

THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL BACKGROUND
OF BARTOLOMÉ XIBERTA'S *CLAVIS ECCLESIAE*

To trace the ecclesiological background of Fr. Bartolomé Xiberta's *Clavis Ecclesiae* entails several surprising factors. Contrary to suspicions that Fr. Maurice de la Taille, S. J., had written *Clavis Ecclesiae* and published it under the name of one of his students¹, Fr. Xiberta time and again affirmed that he had thought of the subject of his dissertation while he was still a young student in Spain². Though he is perhaps remembered in theological circles primarily for this ground-breaking work on the sacrament of penance, a work which he published with some trepidation³, still the rest of Fr. Xiberta's theological career is strangely devoid of other work on the sacrament of penance, or on the sacraments in general, for that matter. There is an article on Henry of Ghent's theory on the causality of the sacraments⁴, a study which resulted from Fr. Xiberta's work on the influence which Henry of Ghent exerted on the Carmelite theologians Guido Terreni and Osbert

¹ During a conversation with Fr. Xiberta 11/1/62, he admitted that Fr. De la Taille had provided him with the title *Clavis Ecclesiae*, culled from his own works. Perhaps this factor led many to suspect that the Jesuit theologian, who caused such a furor in Rome and from whose own title *Mysterium Fidei*, *Clavis Ecclesiae* seemed to have derived, had written the latter as well as the former. Fr. Xiberta recalled that a Jesuit associate at the Academy of St. Thomas, Rome, expressed his amazement when Fr. Xiberta insisted that he and not Fr. De la Taille had written *Clavis Ecclesiae*.

² Conversation with Fr. Xiberta 11/1/62. Fr. Franz Seibel, O. Carm., recalls a conversation with Fr. Xiberta in which the latter mentioned that as a lad he had been taught in religion class that had the Holy Father committed all the most grievous sins in the world and all the censures of the Church had been inflicted on him, a simple friar-confessor could absolve him completely. Even at that young age Fr. Xiberta was not convinced. This was at least one of the factors in his early interest in the ecclesial dimension of the sacrament of penance.

³ In a conversation of 11/1/62 Fr. Xiberta confessed that his inaugural dissertation was just barely approved. Fortunately it was published before De la Taille's *Mysterium Fidei*; had it appeared afterwards, he gave it no hope.

⁴ BARTOLOMÉ XIBERTA, *Una teoria dimenticata sulla causalità dei sacramenti*, in «Divus Thomas» 42 (Plac. 1939) 513-528.

the Englishman⁵. There are also articles on Origen's views on the sacrament of penance⁶ and on the Eucharist as the sacrament of peace with God and with the Church⁷. Other than these, however, Fr. Xiberta's theological bent concentrated on other tracts, which he developed over the course of his professional career: *De Verbo Incarnato*, *De Deo Uno*, *De Deo Trino*, *De Vita Supernaturali*. His works on the Incarnate Word prove to be the most voluminous of his writings⁸.

The elaboration of a tract *De Ecclesia* by Fr. Xiberta actually was the last, in point of time, on which he worked. When he first taught the course on the Church, he followed the then up-to-date volumes of Timothy Zapelena, S. J.⁹. Before the period of the II Vatican Council, Fr. Xiberta's bibliography betrays scant material on the Church, preoccupied as he was with other theological questions. Only in the last years of his professorial life, then, did Fr. Xiberta turn his attention to formally ecclesiological study and speculation on questions which had been raised or implied by the Council¹⁰.

⁵ *De doctrinis theologicis magistri Guidonis Terreni*, in «Analecta Ord. Carm.» 5 (1923-26) 233-376; *De Osberto Anglico, O. Carm.*, in «Analecta Ord. Carm.» 6 (1927-29) 177-243.

⁶ *La doctrina de Orígenes sobre el sacramento de la Penitencia*, in «Reseña Eclesiástica» 18 (1926) 237-246; 309-318.

⁷ *La Eucaristía fruición de la paz con la Iglesia y de la paz con Dios*, in *Actas del XXXV Congreso Eucarístico Internacional* (Barcelona, 1952), I, Sesiones de estudio, Barcelona, 1953, pp. 303-305.

⁸ Especially his *Tractatus de Verbo Incarnato*, Matriti, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto «Francisco Suárez», vol. 2, 1954, 739 pp.; *Enchiridion de Verbo Incarnato*, Matriti, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto «Francisco Suárez», 1957, 801 pp.; *El Yo de Jesucristo; un conflicto entre dos cristologías*, Barcellona, Herder, 1954, 172 pp. Besides, he published many articles on various aspects of controverted questions of the tract on the Incarnate Word. For a full bibliography cf. José RIBERA, O. Carm., *Bibliographia Scriptorum A. R. P. Bartholomaei M. Xiberta, O. Carm.*, in «Carmelus» 9 (1962) 160-196.

⁹ *De Ecclesia Christi*, 5.^a ed. (Romae, apud Aedes Universitatis Gregorianae, 1950).

¹⁰ *Exigencias de la Fe acerca de la unidad de la Iglesia*, in *Ante el Concilio ecuménico Vaticano II: «A la Unidad por la Caridad»*. XII Semana Española de Misionología, Burgos, 5-12/8/60, Burgos, Instituto Español de Misiones Extranjeras, 1961, pp. 246-256; *El papa y los obispos*, in «Orbis catholicus» 5 (Barcelona, 1962) 231-247; *El redescubrimient de l'Església, tasca de la teologia actual*, in *El Concili vivent . . .*, Barcelona, Editorial Franciscana, 1962, «Criterion, col·lecció ideològica, 15», pp. 39-62; *De ratione societatis religioni christianae tribuenda*, in «Doctor communis» 15 (Romae, 1962) 68-75; *Verdadera i falsa unitat en l'Església de Crist*, in «Criterion» 13 (1962) 11-22; *Fundamento del caràcter social de la Iglesia*, in «Orbis catholicus» 6 (1963) 400-414.

