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DIVINE SOCIETY

Books by

F. W. DILLISTONE

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The Structure of the Divine Society
The Holy Spirit in the Life of Today
The Significance of the Cross

The STRUCTURE *of the* DIVINE SOCIETY

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by
F. W. DILLISTONE

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PREFACE

IN my teaching during the past ten years, one of my main concerns has been the Doctrine of the Church. During that period I have seen the subject assume an ever greater importance in ecumenical and missionary circles. Many books have been written, many articles have been published, and at times it has been difficult to focus one's vision and to see what were the really essential issues in the current debate. Nearly three years ago, however, I came to realize that two ideas or categories were constantly re-appearing not only in ecclesiastical discussions, but even in the field of international diplomacy. On the one hand men were talking about *Organic* union between States which had hitherto been autonomous and economically independent: or they were speaking of the achievement of the reunion of Christendom within the one *Body* of Christ. On the other hand, some were advocating a kind of *Federal* union between the nations: others were hoping that the different denominations of Protestantism would discover a way of coming together within the bonds of the one *Covenant* of Christ. These two conceptions seemed to me so interesting and so important as to deserve careful study and critical evaluation, and I quickly found that they were related to almost every aspect of the Doctrine of the Church with which I had hitherto been concerned.

Soon, however, it became clear to me that these two ideas were also closely connected with the two Church traditions which had played the leading part in my own apprehension of the Christian Faith and understanding of the Church's order. I had been baptized, confirmed and ultimately ordained within the Anglican tradition, though for a period in my youth I had been brought into very close touch with what would be called a more sectarian type of worship and organization. But I had also, through periods of residence in Scotland, in India and in Canada, and through a series of visits to the United States, learned to appreciate and admire

the Reformed tradition and had become conscious of a deep indebtedness to and close affinity with many friends within the Presbyterian Churches.

Yet if one idea more than another has been prominent in the historical development of Anglicanism it has been the "organic": if one guiding concept can be said to have been determinative in the ongoing corporate life of Presbyterianism it has been the "covenantal". Thus for both academic and personal reasons the examination of the two ideas in question became a matter of unusual interest.

A final stimulus to this examination came through the invitation to deliver the T. V. Moore Lectures in the San Francisco Theological Seminary in 1949. Actually I attempted in the lectures to sketch the views of both Church and Sacraments as represented within the two traditions, but it has only thus far been possible for me to expand the section on the Church and present it in book form. I must ask the Trustees of the Lectureship to accept what is now to appear in print as a token of my appreciation of the honour which they bestowed upon me. My visit to San Anselmo will always remain one of my happiest memories, and I think especially of the great kindnesses of President Jesse Baird and of my old friend Professor John Wick Bowman during the days that I spent in their company.

Two other matters of a personal kind can conveniently be mentioned in the Preface. First I want to say that my historical survey does not profess for one moment to be comprehensive or exhaustive. Only in a few cases have I gone to the sources direct: in others I have depended upon the guidance of such writers as Mersch and Gierke and Adams Brown and Perry Miller. My main purpose has been to gain some kind of perspective in relation to the historical development of the two ideas with which I am chiefly concerned. Secondly I have to admit that there is one grave omission in the historical section: there is no treatment of Luther or of the Lutheran tradition as represented in Germany, the Scandinavian countries and the United States of America. In reference to this I may perhaps say two things.

In the first place I do not have sufficient knowledge either through first-hand experience or through detailed study to write about the Lutheran Churches. I have never lived or travelled in the Lutheran countries in Europe, nor have I had close contacts with the Lutheran Churches in the United States. In the second place, if I were now to attempt to examine with any thoroughness the influence of the two concepts with which I am concerned upon the Lutheran tradition it would delay the publication of the book and make it larger in size than it probably ought to be. I have therefore done no more than indicate in a brief appendix how certain recent studies of the Lutheran doctrine of the Church seem to be related to the main theme of the book. Possibly a Lutheran scholar will consider it worthwhile to examine how these two leading ideas have been represented within his own tradition at greater length.

In sending out this study of the activity of the Divine Spirit within the corporate life of mankind, I am deeply conscious of my debt to many writers, teachers, and friends of other Christian communions besides the one of which I am myself a member. If I have in any way misrepresented or misunderstood their particular emphasis, I must ask pardon. As Bishop Creighton once said of English Nonconformity: "All its various forms corresponded to some genuine need of the time in which it arose. Each embodies some great truth which was once overlooked or neglected." I recognize this. Yet it is also true that we are living in the day of the great Society, and the pattern of the great Church cannot fail to be a matter of deep concern to all Christian people. It is because I believe that the Divine activity is revealed both through organic growth and through covenantal meeting and that a true understanding of these two processes can provide guidance for those who work and pray for the reunion of Christendom that I offer the results of my study for their consideration.

To my colleagues Sherman E. Johnson and William J. Wolf who have been good enough to read the manuscript and to offer criticisms and suggestions, I extend my warmest thanks.

Grateful acknowledgment is made for the use of quotations from the following works:

Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*
Philosophical Library, 1949

W. A. L. Elmslie, *How Came Our Faith*
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949

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The Macmillan Company, 1939

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SECTION ONE

BIBLICAL

Chapter One

THE ORGANIC VIEW OF SOCIETY

I

MAN, writes Professor R. M. MacIver, "is born in society and the need of society is born in him" (*Society*, p. 9). He first appears upon the scene as a social animal who can only exist within community. If his young are to grow to maturity, if he is to gain security from the dangers which surround him, it is essential for him to have the support of his fellow-men. So the earliest known form of human life is a *common* life and the very pressure of his environment causes the individual to pay more attention to the things which unite him with the other members of his society than to the things which separate him from them.

There is, for example, in the most primitive tribes the sense of being derived from a common *origin*. There may be a tradition of descent from a totem ancestor or from a pair of semi-divine beings or from an original cosmic man. Whatever form the myth of origin may take, there is the firm conviction that all members of the clan are intimately related because of their common parentage. Again there is the sense that all share common *blood*. It is certain that at a very early stage in his career man recognized the close connection between blood and life. To lose blood was to lose life. The ancient custom of blood vengeance shows how precious and sacred a thing blood was felt to be. But every member of the clan possessed this mysterious fluid and it was natural to think that it was the same blood which flowed through the veins of all. In addition to common blood there was common *breath*. To lack breath was to lack energy: to receive a new inflow of breath was to regain vitality and power. But all members of the community were continually breathing in and out and there was every reason to infer that all were sharing in common breath. This list of common

possessions might easily be extended to include a common habitat, common food, common tools and a common language. The important point is that man's earliest life is a collective life and his earliest thinking is directed towards those features of his existence which he shares with all the other members of his society.

Yet this is not to say that there is no recognition of differences. One of the most obvious is that connected with various age-groups. Infants, children, youths, adults, differ in size, in interests, and in capabilities; and it is a familiar experience of life that those within particular age-limits tend to congregate together in what may be called secondary groups of one society. Again, as soon as the most elementary skills developed, further differentiations were bound to appear. Certain individuals proved to have greater cunning in the chase, others to possess superior skill in fashioning instruments, others to be capable of inspiring enthusiasm or emotional pleasure. And according to the scale of their value to the general well-being of the society, so the groups possessing these special capacities were graded. Thus our earliest picture of human society is that of a collective unity in which certain differentiations were tending slowly to emerge.

The interesting question now arises as to how primitive man himself regarded the society of which he formed a part. He could scarcely have failed to be conscious of the wholeness which sprang from one root, possessed one common life, and existed within one particular environment, and yet had within it certain elementary differentiations such as we have already described. Was there anything within his ordinary experience to which such a wholeness could be likened? One possibility springs readily to mind. A tree is an important phenomenon in the life of nature. It rises out of the ground, grows as a living unit, yet spreads itself abroad into countless branches, leaves and fruit. Here is an impressive example of amazing variations within the common life of a single whole and as the Old Testament clearly shows, men were not slow to compare their own society with one of the familiar

and treasured trees which belonged to their environment. But there was another possible comparison which at some time suggested itself to the human imagination and this particular comparison has played a quite extraordinary role within the history of human thought. Why should not society be likened to the human body itself? The body is certainly a unit. It is animated by one breath, it is suffused by one blood, it is unified in its sensitivities and feelings. At the same time the body possesses a hierarchical structure—feet, legs, thighs, arms, head—and the different parts of the body have well-defined functions to perform. In all these ways the body can be compared to a social unit, and when we bear in mind that primitive man is much less aware of sharp outlines and clear-cut distinctions than we are, we can see that it was a perfectly natural thing for him to speak of the social group as a body or (to use a modern expression) a personality and to regard the collective whole as capable of behaviour almost exactly similar to that of an individual unit. In other words, what is usually called the organic view of society must have had its origin far back in the history of the exercise of the human imagination.

The first explicit use of this comparison of which I am aware is to be found in the ancient literature of India. In the laws of Manu (1 : 31) there is an account of the Creation of the Universe in which it is written:

"But for the sake of the prosperity of the worlds, he (i.e. the Lord) caused the Brahmana, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya and the Sudra to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his thighs and his feet." Again we read (1 : 87): "But in order to protect this universe He, the most resplendent one, assigned separate (duties and) occupations to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs and feet."

A similar myth appears in the Hymn to Purusa in the *Rig Veda* (*circa* 1000 B.C.). Purusa is the name given to the original wholeness, the All, but the hymn declares that

> Purusa was divided up.
> Then they (i.e. the gods) dismembered Purusa.

How many portions did they make?
What was his mouth called, what his arms?
What was his two thighs and what his feet?
His mouth became the Brahmana
And his two arms the Kshatriya,
His thighs became the Vaisya-class
And from his feet the Sudra sprang.

In these passages universal nature is likened to the bod) of an original cosmic man—an idea not confined to Indiε but found in the ancient mythology of other peoples. Througl the sacrificial dismemberment of this world giant the differenl orders of society came into being. Thus society has an organic character, the individual member always existing as part of a living body and the social totality being divided into the four hierarchies corresponding to the necessary functions which must be performed for the well-being of the whole.

This view of society is elaborately defended by Professor Radhakrishnan in his book *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (pp. 355–78) as also in his commentary on the *Bhagavadgita* (pp. 366–7). The modern caste system he regards as a perversion of the original quadripartite class system, especially when it came to depend strictly upon birth-status. His contention is that ideally the fourfold division allows an individual to advance from one level to another, but at the same time it shows that there are four main functions which must be performed for the health of the social whole and that each is equally necessary within any total view of life. "Individuals and classes," he writes, "were bound to one another by what is called the spirit of status and not terminable contract. Every man had his place in society and fixed duties attached to it. The social organism expected from each man his duties but guaranteed to each subsistence and opportunity for self-expression. The spirit of competition was unknown."[1] The advantages of such a system he enumerates as an insistence upon the spiritual equality of all men, a provision for the positive expression of the particular contribution of each individual, a recognition that "Society is a pattern or an organism in

which different organs play different parts," a restriction upon any tendency of a particular individual or class to make unlimited claims and an emphasis upon the fact that the highest form of life is at once the most difficult and the most simple. "Society," he says, "is a functional organization and all functions which are essential for the health of society are to be regarded as socially equal. Individuals of varying capacities are bound together in a living organic social system. Democracy is not an attempt at uniformity which is impossible but at an integrated variety. All men are not equal in their capacities, but all men are equally necessary for society, and their contributions from their different stations are of equal value."[2]

A more impartial observer of Hindu society, Professor J. H. Hutton, is inclined to agree that the class—or caste—system in India has been productive of certain permanent values in corporate living. It gives a sense of unity and continuity which is of the greatest importance for any stable social life. Cultural patterns are passed on from generation to generation. Society is relatively independent of changing political ideas. "The caste system has afforded a place in society into which any community, be it racial, social, occupational or religious, can be fitted as a co-operating part of the social whole, while retaining its own distinctive character and its separate individual life."[3] Provision is made for the performance of all the various functions which are necessary to social life. "The truth is," he concludes, "that caste has developed as a quasi-organic structure in which the caste stands to the society as a whole in a relation almost analogous to that of the individual cell to the greater organism of which it forms part."[4] Within such an organic structure, balanced functioning, social solidarity and integrated variety are all to be found.

This does not mean, however, that there are not grave weaknesses in the caste system, and these are significant for assessing the merits and demerits of any organic social system. The first and most obvious weakness is the tendency to develop a rigid conservatism in the methods of performing

particular functions and in the forms of economic organization. The altogether determinative factors are tradition and status and, although these can both be of immense social value, they can also act as hindrances to the fullest social progress. Again, there is the weakness which comes about through the isolation of one caste from fruitful contacts with the others. This leads to inbreeding, both physical and mental, with all its attendant evils. The fact that the caste system is closely tied to religious sanctions only accentuates these evils. And finally there are moral dangers arising from the fact that caste-practice tends to be the ultimate standard by which every action is judged. So long as the members of the caste are performing the particular functions expected of them, they can easily regard themselves as exempt from other social requirements. The great Hindu social system is one of the most remarkable in the history of human development. It is grounded in an organic theory of the universe, it is developed in organic ways, but its impressive stability must not blind us to the dangers which beset any attempt to build up a social system on consistently organic principles. The caste system, says Pramatha Nath Bose in a striking phrase, "has raised men from savagery: it has stopped them half-way on the road to progress." This is perhaps the chief danger to which a strictly defined structural form in any society is exposed, and it is a danger of which we shall become aware more than once in the course of our inquiry.

2

Turning to the more immediate sources of the European tradition, we discover a famous example in the ancient literature of Rome of the use of the body metaphor in relation to the social whole. Just after the beginning of the fifth century B.C. there was dissatisfaction in Rome and ultimately the plebeians seceded on the ground that while they were doing all the work, the patrician order was simply enjoying the fruits of their labour. According to Livy, harmony was

restored only when an envoy from the city authorities arrived and told the rebellious commons a striking fable about the belly and the other members of the body. The scene has been so powerfully dramatized by Shakespeare that we shall describe it in his words.[5]

First he shows us the mutinous citizens gathered together and crying out that they will revolt rather than die of hunger. Then Menenius Agrippa arrives and seeks to pacify them by assuring them that the patricians really care about their needs: to illustrate his point he takes up his parable:

> There was a time when all the body's members
> Rebell'd against the belly, thus accus'd it:
> That only like a gulf it did remain
> I' the midst of the body, idle and unactive
> Still cupboarding the viand, never bearing
> Like labour with the rest, where the other instruments
> Did see and hear, devise, instruct, walk, feel,
> And, mutually participate, did minister
> Unto the appetite and affection common
> Of the whole body. The belly answered--
>
> "True is it, my incorporate friends" quoth he
> "That I receive the general food at first,
> Which you do live upon; and fit it is,
> Because I am the storehouse and the shop
> Of the whole body: but, if you do remember,
> I send it through the rivers of your blood,
> Even to the court, the heart, to the seat o' the brain;
>
> And through the cranks and offices of man,
> The strongest nerves and small inferior veins
> From me receive that natural competency
> Whereby they live: and though all at once cannot
> See what I do deliver out to each,
> Yet I can make my audit up, that all
> From me do back receive the flour of all,
> And leave me but the bran."

Here, as in the literature of India, we find the essential elements for the construction of an organic view of society.

There is the sense of the collective whole comparable to the human body: the sense that sections of society have particular tasks to perform in the same way that members of the body fulfil their own particular functions: and the strong sense of the mutual interdependence of all members of the society, so that if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. The danger of the body-conception is also already evident, the danger, namely, that one group within society will use it to protect its own privileged position regardless of the question whether its own function within that position is being properly performed or no. But on the whole it may be said that in the ancient world the values of the metaphor were greater than its dangers, stressing as it did the interrelatedness of all members of a society within the one living whole. Seneca tells us in his Epistles that Nature has made us all kin, "members of a great Body," and it is this fundamental conviction which we can never afford to lose.

But although this example from the literature of ancient Rome is instructive, it is to Greece that we must look for the altogether formative influences upon later European social and political theory. And it can be said at once that the dominating conception within the thought of the Greeks is of society as an organic whole, comparable in many of its operations to the human body itself. Always, society is regarded as prior to the individual and as having the right to lay its claims upon the individual. The harmony and health of the social body are regarded as the supreme values and it is the unquestioned duty of every single individual to seek to maintain them intact.

Let us look first at a few passages from Plato and Aristotle which indicate their general outlook. "The best ordered polity," says Plato, "resembles an individual. For example, if one of our fingers is hurt, the entire community of the physical organism feels the pain as a whole, although it is only one part that suffers. So we may say that a man has pain in his finger." "I fancy," he goes on, "that when an individual citizen has any experience whether good or bad,

such a city (i.e. the ideal city) will most certainly declare that experience its own, and the whole city will share his joy or his sorrow" (*Republic*, v: 462). For him the greatest evil in a city was disunity, claims to individual ownership: the greatest blessing, unity in feeling and community in ownership. His deepest concern as we see at the beginning of Book IV. of the *Republic* is with the whole—the happiness of the whole, the harmony of the whole, the efficiency of the whole, the prosperity of the whole. Such a view, as Sir Ernest Barker remarks, is an "organic" one, for "an organism is a unity, where each member is an instrument (or *organon*) in the general plan, where each member has its appointed purpose or function (*ergon*) where each member can only act, and be understood, and indeed exist, through the end and aim of the whole."[6]

The priority of the state to the individual is affirmed with equal clarity by Aristotle. "The state," he says, "is by nature clearly prior to the family and to the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part; for example, if the whole body be destroyed, there will be no foot or hand, except in an equivocal sense. . . . The proof that the state is a creation of nature and prior to the individual is that the individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing; and therefore he is like a part in relation to the whole. But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god: he is no part of a State" (*Politics*, I: 2). In a later passage he makes the comparison with what we might call the whole personality rather than the body. "The state," he remarks, "as composed of unlikes, may be compared to the living being: as the first elements into which a living being is resolved are soul and body, as soul is made up of rational principal and appetite, the family of husband and wife, property of master and slave, so of all these, as well as other dissimilar elements, the state is composed" (III: 4, 5 ff.). The emphases of the organic outlook are again evident: the priority of the whole, the dependence of the separate organs, the participation of each organ in the life of the whole, the necessity for a

differentiation of function within the harmonious operation of the whole—all these form part of Aristotle's theory of the State as a creation of nature and as having a system of laws to which individual man must conform.

Thus Plato and Aristotle share a common organic approach to political theory though there are obvious differences in their elaboration of details. Perhaps the main difference between their respective theories may be described as that which would normally exist between the work of an artist and that of a natural scientist. Plato observes given phenomena carefully but has the passion to mould it all closer to his heart's desire: Aristotle observes, describes, analyses, classifies, but is concerned to follow nature rather than to change it. Plato conceives the State as a given organism, and derives much of his teaching about the duty of the individual from that conception. But he is entirely ready to admit that the organism, like a body, may become fevered or diseased and in that case it becomes the responsibility of the élite—maybe the responsibility even of some particular individual—to take control, to submit the State to appropriate treatment and to bring into being a better and more harmonious type of social order. In other words, the given may not be the ideal. It will carry something of the form of the ideal, but the wise man can gain the vision of that which more closely approximates to the ideal and can work for its realization. This consuming desire of Plato to mould and plan the social order according to a particular pattern has laid him open to the charge of advocating a form of totalitarianism and there may be substance to the charge. At the same time it must be said that a striving after the ideal need not necessarily lead to a rigid authoritarianism; only when it is assumed that the ideal is fully known and actually realizable does the danger to the social order become acute.

Aristotle's primary concern was to discover the true nature of a thing, and to make sure that the thing had the opportunity of developing its true nature. Society is a living organism which takes time to grow and to realize its form.

He saw that there were variations in social structures—democracy, oligarchy, aristocracy, monarchy—and he was not prepared to say that one was necessarily right and the others wrong. Each was developing in its own particular environment, and Aristotle was perfectly prepared to allow time and the process of natural evolution to bring each to its true fulfilment. All societies, of course, must maintain their organic character, calling for particular functions to be performed by particular classes of men and requiring the integration of all individuals within the corporate life of the whole. But he did not advocate radical changes. rather he desired that through the steady development of its own given nature every society might move towards its true goal.

Before concluding this brief survey of the Greek contribution to the organic view of society we shall quote at length Sir Ernest Barker's admirable estimate of its value within the history of political thought. "It teaches," he says, "that the unity of the State is not one made by hands, and by hands to be broken, but an inevitable outcome of human nature and human needs. It teaches that the State can no more be left by its members than the body by its limbs, and that its dissolution is as much the death of its members as it is of itself. While in this way it attaches the individual to the State, as the outcome of his nature and the essence of his being, in the same process it also links individual to individual, citizen to citizen. Members of one whole, the citizens are members one of another: as every limb seems to ache when one limb is pained, so the poverty and degradation of one class must impoverish the life of the rest; and the education and assistance of the weaker members is thus inculcated upon the stronger, as the very condition of their own welfare. The conception of a common weal and a vital union supersedes that of self-interest and a casual nexus."[7]

All this is certainly to be affirmed on the positive side. But the negative must not be forgotten. The large emphasis upon the whole can easily lead to a minimizing of the spiritual capacities of the individual. The individual is not just a limb in a body nor is he even an animal in a herd: he

is a unique being with possibilities of self-determination and even of self-transcendence which do not lend themselves to a complete manipulation by the social whole. Again, the emphasis upon the city-state as a living organism easily leads to a form of isolationism in which all responsibilities to the wider world are forgotten. If the community be enlarged to include ever greater numbers of individuals, then it tends to become unwieldy and to lose its original organic character. Finally, there is always the danger that an organic society will concentrate its attention upon its own inner life and growth and will fail to understand the purpose which it is called to fulfil within the wider life of mankind.

Without question the social theory of Greece has exerted an enormous influence upon the development of both the political and the ecclesiastical thought of the Western world. The idea of the nation and of the church as each a living organism, comparable in many of its features to the human body, owes its origin, in part at least, to the brilliant theorizing of the Greeks. But this legacy has been a mixed blessing. It has made for stability and inner harmony within society, often, however, at the cost of rigidity and an unwillingness to respond creatively to the challenge of a new day.

3

In a definitive book on the Bible Doctrine of Society, Professor C. Ryder Smith writes (as if it were an unquestioned axiom of prophetic teaching): "Society is not mechanical but organic, not a convenient arrangement but a natural phenomenon, and like every other organ of life it is various even while it is constant. . . .The Prophets . . . . elected to treat society as a form of life."[8] That there is an element of truth in this statement we should not wish to deny, but that it is the whole truth or even the deepest truth we should seriously question.

For the present we shall concentrate our attention upon the organic quality of community-life within the ancient

Semitic world. Certainly there are no evidences of mechanical organization within these old societies, nor was there ever any idea that a group of individuals had formed some kind of loose association for convenience sake. The normal unit was always the kin-group, and this kin-group was bound together so closely by the ties of family relationship that it constituted what could with complete appropriateness be called an organic whole. Yet there were differences between the Israelite view of society and those views which were held in India and Greece, and these we shall briefly consider.

The first and most far-reaching difference was the emphasis always laid in Hebrew thought on the importance of the family. The desert sheikh with his household around him—a household which included family, servants, flocks and herds and other possessions—ever remained the ideal community in the Semitic imagination. Conditions changed so that a tribe, even a nation, came into existence but the normative picture of the great family was never lost. Thus W. A. L. Elmslie has finely written:

> The Hebrews employed the words *People* and *Nation* in reference to the large communities that shape in history. But when we consider their use of those words, one fact of immense importance stands out—namely, the instinct and passion with which they held on to the root-conception that whenever any group of men—from the smallest to the largest numerically—lives and worships together, it is essentially a *family;* wherefore all its members, from the greatest unto the least, must stand to one another in the intense social obligations proper to a family—as brethren, men of one flesh and one blood—or else they will lose the sustaining Blessing. . . . The inspiring, lovable obligations of family constitute for the Hebrew mind the sole basis on which human society can successfully be constructed. . . . Men must set themselves to treat one another not as things to be used, but as brethren whose welfare it is their joy and their pride to advantage. That thought was the key to the concept of Justice, the discernment of Right from Wrong, in the Religion of Israel. Western secular civilization, to its shame and misery, has fumbled the key, or refused to employ it.[9]

Such a view was organic in a sense, and yet it was more intensely personal than the general view of the Greeks. It is, after all, possible to think of a body functioning harmoniously, with all its parts inter-related and dependent on the whole, and yet to remain altogether within the realm of biological operations and natural law. But there is little to indicate that the Hebrew thought in terms of pure form or of relations of an impersonal kind when he was speaking of society. The head of any social group was the father, and his personality was conceived as extending throughout the whole family. It was not just a matter of functional inter-dependence nor of bonds of a quasi-impersonal kind. Rather the family formed a psychic unity with the father bearing an intimate relationship—in a measure an identity—with all the members of the group. By him all were directed, all were sustained.

One result of this particular view of the psychic unity of the family was that a hierarchical structure of society or any kind of division into functional castes became difficult if not impossible. "During the Hebrew monarchies," says Elmslie, "the heirs of the desert tradition sturdily fought the pretensions of kings who proposed to treat them as subjects: they said the king was their father or brother, and spoke still of the house of Judah, the house of Israel."[10] It is true that royal courts were established in Samaria and Jerusalem and attempts were made by various rulers to follow the example of the kings of the neighbouring nations. But all such attempts were foreign to the genius of the Hebrew social order: because all shared the same life-principle, none had the right to shut himself up within a class separate from his fellow-men. Again, so far as particular functions were concerned, it is true that there were prophets and priests in Israel, and yet there was no rigid establishment of fixed castes separate from the general community. The ideal was that the nation as a whole should form a royal priesthood, that all the Lord's people should prophesy, and if it proved to be the case that any one individual possessed a special gift, then it was assumed that his gift would be used for the benefit of the whole family of Israel. In truth, as Wheeler Robinson

constantly insisted, the life of Israel was so closely integrated that it is right to speak of the people possessing a corporate soul or corporate personality. One life flowed through the whole body corporate, one spirit inspired the whole, one purpose motivated the whole. Probably it would be truer in Israel's case to speak of the society not as a body but as a personality. The inter-dependence of the constituent members was not only functional, it was moral. The ideal was not so much the growth to fulfilment of a single nature, but rather co-operation in the achievement of a single purpose. Thus Israel was an organism but it was much more than a natural organism, and this fact must always be borne in mind when organic categories are employed in describing Israel's social life.

There is another fact which must be remembered when reference is made to Israel as an organic whole. At some point in Israel's history it came to be recognized that there was a radical division in the life of the people. This division is vividly and classically described by Paul in a later day when he affirms that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children . . . . they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Rom. 9: 6–8). But this is not a completely new doctrine. Rather is it a final summary of what had been said in various forms by the prophets before him.

For example, in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, Paul recalls the experience of Elijah who had seemed to stand alone in his faithfulness to God. But he is told that there are as many as seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed the knee to Baal, and this group is identified by Paul as the "remnant according to the election of grace." The reference to the remnant immediately connects his thought with the oracles of Isaiah about whom, indeed, he has already spoken. It was Isaiah who, in a day of widespread social and religious decline, spoke of a remnant which would turn to God and be saved. In a sense this remnant was con-

ceived only in eschatological terms as the minority group which would survive the coming judgment and be vindicated as the true worshippers of God. Yet in another sense the group was already in existence, only waiting for the march of events to reveal its true character. It may even have received a certain form of external expression if Isa. 8: 16–18 refers to a band of faithful disciples which the prophet had bound to himself in intimate fellowship.

Thus a doctrine of a group within a larger organism came to be an integral part of the prophetic teaching. Normally indeed it is assumed that this smaller remnant can only be revealed after judgment has taken place. So deep-seated is the sin of Israel that there must be the complete destruction of the existing régime and the wholesale deportation into exile before a new Israel can be called into being which will return and be faithful to its God. Yet in such a vivid prophecy as Ezekiel 9 it is inferred that a remnant already exists within the holy city, and that it so abhors the abominations of the wider social life that its members are worthy even now to receive a mark upon their foreheads as a sign of their safe passage through the coming judgment. Variations of emphasis there may be but that the prophets make a moral distinction of an Israel within Israel can be confidently affirmed.

In post-exilic writings this doctrine comes to notable expression in the figures of the Servant of Yahweh and the Son of Man. We cannot begin to survey the vast quantity of literature which has grown up around these two figures, but at least in recent times there seems to have been general agreement that they must stand in the first place for corporate groups rather than for individual persons. This is not to say that no individual reference could at any time have been implied but in normal usage they represented some group—either the nation as a whole or a remnant within the nation—which was being called in a special way to act as God's representative in the world.

As is well known, it is in the prophecies of the Deutero-Isaiah that the figure of the Servant of Yahweh stands out most prominently, and there seems little doubt that in some

instances the reference is to the nation as a whole. (Though even in those cases it is the nation which has passed through the purifying experience of the exile, what we might even call the new Israel, that is chiefly in mind.) Yet in other cases, and particularly in the so-called Servant Songs of Deutero-Isaiah (42: 1–4; 49: 1–6; 50: 4–9; 52: 13–53: 12) it can hardly be the whole nation that is in view. To identify the Servant exactly has been the task of scholars for more than fifty years, and recently an entire volume has been devoted to the history of the problem.[11] In the main Professor North's conclusion is that within chapters 40–55 of Isaiah there is an oscillation in the reference of the term, sometimes expanding almost to the extreme of the complete nation of Israel sometimes contracting almost to a single individual. No uniformity of interpretation can be adopted, even if the Servant Songs are kept in a separate category by themselves. But for our purpose the all-important fact is that the Servant figure does sometimes stand for a group within the larger Israel. This group, faithful to Yahweh in the midst of all temptation, listening to His voice, obedient to His commands, willing even to suffer for His name—this group is conceived as the true Israel and its life as a group is so integrated that it can quite naturally be spoken of as the Servant of the Lord in individual terms.

What has been said of the Servant can be also said of other terms in the later Jewish literature which though individual in form seem normally to have a collective reference. Such terms are the "I" used in the Psalter, the "one like the Son of Man" of Daniel, the Son of Man of the Similitudes of Enoch. In regard to the Psalter where it is often exceedingly difficult to determine whether it is an individual or a group that is speaking, T. W. Manson pertinently remarks that "the voice of the group as a whole is the same as the voice of the individual member because the content of the song is the one thing which binds them together."[12] In regard to the "one like the Son of Man" of Daniel 7: 13, the interpretation given later in the chapter makes it clear that the reference is to "the saints of the most High" or to what might be called

the faithful in Israel. In regard to the Son of Man of the Similitudes of Enoch the case may not be so clear, for the reference is often strongly individual. Yet as Manson points out, besides "Son of Man" we find the titles "the Righteous One" and "the Elect One" used in the Enochian literature and "it is at least arguable that the singular term in these cases is the name for the body made up by the individuals included in the plural term. The faithful Remnant may be personified as the Elect one and the Righteous one or regarded as the community of the Elect and the Righteous."[13]

Our final conclusion, then, is that no single doctrine of Israel as an organic whole can be framed on the basis of the Old Testament evidence. Certainly there are many places where the nation as a whole is made to speak and act like an individual and where we might well speak of Israel as a collective personality (though less appropriately, I think, as a body corporate). But then there are other places where a division begins to appear, and it is the Remnant, the Servant, that is the corporate personality.

It is, in fact, Israel within Israel, a moral organism within a natural organism if we may so express it, which becomes the subject of the prophet's discourse. And this would surely indicate that however valuable it may be to recognize that the social group in the Old Testament is conceived in organic terms, this is not the deepest truth. The Hebrew men of God can never stray far from the *moral* reference. If society is an organism, it is so because it is united as one person in doing the will of God. What is in mind is not so much functional interdependence or a wholeness which must be conserved at all costs. Rather it is a unity of life expressing itself in devotion to the service of God. If a large part of the national organism grows slack in its allegiance to the true God and worships other gods, then the concentration of interest is upon the faithful minority which becomes the only organism worthy of the name of Israel. The social theory of the Hebrew prophets is organic, therefore, only to a limited extent: another category which served to maintain a true balance we shall now consider.

Chapter Two

COMMUNITY THROUGH COVENANT

I

SO far we have focussed our attention upon the elements which all the members of a society share in common, though we have seen that certain differentiating factors can readily lead to the formation of secondary groups within the one social whole. But there are deeper differences of which we have not yet spoken. Of these by far the most important is that of sex. Though man and woman share much in common, there are the ultimate differences in their physical and psychical constitutions which profoundly affect their whole relationship with one another. It is true that many variations are to be found in the customs of early societies which govern the relations between the sexes. Sometimes there is an almost complete promiscuity of intercourse, sometimes polygamy, sometimes concubinage. But the fundamental difference is there and few would deny that the highest and noblest development of social life is to be found in the miniature community where one man and one woman are joined together within a permanent relationship and where the offspring of the union are nurtured within the environment of a common love.

Here then is one area of human life where the sense of the priority of the whole and of the necessity of purely functional fulfilment no longer exists. Temporarily man and woman must isolate themselves from the whole and find the fullness of their life in relationship to one another. In fact they can only make their true contribution to society by withdrawing for a period from society. To make the relationships between the different sexes part of the open functioning of the social organism is to empty them of all the mystery and wonder and quasi-religious quality which gives them their power and permanence. Or, again, to make the sex-differentiation

a purely functional one so that woman, for example, comes to be regarded solely as the instrument of man's passion or as the bearer of his children must result in the ultimate de-humanization of both partners in the sex relation and in the dissolution of the social whole. It is one of mankind's strangest and yet deepest instincts that to be joined to another within a permanent union operates not to the limitation but to the expansion of life, not to the lessening of one's contribution to society but rather to its enlarging. To remain a member of the social organism, engaging in promiscuous relations with any of the other sex within the organism, performing meanwhile the other male functions which the organism requires, may appear to be the fulfilment of all the necessary requirements for the continuance of the organic life. Yet it is the denial of human instincts and the flat contradiction of the testimony of accumulated human experience. Thus we may suggest as a general thesis that the highest life of any social organism is promoted by what may seem at first sight to be a denial of the principles of its constitution: by two of its members renouncing for a period their general relation to society so that within a particular relation they may renew their strength for their social function and may actually realize values which will enrich the whole life of the social organism.

But what we have said of the relation between man and woman is also true to a lesser degree of the relation of friendship between any two members of society. Here is another of the great mysteries of human life. One individual is drawn to another—normally through the sharing of common interests, though a certain physical attraction may also enter into the relationship—and desires to give himself to the other in a special way. Inevitably there must be a certain narrowing of interest and affection, even a renunciation of certain purely practical efficiencies. But through the deliberate cultivation of friendship with another the life of the individual is enriched and his contribution to the social well-being is thereby enlarged. And such an experience of friendship is not confined to individuals. There may be a

mutual attraction between one group and another group, one society and another society. In so far as all such attachments can be sealed and strengthened and kept within the context of the larger whole they can serve to realize the highest values attainable within the social life of mankind.

Our analysis of special relationships, however, is not yet complete. We have spoken of mutual attraction: but there is also such a thing as mutual repulsion. In fact there is much to suggest that the two are inseparable and that the very possibility of love involves the possibility of hate. Be that as it may, we cannot close our eyes to the tension and at times the antagonism which has existed between members of opposite sexes nor can we ignore the enmities as well as the friendships which have marked human relationships. Thus while it is true that within a human social organism there are close interdependencies it is also true that there are radical estrangements. It is the latter which are responsible for the hatreds but also, paradoxically enough, when they have been transcended in the experience of mutual reconciliation, for the deepest loves which have graced the record of human history.

Now it is this complex combination of attraction, tension, fascination, fear, awe, existing between different individuals and different social groups which forms the background of one of the most interesting practices in the social development of mankind. This is the practice of making covenants. The very word covenant suggests a coming-together, the bridging of a chasm, the transcending of a dualism, the creating of an intimate union. It is implied that two parties have been standing over against one another in separation and uncertainty and that now a new relationship is being established which will bring them together in a union of a permanent character. But just because the antecedent tension has been so sharp and painful, the new communion cannot possibly be achieved lightly and easily. The actual coming together constitutes a critical occasion of unusual solemnity and is normally marked by symbolic words and actions designed to bear witness to the irrevocable character

of the new relationship thereby established. Thus in the making of covenants there are two essential elements—a psychological and a symbolic. The psychological element is that of inward purpose. There must be a meeting of wills, each being directed towards the achievement of some common purpose. The symbolic element is that of outward sharing. There must be a meeting of the two parties in some symbolic object or activity. In this meeting the nature of the new permanent relationship comes to be vividly symbolized and realized.

