


75D184

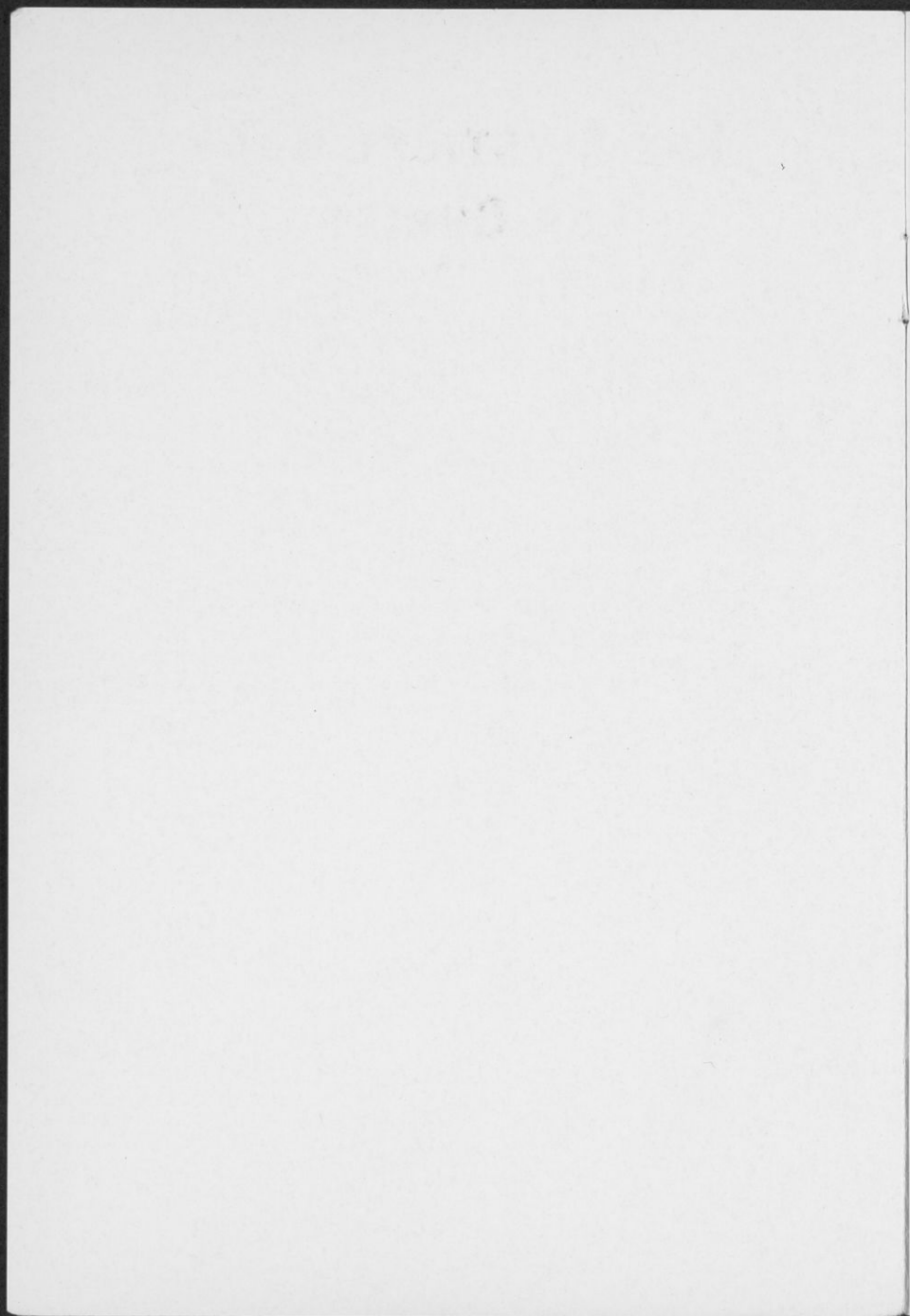
ADJ 6157
Bellanti, L.E.



The
M*ystical*
Body of Christ

With Discussion Club Questionnaire
by Rev. Gerald C. Creacy, S.J.

by
Rev. L.E. Bellanti, S.J.



THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST

By

REV. L. E. BELLANTI, S.J.

Revised Edition with Discussion Club Questionnaire
by Rev. Gerald C. Treacy, S.J.

THE PAULIST PRESS
401 WEST 59TH STREET
NEW YORK, N. Y.

Imprimi Potest:

JAMES P. SWEENEY, S.J.,
Provincial, Maryland-New York.

Nihil Obstat:

ARTHUR J. SCANLAN, S.T.D.,
Censor Librorum.

Imprimatur:

✠ FRANCIS J. SPELLMAN, D.D.,
Archbishop of New York.

New York, April 2, 1942.

COPYRIGHT, 1942, BY
THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE
IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED IN THE U. S. A.
BY THE PAULIST PRESS, NEW YORK, N. Y.

