those who are baptized and receive the Spirit are ‘born of God’ and hence become greater than the greatest of those who are born of a woman, i.e., John the Baptist.

In conclusion, Cyril attributes the superiority of the new dispensation to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit: “So when the divine Evangelist says to us, ‘For as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified,’ let us understand him to be indicating the full and complete dwelling of the Holy Spirit in human beings.”¹⁴ Moreover, Cyril’s approach revolves around John 7:39 “for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Still, however, Cyril connects the gift of the Spirit under the new dispensation to his Christology and the mystery of incarnation.

¹⁰ Luke 17:21.

¹¹ 1John 3:9.

¹² 2Peter 1:4.

¹³ *Jo.* 5.2 (PG 73, 757-760; Pusey I. 696-697); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 311.

¹⁴ *Jo.* 5.2 (PG 73, 760; Pusey I. 698); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 312.

II: Father, Son and Spirit

In order to understand how Cyril sees the Spirit functioning within this new dispensation, we must now consider some his basic dogmatic commitments in the area of pneumatology.¹⁵ On

John 20:21-23 Cyril comments:

Since they were going to say that Jesus is Lord, that is, they were going to proclaim him as God and Lord, they had to receive the grace of the Spirit along with the honor of apostleship. And Christ gave the Spirit not as one serving the desire of another but rather as one *supplying him of himself* (ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ). After all, the Spirit could not come to us *from the Father* (παρὰ Πατρὸς) in any other way than *through the Son* (δι' Υἱοῦ)...

He is arguing, after all, that Christ is *formed* in them in no other way than by *participation in the Holy Spirit* and by living according to the evangelical law. Therefore, Christ restores his *own Spirit* (ἴδιον πνεῦμα) in his disciples as the first fruits of a nature renewed to incorruption and glory and in the *divine image*. In addition, we must—must—understand that *he* is the *supplier and giver of the Spirit*. That is why he said, “All that the Father has is mine.”¹⁶ The Father has his own Spirit from himself and in himself. The Son *has this Spirit in himself* as well, since he is of the *same substance* with the Father and comes from him essentially. By nature he has in himself all things that belong to the one who begat him.¹⁷

This passage reveals many fundamental aspects of Cyril's pneumatology. We may best draw them out by asking about the role of the Father. Athanasius writes: “It is the Father himself who does everything and gives everything through the Word in the Spirit,”¹⁸ and this Athanasian perspective seems to have guided Cyril. However, in referencing Athanasius' *First Letter to Serapion I*, 28-30, Boulnois suggests that the formula is used by Athanasius only to put the accent on the unity of the divine action and to demonstrate the consubstantiality of the three hypostases.¹⁹

¹⁵ For studies related to Cyril's pneumatology, please consult: J. Mahé, *La sandiftcalion d'après saint Cyrille*, *Revue d'Histoire ecclésiastique* X (1909); Hubert Du Manoir, *Dogme et Spiritualité chez S. Cyrille d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1944), 221-256; Aloysio M. Bermejo S.J., “The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit according to Saint Cyril of Alexandria” (Excerpta ex dissertation, Pontifica Universitas Gregoriana, 1963); Boulnois, *Le paradoxe trinitaire chez Cyrille d'Alexandrie*, Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité, vol. 143 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1994); Daniel A. Keating, *The Appropriation of Divine Life in Cyril of Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁶ John 16:15.

¹⁷ *Jo.* 12.1 (PG 74, 712 and 716; Pusey III. 132 and 135-6); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 368 and 369-70.

¹⁸ Athanasius, *Ad Ser.* III, 17,2 (PG 26, 633).

¹⁹ Boulnois, *Le paradoxe trinitaire chez Cyrille d'Alexandrie* 180-209; Hans van Loon, *The Dyophysite Christology of Cyril of Alexandria*, 579.

However, Cyril has developed this formula to encompass salvific nuances. ἐκ (or παρὰ) Πατρός δι’ Υἱοῦ ἐν Πνεύματι is a thematic formula²⁰ in Cyril’s Trinitarian theology. Furthermore, he uses it more extensively than his Alexandrian predecessor and he draws on it for soteriological reasons, as will be shown later in this section. In his Johannine commentary, for instance, he writes:

- John 14:11: He [the Holy Spirit] is not divided in any way from his essence but proceeds from him (God) and remains in him always. The Spirit is also *supplied to the saints through Christ*, since all things *come through the Son and in the Spirit*.²¹
- John 14: 16-17 Furthermore, it is not the Father by himself or the Son by himself who gives the Paraclete, or the Holy Spirit; rather, he is supplied to the saints *from the Father through the Son* (παρὰ Πατρός δι’ Υἱοῦ). That is why, when the Father is said to have given, the Son, “through whom are all things,” also gives. And when the Son is said to have given, the Father, “from whom are all things,” also gives.²²
- John 14:19 God the Father has given the Paraclete, that is, the Holy Spirit, through the Son, since all things *are from the Father through him...* As far as the most bountiful and unstinting grace of the giver is concerned, no one on earth would remain without a share. “For I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,” he says in the Prophets.²³
- Jo 15:1 And if it should seem good to ascribe to each person something that was given to us or accomplished around the creation, we will still believe no less that all things are *from the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit*. Now you should understand, and quite rightly so, that the Father nourishes us for godliness through the Son in the Spirit.²⁴
- Jo 15:1 If we think rightly, however, we will surely hold that neither the one function apart from the Father nor the other function apart from the Son and the Holy Spirit would accomplish the whole task. Everything is *from the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit*, as we have said.²⁵

This formula implies that the Father is the source or origin of the gift of the Spirit and every divine endowment. “When the Son anoints his own temple, the Father is said to do it, since he carries out that activity in no other way than through the Son. Whatever the Son does is ascribed to the Father from whom he exists. The Father is a *root* (Ῥίζα), as it were, and

²⁰ However, sometimes Cyril uses the term Παρὰ Πατρός. For an exhaustive study of the formula please refer to Boulnois, *Le paradoxe trinitaire chez Cyrille d’Alexandrie*, 577-589.

²¹ Jo. 9.1 (PG 74, 216; Pusey II. 432); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 161.

²² Jo. 9.1 (PG 74, 257; Pusey II. 468-9); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 179.

²³ Jo. 9.1 (PG 74, 264; Pusey II. 473); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 181-2.

²⁴ Jo. 10.2 (PG 74, 336; Pusey II. 536); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 211.

²⁵ Jo. 10.2 (PG 74, 336; Pusey II. 536-7); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 211.

source for his own offspring.”²⁶ In addition, the Son acts as the mediator of this gift and the Spirit is the divine medium in which the Trinity interacts with mankind.²⁷

Second, the Spirit belongs to the Son, it is his ‘own Spirit’²⁸. “At the time of the incarnation because he appeared with a body in the world, in the same way, he has *his own Spirit* (τὸ ἴδιον πνεῦμα) essentially *in himself*, but he is said to receive it as man.”²⁹ And commenting on another verse he writes: “Moses said to us, the creator of all took dust from the ground, fashioned a man and “breathed into his face the breath of life.” And what is the breath of life but plainly *the Spirit of Christ, ... the Savior graces us once again with this Spirit, bringing us back to that original dignity and refashioning us into his image.*”³⁰

The fact that the Spirit is proper to the Son, is an Athanasian and Cyrillian theological interpretation of the biblical truth: “All things that the Father has are Mine.”³¹ So since what belongs to the Father belongs to the Son, the Spirit is the Spirit of the Son, just as it is the Spirit of the Father. But does the Son have the capacity of the Father to engender the Spirit in eternity? I will approach this question soon, but first we must discuss the role of the Son in supplying the Spirit to humankind.

Third, the passage shows that dispensing the Spirit to humanity is a peculiar task of the Son, a theme also highlighted in Cyril’s interpretation to the parable of the ‘True Vine’:

Just as the root of the vine serves and distributes the enjoyment of its own inherent natural qualities to the branches, so also the only begotten Word of God *imparts to the saints* a kinship, as it were, to his own nature and that of God the Father by giving them the Spirit, insofar as they have been united to him in faith

²⁶ *Jo.* 11.10 (PG 74, 549-552; Pusey II. 727); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 300-1.

²⁷ Boulnois, *Le paradoxe trinitaire chez Cyrille d’Alexandrie*, 587-589.

²⁸ His ‘own Spirit’ is an Athanasian term, please refer to Andrew Louth, “The use of the Term ἴδιος in Alexandrian Theology from Alexander to Cyril,” *SP* 19 (1989): 198-202.

²⁹ *Jo.* 2.1 (PG 73, 209; Pusey I. 187); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 83. See also: *Jo.* 11.10 (PG 74, 537-540; Pusey II. 717); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 295-6, “and asked that the disciples be protected by the truth, that is, by *his own Spirit* (since the Spirit is the truth as John says, (1John 5:6) and he is “the Spirit of the truth,” John (16:13) that is, of the Only Begotten himself); and *Jo.* 11.10 (PG 74, 540; Pusey II. 718); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 296, “the Spirit belongs to God the Father, but he no less belongs to the Son as well.”

³⁰ *Jo.* 5.2 (PG 73, 756-7; Pusey I. 695-6); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 311.

³¹ John 16:15.

and perfect holiness. He nourishes them for godliness and works knowledge in them of every virtue and good work.³²

Even if the Son is the one who sends the Spirit in the economy, is he the principal cause for the procession of the Spirit?

However, fourthly, in the same treatise Cyril writes:

The Spirit belongs to God the Father, but he no less belongs to the Son as well. However, they are not one and another, and neither is the Spirit understood to subsist divisibly in another, nor does he actually do so. Rather, since the Son is from the Father and in the Father by nature, as the true fruit of his essence, the Spirit, who belongs to the Father by nature, is brought upon us. He is poured out from the Father and supplied to creation through his Son, not in the manner of a servant or as an underling but, as I just said, proceeding from the very essence of God the Father, poured out on those who are worthy to receive him through the Word, who comes from the Father and is of the same substance with him.

We maintain that the Son has his own subsistence, but he also exists in his begetter, and his begetter has him in himself. *The Spirit of the Father is clearly the Spirit of the Son*, and when the Father sends or promises to provide him to the saints, the Son also bestows him as his own on account of the identity of essence that he has with the Father. Furthermore the Father carries out whatever he does *through the Son*.³³

Some western theologians have contended that a sentence like “the Son also bestows him as his own on account of the identity of essence that he has with the Father,” is consonant with a filioquist account of the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit. However, I suggest that Cyril does not explicitly make any clear statement on the matter. The issue of the procession of the Holy Spirit was not a controversial issue during his time, and we should not expect him to have a clear position on this question. In any case, his dominant approach for the Spirit’s descent is the formula (ἐκ Πατρὸς δι’ Υἱοῦ ἐν Πνεύματι). But what are the anthropological and soteriological implications of this descent?

While demonstrating the role of the Holy Spirit in realizing our communion with God Irenaeus writes:

The Lord thus has redeemed us through His own blood, giving His soul for our souls, and His flesh for our flesh, and has also poured out the Spirit of the Father for the union and communion of God and man, imparting indeed God to men by

³² *Jo.* 10.1 (PG 74, 333; Pusey II. 535-6); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 211.

³³ *Jo.* 11.10 (PG 74, 540-1; Pusey II. 718-9); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 296.

means of the Spirit, and, on the other hand, attaching man to God by His own Incarnation, and bestowing upon us at His coming immortality durably and truly, by means of communion with God.³⁴

There is a dual movement here: God descends to us by means of or in the Spirit and humanity ascends towards God through Christ's Incarnation; the result of this communion is the endowment of immortality.³⁵ If the initiative is taken by the Father in the first part of the process, the final destination is also the Father, "that God may be all in all."³⁶ This notion of sequential ascent is found both in the *Glaphyra* and the commentary on John.

In the *Glaphyra* Cyril writes:

Indeed, Christ is to be understood as the perfection of the law and the prophets. For through him there comes a total redemption, since 'there is no other name under heaven among men, by which we must be saved,'³⁷ and in him there is total perfection through sanctification in the Spirit. *Through him we have been summoned to the Father, and with him we shall ascend (αναβησόμεθα) in to the heavenly city.*³⁸

In addition, in his commentary on John, he writes:

John 17:18-19: 'For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son,'³⁹ he makes those in whom he dwells to be *conformed* to the image of the Father, that is, the Son. *So also all things are brought up by the Son to the Father, from whom he comes, through the Spirit.*⁴⁰

John 17: 20-21: When Christ cites the essential unity that the Father has with him and he has with the Father as an image and type of the inseparable friendship and concord and unity of kindred souls, he wants us to be blended with one another, so to speak, by the power of the holy and consubstantial Trinity so that the entire body of the church may be one, ascending (ἀναβαίνον) in Christ by the joining and concurrence of two peoples into one perfect whole.

III: Indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Cyril of Alexandria

It is now time to turn back to the role of the Spirit in the Church, and to the theme of the Spirit's indwelling. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us through Christ, is extensively covered in two passages in Cyril's interpretation of the Gospel of John (John 1:32-33 and

³⁴ AH V. 1,1.

³⁵ Cf. Ysabel de Andia, *Homo Vivens, Incorruptibilité et divinisation de l'homme selon Irénée de Lyon* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1986), 167.

³⁶ 1Corinthians 15:28.

³⁷ Acts 4:12.

³⁸ *Glaph.* 10 (PG 69, 512); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 105.

³⁹ Romans 8:29.

⁴⁰ *Jo.* 11.10 (PG 74, 541; Pusey II. 720); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 297.

17:18-19). However, this theme is not substantially covered in the *Glaphyra*. According to Cyril, this inhabitation of the Spirit is rooted in the incarnation and has established a mystical union between the Word and humankind, the grace of the Spirit flowing from the Head to the members of the Church.

Commenting on the departure of the Spirit from man as a result of Adam's transgression and the overdoing of man in committing sin, Cyril writes : "Evil increased and multiplied among us, and our thoughts always descended to the worse. Sin reigned, and thus human nature was shown to be stripped of the indwelling Holy Spirit. 'For the Holy Spirit of wisdom will flee deceit,' as it is written, 'and will not dwell in a body enslaved to sin.' (Wisdom 1:5, 4)"⁴¹ Subsequently and in order to rectify the damage, the Son of God became man and received his own Spirit for us:

And here too, even though he is holy by nature as God, he is *sanctified for us* in the Holy Spirit in the sense that he gives all creation *participation* in the Holy Spirit for its *continuance* and *preservation* and sanctification. No one else sanctifies him, but he brings about for himself the sanctification of his own flesh. He receives and accepts his own Spirit insofar as he is *human*, but he gives the Spirit to himself as *God*. He did this for us, not for himself, so that originating from him and in him the *grace of sanctification* might *extend* to the entire race.⁴²

Christ is the agent through whom the Spirit indwells humanity. In his divine status he acts as the giver of the Spirit and in his human condition as the recipient of the Spirit, even though Cyril maintains the single subjectivity of the Word as the one who sanctifies his own flesh.

Thus, the Incarnate Word does not receive the Spirit as an extrinsic gift:

"He breathed on his disciples and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"⁴³ So would not someone be quite right in thinking, or rather in being firmly convinced, that since the Son ontologically shares the natural attributes of God the Father, he has the Spirit in the same way that the Father is understood to have him, *not as something imported from the outside* (it would be silly, or rather crazy to think this).⁴⁴

But was it possible for someone else to replace Christ in carrying out this process? Cyril answers:

⁴¹ *Jo.* 2.1 (PG 73, 205; Pusey I. 184); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 82.

⁴² *Jo.* 11.10 (PG 74, 548; Pusey II. 724); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 299.

⁴³ *John* 20:22.

⁴⁴ *Jo.* 9.1 (PG 74, 257; Pusey II. 468); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 179.

When the *Word of God became human*, he received the *Spirit* from the *Father as one of us*. He did not receive anything for himself personally because *he himself is the supplier of the Spirit*. But the one who knew *no sin* received the Spirit as man in order to keep the Spirit in our nature and root in us once again the grace that had left us...[He] *became one of us* so that the Spirit might become *accustomed* (προσεθισθῆναι) to remain in us, since the Spirit finds no reason in him for leaving or shrinking back.⁴⁵

So, the indwelling of the Spirit, for Cyril, is rooted in the mystery of incarnation. For him, in Christ alone, as he is ‘the one who knew no sin,’ can the Spirit remain in a human nature. Here Cyril echoes Irenaeus, when the latter says: “Wherefore He [the Holy Spirit] did also descend upon the Son of God, made the Son of man, becoming *accustomed* in fellowship with Him to dwell in the human race, to rest with human beings, and to dwell in the workmanship of God.”⁴⁶ But does this transaction benefit Christ? And how is he able to preserve the Spirit in humankind?

...Christ did not receive the Spirit for himself but rather *for us in himself*. For all good things come to us through him [Adam lost the Spirit] ... Therefore, God the Word, who knows no turning, had to become human so that by receiving the Spirit as a human he might preserve the good permanently in our nature.

The Only Begotten, then, became human for us so that in him, first of all, good gifts might return, and, second, so that the grace of the Spirit might be rooted and preserved firmly in our whole nature. It is as though the Only Begotten, being the Word of God the Father, *lends us the immutability of his own nature*, which we needed because human nature was condemned in Adam for not being able to remain unchanged. Indeed, it slipped quite easily into turning away. Just as in the turning of the first man, the loss of good gifts extends to the whole nature, in the same way, I think, in the one who knows no turning, the attainment of the lasting possession of the divine gifts will be *preserved* for the entire race.”⁴⁷

In answering these questions, Cyril once again appeals to mystery of incarnation and its ramifications on humankind and to the Adam-Christ typology. Due to the hypostatic union, Christ lends humanity the divine trait of immutability which helps us preserve the gift of the Holy Spirit, and this trait was not offered to the people under the old dispensation. Furthermore, Christ was not the beneficiary of this transaction but he received the Spirit for our own sake that we might participate in the Spirit without the risk of his departure. Cyril’s

⁴⁵ *Jo.* 2.1 (PG 73, 205-8; Pusey I. 184); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 82.

⁴⁶ *AH* III, 17,1.

⁴⁷ *Jo.* 5.2 (PG 73, 753-6; Pusey I. 693-4); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 309-10.

appeal to the mystery of incarnation and his use of the image of the church as the body of Christ frames all that he also says about pneumatology and theological anthropology: “We were all in Christ, (πάντες γὰρ ἦμεν ἐν Χριστῷ) and the shared properties of our human nature were taken up into his person. That is why he is called the *last Adam* (ἔσχατος Ἀδάμ).”⁴⁸

Grace of Sanctification, Cyril of Alexandria

As we have begun to see already, the Holy Spirit, who gushes forth from the Head to the members of the body becomes the principle of our sanctification. Cyril covers this topic at length in his commentary on John 17: 18-19,⁴⁹ arguing that the term sanctification has different connotations. And though Cyril also covers this topic in the *Glaphyra*, there it received only sporadic treatment. Hence, in what follows I concentrate on the presentation found in the later commentary.

When he comments on John 17: 18-19 “And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth, ” Cyril explains the term sanctification in three ways: First, he reads it from the perspective of the OT where sanctify means to set aside or consecrate. Second, to sanctify is to offer an effective sacrifice.⁵⁰ Finally, concerning the third meaning which alludes to the themes of *purification* and *holiness*, Cyril writes:

Nevertheless we do hold that his flesh was sanctified by the Spirit in that the Word, who is *holy* by nature and is from the Father, *anoints* his own temple with the Spirit, just like the rest of creation...

It is not surprising if he says that he sanctifies himself, even though he is *holy* by nature, since the Scriptures call the Father his God,⁵¹ even though he is God by nature. I think that this should rightly and truly be ascribed to the needs of human nature and to the form that is fitting for us...so also he maintains that he sanctifies

⁴⁸ *Jo.* 1.9 (PG 73, 161-164; Pusey I. 141-2); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 64.

⁴⁹ *Jo.* 11.10 (PG 74, 537-552; Pusey II. 717-728); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 295-301.

⁵⁰ *Jo.* 11.10 (PG 74, 545; Pusey II. 722); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 298. “But as it is we are participants and sharers in the essence that is above all things, and we are called *temples* of God. That is because the Only Begotten *sanctified* himself for our sins, that is, he offered and presented himself as a holy sacrifice for a pleasing aroma to God the Father.”

⁵¹ John 20:17.

himself for us, so that this act may *extend* to us in the first fruits of our renewed nature, and in him we too may be “sanctified by the truth,” that is, by the Holy Spirit. For the truth is the Spirit, as John says.⁵² His Spirit is not another besides the Son, at least in terms of essence, since the Spirit is in him and proceeds through him... Indicating that the manner of the sending was precisely that he was anointed by the Holy Spirit, insofar as he became human, and he was the ‘angel of the great counsel.’ (Isaiah 9:6)⁵³

Christ sanctifies himself, i.e., makes holy, so that we may be sanctified. The work of the Spirit is once again dependent on the activity of Christ and is centered on our unity with Christ as the means for our sanctification and salvation. As he writes earlier in the commentary:

Although he was life by nature, he died for our sakes according to the flesh in order to conquer death for us and to raise our *entire nature* with him. (We were all in him because he became human.) In the same way also, he received the Spirit for our sakes in order to *sanctify* our *entire nature*. He did not come to help himself but to become for all of us the door, the beginning and the way to heavenly blessings.⁵⁴

Furthermore, sanctification here alludes to purification,

He uses the activity of the Spirit as a kind of *pruning hook*, as it were, circumcising in them sometimes the pleasures that always summon them to love the flesh and fleshly passions, and at other times those temptations that happen to the human soul, defiling the mind with various kinds of evil. We say that this is the circumcision that is understood to be done by the Spirit and not by human hands.⁵⁵

The principle of purification is the Holy Spirit.

But those who do not need to be completely cut off but remain in the vine and are going to be purged by God’s care are the believers among the Jews and the converts to them from the Gentiles, since there is one *purging* for them, accomplished by the *Holy Spirit* according to the Scriptures.⁵⁶

Noteworthy, Cyril’s theology of sanctification in the *Commentary on John* is already posited in his earlier work, namely the *Glaphyra*. First, he mainly treats the process in terms of purification: “And when it says that they were to wash their clothes, cleansing through water is being portrayed to us, and it is evident that this indicates the removal of defilement through

⁵² 1John 5:6.

⁵³ *Jo.* 11.10 (PG 74, 549-552; Pusey II. 727-8); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 300-1.

⁵⁴ *Jo.* 2.1 (PG 73, 208; Pusey I. 185); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 82.

⁵⁵ *Jo.* 10.2 (PG 74, 352; Pusey II. 550); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 218.

⁵⁶ *Jo.* 10.2 (PG 74, 353; Pusey II. 551-2); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 219.

the Spirit.”⁵⁷ In addition, “and it was he [the Word of God] who baptized us in the Holy Spirit and with fire, with a spiritual fire that consumes what is base within us, and which *melts filthiness of sin*, and which does not permit our minds to remain cold with respect to inordinate pleasures, but rather by this means we are perfected, being aflame in spirit. And this very thing Christ performed in us. That is why he said, “I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! (Luke 12:49)”⁵⁸ Moreover, it is through Christ, the head of the body, that the rest of the body is sanctified and purified: “It is through *Christ* that both the gentiles and the ancient, noble, and holy race itself are sanctified, but that which has not been sanctified by him is wholly profane and remains in a state of impurity.”⁵⁹ And he is able to carry this by virtue of his status as the first fruits of the new creation: “For when Christ was raised to life from the dead, having trampled down death and plundered Hades, . . . and then beautifying human nature by the Holy Spirit as the firstfruits of the human race and of those being re-created for holiness, he breathed upon the holy apostles and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’ (John 20:22)”⁶⁰ However, the Holy Spirit remains the principle of sanctification: “By the one Holy Spirit, God *sanctifies* both the saints that came before us and us ourselves. For as the Father is one, so likewise the Son is one, and so too the Holy Spirit is one, who was in the prophets and is in us also. So since the Spirit is one, it is not proper to understand him as being divided among many, but he is indivisible, and yet is in many distributed gifts, having perfection in them all.”⁶¹

But what role does the sanctification of the Holy Spirit play in our salvation? Cyril answers: “There is only one way union with God can take place, *even in the case of Christ* (insofar as he appeared as and bears the name of a human being). That way is this: the flesh is

⁵⁷ *Glaph.* 10 (PG 69, 504); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 98.

⁵⁸ *Glaph.* 10 (PG 69, 508); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 102.

⁵⁹ *Glaph.* 10 (PG 69, 509); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 104.

⁶⁰ *Glaph.* 13 (PG 69, 676); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 236.

⁶¹ *Glaph.* 9 (PG 69, 464-5); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 67.

sanctified by union with the Spirit in an ineffable manner of concurrence and thus ascends to an unconfused union with God the Word and through him to a union with the Father.”⁶²

IV: Union, Communion and Conformity

In this section, I will argue that by sanctifying the human nature, the Holy Spirit raises man to a union and communion not only with the Son but also with the Father and that Cyril’s approach to this sort of union is commensurate to the Western concept of ‘appropriation’. Furthermore, the Spirit acts as the agent of our unity with one another. However, by means of his communion with the divine, man is conformed once again to the image of God. Finally, This scheme is covered at more length in Cyril’s commentary on John than in the *Glaphyra*. This may be due to the more dogmatic nature, the Scripture’s text and objective of writing the commentary, whereas in the *Glaphyra* Cyril was mainly focused on unearthing the mystery of Christ in the Pentateuch’s characters.

Now concerning the unity in the Spirit, we will follow the same course of investigation and say again that all of us who receive one and the same Spirit (I mean the Holy Spirit) are mixed together (συνανακίρνάμεθα), so to speak, with one another and with God. Even though Christ causes the Spirit, who is his own and who is from the Father, to dwell in us who are many individually, nevertheless the Spirit is one and indivisible. He gathers together the spirits of others, who are cut off from unity (I mean in terms of their essence), into unity in his own personal subsistence, making them all one in himself. Just as the power of his holy flesh makes those in whom it dwells one body, in the same way I think that the one Spirit of God, who dwells indivisibly in all, gathers everyone into a spiritual unity... When the one Spirit dwells in us, the one God and Father of all will be in us through his Son, gathering all who participate in the Spirit into unity with one another and with himself. And from the following it will be clear that we are united by participation in the Holy Spirit.⁶³

The Spirit represents the principle of communion in the church, as he unites us in ‘one and same Spirit.’ Moreover, he is the principle of our unification with Christ: “And because the

⁶² Jo. 11.12 (PG 74, 564; Pusey III. 2); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 306.. See also: *Glaph. 6* (PG 69, 296); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.1, 281.: “Joseph indicates Christ...For he himself is indeed the head, and we are the body and individually members of it. (Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:27) Also, he is the vine, and we are like the branches that grow upon it,(Cf. John 15:5) joined together in the unity of the spirit by sanctification.”

⁶³ Jo. 11.11 (PG 74, 561; Pusey II. 736-7); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 305.

Holy Spirit dwells in us ‘in the inner being,’⁶⁴ Christ himself is said to dwell there as well. (Ephesians 3:17)⁶⁵ Besides, Cyril writes in the *Glaphyra*: “The real mediator is Christ, to whom we are firmly joined, since it is true that he came down into our estate and became a man, so that we ourselves ‘might become partakers of his divine nature,’ (2Peter 1:4) *being united to him by sharing in the Holy Spirit* and by the grace of God.”⁶⁶ However, the Holy Spirit does not only unite us to the Son and to one another:

‘For he is our peace,’ as it is written.⁶⁷ Indeed, our reconciliation to God through Christ the Savior could have been accomplished in no other way than through communion in the Spirit and *sanctification*. That which knits us together, as it were, and unites us to God is the Holy Spirit. When we receive the Spirit, we are made participants and sharers in the divine nature, and we receive the Father himself through the Son and in the Son. The wise John writes to us concerning him, ‘By this we know that we remain in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.’ (1John 4:13)⁶⁸

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is also associated with the inhabitation of the Father in us.

“Though the Spirit is the one who dwells in us, we believe that through him, *we also have the Father and the Son at the same time*, just as John himself said again somewhere in his epistles: ‘By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.’ (1John 4:13)⁶⁹ This process is known in the West under the term ‘appropriation’.

Emery describes it as, “the procedure of the language of the faith by which a reality common to the three Persons (trait which concerns the essence of God the Triune) is attributed in a special way to a divine Person. The goal of appropriation is to make better manifest the

⁶⁴ Ephesians 3:16.

⁶⁵ *Jo.* 2.1 (PG 73, 212; Pusey I. 188); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 84. See also *Jo.* 9.1 (PG 74, 280; Pusey II. 486); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 188. “He bore our nature and thus fashioned it in conformity with his life. And he himself is in us, since we have all become partakers in him, and we have him in ourselves through the Spirit.” And *Jo.* 10.1 (PG 74, 333; Pusey II. 534); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 210.: “*His Holy Spirit is what unites us to Christ our Savior*. The union with the vine of the branches that proceed from it belongs to the faculty of choice, and the vine’s union with us is relational.”

⁶⁶ *Glaph.* 10 (PG 69, 497); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 94.

⁶⁷ Ephesians 2:14.

⁶⁸ *Jo.* 11.10 (PG 74, 544; Pusey II. 722); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 298. See also *Glaph.* 10 (PG 69, 517); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 110.: “For having become partakers of [Christ] through the Spirit, we have united with God the Father through him we are indeed ‘partakers of the divine nature’ in accordance with the Scriptures.” (2 Peter 1:4)

⁶⁹ *Jo.* 1.9 (PG 73, 157; Pusey I. 137); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 62.

divine Persons in their distinctive properties to the mind of believers.”⁷⁰ So the indwelling of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is a common operation to the three but different features of it can be attributed to each *hypostasis*:

Therefore, the Trinity is glorified completely by us, even in one person. We call God ‘Savior’ not because we receive the graces he mercifully grants us partially from the Father, partially from the Son and partially from the Holy Spirit, but because we say that our salvation is truly the work of the *one divine nature*. And if it should seem good to ascribe to each person something that was given to us or accomplished around the creation, we will still believe no less that all things are from *the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit*. Now you should understand, and quite rightly so, that the Father nourishes us for godliness through the Son in the Spirit. He cultivates us, that is, he watches over and cares for us and deems us worthy of his correcting attention through the Son in the Spirit.”⁷¹

However, the direct outcome of this communion is the regeneration of man into the image of God once more:

The divinely inspired Moses said of him that God took dust from the ground and formed the first human being. He then goes on to relate how God gave life to the creature after he finished shaping him. He says, ‘He breathed into his face the breath of life,’ indicating that the soul was not given to the man without *sanctification* through the Spirit and that the soul was surely not bare or devoid of the divine nature. That which has such an earthly origin could never be seen to be *in the image of the highest* unless it had *obtained and received its shape through the Spirit*, like a beautiful mask, by the will of God. Since his Spirit is the perfect image of the essence of the Only Begotten, according to what Paul wrote, ‘For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son,’⁷² he makes those in whom he dwells to be *conformed* (συμμόρφους) to the image of the Father, that is, the Son. So also all things are brought up by the Son to the Father, from whom he comes, through the Spirit. He desires, then, the nature of humanity to be renewed and reshaped into its original image by *communion with the Spirit* so that, by being clothed with that original grace and being shaped again in conformity with him, we may be found superior to and more powerful than sin, which reigns in this world, and we may devote ourselves only to the love of God.⁷³

Just as every spiritual good comes from the Father through the Son in the Spirit, also the Son is the Father’s image, “The Son is not conformed to the Father by voluntary virtue; he is the *image of his hypostasis* and is in him for that reason, having an identical nature and having

⁷⁰ Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 165.