2

From records of the past and from reports of the customs of primitive peoples to-day we can gain a good idea of the symbolic forms employed for the sealing and ratifying of covenants. Less, of course, can be known about the inner purposes though often the words accompanying the symbolic actions give a fair indication of what is involved. The Old Testament is a rich source of information and such a modern enquiry as that of H. C. Trumbull (*The Blood Covenant*, *The Threshold Covenant*, *The Covenant of Salt*) provides us with a wealth of interesting material for making certain generalizations about the early covenant practices of mankind.

In the previous chapter we called attention to some of the basic elements which all members of a social community were believed to possess in common. We instanced common blood, common breath, a common habitat, common food. Now when a situation existed in which two parties were conscious of separation or estrangement, nothing could more vividly symbolize their coming together in a new unity than a sharing of one another's blood, one another's breath and so on. But such a ceremony could serve not only to bind two parties together for the first time: it could also provide a means of deepening and strengthening the sense of common relationship and renewing the first vivid realization of being bound together in a common life.

Glancing first at the blood-covenant, it is an interesting fact that the Hebrew verb used for the making of covenants should literally be translated "to cut the covenant". Behind this verb there evidently lies the early practice of drawing actual blood from the veins of the parties to the covenant and mixing it in some symbolic way. "Primitive covenanting," writes Trumbull, "was by two persons cutting into each other's flesh, and sharing by contact, or by drinking, the blood thus brought out. Earliest it was the personal blood of the two parties that was the nexus of their covenant. Later it was the blood of a shared and eaten sacrifice that formed the covenant nexus." And he comments: "It was the common life into which each party was brought by the covenant that bound them irrevocably."[1] Here is perhaps the earliest, certainly one of the most deeply impressive forms of covenant making. There is something perennially mysterious and awe-inspiring about blood and the thought of becoming blood-brothers has always exercised a strange fascination upon the human imagination. In the East, the tie formed by blood-covenanting has consistently been regarded as stronger even than that formed by natural descent. It is a proverbial saying that brothers in a covenant of blood are closer than brothers at a common breast, or that blood is thicker than milk. It is true that the blood of an animal was early used in place of human blood and that as time went on various substitutes took the place of literal blood within the ceremonial drama—water or wine or even salt. But the fact remains that the blood-ceremony is the oldest and the most deeply impressive of all covenant forms and the modern world cannot afford to disregard it as if it were entirely outmoded.

The sharing of common breath seems to reach its most characteristic expression in the kiss. "The kiss," says Professor Van der Leeuw, "which so frequently has some ritual meaning, was probably intended as a reciprocal transference of the breath-soul and as an exact parallel of blood brotherhood."[2] As the Old Testament reveals, the kiss was a seal of friendship commonly used among members of the same sex

and a study of the New Testament and of the Liturgies shows that for a long time it continued to be used as one of the ritual practices of the Christian Church. Though never so impressive as the blood-symbol within the field of general covenantal practice, the kiss has always played an outstanding part in the sealing of the relationship between members of the opposite sexes.

Other interesting examples of covenant forms are to be found in the sharing of common possessions of various kinds. The early records of 1 Samuel in the Old Testament tell us a good deal about the relationships between Jonathan and David and within the sealing of the covenant between these two friends we find Jonathan stripping himself of his robe and his garments, "even to his sword and to his bow and to his girdle", and giving them to David. But of more general interest because of its universal applicability is the sharing of common food. To eat and drink with another is to enter with him into the actual possession of a common life. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in the records of the ancient Hebrews. "We know," says Pedersen, "the great significance of the meal among the early Israelites. Nothing was so well suited to unite souls and strengthen the covenant as a meal which gathered relatives and friends around the common food in a communal spirit. The meal of such a fellowship confirmed and strengthened the peace, the harmony on which all joint life was dependent."[3] Both for the initial sealing of the covenant and for the renewal of the covenant the participation in common food was an appropriate symbol, though a meal which involved some manipulation of blood or of a blood-substitute was most appropriate of all.

3

We have referred in some detail to the form of primitive covenants. Let us now consider the general conception of society to which the practice of covenant-making bears

witness. In the main the covenant implies a purposive rather than a natural social-group, an eschatological rather than an ontological society. The emphasis lies not on something already in existence (though it is obvious that the given must provide the material for the construction of any new social fabric), but rather upon the achievement of a new social order which will actually embody upon the plane of history the joint-purpose of the covenanting parties. These parties meet first in the realm of common purpose, common will, common hope: they meet next in the realm of common symbolic action: they meet finally in the realm of a sustained common life.

It is evident that the purpose of which we have spoken is most likely to originate in the mind of an individual though the covenant as such only becomes possible when the discovery is made that another individual is prepared to make that purpose his own. Then, however, the covenant becomes capable of indefinite extension as more and more individuals catch the vision of the desired order and commit themselves to strive for its realization. And as a matter of fact the individual never acts alone, even when he is the first to catch sight of the goal set before him, for in committing himself to the new social vision he invariably acts as representative of a wider group. For example, in the classic example of covenant-making in Gen. 31 (Jacob and Laban) or in the early account of 1 Sam. 20 (David and Jonathan) each of the principals involved acts as representing his whole household, and future descendants are also included within the covenant terms. The normal pattern of covenant is thus clear: two principals, each representing wider social groups, commit themselves to the realization of a common purpose and unite their common resources within a single relationship in order that the desired end may be achieved.

All that we have said about covenant ideas in general is of great importance when we come to consider the particular Hebrew conception of society. As was pointed out in the previous chapter, the Hebrew family was a close-knit unit and its constitution was in many ways comparable to that

of other organic groups of the ancient world. Yet it appears that the people of Israel came into existence, not primarily through the growth and expansion of a single tribe but rather through the linking together of a number of families and tribes for the fulfilment of particular purposes and for the attainment of common ends. Moreover at a certain point in history a step of extraordinary significance was taken: it was affirmed that Israel's link with its own God Yahweh was a covenant relation rather than a purely natural tie. Whereas in the case of other peoples of the Near East, a particular god belonged to his own particular people and was, as it were, a member of the existing social organism (though occupying, it is true, the highest position in the social hierarchy), in the case of Israel Yahweh was conceived as standing over against His people and as having come to be their god by a definite action when He deliberately called them into covenant with Himself.

When exactly the relation between Yahweh and His people came to be described in covenant language we have no means of knowing: nor can we say with certainty what were the exact terms in which the earliest covenant was conceived. We can, however, adopt with some confidence the conclusions reached by W. A. Irwin in considering the evidence of the Old Testament as a whole. "Specific mention of Israel's covenant with Yahweh," he writes, "occurs first in the book of Hosea, two of which allusions are evidently genuine (Hos. 6: 7; 8: 1). The idea is absent from Isaiah and Micah but is referred to a number of times in the utterances of Jeremiah; then, as is well known, it becomes one of the great emphases of Deuteronomy. When we recall that Hosea lived not long after the ascribed dates of composition of the J and E documents, the situation becomes relatively clear. The notion of a covenant between God and Israel was introduced by these 'prophetic histories', it was endorsed by Hosea, adopted by Jeremiah, and in Deuteronomy became an essential part of Israel's theology."[4]

When we examine the "prophetic histories" more closely we find that both J and E refer to the covenant made between

Yahweh and Israel. Thus in Exodus 24: 7–8 usually regarded as an E passage we read:

> And he (Moses) took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people; and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.

Again in Exodus 34: 27–8 usually regarded as a J passage we read:

> And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. . . . And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

In these passages we find both J and E referring to the covenant and although the exact terms of the covenant are not defined, it seems to have been in the nature of a commitment by Yahweh to accompany and protect His people as they marched towards their destiny. They on their part, through their representative Moses, committed themselves to worship Yahweh only and to be obedient to His laws in thier common relationships one with another. Indeed, Exodus 24 may well contain the most primitive story of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel and if this is so, then we have an account conforming to the basic covenant pattern which we have already described—a pattern in which there is a mutual commitment to a common purpose and a solemn sealing of the commitment by a sharing in common blood.

Yet the covenant terminology is not only used in connection with the critical events at Sinai. Almost all the great determinative happenings in Israel's history are set within the framework of God's covenant relation with His people. With Abraham and his seed a covenant is made, the house of David is established in the kingdom by a covenant, the supreme blessing to which the prophet Jeremiah looks forward is the inauguration of a new covenant between Yahweh

and His people. The fact is that Israel's very existence as a social entity is believed to rest upon the gracious initiative of God whereby He has bridged the gulf separating Him from men and has called into being a community which accepts as the central principle of its corporate life a willing participation in the purposive activity of God. Faithfulness to the covenant brings a sense of harmony and peace to the whole community: unfaithfulness leads to disaster and death.

One further comment must be made upon the development of the idea of the covenant society in Israel's history. There is clear evidence that the early sense of the intimate personal relation between Yahweh and Israel within the covenant tended gradually to give way to a more legal conception in which the relation was viewed as a well-defined contract binding on both parties. In the "prophetic histories" Yahweh moves freely amongst men, talks with them, tells them of His purposes, calls them to share in His designs, promises to befriend them, unites Himself with them in a covenant of peace. In the main, His encounters are with chosen individuals—Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David—though as we have already pointed out, the individuals always stand and act as representatives of wider social groups both in the present and for the future. Thus the typical social group within the prophetic outlook is a family or a family of families, committed to Yahweh by an irrevocable act on His part and theirs, sharing with Him His purposes, His standards, His name, His character, as a wife would share her husband's. In fact the husband-wife relation is freely used by the prophetic writers to portray the relation between Yahweh and Israel. Yahweh has espoused this people to Himself, has watched over them, has loved them with an everlasting love and is bound to them by the "vow and covenant betwixt them made" at the time of the inauguration of Israel's distinctive national life.

But with the advent of the Deuteronomists the character of the relation between Yahweh and His people began to be conceived in a somewhat different way. Their concern was

to reform and stabilize the social life of Israel and with a view to providing a basis for the new order which they envisaged, they proceeded to work out the covenant concept in a much more extended and even elaborate way. Their first appeal was to the covenant with the fathers—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—which finds its fulfilment in the prosperity of their descendants (Deut. 8: 18). Yahweh loved the fathers and chose them and their seed after them to become a praise and a blessing in the earth (10: 15). The second appeal was to the covenant at Horeb (Sinai) which found expression in the ten commandments written on tables of stone (4: 13). Finally they spoke of another covenant made in the plains of Moab and it appears that the terms of this covenant occupy the whole of the central section of the book (chaps. 12–26, 28). All is summed up in a definitive passage in chapter 26: 17–19.

> Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in His ways, and to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and to hearken unto His voice. And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people, as He hath promised thee . . . and to make thee high above all nations which He hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour: and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God, as He hath spoken.

In this general view of the covenant the emphasis is already moving towards the legal and statutory elements which are to form the essence of its constitution. It is true that there is still a clear recognition that it was out of Yahweh's love and mercy that He first chose the fathers and brought Israel into relationship with Himself. Yet the terms of the covenant at Horeb, after the initial proclamation of Yahweh's redemption, require a complete obedience to the ten commandments, while the covenant in the plains of Moab includes a long and detailed code of regulations for the establishment of the community life of the nation within the land of Canaan. Many of these ordinances breathe a spirit of warm concern for the fellow-members of

the community but the fact remains that the emphasis is now upon obedience to a system of law rather than upon a living faith in God's eternal purpose.

This emphasis received even stronger expression after the return from the Exile. The community had to be disciplined to meet the perils by which it was surrounded. Some assurance had to be provided that the disasters of the exile would not be repeated and that prosperity would be restored to the land. All this was effected, at least temporarily, by an appeal to the idea of the covenant, interpreted, however, in a legalistic way. In brief the argument of Ezra and his associates ran thus: "Our fathers made a covenant with God, promising to keep His commandments in every detail and to worship no other gods but Him. While they remained faithful to their pledge they prospered. But when they forsook the Lord their God and neglected His laws, He allowed them to fall into the hands of their enemies and to endure the shame and suffering of exile. Now to us their children God has given another chance. Let us confess the wrongs that we and our fathers have committed and let us return to the Lord. Let us hear His commandments afresh and let us enter into a covenant to keep them faithfully, finding nothing too hard if only we may walk in His ways. Then within the covenant of obedience our society will be stable and secure and our land will regain its prosperity." So the terms of the covenant were declared, the leaders of the people sealed their names to it and "the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons and their daughters, every one having knowledge and having understanding; they clave to their brethren, their nobles and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord and His judgments and His statutes" (Neh. 10: 28–29). This was the conception of the covenant which was to become dominant henceforward in the life and economy of Israel.

In the writings of P we find the same tendency to stress the requirement of absolute obedience to the covenant demands, these being now formulated chiefly in terms of the cultus. In the covenant with Abraham the rite of circumcision is made obligatory: in the covenant with the children of Israel the sabbath becomes the essential sign (Ex. 31: 16). This does not mean that the fundamental thought of the covenant as an arrangement instituted by God is ever forgotten but the way of human response to the covenant is conceived mainly in ritual terms. A. B. Davidson states the matter fairly and accurately when he says: "In P, as everywhere else, the essence of the covenant is, 'I will be their God' (Gen. 17: 7–8), or more fully, 'I will take you to me for people, and I will be to you God' (Ex. 6: 7). In the idea of P this promise was realized by God dwelling among the people on the one hand, and accepting their offerings on the other. Hence the need of the tabernacle, God's dwelling-place, offerings, and ministrants. These are all divine institutions, creations and gifts of God, the fulfilment in detail of the covenant to be their God. . . . Neither in P nor in Ezekiel are the ritual institutions the means of salvation, they express the *state* of salvation, which is altogether of God; and their performance merely conserves it."[5] Ideally, in other words, all the religious institutions were expressions of responsive adherence to the covenant relationship. All too easily, however, they became virtually ends in themselves, means whereby God's favour could be secured and permanently retained.

That the covenant came increasingly to be viewed as the summary expression of the absolute rule of the Divine Lord from the time of the Deuteronomists onwards, may be seen by reference to the first chapter of Büchler's monumental *Studies in Sin and Atonement in the Rabbinic Literature of the First Century*. In this the author gathers together a host of Biblical texts which set forth the covenant as equivalent to the commandments of God: to keep the covenant is to fulfil the social and religious obligations imposed by Him. There is really no question of mutuality of encounter in the

covenant. God gives His laws: man obeys. To be obedient is to stay within the covenant: to be disobedient is to break the covenant. There is, moreover, no question of renewing the covenant. It has been given once for all and Israel's duty is to learn its terms and to obey it. The daily sacrifice was, in a sense, the renewal of the covenant, but it was such on Israel's side, not on God's.

But the significant thing is that the references which Büchler quotes in support of his interpretation are from Deuteronomic or post-Deuteronomic sources. Key verses which he selects from Joshua, Judges and 2 Kings are all taken from passages regarded as the work of a Deuteronomic editor. For example the important verse 2 Kings 17: 15 "And they rejected His statutes, and His covenant that He made with their fathers, and His testimonies with which He testified against them; and they followed vanity and became vain" is taken from a Deuteronomic sermon on the ruin of Israel which is in entire harmony with the general standpoint of Deuteronomy itself. But as for the writings of the J E historians and the great prophets of the exile they are scarcely referred to in Büchler's chapter. Thus although we may entirely agree that within Judaism the covenant relationship came to be regarded almost exclusively as a King-subject or Lord-servant relationship, established once for all, unchanging in its requirements and inexorable in its demands, yet we do not believe that such a conception does full justice to the highest view of the covenant which the Old Testament contains. Büchler's main conclusion, however, may be quoted as affording an authoritative interpretation of the covenant as it was held within the Judaism contemporary with our Lord and the early Church. He writes:

> In Rabbinic statements of the first century the covenant and the oath of God pronounced at Sinai were interpreted as having served as means to make Israel undertake obedience to the commandments more solemnly, and the Israelites are termed the sons of God's covenant. As the prophets and the Psalmists describe God as the King of Israel, the earth, the

> peoples, or as the King, and Sirach invokes God as King, so in Rabbinic statements of the first century He as the King of all kings imposed upon his chosen subjects, the Israelites, who first willingly accepted His kingship over them, His royal decrees, the commandments. To worship other gods was, consequently, rebellion against God, Israel's and the individual Israelite's King. He declared the Israelites at Sinai to be His subjects who in recognizing Him as their God and King accepted upon them the Kingship or the yoke of God to whose will, expressed in His commandments, absolute obedience was due. . . . As His subject every Israelite has not only to submit to God's Kingship and yoke by obeying His injunctions, but has also to receive upon him in his heart twice daily the Kingship of God by reciting Deuteronomy 6: 4 ff. and to be ready even to give up his life for His God. A Jew who worships other gods or defies God by grave sins breaks off His yoke, breaks His covenant and is insolent to the Torah, he has no longer a share in the God of Israel, he rebels against Him and denies Him. . . . The covenant imposed by God and accepted by Israel at Sinai, His Kingship and His yoke are the sources of Israel's obligation to worship Him as his God and to obey His commandments.[6]

In such a conception there is much that is noble and inspiring but where is the grace, the promise, the dignity, the joyous response-in-meeting, of the covenants of Abraham and the prophets?

Let us briefly summarize the findings of this chapter. Before the settlement in Canaan the social life of Israel was patterned on that of the simple Bedouin families and the early Semitic clans. These families and clans were fearless and independent and had no desire to become absorbed within any of the larger social groups of their time. Yet they recognized the value of co-operation and of the sharing of resources for the attainment of a common end. The "covenant" or "league" was therefore a regular feature of tribal life. The altogether new thing in Israel's history, however, was the use of the covenant imagery by certain of the prophets to describe the distinctive nature of the social life of their own people. They recognized fully the "wholeness"

of Israel's life, the interrelatedness of all its members and the nature of the privileges and responsibilities which all held in common. In that sense Israel's life could be described as organic like that of other social units. But the destiny of Israel was not determined solely by its natural background nor by its natural organic growth. These had their place but far more important was the covenant relation into which the people had been called by Yahweh Himself. This relationship was personal, challenging, forward-looking, creative, permanent. Henceforth their destiny was to be the people of Yahweh, to be holy as He was holy, to bear His Name before the world while He would bear their name upon His heart. Such was the covenant as portrayed in the noblest passages of the Old Testament. Later Judaism might make it legal and impersonal, the expression of an overwhelming demand calling for a minute obedience, a challenge to human effort rather than an instrument of Divine grace. But this could not blot out the memory of the covenants made with Abraham and Moses and David in the past nor could it cancel the hope of the future when God would make a new covenant with His people, writing His laws in their hearts and remembering their sins and iniquities no more.

Chapter Three

ORGANIC IDEAS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

I

CAN we find any suggestions of an organic view of society in the recorded acts and sayings of Jesus? At first sight it would seem that the answer must be a definite "No". All who have studied the Gospels with any care have been impressed by Jesus' concern for the individual and it might well be urged that this concern overshadows if it does not exclude every kind of social emphasis. He moves amongst men and calls individuals to leave all and follow Him. He recognizes the needs of those who are sick in body or mind and no social pressures can ever prevent Him from giving His full attention to the task of healing the one who at the particular moment requires His help. In His parables, God's care for the individual is set forth more beautifully and more convincingly than in any other section of the world's literature. The one lost coin or the one lost sheep is of surpassing importance: every other consideration must be set aside in order that the individual may be saved.

All this is so obvious that it needs no supporting evidence and yet it is also clear that this is not everything. Jesus was never concerned about individuals in isolation or at least if he found an individual in isolation, His concern was to restore him to a proper relationship with God and with his fellow men. When the lost individual was found he was re-integrated into the family. When a man was saved, he was brought into the fellowship of those living under the rule of God. When a man's eyes were opened to behold the vision of his true destiny as a child of God, he could not fail to recognize that his destiny must be pursued in company with other members of the Divine society. That Jesus saw the individual always within his social context is scarcely open to doubt,

but the question has still to be asked: "What *kind* of society did Jesus envisage for those who responded to His call and believed the good news of the advent of the Kingdom of God?"

The answer to this question depends in large measure upon the extent to which Jesus' own mind and outlook was influenced by some of the Old Testament ideas which we have already considered. But can we know anything of the inner self-consciousness of Jesus? Can we with any confidence presume to set forth His determinative ideas and concepts? All the evidence we possess is from the records of those who bore witness to Him at a later time and there is always the possibility that this witness was coloured by their own particular predilections and presuppositions. So complex does this problem of history seem to be that many have virtually abandoned any hope of solving it, saying in effect that we must be content with the faith of the early Church and that the inner ideas and concepts of Jesus Himself must ever remain within the realm of unsolved mystery.

Although it is impossible here to do more than touch upon the fringe of this problem, it seems to us that there are two broad principles which may usefully be employed as we seek help towards its solution. In the first place there is the principle of what may be called temporal change. If at a certain period of history we find certain ideas current in society and at a later period we find a community in which those ideas have undergone a marked change—though by their very form they maintain a certain continuity with the past—then we can reasonably infer that at some point of time between the two periods a creative mind has taken the former set of ideas and given them a new direction or a new reference and that this change has commended itself to other minds as being in closer accord with the real truth. To be sure it may still be difficult to determine whose was the creative mind that made the change, for changes often come about gradually, subtly, mysteriously. Yet if there is some consensus of testimony which concentrates upon a particular man and makes him responsible for the change that has taken place, then for want of better evidence our only

course is to accept this testimony and to believe that it rests on a reasonably firm foundation.

Applying this principle to the matter under consideration what do we find?

We have already had occasion to speak of the ideas of Israel, the Remnant, the Servant and the Son of Man as they are found in the Old Testament and in the writings of later Judaism. These ideas, as we saw, possess a certain flexibility, tending as they do to oscillate between a more corporate and a more individual reference. But the limits of oscillation may be defined as on the one side all the physical descendants of Abraham, on the other side the chosen nucleus within Israel (which in prophetic vision appears to narrow itself even to an individual) which is wholly devoted to the worship and service of God. There is much to suggest that within the more pietistic and apocalyptic circles at the beginning of the Christian era the pendulum had swung strongly in the direction of a narrow limitation of these concepts and such a title as Son of Man may even have been interpreted in a purely individual sense. But there is little evidence of any attempt to identify the Remnant, the Servant or the Son of Man with any actual historical group or individual.

Yet when we turn to the literature of the early Christian Church we find that the historical Jesus is brought into the closest possible association with these ideas and His career is regarded as actualizing within history the Remnant, the Son of Man, the Servant and even the Messiah conceptions, all of which had played so prominent a part in the Jewish history of the past. Who then was responsible for changing these concepts so radically by setting them no longer within the realm of vision and eschatological hope but rather within the realm of actual historical realization? This question can never be answered with final certainty but it is our own conviction that the probabilities lie rather on the side of the creative mind of Jesus than on the side of the inspired intuition of a leader or the leaders of the early Church. It can certainly be argued that the radical change

was made as a direct consequence of the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit into the lives of His apostles. They now saw the truth of things and either independently or following the lead of one of their number they made the great identification—that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the Servant of the Lord and the Son of God. But here the second principle of which we spoke earlier can be brought into operation. It is the principle of what might be called undesigned testimony. If the early apostolic witnesses had been alone responsible for seeing these concepts coming to their true realization in Jesus we should have expected them either to have given no indication of such an identification in Jesus' own ministry or (if they were anxious to play up what they knew of Him to support such an identification) to have shown that both His words and actions made such an identification irresistible. The fact is, however, that the testimony to Jesus which is recorded in the Synoptic Gospels follows neither of these courses. Reminiscences are given both of Jesus' sayings and deeds which cannot conceivably have been designed to make this particular identification. Yet from divers incidents and out of varying fragments of discourse there come hints and suggestions that Jesus Himself saw in His life and ministry the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God and the actual embodiment in history of the great ideas which are to be found in the prophetic literature of Israel.

That Jesus in some way viewed His Mission as the coming of the Son of Man is the witness of numerous passages in the Synoptic Gospels. Strangely enough this testimony does not appear in other parts of the New Testament except in a somewhat specialized sense in the Fourth Gospel. It is particularly hard, therefore, to look for the source of this identification elsewhere than in the mind of Jesus and, if He did so regard His coming, we may go on to ask what are the implications of this identification. In the first place we believe that He was conscious of Himself in His own particularity as the Son of Man. However many corporate associations the title may have had, it seems clear that it

could only find its true realization and fulfilment in an individual. Yet as soon as this is said it must be added that once the individual identification was made the whole background of the idea would encourage a corporate application. The Son of Man came as an individual but the purpose of His coming as Son of Man could only be fulfilled by the reproduction of what we may call the genus "Son of Man" in a wider society. A corn of wheat exists to reproduce itself in a larger wholeness which bears the pattern of its own structure and life. So the Son of Man brought men into relationship with Himself in order that they might partake of "Son-of-Man-hood" and become in turn propagators of this new quality of life on the earth. For the Son of Man is not an undefined and shapeless figure. The Son of Man came to seek and to save: He came not to be ministered unto but to minister: He came to suffer many things and to be set at nought of men. Yet the Son of Man was destined also to be vindicated and exalted and invested with authority in the Kingdom of God. This is the life of "Son-of-Man-hood" and it is this life which, imperfectly realized in the saints of the old Israel, comes to its perfect manifestation in the Son of Man and is extended further into time in the social existence of those who have become united with Him in the likeness of His "Son-of-Man-hood".

The same kind of interpretation can be used in large measure in relation to the concept of "Servant-hood". This too is an exceedingly fluid conception, sometimes more individual in its reference, sometimes more corporate, sometimes more in future vision, sometimes more in present reality. Its appearance in the Synoptic Gospels is more shadowy, more fleeting than the concept of the Son of Man and there are many who would argue that the identification of Jesus' mission with that of the Servant was only made later by the Gentile Christian Church. We believe, however, that there is sufficient evidence of what we have called an undesigned character to make it probable that Jesus Himself made the identification,[1] and if this is so it would mean that this now-corporate, now-individual concept came to

its perfect realization in Jesus and yet not in Jesus as an isolated individual. Its very realization in Him implied the reproduction of the concept in the group which He gathered around Him and that in fact is what we discover in the later pages of the New Testament. Jesus continues to be the Servant of Yahweh within the life of His Church or, to put it in another way, the concept of Servant-hood, perfected and transformed through the career of Jesus, comes to constant expression within the living and growing society of the Church of Christ.

So it may be argued that Jesus regarded Himself as embodying the Messianic concept in His own mission and as reproducing that concept in the continuing life of His Church. But this seems to be the full extent of the Synoptic witness to what might be called an organic conception of the Divine society. And when all is said we are bound to admit that the evidence is not conclusive. That Jesus was concerned not solely for individuals but rather for individuals within a social whole seems to us certain: that this social whole was intimately related to His own person also seems clear: that the Hebrew idea of corporate personality or of the extension of personality[2] may have served to interpret the nature of this relation seems probable: and in that case it is possible to interpret the Son of Man–Servant–Messianic mission which, as we believe, Jesus regarded Himself as fulfilling, in quasi-corporate rather than in purely individualistic terms. This would mean that first the band of disciples and later the growing Christian Church could be regarded as the extension of Jesus' personality in the sense that it shared the privilege of continuing His essential mission in the power of His eternal spirit. The Church could then be described as the body of the Messiah, the body of the Servant or the body of the Son of Man. All this is possible but it is not, we feel, the major emphasis of the Synoptic Gospels nor is it an obvious interpretation of the Synoptic evidence. We doubt if it would be legitimate to construct an organic doctrine of the Christian society on the basis of the Synoptic Gospels alone.

2

Before leaving the Gospels we may glance briefly at the Fourth Gospel. Here we are bound to see a much nearer approach to organic conceptions. There is for example the famous comparison of John 15 in which Jesus likens Himself to a vine, His disciples to the branches. This conception of the Divine society has an unmistakable background in the Old Testament for there Israel is likened to a vine whose boughs spread abroad to the sea and her branches to the river (Ps. 80: 8–11). In fact the picture of Israel as a fruitful tree was altogether congenial to the Hebrew imagination (Hos. 14: 5–7). For, as we have already seen, the family was ever the basic unit in Hebrew social life and as Pedersen points out, the family is "an organism which grows and spreads in the shoots which it is constantly sending forth. The symbol of the plant or the tree naturally suggests itself, and the ancients themselves already made use of it. . . . Just as the branch not only owes its existence to the trunk and the root, but constantly sucks its nourishment from it, in the same manner the individual holds his life only in connection with the family."[3]

In the use of the allegory in the Fourth Gospel the chief emphasis lies on the fact that the branches are utterly dependent upon the parent stock for their continuing life. A branch which ceases to bear fruit must ultimately be removed from the vine. The essential condition of fruit-bearing is to remain in unbroken relationship with the stem from which the life-giving sap is derived. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (15: 4). But the allegory must not be pressed beyond its proper limits. There is no reference in the passage as it stands to the structure of the vine or to the interdependence of its separate parts. The one all-important lesson which the discourse teaches is that fruit-bearing is the final test of true Christian discipleship and that no disciple can hope to bear fruit unless, like the

branch, he is ever drawing his strength and his nourishment from Jesus Himself, who has taken the place of Israel as the vine of the Lord's planting.

In John 10 the allegory of the Shepherd and his flock is developed at greater length than anywhere else in the New Testament. To be sure the imagery is used again and again in the Old Testament to describe Yahweh's relation to His people and there are numerous traces of it also in the New. In Luke 12: 32 ("Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"), R. Newton Flew has seen an important reference to the Remnant-idea for in Micah 4: 4–7 this idea determines the nature of the flock.[4] So he sees in Jesus' use of the imagery a clear indication that He regarded His band of disciples as the true Israel, the saved Remnant which is commissioned also to save that which was lost. In 1 Peter the Church is referred to as the "flock of God" under the pastoral guidance of the elders who, as under shepherds, are themselves responsible to the Chief Shepherd of the people of God. Similarly in Acts 20: 28–29 the duty of elders to feed and defend the flock of God is solemnly enjoined.

But in all these cases the references are fleeting and indirect and the stress tends to be laid upon the figure of the shepherd standing over against his flock in an attitude of responsible guardianship and care. This aspect of the imagery is certainly not absent from John 10, but in the elaborate working out of the allegory the main point of emphasis is now seen to be the intimate union which exists between the Good Shepherd and His flock. In other words, as used by the Fourth Gospel the conception becomes more organic, more mystical. The Shepherd and the sheep share a common life, they are united in mutual knowledge of one another. So greatly does the Shepherd care for the sheep that He is willing even to lay down His life for their sakes. But this laying down of life leads in some mysterious way to its fulfilment: He lays it down in order that He may extend it into the life of His flock. The Church is the true *Koinonia*

participating in the common life and love which the Father shares with the Son.

One other image of the Fourth Gospel deserves to be mentioned if only for its bearing upon the fundamental distinction which we are making between the organic and the covenantal view of society. The image receives its most striking expression in John 2 : 19. "Destroy this temple (*Naos*) and in three days I will raise it up." What does this saying mean? Obviously the Jews applied it literally and exclusively to the actual building which was to be seen in Jerusalem. Some within the Christian Church have applied it literally and exclusively to Jesus' actual flesh body which was to be destroyed and raised again. But in the view of the Evangelist both of these interpretations are wrong. The truth lies in a mysterious combination of these two references: "He spake of the temple of His body". The imagery then becomes exactly parallel to that which Paul uses in the Corinthian Epistles. Jesus' flesh-body is the temple of His Spirit, the Holy Spirit. The very life of God flows through Him and is manifest in all His words and deeds. So there comes His challenge to the Jews: "Destroy this temple, this present organism in which the Spirit dwells! Even so you will not be able to destroy the life of God! Another temple will appear, another organism in which the Spirit can make His dwelling, the organism, in fact, of the Christian Church which is the living temple of God!" That this is the interpretation which the Evangelist puts upon the saying seems evident. The imagery of "temple" and "body" is mysteriously intertwined but as we know from other parts of the New Testament this conjunction was already being made in the developing doctrine of the Church. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, there is a famous passage (2: 19–22) in which it is almost impossible to unravel the separate strands of the two metaphors and in 1 Peter 2 : 5–9 the society which forms the spiritual house constructed out of living stones yet acts as a corporate personality in offering up spiritual sacrifices to God.[5] Thus in the view of the Fourth Evangelist the Lord's logion had only a quite secondary reference to the

Jerusalem temple and to his own flesh-body. The all-important reference was to the organism which embodied the Divine life, the temple which enshrined the Divine Spirit. Let men destroy one such organism (the thought is similar in the corn-of-wheat imagery in John 12: 24) and another organism will be raised up more glorious and more permanent than the original itself.

But it is necessary to ask whether this is the obvious interpretation of the logion as it appears in the Synoptic Gospels. In Mark 14: 58 the charge is made that Jesus had said "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands". In Matthew 26: 61 a similar charge appears though the words "made with hands" and "made without hands" are omitted.[6] Further the record of the mockery at the Cross includes a reference to the saying: "Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross" (Mark 15: 29–30). But as we study this Synoptic tradition we are conscious that the saying has a somewhat different application from that which it bears in the Fourth Gospel. Here it is not a question of Jesus challenging the Jews to destroy the mysterious temple which is His body: rather He Himself will destroy the Temple which stands at Jerusalem, the work of human hands. Even so, the saying cannot be interpreted with complete literalness. Jesus does not undertake to demolish the Temple before their eyes. Whether or not He may have had the coming actual destruction of the Temple in mind is unimportant. What mattered was His conviction that the period in which the Temple shrine at Jerusalem had formed the place of the presence of God was at an end. He by His work and witness as the messenger of God was rendering it obsolete. In its place He would consecrate a new Temple, a Temple made without hands, the Temple of God's people, the House in which He would make His dwelling.

In all this there is no direct reference to the body-metaphor or to organic terminology. It is true that there appears to be a reference to the Resurrection though the conventional

three days may only denote the beginning of a new era. But even if the Resurrection reference is intentional the stress would seem to be on the new activity of the risen Lord in which He, to whom all power is given in earth and heaven, raises up a new Temple in which God makes His dwelling by His Spirit. It is almost impossible to compare the Synoptic narrative with the Johannine at this point without feeling in the one the note of critical change, in the other the note of continuing life. In Mark Jesus confronts His people with a direct challenge. He comes as the Lord to His Temple, to purify, to break down, to render obsolete, to supersede: the veil of the Temple will be rent in twain from the top to the bottom and ultimately there will not be left one stone upon another that will not be cast down. We hear the crash of a falling system: we see Jesus standing forth victorious to build His new Temple on the ruins of the old. But in John it is a different story. Jesus appears more in a passive role. He is the incarnation of the Divine Life, His Body is even now the Temple of the Divine Spirit. So with supreme confidence He can bid the Jews do what they will with His bodily temple: let them even destroy it and still another will rise up to enshrine the indestructible life of God. The note of crisis is not wholly absent but it is the crisis of moving from one form of life into another. Such a crisis is hidden and mysterious. Life continues even though it becomes evident that one form has passed away and another has taken its place.

If what we have said is true, there is a difference between the Synoptic and Johannine approach to the doctrine of the people of God. In the one, Jesus stands in closest possible relationship to His disciples. He may even have regarded them as sharing in some way His vocation as the Son of Man and Servant of God. He may have looked upon them as the faithful Remnant, destined to be the inheritors of the Kingdom of God. He may have chosen them to be the foundation stones for the new Temple which He was erecting as the shrine for the true worship of God. But this view could only be considered organic in a very limited way. The whole

weight of emphasis lies upon Jesus calling men to commit themselves to Him in the sharing of a common purpose and the forming of the nucleus of a new people amongst whom God could live and dwell. In the Johannine account, however, Jesus and His disciples are mystically united within a common life. As a flock to its shepherd, as the branches to the vine, as the grains of wheat to the original seed, so the Church is in mystical union with Christ. Through His death and resurrection, His Spirit, which has hitherto dwelt within the limitations of His earthly body, enters into possession of the larger temple, His body, the Church. The whole weight of emphasis lies upon the disciples receiving the common life and being nourished and strengthened therein by the continuing operation of the Spirit of God.

