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SHORT TITLE

Presented to the Faculty
of the University of St. Louis,
Missouri, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

PAUL'S CONCEPT OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

by
Raymond Carl Schulze

June 1959

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1603

THE PAULINE CONCEPT OF THE BODY OF CHRIST
AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN THE LITERATURE
OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

Raymond Carl Schulze

June 1959

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There is no sin in thought, word, or deed, no matter how personal or secret, that does not inflict injury upon the whole fellowship. An element of sickness gets into the body; perhaps nobody knows where it comes from or in what member it has lodged, but the body is infected. . . . We are members of a body, not only when we choose to be, but in our whole existence. Every member serves the whole body, either to its health or to its destruction. This is no mere theory; it is a spiritual reality. And the Christian community has often experienced its effects with disturbing clarity, sometimes destructively and sometimes fortunately.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this study to determine what Paul means when he calls the Church the "Body of Christ."

The concept of the "body" is central to Paul's theology. With the word *σῶμα* Paul links together all his great theological themes. We are delivered from the "body" of sin and from the "body" of death (Rom. 6:6; 7:24). We are redeemed through the "body" of Christ on the cross (Col. 1:22). We are members of Christ's "body," the Church. We are sustained by Christ's "body" in the Eucharist (1 Cor. 11:24, 27). The new life is manifested in our "body" (1 Cor. 6:20; 2 Cor. 4:10). We are destined to a resurrection of this "body" (1 Cor. 15), and our "bodies" will be likened to the glorious "body" of Christ (Phil. 3:21).¹ One could say that the leitmotif of Paul's theology is the leibmotif.² J. A. T. Robinson calls the concept of the "body" the "keystone of Paul's theology."³

The task of this study, however, is to move toward an understanding of one aspect of Paul's "body theology." Our concern is not to explain what Paul means by *σῶμα*, nor even

¹cf. J. A. T. Robinson, The Body: a Study in Pauline Theology (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952), p. 9.

²J. Robert Nelson, "Many Images of the One Church," The Ecumenical Review, IX, 2 (January, 1957), 109.

³J. A. T. Robinson, loc. cit.

what he means by $\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$ τοῦ Χριστοῦ , but to discover what he means when he calls the Church $\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$ and $\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$ τοῦ Χριστοῦ .

We assume the traditional view of Paul's authorship of Colossians and Ephesians as well as of Romans and First Corinthians, the four epistles with which we principally deal. Furthermore, it has been part and parcel of our method to treat the theology of the "Body of Christ" as a unit, emphasizing not the differences between the accents of the various epistles but attempting to make clear the same basic pattern which is common to them.⁴

The exegetical sections of this study do not pretend to exhaust the meaning of the passages under discussion.⁵ It is rather our purpose to supplement the mass of material in

⁴Cf. Markus Barth, "A Chapter on the Church--The Body of Christ; Interpretation of 1 Cor. 12," Interpretation, XII, 4 (April, 1958), 141: "The time when a 'divide et impera' politics made the interpretation of Paul a ready victim of the interpreter's wishes has passed and should belong to the past. Though different Pauline epistles in their use of the term 'body of Christ' show distinctly different emphases, they all speak of Christ after one and the same basic pattern." Cf. also L. S. Thornton, The Common Life in the Body of Christ (London: Dacre Press, 1944), p. 48: "whatever developments may be traced in the doctrine of the Body of Christ as between earlier and later Pauline epistles, these are subsidiary to the main conception, namely, that Christ and his people share one single life together after a manner which can be fitly symbolized by the idea of a single human organism. Whatever distinctions are to be recognized, they must be compatible with the notion of a living unity which justifies the language of identity as actually used."

⁵All New Testament quotations used infra are from the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated. The Greek text is that of Nestle's twenty-third edition.

print on this subject with a modestly fresh look at the New Testament and with a view to stressing some factors left unnoticed or at least unstressed by the principal monographs and commentaries. We have, of course, consulted the secondary sources and have incorporated into the text or notes the relevant material or references. Thus our conclusions are not to be considered final, but supplementary to the conclusions of others.

The overriding principle of our method has been to ask only those questions which the New Testament asks and to answer only those questions which the New Testament answers. No doubt this has been imperfectly accomplished. But it has been this approach which has brought us to the conclusion that the term "Body of Christ" with reference to the Church describes the relationship and function of Christ to the Church and the Church to Christ and the Body's members to each other, and not so much the nature of the Church, or its structure.

It is generally impossible for us to know how much the language of four different churches . . . including two (Rome and Orleans) he had not visited; and nowhere does he have to justify his terminology, however startling may have been the content he put into it. J. A. F. Robinson, *The Body of Christ in Pauline Theology* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952), pp. 27-28.

They claim that "the fact that *oikos* is not commonly found in Greek of a 'body' of people in precisely the Pauline sense appears to be simply another way of saying that we have only a few fragments of Pseudepistolas in Greek and that we do not possess the demographic actual of the Hellenistic Synagogue, in which the Jewish notion of a body and the High Priest at its head may fairly be assumed to have appeared." W. L. Lane, "Parallels to the New Testament Use of *oikos*," *Journal of Theological Studies*, III, (1938), 244. It is

CHAPTER II

THE BACKGROUND FOR PAUL'S USE OF THE TERM "BODY OF CHRIST"

The use of the word "body" to stand for a group of people is quite familiar to modern readers. It appears, however, that it must have been quite unfamiliar to Paul's first readers.¹ It would be more accurate to say that Paul does not employ this usage. His readers must have understood what he meant; nowhere does Paul find it necessary to defend his terminology. Yet we have little evidence either from the Scriptures or from other sources to show that the term "body" could have been understood by Paul's readers as referring to a society.²

¹"The use of the word 'body' to mean a group of people is so familiar . . . that it is easy to forget that it was quite unfamiliar . . . to the people to whom Paul was writing. Further, it is important to recognise that the Apostle is not apparently conscious of making any innovation in his usage. It is naturally impossible for us to know how much teaching lay behind the epistles now extant. But he uses the language to four different churches . . . including two (Rome and Colossae) he had not visited; and nowhere does he have to justify his terminology, however startling may have been the content he put into it." J. A. T. Robinson, The Body: a Study in Pauline Theology (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952), pp. 49-50.

²Knox claims that "the fact that $\sigma\mu\alpha$ is not commonly found in Greek of a 'body' of people in precisely the Pauline sense appears to be simply another way of saying that we have only a few fragments of Posidonius in Greek and that we do not possess the doxographic manual of the Hellenistic Synagogues, in which the Jewish nation as a body and the High Priest as its head may fairly be assumed to have appeared." W. L. Knox, "Parallels to the New Testament Use of $\sigma\mu\alpha$," Journal of Theological Studies, XXXIX, (1938), 244. It is

One basic problem is, therefore, that our understanding of the term "body" is different from that of Paul and his contemporaries. The reason is that when Paul uses the phrase "Body of Christ" he seems to be referring to a person, Christ, and not to a society.

To say that individuals are members of a person is indeed a very violent use of language--and the context shows that Paul meant it to be violent. . . . But it is of great importance to see that when Paul took the term $\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$ and applied it to the Church, what it must have conveyed to him and his readers was (to employ a distinction which itself would have surprised him) something not corporate but corporal. It directed the mind to a person; it did not of itself suggest a social group.³

What was the basis for such an understanding? It has been suggested that the background of Paul's terminology is to be found in Stoicism, Gnosticism, Rabbinical speculation on the body of Adam, various Old Testament conceptions of corporate personality, or other miscellaneous sources. Some students of Paul would see the background of his terminology in the sayings of our Lord, others in the event of Paul's conversion. The possibility that there really is no background for Paul's thinking but that his terminology was simply forced upon him in the logical development of his thought and in opposition to misconceptions of his readers

to be noted that this is an argument from silence, and that it can therefore hardly weigh against our thesis. If $\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$ is not found in Greek in this sense, we must operate on the assumption that it was not used in this sense. As a matter of fact, it does not seem that Paul uses it in this sense.

³J. A. T. Robinson, op. cit., p. 50.

has been occasionally proposed. Let us briefly glance at some of these hypotheses.

Parallels in Stoicism⁴

The Church as a body, of which the individuals were members, was derived from the Stoic commonplace of the state as a body in which each member had his part to play; in this form Paul had already worked out the parallelism in the same way in which it is worked out in the later rabbinical literature, no less than in classical writers. Naturally it was also a commonplace of Hellenistic Judaism; the Stoic commonplace was the more easily adapted in view of the metaphors from the body found in such passages as Deut. 28:13.⁵

The principal argument for Stoic sources of Paul's terminology is to be found in Paul's use of the assumed discussion between members of a body in 1 Cor. 12:12 ff. This "discussion" would be included in what Knox calls a Stoic "commonplace." Among these commonplaces was a fable which seems to have had wide currency in the ancient world. It was a particular favorite of the Stoics.⁶ Dionysius of Halicarnassus relates the fable, and it is worth quoting in part.

⁴Cf. T. Schmidt, Der Leib Christi: Eine Untersuchung zum Gemeindegedanke (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1919); W. L. Knox, St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles (Cambridge: University Press, 1939); G. Johnston, The Doctrine of the Church in the New Testament (Cambridge: University Press, 1943). These are among the principal exponents of Stoicism as Paul's source for Body of Christ terminology.

⁵Knox, St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles, p. 161.

⁶J. A. T. Robinson, op. cit., p. 59, quotes Lietzmann as noting similar ideas in Plutarch, Aurelius Victor, Valerius Maximus, Cicero, Seneca, Sextus Empiricus, Dio Chrysostom, Themistius, Josephus, Maximus Tyrius, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and 1 Clement.

A commonwealth resembles a human body. For each of them is composite and consists of many parts; and no one of their parts either has the same function or performs the same services as the others. If, now, these parts of the human body should be endowed, each for itself, with perception and a voice of its own and a sedition should then arise among them, all of them uniting against the belly alone, and the feet should say that the whole body rests on them; the hands, that they ply the crafts, secure provisions, fight with enemies, and contribute many other advantages toward the common good; the shoulders, that they bear all the burdens; the mouth, that it speaks; the head, that it sees and hears and, comprehending the other senses, possesses all those by which the thing is preserved; and then all these should say to the belly, "And you, good creature, which of these things do you do? . . .?"⁷

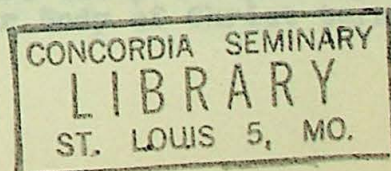
The fable continues by defending the belly as that which sustains the whole body, even though it seems to do nothing but take in. The same argument is applied to the function of the senate within the state.⁸

It should be obvious that the difference between this fable and Paul's usage is that this fable and similar ones deal in similes. For Paul, the Church is the Body of Christ. In the second place, the fable tries to prove which member is the greatest, the opposite of Paul's intent. At the same time, the relationship of the two accounts is so obvious as to lead one to conclude that Paul did not conceive at least the form of his expression unaided.

Furthermore, $\sigma\mu\alpha$ is used as a metaphor for the whole system of the cosmos, which includes men as its members.

⁷As cited by J. A. T. Robinson, ibid., note 1.

⁸Ibid.



There emerges in later Stoicism the view of the state not only as a body, but as a body of which the king or emperor is head.⁹

Stoicism was "in the air" during the Apostolic Age. Paul certainly was familiar not only with Stoic thought in general but with Stoic terminology in particular. But Paul's conception of the "Body of Christ" is completely unique and certainly unparalleled in Stoicism in that he neither says that the Church is like a body nor that the Church is a body. He tells his readers that they are the Body of Christ. Such a conception is radically and inherently different from any parallel in Stoicism.¹⁰

Parallels in Gnosticism¹¹

The principal argument is that Gnosticism developed the idea of the Heavenly Man as the head of the body which was composed of the faithful, members of the saved community. This appears to have been a development of an earlier Gnostic

⁹E. Best, One Body in Christ (London: S. P. C. K., 1955), pp. 222-223.

¹⁰"The uniqueness of the New Testament phrase resides not in the word $\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$ but in the qualifying genitive. The body is not $\tau\acute{o}$ $\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$ $\tau\acute{\omega}\nu$ $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\iota\alpha\upsilon\acute{\nu}\omega\nu$ but $\tau\acute{o}$ $\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$ $\tau\acute{o}\upsilon$ $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\upsilon$." T. W. Manson, "Parallel to a New Testament Use of $\Sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$," Journal of Theological Studies, XXXVII (1936), 385.

¹¹cf. H. Schlier, Christus und die Kirche im Epheserbrief (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1930); E. Kaesemann, Leib und Leib Christi, Beitrage zur Historischen Theologie 9 (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1933). These are the principal exponents of Gnosticism as Paul's source for Body of Christ terminology.

idea of the cosmos as the body of God who was its head. The later development, then, put the Heavenly Man in the place of the god of the cosmos.¹² Speaking of the Heavenly Man the Odes of Solomon say, "They received my blessing and lived; and they were gathered to me and were saved; because they were to me as my own members and I was their head."¹³

Schlier feels that this evidence conditioned only the Ephesian material.¹⁴ Kaesemann¹⁵ and Bultmann¹⁶ feel that it affected Romans and First Corinthians terminology and thought, also. There are two considerations which would render Gnostic influence questionable. The first is that Paul and Gnosticism use $\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$ in differing senses. It is a commonplace that in Gnosticism the $\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$ is the prison of the $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ of man. For Paul the $\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$ is man in his outward being.¹⁷ "For the Gnostic the Heavenly Man wears believers as a

¹²Best, op. cit., p. 85.

¹³As cited by Best, loc. cit.

¹⁴Schlier, op. cit., pp. 39-43.

¹⁵Kaesemann, op. cit., pp. 159 ff.

