

in a steep and tall hill surrounded by level country. This picture can represent both the concentration of authority in the Roman Curia vis-à-vis the bishops of the world, and the position of the parish priest vis-à-vis his parishioners. It would seem a better and more stable situation if there were a gently rising slope rather than a sudden precipice connecting the highest authorities in the Church and their subjects. In this way the priesthood of Christ would be shown forth in many different ways, sacramental and non-sacramental, amongst the members of his body.

The Body of Christ¹

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I

A body is a terrestrial thing. It exists in time. It has a shape and a locus. The *Christos* is the Lord's anointed. He is a being divinely ordained to realize the divine purpose, whatever that may be. The body of the Christ is, therefore (whatever else it be) a temporal and terrestrial entity with a shape and locus ordained to realise the divine purpose.

It has been clear for a long time, indeed I think it was always obvious, that a book, though it be the Bible, was never adequate means to realize the divine purpose. The Torah would not be the Torah without a community to believe and practise it. If the *Christos* has a body, this body must be not merely a system of utterances, but at least a community of people and things, a community that embodies and is chosen or ordained to embody the divine purpose fulfilled by the *Christos*. The body of Christ is the economy, the *ecclesia* of Christ.

Since the body of Christ is a community with shape and locus in time, it will not suffice, at any given time, to postpone its existence to the indefinite future, since this means for all practical and therefore all moral purposes that it is not a body in the time that we call time. The body must be present. If it is not present, we have no sufficient grounds

¹The substance of a paper read to a conference of Catholics and Jews.

for believing that it will be present at some future time. All that we can know of the meaning of the words 'present,' 'body,' 'time,' we know within the circuit of our own present and body and time.

I must therefore begin by considering certain elementary assumptions which condition our experience. Sometime ago a distinguished scientist said to me that he would accept only those propositions for which evidence could be adduced, and as no evidence will suffice to prove the existence of God, he found it necessary to reject theism. In answer I produced three platitudes which there is no doubt he believed without evidence, three beliefs bound up with his and everyman's natural consciousness. These platitudes will serve to define the locus of the body. I propose to begin by considering them, then to consider the meaning of the *Christos*, and finally the body of the *Christos*.

First, people live on the assumption made without evidence that life is good, and by the moral injunction obeyed without question that this good must be maintained and cultivated—a faith issuing in a moral rule. And this faith is articulate. We can reason from it. We know how it grows. When things go wrong the believer will do battle for his conviction that they ought to go right. If he is defeated, he will discover new senses and new relevances in the original faith. The city of our prosperous childhood falls and we are carried away captive into strange lands to encounter alien peoples whose style of life and virtue challenges our prejudice and sets us asking questions. Still certain that life is good, we learn that this good is not bound up with local habits and institutions. It is disengaged from immediate happiness and asserted against present ill-fortune. It thinks for strangers and for the distant future. It transcends circumstance. Being is good though the city be destroyed and the temple desecrated. No condition, no enmity, no achievement, no evidence can overcome the life that is good, the good that is alive. We become aware of the transcendent God.

If I believe in, or (as the Creed puts it) *into* God, this means that my faith transcends all worlds of my experience: I am already a citizen of heaven. Not that I know what heaven is—precisely not. I am transcended by it. But by the same token, no world how vast soever can contain me. I live beyond it. I worship beyond my memories and interests and am aware of the Holy. Forced to this frontier by a life too powerful to be managed, we recognize the Lord as our dwelling place, and if our experience is exacting and wide enough we can make sense of St Paul's persuasion that 'neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor

height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God'.

But nowhere have we weighed evidence for God's existence. The whole structure is of faith—a natural faith, if you like. No hypothetical sentence is built into it and it does not ask for verification. It is believed *a priori* and no facts offered *a posteriori* can defeat it. Yet it makes real predicates concerning man and the world he lives in. These predicates are synthetic not in the manner of synthetic statements considered by epistemologists: they create experience, they do not merely register it. Believing that life is good, I can find it tragic, pitiable, promising, happy. None of these evaluations would be possible if life were neutral or evil or if the real end of thinking and perceiving were simply to know what is the case. Indeed, it is very much open to question whether we ever do simply know what is the case, for all statements (it may well be contended) are made with a view to action or the achievement of value.