3

When we turn to Paul's Epistles we soon discover that the conception of the Church as the Body of Christ is one of the most striking and suggestive of any to be found in the New Testament. It is perhaps the more impressive in that Paul does not, to any large extent, depend in his writings upon metaphor or simile. He draws upon his own personal history and experiences: he appeals to the history of his own people: he refers often to situations existing in the life of the churches to whom he writes: he argues, exhorts, declaims. But there is nothing in his writing comparable to the parables of Jesus or to the vivid imagery of the prophets of the Old Testament. When he attempts to illustrate the new relationship of Jew and Gentile within the Christian Church by appealing to the known processes of the grafting of olive trees, the picture becomes exceedingly confused and it is doubtful whether the subject is really clarified in the process. Yet there are at least two metaphors which Paul uses with astonishing confidence and power, and both are related to the nature and function of the Church. The first concerns the Church as the Temple of the Holy Spirit. The second refers to the

Church as the Body of Christ. We shall consider each of these in turn.

(*a*) In regard to the first, the applications of the metaphor are so varied that no hard-and-fast principles of Church doctrine can be drawn from it. In one place the body of the individual is designated a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6: 19); in another the Corinthian Church is called the temple of God in which the Spirit dwells (1 Cor. 3: 16): while in a third passage the whole universal Church of Christ, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, becomes the habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2: 19–22). Moreover, at least in the Corinthian Epistles, Paul's dominant concern is ethical and his use of the metaphor has an ethical purpose. In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul is struggling with the divisive forces which are threatening to destroy the common life of the Church in Corinth and in order to strengthen his appeal he turns to the temple imagery. "The Corinthians are God's sanctuary in which the Holy Spirit dwells. Yet they are threatening this sanctuary with destruction by their sinful divisions. In short they are endangering the unity of the Church by their vainglory, jealousy and partisanship. This is treachery to the common life. But worse still, it is a form of sacrilege. The holy shrine of God's own Spirit is invaded by a spirit of profanity. Sins against the common life of the Church have a religious significance. For that common life is not simply a human fellowship. It has a Godward aspect. It is a *koinonia* of consecrated persons."[7] Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 6, sins of licentiousness and immorality form the background of Paul's exhortation, while in 2 Corinthians 6 the evil associations of pagan temples are contrasted with the purity and holiness which must obtain in the Christian sanctuary. It is true that God's presence with His people and His intimate relationship with them is also stressed in 2 Corinthians 6, but the sole inferences of a theological kind which we are able to draw are that the Christian Church is the true successor of the Jewish Temple and that the Spirit of God dwells in the individual Christian and the Christian fellowship alike. The

ethical consequence follows that no practices unworthy of a *holy* Spirit have any place within the life either of the individual Christian or of the people of God. In Ephesians 2: 19–22 the case is somewhat different, but there the metaphor is so intertwined with the body-imagery that we shall do well to consider the passage within the context of the Body idea.

Our conclusion concerning the Temple-imagery must be that whereas it has certain affinities with organic concepts these are not developed in any extended way. The body of the individual Christian acts as a shrine of the Holy Spirit: the corporate fellowship is also the shrine of the Spirit. The same Spirit animates (we might say) the single room and the whole building. Such an idea is deeply impressive but it obviously stands in danger of a certain staticism. It is not easy to conceive of a living room or of a living and growing building. Yet place must be found for the living growth both of the individual Christian and of the Christian society and this is clearly provided more adequately by the Body-metaphor. Important as the Temple or House metaphor is in providing a link with the institutions of the Tabernacle and Temple in Israel's history it is less apt and less satisfactory in the final issue than the Body-metaphor which conserves its values but goes beyond it in effectiveness. To the Body-metaphor we shall now turn.

(*b*) Much discussion has centred around the question of the source from which Paul may have derived the Body-imagery which plays so prominent a part in his ecclesiology. For a while Bishop A. E. J. Rawlinson's suggestion that there is a close connection between the Church as the Body of Christ and the Eucharistic Bread as His Body received favourable attention.[8] All share in the one loaf which is designated the Lord's body: what more natural, then, than that all should be regarded as participating in the Body—as being indeed parts of the Body? There is good reason to believe that this idea was already current in the Church before Paul wrote the Corinthian Epistles and may it not have naturally come to expression in this way?

Canon W. L. Knox, however, has affirmed that the idea is derived from Stoic sources. "The Church as a body," he says, "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 the 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 Deuteronomy 28: 13".[9] That there are affinities between Stoic and Pauline thought-forms is undoubtedly true but that these are sufficiently close to make it certain that the body-imagery is taken over from Stoicism direct is less certain. There are, as Knox shows, remarkable parallels between the Stoic conception of the universe as a cosmic body with the Emperor as its head, Philo's conception of the Jewish community as a corporate body with the High Priest as its Head and Paul's conception developed in Colossians and Ephesians of the Church as the body of which Christ is head (He being head also of the entire universe). We are inclined to think that these parallels are so striking that a good case can be made for the influence of Stoic and Hellenistic imagery upon the forms used in Colossians–Ephesians, especially as the imagery in these Epistles differs somewhat from that which is to be found in Romans and 1 Corinthians. But that the idea is originally derived by Paul from Stoic sources we regard as highly questionable.

Other recent discussions[10] have found the origin of Paul's use of the metaphor in the Old Testament and in contemporary Rabbinic teachings. Father Thornton, for instance, draws special attention to the use of the body parable in Isaiah 1: 5–6: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." And in Isaiah 53: 4: "Surely he

hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."

Professor Johnston lays special stress upon the intimate connection which existed between the Messiah and the Messianic community, between the Son of Man and the saints of the most High (though he is not prepared to make this the most important element in Paul's thought). Perhaps, however, Professor Davies' conclusion is the most convincing, coming as it does at the end of a careful comparison between the old and the new humanity in Paul's thought against the background of the Rabbinic discussions of his day. This conclusion is worth quoting in full.

> Paul accepted the traditional Rabbinic doctrine of the unity of mankind in Adam. That doctrine implied that the very constitution of the physical body of Adam and the method of its formation 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, as we have seen. 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 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 *nephesh*, the latter was animated by the Spirit. Entry upon the Christian life is for the Apostle the putting off of the old man with his deeds and the putting on of the new man. The purpose of God in Christ is "in the dispensation of the fullness of times" "to gather together in one all things in Christ", i.e. the reconstitution of the essential oneness of mankind in Christ as a spiritual community, as it was one in Adam in a physical sense.[11]

These various ideas current in the Judaism of his day must have made it easy for Paul to think of the community of Christians in terms of the living body of the Messiah. Yet even so it is not certain that the Body-idea originated elsewhere than in his own creative imagination. For as we read

the First Epistle to the Corinthians we can see how natural the transition is from temple to temple-body and so to body. The imagery of the temple in chapter 3 is clearly congenial to Paul's outlook. Christ the foundation, Paul the master-builder, the living stones making up the temple of God in which the Holy Spirit dwells. Here is a consistent and appealing portrait of the Christian community. But in chapter 6 Paul has to deal with the sin of bodily impurity in the Church. How can such a thing exist, he cries, when the Christian's body is actually a member of Christ? Not yet has he formulated explicitly the concept of the community of Christians as an organic whole but he has gone a long way towards it in speaking of the body of the individual Christian as a member of Christ. This leads him immediately to link the body and the temple concepts together as he reminds the Corinthians that the body is like a temple in which the Spirit of God can dwell. Spiritual exercise and exaltation must never lead to a neglect of or misuse of the body seeing that body and spirit are both God's. Profanation of the body is tantamount to profanation of the Temple of God and such a sin is punishable with death.

In chapter 9 Paul returns again to the Temple metaphor and evidently the thought of the Church as the Temple of God is still uppermost in his mind. But the picture of Christ as foundation could not be finally satisfactory. Paul was too passionately aware of the living presence of Christ, the living purpose of Christ, the living lordship of Christ to be long content with anything which suggested fixity or hiddenness. In chapter 10 the community is referred to as one body inasmuch as the members are sharers in the one body of Christ. It is only necessary to take one more step and we have the fully developed image of 1 Corinthians 12: 12–27 in which the Messiah is one body and every individual within the Church is a member in particular of that body. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also the Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be

bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. . . . Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor. 12: 12–13, 27).

In this great passage, the various strands of Paul's thinking are woven together into a unified whole. The thought of Christians being baptized into Christ and becoming one man in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3: 28): the thought of their receiving the Spirit of the Son into their hearts (Gal. 4: 6): the thought of the Christian as a new creation in Christ (Gal. 6: 15): the thought of the Christian community as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3): the thought of the individual Christian's body as a member of Christ and a temple of the Spirit (1 Cor. 6): the thought of all Christians partaking of the one body in the Eucharist (1 Cor. 10):——all these strands woven into the already existing fabric of humanity as a cosmic body (Stoic) or humanity as the body of the first Adam, become the finished pattern of the Church, the people of God's new creation, as the Body of the Messiah and the shrine of the Holy Spirit. It is unnecessary to single out this strand or that strand as being more influential than another in the development of Paul's thought. We see the materials, we see the finished product, and in between there is the vivid creative imagination of the Apostle himself, fashioning one of the truly archetypal images of the Divine society in its historical realization.

4

What, then, we may ask, are the chief ways in which Paul uses the organic metaphor in his development of the doctrine of the Christian Church? We have emphasized the thought forms current in Paul's day but we can never forget that he was writing in relation to living situations. It is clear, for example, that in the Corinthian social situation there existed to an unusual degree a spirit of competition, individual rivalry, sectionalism, self-seeking. The community was broken up into cliques, each of which considered itself

superior to the others and each of which tended to seek its own advantage at the expense of the rest. This spirit was at work even amongst the leaders of the community; one capacity was being exalted as superior to another and all were struggling to gain the places of highest honour It is this situation which is set over against the picture of the Body. In the body, Paul writes, there must be different members to perform different functions and no one of these is more necessary than another. In fact each member is entirely dependent upon the other members: "the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." Every member shares the responsibility of caring for the other members, and as in the body, so in the Church, the members which seem less honourable should be given more abundant honour. When finally Paul enumerates the various offices or functions within the Church it is true that he appears to establish a certain order of seniority or ranking—apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle-workers, et cetera . . . but it is not certain that the *πρῶτον, δεύτερον, τρίτον*, is meant to imply a definite hierarchical structure of the community and no one would argue that all the functions there described were intended to constitute permanent offices within the Church.

Thus, in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul is concerned above all to present the Christian Church as the body of the Messiah, sharing His Spirit, fulfilling His designs. Every single member of the Body is worthy of honour in his particular task, every member is utterly dependent upon his fellow-members within the one life of the Body. So if "one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." Much the same lesson is pressed home in the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans where Paul uses the metaphor again. "All individual abilities and faculties are endowments for functions within the body, and must be used as such with a true sense of responsibility."[12] It must never be imagined, however, that these "abilities and faculties" are what we should call "natural gifts". Within the body, according to Paul, every

gift depends directly upon the grace bestowed by God (Rom. 12: 6) or to put it in another way upon the manifestation of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12: 7). The one and self-same Spirit divides to every man as He will (1 Cor. 12: 11). The Church in fact constitutes the living Body of Christ within which His Spirit energizes every member for the performance of the particular task to which he has been called.

Other inferences might legitimately be drawn from the concept of the Church as the Body of the Messiah though Paul does not actually refer to them in either of these passages; they are entirely in harmony, however, with other sections of his Epistles. They concern the union of the Church with Christ in His suffering, death and resurrection. If the Church is indeed His body then it must drink of the cup which He drank, it must be baptized with the baptism with which He was baptized. In the interim between the resurrection and the parousia the Body must live as the Messiah on earth even though the Lord is in heaven. It must bear His testimony, share His sufferings, be united with Him in the likeness of His death and resurrection, and wait in hope of the glory of God. In their union with Him, the members find their true union with one another: in the pattern of the Messiah's earthly life, the Church finds the true pattern of her own.

Turning now to Ephesians and Colossians we find a remarkable shift of emphasis in the treatment of the Body-metaphor. Whether or not both Epistles are by the same author, they are certainly extraordinarily alike in their treatment of the doctrine of the Church. The great difference between these Epistles and the Romans–Corinthians group is that in the former Christ is depicted as the Head, the Church as the Body in dependence upon the Head. Under this new form the metaphor is used to enforce three main lessons.

(1) First we note that in Ephesians and Colossians *τὸ πλήρωμα* ("the fullness") is related both to Christ and to the Church. In Ephesians 1: 22–23 it is not altogether clear whether the term is made to apply to Christ or to the Church

and whether it is to be interpreted in the simple way as that which fills a vessel or in the more complicated way as the whole which comes into existence when the vessel is filled. Evidence for both of these interpretations can be found in Greek literature, but on the whole it seems best to adopt the simpler rendering and to picture God as filling His Christ (Col. 1: 19; 2: 9) and Christ as filling His Church (Eph. 1: 23, translating with W. L. Knox: "His Body, that which is filled by Him who is always being filled"). He, then, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, in turn fills His Church with the fullness of life which He Himself is ever receiving from the Father. This life is a life of ἀγάπη, of sacrificial love. It is in being united with Christ in His suffering and death that the Church becomes filled with all the πλήρωμα of God.

(2) The Body is ever receiving "the fullness" from the Head in order that it may grow up into the Head in all things (Eph. 4: 15). The emphasis upon the growth of the Body is a marked feature of Ephesians and leads to the strange intermingling of the Body and Temple metaphors which we have already noted in Ephesians 2: 19–22. The author of Ephesians has been showing in chapter 2 that the barrier between Jew and Gentile has been removed in Christ and this leads him to think of the "middle wall of partition" which, in the Jewish Temple, actually excluded Gentiles from the sanctuary of God. This wall, he says, has been broken down. In the Christian Church Jew and Gentile alike are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, and the whole building, fitly framed together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord. Thus even the Temple-metaphor is used to suggest the process of harmonious growth. But clearly the Body-metaphor lends itself more readily to this end and so the author speaks of the Gentiles belonging to the same body as the Jews and then goes on to describe the growth of this living organism. Here the picture becomes somewhat complex. The process of growth is certainly dependent upon the life-giving energy

which flows from the head into all the members. But Christ has given various ministers to be His agents in supplying to the Body the nourishment which it needs for growth and these ministers seem to stand over against the Body, caring for it, nourishing it, and watching for its steady growth in love. Yet in another sense they are themselves part of the Body and need the life-giving energy from the Head as much as do any of the members. It is just possible that consistency is given to the metaphor by regarding the joints or ligatures spoken of in 4: 16 as the various grades of ministers but it is doubtful if this identification was prominent in the author's thought. The all-important principle of growth which emerges clearly in the Epistle is "From Christ, unto Christ." He is the source of life, He is the goal of life. Christ descended in order that the Church might ascend, seeking those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. It is only as the Church is ever stretching upwards towards the stature of the fullness of the Christ that the Body can attain its perfect fulfilment in love.

(3) The most direct lesson to be derived from the metaphor as it is employed in Ephesians and Colossians is that Christ is the Lord of the Church. Ephesians 1: 21 exults in the thought of the dominion of the ascended Christ. Far above all principality and power He reigns, Lord not only of this world but of that which is to come. He it is who is Head of the Church, its ruler and guide, and in all things the Church must be subject to Him. Nowhere in the New Testament is the cosmic supremacy of the ascended Lord more dramatically set forth. The Church, in so far as she retains her close dependence upon the Head, must share the glory of His pre-eminence over the world.

In the latter part of Ephesians the Body-imagery passes over by a natural transition to the conception of the Church as the Bride of Christ. As Father Thornton points out: "Head and body are mutually complementary; so are husband and wife. But the head has a controlling power over the body. So also the husband is head of the family and the guardian and protector of his wife. In both of these

ways the two types of language suitably represent the mutual relations of Christ and the Church."[13] As is well known the image of Israel as the Bride of Yahweh is one of the most daring and yet one of the most appealing of all the Old Testament pictures of the people of God. It is used mainly by the prophets and is employed by them to magnify the grace of Yahweh in choosing Israel to be His people. At the same time it seems to accentuate the heinousness of Israel's sin in playing the harlot and proving unfaithful to her true husband and Lord. In Ephesians the image is used almost exclusively to emphasize the deep love of Christ for His Church. "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5: 25–27). Christ's intimate relation of love to His Church, His solicitude for its beauty and holiness, the Church's duty of responding in reverent subjection to her Lord—these are the deductions drawn from the Church's status as the Bride of Christ. Nowhere in the New Testament is organic imagery so closely interwoven with covenantal. It is, in fact, within the family circle that the most adequate picture of the Church of Christ is to be found.

We shall return to the Body-metaphor again but, meanwhile, we shall conclude this chapter by pointing out how little in the way of metaphysical theory is constructed on the basis of the organic conceptions which the New Testament undoubtedly employs. Again and again the emphasis is *ethical*. Because the Church stands to Christ as a Temple to its foundation, as a Body to its head, as a Bride to her husband, therefore, the inference is drawn, not that the Church's nature is of a particular kind, not 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.

Chapter Four

THE COVENANT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

I

THE earliest certain reference to the covenant-conception in the New Testament is to be found in the Epistle to the Galatians.[1] This is no casual reference: it constitutes the framework around which the whole central didactic portion of the Epistle is woven. Already in the second chapter Paul has focussed attention upon his main contrast—the contrast between the works of the law and the faith of Jesus Christ. In the "religion of the Jews" (1 : 14) the works of the law had been his supreme concern; in "the gospel of Christ" (1 : 7) justification by the faith of Christ had taken the place of every other consideration. To be shut up to the works of the law was to be involved in the curse which rested upon failure and to be condemned to ultimate death; to be shut up unto the faith of Jesus Christ was to share in the Divine promise and to receive the ultimate gift of everlasting life. This contrast rules all his thought and writing.

But this contrast was made the more vivid and impressive by being related to the record of two Old Testament covenants. Paul was entirely familiar with the classic account of the covenant between Yahweh and Abraham in which it stands written that Abraham believed in the Lord and it was counted to him for righteousness. He was also more than familiar with the record of the covenant at Sinai in which the account of the giving of the law plays a prominent part. Here were two covenants—the one speaking of promise, of sonship, of freedom, of faith, the other speaking of law, of servitude, of bondage, of works, and it is Paul's contention that the first expresses the real purpose of God, having been related from the very beginning to His design for man's salvation through Christ. Direct confirmation of this fact he

finds in the form of words used at the inauguration of the covenant with Abraham. "And to thy seed" the promise ran, not seeds. What could the singular mean save Christ? So he concludes that God, in calling Abraham into relationship with himself, was calling him already into His purpose in Christ and within that purpose the only possible response on man's part was a joyful acceptance of the gracious invitation of God. In other words the covenant with Abraham was a proleptic realization of the covenant in Christ: the true gospel was proclaimed to Abraham and by his faith Abraham became a true partaker of the righteousness of God.

But this line of exegesis left Paul with a serious problem in regard to the second covenant, the covenant at Sinai. He could not bring himself to affirm that this covenant had not been given by God nor could he allow that its character had been radically misinterpreted by the Jewish people. Instead he declares that it was promulgated by God because of the transgressions of men. Because of their failure to live by the promise of the Abrahamic covenant, God gave them a law to bring home to them the seriousness and indeed the hopelessness of their condition. Shut up under a system which demanded strict obedience in every respect to a given code, men were bound to become aware of their failure and of their state of bondage and of their alienation from God. Thus the contract established at Sinai was intended by God as an instrument to convict men of sin and to make them ready to welcome the Redeemer who alone could lead them out into freedom and life.

This interpretation is given final support by an appeal to the method of allegory. Abraham entered into a union with his bondmaid Hagar and a son was born in the ordinary course of nature: when, however, he entered into union with his true wife Sarah and a son was born, this child was the offspring of a freewoman and was the direct gift of the grace of God. So it was, says Paul, with the covenants. The one at Sinai corresponds to the bondwoman in the wilderness and to the earthly Jerusalem which still lives under the bondage

of the law: the one with Abraham is directly associated with the freewoman in the home and to the heavenly Jerusalem which is eternally free. The inference immediately follows. Whereas Jews who live under the law and give their allegiance to the earthly Jerusalem are in a state of complete bondage, Christians who live by faith and acknowledge the exalted Christ, the Lord of the heavenly Jerusalem, are in a state of complete freedom. There can be no thought of Christians living under the discipline of the Sinaitic-covenant —that would be a reversion to slavery. Rather Christians are called upon to stand fast within the provisions of the covenant of promise and to enjoy the life of freedom by faith.

In this whole argument there is much that appears strange to the student of Scripture to-day. The stress laid upon the singular form of the word translated "seed" and the appeal to the allegorical significance of the story of Ishmael and Isaac seem utterly foreign to modern standards of sound exegesis, and it must be said at once that there are few who would wish to defend Paul's main conclusions by recourse to his methods of spiritualization and allegory. Yet it must be borne in mind that he was talking into a situation where these points of exegesis were common matters of debate and the all-important thing is to discover what were the central Christian truths which he was seeking to impart to his readers.

What seems abundantly clear is that Paul was standing over against an official Judaism which was laying an exorbitant emphasis upon the *contractual* nature of God's covenant with His people Israel. In the record of the covenant with Abraham, attention was focused upon the Priestly document (P) in which circumcision was required as the essential sign and seal of the covenant-relationship (Gen. 17: 1–14). Again, in the record of the covenant at Sinai, stress was laid upon the command-and-obedience aspect of the agreement and a natural continuity was found between the two covenants in that in each case a Divine command was sealed by a solemn pledge or act on the part of the human participators. And on

the face of it there was much to support this interpretation of the Old Testament revelation. Yet Paul was convinced that it was a false interpretation. For him the Prophetic (JE) account of the covenant with Abraham contained the basic principle of all true religion—that Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. All was of God's grace: nothing was required of man except an active apprehension of the promise of God by faith. Seals and signs might follow (Rom. 4: 11) but the inital step in the covenant was a complete committal to God in trust, a solemn engagement to a participation in the purpose which He had revealed. This was so fundamental for Paul that when he came to consider the account of the covenant at Sinai he could not regard it as other than a descent to a lower plane. This was not God's real purpose for men. It was a temporary measure, a design on His part to awaken men to a sense of their sin and need, an expedient looking beyond itself to the coming of salvation through the Messiah.

That Paul was right in rejecting the official Jewish interpretation of the covenant-relationship and in substituting for it a new emphasis upon the primary covenant with Abraham and its fulfilment in Christ, we should unhesitatingly affirm. That his interpretation of the Sinaitic covenant is true to the whole revelation of the Old Testament seems, however, to be more open to question. In Galatians he never mentions Moses and the part taken by him in the inauguration of the covenant. He lays no stress upon the historical context of Sinai, the way it follows upon redemption, the significance which it holds as the expression of Israel's obedience-in-trust to the God who had called them to be a peculiar treasure to Himself above all people (Ex. 19: 5). Indeed it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the rôle which Paul assigns to the law is unworthy of a God of redeeming grace. The fact is that a full covenant relationship must always include the elements of promise and demand, of grace and requirement. It is true that any particular set of circumstances may call for a greater emphasis to be laid upon one of these elements than upon the

other but neither can ever be entirely absent. Thus, when the Jews tended to interpret the covenant exclusively in contractual terms of demand and obedience (though they never lost sight entirely of the fact that the law was a gracious revelation of the will of God), they failed to be true to the whole new revelation of God which the Old Testament provides.

Paul, then, was right to challenge official Judaism on this score, but when he draws so complete a contrast between the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants as to make the former purely of grace and the latter purely of law he himself is guilty of doing despite to the highest truth of the Old Testament revelation. To say this is not to minimize for a moment the importance of Paul's re-discovery of the primacy of grace and faith in any true covenant relationship. All that we are urging is that in the Epistle to the Galatians he seems to press his point too far. The covenant at Sinai is set forth exclusively in terms of law and bondage and works but such a covenant would not be worthy of the God of all grace. So we may accept Paul's pattern of the true covenant-relationship as it is disclosed in the story of Abraham but we must go on to say that the same essential pattern may be seen in God's dealings with His people at the Exodus and at Sinai and that it is only a later misinterpretation which has seen the second covenant purely in terms of contractual law. A true covenant must always contain within it the dialectic of grace and demand, of promise and requirement, and it is that kind of covenant which the prophetic writers of the Old Testament declared was characteristic of Yahweh's relations with His people Israel.

2

We have considered at some length the special use which Paul makes of the covenant-relationship in his controversy with the strict Jewish party about the necessary requirements for full membership within the people of God. Let us

now turn to the wider use which the New Testament makes of the covenant idea, beginning with the Synoptic Gospels.

The first thing to be said is that there is much that is suggestive of the covenant-relationship in all Jesus' dealings with His disciples. Whatever may have been the nature of their earliest associations with Him, a much more definite attachment was formed when in response to His deliberate call they left all and followed Him. "Follow Me," He said, "and I will make you." Share My purposes, identify yourselves with Me, believe in the reality of the Kingdom which I am establishing: so shall you find your own true destiny! Life does not consist in the possession of material goods nor in the achievement of individual ambitions. Rather life's deepest significance is to be found in relationship, in the union of wills and purposes within the one embracing purpose of the Kingdom of God. This might, as He pointed out to the sons of Zebedee, involve a sharing of suffering and shame, but when willingly accepted these very experiences could prove a means of strengthening the bonds of the common life.

There is no record of Jesus having actually used covenant terminology until the very eve of His passion.[2] Then, however, we find two striking sayings each of which seems to carry echoes of the covenant-histories of the Old Testament. The first is the familiar word of institution at the delivery of the cup. "This is my blood of the new covenant," says Jesus (Mk. 14: 24), or "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22: 20; 1 Cor. 11: 25). Into the variations of this formula we need not enter: we are only concerned with the references to a new covenant and to covenant blood. If the saying is genuine (and there is no real reason to doubt its genuineness apart from the fact that the only direct references to the covenant in Jesus' recorded sayings are here and in Luke 22: 29) the question arises whether any clear connection with Old Testament passages can be discerned. Three at least have been suggested. The "new covenant" obviously suggests the notable prophecy of Jeremiah:

> Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jer. 31: 31–34.)

But if this is the *new* covenant in blood, which was the *old* covenant in blood? Jeremias has suggested that it was the covenant established through the blood of the passover lamb and this would agree well with the reference in Jeremiah to "the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt" and with the remarkable passage, Zechariah 9: 11, which speaks of the sending forth of prisoners out of the pit "because of the blood of the covenant". However, Vincent Taylor seems to be justified in holding that the more likely reference is to the inauguration of the covenant in Exodus 24, where blood was sprinkled both on the altar and on the people in token that henceforward Yahweh and Israel were indissolubly united within a common purpose and a mutual loyalty.[3]

One other possible reference may have been in Jesus' mind. In the Servant-Songs of Second Isaiah the phrase, "a covenant of the people", occurs twice in the Authorized Version (42: 6; 49: 8). The exact meaning of the phrase in the original is exceedingly hard to determine. In an illuminating discussion Professor C. R. North points out that there are four possible renderings but that on the whole, the most likely seems to be: "A covenant-bond of the people". The Servant is to be the medium of God's covenant with all

mankind. If now Jesus had brooded long upon the Servant-passages, and had seen in them a picture of His own vocation, it would be natural for Him at so critical a point in His ministry to speak of the new covenant-bond which He would by His own action establish on behalf of all mankind.[4]

Let us now glance at the other recorded saying of Jesus in which the covenant terminology appears. The Authorized Version of Luke 22 : 29 reads, "I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto Me," but the Greek verb translated "appoint" is διατίθεμαι, closely connected with διαθήκη, and therefore translatable as "covenant". Thus Otto translates the phrase, "I appoint the kingdom unto you by covenant, as my Father has appointed it to me", and goes on to affirm that "here the meaning of the *akoluthia*, or discipleship, reaches its final form. Jesus required His disciples to cleave to Him as the eschatological redeemer and saviour with a view to a fellowship which began here and was completed in the final age."[5] Further, he points out that here in particular the idea of testament which was never far away from διαθήκη in the New Testament (in fact it must often be used as the correct translation of the word), has a special appropriateness. Jesus is about to die and prepares to make His last disposition to His disciples. But His only possession is the Kingdom into which the Father has called Him by a covenant. Now He will extend the covenant to His disciples. They will be bound to Him within the new covenant and so will share in the blessings and the responsibilities of the Kingdom of God.

Taking the two passages together, and setting them within the context of Jesus' wider relationships with His disciples, we may conclude that Jesus regarded His disciples as in a very real sense a covenant-community. He called them to share with Him His mission, His sufferings, His triumph. He made them His friends, His followers, His representatives. Then, in the last solemn hours before His passion, He, as God's representative, sealed the relationship by inaugurating a new covenant. By word, He invested them with

authority and partnership within His royal purpose; by sacramental act, He joined them to Himself in a covenant of blood. So, in that hour, the covenant-community took shape and the Old Testament promise of the new covenant began to be fulfilled. Henceforward there existed in the world a community which had been taken into covenant relationship with God through Christ and which was committed to the task of calling men of all nations to enter into the same relationship and to become heirs with them of the promised Kingdom of God.

3

Of all the writers of the New Testament none makes greater use of covenant terminology than does the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Yet, as we shall see, his concept of a covenant is a distinctive one and in many respects differs from the basic Old Testament pattern of covenant which we have already outlined. In a word, this author tends to regard covenant far more in the light of an ordered arrangement than of a personal relationship.

The main purpose of this writer is to contrast the religious system of Judaism with the new order of things in Christ. He has a practical end in view in that certain Christian converts were evidently growing lax and lukewarm in their Christian faith and were in danger of turning back to their former allegiance. But the greater part of the Epistle is taken up with theological exposition designed to stir the consciences and imaginations of the readers and to inspire them again to a vital Christian faith. The whole framework of this exposition may be said to have been constructed out of the idea of the two covenants. A. B. Davidson says:

> The Epistle . . . distinguishes two covenants, that made at Sinai (8: 9) and that made through Christ (9: 15). The former is called the *first* covenant (8: 7, 9: 1, 18); it is not named the "old" covenant, although it is said that God, in announcing a new covenant, has made the first old (8: 13). The latter is

> called a second (8: 7), a better (7: 22, 8: 6) a new as having different contents (8: 8, 9: 15), and also new as being recent (12: 24), and an eternal covenant (13: 20. Cp. 7: 22). The first covenant was not faultless—so mildly does the author express himself (8: 7); the second is enacted upon better promises (8: 6, 10–12). The Epistle does not speak of a covenant with Abraham, as the Pauline Epistles do (Gal. 3: 15, 17); it knows of promises to Abraham (6: 13, 7: 6), which the first covenant was ineffectual to realize (11: 39), which, however, are realized through the second (9: 15).[6]

This summary of Davidson's admirably sets out the contrast between the two covenants. The author will not allow that the religious system of Judaism, growing, as he believed, out of the pattern laid down at Sinai, was a mistake. He implies that it was solely a temporary arrangement, that it was concerned with outward and material things rather than with the inward and the spiritual, that it could only take those who were involved in it a certain distance towards the attainment of holiness, that it was imperfect, shadowy, changeable. Yet he also insists that it was given by God, that it did provide a temporary relief from the burden of sin, that it gave at least some sense of access to the presence of God. Such a view may appear strange to us for it is hard to think that God could ever offer men that which is by its very nature imperfect and destined in time to be superseded. We are more inclined to see the fault and the imperfection on man's side in that he shows himself unable to apprehend the riches of God's grace and all too slow to avail himself of the means by which he may draw near to the Divine presence. But the author of Hebrews does not see things entirely in this light. He is, indeed, well aware of man's faithlessness and defection and even apostasy, but at the same time he holds that the system of religious practice inaugurated at Sinai was only the first stage in God's plan to bring full salvation to mankind.

All this means, however, that the very concept of covenant is different from that which we have hitherto considered. It does not stand for that living relationship into which God

calls an individual or a group and within which the called are enabled to share with Him in the intimate fellowship of a common purpose. Nor does it stand for the more legalized contractual arrangement in which the whole stress is laid upon rights to be guaranteed and duties to be performed. Rather it stands for an essentially religious means of bringing man into fellowship with God. For the basic problem with which the author of Hebrews grapples is this: "How can sinful man draw near to God?" Man is impure externally in his flesh by reason of his bodily activities: he is impure internally in his conscience by reason of his spiritual failures. While he remains a creature of this world of space and time he can never enter into the final blessedness of unbroken fellowship with God. Here, then, is man's condition and God is not unmindful of this condition. He appointed a man, Moses (who occupies a prominent position in this Epistle), to be the mediator of a religious system in which men might be trained and disciplined for the true service of God. An earthly sanctuary was set up, a priesthood was appointed, a sacrificial system was inaugurated, definite rules were established. Yet, as the Epistle makes clear, this system was only in a very minor degree effective in bringing men near to God. The very arrangement by which the High Priest alone was allowed to enter into the Holiest place, and that only once a year, showed that ordinary worshippers could not enter into the very presence of God. Again, the very fact that the sacrifices had continually to be repeated—in particular that the great Day of Atonement ceremonies had to be solemnized year by year—meant that sin was continually being remembered and that the sacrifices could not really take it away. These sacrifices "could not make him that did the service perfect" (9: 9), they could "never take away sins" (10: 11), though they did sanctify to the purifying of the flesh (9: 13), and were adequate for the purification of the externalia of worship (9: 23).

Thus the first covenant, the author suggests, was only effective to a very limited extent in bringing about the true

end of all religion—the perfection of man within the intimate fellowship of God. It was necessary, therefore, that another arrangement should be made which would be inward in its operation and permanent in its effectiveness. These are the essential marks of the new covenant. Already in Jeremiah's prophecy these blessings had been envisaged: "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more". And what Jeremiah had envisaged, Jesus had actually performed. He, the Son of God, having offered the perfect sacrifice in the realm of spirit (9: 14) and of will (10: 9) can purge even the *consciences* of men to serve the living God. He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. He is the mediator of the new covenant in the sense that He is the great High Priest of the new religious system, ministering within the true heavenly sanctuary and bearing the responsibility of bringing all His worshippers into actual relationship with God. As Davidson remarks: "In all those points where the first failed the second realizes the purpose of the covenant. That which gives eternal validity or absoluteness to the new covenant is the *person*, the Son of God, who in all points carries it through—who reveals, mediates, and sustains it."[7]

We see then that this Epistle uses the covenant idea in a highly distinctive way. The covenant is an arrangement designed by God for bringing men into relationship with Himself, for enabling them to share in the blessedness of His eternal rest. But it is an arrangement of an essentially cultic character. There is a sanctuary and a sacrificial system and a mediating priesthood. The blood symbolism is not related to the sharing of a common life but rather to the expiating of defilement of every kind. A sacrifice is not so much a sacramental seal of the covenant as it is a means of removing the guilt of sin. And this even holds true within the "better" arrangement which is called the new covenant. The central function of the Son of God is that of High Priest. His Blood is shed in order that the consciences of men may

be cleansed. His body is willingly offered in order that those within the covenant may be sanctified This whole conception of the covenant may be a natural development from some of the ideas present in later Judaism but it certainly belongs to a very different outlook from that which appears within the prophetic histories and the prophetic writings. Indeed we must conclude that the contribution of the Epistle to the Hebrews can hardly be integrated into the main body of Biblical teaching on the Covenant. It stands on its own and though it is highly suggestive within the particular context of this Epistle it can only be used in a quite secondary way when seeking to build a comprehensive Biblical doctrine of the Covenant-People of God.