¹⁶R. Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, translated by K. Grobel (New York: Scribner's Sons, c. 1951), I, esp. 178-180.

¹⁷Cf. E. de W. Burton, Spirit, Soul and Flesh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1918), passim. Also F. Kuemmel, Das Bild des Menschen im Neuen Testament, in Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments 13 (Zuerich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1948), pp. 20-40.

garment (body). A man's clothes are not part of him; they are external to him and cannot be regarded as included in him."¹⁸

The second consideration which militates against Gnostic influence is that we do not find the idea of human beings as members of the Heavenly Man until about 150 A. D. In fact, this whole system of thought does not find perfected expression until Valentinus, the heretic, and his disciples.¹⁹

This is not to say that the myth of the Heavenly Man itself was post-Pauline. It is to say that Paul did not simply "take over" Gnostic conceptions and adapt them to his purposes. If there is any influence to be detected, it would be, as is the case with Stoicism, an influence of "form" and not "matter."²⁰

Rabbinical Speculation on the Body of Adam²¹

¹⁸Best, op. cit., p. 86.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 224 ff. Cf. Markus Barth, "A Chapter on the Church--The Body of Christ; Interpretation of 1 Cor. 12," Interpretation, XII, 4 (April, 1958), 137: "The syncretist myth-mixture of the Aion-god, the Primordial Man, and the Messenger-Redeemer may not have been concocted before about 150 A. D." Cf. also Best, op. cit., p. 225: "the closer the gnostic writing is to Christianity, and the greater its influence therefrom, the more clearly is the metaphor to be found." Cf. E. Percy, Der Leib Christi (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1942), p. 40.

²⁰E. Percy, op. cit., pp. 39 ff., says that the idea of the "heavenly man" as even "representative" is lacking in the Gnostics.

²¹W. D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism (London: S. P. C. K., 1948), is the chief exponent of rabbinical speculation on the body of Adam as Paul's source for Body of Christ terminology.

Davies argues that Paul's acceptance of the Rabbinic doctrine of the unity of mankind in Adam made Paul's terminology understandable to his readers, and thus gave him reason for employing the term Body of Christ in a sense at least similar to the term body of Adam.²² The doctrine of the unity of mankind in Adam

implied that the very constitution of the physical body of Adam and the method of its formulation was symbolic of the real oneness of mankind. In that one body of Adam east and west, north and south were brought together, male and female. . . . The "body" of Adam included all mankind. Was it not natural, then, that Paul when he thought of the new humanity being incorporated "in Christ" should have conceived of it as the "body" of the Second Adam, where there was neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond nor free. The difference between the Body of the first Adam and that of the Second Adam was for Paul that whereas the former was animated by the principle of natural life, was $\psi \delta \mu \alpha$, the latter was animated by the Spirit.²³

Davies sees the role of Christ as one of reconstituting the unity of mankind in Himself as it was one in Adam, the latter in a physical sense, the former in a spiritual sense.²⁴

A major difficulty with this view is that the phrase body of Adam is used neither by Paul nor by the rabbis. Paul does speak of mankind as being "in Adam" (1 Cor. 15:22), but, as Best argues, if he had known the term body of Adam, he would certainly have used it in his comparison in 1 Cor. 15:22 as a phrase more suitable to his argument.²⁵

²²Ibid., pp. 36-57.

²³Ibid., p. 57.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Best, op. cit., p. 92.

It appears that the argument of Davies would be acceptable in part were we to find evidence of the usage of the term body of Adam. The lack of such evidence, however, is the missing link in the argument.²⁶ Furthermore, the term Body of Christ never suggests the oneness of mankind in Christ. There are certain requirements for incorporation into the Body of Christ beyond that of being a "part of mankind."

Old Testament Background²⁷

1. The Nation as Person.

It is possible that Paul's conception of the Body of Christ could have been influenced by the view of the Old Testament of the nation of Israel as a person. First of all, it must be noted that Israel as a nation was considered a complete unit (Ps. 33:12; Is. 5:1 ff.; 27:2; 63:13; Jer. 50:17;

²⁶Cf., however, M. Barth, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-141, who points out that Paul uses the body-member terminology "only in those letters in which he also bases his argument upon the idea of the first and the last Adam. . . ." But Barth also observes that such evidence is not "strong enough by itself to support or to prove as absolutely sure the Hebrew origin . . . of the term 'body of Christ.'"

²⁷Cf. A. Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, translated by W. Montgomery (New York: Henry Holt and Co., c. 1931); A. R. Johnson, The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1942); F. W. Billistone, "How is the Church Christ's Body?" Theology Today, II, 1 (April, 1945), 56-68. These stress the Old Testament background as Paul's source for Body of Christ terminology.

Ezek. 19:10-14; Hos. 10:1-2; Ps. 80:8-19). But the thought of Israel as a unit is complemented and superseded by the conception of the nation as a person.

She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce; yet her false sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the harlot (Jer. 3:8).

Plead with your mother, plead--for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband (Hos. 2:2).²⁸

The city of Jerusalem appears as the daughter of Zion (Is. 10:32; 52:2; 62:11). The nation of Israel is also called the servant of Yahweh (Is. 41:8 ff.). The nation of Israel is called by a personal name--Israel, Jacob--the name of the ancestor of the people.²⁹

2. The King and the People.

Pedersen points out that the king in Israel forms with his people a "psychic whole."³⁰ This is a conception similar to that of "corporate personality" or "racial solidarity."³¹ The actions of the king directly affect his people.

²⁸Cf. also Ezek. 16, passim.

²⁹J. Pedersen, Israel, Its Life and Culture (Oxford: University Press, 1926), I-II, 206, shows that the people of Israel can be called Jacob also from the viewpoint that Jacob lives on in them. "When a man has progeny, it means that his soul persists, nay, which is more, it grows. It spreads in his sons and the sons of his sons, and the more numerous they are, the greater the soul becomes."

³⁰Ibid., III-IV, 76-106.

³¹Best, op. cit., pp. 203-208.

When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel; but you have, and your father's house, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals," (1 Kings 18:17-18).

Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years. . . . And David sought the face of the Lord. And the Lord said, "There is blood guilt on Saul and on his house, because he put the Gibeonites to death," (2 Sam. 21:1).³²

Thus we see that for the pious Hebrew, the life of the individual Israelite along with that of his nation was bound up with the actions and life of the king, and with the whole house of David.

3. The High Priest and the People

It is Pedersen again who helps us to understand the solidarity of the "one" with the "many."

Now it was the high-priest who was to secure through the cultus that strength for the people which it had previously been the duty of the king to create. However, it is particularly the negative element which comes into the foreground. A sin committed by him reacts on the whole community, therefore special expiatory offerings are made for him (Lev. 4,3 ff.; 16). How largely the whole psychic life of the people with its responsibility was associated with him may be seen from the fact that murderers were exempted from their blood-guilt when the high priest under whom they had incurred it died (Num. 35,25. 28. 32).³³

4. God and the People Identified.

³²Cf. also 2 Sam. 21:17; 24:17; 1 Kings 17:1; Lam. 4:20, et. al.

³³Pedersen, op. cit., p. 190.

Further possible background material for the Pauline conception of the Body of Christ is to be found in the Old Testament understanding of the solidarity which Israel enjoyed with God himself.

I will make my abode among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people (Lev. 26:11-12).

Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for lo, I come and I will dwell in the midst of you, says the Lord. And many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people; and I dwell in the midst of you (Zech. 2:10-11).

Furthermore, the actions of Israel's enemies which affect Israel are seen as actions directed against God himself.

Return sevenfold into the bosom of our neighbors the taunts with which they have taunted thee, O Lord (Ps. 79:12).

Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am against you, Mount Seir. . . . Because you said, "These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will take possession of them,"--although the Lord was there--therefore, as I live, says the Lord God, I will deal with you. . . . because of your hatred against them (Ezek. 35).

For thus says the Lord God: My people went down at the first into Egypt to sojourn there, and the Assyrian oppressed them for nothing. Now therefore what have I here, says the Lord, seeing that my people are taken away for nothing? Their rulers wail, says the Lord, and continually all the day my name is despised (Is. 52: 4-5).³⁴

Though there is nothing approaching the Pauline development of the solidarity of the New People with God, there is indicated here the kind of relationship between God and his

³⁴Cf. also Zech. 1:14-15; Ezek. 25:8-11.

people which is similar to numerous Matthean statements. (Cf. Matt. 25:40, 45, et. al.) When Israel suffers, God feels it. When Israel is maligned, God is maligned and takes revenge.³⁵

5. The Messiah and the Elect.

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom . . . his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. . . . But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, for ever, and ever (Dan. 7:13, 14, 18).

Although this passage does not speak of the Messiah in the strictly technical sense of the term, it has at least been infrequently interpreted as Messianic among the rabbis.³⁶ Best claims that the phrase son of man has been understood as denoting the Messiah, possibly because verse eighteen is read in disassociation from verses thirteen and fourteen.³⁷ But whether or not we are to give these verses

³⁵A. R. Johnson, The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1949), pp. 105-106, "In fact, the important thing for every Israelite is that, as Abigail said of David, he should be 'bound up in the bundle of life' . . . with Yahweh his God."

³⁶Cf. Best, op. cit., p. 210. But see also J. Y. Campbell, "The Origin and Meaning of the Term Son of Man," Journal of Theological Studies, XLVIII (1947), 144-145, who says that there is "no certain evidence, in Jewish writings, earlier than the first half of the third century after Christ" for the Messianic interpretation of Dan. 7:13.

³⁷Best, loc. cit.

a Messianic interpretation, the solidarity of the "one like unto the son of man" with the "saints of the most high" is certainly demonstrated.

Furthermore, the Messiah may have been identified by the rabbis of Paul's day with the Servant of Deutero-Isaiah. Davies is among the few who thinks that such an identification may have been made.³⁸ But with regard to these passages of the Servant Songs it seems unimportant to determine the extent of their understanding as Messianic by the rabbis. If we are looking for possible background material for Paul's thinking in regard to the Body of Christ, we will note that the primitive Christian community (and the Lord Himself) most certainly identified such passages with the Messiah, namely, with Jesus of Nazareth.

It is at precisely this point that the gap between the Old Testament and the thinking of Paul is closed by Schweitzer. In spite of his over-emphasis on eschatology, Schweitzer is correct in seeing that both Jesus and Paul move in the thought world of eschatology and that "the concept of this community of the saints in which, by the predestination of God, the saints are united with one another and with the Messiah as the Lord of the Elect, is to them perfectly familiar."³⁹

³⁸Davies, op. cit., pp. 99-100 and pp. 274 ff.

³⁹Schweitzer, op. cit., p. 104.

Whether we trace the conception of a community of the Messiah to Dan. 7 or to Is. 53, or both, we are confronted with the fact that "Jesus . . . was gathering around Himself a community of people pledged to loyalty to Him above all else."⁴⁰ Thus we see that the solidarity of the remnant, the elect, the community with the Messiah is possibly the background of Paul's thinking in his usage of the term Body of Christ.⁴¹

Still we do not have a basis for Paul's detailed use of the "corporate solidarity" of Christians with their Lord.

The Conversion Experience

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

⁴⁰Davies, op. cit., p. 100.

⁴¹Cf. R. Newton Flew, Jesus and His Church (New York: Abingdon Press, 1938), p. 80: "Here we shall find the link between the original teaching of Jesus, on the one hand, and, on the other, the thought of the primitive community in Jerusalem and the profounder Christianity of St. Paul. The preaching of the βασιλεία involves the gathering of the true Israel of God, the little flock. Jesus Himself as the destined Messiah gathered this community in close companionship with Himself. In fellowship with Him now, they have their guarantee of fellowship with the Son of Man hereafter. St. Paul takes up his conception of a corporate relationship of the community with Christ Himself and interprets it by what is misleadingly called his Christ-Mysticism." Cf. also M. Barth, op. cit., p. 142, who feels that it is most likely that the "representative history" of the Jesus of history is the basis of Paul's teaching of the Body of Christ, but that really convincing sources have not as yet been found.

Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren. . . . Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me (1 Cor. 15:3-8).

Paul claims that the resurrection appearance of Christ to him is parallel to that given to the other apostles. Paul had seen the Lord. He does not say that there was a difference between the pre-ascension appearances and Christ's post-ascension appearance. There is to be found here one of the reasons for Paul's preaching the resurrection of the dead. He had actually seen Jesus.

In Paul's defense before Agrippa he describes how he threw the saints into prison, how he cast his vote against them when they were put to death, how he punished them in the synagogues. He adds, "and in raging fury against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities," (Acts 26:11). On the journey to Damascus Paul heard a voice saying to him in Hebrew,

"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It hurts you to kick against the goads." And I said, "Who are you, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and bear witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, . . ." (Acts 26:14-16).

Paul was persecuting the saints, and the Lord asked, "Why do you persecute me?" It is obvious that such an experience could have so shaped the thinking of the apostle as to make the idea of the solidarity of the believers with Christ in his Body a central factor in Paul's Gospel.

The appearance on which Paul's whole faith and apostleship was founded was the revelation of the resurrection body of Christ, not as an individual, but as the Christian Community. In face of this it would seem unnecessary to go further for an explanation of why the body of Christ inevitably meant for him what it did.⁴²

As striking as the conversion experience of Paul seems to be in relationship to his development of the concept Body of Christ, one need not look to it as the sole basis for its development. Jesus had said, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me," (Matt. 18:5); and, "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me," (Matt. 25:40). Schweitzer finds the link between the teaching of Jesus and Paul's "mysticism" in passages such as these. Robinson would base it squarely on the conversion experience. Dodd puts them together.