Deacidified

THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST

THE Mystical Body of Christ is a fact. It is also a Mystery. So it is called mystical. It is a fact of divine revelation. God has revealed it through His Divine Son. **I am the vine, you are the branches; he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing.**¹

This means a life, our life in Christ. We are incorporated with Him in His Mystical Body. This is a fundamental truth of our faith; it rests on the firm basis of revelation; it is intimately connected with our service of God and with our outlook on the spiritual life. To refuse to consider the meaning of Incorporation with Christ, or to follow out this truth in its various implications would at least betoken some timidity and want of faith in God, seeing that, what He has revealed, and what the living voice of the Church commands, and what has been preached by the greatest Saints to simple and learned alike, cannot be a snare or a pitfall to us.

Man's Nature

It will not be amiss to recapitulate the main facts on which our life is built, both in the order of nature and in that of grace. Man is made up of body and soul. He is conscious of the gravitating tendency of the flesh and of the buoyant impulse of the spirit. He is aware of contradictory elements in his composition, of discordant principles at war within him. Yet all along there is a dominant conviction that he is a single unit, an individual, a person alone and apart; and that it is for him to rule

¹ John xv. 5.



his higher and lower natures, the beast and the bird of paradise that have been so astonishingly caged together in his clay. As St. Augustine once told his congregation at Hippo: it was free to them to be beasts or angels; beasts, if they followed the instincts of their blood; angels, if they guided their lives by the dictates of conscience. Moreover, from the very outset of his attempts at self-analysis, man is faced by the inexplicable mystery of life. More actually than his reflection stares back at him through the mirror, he stares at the spiritual, indwelling substance of his soul, and finds himself compelled to bow down before the mystery which his own frame enshrines. "Now," he says quite simply and humbly, "if the energy I feel within me, if the light in my eyes and the thrill in my veins pass my understanding, if my natural life must be a mystery to me, how can I hope to measure or comprehend that life of grace of which Christ speaks, that divine Life which is His Life and which His Church imparts?" Heaven may "stand about us in our infancy," but certainly "shades of the prison-house" are not calculated to dispel the mysteries that gloom thicker with our growth; and the clearer our mental vision becomes, the more we see how true it is that "abyss calleth unto abyss." Yet, as Bishop Hedley has well said: "Though belief in a spiritual soul does not solve the problem of the supernatural, or take us out of the land of mystery, it enables us in some measure to understand how the God on Whom life and movement, intelligence and free-will all depend, has designed to use the mystery of life and spirit in the natural order as a starting-point for a scale of marvelous life whose lower end may be on earth,

but the top of which is hidden in the heavens, far out of the sight of men or angels.”²

Nature and Grace

Working up then to the first half of a great truth, we are led to admit a dualism in our nature. Not only are we, as men, made up of body and soul, but as Christians we live by a double life of nature and of grace. We have in fact two elements and live two lives. This is one side of our proposed equation or identity. Formulating the other side, which is its counterpart, we say that to every Christian the Church presents herself with a similar dualism in her nature. She bases the whole strength of her appeal for his allegiance and his love on the grounds of a common identity. She as much as says to him: “You have perhaps been used to think of me as a divinely ordered system, with a sevenfold hierarchy, and seven sacraments, and devotions, and a calendar of feasts and fasts, the guardian of God’s revelation and the pledge of His continued presence among His children—and you are right—I am all this; but I am more. I am like yourself both body and spirit; like you I am an external organism, yet nourished by an inward and supernatural life; like you I am both human and divine.”

Outward and Inward Life

It will be our primary purpose to justify the literal truth of these bold assertions, and then briefly to suggest something of their import. St. Augustine, St. Cyril of Jerusalem and St. Anselm continually insisted upon these proofs of the Church’s out-

² *The Light of Life*. By the Most Rev. John Hedley, Bishop of Newport, p. 216.

ward and inward life in their familiar homilies. St. John Chrysostom ranges over every implication of this doctrine with a sublimity of thought and a simplicity of speech and occasional outbursts of spontaneous eloquence that leave our hearts burning within us. But why recall the Doctors of the Church when this truth is at the root of all spirituality and so dominates the mind and heart of St. Paul, that, without it, his inspired writings become furious exaggerations, wildly incoherent in the very intensity of their appeal. Our Lord Himself gathers up into this message of identity the moral teaching of His whole life and His last calm and collected prayer on earth is that this sweet mystery of union with Him may be verified in ourselves: **that we may all be one, as Thou Father in Me, and I in Thee.**³

The Physical and Mystical Christ

The significance of the statements in the Fourth Gospel and in the Pauline Epistles will not be grasped unless the two senses in which our Lord speaks of Himself, and is spoken of by the Apostle, are carefully taken into account. Jesus Christ, Who was born of the Virgin Mary and lived and died for us, was true Man and true God. As Man He is in heaven and in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. As Man He is the *physical* Christ. He is still the same *physical* Christ when He comes to us under the image of the Vine, of which we are the branches, of the Bridegroom forming one body with His elect bride the Church, of the Head of that body to which we belong as members, but with this difference: that here we form part of Him-

³ John xvii. 21.

self, living with His Life, submerged in His Personality, identified with Him. Hence the importance of distinguishing between the *physical* and the *mystical* Christ.⁴ The *physical* Christ took flesh from Mary's womb; the *mystical* Christ extended the benefits of His Incarnation and Humanity to our living bodies, summoning us all into one body of which He is the Head; the *physical* Christ died for us; the *mystical* Christ lives in us; the *physical* Christ reconciled us to His Eternal Father; the *mystical* Christ makes us one with Him. In a word, the *mystical* Christ is the absorption of the Church into Christ in such a way that the Church completes her Chief and is completed by Him.