4

In only one other place in his writings does Paul make free use of the covenant idea. (1 Cor. 11 : 25 may be classed with the Institution-narratives in the Synoptic Gospels.) This is in his great apologia in 2 Corinthians 1–5, where a personal explanation of his delay in coming to Corinth leads him into one of the most eloquent and moving defences of his gospel to be found anywhere in his writings. Actually the thought of the covenant springs to his mind as the result of a reference to the letters of commendation which the Corinthians were requiring from certain of their visitors. It was unthinkable that he should need letters of commendation after his intimate associations with them. Instead, they themselves constituted his letters of commendation which could be read and known by all. He, Paul, had been the minister of Christ to inscribe a Divine message, not with ink on tablets of stone, but with the Spirit of God upon the hearts of men. And now the whole contrast between the Sinai-dispensation and the Gospel-dispensation comes into view. The former was the old covenant, a code written in stone, a code pronouncing condemnation on the offender, a code threatening death to all who disobeyed its commands.

But the latter, ministered by Paul, was the new covenant, a covenant operative in the realm of the Spirit, a covenant declaring the sinner righteous, a covenant giving life to all who believe.

It is this contrast which Paul works out with passionate intensity in chapter 3 of the Epistle. He turns back to the story of the giving of the law to Moses and recalls the fact that Moses' face shone with the glory of God as he came down from the mount. So brilliant was the sight that the children of Israel could not continue to gaze into his face—and yet, says Paul, that glory was not permanent, it was actually fading away. If, then, the covenant which was only a temporary arrangement and which was mainly concerned with judgment and death was surrounded with a measure of glory, how much more must the new covenant of the Spirit which is concerned with righteousness and life exceed in glory? The veil which Moses put over his face Paul regards as a dramatic symbol of what might be called the spiritual entropy of the old covenant: its glory was running down, even vanishing away. But the glory of the new covenant will never fade. As men turn to Christ they advance from glory to glory as the Spirit changes them into the image of the Lord Himself.

Paul's approach to the covenant-idea in this letter is in a measure different from his approach in the Epistle to the Galatians and yet his main point of emphasis proves to be the same. He is convinced that the law given at Sinai was concerned primarily with condemnation and death. It is true that it was given by God and as such could not fail to reflect some measure of His glory. Yet Paul believed that its function was chiefly to drive men to despair, making them ready for the Messiah who alone could save. If this had indeed been the only purpose of the Sinai-dispensation, then it is highly questionable whether it ought to be called a covenant at all. But it appears that Paul, for the sake of his argument, stresses one aspect of the dispensation with Israel at the expense of the wider context. Actually, the record as a whole shows much more than the imposition of a legal

code. It was a true covenant in the sense that Yahweh called Israel into relationship with Himself as His people and they on their part, at least inchoately, called upon Him as their God. This aspect of things Paul scarcely mentions and we must conclude that he is less than just to the Sinai-covenant, although his positive emphasis upon the Abrahamic covenant of promise fulfilled in Christ gives a basis for a view of the Church as a covenant-community which he does not work out in detail.

One may hazard the suggestion that in his earlier years Paul had been so familiarized with the Rabbinic conception of the covenant as the promulgating of laws by God which it was Israel's duty to obey, that it was hard for him to think of covenant in any other sense.[8] His study of the life of Abraham as given in Genesis suggested to him the thought of a covenant of promise which had been finally fulfilled in Christ. But this led him to infer that there were covenants of entirely different kinds—a covenant of promise and a covenant of command, a covenant leading to death and a covenant leading to life. To use such terminology, however, is misleading. There must be a common underlying pattern in *God's* covenants if the word is to mean anything at all. This pattern, we believe, may be seen in most, if not all, of the Old Testament records of the covenant and this pattern, we believe, was taken up by Jesus when He established the new covenant with His disciples. In short, Paul was right in condemning the conception of the covenant society current in Rabbinic Judaism, but in so doing he came near to setting up a complete dichotomy in the field of the relations between God and men. The covenant-community lives ever under the dialectic of Grace and Law and any relationship in which either of these elements fails to find a proper place is not worthy to be called a covenant.

SECTION TWO

HISTORICAL

Chapter Five

"THE BODY OF CHRIST" IN THE EARLY CHURCH

I

NO systematic treatment of the doctrine of the Church can be found in the Christian writings of the second century A.D. Cyprian is the first of the early Fathers to devote a special treatise to an examination of the nature of the Church and even he is content to concentrate his attention upon the particular subject of the Church's unity. As Professor Bethune-Baker has well said: "The idea of a new spiritual society which was potentially world-wide, united by a common faith and worship and pledged to definite moral standards of life, enjoying a real spiritual union with Christ Himself, permeated and sustained by the Holy Spirit and His various gifts of grace, is implied from the first."[1] Moreover, as the Church gradually became more self-conscious, the notes of unity, catholicity, apostolicity began to be emphasized and the patterns of its structure began to be recognized. Nevertheless, there was no formal exposition of its nature and function in the sub-Apostolic period.

But if there was no formal theology of the Church, was there a continuing use of the important images which the New Testament had employed? To this question the answer must certainly be "Yes", for it is possible to find references to most of these New Testament metaphors—the Bride, the Temple, the Flock, the New Israel. And there are certainly references to the Body-concept though, prior to the writings of Augustine, these are not as frequent as we might have expected.

The earliest reference to the Body-metaphor outside the New Testament is to be found in the Epistle usually known as First Clement (37, 38). In this the author paints a vivid picture of the Church as an army of Christ.

In an army there is perfect discipline and a gradation of ranks.

> The great cannot exist without the small nor the small without the great. There is a kind of mixture in all things, and thence arises mutual advantage. Let us take our body for an example. The head is nothing without the feet, and the feet are nothing without the head; yea the very smallest members of our body are necessary and useful to the whole body. But all work (or breathe) harmoniously together, and are under one common rule for the preservation of the whole body. Let our whole body, then, be preserved in Christ Jesus; and let every one be subject to his neighbour, according to the special gift bestowed upon him. Let the strong not despise the weak, and let the weak show respect unto the strong.

Here no mention is made of particular hierarchies within the Church. The whole emphasis, as in Paul's use of the metaphor in 1 Corinthians 12, is on all the members of the Church working harmoniously together under the leadership of the one head (though an earlier reference to "generals" in the army may indicate that Clement had certain ministers in mind).

Ignatius, in spite of his deep concern for the unity of the Church, makes surprisingly little use of the Body-metaphor. He does indeed quote the passage from Ephesians, "There is one Body and one Spirit," and in his own Epistle to the Ephesians (17) he seems to have the relationship between Christ as Head and the Church as Body in mind: but we could not claim for a moment that his is a recognizable organic view of the Church. In the *Shepherd* of Hermas there are three references to the Body of Christ, but in the other second-century writings there is scarcely any explicit use of the idea though, as Mersch has pointed out, the doctrine of the two Adams is at the very centre of Irenaeus' theological position and this doctrine has a very close relationship with the doctrine of the mystical Body of Christ.

Irenaeus' most striking use of the Body-metaphor occurs in an unusual context. Instead of relating the idea to the

Christian Church whose members "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ" (Col. 1 : 24) in their flesh, he applies it to the Old Testament prophets who in their bodies, each in his own way, prefigured some particular part of the wholeness of Christ's sufferings. He does indeed affirm that all those on whom the Spirit of God rests will suffer persecution—and doubtless this is connected in his mind with the Christian Church. But as is clear from the passage itself, the primary application is to those who preceded Christ rather than to those who follow Him in time.

> And indeed the prophets, along with other things which they predicted, also foretold this, that all those on whom the Spirit of God should rest, and who would obey the word of the Father, and serve Him according to their ability, should suffer persecution, and be stoned and slain. For the prophets prefigured in themselves all these things, because of their love to God and on account of His word. For since they themselves were members of Christ, each one of them in his place as a member did, in accordance with this, set forth the prophecy (assigned him); all of them, although many, prefiguring only one, and proclaiming the things which pertain to one. For just as the working of the whole body is exhibited through means of our members, while the figure of a complete man is not displayed by one member, but through means of all taken together, so also did all the prophets prefigure the one (Christ); while everyone of them, in his special place as a member, did, in accordance with this, fill up the (established) dispensation, and shadowed forth beforehand that particular working of Christ which was connected with that member.[2]

In one other passage Irenaeus shows his close acquaintance with Paul's doctrine of the Church as the home of the Spirit and proceeds to use the doctrine as a bulwark against heresy. This principle was destined to be constantly appealed to in the early Church—the principle, namely, that if the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Body of Christ, then only those within the Body can partake of the Spirit. Such an appeal, of course, assumes that the outward form of the Body is readily distinguishable—though in point of fact, the

precise demarcation of the boundaries of the Body has proved to be one of the most difficult problems in the whole history of Christian thought.

> This gift of God (i.e. the Holy Spirit) has been entrusted to the Church, as breath was to the first created man, for this purpose, that all the members receiving it may be vivified; and the means (of communion) with Christ has been distributed throughout it, that is, the Holy Spirit, the earnest of incorruption, the means of confirming our faith, and the ladder of ascent to God. 'For in the Church,' it is said, 'God hath set apostles, prophets, teachers' and all the other means through which the Spirit works; of which all those are not partakers who do not join themselves to the Church, but defraud themselves of life through their perverse opinions and infamous behaviour. For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace.[3]

When we come to the turn of the second century we find the Alexandrian theologians appealing to the Body-metaphor as a stimulus to an imitation of Christ the Head both in His knowledge of the truth and in His purity of life. But the tendency, as Mersch says, is to minimize the ontological and the mysterious in the thought of our incorporation into Christ, and to emphasize rather the ethical and the spiritual. Cyprian, as is well known, had an almost fanatical concern for the maintenance of the unity of the Church. Secessions had taken place, and rival groups had been established, and Cyprian felt bound to proclaim the necessity for the Church's external unity in the most uncompromising way. After quoting the words from Ephesians about one Body and one Spirit he goes on to affirm that episcopate and church alike are one and undivided. He employs various similes to illustrate his contention that the Church, though spread abroad, is one in her inmost life—the sun and its rays, the tree and its boughs, the source and its many streams—but strangely enough he does not include the body and its members, except in a passing reference to the one head. In Cyprian the need for the whole Church to

maintain its unity by preserving its relationship to the one episcopate is constantly reiterated. But the Body-image seems to be employed almost entirely in the interests of this external unity under the one head rather than in the service of what might be called a truly organic doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ.

2

It is in the writings of Augustine that the doctrine of the Church first receives a more comprehensive treatment, but it is almost impossible to construct any kind of system out of his many-sided thought. One thing however stands out clearly. The idea of the Church as the Body of Christ fascinated him and he returns to it again and again. If there is one single determinative concept which draws together his devotional, his ecclesiatical and his ethical teachings it is this central image. Dr. Grabowski has gone so far as to say that almost every page in Augustine's voluminous *Enarrationes in Psalmos* has references to Christ, the Head of the Church, and to the faithful forming the members of His Body.[4]

When we examine Augustine's doctrine in detail we find that he uses the Body-concept primarily for what we should call devotional purposes, though it is true that devotion can never be separated from doctrine. In his commentaries on the Psalms he sets up as one of his chief interpretative principles that what is said of the Head may be applied to the Body, that what is said of the Body may be applied to the Head. For Head and Body form *one Christ*. To justify this method of interpretation he returns more than once to the Apostle's word in 1 Corinthians 12: 12, "as in one body there are many members; and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, are one body, so also is Christ." "He did not say," Augustine comments, " 'so also is Christ's', that is, Christ's body or Christ's members, but 'so also is Christ', thus calling the head and

the body one Christ."[5] And again: "We all are in Him both Christ's and Christ, since in some manner the whole Christ is the Head and the body."[6] Thus, he says, we learn to know Christ in the Scriptures, but it is also in the Scriptures that we learn to know the Church. We read of Abraham's *seed*: here we apprehend both Christ *and* the Church. In Psalm 2 we read of Christ as the Son: immediately after we read of the Church, His possession. And he goes on to extend this by referring to other Psalms in which a word spoken of Christ is immediately completed by some truth concerning His Church. Wherever we recognize the Christ, there too we recognize the Church, for Head and Body constitute one Christ. "What is the Church?" he asks. "The Body of Christ: Add the head to it and it becomes one man; the head and the body make up one man. The head, what is it? He who was born of the Virgin Mary. His body, what is it? His bride, that is to say, the Church . . . and the Father has willed that the two should make one man: the Divine Christ and the Church."[7] Augustine never tires of proclaiming, as Mersch shows by countless references, that Christ and the Church constitute one thing, one soul, one man, one person, one whole Christ, one Son of God.

But what are the consequences which follow from this identification? Augustine delights to draw out its significance for every aspect of the life of the Christian. He applies it to the prayer life. "When then we present our supplications to God, let us not separate ourselves from the Son, and when the Body of the Son prays, let it not separate itself from the Head. Let the only Saviour of the Body, our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God . . . both pray for us and pray in us and be prayed to by us. He prays for us, as our priest; he prays in us, as our head; he is prayed to by us, as our God." Again the Saviour continues His passion in His Church, just as He continues His prayer. In fact all the incidents in His earthly incarnate life are full of significance for His Church: they were the initial expression of that life which is to be continued in His Church. Augustine often

refers to the words spoken on the Damascus road: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" The persecutor of the Church was in fact persecuting Christ Himself. Further, the sacrifice of the Christ is continued in the sacrifice of the Eucharist in which the Church itself is laid upon the altar. She receives the bread, the one body made up of many grains which correspond to the many members in the Church of Christ. The holiness of Christ, the unity which is in Christ, the love of Christ—all belong both to Head and Body and it is for the Body to enter into full possession of that which God has committed to it in Christ. So constantly does Augustine return to this theme that it tends to become monotonous. In every respect Christ and His Church, the Head and the Body are one. In its witness, in its worship, in its tribulations, in its temptations, in its life of charity, in its life of understanding, it is Christ that is preaching, Christ that is praying, Christ that is suffering, Christ that is labouring. Nowhere in Christian literature is the union between the Head and the members of His Body more profoundly analysed and more vividly set forth than in the writings of Augustine.

This intimate union between the Head and the Body was regarded as of signal importance not only devotionally, but also evidentially. What we see in the Body, the Church, leads us to faith in the living Head of the Church. The following is a particularly striking passage in which he works out this thought in full.

> This the disciples did not yet see, namely, the Church throughout all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. They saw the Head and they believed the Head in the matter of the body. By this which they saw they believed that which they did not see. We too are like to them; we see something which they did not see, and we do not see something which they did see. What do we see which they did not? The Church throughout all nations. What is it we do not see, which they saw? Christ present in the flesh. As they saw Him and believed concerning the Body, so do we see the Body: let us believe concerning the Head. Let what we have respectively seen help us. The sight

of Christ helped them to believe in the future Church; the sight of the Church helps us to believe that Christ has risen. Their faith was made complete, and ours is made complete also. Their faith was made complete by the sight of the Head; ours is made complete by the sight of the Body. Christ was made known to them wholly, and to us is He so made known. But He was not seen wholly by them, nor has He been seen wholly by us. By them the Head was seen, the Body believed. Yet to none is Christ lacking. In all He is complete, though to this day His Body remains imperfect.[8]

3

Another aspect of Augustine's doctrine of the Church is to be found in his frequent reference to the fact that the Holy Ghost is the soul of the Body of Christ. Augustine was confronted by a situation which has often recurred in Christian history—a situation in which individuals and groups who had separated themselves from the institutional Church claimed that the Holy Ghost was an individual gift, bestowed by God upon the individual apart from any necessary relationship to the institutional whole. But Augustine would not allow this. To leave the Body was to lose the Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Body (and of this Augustine had no doubt) then, just as in a natural body, an arm or leg which is severed from the body is no longer animated by the soul of the body, so a member severed from the Church can no longer enjoy the inspiration of the Spirit of Christ which is the Holy Spirit. For Augustine the implications which follow from the Body-image are ineluctable. If you desire to possess the Holy Spirit you must become a member and remain a member of the Body which He inhabits.

"Let them," he says, "become the Body of Christ if they wish to live of Christ's Spirit. Only the Body of Christ lives of the Spirit of Christ. Do you also will to live of the Spirit of Christ? Be in the Body of Christ." Again:

> That which the soul is to the human body, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ which is the Church. That which the soul effects in a single body, the Holy Spirit effects in the whole Church. But observe what it is you ought to avoid, to do and to fear. In the human body it happens sometimes that a member is cut off—a hand, a finger, a foot. Does the soul accompany the severed member? While it was joined to the body it lived; when it is cut off it loses life. So for the Christian while he is a member of the church his life is in his body, he is a catholic. If he is cut off he becomes a heretic: The spirit does not accompany the severed member.[9]

Probably Augustine would not have denied that there was a real operation of the Spirit outside the Church and that even a bad man might become partaker of some particular gift of the Spirit (as Saul had the gift of prophecy). But in the light of Romans 5: 5: "Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" he is convinced that the chief and altogether indispensable gift of the Spirit is love; and secondly, he is convinced that love shows itself primarily in the maintenance of unity in the bond of peace. "He is not a partaker of the divine love who is the enemy of unity."[10] "Those are wanting in God's love who do not care for the unity of the Church; and consequently we are right in understanding that the Holy Spirit may be said not to be received except in the Catholic Church."[11] We may well believe that his chief concern was his positive assurance that within the Catholic Church the Holy Spirit was ever supplying the gifts of unity and peace: but he could not avoid the negative conclusion that outside the Catholic Church the Spirit could not be found.

4

We have noted Augustine's constant reiteration of two themes: (1) That Body and Head together constitute the Whole Christ; (2) That the soul of the Body of Christ is the

Holy Spirit. In developing each of these themes he was dependent largely upon the New Testament itself. He had the testimony of 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 and he used this testimony to create an ideal picture of the relations between Christ and His Church.

But did this description really correspond to the situation as he knew it in the world of his day? Did the Church—the external, institutional Church in the world—show the marks of love and unity and peace and deep identification with the Christ in prayer and witness and suffering of which Augustine speaks so confidently and so impressively? In a measure the answer must be "No", and it is evident that a good deal of Augustine's concern is to explain the existence of imperfection in the empirical Church when the true Church has so exalted a status and character. At the same time it must also be recognized that Augustine had found in the Catholic Church of his own day a stability and a unity and a quality of social life such as existed, to his knowledge, nowhere else. He had cast himself into the arms of this Church, he believed in this Church as the representative of Christ on earth and he found it utterly incomprehensible that individuals or groups should wish to cut themselves off from this true Body of Christ.

Rothe has described Augustine's position accurately when he writes:

> The position in which he found rescue from the shipwreck of his inner life, and to which he convulsively clung with all the vehemence of his energetic spirit, was the profound conviction that the Catholic Church, and that alone, is an historical phenomenon in which the Christian spirit can actually express and realize itself, and in which he possessed a living, powerful organism for his activity—in a word, the consciousness of the specific and exclusive adaptation of the Catholic Church to the Christian life, as the mould in which that life was to be formed. In his view, the Catholic Church stood forth as the compassionate, loving guide of erring man, who, apart from her, must needs be abandoned, without hope of deliverance, to himself, fallen and isolated in his selfishness; as the

> never-failing fountain from which alone divine grace and vital force are derived; as the truly divine community upon earth, in which alone there is a true life of holy love; and as the paternal home in which each one, according to his individual need, finds sympathy and faithful care for his infirmities, and at the same time, an adequate theatre for his Christian activity.[12]

Certain of these ideas may have come to Augustine from the writings of Cyprian, but in the main the Church as he found it in his own day was clothed in his mind with the exalted imagery of the New Testament and regarded as the embodiment of the Divine life in the world.

How then did he reconcile his leading concept of the Church as the Body of Christ with the existence of sin and imperfection in the Church? Broadly speaking it was by focussing attention upon the whole rather than upon the parts, upon the ideal rather than upon the actual. This is not to say that he was indifferent to the part played by the individual in the actual situation, but the whole comes first in his thinking. It is for the individual to identify himself with the life and destiny of the whole. If he fails to do so, his is the loss: the divine purpose for the whole must be realized.

This general outlook leads him to lay great emphasis upon the extension of the life of the Church in history. He says:

> Our Lord Jesus Christ is as one whole perfect man, both head and body. We acknowledge the Head in that Man who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was buried, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of the Father, from thence we look for Him to come to judge the living and the dead. This is the Head of the Church (Eph. 5: 23). The body of this Head is the Church, not the church of this country only, but of the whole world; not that of this age only, but from Abel himself down to those who shall to the end be born and shall believe in Christ, the whole assembly of Saints belonging to one City, which City is Christ's body, of which Christ is the head.[13]

Augustine exults in the thought that all the faithful from the beginning to the end of time form the one Body of Christ: he exults in the thought that this Body is spread throughout the whole world: and finally he exults in the thought that the Head, and part even of the Body, are in heaven. Thus backwards and forwards in time, outwards in the world, upwards into heaven, the one Body is extended, the Body which forms the focus of universal unity, the Body which is the centre of Divine life. Some individuals at present in the body will be cut off and finally excluded from its fellowship. Some members must be regarded as dead even now by reason of sin although they may retain their place within the juridical body. But all this does not affect the grandeur of the origin and life and destiny of the whole.

There is then this double-sidedness in Augustine. He had found his own salvation within the visible, empirical Church and he never flagged in his zeal to promote the welfare of that Church and to draw others within its embrace. Yet, as Bishop Robertson has put it, there was always in reserve in his writings an element of "abstract idealism—the appeal to transcendental reality, to the aspect of things as viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*."[14] He was vividly aware of the pure Form which lay beyond "the mist of corporeal images", though he was equally aware that it was through the earthly that the lineaments of the heavenly could be discerned. To reconcile completely these two aspects of his thought is not possible. Perhaps the tension can best be expressed in the words of Dr. Grabowski's article to which I am indebted in this discussion.

"The visible Church," he says, "——the Augustinian *Catholica*—is neither in whole nor in part a different entity from the Mystical Body of Christ—the Augustinian *corpus Christi*. They are one and the same Church, the true Church of Christ. The members of the one are identical with the members of the other; the extension of the one coincides perfectly with the extension of the other. In *kind and quality of members* (italics mine) they differ: the member of the

Mystical Body of Christ possesses divine life in his soul, whereas the sinner is devoid of it; the former is a living member of Christ, the latter a dead member attached to Christ by virtue of the oneness of the Mystical Body of Christ and the external Church."[15]

Thus if Augustine's doctrine of the Body of Christ is to be called an organic theory it is so in a mystical and spiritual rather than a technical and formal sense. He is concerned with the *kind* and *quality* of the life of the individual member. He is concerned with the lack of the spirit of unity and love in the schismatics of his day. These were the weighty reasons which constituted them diseased or dead members within the *Catholica* or even severed them from the Body of Christ. He does not deal with questions of abiding structures or continuing interrelationships in any formal way. The Body of Christ animated by the Holy Spirit of unity and love is the vision, the ideal, the heavenly reality constantly before Augustine's mind. To dwell in unity with the Head is for him the *summum bonum* of individual and social living. True, no one could have Christ as Head unless he were joined to the Body, the Church, in its manifestation in time. But the most important thing of all is that those who are members of Christ "are with Him in Heaven through hope: He is with us on earth through love".

Chapter Six

ORGANIC IDEALS IN THE MIDDLE AGES

I

AT first sight it may appear that Aquinas' doctrine of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ is almost exactly similar to that previously expounded by Augustine. Let us, for example, consider a passage from the Exposition of the Creed which Père Congar regards as one of the most thorough and at the same time one of the most spontaneous of Aquinas' definitions of the nature and function of the Church.

> As in a man there is one soul and one body, yet a diversity of members, so the Catholic Church is one body and has different members. The soul which quickens this body is the Holy Ghost; and that is why, after faith in the Holy Ghost, we are required to have faith in the Catholic Church, as the creed itself makes clear. He who says Church says Congregation; and he who says Holy Church says Congregation of the Faithful, and he who says Christian Man says Member of that Church. . . . The Church is one, and this unity of the Church is grounded in three elements. It is grounded first in the oneness of faith; for all Christians belonging to the body of the Church believe in the same reality, as Scripture says: That ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you (1 Cor. 1: 10); One Lord, one faith, one baptism (Eph. 4: 5). Further, this unity comes from the oneness of hope, for all are rooted in the same hope of attaining to eternal life, as St. Paul says again: There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling (Eph. 4: 4). Thirdly, there is the oneness in love, for all are joined unto the love of God, and to one another in the love of one another, according to what St. John says: The glory which thou gavest me have I given them: that they may be one, even as we are one (John 17: 22). This love reveals itself, if it be true when the members have care and solicitude one for another and when they feel for one another.[1]

Here, as in Augustine, there is the emphasis on the one Body made up of many members and yet quickened by the one Holy Spirit: on the unity of the Body in faith and hope and love: on the universal extension of the Body in space and time. Here, as in Augustine, the primary interest is in the spiritual and the ethical rather than the metaphysical and the formal. Not yet is there any special concern for the sociological implications of the Body imagery but the emphasis lies rather upon the dynamic Spirit producing in every member of the one Body in a mysterious way the graces of faith, hope and charity which incline and lead it towards God Himself. The Church is the Body of Christ and because "Christ bears in Himself the whole economy of the new life, the whole of humanity reborn moving back to God," the Church "is really a kind of overflow of a fountain, or an unfolding and development of what was from the beginning Real in Christ".[2] Thus the intellectual and moral life of the Church is in reality the life of Christ Himself returning to God in filial devotion and love.

But although Thomas shares with Augustine this primary interest in the theological and ethical life of the Body of Christ and of the members in that Body, he is more concerned with the *pattern* of the external life of the Body than Augustine ever was. Under the influence of the revived Aristotelianism Thomas could hardly fail to enquire about the earthly form of the Church, its structure and organization, its seat of authority, its relations to the political and social order. So the highly important question arises whether he used the Body-imagery derived from the New Testament to establish what may be called an organic theory of the Church and indeed of society as a whole. Can it be shown that in the thought of the Middle Ages the whole of human society was regarded as one vast organism within which particular groups could be regarded as smaller organisms, all sharing in the life and general organic structure of the larger whole?

In his classical treatment of *Political Theories of the Middle Age* Professor Otto Gierke asserts that "under the influence

of Biblical allegories and the models set by Greek and Roman writers, the comparison of Mankind at large and every smaller group to an animate body was universally adopted and pressed. . . . According to the allegory that was found in the profound words of the Apostle—an allegory which dominated all spheres of thought—Mankind constituted a Mystical Body, whereof the Head was Christ. It was just from this principle that the theorists of the ecclesiastical party deduced the proposition that upon earth the Vicar of Christ represents the one and only Head of this Mystical Body, for, were the Emperor an additional Head, we should have before us a two-headed monster, an *animal biceps*."[3] The fact that the theorists of the imperial party, starting from the same picture of the Body, were able to deduce the necessity for a temporal Head of Christendom in direct opposition to the ecclesiastical theorists, shows how dangerous and how undeterminative it is to ground details of structure upon some general pictorial likeness. But having once accepted the idea of Mankind as a bodily organism there was scarcely any limit to the lengths to which certain doctrinaire writers were prepared to go in working out comparisons between the body and the social order. Nicholas of Cusa, for example, affirmed that there was the Spiritual and Temporal Hierarchy, each belonging to the one Organism, animated by the One Spirit. These two were then made to correspond stage by stage. On the one side was the Papacy as brain, the Patriarchate as ears and eyes, the Archepiscopate as arms, the Episcopate as fingers, and so on; on the other side stood the Emperor, the Prince-Electors, the nobles, and so on. In one writer quoted by Gierke, landfolk, handicraftsmen, and the like are the feet, the protection of the folk is the shoeing and the distress of the feet is the State's gout! The medical knowledge of the day was brought into the service of these comparisons and the result, as can well be imagined, was often fantastic and even absurd.

However, wiser minds sought to employ the similitude in a more sober way, using it to enforce the lesson that in

every true society the different members must support and strengthen one another, pursuing the same end and striving together for the welfare of the common whole. The picture of the head in relation to the body introduced a rather different set of ideas and brought the doctrine of organism into close relationship with the doctrine of the monarchy—though to view a society as an organism does not necessarily mean that it must be viewed in monarchical or oligarchical terms. It is significant that there is no suggestion in the Middle Ages of ascribing personality to the social organism. Society could be regarded as a bodily organism, functioning healthily and harmoniously in fulfilment of its true end, but not as a personality pursuing or expressing a will and purpose of its own. In this respect men's ideas were held firmly within the confines of Natural Law, the system of universal order to which both individuals and societies were held to conform.

2

What now are we to say of Aquinas' own doctrine of the Church in the light of the general conceptions current in his day? In the first place he has no doubt that to speak of the Church as a body is to speak metaphorically.[4] Answering the objection that it is not fitting for a head to have a head (Christ is the Head of the Church but "The Head of Christ is God") he points out that in metaphorical speech we must not expect a likeness in everything for then there would not be a likeness but identity. The Head-Body relation between Christ and His Church is metaphor or similitude: it is not a description of ontological identity. As a Roman Catholic theologian has aptly remarked in connection with the Body-metaphor: "For theologians to find more than an accommodative interpretation in an allegorical paralleling of the diverse parts of the human anatomical structure and the various functions and states of the Church would be to submit sacred truth to ridicule."[5]

Indeed, Thomas himself is not slow to affirm that there are *differences* as well as similarities between the natural body of man and the mystical body of Christ. This is the difference he says, "... that the members of the natural body are all together, and the members of the mystical are not all together: neither as regards their natural being, since the body of the Church is made up of the men who have been from the beginning of the world until its end: nor as regards their supernatural being, since, of those who are at any one time, some there are who are without grace, yet will afterwards obtain it, and some have it already."[6] And the differences could be multiplied. The Body-image is a metaphor: it does not imply similarities in every respect.

In the second place Aquinas leaves us in no doubt as to what he considers the chief point of comparison between a human body and a social organism. "A multiplicity organized into unity by the concourse of different activities and functions"[7] may be metaphorically called a body. It is the unifying of different activities towards one single end which is significant for him and this he sees in any true society but above all in the Christian society. And this is so in the Christian society by reason of the fact that it is the Body whose Head is Christ. In an ordinary body the head is the principle of order, of perfection, of power: in the Church Christ likewise is the centre of order, perfection and power. In an ordinary body the head influences the other members in two ways: (1) by a certain intrinsic influence inasmuch as motive and sensitive force are derived by the other members from the head; (2) by a certain exterior guidance inasmuch as by sight and the senses, which are rooted in the head, man is guided in his exterior acts. Now, says Aquinas, the first of these influences is mediated by Christ alone, but the second can be mediated through the head of a particular part of the body at a particular time and place. Christ is supreme Head but His agents can be denominated "heads" in whatever spheres of influence they may rule.

In the third place Aquinas touches on the hierarchical

principle though he does not expound it at length. "An ordered multitude," he says, "is part of another multitude as the domestic multitude is part of the civil multitude; and hence the father who is head of the domestic multitude has a head above him—i.e. the civil governor."[8] He points out that the diversity of states and functions in the Church is related to three things: (1) To the perfecting of the Church. As perfection, which in God is simple and uniform, becomes multiform in the universe, so the perfection of Christ flows forth to His members in many and various ways (Eph. 4: 11, 12). (2) To the need of differentiation of labour in the Church (Rom. 12: 4, 5). (3) To the nobility and beauty of the Church which consist in a certain "order." The diversity of states and duties actually promotes unity according to the saying of Eph. 4: 16.[9]

In the fourth place it is clear that Aquinas depends upon Aristotle for much of his social doctrine of man. Man is not simply a pilgrim pursuing his way through the wilderness of sin to the heavenly city. He cannot even be regarded as dwelling securely within the ecclesiastical order and waiting for the final redemption of the body. His activities within the secular order are of consummate importance, for (and here Aquinas directly follows Aristotle) man is by nature *animal politicum et sociale* and therefore his life in society must be lived according to principles established within the regimen of Natural Law. It is not a matter of indifference what kind of political order is set up. The State must be organized in such a way as to conform to the Divine Law and promote the common good. Thus an individual must not attempt to lead a solitary existence: his full life can only be realized in so far as he is "well proportioned to the common good".

But this view of the social nature of man led Thomas to adopt another of Aristotle's leading principles—that the whole is always prior to the parts and that therefore the good of the whole must take precedence of the good of the individual member. We have already spoken of the problems which this principle creates and it becomes an exceedingly

delicate task to know how far Thomas, in adopting this principle, guarded himself from the dangers of Totalitarianism to which it may easily lead. He insisted that the good of the community is more important than the good of the individual and quoted Aristotle to the effect that the whole differs from the parts not only in quantity but also in kind. Yet he is equally insistent that whatever his duties to the social whole may be, in the last resort "all that a man is, and can do, and has, must be directed to God."[10] This is probably his ultimate safeguard against any form of social tyranny but it does not affect his general principle that in the life both of State and Church "the common good" must ever hold the place of supreme importance.

In the final analysis we shall call Aquinas' general theory of the social order "organic" for two reasons: because of the essential framework of Natural Law in which it is set and because of the constant emphasis upon *Life*, especially in the sections dealing with the relation between Christ and His Church. In our judgment the twofold emphasis upon *Law* and Life must be characteristic of every theory of society which may justly be called "organic". A central source of life pouring vitality through every part of an ordered structure—that is the essence of organism.

Now Aquinas believed with all his heart that he was living in an ordered universe and that the secrets of its order would yield themselves to the patient enquiry of the human reason. These secrets were the "laws" of its structure and it was his aim to set them forth accurately and systematically. The result was a hierarchical system which included the whole universe and within which every individual part could find its proper place. The outline of his system has been well described by J. Bowle in his admirable history of *Western Political Thought.* "The world," he says, "is governed by God's Law, which rules at different levels in the cosmic hierarchy. Eternal Law transcends human experience altogether; next, Divine Law is embodied in the revelation of the Scripture and the dogma of the Church; Natural Law rules the material and animal creation, including all

men, while Human Law is assigned specifically for the regulation of society. It may take different forms in different places, but is the reflection on its own plane of the general pattern of Natural Law, whereby every creature fulfils its natural aim, the fullness of its own life within the Divine order."[11]

Here then is the ordered structure; but the question still remains, what is to animate the structure and give it life? The answer is, of course, that God is the beginning and end of all life. He is in very truth the soul of the universe, the source of all its natural life. Yet there is also a supernatural life, the fullness of which is to be found in Christ alone. He, as Head of the Mystical Body, communicates this life to all its members. In this thought of the Christ as Head of the Church, as source of all grace, as life of its life, as power and movement of all its members, not only Aquinas' intellect but also his heart found illumination and joy. The Church he sees as a Divine Organism which is distinct from all other social organisms. Christ indeed is the Head of all men, those being related to Him in potentiality who are not yet related to him in faith.[12] The whole universe is animated by God and moves towards God. But the Church, the Body of Christ, is in an altogether unique way animated by the Holy Spirit flowing from its Head and finds its power and perfection through Him in the life of God Himself.

3

The most powerful advocate of the organic view of the universe and of society at the time of the Reformation was Richard Hooker. He was an admirer of the scholastics and he preserved much of the general philosophical outlook of Thomas Aquinas. Yet there was also something characteristically English about his modification of Aquinas' method and doctrine. He is less subtle, less rigid, less scientific. He writes with clarity and suavity and with an eye always to the practical application. He does not indulge

in flights of speculation or fancy nor does he pursue a thought to its farthest limit. He seeks to maintain a sense of proportion and to show how his principles are related to the political as well as to the ecclesiastical situation in England. He is firm and yet tolerant and though at times he may seem to be inconsistent and inclined to compromise, his writings have retained their influence even to the present day.

Like Aquinas, Hooker made the principle of Law the foundation of his entire system. In fact if there is one thing that can stir Hooker's feelings and raise him to the heights of eloquence it is the thought of the Divine Law. "Of Law", he says, "there can be no less acknowledged, than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world; all things in heaven and earth do her homage, both angels and men and creatures of what condition soever . . . all with uniform consent admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy."[13]

But Law, as Hooker conceives it, is no simple and straightforward affair. He speaks of the Eternal Law of God, Natural Law, Human Laws and Ecclesiastical Laws and seeks to understand the proper relation between them all. Natural Law, which is directly based upon the Eternal Law of God, would have been sufficient to lead man in the paths of righteousness and peace had it not been that his sinful appetites caused him to transgress the Law of his Nature and so to disturb the course of the whole universe. Because of this fatal transgression other laws have had to be devised to keep him in check and by the imposition of punishments or rewards to incite him to seek after virtue.