The idea of the solidarity of believers with the Lord is present in Paul's conversion experience, and the doctrine of the Body of Christ follows from it; but that idea is already given in the sayings of Jesus as they appear in the Gospel according to Matthew.⁴³

Conclusions

⁴²J. A. T. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 58. Cf. F. Prat, The Theology of Saint Paul, translated by J. L. Stoddard (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, Ltd., 1957), I, 300, who maintains that "the theory of the mystical body is not the product of the growth of years. It is impossible to trace its gradual development; it had no history. Apart from its application and consequences, it is wholly contained in the remark of the Saviour to Paul: 'I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.'"

⁴³C. H. Dodd, "Matthew and Paul," Expository Times, LVIII (1947), 296.

We have not attempted to give an exhaustive overview of the possible sources of Paul's usage of the phrase Body of Christ. The problem has been approached through Stoicism, Gnosticism, rabbinism, apocalypticism, Old Testament concepts of corporate personality, and through Paul's own account of his conversion experience. None of these approaches can offer us a complete answer.

The problem can certainly be approached by seeing a development by Paul of his "in Christ" concept into his doctrine of the Body.⁴⁴ The precedence of Paul's teaching on the Body of our Lord in the Eucharist and of his idea of the Church as the Bride of Christ to his development of the "Body of Christ" idea offers other possibilities.⁴⁵

It is most reasonable to assume that the origin of the term Body of Christ was the result of the combination of thoughts and influences which bore in upon Paul from his varied background as a Hebrew of the Hebrews,⁴⁶ and as an

⁴⁴An excellent brief summary is to be found in Best, op. cit., pp. 1-33, who frequently takes issue with the position of W. Schmauch, In Christus: Eine Untersuchung zur Sprache und Theologie des Paulus, in Neutestamentliche Forschungen 9, edited by D. O. Schmitz (Gutersloh: Bertelsmann Verlag, 1935).

⁴⁵The former has been thoroughly explored by A. E. J. Rawlinson, "Corpus Christi," in Mysterium Christi, edited by G. K. A. Bell and A. Deissmann (London: Longmans Green, 1930), pp. 225-244, the latter by C. Chavasse, The Bride of Christ (London: The Religious Book Club, n.d.).

⁴⁶Cf. Moffatt, as cited by F. W. Dillistone, "How Is the Church Christ's Body?" Theology Today, II, 1 (April, 1945), 62-63.

apostle who had become all things to all men. His conversion experience could be interpreted as the crucial event which gave rise to a synthesis of the "background" ideas. At the same time "we must never forget the creativeness of Paul as a thinker; he may have hit on the use of the term quite by himself."⁴⁷

He would exclude other influences: "He [Paul] is in line with the working of the Hebrew mind which readily personified the divine community, as in the Psalms. The anticipations of his view are to be found in apocalyptic mysticism, with its concept of a solidarity between the elect and their Messiah; the Son of Man and the Suffering Servant of the Lord were readily associated with a transcendent, corporate idea of the saints."

⁴⁷Best, op. cit., p. 94.

take always to refer to the Church. The Church thus becomes the completion of Christ who is being filled (*anapluo*).¹ It seems rather to be more in keeping with the rest of the New Testament and other Pauline material to take the *anapluo* as referring to Christ and not to the Church. "God gave Christ to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body, and to be the fulness of him (that is God) that filleth all in all."² But the grammatical difficulties here are burdensome.

¹J. Ambrose Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (2nd edition, London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1909), pp. 37-39, 236-237, et al.

²Wm. G. F. B. Miles, "Fulness' and 'Fill' in the New Testament," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, IV (1951), 81.

³Ibid.

CHAPTER III

THE BODY OF CHRIST--ITS HEAD

What is the relationship between Christ and the Church which Paul describes when he calls Christ the Head of the Body?

Ephesians 1:22-23

- 22) καὶ πάντα ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοῦς πόδας αὐτοῦ, καὶ αὐτὸν ἔδωκεν κεφαλὴν ἑπὲρ πάντα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ,
- 23) ἣτις ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου.

Nearly all commentators take πλήρωμα to refer to the Church. The Church thus becomes the completion of Christ who is being filled (πληρουμένου).¹ It seems rather to be more in keeping with the rest of the New Testament and other Pauline material to take the πλήρωμα as referring to Christ² and not to the Church. "God gave Christ to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body, (and to be) the fulness of him (that is God) that filleth all in all."³ But the grammatical difficulties here are burdensome.

¹J. Armitage Robinson, St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians (2nd edition; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1909), pp. 87-89, 255-259, et al.

²With C. F. D. Moule, "'Fulness' and 'Fill' in the New Testament," Scottish Journal of Theology, IV (1951), 81.

³Ibid.

The πλήρωμα in this verse must refer to the Church.⁴ Head and Body are a unity, and life flows from the Head to the Body (Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:15, 16). In this way Christ is understood as filling the Body with his gifts and life. Christ is the πλήρωμα of God (Col. 2:9), and the Body is the πλήρωμα of Christ (this passage); that is, as God's attributes fill Christ (Col. 2:9), so the life and "attributes" of Christ fill the Church. In this sense the Head is related to the Body; the Body is filled by the Head.

But what of πληρουμένου ? It may be either middle or passive. Its active sense is warranted but unnecessary since Paul uses the active voice when he wants to express such a sense (Eph. 4:10).⁵ A translation of the word in the passive sense would give the idea that Christ, who fills the Church, is himself being filled by God.⁶ The strength of this

⁴But not πλήρωμα as the Body in complement to the Head. "The use he [J. Armitage Robinson] quotes of πλήρωμα for the 'complement' of a ship or city is not a real parallel. The crew and population are what fill these and make them complete for their function. In this sense the complement of the head would be the brain, not the body. There is no evidence that πλήρωμα is used in the case of two mutually supplementary things. Thus, in Mark 2:21, it means a 'patch'--that which fills a hole and makes the garment complete for its function. It would be an unwarranted extension of this use to apply it to the other half of a pair of pyjamas!" J. A. T. Robinson, The Body: a Study in Pauline Theology (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952), p. 67, note 2.

⁵Cf. Ernest Best, One Body in Christ (London: S. P. C. K., 1955), p. 143, note 2.

⁶Cf. W. L. Knox, St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles (Cambridge: University Press, 1939), p. 186. Cf. also J. A. T. Robinson, op. cit., pp. 69ff., and Best, op. cit., pp. 139-145.

interpretation is that it takes the meaning of πλήρωμα seriously,⁷ it does not force the meaning of πληρουμένου, and it fits the present context as well as the close parallel in Col. 2:9, 10.⁸

What does this add to our understanding of the Head's relationship to the Body? Christ is given to the Church as Head above all possible headships.⁹ Thus his absolute sovereignty is established over his Body. It is the resurrection and exaltation of Christ the Head that gives him this sovereignty (as well as sovereignty over all things) and that establishes the Body as the recipient of the resurrection Life of the Head.¹⁰ The Body is always receiving what the Head is giving always, a new life demonstrated in peace and love¹¹ and made possible in the one-time resurrection. The one who gives this new life is Christ, the Head, who in turn

⁷Even according to J. Armitage Robinson, op. cit., pp. 255-259.

⁸Note E. K. Simpson, Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), p. 43, note 42, who takes πληρουμένου as a middle and gives it reciprocal sense: "to fill for oneself . . . all things are for Christ." But Eph. 1:22-23 emphasizes Christ as Head for the Church.

⁹Best, op. cit., p. 146. Cf. J. A. T. Robinson, op. cit., p. 66, who points out adequately that "every time the headship of Christ is mentioned in Ephesians and Colossians it is in the closest conjunction with His body, the Church."

¹⁰One must read at least 1:20 through 2:7 as a unit.

¹¹Eph. 2, passim.

has received it from the Father (1:20) and always receives it in every way from him.¹²

To sum up: Christ is the Head above the universe to the Body and is sovereign ruler of both; as the Head of the Body he is constantly supplying the Body with his own life and power which he constantly receives (or which he has fully received) from the Father.¹³

¹²For τὰ πάντα ἐν ᾧ used adverbially cf. J. Armitage Robinson, op. cit., pp. 44, 152, and Knox, op. cit., p. 186, note 3. One could translate, "who is always being filled in every way." The Church need look for a head nowhere else, in a stellar intermediary, for example. The Church's Head, Christ, is filled in absolutely every way by God. Why look elsewhere than to Christ for the divine pleasure? Paul uses πάντα adverbially in 1 Cor. 9:25; 10:33; 11:2; Phil. 4:13 and in Ephesians he uses τὰ πάντα adverbially in 4:15.

¹³If it is necessary to insist upon understanding the Body as that which is the completion of Christ, perhaps the best formulation of this is to be found in L. S. Thornton, The Common Life in the Body of Christ (2nd edition; London: Dacre Press, 1944), p. 310: "It must therefore be recognized that . . . there are two senses in which the Church is the fulness of Christ. In the primary sense the Church is the fulness because the mystical body is like a vessel into which the fulness of Christ is poured. He fills it with himself. In the secondary sense, however, the Church may be called the fulness of Christ because that fulness cannot be manifested amongst men without or apart from the human vessel which contains it. As Christ is the indispensable mediator of God's fulness, so the Church is the indispensable container of Christ's fulness. On the first view the Church is empty apart from Christ; on the second view Christ is inaccessible without the Church. The Church apart from Christ would be like an empty wine-cup. Christ without the Church would be like wine, which, for lack of a wine-cup, no one could drink. To conceive of the Church apart from Christ is like thinking of an empty jewel-case. So Christ without the Church would be like precious treasure hidden, buried, or inaccessible."

Colossians 2:9-10

- 9) ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς,
 10) καὶ ἐστὲ ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληραμένοι, ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας

Our concern with this passage is to discover to what the Head is related, and if it is related to the Body, the Church, to discover what this passage adds to our understanding of the Head-Body relationship.

Some interpreters, assuming that Christ's headship always applies to his Body, adduce this passage as evidence that the "heavenly powers" are included in his Body.¹⁴ J. Armitage Robinson thinks that there is a reference to the Church in σωματικῶς.¹⁵ But this seems to be straining the sense of the word a bit. We go along with Moule who agrees that it would be attractive to "interpret it as 'organised in one personality'" but that it probably means "in a bodily person--in the Jesus of history."¹⁶

¹⁴Martin Dibelius, An die Kolosser, Epheser, an Philemon, in Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Guenther Bornkamm, (3rd edition reworked by Heinrich Greeven; Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1953), pp. 29-30.

¹⁵J. Armitage Robinson, op. cit., p. 88, paraphrases thus: "For in Christ dwells all the fulness . . . of the Deity, expressing itself through a body . . . for He who is your head is indeed universal head of all that stands for rule and authority in the universe."

¹⁶Moule, op. cit., p. 80. Cf. also Phil. 3:21, "the body of his glory." But cf. William F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, c. 1957), ad loc., (hereinafter referred to as A-G).

It is possible, however, to assume that Christ as Head in this passage is related in headship to his Body, the Church, without finding a reference to the Church in *σωματικῶς* and without assuming the inclusion of the cosmic powers in the Body. Such an assumption is possible in this passage since Paul relates the Head to the Body, the Church, in 1:18 previous to this passage and in 2:19 after this passage. Moreover, if this passage indicates Christ as Head of the "cosmic powers," it would be the only one in which such a relationship is indicated.¹⁷ Paul's use of *κεφαλή* in reference to Christ in every other passage in Ephesians and Colossians relates it to Christ's Body, the Church.¹⁸

Furthermore, Paul always loads *κεφαλή* with more than "sovereignty" and "lordship." There is always a relationship of unity indicated by him with the Body, and the head is

A-G claim that the verse most likely is to be understood from v. 17 of the same chapter, with *σῶμα* opposed to *οὐρα*, as meaning "in reality, not symbolically."

¹⁷The only possible parallels are Eph. 1:22-23, where we have shown (*supra*, pp. 23-26) that "head" is related to the Body and only secondarily to the cosmos, and Eph. 1:10 where *κεφαλή* is not used, but *ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι*, which may be more dependent on *κεφαλή* than on *κεφάλαιον*; but this is not certain, in spite of H. Schlier, "Κεφαλή," *Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, edited by G. Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1938), III, 681-682.

¹⁸Outside these letters, Paul's only use of it in reference to Christ is 1 Cor. 11:3, "The head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God."

always seen as a source of help.¹⁹ Such a relationship is lacking with the universe; even though it is reconciled (Col. 1:20), Christ "triumphed over" the principalities and powers, and this was for the sake of the Church.²⁰

This evidence would lead us to conclude that Col. 2:9-10 is a close parallel to Eph. 1:22, and that substantially the same thought is set forth: Christ is Head to the Church, his Body, over and above every supposed headship of ἀρχή or ἐξουσία.

What does this passage add to our understanding of the relationship of Christ as Head to his Body, the Church?

Everything that God is and does is completely (permanently) resident in Christ. As Head to his Body, the Church, Christ fills the members of the Body with what he has from the Father.²¹ There is no need, therefore, to make a cult of angels (1:16; 2:18) nor to fear the powers of the heavens (1:20). There is no need to depend upon ἀρχή and ἐξουσία because Christ, the Head of the Body, includes in his person every ἀρχή and ἐξουσία.²² The Church has unity with God

¹⁹Also in those passages in which the husband is referred to as "head" of the wife.

²⁰Cf. Col. 2:15, and note the δυν in v. 16.

²¹Note the parallelism in these verses: πλήρωμα, πεπληρωμένοι .

²²A genitive of definition or apposition is possible.

because it has unity with Christ as his Body and therefore needs no longer placate other intermediary "powers."

Colossians 2:18-19

- 18) μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς καταβραβεύτω θέλων ἐν ταπεινοφροσύνῃ καὶ ῥησικείῳ τῶν ἀγγέλων, ἃ ἑώρακεν ἐμβατεύων, εἰκὴ φυσιοῦ-
μενος ὑπὸ τοῦ νοῦς τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ,
- 19) καὶ οὐ κρατῶν τὴν κεφαλὴν, ἐξ οὗ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα διὰ τῶν ἀφῶν καὶ συνδέσμων ἐπιχορηγούμενον καὶ συμβιβαζόμενον ἀξεί τὴν ἀξῆσιν τοῦ θεοῦ.