⁷¹ *Jo.* 10.2 (PG 74, 336; Pusey II. 536); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 211.

⁷² Romans 8:29.

⁷³ *Jo.* 11.10 (PG 74, 541; Pusey II. 719-20); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 297.

one essence with him.”⁷⁴ And the Spirit is the Son’s image respectively “his Spirit is the perfect image of the essence of the Only Begotten.”⁷⁵ Accordingly, it is only in communion with the Spirit that man is refashioned in the form of the Son: “And just as then it was formed into the image of its creator, so also now it is refashioned *by participation in the Spirit* to the likeness of its maker. How can there be any doubt that the Spirit forms *the image of Christ* in the souls of those who receive him.”⁷⁶ While commenting on our creation in the image of God, Cyril writes: “However, the element of similarity to God the creator that is most manifest of all is incorruptibility and indestructibility (τὸ ἄφθαρτον καὶ ἀνώλεθρον).”⁷⁷ And the term he mainly uses to describe this operation is (σφραγίζει):

Moses, who was known by God ‘above all,’ says, ‘And God made the man; according to the image of God he made him.’⁷⁸ He taught us that through the Holy Spirit he was sealed (κατεσφραγίζετο) in the divine image, saying, ‘And he breathed into his face the breath of life.’⁷⁹ At the same time the Spirit put life into the one who had been formed, he also imprinted (ἐνεσήμαιεν) his stamp on him, in a manner appropriate to God.⁸⁰

...Rather, after the creature was ensouled, or rather after it arrived at the condition of its complete nature through both (I mean soul and body), then, like a stamp (σφραγιδα) of his own nature, the creator fixed upon it the Holy Spirit, that is, the breath of life, through which he shaped it into its archetypal beauty. It was completed in the image of its creator and made constant in every form of virtue by the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwelt in it.⁸¹

Also, in the *Glaphyra* he writes: “So, as the image of the first man taken from the ground was imprinted upon us, which had to suffer death and be ensnared in the cords of corruption, but also in the case of the second beginning after the first one, incorruptible nature is impressed upon us through *the Spirit*, incorruptible nature is impressed (ἐνσημήνηται) upon us.”⁸²

⁷⁴ Jo. 9.1 (PG 74, 240; Pusey II. 452); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 171.

⁷⁵ Cf. Athanasius, *Ad. Serapion* III, 3 and I, 20.

⁷⁶ Jo. 12.1 (PG 74, 716; Pusey III. 135); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 369.

⁷⁷ Jo. 9.1 (PG 74, 277; Pusey II. 484); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 187. See also, Athanasius, *Ad. Serapion* I, 23 and III, 3.

⁷⁸ Genesis 1:27.

⁷⁹ Genesis 2:7.

⁸⁰ Jo. 2.1 (PG 73, 204; Pusey I. 182); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 81.

⁸¹ Jo. 9.1 (PG 74, 277; Pusey II. 484); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 187.

⁸² *Glaph. 1* (PG 69, 28); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.1, 63.

Finally, conformity to Christ covers the gift of sonship. In the *Glaphyra*, Cyril highlights that Spirit enables us to participate in Christ and through this participation we are transformed into adopted sons: “We are included among the children of God through the Spirit of freedom. We are admitted to Christ as to one who is like us, as a brother.”⁸³ And in his Johanine corpus he writes: “And what does Paul say about this? “And because you are sons,” he says, “God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our heart, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ (Galatians 4:6) implying that if we had remained without *participation in the Spirit*, we would never have known that God was in us at all, and that if we had not been enriched by the Spirit that puts us in the rank of sons, we would never have been sons of God at all.”⁸⁴

Conclusion

In summary, Cyril pneumatological ecclesiology predominantly ensues from his Christology. It is shaped by the Trinitarian formula “from the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit,” which enables Cyril to underline the role of the Spirit in the church, without jeopardizing her Christological dimension. However, given that Cyril did not exclusively write a treatise on the church, his ecclesiology is inferred from his implicit treatment of this topic in different treatises.

⁸³ *Glaph.* 3 (PG 69, 176); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.1, 183.

⁸⁴ *Jo.* 11.10 (PG 74, 545; Pusey II. 722); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 298.

CHAPTER IV: Congar's Pneumatological Ecclesiology

Introduction

After analyzing Cyril's pneumatological ecclesiology, and depicting the centrality of the formula "From the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit" to his theology, I will now turn to that of Yves Congar. As a result of his engagement in ecumenical dialogues, and listening to those who accused the Roman Catholic Church of "Christomonism", Congar states:

I have studied the question in the theology of the sacraments and of the 'gratia capitis [the grace of the head], and in ecclesiology. Indeed, the Christological foundations of these realities are essential and authentic, but they must be complemented by a pneumatological contribution.¹

Furthermore, once he had embarked on the journey of rediscovering the pneumatological dimension of the church, he found out that neo-scholasticism is found lacking in relation to the work on the Holy Spirit and that the 19th and early 20th century era is characterized by an anthropological pneumatology that is separated or divorced from pneumatological ecclesiology.² The reconciliation of these two elements would help "redress a lacuna in the Catholic theology of the Holy Spirit and provided the basis for a renewed ecclesiology."³ And this "would not have been possible without a return to the sources."⁴ And one of these sources is Cyril of Alexandria. Hence, the objective of this chapter is to highlight that in incorporating the works of the Church Fathers, including that of Cyril, with modern biblical scholarship, a certain tension arises in Congar's pneumatological ecclesiology in *I Believe in*

¹ Yves Congar, *The Spirit of God: Short Writings on the Holy Spirit* eds. Susan Brown, Mark Ginter, and Joseph Mueller, trans. Susan Brown, Mark Ginter, Joseph Mueller, and Catherine Clifford (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 112.

² Elizabeth Teresa Groppe, "The Contribution of Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit," *Theological Studies* 62 (2001), 452-454. Cf. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit, Vol. 1*, 155-7.

³ Gabriel Flynn, "Ressourcement, Ecumenism, and Pneumatology: The Contribution of Yves Congar to Nouvelle Théologie," in eds. Gabriel Flynn and Paul Murray, *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 233-4; cf. Elizabeth Teresa Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 85-137.

⁴ Flynn, "Ressourcement, Ecumenism, and Pneumatology," (Abstract in online version).

the Holy Spirit. Yet in his later writings demonstrate a more balanced Pneumatological Christology.

Congar's Theological Position

In this section, I will not delve into the details of the emergence of the notion of the Filioque and the Eastern objections to it, as it does not seem to cause a significant discrepancy in relation to the ecclesiology of these two theologians. However, I will highlight Congar's fundamental dogmatic position and this will form a basis for comparison with Cyril. My goal here is to show that the two theologians share a common soteriological objective in their pneumatologies.

Congar agrees that the Spirit is the Spirit of the Son⁵ and that he was communicated to us by Christ.⁶ He also appeals to Athanasius of Alexandria in relation to the formula "from the Father through the Son and in the Spirit"⁷ quoting him as follows: "The grace which (coming) from the Father through the Son is completed in the Holy Spirit is one; the divinity is one and there is only one God who is over all and through all and all in all."⁸ For Congar, the economic order is completed through the dispensation of the gift of the Spirit to humanity: "According to that order the Spirit is the one through whom God's communication of himself is completed. His economic attributes are sanctification or the ability to make perfect."⁹

He also posits a dual movement of descent and ascent in a manner similar to that which we find in Irenaeus and Cyril, here spoke of in relationship to Thomas Aquinas: "Thomas Aquinas treated this theme [mission of the Spirit] as a link between his theology of God in

⁵ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁷ Athanasius, *Ad Ser.* III, 17,2 (PG 26, 633) quoted in Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 3, 147.

⁸ Athanasius, *Ad Ser* I, 14 (PG 26, 565).

⁹ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 3, 147.

himself and his theology of the activity of God placing a world outside himself and *bringing men made in his own image back to himself*. (ST Ia, q. 13; *In I sent.* D. 14, a. 16)”¹⁰ In

explaining the notion of ascension of humankind to God the Father, Congar writes:

Christ is the centre and indeed the culmination of our life as Christians, but he is not the end. As the ‘Son of man’, the type of man, he goes beyond himself and leads beyond himself. He is everything *ad Patrem, pro ton Patera*-towards the Father and for him. If this were not so he would not enable us to go beyond ourselves. ‘The Spirit leads us to the Son, who leads us to the Father’, as the classical theologians said. (Ignatius of Antioch, *ad Rom.* VII, 2; Irenaeus *AH.* V,36; and Aquinas, *Comm. In ev. Ioan.* C.14, lect. 6.)... God’s plan, however, was to go from the one to the one by way of the many. ‘No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven.’ (John 3:13) We can come to the Father in him.¹¹

Hence, in his proposal of a dual movement, Congar appeals to the Fathers in showing that the Spirit joins us to the Son who leads us to the Father. But, he uses a more Western language, when he draws on the notion of two missions of the Son and the Spirit and explains that a “mission presupposes a connection with the one who sends - the Father who is the Principle without beginning, sends, but cannot be sent - and a connection with those to whom the one sent is sent...”¹² He then adds: “The two missions of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and taking place in favour of creatures, *return* to the Father in cosmic, universal and total praise.”¹³

Even from this very basic investigation we can see that Cyril and Congar share many basic pneumaotlogical principles.

From Christocentric to Pneumacentric Ecclesiology

A gradual transformation in Congar’s ecclesiological orientation can be traced over the course of his career. He moved from perceiving the Spirit as the soul of the body of Christ to

¹⁰ Cf. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 7-8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 104-105.

¹² *Ibid.*, 8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 213.

its animator and then finally to its co-institutor.¹⁴ As an example in *Chrétiens désunis*, written in 1937, he roots the church's Catholicity in Christ, "L'Église ne peut pas ne pas être catholique, si son unité lui vient du Christ et, par le Christ, du Père."¹⁵ While in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, written in 1979-1980, he locates it to the Holy Spirit: "He [the Spirit] makes the Church catholic, both in space, that is, in the world, and in time, that is, in history."¹⁶ As I will show, during the early stages of his career Congar conceived the difference between the new and old dispensation in Christological terms. However as time passed, he shifted towards a more pneumatological solution. And this is where Cyril's direct influence on Congar's theology becomes obvious. However, even though at this stage of his career Congar makes extensive use of Cyril, there is still a certain tension resulting from his leaving behind some of the Christological focus that is so important for Cyril. Congar has the Spirit replacing Christ, rather than linking the two deeply enough as in the case for Cyril.

In the *Mystery of the Church*, Congar begins his exposition by defining the church as the realization of the new covenant. The mystery of the church was partially realized under and made known in the Old Testament by the formation of a people of God, and the sign of this covenant was the circumcision of the flesh. Then he explains that the alliance was 'renewed' between God and Moses on the basis of God's law. Moreover, through its observance of the law and fidelity to God, Israel would rise to 'the sphere of divine life'. This creates a new mode of relationship, where Jahweh would dwell in Israel (Leviticus 26:12; Ezra 37:27). However, the old covenant and its renewal are concerned with 'earthly' inheritance. So this alliance is perceived in a 'racial and carnal' sense, and it involves a 'material and earthly heritage'.

Congar, then, contends that:

¹⁴ For a detailed account of Congar's gradual change of approach to the role of the Spirit overtime please refer to Viorel Coman, "Ecclesia de trinitate: The ecclesiological Synthesis between Christology and Pneumatology in modern orthodox and roman catholic Theology," *Studii Teologice (StTeol)* 3 (2014), 54-59.

¹⁵ Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*, 121.

¹⁶ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2 , 24.

The old alliance, even in its most spiritualized form, is acknowledged to be superseded at a future time. Zacharias (2:5; 3:6-10; 6:12; 9:9) announce the conclusion of a new alliance. There will be a new order of things corresponding to the messianic era, which will be characterized by a new regime of wisdom, gentleness, peace, thanks to the sending down of the Spirit of God on the King-Messias and his people... In this new order, the inheritance promised to Abraham and called 'the land' is radically transformed,... [it] is no other than the patrimony of God himself. The new alliance opens up access to the heavenly inheritance.¹⁷ ...an inheritance of the Kingdom, of eternal life, the city of the living God and we have communion of life with God and eternal life. However, we can partake in the patrimony of God as an inheritance only *in Christ*. We are co-heirs *with him*.¹⁸ *In him* we are able to lead the life of sons that we have received, the life of children in the family of God.¹⁹

Thus it is clear that in his early stages of writing, Congar distinguishes between the old and new covenant through the lens of the Messiah. In Christ, we have a spiritual and heavenly inheritance which is far more superior to the earthly and carnal one of the OT. But the role assigned to the Holy Spirit in this process is secondary. However, in later years Congar relies more heavily on pneumatology in distinguishing between the old and new dispensation.

In his *I Believe in the Holy Spirit II*,²⁰ Congar claims that it cannot be disputed that the Spirit was neither given nor revealed under the old dispensation in the same way and under the same conditions as he has been under the new, which is marked by *the incarnation* and the *Pentecost*. "In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit is spoken of mainly as a power coming upon individuals at particular times... The New Testament begins by describing how the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus and abode upon him."²¹ and here he quotes Cyril commenting on John 7:39 (PG 73, 757A-B)

that in the holy prophets there was certainly an abundant and torch bearing Spirit [illumination of the Holy Spirit]²²... In those who believe in Christ, however, there is not simply a torch light [illumination] from the Spirit, but we are confident that *the Spirit himself dwells in us* and takes up residence. Thus, there is good reason that we are called the temples of God, even *though none of the holy prophets was ever called a divine temple*.

¹⁷ Hebrews 9:15; Colossians 3:24.

¹⁸ Romans 8:14-17; Ephesians 3:6.

¹⁹ Congar, *The Mystery of the Church*, 61.

²⁰ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit, Vol.2*, 73-77: The Gift of the Spirit in the Messianic Era: Under the Old and the New Dispensations.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

²² Congar uses the term illumination instead of torch of light in his translation of Cyril's quote.

Then he wonders: “The question, however, is what the nature is of that difference and how it should be interpreted.” Consequently, following Cyril in citing (Luke 7:28), he responds: “One economy follows another: preparation gives way to reality, prophecy to a messianic era, when the kingdom is close at hand... The new aspect is proclaimed concerns both the corporate regime of the gifts of God and the religious state of individuals.” Then appealing to Paul, Congar continues:

‘For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body’²³ would have been inconceivable under the old dispensation. Through the gift of the Spirit, the people of God exist as the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Spirit. This is a radically new element.²⁴

Furthermore, he appeals to John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria and claims that they regarded John 7:39 as ‘decisive’.

Moreover, he highlights the difference between the two schools (East and West) in interpreting this verse. He argues that Greek theologians, including Irenaeus and Cyril, and some Latin Fathers, adopted a literal approach to interpreting the verse and they believed that in the pre-messianic era, “there were gifts of the Spirit, but the Spirit had not been personally given and he did not dwell substantially in believers.”²⁵ While Western theologians such as Augustine and Aquinas, concede that there is “a difference in regime between the two dispensations,” but that the righteous under the old system “were subject to the same condition as later Christian believers” and possessed “the quality of sons and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit,” based on their faith in Christ who was yet to come. However, the incarnation and Pentecost brought about a wider spread of grace and the presence of the Holy Spirit. He concludes

It is inconceivable that the incarnation of the Son, Christ’s Easter and glorification and the coming of the Spirit who was promised should have changed nothing and should have brought nothing new. Until that time something was lacking and the gift of the Spirit was not complete.

²³ 1Corinthians 12:13.

²⁴ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 74.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

Thus we can see that Congar's theology regarding the distinction between the old and new dispensations shifted from a Christological one to a more pneumatologically oriented one, where the holy Spirit plays an integral role in relation to the salvation of the faithful under the new economy. We should also note that Congar's view is informed by that of Cyril: he both quotes Cyril and makes the same verse (John 7:39) a determinant factor in distinguishing between the two dispensations. In the rest of this section I will analyze Congar's most extensive coverage of this subject, in *the Mystery of the Temple*, focusing on drawing out the main points that have not been addressed in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit II*.

Congar explains that there are two positions within the Catholic Church: One, that concurs with the Greek Fathers (including Irenaeus and Cyril) which attributes the new dispensation to the missions of the Son and the Spirit in the history of salvation, "*and from that moment onward,*" the new dispensation was established, here "the Lord not only gives us gifts but, gives us himself."²⁶ Then he adds that for Irenaeus (*AH V*, 6, 1) and Cyril (again referring to Cyril's interpretation of John 7:39 (*PG*, 73, 752 c-57A) "an 'economy' of salvation involves an *anthropological* application. Since we share in the Spirit which belongs to Christ as Man-God (the famous $\Phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\kappa\omega\varsigma$ of St Cyril), it once more becomes soul, body *and Spirit*, it recovers its full character as "image"; and this had been disfigured by sin."²⁷ Next, Congar presents the position of Western theologians, including Augustine and Aquinas, as explained above.²⁸

He then refers to many theologians who tried to find a solution for this dilemma including Gerard Philips, who tried to uphold the Western view that the OT just "possessed the grace of Christ with its power of justification" and the view of Irenaeus and Cyril "concerning the intrinsic qualitative difference we should recognize between the grace of the just in the OT and the grace which follows the Incarnation, Easter and Pentecost."

²⁶ Irenaeus (*AH V*, 34, 1) and Cyril on John 7:39 (*PG* 73, 757AB)

²⁷ Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 264.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 265.

Afterwards, Congar proposes a solution, based on that of Fr de la Taille, and based on economic degrees and classes of grace. He suggests that grace exists in the just of the OT in latent form waiting to be actuated through the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit.²⁹

Next, echoing Cyril of Alexandria, Congar alludes to Mathew 11:11 and Luke 7:28, where it's mentioned that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John Baptist. He also adduces to Cyril comments on John 7:39 (PG, 73, 757) where John the Baptist himself declares that he needs to be baptized Jesus. He then points to the difference between the Jews' sonship, which is of a juridical type and ours which is given by the Spirit to the members of the body of Christ. (Galatians 4: 5-7; Romans 8: 14-17)

He also describes the Spirit as the 'specific gift' of the new economy and claims that the usage of the adjective πνευματικός in Scriptures denotes "something proper to the new dispensation." Moreover, Congar argues that the terms used to describe the status or deeds of the Spirit under the two dispensations carry

significant differences. The comparisons henceforth used are less concerned with a more or less temporary inspiration than with the Spirit as dwelling in and filling the soul...The river of the living water truly flows from the new Paschal temple, The Spirit is given, and it *dwells* in both the individual believer and in the Church.

The result of this flow is the communication of a new mode of life a "life in Christ" , where the "life of *God himself* is communicated to his sons...This was accomplished in Jesus by the incarnation of the Son, and collectively in us by the gift of the Spirit as a consequence of the Pasch of Jesus."³⁰

Finally, in his quest to find a solution to these opposing views, Congar suggests that the answer lies in the "distinction between grace as a form of holy life directed towards God, and its power effectively to enter into contact with God as its goal."³¹ Hence, for him, spiritual prerogatives such as the life of sonship, the disposition for the divine indwelling and

²⁹ Ibid., 268.

³⁰ Ibid., 274,275

³¹ Ibid., 277.

divinization, were present in the just of the OT in a pending state, and deprived of effectual power. This power birthed forth through Jesus' Pasch:

What was new was that God had come in person instead of sending only his gifts. This must be and it can be said in the sense in which theology speaks of the divine missions. Since then, the guiding principle of our movement towards salvation has no longer been a supernatural gift alone, preparing us for salvation and accompanied by a genuine title to its possession yet maintaining a distance between us and God himself; it has been in its very substance heavenly and divine, linked efficaciously to its divine source and therefore absolutely capable of bringing us into effective contact with God himself.³²

At the end of his proposal Congar writes: "Israel was indeed God's people, but not the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit exercised various activities within it, but he dwells *only* in the Body of Christ whose soul he is."³³

In conclusion, in *On the Holy Spirit* Congar argues that the major difference between the old and the new dispensations lies in the type of indwelling of the Holy Spirit and sonship we receive under the new economy. Hence, the shift from a Christologically based approach to a more pneumatologically centered one is clear. Moreover, the influence of Cyril in informing Congar's theology is clear in the many citations of Cyril that we find. We can see this treatise as also revealing the early stages of Congar's departure from a conventional Western approach, which claims that the righteous of the OT "were subject to the same condition as later Christian believers", in admitting that under the new dispensation something new is introduced to humankind and this new gift has to do with the descent of God himself (whether in the incarnation or by means of the new type of indwelling of the Spirit under the new dispensation) in the world instead of his gifts and this divine presence is "absolutely capable of bringing us into effective contact with God himself.". Finally, in his attempt to bridge the gap between Eastern and Western theologies, he tries to explain Irenaeus and Cyril accounts from a western perspective, while maintaining the underpinnings of their theology.

³² Ibid., 281.

³³ Ibid., 290.

This leads us to the question, how does Congar perceive the notion of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, both anthropologically and ecclesiastically?

Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

The inhabitation of the Holy Spirit in us and in the church is extensively covered in both *The Mystery of the Temple* (1958) and *I Believe in the Holy Spirit II*. However, given that the first discourse was written at a stage when the Spirit was still treated by Congar as an animator of the body of Christ, rather than as a co-institutor of the church as in the case of the second treatise, one can find in the former a pneumatology that is still more ingrained in Christology when compared to the one presented in the latter. However, to Congar, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is, first, grounded in the paradigm of the church as the temple of God, which is related to its depiction as the body of Christ. Second, based on this image of the church, Congar's ecclesial and anthropological pneumatology are deeply intertwined. Accordingly, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is accompanied by anthropological and soteriological implications. Third, the second treatise includes a more elaborate discussion on the process of indwelling, due to its being published at a later stage of Congar's life when his ecclesial writings were more focused on pneumatology. Fifth, Cyril's influence on Congar's pneumatological ecclesiology is clear. Finally, unlike Cyril, for Congar the descent of the Holy Spirit on Christ during his baptism has added something to him.

Congar explains that before Christ the paradox between God's presence and transcendence were communicated through the term *shekinah*, which denotes the dwelling or inhabiting presence of God. According to Moore: "The OT authors spoke of the *shekinah* more or less as Christians speak of the Holy Spirit when they do not wish to define with

theological precision the activity of the indwelling of God.”³⁴ However, in the New Testament, the words *oikein* and *menein* are normally used in relation to the concept of the Holy Spirit indwelling. Though these terms tend to denote stability and indestructible firmness, they outgrow this meaning in the NT: “Here the context is both one of entering into a definitive relationship of covenant with God and of enjoying communion with him on the one hand and, on the other, of being in a state in which one is the true temple in which God dwells and where he is given spiritual worship.”³⁵ But which images of the church does Congar appeal to in order to emphasize this notion of indwelling?

Groppe notices that as per van Vliet: “the theology of the mystical body was dominant in Congar's work between 1931 and 1944; the theology of the people of God, between 1959 and 1968;³⁶ and the theology of the temple of the Holy Spirit, between 1969 and 1991.”³⁷ The last phase is the one in which we see Congar synthesizing the individual and collective and projecting individuals as integral constituents of the structure:

As Thomas himself was careful to point out, the Church is the assembly of believers. If each soul is the church, then the latter is even more clearly characterized as the house of God in which the believers are present as living stones.³⁸ And it is on the basis of charity that God (the Spirit) dwells fully, then only the Church, as the Body of Christ, is certain always to have a faith that is fashioned by charity,³⁹ since every individual is able to fail in this.⁴⁰

Nonetheless, during the second phase (in 1958), the notion of the body of Christ replacing the old temple, which was previously discussed, is integral to Congar's ecclesiology. Here, what is interesting in Congar's approach to the notion of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is his

³⁴ G. F. Moore, Intermediaries in Jewish Theology. Memra, Shekinah, Metatron,” *Harvard Theological Review* 15 (1922), 48, cited in Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2 , 79.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

³⁶ However, in 1965 Congar admits to the limitations of this image as “it fails to bring out as clearly as “Body of Christ” what is new in the New Covenant, namely that men are brought into a consciously affirmed filial relationship to God. We become by adoption what Jesus Christ is by origin: sons of God.” Yves Congar, “The Church: People of God,” *Concilium* I (Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1965), 11-37, cited in Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 46.

³⁷ van Vliet, *Communio sacramentalis*, 83–87, 200–208, 244–46, cited in Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 115.

³⁸ Ephesians 2:20-22; 1Peter 2:5.

³⁹ *III sent.* D. 25, q. 1, a. 2, ad 4; *ST* IIa IIae, q. 1, a. 9, ad 3.

⁴⁰ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2 , 54.

ability to link the two images of the church: the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit.

This is why, although Jesus had revealed himself as destined to *take the place of* the temple, the apostles did not hesitate to identify this temple with the church. And the church's existence as the temple comes to her from Christ. It is noteworthy that the passages in which Christ is shown as the temple immediately lead to the statement that Christians, with and in and by Christ, are one unique temple. (Colossians 2:9-10; Ephesians 2:20-22; 1Peter 2:4) ⁴¹

He also argues that these two images are deeply interwoven and may be used interchangeably in Paul's ecclesiology. Commenting on St Paul's passages 1Corinthians 3 and Ephesians 2 (4, 11-16), Congar writes:

The church is compared by the apostle both to a building and in course of erection and to a body in the process of growth, and there are moments when he (Paul) passes from one image to the other [In Ephesians. 2:21 and 4:16 the building is said 'to grow' and (4:12, 16) the body is said to build itself up.']⁴²

However, in *The Mystery of the Temple*, Congar does not posit any precedence regarding the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the church or in its individual members. According to him the two need each other:

We might be tempted to conclude that for him [Paul] the question of the church comes first and, like a principle in relation to its consequence, is the determining factor in the idea of the individual believer as the temple of the Holy Spirit...St Paul has the community in mind and considers the individual as *in* the church...there is no opposition, *no* systematic and exclusive *priority* as between the Church and the individual believer. Each needs the other and in them both the Holy Spirit is the principle of life.⁴³

So by virtue of being a constituent of the church, the individual receives the Holy Spirit together with the church simultaneously.

St Paul connects the idea of the Christian as a temple (naos, sanctuary) with the fact that the Holy Spirit, who comes from God, is *in* us...If we cannot have Christ without the body of those who are his, that is, the church, we may say that for Paul, the communication to us of the Holy Spirit corresponds to the effective development of what Christ must be and do in us...There is also the fact that "Christ is in us", which corresponds to the effective unfolding of this power by

⁴¹ Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 152.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 160.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 152-153.

Christ [Christ power as the principle of the new creation]. And this unfolding is made possible by the gift of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴

This passage shows that, first, the Holy Spirit converts the believer into a temple. Second, based on our solidarity with Christ, his being and his work in us depends on the communication of the Holy Spirit. Hence, Congar's pneumatology, at this stage of his career, is connected to and points towards his Christology. Third, the underpinning principle for the realization of the new creation is the 'unfolding' of the Holy Spirit's power. However, the Holy Spirit represents more than a 'force energizing us'. Moreover, "through this *Vita in Christo*, which is a life of the Spirit, it is again our body which becomes a temple of God and an instrument of justification."⁴⁵

Congar's account regarding the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is more developed in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*. He starts by quoting Möhler: "They [the apostles] formed a single community of brothers...Each disciple therefore was filled with the gifts from on high only because he formed a moral unity with all the other disciples. (*Symbolik*, 37; Cf *Einheit*, 63)"⁴⁶ Here, the emphasis is on the integrality of the brothers and the harmony between them in order for the church to receive the Holy Spirit as a one whole.

This is of decisive importance, since, if the Spirit is received when believers are *together*, it is not because there is one body that there is only one Spirit-it is rather because there is only one Spirit of Christ that there is only one body, which is the Body of Christ. The Spirit acts in order to enable men to enter that Body, but he is *given* to the Body and it is in that Body that we receive the gift of the Spirit. 'By the one Spirit were all baptized into one body.'⁴⁷ The Spirit is given to the Church into which the individual is received by baptism.⁴⁸

The passage implies that the harmony between brothers makes it possible for the Spirit to come to them. However, the Spirit also gives rise to this unity "The Spirit, the principle of unity, therefore presupposes and initial unity, which he himself is already bringing about, unobserved, and which is a unity of consent to be together and of movement in this

⁴⁴ Ibid., 154.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 155.

⁴⁶ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 15.

⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:4.

⁴⁸ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 15.

direction.”⁴⁹ Thus, we see once again how both the church and the individual need each other for the Spirit to indwell them, and how the paradigm of the body of Christ enables Congar to combine his pneumatological anthropology and ecclesiology. The spirit engrafts the faithful into this body while he/she receives the Spirit of the Son as a member of this body.

As mentioned above ‘indwelling’ denotes a new type of relationship between divinity and humanity. Congar elaborates on this relationship in his section *How does this indwelling take place?* In his attempt to decipher this mystical activity, Congar draws mainly on Aquinas (I *Sent* d. 14-17) and secondary on Cyril, while stressing the similarities in their approach and trying to reconcile their minor anomalies. Based on Aquinas’s early writings, Congar first explains that the indwelling activity doesn’t alter God himself but rather, “brings about a reality outside himself... it is therefore a reality that is placed in a certain relationship with God, and that relationship varies according to the effects that are produced.” In this relationship, “we are created or transformed according to grace, that is according to this real relationship and therefore according to the quality of sons and heirs of the Father’s goods- eternal life and glory.”⁵⁰

In this new affiliation, God himself “becomes present to us as the object of knowledge and love. This new supernatural and deifying presence presupposes a presence of immensity and is grafted on to it..... He becomes *substantially* present as the object of our *love* and *knowledge*, as the end of our return to him as our Father.”⁵¹ Congar then contends that Aquinas’s manner of approaching this scheme is commensurate to that of Cyril, where “the latter spoke of a *substantial* presence and a union according to a relationship, *enosis schetike*, a union that places us in a new and deifying relationship with God and his Holy Spirit.” This shows not only that there are parallels between the Western and Alexandrian approaches to

⁴⁹ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 83-84.

⁵¹ Ibid., 83.

the notion of indwelling, but also that Congar is well informed by Cyril's pneumatology. But why is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit so important for Congar?

Sanctifying Grace

Thomas Aquinas writes: "Firstly, there is the grace by which man himself is united to God, and this is called *sanctifying grace*⁵²...such that by it man is justified and made worthy to be called pleasing to God, as is in *Colossians*, *He made us worthy to share in the inheritance of the saints of light.* (Colossians 1:12)"⁵³ This denotes that, for Aquinas, sanctifying grace makes man pleasing to God and subsequently enables him to be united to God. Wawrykow adds "*gratia gratum faciens*, sanctifying grace, has to do with the justifying and making holy of a person, and is oriented to that person's salvation."⁵⁴

Congar covers the topic of sanctification in both *The Mystery of the Temple* and in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*. However, his approach to the topic differs between the two monographs. In the former, and as disciple of Aquinas and while still adopting a Christological approach, Congar attributes sanctification to sanctifying grace. In the latter, where he holds a more pneumatological view, Congar perceives the Holy Spirit as the principle of sanctification, even, like Cyril, in the case of Christ's humanity. Finally, whether it is due to sanctifying grace or the Holy Spirit, sanctification, for Congar, makes us more pleasing to God and, as in the case of Cyril, prepares the recipient for unity with Him. However, in the first book, where Congar remains Christologically oriented, one can detect a certain tension between the notions of grace and the Holy Spirit in his ecclesiology.