Fr. Xiberta's tract on the Church was never published, but remains in mimeographed form; although certain questions are dealt with in a profound and thorough manner, there are many others which are quite fragmentary and were intended to be developed subsequently. Illness and eventual death precluded this hope of Fr. Xiberta. Since such a lapse of time intervened between the writing of his inaugural dissertation *Clavis Ecclesiae* and Fr. Xiberta's explicitation of his ecclesiological thought, it might be objected that an attempt to describe the ecclesiological background of *Clavis Ecclesiae* is a useless task.

There is, however, among others one basic reason why such a study is of value. The overall theological outlook of Fr. Xiberta, which like his favorite theologian Mathias Scheeben, delights in seeing the connection and relationship between the various mysteries of our faith, means that there is a solid and ever present unity of outlook in the various phases of Fr. Xiberta's theological thinking. There is constant cross reference in the various tracts of Fr. Xiberta, recalling now one, now another truth which was already studied and established in another *locus*. This unity of theological thought is found in *De Ecclesia* as well, where consonance with the other theological tracts once more elucidates the unitarian theological vision of Fr. Xiberta. Thus in the writings of the Catalan theologian there appears a surprising consistency between his earlier writings and those of his later and more mature years. Naturally, these latter show a greater depth and breadth of vision, but the fundamental insights and the principles on which his theology is based remain unchanged. Thus the legitimacy, even on only this one count, of a study of *Clavis Ecclesiae* within the ecclesiological vision of Fr. Xiberta.

THE «DE ECCLESIA» TRACT

The tract *De Ecclesia*, Fr. Xiberta sees as one of the cardinal tracts of dogmatic theology. These major tracts, he divides into those which deal with the supernatural realities which effect man's economy of salvation — the one and triune God, God and creatures, the Incarnate Word and his work of redemption — and those which deal with the acquisition of salvation, which in the first

place includes the tract on the supernatural life¹¹. Since, however, salvation is not merely an individual experience, as the sources of revelation show man worshipping God with his fellows, the means of salvation, though they effect the personal sanctification of each individual, still are offered to all men indistinctly. Thus the tract *De Ecclesia* «illustrates the social dimension of the economy of salvation; it runs parallel to the tract *De Vita Supernaturali* in which the individual dimension is illustrated»¹².

Although he does not belittle the historical exigencies which led to the apologetical slant of *De Ecclesia*, from the Protestant Reformation right up to our own time, still he opts for a new ordering of the tract «which better responds to the connatural connection of the tracts to which we have just referred»¹³. New needs, and especially stress on the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ, demand that the tract be exposed in a dogmatic rather than apologetic manner. The system evolved by Zapelena of dividing the material into an apologetic and a dogmatic part does not completely satisfy, and having cited Cardinal Journet¹⁴, Fr. Xiberta concludes: «It seems that this way of treating (the matter) is not consistent because the tract which is called apologetic is nothing else than a fragmentary treatment of the dogmatic doctrine on the Church. What we look for is the wholeness of doctrine through the joining of the two parts»¹⁵.

Confronting the problem of the connection and yet the distinction between the kingdom of God and of the Church of Christ, Fr. Xiberta chooses to include both in his tract. «The subject (of the tract) is in a universal sense the kingdom of God; in the con-

¹¹ *De Vita Supernaturali*, as elaborated by Fr. Xiberta, includes questions treated in the traditional tracts *De Gratia*, *De Deo creante et elevante*, *De Virtutibus*; his intention was to give a synthetic view of the more individual aspect of salvation.

¹² *De Ecclesia*, ad instar manuscripti, Romae, in Collegio S. Alberto, 1958-59, 1; cf. p. 3: «Ratio formalis. Quandoquidem noster tractatus subintrat ad illustrandum alterum aspectum oeconomiae salutis e fronte tractatus de vita supernaturali, illius ratio formalis reponi debet in aliquo quod vere contradistinguatur a salute formali et individuali et quidem ita ut simul cum ea totam complectatur executionem oeconomiae salutis. Hoc autem non aliud esse videtur nisi socialis indoles a Deo religioni imposita».

¹³ *De Ecclesia*, p. 2.

¹⁴ *L'Église du Verbe Incarné I* (Paris, 1951), p. xi.

¹⁵ *De Ecclesia*, p. 2.

crete, however, it is the Church of Christ in so far as it is the

necessary actualization of the kingdom of God for the present time»¹⁶. Among the objects which the tract should study is «the attitude (of the Church of Christ) towards the internal salvific realities (*bona*)¹⁷. It is in this context that Fr. Xiberta sees the sacraments as a tract intimately depending on *De Ecclesia*. In describing the material objects of *De Ecclesia*, he makes this remark about the oral and real Word of God: «Among the material objects (of the tract) in some way we should also include those *bona* which have been given to the Church — the riches of doctrine and the sacraments. Thus the doctrine on faith (not on the act of faith, but on the object of faith) as well as on the sacraments can be evolved in two sections of the tract on the Church. Still, these can probably be better dealt with in separate tracts, which are derived from the tract on the Church and intimately connected with it»¹⁸.

From another viewpoint Fr. Xiberta sees the importance of the tract on the Church stemming from the fact that the Church is not in the first place a juridical entity, nor the hierarchical structure of the Church but rather the salvific reality which dispenses supernatural life. «The Church was instituted by Christ as the means by which the supernatural *bona* are communicated to us; this includes both faith and sacramental sanctification. Unless the means is carefully held on to, the *bona* themselves will be dissipated»¹⁹.