Hooker proceeds to discuss the social organization of mankind in an important passage which we shall quote in full.

> Forasmuch as we are not by ourselves sufficient to furnish ourselves with competent store of things needful for such a life as our nature doth desire, a life fit for the dignity of man; therefore to supply those defects and imperfections which are in us living singly and solely by ourselves, we are naturally

induced to seek communion and fellowship with others. This was the cause of men's uniting themselves at the first in politic Societies, which societies could not be without Government, nor Government without a distinct kind of Law from that which hath been already declared. Two foundations there are which bear up public societies; the one, a natural inclination, whereby all men desire sociable life and fellowship; the other, an order expressly or secretly agreed upon touching the manner of their union in living together. The latter is that which we call the Law of a Commonweal, the very soul of a politic body, the parts whereof are by Law animated, held together, and set on work in such actions, as the common good requireth. Laws politic, ordained for external order and regiment amongst men, are never framed as they should be, unless presuming the will of man to be inwardly obstinate, rebellious and averse from all obedience unto the sacred Laws of his nature; in a word, unless presuming man to be in regard of his depraved mind little better than a wild beast, they do accordingly provide notwithstanding so to frame his outward actions that they be no hindrance unto the common good for which societies are instituted: unless they do this, they are not perfect.[14]

In this striking passage there is a curious mixture of optimism and pessimism. On the one hand we have the picture of individuals recognizing by the light of nature that they cannot exist without one another's fellowship and help: this draws them together into politic societies in which each may give according to his ability and each may receive according to his need. Yet on the other hand we have the picture of men who are little better than wild beasts, intent upon wrecking the common good and having therefore to be restrained and disciplined by laws which prescribe the correct patterns of common life. Men must live together in order to rise to the full dignity of their nature: men cannot live together unless they are governed by a Law expressing and safeguarding the common good.

What kind of Law then is most suited to the ordering of a stable society? Hooker has a certain leaning towards a paternalistic order for he recognizes that in the very nature of things the family stands under the authority of the father.

Yet he does not press this point but asserts that many kinds of different regiment may be devised according to different times and circumstances. The devising of the laws, however, must always be the work of the *wise men* of the community; men of common capacity and ordinary judgment are not competent to undertake the task. This principle is of great importance in Hooker's thought. Wise men are able to discern that which is good without partiality and for this reason others are the more ready to obey the legislation which they frame. Yet even a body of laws so devised must receive the consent of the society which it is designed to govern. This need not be a direct personal assent (it may be given through a representative) not even a conscious assent (it may be the thinking acceptance of a long tradition). But Hooker insists that in some general way the system of Laws must be approved by the whole society which they are intended to govern if tyranny is to be avoided.

Considering further the laws which govern societies, Hooker makes an important distinction which has a bearing on his doctrine of the Church. The laws, he says, are in part "mixedly" human, in part "merely" human. There are certain laws which to those who have eyes to see are plainly the laws of nature and therefore of divine ordinance; yet they may have been so contaminated by custom or by appetite that it is necessary to *prescribe* them as laws of the social whole and as binding upon all. On the other hand there are other laws which do not belong to the universal order of nature but which it may be desirable to ordain for particular times and circumstances. These are *merely* human and not binding upon all men at all times. But this principle also holds for the spiritual society, the body which we call the Church. It is exceedingly important to determine which of its laws are *merely* human and which *mixedly* human so that we may not make the *merely* human binding upon all.

Having concluded his survey of life on the natural level, Hooker turns with animation to consider the possibility of life on the supernatural level, life in fact in "participation and conjunction" with God. "Then are we happy therefore

when fully we enjoy God as an object wherein the powers of our souls are satisfied even with everlasting delight; so that although we be men, yet by being unto God united, we live as it were the life of God."[15] Such perfection is not fully attainable in this life. Indeed it is not attainable at all without the revelation of some way thereto which man himself is incapable of devising. But God has revealed His way of salvation—the way of redemption "by the precious death and merit of a mighty Saviour", which leads from misery unto bliss. He has revealed it in that Law which cannot be discovered anywhere in the world but in the Scriptures alone. Not that Scripture is concerned with the Way of Salvation only. It too can tell us of the natural Law of God, especially of those natural duties which could not by the light of Nature easily have been recognized. Yet supremely Scripture is concerned with the supernatural way of salvation.

Does this mean then that everything contained in Scripture must be regarded as immutable? Does it imply that only positive laws made by men are mutable? No, Hooker replies, in every kind of Law there are permanent and changeable elements, whether God or man was the maker of it, and he goes on to apply his principle within the life of the Church. As a social body the Church has much in common with other social bodies: yet as a supernatural society it has its own peculiar qualities. In the Church men are united not only with one another but also with God, Angels, and holy men. And as part of the bond of association in the Church, there is the law supernatural in which God has revealed the kind of worship which His people should render unto Him. This law is unchangeable. Nevertheless, in all societies—secular or ecclesiastical—there are bonds which are changeable and it is man's responsibility to recognize this distinction and not to seek any short cut to clarity by assuming that every detail of God's Law must *ipso facto* be regarded as immutable.

Bringing his arguments to a conclusion at the end of his first book, Hooker shows, in a passage of rare persuasiveness,

that life is far more complex than men are inclined to imagine and that most of our difficulties arise through our failure to see the picture of the whole. Laws are intertwined one with another and it is most important to see how they are related, how some are permanent and some changeable, how some are primary and some secondary, how some cover one area of life, some another. It is altogether easy and yet altogether disastrous to take some small segment of life, frame its laws and then imagine that they apply to the whole. Hooker says that he knows men whose betters could hardly be found if life had to be lived in a solitary wilderness. But once they get with others in society they seem quite incapable of recognizing the complexity of relationships that have to be considered and want rather to include everything within their own narrow and self-engineered system. They wish to follow "the law of private reason, where the law of public should take place."[16] Even such a simple article as food is subject to all kinds of laws, for it is related to all kinds of different departments of life. In this sense, then, we are justified in speaking of Hooker's view as "organic"—that he was always thinking of the whole and of the complexity of relationships within the whole and of the laws which govern the various interlocking areas of existence within the one total economy of God. Yet it was not organic in the sense that he saw a particular law of pattern working itself out into the life of the whole in an altogether predetermined way. In his view of the nature of the social organism there is a constant recognition of a certain dialectical interplay—between the permanent and the transient, between the pure and the mixed, between the primary and the secondary—and it is this, perhaps, which makes his thought of such enduring value for both the political and the religious life of mankind.

4

At the beginning of Book 3, Hooker takes up a more positive consideration of the Church and its polity in a section which is of great importance in his ecclesiological thought. He says:

> That Church of Christ, which we properly term his body mystical, can be but one; neither can that one be sensibly discerned by any man, inasmuch as the parts thereof are some in heaven already with Christ, and the rest that are on earth (albeit their natural persons be visible) we do not discern under this property whereby they are truly and infallibly of that body. Only our minds by intellectual conceit are able to apprehend that such a real body there is, a body collective, because it containeth an huge multitude; a body mystical, because the mystery of their conjunction is removed altogether from sense.[17]

Here is another dialectic which Hooker is to carry forward in his thinking—the dialectic between the body collective and the body mystical. God's promises of love and mercy and blessedness belong to the mystical Church which in its ultimate composition is known only to God. But God's laws for His Church concern the visible collective body whose marks are that all within it confess one Lord, acknowledge one Faith, are initiated into one Baptism. These marks belong to the very essence of Christianity and are to be required of every Christian man. "In whomsoever these things are, the Church doth acknowledge them for her children."[18]

It is true that there are corruptions within the visible Church so that some within it are like the bad fish which will finally be cast out. The Church must ever be willing to be reformed according to the will of God. But at any time and in any place those who acknowledge one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism constitute the visible Church of Christ. And "for preservation of Christianity there is not anything more needful, than that such as are of the visible Church

have mutual fellowship and society one with another. In which consideration, as the main body of the sea being one, yet within divers precincts hath divers names; so the Catholic Church is in like sort divided into a number of distinct societies, every one of which is termed a Church within itself. In this sense the Church is always a visible society of men; not an assembly, but a society."[19] If now the Christian society in any one area is rightly denominated "the Church," it means that the Church of England, for example, is a legitimate ecclesiastical whole within the one Catholic Church of Christ. And if it is such, then, Hooker avers, it has every right to establish its own polity so long as it be generally consistent with the whole Law of God.

This leads us to another of Hooker's distinctions—the distinction between that which is necessary and that which is accessory. The great matters of saving faith, the Gospel Sacraments—these are necessary; ceremonies and matters of government—these are accessory. Even this distinction cannot be made absolute as probably Hooker himself would have allowed. But that there are things necessary unto the salvation of all and things which are only concerned with the external regiment of the Church—this is a distinction which must always be borne in mind. The Scripture, says Hooker, leaves some things "to the Church's discretion". The difficulty, of course, lies in drawing the line of distinction between necessary and accessory in the right place, but Hooker seems confident that by paying due attention to the principles which he has already laid down, by viewing the parts always in relation to the whole, by a certain flexibility and reasonableness, and above all by keeping a due proportion between Scripture and the Law of Nature, it should be possible to establish that order which is for the good of the Church in every case.

The greater part of Hooker's Church-doctrine so far considered has been related to the collective Church visible rather than to the Church mystical. He has one chapter, however (Book 5, ch. 56), in which he speaks with a great depth of devotional intensity concerning the Mystical Body

of Christ. He begins by referring to the fact that God having created all things is in a real sense in all things. "All things are . . . partakers of God, they are his offspring, his influence is in them." In fact without that influence their annihilation would follow inevitably. But through the *saving* work of God a special offspring among men is brought forth. They are in God through Christ eternally according to His intent and purpose, though actually they are to be regarded as in God only from the time of their adoption into the Church, the Body of Christ. "For in Him we actually are by our actual incorporation into that society which hath Him for their Head and doth make together with Him one Body (He and they in that respect having one name, 1 Cor. 12: 12) for which cause, by virtue of this mystical conjunction, we are of Him, and in Him, even as though our very flesh and bones should be made continuate with His".[20] Thus His life is the well-spring and cause of ours. We are quickened by His Spirit and stage by stage are filled with the fullness of His grace till finally we shall share with Him a state of fellowship in glory.

In a section of remarkable comprehensiveness and beauty Hooker sums up his teaching on the Mystical Body of Christ:

> Thus we participate Christ, partly by imputation, as when those things which he did and suffered for us are imputed unto us for righteousness; partly by habitual and real infusion, as when grace is inwardly bestowed while we are on earth, and afterwards more fully both our souls and bodies made like unto his in glory. The first thing of his so infused into our hearts in this life is the Spirit of Christ, whereupon, because the rest of what kind soever do all both necessarily depend and infallibly also ensue, therefore the Apostles term it, sometimes the seed of God, sometime the pledge of our heavenly inheritance, sometime the handsel or earnest of that which is to come. Whence it is, that they which belong to the Mystical Body of our Saviour Christ, and be in number as the stars of heaven, divided successively, by reason of their mortal condition, into many generations, are notwithstanding coupled every one to Christ their Head, and all unto every particular person among themselves, inasmuch as the same Spirit which

> anointed the blessed soul of our Saviour Christ, doth so formalize, unite and actuate his whole race, as if both he and they were so many limbs compacted into one body, by being quickened all with one and the same soul.[21]

Such a passage indicates clearly what was the centre of Hooker's interest. Not formal declarations of faith, not precise definitions of order as constituting the Body of Christ, but rather the living Christ Himself, infusing grace into all His members through the Holy Spirit so that they with Him might be quickened and united into one Body. Forms and structures and laws of being were not unimportant to Hooker but the living Spirit was of more importance still and no outward form or structure was sufficient apart from the constant quickening influence of the one Holy Spirit of God.

Chapter Seven

THE COVENANT CONCEPTION IN CALVIN

I

IT is a remarkable fact that only one pre-Reformation writer makes any extended use of the Covenant-Idea in developing his theological teaching. This one writer was Irenaeus whose main concern was to show that the covenants referred to in the Old Testament Scriptures were not, as Marcion sought to affirm, the work of an inferior god, but rather the dispensation of the one God who was leading man towards perfection by a series of well-defined stages. In the main he focusses his attention upon the two covenants—the one associated with the giving of the Law, the other with the Gospel. "But one and the same householder (referring to Matt. 13: 52) produced both covenants, the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who spake with both Abraham and Moses, and who has restored us anew to liberty, and has multiplied that grace which is from Himself".[1] The two covenants, indeed, have many properties in common, but in the new covenant there is a greater freedom, a clearer vision, a more universal reference and a richer inheritance, though both are related to the same God and the same Christ.

A study of Irenaeus' Teaching shows him making use of the shadow-substance contrast of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the law-liberty contrast of the Pauline epistles. But except by implication there is no connection made between the Covenant-idea and the doctrine of the Church in his writings. The same is to a large extent true of Luther and the other early Reformation writers, but with the coming of Calvin the importance of the Covenant conception as a basis for a Reformed ecclesiology is no longer in doubt. No passage reveals more clearly the close association of Church and Covenant ideas in Calvin's thinking than the

following from his Commentary on Genesis. Speaking of the Covenant made with Abraham he says:

"In the beginning, antecedently to this covenant, the condition of the whole world was one and the same. But as soon as it was said, 'I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee', the Church was separated from other nations; just as in the creation of the world, the light emerged out of the darkness." (On Gen. 17: 7.) This Abraham story, indeed, provides certain principles which were to become fundamental for Calvin's whole system.

(1) The Church throughout recorded history is one. The Church of God whose history is recorded in the Old Testament is not to be dissociated from that whose history is recorded in the New.

(2) The Church is utterly dependent upon the Word of God. God speaks and the Church comes into being.

(3) The particular form of the Word by which the Church is created is the Word of Covenant-Promise: and this Covenant is confirmed and established by the sacramental sign which follows.

(4) The Covenant is not made with an individual only but with an individual *and his seed*. In other words, at the very beginning the Covenant created and determined the form of the Church. Individuals become inheritors of the blessings of the promises by entering the community whose whole existence depends upon the Covenant of God.

These principles receive fuller expression and exposition in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and it is to this book that we shall now turn.

The First Book of the *Institutes* is concerned with our knowledge of God as Creator and this has no immediate relevance to our enquiry. But in the Second Book, which deals with our knowldge of God as Redeemer, we find an extended treatment of the Covenant (in chapters 10 and 11), and this is of great importance for a true understanding of Calvin's thought. Having shown that man is in need of redemption in every part of his being, he proceeds to consider the nature of redemption as it is exhibited both in the

Old Testament and in the New. Always it is the same God who redeems. Always it is the same Christ who mediates the redemption. Always it is the same covenant which constitutes the instrument of redemption. Always it is the same Holy Spirit who enlightens men's minds and operates in their hearts so that they become united with Christ within the Covenant. "All from the beginning of the world whom God adopted as his peculiar people, were taken into covenant with him on the same conditions and under the same bond of doctrine as ourselves".[2] There may have been, there undoubtedly were, differences in degree but not in kind, differences in administration but not in substance, differences in the strength of the light but not in the reality of which the light was the expression. God and His Christ and His Spirit and His Church are the same throughout the entire process of Redemption.

One consequence immediately follows from this and it affects Calvin's whole doctrine of God's relations with men. It is that the law is not an evil thing, not even a temporary thing. The Jews of old were constantly involved in what might be called the dialectic of Law and Gospel and so are Christians to-day. The Law as well as the Promise is an essential part of the redeeming grace of God. We Christians have not yet fully attained the Promises and so as pilgrims we need ever to be checked and guided by God's Law. In other words, it was of God's abundant mercy that the Law was given—a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. The Moral Law will never be superseded while we remain *in via* and it can therefore be affirmed that Law and Gospel, Demand and Promise, form inseparable pairs in all God's redemptive dealings with mankind. Christ is truly exhibited in the Law and true obedience to the Law is the fulfilment of the will of God in Christ.

Yet it must never be forgotten that it is beyond our powers to keep the Law and that the crowning revelation of God's grace is Christ exhibited to us in the Gospel. This revelation, however, is not confined to the New Testament. Calvin insists that the faithful in Israel really entered into the

enjoyment of the Gospel and the Promises. The Jews, he says, "were parties to the Gospel covenant" (2.10.4). And not only did they hear the word of the Gospel, they also enjoyed a real participation in the Sacraments of the Gospel. (Calvin refers to St. Paul's words in 1 Cor. 10.) In regard to the form of the Covenant, Calvin is quite explicit. "The covenant which God always made with his servants was this: 'I will walk among you and will be your God and ye shall be my people'. These words, even as the prophets are wont to expound them, comprehend life and salvation, and the whole sum of blessedness" (2.10.8). Further, the promise was extended to future generations so that the hope of the faithful "was extended beyond present good and stretched forward into eternity."

Thus under the dispensation of the Old Testament as well as under that of the New, Christ has been exhibited to men through the Gospel. Under both dispensations God has graciously called men into relationship with Himself, has dwelt among them, has given them the hope of eternal life and full salvation. In a fine passage Calvin summarizes his teaching on the Gospel in the Old Testament. "The method and economy which God observed in administering the covenant of his mercy was, that the nearer the period of its full exhibition approached, the greater the additions which were daily made to the light of revelation. Accordingly at the beginning, when the first promise of salvation was given to Adam (Gen. 3: 15), only a few slender sparks beamed forth: additions being afterwards made, a greater degree of light began to be displayed, and continued gradually to increase and shine with greater brightness, until at length all the clouds being dispersed, Christ the Sun of Righteousness arose, and with full refulgence illumined all the earth (Mal. 4: 4)" (2.10.20).

2

Does this mean that there is no essential difference between the Covenant under the old dispensation and that under the

new? Not at all, Calvin answers. Once the *unity* of God's dealings with men has been fully established it is right to pay attention to the differences. These he enumerates as five.

(1) Under the old order, earthly objects played a major part in man's education. Visible and tangible things were used by God as foretastes and types of realities which under the new order can be directly apprehended.

(2) Under the old order there were images or shadows of Divine truth; under the new there is the reality or the substance.

(3) Under the former dispensation the Law, occupying as it did the place of primacy, held men under sentence of condemnation and death: under the latter the Gospel holds out the promise of righteousness and life.

(4) The former held men under bondage and fear: the latter gives confidence and freedom.

(5) Under the former the Gospel had been confined to one single nation, the Jews: under the latter it is preached to all peoples.

In this list of differences there tends to be some repetition and some inconsistency concerning the function of the Law. Whereas the Law is viewed as part of God's gracious self-revelation, it still is regarded as holding men under bondage and condemnation. This is the same inconsistency, or tension, which we find in Paul. He can never bring himself to condemn the Law outright or even regard it as of purely human origin. It has been given by God for the training and disciplining of man: to convict and arrest him: to drive him towards Christ. Yet it has a darker side: it holds over man the sentence of death: it keeps him in bondage and prevents him from enjoying any kind of spurious freedom apart from Christ. It is unnecessary to attempt to reconcile these two aspects of the law. Any Law must have its brighter and darker side. It holds a standard before men which is for their good. At the same time it pronounces judgment upon those who fail to attain the standard thus revealed. If the Law and Demand were all, then indeed man's lot would be a sorry one.

But for Paul and later for Calvin the Law was always associated in their minds with the Gospel. The Law gave the background for the Gospel: the Gospel never ceased to be related to the Law. As William Adams Brown has said, Calvin carries back the idea of grace into the Law and interprets the latter by the former. For it is one and the same God who is ever active towards men. He is a God of grace in that He ever desires man's highest good, even when man has rebelled against Him. In His wisdom He knows that without the revelation of the true standard of holiness man can never be arrested in his evil ways and it is the Law in its diverse forms which gives such a standard. Yet by itself this standard would inevitably drive man to despair. Again, however, God in His providence allows this very fact to drive man to lay hold of the Promise of salvation which is his in Christ. Thus the meaning of all history is that Christ is ever being exhibited to man in Demand and in Promise, in Law and in Gospel, in Holy Constraint and in Gracious Forgiveness. The dialectic is never finally resolved. Man never reaches a point where he ceases to need the Law. Certainly he never reaches a point where he ceases to need forgiveness. And all this is summed up in the concept of Covenant which ever retains the double-sidedness of the relation between God and man. In the Covenant God calls man, He makes a new demand upon his life: at the same time, He commits Himself to man, He makes a new offer of gracious assistance in the together-ness of fellowship. This covenant is not established and completed once for all. It is part of God's grace that He repeats the covenant under new conditions, making its nature ever more clear until in the coming of the Christ it is revealed in the fullness of its glory. But even after the coming of Christ the light may be dimmed or darkened by the perfidy of man and in some crisis of history God may again cause the true nature of the Covenant to shine forth clearly before men's eyes. This process, it is presumed, will continue so long as man remains a pilgrim and a stranger on the earth. Only in the heavenly places will he finally enjoy the full blessedness of the covenant inheritance.

3

Such appears to be Calvin's general philosophy of history and it is within this context that we must set his developed doctrine of the Church which we find in Book 4 of the *Institutes*. Here he does not often speak of the covenant explicitly though the occasional references show that it formed a very definite part of his theological system. For example, when he is dealing with the question of the status of the Reformed Churches over against the Church of Rome he turns to what he calls "the ancient Israelitish Church" to find a parallel to the situation of his own day. "So long as the Jews and Israelites persisted in the laws of the covenant," he says, "a true Church existed among them; in other words, they by the kindness of God obtained the benefits of a Church. True doctrine was contained in the law, and the ministry of it was committed to the prophets and priests. They were initiated in religion by the sign of circumcision, and by the other sacraments trained and confirmed in the faith" (4.2.7). And he goes on to discuss how far it is possible to lapse into idolatry and vice and yet still retain the title of the Church of God. His final conclusion is that both the idolatrous Jews and the degenerate Papists retained certain "special privileges of a Church", certain "vestiges of a Church", even when corruption was at its worst. For "when the Lord had once made his covenant with the Jews it was preserved not so much by them as by its own strength, supported by which it withstood their impiety. Such, then, is the certainty and constancy of the divine goodness, that the covenant of the Lord continued there, and his faith could not be obliterated by their perfidy; nor could circumcision be so profaned by their impure hands as not still to be a true sign and sacrament of his covenant. . . . So having deposited his covenant in Gaul, Italy, Germany, Spain and England, when these countries were oppressed by the tyranny of Antichrist, he in order that his covenant might remain inviolable, first preserved there baptism as an

evidence of the covenant; baptism, which, consecrated by his lips, retains its power in spite of human depravity; secondly, he provided by his providence that there should be other remains also to prevent the Church from utterly perishing" (4.2.11.).

In this whole section the intimate relationship between the Covenant and the Church may be clearly seen. The Covenant holds the place of primacy. Through the Covenant the Church comes into existence and, however great may be the defection and faithlessness of those within the Church, the Covenant continues to stand "in its own strength". Even the outward sign of circumcision remains as a true sacrament of the covenant. To re-discover the Covenant is to re-discover the true nature and meaning of the Church. Though the Church may seem to be in ruins the foundation cannot be destroyed and even ruined walls give some indication of the true shape and pattern of God's Building. It is questionable whether any idea gave so great confidence and strength to Calvin as he faced the might of Rome and the uncertainties within Reformed Christendom as did the idea of the unshakable covenant of God. "The covenant of the Lord remains", he affirms in another place, "and ever will remain, inviolable, that covenant which he solemnly ratified with Christ the true Solomon, and his members, in these words: 'If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments: . . . then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him' " (4.1.27). Thus the Church stands firmly upon the Covenant and within the Covenant there is not only the standard of God's righteousness, there is also the supreme blessing of the forgiveness of sins "without which we have no covenant nor union with God" (4.1.20).

This re-discovery of the Covenant gave the Reformed Churches their most powerful ecclesiological principle, but unfortunately the principle was soon exposed to the most serious dangers of misinterpretation and misapplication. In a word the danger was that the concept of Covenant would

be interpreted in such formal, legal, contractual terms that it would gradually lose its vitality and creativity. "The covenant of the Lord remains inviolable"—here is a magnificent principle. But once interpret "covenant" as a legal contract expressed in an unchangeable verbal form and it becomes deadly. This danger was not absent in Calvin though in the fresh new era of the Reformation it did not assume undue proportions in his writings. But as we shall see, a very different judgment must be given when we come to the Post-Reformation scholasticism of the seventeenth century. Meanwhile we shall notice how certain dangerous tendencies were already appearing in Calvin's own exposition of the doctrine of the Church.

4

Perhaps the most illuminating approach to his mature thought is to be found by considering the metaphors which he uses in speaking of the Church. In the first place the Church is a mother. "I will begin", he says, "with the Church, into whose bosom God is pleased to collect His children, not only that by her aid and ministry they may be nourished so long as they are babes and children, but may also be guided by her maternal care until they grow up to manhood, and finally attain to the perfection of faith. What God has thus joined, let not man put asunder; to those to whom he is a Father, the Church must also be a mother" (4.1.1). One might have expected Calvin to develop further the implications of the maternal metaphor and thereby to relate his doctrine to the organic conceptions which have played so large a part in Christian thought. But that is not his real interest. He does indeed speak of the necessity of the Church conceiving us in her womb and giving us birth, even of the Church nourishing us at her breasts, but there the quasi-organic language abruptly ends. He moves to another metaphor.

The real function of the Church is to be an educator, a

school-teacher, a disciplinarian, a guardian, a guide. Calvin can never forget what he feels to be the weakness, the immaturity, the sloth, the ignorance, the instability of the mass of humanity, even of those who are within the Church. We can never get beyond the stage of being school-children, needing to be disciplined and edified in the faith. "Our weakness does not permit us to leave school until we have spent our whole lives as scholars" (4.1.4). And as this sentence comes immediately after the reference to the Church as Mother, one is inclined to suspect that Calvin regarded even a mother as most usefully employed when seeking to impart some rudiments of knowledge to her lazy and refractory children.

However that may be, he finally abandons the mother-conception and concentrates his whole attention upon the Church as a school of doctrine, a place where men may learn true knowledge and be instructed in the way of the Lord. "We see that God, who might perfect his people in a moment, chooses not to bring them to manhood in any other way than by the education of the Church. We see the mode of doing it expressed; the preaching of celestial doctrine is committed to pastors. We see that all without exception are brought into the same order, that they may with meek and docile spirit allow themselves to be governed by teachers appointed for this purpose" (4.1.5.). To edify, to teach, to instruct, to interpret, to preach—these are the words which constantly appear as Calvin expounds his theory of the Church. God has entrusted His Church with the pure doctrine of the Gospel. He has appointed pastors and teachers in the Church whose task it is to instruct His children by the preaching of the word and by the administration of the sacraments (a wonderful means of fostering and confirming our faith). It is this which makes preaching of supreme importance. "The Church can only be edified by external preaching and . . . there is no other bond by which the saints can be kept together than by uniting with one consent to observe the order which God has appointed in his Church for learning and making progress" (4.1.5). Thus the Church as a school

in which the pupils meekly learn sound doctrine and make progress in the true knowledge of God—this is Calvin's ideal. And it necessarily involves an ideal for the ministry—well-learned men who will consecrate their mouths and tongues to the service of God so that His own voice may be heard in and through them. Not that they dare speak on their own. They are to be ministers of the word of God and must ever remain faithful to this rule—"that there is no word of God to which place should be given in the Church save that which is contained, first, in the Law and the Prophets; and, secondly, in the writings of the Apostles, and that the only due method of teaching in the Church is according to the prescription and rule of his word" (4.8.8. Cf. 4.8.2).

The Church, then, is the school in which men are instructed in the Word of God. We should not be moved "in the least to admit that there is a Church where the word of God appears not" (4.2.4). "The Lord recognizes nothing as his own save when his word is heard and religiously observed" (4.2.3). The word of God must be proclaimed in the Church, it must be received, obeyed, followed. Only in this way can the life of the individual and of the community grow strong and mature. Indeed the one altogether deadly enemy of the Church is false doctrine. Let falsehood insinuate itself and the death of the Church will undoubtedly ensue "just as the life of man is destroyed when his throat is pierced, or his vitals mortally wounded" (4.2.1). This is clearly evinced, says Calvin, by the words of Paul about the Church being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2: 20)—though without any explanation he proceeds to interpret this as meaning the *doctrine* of the apostles and prophets, thus supporting his own dictum that "nothing is more absurd than to disregard doctrine and place succession in persons" (4.2.3).

Surveying Calvin's doctrine as a whole we gain two main impressions. In the first place we believe that in the covenant-concept Calvin re-discovered a principle of inestimable value for the life of the Church. To see the Church as created and sustained by the personal call and promise of God, a call

and promise which were first addressed to the one in order that they might be transmitted to the many, was to enter afresh into the Biblical heritage and to view with the eyes of the Biblical witnesses the acts of God in history. Moreover, to interpret the Covenant as holding within it the dialectical principle of Law and Gospel was to give unity to God's providence without reducing it to a barren uniformity. In seizing the significant words of promise "I will walk among you and will be your God and ye shall be my people" and making them determinative for the constitution of the Church, Calvin laid hold of a permanently valid principle of supreme importance.

Again, in recognizing that Christ Himself is the fountain from which Adam, Noah, Abraham and the prophets drew all the heavenly doctrine which they possessed, Calvin penetrated to the very heart of the continuing life of the Church. But when he proceeded from this to codify his own doctrine and to regard the canonical scriptures as the sum of heavenly doctrine reduced to written form: when he went on to infer that the life of the Church could be continually re-invigorated and sustained solely by the impartation of this heavenly doctrine: when he further assumed that the primary if not the sole office of the ministry was to instruct the Church in the doctrine of the Apostles and Prophets and to strengthen the minds of believers in the faith of Christ: when in fact he conceived the Church and the ministry almost exclusively in terms of doctrine and intellectual apprehension and dutiful obedience to the word thus apprehended, he was narrowing the life of the Church within limits of far too formal and theoretical a kind. Man is not simply a creature who needs to go to school to learn true knowledge and the principles of right conduct. That these are supremely important aspects of his life none would deny. But what of all the warmth and the emotion and the longing for personal relationship and the aesthetic sensitivities which also form a part of human life? What of the extraordinary variety of functions that have to be performed within any society? What of the way in which many members must be integrated together to form

one organic whole? Of these aspects of the Divine society Calvin seems relatively unaware. His new emphasis upon the Covenant provided a magnificent corrective but by itself it was not sufficient to give a comprehensive doctrine of the Church. And when those who followed him narrowed the conception within still stricter limits, the grandeur of the Church-idea was in danger of being lost altogether. How this came about we shall now enquire.

Chapter Eight

FEDERALISM IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

I

IN the Reformed Confessions of the sixteenth century Covenant-Terminology is seldom used. In fact there is only one example of the Covenant-concept occupying a place of prominence and that is in the title of the Second Scots Confession of 1580. This is designated the "National Covenant," and for the first time we find a symbol of common agreement being described in this way. Probably the Old Testament record of covenants between the people and their king gave the necessary precedent for such a use.

But, although there are few explicit references to the covenant, the general Church-doctrine of Calvin was being warmly embraced. Nowhere, perhaps, does the true voice of the Reformation ring out with more joyful assurance than in the First Scots Confession of 1560. In this, the most notable of the early Reformed Confessions, there is no attempt to minimize the importance which the *Church* holds in the providential working of God in history. The Church is the community brought into being by God's Promise. In the face of man's defection, the Confession asserts, God made to Adam one most joyful promise, a promise which was made more and more clear and repeated from time to time. But those who have embraced the promise with joy, constitute the one Kirk of all the ages, a Kirk which God has preserved, instructed, multiplied, honoured, adorned, and from death called to life throughout the history of mankind. This Kirk is distinguished from the rest of society by the three notes which had already become famous—the true preaching of the Word of God, the right administration of the Sacraments, and ecclesiastical discipline uprightly dispensed. These are the marks of the visible Church in the world. But the source and spring of the whole life of the

Church is God's Promise by which He called the new community into being and by which He renews and restores it from age to age.

With the turn of the century a significant change appears. The Covenant-conception begins to occupy an increasingly important place in Reformed theology but it is interpreted in a way markedly different from that of earlier Reformed teaching. The new theory of the covenant comes to clear expression in the Irish Articles of 1615. First, reference is made to the Covenant of the Law ingrafted in man's heart at creation whereby God did promise unto him everlasting life upon condition that he performed entire and perfect obedience to His commandments: but seeing that men broke this covenant of the Law, it was necessary for a second covenant to be inaugurated, the covenant of which Christ is the Mediator and whose purpose is man's salvation. This is the framework which now receives ever fuller elaboration:—the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, each in its way a contract between God and man, each promising man life and salvation upon definite conditions. The outstanding difference between the covenants is to be found in the fact that whereas the first demanded unquestioning obedience, the second demanded unqualified faith. It is the same God who made each covenant and it may be assumed, therefore, that the purpose and general structure of each covenant is the same. In other words God is a God who enters into contract with men, who binds Himself to bestow blessings if only they will fulfil certain conditions. The supreme mark of His grace is that when men failed to keep the first covenant, He did not abandon them entirely. Instead He made a second compact, one moreover which might seem at first sight to demand less of man than the first. Obedience having proved impossible, obedience was replaced by faith. So the dialectic between Law and Gospel which Calvin sought to maintain is broken and instead we have two successive eras, in one of which God deals with man in one way, in the second of which He deals with him in another. In all this there is a serious danger of losing the

vision of the One Personal Living God who at all times and under all circumstances deals with man both in judgment and in grace.

The Federal Theology, as it has come to be called, seemed to provide just the system or schema that men were seeking in the period of consolidation after the revolutionary changes of the sixteenth century. A dialectical interpretation of reality does not lend itself to an easy formalization whereas a succession of contracts can be systematized within a legal framework. A covenant expressed in terms of direct personal relationships is a source of inestimable strength and comfort to the individual or to the struggling group whose only hope is in the mercy of God. But once a group is established and inspired with growing confidence, it tends to look for something more concrete, more definite, more constitutional and this is exactly what the developing Churches of the Reformation found in the doctrine of the Two Covenants. Robert Pollock in Scotland, William Ames in England, James Ussher in Ireland, Johannes Cocceius and later Hermann Witsius in Holland, all wrote treatises on the Covenant—and Puritan and Calvinist alike found in this one idea the necessary framework for a new theological and ecclesiastical system.

2

This system comes to classical expression in the great Confessional statement of the mid-seventeenth century, the *Westminster Confession.* A joint production of English Puritans and Scottish Calvinists, it was designed to produce "a covenanted uniformity in religion betwixt the Churches of Christ in the Kingdoms of Scotland, England and Ireland". After a preliminary chapter on Holy Scripture, the source of that knowledge of God which is necessary unto salvation, the Confession proceeds to set forth its doctrine of God's essential nature, His eternal decree, His creative and providential activity, and His judgment upon the transgression of man. Then comes Chapter 7 which may well be regarded

as the centre and turning point of the Confession. It gathers together what has already been said and opens the way to all that is to follow concerning the salvation which is in Christ. And it does this in definite and systematic fashion by its use of the covenant-concept.