⁵² Translator: "After considerable hesitation I decided to translate *gratia gratum faciens* conventionally by 'sanctifying grace'. A literal translation, 'grace which makes pleasing'.

⁵³ *ST* q.111 a.1

⁵⁴ Wawrykow, "Grace" 219.

By virtue of being Aquinas' pupil, in *The Mystery of the Temple*, Congar attributes the process of human purification to sanctifying grace. He begins his treatise by contrasting what is meant by sanctification in old and new testaments:

It is certainly true that the idea of sanctity has changed in its passage from the OT to the NT. In the former, it involved above all the notion of consecration, in the latter it is more concerned with a personal, moral and interior value. Yet obviously we cannot deny that the faithful Israelites possessed the supernatural sanctity which God's grace confers....If we may say thus use the word 'sanctification', are we entitled to go as far as to speak of sonship?⁵⁵

Congar interprets the concepts of consecration and purification in the OT as resulting from the grace of sanctification. Then while answering the question he poses at the end of the passage, he explains that the just of the OT,

possessed in themselves a source of justice and of holy life....[which] is the very reality of a form of just and life stemming from a supernatural gift of the same type as our *sanctifying grace*. This source of holiness of life, since it was thus substantially the *grace* which Christ was to merit, was in itself a source of the life of sonship and a title meriting the glory of heaven. Yet something was lacking if this filial life were to bring man to union with the Father. The source though it was of a holy life, this *grace* was still, in a sense, deprived from its normal fruits in the field of adoptive sonship of power to merit, and of the substantial, objective of dwelling of the Holy Trinity in the soul, since the formal *principle* of this indwelling is the *power of grace* to enter into contact with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as the object of knowledge and love."⁵⁶

Sanctification is here attributed to sanctifying grace merited by Christ; it is the source of the holy life in the OT, the life of sonship and the inheritance of the glory of heaven. By attributing all these to the power of grace, Congar's account is still primarily Christologically oriented. Nonetheless, by writing "I believe in the Holy Spirit unifying the Church, *sanctifying* her, making her Catholic and apostolic, (Cf. Aquinas, III *sent.* D. 25, q. 1, a. 2, ad 5; *ST* IIa IIae, q. 1, a. 9, ad 5)," ⁵⁷ Congar attributes the process of sanctification to both the Holy Spirit and to the grace of Christ, though the latter remains the more prominent principle of sanctification at this stage of his career.

⁵⁵ Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 269.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 277.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 289.

However, in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, where Congar's approach was more pneumatologically oriented, he imputes the process of sanctification primarily to the Holy Spirit. He writes:

Catholic theologians speak of 'grace'. In so doing, they run the risk of objectivizing it and separating it from the activity of the Spirit, who is uncreated grace and from whom it cannot be separated. Only God is holy, and only he can make us holy, in and through his incarnate Son and in and through his Spirit: 'God from the beginning chose you for salvation through *sanctification by the Spirit* and belief in the truth.' (2Thessalonians 2:13)⁵⁸

This passage manifests the change in Congar's perception of the role of the Holy Spirit. Here he clearly assigns the task of sanctification to the Holy Spirit. "If, in other words, creation is attributed to the Father, then redemption is the work of the Word made flesh and *sanctification* is the work of the Holy Spirit."⁵⁹

Interestingly, Congar revisits Cyril's approach to the sanctification of Christ's humanity. "It was the Spirit who sanctifies Jesus' humanity from the moment of his conception. (Luke 1:35)"⁶⁰ And reiterating the same notion in the third volume of his monograph, he writes:

The hypostatic union is a metaphysical fact by means of which a human nature subsists through the Person of the Son of God. It clearly requires the man who is thus called into existence to be holy. In Scholastic theology, this is the work of the Holy Spirit, who follows the presence of the word, and of *sanctifying grace*, which follows the grace of the union as its consequence. (Cf. Aquinas, *ST IIIa*, q. 7, a. 13)⁶¹

This text clearly reveals that the activity of sanctification is attributed to both the Spirit and the sanctifying grace from Christ. This framework could have acted as a beginning of a solution for Congar in order for him to link his Christology to his pneumatology by developing the notion of Spirit as coming with the presence of the Word, and the sanctifying grace follows on from the union that is Christ. But he does not seem to draw this out very much.

⁵⁸ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 68-69.

⁵⁹ J. A. Jungmann, 'Die Gnadenlehre im apostolischen Glaubensbekenntnis', *Gewordene Liturgie* (Innsbruck and Leipzig, 1941), 173-189, cited in *ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶¹ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 3, 166.

Hence, for Congar, the Holy Spirit is the principle of our sanctification in this later work. He even argues that in some manuscripts of ‘Our Father’s’ prayer the stanza ‘thy kingdom come’ (Luke 11:2) is replaced by “may thy Spirit come upon us and purify us,” and that this disposition was “preferred by some of the Church Fathers.”⁶² Moreover, he writes: “On the basis of baptism and the gift of the Spirit in the first place,⁶³ ... The church as the bride becomes the Body of Christ and with him forms, spiritually and mysteriously (or mystically), ‘one flesh’.”⁶⁴

We can now examine the role of the Spirit as the principle of union and communion. Here we will see the same pattern repeated.

Union and Communion

The concept of union and communion as a result of the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the church and in us, is extensively covered in two passages in Congar’s *The Mystery of the Temple* and *I Believe in the Holy Spirit II*. Furthermore, by this stage of his career (ecclesiology of communion phase), he likes to perceive the church in communal sense, as the body of Christ and as a temple. In this context, the Holy Spirit acts as the principle of union and communion between God and man and among human beings. Accordingly, Congar’s pneumatological ecclesiology and anthropology are deeply integrated. Furthermore, his pneumatological ecclesiology is addressed more at length in the second treatise, and here Congar draws more extensively on Cyril in this regard.

But how does Congar conceive the notion of communion? In the *The Mystery of the Temple* Congar writes:

It is not a question of fusion but of a communion, a communion divinely real and profound,... This communion is, first of all, a mutual exchange... He is our

⁶² Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 57. In the footnote note Congar writes: “An allusion to this will be found in Tertullian, Adv. Marc. IV, 26; Gregory of Nyssa, *De Orat. Dom.* 3 (PG 44, 1157C); Maximus the Confessor (PG 90, 884B).”

⁶³ Commenting on Ephesians 5:25-27, 29-31 and Titus 3:5-7, Congar highlights that what these passages “contain implicitly, namely that the Spirit plays a part in baptismal purification and regeneration.” In *ibid.*, 55.

⁶⁴ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 55-6.

dwelling-place, but we too are his dwelling place and he lives in us. Between God and ourselves there is, we may venture to say, reciprocal hospitality and indwelling, because there is between us both communication and communion (κοινωνία)... But it is clear in this mutual interchange, it is we who receive and are filled... God's plan moves towards a communion of such intimacy that the duality between man and God, and therefore their external separation from one another, are both overcome in so far as this is possible without meaningless confusion of beings or pantheism.⁶⁵

Communion involves a mutual indwelling and a communication of God Himself,⁶⁶ and this indwelling is only made possible by means of the Holy Spirit: "The new dispensation of the messianic era is marked by the gift of the Holy Spirit and his grace. *Grace makes it possible for us to reach and to possess God himself*; we can know and love him."⁶⁷

Next, showcasing his pneumatological ecclesiology and commenting on the way the scholastics explained the creed, Congar writes: "I believe in the Holy Spirit *unifying* the Church, sanctifying her, making her Catholic and apostolic. (Aquinas, *III sent. D. 25, q. 1, a. 2, ad 5; ST IIa IIae, q. 1, a. 9, ad 5*)." But how does the Spirit unify the church?

The Spiritual gifts made to every soul for the sake of Christ and in relation to him (that is, they incorporate souls or at least dispose them for incorporation in his Body) thus possess the principle enabling them at length to bring us to God himself... All this because the Holy Spirit exists for man in a new way, namely as the principle of divine efficacy *linked to personal grace* and to the operations of the Church, Christ's Body, *who received first her body then her soul*. It is in this sense that we should re-read the statements of the Greek Fathers, especially St Irenaeus, St John Chrysostom and St Cyril of Alexandria.⁶⁸

So the above passages reveal: First, the connection between Congar's pneumatological ecclesiology and his perception of the church as the body of Christ. Accordingly, his ecclesiological and anthropological pneumatology are deeply interlinked. Second, the Holy Spirit is the principle of our unification with the Son and subsequently the Father. Third, in this treatise, the Holy Spirit is treated as an animator and the Christological aspect of the church precedes the pneumatological one. Finally, Congar is not only informed by Cyril, but regards the latter as an authority: "it is in this sense that we should re-read the statements of

⁶⁵ Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 230-232.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 232.

⁶⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 232.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 288-289.

St Cyril of Alexandria.”⁶⁹ However, it is not clear whether it is the Holy Spirit or grace that unites us to Christ. And though Congar admits that the Holy Spirit as ‘the principle of divine efficacy’ is ‘*linked to personal grace*’ one can see that a certain tension between grace and the Holy Spirit begins to arise in this treatise and this may be due to his attempt to combine different theological schools and traditions together.

The notion of the Holy Spirit as principle of communion has been adopted and amplified by Congar in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, where he elaborates on how the Spirit performs his mission of unification and more importantly he attributes this transaction solely to the Holy Spirit. Congar utilizes the notion of the church as a communion in order to integrate the collective and individual aspect of the church and ascribes to the Holy Spirit the power to effect this operation: “The Church is a communion a fraternity of persons. This is why a personal principle and a principle of unity are united in the Church. These two persons are brought into harmony by the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁰ The Holy Spirit is the principle of union and communion of the church: “It is not because there is one body that there is only one Spirit-it is rather because there is only one Spirit of Christ that there is only one body, which is the Body of Christ.”⁷¹ Here the emphasis has clearly shifted to a more pneumatologically centered ecclesiology.

Nonetheless, in this treatise Congar elaborates on how the Spirit establishes this sort of union between the members of the church. After highlighting the disparities between the different individuals and between the magisterium and the lay people within the church, he attributes to the Spirit the ability to join all them together despite their differences:

Nothing less than the Spirit of God is needed to bring these different elements to unity, and to do so by respecting and even stimulating their diversity...He does it by the more delicate way of communion...That Spirit can further God’s plan, which can be expressed in the words ‘communion’, ‘many in one’ and ‘uniplurality’. At the end, there will be a state in which God will be ‘everything to

⁶⁹ Ibid., 289.

⁷⁰ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 15.

⁷¹ Ibid., 15.

everyone,⁷² in other words there will be one life animating many without doing violence to the inner experience of anyone.⁷³

Hence, for Congar, the Holy Spirit is the principle of communion. And He performs his duty without jeopardizing the autonomy of each individual. Furthermore, communion and union are interconnected. Subsequently, the Holy Spirit is able to convert each individual into a part of the whole: “This is the way in which there is a realization of that mutual interiority of the whole in each which constitutes the catholic sense: Kath’ holou, being of a piece with the hole. The Spirit enables *all men to be one* and unity to be a multitude. He is therefore *the principle of communion* of the saints.”⁷⁴ ... This communion consists in living and behaving as a conscious member of an *organic whole*.⁷⁵ Then, Congar gives a detailed description of the type of union effected by the Holy Spirit in the church. It outgrows our temporal and spacial limits since the Spirit represents,

The *principle* of that presence of the past and the eschatological future in the here and now... This is also one way in which the Spirit makes the Church *one*, in all the dimensions in which we confess it to be such and which are the dimensions of God’s *plan of salvation*: from Abel the righteous man to the last of the chosen people, the Church of earth and the Church of heaven, the Head and the members, since the same Spirit in all things. It is the Spirit who, in God, places the seal, in love, on the unity of the Father and the Son from whom he proceeds.”⁷⁶

Hence based on his belief that the church is the body of Christ, Congar perceives her members to be both celestial and temporal since the principal of its communion and union is, in this case, the Holy Spirit. In addition, this vision of the Church involves soteriological aspects since it falls within ‘God’s plan of salvation’. Besides, Cyril’s influence on Congar was manifested when the latter, at the end of his passage, cited the Alexandrian theologian saying:

⁷² 1Corinthians 15:28.

⁷³ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 17.

⁷⁴ P. Bernard ‘Communion des saints’, *DTC* III (1908), col. 440.

⁷⁵ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 18.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 18. He also cites Cyril, Cyril, *Jo.* 11.11 (PG 74, 561): “Since we all have received the same unique Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit, we are all in a certain sense merged together with each other and with God. Although we are many and separate although Christ has made the Spirit of the Father and his own Spirit dwell in each one of us, the Spirit is still one and indivisible. He thus reduces to unity the different spirits in each one of us through himself and makes them all appear one in him.”

We have all received the same unique spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit, we are all in a certain sense merged together with each other and with God...that Spirit still *one and indivisible*. He thus reduces to unity the different spirits of each one of us through himself and makes them all appear one in him.⁷⁷

Finally, the Holy Spirit unites us to the Son and the Father. In *The Mystery of the Temple*, and in following in the steps of Cyril, Congar resorts to the concept of appropriation. He explains that we cannot appropriate to one *hypostasis* in isolation of the others “any created effect. The Father and the Son perform the *ad extra* works attributed (appropriated) to the Holy Spirit, for all is common to the three divine Persons, except that by which the First Person is the Father, the second the Son, and the third the Holy Spirit.” Yet, he adds: “it is legitimate and profitable to appropriate some essential attribute or and *ad extra* act to one Person, because there is some similarity between the attribute or act and the Personal character...of each Person.”⁷⁸ Then focusing on the role of the Holy Spirit as the protagonist of communication within the trinity, he adds:

Communication means that the fact of self-giving which applies to the three Persons corresponds in a mysterious way with what is proper to the Person of the Holy Spirit and *to his order in the eternal processions*...It is most appropriate that he should establish in the creature whom the Father loves the relation of sonship, of an effective return to the Father, of indwelling and divinization...so that he becomes more properly God active in us in respect of his gifts of grace through which we can effectively *return to the Father*.⁷⁹

However, in the second discourse the influence of Cyril becomes more explicit, as he uses him as a reference for this operation and where he expatiates on the notion of our unification to God: “God gives himself to us, in such a way that, although it is purely through grace and we hardly dare to confess it, we really possess him. (Aquinas, *I Sent. D. 15, q.3, a. 1 sol*)... His presence is also personal. He is not only in us, but also with us, and we are with him. We are with him insofar as it is really him!”⁸⁰

⁷⁷ *Jo. 11.11* (PG 74, 562).

⁷⁸ Congar, *Mystery of the Temple*, 285-286

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 287.

⁸⁰ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 83-84.

Nonetheless, Congar notices strong similarities between Aquinas and Cyril in approaching this new type of relationship between God and man, and he attributes it to the Holy Spirit.⁸¹ However, he argues that:

The Eastern and the Western Churches, the Church Fathers, the theologians and the councils of the Church are all unanimous in affirming that what the divinity does outside itself is the work of all three persons... In the West at least, the fact that every action performed by God is common to all three Persons of the Trinity has given rise to the idea that an activity in creatures can only be appropriated to one Person, but is not peculiar to him, or his own.⁸²

Then he cites Mahé in “La sanctification d’après S. Cyrille d’Alexandrie.” saying: “The work of sanctification is not so peculiar to the Holy Spirit that it belongs exclusively to him.”⁸³

Then he cites Cyril and his famous formula: “Our renewal is in a sense the work of the whole Trinity... We may seem to attribute to each of the Persons something of what happens to us or of what is done with regard to the creature, but we still believe that everything is done by the Father by passing through the Son in the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁴ Accordingly,

the Three therefore come as one, although this operation is not threefold, but according to the order of characteristics of their hypostatic being... The three Persons may act together in the descending line of efficient causality, nevertheless they do so according to the order of the hypostatic being of each Person. (Cf. Aquinas, *ST Ia*, q. 34, a. 3; q. 45, q. 6 c and ad 2 (creation)).⁸⁵

The above depicts not only the parallelism between the approaches of Cyril and Congar, but also the extent to which Congar has been deeply informed by the former.

Conformity to the Image of God

In the previous section I have attended to Congar’s projection of the Holy Spirit as the principal of communion. Here, I will address the ramifications of this communion and the role played by the Spirit in effecting them.

⁸¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 84.

⁸² Cf. Athanasius, *CA* 2, 41-42; *ad Serap.* I, 19 (PG 26, 537); Cyril of Alexandria, *Jo* IV, 3 and X, 2 (PG 73, 558 and 74, 336), Pius XII *Mystici Corporis*, 1943 (AAS 35 (1943), 231; DS 3814), in Congar, *I believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 83-5.

⁸³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 87.

⁸⁴ Cyril, *Jo*. 10. 2 PG 74, 337, quoted in Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 89

⁸⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 89.

Congar's discussion of the mystical body tradition presumed an *imago Dei* anthropology and the theology of divine filiation. God not only created humankind in the divine image with the capacities for knowledge, love, and freedom but also destined humanity to communion in the divine life. We were created to become sons and daughters of God, a divine plan that is fulfilled through the Incarnation of the Word and the gift of the Spirit. In Christ and the Spirit, humanity is incorporated into the mystical body of the one who is *the* Image of God. This deification elevates humanity to a new level of participation in the life of God; yet it does not eclipse our human faculties or subsume our human personhood.⁸⁶

Congar speaks of conformity in two different ways. The first speaks of the conformity of the soul of a human being to the image of God, understood in a Trinitarian manner. The second, which is related to the first, involves our assimilation to Christ or the Son of God, and is a purely Christological matter. For the former, which is covered at length in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, the human soul is transformed to the image of God through the work of the Trinity while in the latter, which is covered in *The Mystery of the Temple* and in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, the principle of man's conformity to the Son is the Holy Spirit. I will argue in this section that, for Congar, the notion of conformity is an ontological and soteriological one. However, his approach is different from that of Cyril, but Congar did not propose a solution for this distinction. I will also show that his approach to our adoptive sonship is based on the notion of the church as the body of Christ and the relation between the Head and the members. Finally, though Congar is educated in the Aristotelian school, he still appreciates the notion of participation which is adopted by Cyril and the Greek Fathers.

Concerning our assimilation to the image of God from a Trinitarian perspective, Congar appeals to the Western tradition by commenting on Augustine who says: "The soul is more God's image when, because of the knowledge that the Word communicates to it and the love that the Spirit places in it, it makes present the resemblance to the one of whom it is the

⁸⁶ Groppé, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 117.

image. The missions make possible an increase in faith and love. (For faith, *De Trin.* IV, 20, 28; for charity, *In Ioan. ev.* LXXIV, 3)⁸⁷ Then drawing on Aquinas, Congar writes:

In his mystery, which is both necessary and absolute, God know and love himself. He communicates his goodness with sovereign freedom in the free mystery of creation and of the 'divine missions'. Through which creatures, who are made 'in his image', are included in that life of knowledge and love and are in this way 'deified'.⁸⁸

Congar recites the same view through the Aristotelian logic and the language of Thomism, saying:

The three therefore come as one, although this operation is not threefold but according to the order and characteristics of their hypostatic being. Their action assimilates the soul that they are sanctifying to the divinity by *assimilating it to what is peculiar to each hypostasis* according to a causality that is quasi formal or exemplary. 'Quasi-formal' in this context means simply that the form does not become part of the physical composition of the recipient, but remains transcendent.⁸⁹

So, according to the Western tradition, the image of God is perceived in terms of the three hypostases, is translated in terms of knowledge and love, and culminates in a beatific vision. Congar's account offers no innovation, and seems simply to follow well-established lines.

The second conception, concerning our assimilation to the Son, is connected to the first notion since Congar writes: "Their action assimilates the soul that they are sanctifying to the divinity by *assimilating it to what is peculiar to each hypostasis* according to a causality that is quasi formal or exemplary."⁹⁰ This second conception is found in both the treatises that we have been considering. In the *Mystery of the Temple*, Congar writes that "man himself... is truly united to God, no other and no less, by the Spirit who makes the image *conform* to its model."⁹¹ Then he quotes Cardinal Journet, who states: "The Church is only complete when the *Holy Spirit*, by his presence as *efficient cause*, infuses in her through Christ, the grace that is fully Christ's and is able to make us other Christs. (Journet, *L'Église du Verbe incarné*, t. 2,

⁸⁷ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 3, 84.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁸⁹ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 89.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁹¹ Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 290

562)''⁹² This text shows that, for Congar, the Spirit remains the efficient cause of our assimilation to the Son. Besides, by quoting Journet, Congar shows not only his faithfulness to Thomist Aristotelianism, but more importantly his adherence to the Christological approach of the church, where, the spiritual endowments reach the members of the body through its head, Christ.

In *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Congar still speaks of the Spirit assimilating man to the Son, but with a deeper account of the role of the Holy Spirit. He writes: “The Holy Spirit makes us children of God because he is the Spirit of the Son. We become adopted sons by assimilation to natural sonship. As Romans 8:29 says, we are ‘predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren’.”⁹³ However, this assimilation involves more than just an imitation to Christ. Allow to offer a series of quotations from *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*:

- The title of sons that has been given to us *assimilates* us to the eternal Son⁹⁴ more than by way of exemplarity. (Mersch, *La théologie du Corps mystique* (Paris and Brussels, 1944), II, 44.⁹⁵
- According to Paul, there is no “body” of the Holy Spirit. The Sacred host carries on a mysterious work of incarnation in us, but on the account of the Son of God, by integrating us into Christ and assimilating us to him. (F.-x Durrwell, *La Résurrection de Jésus, mystère de salut*, 2nd ed. (Le Puy and Paris, 1955), 257-258; 10th ed. (Paris, 1976), 170) This spiritual identification or ‘mystical’ assimilation to Christ, and this absolute credit that we give him so that he will fill our lives, are brought about by the *Holy Spirit* as an intimate and transcendent cause and take place as the indwelling of the Spirit in us.⁹⁶
- As sons of God, we are the body of the only Son. (Augustine, *Ep. Ioan. ad Parth. X*, 5, 9 (PL 35, 2055); *Comm. in ev. Ioan. xx*, 5; XLI, 8 (PL 35, 1568 and 1696)). Cyril of Alexandria, who had so much to teach us about our divine sonship, said: “Christ is both the only Son and the first-born Son. He is the only Son as God, but he is the first-born son by the saving union that he has constituted between us and him in becoming man. In that, we, in and through him, have become sons of God, both by nature and by grace. We are those sons by nature in him and only in him. We are also those sons

⁹² Ibid., 291.

⁹³ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 91.

⁹⁴ Cf. Ibid., 106: “We may conclude by saying that we need all this- an understanding of the mystery of Christ, a daily life of obedience and a prayer to the Father as sons – if we are to be transfigured into the image of the Son by the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Cor 3:18)”

⁹⁵ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 92.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 101.

by participation and by grace through the Spirit.” (Cyril, *De recta fide ad Theod.* (PG 76, 1177)).⁹⁷

- God outside himself is God in us... This gift is in accordance with a deep desire that is present in our nature, it is true that we are made in God's *image*. We are therefore destined to become *children of God* by receiving the Spirit of his Son. (Athanasius, *CA* 3, 24 (PG, 26, 373))⁹⁸
- The image of God comes more intimately alive in us and through which we return to the Father... It is important to give its fullest realistic sense to the theological character of this life. It is our life and it is firmly rooted in us because of the gifts that are really ours, but its principle and its term are, in a very real sense, God. We are sons of God (1John 3: 1-2). We are really *deified*! God is God not only in himself but also in us! He is God not only in heaven but also on earth! The Holy Spirit, who is the term of communication of God outside himself and beyond himself.⁹⁹

These quotations show that, first, the Holy Spirit is the principle of our conformation to the Son. Second, the process is ontologically transformational and deifying. Third, Congar is still influenced by the Aristotelian school in his quest of explaining the transformative transaction. Fourth, Congar is informed by Cyril's writings regarding our adoptive sonship and the French theologian's approach to the notion of our assimilation to the Son is undergirded by Augustine and Cyril's conception of the church as the body of Christ. Fifth, for Congar, our assimilation to the image of God is related to our conformity to the Son, where he writes: "God outside himself is God in us... This gift is in accordance with a deep desire that is present in our nature, it is true that we are made in God's *image*. We are therefore destined to become *children of God* by receiving the Spirit of his Son. (Athanasius, *CA*. III, 24 (PG, 26, 373))"¹⁰⁰ Finally, although Congar draws on Augustine and Aquinas in their appeal to a Trinitarian approach for explaining the notion of the image of God in man, he does not try to reconcile it with the Christological approach of Cyril and the Eastern Greek Fathers. But he seems to favor the Greek approach in relation to our conformation to the image of the Son.

The Greek Fathers preserved the principle that God's work done *ad extra* were common to all three Persons, but at the same time spoke *more positively* about the connection between our created sonship and the uncreated sonship of Christ. They were able to do this because of two factors that were peculiar to them and

⁹⁷ Ibid., 105

⁹⁸ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 3, 150.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 150.

¹⁰⁰ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 3, 150.

also closely related to each other. On the one hand, their teaching was situated within a logical framework of *participation* and exemplarity and of formal and of formal and not efficient causality. Now it is on the basis of production or efficiency that our sonship should be attributed to the basis of divinity as such. On the other hand, they believed that, when he assumed human nature, the Son of God assumed more than the individual humanity of Jesus and in fact assumed 'human nature', not in the sense that hypostatic union extended to all men, but rather in the sense that the nature that each man hypostasizes individually is assumed as such by the Son of God, and that in him that nature is *re-conformed* to the likeness of the Son.¹⁰¹

Hence, by appealing to the notion to our conformity to the Son (who is the Image of the Father) there might be a path forward between to these two traditions with regards to this soteriological notion. Still, it is worth noting that one finds a Greek tradition of being conformed to the Son, and then a Latin tradition which almost always has both aspects - conformation to the Son AND conformation to the Trinity.

However...

Given Congar's conviction in the 1970s that "Vatican II's efforts to recover the pneumatological dimension of the Church 'stopped halfway',"¹⁰² in his quest to advance the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church, and despite the manifold parallels between the two theologians' approaches in relation to their pneumatology, there are some important differences between Cyril and Congar. First, as previously discussed, while the descent of the Holy Spirit on Christ during his baptism in Cyril's account leaves no room for advancement in the person of Christ, Congar holds a different view. He believes that Christ was assigned his messianic vocation during this event. "The event in the Jordan marks the beginning of the messianic era...The Spirit who descends on Jesus anoints him as Messiah and the 'Christ'."¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 92.

¹⁰² Yves Congar, "Actualité de la pneumatologie", in: José Saraiva Martins [ed.], *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum: atti del congresso teologico internazionale di pneumatologia, Roma, 22-26 marzo 1982*, Libreria editrice Vaticana, Vatican City, 1983), 16, cited in Coman, "Ecclesia de trinitate," 52.

¹⁰³ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 3, 167.

The second point deals with the timing of the reception of the Holy Spirit by the church.

In line with his interpretation of Christ's baptism, Cyril conceives the Pentecost as a sign that the disciples (the first-fruits) already possessed the Spirit.

Therefore, they receive participation in the Holy Spirit when 'he breathed on them,' saying, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' After all, Christ could not have been lying. He would not have said "receive" if he did not give. But in the days of holy Pentecost, when God *made a clearer proclamation of grace* and a *clearer revelation* of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, tongues of fire appeared. They did not signify the beginning of the gift of the Spirit in them, but rather they referred to the beginning of the gift of languages. It is written that 'they began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.'¹⁰⁴ Do you hear how it says that they began to speak, not that they began to be sanctified, and that the distribution of tongues came upon them as the Spirit, who was in them, brought this about? Just as the Father spoke from heaven to testify about his own offspring, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,'¹⁰⁵ and he did this for the edification of the hearers, sending down a voice (or causing it to occur) as a kind of instrument suited to our ears, so also he *placed a visible proof* of grace on the holy disciples by sending down on them tongues in the form of fire and by making the descent of the Spirit imitate the sound of a 'rush of a violent wind.'¹⁰⁶ And you will readily understand that this too was given as a *sign* to the Jews when you hear God, the Lord of all, speaking through the voice of the prophet, 'By strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people,' and they will not believe. (1Corinthians 14:21; Isaiah 28:11)¹⁰⁷

It is clear that here Cyril is using the same methodology that he has used in interpreting Christ's baptism. Just as the descent of the Spirit on him was perceived as a sign, the descent of the third Person of the Trinity on the disciples is also seen as a 'sign' or a 'visible proof' that they already possessed the Spirit. Cyril also underscores that 'they began to speak, not that they began to be sanctified' and this is a contrasting position to that of Congar who, commenting on the Pentecost, says: "The twelve themselves and the 120 disciples mentioned by Luke seem never to have received baptism by water, except possibly from John the Baptist."¹⁰⁸ They were, as it were, plunged in the Spirit, who came upon them."¹⁰⁹ Moreover, by this stage of his career he conceives the church to be emerging from Pentecost.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Acts 2:4.

¹⁰⁵ Matthew 3:17; 17:5.

¹⁰⁶ Acts 2:2.

¹⁰⁷ *Jo.* 12.1 (PG 74, 717; Pusey III. 137-8); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 370-1.

¹⁰⁸ H. A. Echle, "The Baptism of the Apostles. A Fragment of Clement of Alexandria's Lost Work "Ipotyposeis" in the *Pratum Spirituale* of John Moschus," *Traditio* 3 (1945), 365-368.

Congar is stuck between a rock and a hard place: On the one hand, he does not want to completely abolish the Christological aspect of the church, “a sound pneumatology always points to the work of Christ and the Word of God.”¹¹¹ On the other hand, he wants to promote her pneumatological dimension. He wants to preserve the tradition of Cyril, Augustine and Aquinas, while simultaneously incorporating the modern/contemporary biblical scholarship of the historical Jesus. So, in order to reconcile the ‘Johannine Pentecost’ (John 20:22) with the Pentecostal event of acts, he comes up with different prepositions. First, he states: “Jesus communicates the Holy Spirit, but not the Paraclete, whom he had promised in John 14 and 16.”¹¹² Then, he writes: “He [the Spirit] was given first to the apostles (John 20:22) and then to the whole of the early community at Pentecost.”¹¹³ So one time he writes it’s the ‘Spirit, but not the Paraclete’, another time he says the Spirit was given ‘the apostles (John 20:22) and then to the whole community’. Clearly, a certain tension arises in Congar’s attempt to synthesize these two events. But, by this stage of his career, he certainly conceives that: “It was to the Church, assembled and unanimous in the company of the apostles, that the Spirit came at *Pentecost*.”¹¹⁴ And that: “From the point of view of the reality of the situation, however, Acts 2:42 may well reflect the life of the Church as it *emerged from the Pentecost*.”¹¹⁵ However, by tying the emergence of the church to Pentecost, Congar risks bypassing the biblical and patristic representation of Christ as the Head of the church and her well spring of spiritual goods.

¹⁰⁹Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit, Vol. 1*, 45.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 46.

¹¹¹Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit, Vol. 2*, 12.

¹¹² Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit, Vol. 1*, 53.

¹¹³Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit, Vol. 2*, 15.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹¹⁵Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit, Vol. 1*, 45.

Nonetheless...