Difference Between Physical and Mystical Christ

Further, the term *mystical* is not introduced here to cover a far-fetched metaphor or to detract from the living and vital functions of that body. It simply serves to stress the differences between the living body—which is Christ and His Church—and the physical body which was born of Mary, and is born again on our altars at every Mass. The word *mystical* also denotes functions in the *mystical* Body which do not come under the category of sense, and so saves us from attempting to press the concrete aspect of the image. It equally forbids the other extreme view which would regard the bond that unites us to Christ as a mere moral tie.

The familiar use of the terms body and members to denote any group of men bound together by some common purpose or interest or accidental circumstance—such as a club or parliament or confraternity—

⁴ Father Prat, S.J., carefully works out this distinction, *La Théologie de S. Paul*, vol. i., p. 419.

ternity—is very misleading in this connection. Between such a moral unit and the *mystical* Christ the difference is not merely one of degree, it is actually a difference of kind. The *mystical* Body of Christ is essentially different from all other so-called *bodies*, in that it is a living body. Other *moral* bodies draw their *metaphorical* life from without. This real and living body—Christ's Mystical Body, the living Church—draws its life from within. It lives with the life of Christ.

Growth of the Vine

From the first throb of our Lord's human life in Mary's womb, He has always been with the children of men. In due time He was born and grew in wisdom and age and grace, and in His growth we see the growth of that Vine with which we are later to be identified. We see the first outstretching of those frail tendrils which shall continue to spread further and yet further to the end of time. In this respect—to quote a favorite saying of Father Joseph Rickaby—"the Church is simply the extension of the Incarnation."

Effect of the First Mass

Gradually our Lord gathered together His Apostles and disciples—potential channels through which His inexhaustible Life would flow for the vivification of mankind. On the night before He died, we see these elect members present at the first Mass, in which our Lord as Priest and Victim offers up the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and unites His members to Himself in the Communion of His Body and Blood. Now that He and His Church are one, He reveals that which He has effected. The deep calm of that

solemn, postcommunion hour is chosen by Himself to explain the change that elevates and transforms and identifies these faithful few with Himself. In describing this life we shall limit ourselves to our Lord's word applying to them, as commentary, the inspired writings of St. Paul.

Oneness of Christ and the Church

To Paul, indeed, our identity with Christ was the supreme revelation, even as it was the first lesson that came to him from the lips of Christ. For the Apostle first learned that Christ and His Church were one when amid a binding flash our Saviour said to him, **I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest.**⁵

I am the Vine; you the branches; that is, "I"—no longer the *physical* but the *mystical* Christ—the Church; "You" are the members of the Church. I am the living whole, and you are parts living with the life of the whole—vine-branches living with the Vine's life. This deep truth will be best expressed in Monsignor Benson's words: "The branches are not an imitation of the Vine, or representatives of the Vine; they are not merely attached to it, as candles to a Christmas tree; they are its expression, its result, the sharers of its life. The two are in the most direct sense identical. The Vine gives unity to the branches, the branches give expression and effectiveness to the energy of the Vine; they are nothing without it; it remains merely a Divine idea without them."⁶

⁵ Acts ix. 5.

⁶ *Christ in the Church*. By R. H. Benson, p. 12. The almost intuitive grasp of this vital doctrine of identity invests Monsignor Benson's work with a singular charm. It was indeed an essential element of his spiritual genius, seen at its best, perhaps, in such books as *Richard Raynal, Christ in the Church*, and *The Friendship of Christ*.

Organic Union With Christ

He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing. . . . If anyone abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch and shall wither. The branches and the Vine grow together—one principle of life diffuses its vitalizing properties through root, stem, branch, leaf and tendril. Cut off the flow of sap and they wither even as the fig tree withered under the curse of God. Briefly, the substance of Christ's teaching here is that organic union with Christ means life, severance means death.

Many Form One Body

St. Paul reaffirms this teaching under the image of Christ's mystical body—nor yet under a mere image, for in the face of the inadequacies and limitations of human speech, it is the truest possible account of a supernatural fact. **We being many are one body in Christ, and all members one of another.**⁷ **As the body is one and hath many members and all the members of the body many as they are, form one body, so also is it with Christ** (that is, with the Church which is Christ). To the Galatians he says, **You are all one—one man—one person—in Christ Jesus.**⁸ This then is the meaning of our Incorporation with Christ. Jesus Christ and we are one body. "He again is the Head of the Body, the Church,"⁹ while we "are together, the Body of Christ and severally His members."¹⁰ To Paul (in

⁷ Rom. xii. 5.