My faith does not remedy the situation, or heal it in any way, but rather supervenes upon my reverses to explore new possibilities of believing that life is good. The worship of all-transcending Good does not comply with necessity but obeys a commandment. It is the act of a man whose heart thirsts for the living God, because he has known doubt and adversity, has been frustrated and betrayed. He has discovered a sense of guilt intensified by the unkindness of his environment and his own undivulged dissatisfaction of conscience. He knows life as a conflict and a judgment which he cannot escape. Creation is not enough. There is judgment. There must be redemption. In small practical affairs which make up most of our experience, we make, judge and mend continually, and deliver this elementary pattern of behaviour from generation to generation. Great movements which shape history come down to these humble elements. Science which never touched questions of healing and destruction, which never satisfied or frustrated the lowliest appetites would never gain the manpower or apparatus it needs for its enquiries and would remain a beautiful and ineffectual angel beating its luminous wings in vain. We never surpass the faith that life is good and must be created, judged and mended. These two simultaneous beliefs are the right and left hand of the same road. The Good we worship creates, judges and redeems the good we are. The good we make and judge and recover expresses the Good in which we believe.

My second platitude is that life is history. It is made of events—not

phenomena. They really happen; they do not merely evolve. They are contingent, not necessary, not fortuitous. Yet as each happens it helps to form a discernible pattern. History discloses a kind of logic discernible over long intervals of time. An event, as it floats astern, becomes phenomenon; as it emerges from the future, it comes as accident. Now and here, it is all event. Only creatures that have a *now* and *here* can suffer events. In the world of events, we suffer an irremediable agnosis. If then history seems to have a shape or reason, this can be only because faith makes it. We believe in a direction or a logic which is not given by mere contingency. We do in some sense believe that the Lord has been our dwelling place from one generation to another, though we may not discover the attributes of the Lord.

Each event has a discernible identity. We could not replace it as we could the parts of a machine by another exactly similar event. Each is in some sense a gift, an effect of unrepeatable causes, a cause of peculiar reactions. We 'remember all the way that the Lord our God has led us in the wilderness to try us, to humble us and to know what was in our heart' and from this belief we elicit a belief in divine economy which explains and validates history for us and gives shape to the universe. And a real event kills something. It puts an end to a state of things. When the elements reassemble in a new pattern or, as Paul will say, in newness of life, this revival is a resurrection. The earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, and since all events are deeds or gifts of God, the new life is a dwelling from God. Any rearrangement short of this death and resurrection is no more than a phenomenal adaptation or explication of the facts which are there already. J. P. Sartre spends his metaphysical subtlety on emphasizing this total otherness, this alien invasion of events, but we are all aware of it. Moreover, unless some strange factor breaks into the established system and shatters its monotony, this uneventful system is insignificant. Meaning implies death and resurrection.

My third platitude is that life is regular. I know that if I go out of my gate and turn to the left, I shall duly arrive at one railway station, and if I turn to the right I shall duly arrive at another. I left some daffodils on the table, and since no one is in the house, I know that the daffodils are where and as they were behaving in the manner of daffodils. I know what stars I shall see from my bedroom window if the night is clear. Regular; but not a machine, rather a ritual. A living organism is a ritual. It is living and regular, a pattern of many behaviours and many parts, harmonized by the life they all share and to

which all contribute. 'For the body is not one member but many . . . there are many members but one body. 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.' Further, if we think of society as living organism, we must think of it as a ritual. Language is not only signs but a ritual and regular communion. We learn it, not to make sense of predicates merely, but to share the life of those who speak it, and their speech is an order of noises devised, like ritual, to convey meaning and establish common action. Constitutional practice and legal procedure, art, science, custom, sport—all have this ritual quality. A certain proposal for the control of national conduct goes stage by stage through the precise ritual of parliament and, behold, it is a statute enforced by the power of the state. It is broken or alleged to be broken and the allegation will be subjected to a ritual procedure. Again, science is not only or primarily a system of information about the world but a communion of scientists with its ritual continuing from generation to generation, its sacred vessels, its dedicated buildings, tradition, guilds and discipline.