In his *The Word and the Spirit* (1986) and *The Spirit of God: Short Writings on the Holy Spirit*¹¹⁶ which were written after his *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* trilogy, Congar is more successful in loosening up the tension between the (traditional) Christological and (modern) pneumatological aspects of his ecclesiology. Building on Irenaeus scheme of the two hands of God,¹¹⁷ he writes:

If, from my lengthy study of the Holy Spirit, I had to keep but a single conclusion, it would be this: Christology ensures the well-being of pneumatology. There is no Word without Breath; it would remain in the throat and would address no one. There is no Breath without a Word: it would have no content and would transmit nothing to anyone... the goal of the divine design or plan¹¹⁸ is to bestow adoption upon us as children, to make us into sons *in the Son*, ... That is accomplished through the one-time historical sending of the Son into the world, that is, through the redemptive Incarnation, and through the sending of the Spirit into hearts, through which the one and only Son becomes many sons and heirs—many and one-and-only, the one-and-only being *extended* to many through the Spirit, who is communication, *koinōnia*, communion.¹¹⁹

Here Congar suggests that pneumatology cannot be separated from Christology and vice versa: “No Christology without pneumatology and no pneumatology without Christology.”¹²⁰

The integration of these two aspects is “intended to ensure the health of both Christology and pneumatology.”¹²¹ Brooks argues the title *The Word and the Spirit* does not capture the full meaning that the original French title *La Parole et le Souffle* intended to do, where the latter term *Souffle* denotes *Breath*.¹²² Thus, the Breath “is never to be considered an isolated breath,... It always carries forth the *Word*.”¹²³ Hence, the interdependency of the two elements (the Breath and the Word) in relation to each other is here in full display. The Son

¹¹⁶ Yves Congar, *The Spirit of God: Short Writings on the Holy Spirit*, eds. Susan Brown, Mark Ginter, and Joseph Mueller, trans. Susan Brown, Mark Ginter, Joseph Mueller, and Catherine Clifford (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press 2018).

¹¹⁷ *AH* 5:6.1 and 5:28.4.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Romans 8:28–30; Ephesians 1:3–14...

¹¹⁹ Yves Congar, “Pneumatology Today,” in eds. Susan Brown, Mark Ginter, and Joseph Mueller, trans. Susan Brown, Mark Ginter, Joseph Mueller, and Catherine Clifford *The Spirit of God: Short Writings on the Holy Spirit*, 219–221

¹²⁰ Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, 1.

¹²¹ Adrian J. Brooks, “Breathing Forth the Word: Yves Congar’s Articulation of the Activity of The Holy Spirit in the Life of Christ,” *New Blackfriars* 12545 (2020), 200.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 201.

and the Spirit work in tandem¹²⁴ for the fulfillment of the divine plan of salvation, where the latter represents the means of communication, while the former acts as the subject or content¹²⁵ of what is being communicated.

The Spirit does the work of Christ/the Son. For here it is a matter of making sons and daughters of God in the image of the Son and by their assimilation into his “body.” It is the Spirit which makes us members of the body (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 4:4) because the Spirit is the Spirit of the Son (Gal 4:6), of Christ (Rom 8:9), and because the Spirit takes or receives what is Christ’s to give us a share in it (Jn 16:14)... The Spirit interiorizes and personalizes the treasury of *grace acquired by Christ*. The Spirit is communication, communion. St. Irenaeus speaks of “communicatio Christi [the communication of Christ].”¹²⁶

This passage reveals *the ongoing interplay* between Christology and pneumatology, in Congar’s more developed Pneumatological Christology compared to the one offered in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*. The French Theologian is able to promote the role of the Spirit while upholding Christ’s continuous dynamic interconnection with the church, at once. Furthermore, “Congar rules out the other extreme of *pneumatomonism*, an unhealthy concentration on the Spirit, as the Word provides the content, the message, the tangible form. The Spirit never speaks of itself. The *Breath* and *Word* mutually inform and depend upon each other.”¹²⁷ More importantly, for the purpose of this research, Congar is reverting to a patristic tradition shared by Cyril who also posits an ongoing dynamic Christological and pneumatological interplay within the life of the church and the believer simultaneously.

Conclusion

In summary, Cyril is able to balance between his Christological and pneumatological ecclesiology by drawing on the formula “from the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit.”

¹²⁴ “The unity of the glorified Christ and the Spirit is functional, that is to say, it is an operative unity. The work to be done in believers is common to both of them.” Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, 25.

¹²⁵ “The Spirit causes Jesus Christ to be known and confessed as the Father’s ambassador and as Lord.” Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, 28.

¹²⁶ Yves Congar, “The Spirit Is the Breath of the Word and the Spirit of the Son,” in eds. Susan Brown, Mark Ginter, and Joseph Mueller, trans. Susan Brown, Mark Ginter, Joseph Mueller, and Catherine Clifford *The Spirit of God: Short Writings on the Holy Spirit*, 110-111.

¹²⁷ Brooks, “Breathing Forth the Word,” 203.

On the other hand, Congar has moved from a more Christocentric to a more pneumacentric ecclesiology throughout his career, which spans several decades. Moreover, Cyril's pneumatological account has nourished Congar ecclesiological thoughts to a great extent, "Cyril of Alexandria, whom I have already quoted many times in this work."¹²⁸ However, in his attempt to put more weight on pneumatology, especially in his *I Believe the Holy Spirit* trilogy, Congar's theological account has experienced certain tension between tradition and modern biblical studies. And though he likes some aspects of Cyril's pneumatology, Congar misses his exegesis of key episodes in the Scriptures.

It is also worth noting that while Congar is drawing more and more on Cyril's pneumatology in this monograph, he does so at the expense of Cyril's Christological account. This may be due to the fact that Cyril's Christological focus acts as an underlying principle for Thomas Aquinas' Christology, and Congar thinks that to move away from Thomas, one must move away from a Christological focus. Unfortunately, he does not unite those things in a similar way to that of Cyril (and probably not even to that of Augustine!)

Nonetheless, when considering Congar's later writings, post *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, one can find a loosening up of the tension between tradition and modern biblical studies and a more balanced Pneumatological Christology. Hence, Congar is once again moving closer to the patristic tradition shared with Cyril.

¹²⁸ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 101.

CHAPTER V: The Sacramental Theology of Cyril of Alexandria

Introduction

A sacrament denotes a visible reality which contains an invisible mystery, where mystery refers to the communication of the supernatural life.¹ In the previous chapters the Christocentric approach to the church by Cyril and Congar was discussed and it was found that the two theologians share a theology of participation in Christ. But how is such participation attained? This will be the primary focus of the next two chapters, where I will, first, attend to Cyril's sacramental theology and then to Congar's, highlighting the commonalities and variations in their sacramental approach.

Cyril of Alexandria

In light of the above definition, and given that Cyril was writing in the fifth century i.e., prior to later developments that took place in the field of sacramental theology (especially those that eventually resulted in lists of distinct sacraments), this chapter argues that, first, the Eucharist² represents the sacrament of the church *par excellence* and that Cyril's Eucharistic theology flows from his Christology and spills into his ecclesiology. Second, that Athanasius laid the ground work for Cyril's sacramental theology but the latter has developed it by postulating two modes of union and elucidating how participation in Christ vivifies us. Third, Cyril's sacramental theology is tailor made to meet our corporeal and psychic needs. In retrospect, Cyril's sacramental scheme revolves around the Eucharist and the Holy Spirit.

¹ Jean-Marie Pasquier, *L'Eglise comme sacrement* (Freiburg: Academic Press of Freiburg, 2008), 32.

² It is worth noting that when Cyril speaks of the mysteries (τὰ μυστήρια) in plural, he refers to the Eucharist: "He broke bread, as it is written, and gave it to them saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you for the remission of sins. This do in remembrance of me.' (Luke 22:19; Matthew 26:28) Therefore, participation in the *holy mysteries* (τῶν ἁγίων μυστηρίων) is a true confession and remembrance of the Lord's death and resurrection for us and on our behalf. By it we are filled with divine blessing." *Jo.* 12.1 (PG 74, 725; Pusey III, 145); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 374.

Fourth, baptism marks the beginning of the ongoing process of the faithful's reception of the Holy Spirit and acts as the gateway to our participation in the Eucharist. Finally, that Cyril addresses the sacramental topics in his Johannine commentary at more length than in the *Glaphyra*.

The following passage underlines the main themes/attributes of his view of the Eucharist.

He is, after all, *life by nature* (ζωὴ μὲν γὰρ κατὰ φύσιν ἐστὶ), inasmuch as he was begotten of the living Father. And his *holy body* too is no less life-giving, since it is in some way brought together and *ineffably united with the Word* who gives life to all. Therefore, it is counted as his, and it is considered to be one with him. He is *indivisible* after the incarnation except for the knowledge that the Word, who comes from God the Father, and the temple, which comes from the virgin, *are not the same in nature*. That is because the body is *not of the same substance* as the Word of God. But they are *one by that coming together and ineffable concurrence*. And since the *flesh* of the Savior has become life-giving (in that it has been united to that which is by nature life, namely, the Word from God), when we *taste* of it, then we *have life* in ourselves, since we too are *united to that flesh* just as it is united to the *Word* who indwells it.³

The text underscores the continuity between the incarnation and the Eucharist by, first, stressing the difference in nature between the constituents of the mystery of incarnation.

Second, by virtue of the coming together of these two distinct elements, the flesh becomes the Word's own '*is counted as his and it is considered to be one with him*', here the accent is put on the intimacy of the union and the ramifications ensuing from it, where the flesh becomes indivisible and more so a life-giving medium to those who are united to it through tasting it. 'When we *taste* of it, then we have life in ourselves, since we too are *united* to that flesh.' Here the emphasis is on the union between the Word's flesh and the communicant and the soteriological implications of this transaction.

In order to demonstrate the interconnection between Cyril's Christology, sacramental theology and ecclesiology, I will begin by showing that for Cyril the Eucharist is the sacrament of the church and demonstrate how he develops the sacramental theology of Athanasius. Then, I will address the relation between the Holy Spirit and baptism while

³ *Jo.* 4.2 (PG 73, 577; Pusey I. 529-30); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 236.

highlighting the visible and invisible aspect of the sacrament, its relation to the Eucharist and how it meets the different needs of human beings. Finally, I will elucidate the connection between the Eucharist and the incarnation, the interconnection between the Logos and the Spirit, and the vitality of Christ's flesh as an instrument of salvation.

Modes of Union

Athanasius writes:

Therefore I ask that they also may become one, according to the body that is in Me and according to its perfection; that they too may become perfect, having oneness with It, and having become one in It; that, as if all were carried by Me, all may be one body and one spirit, and may grow up unto a perfect man. 'For we all, partaking of the Same, become one body, having the one Lord in ourselves'⁴... And we are deified (θεοποιούμεθα) not by partaking the body (μετέχοντες σώματος) of some man, but by receiving the Body of the Word Himself."⁵

These passages manifest, first, the unifying/ecclesial aspect of the Eucharist. Second, the communal aspect of not only the sacrament, but rather the means of salvation. Finally the indispensability of the complete appropriation of the body by the Word for the body to become a salvific instrument.

Based on his predecessor's work and concerning the type of union procured by the sacraments, Cyril posits a double layer approach where the believer is united to Christ, corporeally by means of the Eucharist, and spiritually, mainly through the mediation of the Holy Spirit. This structure meets the needs of the human being who is composed of a soul and a body. "Therefore, since the natural unity between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is acknowledged (since we believe in and glorify one divine nature in the holy Trinity), come, let us consider how we too are found to be one with one another and with God both *corporeally and spiritually* (ἐν σωματικῶς τε καὶ πνευματικῶς)."⁶

⁴ C. Ar. III,22 (PG 26, 368-369).

⁵ Letter to Maximos 61, 2. (PG 26, 1088).

⁶ Jo. 11.11 (PG 74, 557; Pusey II. 734); Commentary on John, vol.2, 303.

In the *Glaphyra*, for instance, Cyril writes:

Having become a second Adam for us, [He] could not make the very ones who wished to participate in a relationship with him by faith to share abundantly in his own life. For through the *mystical blessing*⁷ (εὐλογίας τῆς μυστικῆς) we have indeed become fellow members of his body (Σύσσωμοι). Yet we have been united with him in another way, because we have become ‘partakers of his divine nature’⁸ through the Spirit. For he resides in the souls of the saints, as the blessed John also says, ‘And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.’⁹ ...Yet Christ uniting the church to himself through the Spirit, rescues and saves her, and accomplishes better things for her than the devil did in his deceit.¹⁰

So, Cyril focuses on the type of union realized between Christ and the faithful on the one hand and Christ and the church on the other. But, he does not expatiate on the solidarity established between the faithful. Regarding this point, a more detailed and developed account covering the twofold type of union is presented in his Johannine discourse:

We are united with one another in the way that was just explained, and we are united with God. And the Lord has given us a crystal-clear explanation of how or in what way this takes place. He lays out the glorious benefit of his teaching as follows. He says, ‘I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one.’ The Son is in us corporeally as a human being, comingled and united with us through the *mystical blessing*, (εὐλογίας τῆς μυστικῆς) but spiritually as God, *re-creating* our spirit to newness of life by the activity and grace of his Spirit and making us sharers in his divine nature. Christ, then, is clearly the bond (Σύνδεσμος) of our unity with God the Father, uniting us to himself since he is a human being, and to God his Father since he is God by nature [a more accurate translation for the last sentence would be: and to God since he himself is God, dwelling by nature in His own Father].¹¹

Accordingly, our participation not only with God but also with each other is procured by means of the Eucharist and the Holy Spirit (please note that here Cyril does not mention the sacrament of baptism). Furthermore, Christ is portrayed as ‘the bond of our unity with God

⁷ Cyril uses the term ‘*mystical blessing*’ to allude to the Eucharist.

⁸ 2Peter 1:4.

⁹ 1John 3:24.

¹⁰ *Glaph. 1* (PG 69, 29) *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.1, 64.

¹¹ *Jo. 11.12* (PG 74, 565; Pusey III, 2-3); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 306. See also Cyril, *Dial. I.*(SC 231. 407 d- 408 a), 192-5: “We who belong to humanity, we are first of all connected to one-another in identity by a natural pact and besides, we are united in in another way. being cut (Διατετμημένοι) from one another by virtue of our special hypostasis, I want to say individuals, in a way that one is Peter or John, the other is Thomas or Matthew, we have become concorporeal (σύσσωμοι) in Christ, nourished by the same flesh and sealed in unity by the unique Holy Spirit; and just as Christ is indivisible – as He does not leave himself to be divided in the slightest manner- we are all in him. This is why he says to his Heavenly Father: “that they may be one as we are one” (John 17:22) take notice how ((ὅπως) in such manner as) in Christ and in the Holy Spirit we are all one according to the body and according to the Spirit.”[Translation by the author of the this research].

the Father,' due to his simultaneous divine and human being at once. However, though Cyril, mainly links the corporeal unity to the Eucharist, he does not deny that the sacrament carries a spiritual participation as well. As Boulnois argues, while commenting on a text by Cyril, "the mystical blessing does not only confer participation in the body of Christ, but also enables Christ to remain in our souls through the Holy Spirit, in order to render us participants in his holiness."¹² Accordingly, by means of the Eucharist, Christ dwells in us by the Holy Spirit (διὰ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος). Finally, although this passage may cover the main sacramental points effecting the establishment of the corporate body of Christ, Cyril's commentary on John 17:20-21 remains the most prominent statement of his bimodal sacramental ecclesiology (I will start with the Christological dimension and address the Spiritual aspect later in the section).

In order that we too may be mixed together and come into unity with God and one another, even though the difference between each of us makes us exist individually in terms of our bodies and souls, the Only Begotten manufactured (ἐμηχανήσατό) a means for that to happen, devised by his wisdom and the will of the Father. By one body (σώματι), that is, his own (ιδίῳ), he blesses those who believe in him through *mystical participation* (μυστικῆς μεταλήψεως) and makes them to be of the same body as himself and one another (ἐαυτῷ τε καὶ ἀλλήλοις ἀποτελεῖ). Who could divide or separate from their natural union with one another those who are bound together through his one holy body into unity (ἁγίου σώματος πρὸς ἐνότητα) with Christ? If 'we all partake of the one bread,'¹³ then we are all made one body, since Christ cannot be divided. That is why the church is called the 'body of Christ' and we are members of it individually, according to Paul's understanding.¹⁴ We are all united in the one Christ through his holy body since we receive the one indivisible body in our own bodies (ἀδιαίρετον ἐν ἰδίοις σώμασιν), and so we owe our members to him rather than to ourselves. Christ is classified as the head, and the church is called the rest of the body, as it is composed of individual members... 'But speaking the truth in love, we must *grow up in every way into him* who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in

¹² Marie-Odile Boulnois, "L'eucharistie, mystère d'union chez Cyrille d'Alexandrie: les modèles d'union trinitaire et christologique," *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* tome 74, fascicule 2, (2000), 156, where she comments Cyril, on Matthew 26: 26-27 (PG 72, 452 B): "ἔδωκεν οὖν ἡμῖν τὸ ἴδιον σῶμά τε καὶ αἷμα, ἵνα δι' αὐτῶν καὶ τὸ τῆς φθορᾶς καταλύηται κράτος, ἐνοικίζηται δὲ ταῖς ἡμετέραις ψυχαῖς διὰ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, καὶ γενώμεθα ἁγιασμοῦ μέτοχοι."

¹³ 1Corinthians 10:17.

¹⁴ 1Corinthians 12:27.

love.’¹⁵ And when we come into participation with his holy body, we obtain a *bodily union* (I mean with Christ) (ὅτι δὲ καὶ τὴν κατὰ σῶμα νοουμένην ἔνωσιν, φημι δὴ τὴν πρὸς Χριστὸν, οἱ τῆς ἁγίας αὐτοῦ σαρκὸς ἐν μεθέξει γεγονότες ἀποκερδαίνομεν)... If we are all members of the same body with one another in Christ—and not only with one another but also with him who is in us through his flesh (διὰ τῆς ἰδίας σαρκός) —how is it not obvious that we all are one both with one another and with Christ? Christ is the bond of union (τῆς ἐνότητος σύνδεσμος) because he is God and a human being in the same person (ἐν ταῦτῳ).¹⁶

This passage depicts the relation between the sacrament and the church in Cyril’s thought.

For him, first, the Eucharist was given in order to enact these two planes of solidarity for the communicant, one with Christ and one with each other. Second, Cyril perceives this union in terms of participation. Third, by virtue of being the bond of unity, Christ is the agent and foundation of this unity. Fourth, when talking about the Eucharist Cyril uses both terms flesh and body interchangeably. Fifth, he identifies the church with the body of Christ, and the means of actualizing the church is the Eucharist. Finally, the outcome of our participation in this sacrament is a corporeal unity.¹⁷ Moreover, and in order to illustrate the form and intimacy of this union Cyril uses the analogy of combining two pieces of wax into one: “If one combines *one piece of wax* with another and melts them both with fire, one piece is made from both. In the same way, by *participation in* the body of Christ (μεταλήψεως τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ) and his precious blood, we are united (συνενοούμεθα) so that he is in us, and we are in him. There was no other way that what was subject to decay by nature could be made

¹⁵ Ephesians 4:14-16.

¹⁶ *Jo.* 11.11 (PG 74, 560-1; Pusey II. 735-6); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 304-5.

¹⁷ Regarding this bodily union, please refer to Cyril, *Jo.* 10.2 (PG 74, 341-344; Pusey II. 541-2); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 214: “...We agree that he is quite right in saying this (that there is a spiritual union between us and Christ). But we will show that the bold claim that there is no reference to a *union* according to the *flesh* (συναφείας τῆς κατὰ σάρκα) between us and him is completely out of harmony with the divinely inspired Scriptures... And we, filling the role of branches, *take into ourselves the life that comes out of and from him* (ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ παρ’ αὐτοῦ). Paul says that we all, ‘who are many, are one body in Christ, because there is one bread; for we all participate in the one bread.’ Let anyone interpret this for us and teach us what it means without reference to the power of the *mystical blessing*. (μυστικῆς εὐλογίας) Why do we receive it within ourselves? Does it not make Christ dwell in us *bodily by participation and communion with his holy flesh* (σωματικῶς ἡμῖν ἐνοικίουσα τὸν Χριστὸν τῇ μεθέξει καὶ κοινωνίᾳ τῆς ἁγίας αὐτοῦ σαρκός)?...”

alive except by being *combined bodily* with the body (συνεπλάγη σωματικῶς τῷ σώματι) of him who is *life by nature* (κατά φύσιν ζωῆς), that is, the Only Begotten.”¹⁸

This passage (and the one cited in the previous footnote) reaffirm Cyril’s position with regards to our spiritual and corporeal modes of union with Christ. Cyril also again attributes our physical union to the Eucharist. But there are two other points that are made clear from this text. First, the extensive use of language of participation and communion in Christ’s flesh and its relation to vivifying our nature highlights Cyril’s understanding of salvation in terms of participation (μέθεξις), this point will be discussed in more details later in the chapter. Second, Cyril again uses the terms flesh (σάρξ) and body (σῶμα) interchangeably in relation to what is being offered in the Eucharist. However, the outcome of this operation is that we form one body (ἐν σῶμα) or are united bodily (σωματικῶς) with Christ. But what about our union in the Spirit with Christ and with each other?

Now concerning the *unity in the Spirit* (τῆς ἐνώσεως τῆς ἐν Πνεύματι), we will follow the same course of investigation and say again that all of us who receive one and the same Spirit (I mean the Holy Spirit) are mixed together, so to speak, with one another and with God. Even though *Christ causes the Spirit*, who is his own and who is from the Father, *to dwell in us* who are many individually, nevertheless the Spirit is one and indivisible (ἀλλ’ ἐν ἐστὶ καὶ ἀμέριστον). He gathers together the spirits of others, who are cut off from unity (I mean in terms of their essence (κατά γε τὸ εἶναι φαρμεν)), into unity in his own personal subsistence (ὑπαρξιν ιδιότητι συνέχον), making them all one in himself. Just as (ὡσπερ) the power of his holy flesh makes those in whom it dwells one body (συσσώμους), in the same way I think (τὸν αὐτὸν οἶμαι τρόπον ἐν) that the one Spirit of God, who dwells indivisibly in all, gathers everyone into a spiritual unity (πρὸς ἐνότητα τὴν πνευματικὴν). That is why the divinely inspired Paul addressed us, saying, ‘Bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.’¹⁹ When the one Spirit dwells in us, the one God and Father of all will be in us through his Son, gathering all who participate in the Spirit (τὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος μέτοχα) into unity with one another and with himself. And from the following it will be clear that we are united by participation in the Holy Spirit (δὲ τῷ Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι κατὰ μέθεξιν). Once we have given up our natural lives and conceded victory to the laws of the Spirit, how could anyone doubt that by denying our own

¹⁸ *Jo.* 10.2 (PG 74, 344; Pusey II. 542); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 214.

¹⁹ Ephesians 4:2-6.

life, as it were, and receiving the superworldly likeness of the Spirit who unites us, we are practically transformed (ἀναλαμβάντες μὲν μορφώσιν) to another nature, as it were? We are not only human, but we are called sons of God and heavenly men because we have been made sharers in the divine nature. Therefore, we are all one in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (ἐν τοιγαροῦν οἱ πάντες ἐσμὲν ἐν Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ καὶ Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι) (one, I mean, by identical disposition—since I think we ought to remember what was said at the beginning). We are also one by the form of godliness and by communion with the holy flesh of Christ (τῇ κοινωνίᾳ τῆς ἁγίας σαρκὸς τοῦ Χριστοῦ) and by communion with the one Holy Spirit (τῇ κοινωνίᾳ τοῦ ἐνὸς καὶ ἁγίου Πνεύματος), as was just explained.²⁰

The passage highlights that by virtue of being one and indivisible, the Holy Spirit is the principle of our spiritual union not only with Christ but also with one another as he ‘*gathers together the spirits of others*’ and ‘*gathers everyone into a spiritual unity*’. Moreover, by appealing to the terms just as (ὡςπερ) and in the same way I think (τὸν αὐτὸν οἶμαι τρόπον), Cyril is establishing a parallelism between our participation in the Eucharist and in the Holy Spirit and between the consequential effects of each type of participation. Furthermore, the language of participation in Christ flesh and in the Holy Spirit appears extensively throughout the passage. However it is worth noticing that he attributes the two modes of participation to the Eucharist and to the Holy Spirit not to the sacrament of baptism. Besides, the last sentence represents a summary to the whole exposition where ‘the form of godliness’ refers to the form and shape of unity that is being generated.

When Christ cites the essential unity that the Father has with him and he has with the Father as an *image and type* of the inseparable friendship and concord and unity of kindred souls, he [Christ] wants us to be *blended* (συνανακίρνᾶσθαι) with one another, so to speak, by *the power of the holy and consubstantial Trinity* so that the entire body of the church may be one, ascending in Christ by the joining and concurrence of two peoples into *one perfect whole*. As Paul says, ‘For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in *himself* one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might *reconcile* both groups to God in *one body* through the *cross*, thus putting to death that hostility through it.’²¹ Indeed, this is what he accomplished, since the believers in Christ were of one soul with one another and received one heart, as it were, by their complete likeness in godliness (διὰ τῆς εἰς ἅπαν ἐμφορείας τῆς κατ’ εὐσέβειαν) and by their obedience of faith and their virtuous mind... In the foregoing he said

²⁰ *Jo.* 11.11 (PG 74, 561; Pusey II. 736-7); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 305.

²¹ Ephesians 2: 14-16.

(not unintelligently) that the unity of concord and agreement among believers should imitate the manner of the divine union and the essential identity and complete interweaving of the Holy Trinity.²²

This gives a detailed description of the kind of ecclesial unity that resembles the type of unity of the Triune and that is being realized *in Christ*. In addition, Cyril substantiates his argument by showing that this unity did in fact exist in the early church in Jerusalem (Acts 2:42-44 and 4:32, though without explicitly citing the text,) when he writes: “Indeed, this is what he accomplished, since the believers in Christ were of one soul with one another and received one heart, as it were, by their complete *likeness in godliness* and by their obedience of faith and their virtuous mind.”

Finally, the outcome of this communion is ontologically soteriological since human beings are being transformed and elevated to a dignity above their own. Yet, despite the elaborate description of the role played by the Holy Spirit in establishing the spiritual aspect of our communion with God and the Son, the above passages do not depict how believers are able to initially receive the Spirit.

The Spirit and the Sacrament of Baptism

Although Cyril dwells on the Holy Spirit’s impact in his anthropological and ecclesial theology, as shown above, he does not offer a discourse on baptism that is as extensive as the one he provides for the Eucharist, which will be addressed later in this chapter. However, he still manages to link baptism and the Holy Spirit in a few places in his commentary on John.²³ In this section I will, first, show that Cyril’s sacramental theology offers a clear connection between baptism and the Holy Spirit. Second, Cyril mainly emphasizes the purifying aspect of the sacrament although he still depicts its unifying aspect in some texts.

²²*Jo.* 11.11 (PG 74, 557; Pusey II. 733-4); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 303.

²³ Furthermore in the *Glaphyra* Cyril writes: “Also the stalk of hyssop is very appropriately placed over fresh water. For we were baptized in the Holy Spirit and fire in accordance to what is written. (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; Acts 2:3-4)” *Glaph.* 11 (PG 69, 560); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 144

Third, given his conviction that man is composed of a soul and a body, Cyril offers a material and spiritual solution that would meet our anthropological needs. Fourth, he perceives baptism as a precondition to our participation in the Eucharist. Fifth, he conceives the sacrament as the beginning of the continuous process of our reception of the Third Person of the Trinity. Finally, given the dogmatic aspect of his commentary on John and the text contained in this gospel, Cyril gives a more elaborate account in this document compared to that which we find in the *Glaphyra*.

Concerning the relation between the Holy Spirit and baptism, Cyril writes on behalf of John the Baptist:

For I not only proclaimed that Christ would come, but also I have already seen him present, and I admit his very voice into my ears. But you, my wise disciples, when you see human nature, which is betrothed to Christ, going to him, and when you observe the nature that is cut off and running away from its love for him *ascending to spiritual intimacy through holy baptism*, do not be upset that this is not for me, he says. Instead, realize that the *bride* gladly runs to her spiritual *bridegroom*, since this is truly right and more fitting.²⁴

Here, Cyril is depicting the church as the bride that will be spiritually united to Christ her (νυμφίος) bridegroom, a task ascribed to the Holy Spirit, through the mediation of baptism. In another passage he writes, also on behalf of John the Baptist:

The Spirit bearer, cutting short their offense and implanting in his disciples a healthy view of the most important matters, explains as well as he can the superiority of the Savior over all things. And he teaches the reason, no less, why everyone was now going to him and why they were leaving behind the baptism by water only and going to the more divine and more perfect baptism, namely, *the baptism by the Holy Spirit*.²⁵

In this passage Cyril shows not only that the new covenant baptism is performed by the Holy Spirit, but also that its superiority to the old one stems from the fact it executed through the Third Person of the Trinity. Finally, the passage that reveals the connection between the Spirit and this sacrament is found in his commentary on John 7:24 which addresses the notion of circumcision in the Spirit. After explaining that it “raises us to fellowship with God” and

²⁴ Jo. 2.1 (PG 73, 264; Pusey I. 237); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 106.

²⁵ Jo. 2.2 (PG 73, 272-3; Pusey I. 245); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 109.

establishing its connection to Christ's resurrection, since it's only performed "on the eighth day, that is, the day of Christ's resurrection," Cyril highlights its superiority to the corporeal circumcision and its spiritual benefits: "*the purification by the Spirit is more appropriate. It drives out all defilement from our souls and brings in perfection in the brightness of godliness through faith.*" He also shows that the first circumcision was authored by Joshua while the second is performed by Christ. Then he writes:

Furthermore, the new and noble people are circumcised beyond the Jordan at the command of Joshua, as it is written. The insight that comes from the truth is as follows: *We will never receive the circumcision of the heart by the Spirit as long as we have not yet been carried over the mystical Jordan but are still on the other side of the holy waters.*²⁶

Then after reciting some of its benefits like "snatching human souls from the hand of the devil" and "freeing and releasing us from sin" he highlights that, "it frees us from both death and decay. And these are not the only benefits of circumcision; it also makes us partakers in the divine nature (2Peter 1:4) through participation in Christ our Savior."

The passages quoted above underline the link between the Holy Spirit and baptism. They also depict the soteriological implications of this sacrament such as uniting the church to Christ, establishing our fellowship with God, enabling us to become partakers of the divine nature through participation in Christ, and purifying us. This notion of purification is found in high frequency when the sacrament is brought up, especially in the *Glaphyra*.

Baptism is

"the Cleansing that comes through holy baptism."²⁷ "It is the grace of baptism, through which we are all cleansed of all our filth and are declared to be partakers of divine nature."²⁸

For in him we have been justified in our souls and inward parts and have rid ourselves of pollution, since baptism truly brings salvation and the imparting of power, not as the removal of filth from the body, but as the appeal to God of a good conscience. (1Peter 3:21)²⁹

²⁶ Jo. 4.7 (PG 73, 697; Pusey I. 638-9); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 286.

²⁷ *Glaph.* 11 (PG 69, 576); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 156.

²⁸ *Glaph.* 12 (PG 69, 625); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 197.

²⁹ *Glaph.* 12 (PG 69, 632); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 202.

