

## THE MYSTICAL BODY AND THE SACRAMENTS

Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J.

**M**ANY unities bind men together besides their unity in Christ. The bond may be conspicuous as a country on the map, or inconspicuous as a cultural tradition. It may be quiet and practical like a trade union or a sodality; or noisy and mysterious like a break on the stock market. It may be a fine ideal as democratic justice and equality; a grandiose dream like the Fascist empire; the efficient madness of Germany's racial pride; or just the homely brutality of Joseph Stalin. But whatever their nature, such bonds are ever present. Weak or strong, manifest or unsuspected, localized or far-reaching, vile or inspiring, they are ever manifold, ever pressing upon us, ever moulding our deeds, our statements, our thoughts, our judgments.

In the aggregate these mysterious bonds are termed human solidarity, and from their grip there is no escape. Think what the Soviet rule means to one hundred and eighty million Russians. Yet the heavy imprint of that rule on the external way of life, on the inward thoughts, on the eternal destiny of every Russian is but a striking example of a more general law. Because that regime is planned and organized, because it is dramatic in bloodshed and ruthlessness, because under the shadow of terrorism it fans out through the press, the radio, the school, the factory, the farm, the market from the Polish marshes to the Pacific, from the Arctic to the Caspian, this giant octopus seizes the imagination and drives home the helplessness of the Russians in their solidarity. But if only we reflect, we come to realize that a similar though far from identical helplessness is the lot of all men. Indeed we have free will, but the field in which our responsible choices are made, that is not of our doing. We were not asked whether we cared to be born, to select our parents or their ancestors, to choose our country, or the ideals and principles taught us in our youth. Our occupation and marriage—or lack of these—we attribute more to ourselves; yet who can measure the role played by temperament and chance circumstance in these most serious decisions. If in them we are not too notably the unconditioned masters, then how much less in the daily routine on which we seldom reflect, which we leave to the control of custom and fashion? Finally when we turn to broader issues, to prosperity and slumps, to the whims of dictators or of democratic public opinion, to peace and war,

to national ambitions and enmities, to the historical forces immovably rooted in the past yet powerfully operative in the present, then we must confess that even we are no more than atoms, each indeed autonomous within his narrow orbit, for each is free, yet together swept in a swirling mass down the cataract of life to the serene pool of a green churchyard.

Examine that cataract. At first one is struck with a love of its beauties, its amazing progress, its splendid virtues, its courageous smile and lament laughter. Draw nearer: one grows indignant at vast injustice, loathes soul-destroying bestiality, hates the confusing cult of ever shifting errors. Yes, the stream is contaminated at its very source, and every atom in the torrential flow is the disabled veteran of a primitive battle that was lost. Men are truly men: they acknowledge a rule and a law above that of beasts; they distinguish right and wrong; they praise many a heroic deed; they abominate much evil. Yet in their very manhood they are cripples: at the best, the good they would they do not, and the evil they would not, that they do; and at worst? Let St. Paul answer.

As they liked not to have God in their knowledge, God delivered them up to a reprobate sense, to do those things which are not befitting. Being filled with all iniquity, malice, fornication, avarice, wickedness: full of envy, murder, contention, deceit, malignity: whisperers, detractors, hateful to God, contumelious, proud, haughty, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, foolish, dissolute; without affection, without fidelity, without mercy. Romans 1, 28-31.

That picture is not merely of ancient Rome. It is the inevitable goal of all merely human progress. Men can and will revolt against such monstrous evil, but to what avail? Neither revolution, nor liquidation, nor reform, nor the European new order, nor the Asiatic new order, nor the dynamic of events, nor muddling through, nor common sense, nor any other human plan can end it. For every human effort will be equally corrupt, will equally have its source in the heart of man and in Adam's sin.

There is but one hope, one refuge, one remedy. Only one man has overcome the world, and that man was God. There has been but one com-

plete victory over sin, and that victory was death, a death wrought in mid air by the agony of crucifixion. "I", he said "if I be lifted up, will draw all things to Me." Into that death of his we too must enter, if we are to share the glory of his resurrection. To share that glory we pray when we recite, "Thy kingdom come." Into that death we enter, when we receive the sacraments.

"Know you not", wrote St. Paul, "that all we who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in his death? For we are buried together with him by baptism into death: that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer." Romans 6, 3-6.