Paul describes Christ, the Head,²³ as the source of the Body's growth, sustenance and unity. *Ἐπιχορηγούμενον* means "support" in the sense of "sustain with every necessity of life."²⁴ *Συμβιβαζόμενον* means "hold together," "unite." Christ as Head is the source of everything essential to the Body's life and is likewise the source of its "holding together." It is from the Head as source that the Body grows. But *ἐξ* with the genitive indicates more than that the Head is the source. The Head is the cause of the Body's sustenance, unity and growth. Christ is not just the one to whom the Body looks for help. He is constantly supporting the

²³Note the *ἐξ οὗ* after τὴν κεφαλὴν ; a construction according to sense. The κεφαλὴν becomes masculine because it is Christ. Cf. Moule, The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon in Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary, edited by C. F. D. Moule, (Cambridge: University Press, 1957), p. 106.

²⁴A-G, ad loc., list 1 Clem. 38:2, "Let the rich man support the poor man," and Hermas 2:6, "The poor man, who is supported by the rich."

Body and holding it together. He is constantly causing its growth. This he accomplishes through (the agency of) members of the Body.²⁵

How is the genitive τοῦ Θεοῦ at the end of the verse to be understood? Best claims that the entire clause is dependent on ἐξ οὗ and that τοῦ Θεοῦ cannot therefore describe the source of the growth; "rather, it must describe its nature--a divine type of growth. The increase comes from Christ and its quality is divine."²⁶ Such an interpretation is not a grammatical necessity nor a theological one.²⁷ God is the source and subject of the Body's growth, as is Christ, the Head. The one already described as the εἰκὼν of God, πρωτότοκος (1:15), πρωτεύων (1:18); the one "in whom the universe was created" (1:16) and "in whom resides permanently all the πλήρωμα of the Godhead" (2:9), this one is God himself, in the person of Christ, the Head of the Body. That is why members of the Body must "hold closely" to the Head; he is no one less than God himself who gives all growth and sustenance and unity.

Ephesians 4:15-16

²⁵This concept is discussed infra, Chapter IV. The concept of the growth of the Body is discussed there also.

²⁶Best, op. cit., p. 128.

²⁷It is, of course, a grammatical possibility.

- 15) ἀλγοεύοντες δὲ ἐν ἀγάπῃ ἀβήτησαμεν εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα, ὃς ἐστὶν ἡ κεφαλὴ, Χριστός,
- 16) ἐξ οὗ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβασόμενον διὰ πάσης ἀφῆς τῆς ἐπιχορηγίας κατ' ἐνέργειαν ἐν μέτρῳ ἑνὸς ἑκάστου μέρους τὴν ἀβῆσιν τοῦ σώματος ποιεῖται εἰς οἰκοδομὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ.

This passage is obviously parallel to Col. 2:19. Does it add anything new to our understanding of the relationship of the Head to the Body? In the preceding context Paul speaks of the Body as attaining the maturity of a full-grown man (v. 13), and in this verse he describes the Body as growing up into Christ in every way.²⁸ This is not necessarily a picture of the Body's growing up into the Head. Rather, it is that "having spoken of Christ, the writer then remembers that he is the Head, mentions this, and starts off on a new chain of ideas (v.16) suggested by the word κεφαλὴ."²⁹ The idea is one of growing up into Christ, but not into Christ as Head.³⁰ As Head Christ gives the Body sustenance, unity, growth. As Head he does not receive the Body's growth but supplies it. Thus this passage tells us nothing new about Christ's relationship to the Church as Head to Body.³¹

²⁸We take τὰ πάντα as an adverbial accusative.

²⁹Best, op. cit., p. 149.

³⁰Cf. J. Armitage Robinson, op. cit., p. 103, "the Apostle here passes from the thought of Christ as the Whole; into which we are growing up, to the thought of Him as Head, upon which the Body's harmony and growth depends."

³¹The function of the Body in this passage is discussed infra, Chapter IV.

Ephesians 5:23

ὅτι ἄνθρωπος ἐστὶν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναίκος ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, αὐτὸς σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος.

Again we are concerned with the relationship of the Head to the Body.³² Best concludes:

There is a new emphasis with regard to the place of the Head. Previously, in this Epistle and in Colossians, the Head supplied and nourished the Body, gave to it its own internal unity, and was itself held to it in the closest of unions. Now these relationships recede into the background and the Head becomes the overlord or ruler of the Body.³³

It seems more likely that σωτὴρ is to define the function of the Head in relation to the Body. As Head, Christ is savior; not "as Head, Christ is overlord." It is true that the Church is subject to Christ as Head, just as wives should be subject to their husbands, for the husband is head of the wife (vv. 23-24). But this does not imply that Christ as Head is overlord or ruler of the Body any more than it implies that the man's function is one of overlord or ruler of the wife.³⁴ The husband's role is one of loving his wife. Christ as Head saves the Body as once he "loved the Church and gave himself up for her" (v. 25). This becomes especially evident when one does not supply καὶ before αὐτός

³²Other material on this verse is contained infra, Chapter IV.

³³Best, op. cit., p. 162.

³⁴Cf. Schlier, op. cit., pp. 678-679, on 1 Cor. 11:3.

in v. 23.³⁵ The thought is not that Christ is Head of the Church, and, in addition, savior of the Body. The thought is more literally after the Greek: "Christ is Head of the Church--(being) himself savior of the Body."³⁶

This passage tells us something new about the Head's relating to the Body. The Head is the savior of the Body. Keeping vv. 25-27 in mind, σωτήρ is to be interpreted in the general sense of σώζω, and therefore linked with the death of Christ. But this does not exhaust its meaning. The Head is constantly delivering, rescuing, preserving his Body from every peril to its life.³⁷ If, with Best,³⁸ we are to understand σωτήρ with reference to vv. 25-27, it must be linked not only with Christ's death but with his "sanctifying" and "presenting." The Head has saved and saves the Body.

We have seen that Paul has described the relationship of the Head to the Body to this point in terms of the Head as source, as savior, and as sovereign. But the matter of sovereignty has not been emphasized, even though it may have been implicit in each use of the term "head." At the same

³⁵Both the RSV and the KJV insert "and" in spite of most insignificant textual-critical evidence. Nestle's edition has καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν inserted only by K [οινή], pl., sy.

³⁶Cf. J. Armitage Robinson, op. cit., p. 124, who goes on to see the husband as savior, in a sense, of the wife.

³⁷Cf. A-G, ad loc., on _____, and _____.

³⁸Best, op. cit., p. 173, note 1.

time, it must not be assumed that Paul uses κεφαλή to suggest control or direction by the mind.³⁹ What he may have been suggesting is "supremacy" and "origin."⁴⁰ The Hebrew equivalent rosh is used of the rule of one man over others in the Old Testament.⁴¹ Paul emphasizes this supremacy exclusively, however, only in Col. 1:18: καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλή

³⁹Moule, The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon, p. 68. But cf. J. B. Lightfoot as cited by Best, ibid. Note the difficulties into which one is led by such thinking in H. A. A. Kennedy, The Theology of the Epistles (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n.d.), pp. 149-150. "Christ is frequently described as the 'Head' of the Body, and of course that is always presupposed. The head requires the body. The brain controls the limbs. The will demands an instrument to carry out its purposes. Here is outlined the daring idea that the Church is the direct manifestation of the life of Christ to humanity, the supreme witness to the Divine intention for the universe."

⁴⁰Cf. S. Bedale, "The Meaning of Κεφαλή in the Pauline Epistles," Journal of Theological Studies, V, 2 (October, 1954), 211ff. Also H. Schlier, op. cit., pp. 673ff.

⁴¹Cf. Deut. 28:13, 43, 44; Is. 9:13; 7:8-9; Judges 10:18; 11:8-9. But cf. also A. R. Johnson, The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1949), pp. 41-42: "we may note . . . that mockery or derision might be expressed by the shaking of the head, while the bowed head must have been recognized quite early as a sign of weakness or humiliation. Moreover, just as blessing might be bestowed by laying one's hand upon the head of the recipient, so the responsibility for shed blood or trouble of any kind could be spoken of in terms of its descending or recoiling upon one's head; and we may recall the way in which Achish of Gath expressed his confidence in David by saying, 'I will make thee a keeper of my head', i. e. as we should say, 'a guardian of my person' or 'one of my bodyguards'. . . . In each of these cases the presence of synecdoche with its implicit grasping of a totality is clear enough, and needs no further elaboration."

τοῦ σώματος, τῆς ἐκκλησίας. ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος
 ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων.

Here Paul shows that just as the universe is subject to Christ, so is the Body subject to him as Head. He has all rule and preeminence.

In 11:17-34 Paul has discussed the situation of the Corinthian congregation at the celebration of the Eucharist. In 12:1-11 he writes of the differing gifts which the Spirit bestows. In the verses which follow Paul describes the functions of some of the members appointed by God to carry out these functions (25-31), and shows the gift of love as "the more excellent way" in chapter thirteen. In chapter fourteen Paul gives into a detailed account of some of the gifts, particularly that of "tongues."

The danger of not viewing this passage in its context is evident from the comment of J. A. T. Robinson.

The unity of Christ, as of the human body, is his Paul's starting-point. He then proceeds to show that the body cannot in fact consist only of "one member", but must be "many" (v.14). The point of the verses that follow (15-21) is not that the different members must be united among themselves (the question of schism does not enter till v.2), nor that it is quite incidental to the passage, but precisely that there must be more than one member if there is to be a body at all.¹

The point of the passage is rather that every member must contribute its function to the unity of the body, and that the functioning of the body depends upon the functioning

¹J. A. T. Robinson, *The Body: a Study in Pauline Theology* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952).

CHAPTER IV

THE BODY OF CHRIST--ITS MEMBERS

First Corinthians 12:12-27

In 11:17-34 Paul has discussed the disunity of the Corinthian congregation at the celebration of the Eucharist. In 12:1-11 he writes of the differing gifts which the Spirit bestows. In the verses which follow Paul describes the functions of some of the members appointed by God to carry out these functions (28-31), and shows the gift of love as "the more excellent way" in chapter thirteen. In chapter fourteen Paul moves into a detailed account of some of the gifts, particularly that of "tongues."

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The point of the passage is rather that every member must contribute its function to the unity of the body, and that the functioning of the body depends upon the functioning

¹J. A. T. Robinson, The Body: a Study in Pauline Theology (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952).

together of the individual members.² One matter that stood in the way of this functioning together was that some of the Corinthians apparently felt that one member was superior to another. This had the double result that some members felt inferior (and this Paul answers in 14-19), and others felt superior (and this Paul answers in 20-25). These attitudes blocked both unity and function. The purpose of the discourse is not only to demonstrate that the Church is a unity, and a unity with Christ.³ Rather, God has so arranged the body (and hence, the Body of Christ, v. 27) that "there may be no discord but that the members may have the same care for one another." In other words, the varying gifts of the Spirit are to be employed within the Body not only that there "may be no discord" but that, positively, the members "may have the same care for one another."

Furthermore, each specialized function of every member of the Body is absolutely essential for the working of every other member and for the functioning of the Body itself. It is worth noting that Paul's emphasis is not only on the fact that each member of the Body is necessary for every other member or necessary to the Body itself. His emphasis is also

2C. H. Dodd, The Meaning of Paul for Today (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1920), p. 154, suggests "organs" as the modern equivalent of μέλη .

³Thus concludes also E. Best, One Body in Christ (London: S. P. C. K., 1955), p. 96.

upon the idea that each member has an essential function. Μέλος does not just mean "part" but "member" or "organ." When Paul writes ποῦ ἡ ἀκοή; and ποῦ ἡ ὀσφρησις; (v. 17) he is not asking, "Where would these parts go?" or, "Where could these parts be found?" but he asks, "How could the body function in hearing and smelling?" It is not simply that organs are essential to each other to make one good-looking body. Organs are essential to each other to make one functioning body.

Thus each Spiritual gift to individual members is essential to the functioning of the other members. Apostles and prophets and teachers (vv. 28-30) are people with differing gifts and differing functions to perform. The function that all the organs (members) perform is that of suffering when one member suffers and rejoicing when one member is honored. This is merely a prelude, however, to Paul's hymn on the function of love in chapter thirteen. Not just suffering or rejoicing is the function which all perform together, but love is the great "function" that is not specialized. It is the task of all members of the Body together.

Finally, the function of each member is not only to serve the common good (v. 7), but it is to serve the unity with Christ. The Body is one (and the Corinthians should remember that and function accordingly), but it is not one of itself; Christ is one, like a body with many organs, and "you

are the body of Christ," not just one body of Christians. This all-important aspect of the Body we shall treat below.⁴

Romans 12:4-5

- 4) καθάπερ γὰρ ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι πολλὰ μέλη ἔχομεν, τὰ δὲ μέλη πάντα οὐ τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει πράξιν,
- 5) οὕτως οἱ πολλοὶ ἐν σῶμα ἴσμεν ἐν Χριστῷ, τὸ δὲ καθ' εἷς ἀλλήλων μέλη.

The context of this passage is similar to that of 1 Cor. 12:12-27. It seems at first glance to add little to what First Corinthians has shown us. The only difference appears to lie in the fact that we have σῶμα . . . ἐν Χριστῷ here and σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ in the First Corinthians passage (and elsewhere).⁵

What this passage says that 1 Cor. 12 does not say is that the members of the Body are καθ' εἷς ἀλλήλων μέλη, individually members of one another. As in First Corinthians, there is here no loss of individuality; but the members are not only individually members of the Body of Christ but individually members of each other. The members do not only "exist only in each other,"⁶ but they function (as organs)

⁴Cf. the end of this chapter.