The frequent linkage between our purification and baptism in the *Glaphyra* emanates from Cyril's conviction that the OT is loaded with types and shadows of the mysteries of the messianic era and since the Pentateuch contains many purification rites, they are reflected in his commentary. However, the same link between baptism and purification is to be found in his commentary on John's gospel. Commenting on Christ's words "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God,"³⁰ Cyril writes:

Since human beings are composite (σύνθετον) and not simple by nature, mixed from two things—namely, a body with senses and an intellectual soul (σώματος καὶ ψυχῆς)—they need a twofold healing for the new birth, corresponding to both of the aforementioned. So the human spirit is sanctified (ἀγιάζεται) by the Spirit (πνεύματι), and the body is sanctified by the water, which in turn is also sanctified (ὕδατι δὲ αὖ πάλιν ἡγιασμένῳ). Just as water that is poured into a kettle receives an impression of the fire's power by association with the tips of the flame, so also through the activity of the Spirit, perceptible water is transformed (μεταστοιχειοῦται) into a divine and ineffable power and sanctifies those with whom it comes into contact."³¹

In relation to Cyril's baptismal approach, this passage reveals, first, that the link between baptism and purification is covered in both of his discourses. Second, the role played by the Holy Spirit in transforming the water in baptism into a sanctifying material. Third, sacramental nature of baptism which involves a visible material aspect, water, and invisible transcendent power, the Spirit. Fourth, Cyril perceives the sacrament as a therapeutic treatment for human needs, where the body is purified by a material substance, water, and the soul is sanctified by the Spirit. This twofold approach is repetitive in Cyril's sacramental approach, as he ascribes our twofold union (corporal and spiritual) to the Eucharist and the Holy Spirit respectively. So, this leads to the discussion of the relation between baptism and the Eucharist.

After establishing the relation between circumcision of the Spirit and baptism, Cyril writes:

³⁰ John 3:5

³¹ *Jo.* 2.1 (PG 73, 244-5; Pusey I. 219); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 98.

To what has been said, the author of the book adds, ‘And the Israelites kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month, and they ate unleavened fresh bread made from the land’s grain.’³² *It is impossible, after all, to participate in the true lamb who takes away the sin of the world or to find the fresh unleavened food of the gospel proclamation without first crossing the mystical Jordan, receiving circumcision from the living Word and rubbing off, as it were, the insult of Egypt like a stain on the soul, as we just explained it.*”³³

Similarly in the *Glaphyra* he writes:

‘Your lips *are* like a thread of scarlet, my sister, my bride’³⁴ For as the lips of the Church always proclaim salvation through the blood of Christ and command that the one who draws near should make a confession of faith in him, so its lips are suitably likened to a scarlet thread, and its participation in the mystical blessing also involves a proclamation of the death and resurrection of Christ... Confession of faith in him, which is brought to its completion and its sanctification in holy baptism.³⁵

However, our reception of the Holy Spirit is not confined to the baptismal event. Baptism marks the beginning of the journey but it is an ongoing process. This is made clear in Cyril’s attachment to verses that illustrate the toiling and laboring performed for the acquisition of the Spirit, such as Isaiah 26:18 LXX: “*We have conceived and travailed and gave birth to a Spirit of salvation (πνεῦμα σωτηρίας)*”, which he quotes several times, especially in the exegetical works he wrote in the beginning of his career.³⁶ And also in his likening of the Holy Spirit to the sap of the vine which involves an ongoing and continuous process of nourishment to the branches.

If the branch does not have the *life-giving sap* supplied to it from its mother the vine, how could it yield grapes?... However, the ability to bear fruit will easily belong to those who are joined to him who is able to *feed and nourish* them for

³² Joshua 5: 10-11.

³³ *Jo.* 4.7 (PG 73, 700; Pusey I. 639-40); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 286-7. Also commenting on John 20:17, Cyril writes: “He does this as a type of the holy churches and of the mystery concerning himself, which the law given through the all-wise Moses also indicated to us when it represented the slaughtering of the lamb as an image of Christ. “No uncircumcised person shall eat of it,” it says. (Exodus 12:48) By “uncircumcised” it means “impure.” And humanity, at least according to its own nature, could reasonably be understood to be impure. After all, what is human nature in comparison with the purity of God? Therefore, while we are still uncircumcised, that is, impure, we must not touch the holy body, but rather we must be made pure by the circumcision that is by the Spirit. “Circumcision of the heart is by the Spirit,” as Paul says. (Romans 2:29) But circumcision by the Spirit would not happen in us if the Holy Spirit did not dwell in us by faith and *holy baptism*. Surely it was fitting, then, that Mary was prevented from touching the *holy body* for a while, since she had not yet received the Spirit.” *Jo.* 12 (PG 74, 696; Pusey III, 118-9); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 361.

³⁴ Song 4:3.

³⁵ *Glaph.* 11 (PG 69, 576-5577); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 157-158.

³⁶ Cf. *Commentary on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, 1.51.22; 2.147.15; *De adoratione*, PG 68.545.49; *Glaphyra*, PG 69.241.38, 320.33.

godliness by the bounty and grace of the Spirit, like life-giving water. The Only Begotten knew this, and he said in the Gospels, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.’ (John 7:37)³⁷

The Eucharist³⁸

This section will present, first, the Eucharist as flowing directly from the redemptive incarnation, and as a gateway to participating in the mystery of nativity. Second, it will demonstrate the vitality of Christ’s flesh for human redemption, where Cyril suggests that it is an economic instrument of salvation, and that, for him, only the type of union suggested by Cyril in the incarnation would render Christ’s flesh life-giving. Third, it will argue that the term body stands in for the term flesh in Cyril’s Eucharistic language for redemptive and ecclesial reasons. Finally, it will argue that salvation for Cyril is understood in terms of participation in the body of Christ.

The Incarnation and the Eucharist

One cannot address Cyril’s Eucharistic theology without referring to the mystery of incarnation and its transformative ramifications on Christ’s flesh. For him, the incarnation undergirds this sacrament and in his Eucharistic discourse, mainly on John 6, Cyril addresses the incarnational transaction several times:

Therefore, Christ has given his own body (ἴδιον σῶμα) for the life of all, and through it he makes life dwell in us again. Since the life-giving Word of God has taken up residence in the flesh (σαρκί), he has transformed (μετεσκεύασεν) it so that it has his own (ἴδιον) good attribute, that is, life. And since, in an ineffable mode of union, he has completely come together with it, he has rendered it life-giving (ζωοποιὸν ἀπέδειξε), just as he himself is by nature. For this reason, the body of Christ (σῶμα Χριστοῦ) gives life to those who participate (μετέχοντα) in

³⁷ Jo. 10.2 (PG 74, 361; Pusey II. 559); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 222.

³⁸ For studies on Cyril’s Eucharistic Theology please refer to: J. Mahé, “L’eucharistie d’après saint Cyrille d’Alexandrie,” *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique* 8, (1907), 677-696; Hubert Du Manoir, *Dogme et Spiritualité chez S. Cyrille d’Alexandrie* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1944), 185-218 ; Henry Chadwick, “Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy,” *Journal of Theological Studies*. N.S., Vol. II, Pt. 2 (October 1951); Ezra Gebremedhin, *Life-Giving Blessing: An Inquiry into the Eucharistic Doctrine of Cyril of Alexandria* (Motala, Sweden: Borgstroms Tryckeri AB, 1977); Cyril, *On John 6:38* (Pusey I, 486), quoted in Lawrence J. Welch, *Christology and Eucharist in the Early Thought of Cyril of Alexandria* (San Francisco, CA: International Scholars Publications, 1994); Marie-Odile Boulnois, “L’eucharistie, mystère d’union chez Cyrille d’Alexandrie: les modèles d’union trinitaire et christologique,” *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* tome 74, fascicule 2, (2000); Daniel A. Keating, “Divinization in Cyril: The Appropriation of Divine Life,” in *The Theology of St Cyril of Alexandria: A Critical Appreciation*, 149-185. London: T&T Clark LTD, 2003.

it. His body drives out death when that body enters those who are dying, and it removes decay since it is fully pregnant with the Word who destroys decay.³⁹

This passage depicts, first, the salvific transformative nature of the incarnation and the ontological ramifications that it brings about in Christ's flesh. Second, the rootedness of the Eucharist in the incarnation. Third, the use of Christ's flesh as an economic instrument for salvation. However, Cyril has no problem in utilizing the terms flesh and body interchangeably. Finally, he perceives salvation as a participation in this body that has been elevated to a dignity exceeding human capacity as a result of its union with the Word.

The Flesh of the Incarnate Word

The above scheme was re-iterated by Cyril in his commentary on John 17:

And the *flesh itself* was not sanctified on its own but by the *presence* (συνουσία) of the Word, who was *united* to it. It was *transformed* (μεθισταμένη) in some way so that it had his own natural power, and it became the *supplier of salvation* and *sanctification* to all who *participate* in it. (σωτηρίας πρόξενος καὶ ἁγιασμοῦ τοῖς αὐτῆς μετέχουσι γίγνεται)⁴⁰

It is thus clear that as a result of the incarnation Christ's flesh has become an omnipotent instrument of salvation, because as Athanasius writes:

The Body had in it the impassible Word, which was destroying the infirmities inherent in the Body...For on the contrary, a great addition has accrued to the human Body itself from the fellowship and union of the Word with it. For instead of mortal it is become immortal.⁴¹

Informed by his predecessor's thoughts and regarding the salvific capacity of Christ's flesh, Cyril writes:

That is why, when he raises the dead, the Savior is found to act not by a word alone or by God-befitting commands, but he rushes to employ his holy *flesh* in particular as a kind of coworker as well, thus showing that it has the power to give life since it has now become one with him. His body, after all, really belonged to him and not to another. So when he raised the synagogue leader's daughter by saying, 'Child, arise,' he took her by the hand, as it is written.⁴² By giving life as God through his all-powerful command and by giving life through the touch of his *holy flesh*, he displays one joint activity through both. Moreover, when he went into a city called Nain, and 'a dead man was being carried out, the

³⁹ Jo. 4.2 (PG 73, 565; Pusey I. 520); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 232..

⁴⁰ Jo. 11.9 (PG 74, 520; Pusey II. 699-700); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 287.

⁴¹ Athanasius, *Letter LIX to Epictetus* para. 6 and 9.

⁴² Luke 8:54.

only begotten son of his mother,’ again he ‘touched the bier and said, ‘Young man, I say to you, arise.’⁴³ He does not give the activity of raising the dead only to his word, but that he may show that his *own body is life-giving*, as we have already said before, he touches the dead and through his *body* places life into those who have already succumbed to decay. And if through the mere touch of his holy flesh he gives life to that which has decayed, how will we not gain the life-giving blessing more richly when we also taste the blessing? After all, he will surely *transform* those who *participate* in the blessing so that they will have his own good attribute, that is, immortality.⁴⁴

The passage reveals the significance of Christ’s flesh to our salvation, where this flesh, by means of its ineffable union with the Word, has become the economic medium for our redemption. However, this flesh has become so powerful only because of the Word who indwells it. Besides, the single subjectivity approach adopted by Cyril, where the Logos is always the subject of the verb or act being performed, is being underscored. In addition, that salvation is perceived as an ontological transformation to those who *participate* in the body of Christ. Finally, Cyril alternates between the terms flesh (σάρξ) and body (σῶμα). This may be due to one of the following reasons:

First, Cyril’s usage of the flesh (σάρξ) outgrows our conventional understanding of the term as it contains the whole human nature as previously mentioned. “And when he says this, he is introducing to us nothing strange or unexpected. Holy Scripture often calls the whole creature (ὅλον ἀποκαλούσης τὸ ζῶον) by the name of the flesh alone, as in the passage in the prophet Joel, ‘I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.’ (Joel 2:28)”⁴⁵ Hence, since the term flesh encompasses the whole human nature, by default it includes the body of Christ.

Second, Cyril’s usage of the term ἴδιος with flesh or body implies that they are the Word’s ‘own’ and hence whether it’s the flesh or the body they would carry the Logos’ ‘own (ἴδιον) good attribute’ that is able to vivify those who partake of it.

⁴³ Luke 7: 12, 14.

⁴⁴ Jo. 4.2 (PG 73, 577-80; Pusey I. 529-30); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 236-7. Cf. *On Luke*, 4:35, (PG 72, 552) (*Commentary on Luke*, trans. Payne Smith I.70-71): “He also lays His hand upon the sick; *for it was necessary, most necessary, for us to learn* that the holy Flesh which He had made His own was endowed with the efficacy of the power of the Word by His having implanted in it a godlike might. Let Him then take hold of us, or rather let us take hold of Him by the Mystical Blessing.”

⁴⁵ Jo. 1.9 (PG 73, 157-60; Pusey I. 138); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 62.

Third, although John 6 uses the term flesh (σάρξ) of Christ in the Eucharistic context, the synoptic Gospels use the term body (σῶμα) in the institution narratives. Moreover, Paul uses the term σῶμα (1Corinthians 10:17) and σύσσωμα (Ephesians 3:6) with reference to our participation in Christ's body. So, by alternating between the terms flesh and body in his Eucharistic narrative, Cyril is trying to present the Eucharist as the means of effecting our concorporeality with Christ which alludes to the establishment of the body of Christ, the church, at the physical level.

It is thus clear how central the flesh of Christ is for the soteriological plan postulated by Cyril. However adopting a sacramental approach, Cyril insists that the *flesh*, visible aspect of the sacrament, by itself does not *vivify*, it is only because of the Logos, the invisible aspect, who indwells it that the flesh has become an omnipotent instrument. Commenting on John 6:63 "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing," Cyril writes: "When the nature of the *flesh* is considered *alone* and *in itself*, it will clearly not be life-giving... [But] since it has been united to the life-giving Word, it has risen to the power of the better nature and has become life-giving in its entirety."⁴⁶ He continues:

He now fills his whole body with the life- giving activity of the Spirit since he calls his flesh "spirit" without overturning the fact that it is flesh. Because his whole flesh is utterly united to him and clothed with life-giving power, it now ought to be called "spirit" as well... The nature of the flesh does not render the Spirit life-giving, but the power of the Spirit makes the flesh life-giving.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Jo. 4.3 (PG 73, 601; Pusey I. 551); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 246. Please also refer to Cyril's *Third Letter to Nestorius* para. 7 (A.C.O. I. 1. 1, p. 37. 22- p. 38. 3) in Wickham, *Cyril of Alexandria Select Letters*, 23 "...when we perform in church the unbloody service, when we approach the sacramental gifts and are hallowed participants in the holy flesh and precious blood of Christ, saviour of us all, by receiving not mere flesh (God forbid!) or flesh of a man hallowed by connection with the Word in some unity of dignity or' possessing some divine indwelling, but the personal, truly *vitalizing flesh* of God the Word himself. As God he is by nature Life and because he has become one with *his* own flesh he rendered it vitalizing..." See also Cyril, *Contra Nest.* 4, 5 (A.C.O. I. 1. 6, p. 84. 25-35): "For then, then we shall see clearly, that the Flesh which was united to Him and not another's flesh, avails to give Life, yet 'because it has been made the very own of Him who is mighty to quicken all things,'... what wonder or how can one disbelieve that the Word out of God the Father being the Life by Nature rendered the Flesh which is united to Him, Life-giving? for it is His very own and not that of another conceived of as apart from Him and of one of us. But if *thou remove the Life-giving Word* of God from the Mystical and true Union with His Body and sever them utterly, how canst thou shew that it is still Life-giving?"

⁴⁷ Jo. 4.3 (PG 73, 604; Pusey I. 552-553); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 247.

The above statements show very clearly the interrelationship between the Logos and the Spirit and between the flesh and the Spirit. Furthermore, with regards to the intimate relationship between the Logos and his own flesh, Cyril adds: “He is *indivisible* after the incarnation except for the knowledge that the Word, who comes from God the Father, and the temple, which comes from the virgin, *are not the same in nature.*”⁴⁸ Finally he writes:

Therefore, whoever eats the holy *flesh* of Christ has eternal life because the *flesh has in itself the Word*, who is life by nature. For this reason he says, ‘I will raise them up on the last day.’ Instead of saying that ‘my body’ will raise them (namely, those who eat), he has put ‘I’ on the grounds that he is *not different* from his *own flesh*. He is certainly not different in nature, since he refuses to be at all divided into a *pair of sons* after the union.⁴⁹

The passage demonstrates the parallelism between the effects of the incarnation on Christ’s flesh and the ramifications of the Eucharist to the communicant. Furthermore, the passage, again, portrays the Word as the principle of vivification. Moreover, it reveals that Cyril was aware of Nestorius’ claims while writing this treatise and hence he was defending the intimacy of the union established by virtue of the incarnation.

The above facts have led some renowned scholars like Chadwick to describe Cyril’s perception of every Eucharistic meal as a reincarnation,⁵⁰ and Gebremedhin to contend that the mystery of the efficacy of the Eucharistic meal is rooted in the mystery of the hypostatic union and the bread and wine of the Eucharist.⁵¹ However, there are certainly limitations to this parallelism. “Therefore, the Savior was typified ahead of time in the law as bread, and the disciples, by their likeness to him, were typified as loaves, since all things have their true reality in Christ, but when it comes to us these things only exist by *likeness to him*, through his *grace.*”⁵² Also, “the statement ‘the flesh is of no benefit’ would rightly hold true for those who are earthly. Neither the flesh of *Paul*, for example, or that of *Peter* or anyone else will work this in us, but only the exceptional flesh of Christ our Savior, in whom dwelt ‘all the

⁴⁸ *Jo. 4.2* (PG 73, 577; Pusey I. 529-30); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 236.

⁴⁹ *Jo. 4.2* (PG 73, 581; Pusey I. 533); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 238.

⁵⁰ Chadwick, “Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy,” 155.

⁵¹ Gebremedhin, *Life-Giving Blessing*, 41-42

⁵² *Jo. 4.2* (PG 73, 572; Pusey I. 524); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 234.

fullness of the deity bodily.’ (Colossians 2:9)”⁵³ Thus, the soteriological aspects of Cyril’s theology of the incarnation can be applied to his Eucharistic theology with the above qualifications. But, given the soteriological implications of the Eucharist and their rootedness in the mystery of the incarnation was Cyril justified in his stance against Nestorius?

Some scholars claim that the Nestorius controversy was not a purely theological one, however, I believe that Chadwick’s view of the situation is more convincing. Cyril’s fundamental objections to the Antiochene doctrine lay in the implications of endorsing such teachings would be on the doctrine of the Eucharist.⁵⁴

Nestorius and the Antiochenes describe the union as an ἄκρα συνάφεια (superior conjunction), which is for Cyril insufficient to transform the body of Christ into a life-giving one. To him only a hypostatic union can endow the body with the latent life giving power necessary for the Eucharistic flesh to become vivifying.⁵⁵ By rejecting the physical and substantial union between the human nature and the Word, Nestorius cannot justify the efficacy of the Eucharistic flesh; it is only in drawing a flesh born of Mary that the Word can vivify it and render it vivifying.⁵⁶ So after discussing what Cyril means by the term flesh and its importance for our salvation, it is necessary to attend to the ecclesial and soteriological role of the Eucharist.

The Eucharist as the Sacrament of Communion and Means of Salvation

Cyril sees a direct connection between the Eucharist and the church: “Therefore, we are called both the body and members of Christ⁵⁷ since we receive the Son himself into ourselves through the blessing.”⁵⁸ However, my focus in this section will be on the implications of the

⁵³ *Jo.* 4.3 (PG 73, 601; Pusey I. 552); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 246-7.

⁵⁴ Chadwick, “Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy,” 153.

⁵⁵ Chadwick, “Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy,” 155. For a brief discussion of the union in Christ see Chp. 7.

⁵⁶ *On Luke* 22:19, PG 72, 909. Manoir, *Dogme et Spiritualité*, 199.

⁵⁷ 1Corinthians 12:27.

⁵⁸ *Jo.* 4.2 (PG 73, 581; Pusey I. 534); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 238.

participation of the communicant in the body of Christ. And here lies the soteriological aspect of the sacrament which is perceived in terms of communion.

In attempting to expound the efficacy of the Eucharist, Cyril starts by wondering how can a man under the dominion of death acquire the gift of immortality? Then he answers that it is paramount that his mortal body *participates* in the vivifying power of God, and the vivifying power of God is the divine Logos who unites Himself to a body which He immunizes against corruption and renders it vivifying. However, He had to dwell in us divinely through the Holy Spirit and mingles Himself with our bodies through His sacred flesh and precious blood. “which things also we possess as a life-giving Eucharist, in the form of bread and wine.”⁵⁹

This scheme is repeated in his John 6 discourse where both our spiritual and corporeal needs are met:

And don't be amazed at this or say to yourselves in a Jewish fashion, 'How?' Instead, recognize that water is cold by nature, but when it is poured into a kettle and joined with fire, it then all but forgets its own nature and departs into the activity of that which has overcome it. In the same way then, we, even though we are corruptible because of the nature of our flesh, leave our own weakness by being *mixed* with life and are transformed into the property of that life. It was necessary—necessary—not only that the soul be recreated in newness of life by the Holy Spirit⁶⁰ but also that this coarse earthly body be sanctified and called to incorruption by a coarser *participation* that is of the same kind as the body.⁶¹

And finally using the analogy of combining two pieces of wax into one, he writes:

If someone were to join wax with other wax, they will surely see that one has come to be in the other. In the same way, I think, the one who receives the flesh of our Savior Christ and drinks his precious blood, as he himself says, is found to be one with him, *mixed* together, as it were, and *mingled* with him through *participation* so that they are found in Christ, and Christ in them.⁶²

Hence, we, who were under the dominion of death, are able rediscover the gifts of life and immortality through being mixed with and participating in him who is life by nature, and this union is effected by means of the Eucharist. “There was no other way that what was subject to decay by nature could be made alive except by being *combined bodily* with the body

⁵⁹ *On Luke 22: 17-22.*

⁶⁰ Romans 6:4.

⁶¹ *Jo. 4.2 (PG 73, 580; Pusey I. 530); Commentary on John, vol.1, 237.*

⁶² *Jo. 4.2 (PG 73, 584; Pusey I. 535); Commentary on John, vol.1, 239.*

(συνεπλάκη σωματικῶς τῷ σώματι) of him who is *life by nature* (κατὰ φύσιν ζωῆς), that is, the Only Begotten.”⁶³

Conclusion

In conclusion, for Cyril, the sacrament of the church is the Eucharist. It encompasses an invisible and a visible elements and it together with the Holy Spirit, which we initially receive in baptism, act as the means of realizing our bimodal union with Christ and, subsequently, our corporeal and spiritual treatments. Finally, the Eucharist is rooted in Christology and implicates ecclesial and soteriological consequences, as it flows from the mystery of incarnation and results in the realization of the corporate body of Christ. However, the “*Eucharist does not involve a ‘repetition’ of the Incarnation in the strict sense of the term.*”⁶⁴ Let us now turn to Yves Congar,

⁶³ *Jo.* 10.2 (PG 74, 344; Pusey II. 542); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 214.

⁶⁴ Gebremedhin, *Life-Giving Blessing*, 41-42

CHAPTER VI: The Sacramental Theology of Yves Congar

Introduction

The last chapter has shown that, for Cyril, we attain our bimodal participation in Christ through the Eucharist and the Holy Spirit. Congar speaks more explicitly of baptism and the Eucharist as distinct realities, which may be due to the already established system of seven sacraments in the RCC and also to the emergence of the Donatist controversy in North Africa during Augustine's era.¹ However, this chapter will contend that there are many commonalities between Cyril and Congar's sacramental theology because of their Christological rootedness, and ecclesial and soteriological roles.

For Congar, more specifically, I will argue that, first, his sacramental theology carries ecclesial and soteriological implications. Second in his early writings, he was heavily influenced by Aristotle's philosophy and Aquinas's sacramental theology. However, as time passed he gradually became more receptive to the notion of participation, which allowed him to, first, link the Eucharist as the sacrament of the church to the body of Christ and the salvation of the members of this body, and second, to move closer to Cyril's theology, which he was aware of. Second, he perceives the term sacrament in line with the way I have defined it, in terms of the distinction between a hidden *res* and a visible *sacramentum*; and this definition enables him not only to perceive the body of Christ, the church, as a sacrament but also to find a connection between Christ in his incarnation, the Eucharist, and the church. However, he insists that there is neither a repetition of incarnation nor of the Eucharistic sacrifice. Third, for him, the two major sacraments are baptism and the Eucharist, where the former incorporates us into Christ's body, while the latter takes us to a deeper level of

¹ Regarding the Augustine-Donatist controversy, please consult Lewis Ayres and Thomas Humphries, "Augustine and the West to AD 650," in eds. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering, *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 156-169.

incorporation and procures our internal union not only with Christ but also with one another. Finally, the similarities in Cyril and Congar's sacramental theology lay not only in their understanding of the sacraments in terms of participation in Christ but also in their positing of clear links between Christ, the Eucharist, and the church.

The objectives of this chapter will be achieved by chronologically attending to Congar's sacramental theology in four of his publications namely, *Chrétien Désunis* (1937); *The Mystery of the Church* (originally, 1941); *Lay People in the Church* (originally, 1953); and *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (originally, 1979-1980), while also highlighting the similarities in the sacramentalism of the two theologians throughout.

Congar and Western Sacramental Theology

Before I turn directly to Congar I want to examine briefly some of his main sources.

Augustine

You ought to know what you have received, what you are about to receive, and what you ought to receive every day. That bread which you can see on the altar, sanctified by the Word of God, is the body of Christ. That cup, or rather what the cup contains, sanctified by the Word of God, is the blood of Christ. It was by means of these things that the Lord Christ wished to present us with his body and blood, which he shed for our sake for the forgiveness of sins. If you receive them well, *you are yourself what you receive.*²

The passage reveals two major elements of Augustine's Eucharistic theology. First, the true and authentic presence of Jesus Christ in the sacrament. "Recognize in the bread what hung on the cross, and in the cup what flowed from his side."³ Second, the mysterious conversion of the communicant into the body of Christ, i.e., the church. But what are the implications of this unification?

It follows that the whole redeemed city, that is to say, the congregation or community of the saints, is offered to God as our sacrifice through the great High Priest, who offered Himself to God in His passion for us, that we might be

² Augustine, *Sermon 227*, to the neophytes on Easter AD 414-415, quoted in Lawrence Feingold, *The Eucharist: Mystery of Presence, Sacrifice, and Communion* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2018), 158.

³ Augustine, *Sermon 228B.1-3*, in Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 159.

members of this glorious head, according to the form of a servant. For it was this form He offered, in this He was offered, because it is according to it He is Mediator, in this He is our Priest, in this the Sacrifice... This is the sacrifice of Christians: we, being many, are one body in Christ. And this also is the sacrifice which the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar, known to the faithful, in which she teaches that she herself is offered in the offering she makes to God.⁴

This passage reveals the invisible aspect of the Eucharist in Augustine's sacramental theology including its ecclesial and soteriological implications. First, despite our autonomy, this sacrament draws us all into one body, the church. Second, through our incorporation in this body, we, the church, are included in the offering that is being made. Hence, for Augustine, the soteriological aspect, which is the participation of the faithful in the sacrifice, is a direct outcome of their incorporation in the body of Christ through their partaking of the Eucharist. Thus, according to this passage our salvation is dependent on our abode in the body of Christ.

However in his Eucharistic theology, Augustine distinguishes between the reality of grace that is embodied, brought about and communicated by the visible sacrament and the palpable sacrament itself, which binds communicants to one another and to Christ the Head of the church. "for the sacrament is one thing, the efficacy of the sacrament another."⁵ This twofold scheme of distinguishing between the sacrament (*sacramentum*) and its invisible reality (*res*) is a salient feature in Augustine's sacramental theology that would be further developed by twelfth-century scholastics.⁶

The Twelfth Century Scholastics

The thing [res] of this sacrament is twofold: namely one contained and signified, the other signified and not contained. The thing contained and signified is the flesh of Christ, which he derived from the Virgin, and the blood, which he shed for us...But the thing signified and not contained is "the unity of the Church in

⁴ Augustine, *City of God* X, 6, trans. Gerald Walsh and Grace Monahan, vol. 14, *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1952), 126-7.

⁵ Augustine, *In Ioannis Evangelium 26. 10, in Tractates on the Gospel of John, 11-27, in Feingold, The Eucharist, 179.*

⁶ Boyd Taylor Coolman, "The Christo-Pneumatic- Ecclesial Character of Twelfth-Century Sacramental Theology," in eds. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering, *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 203.

those who are predestined, called, justified, and glorified.”(Lombard is quoting St. Augustine, *In Joannem* 26.15)

And so there are things to distinguish here: one, which is the sacrament alone [*sacramentum tantum*]; another, which is sacrament and thing [*res et sacramentum*]; a third, which is thing and not sacrament [*res et non sacramentum*]. The sacrament and not thing [*sacramentum et non res*] is the visible species of bread and wine; the sacrament and thing [*res et sacramentum*] is Christ’s own flesh and blood; the thing and not sacrament [*res et non sacramentum*] is his mystical flesh.⁷

The above passage by Peter Lombard typifies the Eucharistic theology of the twelfth-century scholastic era (including that of Hugh of St. Victor). It develops Augustine’s Eucharistic scheme of *res* and *sacramentum* into a concurrent tripartite system. “Three elements, as it were ... three stages of depth, all three of them essential to its integrity.”⁸ They distinguish between the appearance of bread and wine [*sacramentum tantum*] which is only a sign, the reality of the bodily presence of the Incarnate Word [*res et sacramentum*] for which the *sacramentum tantum* acts as a sign and the *res tantum*, which is “the effect or benefit associated with and derived from Christ’s presence, which was a reality only, not a sign of anything else.”⁹ Regarding this layer, there has been a plethora of terms and themes that has been associated with it such as the “unity of the Church,” the “unity of the head with its members,” the “power”, the “efficacy”, and the “invisible grace”.¹⁰

⁷ Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 8, ch. 7, nos. 1-2, 44-45, in Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 181.

⁸ Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1988), 96.

⁹ Joseph Goering, , “The Invention of Transubstantiation,” *Traditio* 46 (1991), 151; Damian van den Eynde, “The Theory of the Composition of the Sacraments in Early Scholasticism (1125–1240),” *Franciscan Studies* 12 (1952), Damian van den Eynde, *Les Définitions des sacrements pendant la première période de la théologie scolastique (1050–1235)* (Rome: Antonianum, 1950), 70; Gary Macy, *The Theologies of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period: A Study of the Salvific Function of the Sacrament according to the Theologians c. 1080–1220* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 51-53, in Coolman, “The Christo-Pneumatic- Ecclesial Character of Twelfth-Century Sacramental Theology,” 203-4.

¹⁰ Coolman, “The Christo-Pneumatic- Ecclesial Character of Twelfth-Century Sacramental Theology,” 205-6. For a detailed analysis of the three elements of the Eucharist please consult: Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 179-84 and 254-7; Coolman, “The Christo-Pneumatic- Ecclesial Character of Twelfth-Century Sacramental Theology,” 203-7; and Joseph Wawrykow, “The Greek Fathers in the Eucharistic Theology of Thomas Aquinas,” in eds. Michael Dauphinais, Andrew Hofer, and Roger Nutt, *Thomas Aquinas and the Greek Fathers* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2019), 282-3.

However, by the thirteenth century there was an informal agreement, rooted in Lombard's *Sentences* (d. 1160), concerning the seven sacraments of the church.¹¹

Nonetheless, the hierarchy of the sacraments was based on the level or intensity of their participation in the power of Christ's humanity.¹² Hence, the primacy of the Eucharist was held due to the real and authentic presence of Christ in the sacrament.