⁹ Col. i. 18.

⁸ Gal. iii. 28.

¹⁰ 1 Cor. xii. 27.

Father Rickaby's words),¹¹ "the Incarnation is an alliance contracted, not with that soul and that body only which was united in the unity of one Person with the Word made flesh, but likewise with all mankind by their entrance into the Church, in which that Word has dwelt amongst us."¹²

Head Unifies the Church

Hence we are members of His Body, of His flesh, and of His bones,¹³ and He and we together form the Church. So, too, the Church is a living body, a warm, throbbing organism, pulsating with an intense vitality, composed of a variety of members with a diversity of structure and different functions, yet co-ordinated in their action by one common principle of movement and of life. In the Apostle's eyes it is the head that gives unity to the body, and adjusts and correlates the action of the parts. He insists on these relations between the members and the head, through which the body grows into **the full stature of Christ**;¹⁴ in other words, from Christ our Head, **the whole body, nourished and knit together by means of the joints and ligaments, doth grow with a growth that is of God.**¹⁵

Members Depend on the Head

Consequently our dependence as members on Christ, our Head, is absolute for from the Head we derive our unity, our growth and development and

¹¹ *Notes on St. Paul.* By Joseph Rickaby, S.J., 1 Cor. vi. 15. The bold and striking reading in Eph. v. 30—derived from Gen. ii. 23—confirms and clinches our point.

¹² John i. 14.

¹³ Eph. v. 30.

¹⁴ Eph. iv. 13.

¹⁵ Col. ii. 19.

the whole inflow of Divine vitality. Severed from the head the members are but mutilated fragments. The converse of this proposition is equally true in the sense that the Head as such cannot exist without its bodily complement, nor can the Incarnation of the Son of God attain its full significance without the *mystical* Body. Each, apart, is incomplete. How can the head—which focuses and defines all sensation and directs all movement—possibly exercise these vital acts unless it is substantially united to an organism? Rather is it the principle that constitutes the organism's being, the center and source of personality, radiating throughout the members the steady flow of conscious life. Even these bare outlines of Paul's doctrine of incorporation may enable us to see how closely the Apostle treads in his Master's footsteps. The sum of their teachings is one and the same. Organic union with Christ is life, its severance is death.

Christ Prayed for Unity of Members

And Jesus lifting up His eyes to heaven said: Holy Father keep them in Thy name whom Thou hast given Me that they may be one as We also are . . . that they all may be one as Thou Father in Me and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us . . . that they may be one as We also are one. I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one . . . that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them and I in them. Our Lord's human body and soul are about to undergo the extremes of physical and mental anguish. No limb will be without its pain, no sense without its torture. Yet His prayer is not that His natural body may be saved

the agony of ropes and scourges and thorns and shameful defilement, but that His Mystical Body may be spared; that His seamless garment may not be divided, that His members may not be torn from Him to be the prey of the devourer.

We Share in the Divine Nature

He prays that His love, nay that He Himself, may be in them. His divine vision sees them in their untold variety of age and sex and character and condition, yet, transcending the differences of centuries and continents, He prays that they may be all one, "as Thou Father in Me and I in Thee." God the Father and God the Son are one God by virtue of the one nature of God. Even so much all Christians become, in some mysterious sense, sharers of that Divine nature, being "made perfect in one" by their elevation and absorption into the Divine Being. The secret of Christian perfection lies in this indescribable transformation. Its efficient cause is the sanctity of Christ operating towards the sanctification of His members. In His holiness they are made holy. **For them do I sanctify Myself that they also may be sanctified in truth . . . and not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me.**

Results of Incorporation in Christ

Far from being limited to His own immediate following, our Lord's prayer embraces the believers and the converts of all ages. Moreover, the Apostles and their successors are to preach Christ to the nations, that so the Church may grow and develop to its full term and completion. The sum

then of Christ's desires is that in spite of our diversity, union with Him should make us all one, that it should make us perfect in one, and that it should embrace all who may come to believe in Him; or—more briefly—Christ's prayer is that union with Him may lead to the assimilation of all human differences, the sanctification of human lives, and the salvation of mankind and as "*Cor Christi Cor Pauli est*" so, too, these effects follow, in the Apostle's teaching, as a natural consequence of our incorporation with Christ.