A rite means something. It is a *word*. Body, ritual, word are one. Body is ritual: language is body: ritual is language. There could be no ritual without body, no body without meaning. The natural cosmos and human race are thus bound together in a liturgy. We cannot progress beyond this liturgy or escape from it. In saying that the word became flesh we do not announce a paradox but make a self-evident assertion. We cannot begin to disembody our ideas. All we have to do is to discover what body, what ritual, what word expresses the life that is good and being good transcends and transfigures experience. The answer to the question 'what?' must be 'this'. And 'this' must signify not a phenomenon but an event. The liturgy is the event: it is the life that is good, and it is the event that expresses that good.

These three primitive acts of faith are a kind of *preparatio* for that supernatural faith which apprehends the Christian Trinity.

The faith that life is good leads to belief in God

The faith that life is history leads to belief in God incarnate

The faith that life is liturgy leads to belief in the holy body of the Holy Spirit.

II

Christos is the 'anointed', the divinely chosen servant of the divine purpose. At one time, Cyrus is *Christos*, but above all, the *Christos* is David; and of David it is written

Thine house and thy kingdom shall be made sure for ever before thee.

And again

My covenant will I not break

Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.

Once I have sworn by my holiness,

I will not lie unto David.

His seed shall endure for ever,

And his throne as the sun before me;

It shall be established for ever as the moon.

And as the faithful witness in the sky.

The *Christos* is as original and inevitable as the natural universe. His source is the divine holiness. He has the same authority as the word which made the world and the covenants.

The Christian argument is set forth by Paul in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia thus:

And as concerning that he raised him from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he hath spoken on this wise, I will give you the holy and sure mercies of David. Because he saith also in another psalm, Thou wilt not give thy holy one to see corruption. For David, after he had in his own generation served the counsel of God, fell on sleep and was laid unto his fathers and saw corruption.

Here, the point is that whatever happens to the individual David, the *Christos* is everlasting, and this serves Paul as argument for resurrection. The divine counsel could not be quenched. History would declare it. We are not concerned here with the historical reappearance of Jesus after death, but with the fact that death has no dominion over the Lord's *Christos*. Elsewhere Paul constantly sees this resurrection in terms of the community which he calls the body of the *Christos*. It is an ancient prophetic conviction that the *Christos* survives all defeat. The Lord's community rises from the dead:

And he carried me out in the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. And he caused me to pass by them roundabout; and behold there were very many in the open valley, and lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of Man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. And he said unto me, Prophesy over these bones and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones: Behold I will

lay sinews upon you and will bring up flesh upon you and cover you with skin and put breath in you and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

And the new community rises no longer a small military and materialistic state but as the *ecclesia* of I AM, emancipated from the local monolatry to a mature monotheism. Exile and defeat has taught the faithful that God is the God of the whole earth which he creates and judges and redeems. So it happened in the age of Ezekiel and the Second Isaiah. Four centuries later it happened again. I quote Professor Burkitt:

The great spiritual crisis that befell the Jews of the second century before our era was not the result of any development of Jewish thought. It was brought on from without. To the pious Jew was offered by Antiochus Epiphanes the alternative of death or assimilation to the heathen world around him, and he chose rather to die . . . It was under Antiochus that Israel rose up once more to be a nation baptized to a new life in the blood of the martyrs . . . In Daniel there is a philosophy of universal history: the great Gentile Kingdoms, like the Greek supremacy of the Seleucids and the Ptolemys which seemed so overwhelming and terrible, are shown as phases in a world process whose end is the Kingdom of God . . . In other words Judaism is to the author of Daniel a cosmic, world religion . . . The Kingdom of God that is the central idea. It is the new age, the new state of things that will come about when the great agony has ended by God's victorious intervention on behalf of His saints, when He comes or sends His representative (Christos) to set the world right.

Twice a death, twice a resurrection and as each crisis passed that which was soon a natural body, rose a spiritual body.

The state died. The *ecclesia* rose from its grave. The *ecclesia* was martyred and behold in its place a 'cosmic, world religion', a new age, a Kingdom of God. Such is the logic of their history. And what next? This was the question which confronted Saul of Tarsus. Suppose that another Antiochus or a new Babylon greater than the old should destroy this temple what would be the logical attitude of a Jew who believed in the divine history of his people? Daniel had seen in the 'night-visions and behold there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a Son of Man and he came even unto the Ancient of Days and they brought him near before him. And there was given unto him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that which shall not be destroyed.' That was last

time but what of now? That was a night vision but what of the daylight? Destroy this temple and in three days I will build it up. But he spoke of the temple of his body. Which body? Which temple? The Church died and rose again as a cosmic world religion in the hope of Messiah, and then, for those at least who believed in him the messianic hope died. And then?