«In the New Testament Christians form the Church insofar as they recognize the one Savior, they are together the end of redemption and the object of the love of Christ Jesus and of the heavenly Father, they live under the influence of the Holy Spirit, delight in the holy Eucharist, sacrament of unity, together receive the duty of offering perennially the Victim of Calvary and of extending everywhere the kingdom of Christ and together they march towards the realization of the heavenly Jerusalem. They form the Church because in common they enjoy these gifts, which are the social dimension in a strict sense, not because some other gift which brings about a social structure is added to them. By reason

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 5; from another viewpoint cf. XIBERTA, *Fundamento del carácter social de la Iglesia*, 6 (Barcelona, 1963), esp. pp. 400-403.

of such gifts the Church is the society which Christ loved and for which he shed his Blood (Eph 5: 25-28) — the immediate subject of those supernatural values which Christ brought to the world: ... truth ... holiness ... the indefectible continuation of the redemption, which will last until the consummation of the ages when it will be transferred into the heavenly Jerusalem in which Christ reigns for all eternity»²⁰.

As he points out, foreseeing more ecumenical times, the doctrine on the Church is one of the principal stumbling-blocks for the Orthodox and Protestants. In regard to the latter, who proclaim allegiance to Christianity as much as Catholics are typically «Church» oriented, the Catholic doctrine on the Church is of capital importance because it is so intimately connected with the different vantage points from which Protestants and Catholics see justification and salvation. For the Catholic «we acquire salvation in the Church and by means of the Church. For the Church is the pillar and stronghold of truth (I Tim 3: 15), who teaches us that faith without which it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11: 6). She is the Spouse of Christ in which we enjoy the sacrament of peace and union with Him . . . »²¹.

The highpoint of Catholic belief in the Church rests precisely in the fact, according to Fr. Xiberta, that today's Church is numerically and formally identical with the salvific work of Christ. The following partial assertions are taken for granted in the reaching of this conclusion: «a) Christ Jesus instituted an economy of salvation clearly individuated both by the greatest spiritual gifts (*bona*) and by the concrete external structure which, as such, derives from Him; b) Christ Jesus instituted this economy of salvation with this dual source of individuation in such a way that it, and only it, will last specifically and numerically identical until the end of time; c) this unique economy of salvation instituted by Christ continues on in the Catholic Church; d) essential to the Catholic Church, in which the one economy of salvation instituted by Christ is preserved, is the unity of faith and communion with

²⁰ XIBERTA, *El papa y los obispos*, in «Orbis catholicus», 5, I (1962) 237: «Sólo decimos que esta institución de Cristo Jesús no empieza a revestir carácter social por la accesión de sus elementos visibles y jerárquicos, porque originariamente ya lo tiene con los misterios que se verifican en lo íntimo de las almas».

²¹ *De Ecclesia*, p. 4.

the bishops, the successors of the Apostles and with the Roman Pontiff, the successor of St. Peter, who as such enjoys the primacy which Christ conferred on Peter»²².

Fr. Xiberta restates this doctrine from another viewpoint: «Frequently . . . the spiritual properties are conceived as elements which affect us in our condition as individuals and the social (element) is made out to begin by the setting up of an external communitarian structure. Because of this, in order to prove that the Church received from the Lord the nature of a society, a decisive reason is given as the institution of the apostolic college. I believe that its social character is rooted deeper. I believe that it penetrates the intimate constitution of rational beings, whenever several of them have something in common either by origin or because of work or because of enjoyment. I believe that the society of the Church consists above all in the fact that all the redeemed together constitute the Spouse whom Jesus loves, together they are his Mystical Body, they are enlivened by the one Holy Spirit. The fact of having an external communitarian structure is a mere consequence of these spiritual goods»²³.

THE CHURCH AS A SALVIFIC REALITY

In the first question of *De Ecclesia*, Fr. Xiberta wishes to demonstrate that the Church is a reality which as such is an independent subject. Though medieval theologians did not dwell on this question because they took it for granted, ever since the Protestant Reformation, the problem has had to be broached because of the successive denials and attentuations of the reality that is the Church. In successive questions Fr. Xiberta studies at length the social dimension of the religion proposed in the sources of revelation and the philosophical notion of society as it finds meaning in the Church.

Fr. Xiberta's third question has direct bearing on the subject of this article; in it he studies the Church of Christ insofar as it

²² Ibid., p. 26. Xiberta in pre-Vatican II terms adds the following: «e) Prop-
terea christianae societates ab ecclesia catholica-romana separatae extra oecono-
miam salutis a Christo institutam et impositam vagantur».

²³ XIBERTA, *Exigencias de la fe acerca de la unidad de la Iglesia* (Burgos, 1961),
p. 248.

is a subject individuated by spiritual gifts (*bona*). He opts to study this aspect of the Church of Christ rather than the kingdom of God because it is the more proximate subject of interest and also because concretely, in the present economy of salvation, the Church of Christ is the kingdom of God for men. The Church, in other words, is studied as bringing salvation to men; naturally the sacramental moments, and this would include the sacrament of penance, are concrete realizations of this aspect of the Church's nature. Anticipating the teaching of the II Vatican Council²⁴, Fr. Xiberta insists that the Church, in conjunction with the external, hierarchical structure, also has the essential dimension of continuing the salvific work of Christ for men, insofar as she is the recipient of the greatest, particular gifts from him.