Thomas Aquinas

Not surprisingly, Aquinas promotes a seven sacrament framework and insists on the primacy of the Eucharist, mainly due to the real and substantial presence of Christ in it: "The Sacrament of the Eucharist is the greatest of all the sacraments...First of all because it contains Christ Himself substantially: whereas the other sacraments contain a certain instrumental power which is a share of Christ's power."¹³

Hence the centrality of the Eucharist to both Cyril's and Aquinas's sacramental frameworks cannot be overstated. In this section I will attend to the parallels between Cyril and Aquinas' sacramental theology while underscoring the extent of Cyril's impact in informing Aquinas' Eucharistic account.

Wawrykow notices that Aquinas quotes/paraphrases Cyril four times in the *Summa* in relation to the Eucharist.¹⁴ And these citations dramatically inform Aquinas' account in

¹¹ Coolman, "The Christo-Pneumatic- Ecclesial Character of Twelfth-Century Sacramental Theology," 202.

¹² Following Blankenhorn, Coolman writes: "The hierarchy of the sacraments is the result of the degree of their participation in the power of Christ's humanity. The other six sacraments also participate in something of the instrumental power of that humanity. The Eucharist is the model sacrament whose efficacy is found in the other six sacraments to a lesser degree, mainly because Christ's presence is not as intense. All the twelfth-century sacraments are thus sacraments *of Christ*, deriving their saving power in relation to his saving mysteries made present in his person in the Eucharist." Blankenhorn, Bernard, "The Instrumental Causality of the Sacraments: Thomas Aquinas and Louis-Marie Chauvet," *Nova et Vetera* 4 (2006): 273, cited in Coolman, "The Christo-Pneumatic- Ecclesial Character of Twelfth-Century Sacramental Theology," 206-7.

¹³ *ST* III, q. 65, a. 3. Please see also *ST* III, q.73, a. 1, ad 3: "The difference between the Eucharist and other sacraments having sensible matter, is that whereas as the Eucharist contains something which is sacred and absolutely, namely, Christ's own body; the baptismal water contains something which is sacred in relation to something else, namely, the sanctifying power." For a detailed study on why the Eucharist is considered as the summit of sacramental economy, please refer to Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 31-37.

¹⁴ *ST* III, q.75, a.1c; q.76, a.1, ad 1; q.76, a.6, ad 2; q.79, a.1c. Wawrykow, "The Greek Fathers in the Eucharistic Theology of Thomas Aquinas," 285.

relation to “the irreducible, distinctive Eucharistic presence of Christ [and] the saving effects transmitted to the communicant due this mysterious presence.”¹⁵

The effect of this sacrament ought to be considered, first of all and principally, from what is contained in this sacrament, which is Christ; Who, just as by coming into the world, He visibly bestowed the life of grace upon the world, according to John 1:17 “Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ,” so also, by coming sacramentally into man, causes the life of grace. According to John 6:58 (57) “so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.” Hence Cyril says on Luke 22:19 “God’s living Word by uniting Himself with his own flesh, made it to be productive of life. For it was becoming that He should be united somehow with bodies through his sacred flesh and precious blood, which we receive in a life-giving blessing in the bread and wine.”¹⁶

This passage, in which Cyril is quoted, reveals the main attributes of Aquinas’ Eucharistic theology. In summary, these traits are: the insistence on the real presence of Christ in the sacrament; the perception of the sacrament in terms of (Aristotelian) instrumental causality; the salvific and ecclesial implications of partaking of the sacrament.

Concerning the first trait Cyril writes: “But he said quite plainly This is my body, and This is my blood, so that you may not suppose that the things you see are a type; rather, in some ineffable way they are changed (μεταποιέσθαι) by God, into the body and blood of Christ truly offered.”¹⁷ Likewise, Aquinas writes: “So after the consecration the whole body of Christ is under each part of the divided bread”¹⁸ But what does Aquinas mean by the presence of the body of Christ? He answers:

Since the Godhead never laid aside the body which was taken up into the hypostatic union, wherever the body of Christ may be, you must have the godhead with it. We read in the creed of the council of Ephesus [referring to Cyril’s *Third letter to Nestorius*, though not explicitly stated], *we partake of the body and the blood of Christ; it is not ordinary flesh or even the flesh of someone who is very holy and joined to the Word, sharing his dignity; but it is actually life-giving, it is the very flesh of the Word himself.*¹⁹

¹⁵ Wawrykow, “The Greek Fathers in the Eucharistic Theology of Thomas Aquinas,” 285-6.

¹⁶ *ST III*, q.79, a.1c.

¹⁷ Cyril, *On Matthew 26:27* (PG 72, 452) Welch, *Christology and Eucharist*, 125.

¹⁸ Aquinas, commentary on 1Corinthians 11, lec. 5, Maritetti no. 644, in Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 280. Please see also *ST III*, q.76, a.1, ad 3. “Hence it is clear that *the body of Christ is in this sacrament* “by way of substance and not by way of quantity.”

¹⁹ *ST III*, q.76, a.1, ad 1.

It has been previously shown that Aquinas understands the hypostatic union in a Cyrillian manner. Here, echoing and citing Cyril, Aquinas roots the efficacy of the body of Christ in the hypostatic union and the Eucharistic sacrament in the mystery of incarnation, which shows how far Cyril's theology has informed Aquinas' Eucharistic theology.

Second, Feingold expounds that instruments are efficient causes that produce effects higher than themselves "by executing a design that does not originate in itself but in a higher cause, referred to as the principal cause, which moves the instrument directly or indirectly."²⁰

Hence, sacraments are perceived, by Aquinas, as instrumental causes of grace:

A sacrament works to produce grace as does an instrument... But there are two kinds of instruments: one separate, like a staff; the other joined, like a hand. It is through the intermediary of the joined instrument that the separate instrument is set in motion, such as the staff by the hand. Now, the main *efficient cause of grace is God* himself, for whom Christ's humanity is a joined instrument and the sacrament a separate instrument. That is why it is necessary that the salvific efficacy (*uirtus*) of Christ's divinity pass through his humanity in the sacraments It is clear then that the Church's sacraments receive their specific efficacy from Christ's Passion and that receiving the sacraments puts us in communication with the *salutary power of Christ's Passion*. The water and blood flowing from the side of Christ hanging on the cross symbolize this truth; water speaks of baptism and blood of the Eucharist, for they are the most important sacraments.²¹

This passage showcases Aquinas' sacramental vision. First, for him baptism and the Eucharist are the two most important sacraments. Second, it's clear that he heavily depends on Aristotle's approach of causality. Third, his appeal to Aristotle's philosophy enables him to consider God as the efficient cause of grace, where he separates between Christ's humanity and the sacrament in terms of joined and separate instruments of grace respectively. This hierarchal structure for the sacraments echoes the three-level scheme posited by Aquinas' scholastic predecessors.

I do not believe that Cyril would have liked to see these distinctions since, for him, the body that we taste during the Eucharistic meal is the selfsame body that Christ took of Mary. Christ said: "This is my body. He did not say that what you see is a figure, but rather that the

²⁰ Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 185.

²¹ *ST IIIa* q. 62 a. 5.

elements are truly transformed into the flesh and blood of Christ so that by partaking we receive the life-giving and sanctifying *power* of Christ.”²²

Third, concerning the salvific and ecclesial ramifications of the Eucharist, the *res tantum*, points to the grace of salvation, Thomas suggests that, “the whole mystery of our *salvation* is comprised in this sacrament.”²³ “But Aquinas can also refer here to the church, to the mystical body of Christ, the body that has Christ as its head. In that body, many are brought together as one; to invoke the *sacramentum tantum* again, here as pointing as well to the *res tantum*, that body is like one bread, made out of many grains.”²⁴ It is clear that due to his overemphasizing of the notion of causality for the individuals’ salvation in his sacramental theology, and unlike Cyril who accentuates the notion of the Christian’s participation in the life and nature of Christ, Aquinas is presenting salvation and church unity as two separate byproducts of the Eucharist and he does not depict the relation between communication of salvation and the individual participation in the body of Christ, i.e., the church.

Now I am going to turn directly to Congar, and explore his work by chronologically addressing his sacramental theology in four of his books.

Yves Congar

Chrétiens Désunis

In his early monograph *Chrétiens désunis*,²⁵ Congar postulates a sacramental theology that is loaded with ecclesial and redemptive implications. However, by virtue of his Dominican formation, Congar roots, to a great extent, his sacramental theology in that of Aquinas.

Depicting the two aspects, visible and invisible, of a sacrament, Congar writes:

²² *On Matthew 26:26*, PG 72, 452, quoted in Chadwick, “Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy,” 153.

²³ *ST III*, q.83, a.4c.

²⁴ Cf. *ST III*, q.74, a.1c, in Joseph Wawrykow, “The Sacraments in Thirteenth-Century Theology,” in eds. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering, *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 227.

²⁵ Translation from French to English is undertaken by the author of this study.

On the one side, they [sacraments] are the practical and sensible acts, where the ecclesial assembly enters in collaboration to express its faith and give worship to God; on the other side, they are the acts of Christ, through which a part “quelque chose” of the fullness of grace and redemption is communicated to us...

But since Christ had not yet come, they [sacraments of the Old Testament] do not grant his grace; whereas Christian sacraments are not just signs of the religion of the New Israel, that is an act of a member and an effort of man in order to move towards God, but also signs and avenues/conduits for the gift of the life of the Father that is realized in Christ dead and resurrected for us.²⁶

This highlights the rootedness of Congar’s sacramental theology in that of Aquinas, where the sacramental theology is ingrained in Christology; the humanity of Christ has received the fullness of grace, and through the sacrament, the communicant receives “quelque chose” of this fullness. Thomas’ influence on Congar can also be seen their common perception of the sacraments as signs that point to a spiritual reality.

Aussi, nous entrerons en part de la redemption du Christ en vue de son Royaume, par la foi et par les sacrements de la foi: une foi qui s’attache à l’Ecriture et à la predication apostolique, c’est-a-dire a un ensemble de symboles et de signes sensibles (Cf. S. Thomas, *II Sent.*, d. 13, q. 1, a. II, ad 3) des sacrements qui sont précisément des signes sensibles des gestes symboliques et collectifs (Cf. S. Thomas, *Sum. theol.*, *IIIa*, q. 80, a. II, ad 2). bref, un ordre de signes, de symboles et d’*instruments* adapté à notre nature sensible et à notre condition d’êtres en marche vers la substance des *réalités célestes* (S. Thomas, *Sum. theol.*, *IIIa*, q. 60, a. V. ad 1; comp. q. 80, a. II, ad 2 et *II Sent.*, d. 9, q. 1, sol. 3, et Hugues de S. Victor, *Miscellanea*, lib. I, c. 102; *P. L.*, 177, 533).²⁷

To underscore his influence on Congar, Aquinas is cited three times in this passage, where again sacraments are portrayed as signs pointing to a reality. And here this reality signifies the redemption fulfilled in Christ, where the Incarnate Word acts as the agent of salvation and the sacraments as instruments, adapted to our human needs, or as instrumental causes, due to their invisible connection with Christ, (en vertu d’une efficacité spéciale attachée par le Seigneur) “for our joining in the unique and historic act of salvation constituted by Christ’s death and resurrection for us.”²⁸

²⁶ Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*, 104.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 83-4.

²⁸ Yves Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*, 75.

However, Congar recognizes that the realities communicated by the sacraments are also related to the formation of the mystical body of Christ:

Now –this is extremely important- this incorporation into Christ is neither inaugurated nor consummated except by a contact with Christ, which is specifically of a sacramental order. What do we mean by a sacramental order? An order of realities, sensible gestures, and societal in their nature... They [sacraments] are nothing other than the means through which the unity is realized, or rather, the uniqueness of the mediation of Christ...²⁹

Furthermore, “the church is like a big *sacrament*, where all is sensibly projected and procures an *internal unity of grace*.”³⁰ Here, given the objective of writing this treatise which can be deducted from its title, the reality that is being addressed is related to the internal unity of the church. However, Congar is able to link the ecclesial unity to the salvation, and this connection has not been made as explicit in Thomas’ account. “nous sommes vivifiés et devenons un seul corps *dans le Christ*. De toute manière, le sacrement *signifie et fait* que notre vie divine de foi et de charité est mystiquement *la vie du Christ* mort et ressuscité, et que son mystère, vraiment, est vécu par l’Église qui est son corps”³¹

Congar’s adoption of a participatory account of salvation may be due to, first, his exposure to Augustine’s sacramental theology. Second, Congar’s own early inclination to unearth and promote the communal aspect of the church. However, this shift from talking in terms of causality to talking in terms of participation marks the beginning of Congar’s gradual movement away from a purely Thomist approach.

Finally, regarding the sacraments that mostly initiate our unification with Christ, Congar writes:

Baptism incorporates us into Christ and the heavenly City...and admits us into the church as a society, the new Israel...In the same way, the Eucharist which is the center of the exterior and collective cult, the selfsame object of the religious gathering of Christians and the celebration takes place through maximum sensible means,..., is also the most profound sacrament regarding our incorporation into Christ. The theological reality procured by the Eucharist is *the interior unity* of

²⁹ Yves Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*, 75-76.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 108.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

the mystical body. (Cf. 1Corinthians 10:17) (which is equivalent to the *res* aspect for St Augustine and all the Latin theology). Hence, it's not without a valid reason that the Eucharist and the church are both considered to be the reality, and both carry the name 'body of Christ.'³²

The above passages show, first, the extent to which Aquinas' theology informs that of Congar, where the French theologian appeals to the Aristotelian philosophy of causality and Aquinas' sacramental theology of means of grace, and where God acts as the efficient cause. Second, also echoing Thomas, the passages show the relationship between the incarnation, and the sacrament, where grace flows from the head to the rest of the body. However, Congar insists that there is no repetition of the Eucharistic sacrifice.³³ Third, the passages show Congar's strict adherence to a classical definition of a sacrament which includes a visible and sensible part such as substance, gesture, community and an invisible and transcendent side such as grace, redemption, celestial endowments and our internal unity '*res*'. Fourth, given the objective of this treatise which addresses the issue of Christian dis-unity, using the term 'body of Christ' to allude to the Eucharist and the Church, enables Congar to establish the connection between the two - the sacrament is the means of enacting this unity. Fifth, the last passage reveals the relationship between baptism and the Eucharist, where the emphasis is put more on our incorporation into Christ in the former, while he accentuates the deepening of our communion with Christ and with one another in the latter. Finally, Congar's conviction that Christ death and resurrection becomes our own, by virtue of our being the members of his body, shows his ability to connect the salvific and unifying realities in the sacrament and signals the beginning of what will be his diminishing reliance on Aquinas' scheme of causality. However, this notion is much more developed in his later works.

³² Ibid., 103-104.

³³ "Et de même l'eucharistie, que les chrétiens latins appellent aujourd'hui messe, ne recommence pas le sacrifice du Christ et n'est pas, en toute rigueur, à l'égard de la Croix, un geste nouveau; mais elle représente et rend présent le Christ offert, en telle manière que, répété sans cesser d'être unique, le sacrifice du Christ soit, partout où il y a des chrétiens, le sacrifice même de ces chrétiens et de l'Église et l'accomplissement par ces chrétiens de ce qu'accomplit une fois, pour eux, le Christ." Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*, 76

The Mystery of the Church³⁴

Given that *Esquisses du mystère de l'Église* (1941) and *Chrétiens désunis* (1937) were written in a span of four years and during a period where Congar was still considered to be a Thomist, one can find huge resemblance, and in some cases similar wording, in the sacramental theology posited in the two treatises. However, since Congar's ecclesiology can be characterized by a gradual transformation from a structurally rigid Christological one to an ecclesiology of communion which was made manifest starting the 1950's –as demonstrated in the second chapter of this thesis- one can also see a sacramental theology of participation brewing in *Esquisses du mystère de l'Église* far more than in *Chrétiens désunis*.

Regarding the definition and role of sacraments, Congar writes:

But there is much more than that [a highly moral kind of human life belonging to Christ [externally] and drawing its inspiration from him]. Clement of Alexandria's Christ-teacher would not be the Christ of the Mystical Body if *St Cyril* had not gone to affirm an interior, vivifying, sanctifying Christ, *imparting his own life to the whole of humanity*. The Mystical Body is, . . . , *Christ continuing his life in humanity* . . . The life of the Mystical Body is not just a life of religion which could be his own; it is actually his own.

This is the meaning and function of the Christian sacraments. Human in their outward form, repeatable at will, of sensible and collective significance, they put us in touch, by a *special efficacy* attached by Christ to their *symbolism*, to the unique and historical fact of the redemption; they make us *sharers* of the Redemption and salvation established in Christ dead and risen for us.

All Christians are *brought into relation with Christ himself*, the very same Christ who, at a particular time, suffered under Pontius Pilate and rose from the dead.³⁵

The passage reveals, first, Congar's familiarity with and endorsement of Cyril's ecclesiology and sacramentalism. Accordingly, the French theologian's sacramental theology is rooted in his Christology; the sacraments impart Christ's own life to humanity.

Homo, Christus Jesus. Mediation of the man-Christ, for men; all in this is homogeneous with man, co-natural with him; that is to say it is both sensible and spiritual, personal and collective, interior and exterior. The sacraments like the

³⁴ *The Mystery of the Church*, which is a translated collection of *Esquisses du mystère de l'Église* (1941) and *La Pentecôte: Chartres*, 1956.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 129-130.

Church as a whole, are a *prolongation of the incarnation of the Word* and follow out, in their scheme and manner, the logic of its theandric character.³⁶

Second, the passage shows the relation between sacraments and the mystical body, i.e., the church, where by means of the former, “all Christians are *brought into relation with Christ himself*,

Third, the same passage demonstrates how influential Aquinas’s sacramental theology is on Congar’s when he presents the sacraments as sensible signs, with special efficacy and pointing to a greater reality:

The constitution of the mystical Body at the deepest level of its being is the ground of its sacramental action³⁷ and of its *causality*. ...through a special *efficaciousness* attached by the *Christ* to their symbolism, link us to the unique event of redemption and salvation wrought by Christ in his death and resurrection. The sacraments are not, *strictly speaking new acts*, but they are, in the spiritual mode of being the actual presence of his substance (in the Eucharist) [which does not begin anew Christ’s sacrifice], or of his sanctifying power (in baptism).

Christians are placed in contact with Christ himself, their Redeemer... the sacraments are the precisely the *means* by which is realized the oneness, nay the uniqueness, of the mediation of Christ.

Through baptism we participate in “his passion and resurrection,” and through the Eucharist, we “are vivified and are *made a single body in Christ*.”³⁸

Hence, the sacraments are essential for the establishment of the church:

We can see why it is that the early theologians, when they set about defining the Church, proposed, in addition to the rather more sociological one of ‘*congregatio hominum fidelium*’, this other, “*Ecclesia, id est fides et fidei sacramenta*.” What makes the Church is our faith and the sacraments in which it takes visible form. The Church is, of its essence, sacramental.³⁹

However, the two most important sacraments, for the formation of the church, are baptism and the Eucharist: “Baptism incorporates us in Christ, [hence] we become living beings animated by his life. The Eucharist takes us deeper still in to the mystery of incorporation

³⁶ Ibid., 130.

³⁷ Actions has to do with the gesture and sensible expressions.

³⁸ Ibid., 76-77

³⁹ Ibid., 78.

with Christ. It is the sacrament of the unity of the mystical Body, with it is its special grace to bring into being.”⁴⁰

This passage shows not only the congruence of Congar’s sacramental approach in the two treatises, but even the repetition of the same key phrases. Here, Congar states: “the sacraments are the precisely the *means* by which is realized the oneness, nay the uniqueness, of the mediation of Christ,” while in *Chrétien désunis*, he writes: “Ils ne sont autre chose que le *moyen* par quoi se réalise l’unité, plus encore, l’unicité de la médiation du Christ...”⁴¹ Also in *The Mystery of the church*, he states: “They put us in touch, by a *special efficacy* attached by Christ to their symbolism, to the unique and historical fact of the redemption; they make us *sharers* of the Redemption and salvation established in Christ dead and risen for us.”⁴² At the same time in *Chrétien désunis*, he writes: “en vertu d’une efficacité spéciale attachée par le Seigneur ... nous entrerons en part de la redemption du Christ en vue de son Royaume, par la foi et par les sacrements de la foi.”⁴³ This shows the continuity of Congar’s Thomist theology across both treatises, where he perceives the sacraments as means for a special grace fulfilled in Christ, and as perceptible signs alluding to a divine reality which has the Incarnate Word as its principle. But what does he designate by the reality embedded in the sacraments?

The Eucharist is the sacrament of the redemptive mystery of the cross which it symbolizes, celebrates and makes present. It is in addition (Elle est aussi), the sacrament of the unity of the Mystical Body, which is its special grace to bring into being.⁴⁴

It is clear that reality connotes the mystery of redemption and the internal unity of the mystical body. I have shown that Aquinas does not link these two realities procured by the Eucharist particularly clearly. However given his disposition towards a “communion”

⁴⁰ Ibid., 131-132.

⁴¹ Yves Congar, *Chrétien désunis*, 75-77.

⁴² Congar, *The Mystery of the Church*, 129-130.

⁴³ Yves Congar, *Chrétien désunis*, 75-77 and 84.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 132.

ecclesiology , and in his attempt to join these realities together, Congar begins by arguing that

John 6:57 , “*is to be read in conjunction with (A rapprocher de)*”⁴⁵ John 17: 20-21 and

1Corinthians 10:17. Then showing the relation between these realities, he writes:

The union with Christ which results, an infinitely mysterious one, is the like union that takes place in a living thing; it is both an *incorporation* and an *intensification* of life. For, as we have seen, Our Lord compares in the most explicit fashion the union he wishes to establish between us and himself, especially through the Eucharist, to the unity existing between him and his Father, and that is a unity of perfect life, a *substantial unity of life*. The Eucharist is, then, the perfect sacrament of our incorporation with Christ. Theologians are unanimous in holding that its special effect is to bring about the unity of the mystical Body. By a special increase of grace and of living faith , it incorporates us with Christ precisely inasmuch as it takes us all into the supreme act of love by which he offered himself for us on the cross, “but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.” (John 11:52)⁴⁶

In line with his trajectory towards an ecclesiology of communion, Congar, here, sets out a new approach in his sacramental theology. By comparing our union with Christ to his union with the Father and calling it a *substantial unity of life*, Congar is able to establish a clear connection between our participation in Christ and our salvation and between his ecclesiology and his soteriology. This linkage not stressed, although it is mentioned, in *Chrétiens désunis*, but in *Lay People in the Church* we will see this theme becomes prominent.

Lay People in the Church

He is the fullness from which we draw all our spiritual existence...As regards the Pasch, we receive everything from the unique fact of Jesus Christ in his historical incarnation, *his acta et passa pro nobis*, as a well-spring of holiness outside ourselves at a certain moment in history. The Church is the aggregate of the means whereby these waters reach us (before she is the community of men in whom is the truth and grace of Jesus),...As regards to the Parousia, we, on the basis of what we have received, have to bring to God through Christ the modest riches of creation and of our free co-operation, or, if you will...

That the Church, the same Church, is both communion with God in Christ and the means for attaining this fellowship. That in her which is communion already

⁴⁵ Ibid, 132.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 133.

realized will endure forever in Heaven, and so we can say that in one same Body of Christ, one same Church of God, in two different states, here if pilgrimage and warfare, there of happiness and glory. That in her which is means to communion belongs to her earthly condition, and will pass away when Christ delivers up the Kingdom to his Father that *God may be all in all...* Patristic ecclesiology which is followed fundamentally by St Augustine and Western scholasticism, conceives the Church essentially as a fellowship in heavenly things, in Christ *through the sacraments*, preaching, acts of the visible ministry...⁴⁷

This passage nicely reveals the fundamental shape of Congar's sacramental theology in *Lay People in the Church*; we receive from Christ-as well spring- not only spiritual endowments but more importantly our spiritual existence. However, given the time period in which he was writing this book – during his increasing focus on the ecclesiology of communion stage, Congar stresses the communal aspect of the Church, as it helps him portray the laity as active constituents of and participants in the edification of the body of Christ. He also appeals to Augustine's understanding of the church as a fellowship rooted in Christ and the role of the sacraments in effecting this fellowship. Then in explaining the relationship between our communion in Christ and the sacraments, he writes:

So from the start he has joined the oneness of the communion we must have with him to the *means* of realizing it: the *mediation* of the man Jesus Christ (1Timothy 2:5). Thus in communicating his life to us, God acts not according to *his* mode, but according to *ours*. Whatever is given of the final reality of divine life is through the *sacramentum humanitatis (Christi)*: there will be nothing in the Omega that has not *come from* Alpha, that is, from what Christ has been and has done and has suffered for us in his incarnation.⁴⁸

Here, Congar perceives the need for incarnation in terms of mediation, where God's life is communicated to us through a human mode, and the fountain for this communication is the Lord Jesus Christ and his salvific actions. This leads to the discussion of the composition and role of sacraments.

In light of the above, Congar perceives the church including its sacraments, in terms medieval theologians would have recognised, in terms of *res* and *sacramentum*:

The *sacramentum* is the sacramental rite, the outward rite, the visible institution; the *res* is the spiritual fruit that the sacrament hiddenly procures. Thus the Church

⁴⁷ Yves Congar *Lay People in the Church*, 102-103.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 105-106.

as Body of Christ is the reality in which he takes form in order to live and to act there; as institution, the Church is the visible form of his action, and as fellowship, of his life.⁴⁹

Here, Congar's sacramental theology is seen in its fullness. The church is in progress, being edified through the sacraments. The sacraments are, on the one hand, composed of hidden grace (*res*) that renders the sacrament effective and, on the other hand, of a visible element (*sacramentum*) that renders the sacrament communicable to the participant. Subsequently, according, according to Congar, the church itself, as the body of Christ, becomes a sacrament as it is composed of *res* and *sacramentum*, its visible and materialistic aspect leading to its invisible and spiritual one. But where do the faithful fall in this grand sacramental scheme?

These sacraments belong to the 'space-between' in which the Church's mission is carried out. On the one hand, theirs it is very specially to link up the operation of grace with their historical source, the life and death of the Word made flesh. On the other, they partake of both terms, the beginning and the end. (1) they share Christ's conditions of being both a visible human thing and a spiritual object of faith; they follow on from his incarnation; they represent and *apply his redeeming mysteries in the life of man under conditions of earthly* time. Therefore, these sacraments, and the liturgy with them, conform to a law of both sameness and beginning anew, for they organically unite a spiritual reality which corresponds to Christ's hapax with a sensible celebration that recurs in space and time. (2) Springing from the single root of Christ, the sacraments enable us to partake of his fruits here and now. As sacraments they effect the reality that they signify, they represent a process that involves its own end...Because the space between those two times, which both separates and joins the root and its fruits, carries with it an economy of sacraments, the Church participates in Christ in two ways: Firstly, Christ is the reality of the Church's life in the measure that she is fellowship-body, that is to say, in the measure that Christians form with him one single being in a life of sonship, *πρὸς τὸν πατέρα*. It will be so in eternity, and it is so now, but not fully and not unless something else goes with it. Secondly, Christ is no less the means and the way whereby the Church realizes this communion in the life of sonship. Principle of everything, Christ is *shared* in as end and as means."⁵⁰

This passage, first, depicts the soteriological aspects of the sacraments, where they link the communicant to Christ's soteriological actions. Second, it delineates the connection between the nature of the sacrament and the Incarnate Word, both constituted by a visible human element and an invisible divine one. Third, it portrays Christ as the principle, means and end

⁴⁹ Ibid., 104.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 156-157.

of the sacraments. Fourth, it shows a shift in Congar's language from one mainly focused on causality to a one that is more focused on participation. This approach enables him to link the formation of a single body or being in Christ and the spiritual endowment of sonship that is brought about through this union. Moreover, it allows him to argue that the faithful participate in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

In this regard, Congar starts his argument by contending that in the early church and the Fathers, the faithful would be spiritually united to the sacrifice, while in the high middle ages

especially before the development of analytical theology and 'scientific' form had diminished interest in the symbolic expression of spiritual things, there is no end to the texts that the Eucharist set forth as the sacrifice of the mystical Body, that is offered by the whole Church, and that includes the sacrifice of the faithful as well as of Christ.⁵¹

Nonetheless, this sense faded away in scholasticism. However, by appealing to the liturgy Congar argues: "The Mass is not only Christ's sacrifice as offered by Christ himself...It's also the Church's sacrifice...in as much as the Church offers her own sacrifice in and through Christ's."⁵² Then he states: "Under one single sacrifice of Christ and his body, the Head and his members. That which on Calvary was enacted fully and openly in respect of the Head, is now enacted day by day, by the members joining their own to that of their Head."⁵³ Here, echoing Augustine,⁵⁴ Congar establishes a clear connection between our participation in Christ's body and the soteriological implications that are brought about through this solidarity. This linkage is not made as clear in Aquinas' sacramental theology but would resonate with Cyril's who also perceives salvation in terms of participation in Christ and his sacrifice. "For in our sacrifices, we to a certain extent immolate and offer our soul, as an image, to God, we die to the world and to the wisdom of the flesh, when we mortify our vices

⁵¹ Ibid., 204.

⁵² Ibid., 206.

⁵³ Ibid., 210.

⁵⁴ Augustine *City of God* X, 6.

and are, so to speak, crucified with Christ; thus living a pure and holy life, we spend our days in submission to His holy will.”⁵⁵

I Believe in the Holy Spirit

At the summit of his ecclesiology of communion phase, in *I believe in the Holy Spirit*,

Congar writes:

In his very illuminating study of the Eucharist, Henri de Lubac denounced the disadvantages of movement from ‘symbolism to dialectics’.⁵⁶ One of these disadvantages was the distinction that led to what de Lubac called a break in the earlier unity between *res contenta* or ‘real presence’ and the *res non contenta*, the unity of the mystical body. For Augustine on the other hand, the bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ on the altar, ‘represented and contained, in a real and physical way, his mystical Body, since the head without the body was not the head.’⁵⁷ In scholastic theology, a bond was preserved between Christ present or ‘contained’ in the sacrament and his mystical ‘Body’, but this bond was to a reality that was *extrinsic* to what is found on the altar and what we eat.⁵⁸

Aquinas’s failure to focus on salvation as union with Christ, as shown above, may be rooted in this decoupling/separation between the presence of Christ in the sacrament and the mystical body. Commenting on Peter Lombard and Aquinas’ sacramental theology, in the chapter entitled ‘*The Holy Spirit in our communion with Body and Blood of Christ*’, Congar writes:

By *res*, he [Lombard] did not mean, as Augustine had meant Christ himself, but also an aspect of the sacrament. The first of these two *res* is the reality that is at once aimed and contained. This is personal body of Jesus Christ. The second is the reality aimed at but not contained. This is the unity of the Church in its saints.⁵⁹

Thomas Aquinas continued in the line followed by Peter Lombard and took it in terms of the structure of the sacrament. He distinguished between a *manducatio spiritualis*, in which the *res tantum* was acquired, that is the spiritual reality to which the sacrament finally pointed, and a *manducatio sacramentalis*, which

⁵⁵ Cyril, *De Adoratione in Spiritu et Veritate*, 11 (PG 68, 769), English translation in Maurice De la Taille, S.J. *The Mystery of Faith Vol.1, The Sacrifice of our Lord* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1940), 1:8-9, cited in Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 326.