Chapters 2–6 in the Confession have emphasized in no uncertain terms the "infinite qualitative difference" between God and man. God is infinite in being, in perfection, in holiness, in knowledge; His decrees are most wise, most free, most mysterious, most effectual, His power in creation and providence is absolute. Man on the other hand is a creature whose sole duty and responsibility it is to give to God "whatsoever worship, service or obedience" He is pleased to require. So, Chapter 7 begins, man could never have drawn near to God and found in Him his true blessedness save "by some voluntary condescension on God's part" and it is this voluntary condescension which God has been pleased to express by way of covenant. At once the appeal of the Covenant-idea becomes manifest. In Chapters 2–6 of the Confession man could only behold the vision of the unapproachable majesty and the omnipotent power of God. In His hands are all the issues of life and death. His mysterious decree is glorious and immutable. On the other hand man is not only a creature, he is a *fallen* creature who has become dead in sin and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. But now in Chapter 7 the first glimmer of light appears. God has come down, has revealed Himself, has begun to make His purpose known, has expressed His will "by way of covenant". In its first form, the covenant is defined as a covenant of works,—God, as it were, pledging Himself to give life to Adam and to his posterity on condition that they would maintain an attitude of perfect and personal obedience. But this, we must urge, is no particular *condescension* on God's part. Man by his very creation was bound to give perfect obedience to God, for the law of God was written in his heart and power to fulfil it was also there (4.2). If an explicit command was added this could only have been in the nature of a legal confirma-

tion of something already known; it was not a covenant in the Biblical sense of the term. The so-called Covenant of works is really a fictitious invention which has no Scriptural foundation. It may have been an attempt to justify the ways of God to men but actually it introduced confusion and, most serious of all, it tended to give a false view of the nature of the Covenant of Grace about which the Confession was soon to speak.

Once the idea is accepted that a Covenant is in its essence an affair of strict conditions—if you will do something, I will do something—the heart of the Gospel has been lost. The very glory of the Covenant with Abraham is that God, out of His own pure grace, comes to man just as he is and promises to be His God. Such a Covenant must naturally involve conditions in its developed form, but the essence of the Covenant is not the ultimate condition but the initial promise. The difference may seem small but it strikes at the heart of evangelical religion. To promise oneself without explicit conditions—that is Covenant: to promise a gift upon explicit conditions—that is Contract. And there can be little doubt that in Chapter 7, Section 2 of the Confession, Covenant is interpreted as Contract and this interpretation was bound to affect every subsequent reference to Covenant which the chapter contained.

The exposition of the Covenant of Grace contains nothing that could be called new. Through the Covenant God promises His Spirit to the elect to "make them willing and able to believe". Through faith they can receive the gift of life and salvation by Jesus Christ. It is true that in this description of the Covenant there is a greater emphasis upon the free grace of God. Apparently without condition He promises to give His Holy Spirit to the elect, but now there seems to be no possibility of man's personal response in faith. There is no real meeting and hence again no real covenant. The Covenant has even ceased to be a contract: it has rather become a *deus ex machina* automatically bringing life and salvation to the elect. This in fact is what tended to happen to the dialectic of Law and Gospel in all later

Reformed Theology: it became a dichotomy of Contract and Compulsion. The first Covenant offered man life on condition: the second gave man life by compulsion. To be sure it often happened that the second was also interpreted as a covenant on condition: if a man would believe he would receive the gift of life and in this way the second covenant took on the exact pattern of the first. Nothing could more clearly show how hard it is to systematize and formalize dialectical personal relationships!

The Confession takes up the question of the difference between the Covenant in the Old Testament and that in the New and explains it as being due to a difference of administration. Under the Old it was administered by promises, prophecies, types and ordinances, all fore-signifying Christ to come and sufficient to build up the elect in the faith of the promised Messiah. Under the New, Christ the substance was exhibited and the covenant came to be dispensed in the preaching of the Word and in the administration of the sacraments. "There are not therefore two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations" (7.6). Later in the Confession reference is again made to the covenant of works. It was not abrogated by the fall of man but continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness. As such it was actually delivered to man in the form of the Sinaitic code. No longer then does it serve as the final criterion for justification or condemnation—that criterion is to be found in the Covenant of Grace alone—but it is still of great use to believers as a rule of life. One cannot but feel that much of this reasoning is in the nature of an excuse for retaining the Ten Commandments in the Church as a standard of conduct. It does little to clarify the covenant-relation between God and man.

In regard to the Church, the Confession says surprisingly little, and there is nothing to indicate that its ecclesiology was consciously dependent upon the Covenant-conception. Indeed, as Professor J. T. McNeill has pointed out in his valuable study of the doctrine of the Church in Post-Reformation Reformed theology,[1] the new emphasis on the

two Covenants in the seventeenth century is reflected in the formal doctrine of the Church in only a quite limited fashion. The Confession proceeds to identify the invisible church with the elect and the visible church with all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children. Within the visible church the doctrine of the gospel is taught and the ordinances administered, sometimes more, sometimes less purely. But there will always be a visible church within which the saints can be gathered and perfected and outside this church there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. As the later chapter on Sacraments makes clear, the life of the Church is in some way dependent upon the covenant of grace but the nature of this connection is never made clear in the Confession. The meagre reference to the Church in this definitive statement of doctrine contrasts strangely with the comprehensive treatment of the subject in Calvin's *Institutes*. Thus our judgment must be that the doctrine of the *two* Covenants not only brought the whole idea of the Covenant into confusion, but also failed to retain it as the central principle of the Reformed doctrine of the *Church.*

3

The Longer and Shorter Catechisms which were also composed by the Westminster Divines add little to the Covenant-ideas which the Confession itself contains. But another document became attached to the Confession and the Catechisms and this is of particular interest in relation to the development of Covenant theology. It is known as *The Sum of Saving Knowledge* and claims to be a brief sum of Christian Doctrine contained in the Scriptures and holden forth in the Confession of Faith. It is conveniently set out under four main heads and is remarkable for its consistent use of covenant terminology. It leaves us in no doubt that the Covenant-schema is the essential framework of the Confession and it confirms what we have already suggested, that in the view

of the Divines there was no real distinction between Covenant and Contract. Under Head 1 it is affirmed that our first parents had the law of obedience written in their hearts and therefore they had either to follow their true nature by obeying it or repudiate their true nature and die. God, however, brought this law into open expression. He made it into "a covenant or contract" whereby upon condition of perfect personal obedience they would gain life: if they failed, death would be their due reward. Thus what was unconscious in the natural order of things was made conscious and personal by the direct covenant of God. Life and death ceased to be natural consequences: they took on the character of reward or punishment as the case might be.

In Adam the whole of mankind fell, and "lost all ability to please God". Yet a way of salvation has been revealed, the way of "the covenant of redemption made and agreed upon between God the Father and God the Son, in the council of the Trinity, before the world began". Much more clearly than in the Confession itself, it is shown that the Covenant of Grace was in its essence a Covenant between the Father and the Son. On condition that the Son would humble Himself even to the death of the cross, the Father covenanted to give Him the elect to be by Him ransomed and redeemed from sin and death. This condition the Son accepted and fulfilled. "But by virtue of the aforesaid bargain, made before the world began, he is in all ages, since the fall of Adam, still upon the work of applying actually the purchased benefits unto the elect; and that he doth by way of entertaining a covenant of free grace and reconciliation with them, through faith in himself; by which covenant he makes over to every believer a right and interest to himself and to all his blessings." Thus Christ Himself has accomplished the full conditions of the covenant for the sake of the elect, and by outward means and ordinances—preaching, the sacraments, Church-government, and prayer—the elect are received, confirmed, hedged in and helped forward unto the keeping of the covenant. The effective agent in all this is the Spirit who applies to the elect the saving

graces of the covenant and converts their persons so that they embrace Jesus Christ unfeignedly.

In this *Sum of Saving Knowledge* the seventeenth century conception of Covenant comes to formative expression. It is a contract established upon definite conditions. It can be made with a "public person" for the sake of his descendants. The contract with Adam failed but this failure had been foreseen by God and had been, as it were, forestalled by an earlier contract within the Divine council. There the contract made with Christ included His descendants but the conditions could be fulfilled by Him alone. Because He completely accomplished His side of the bargain, His seed, the elect, enjoy the benefits of His redeeming act. By the Spirit they are brought into actual enjoyment of the purchased benefits and thereby may be said to constitute a covenant community (though this phrase does not occur in *The Sum*). Actually the covenant terminology was already being freely used in reference to those who had pledged themselves to profess the true religion. 2 Kings 11 : 17 : "And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people, that they should be the Lord's people; between the king also and the people" had become a key-text and it was assumed that those who pledged themselves to an outward confession of faith could be regarded as belonging to the covenant-community even though, in the deepest sense, those only were the children of the covenant who had been effectually called into the Covenant of Grace made between the Father and the Son in the councils of the Eternal Trinity. In fact the "invisible" Church embraces those who were redeemed in Christ through the eternal covenant of the Father and the Son: the "visible" Church includes those who have pledged themselves to God and to one another by committing themselves to the Covenant of Grace in its outward form.

4

We have seen that from the beginning of the seventeenth century onward the Covenant-idea was gaining ground both amongst the Puritan leaders in England and amongst Calvinists elsewhere. In England the men who exercised the greatest influence were William Perkins, William Ames and John Preston whose works were appearing between 1609 and 1643, but, as subsequent history was to show, their influence was not confined to England. Beyond the seas in New England the doctrine of the covenant was from the beginning, writes Perry Miller, "a fundamental tenet, the basis for much thinking which was ecclesiastical, political and social as well as theological".[2] Indeed it is not too much to say with H. Shelton Smith that in this idea there was found "the germ of both political and religious democracy".[3] If one idea held together the bands of the early colonists and gave them strength and patience to persevere in building up a new civilization it was the idea that God had covenanted Himself to them and that they were in covenant with Him.

It is the whole purpose of the fourth section of Perry Miller's great book on The New England Mind to show that the Covenant-idea was the most potent factor in shaping the beliefs, the laws, and the social polities of the early settlers. He shows that Puritan theology was already finding it hard but necessary to steer carefully between the extremes of Arminianism and Antinomianism, each of which would have undermined the primary Puritan emphasis upon the majestic moral sovereignty of God. And it was through the theory of the Covenant, he believes, that a way was found of upholding the moral law and at the same time of giving man the assurance he needed of his own individual salvation. The substance of the federal theology as it came to be expounded in New England has been set forth so admirably by Miller that we shall quote his chief summary at length.

He begins by an examination of the word "covenant" itself as it was used by the theologians. By it, he says, they

understood "just such a contract as was used among men of business, a bond or a mortgage, an agreement between two parties, signed and sworn to, and binding upon both." It is entirely voluntary on both sides. There can be nothing of natural necessity about it but it must be the undertaking of utterly untramelled wills. Being thus undertaken, it constitutes the strongest tie by which man can ever be bound. "In a covenant he is infinitely more liable than in a promise, more obligated than by a law, more involved than in a testament, more answerable than for his oath." And he continues . . . "An absolute monarch can change his laws every day, forswear his oaths, make promises and break them by the score, re-write his testament as often as he pleases, but once he enters a covenant, though with but the humblest of his peasants, he is held as with hoops of steel. One who owes a debt of money may abscond, or of friendship may prove false, the day labourer may go elsewhere to-morrow; but when a man has made a covenant with his landlord, his friend, or his employer, he can never escape his commitment. Starting from absolute independence, the covenant leads to mutual subjection; in a universe where nothing seems certain, it alone produces certainty; in a society where men cannot be relied upon, it creates reliability. It is the only point at which might and weakness can meet on a footing of right.

"The federal Theology appropriated this concept and fastened it upon both God and Man. . . . Out of His mere pleasure, God in the Covenant gives men something new, something over and above their mere existence, something gratuitous, and then by affixing His seal to the grant translates the bestowed privilege into a right. He who might rule by fiat limits himself to a contract; He who could exact tribute to the last farthing consents to parliamentary taxation. The Covenant between God and man is an agreement of unequals upon just and equal terms, 'in which God promises true happiness to man, and man engages himself by promise for performance of what God requires.' It may be, as Preston said, a difficult point to grasp, 'yet you must

know it, for it is the ground of all you hope for, it is that that every man is built upon, you have no other ground but this, God hath made a Covenant with you, and you are in Covenant with Him.' "[4]

In their expositions of the Covenant theology the New England divines at first held closely to the schema which we have already outlined. They spoke of the law of God written in man's heart which had been made open and explicit in the Covenant of works, so that from the time of the making of the covenant disobedient man was involved not simply in a sin which could be called the denial of his true nature but also in deliberate guilt which was the result of his conscious rejection of the law of God. They spoke further of the Covenant of Grace, interpreting it as a contract like the first but as resting upon a condition of faith rather than of works. This second Covenant was a marvellous device of wisdom and of grace for it did not annul the first covenant or make it obsolete but provided a new context within which it could operate effectually. Those who carried the guilt of the broken law could receive forgiveness through the covenant of grace and could then apply themselves in a wholly new spirit to fulfil the covenant of works. But this did not complete the theological framework. In line with the teaching of *The Sum of Saving Knowledge* they laid great stress upon the archetype of the Covenant of Grace which they called The Covenant of Redemption. This Covenant had been made within the eternal counsels of God and it formed the pattern and the foundation of the Covenant of Grace. The Covenant of Redemption, they said, could be regarded as "the *procuring cause* of the Covenant of Grace":[5] in their view it had provided the way for God to reconcile sinful man to Himself without impugning His justice or infringing His law.

In the fully developed system of Covenant Theology, the very life of the Eternal Trinity is described (to use a famous distinction) not so much in terms of status as of contract. The emphasis does not lie upon the eternal relationship of mutual love within the Trinity but rather upon a definite mutual commitment within that life whereby the Son, acting

as federal representative for the elect, voluntarily undertook the mission of redemption on their behalf and whereby the Father, of His infinite grace, voluntarily guaranteed the gift of life and salvation to those so redeemed. Thus in the life of God as well as in the life of man the Covenant was given the place of supremacy. *Natural* life might be the necessary preliminary but it was only a preliminary to be superseded as soon as possible. There was presumably a mutual relationship between Father and Son in the very nature of things: but it was far more acceptable to the Puritan thinker to conceive the relationship in terms of freely-willed contract rather than of organically-given nature. Similarly there was undoubtedly a moral law written originally in man's nature, but it was altogether more desirable that this should be viewed as an open contract freely consented to rather than as an inner principle directing man's being towards either life or death. Already the New England aversion to, fear of, recoil from, nature is apparent. Everything must be open to the light of day: it must be apprehensible by the intellect and obeyable by the will: it must be expressible in terms of free human commitment and solemn engagement. For all this the covenant-idea, when interpreted in contractual terms, gave the very pattern of thought that was needed.

5

The relevance of all this to the doctrine of the Church is obvious. "The heart of the church theory (i.e. of the New England Puritans) was the church covenant. Regenerate men, the theory ran, acquire a liberty to observe God's commanding will, and when a company of them are met together and can satisfy each other that they are men of faith, they covenant together, and out of their compact create a church. Therefore each society is an autonomous unit, and no bishops and archbishops, no synods and assemblies, have any power, either from the Bible or from nature, to dictate to an independent and holy congregation."[6] That this theory was very different from that of the Church of England goes

without saying. But it is important to notice that it is also very different from that of the Church of Scotland and indeed from that of the classical Calvinist tradition wherever it was held. According to the Calvinist theory God's covenant was with a whole people and it was not for man to attempt to discriminate between those who were within and those who were without the covenant. Notorious sinners might be disciplined and excluded from participation in the privileges of the covenant. Yet the basic principle remained that the Church is one, sometimes more, sometimes less visible, but the same Church of God appearing in every place. It is true that there had already been occasions when those belonging to the true Reformed faith had pledged themselves to the covenant in the same way that the people under Jehoiada had engaged themselves afresh to the covenant of the Lord. But there was no thought of this being a special covenant for a particular group in a particular place. Yet this is what the New Englanders were determined to have. In every place which became newly settled the all-important thing was that those who knew themselves to be within the Covenant and had given some evidence of the genuineness of their conversion, should join together in a solemn and public compact to walk together in such a way as the Gospel of Christ required of the members of every Christian Church. This, they held, was the New Testament norm even though the actual Covenant-terminology was not employed therein in precisely this way. Indeed civil conditions were such in New Testament times that it had been impossible for the covenant-pattern to be developed in its fullness. But now on the virgin soil of New England it could be worked out ecclesiastically and politically. At the heart of each new township there was to be the church, consisting of all those who had committed themselves to the sacred covenant. They had the right to elect their own minister and to administer all godly discipline and to vote on all the chief issues affecting the welfare of the community. Outside the covenanted community there were the remainder of the inhabitants who were expected to support the church by attending services

and paying taxes, though in the actual conduct of its affairs they had no voice. Such a conception of the church and its relation to society is clearly different from the sectarian ideal which was already gaining ground in Europe and was destined soon to have a tremendous influence upon the developing social life of America. The sectarians desired to form self-contained societies apart from the heathen world: the New England Puritans wished to make their societies in every case the living centre of the unregenerate world. The sectarians were bound together into their particular societies by varying kinds of bonds—ecstatic, economic, visionary, functional: the New Englanders knew of only one all-important bond—the bond of the covenant, openly and publicly declared in contractual terms. The New England exalted the intellect, the sectarians the emotions. The New Englanders sought for the establishment of the Divine society in this world: the sectarians looked for it in the world to come.

Thus in between the Presbyterian doctrine of the one Divinely-created community of the Covenant and the sectarian theory of multifarious groups of Spirit-inspired devotees there arose the new theory of the autonomous local church whose members, though deriving their status from the one Covenant of Grace, had in addition freely and voluntarily bound themselves to one another and to God in a solemn covenant whose terms were openly known and declared. It is of vital importance that this threefold distinction should be recognized for it is often assumed that there are only two main strands within Protestant church-theory. This is partly due to the fact that in the Old World there was always so much overlapping and interdependence that it was always hard to work out a new theory into actual social expression. But this was not the case in the New World, and for this reason alone it is only in the light of experiments carried on in the developing social life of America that we are able to see clearly what are the main types of church theory within the boundaries of Reformed Christendom.

SECTION THREE

CONSTRUCTIVE

Chapter Nine

DEFECTIVE TYPES OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

IN the course of Christian history, six main types of community have emerged. These are

(1) The Monastic	(4) The Covenantal
(2) The Imperial	(5) The Contractual
(3) The Organic	(6) The Sectarian

This order does not correspond to any particular chronological sequence but it has its importance within any comprehensive pattern of ecclesiology. For our thesis is that (1) and (6) are fringe-types or tangential-types of Christian community corresponding to the more Catholic and the more Protestant emphasis respectively: (2) and (5) are static-types or organizational-types corresponding again to the Catholic and Protestant emphases: while (3) and (4) are dynamic, personal types which for our purpose are the most significant and to which we shall give the major part of our attention. Thus in our view the monastic and the sectarian, while performing some valuable function at some particular period of history, are farthest removed from the true pattern of Christian community. The imperial and the contractual, while nearer to the true pattern, have become prematurely settled and rigid within some historical formulation and so have prevented themselves from continuing in the living movement towards the community-goal. The organic and the covenantal, each bearing within itself a vital principle belonging to the true pattern, must both continue in dynamic inter-relationship if the Christian community is to grow "unto an holy temple in the Lord for an habitation of God through the Spirit". We shall first consider briefly (1) and (6), then (2) and (5) and finally shall gather up the results of our earlier enquiry and speak in greater detail of (3) and (4).

THE MONASTIC

The monastic type of community is in no way an invention of Christianity. Without doubt it has received certain distinctive expression within the Christian movement but has rarely existed in what might be called its pure and original form in Christian history. Indeed it might well be claimed that the nearer it drew to its original norm, the less it was justified in retaining the name "Christian". But in point of fact every monastic community in Christendom has preserved some kind of link with the Christian past and some sort of connection with the wider Christian community of the present and for this reason the monastic form in Christian history can never be regarded as something entirely separate from the other types of community which we have named. Thus it must be clearly understood that no one of the six can be completely isolated within a sealed compartment except theoretically for the purposes of analysis. There are always links with and influences derived from the other forms but at the same time it is, we believe, possible to see what are the central and what the peripheral types of Christian community-theory.

The earliest appearance of the monastic idea in its developed form is in India. As far back as we can go in the history of settled life in India, the withdrawn mystic or ascetic has constituted the ideal figure of the religious life. "By the Indian life has ever been regarded as essentially evil, and relief from the burden and sorrow of existence as the chief and final goal. In many forms of Indian doctrine, especially the Buddhist, but also in that of Hindu leaders and teachers before Gautama, this end was to be achieved only in and through a monastic dedication and life. It was impossible for the layman, distracted by the cares and encumbered by the possessions of the world, to secure salvation. Emancipated from these, he was free to devote himself to the highest aim, and to win his way to deliverance."[1] Essentially the monastic movement consists in a withdrawal

from civilized life towards a deeper fellowship with the order of nature. Possessions, community-responsibilities, even family-responsibilities are to be renounced in order that the self may be absorbed within the cosmic whole. It is true that there have been times when the attempt has been made to withdraw from *all* the things of sense, including even the natural phenomena of the created order. But generally speaking monasticism has been a return to nature, an attempt to be caught up into the structure and rhythm of the cosmic whole.

When the campaigns of Alexander the Great made it possible for the Mediterranean world to become aware of the religion and culture of the East, the monastic ideal began gradually to make its influence felt in the West, especially in Egypt where conditions were such as to favour retreat to the desert. There is little evidence that Christianity was affected by it till after the end of the second century A.D., for at about that time we find Tertullian replying to the objection that Christians were useless as members of society by contrasting the Christian with the eremitic ideal. "How can this be?" he urges, "since we mix with you as men. We are not Brahmins or Indian devotees who live naked in the woods or recluses in exile from other men. We avoid not your forum, your markets, your baths, your shops, your forges, your inns, your fairs. We are one people with you in all worldly commerce." So Tertullian was able to protest that the Christian movement had no desire to withdraw from civilization and to return to nature or to the void. Yet within a comparatively few years Christians were doing this very thing. Hermits withdrew into the complete solitude of the desert, though the pure individualism of eremitism is so far removed from the Christian way of life as set forth in the New Testament that it has always remained a kind of freak form of Christian existence. Of more permanent significance, however, were the monastic communities which were gradually formed. For more than a millennium their pattern of social life held the attention and admiration of Christendom. As Foakes-Jackson has said in reference to the period from

roughly A.D. 300 to A.D. 1500, "Everybody was a monk at heart. . . . To all men the monastic life represented the highest goal on this earth."[2] It is true that the ideal took many forms: sometimes the monks were recluses, sometimes teachers, sometimes labourers on the soil, sometimes preachers, sometimes most of these combined. But at all costs and at all times they sought to establish an ordered form of community life, regulated by the hours and days and seasons of the natural order, untrammelled by the temptations and responsibilities of civilized life, in league with the earth and its natural processes, a life in fact patterned as closely as possible upon the timeless rhythm of nature and upon the silent processes of organic growth, a life bounded by its own particular environment though not without its influence, it was believed, upon the wider life of the Church.

It is not difficult to discern what was the strength of the monastic ideal. It definitely renounced the world at a time when the Church at large was becoming increasingly occupied with worldly affairs. It stood for order and discipline at a time when social life generally was often anarchic and direction-less. It kept close to nature and retained its appreciation of the values of the created order at a time when the lure of city-life exerted a powerful attraction both upon the traditional city-dwellers of the Mediterranean and upon the barbarians from the north. It provided the possibility for specialization of function within the wider community at a time when opportunities for such specialization simply did not exist within society at large. But when all that is possible to say has been said in its favour it remains true that the monastic ideal can never be embraced by more than a tiny minority of Christians and in any particular form of expression it can only remain healthy for a severely limited time. It is essentially a movement of withdrawal: to return is contrary to its true nature. It stands for a rigid discipline: individual freedom is contrary to its true nature. Its goal is absorption into the rhythm and structure of the cosmic order: to be related to the dynamics of history is contrary to its

genius. It desires an ever greater efficiency of specialization: to embrace the wholeness of human experience is contrary to its inner ideal. Thus we reach the inescapable conclusion that the more monasticism is true to its origins and ideals the less is it true to the fullness of the Christian revelation. It has contrived to remain within the Christian fold by modifying its own inner impulses and directions and by adjusting its pattern to such an extent that it can justifiably regard itself as performing a specialized function within the life of the larger whole. But it is at best far off from the centre of the development of Christian community life and can never be regarded as providing the pattern for the life of the Church as a whole.

THE SECTARIAN

The sectarian, like the monastic, community is no new phenomenon which appears for the first time within a Christian context. Its origins may be traced far back to a pattern of experience which was not uncommon amongst the people of Semitic stock. These peoples were nomads who were often forced by the pressure of circumstances to seek new sources of food-supply, even maybe a new means of livelihood altogether. Such a migration, however, always cut across settled and well-established habits and demanded unusual faithfulness and fortitude on the part of those who were prepared to commit themselves to a revolutionary way of life. But sometimes it happened that a man arose who was determined to force the pace even at the cost of creating a schism in the existing community. He had eyes for nothing except the better conditions which he was sure could be found. He called others to join with him in his journey towards the better land. He refused to be deterred by the accumulated lethargy of the larger society. He declined to be daunted by the difficulties which always confront a pioneer in his quest for a desired goal. If the community as a whole held back he would go on ahead in company with those

who were prepared to follow. Let them leave behind the soft and easy way of life, let them keep the vision ever before their eyes, let them abandon the wider society to its doom, let them press forward with hope and expectancy towards the better land!

This kind of situation constantly resulted in the emergence of the sect-type of community, from the early Semitic nomads of the Fertile Crescent, through the Apocalyptic enthusiasts of later Judaism, on through the Montanists within the Christian Church, the hosts of Islam, the Anabaptists, and the multifarious sects of more recent Protestant history. In all the critical movements of history with which these groups have been associated, a common pattern may be discerned. An initial dissatisfaction with the present situation leading at times almost to despair, a sense that the resources of the existent order of things are exhausted, a conviction that there are better conditions elsewhere, a determination to break with the known and to launch out into the unknown—these are recurring elements in the common pattern. Moreover there is always a feeling of urgency, a passionate intensity, a conviction that action can no longer be delayed. It is a costly business to break for ever with the settled patterns of life, to face the rigours of mountain and desert in the effort to reach the land of man's dreams. It involves stern discipline and unqualified devotion, but the ultimate reward provides abundant compensation for every sacrifice that has been made in the course of the pilgrimage thither.

Let us analyse this pattern a little more closely. The sect-type of community breaks away entirely from the society to which its members have hitherto been attached and from the outset admits none to its fellowship save those who are prepared to commit themselves wholeheartedly to the new way of life. The eyes of all must be directed towards the future, towards the unseen goal, which will provide the reversal of present, visible experience. The very character of the goal which is envisioned will do much to determine the pattern of conduct adopted by those who are on their way

to find it. There will be no attempt to retain stable institutions which depend upon particular *natural* conditions: the only institutions will be those possible to pilgrims *in via.* If there seems to be no hope of reaching the better land within the limits of space and time then the community-goal must be envisioned as beyond space and time and the morale of the community must be sustained by the promise of glories far surpassing anything that earth can afford.

Again it is not hard to discern the strength of the sect-ideal. At a time when society at large has seemed to provide no hope for the betterment of the lot of its members, a group has moved ahead in the strength of the conviction that betterment was not impossible. At a time when standards have been lax and the majority have been content simply to maintain the *status quo*, the sect has committed itself to a pattern which condemns the existent laxity and acts as the cement for their newly-created community life. At a time when the world at large has been over-dependent upon the natural order of things, the sect has renounced nature and has committed itself to that which is beyond nature, at least in any sense which has hitherto been known. Still further at a time when the vision of spiritual realities has languished and the order of the seen and known has filled men's thoughts, the sect has stood out as a constant challenge and reminder that the things which are seen are temporal, the things which are not seen are eternal.

Yet when all this has been said, it still remains true that the sect-ideal is by its very nature a minority-ideal and commonly retains its freshness and vitality for a comparatively short period of time. It is essentially a movement which must hurry on ahead; any turning back towards the doomed city must inevitably result in the fate which overtook Lot's wife. It imposes upon its members a strict pattern of discipline, a pattern which is determined by the nature of the goal to be reached; any divergence from the pattern towards free individual expression must be sternly repressed and even ruthlessly denied. It seeks to cut adrift entirely from the settled order of nature and to launch out upon the

uncharted sea of historical destiny: to be related to the order of creation in any significant way is to go clean contrary to its own inner genius. It stands for the vision of the unexperienced and the unseen: to become entangled in the toils of common human experience is to deny the innermost motive of its continuing life. Thus we again reach the inescapable conclusion that the more sectarianism is true to its origins and ideals, the less can it be true to the Christian revelation. In the course of history, sectarian movements have restrained their impatience, have eased their pattern of discipline, have related themselves in a modified way to the present order of existence and so have retained their title "Christian". But it is a striking fact that time and again the Christian sect-community has either moved on ahead out of the Christian fold altogether or has gradually been re-absorbed within a more stable Christian community. The fact that the sect draws into its ranks all sorts and conditions of men, old and young, and does not confine itself, as the monastic community does, to those who have in some way renounced their full humanity, makes it, we believe, nearer the centre of Christian community living than the monastic-type ever can be. At the same time the sect is far enough from the centre for it never to be able to provide the norm of the life of the Church as a whole.

THE IMPERIAL

The "Imperial" view of community-life comes to its earliest full-scale expression in the great empires of the Middle East. The title "oriental despotism" has become a familiar one in our language and there lies behind it the memory of a form of social order established in ancient times in the great river-valleys of Mesopotamia, Egypt and even of India and China. The history of the Empires of Sumeria, Babylon, Nineveh, Persia, Egypt, India and China is a fascinating one, for each of these empires had its special characteristics and it is possible to see how the form of each was to a con-

siderable extent moulded by the particular physical environment in which it grew to maturity. Yet when every allowance has been made for individual variations, it remains true that a general pattern of social order came to be adopted by all. This pattern we have called the imperial though in its more developed form it might be called the mechanical. Its main features we shall briefly describe.

Its essential character can best be understood by referring to the great symbolic structures which played so prominent a part in the life of these societies. The zikkurat in Mesopotamia, the temple in India, the great imperial altar in China but above all the pyramid in Egypt—all are significant in this respect. Each in its own way is constructed with a very broad base and then rises by successively narrowing rings or squares to its summit. In this fashion it is made to resemble a mountain, the most solid and stable natural phenomenon known to the river-valley dwellers of old. But it was an easy inference, if partially an unconscious one, that the form which could give stability in nature could also give stability in society. So the pyramidal or hierarchical or even we might call it the scientific (in relation to the physical world) pattern came to be accepted as the ideal for the community at large.

This early connection between nature and society must be emphasized for it influenced much of social development in the Near East and later in the Mediterranean. Human existence was regarded as an integral part of the life of the cosmos and what was significant for the stability and continuity of the natural order was significant also for the social. Nowhere can the implications of this deep-seated conviction for the life of the community be seen more clearly than in the story of the ancient Egyptian Kingdoms. Conditions in the Nile Valley were such that for centuries nothing seemed able to threaten the essential stability of the known cosmos. The Tigris was a turbulent, dangerous river whose vagaries could never be reduced to a regular pattern: Mesopotamia was always open to the assaults of greedy invaders who could sweep down from the mountains and disturb its peace. The result was that the spirit of anxiety and foreboding hung

over the life of the Tigris-Euphrates civilization from start to finish and coloured all its religious forms of expression. But Egypt was different. There was the same rhythm of the seasons but the Nile could be utterly depended upon. The geographic position was such that no fear of invasion seriously troubled the inhabitants. So, as Professor H. A. Frankfort has said, "In Egypt . . . the festivals provided occasion to reaffirm that all was well. For Egypt viewed the universe as essentially static. It held that a cosmic order was once and for all established at the time of creation. This order might occasionally be disturbed, for the forces of chaos were merely subdued and not annihilated. Nevertheless, revolts against the established order were bound to remain mere ripples upon the surface. The feeling of insecurity, of human frailty, which pervades every manifestation of Mesopotamian culture, is absent in Egypt."[3]

In another of his books Professor Frankfort reverts to the same theme. He points out that all the doctrines of Egypt were rooted in a single basic conviction "to wit, that the universe is essentially static. The Egyptian held that he lived in a changeless world. . . . Not as an articulate doctrine but nevertheless decisively, it determined the forms he gave to his state and his society, to his literature and his art".[4] So far as society was concerned this meant that there had to be a highest point nearest to heaven and that by descending degrees the social order could widen out until it reached its base of menial labour. The highest point, of course, was the Pharaoh who was the descendant of the Creator and in him everything cohered. There was always the sense of an intimate relation between the Pharaoh and the Sun and when we remember that the conical pattern made by the sun's rays must have been observed from earliest times we see another reason for the establishment of the conical or pyramidal pattern in society at large. Here then was a social structure of extraordinary stability. The Sun-god shed his beams upon the earth: the Pharaoh acted as the focusing agent to transmit the life-giving rays to the natural and social order within the kingdom of Egypt: beneath him the suc-

cessive hierarchies acted as connectors between the above and the below until the last stratum of the social order was reached which in its turn was closest to the earth, itself an integral part of the whole. Thus a vast social mechanism was constructed. It derived its necessary energy from above through the mediation of the Pharaoh. It related itself to its natural environment in such a way that the whole could operate as one interlocking mechanism smoothly and efficiently. The time-factor scarcely entered into men's thinking. The cycle of the seasons might come and go, day and night might succeed one another in regular order, birth and death might come to all alike, but there was no need to be concerned with the passage of time. Everything was stable and certain, there was no definite purpose to be achieved within a limited period, and the social order therefore could exist independently of time; its only requirement for a life of perpetual motion was the energy derived from the Pharaoh,—the god, as one inscription puts it, "by whose dealings one lives." Probably at no period in the history of mankind has the ideal of society as a colossal, smooth-functioning, mechanical whole come nearer to realization than under the Pharaohs of imperial Egypt.

Whenever in human history relatively settled conditions have prevailed within a particular area, whenever the society has been either virtually isolated from other peoples or at least sufficiently powerful to face external dangers with confidence, whenever in its relations to the natural order the society has had no qualms about its ability to control the processes of production and to derive from nature all that it could ever need, then the imperial or mechanical pattern has seemed the obvious one for society to adopt. True, the ideal has been actualized in very varying degrees at different times and places. In Mesopotamia, as we have seen, there was less confidence and so less fixity of structure than in Egypt. In India there has never been a stable empire which has included the whole country though even up until recent times within the domains of the native princes the essential structure of feudalism has been retained.

For example in Udaipur, from the Maharana at the top to the ordinary inhabitants of the many thousand villages at the bottom the social order descended by expanding rings representing different ranks so that the whole state was able to operate as one quietly functioning unit. Minor variations could be noted but in the settled social order of the Mayas or in the modern empire of Japan or in the medieval Chinese dynasties one basic pattern has appeared—the pyramidal or mechanical—a pattern extraordinarily effective for a period but by very reason of its fixity and inadaptability destined always to become obsolete and so to share the fate of all the mechanical contrivances that man has ever made.

In the West the history of this idea is associated first with the conquests of Alexander and then with the might of imperial Rome. Alexander by his titanic energy united the greater part of the known world of his time within a single society, a society which took little account of the differences between races and traditions and civic groups and concentrated rather upon the fundamental equality of all its members within a common humanity.[5] While the institution of slavery lasted, it meant that there was a higher and a lower stratum within this one humanity but the conviction was gaining ground that there is a given law of nature which grants to all men an equal status. The result was that society gradually took on the shape of a vast cosmopolis under the control of one supreme ruler in which all the members share in the duties and privileges while differing in the functions which each is called upon to fulfil. Though in many respects akin to the Egyptian pattern, the Roman pattern contained certain quite distinctive features of its own. In the first place the connection with the natural order of things was altogether less evident than was the case in Egypt. It was the energy of one man which had welded together peoples belonging to many different geographical areas and physiographical conditions: there was thus no sense of the obvious connection between the natural and social orders such as existed in Egypt (though the emergence of the theory of a

universal law of nature did something to take its place). Again far more depended upon the personal qualities of the Emperor in Graeco-Roman society than had ever been the case in Egypt. The weakness of an emperor would soon be felt in the farthest confines of his domains and although his authority might be temporarily enhanced by theories of his divine status or by appeal to some abstract divinity of which he was the accredited representative, such fictions could never make up for fundamental defects in the character of the ruler himself. Further the maintenance of the pyramidal structure by means of a series of graded functions, though successful up to a point, was again too dependent upon the personal qualities of the holders of offices to be an arrangement of permanent stability. In Egypt particular functions could be performed almost automatically: in the more complex and widely-flung empire of Rome the personal factor was always of greater importance.