Such is the efficacy of the death of Christ. It draws the attention and wins the allegiance of a sinful world. Through its symbol and representation, the sacrament of baptism, it destroys the reign of sin in each individual, the reign of the old Adam vitiating every noble aim and bringing every good beginning to an evil end. But not only does it destroy. It lays the foundations of a new humanity, walking in a newness of life, walking in the freshness of freedom liberated from the clutch of sin's solidarity. Just as food that enters into the body is disintegrated and refashioned to become new blood, new tissue, new flesh, new bone, new sinew, so too by baptism is the dominion of sin broken in Adam's children of wrath to rebuild them anew in Christ. "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3, 5) Be convinced of the reality of that new birth. The human body is not nourished by patching here a piece of lettuce and there a bit of beef: neither is the mystical Christ built up by any mere agglomeration of men. But as food is transformed into human flesh, so also men are transformed into more than men, into children of God and temples of the Holy Spirit, that in Christ they be as Christ who is the Son of God on whom the Holy Spirit descended.

Still, profound as is this spiritual change, our bodies do not at once die to rise again as Christ rose from the tomb. Our liberation is not complete. Our sojourn is prolonged until nature's course makes us pay by death the forfeit of Adam's sin. Thus, besides the sacrament of baptism, there are six more to strengthen the bonds uniting us with

Christ, lest we become entangled in the tentacles of human solidarity, lest we let charity grow cold and faith grow dim and our hope of heaven so faded that we barter our eternal heritage for place or pleasure in this Egypt of our souls.

There is confirmation. "Everyone that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven. But he that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven." (Mt., 10: 32, 33) It is not enough to believe inwardly in Christ; we must also give others the example of belief. "With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10, 10) This confession of Christ is not always an easy matter, as even St. Peter showed when a froward maid embarrassed him into disclaiming Christ. Nor need we think of ancient martyrs. In modern Germany Nazi pressure has been so great that parents have fallen on their knees pleading with their children to leave the Catholic school and desert the organizations of Catholic youth. In modern France it was accounted a great thing that five thousand professional men in Paris were found ready, after much labour, to jeopardize their careers by making their Easter Communion. "If you had been of the world, the world would love its own: because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (John 15, 19) Against this inevitable hatred, our souls must be steeled. To give them the temper needed, Christ ascended into heaven and on Pentecost sent the Holy Spirit on the apostles and disciples. It is a grace that we too receive in confirmation and, to know its efficacy, we need only compare St. Peter first brazenly denying Christ in the court-yard of the high priest, and later brazenly telling the high priest to his face that God was to be obeyed rather than men (Acts 3, 5-21). The Spirit revealed in Christ from Gethsemani to Golgotha has also been revealed not only by the apostles but by the martyrs of every age, not only by martyrs but by every Catholic who has endured slights and sneers, discrimination and ostracism, calumny and hatred for his belief in Christ, whom the world will ever reject.

There is the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist. "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. If anyone abide not in me, he shall be cast forth as a branch and shall wither: and they shall gather him and cast him into the fire." (John 15, 5, 6). Since we are born again in Christ unto a newness of life, we must be sustained by the life that is in

Christ. The branch that is not sustained by the vine withers away. But the branch that is grafted on to it, that draws its life from it, is the channel and the tool by which the vine brings forth its fruit. That is clear and simple. "Amen, amen, I say to you: except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day." (John 6: 51, 55) The point cannot be made any plainer. Would you ward off the death of your immortal soul? Go to communion: "without me you can do nothing." Would you grow in Christ, would you become what Christ would have been had he your life to lead? Go to communion: "as the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me." (John 6, 58) Would you be more reverent in your communions? would you make them occasions for increasing your determination to reject all sin? You have only to recall that communion represents and applies the passion and death of your Lord. "For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink this chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord." (1 Cor., 11, 26).

But we are still weaklings in Christ, barely weaned from the world, still subject to deceit and temptation. Like the vineyard on a hill in a fruitful place, fenced in and cleared of stones and planted with the choicest vines, we too have been renovated in baptism and confirmed in the Holy Spirit and nourished by the body of Christ. And as that vineyard brought forth grapes not sweet and full but sour and wizened, so too we bring forth not the fruits of Christ's example and of the indwelling Holy Spirit but the fruits of our not yet glorified bodies and of the worldliness that surrounds us and presses us down. We become diseased members of the mystical body, to the public disgrace of Christ and to the scandal of those outside who are led to say that Catholics are not a whit better than anyone else. For this reason the sacrament of penance exists, the tribunal of the confessional. As before the tribunal of Pilate Christ was unjustly condemned to death, so by this tribunal the unjust members of Christ may be allowed to go free. "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain they are retained." The sin-



This is the latest picture of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, and Princess Elizabeth to reach this continent. The Queen and the Princess are constantly mingling with the people greeting them with words of cheer and sympathy and sharing the hardships of rationed food and rightly bombings.

ner must repent and resolve amendment, but to be restored fully to the living body of Christ, he must also confess and be forgiven.