⁵⁶ Henri de Lubac, *Corpus mysticum* (Paris, 1944; 2nd ed. 1949), Chapter X and the end of Part II.

⁵⁷ O. Perler, *Le pèlerin de la Cité de Dieu* (Paris, 1957), 135.

⁵⁸ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 3, 263.

⁵⁹ Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 8, in Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 3, 260.

reached the *res et sacramentum*, what we term the real presence.(IV Sent. D. 9, a. un. q 3; *Comm. in ev. Ioan.* c. 6, lect. 7; *ST IIIa*, q. 80, a. 1.)⁶⁰

So, the treatment of the mystical body as a separate *res* from the reality of the presence of Christ in the sacrament is not what Augustine propagated. At the time of writing this monograph, Congar was at the pinnacle of his communal ecclesiology phase and perceived salvation in terms of participation: “In reality, however-and the biblical Greek term *Koinonia*, translated by the Latin *communio*, requires us to see the matter in this light-it means the *participation* in the good things of the community of salvation together with the other members of that community.”⁶¹ It is, consequently, easy to see why he prefers Augustine and the Greek Fathers’ approach to the scholastic one.

The Greek Fathers preserved the principle that God’s work done *ad extra* were common to all three Persons, but at the same time spoke *more positively* about the connection between our created sonship and the uncreated sonship of Christ. They were able to do this because their teaching was situated within a logical framework of *participation* and exemplarity and of formal and not efficient causality.(Cf. Athanasius on our participation in the Son, *C Ar I*, 16 and 56 (PG 26, 45 and 129)).⁶²

Accordingly Congar can write in relation to the Eucharistic sacrament:

The Eucharist is the synthesis, communicated sacramentally and spiritually, of what God has done for us in and through Jesus Christ.⁶³

What we have here is a movement that extends the mystery of Christ who has died and risen again to the believers- it envisages the *people communion* as part of the consecration of the gifts...what the Eucharist has in mind is our deification through our *union with the Spirit filled flesh of Christ*. For his part, Christ blessed, sanctified and filled with his Spirit the bread and the wine at the Last Supper.⁶⁴

Thus, the principle of participation enables Congar not only to present the Eucharist as a salvific tool but also to link our salvation to our communion with the body of Christ. Finally, in line with Cyril, Congar understands there to be an intimate connection between the mystery of incarnation with the Eucharist and the mystical body of Christ.

⁶⁰ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 3, 260. Cf. That man eats and drinks sacramentally who receives the sacrament, and spiritually is he goes as far as the *res* of the sacrament, which is twofold: the one is contained and signified; that is Christ who is complete, contained in the species of bread and wine; the other is signified and not contained; that is the mystical Body... Congar, *I believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 3, 261.

⁶¹ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 59.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 92.

⁶³ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 3, 229.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 230-1.

What the Spirit has brought about in Christ in order to make him the Head of the Body, he has also to bring about in us to make us his members and to complete and sanctify the Body. The same Spirit is at work in the three realities that bear the name of the body of Christ and are *dynamically linked* to each other through the dynamism of the Spirit: Jesus, who was born of Mary and who suffered, died and was raised from the dead and glorified → the bread and wine that are ‘eucharisted’ → the communion or Body of which we are the members. There is only one economy of grace in which the same Spirit sanctifies the body of Christ in its three states that are differentiated *but at the same time dynamically work together*.⁶⁵

Conclusion

In conclusion, when analyzing the sacramental theology of the two theologians considered through this chapter and the previous, one needs to take into account the conditions and the objectives of their writings. Cyril was defending the hypostatic union and the oneness of Christ against Nestorius. Accordingly, his portrayal of the flesh of Christ as a vivifying and salvific instrument as a result of the union was paramount in his theology. And though he spoke of baptism, the Eucharist captured most of his attention when he considered the sacraments. Hence, he attributes our participation in Christ to the Eucharist and the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, Congar presents baptism and the Eucharist as the two main sacraments of the church. The variation in language and emphasis here may be due to the already established hierarchical system of the seven sacraments as well as to the significance of the baptismal sacrament in the West following Augustine’s controversy with Donatism.

All that said, Congar’s sacramental theology demonstrates many parallels with that of the Alexandrian theologian. Both Cyril and Congar believe that sacraments are composed of an invisible and a visible element and that they implicate ecclesial and soteriological consequences. They both agree that the Eucharist is the sacrament of the church and trace it back to the mystery of incarnation, which, in Cyril, enables an ecclesiology focused on participation. As for Congar, he begins by perceiving Incarnation and Eucharist through the

⁶⁵ Ibid., 264.

Aristotle and Aquinas but later comes to focus on communicants' participation in the sacrament, which enables him to develop a new participatory link between soteriology and ecclesiology.

CHAPTER VII: Conclusion and Recommendations

Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωὴ· οὐδεὶς ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸν πατέρα εἰ μὴ δι' ἐμοῦ.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

(John 14:6)

Introduction

In this thesis, I have explored how far Cyril and Congar posit compatible theologies that would help advance the dialogue between the Roman Catholic and Coptic Orthodox Churches. My focus throughout has been the Christological and Pneumatological ecclesiology and sacramental theology of the two theologians.

However, before outlining my conclusions, it is worth noting that in *Lumen Gentium* (Second Vatican Council 1964a, (LG)) the church is perceived as being “born in the world with the incarnation of Christ who, in the power of the Holy Spirit, came to fulfill the Father’s desire to draw all people to himself. The church is thus *Trinitarian* (LG, 2–4).” And consequently the church is able to unite the human race to God (LG, 1) “in and through the sacraments, above all the Eucharist, which LG famously called ‘the fount and apex of the whole Christian life’ (LG, 11).”¹

It is quite remarkable how far this framework is rooted in Cyril’s theology of the church and simultaneously reflected in Congar’s (early) ecclesiology. In this concluding chapter, I am going to summarise the fundamental similarities that I have found between my two authors. These similarities lie, most importantly, in their positing of a substantial

¹ Adam DeVille, “Church,” in eds. Paul McPartlan and Geoffrey Wainwright, *The Oxford Handbook of Ecumenical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 225-6.

interconnection between Christ, the Eucharist and the church, which results in the incorporation of the faithful into the body of Christ. In the second part of the chapter, I will trace historical developments in the relationship between the two churches and explore prospects for future dialogue between the two traditions.

The Church

Cyril posits an ecclesiology of communion that is rooted in the mysteries of the Trinity and of incarnation. Allow me to quote, at length, a passage I have used before, but which is of the utmost importance in relation to Cyril's ecclesiology of communion. Commenting on John 17:20-21, Cyril writes:

He asks, then, for the bond of love and agreement and peace to bring the believers together in spiritual unity, a unity of agreement in all things and of inseparable harmony of their souls, *so that they may imitate the imprint of the natural and essential unity that we see in the Father and the Son*. But the bond of love in us and the power of concord will not completely prevail to the point of being unchangeable, as the Father and the Son are, since they preserve their unity by the identity of their essence. Their union is natural and true and may be seen in the definition of their being, but our unity imitates the form of their true unity. After all, how could the antitype be completely equal to the archetype? The semblance of truth is not conceptually the same as the truth itself. It looks the same, but it is distinct even though the distinction is not occasioned by actual differences.

When Christ cites the essential unity that the Father has with him and he has with the Father as an image and type of the inseparable friendship and concord and unity of kindred souls, he wants us to be blended with one another, so to speak, *by the power of the holy and consubstantial Trinity* so that the entire body of the church may be one, ascending *in Christ* by the joining and concurrence of two peoples into one perfect whole. As Paul says, "For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it." (Ephesians 2: 14-16) Indeed, this is what he accomplished, since the believers in Christ were of one soul with one another and received one heart, as it were, by their complete likeness in godliness and by their obedience of faith and their virtuous mind.

In the foregoing we said (not unintelligently) that the unity of concord and agreement among believers should imitate the manner of the divine union and the essential identity and complete interweaving of the holy Trinity. *But here we want to point out a natural unity by which we are all connected with one another and with God*. Perhaps we do not even fall short of a corporeal unity (I mean with one another) even though we are separated by different bodies, with each one of

us withdrawing, as it were, into our own circumscribed hypostasis. After all, Peter is not Paul, for example, and neither could he be spoken of as such, nor is Paul Peter, even though both may be understood to be one by the union they have on account of Christ. Therefore, since the natural unity between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is acknowledged (since we believe in and glorify one divine nature in the holy Trinity), come, *let us consider how we too are found to be one with one another and with God both corporeally and spiritually.* The Only Begotten shone forth for us from the very essence of God the Father and had his Father completely in his own nature. He then “became flesh,” according to the Scriptures, (John 1:14) and mixed himself, as it were, with our nature through the unimaginable coming together and union with this body from the earth. Thus he who is God by nature is called and truly becomes the heavenly man. He is not a God-bearer, as some think, who have no detailed understanding of the depth of the mystery. He is God and a human being in the same person so that by uniting in himself, as it were, things that are very different by nature and essentially distinct from each other he may make *humanity share and participate in the divine nature.* The communion and abiding presence of the Holy Spirit extended to us, beginning *through Christ and in Christ* first, when he became human like us and was anointed and sanctified—even though he is by nature God, in that he arose from the Father—and sanctified his own temple by the Holy Spirit along with all creation, which came to be through him and to which sanctification applies. *The mystery of Christ, then, has become a beginning and a way for us to attain participation in the Holy Spirit and union with God. We are all sanctified in him in the way that has already been explained.*²

This passage reveals that Cyril’s whole ecclesiology is about “*participation in the Holy Spirit and union with God.*” The church’s rootedness in the Trinity appears not only in the resemblance of its unity to that of the Triune unity, but also in the fact that our blending together is attainable “*by the power of the holy and consubstantial Trinity.*” However, one needs to notice that Cyril differentiates between the communion of the Triune God and our participation in the divine life: “But the bond of love in us and the power of concord will *not completely prevail* to the point of being unchangeable, as the Father and the Son are, since they preserve their *unity by the identity of their essence.* Their *union is natural and true and may be seen in the definition of their being,* but our unity *imitates* the form of their true unity. After all, how could the antitype be completely equal to the archetype?” Hence, there is a limit to how far a human ecclesiological communion can imitate that of the Triune. Here, one would agree with Kilby’s claim that the use of theological terminologies such as *perichoresis*

² Jo. 11.11 (PG 74, 556-560; Pusey II. 731-5); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 302-4.

(which was originally used to describe aspects of the immanent Trinity) to norm human relations without any qualifications will result in idolatry.³

Furthermore, this mystical communion can be achieved by means of the mediation of the only begotten Son and the mystery of his incarnation in which he brings together “things that are very different by nature and essentially distinct from each other.” Moreover, by appealing to Ephesians 2:14-16, Cyril is implying that the rootedness of this communion lies in Christ, whereby reconciliation and union of humankind with God and with one another takes place in and through his flesh, “so that the entire body of the church may be one, ascending *in Christ* by the joining and concurrence of two peoples into one perfect whole.” After all, for Cyril, “Christ is the *bond of union* (ὁ τῆς ἐνότητος σύνδεσμος) because he is God and a human being in the same person.”⁴ Finally, though Cyril accentuates the role of Christ in the church, the Spirit’s role in the body of Christ is inseparable from Cyril’s Christological account as the interplay between the two hypostases is governed by the formula, “*from the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit.*”

As for Congar, I have shown that he also perceives the church through the lens of its participation in the divine life, “C’est cela l’Église: l’extension de la vie divine a une multitude de créatures.”⁵ However, in order to achieve this feat, “il a fallu que le *Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine* devienne *l’homo factus ex Maria Virgine.*”⁶ This is so because there is “one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the Man Christ Jesus*” (1Timothy 2:5). Here we see how the communion in the divine life is rooted in Christology and hence the notion of the church as the body of Christ was the prevailing one at this stage of his career. In addition his early theology was informed by that of Aquinas and Möhler, and they, in turn,

³ Karen Kilby, “Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity,” *New Blackfriars* Vol. 81, No. 956 (October 2000), 432-435.

⁴ *Jo.* 11.11 (PG 74, 560; Pusey II. 736); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 304.

⁵ Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*, 59.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

were rooted in the Christology of the Alexandrian Fathers and had the mystery of incarnation as their underpinning principle.

However, Congar was facing a specific challenge related to the Catholic Church at the time:

In the modern era, excessive emphasis has been given in the Catholic Church to the role of authority and there has been a juridical tendency to reduce order to an observance of imposed rules, and unity to uniformity. This has led to a distrust of expressions of the personal principle. It has also led to the development of a system of supervision that has been effective in maintaining an orthodox line and framework, but this has been achieved at the price of *marginalizing* individuals who have had something to say, and often even reducing them to silence and inactivity.⁷

In facing this challenge, Congar resorted to the models of the church as a sacrament and subsequently as a communion in order to advance the role of the laity. I have shown that this shift in emphasis is accompanied by a gradual departure from the Aristotelian/Thomistic scheme of causality to an Augustinian/Cyrrillian notion of participation. As he does so, Congar shows us the high point of his overlap with Cyril because he explicitly roots this communion in our incorporation and participation in Christ: “In her ultimate reality the Church is men’s fellowship with God and with one another *in Christ*.”⁸

Congar remained faithful to the paradigm of communion ecclesiology, but as a result of his ecumenical encounters, he decided to depart from a Christological approach to a more Pneuma-centric one. However, this, unfortunately, came at the expense of his Christology and resulted in new tensions. Congar writes: “From the point of view of the reality of the situation, however, Acts 2:42 may well reflect the life of the Church as it *emerged from the Pentecost*.”⁹ However, as noticed by Tillard, “the writers in the first centuries did not find it sufficient to view the Church as born in this way by the eschatological bursting forth of the Pentecost... They persist also in affirming the specific relationship to Christ Jesus which

⁷Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 16.

⁸Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 22.

⁹Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 1, 45.

supports the reality of the *Ekklesia tou Theou*. They find it in the idea of the body of Christ.”¹⁰ Congar also realizes the shortcomings of this approach “My mistake was that I followed Acts more closely than the Pauline epistles and I wanted to give the Holy Spirit his full worth. As a result I was not sufficiently conscious of the unity that exists between the activity of the Spirit and of the glorified Christ.”¹¹

But was Congar able to emphasize the unity of activity between the Son and the Spirit or develop a framework in which the Son and the Spirit work in tandem, in his later pneuma-centric phase? Previously, during his Christo-centric phase, and in his monograph *Lay People in the Church*, he states: “These aspects are necessary for the realization of the double relation Christ has with the Church, by which he makes her his body; as her founder, ruling her and building her up by his power; as her *life*, quickening her by his Spirit,”¹² thus emphasizing the continuous role of Christ ‘as the *life* of the church’ and his work in cooperation with the Spirit for her edification. However, in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, when he portrays the Spirit as the principle of communion, he writes: “Since that time, the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit have *together* been the authors of the Body, in other words, the Church in its unity, but Christ is the author as Head of that Body, homogeneous with its members, in a way that is absolutely his own.”¹³ By reducing the role of Christ to the author and Head of the church, Congar is implying that Christ’s role is restricted to the establishment of the church while the continuous work of edification in the church is carried out by the Spirit. Nonetheless, later in the same monograph while drawing on the Church Fathers (eg. Augustine and Cyril) he says: “Augustine said that this Son is not simply our

¹⁰ J.-M.R. Tillard, *Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion*, trans. R. C. De Peaux, O. Praem (Collegeville, MN: A Michael Glazier Book The Liturgical Press, 1992), 20.

¹¹ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 12.

¹² Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 31.

¹³ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 20.

head, the Christ, *but his body*, of which we are the members.”¹⁴ And this is a clear example of how his attempt to integrate modern Biblical scholarship with traditional patristic Christology has resulted in a certain tension. However, this tension was dealt with by Congar in his writings post the *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* trilogy, which enabled him to move, once more, closer to the Church Fathers, including Cyril.

Christology

On the Christological front, I have argued that Congar followed a typical Chalcedonian Christology which suggests that Christ exists as one person in two natures without confusion, change, division, or separation. This enabled him not only to liken the structure of the church to the union of the divine and human of the Incarnate Word, but also to justify the need for human mediation in the church. However, at the later stage of his career, and in his attempt to put more weight on the role of the Holy Spirit in the church, a certain tension arises between Congar’s Christology and the traditional Christology of the Fathers and scholastics.

As for Cyril, the study shows that his theology is continually rooted in the hypostatic union which enables him not only to underscore the intrinsic union within Christ in face of the moral and extrinsic union suggested by Nestorius, but also to maintain the biblical and creedal reality in grounding all the actions performed by Christ in the Logos. Accordingly, Cyril has propagated the ‘one incarnate nature of God the Word’ formula which is a subject of debate in Christendom until today. Nonetheless, given Cyril’s Christological authoritative status in traditional Christendom and the centrality of this formula to his refutation of the Nestorian claims, it is of paramount importance to understand what Cyril means by nature (φύσις) and how he perceives the relationship between nature and hypostasis.

¹⁴ Augustine, *De div. quaest.* LXXXIII, q. 69, 10 (PL 40, 79), cited in Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 2, 105. He then quotes Cyril in the same page saying: “Christ is both the only Son and the first-born Son. He is the only Son as God, but he is the first-born son by the saving union that he has constituted between us and him in becoming man. In that, we, in and through him, have become sons of God, both by nature and by grace. We are those sons by nature in him and only in him. We are also those sons by *participation* and by grace through the Spirit.” *De recta fide ad Theod.* (PG 76, 1177).

Cyril's Use of Nature Language

In my initial discussion of Cyril in Chapter 1 I did not have an opportunity to consider in detail Cyril's unitive account of Christ. To make up for that lack I will now offer some brief comments on Cyril's use of nature language. According to John McGuckin the formula μία φύσις τοῦ θεοῦ λογοῦ σεσαρκωμένη, "correctly laid the Christological stress on the mysterious making of *One* out of two things that had not been one before,"¹⁵ (namely Godhead and humanity). This formula was used three times during the Nestorian Controversy and prior to the Formula of Reunion (433) and at higher frequency in the aftermath of the reunion especially in his correspondence with his miaphysite supporters.¹⁶

Well, do we not say that a human being like ourselves is one, and has a *single nature*, even though not homogeneous but really *composed* (συντεθειμένου) of two things, I mean soul and body?...And if someone takes the flesh on its own, separating its unity with its own soul, and divides what was one into two, have they not destroyed the proper conception of a man?¹⁷

So, as put by McGuckin : "Cyril uses the *Mia Physis* phrase, therefore, to insist that the Christ was *One*; that the divine Word was *One* both *before* and *after* his incarnation; and that this *oneness* comes as a result of a *dynamic mystery*."¹⁸

Furthermore, though scholars suggest that Cyril mistakenly thought that the *mia physis* formula was Athanasius's, it still served him in different ways. It, first, ensures the oneness within the union, preventing us perceiving the human nature as an independent acting subject, which is of the utmost importance for the dynamic soteriological approach propounded by Cyril. Second, the formula accentuates the single subjectivity within the Word incarnate and

¹⁵ John McGuckin, "St. Cyril of Alexandria's Miaphysite Christology and Chalcedonian Dyophysitism," in ed. Christine Chaillot, *The Dialogue Between the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches* (Volos: Volos Academy Publications, 2016), 48.

¹⁶ For a detailed study for how often the formula is used by Cyril and where it is used please refer to Van Loon, *The Dyophysite Christology of Cyril of Alexandria* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 521-530.

¹⁷ *Chr. un.*(SC 97. 736 b-c), *On the Unity of Christ*, 78.

¹⁸ McGuckin, "St. Cyril of Alexandria's Miaphysite Christology," 44. Cf. Cyril, *Oration ad Dominas* 31 ACO 1,1, 5, 73:1-2; PG 76, 1228C, cited in Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 405: "God the Logos did not come into a man, but he "truly" became man, while remaining God."

his ‘rootedness in the being of Godhead’.¹⁹ However, other theologians may express some concerns with regard to it. In their attempt to reconcile the proceedings of the Council of Chalcedon and Cyril’s famous formula ‘one incarnate nature of God the Word (μία φύσις τοῦ θεοῦ λογοῦ σαρκαωμένη), many theologians have argued that φύσις should be read as ὑπόστασις. Romanides, for instance, writes: “For Cyril *physis* means a concrete individual acting as a subject in its own right and according to its own natural properties.”²⁰ McGukin adds: “For Cyril, the *physis* in this sense of concrete personal individual is synonymous with hypostasis.”²¹ It is also argued that Cyril uses these two terms interchangeably in different parts of his corpus.²² However, when analyzing Cyril’s letters that were addressed to some of his proponents, who were wondering whether he had changed his stance with regards to the one nature of Christ by endorsing the Formula of Reunion, it seems that Cyril still regards φύσις as equivalent to nature.

[12] In this way, when we have the idea of the elements (ἐξ ὧν) of the one and unique Son and Lord Jesus Christ, we speak of two natures being united (ἐν ἐννοίαις δεχόμενοι δύο μὲν φύσεις ἠνώσθαι φαμεν); but after the union, the duality has been abolished (ἀνηρημένης ἤδη τῆς εἰς δύο διατομῆς) and we believe the Son’s nature to be one (μίαν εἶναι πιστεύομεν τὴν τοῦ υἱοῦ φύσιν), since he is one Son, yet become man and incarnate. Though we affirm that the Word is God on becoming incarnate and made man, any suspicion of change is to be repudiated entirely because he remained what he was, and we are to acknowledge the union as totally free from merger (ἀσύγχυτος).²³

It is thus clear that, first, when Cyril is speaking of two natures (δύο μὲν φύσεων, or δύο μὲν φύσεις) being united, he is pointing to the essence of the Word with the attributes proper to it and the human nature being united to him²⁴ and not to two *hypostases* (individuals). Then, Cyril highlights that the duality of natures referred to in the previous sentence has been

¹⁹ Cf. Andrew Louth, “Severus of Antioch: an Orthodox View,” in ed. Christine Chaillot, *The Dialogue Between Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches* (Volos: Volos Academy Publications, 2016), 60.

²⁰ John S. Romanides, “St. Cyril’s “One Physis or Hypostasis of God the Logos Incarnate’ and Chalcedon,” in eds. Paulos Mar Gregorios, William Lazareth and Nikos Nissiotis, *Does Chalcedon Divide or Unite?: Towards Convergence in Orthodox Christology* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1981), 54.

²¹ McGukin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and The Christological Controversy*, 208.

²² Cf. Du Manoir, *Dogme et Spiritualité chez S. Cyrille d’Alexandrie*, 126-143.

²³ Cyril, *letter to Acacius of Melitene*, ep. 40 ACO 1,1,4. 26, 6-11; in ed and trans. Lionel Wickham, *Cyril of Alexandria Select Letters*, 49. However, Wickham labels it letter 41. See also his letter to Eulogius and two letters to Succensus, which would follow a similar type of analysis and predominantly lead to similar results.

²⁴ Cf. G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 1496.

abolished or eliminated and hence the Son's nature (τοῦ υἱοῦ φύσιν) is no longer two but one (μία). It is also highlighted that this union does not include any merger or mixture between the two natures. However, Cyril does allow for the notion of two natures on the intellectual and speculative level, using the analogy of soul and body (referring to the two natures) in man he says: "The point is that man results from two natures—body and soul, I mean—and intellectual perception recognizes the difference [between body and soul]; but we unite them and then get one nature of man. So, recognizing the difference of natures is not dividing the one Christ into two."²⁵ This shows that the difference between the two natures can be recognized in θεωρία.

Several scholars have argued that Cyril offers a dyophysite Christology.²⁶ In his extensive monograph *The Dyophysite Christology of Cyril of Alexandria*, for instance, van Loon uses Aristotelian logic of the *Categories* to reach the following conclusion:

The final conclusion of this study is that Cyril of Alexandria is not the miaphysite theologian he is often made out to be... His language is much more dyophysite... Expressions like 'natural union' and 'natural unity' are dyophysite in that they denote the coming together of two natures, two entities that belong to the Aristotelian category of substance... The notion 'in contemplation only' is applied by the Alexandrian archbishop, not to the natures of Christ themselves, but to *their division*. The natures themselves are really existing individual natures, which are *not separate* realities, but which are rather united into one separate reality.²⁷

Moreover, several studies have discussed Cyril's familiarity with and the extent of his utilization of Aristotelian methods and concepts.²⁸ But what does Aristotle's philosophy regarding the universal and particular suggest and how did Cyril receive it?

²⁵ *Letter to Eulogius*, ep. 44, ACO 1,1,4. 35, 15-18; in ed and trans. Lionel Wickham, *Cyril of Alexandria Select Letters*, 62-65. "ἔστιν μὲν γὰρ ἐκ διαφόρων φύσεων, ἀπὸ τε σώματος φημι καὶ ψυχῆς, καὶ ὁ μὲν λόγος καὶ ἡ θεωρία οἶδεν τὴν διαφορὰν, ἐνώσαντες δέ, τότε μίαν ποιοῦμεν ἀνθρώπου φύσιν. οὐκοῦν οὐ τὸ εἰδέναι τῶν φύσεων τὴν διαφορὰν διατέμνειν ἐστὶν εἰς δύο τὸν ἕνα Χριστόν. "

²⁶ Hans van Loon, *The Dyophysite Christology of Cyril of Alexandria* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Thomas G. Weinandy, "Cyril and the Mystery of the Incarnation," in eds. Thomas G. Weinandy and Daniel A. Keating, *The Theology of St Cyril of Alexandria: A Critical Appreciation* .

²⁷ Van Loon, *The Dyophysite Christology of Cyril of Alexandria*, 578-9.

²⁸ Ruth Siddals, "Logic and Christology in Cyril of Alexandria," in *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS., 38 (2), (1987): 341-367; Boulnois, *Le paradoxe trinitaire chez Cyrille d'Alexandrie*, Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité, vol. 143 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1994), 180-209; Hans van Loon, *The Dyophysite Christology of Cyril of Alexandria*, 61-122.

After defining primary and secondary substance Aristotle writes:

All the other things (τὰ δ' ἄλλα πάντα) are either (ἦτοι) said of (λέγεται) the primary substances as subjects or in them (ἐν ὑποκειμέναις) as subjects. This is clear (φανερὸν) from an examination of cases. For example, animal is predicated (κατηγορεῖται) of man and therefore (οὐκοῦν) also of the individual man (κατὰ τοῦ τινὸς ἀνθρώπου); for were it predicated of none of the individual men it would not be predicated of man at all (ὄλως). Again (πάλιν), colour is in body and therefore also in an individual body (ἐν τινὶ σώματι); for were it not in some individual body it would not be in body at all. Thus all the other things are either said of the primary substances as subjects or in them as subjects. So if the primary substances did not exist (μὴ οὐσῶν οὖν τῶν πρώτων οὐσιῶν) it would be impossible (ἀδύνατον) for any of the other things to exist (εἶναι).²⁹

This passage shows the ontological necessity of the primary substance to the secondary substance “So if the primary substances did not exist it would be impossible for any of the other things to exist.” However, this ontological fundamentality stems from the fact that the individual is the underlying subject of predication.³⁰

This language is used by Cyril in the light of late-fourth century developments in Trinitarian theology. In that context, Gregory of Nyssa had introduced the concrete dimension of the hypostasis:

This, then, is hypostasis. It is not the indefinite notion of ousia, which finds no *stability* (στάσις) on account of the community of what is signified. It is that notion which sets before the mind a circumscription in one thing (πρᾶγμα) of what is common and uncircumscribed by means of such properties as are seen with it (ἐπιφάνομαι).³¹

While adopting a binary system of universal and particular, Gregory assigns to each element, including the set of properties belonging to it, different roles. While ousia defines what a thing is, hypostasis designates the concrete and existential aspect of the individual.

Furthermore, “this is in line with what Aristotle calls ‘particular ousia’, the universal as

²⁹ *Categories*, 2a34–2b6.

³⁰ John R. Mahlan, “Aristotle on Secondary Substance,” *Apeiron* 52 (2), (2019), 176.

³¹ [Basil], Ep. 38, 3 (3, 82, 8–83, 12 Courtonne), in Johannes Zachhuber, *The Rise of Christian Theology and the End of Ancient Metaphysics: Patristic Philosophy from the Cappadocian Fathers to John of Damascus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 53. Zachhuber, 46–48, also argues that though some scholars ascribe the Epistle to Basil, its authorship, based on writing style and the work of other scholars, belong to Gregory.

individuated in the particular.”³² The same approach is re-iterated by Gregory in another treatise, namely Homilies on the Hexaëmeron:

Therefore, due to the joint operation of power and wisdom towards the perfection of each part of the world, a necessary sequence is followed, according to a certain order, so that one concrete object (τόδε τι) of those that are seen in the totality takes precedence and appears before the others, and then, after it, that which necessarily follows the one that took precedence, and after this a third, as arranged by the artful power.³³

In this passage, the universal being takes precedence over the particular, and is instantiated in its constituents. Moreover, Gregory posits an ontological continuity between the universal *ousia* and the concrete *hypostasis*, where the latter represents the realization of the former. So, Gregory’s postulated binary model is based on the realization of the universal in the particular. However, this particular or individual is ontologically connected to the universal and represents the authentic manifestation of its secondary substance.

Cyril was certainly familiar with the Cappadocian’s Trinitarian theology.³⁴ But how does he perceive the relationship between the universal and particular in an ontological sense? In his first *Dialogue on the Trinity* he writes:

We possess among us a natural unity (φυσικήν...τὴν ἕνωσιν) and of choice similar to the one we are going to discover in Christ... We who belong to the human race have from the outset been connected with each other in an identity (εἰς ταυτότητα τὴν πρὸς ἀλλήλους) based on a natural bond (θεσμῶ φυσικῶ).³⁵

Concerning the connection of identity he also writes: “They should tell us how Adam, the protoplast, can be homoousios with him who was begotten from him. Neither can he be Abel, nor can Abel ever be Adam. And yet the difference of names does not exclude identity of substance (τῆς οὐσίας τὴν ταυτότητα).”³⁶ Hence, Cyril is a proponent of the ontological connection between the universal (substance) and particular (individual). Moreover, Cyril also distinguishes between *ousia* and *hypostasis* within the Godhead: “For, to put it in this

³² Cf. Ibid.

³³ Gregory of Nyssa, Hex. 9 (18, 12–19, 4 Drobner), in Zachhuber, *The Rise of Christian Theology*, 57.

³⁴ Index des sources in Marie-Odile Boulnois, *Le paradoxe trinitaire chez Cyrille d’Alexandrie*, 659-74.

³⁵ *Dial.* I (407d).