⁵This matter we take up infra, Chapter V, note 1.

⁶Thus J. Denney, St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, in Expositor's Greek Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1951), II, ad loc. Cf. also A. M. Ramsey, The Gospel and the Catholic Church (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956), p. 38.

by and for each other member. Each member is not only a member of the Body; each member is a member of a member! As we have seen above, this is not only a relationship of unity but a relationship of function. The gifts differ, but they are to be used (v. 6), and they are to be used in helping the other members to function with their gifts. As in First Corinthians, the principal gift that does not differ is that of love (vv. 9ff.).⁷

Ephesians 4:1-16

Similar thoughts meet us in Ephesians. Unity is a datum, but it is to be maintained by peace and love and lowliness and meekness and patience shown to "one another" (1-4). The unity is from the Spirit⁸ and is already given by the

"'Individualism' therefore has no place in Christianity, and Christianity verily means its extinction. Yet through the death of 'individualism' the individual finds himself; and through membership in the Body the single Christian is discovered in new ways and becomes aware that God loves him, in all his singleness, as if God had no one else to love. . . . Hence two kinds of language have always been legitimate for Christians, the one which dwells upon the Body of Christ wherein the individual is merged, the other which dwells upon the individual Christian in his conscious union with Christ. But both kinds of language describe what is really one fact. For the individual Christian exists only because the Body exists already."

⁷Paul uses ἀλλήλων (-ους) in vv. 5 and 10. In v. 5 the members are members of one another; in v. 10 the members love one another; vv. 9-21 are entirely a discourse on love.

⁸Subjective genitive.

Spirit, but it is to be kept, that is, it is not to be lost.⁹ What is the ἐνότης which is brought by the Spirit? It is the one Body, the one Spirit himself, the one Lord, one faith, one baptism, the one God and Father of all. These are not lost but are kept by means of the functions of the members on behalf of one another which Paul describes in vv. 1-3.

These functions are to be carried out by all the members; but Paul goes on to point out the diversity of functions which are given to each of the members, this time for the "building" of the Body of Christ and the attainment of unity.

In 7, 11-14 we meet the picture again of differing gifts. But these are not just gifts or "offices"; they are terms which describe specific functions for a purpose: they equip the saints for the work of serving, for building up of the Body of Christ. The saints build up the Body of Christ; those with special functions of preaching and teaching "train" the saints for such building.¹⁰ This activity goes on until "we all begin to attain to"¹¹ the (kind of) unity

⁹Cf. W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, c. 1957), hereinafter referred to as A-G, on τηρέω with reference to this passage.

¹⁰Perhaps εἰς οἰκοδομήν can be taken in apposition to εἰς ἔργον διακονίας so that we get the sense of "for a work of serving, namely, for building up the Body of Christ."

¹¹Using the "Inceptive Aorist" of E. de W. Burton, Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek (3rd edition, 8th impression; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923), paragraphs 54-55.

that comes from faith¹² and knowledge of the Son of God. This activity must go on and on because the Church is always striving for the attainment of a unity which is already given.¹³

In verses 14-16 the author is carried on by his "building" and "training" and "attaining" thoughts to the idea of the growth of the Body.¹⁴ The purpose of the training, building and attaining is that "we may no longer be children." Children can be easily moved by any kind of teaching which comes from men who speak cunningly and deceitfully. But the Gospel (the truth) is not in craft or cunning but it is to be spoken, and is to be spoken in love.¹⁵ Speaking to one another in this way, we are to grow up into Christ.

The Body is not just acted upon by the Head but plays a vital role in this growth itself. As we have seen, Paul has been leading up to this idea throughout the chapter. Verse 15a indicates that "speaking the truth in love" plays a role in the Body's growth. Now, in verse 16, Paul says that the whole Body is joined and tied together (unified) through the

¹²Subjective genitive.

¹³The "already--not yet" character of this whole section is indicated beginning in v. 1, where Paul begs the Ephesians to "lead a life worthy of the calling to which you were once called."

¹⁴This passage has been partially treated supra, pp. 31-32.

¹⁵The verb here takes the sense of "truth" as the "Gospel." Six verses on, Paul says "the truth is in Jesus." Cf. also Eph. 1 where the Gospel is equated with the "word of truth."

agency of every supporting (sustaining) joint¹⁶ as long as every part works properly. Christ as Head is the source, but the members (ἄφαι) carry his sustenance to the whole Body, and, in fact, by performing their proper functions under the Head the members maintain the Body's unity (συναρμολογούμενον and συμβιβασόμενον).¹⁷ The verse ends with the astounding statement that the Body itself¹⁸ brings about (ποιεῖται) the growth of the Body for its own upbuilding by means of love.

We must not lose sight of the fact that all that is done by the Body is made possible, is given by the Head. But our emphasis is on the relationship of members to members and members to the Body. The Body builds itself up; the members themselves hold the Body together; the members sustain the Body's life. How is this done? The answer is that the members are organs with functions within the Body. All the members have at least one function in common: they speak the

¹⁶ ἄφης , "provided that we use the word accurately of the relations between contiguous limbs, and not loosely . . . of the parts of the limbs themselves in the neighborhood of the contact." J. B. Lightfoot, as cited by C. F. D. Moule, The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon, in Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary, edited by C. F. D. Moule, (Cambridge: University Press, 1957), pp. 106-107. On ἐπιχορηγίας cf. supra, p. 30. Here we take it as genitive of definition in which the second noun stands in direct apposition to the first. Cf. Moule, An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), pp. 38-39.

¹⁷ Here is an echo of a theme we have heard since the beginning of the chapter.

¹⁸ The subject of the clause is πᾶν τὸ σῶμα at the beginning of the verse.

Gospel. Yet each member has a distinctive gift to use;¹⁹ the distinctive gift is put to use in love. When all this is working properly, the Body grows, that is, it grows up in every way and moves from childishness into Christ.

Colossians 1:24

Νῦν χαίρω ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, καὶ ἀνταναπληρῶ τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου ὑπὲρ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, ὃ ἐστὶν ἡ ἐκκλησία

Colossians 1:24 indicates relationships between the sufferings of Paul to Christ (or, more accurately, to the sufferings of Christ) and to Christ's Body, the Church. It is clear from other passages that the sufferings of members of the Body affect other members.²⁰ We turn our attention now to the relationship of Paul's sufferings to "what is lacking in Christ's afflictions."

If there is something lacking²¹ in the sufferings of Christ, these sufferings are not to be understood as those which Christ undertook in his passion for our reconciliation,

¹⁹ Ἐνδὸς ἐκάστου etc. in v. 16 is certainly an echo of ἐνὶ . . . ἐκάστῳ in v. 7.

²⁰Cf. 1 Cor. 12:26; 2 Cor. 7:3-4; 4:10-12; 1:6. In this connection A. Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, translated by W. Montgomery (New York: Henry Holt and Co., c. 1931), p. 126, refers to "the mystical character and wide scope of this communicability of experience [which] has not hitherto received the attention it deserves."

²¹A definite insufficiency. Cf. A-G, ad loc. Cf. also 1 Cor. 16:17; 2 Cor. 9:12; 11:9; Phil. 2:30.

because that reconciliation is fully accomplished and further sufferings for the sake of reconciliation are unnecessary.²²

Moule suggests two possible solutions: the one, that Paul's sufferings contribute to the "total destined afflictions of the Christian Church" (Christ being identified with his Body), the other being that Paul's sufferings complete the effect of Christ's sufferings in the sense that the sufferings of Christians for Christ's name contribute to "the availability, as it were," of Christ's sufferings in his passion.²³ The first suggestion can be dismissed on the ground that even if there were a total number of afflictions destined to be suffered by the Church (which one is led to doubt) it seems contrary to the general teaching of Paul that his sufferings could "make up for" what the Church is to suffer. The second suggestion goes against the sense of the words "lacking in Christ's afflictions." The afflictions themselves are lacking, not their effect or availability. If what is lacking in Christ's afflictions is their availability one must ask how Paul's sufferings would make those of Christ available.

Hebert's suggestion that "the perfecting of the Church also is achieved through sufferings, and in these he (Paul)

²²Cf. Col. 1:20.

²³C. F. D. Moule, "'Fulness' and 'Fill' in the New Testament," Scottish Journal of Theology, IV (1951), 82.

is privileged to have a share"²⁴ is inadequate because it deals only with the "for the sake of his body" and not with the "filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions."

An interesting proposal has been made by Best that these are the "sufferings of the Messiah," the messianic birth-pangs which must be completed before the Parousia.²⁵ These are the "woes of the Messiah" which are "woes that the generation of the Messiah suffered, and not he himself."²⁶ The evidence that Best brings to show that tribulations were expected to be suffered by the Messiah's People in his time, and that the Messiah himself would not suffer in this time is adequate evidence.²⁷ The difficulty is that the "sufferings of the Messiah" are not referred to in the passages which Best lists. The terminology used refers to the suffering of his people. Best himself is unwilling to see an idea of a corporate Messiah as pre-Pauline.²⁸ Hence, if he uses the term "sufferings of the Messiah" to refer to the sufferings of the Messiah's people, he is being inconsistent. What is more, he draws his proof for his thesis from the very verse which he is trying to explain. This would seem to be precarious procedure.

²⁴G. Hebert, "The Church Which Is His Body," The Ecumenical Review, IX, 2 (January, 1957), 120.

²⁵Best, op. cit., pp. 130ff., 134ff.

²⁶Ibid., p. 133.

²⁷Ibid., p. 132.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 208-214.

Finally, the position of Thornton is that "they are messianic afflictions which declare an identity of life between the Messiah and his apostle. That is what gives him joy."²⁹ But if Christ is to be identified with his people in this passage or not, in what respect are his sufferings lacking? Surely not in the area of reconciliation. If our Lord suffers when his own suffer (and he does), and if that is the thought of this passage, why does Paul say that he fills up "what is lacking in" these afflictions? Does Christ, albeit in solidarity with his people, have need of further sufferings? Furthermore, even if one could agree with Thornton that these afflictions "declare an identity of life between the Messiah and his apostle," this is not what gives the apostle joy. Paul explains that what gives him joy is that he suffers "for your sake."

Whatever merit there may be in these solutions, a common-sense solution would be to take τοῦ Χριστοῦ as subjective rather than objective. The sufferings which Paul undergoes are from Christ, that is, they are a part of Paul's work as a δῆμονος of the Church (v. 25), a calling given to him according to the plan of God (v. 25). This is a calling of making known the mystery, that is, of preaching the Gospel for which task Paul says, " κοπιῶ ἀγωνιζόμενος κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐν δυνάμει " (v. 29).

²⁹L. S. Thornton, The Common Life in the Body of Christ (2nd edition; London: Dacre Press, 1944), p. 35.

Elsewhere Paul characterizes his $\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\omicron\nu\iota\alpha$ as one in which he commended himself in every way, also through "afflictions" (2 Cor. 6:3ff.).

Can such afflictions be lacking? There is certainly a need for sufferings of Christians, because suffering is to serve the furtherance of the Gospel (1 Pet. 4:13) and can therefore be "rejoiced in." Suffering is, in fact, necessary for anyone who would be Christ's heir (Rom. 8:17). Suffering is thus a part of the furtherance of the Gospel (and as such a part of God's plan for Paul), and it is perfectly possible for Paul to suffer for the benefit of the elect (this passage, 2 Tim. 2:8-10). The fact that Paul can replace this lack by his own suffering is explained by the fact that this suffering "from Christ" is part of the Gospel mission, and in this task Paul has labored (and suffered) "more abundantly than they all" (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 11:23). Such an interpretation fits the context much more closely than the ones suggested above, and it appears to take all the words of the verse seriously. Sufferings "for the Gospel" are thus "for the Body." Paul does not say for the "upbuilding" of the Body, but for the Body. It is for the Body because it is a part of making known the mystery, Christ himself; and the making known of this mystery is what brings "every man" in the Body to maturity. It is the Gospel that is to be brought to bear on the Body, and sufferings for the Gospel (from Christ) are thus "for the Body's sake."

To complete our study of the relationship of the members of the Body to the Body and to the other members, we briefly glance at passages we have looked at already in another connection.

Colossians 2:19

Although the thought of Col. 2:19 is not identical with that of Eph. 4:16 it is close enough to make unnecessary further extended discussion of this passage. The additional word is "ligaments," the bands by which the body is held together.³⁰ The Body is again the agent through which the Body itself is "sustained" and tied together; that is, the Body's function is one of furnishing "supply" for life and holding the Body together in an already given unity.

Colossians 3:15

καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ Χριστοῦ βραβεύετω ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν,
εἰς ἣν καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι. καὶ εὐχάριστοι γίνεσθε.

As members of one Body, the Colossians are to let the peace which Christ brings be the "umpire in their hearts, settling conflicts of will and bringing co-ordination and direction to life."³¹ The idea is that the members were

³⁰Moule, The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon, p. 107.

³¹Ibid., p. 124.

called as a Body with a view to peace³² and are therefore to live in that peace. But notice how closely bound up with this verse is the preceding verse in which Paul exhorts to "put on love" on top of all the other "clothes" they are to wear. Love is always in close relationship to passages referring to the Body. This is no exception.³³

In the section just completed we have discussed the relationships of the members of the Body to each other as members and to the Body itself. The purpose of doing so was to make clear the fact that the members are in union with each other, that they depend on one another and interact with each other; that they have specific functions to perform to each other and for each other as members and as one Body. But we have separated relationships and functions for the purpose of emphasis which are quite literally inseparable. The members of the Body are members of the Body of Christ. The functions which they carry out for each other and to each other are functions that are given by Christ and are carried out in relation to him as both their means and their end. There is no unity among the members that is not at the same time union with Christ. The Body is not a Body of

³²Moule, An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek, p. 70.