«In the economy of salvation there are not only God and individual persons, but also gatherings of men as such. These gatherings are such in a real and proper sense, i. e. as particular subjects which are certainly not to be identified with a mere complexus of many men. They possess those two factors by which gatherings subsist as real (moral) entities, which are undivided in themselves and divided from all others and thus distinguished from individual men who are gathered in them. These factors are: the fact of a good distinct from the goods which men have as individuals, as well as the fact of being an operative principle.

»The gatherings which we have in mind are the people of Israel in the economy of the Old Testament, the kingdom of God promised to this people and fulfilled by Christ, the Church of Christ, which denotes this very kingdom as verified with a juridical structure . . . To be avoided most carefully is that, when we think of the Church, we abstract from its juridical structure and thus set up two churches. What we wish to do is to consider two aspects or two distinct formalities in the one Church»²⁵.

Fr. Xiberta sees the evidence of Scripture as witnessing to two fundamental truths: that the religious gatherings of men are the object of the love of God, of divine providence and predestination, and secondly, to forstall Protestant objections, that these gatherings precisely as such effect man's salvation. Speaking of the peo-

²⁴ *Lumen gentium*, especially the first chapter.

²⁵ *De Ecclesia*, pp. 61-62.

ple of Israel he notes: «The title by which individual Israelites become accepted by God, so long as they preserve the covenant, is placed in their lineage from Abraham. No other factor of an operative principle in the order of salvation is named»²⁶. «For you are a people consecrated to Yahweh your God; it is you that Yahweh our God has chosen to be his very own people out of all the peoples on earth. If Yahweh set his heart on you and chose you, it was not because you outnumbered other peoples: you were the least of all peoples. It was for love of you and to keep the oath he swore to your fathers that Yahweh brought you out with his mighty hand»²⁷. What in the Old Testament was embodied in the chosen people, in the New Testament was fulfilled in Christ, whose Body, the Church, became the dynamic source of new life: «If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow in all ways into Christ, who is the head by whom the whole body is fitted and joined together, every joint adding its own strength for each separate part to work according to its function. So the body grows until it has built itself up, in love»²⁸.

In an additional question, Fr. Xiberta completes his basic picture of the Church of Christ, as he identifies the grouping of men endowed by God with spiritual gifts and the concrete, visible society which the Scriptures witness to as continuing even after the death of the Apostles. «What we read about the Church beloved of Christ in the New Testament, of the Church's power to effect man's salvation, etc., does not bear on a certain, merely ideal Church, but on that concrete society which was developping before the eyes of all»²⁹. He points out that the congregation of Christians immediately appears as the seat of all those goods brought by Christ through the Holy Spirit: this appears clearly on Pentecost itself; but also subsequently when the charisms, signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit, were habitually communicated to those who had been or were about to be received into the Church³⁰.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 63-64.

²⁷ Deut. 7: 6-8; also cf. Ex. 19: 4-5; Deut. 10: 15; Deut. 26: 18-19; Deut. 32: 8 ff; Ps. 79: 9-16; Is. 5: 1-17; Is. 62: 1-12; Is. 66. 10 ff; Jer. 2: 2.

²⁸ Eph. 4: 15-16; cf. also Jn. 15: 1-5; I Tim. 3: 15.

²⁹ *De Ecclesia*, 73-74.

³⁰ Cf. Acts 2: 1-4; Acts 10: 44-47; 11: 15-18; 19: 1-6.

THE PROPERTIES OF THE CHURCH

Having described the nature of the Church of Christ, Fr. Xiberta turns his attention to the properties of this Church, which expectedly will follow from its dual make-up: internal and external. As an introduction, he provides a study of the names by which Scripture designates the Church of Christ, since the modern mentality insists that «realities are not fully expressed by the partial predicates which are detected in them by way of abstraction . . . comprehensive intuitions . . . are to be gathered from symbols and analogies»³¹. There follows a kerygmatic study of images also dwelt on by the II Vatican Council³²: Church, Kingdom of God, city, temple, house of God, Body of Christ, Spouse of Christ, Communion of saints.

Since the properties of the Church which have to do with the spiritual goods committed to it are the basis and cause of those which pertain to its external structure, Fr. Xiberta treats the former first. There is a two-fold series of properties: one which relates the Church to the three divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity, the other has to do with the spiritual gifts entrusted to the Church. These studies make even more concrete the vision of Fr. Xiberta in regard to the place which the Church holds in man's justification and thus form the basis of his ecclesiological view of the sacrament of penance, which he had first expressed in his dissertation *Clavis Ecclesiae*.

THE CHURCH'S RELATIONSHIP TO CHRIST

He begins with the relation of the Church to Christ and summarizes his view in three sentences: «The Church is *the* work of Christ, since she is totally constituted by the reception of his salvific power; outside of her this salvific power is in no way realized.

»The Church includes Christ in herself, as him who presides over her and distributes the *bona*.

»Besides, she is like the continuation and fullness of Christ,

³¹ *De Ecclesia*, p. 77.

³² *Lumen gentium*, 6.

insofar as she brings the saving power of Christ to individual men and she is the glorification of Christ»³³.

The importance of the Church, then, rises from her complete penetration by Christ, the Incarnate Word, who in the above summary is described in his threefold function as source of the Church, as part of her permanent constitution, as functioning in the Church.

In the first place the Church is completely from Christ: nothing pertains to her except to the degree that it is derived from Christ. The Church depends on Christ in a much deeper way than the chosen people of Israel depended on their covenant with Yahweh. For Israel as a people was constituted by its carnal origin from Abraham and thus constituted, received the dignity of being the people of God besides. In this way the people of Israel and the people of God are two formalities that could be separated. Not so with the Church of Christ. The Church received her first existence from the founding hand of Christ, so that to the degree that she should lose what she received from Christ, to that degree she would be nothing in the order of salvation. Societies which perhaps exist from another source than Christ's institution lack internal strength. And so the institutions founded by the mere human members of the Church through the centuries, such as the cardinalate or the patriarchates, are marginal and do not fall under the heading of Christian values except insofar as they can be reduced or are an aid to those elements instituted by Christ himself.