One Body and One Spirit

Towards His members our Lord feels an exquisite sympathy and tenderness—such also in its measure should be the bond of fellow-feeling uniting the members among themselves in their union with Christ their Head. In the physical body how deftly the eyelid shields the eye, how firmly does the hand guard the head, and the foot save the body lest it stumble. **And the eye cannot say to the hand: I have no need of thee, or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you . . . and if one member suffereth, all the members suffer therewith; if a member be honored all the members rejoice therewith.**¹⁶ Now, St. Paul goes on, **You are together the body of Christ and severally His members . . . I exhort you, therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthy of the calling wherewith you were called . . . careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; one body and one Spirit as also ye were called in one hope . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, Who is above all and**

¹⁶ 1 Cor. xii. 21.

throughout all and all in all.¹⁷ So that there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.¹⁸

The Beauty and Glory of the Body

It is noteworthy that while driving home the lesson of our incorporation in Christ, the Apostle lays stress on the diversity of the members, the human differences of nation, sex and condition. Corresponding to this diversity of members is a diversity of functions, a different measure of gifts and graces, a variety of qualities and endowments whose harmonious combination goes to make up the beauty and glory of the Mystical Body, even as a similar variety of gifts and graces in the physical and moral order lends a distinct attractiveness to each personality. Almost invariably the Apostle is leading up to the familiar lesson of concord, with an obvious reference to the quarrelsome section of his audience. Let us have no sedition, no jealousies nor divisions amongst us. If we are to work in harmony we must be content with our place in the divine organism.

Sanctification of Human Lives

Incorporation into the harmonious commonwealth of the Mystical Body leads not only to the assimilation of human differences, but also to the sanctification of human lives. The Christ-life finds its natural outlet in the whole-hearted practice of the moral virtues. Once we are possessed of this life, **We shall be no longer children, nor tossed on the waves and carried around by every wind of doc-**

¹⁷ Eph. iv. 1 ff.

¹⁸ Gal. iii. 26-28.

trine. . . . Rather we shall hold the truth in charity and grow in all things into Him, Who is the Head, Christ. From Him the whole Body welded and compacted together throughout every joint of the system—part working in harmony with part—from Him the Body draweth its increase into the building of itself in charity.¹⁹

Avoidance of Sin

The first and negative consequence of this participation in the life of Christ is the avoidance of sin. By sin the loved member cruelly wounds the living body amid a horrible wrench of nerve and fiber and flesh and bone; by sin we not only inflict a grievous wound on the mystical Christ, we even crucify again to ourselves the Son of God, making Him a mockery.²⁰ . . . Know you not that your bodies are members of Christ? Am I then to take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? God forbid.²¹

Constant Conflict

The avoidance of sin and the subjugation of our debased nature involves a continuous struggle, but our help is from within us. **I see another law in my members fighting against the law of mind and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God by Jesus Christ our Lord.**²² Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath delivered thee from the law of sin and death.²³ Here then we have mention of the

¹⁹ Eph. iv. 14-16.

²⁰ Heb. vi. 6.

²¹ 1 Cor. vi. 15.

²² Rom. vii. 23-25.

²³ Rom. viii. 2.

second and positive consequence of our incorporation with Christ, that is, the maintenance and increase of Divine Grace within us by the practice of Christian virtues. With what energy and frequency does the Apostle enforce this lesson! To the Corinthians he says: **You are not your own, for you have been bought at a price. Glorify God then in your body,**²⁴ that is, glorify Him by showing forth your virtues as fruits of the Christ-life within you. . . . I beseech you, therefore, brethren, he writes to the Romans, **by the mercy of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God . . . and be not conformed to this world;**²⁵ rather, mold your lives into the likeness of Christ in Whom you live. He exhorts the Colossians: **Strip off the old man with his practices and put on the new—put on then as God's elect, holy and well beloved, hearts of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering. . . . But over all these put on charity, that is the bond of perfection. And in your hearts let the peace of God stand supreme, whereunto also ye are called as members of one body.**²⁶

Organic Growth of the Church

From all this it is abundantly clear that to Paul, incorporation with Christ assimilates human differences, and leads to the sanctification of human lives. The growth of the Church, by which we mean not only the aggregation of new peoples into the fold, but also the development of organization and the more explicit unfolding of dogmatic and moral teachings, is a further consequence of this doctrine. Growth is

24 1. Cor. vi. 20.

25 Rom. xii. 1-2.

26 Col. iii. 4-15.

essential to a living organism, in which every cell, while unfolding its own minute processes, contributes to the extension and development of the life of the whole. The individual Christian is a living cell in the Mystical Body of Christ. **In Him it hath pleased the Father that all the fullness should dwell, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself.**²⁷ This then is the explanation of the Church's missionary zeal. It is of her very nature to develop by the generation and absorption of new and living cells into her organism; their multiplication is her growth. Even in his own day, reflecting on the abundant fruits of the brief and checkered ministry, Paul could say to the Romans: **Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. But I say: Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound hath gone forth into all the earth and their words unto the end of the whole world.**²⁸

All Men Saved by Identification With Christ

Later on in the same epistle Paul speaks of this extension of the Church as a mystery or secret of God's providence and this secret design is further explained in the epistle sent from his Roman prison to the Ephesians: **Unto me, he says, the least of all saints hath been given this same grace, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to make clear what is the dispensation touching the mystery which from ages hath been hidden in God the Creator of all, in order that now through the Church be made known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of**

²⁷ Col. i. 19, 20.

²⁸ Rom. x. 17, 18.

God.²⁹ These words come to the same thing. Briefly they denote the plan conceived by God from eternity, but revealed only in the Gospel, by which all men were to be saved—without distinction of race—by being identified with His well-beloved Son in the unity of the Mystical Body.