³³Cf. the beginning of Eph. 4 where that to which the members are called includes love and some other of the nouns listed in v. 13 of Col. 3, here under discussion.

Christians but the Body of Christ. It is this relationship that we shall now review: how is the Body related to Christ?

We have seen what Christ's relationship is to the Church in the use of the term "head." We shall see below in Chapter VII that the question which must be asked is not "What is the nature of the Body of Christ?" nor "To which Body of Christ do we refer?" nor "Is the Church Christ's real Body?" The question which must be asked is, "What is the relationship of the Church to Christ as expressed by the term 'Body of Christ'?"

First Corinthians 12:12-27

Christ, like a body, has many organs but is one Body (v. 12). Paul tells his readers that they are individually organs in the Body of Christ and are to function as such. They are to accept God's arrangements of function for the care of the other members (vv. 24-25). Christ is not set apart from the Body as Head in this passage, and thus the members are in the closest possible relationship of unity with him. Paul's readers are the Body of Christ.³⁴ To carry out their functions as organs of the Body the members must

³⁴J. G. Griffiths, "A Note on the Anarthrous Predicate in Hellenistic Greek," Expository Times, LXII (1951), 314-316, points out that the article is usually omitted before a predicate noun or adjective. It would be grammatically possible to translate 1 Cor. 12:27 "you are a Body of Christ" or "you are the Body of Christ." But neither translation implies "you are like a Body of Christ."

receive the Spirit and his gifts, they must be placed into their functions by God himself, and they must receive from above the gift of love.

Romans 12:4-5

Paul tells his readers that they are one Body in Christ. Thus they are in closest relationship to Him, united to Him. Here the members are organs of each other. To function in this relationship they are dependent upon receiving love and other gifts from God (vv. 3, 6ff.).

Colossians 2:19

Christ is the Head of the Body. The Body is to hold closely to him as Head if it is not to be "disqualified." It is to receive nourishment and the "stuff of unity" and growth from God, who is here Christ the Head.

Ephesians 5:29-30

Because of the unity which the Church has with Christ as members of his Body, Christ "nourishes and cherishes" the Church and the Church must therefore receive its love and sustenance from Christ.

Ephesians 5:23-25

Christ is the Head of the Church, which is his Body. As Head he is the Savior of the Body. The Church, therefore, as

his Body, must look to Christ to receive healing and to be rescued daily. The Church is subject to Christ and looking to him as Head is obedient to him while it receives the love with which he loved and constantly loves her.

Ephesians 4:1-16

The Church, as Body of Christ, maintains every unity which the Spirit has given and gives by using the gifts which she has received and receives from Christ. Certain members of the Body train the saints for the work of service which is the building up of itself as Body of Christ by the use of the gifts and faith and knowledge which it receives from Christ as Son of God. The Body sustains itself, holds itself together, grows, builds itself up by means of the love, sustenance, unity, and growth which it constantly receives from Christ as Head.

Colossians 3:15

The Body is to receive peace (and love) from Christ constantly and is to live by the peace and love which it receives.

Ephesians 1:22-23

The Church, as Christ's Body, receives Christ's life and everything that Christ is, which Christ, in turn, has received from the Father. The Church has no need to depend on other

possible headships, because Christ as Head is over all things for the Church.

Colossians 1:18

Christ is sovereign over the Church, his Body. The Church lives in obedience to him.

Colossians 1:24

Members of the Body receive sufferings from Christ as a part of the service which they bear to one another, the speaking of the Gospel strengthened by sufferings for the Gospel.

The main points are the following: the Church, as Body of Christ, is constantly receiving from Christ; she receives new life, love, unity, nourishment and special gifts to use for the Body itself, for its unity and maturing in Christ. The Church as the Body of Christ is constantly subjecting herself to Christ. The Church receives sufferings from Christ which strengthen her Gospel witness. The Church as Body of Christ receives unity with Christ. F. W. Dillistone expresses well what we are attempting to say:

The main stress is laid upon the Church . . . receiving the fullness of God through Christ, . . . growing up into Christ in all things. In other words the emphasis is laid upon the Church as the redeemed community receiving from its Head all that it needs for its true growth in love.³⁵

³⁵F. W. Dillistone, "How Is the Church Christ's Body?" Theology Today, II (1945), 56-68.

CHAPTER V

THE BODY OF CHRIST AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

First Corinthians 12:13

καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες, εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ πάντες ἐν πνεύμα ἐποτίσθημεν.

The first point to be noted is that the members were brought into the one Body by one Spirit; all were made to drink of one Spirit. The initiates, differing in race and rank, are brought into the one Body of Christ by one Spirit. The Spirit is thus seen as being constitutive of the unity of the members and as being the initiator of their incorporation into the unity of the Body of Christ.¹

It is furthermore the work of the Spirit to "water" the members of the Body.² Thus the members are not only

¹"We must remember also that 'the body' is 'the body of Christ.' We have no certain evidence that in Pauline, or pre-Pauline times σῶμα was used to denote a collection or society of men; σῶμα when used of a number always represents the body of a person, but not in the way in which we speak of a group of people as a body." E. Best, One Body in Christ (London: S. P. C. K., 1955), p. 69, note 2.

²Ibid., p. 97, note 2: "To 'water' has a double meaning: we water a horse and we water ground. Ποτίζειν has the same double meaning . . . the latter sense, which is frequent in the papyri, is perhaps preferable." But cf. W. Flemington, The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism (London: S. P. C. K., 1948), p. 56, note 2.

incorporated into the Body by the work of the one Spirit, but as members they are refreshed by the one Spirit.³

When Paul uses the term Body of Christ he does not relate the activity of the Spirit (or the Spirit himself) to the Body, except in the passage just cited, its context, and in Eph. 4.

The context of 1 Cor. 12:12ff. speaks of the gifts which the Spirit gives. But the point of vv. 4-11 is not one of the relationship of the Spirit to the Body as giver of gifts. The point of this section is that the differing gifts are given to Christians by the same Spirit, and that Christians must therefore not argue about which gift is better, but must use the gifts for the common good.

We have seen above⁴ that a possible interpretation of Eph. 4:3-4 would indicate that the Spirit is the source of the unity which is to be kept, namely, the one Body and the one Spirit, etc. But the fact that this idea is not developed elsewhere by Paul (at least as relating to the term Body of Christ) should warn against taking it as a structure for further theological development.

³L. S. Thornton, The Common Life in the Body of Christ (2nd edition; London: Dacre Press, 1944), p. 94: "The unity of the Body is a living unity created and sustained by the one Spirit. The drenched soil holds together, whereas if left dry it would crumble apart into dust."

⁴Pp. 41-45.

Actually, this has been widely attempted, though not on the basis of Eph. 4:3-4. Typical of Roman Catholic scholars is F. Prat: "The Holy Spirit is the soul of the mystical body."⁵ C. H. Dodd is more careful:

For Paul, the Church is the "Body of Christ" in which He dwells by His Spirit. The Spirit of Christ, replacing the γράμμα of the Torah . . . provides the norm of life within the εκκλησία .⁶

But H. A. A. Kennedy is outspoken.

The one Spirit, as the real life-principle of the society (of Christians), suggests the correlative idea of the one Body, the living organism which gives expression to the life of the Spirit. This is ideally the embodiment of the mind and will of Christ.⁷

Nowhere is the Spirit mentioned as dwelling in the Church as Body of Christ. He adds members to the Body; he "waters" the members; he may be thought of as giving gifts to the members (as members of the Body of Christ); and he may be considered as a source of unity of the Body which is not to be lost. But more than this, in relation to the Body of Christ, Paul does not say.

⁵F. Prat, The Theology of Saint Paul, translated by J. L. Stoddard (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, Ltd., 1957), II, 288.

⁶C. H. Dodd, "Matthew and Paul," Expository Times, LVIII (1947), 296.

⁷H. A. A. Kennedy, The Theology of the Epistles (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n.d.), pp. 147-148.

CHAPTER VI

THE BODY OF CHRIST AND THE SACRAMENTS

First Corinthians 12:13

καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες, εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ πάντες ἐν πνεύμα ἐποτίσθημεν.

W. F. Flemington makes the statement that "Baptism in the New Testament was the gateway into the κοινωνία, the means whereby the believer was 'grafted into the Body of Christ's Church'."¹ We will get some perspective on our situation by looking at Markus Barth's statement:

Paul speaks frequently of baptism without mentioning the Church or the body of Christ together with it. Vice-versa he speaks often of the body of Christ without reference to a sacrament. . . . The concept of a "sacramental incorporation" is certainly not biblical and perhaps not helpful for explaining the Bible.²

Both of these statements, contradictory as they are, are largely correct. Barth is correct at least when he points out that baptism and Body of Christ terminology are not, as a rule, in the same contexts. But they are together in this verse, and, if this is a reference to water baptism, this

¹W. F. Flemington, The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism (London: S. P. C. K., 1948), p. 127.

²Markus Barth, "A Chapter on the Church--The Body of Christ; Interpretation of 1 Cor. 12," Interpretation, XII, 4 (April, 1958), 151-152.

verse does speak of incorporation into the Body of Christ by baptism and the Spirit.

It has been claimed that the translation "were baptized into one body" is not permissible, but that the phrase must be translated "to one body" with the idea that the one body is the result of the baptism by the Spirit.³ One is inclined to agree with Percy, however, who feels that it is much more natural to take the expression as analogous to Paul's usual expression βαπτίζειν εἰς Χριστόν or βαπτίζειν εἰς τὸν Μωσοῦν . He feels that the εἰς can hardly mean anything else than that the baptized through his baptism is bound up with the object of the preposition.⁴ This would mean that the baptized would be gathered into a Body which already existed before his baptism.

The next matter is to discover whether or not this passage refers to water baptism or to Spirit baptism, or to both.

The baptism of 1 Cor. 12:13, by which we are added to the one Body, is not water baptism but baptism in the Spirit; water baptism is the sign and seal of this latter baptism--just as in Rom. 6:1-14 water baptism does not affect our death and resurrection with Christ, which

³E. g., H. Lietzmann, An die Korinther I, II, edited by W. Kuenne, in Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, based on H. Leitzmann, edited by G. Bornkamm (4th edition; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1949), ad loc. Also J. Weiss, The History of Primitive Christianity, translated and edited by Frederick C. Grant (New York: Wilson-Erickson, 1937), II, 637.

⁴E. Percy, Der Leib Christi (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1942), pp. 15-16.

took place on the cross, but is the sign and seal of it to us.⁵

The difficulty with Best's statement is that he theologizes without answering the question that both he and we are asking. We are not asking what water baptism is or what it does for the moment; nor is Best. But that is the question he answers. Percy's argument on the use of εἰς with βαπτίζω by Paul⁶ suggests an affirmative answer to the question of whether or not this is a water baptism. Flemington's quote of Moffatt is appropriate: "St. Paul 'never contemplates any baptism of the Spirit as a higher experience of Christians'."⁷ We are inclined to agree that the baptism referred to in this verse is both a baptism of the Spirit and water baptism. We go with Best at this point, who says: "Members are added to this Body by baptism of the Spirit, and since sign and reality are not usually to be separated in ancient writers, by baptism of water."⁸ Thus we see that the Spirit is the one who makes the baptism with water an effectual incorporation of the person baptized into the Body of Christ.⁹

⁵E. Best, One Body in Christ (London: S. P. C. K., 1955), p. 73.

⁶Cf. supra, p. 2.

⁷Flemington, op. cit., pp. 56-57.

⁸Best, op. cit., p. 113.

⁹On the term one body and whether or not it means the Body of Christ, cf. supra, p. 56, note 1. On ἐπιτίθημεν cf. supra, p. 56, note 2.

The Spirit is not without the water, even as the water is not without the Spirit.

The only other reference to baptism in a Body of Christ context would be Eph. 4:4-5.¹⁰ But there is no possible interpretation of these verses which would add to our understanding of the relationship of baptism to the Church as Body of Christ.

First Corinthians 10:16-17

- 16) Τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας δ' εὐλογοῦμεν, οὐκ κοινῶς ἐστὶν τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ; τὸν ἄρτον ὃν κλῶμεν, οὐκ κοινῶς τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐστὶν;
- 17) ὅτι εἰς ἄρτον, ἐν σῶμα οἱ πολλοὶ ἐσμεν. οἱ γὰρ πάντες ἐκ τοῦ ἑνὸς ἄρτου μετέχομεν.

The emphasis in v. 17 is on unity. All who take part of the bread are one body. As we have seen, this cannot be simply a body of people; it is the body of a person, the Body of Christ. But what is the relationship between vv. 16 and 17? Wendland¹¹ points out that the meal described in 11:23-25 and in v. 16 is a meal of fellowship with Jesus Christ. The relationship of the participant to Christ is one which corresponds to "communion" with demons (v. 21). This takes place through meal fellowship when one sits at table with

¹⁰On these verses cf. *supra*, pp. 41-45, 57.

¹¹H.-D. Wendland, *Die Briefe an die Korinther*, in *Das Neue Testament Deutsch*, edited by P. Althaus and J. Behm (4th edition; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1946), VII, 64-70.

demons. But Paul does not here develop a doctrine of how, for instance, Christ is present in bread and wine. At the Lord's Table there is actual partaking of the body and blood of Christ, though not in a magical way.

Now, through the fellowship with Christ at his Table, the Eucharist establishes the fellowship of the many with one another. The Lord's Supper is a realization of the Church. Because there is one bread, the many are one Body, for they all partake of the same bread.

On this account the self-seeking of those who ate first, of the ones who couldn't wait (11:20ff.; 27 ff.), is the worst sin against the meaning of the Lord's Supper, a contempt for the congregation of God. Everything depends on the fellowship at the meal. The Lord's Supper is always newly establishing the Body of Christ, in which it joins individuals together, because it gives participation in Christ.¹²

When a person eats bread, the sustenance of the bread passes into all the organs of the body. In receiving Christ, the Body, which is the community, nourishes "all its several members and they are inseparably one in the sharing of the common life."¹³ But there is here not only a sharing of the common life. There is a sharing in the common life of the many with the one, of the Body with the Christ.