Consequently Christ Jesus left nothing in the order of salvation except the Church and the gifts (*bona*) which belong to her, of which the sacrament of penance is one. Just as there is no economy of salvation outside of Christ, so there is no saving work of Christ outside the Church. Through what causality did Christ institute the Church? In those ways in which Christ through an active causality redeemed men; because for Fr. Xiberta it is the same thing for Christ to found the Church and for men to receive the saving influence of Christ. Thus the Church is caused by Christ both by his Incarnation, by his redeeming death and by his resurrection³⁴.

³³ *De Ecclesia*, p. 86.

³⁴ Fr. Xiberta postulates both a meritorious and an efficient-formal causality. Meritorious in the sense of both dispositive and moral cause; insofar as he in-

Secondly, the Church founded by Christ is not such that once founded she can exist separated from him. Rather she is bound to Christ permanently; she receives her gifts (*bona*) from Christ permanently, as he causes them here and now. The Church, thus, continues to exist with Christ and in Christ. This presence of Christ is altogether real; the strength, security and dignity which the Church enjoys depends on this. Nor is this presence static, but dynamic: Christ in the Church continues to exercise the work without which the Church would cease to be. The Church and Christ, then, are not distinguished adequately but only partially, just as a living body is only partially distinguished from the head or the soul. However, Christ is not in the Church on a par with everyone else: he is preeminent over all, as the prime analogue predominates over secondary analogues, and a cause predominates over its effects. Christ is in the Church functioning analogously to the function of the most noble organs in a living body: thus he is called head, vine, corner-stone.

Thirdly, the Church, so replete with Christ, practically becomes his continuation, his fullness, his complement³⁵. The Church takes the place of Christ, but in a much more efficacious way than those who take the place of a human superior. The Church represents Christ on earth as long as he is «personally» absent, since it was necessary that he return to the Father to make constant intercession for us. Fr. Xiberta sees this representation not as a mere presence, but, as she retains the power of Christ, the Church in some way repeats those things which are constantly required to foster our salvation (surely the sacrament of penance is one of these). Thus she renders Christ present in a perennial way so that Christ himself does invisibly what the minister of the Church performs externally³⁶.

The Church completes Christ. As the fruit of the redemption,

duces the disposition which attracts the form and he manifests to God the good for which it is fitting that God dispense grace to men. Efficient-formal insofar as he communicates (rather than effects) his own grace, the Holy Spirit, divinity whose fullness abides in him personally: *De Ecclesia*, p. 87.

³⁵ Xiberta (*De Ecclesia*, p. 87) gives an example of a king, who when he leaves for a journey, leaves a regent who enjoys all necessary prerogatives so that he is capable of fulfilling his function. He is looked on as the continuation and repetition of him whose place he is filling.

³⁶ Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7.

in which the power of Christ is made manifest or rather Christ is manifest with his power, the Church as a result actually accomplishes by her constant action that salvation of mankind which Christ while he dwelt on our lands performed only potentially (so to speak). Should the death and resurrection of Christ not be followed up by the perennial action of the Church, the salvation of the world would in no way be effected. But Fr. Xiberta warns against exaggeration: the Church is not the fullness of Christ in quality or intensity, but in quantity, in expansion, in diffusion, and thus her overall dependence on Christ. She has nothing that is essentially hers that she has not received from Christ.

As the glorification of Christ, the Church, enriched by Christ's gifts, serves as a sign lifted up for all nations to see, by which Christ is enabled to make his power clear to all men. The existence of the Church is a constant manifestation of the glory which Christ received at his resurrection: the proof that all power in heaven and on earth was truly given to Christ. This aspect of the Church is most fully realized in the heavenly assembly or church, while in the terrestrial Church, though the characteristic of glory is not lacking, still it also must provide for men the image of Christ crucified³⁷.

This Christocentric view of the Church is summarized thus by Fr. Xiberta himself: «In the Church everything belongs to Christ. Nothing in her is of value except what Christ really instituted: nothing of what Christ instituted can licitly be taken away from her»³⁸. In showing that Scripture amply gives this picture of Christ and his Church, Fr. Xiberta speaks thus of the functions of the Church: «The Church performs for us the functions of Christ; in reality, those which call for the power of Christ. These are the sacraments and sacrifice, as well as the preaching of the Word. In a generic way this is found in John 20: 21: 'As the Father sent me, so also I send you'»³⁹.

³⁷ On this point Xiberta refers to A. VONIER's, *Le Mystère de l'Église*.

³⁸ *De Ecclesia*, p. 90.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

THE CHURCH'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE FATHER

In treating the Church's relationship to the Father, Fr. Xiberta concentrates on the action of God in the line of efficient causality, while the Holy Spirit is studied later in his relation to the Church in the line of eminently formal causality. «The Church of Christ is *the* work of divine providence in regard to the economy of salvation of the New Testament. This providence is unique since it involves the redemption of Christ. However, it is inserted into the more common providence governing the whole world»⁴⁰.

The Church, then, is the concrete realization of the plan of divine providence for the salvation of men in the New Testament economy. For if in creation God exalted man above all other creatures; if the Jewish people was loved with predilection above the other peoples, then which much greater predilection is the new order of salvation initiated by Christ favored by the Father. In this sense it can be affirmed that this New Testament salvation is the end and summit of all of creation, or as St. Paul has it «the mystery hidden from all ages»⁴¹.