Comprehensiveness of Divine Plan

This note of comprehensiveness in the Divine scheme of salvation is so fundamental to the Catholic mind that we find some difficulty in conceiving it as a mystery revealed only in these latter days to the Apostles. Yet when we consider what a death-blow was dealt to Jewish hopes and aspirations by this flinging wide of the portals and recall the furies of passion, the tireless persecutions, the various attempts made on the life of the Apostle of the Gentiles, this revolutionary aspect of the Gospel message stands out more clearly. The extension of salvation to all mankind is the keynote of Paul's ministry. It may be summed up in the Temple incident. Paul's arrest at Jerusalem and his subsequent captivity at Cæsarea and in Rome was in Jewish eyes justified on the count that he had violated the sanctity of the Temple by the introduction of a Gentile into its sacred precincts. He had not done that, but he had done something immeasurably more awful. He had opened the Church to the world.

Personal Effect of Incorporation in Christ

In conclusion, it may be profitable to consider this doctrine of our incorporation with Christ from a more intimate and personal point of view. Christ's

²⁹ Eph. iii. 8-10.

life on earth in the beauty of His visible manhood is over. Since that Easter morning when His living and glorious form rose from the tomb, further change or growth or external perfection are impossible to Him. "In a sense," as Monsignor Benson points out,³⁰ "we may close up with our Gospels the individual life of Christ and find in His words, 'It is consummated,' a proof that His human relations with men are over, His work of Redemption completed; but there is a sense in which that ending was but a beginning—an inauguration rather than a climax." For the Mystical Body which the Son of God fashioned in the womb of the Church, and of which He is the Head, is alive and growing with the growth of the ages, nor can it attain its full development till the end of time. He is indeed gone to His Father, but just as His physical body by its hypostatic union with the Word is in heaven and in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, so also is it united by a unique and organic bond to the members of His Mystical Body in heaven and on earth.

We Relive the Life of Christ

Still we are one with Him in His human nature, and can relive in Him the wonder and the tragedy of that human life, in all its rosary of mysteries joyful, sorrowful and glorious. And just as these mysteries are contained in the written Gospel as in the record of a past life, so also do they recur in the Church which is His living embodiment, as in the living Gospel and record of a present life.³¹ Here "he looks through the lattice visible to all who have eyes—here he reproduces the events and crises of

³⁰ *Christ in the Church*. By R. H. Benson, p. 9.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

the life in Judea and in Galilee. Here he works out and fills upon the canvas of the world's history that outline laid down two thousand years ago," flashing its every detail as through the myriad fragments of a shattered mirror in the life of each one of us. In us He is born, lives, suffers, dies and eternally rises again. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever."

We Are Risen With Christ

Does this last point seem somewhat forced—a presentation—imaginative and devotional it is true but hopelessly idealistic—of a belief which cannot be taken too literally or indeed too seriously? Yet it is precisely on this point that St. Paul's testimony is most convincing. We were dead in sin; with Christ we were buried in the fount of baptism. With Him we rose again, living now with a glorified life; with Him or more truly in Him we are seated at the right hand of God the Father. **For God, Who is rich in mercy by reason of the great love wherewith He hath loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to *life* with Christ—by grace ye are saved—and raised us up and seated us in Christ Jesus in the heavenly places.**³²

We Make Up for Christ's Sufferings

On the other hand, though we are raised from the dead and living in Christ, we are not yet wholly glorified, and Christ makes up by our sufferings what is wanting in His own Passion: "for," to take Father Rickaby's explanation,³³ "there is a cross

³² Eph. ii. 4-6.

³³ *Waters That Go Softly*. By Joseph Rickaby, S.J., p. 136.

and a Passion in His Mystical Body which He must endure till the day of judgment, and this He portions out age by age among His friends." Receiving his portion with gladness St. Paul wrote: **Now I rejoice in my sufferings; . . . and make up in my flesh what is lacking to the sufferings of Christ, on behalf of His Body which is the Church.**³⁴ And in so far as we are identified with Him, we must always be **bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh.**³⁵ Through each one of us Christ is daily and hourly coming into His own, and so entering more fully into the possession of His final heritage. Our sorrows are His sorrows; our joys His joys; the kindness done to us He takes as done to Himself; against our persecutors His voice rings out: **I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest.**

We Are His Coheirs to Be

And after we have lived with His life and expressed in ourselves its joys and sorrows, we are also to be united with Him in His glory. To the Eternal Father He says: **The glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them;** to each one of us: **Have a good heart, it is I!** In hinting at this intimate recapitulation of the Christ-life in the life of every Christian, it has been impossible to do justice to the emphatic utterances of St. Paul.³⁶ Summed up they state that with Christ we are *born* and *live* and *suffer*;³⁷ with Him we rehearse the mysteries of the

³⁴ Col. i. 24.

³⁵ 2 Cor. iv. 10.

³⁶ See for this Father Rickaby's *Notes on St. Paul, passim*; and especially on 1 Cor. vi. 2.