¹²Ibid., p. 67, my translation. Cf. G. Bornkamm, "Herrenmahl und Kirche bei Paulus," New Testament Studies, II (1956), 206, who writes, "Die Frage nach dem rechten Sakramentsverstaendnis ist fuer ihn [Paulus] nicht wie in spaeteren Zeit die Frage nach den Elementen, sondern die Frage nach dem unaufloeslichen inneren Zusammenhang von Sakrament und Kirche."

¹³C. H. Dodd, The Meaning of Paul for Today (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1920), pp. 142-143.

This is again a unity of the Body depending upon Christ for nourishment and for maintenance of the unity. But the members of this Body still have a function beyond that of receiving of Christ. Their function is to share in the same bread. Christ does not give himself to the Body outside the area of the Body's function. To be the Body of Christ, to be a unity and to be a unity with him, the members must share in the "objective" of v. 16. Then they are really one Body--Christ's Body.¹⁴

First Corinthians 11:29

ὁ γὰρ ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων κρίμα ἑαυτοῦ ἐσθίει καὶ πίνει
μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα.

The best case for taking the word body as referring to the Church as the Body of Christ is worked out by Best, who carefully meets the traditional objections to this interpretation.¹⁵ If σῶμα refers to the Eucharistic Body of Christ, why is there no reference to the Blood here? Also lacking is the phrase, of the Lord, which is included, however, in **R**, **D**, **G**, **pl**, **vg^{cl}**, and **sy**. Further, if this is the proper

¹⁴Man darf darum aus X. 17 nicht den bloßen abstrakten Gedanken der Einheit herausnehmen und nur ihn als Begründung fuer den Zusammenhang von Sakrament und Ekklesia verstehen. Vielmehr koennte man Vers 17 geradezu so paraphrasieren: 'Denn das in diesem Brote uns dargereichte, fuer uns dahingebene σῶμα ist eins und eben darum sind die Vielen ein Leib, naemlich Christi Leib.'" Bornkamm, op. cit., pp. 205-206.

¹⁵Best, op. cit., pp. 107-110.

interpretation of $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha$ here, "it is the only place in Paul where Body and bread are so closely identified. . . ."16

There are two principal objections to taking $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha$ as referring to the Church: $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha$ will have changed its meaning from its use earlier in this passage; the judgment that comes upon the unworthy participants suggests a power within the elements which could afflict those who handled them irreverently. The first objection is not too serious; in 10:16-17 a similar change in a similar context is easily made by Paul. As to the second objection, Wendland points out that

the unworthy eating and drinking of the holy things brings through itself the judgment--that appears to be the thought. Only it must be noted that in 11:31 Paul speaks explicitly of the judgment of Christ. It doesn't take place here as a magical working of the sacred elements but as an action of the Lord on him who destroys the meaning of the Lord's Supper, because he can't wait and doesn't think of the brethren.17

It appears that the evidence is slightly in favor of taking τὸ $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha$ in this verse as referring to the Church as Body of Christ. The fellowship maintained by the Lord's Supper is the key to the entire context. Just as fellowship with Christ is disrupted by participation in a heathen cult-meal, so fellowship among believers is disrupted when some do not have a "proper sense of the Body."18

16 Ibid., p. 108.

17 Wendland, op. cit., p. 68. My translation.

18 James Moffatt, The Bible, a New Translation (New York: Harper and Bros., c.1935), ad loc.

But what does this have to do with the function of the Body if it is granted that such action destroys the essential relationships of the Body? The function of the members of the Body is care toward one another as well as receiving from Christ. The fact that some have thought that they can eat the bread of unity and not care for the Body in which they are united with other members is the reason for the sickness and death prevalent in the Corinthian Church.¹⁹

¹⁹But cf. Ralph Kruger, "Not Discerning the Body' in First Corinthians 11:29 in the Light of Pauline Eucharistic Theology of First Corinthians," (Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, St. Louis; Concordia Seminary, 1957). Kruger shows that the commentators are about evenly divided on whether or not the "body" in this verse refers to the Church. He is unwilling to take a position on one side or the other. His conclusion is that this verse refers both to the Body of Christ "in" the bread and to the Body of Christ, the Church.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The Body of Christ and Christology

There is only one Christ. Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ; that is the message of the Scriptures. Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ is the Son of God and God the Son; He is both God and man, and yet there are not two Christs but one Christ. Likewise, unless the Scriptures tell us that Christ has more than one body after his resurrection, we must affirm that Christ has only one body.

The danger inherent in any systematic theology is that it tends to absolutize and synthesize distinct functions and relationships. This has happened in many of the theological developments of the concept Body of Christ. For example, the Scriptures say that the Church is the Body of Christ. We have attempted to show that this is a statement that describes a relationship between the Church and Christ. The systematic theologian tends to absolutize this statement and to see in it a form rather than a relationship and a function. K. E. Kirk will serve as an example.

The Church is the Body of Christ because it is the place where His Spirit dwells and is with certainty to be

found. It is the instrument whereby God transmits His redemptive activity to individuals.¹

The error of such a statement is already established before the first sentence is complete: "because it is the place where." Words that are to express relationships and functions should not be absolutized in static definitions of the "nature of the thing."

Another pitfall of the systematician is that of equating subject and predicate. It seems hardly possible, but such a switch is made with the sentence, "The Church is the Body of Christ." The method is, "If you can make that statement, then you can say that the Body of Christ is the Church." The difficulty with this procedure is that whereas one can define the Church with several predicates, one cannot make the same set of predicates serve as subjects defined by the term Church.

To illustrate:

Possible

Not Possible

Church is Body of Christ

Body of Christ is Church

Church is Bride of Christ

Bride of Christ is Church

Church is Building in Christ

Building in Christ is Church

To return to the point at which we began: there is one Christ. The one Christ is related to the Church. His relationship to the Church can be described in various ways because

¹K. E. Kirk, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, in The Clarendon Bible, edited by T. Strong, H. Wild, G. Box (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), p. 115.

the relationships are various. It is extremely dangerous to absolutize any one of the descriptions.

Distinctions which the Scriptures make to describe relationships or functions should not be absolutized into "ontological realities." This has been done with the term "Body of Christ."

this word "ontological" is also unsatisfactory, because it treats "the Church" and "the Body" as logically convertible terms, and therefore fails to do justice to the actual unworthiness, imperfection, and sinfulness of the . . . Church on earth. The words which give the right approach are first eschatological and then sacramental and liturgical.²

I need not attempt to amass the evidence from the New Testament writings and from the fathers in support of the contention that, while it contains of course a certain element of metaphor, the description of the Church as the Body of Christ is to be taken ontologically and realistically.³

Mascall, in the latter quotation, falls into the very difficulty which Hebert, in the first quotation, tries to obviate.

The result of such "philosophical absolutizing" has serious theological implications. The moment that a term of the Scriptures is described as an ontological reality we are moving from the realm of the theological concern of the Scriptures to the area of philosophy. The danger is that one begins to find things that are true about the so-called ontological reality and then applies them to a theological

²G. Hebert, "The Church Which Is His Body," The Ecumenical Review, IX, 2 (January, 1957), 114.

³E. L. Mascall, Christ, the Christian and the Church (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1946), p. 112.

term of the Scriptures. E. F. Scott may serve as an example. In Romans and First Corinthians he finds the term, the body, to be mainly metaphorical. In the later epistles, though, he says that the idea "ceases to be figurative and is made to correspond to a mystical reality. The Church is regarded as the larger incarnation of Christ."⁴

Beyond Metaphor

If one must be aware of these dangers, one must be equally aware of the fact that a term (such as Body of Christ) may describe a reality even though the purpose of the term is to describe a relationship or a function. We know that Christ has a body. We know that the Scriptures call the Church his Body. It is therefore equally as dangerous to call a term of the Scriptures a "metaphor" when the Scriptures themselves do not necessarily indicate metaphorical usage of it.

But to say that the Church is the body of Christ is no more of a metaphor than to say that the flesh of the incarnate Jesus or the bread of the Eucharist is the body of Christ. None of them is "like" His body (Paul never says this): each of them is the body of Christ, in that each is the physical complement and extension of the one and the same Person and Life. They are all expressions of a single Christology.⁵

⁴E. F. Scott, Epistle to the Colossians, in The Moffatt New Testament Commentary, edited by J. Moffatt (New York: Harper and Bros., 1930), p. 24.

⁵J. A. T. Robinson, The Body: a Study in Pauline Theology (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952), p. 51.

Obviously when the Scriptures indicate that the Church is the Body of Christ, there is danger in saying that the term is "designed simply to suggest certain likenesses and no more."⁶

One way out is that of W. N. Pittenger.

Obviously the phrase "Body of Christ" cannot be pressed to absurd lengths because it is a metaphor and remains a metaphor. And even if in St. Paul himself, the relation of Christ as head and informing life of the body and of the Holy Spirit as principle of unity and integral life of the body is ill-defined and in some of the references seems to be rather confused, the total picture emerges plain and clear. The metaphor of the Body of Christ is not mere metaphor; it is to be taken very seriously, as being for St. Paul the only adequate description of the Church.⁷

What does "not mere metaphor" mean?

Moffatt is closer to reality: "For Paul it is no simile but a spiritual reality, this Body of Christ."⁸ It may be that this is as close as one can get to describing a description.

It is the writer's judgment that the terms of the Scriptures which are used to describe either realities or functions or relationships are to be used without further description or extension beyond what the Scriptures themselves indicate.

⁶F. W. Dillistone, "How Is the Church Christ's Body?" Theology Today, II (1945), 67.

⁷W. N. Pittenger, "The Church as Body of Christ," Christendom (Spring, 1944), 209.

⁸J. Moffatt, Commentary on First Corinthians, in The Moffatt New Testament Commentary; edited by J. Moffatt (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1943), p. 184.

Scriptural terminology is to be used only in terms of definition which the Scriptures supply. We must agree with J. A. T. Robinson, although for different reasons than he would offer, when he says that "one could heartily wish that the misleading and unbiblical phrase 'the mystical body' had never been invented."⁹

At the Lord's Supper Christ said, "This is my Body." The Scriptures speak of the body of Christ's glory. Our Lord had a body after his resurrection which was different from that of his pre-resurrection body. The Church is Christ's Body. If, when and where the Scriptures relate these "bodies" to each other we are to relate them to each other. To do more than this, or less, is to imperil the task of exegesis and systematic theology itself.¹⁰

⁹The full quotation is: "Paul knows no distinction between the ascended body of Christ and His 'mystical' body. For God 'raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2:6); cf. Eph. 1:20-3, 'he raised him (Christ) from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places . . . and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body'. One could heartily wish that the misleading phrase the 'mystical' body had never been invented." J. A. T. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 52, note 1.

¹⁰Mascall's theology is at least deftly imperiled. "it is not a mere metaphor, but the literal truth, that the Church is the Body of Christ. Christ has only one Body, that which he took from his mother, the Virgin Mary, but that Body exists under various modes. As a natural Body, it was seen on the earth, hung on the Cross, rose in glory on the first Easter Day, and was taken into heaven in the Ascension; as a mystical Body it appeared on earth on the first Whitsunday and we know it as the Holy Catholic Church; as a sacramental Body it becomes present on our altars at every Eucharist. . . ."

Conclusions

We are not to distinguish between the "bodies" of Christ as though they were separate entities. The Church, as Christ's Body, is "in Christ" in such a way as to preclude such distinctions. The Scriptures relate the various uses of the term Body to each other not in terms of existence but of function. The function of the Church as Body of Christ is not to effect the reconciliation which Christ once worked in his Body; the function of the Church is to participate, to share in all that Christ worked in his Body.¹¹ The separation in function is not a separation in existence. There is one Body of Christ. Christ worked out our salvation in

Now we were made members of the Mystical Body in our baptism, whereby we were incorporated into Christ. . . . And because . . . Christ has not three bodies but one Body which exists in three modes (natural, mystical, sacramental), in offering the Eucharist we offer ourselves, or, to express it more accurately, Christ offers us as members of His Body. So we may see the force of St. Augustine's famous words: 'The mystery of yourselves is laid upon the table of the Lord.'" Mascall, op. cit., pp. 161-162.

¹¹cf. G. Hebert, op. cit., p. 121: "It is not that the 'mystical Body' is an organisation, depending on the work of Christ through the 'natural Body' of His incarnation, and nourished by the 'eucharistic Body.' The three are not distinguished as separate entities. The teaching about the 'fulness of Christ' shows that he is thinking of the life of the Body which is the Church as a life 'in Christ'; the Church partakes of His spiritual riches."

this Body. This Body possesses all who have been incorporated into him.¹²

As organic as the conception of the Body is, there is here nothing of metaphysical theory. Because the Church stands to Christ as Body to its Head, the inference is not to be drawn that the Church's nature is of a particular kind,

nor that its structure is of a particular pattern, but rather that its duty is to behave in a particular way, its privilege to receive the grace which will enable it to fulfil its particular destiny in the high calling of God in Christ Jesus its Lord.¹³

The emphasis which Paul employs when he uses the term Body of Christ is again and again theological and ethical. The members of the Body have as their supreme object "mutual service and helpfulness."¹⁴ They share in the Body of Christ, are its members, that they might constantly receive

¹²J. Reuss, "Die Kirche als 'Leib Christi'," Biblische Zeitschrift, as reviewed in Catholic Biblical Quarterly (October, 1958), 540ff., would say that the one Body of Christ which worked out our salvation possesses upon its glorification all who are incorporated into Christ through Baptism. L. S. Thornton, The Common Life in the Body of Christ (London: Dacre Press, 1944), p. 298, says more: "There is only one Body of Christ. But it has different aspects. We are members of that body which was nailed to the cross, laid in the tomb and raised to life on the third day. There is only one organism of the new creation; and we are members of that one organism which is Christ." Would it not be better to say that "there is only one Body of Christ," but it has different functions, rather than different aspects.