However, the Church is not the subject of constant miracles nor of perpetual exceptions to the normal course of events, as affected by God's providence. As the Church is on pilgrimage on earth, she is in no way segregated from the rest of men, but rather she shares in the common lot of mankind. In this she follows the example of Christ who wished to be like us in all things but sin, who only after he had passed over into glory became for us an exemplar on whom we can model ourselves. Practically, this means that, according to the normal course of providence, the evil spirits are allowed to battle the Church constantly and men in this life are left with the defectibility of free will⁴². Because of this fact, there will be need for divine forgiveness, which is found in Christ's plan in the sacrament of penance.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 94.

⁴¹ Col. 1: 26.

⁴² *De Ecclesia*, pp. 94-95.

THE CHURCH'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

To the Holy Spirit should be ascribed the divine actions which affect man in the line of eminently formal causality, as explained in the tract *De Vita Supernaturali*⁴³. «The Church of Christ is created and preserved by the coming of the Holy Spirit who abides in her as the eminently formal cause of all her supernatural gifts.

«Thus the Holy Spirit is aptly conceived as the mystical person of the Church and is called her soul and heart»⁴⁴.

The action of the Holy Spirit reaches the Church itself and does not merely affect individuals as such, much less does it set them up in competition with the Church. Nor should the action of the Holy Spirit be imagined as attaining an ideal reality after the fashion of Platonic ideas rather than real human beings. Like other moral entities, the Church is made up of men; however, it is not formally identified with the multitude of men. The Holy Spirit affects the Church, acting in men insofar as they make up the Church; and also according to the function they hold in the Church, be it hierarchical or lay. In this the Catholic position is in direct contrast with the Protestant view, which sees the Holy Spirit aiding individuals as such without reference to their belonging to the Church.

But even more: the action of the Holy Spirit does not reach the Church in any which way, but gives her existence at her very roots, and thus determining her very nature. For, the economy of salvation of the New Testament is not so set up that the Holy Spirit first produces individual fruit in individual men, namely justification, and the faithful so justified are then gathered and become the Church. This would be so if justification in the first place consisted in the created gifts of grace and virtues, because these gifts are received subjectively by each man precisely as an individual. On the contrary, justification primarily begins with the communication of the Holy Spirit, who is one and personal. Thus a social unity is effected by the justifying Spirit immediately and from the

⁴³ *Tractatus de Vita Supernaturali*, vol. 1 (lithographed), Romae, 1964; also cf. *De ratione entis supernaturalis* in «Carmelus» 4 (1957) 3-49.

⁴⁴ *De Ecclesia*, p. 96.

very start. Thus in the New Testament supernatural life is born already marked with the seal of social unity.

The Spirit can be conceived of as the mystical person of the Church. In this sense the Spirit is the subject from whom the important functions of the Church flow and to whom therefore they are attributed. The function of the Holy Spirit certainly differs from Christ's; the Spirit is sent by Christ to further and expand his work. The Spirit is also called the soul and heart of the Church. Christian tradition often uses the name 'soul' insofar as the soul is the principle of life in man, the internal and invisible principle. The heart is analogously applied to the Spirit insofar as the influx of the heart on the life of the body is a hidden but most essential process⁴⁵.

How this dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church is related to the sacrament of penance is made clear in the Scriptural testimony, which Fr. Xiberta summarizes under four headings:

«1) The Spirit is sent not to one or another man, but to all who are inserted into the new economy of salvation. The Spirit is, then, the bond of unity, especially since he is not a mere form subjectively received... but is a divine person, who acts on all as one and the same.

»2) In the infusion of the Holy Spirit there is place for Christians to act on others, as is evident from the sacramental nature which is inseparable from Christianity.

»3) The Holy Spirit is affirmed to be given in part so that the individual members of the Church might contribute something to the common good and receive something from others, as takes place in the human body.

»4) The Holy Spirit in his action is predicated as joined both with the universal Church and with the sectors of the Church»⁴⁶.

The second point especially gives the ecclesiological background for Fr. Xiberta's concept of reconciliation with God through the Church in the sacrament of penance. He goes on to explicitate that the Apostles receive the Holy Spirit in order that they might communicate salvation to others. He cites John 20: 22-23: «Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you shall forgive, they shall be for-

⁴⁵ Cf. *Summa Theologica* III, 1 ad 3um.

⁴⁶ *De Ecclesia*, p. 100.

given . . . ». Besides this, they communicate the Holy Spirit by the rite of imposition of hands, which signifies the transmission of power from one to another⁴⁷. Also pastors are instituted by the Holy Spirit: «The Holy Spirit placed bishops to preside over the Church of Christ, who redeemed her by his blood»⁴⁸. And so at the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem what the pastors decided was considered a decision of the Holy Spirit⁴⁹.

THE HOLINESS OF THE CHURCH

Fr. Xiberta's consideration of the holiness of the Church flows from this relationship to the persons of the Blessed Trinity, and particularly to the Holy Spirit. In his view, the fact that there is this close relationship between the Triune God and the Church, the latter is adorned with priceless qualities which in some way reflect the divine attributes. Among these qualities there are two which bear on the spiritual goods entrusted to the Church: truth and holiness. Holiness and how it relates to the Church, in Fr. Xiberta's mind, is a dogmatic, not an apologetic question and thus holiness becomes not just a characteristic of the Church but a property in the strict sense, which reveals the true nature of the Church.

Fr. Xiberta's summary of his views on the holiness of the Church is as follows:

«The Church was founded as the seat of holiness which Christ brought to the world.

»She is holy and immaculate. Being totally consecrated to God, she possesses the means, the fruits and the splendor of outstanding holiness.