³⁷ Rom. vi. 3; Gal. ii. 20, etc.

Crucifixion,³⁸ *Death*,³⁹ *Burial*,⁴⁰ *Resurrection*⁴¹ and *Ascension*.⁴² We are to be *coheirs* with Him, to be *glorified* with Him,⁴³ to *reign* with Him, and with Him to *judge* the world.⁴⁴ These are sublime promises, but taken in their context they seem no more than the logical consequences of our Incorporation with Christ. Further, the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption, our own justification and sanctification, the full purpose of our life on earth, the operation of the Sacraments in the unity of the Mystical Body, and our communion with the souls in purgatory and the Saints in heaven, are in the light of this doctrine invested with a fuller meaning and take a clearer place in the Divine scheme.

Grace and the Mystical Body

In conclusion, it may well be asked how does all this correspond to the usual teaching on sanctifying grace? Sanctifying grace holds the foremost place in the New Testament writing, and is, indeed, in the Apostle's eyes, that life which is communicated to the members by the Head and constitutes the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ.

A Summary Comparison

Briefly, we are taught that man is born in the state of sin. He becomes truly just by Baptism, or in the case of actual sin by having recourse to the Sacrament of Penance. The formal cause of this justification is the justness of God communicated to

³⁸ Rom. vi. 6; Gal. ii. 19.

⁴⁰ Rom. vi. 4.

⁴² Eph. ii. 6.

⁴⁴ 2 Tim. ii. 12; 1 Cor. vi. 2.

³⁹ 2 Tim. ii. 11.

⁴¹ Eph. ii. 5; Col. ii. 13 and iii. 1.

⁴³ Rom. viii. 17.

man and permanently dwelling in his soul. (*"Non qua Ipse justus est—sed qua nos justos facit."*) Though this birth or renewal or internal change is an instantaneous event, its effects remain, just as resuscitation to life is the miracle of an instant and yet the restored life is permanent. This permanent quality is known as sanctifying grace, which by its very nature is so opposed to sin that sanctifying grace and sin cannot by any possibility coexist.

The Effects of Sanctifying Grace

Sanctifying grace is best described in its effects. It establishes a unique bond of sympathy between the soul and God; it induces a likeness in the spiritual order, beautifying the human soul with the beauty of Christ; as it imparts a supernatural birth, so it involves a sonship by which we are admitted into the family of God; it makes us partakers of the Divine nature of Him Who deigned to become a partaker of our humanity. Is not all this a recapitulation in detail of the teaching of St. Paul? Sin is death—sanctifying grace is the life of Christ within us. Life and death cannot by any possibility coexist. The life of Christ establishes a unique bond of sympathy between us and Christ; it makes us one with Him, beautiful with His beauty, transformed into His own likeness, adopted into His Mystical Body by the extension of the Incarnation to our humanity.

The Divine Plan

In this divine scheme the Sacraments stand forth as the main channels of a visible dispensation through which life is poured into the different members, while the Holy Eucharist sustains and aug-

ments that Divine Life. We are apt to regard these doctrines as more or less disjointed, or at any rate to miss their close connection. St. Paul saw in them aspects, implications, conclusions drawn from the one fundamental doctrine of our identification with Christ. To him, both in faith and in practice, the Christ-life sums up Christianity.

Father Gerald Ellard, S.J., writing on the Liturgical Movement remarks: "In every age and especially at the turning points in history, the Church has fashioned its appeal to accord with the pressing needs of the day. The Holy Spirit, the Divine Guide of the Church, is Himself the Householder in the parable, **Who bringeth forth out of His treasure new things and old.**"⁴⁵ To meet the needs of the disruptive twentieth century, the Holy Spirit has brought forth something very, very old indeed, something that has slumbered in the general Christian consciousness for centuries, the doctrine of the Mystical Body.

What are the basic notions of this doctrine? They are two: first that every Christian in virtue of Baptism becomes vitally attached to Christ; second, that every Christian in the State of Grace is permanently a living temple of the Godhead in such an intimate way, that he is caught up and associated with the actual life of God Himself. This extension of Christ in His brethren, this necessary complement of Christ, without which He Himself would be imperfect, is the vast *living organism* called *now* the Church, *now* the Mystical Body of Christ. This indwelling of the Holy Spirit, an actual sharing in the

⁴⁵ Matt. xiii. 52.

Divine Life, is the root notion of grace, merit, sanctification, salvation.

What is the bond that links together all the members of Christ's Mystical Body? It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is called nowadays Christ-life, the constant flow of the vitality and fruitfulness of the Vine into the branches. The supernatural vitality, the participation of the life-forces of Christ, is that life which Christ came that we might have and have more abundantly.⁴⁶ And it is ours at every contact with the supernatural order, but pre-eminently ours in the marvelous system of the sacraments, so many channels to bring this life into every moment and need of our lives. By Baptism we are engrafted into Christ, regenerated in the supernatural order. When the Christ-life now pulsing through us becomes endangered at adolescence, it is confirmed (Confirmation) with the seal of the Spirit, Who in a special manner takes up His abode within the heart. If serious sin should stop the normal flow of Christ-life, this is restored by the Sacrament of Penance. For the special crisis of serious sickness, when the reception of Penance might be impossible, the same effect is made possible by the last anointing. Then there is the Holy Eucharist, called by the people of Hippo in St. Augustine's day, LIFE. Life indeed it is, the food, the sustenance of the soul, immediate contact with the Truth, the Life, in Whom dwells the Godhead corporally.⁴⁷ Then there is Orders for spiritually propagating this Christ-life and Matrimony for propagating this Christ-life in the flesh, for be-

⁴⁶ John x. 10.