Thus nature was replaced by a law of nature, the immediate divine presence was replaced by a religious myth, the interlocking social structure was replaced by a vast interrelated system of imperial offices. The whole was too weak to last. The Roman Empire fell, only to be succeeded by an ecclesiastical empire which sought to achieve by aid of the true religion what the secular empire had failed to achieve by the false. It sought to establish a divine imperium on earth with Christ's vicar at its head, successive ranks of hierarchies beneath him, the whole based upon the broad foundation of the laity who were to form the necessary link with the order of nature itself. This vision of the Christian society as a single imperial structure over-arching the earth has never faded from the consciousness of the Roman Catholic Church since the time of the Papacy's rise to supreme power in the Middle Ages. To be sure there have been thinkers within the Roman communion whose sympathies have been far more inclined towards an organic view of society, seeing the Church not as a well-established dominion with a charter defining the nature of its structure and activity, but rather "as a living entity containing the prin-

ciple and the law of its own development, as it were, in germ" (Father M-J. Congar). But although liberal thinkers have been attracted by this more philosophic organic theory, the powers that be and the framers of the policies of the Church have found the imperial or mechanistic view more expressive of their own convictions and ideals. It is simpler, more clear-cut, more in conformity with the pattern of the natural order as it has been imagined at least until recent times. It is strong, stable, and apparently permanent. Broad-based upon the multitude of the laity, it rises by successive narrowing stages to the apex who speaks and rules in the name of Christ Himself. The whole social structure is sustained by Divine grace which is mediated through the successive stages of the hierarchy and thereby animates the whole. The operation of the vast Divine social mechanism is precisely parallel to the operation of the natural order, which is also conceived as a machine working according to given laws. Such is the theory which for more than half a millennium has been gaining an increasing hold upon the thoughts and imaginations of the rulers of the Roman Catholic Church.

That there are elements of strength in such a theory none would deny. It provides the most impressive demonstration of the institutional unity of the Church that can be conceived. It makes for certainty in thought and efficiency in action. It is universal in its outreach for it draws into its service all the aspirations of men expressed within the natural order and gives back to all without distinction the life of grace from the Divine order. Yet its apparent strength is in reality its weakness. Its institutional unity does not allow for personal freedom. Its relation to a particular interpretation of the laws of nature does not allow for new developments within the field of scientific investigation. Its craving for certainty and efficiency is satisfied at the expense of real creativity in thought and action. Its assimilation of the religious aspirations and practices of all and sundry is at the expense of the maintenance of a clear moral criterion. The imperial authority and the universal efficiency of the

Roman Church are impressive to an age which seeks for social security and rapid results, but freedom and creativity are values too precious for the continuing life of any society to be sacrificed upon the altar of a smooth-functioning mechanism. Any form of totalitarian imperialism is an anachronism in the world of to-day.

THE CONTRACTUAL

The earliest appearance of what may be called the contractual view of society is to be found amongst the Hebrews of the Exile. Prior to the great deportations of the eighth–sixth centuries B.C. the Israelites had been bound together by common sanctuaries, common ritual-forms, a common homeland, common traditions, a common language, common customs—in fact by all those ties which constitute nationhood. But with the break-up, first of Israel, then of Judah, with the destruction of the Temple and of the greater parts of the city of Jerusalem, with the tearing asunder of the social fabric and the forced cessation of the religious ritual, a situation was created in which the continued existence of a distinctively Hebrew society seemed almost impossible. Set as they were in the midst of a foreign civilization the Hebrews might well have been swallowed up by their captors. It would have been perfectly understandable if in Babylon, as at Elephantine in Egypt, the Hebrews had gradually adopted a kind of synthetic religion which would have enabled them to fit more easily into the social structure of the dominant civilization. But although in the case of those deported from Samaria in the eighth century something of this kind seems to have happened, a large number of the Jews who went into exile at the time of the Fall of Jerusalem remained faithful to their peculiar religious faith and retained their social identity in a new form. For the time being the monarchy, with its civil and religious forms, had to be left behind. But its place was taken by a collection of writings which provided a norm for the religious and social life of

the people. From the time of the Exile onwards we see a new species of community emerging—a community held together by a definite written constitution.

It is generally assumed that it was during the period of the exile that the institution of the synagogue first took shape. This again was a new phenomenon. Men gathered around the law of the Lord and heard it read and expounded by a qualified teacher. They met on the basis of a common national background but there is no reason to think that earlier social distinctions retained any special importance when all alike were sharing a common fate in the land of exile. Memories, traditions, customs could not be easily expunged but the break with the past was so radical that it is doubtful whether a separate social existence could have been maintained had it not been for the written code which provided both the essential link with the past and the necessary guide for the future. As a matter of fact, the code had never been intended to perpetuate all of the patterns and practices which existed under the monarchy. It was by its very nature a reforming code and this made it the more suitable as a norm of social theory and behaviour at a time when much of the former pattern of national life could not have been recovered even if men had been minded to restore it in its fullness. Moreover it was pre-eminently a religious code, a code which derived the principles of every form of conduct—family, civil and cultural—from the direct command of God Himself.

So there developed in Babylon a new type of society—a scattered collection of groups, each maintaining its own corporate life (for it is doubtful how far there were opportunities of intercourse between separated groups) each sustained and moulded by its allegiance to the one law of God. The sense of direct contact with the Divine manifestations in the *natural* order was less than hitherto: the sense of direct responsibility to a Divine overlord in the social order was far greater than hitherto. To have every local community bound to the Divine ruler by the prescriptions of the law and to have all its members bound to one another by their

common allegiance—this was the community-ideal which from now onwards dominated the life of Judaism. It was to pass through many variations and vicissitudes. Those who returned from exile to the Holy Land sought to realize the ideal on a *national* rather than an associational scale. Under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah a new régime was established which gave a place to the more priestly and ritual elements of social life and even sought to restore certain of the political institutions of the past. But all these were made secondary to the Law of the Lord. They were not to be regarded as expressions of man's relation to the natural order but rather as signs of his complete obedience to his sovereign Lord.

Thus the characteristic pattern of Jewish social life was to be found henceforward in the synagogue. Here the only distinctions which were retained were those of age and sex and to some extent of education. All who were prepared to bend their necks to the yoke of the Lord and to enter into covenant to keep His Law stood on an equal footing. Each synagogue was a self-contained community though ties of tradition and sentiment continued to bind its members to Jerusalem and the Temple. The picture of many local groups in contract with God to keep His law and in contract with one another to maintain the brotherhood—this was the distinctive contribution of later Judaism to the social development of mankind.

To a considerable extent this social pattern of Judaism was accepted within Islam. Many elements in the new movement were taken over from the social life of the Bedouin tribes and in its early crusading days Islam had not yet become the religion of a Book. But as it took on a more settled character and established itself in different areas, its form became very similar to that of Judaism within the Diaspora. An absolute submission to God, a firm loyalty within the local group, an almost blind acceptance of the Koran as the sufficient rule for every detail of belief and conduct, few distinctions within the social structure save the obvious ones connected with sex, age and learning (that is

in knowledge of the Koran), little attention to ritual forms but an overwhelming emphasis upon the commands of the Book and upon the response of the faithful in prayer—this was the essential social pattern which became accepted within Islam, whatever allowances were made for variations of a national and local character. Allah was remote but his law was near at hand. In the desert, objects and structures belonging to the national order were of little account and their influence upon social life consequently minimal. Thus a social order structured entirely upon the revealed law became the permanent feature of Muhammadan community life.

Although the Reformation in Europe opened the way to the discovery of new forms of community life, traditions and environmental influences were so strong in all the countries which the Reformation touched that any new forms were at first deeply influenced by the continuing power of the old. Even when a small group broke away and sought to establish its own peculiar form of community, it could not for long remain isolated and soon it was showing signs of some conformation to earlier patterns. But the whole situation was changed when those in revolt against the accepted patterns in Church and State voluntarily went into exile to a new land. They could not, it is true, cut themselves off entirely from the past, but at least they were out of touch with *natural* influences and in a large measure with *social* influences too. What they brought with them was a Book and minds to understand and interpret the book. The Book, indeed, tied them to the past and their mental structures were inherited from the past. But they were scarcely conscious of this fact for they believed that the Book was timeless in its validity and relevance and that their forms of thinking belonged to man as man and did not depend upon the influence of any particular period. So they set their minds to interpret the revelation of God and to construct from it an order agreeable in every respect to His revealed Will.

We have already made some reference to the New England Theology and have seen that its key-idea of covenant was

interpreted almost exclusively in contractual terms. Each separate congregation (like the synagogue of old) gathered around the law of the Lord which contained both a covenant of works and a covenant of grace. The members were under contract to hold fast to their belief in the covenant grace of God and to fulfil His will as expressed in the covenant of works. Ritual observances were of little account. Hierarchical grades were no longer recognized. Continuity with past traditions was discounted. Formal unity with the wider Church of Christ was seldom considered. The focus of interest was the local congregation and within it all stood upon an equal footing. For all had been called by God into the covenant and all had voluntarily committed themselves to Him in solemn response. The only distinction that really mattered was that which divided them from those who were not within the covenant. Even they were allowed a certain participation within the community on the assumption that at any time they might hear the call and accept the covenant relationship. But for a long time the New England Townships were ruled by the saints who were themselves under the absolute rule of their covenant liege-Lord.

While the deep religious conviction and impulse lasted, the social pattern continued relatively unchanged. But new ideas were abroad which were destined soon to affect the New World profoundly. Newton's formulation of physical laws followed by John Locke's formulation of psychological and social theories provided a new secular foundation for what had hitherto rested entirely upon a religious basis. Or to put it in another way, a social order which had hitherto found its only justification in a Divinely revealed contract could now strengthen its claims by appealing to the very constitution of the universe as depicted by Newton and Locke. What, after all, is the created universe save an agglomeration of material atoms held together by certain well-defined laws? And what after all is man save an independent mental substance who is able to discover the laws of the universe and turn them to his own advantage? All experience is the result of the interaction of mind and matter and there is nothing

in the material order as such which need affect the free decisions of the mind. Thus man is free to handle nature as he sees best, to investigate it, to manipulate it, to mould it, to conquer it. At the same time he is free to construct his own laws of society as he sees best without fear of violating connections or relations which might be grounded in the very structure of the universe itself. Men might band themselves together within a social contract for mutual edification and support—in fact, it was hard to avoid the conclusion that it was utterly *natural* for them to do so—but as for the particular form of the union, *that* could be decided by the exigencies of the particular time and place.

The church-theory which follows from such a line of reasoning has been formulated once for all in the famous words of John Locke. "A Church I take to be a voluntary society of men joining themselves of their own accord in order to the public worshipping of God in such manner as they judge acceptable to Him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls. . . . I say it is a free and voluntary society. Nobody is born a member of any church; . . . since the joining together of several members into this church-society . . . is absolutely free and spontaneous, it necessarily follows that the right of making its laws can belong to none but the society itself; or at least (which is the same thing) to those whom the society by common consent has authorized thereunto".[6]

Such a conception stands wide open to criticism to-day yet it has won the consent of countless minds and has been deemed by them to be in full accord with the Biblical revelation. The earlier religious version of the contractual theory founded itself upon the written law of God consented to by men: the later secular version (for Locke's theory while not completely secularized was well on its way thereto) founded itself upon a written constitution, formulated by men themselves and voluntarily accepted by any who found it an agreeable pattern of social existence. The strength of the contractual theory has been demonstrated time and again within the social experience of the Jews, the Moslems,

and congregational Protestant groups. It produces a marvellously strong cohesion within the local community. It gives a sense of dignity and equality of status to every member of the group and challenges him to act responsibly in the light of the contract into which he has voluntarily entered. It finds in the written code an extraordinarily powerful symbol of unity and authority: the symbol can be easily reproduced so that each member may possess his own replica of the original. To know that he can himself examine the essential contract and appeal to it and guide his actions by it gives confidence to the individual and strengthens him in his relations with others who are directed by the same symbol. Again the theory allows a certain relation to the natural order—it does not, like the sectarian, seek to break free from nature altogether. But the relation is one of control, of domination, of subjugation. The man who has submitted himself entirely to the law of God finds his compensation by dominating nature and making it serve his own purposes and ends.

While possessing an obvious strength, this theory also has its grave weaknesses. The local community can never for long remain isolated. There is bound to be coming and going, contacts with the wider world and with other Christian groups. So the question soon arises: How can the local cohesion be preserved within this wider context? Moreover new generations succeed one another and the historical question cannot for long be avoided: What is the place of tradition and of new ideas within the local congregation? Can these all be brought into relation to the written law of God? The very rigidity of the community symbol also constitutes a weakness. Men may attempt to overcome it by allowing for changes of interpretation but the principle of changing interpretations must ultimately bring about changes in the character of the society and must undermine the contractual principle on which it was founded. Once again the relation of the society to the natural order which the theory involves cannot be regarded as finally satisfactory. Nature cannot forever be dominated and controlled. Nature

must be served, appreciated, understood; its structure must be viewed not as independent of the social structure but as subtly interwoven with it and related to it. Man, in spite of Locke, cannot depend only upon his own free decisions to form a stable social order, not even if the decisions are related to the written Law of God. God is the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe and man is part of the universe. He cannot isolate himself from the material order or even from his own body and seek to build up a structure of a purely mental or verbal kind. For these reasons, then, although we believe the contractual theory of society to be nearer to the truth than the imperial,—being one example of the famous *advance* from status to contract—we cannot accept it as providing the final norm for Christ's Church in the world of space and time.

Chapter Ten

THE SOCIAL ORGANISM

THE organic view of society is widely accepted to-day for at least two reasons. In the first place it seems to be in accordance with some of the most recent developments in natural philosophy. Whitehead does not stand alone as the proponent of a comprehensive philosophy of organism. There are many who regard the recent advances in the science of biology as forerunners of similar advances in the science of society and who look for the emergence of new social patterns of an organic character in the near future. In the second place this view has honourable associations with some of the greatest eras in the social history of mankind. It was certainly characteristic of the civilization of Greece and it regulated much of the theory of the Middle Ages in Europe. Thus at a time when there is much dissatisfaction with over-specialization, it is natural for men to turn back nostalgically to the middle ages when society seems to have been remarkably integrated and when every section seems to have found its own particular function to fulfil within the life of the unified whole. To these two attractions of a general kind there must be added the particular fascination which this view holds for the Christian because of its relation to the New Testament conception of the Body of Christ. If the Christian society is in very truth a Body, Divinely originated and sustained, then organic structures and categories must be of peculiar importance to Christian theologians and sociologists. Let us then seek to examine a little more closely the scientific and historical associations of this idea.

I

Since the time of Newton, man's knowledge of the laws of the physical universe has grown ever more extensive and

detailed. As his knowledge has increased, his confidence has grown and at times it has seemed that nothing could ultimately elude his comprehension and control. At first he was mainly concerned with the structures and movements of objects in the universe around him but during the nineteenth century another kind of science appeared—the science of life itself. For a time it followed its own independent path, investigating the properties of life in its myriad forms and in particular the properties of the living human body. More recently, however, men have come to realize that the science of living things cannot be dissociated from that of inorganic matter. Not the organism in isolation from its environment but the organism in relation to its environment is the proper subject for scientific enquiry. This does not mean, however, that the living organism has *no* peculiar qualities of its own as compared with the material order in which it lives and it will be worth our while to consider for a moment what those qualities are.

One of the most notable characteristics of a living organism is that it is a "whole entity which is not to be arrived at by dividing it up into parts and adding them up again".[1] Yet in a very real sense this is also true of an object such as a stone or a piece of iron or a mountain. Again, the quality of endurance, that is the retention of its distinctive identity when surrounded by forces of disintegration, is another impressive feature of the organism, but even this does not separate it entirely from the inanimate world. It may be argued that the capacity to retain a particular form is more marked in the organic sphere but it is equally possible to maintain, as Whitehead has done, that wholeness and endurance are qualities characteristic of inanimate objects as well as of the world of living beings.

Yet we find it hard to admit that there is *no* distinguishing quality which we call life. Perhaps Leslie Paul comes near to the heart of things when he affirms that a living thing must be described "not merely in terms of its history and structure, but in terms of its functions, for it is not solely passive, a thing to which events happen. It initiates events. It exists

for action. It has the *appearance* of being dynamic, and it possesses powers and properties which are only to be interpreted in terms of the things it proposes to do. . . . Species do not simply survive, as a stone survives if nothing is done to it, they struggle to survive. They do not merely exist, they 'come into existence' out of non-existence by an effort which belongs to them, and they organize other substances, organic and inorganic, to aid them in that effort—'sucking orderliness' out of their environment in order to overcome their own disorder."[2] He goes on to discuss more fully this property of purpose or direction or dynamic struggle to endure through constant change and concludes that it is this which distinguishes the living organism from the objects of inanimate nature and that "it stems from some *will* or other, for it cannot be dissociated from the effort to stretch resistance or endurance beyond the limits physically imposed."[3]

Such a doctrine differs in one important respect from Whitehead's philosophy of organic mechanism, for, whereas the latter holds that the entire universe is constructed according to a particular organic pattern in which enduring forms and integrated wholenesses are the essential features, Paul would insist on a distinction which Whitehead calls a compromise—that there *is* a difference between the inanimate and the living in nature so radical that only the self-governing and self-directing living entity should rightly be called an organism, even though the qualities of wholeness preceding parts and structure pre-ordaining character may loosely be called organic. It is true that part of the difference between two such views is to be found in the varying shades of meaning given to the word "organic", but there is a deeper difference depending upon divergent interpretations of the phenomenon of life.

As Paul points out, the final decision between these two points of view must rest upon an act of faith. Some will be prepared to sacrifice the self-determination of the individual part in order to maintain a completely integrated view of the whole: others will insist that at all costs a place

must be found for the initiative and dynamic purpose of the individual, even if this prevents the construction of a tidy philosophy of the whole. Yet, whichever decision is finally taken, there will be general agreement that the term "organic," in its scientific use, emphasizes wholeness rather than fragmentation, structure rather than arbitrary expression, continuity rather than disconnectedness, struggle towards integration rather than acceptance of dissolution. The movement of modern scientific thought is certainly set in this direction and consequently any theory of society which seeks to derive its pattern from the order of nature will tend to be "organic" in this general sense.

So much may be said of the present direction of thought in scientific circles. In the realm of politics, the general movement is also away from the individual as such towards the welfare of the state as a whole. Individualism has been tried and found wanting and the tendency is to move to the other extreme and replace it by some kind of collectivism. Such a trend can find a good deal of justification by appealing to the political theory of Greece which has had so great an influence upon the Western tradition. In their cosmology, as well as in their politics, the leading thinkers of Greece began with the whole and only saw the parts in relation to the whole. Plato, in the *Timaeus*, defines the model of the universe as "that living Creature of which all other living creatures, severally and in their families, are parts" (30C–31A). Similarly it was believed that the original form of the ideal city had been given and that the true health of any city-state could only be attained by deliberate conformity to this original pattern. Furthermore, this setting of the whole before the parts may be regarded as characteristic of medieval thought, though, as we have seen in our discussion of Aquinas, this thesis must not be pressed too far. If the creative achievements of Greece are to be associated with an organic social order, if the medieval framework owed its stability to its organic structure, if the classical theory of political life in England is to be derived from Richard Hooker, himself a successor of Aristotle and Aquinas, in his

approach to social theory, may it not be that our greatest need to-day in Church and State is to discover a doctrine of organism which will follow the best traditions of the past while conforming to the new scientific knowledge of the present?

2

But the question immediately arises: How far are we justified in speaking of society as an organism? Phrases like organic society, organic union, the social organism, the essential structure of the organism, are constantly used to-day. How far is this justified? Does a society obey the laws of a biological organism? Or can it be so constructed that it will perforce behave in precisely the same way as does an individual organism? These questions are of major importance in the field of politics: they are no less important in the affairs of the local, as well as of the ecumenical, Church.

In his Herbert Spencer lecture at Oxford in 1937, Professor Joseph Needham dealt at length with the implications of an organic theory of society. He pointed out that Spencer was one of the first thinkers to apply the new scientific theories of evolution to sociology—though strangely enough he was perfectly content to find in the social pattern of nineteenth-century England nature's supreme achievement. But his main concern in employing the organic analogy was to point out its important implications for the division of labour in any developed society. The larger the social whole, the greater differentiation of classes within the whole there must be; and the grading of these classes corresponds to that of the various members within any animal organism. So, "he elaborates, to a degree sometimes almost fantastic, the analogy between animal and social organisms. Thus the superior military class of warriors corresponds to the ectoderm, and the inferior class of cultivators, in close contact with the mechanism of food-supply, to the endoderm. The origin of the State, he thinks, was the necessity of a

centralized neural apparatus to co-ordinate the military activities of the organism-society against other societies. . . . As the peasants correspond to endoderm, so the king's council corresponds to medulla."[4]

Yet even Spencer could see that, while there were numerous parallels between an animal organism and a social unit, these were not sufficient to classify a society as an organism in the strict scientific sense of the term. For one thing, "consciousness" in an organism is concentrated in one part only, in a society it is diffused throughout (though even here it could be claimed that "consciousness" is only to be found in the sum of the parts: it does not permeate the whole). A more radical difference which he noted and which we shall have cause to mention again is that whereas society exists for the benefit of its members the opposite is true in the life of an organism in nature. At least it is true that in nature the members exist *more* for the benefit of the whole than can ever be the case in a creative society. Otherwise it would mean, for example, that the liquidation of a non-conforming member of society is just as defensible and even desirable as is a surgical operation on a diseased part of the human body.

The fact is that there are very few natural scientists or sociologists, at least in the western world, who would to-day be prepared to extend the comparison beyond the ordinary limits of a metaphor or an analogy. Needham himself points out some striking dissimilarities between a society and an organism. Julian Huxley in *Man Stands Alone* (pp. 239 ff.) warns against pressing the parallel of specialization of function too far and stresses the fact that the sacrifice of the unit for the good of the whole is far greater amongst the cells in the body than it can ever be amongst individuals in society. Ralph Linton, in his book *The Cultural Background of Personality* (pp. 23–24), remarks that "in order to function successfully as a unit in society, the individual must assume certain stereotyped forms of behaviour, that is, culture patterns. A great many of those culture patterns are oriented toward the maintenance of society rather than the satisfaction of individual needs. Societies are organisms of a

sort, and it has become common practice to speak of their having needs of their own as distinct from those of the individuals who compose them. Such usage carries unfortunate implications, since *the qualities of societies are quite different from those of living organisms*" (italics mine). What exactly is meant by "organisms of a sort" is not clear when the author goes on immediately to deny that societies and organisms have any qualities in common. Here Linton seems to go to the opposite extreme from Spencer by underestimating the organic character of society and by giving a greater importance to patterns of society produced by cultural techniques than is normally justified. It is hard to avoid the impression that the exact degree to which a scientist is prepared to apply the organic analogy to society depends in no small measure upon the opinions which he has already formed concerning the ideal structure of the social whole. Be that as it may, we can at least say that few experts in the realms of biology or sociology would care to regard society simply as an expression on a greatly magnified scale of the individual living organism. Society is an aggregate of living organisms and many of the laws of individual organisms apply to the social whole: but even in its most compact and integrated form (i.e. the family) the individual member has an "apartness" such as the individual organ of a human body can never possess. Thus the correspondence is not exact. Society is *like* nature. It is not simply a part of the one vast natural whole.

3

But even allowing that the ordinary human society does not fully conform to the laws of organisms, may it not be that there is a specially created *Divine* society which provides the perfect archetype for human society and which actualizes in every part of its structure that organic pattern which is the ideal for every social organization? In other words, although human communities are obviously imper-

fect in their manifestation of organic social relationships, may we not look for a *Divine* social organism which will provide the standard and the sanctification of every form of communal life? This thesis has gained a strong following within Catholic circles and we must examine its implications in some detail.

Let us take first a remarkably interesting set of definitions given by a Roman Catholic writer, Father John T. Dittoe.

> A living body may be defined as an organic whole, made up of heterogeneous parts that are called members, all subordinated to the principal part, the head, both head and members being informed by a single vital principle, the soul, that moves them to the common end of the whole, which is the preservation and ultimate perfection of the organism. In the Mystical Body of Christ there are members, the faithful, all subordinated to the Head, Christ, both being informed by the soul, the Holy Ghost, which moves them to the common end, the perfection and completion of the Body of Christ. From an analysis of the Mystical Body it is evident that the elements that go to make up the Mystical Body are the constituents of a living body.
>
> Although the Body of Christ is a living body, it is not a natural body and the differences between it and a natural body are varied. In a natural body the heterogeneous parts, the members, are not complete in themselves; they do not exist as numerically distinct; they do not exist antecedent to the being of the whole. The principle of unity so unites the parts that each is wanting in its own individual subsistence. In the Mystical Body, a "supernatural" living body, the members are living things, complete in themselves, numerically distinct, already having their own existence antecedent to their incorporation in Christ.
>
> Although the members of the Mystical Body are subsistent beings, they have a new corporate unity in a vital social principle, the soul of the Mystical Body. Because it is a Divine Person, Who is His own subsistence, Who is wholly self-sufficient, and Who contracts no substantial union with the divine organism which is animated by His life, the soul of the Mystical Body cannot be joined by a substantial union with the Body. In the natural order the soul is joined with the body by a substantial union, for in itself each is an incomplete substance

and ordered to constitute a complete substantial essence. The Mystical Body of Christ, therefore, is a living Body, but it is a Body that transcends nature and is of the supernatural order, and hence it is termed by theologians the "Mystical Body of Christ."[5]

He starts, we note, from his own definition of the essential constituents of a living organism and deduces that the Mystical Body, seeing that it possesses these constituents, is rightly called an organism. But it is not a *natural* organism. Certain differences between the natural and the supernatural rule out any such possibility. The Mystical Body of Christ, though existing in the world, is altogether separate from the world of other organisms for it "*transcends* nature and is of the *supernatural* order", i.e., it is a Divine Organism. Now the fatal objection to such a line of reasoning is that the initial definition makes a selection of certain important elements of that which in nature is called an organism but omits certain other elements which are of equal importance. For example, nothing is said about relation to environment, and yet it is a basic tenet of modern organic theory that to speak of an organism out of relation to its environment is a meaningless use of language. Dittoe himself, in the second paragraph quoted, seems to undermine his own position by admitting that some very important characteristics of a natural organism are foreign to the supernatural (though we should feel compelled ourselves to question most of the points of difference which he affirms). Nevertheless, in the final paragraph he reaches the conclusion that the Mystical Body is a supernatural living Body, existing in the world, animated by the one Divine Spirit though not substantially united with Him, drawing together into its own unity the heterogeneous human members who are being incorporated into it.

There are a number of objections to such a theory. In the first place the resemblances of the Divine Organism to the human are in reality so few (the similarities in the first paragraph are superficial, and are in any case counterbalanced by the differences in the second) that it becomes a

misnomer to call the Supernatural Wholeness a Body or an Organism at all. In the second place, if the supernatural entity exists in the world but is separate from the world, then the attempt must inevitably be made to define its boundaries within the world, for a body is visibly separated from its environment by a particular external form. What then is the external form of the Mystical Body? (It is useless to call it a Body unless it has *some* external form.) The answer normally given is that a particular social structure, or a particular governmental pattern, or a particular dogmatic framework, or all of these together constitute the essential external form. Some may try to avoid the hard logic of such a conclusion by pleading that individuals may belong to the soul of the Church without being joined to the body, but such concessions meet with little sympathy in official circles. Pope Pius XI, for example, in refusing to allow representatives of the Roman Church to attend ecumenical gatherings, declared in the Encyclical *Mortalium Animos* that "Since the mystical Body of Christ, namely the Church, is one, 'being compacted and fitly joined together' after the fashion of His physical body, you would foolishly and stupidly say that a mystical body can consist of dispersed and scattered members: whoever therefore is not joined with Him is neither His member nor one with the Head (who is) Christ." The present Pope, Pius XII, in the Encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*, has spoken even more definitely. "Only those are among the members of the Church who have received the baptism of regeneration and profess the true faith, and who neither have separated themselves to their harm from the organism of the body, nor have been excluded from it by the legitimate authority for very grave faults. . . . And so those who have separated for reasons of faith or order cannot live in the same body, nor, consequently, by the same divine Spirit. . . . Those, therefore, dangerously err who believe they can attach themselves to Christ, the Head of the Church, without faithfully adhering to His Vicar on earth." Ingenious interpretations and modifications of these encyclicals have been suggested by

Roman theologians, particularly in America,[6] but they are far from convincing. Once allow that the Church is a Divine Organism with a Divinely given external form and something like the Papal conclusions must follow. The only possible alternative would be that some other form was in reality the Divinely given distinguishing mark of the Church, that in fact the Roman theologians were right in their premises but wrong in their definition of the true form of the Body of Christ. This would be the claim of certain Anglican theologians and it is their position which we must now consider.

4

For a clear presentation of the organic-theory of the Church in Anglican circles we turn to the writings of E. L. Mascall. His views may be studied in summary form in the opening essay of *The Church of God*, but they have since been expressed in greater detail in his book *Christ, The Christian and The Church*. Mascall's ecclesiological theory is expressed almost entirely in organic terms. Words such as body, humanity, incorporation, organism, occur again and again. He is relatively indifferent to other possible expressions of Church-theory. Instead, he sets out to expound in a clear and systematic way the doctrine of the Christian community as it is implied in the affirmation that the Church is the Body of Christ.

The emergence of the distinctive community, the Church, is related in the closest possible fashion to the Incarnation. "Just as the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost first formed in the womb of the Blessed Virgin the body in which the Divine humanity was manifested in the historic life of Christ on earth, so the descent at Pentecost upon the Apostles brought into being the new body, the Church, which was to be the new ark of that humanity and was to make it with its redemptive power accessible to all the peoples of the earth".[7] In the Incarnation human nature was united to the divine Person of Christ in such a way that a new Divine

humanity came into existence: this new humanity was manifested first in the body of the historic Jesus, then after Pentecost in the body of the Church. We cannot here discuss Mascall's Christology, except to say that his references to "human nature" and "Divine humanity" tend to be abstractions without any very clear content, and the same must be said of "the new body", the new ark of the Divine humanity, the terms which he uses in reference to the Church.

What now, are the implications of this Body-concept? It is, Mascall judges, more than a vivid form of description: there must be some "metaphysical unity" between the Body and the Church. Paul himself may not have realized all that the concept involved, but we are justified in using our knowledge of bodily structures and processes in order to interpret its meaning for to-day. For example, the word "body" may be defined as "the external form under which humanity is manifested". Just as in the case of an individual man, there is continuity in the form of his body, so is it with Christ: there is continuity in the form of His Body, even though it is to be thought of now as the earthly body of Jesus of Nazareth, now as the Body of the Church, now as the Eucharistic Body on the Altar. It is the same Divine humanity which clothes itself in different configurations at different stages of its existence. But, however it may be manifested, it is the same Christ who through His Body is ever seeking to incorporate individual human lives into union with His own glorified humanity, which is the very manhood of God. When the individual has thus been grafted into the human nature of the Ascended Lord, he is joined to his fellow-man in indissoluble union, the union of the Body of Christ.

Mascall develops the thought of union within the Body still further. "It involves," he says, "even more intimacy and interpenetration than exist between the head and the body of a man. The Christian is re-created into Christ. . . . In the order of supernature he is identified with the Saviour in everything except his indestructible and inconvertible personal individuality."[8] And he goes on to quote with approval Father de Lubac's statement that "in St. Paul,

Christ appears rather as a medium, an atmosphere, a world where man and God, and man and man, are in communion and unity." The word "atmosphere" is perhaps significant for throughout the discussion we seem to be moving in a blurred atmosphere where everything merges into everything else, where union and interpenetration and incorporation are the key-words, where personal distinctions scarcely exist any longer (the "inconvertible personal individuality" seems to have little more substance than an isolated point), and where the New Testament emphasis upon personal relationship through faith (nowhere more emphasized than in Paul's own writings) is in danger of being swallowed up altogether within an amorphous pantheistic "medium" of a vague Divine-humanity. In a justifiable reaction from an excessive individualism, Mascall has surely gone too far the other way. Personal encounters and historic experiences seem to be ignored. The whole emphasis is on "steady continuity" of life, manifested in a steady continuity of form—though how the form of the Lord's earthly body, the form of the Christian society and the form of the Eucharistic sacrament are related to one another is nowhere made clear. The Divine humanity still being manifested through the Divine organism, the Church, is a high-sounding expression, but it is hard to derive it from the New Testament unless Paul's words are interpreted in a metaphysical and mystical rather than a metaphorical and ethical way.

It is clear that Mascall's primary interest is in the metaphysical implications of the Body-idea and he works these out in relation to the life of the Holy Trinity and to the sense of timelessness which belongs to the Church by reason of her participation in the Divine life. But the Divine humanity is being manifested visibly on earth, and the mode of that manifestation must receive some consideration. Mascall turns, therefore, to the human body and its structure (rather than to the form of the body of the historic Jesus) to gain light on the outward form of the Church in history. He regards it as axiomatic that the Church must share with other living bodies the property of possessing a

particular structural form. But it will be of a "supernatural and sacramental order".[9] And then we are suddenly told that the ministry as it is conceived in Catholic theology meets the requirement of a supernatural and sacramental structure in every respect and *therefore it must be the structure.* This is an astonishing piece of reasoning but it is being constantly employed to-day. The Church is the Body of Christ. Therefore it must have a structure like other bodies. But it must be a supernatural structure. The Catholic ministry is such a structure. Therefore the threefold ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons *must* constitute the essential form of the Church! It would be hard to find a short chain of reasoning in which there were more *non sequiturs.* It is true that other writers try to support the argument by appealing to the authority of our Lord who appointed the Apostolate for His Church. But even then it is exceedingly difficult for them to prove that He appointed the apostles to fulfil the functions of the "priestly organism" of which Mascall speaks or that He ever intended the ministry to provide the essential structure of His Church. The whole argument and contention is not only without foundation in the New Testament but receives little support within the history of the Church. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that it is a modern *tour de force* which is being used to bolster up a position which has the flimsiest of foundations either in the Bible or in the tradition of the Church.

To sum up. The theory of a Divine organism existing eternally in ontological reality and manifested in the world in a succession of forms cannot be accepted as a completely satisfying interpretation of the nature of the Divine relations to man. It uses a natural phenomenon—the living body or organism—and makes it the medium through which all reality is to be viewed and interpreted. This means that if the inner life-principle of the organism is given the primary interpretative emphasis, the resultant thought-system tends towards some kind of nature-mysticism. If, on the other hand, the outward form of the organism is made primary, then some kind of rigid institutionalism

ensues. The fact is that the organic principle is not sufficient by itself to provide the generating impulse of an entire system. Catholicism—whether Roman, Orthodox, or Anglican—needs the polarizing influence of a different principle if it is to be prevented from running out on the one hand into a vague and ethereal mysticism, or on the other hand into a hard and rigid formalism.

5

In spite of the fact that we have been compelled to reject the use of the organic principle as the *sole* instrument for interpreting the character of the social unit, we should not for a moment wish to underestimate its value in defining the nature and function of the Church as the Body of Christ. In certain ways the Church is an organic society, and it is desirable that these ways should be set out as comprehensively as possible.

(1) *Every society, like every individual organism, must provide for differentiation of function of the several parts within the living whole.* This is a principle of great importance but it can easily be mishandled and misinterpreted. In a living organism a part such as a finger has particular functions to perform (it cannot by its very nature perform the function of the nose), it fulfils these functions in relation to the whole body (to speak of a finger acting out of self-preservation would be meaningless), and it acts under the direct stimulus of the unifying centre which controls the whole. But to say that in any society particular subsidiary *groups* correspond to the particular parts of the body is to introduce a most dangerous principle. In human societies this argument has been used, as we have seen in the course of our study, to justify the most rigid forms of class-distinctions and caste-systems. In the Church likewise it has been used to justify the existence of inflexible hierarchical structures within the Christian society. But whereas, in a unitary organism, the principal functions are performed throughout its life-span by the corresponding principal parts, in a social

organism the chief functions can in principle be performed by *any* members of the organism so long as they are performed efficiently. Attempts may indeed be made to "freeze" a particular structure by preventing members of one caste from having any personal contact with members of the other—learned and unlearned, priestly and lay, freeman and slave, warrior and peasant, and so on. But all such attempts to reduce the social whole to a unitary form ultimately stultify themselves. A unitary organism is organized in such a fashion that particular members must perform particular tasks: a social organism is so organized that its different functions must indeed be performed but the question of who will perform them at any particular time must not be determined by physical heredity—an immanent *natural* principle—or by ecclesiastical succession—an immanent supernatural principle.