»However, since she remains subject to battle with evil so long as she is on pilgrimage here on earth, it is fitting to the real situation that some of her members fail in holiness, thus becoming aliens in the Church, without, on the other hand, being expelled from her ranks *ipso facto*⁵⁰.

There are, then, four elements to this vision: 1) The position of the Church in the economy of salvation in regard to holiness; 2) a general affirmation of holiness; 3) the parts by which the

⁴⁷ Acts 8: 17; 19: 6; II Tim. 1: 6.

⁴⁸ Acts 20: 28.

⁴⁹ Acts 15: 28.

⁵⁰ *De Ecclesia*, 113.

holiness of the Church is made integral; 4) defection from holiness.

1) The Church is given as much holiness as Christ wished to bring to this world. The Church is thus the verification of the economy of salvation in the New Testament also in regard to holiness. Actually she was founded in order to exercise the sanctifying function of the new economy of salvation. This is to be taken both positively and negatively: the Church possesses all the holiness of this economy of salvation; nothing of this holiness is found outside the Church⁵¹.

2) The result of this identification of the Church and holiness in New Testament times is that the Church is holy and immaculate without a spot or wrinkle⁵². Her condition is such that she can be simply called holy. This datum of divine revelation must precede any other assertion of what can happen to this holiness in the Church, especially in regard to possible defections from holiness.

3) The holiness of the Church includes all the integrating parts that can be attributed to a society. Firstly, holiness implies a formal consecration, or as some call it, ontological holiness. The Church is an object completely dedicated to God. There is nothing that really pertains to her that is not dedicated to God and conversely, nothing that is not dedicated to God really belongs to her. The Church is thus that portion of the world in which the motive for the Incarnation is verified: Christ came «wishing to consecrate the world»⁵³. As a result of this consecration to God, the Church partakes in the venerability of God; reverence and respect are due her. If we are moved to reverence for stone temples, so much the more should this be verified towards the living Church. Therefore it is illicit to deal with what pertains to the Church as something profane.

The Church is also holy because she has been given the means which Christ instituted to actuate the holiness proper to the new economy of salvation. These means include: doctrine, taken not only from the dual source, but from the Church's declarations as

⁵¹ With these strong statements Fr. Xiberta does not wish to prejudice the position of those who are not fully or normally inserted in the Church. His point is that they possess real holiness only through some relationship to the Church (*De Ecclesia*, 113). Cf. also XIBERTA, *Exigencias de la fe acerca de la unidad de la Iglesia* (Burgos, 1961), p. 248.

⁵² Eph 5: 25-27.

⁵³ *Roman Martyrology* for Christmas Day.

well; sacraments and sacramentals; the other Church institutions through which divine truth shines; and at the same time the power to foster holiness is at work. In Fr. Xiberta's mind, preeminence must be given to the Eucharist, sacrament and sacrifice, through which the work of redemption is actualized here and now, from which the whole economy of salvation flows; and not only the work is present but He who is actually working. Thus the Eucharist is the sacrament of the Church, by which the Church is gathered together.

The Church is also holy because of what she produces. There is a multitude of faithful who have received the help of the Church and thus acquired a moral purity, even to a heroic degree. The Church is so constituted that she spontaneously generates men, outstanding for their moral holiness, who have received the stimulus to holiness from no other source than the Church.

4) In the Church both individuals and institutions can cease to be holy either by a lack of moral purity or by not fostering and reflecting true holiness. When such cases are verified, the Church has no part in evil, and the perpetrators are alien to the life of the Church⁵⁴. However, they are not by that very fact thrown out of the Church. «Christians who have committed even the most grievous sin, lose their full insertion which the just enjoy; they can hardly be called fellow citizens with the saints and the household of God; they lose the right to those gifts of the Church, which have the nature of anticipated glory, such as the right to the Eucharist; however, they do not in the least cease to be members of the Church»⁵⁵. This point is important for Fr. Xiberta's views on the power of the keys, exercised in the sacrament of penance precisely by the Church, which would have no jurisdiction over sinners if they did not in some way remain her members even when they have fallen seriously.

⁵⁴ On this point Fr. Xiberta does not seem to stress the image of the Church which is bespoiled when members do not reflect the holiness of the Church in their lives. He writes (*De Ecclesia*, 115): «Quod Christiani male operentur, ipsis solis individualiter imputandum est nullam partem ecclesiae habente. Malum quod aliqui Christiani operentur, non est Ecclesiae malum, sed malum peccatoris quod ecclesiae patitur. Non datur igitur communicio in malis respondens communioni in bonis. Vitia membrorum ecclesiae sunt sicut corpora illa extranea quae a vivente non intus suscipiuntur».

⁵⁵ *De Ecclesia*, p. 115.

THE SACRED POWER OF THE HIERARCHY

This power which the Church exercises over sinners is part of the sacred power which Christ himself conferred on certain members of the Church. As a matter of fact, Fr. Xiberta insists that the hierarchy is established precisely in the act of conferring this sacred power through the sacrament of Orders, and not vice versa. «If the hierarchical nature of the Church is to be traced back to Christ, *a priori* we must judge that it rises from the conferral of sacred power; for it is fitting that the Savior enact his divine work not in setting up juridical forms, but in instituting sacred things»⁵⁶. It is not a question, then, of Christ giving a list of requisites and of those who enjoy this power, as is done in the constitutions of modern societies; rather he, in his function as Redeemer, conferred the sacred power. The importance of this doctrine lies in the fact that it is not a question merely of a form of government, i. e. of external elements which can easily be changed without harming the spiritual gifts (*bona*); rather it is question of the means which Christ instituted to communicate those very spiritual gifts.