I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men and he shall dwell with them . . . And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold I make all things new.

According to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and every name that is named not only in this world but also in that which is to come; and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

This, I think, is the successor in logic as in history of Ezekiel and Daniel. 'I stand' said Paul 'unto this day saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come.' 'Behold' said Stephen, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.'

III

The *Christos* cannot be holden of corruption. Wherever in the history of the *Christos* we encounter death, we do by the same token realise resurrection. The faith that life is good grows by defeat and against all evidence of disaster into the faith that Good transcends myself and any possible universe. This faith affirms that God creates and judges and redeems all things. The act of creation, judgment and redemption is historical. It is composed of events, and these events are factors of a liturgy which has meaning and coherence, is word and body. The embodied word, the body which in terms of organic existence gives utterance to the transcendent God is revealed in his *Christos* as creating judging and redeeming. Hence:

(1) *This body is the body of his resurrection*, and to enter it we repeat liturgically, that is we realise as present here and now, the death and resurrection of the *Christos*. Baptism gathers into itself the three funda-

mental facts of our human nature, birth, death and resurrection.

All we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.

(2) *It is a cosmic body*, an organism that includes the natural universe.

For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the apocalypse of God's sons. For the creation was subject to frustration not of its own will, but by him who subjected it in hope, hope that the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans in travail till now. And we too groan within ourselves, we who have the first fruits of the Spirit, as we wait for our adoption, the redemption of our body.

The redemption of our body is the fulfilment of the divine purpose in creating the universe. Nothing that God creates or judges is irrelevant to the divine redemption. The whole universe is the matter of a sacrifice. It is all to be made holy within the body of the *Christos*.

(3) *It is an organic unity*, not only as each organ needs the other organs in order to live its life and perform its function, but above all as one life or spirit informs the whole.

For as the body is one and hath many members and all the members of the body being many are one body, so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and were all made to drink of one Spirit.

That which constitutes the body is that which makes and keeps it alive. The body of the *Christos* is a body solely because the *Christos* is living in it, because it embodies his transcendence of death, his resurrection. When we say that the *Christos* is living, we mean that in his body the consummate purpose of God is actually and actively realized,

to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, in him in whom also we were made a heritage having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will.

Liturgy is not the 'routine of religion' merely, but the routine of being. It is the stuff of morality and reason, the remedy and reverse of chaos. It establishes identity and enables us to know where we are. It is the shape of things and must therefore be accomplished, fulfilled. The *Christ* is the fulfilment, so Christians believe. So St Paul speaks of the 'fulness

of the Jews' and the 'fulness of the Gentiles'. Love, he says, is the fulness of the law. He is going to visit the Romans in the 'fulness of the blessing of Christ'. To the Corinthians, justifying his universalism, he quotes, 'the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.' 'In the fulness of time' he tells the Galatians 'God sent his Son, born of a woman.' The Ephesian and Colossian epistles speak of 'the economy of the fulness of the times', of 'the church which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all'. He prays that the Ephesians 'may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God' 'till we all attain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ'. 'In him all the fulness dwells' 'all the fulness of the Godhead bodily'. St Paul leaves nothing out. By the time he has finished with the word *pleroma* we are in no doubt that he really means fulness. This is the fulness of the body of Christ.

This full significance we can see, perhaps, best of all in one of the most sublime moments of Pauline insight. 'We all with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord are transformed into the same image from glory to glory even as from the Lord the Spirit.' The image in St Paul's mind is of two glories, the Father and the Son, and proceeding from glory to glory is the love that subsists between them, love that is himself a person of the Godhead, the Lord the Spirit. As he proceeds, this divine Spirit has a holy body whose members are we, Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, a holy body carried in that divine procession to express the love of God for God. This is our *raison d'être*—to be the ultimate utterance of divine *agapē*. To this end the divine *Ecclesia*, embracing and translating the whole created universe exists as ultimate sacrament and fulfilled creation.