⁴⁷ Col. ii. 9.

getting children for their place in the Mystical Body. The sacramental system is thus seen to be adequately planned for maintaining this Christ-life from the cradle to the grave.”

The Head of the Mystical Body is Christ.

The Soul of the Mystical Body is the Holy Spirit.

The Blood Stream of the Mystical Body is Sanctifying Grace.

The Cells of the Mystical Body, its members, are all who share in the Gift of Sanctifying Grace.

DISCUSSION CLUB QUESTIONNAIRE

Questions

LESSON I

(Pages 3-5)

Is the doctrine of the Mystical Body a theory or a fact?

On what basis does it rest?

Why should I accept this doctrine?

Are there contradictory elements in man's life?

In examining his nature, what conclusion will man reach?

Quote St. Augustine on man's nature.

What two lives does man enjoy?

Are they mysteries?

Does belief in a spiritual soul solve the problem of supernatural life?

What dual life is the Christian conscious of?

LESSON II

(Pages 6-8)

On what does the Church base her appeal to our loyalty?

The Church says to man: "I am like yourself." Explain.

Name the saints who taught so clearly the inward and outward life of the Church.

What was our Lord's final prayer for His followers?

Our Lord as Man is the Physical Christ. Explain.

State the difference between the Physical and Mystical Christ.

The Mystical Christ is the absorption of the Church into Christ. Explain.

Is our union with Christ like our union with our fellow citizens?

Whence does the Mystical Body draw its life?

The Church is the extension of the Incarnation. Explain.

LESSON III

(Pages 8-11)

How did Christ explain the effects of the First Mass on His Apostles?

What was the first lesson learned by St. Paul from Christ?

"I am the Vine, you are the branches." How does Monsignor Benson explain this statement?

What is the meaning of *organic union* with Christ?

"We being many are one body in Christ." Is this statement of St. Paul a figure or an image?

What does Incorporation in Christ mean?

What is the co-ordinating power that makes all the members of Christ's Body one?

Do the members of the Body differ from one another in themselves and in their functions?

To what does St. Paul attribute the unity of the Mystical Body?

How do the members depend upon the Head?

LESSON IV
(Pages 11-15)

What is necessary that the Incarnation may attain its full significance?

What radiates life through the Mystical Body?

What was the unity that Christ prayed for at the Last Supper?

How are men made sharers in the Divine Nature?

What is the secret of holiness?

What causes holiness in the members of the Mystical Body?

Did our Lord's prayer for unity apply only to the Apostles?

What is the sum of our Lord's desires expressed by this prayer?

In St. Paul's teaching what effects follow from our incorporation in Christ?

What should be the bond of fellow-feeling among the members of the Mystical Body?

"If one member suffers all the members suffer." Explain.

What makes up the glory and beauty of the Mystical Body?

LESSON V
(Pages 15-19)

What lesson does St. Paul constantly teach in explaining the Mystical Body?

What two special effects follow from incorporation in Christ?

What special virtue does the Christ-life build into the Mystical Body?

State the first negative consequence of the Christ-life in the soul.

What is it that "crucifies again the Son of God"?

How are we helped to control our diseased nature?

What does St. Paul mean by the two laws that are in conflict?

What is the second and positive consequence of our incorporation in Christ?

What is the full meaning of the growth of the Church?

The individual is a living cell in the Mystical Body. Explain.

Explain the missionary zeal of the Church in the terms of the Mystical Body.

LESSON VI

(Pages 19-23)

What is the plan of God whereby all men are to be saved?

What is meant by the "revolutionary aspect" of the Gospel message?

State the keynote of St. Paul's ministry.

How may it be said that the ending of Christ's life was a beginning?

When will the Mystical Body attain its full growth?

How do the mysteries of Christ's life recur in the life of the Church?

"In us He is born, lives, suffers, dies and eternally rises again." Explain.

How could St. Paul say: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings"?

Our Lord said to St. Paul: "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest." Explain.

What does the "recapitulation of Christ-life" mean?

LESSON VII

(Pages 23-27)

What relation does sanctifying grace bear to the Mystical Body?

How does man become *justified*?

Is sanctifying grace a permanent or transient quality in the soul?

Name the effects of sanctifying grace.

What is the function of the sacraments in the divine plan?

What sacrament sustains the divine life of the soul?

How does the Holy Spirit act in meeting the needs of the day?

State the two basic notions of the doctrine of the Mystical Body.