³⁶ *Theos.* XIX (PG 75: 316A).

way, common to the whole Godhead may be called the things that are attached naturally to the supreme substance (*ousia*), and if someone mentions the divine nature (*physis*), he directly indicates to us, as in one signified entity (ὡς ἐν ἐνὶ τῷ σημαينوμένῳ), the whole holy Trinity, regarded in one Godhead, but not yet the Person of the one [of the three] separated by itself.”³⁷

It is thus clear that Cyril differentiates between the common nature and particular *hypostasis* within the Trinity. Moreover, he perceives an ontological continuity between universal and particular. But does he apply this ontological approach to his Christology? In answering this question Cyril writes:

As he says that the ‘form of the servant’³⁸ has been assumed by the form of God, *he should teach now whether the forms came together as such, without hypostases* (διδασκέτω παρελθὼν εἰ δίχα τῶν ὑποστάσεων μόναι καὶ καθ’ ἑαυτὰς αἱ μορφαὶ συνῆλθον ἀλλήλαις)? But I suppose that he himself will reject that out of hand. For it were no mere similarities and forms without real existence (ὁμοιότητες ἀπλῶς ἀνυπόστατοι καὶ μορφαί) that were joined to each other in the salvific union, but a confluence of real things and hypostases [occurred] in order that we believe that the incarnation of the Word truly happened.³⁹

In this passage the term form refers to divine and/or human natures, this is made clear a few lines later in the same treatise when Cyril writes: “If now each nature possesses perfection (εἰ τοίνυν ἑκατέρα φύσις τὸ τέλειον ἔχει) and both come together into one single thing—namely, the form of God assuming the form of the servant (τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ μορφῆς δηλονότι λαβούσης τὴν τοῦ δούλου μορφήν)—it is pious to confess one person (πρόσωπον) and one Son and also [one] Christ.”⁴⁰ Accordingly, Cyril cannot imagine an *ousia* having real existence unless it is instantiated as a hypostasis. Thus, he posits a concrete ontological continuity between nature and hypostasis. Moreover, for Cyril assuming two natures implies two hypostases and based on this Cyril assumes that his opponent, Theodoret of Cyrus, would automatically reject this

³⁷ *Dial.* II (422d, 26–31).

³⁸ *Philippians* 2: 7.

³⁹ *Apologia xii anathematisorum contra theodoretum* ACO 1,1,6. 112, 12–17 (Schwartz).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, ACO 1,1,6.117, 15–17 (Schwartz).

premise.⁴¹ Cyril's stance was reaffirmed in his second letter to Succensus, when he writes: "They have forgotten, however, that it is only those things that are usually distinguished at *more than a merely theoretical level* (μη̄ κατὰ μόνην τὴν θεωρίαν διαιρεῖσθαι φιλεῖ) which split apart from one another in differentiated separateness and radical distinction."⁴² Cyril thus faces a conundrum, he either accepts that Christ exists in two natures which, for him, implicates two hypostases, a theme that Theodoret was happy to accept and that he would not allow for, or to compromise the integrity of the human nature of Christ. In order to overcome this challenge Cyril had to admit to the limitations of the human mind in apprehending the mystery of the coming together of these two natures. In order to describe this mysterious union Cyril uses different terms such as ἄφραστος, ἀπόρητος, ἀπόρητος καὶ ὑπὲρ νοῦν. Following the above passage, for instance, he writes: "So, if we do say, "The Word became flesh," then we do not mean by this a confusion or a mixing, nor a change or alteration, but rather that, in a way that *cannot be fully described* (περὶ αὐτὸν φαμέν), he was united with a holy body that possessed a rational soul."⁴³ Then, in the Glaphyra he states: "He joined, in effect, human nature to himself, in a way that no one would be able to understand or express (καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἂν δύναιτό τις νοεῖν ἢ φράσαι)."⁴⁴ In addition in his first letter to Succensus, he writes "So we unite the Word from God the Father without merger, alteration or change (ἀσυγχύτως ἀτρέπτως ἀμεταβλήτως) to holy flesh owning mental life in a manner inexpressible and surpassing understanding (ἐχούση τὴν νοερὰν ἀπορητῶς τε καὶ ὑπὲρ

⁴¹ Cf. Zachhuber, *The Rise of Christian Theology*, 109.

⁴² *Second Letter to Succensus Ep.* 46, ACO 1,1,6. 162, 2-4; in McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and The Christological Controversy*, 363. Zachhuber comments, "it appears, is aware that divinity and humanity constitute natures and that these natures can, as such, only exist as individuated in hypostases." Zachhuber, *The Rise of Christian Theology*, 109. For a study on the relationship between the abstract and the concrete in Cyril's Christology, please refer to Adam G. Cooper, "Christology in the Concrete: Cyril of Alexandria and the Question of Theological Abstraction." https://www.academia.edu/12762436/Christology_in_the_Concrete_Cyril_of_Alexandria_and_the_Question_of_Theological_Abstraction [accessed 22 May 2023].

⁴³ *Apologia xii anathematorum contra theodoretum* ACO 1,1,6. 112, 17-19 (Schwartz), in *Three Christological Treatises*, trans. Daniel King, Vol. 129, The Fathers of the Church (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 90.

⁴⁴ *Glaph.* 9 (PG 69, 480); *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol.2, 78.

νοῦν).”⁴⁵ And finally in his *On the Unity of Christ*, he writes: “Well. Godhead is one thing and manhood is another thing. Considered in their respective and intrinsic beings (κατά γε τοὺς ἐνόητας ἑκατέρῳ λόγους), but in the case of Christ they came together in a mysterious and incomprehensible (ξένως τε καὶ ὑπὲρ νοῦν) union without confusion or change. The manner of this union is entirely beyond conception (Ἀπερινόητος).”⁴⁶ And then responding to the question how can we out of these two things envisage Christ as a union of these two, he replies: “I think in no other way than as things which come together with each other in an indivisible union beyond all conception (καὶ τὴν ὑπὲρ νοῦν).”⁴⁷ Hence, Cyril found in the incomprehensible mysterious aspect of the mystery of the incarnation a way out of the conundrum of bringing together two natures into one without compromising the singleness of the hypostasis; and a way of avoiding the question of how to speak of Christ’s humanity without speaking of a human hypostasis (where he never speaks of a human nature that is hypostasized, hence, the subject attribute model helps in some ways in this regard) and this is why the incarnation, for him, remains a mystery that surpasses our understanding! Finally, the importance of this section will become quite clear when I offer my recommendations regarding the Roman Catholic and Coptic Orthodox Churches’ joint approach to understanding Cyril’s Christology at the end of this chapter.

The Eucharist

Regarding the Eucharist, I demonstrate several commonalities between Cyril and Congar’s sacramental theology in terms of their Christological rootedness, composition, and ecclesial and soteriological roles. However, the most salient one lies in their projection of a substantial link between Christology, the Eucharist and the church. It was argued that for both theologians the Eucharist is composed of a tangible element but draws its efficacy from the

⁴⁵ Cyril, First Letter to Succensus *Ep.* 45, ACO 1,1,6. 153, 7-8, in ed and trans. Lionel Wickham, *Cyril of Alexandria Select Letters*, 75. Cf. ACO 1,1,6. 33, 5; ACO 1,1,6. 83, 20.

⁴⁶ *Chr. un.* (SC 97. 736 a), *On the Unity of Christ*, 77.

⁴⁷ *Chr. un.* (SC 97. 736 b), *On the Unity of Christ*, 78.

divine and invisible element that it carries. Hence, both of them agree on the complete presence of the Incarnate Word in the sacrament and his efficient causality's role.

I also argued that that the sacrament of communion carries soteriological implications. For Cyril these were understood in terms of participation in the body of Christ who is life by nature. As for Congar, It emerged that in his early writings, he was heavily influenced by Aristotle's philosophy and Aquinas's sacramental theology of causality.⁴⁸ However, as time passed, he gradually turned to the theme of participation, which allowed him, first, to link the Eucharist as the sacrament of the church to the body of Christ and the salvation of the members of this body together, and second, to move closer to Cyril's theology.

However, I showed that for Cyril the means for establishing our participation in Christ were the Eucharist and the Holy Spirit. While Congar speaks more explicitly of baptism and the Eucharist since he was writing at a time where the hierarchical order of the sacraments was already established.

Nonetheless given its significance when Cyril talks about the mysteries (τὰ μυστήρια in plural), he refers to the Eucharist. In line with this Cardinal Ratzinger laments the listing of the Eucharist as one of the seven sacraments,

'one liturgical act among others, no longer the encompassing orbit and dynamic centre of ecclesial existence per se... In consequence, the Eucharist itself was fragmented into a variety of loosely related rites... the linking of the whole sacramental event to the oneness of the crucified and risen Lord was overshadowed by the emergence of a plurality of separate sacrificial rites.'⁴⁹

Put in de Lubac's words, "the Eucharist makes the Church."⁵⁰ Interestingly, the thesis underscores that this theme is found in both Cyril and Congar. The latter states: "The

⁴⁸ Cardinal Ratzinger once commented that 'the separation of the doctrine of the Eucharist and ecclesiology, which can be noted from the eleventh and twelfth centuries onwards, represents one of the most unfortunate pages of medieval theology.' Joseph Ratzinger, "The Pastoral Implications of Episcopal Collegiality," *Concilium* 1(1) (1965), 28, quoted in Paul McPartlan, "Eucharist" in eds. Paul McPartlan and Geoffrey Wainwright, *The Oxford Handbook of Ecumenical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 261.

⁴⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, trans. Sr Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1987), 255, quoted in McPartlan, "Eucharist," 262.

⁵⁰ Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, trans. Gemma Simmonds and Richard Price (London: SCM, 2006), 88.

theological reality procured by the Eucharist is *the interior unity* of the mystical body. (Cf. 1Corinthians 10:17) (which is equivalent to the *res* aspect for St Augustine and all the Latin theology). Hence, it's not without a valid reason that *the Eucharist and the church are both considered to be the reality, and both carry the name 'body of Christ.'*⁵¹ While the former writes

If we are all members of the same body (σύσσωμοι) with one another in Christ—and not only with one another but also with him who is in us through his flesh (διὰ τῆς ἰδίας σαρκός) —how is it not obvious [visible] that we all are one both with one another and with Christ? Christ is the bond of union (τῆς ἐνότητος σύνδεσμος) because he is God and a human being in the same person (ἐν ταύτῳ).⁵²

Hence, the establishment of the church is rooted in the unitive role of Christ as its bond of unity (τῆς ἐνότητος σύνδεσμος) and Cyril designates this union by the Pauline term (Ephesians 3:6) σύσσωμοι. Accordingly, “when Tradition [including Cyril] asserts that the Church is Eucharistic it proclaims the profound sense of the unbreakable unity of the Church of God, inseparable from its catholicity, grounded in its Sanctity, in other words, in its insertion into Christ the Lord.”⁵³ Thus, it's quite obvious that this unity, which surpasses our human capacity, is rooted in the divine, and is bestowed upon the believers. But how did the Roman Catholic and Coptic Orthodox Churches receive and respond to this spiritual endowment? In the light of showing that Congar and Cyril share fundamental beliefs - despite the tensions in Congar's own work - I want now to look more broadly at the relationship between our churches.

The Relationship between Roman Catholic and Coptic Orthodox Churches

In antiquity, the churches of Alexandria and Rome stood hand in hand in the face of eccentric teachings within Christendom. The incidents are numerous, but to name a few: Rome

⁵¹ Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*, 103-104.

⁵² *Jo.* 11.11 (PG 74, 560-1; Pusey II. 735-6); *Commentary on John*, vol.2, 304-5.

⁵³ Tillard, *Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion*, 26.

supported Peter II against Melitius of Lycopolis (306); Alexander I against Arius (318 or 321); Athanasius against the Arianism of the Eusebians (339); and Cyril against Nestorius (430). However, the rejection of the council of Chalcedon (451) by the Copts instigated a complete rupture between these two churches.

Subsequently, there were several attempts of reconciliation but without avail, for instance, Pope Cyril III of Alexandria's (1235-1243), negotiations with Rome, during the Crusades, did not bear fruit. However, from the Council of Florence (1439-1445) till the nineteenth century, there was a complete divergence with regards to the terms of reunion, while Rome perceived it in terms of 'unconditional subjection' to the Bishop of Rome as the heir of St Peter,⁵⁴ the Alexandrians have understood it otherwise.

In c.1440, Pope Eugene IV (1431-1447) approached his Alexandrian counter-part, Patriarch John XI (1427- 1452), inviting the Coptic Church "to join the union between Latin and Greek churches that had been proclaimed the previous year at the Council of Florence." The Alexandrian Bishop responded with an interesting letter full of respect and courtesy, but simultaneously confessing the Orthodox faith.⁵⁵ "What is striking about the letter is that, despite its humble and courteous tone, Patriarch John makes no concessions to major Roman concerns, e.g., papal primacy or the existence of two natures in the incarnate Christ."⁵⁶ This manifests the nuances of the relationship at the time. Patriarch John XI expressed a willingness for communion of love and fellowship without compromising the "Coptic Orthodox faith and culture—even for the sake of winning allies in troubled times." More importantly, this trend continued with John XI's successors.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Petro B. T. Bilaniuk, "Coptic Relations with Rome," *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, volume 2 (CE:609a-611b).

⁵⁵ Swanson notes: "There is a fine study of this exchange, with an edition of the letter of Patriarch John XI to Pope Eugene IV: Luisier, "Lettre" and "Jean XI," in Mark Swanson *The Coptic Papacy in Islamic Egypt* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2010), 212.

⁵⁶ Swanson *The Coptic Papacy in Islamic Egypt*, 124.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 124-5. Please refer to the exchange between Pope Sixtus V and the Coptic Pope Gabriel VIII of Alexandria in 1590, in Bilaniuk, "Coptic Relations with Rome."

However, “the creation of the Coptic Catholic Patriarchate in 1824 raised the tensions between the Coptic and the Roman churches.”⁵⁸

A century and a half later, the RCC experienced a transformative council, namely the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), in terms of its ecumenical outlook as one of the major issues that the council, convoked by Pope John XXII, had to deal with was the problem of Christian division. Prior to Vatican II, it was normative for Catholics to speak of an ‘ecumenism of return’. However, this has been refuted by prominent figures of the RCC, such as Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy as President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and by Pope Benedict XVI who said that ‘unity does not mean what could be called ecumenism of the return: that is, to deny and to reject one’s own faith history. Absolutely not!’⁵⁹

One of the major documents produced at the council and which primarily deals with ecumenism was *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Second Vatican Council 1964c; (UR)). The document starts by highlighting that one of the main objectives of the council was the restoration of Christian unity (UR, n. 1). It, for the first time, acknowledges that ‘often enough, men of both sides were to blame’ (UR, 3). And, more so, it states: ‘To remove, then, all shadow of doubt, this holy Council solemnly declares that the Churches of the East, while remembering the necessary unity of the whole Church, have the power to govern themselves’ (UR, n. 16).⁶⁰ Hence, this represents an astounding departure by the RCC from an ‘ecumenism of return’ and an astonishing transformation from a precondition of ‘unconditional subjection’ to a ‘power to govern themselves’ for the reunion to be effected.

In light of the above, in May 1973, Pope Shenouda III visited Pope Paul VI at the Vatican, and they issued a common declaration. It was characterized by the avoidance of

⁵⁸ Bilaniuk, “Coptic Relations with Rome.”

⁵⁹ Edward Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue: Unitatis Redintegratio, Nostra Aetate* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005); and Pope Benedict XVI, *Ecumenical Meeting: Address of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, Archbishop’s House, Cologne* (2005), 19, in DeVille, “Church,” 225.

⁶⁰ DeVille, “Church,” 226, 236.

terminology that had stirred up disagreement in the past and the accentuation of the Christological commonalities.⁶¹ Even more, it established a joint commission whose purpose is: “to guide common study in the fields of Church tradition, patristics, liturgy, theology, history and practical problems,” in order “to achieve the fullness and perfection of that unity which is His gift.”⁶² The selected committee undertook its responsibility and in 1974 produced a joint report including ‘A Statement on Christology’,⁶³ which included the admission to the human limitations in fully comprehending the mystery of incarnation: “We must humbly recognize the limitations of our minds to grasp the truth of it, nor are we able to give adequate words in our human language to fully express it.”⁶⁴ That was succeeded by another common report encompassing a ‘Christological Declaration’ (1976).⁶⁵ However, in 2004 the dialogue has entered a new phase, it has changed from separate bilateral ones that take place between the RCC and the members of the Oriental Orthodox family individually to a dialogue that includes the RCC and the members of the Oriental Orthodox family jointly.⁶⁶ Subsequently, in 2009, The *International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches* issued a statement entitled “Nature, Constitution and Mission of the Church,” covering topics such as “as the relationship between the Trinity and the Church, attributes of the Church, Bishops in Apostolic Succession, synodality and primacies in the Church, and the Church’s mission.”⁶⁷

⁶¹ Cf. Ronald G. Roberson, “Dialogues of the Catholic Church with the Separated Eastern Churches,” *U.S. Catholic Historian*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Spring 2010), 139.

⁶² Common Declaration Signed by Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Shanouda III, in “The Roman Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church: Documents (1973 - 1988),” in *The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity: Information Service* N. 76 – (1991)/I, 9.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 21. For an analysis of the 1976 declaration please consult Theresia Hainthaler, “Christological Declarations with Oriental Churches,” in eds. Geoffrey Dunn and Wendy Mayer, *Christians Shaping Identity from the Roman Empire to Byzantium: Studies Inspired by Pauline Allen* (Leiden/Boston: BRILL, 2009), 431-433. This was followed by a short joint statement in 1988: (this statement can be found in “Relations entre les Communions,i in *Irénikon*, tome 61, (1988), 252).

⁶⁶ The family of the Oriental Orthodox Churches includes: the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolic Churches, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church, the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, and the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahido Church.

⁶⁷ Roberson, “Dialogues of the Catholic Church with the Separated Eastern Churches,” 140.

This statement agrees with my study. The resemblance between the statement and the findings of this research mainly lies in the understanding of the church as a communion of the faithful with God and with one another (ecclesiology of communion) *in Christ* and the designation of the church as the body of Christ. However, after a close examination of the ecclesiology of Cyril and Congar, I would add that their ecclesiology is rooted in the mystery of the joining of divinity and humanity in the person of Christ, i.e., the incarnation, by virtue of which a mystical union between the Incarnate Word and the faithful has been established, and subsequently Christ acts as a mediator or boundary (μεθόριον) between God and man. In addition, both theologians perceive the Eucharist as the sacrament of the church *par excellence* and draw a substantial interconnection between the Incarnate Word → the Eucharist → and the church.

Furthermore, in April 2017 Pope Francis and Pope Tawadros II signed a common declaration stating: “in order to please the heart of the Lord Jesus, as well as that of our sons and daughters in the faith, we will seek sincerely not to repeat the baptism that has been administered in either of our Churches for any person who wishes to join the other.”⁶⁸ This reveals not only the willingness of the two Popes of the churches to continue the dialogue, but more importantly their commitment to taking practical steps for the realization of the desired reunion.

As for the 1976 Christological Declaration, it articulates the common faith in Christ including his double consubstantiality, the true union of the divinity and humanity and the adverbs “without mingling, without commixtion, without confusion, without alteration, without division, without separation.” And the Coptic liturgical formula “His divinity did not separate from His humanity for an instant, not for the twinkling of an eye,” is also added. Moreover, it lists the approved councils and heresies condemned by both parties.

⁶⁸ “Common Declaration of His Holiness Francis and His Holiness Tawadros II,” in *The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity: Information Service* N. 150 – (2017), 40.

Commenting on the Christological declaration, Hainthaler writes : “The declaration thus values the *mia physis* formula and the two natures formula in the framework of a given interpretation, without mutual accusation of a heresy.”⁶⁹ Besides, Grillmeier perceives it as having a ‘historical significance.’⁷⁰

Nonetheless, the following paragraph, regarding the nature of Christ, warrants a careful examination:

When the Orthodox confess that Divinity and Humanity of Our Lord are united in one nature, they take “nature”, not as a pure and simple nature, but rather as one composite nature, wherein the Divinity and Humanity are united inseparately and unconfusedly. And when Catholics confess Jesus Christ as one in two natures, they do not separate the Divinity from the Humanity, not even for the twinkling of an eye, but they rather try to avoid mingling, commixtion, confusion or alteration.⁷¹

This passage has been taken word for word from the 1974 Christological Statement and it reveals the understanding of the two churches in relation to the coming together of the two natures in Christ, while allowing each party to give and defend its own interpretation regarding its scheme of union. On the one hand, the RCC expounds that the underlying reason for proposing two natures in Christ is the avoidance of mixing or confusion of the two natures and insists that they do not separate them. On the other hand, the Coptic Church insists on the oneness of union, the single subjectivity of Logos “When the Orthodox part rejects all duality in Jesus Christ, it is intended to say that every act of Jesus Christ is in fact the act of God the Word incarnate,”⁷² while upholding the integrity of each nature ‘united inseparately and unconfusedly’, and proposes the term ‘one composite nature’. And here, the Coptic delegation is echoing their Father Cyril who writes:

Surely it is not only those things which are simple and homogeneous which hold a monopoly over the term “unity”? for it can also apply to things *compounded*

⁶⁹ Hainthaler, “Christological Declarations with Oriental Churches,” 433.

⁷⁰ Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2/1.335, n. 48, quoted in Hainthaler, “Christological Declarations with Oriental Churches,” 433.

⁷¹ Christological Declaration (1976), in “The Roman Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church: Documents (1973 - 1988),” The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity: Information Service N. 76 – (1991)/I, 21.

⁷² *Ibid.*

(συγκείμενα) out of two, or several, or different kind of things. This is the considered opinion of the experts in such matters.⁷³

The thesis argues that Cyril has used the language of synthesis (σύνθεσις), and composite or compound (συγκεῖσθαι),⁷⁴ which is rooted in the analogy of soul and body in the human being, at a higher frequency in the aftermath of the formula of Reunion (433) in order to accommodate more for the human nature of Christ - which was a source of concern for the Antiochene. This principle enables him to avoid any sort of not only separateness but also confusion or mixing of divinity and humanity in Christ. Furthermore, this composite scheme has opened the door to the Oriental Orthodox for significant developments in their dialogue, not only with the Catholic Church but also with the Eastern Orthodox Church.

After finding their common ground in Cyril of Alexandria's *Mia Physis* formula, the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Joint Committee states:

When we speak of the one composite (*synthetos*) *hypostasis* of our Lord Jesus Christ, we do not say that in Him a divine *hypostasis* and a human *hypostasis* came together. It is that the one eternal *hypostasis* of the Second Person of the Trinity has assumed our created human nature in the act uniting it with his own uncreated divine nature, to form an inseparably and unconfusedly united real divine-human being.⁷⁵

The outcome of the joint meetings between the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox was seen a beacon of hope for re-union in Christendom as it recommended the lifting of the anathemas and condemnations within the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox family.⁷⁶ However, in 1994, the Holy Community of Mount Athos strongly rejected such agreement on the basis of “the non-

⁷³ *Chr. un.* (SC 97. 733 a-b), *On the Unity of Christ*, 73. Cf. Cyril, *Second Letter to Succensus*, par. 3 ‘One’ is a term applied properly not only to basic single elements but to such composite (σύνθεσιν) entities as man compounded (συνηγμένων) of soul and body.

⁷⁴ *Second Letter to Succensus*, (which was written after 433AD) par. 3 and 5. “We assert that the ‘Mediator between God and men’ (as the Scriptures say) is composed of (συγκεῖσθαι) the humanity which is ours in a state conformed to its proper definition, and of the Son born naturally of God – that is, the Only-begotten. At the same time we hold firmly that there has been a certain coming together and an ineffable concurrence into unity of two unequal and unlike natures.” *On the Incarnation of the Only Begotten*, (PG 75, 1208c-d), and cf. *Scholia on the Incarnation*. 8 (PG 75, 1377BC; ACO 1, 5, 220) quoted and cited in Norris, “Christological Models in Cyril of Alexandria,” 262.

⁷⁵ “Agreed Statement of the Joint Commission St Bishoy Monastery, Egypt, 20-24 June 1989”, in eds. Christine Chaillot and Alexander Belopopsky, *Towards Unity: The Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches* (Geneva, INTER-ORTHODOX DIALOGUE, 1998), 60.

⁷⁶ Cf. “Second Agreed Statement and Recommendations to Churches Chambésy, Switzerland, 23-28 September 1990,” in *Towards Unity: The Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches*, 63.

negotiability of the status of ecumenical councils.”⁷⁷ Furthermore, some theologians in the West also opposed the agreement. De Halleux, who participated in the RCC-Coptic Orthodox bilateral dialogue (1974), for instance, states:

Il serait extrêmement regrettable que le dialogue christologique des deux familles d'Églises orthodoxes, que leurs traditions théologique, spirituelle et liturgique rapprochent singulièrement, puisse donner l'impression de se monnayer aux dépens de la chrétienté «occidentale» en général et de l'Église catholique en particulier.⁷⁸

But is this true? When the two churches find a common ground in Cyril's Christology, who is considered as a Saint and a Doctor of Faith, by traditional churches, how is this expelling the Catholic Church? When they both agree on the term '*composite hypostasis*', to denote the joining of the two natures in Christ, how is this considered as a 'short selling' of Western Christology? Isn't it a Christological term that came out of the II Constantinople Council (553) and which was recognized by the RCC and not by the Coptic Orthodox Church?⁷⁹

This term does not only bring the two traditions closer, but also puts the accent to the single subjectivity of the Logos in Christ, an approach that has been recognized by, as shown in the thesis, Augustine, Cyril, Aquinas and Congar during his Christological phase, since “the death of a man, however righteous, cannot have any redemptive value.”⁸⁰

And this leads to the recommendations of this thesis:

⁷⁷ Norman Russell, “The Eastern Orthodox–Oriental Orthodox Dialogue Hits Stormy Waters: Two recent Publications on the Debate,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* Vol. 21, No. 1 (2021), 32-41.

⁷⁸ André De Halleux, “Actualité du néochalcedonisme. Un accord christologique recent entre orthodoxes,” *Revue théologique de Louvain* 21^e année, fasc. 1 (1990), 52.

⁷⁹ Ayres suggests that the more substantial advancement in the dialogue within the Orthodox family compared to the RCC and Oriental Orthodox one may be due to the ability of the participants “to make use of some of the key terminologies of the period [6th century]...[such as] “*composite hypostasis*” and [explaining] what [it] means” Lewis Ayres, “Returning to Justinian: Neo-Chalcedonianism, Catholic Christology, and Dialogue with Oriental Orthodoxy,” “a lecture for the Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies, University of Toronto (July 2022), now forthcoming.”, 27.

⁸⁰ Cyril, *Scholia* 37 (Pusey 6, 574, and A.C.O.1.1.5. 50, 9) cited in Henry Chadwick, “Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy,”; *On John* 19:26-27 (Pusey III, 91); *De recta fide ad reginas*, 42 (PG 76: 1393).

Recommendations

First, a more thorough patristic examination of the Christology of the Post 451 period is paramount for the advancement of the dialogue between the Catholic and Oriental Orthodox churches. On the Catholic side, this investigation will offer not only “clarity that this period is also fundamental to their [Catholics] own theological legacy,”⁸¹ but also insights “to understand our own [Catholic] tradition, and that we actually should share many of the very concerns central to the Oriental Orthodox.”⁸²

As for the miaphysite churches, it is important to recognize that the Chalcedonian Christology did not reach its complete and final shape until at least the third council of Constantinople (680-681). Hence, Chalcedon cannot be treated in isolation of these other councils. In addition, it was made clear by both Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches that a response regarding the four councils succeeding Ephesus (431) is expected from the Oriental Orthodox churches, for instance, the Eastern Orthodox keeps the elevation of anathemas with Oriental Orthodox pending the recognition of the councils by the latter. In addition, the Common Report of The International Joint Commission between the RCC and the Coptic Orthodox Church of 1976 recommends the following studies:

With reference to Councils of the Church: What are the doctrinal and dogmatic points to be found in councils which have not been shared by the Catholic and Coptic Orthodox Churches. Are these acceptable? How can points of disagreement be resolved? How can a Church which has celebrated many councils be in communion with one which has not shared these councils? How much are the canons and anathemas of earlier councils binding today?⁸³

Hence, a study of these councils is a must in order to take the dialogue forward. And here I would recommend the second council of Constantinople (553) as a starting point since it was after all Emperor Justinian’s wish to find a common ground between these two traditions and the council’s terminology has been proven to be a useful tool in previous bilateral dialogues,

⁸¹ Ayres, “Returning to Justinian,” 27.

⁸² Ibid., 30.

⁸³ Common Report (1976), in “The Roman Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church: Documents (1973 - 1988),” The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity: Information Service N. 76 – (1991)/I, 20.

namely that of the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox. But prior to that it is vital to have a common thorough investigation of the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria.

Designated as ‘*the seal of the fathers*’ (σφραγίς τῶν πατέρων),⁸⁴ Cyril is considered as the Christological authority of his time and his legacy subsists in successive centuries. His Christological contribution cannot be overestimated. Hence, he left a rich Christological heritage, that would be considered as the last corpus receiving recognition from both sides of the Chalcedonian aisle. Therefore, it’s no surprise to see how the fourth and fifth councils gauge their Christological formulae in light of his Christology. During the council of Chalcedon, for example, it was claimed that “Leo and Cyril taught the same,”⁸⁵ and more recently the Agreed Statement of the Joint Commission of the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox family states:

Throughout our discussions we have found our common ground in the formula of our common Father, St Cyril of Alexandria: *mia physis (hypostasis) tou Theou Logou sesarkomené*, and in his dictum that “it is sufficient for the confession of our true and irreproachable Faith to say and to confess that the Holy Virgin is *Theotokos*. (Hom:15, cf. Ep. 39)”⁸⁶

However, in the aftermath of the Formula of Reunion (433), different traditions read Cyril in different ways. “In the sixth century our traditions are engaged in a mutual debate over the legacy of Cyril of Alexandria and concepts travel between the emergent communities in fascinating ways.”⁸⁷ Hence, a proper joint investigation of his Christology and its reception by different traditions would act as an impetus for advancing this dialogue. And we are not only talking about his use of certain terminology but rather the underlying principles that govern the flow of his ideas, its reception by the different traditions and their mutual

⁸⁴ Anast.S. *hod.* PG 89,113, cited in Lars Koen, *The Saving Passion: Incarnational and Soteriological Thought in Cyril of Alexandria's Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1991), 19.

⁸⁵ Richard Price and Michael Gaddis trans. *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, Vol.2 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 24.

⁸⁶“Agreed Statement of the Joint Commission 1989”, in *Towards Unity*, 60.

⁸⁷ Ayres, “Returning to Justinian,” 27.

exchange in this regard,⁸⁸ while taking into account that the mystery of incarnation surpasses our human comprehension. For as Augustine said, “*If you understand it, it is not God,*” and as Cyril writes: “But how this is so cannot be grasped by the mind or spoken by the tongue but *must be honored by silence and faith that is above the mind* (σιωπῆ δὲ καὶ πίστει τῆ ὑπὲρ νοῦν τιμώμενον.)”⁸⁹

Finally, in this thesis, I have posited a framework for the assessment of the extent of overlap between Cyril and Congar with regard to their understanding of the nature of the church, and I have shown a fundamental agreement between them. Hence, I recommend that we (Catholic and Coptic/Oriental Orthodox) look in more detail not only at our view of the person of Christ, but also at the fundamental vision of the church and salvation we share. This can be carried out by applying the framework proposed in this thesis to other theologians such as Severus of Antioch or Bulus al-Bushi,⁹⁰ (from the miaphysite tradition) and the documents of Vatican II (from the Catholic tradition) to enable better understanding, in order advance our dialogue, that “we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”⁹¹

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ *Jo.* 4.3 (PG 73, 604; Pusey I. 553); *Commentary on John*, vol.1, 247.

⁹⁰ Bulus al-Bushi (1171–1250), was the Bishop of Old Cairo and a prolific theological writer of the Copto-Arabic Christological era. For a biography of Bulus al-Bushi, please refer to Stephen J. Davis, *Coptic Christology in Practice: Incarnation and Divine Participation in Late Antique and Medieval Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 238-9.

⁹¹ Ephesians 4:13.

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