The sacraments of matrimony and orders are concerned with the extension of the mystical body. Not only does Christ grow in each individual, but also would he reach out through them to others, that the Church be perpetuated in every age to the consummation of the world. Thus by orders bishops and priests are procured to replace the apostles in their mission of teaching all nations. Similarly the sacrament of matrimony elevates a natural function into a function of the mystical body. Christian marriage is not merely for the procreation and education of more human beings; it is for the procreation and education of more Christians. In this

(Continued on page 32)

**THE MYSTICAL BODY AND THE SACRAMENTS***(Continued from page 10)*

duty even Catholics can be led astray at a time when contraceptives are a \$250,000,000 yearly business and, since they commonly are defective, the number of abortions is rivalling the number of births. Such is the world which the Christian must renounce, for no man can serve two masters. Of the standard of living, the gospel says: Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. Of the standard of holiness, it says: Be ye therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. Not only to James and John but to every member of the mystical body is the question put: Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink? For the love of Christ crucified for his mystical body is the model and measure of married love and married sacrifice.

Extreme unction, finally, is a sacrament with a double effect: sometimes it communicates the efficacy with which Christ cured the sick of ancient Palestine; always, when properly received, it clears away the scars and remnants of sin to prepare the soul for its first interview with the Lord of us all. If only then he smiles on you and says to you, Well done, is not that smile, are not those two words from him worth a thousand lives of faithful gratitude and love? Think it over.

**Esquimalt Subdivision**

The Esquimalt Catholic Women's League held a successful tea and turkey contest at the home of Mrs. Sparrow. The president, Mrs. Comerford, received the guests, and a musical programme was given. Mesdames Colbert and Harris presided at the tea urns. Mrs. Smythe and Mrs. Palmer were in receipt of customs, and Misses Pick and Sparrow served the tea. Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Lambert helped with refreshments.

**Cobble Hill Shawnigan**

Twenty tables of cribbage, five hundred and bridge were made up at an enjoyable card party held in the S.L.A.A. Hall, Shawnigan, under the auspices of the Cobble Hill and Shawnigan Lake Branch of the Catholic Women's League. A popular contest with many useful prizes was an additional attraction, and prizes were won by Messrs Hall and F. T. Elford as possessors of the "lucky" chairs. Refreshments were served by the members of the League. Winners at cards were as follows: Cribbage, first, Mrs. A. Hallet and H. Piton; five hundred, first, Mrs. W. Bell and Mr. J. Walker; bridge, first, Mrs. K. Bloomquist and Mr. F. T. Elford.

**Langford Subdivision**

The monthly meeting of the Langford Subdivision of the Catholic Women's League was held at the home of Mrs. W. R. Scafe. The president, Mrs. Patrick Mahoney, presided. Much business and many plans for future activities were discussed.

**PERPETUAL HELP CREDIT UNION***(Continued from page 17)*

ment in this province. He pointed out the orderly and constitutional manner in which coöperative institutions could bring about much needed economic reforms without the violence and revolutionary methods advocated by some. There are two fronts, he said, in this war which have to be strengthened and defended: the battle front, where soldiers fight so valiantly against the enemy, and the home front, which must be prepared to guard against the economic strain, now, and after the war. Group movements of this kind, he said, were of great value in showing the people what they could do to help themselves. Bishop Cody was thanked for his timely and helpful address by the President, as were also the other members of the clergy for their interest and support.

Owing to the resignation of Mr. Hubert Fogden on account of military duties, from the Directors, and to extend the Board to seven members, the following new members were elected: Mr. E. L. St. Martin, Mr. Brian Burdon Murphy, and Miss Kathleen Nesbitt. Mr. F. X. O'Neill was chosen Chairman of the Credit Committee. Other committees and officers remain as previously.

An active Refreshment Committee consisting of Mrs. E. Hornsby, Mrs. J. D. Kissinger and Mrs. J. DeBlanquiere served the assembled members and their friends. Other social and educational groups were named and plans for further coöperation are being arranged.

**PAPAL HONOR TO REV. G. T. DALY, C.S.S.R.**

His many friends from Coast to Coast in Canada will be glad to learn that the Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice has been presented to Rev. George T. Daly, C.S.S.R., of St. Patrick's Church, Toronto.

Father Daly, formerly a member of the staff of St. Peter's Church, Toronto and founder of the Sisters of Service, recently observed the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination.

The presentation of the Cross to Father Daly was made recently by the Most Rev. J. C. McGuigan, D.D., Archbishop of Toronto.

**SYMPATHY**

To Mrs. Chipman Kean, National Convener—Girl Guides, we extend on behalf of members of the C. W. L. deepest sympathy on the death of her Mother, Mrs. Julia George of Saint John, N. B. who died on January 14th after a short illness.