«Ordinary men, when they originate social entities, hasten to trace a list of coordinated duties which embraces all needs, and to insure continuity look for officials with the proper capabilities, who then acquire authority by their very nomination. This is the only procedure possible for men, who do not attain reality except through the exterior. Christ Jesus, on the contrary, since he is the original source of all power in the order of salvation, proceeded thus: having chosen the Twelve, he bestowed supernatural goods on them, which should characterize Christians. He gave them another mission, accompanied by the power to communicate these gifts to other men, and by way of such power he left them constituted in relation to the Church. Sacred Scripture narrates the creation of the Apostles and the mission of the seventy-two disciples, it notes various bestowals of sacramental power and the general mission to preach to every creature . . . »⁵⁷.

Fr. Xiberta summarizes his thought thus: «Christ our Lord

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 157-158.

⁵⁷ XIBERTA, *El Papa y los obispos*, p. 240.

founded a hierarchical Church; he set men over the Church on whom he conferred a sacred power that they might communicate the spiritual goods to the rest of the faithful.

»This sacred power which establishes the hierarchy in no way extenuates other gifts of certain faithful, which are given for the building up of the Body of Christ.

»In the Church the distinction between clerics and laity or between the active and passive hierarchy is essential»⁵⁸.

The institution of the hierarchy, then, is of divine, not merely human origin. The nature of this hierarchy given the Church by Christ is not just one social form which was chosen out of many others, but rises from a sacred power. Christ's main purpose was that the supernatural gifts of the present economy of salvation should not be dispensed privately to individual men, but by conferring on men chosen for this, the power to minister these gifts. This is a continuation of what Scriptures tell us: Christ Jesus taught Paul what he was to do through Ananias; he granted remission of sins to those who were baptized by the apostles. Thus, the social make-up of the Church rather than being an immediate object of positive institution, should be seen as a result of the way in which Christ decided the supernatural gifts were to be conferred. Just as the Church was made the mediator of the supernatural life by the sending of the Holy Spirit, so she was hierarchically constituted by the conferral of sacred power on some by the same Spirit. It is for this reason that Fr. Xiberta insisted time and again that the study of the hierarchical structure of the Church was not a juridical question, but a theological, even mystical one⁵⁹.

To forestall any misunderstanding about this sacred power, Fr. Xiberta hastens to speak about the coexistence of non-hierarchical gifts. Sacred power is not conferred on those who preside over the Church in a monopolistic way, by which all power is given

⁵⁸ *De Ecclesia*, p. 159.

⁵⁹ Cf. also XIBERTA, *Fundamento del carácter social de la Iglesia* in «*Orbis catholicus*» 6 I (1963) 412-413: «Sabemos muy bien por la divina revelación que la Iglesia así constituida con dones sobrenaturales personales ha recibido por voluntad del Señor la estructura externa que deriva de la jerarquía fruto del sacramento del Orden... Por otra parte, no sería exacto decir que fuera invisible la Iglesia en cuanto causada originariamente por aquellos dones sobrenaturales personales, porque entre ellos se cuentan elementos muy visibles, como son, por ejemplo, la posesión comunitaria del tesoro de las verdades reveladas y la vida sacramental, particularmente la participación en el sacrificio eucarístico».

to one person and others have none. On the contrary, in the work of Christ the hierarchical power leaves individual goods fully operative — and not just restricted to private ends, but for the purpose of the building up of the Body of Christ.

These individual gifts include charisms, often met with in the New Testament and continued in the Church's history with forms such as private revelations and insights, which are to be included within the Church. As a matter of fact certain liturgical feasts such as Corpus Christi and the Sacred Heart of Jesus resulted from such revelations. Also included are sanctifying grace, the virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit and their fruits (merit, satisfaction, petition). The doctrine of the Communion of saints follows from this. The Church is ever a mystical reality, and not primarily a juridical one. The Secretariate of State, v. gr. does not give the Church more power; this comes from the constant power of the ever-acting Christ. The Popes act only after numerous prayers have been offered by the faithful. At a canonization ceremony the Pope acts and proclaims a new saint only after all the faithful present have begged for God's light and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Included also are natural gifts such as the studies of theologians, Catholic Action, the part of the people in the election of their bishop in the ancient Church. «All of these together with the hierarchical constitution of the Church do not become less useful and fruitful, but they are meant to contribute to the real usefulness of the Church»⁶⁰.

CONCLUSION

That Fr. Xiberta was consistent in this vision of the hierarchy being first and foremost constituted by the conferral of sacred power by Christ himself, is confirmed by many factors in his tract on the Church. Among the most obvious is the question on the three-fold function of the hierarchy as ruling, sanctifying and teaching. He simply leaves the whole question of the power of sanctification to the tract on the sacraments⁶¹.

Because of the indispensable function of the Church in man's

⁶⁰ *De Ecclesia*, p. 160.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

justification, it is not difficult to understand why Fr. Xiberta would have opted to see the *res et sacramentum* of the sacrament of penance as reconciliation with the Church. The foregoing summary of his views on ecclesiological questions pertinent to the understanding of his theory, underscores the prominent place of the Church in the present economy of salvation. It is a delight to come on many insights in the writings of Fr. Xiberta which were later collaborated even by the highest magisterium of the Church. Doubtless, some of his insights will betray their pre-Vatican II stamp, but it is amazing to come upon so many questions which are dealt with in an *au courant* way. Not the least of these is the ecclesial dimension being given to the sacrament of penance, not just in theory but also in the practical and concrete forms of penance. It is gratifying to see that Fr. Xiberta, in his public defence of the thesis *Clavis Ecclesiae*, never had to divert from his original vision that the sacraments are first and foremost acts of Christ, and as such must be acts of the Church.

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