¹³F. W. Dillistone, The Structure of the Divine Society (London: Lutterworth Press, 1951), p. 69.

¹⁴Cf. H. A. A. Kennedy, The Theology of the Epistles (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n.d.), p. 149.

the gifts of God in Christ and use them in peace and love to cause the Body's growth to maturity.

The term Body of Christ is used of the "interior relationships" of Christ to his Body's members, and of the members to one another.¹⁵ Paul nowhere describes the Church as the Body of Christ in terms of the relationship of the Church to the world. The time-worn sentiment, "Christ has no hands but our hands," as true as it may be in another context, is not the idea that Paul tries to convey with the term Body of Christ. The Church as the Body of Christ is a living and growing unity of Christ with his members and of his members with one another. The Church as the Body of Christ is not to teach or command or warn. These are separate functions within the Body which serve to build up the Body to maturity in Christ.¹⁶

The Church as the Body of Christ is to hold to Christ, the Head. That is its function. The members of the Body of Christ, the Church, are to keep their Christ-given unity and perfect it by speaking the Gospel to each other and by loving one another and by feeding on Christ. That is their function. The members of the Body of Christ, the Church, are to use their gifts which are given to them individually to help the

¹⁵Cf. E. Best, "The Body of Christ," The Ecumenical Review, IX, 2 (January, 1957), 124-125.

¹⁶Cf. W. Lofthouse, "The Church Which Is His Body," Expository Times, LVII (1946), 144-149, who works out this thinking as his thesis.

other members perform their functions, so that the whole Body may function properly and grow up into maturity in Christ. That is their function. Everything that the Church is and does as the Body of Christ comes from God in Christ and it is the Church's task to be constantly living by his saving act and acts. That is the function of the Church as the Body of Christ. Every function of the Body is carried out in subjection to the Head, Christ, and to him alone. That is the function of the Body of Christ.

The ecumenical movement is older and broader than the World Council of Churches or the Conference on Faith and Order. But it is principally to the literature of these that we turn to examine in summary how the concept of the Body of Christ is being used.¹

The division of the churches stands in paradox to the Pauline description of the Church as one Body in Christ. The Faith and Order movement would see the horror of this division, not so much in the fact that churches are kept from joining with churches, but in the fact that the division of the churches keeps Christian people from their tasks which they must

¹For a brief history of the interpretation of the Church as the Body of Christ the reader may look with profit to Markon Barth, "A Chapter on the Church--The Body of Christ; Interpretation of 1 Cor. 12," *Interpretation*, III, 4 (April, 1953), 133-136.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

This chapter is an unscholarly footnote to the foregoing pages. Its purpose is to point out in summary fashion the significance of the Pauline concept of the Body of Christ in recent ecumenical discussion. In a sense, much of the foregoing material has pointed out this significance, in that a majority of the secondary source material referred to in the preceding pages has evolved in one way or another from what might be termed "the ecumenical movement."

The ecumenical movement is older and broader than the World Council of Churches or the Conferences on Faith and Order. But it is principally to the literature of these that we turn to examine in summary how the concept of the Body of Christ is being used.¹

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carry out together. Underlying the failure to carry out the mutual task, however, is the failure to realize in life the nature of the Church as united in Christ. It is this need that is most keenly felt, and it is this need that is the spur to the extensive ecumenical discussion of our day. This need is no mere undercurrent, but is consciously felt and was expressed at Lund as necessitating penetration "behind our divisions to a deeper and richer understanding of the mystery of the God-given union of Christ with His Church."²

Many of the attempts to understand this God-given union have expressed themselves with the use of the term Body of Christ. Emphasis has been on the form as well as the function of the Church as the Body of Christ, and the idea of the Headship of Christ, in particular, has been vigorously proclaimed. The main currents of Body of Christ discussion may be summarized in the following statements:

1. The Church as Body of Christ is subject to Christ, centered in Christ, and finds realization of unity only in increasing life with Christ.
2. The person and work of the Holy Spirit is intimately related to the Church's task and to its nature as the Body of Christ.
3. The Church as the Body of Christ is the bearer of Christ's task and in its mission to the world is the extension of Christ in his life to men.

²⁰ S. Tomkins, editor, The Third World Conference on Faith and Order (London: S. C. M. Press, Ltd., 1953), p. 15.

4. Any movement of the churches toward common confession and cooperation depends upon the common recognition of the fact of the Church's position as the Body of Christ under Christ, the Head.

We shall briefly examine some of the statements in the literature, particularly of the Faith and Order movement, which illustrate these points, and compare them to the findings of our thesis.

Christ-Centrality

The keynote of all Faith and Order discussion and declarations is the centrality of Jesus Christ as the subject and object of the Church's faith. Thus, belief in Christ has implications for belief in the Church. "Because we believe in Jesus Christ we believe also in the Church as the Body of Christ."³ Ecumenical discussion which began with ecclesiology is now moving in the direction of establishing a sound Christology as the center and basis of ecclesiological agreement. Jesus Christ is one, he has one Body, and the Church is that Body. All of the life and activity of the Church is dependent upon Christ, since the Church is his Body. "Christ lives in His Church and the Church lives in Christ. Christ is never without His Church; the Church is never without Christ. Both belong inseparably together, . . . "⁴

³Ibid., p. 17.

⁴Ibid., pp. 17-18.

Because of the close union of Christ with his Body, the Church, every relationship among the churches can find substance only in a "common submission of the Churches to the Headship of Jesus Christ in His Church."⁵ The churches in their dialectic must shape their language and life to the way of Christ. Because the Church is the Body of Christ, its every attempt at preserving and fostering its given unity must be a movement to the center of that given unity and of the unity desired. That center is Christ, the Head of the Body.⁶

When Paul uses the term Body of Christ and describes the Body as a unity with its Head he is speaking of a relationship and a function. The relationship of unity among the members derives from the unity of the members with Christ, the Head. The function of the Head is to nurture, save, and rule the Body. The function of the members of the Body is to hold to the Head and to channel to the other members of the Body the nourishment which he gives. The members of the Body grow in unity by exercising in life what they receive from the Head.

⁵The Christian Hope and the Task of the Church, six ecumenical surveys and the report of the Assembly prepared by the Advisory Commission on the main theme (New York: Harper and Bros., c.1954), p. 12. This is a quotation of the Toronto Statement.

⁶Tomkins, op. cit., pp. 21-22. "because Christ is the Head and Lord of the Church, His way is the Church's way. He calls, He sends, He judges. The shape of His life is the shape of the Church's life. The mystery of His life is the mystery of the Church's life."

The Body grows in its unity as the members speak the Gospel and care for one another in love.

The literature of the ecumenical movement with respect to Christ-centrality has emphasized the relationships which the term Body of Christ describes at the expense of the functions of the members within the Body, which the concept of the Body of Christ implies. At the same time it has been the ecumenical movement which has set up the structures and widened the opportunities for the members of the Body of Christ to speak the Gospel to each other and to care for one another in love.

The Holy Spirit and the Body

A renewed emphasis upon the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church has been a contribution of the literature of the ecumenical movement to contemporary theology. The Lund conference gave a special impetus to theological study on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

In our work we have been led to the conviction that it is of decisive importance for the advance of ecumenical work that the doctrine of the Church be treated in close relation both to the doctrine of Christ and to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.⁷

The relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Church as the Body of Christ is, however, imprecisely defined. It is in this area that one begins to detect an equation of the Body

⁷Ibid., p. 22.

of Christ and the Church. For example, the Lund report indicates that it is by "the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (that) the redeemed are united into a body . . . who share in common the gifts of the one Spirit."⁸ It is not that such a statement cannot be made with regard to the Church, but it is an un-Pauline usage to make such a statement with regard to the Body of Christ.

Perhaps there are indications since Lund of a move toward more exact expression with regard to the Spirit and the Body. An example is that of the North American Regional Conference on Faith and Order at Oberlin, in 1957.

It is by one Spirit that men are incorporated into the one body. Within the body there are many members, but all are coordinated by Christ who is the head. There are diversities of gifts and ways of service, but under the guidance of the Spirit these are enhanced by the supreme spiritual gift of love and contribute to the upbuilding of the Body. As a physical body is animated by the spirit, so the Church is a visible community in which the risen Christ is present in the midst of his people in life-giving and unifying love.⁹

The Nature of the Church and the Work of Christ

The Church is, in its nature, one. It is one as the Body of Christ. "The visible fellowship and its essential activities are a 'sacrament' or efficacious sign of the Church's

⁸Ibid., p. 23.

⁹P. S. Minear, editor, The Nature of the Unity We Seek, official report of the North American Conference on Faith and Order, September 3-10, 1957, Oberlin, Ohio (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1958), p. 178. This is part of the report of Section 1 of the conference.

hidden nature as the Body of Christ."¹⁰ Though the nature of the Church as the Body of Christ is hidden, yet the term itself is "no mere metaphor, but expresses a living reality."¹¹ This reality is understood more in terms of function than of form. The Church as the Body of Christ continues "the mission of Jesus Christ to the world, so that the way of Christ is the way of His Church."¹² The Church is the means through which God carries his purposes to effect.¹³ The most fitting expression of the Church as a "medium of divine action in history" is the figure of the Body. It is the Church as Body of Christ that carries on the work of God and Christ among men;¹⁴ in fact it is the Church's "apostolic task," as the Body of Christ, "to witness to the Gospel and to bring its redeeming power to bear upon every aspect of human life."¹⁵

Such an understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ is quite un-Pauline. No matter how true it may be

¹⁰Ibid., p. 231. This is from the report of Section 8 of the conference.

¹¹Tomkins, op. cit., p. 23.

¹²Ibid., p. 8.

¹³The Christian Hope and the Task of the Church, p. 15. "It is the Body whose members are members of Christ, united with Him and at His disposal. Its life therefore is both the extension of His ministry and also a participation in His present and continuing work as risen Lord and Saviour."

¹⁴Miner, op. cit., p. 68, from the address of Robert Calhoun at the Oberlin Conference.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 206, from the report of Division II.

that the Church is the agent of God's mission to the world, the term Body of Christ is meant to describe the Church as God's agent for his mission to the Church itself, and not to the world.

Implications for Unity among the Churches

It is among the declared purposes of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches

to proclaim the essential oneness of the Church of Christ and the obligation of the Churches to manifest that unity so that they may not only work together, but live together as members of the one Body of Christ;
 . . . 16

It is important to note, however, that such a proclamation does not seek to achieve unity among the churches merely by proclaiming the Church's essential oneness. It is rather an assumption of the Council that it is Christ's Headship over his people which compels "all those who acknowledge Him to enter into real and close relationships with each other, even though they differ in important points."¹⁷

The oneness of the Church is not a means for unity. Christians cannot become one by insisting that they should be one. The compulsion is God and Christ's. This compulsion relates individuals to the Body of Christ through local

¹⁶The Church, report of a Theological Commission on Faith and Order (London: S. C. M. Press, Ltd., 1957), p. 51.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 54.

congregations,¹⁸ and moves congregations to seek fellowship and sustenance from the whole Body of Christ. "Without this relationship the congregation is incomplete, and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit will know itself to be so."¹⁹

As these relationships increase differences among individuals and groups emerge. But these differences do not make division necessary.

The Body of Christ is described by Saint Paul as unity in diversity (1 Cor. 12). Differences of function, of special gifts and graces, of characteristic emphases in Christian faith and practice, may peacefully subsist within the one Body, and be encouraged by the one Spirit, as enrichment of the common life of the true Church. The differences which amount to divisions are those which cause Christians to organize separate bodies which cannot freely commune or easily co-operate with one another.²⁰

When relating especially First Corinthians 12 to the ecumenical situation, the inter-church discussions, and the Faith and Order Conferences emphasize the importance of the "empty churches, the 'free' churches, the young churches, the worried churches,"²¹ the churches without a traditional high doctrine of the Church as crucial centers of re-establishing the Body's unity. An ambivalence is to be noted here, in that, as denominations, those who emphasize the idea of the

¹⁸Miner, op. cit., p. 217, from the report of Section 5 of the conference, emphasizes this theme.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 216.

²⁰The Church, p. 21.

²¹Barth, op. cit., p. 156.

Body of Christ with the most vigor are those who believe the Church to be essentially an organism and institution, "placed by God in the context of human society and history, with its continuity in ministry and liturgical action scrupulously maintained."²² The response to this attitude stresses function rather than form, but still uses the term Body of Christ. It may be within this discussion that the Pauline thinking will emerge as champion.

In spite of the inaccuracies attendant upon the use of the term Body of Christ in the ecumenical literature, it is this literature itself and the discussions and meetings behind it that is performing the function, in many cases, which Paul speaks of the Body of Christ performing. The true unity of the Church is being met not by discussing what the Church is, but by the witnessing that is going on and the love that is being enacted among the adherents of the ecumenical movement. When the Body is functioning properly, the whole Body grows to maturity in Christ. If the literature of the ecumenical movement is a gauge of what is going on in Christendom, and it is perhaps one of the best measures, we cannot hope for exact theological expression and definition of the term Body of Christ, but we can hope for growth in unity to maturity.

²²J. Robert Nelson, "Many Images of the One Church," The Ecumenical Review, IX, 2 (January, 1957), p. 110. Cf. also R. Newton Flew, editor, The Nature of the Church, papers presented to the Theological Commission appointed by the Continuation Committee of the World Conference on Faith and Order (London: S. C. M. Press, Ltd., 1952), pp. 36-40, 42-53, 144f., 155f.

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