Again the fulfilling of functions on behalf of the whole body is obviously important in the unitary natural organism. But a social organism soon proliferates in such a way as to include within itself many subordinate wholes. And the functions to be performed within the smaller whole may easily come into conflict with duties owed to the larger whole. It may, indeed, be possible to resolve these conflicts. But at least it cannot be regarded as axiomatic that within the social organism every single member or group must perform its functions in relation to the all-inclusive whole in the same simple and spontaneous way in which the finger acts in relation to the whole body. Beautiful things may be written about wholeness, whether in Church or State, and about the duty of every member to sêrve the interests of the organic whole. But it must be insisted again that a principle belonging to a unitary organism cannot be applied *pari passu* to a social organism. The area of application is altogether too complex and a whole made up of subordinate wholes is not the same structure as a whole made up of directly dependent parts.

Once more it is certainly true that an essential characteristic of a unitary organism is the immediate response

which each member makes to the central controlling agent. But there are at least two difficulties in the way of extending this characteristic to a social organism. One is that even to-day the precise nature of the controlling agency in the body is unknown. Enormous strides have been made in medical science so that the mechanisms of the brain and the patterns of cortical stimulation can be confidently described. Yet in the last resort the control of the mechanism remains a mystery. The seat of control can be roughly located in the upper brain stem, but beyond that even science cannot go. Whether the controlling agent is a part of the body, or whether it is "a spiritual element of different essence" (to use the actual words of a brain surgeon) we cannot at present know—though in his heart of hearts man by-passes analysis and simply affirms that *I* did this or that. Thus the individual organism throws little clear light on the question of how a social organism should be governed and controlled. A direct physical control? A mysterious mental control? An actual locus of control? Who can say? Only in the rarest instances does the instinctive action of the corporate body even begin to compare with the instinctive "I will" of the individual organism. Which brings us to the second difficulty that in a social organism in which two or more centres of consciousness are related to one another, the seat of control is bound to be a far more complex phenomenon than is the case in a unitary organism. The more the society can act as one man in times of emergency, the more effectively it can deal with a situation. Yet at other times nothing can be more deadly than an automatic communal response to some external stimulus. And even in the Church, in which all the members should yield obedience to the Head who is Christ, there is no reason to assume that this must involve response of an automatic kind to some stimulation directly transmitted from Him. Christ is related to His Church in ways that can be called organic, but no direct analogy of a physical kind can cover the complex of delicate relationships by which through the orders of nature and of history He makes His will known to men.

(2) *Within the social organism as within the individual organism there must be a continuity of life in some form.* In this connection Professor A. E. Taylor has a notable sentence: "The organism," he writes, "is charged with all its past and pregnant with all its future." In this way it is distinguished from any mere configuration or arbitrarily constructed form. What the ultimate secret of this continuing life may be still remains a mystery, but it is one of the most characteristic features of the biological organism, that from the beginning to the end of its career its life continues in one unbroken stream: "Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust."

But how far can the life of a society be said to be continuous? It has been the claim of Spengler and his followers that civilizations are born, grow, continue in life, decay, and die in exactly the same way as do individual organisms. Once a civilization has reached maturity, it is bound to turn back and be absorbed again in the primitive, raw humanity from which it originally emerged. The continuity is described as "the primitive psychic conditions of a perpetually infantile (raw) humanity",[10] though what exactly this phrase means is far from clear. In general, however, it appears that those who uphold the theory that every society can be regarded as an organism in the strictly scientific sense of the term, would claim that just as in the physical universe there is a continuing stream of biological life which comes to expression in many forms, so in the universe of civilization and culture there is a continuing stream of psychic human life which also comes to expression in countless different ways. Obviously there is truth in this claim though there is no justification for assuming that the continuity of life must manifest itself in precisely parallel ways in the two universes under consideration.

In the history of the doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ it has been consistently maintained that the continuing life of the Body is the life of the Holy Spirit who dwells within the Church and is to the Mystical Body what the soul of a man is to his physical frame. The life of the

Spirit cannot be destroyed by the processes of dissolution which operate in nature, nor by the ravages of sin which damage human life. So the life of the Church, like that of a physical organism, is continuous, though whereas the life-span of biological and social organisms is limited, that of the Church possesses the eternity which belongs to the life of God Himself. Such a claim is inspiring, and in its essence true, but it is not fair to use it to support theories which do not necessarily follow from it. The Spirit's operations in the Church cannot be regarded as precisely parallel to life-processes in the biological organism. The pattern of the continuity of the Spirit in the Church cannot be regarded as necessarily the same as the life-pattern of the culture of a bounded society. The life of the Spirit cannot in fact be described by the use of organic categories alone, and no patterns taken from organic processes can fully represent the nature of the Spirit's continuous activity in relation to the world of men.

(3) *A social organism, like an individual organism, is constantly dependent upon its environment though in each case there is the possibility of adaptation to a changing environment.* A leading biologist has expressed the matter tersely so far as individual organisms are concerned. "An organism without an environment," he says "is never an object of experience and to a biologist it is unthinkable in the sense of unmeaning".[11] Similarly, Schrödinger has coined the phrase, "sucking orderliness", to denote the absolute dependence of the living organism upon its environment. If it is to maintain its particular organic form it needs to be sustained not merely by atomic particles, but by ordered groups which will make up for its own tendency towards disintegration and death. These ordered groups it derives from its environment, and the question of the proper environment for any particular organism can never therefore be ignored. A kinetic system, as A. E. Taylor points out, has "surroundings", it does not have a true environment, and this is one of the main distinguishing marks between an organism and a machine.

Now this interaction between an organism and its environ-

ment works both ways. An organism not only depends upon its environment for its sustenance: it must co-operate with its environment, adapt itself to it, sustain it. "Any physical object which by its influence deteriorates its environment, commits suicide."[12] This is the wonderful and mysterious character of organic life—that in the inter-relationship of organism and environment, each is upheld, each is enriched, each is enabled to retain its identity within the complex whole.

But how far is all this true of societies? Perhaps the strongest argument in support of such a view is the history and the enduring power of the nation. A society gradually takes shape within a particular physical environment. Its forms are influenced by the character of the environment—whether it is a fertile or hard country, whether the climate is equable or extreme, whether the mineral and water power is abundant or scanty. Through their common relation to the same environment men become more deeply related to one another and so a national consciousness grows and intensifies until it seems strong enough to withstand all attacks.

Not only in the field of politics is nationalism an important factor: it affects art, literature, economics, recreation, and makes any form of pure cosmopolitanism, at least under the present conditions of the world, quite impossible. The fact is that the relation of a society to its environment is a permanently important factor in its development, and although new ideas and principles may mould its character to an astonishing extent, yet deep down the influence of environment remains strong and permanent. Unless the cosmopolitan creed takes the natural environment into account, its latent forces are likely to erupt at any time and wreck the most tidy schemes of idealistic planners. Nationalism is proving to be in many ways an unwelcome hindrance to Western European Union; it is proving a still more unwelcome obstacle to those who desire to embrace the whole world within one single Communist state.

Even in the United States, the home of liberal democracy, it has already been demonstrated that every society, like

every living organism, is deeply dependent upon its environment. The variety, the open-ness, the richness, the undeveloped-ness of the new country has fostered a society which is infinitely varied, flexible, equalitarian, dynamic. Certainly the ideas of the self-determining individual and of the social contract have been enormously influential in its cultural and political growth, but they have never been the sole factors determining the pattern of its social life. The same ideas acting on societies in other environments have produced different results. And however painfully particular groups may strive to retain their cultural homogeneity in a new environment, all experience shows that sooner or later the pattern must change.

But what is true of every human society must also be true of the Church unless it be altogether separate from the world. In that case, as we have already claimed, to speak of it as an organism is to use a meaningless term. Proponents of the organismic theory in Church doctrine cannot have it both ways: either the Church is to be regarded as an organism and therefore subject to the major principles of organic life or it is not an organism at all. Even if it is a *Divine* organism it must still have a deep and intimate relation with the environment in which it lives. In general it may be said that the Roman theory on the one side, and the Puritan theory on the other side have both sought to resist this inescapable fact. In practice Rome has sought to integrate local rituals and myths into her own normative pattern, but there has never been any willingness to allow that this normative pattern could really be adjusted to a new environment. The hierarchy, the liturgy (even the language of the liturgy), the dogma, are unchangeable and no environmental influences must touch them. In other words, the system is mechanical, not organic. The Puritan resistance to environmental influence has been even fiercer. It must not be assimilated, it must be destroyed. The abstract theoretic structure of free association must be possible of realization at any time in any place. Nature must be dominated so that its deleterious effects upon social relationships may be

nullified. Society, in its view, was never meant to be organic but rather contractual.

Thus Roman Catholic theory, while trying to hold to certain organismic qualities, denies others which are even more important from the biological point of view. Puritan theory denies the category of organism entirely, at least in its doctrine of the Church. The truer way would seem to be to accept the doctrine of organism for the life of the Church in all its broad outlines while insisting that it is not sufficient of itself to determine fully the character either of the human or of the Divine society. Thus the Reformation principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*, is certainly valid up to a point. The *regio* must influence the social expression of the *religio*, though the power of the prince in the particular *regio* must not be allowed to determine the exact form of the *religio*. The principle of national Churches in the sense of Churches which fully accept the Lordship of Christ, and yet which develop their ecclesiastical structure in ways congenial to their traditions and geographical environment, has not only been validated by experience, it is the direct outcome of any vital acknowledgment of a God who is Creator of heaven and earth. That there are grave dangers in allowing the principle of nationalism to dominate Church polity or in attempting to make the structure of a particular national Church regulative in an alien environment, few would deny. But this is no reason for rejecting the principle altogether. Unless the universe as we know it is radically dualistic, unless, that is, the social order is utterly separate from the natural, unless grace utterly repudiates nature, the organic principle must be allowed to operate, both in the secular and in the sacred society, and the attempt must constantly be made to make the Church in very truth the Church of the local, the civic, the provincial, the national, the world community in which it dwells. It is not man's task, as Brunner has well said, to engage in a gigantic wrestling match with nature either in his secular or his religious life but rather, so far as is possible, to co-operate with nature in the production of one organic whole.

(4) *The ideal for the social organism, as for the individual, is that it shall be an integrated whole, balanced, harmonious, beautiful.* The fruitful tree, or the healthy, human body, holds together all its separate parts in a delicate harmony, and gives to the sensitive observer of it an experience of deep aesthetic pleasure. So a true satisfaction may be found both in observing and in sharing in the membership of an organic society, and this satisfaction has something of the timeless quality which belongs to every aesthetic experience. It is a deeper satisfaction than can ever be found in relation to that which is essentially mechanical, for in that relationship the elements of rigidity, absolute regularity, uniformity, monotony, automatism, enter in and detract from the beauty of the whole. Normally the properties of the parts of a machine are the same whether they are *in* the whole or separate from the whole.[13] In an organism, however, this is not the case for only within the whole do the parts attain their fullness of living expression, and it is this which is inexpressibly satisfying to the human heart.

Something of this aesthetic emphasis is to be seen in Plato's doctrine of society: "We have given to each his portion and thus have made the whole beautiful". Similarly, Aquinas affirms that there is no beauty in a body unless all the members are *decenter disposita* and Hooker rejoices in the vision of the whole body of the realm, with each part fulfilling the law of its being within a fully balanced harmony. For Aquinas, of course, and for all other Christian thinkers the harmonizing life-principle is the Divine activity ever operating to bring the parts into perfect relationship with itself and with each other. The ultimate goal is that the world, society, the church, and the individual shall all be drawn by the same Eternal Beatitude into perfect union with itself.

Obviously there are dangers even in this ideal. As is often pointed out to-day, Plato was in many respects totalitarian in his outlook. Aquinas could be astonishingly forgetful of the rights of the individual parts so long as they seemed to fit harmoniously into a whole. To integrate a social organism

is a more complex task than to integrate an individual organism for in the latter the part fulfils its own nature completely by occupying its proper place in relation to the whole. But this can never be the case within a social organism where the self-determination of the individual part must always be safeguarded. Indeed, it is possible to claim—and many within the Christian tradition would claim—that a fully integrated individual person is a more beautiful object even than the most harmonious social whole. This does not mean an *isolated* individual, for no person can be fully integrated who attempts to live in isolation from his fellows. But it gives the place of primacy to the individual in relation to the personal-absolute rather than to the individual in relation to the social-absolute. It refuses to be dominated by man's social objectifications, however aesthetically beautiful they may appear. It refuses to subordinate the person-in-living—decision to the theoretic social whole.

The danger of society becoming a harmonious ant-heap is real. Yet it need not deter the Christian from working for a harmonious order by taking the organic beauty of nature as a pattern and guide. He will even be willing to accept the pattern of death and resurrection which is so deep-seated a principle in natural life, and will be ready to die to all forms of self-advantage in order that the community may continue to live. The beauty of the harmoniously functioning organic whole must always be regarded as part of the given-ness and as part of the *telos* of the Christian Church, and Protestantism in particular should not allow fear of the dangers of such a conception to rob it of the glory of the ideal.

Let us summarize the argument of this chapter. The importance of organic categories and terms within contemporary thought can scarcely be over-emphasized. Even if the evidence at our disposal is not sufficient to justify us in regarding the whole universe as a single organic process, there can be no doubt that there is enough to enable us to construct a world-picture on general organic lines. This being so, it is natural that the attempt should be made to analyse and interpret human society in organic terms.

Individual man may be described as a living organism—though he may also be more than this. Society, being composed of individuals, may likewise be called an organism, though again it may be more than this. We have seen, however, in the course of our investigation that any attempt to enclose society within the rigid framework of a preconceived organic philosophy is fraught with grave danger to every aspect of human life within that society.

But if such an enclosure threatens to extinguish the creative life of man within the world at large, still more does it jeopardize the life of the Christian within the Church. Certainly, whatever can be learned about the pattern of organic processes in nature must be examined and evaluated in its social context so that we may the better interpret the character of the life of the Church as the Body of Christ. But the Church must not be regarded simply as a special type of organism—not even as a Divine organism—if the term organism has already been defined in terms dictated by some naturalistic philosophy. The Church is in many respects comparable to an organism and some of these likenesses we have sought to point out in this chapter. But in the last resort we must recognize that the energizing life-force of the Church is the Holy Spirit, the definitive pattern of the Church is the incarnate life of the Son of God. In so far as the Church is a society in this world, it is bound to be subject to the organic processes of the universe as a whole. Yet in so far as it partakes of life from above, it fulfils a particular role as the sacramental organ through which the whole process is sanctified and perfected. Such a view is entirely in harmony with the vision of Ephesians 1, which sees God gathering together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. Christ is the source and the Spirit is the energy of this redemptive organic process, while the Church is both the anticipation of the completed Divine society and the organ of its progressive realization amongst men.

Chapter Eleven

THE COVENANT SOCIETY

THE most serious alternative to the organic view of society to-day is the dialectical. Like the organic it exercises a double attraction upon men's minds. In the first place it seems to be compatible with much that we know of the actual processes of historical development. No one who stops to consider the course of events as he has encountered them in his own experience or has learned of them from others can fail to admit that they often seem to fall into a kind of rhythmic pattern. Ebb and flow, systole and diastole, breathing out and breathing in, rise and fall, advance and recession—such pairs of terms come readily to our minds, and we are prepared to acknowledge that a dialectical pattern can easily be traced out of the common experiences of mankind. The idea that the course of history is a steady movement upwards on an inclined plane was short-lived and would find few supporters to-day. May it not rather be that history pursues a dialectical path as it moves forward from stage to stage?

The second attraction of the dialectical view is that it provides a source of constantly renewed hope to those who are at any time subjected to hard and unpleasant conditions of life. The under-privileged, the dispossessed, the unem- ployed, the hungry, the outcast—all respond instinctively to a theory which assures them that in course of time their lo will certainly be reversed. That the oppressed must rule, tha the mighty must be put down from their seats and those of lov degree exalted, that those who have been nought will ye be all—these are possibilities so alluring that a theory pro claiming their certain fulfilment can be sure of an enthusiasti following at least in some quarters. There can be little doub that the dialectical view of the dynamics of society is winnin more and more adherents, and we must consider carefull what are its implications for the subject of our enquiry.

I

Let us first enquire what exactly is meant by the word "dialectical". To-day it has come to be used loosely for any to-and-fro movement in which an advance in one direction is never allowed to reach its limit but is negated by a movement in the other direction which in turn is reversed before it has gone beyond recall. It is used, for example, to describe certain sequences in nature. In the process of human generation two elements are involved—the egg and the spermatozoon. Actually, the egg might continue its own mode of existence to the limit and then die, or the spermatozoon might do the same. But if, before reaching the limit of its own existence, either meets the other, then new processes are set in motion which lead ultimately to the production of new eggs or new spermatozoa as the case may be, and the "dialectical" movement continues. In the same way the term is used to describe certain processes in history. A particular civilization, such as that of India in Dravidian times, might have continued its natural development untouched by outside influences until it reached its limit. Similarly, the Aryan tribesmen might have remained in their original habitat in the highlands of central Asia, struggling with their natural environment but unaffected by any radically different forms of life. Yet the meeting took place and out of the meeting a new civilization emerged which was destined in course of time to meet another group of invaders, and so the "dialectical" movement continued. Thus it has become a common practice to speak of any situation in which internal contrasts are at work as a "dialectical" situation, and to call any process in which apparently contrary factors are involved, a "dialectical" process.

This manner of speaking may be legitimate up to a point, but it can easily breed confusion if the "blanket" word is used too freely. We need ever to remind ourselves that the original use of the term was confined to a context of *conversation* and of the meeting of minds. Dialectic is derived

from *dia* and *lego*—to *speak* to-and-fro—and the very reason for the emergence of the compound word was that this speaking to-and-fro constituted for men an experience of unusual significance. Within it something mysterious seemed to happen. It was not exactly that one man accepted the other man's contribution and so added to his own store of knowledge, but that in speaking to-and-fro, new visions dawned, new light appeared, new possibilities opened out and all who shared in the experience were convinced that something altogether creative had happened within the "dialectic".

Such is the background of the word in the history of human thought, and until roughly a century ago the word would have been understood as belonging to this context of the intercourse of mind with mind. It was, of course, possible to ring variations on the precise mode of this intercourse. A man's ideas might be expressed in writing and these would then be examined and considered by another man who in turn would express his own reactions in written form. In such a case the dialectical process would be slower and less spontaneous, and there might be less likelihood of the sudden emergence of creative insights. Nevertheless the whole experience could still be regarded as within the realm of mental intercourse. Or, again, a single writer might engage in a kind of dialectic within himself. He might set forth a proposition, consider possible objections to it, and finally arrive at a result not exactly the same as the original but in general conformity with it. We see this method of procedure in the writings of Thomas Aquinas and although in its indefinitely extended form it tends to become monotonous, yet from time to time within the "dialectic" of proposition and objection some vital truth emerges which is a permanent contribution to human knowledge. The limit of the purely intellectual use of the term is to be found in Hegel's system in which the whole universe is regarded as the product of a Divine mental process in which a thesis is counter-balanced by an antithesis, and out of the dialectic of contraries a new synthesis emerges. This synthesis in turn

is polarized by its opposite, and so the process continues indefinitely. History on this planet is held to be the result of the Universal Mind working itself out in this dialectical way.

So far we have confined ourselves to the use of the method of dialectic in philosophical circles. "Dialectic" referred to the intercourse of mind with mind or of mind within itself in search for higher truth. Always the underlying conviction persisted that in some mysterious way, as mind stimulated mind, there would suddenly be a jump to some higher plane of truth. Within the long tradition of thought, stretching from Plato to Hegel, this was ever the goal—*higher* truth, truth nearer to the Divine truth, truth nearer in its expression to those eternal forms which guide and govern all things. The search of the thinker after truth was exactly comparable to the search of the mystic for the One ineffable Reality—it was an ascent of the scale of perfection towards the Absolute, and the chief distinguishing mark of the followers of the dialectic method was that they believed that in the relationship of mind with mind, rather than in the solitary contemplation of the individual, the ascent could most easily be made.

2

But there is another realm of experience akin to the dialectical, and yet not identical with it, which we must now consider. It is the experience lying behind the word "covenant" as we use it in modern speech. Probably its most notable appearance in modern history was in the title-deeds of the League of Nations. The constitution of this League was called a "Covenant", and the implications of this title are not hard to discern. It implies that the terms of agreement were drawn up within the context of common discussion, and that any modifications or alterations which the future might necessitate would also be worked out through mutual consultation. Representatives of free sover-

eign nations had met together, had sought to view their own future interest within the context of the interests of the other nations involved, had listened to the claims of others, had staked their own claims, had compromised, adjusted, given, received, until at length a *covenant* had been drawn up which though failing to provide for *everything* which any single party to the covenant might desire, yet held out the promise to *all* of something better than could be attained by any individual in isolation from the rest. It was the judgment of the representatives of the people of the U.S.A. that participation in the Covenant could not provide them with anything better for their own future, but rather with entanglements which might be for the worse, and so they refused to join. But all those who committed themselves to the Covenant believed in the method of coming together (*co-venire*) for personal consultation and of committing themselves there to agreed decisions which could be formulated and made the standard for the future conduct of all.

The term covenant though used in this particular instance has been less popular than its cognate term federal. The Latin term *foedus* denoted a formulated agreement, almost a contract, and in the realm of national and international politics there is always the desire to produce something in black-and-white which can be presented to peoples by their representatives, and which can be appealed to in case of disputes between any of the parties concerned. So the phrases federal constitution, federal union, federal government, have become commonplaces and few matters have been more discussed in recent years than the possibility of federal union between long-established sovereign national states, after the pattern of the federal union which has been achieved between the more recently-established provincial states in the United States and in Canada. "Federalism" is in the air to-day in the affairs both of Church and State, and it is altogether desirable to have a clear idea of the origins and growth of the conception.

Behind "federal", as we have suggested, stands "covenant", and behind "covenant" stands a practice which dates from

the earliest experiences of mankind. Ultimately there are only two ways in which two persons may come together and remain together. (They may, of course, prefer never to come together at all or may decide to separate entirely after they have come together.) One person may submit himself completely to the other so that he becomes his property, his chattel, his slave: he seeks his own future fulfilment simply in being taken up into the other's purposes and destiny. There is no need for mutual assurances or commitments. In absolute self-negation the one allows himself to be carried forward by the other towards his desired goal. But there is another way. The two persons may commit themselves to each other for the future, each renouncing a measure of his own independence by pledging a part of himself to the other, each increasing his own potentiality by receiving some contribution from the other. In such a form of coming together there is always the conviction that in some mysterious way whatever may be given up on either side is more than repaid by what is received within the union. In other words there is always the belief that future existence *within* the covenant is better than past existence *outside* the covenant, that the never-ending process of give-and-take, of demand-and-receive, of renunciation-and-reward, is a *forward* process in which both partners within the covenant are moving together towards their true destiny.

Thus, whereas the process of dialectic is in its origins an intellectual process in which minds in relation to one another "jump" upwards towards the apprehension of ultimate truth, the process of the covenant is in its origins a purposive process in which wills in relation to one another *leap* forward towards the attainment of ultimate destiny. The dialectic may be arrested at any time by being expressed in a formal synthesis which is regarded as a systematic presentation of ultimate truth. The covenant may be arrested by being expressed in a formal contract which is regarded as the definitive standard for the living-together of the consenting parties. But in each of these cases there is a departure from the living dynamic quality of the original conception.

Within the continuous dialectic of common aspiration, within the continuous covenant of common purpose, both parties discover the secret of true progress. This is not to say that all intellectual systems and all social contracts are valueless. They can be of temporary value especially when they are set within the wider context which we must later consider. But as soon as they become ends in themselves, determinative for all places and for all times, they act as blocks to all progress and make creative adventure impossible.

3

Certain developments within the general area of dialectic thinking during the past century must now be briefly reviewed. The altogether revolutionary change is associated with the name of Karl Marx. As we have seen, until the time of Hegel the dialectical process had been an essentially intellectual or conversational process. But Marx and Engels saw no reason to confine the process to the realms of thought and speech. Instead they asserted that the same process is actually going on within nature itself

> and that the undoubted fact that it happens in our thought about nature is because we and our thought are a part of nature. We cannot consider nature otherwise than as a series of levels of organization, a series of dialectical syntheses. From ultimate physical particle to atom, from atom to molecule, from molecule to colloidal aggregate, from aggregate to living cell, from cell to organ, from organ to body, from animal body to social association, the series of organizational levels is complete. Nothing but energy (as we now call matter and motion) and the levels of organization (or the stabilized dialectical syntheses) at different levels have been required for the building of our world. The consequences of this point of view are boundless. Social evolution is continuous with biological evolution, and the higher stages of social organization, embodied in advanced ethics and in socialism, are not a pious hope based on optimistic ideas about human nature, but the necessary

> consequence of all foregoing evolution. We are in the midst of the dialectical process, which is not likely to stop at the bidding of those who sit, like Canute, with their feet in the water forbidding the flood of the tide.[1]

So writes a modern scientist who has been captivated by Marx's revolutionary application of the dialectical principle. By his own researches into the processes of the world of nature, he is convinced that the dialectical movement is constantly going on therein. But to claim that the whole of nature is to be interpreted as the outworking of a dialectical process is a very different matter from saying that examples of the dialectical process may continually be observed within nature. Again the claim that a process which is observable at the levels of atom and molecule and living cell must necessarily be the process at work at the level of social organization, cannot be accepted by those who hold that there is a complete discontinuity between self-directing man and the rest of nature. That movements comparable to the dialectical processes of human thought are to be observed in nature none would deny. That much of human thinking is determined or at least influenced by the processes going on in nature would also be generally allowed. But to extend these two propositions in such a way as to construct an all-inclusive theory in which nature itself and all thought about nature are manifestations of one single dialectical process is a form of intellectual *hubris* which contains its own dialectical reversal within itself.

Had Marx been simply an intellectual interpreting the dynamics of the material order in a dialectical way it is probable that his universal theory would have remained an interesting speculation and nothing more. He would have taken his place in history as a brilliant thinker who had observed the dialectical pattern in nature itself and in the dynamics of social progress. It is fair to assume, however, that few would have been concerned with his total philosophy had it not been that he combined with his dialectical thinking a covenantal zeal. The overwhelming sense of

destiny, the technique of groups meeting together to strengthen one another in a common purpose, the challenge to decision and committal—these are derived not from the dialectical tradition of Greece so much as from the covenantal tradition of Israel. As Arnold Toynbee has well expressed it:

> If Karl Marx had been challenged by some Victorian *censor morum* to give his spiritual name and address, he would have described himself as a disciple of the philosopher Hegel, applying the Hegelian dialectic to the economic and political phenomena of his day. But the elements that have made Communism an explosive force are not of Hegel's creation; they bear on their face their certificate of origin from the ancestral religious faith of the West. . . . Marx has taken the goddess "Historical Necessity" in place of Yahweh for his deity, and the internal proletariat of the Western World in place of Jewry for his chosen people, and his Messianic Kingdom is conceived of as a Dictatorship of the Proletariat; but the salient features of the Jewish Apocalypse protrude through this threadbare disguise.[2]

Thus a process which for centuries has been recognized as one of the most creative in man's search for truth has been made the key to unlock the mysteries of the whole material universe. Moreover the same pattern has been imposed upon history so that all history is regarded as the overcoming of successive contradictions in the inexorable onward movement of the dialectical process. Lastly, the self-committal within a common purpose which has throughout the long Judaeo-Christian tradition been recognized as the innermost secret of man's spiritual development has been adopted, at least in theory, as the method to be used for the attainment of man's material destiny. Whatever judgment is finally passed on the truth of Marx's doctrines there can be no doubt that through his labours the dialectical pattern has been brought to the very centre of the world's thinking and it is no matter for surprise that it should be regarded by many as the ultimate determinant of every form of human society.

4

But it is time to examine this principle under its more religious aspect. We have already seen that Covenant terminology has been freely used in history to describe the particular character of the community chosen by God to share in the outworking of His purpose. The Church, it has been claimed, is the People of the Covenant, constituted not by human pledges or agreements but by a promise and a sign instituted and established by God Himself. To be sure the Church must continue to live its life in this world but its true existence belongs to another world: a Covenant which is Divine in its origin and form cannot be affected by the changes and chances of the human situation. Must it not follow that the Church, being constituted by the Covenant, partakes of the stability and constancy which belongs to the Divine Covenant itself?

This view which contains within it a large measure of truth is yet open to perversion from two sides. On the one hand it may be interpreted to mean that the Divine Covenant has been expressed once for all in contractual terms which have literal and exact referents in human experience. (A variation of this interpretation claims that the course of time may be divided into a series of self-contained dispensations, each governed by a special Divine covenant operative only within its particular span: the covenant of each dispensation, however, is expressible in language bearing an exact correspondence to phenomena belonging to that period.) On the other hand it may be interpreted to mean that the Divine Covenant has been expressed in terms which have no referents in ordinary human experience at all. It belongs altogether to the realm of Holy Spirit and is quite independent of visible form or earthly institutions.

Examples of the first of these dangers have appeared at earlier points in our discussion. Later Judaism always tended to look for the fulfilment of God's Covenant-Promise in terms of concrete realities in space and time. If we look

at Psalm 105, for instance, we find that the call to worship and praise is based upon the recollection of the everlasting covenant, the word which God commanded to a thousand generations, which he made with Abraham and confirmed to Isaac and Jacob, saying, "Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance". These are the essential terms of the covenant, and they must be capable of literal fulfilment. A long account of the history of the chosen people follows with the promised destiny always in view. God must be faithful to His Covenant-Promise, and so in spite of all the changes and chances of history, Israel, God's Messiah, God's Chosen Covenant-People, must at length inherit the promised land. In this case the promise is the centre of interest though the law is not forgotten. In other cases the primary stress is laid upon the eternal law which constitutes the community, and the promise is made conditional upon its fulfilment. Always, however, the basic conviction is the same. God Himself is unchangeable. He has revealed His purpose in Command and Promise, and this revelation has received a concrete formulation. This too, must be unchangeable, and must constitute forever the plain and open charter of the destiny of the Chosen People of God.

In such a view the only history that is of final account is the history of the Covenant-People. And that history is not the history of growth, of struggles to learn and achieve, of the development of social institutions and the creation of cultural forms: rather it is the history of the people in relation to the Covenant—their unfaithfulness or faithfulness to the Covenant demands, their movement towards or their recession from the Covenant promises. Through it all *God's* righteousness in the sense of the upholding of His Covenant requirements, *God's* faithfulness in the sense of the sure fulfilment of His Covenant promises, cannot change. Indeed, they will break into the Covenant-people's unrighteousness and unfaithfulness at critical points of history, thereby changing their course and bringing them back within the proper bounds of their Covenant life. What happens to the

rest of the world, or to other human institutions, does not come within the direct purview of Covenant-history. All that matters is the history of the Covenant-People in relation to the Covenant, the terms of that covenant being formulated sometimes as a given Law, sometimes as a given Promise, sometimes as a given Contract, sometimes as a given Book.

The other tendency to make the eternal calling of God the focus of interest and to lay emphasis upon the mysterious choice of an elect people whose outward institutions are of no permanent significance, has operated powerfully at times of great crisis in both Jewish and Christian history, leading men to despair of all established forms and to set their hope upon the unpredictable movements of God's Spirit alone. Ultimately this leads not only to a despair of finding any God-given social forms, but even to a despair of discovering any formalized expression of God's Covenant. The Covenant, it is said, is the bond in the Holy Spirit. It is an aspect of God's eternal character through which He wills to call His elect into relationship with Himself. Being thus rooted in God's own nature, it is absolutely sure but it is also inexpressible in human terms. That God is a God who calls others and commits Himself to them is sure: who those "others" are we can never know, and any attempt to set up earthly boundaries around the true Covenant-people is blasphemy against the living God. God calls, God knows, God determines: man can only fear and hope and pray.

A modern example of this general tendency is to be found in the ecclesiology of Karl Barth. At first sight it would appear that Barth gives a high and noble place to the Church of God in his theology. "The Church was not founded," he writes, "as the result of a human intuition or in consequence of a human resolution. Neither the genius of individuals, nor the instinct or the enthusiasm of a crowd created it. No one was asked whether he wanted something in the nature of the Church. No one was endowed with the skill to build it. . . . It is the act of the exalted Jesus Christ who gave Himself to His own by giving to them His

Spirit, that makes the Church a fact, an event, amongst men".[3]

He admits that the Church is manifest in human form, but it soon appears that this form has no necessary relation to the essential truth of the Church's being. The form may seem to be impressive, it may seem to be beggarly. But the all-important question is: Can we penetrate beyond the outer form to the inner constitutive principle of the Church, namely, to Jesus Christ Himself? God's Election is election in Jesus Christ. God's Covenant is a covenant in Jesus Christ. It is through Him that the Church is elect, through Him that the Church is within the Eternal Covenant. Thus, every question about the Church is ultimately a question about Jesus Christ. Do we want to discover the criterion of the true Church of God? It is here. "The true Church is distinguished from the false only by the fact that in her, Jesus Christ is *present in power*. The true Church exists, shines out, fights against temptation and escapes the danger of becoming a false Church only where, through the power of Jesus Christ Himself, men enquire about Him, i.e., where they do not care about anything else—success or outward safeguards or about expansion or virtues and wisdom, but about Him and Him alone. Where this question is a burning one, bringing unrest and longing and anger and love, there the true Church lives. And there alone; for this alone is the question asked by faith".[4]

Barth's fervour and eloquence are such that it is not easy to subject such a passage to critical analysis. But we are only following his own directions if we press the question about Jesus Christ still further. How do we know about Jesus Christ? where do we find Him? Barth assures us that "we *can* enquire after Him, for He exists in concrete form, as witnessed to in the Bible, in the written word of prophets and apostles."[5] But is this form a *natural* form? No, for that would be Jesus Christ after the flesh. Is it a *historical* form? No, for that would be the myth of the historical Jesus. It is a *spiritual* form—the form created and ever re-created by the Holy Spirit. It is true that Barth seeks to save himself from

pure arbitrariness by insisting that the Holy Spirit operates through the witness of prophets and apostles. The Church lives by proclaiming the Gospel. But this witness, this Gospel, can never be formalized in such a way that it becomes the determinant of the form of the visible Church. God's Spirit cannot in any way be limited by natural or historical forms. At any given moment, in any given set of circumstances, the Church consists of those who through the Holy Spirit are united to Jesus Christ by faith and come together to bear witness to Him—more than this we cannot say. The only continuities are the continuity of Jesus Christ and of His Spirit. There are no continuities in natural or historical forms.

One curious qualification of this general position deserves to be mentioned, especially as it is directly connected with the notion of the covenant. In his book, *Dogmatics in Outline*, Barth devotes one chapter to a discussion of the name Jesus and the title Christ. Linking each with its Jewish background he affirms that in Jesus Christ "we are dealing with the man in whom the mission of this one people . . . the Jewish people, is set forth and revealed. . . . Israel is nothing apart from Jesus Christ; but we also have to say that Jesus Christ would not be Jesus Christ apart from Israel. So first of all we must look for a moment at this Israel, in order to be able really to look at Jesus Christ" (p. 74).

What then, do we see as we look at Israel? We see, says Barth, a people with whom God has concluded *a covenant.* But this word "covenant" must not be interpreted by any reference to universal human experience. It is defined once and for all by "the fact that God called Abraham out of the nations, and bound Himself to him and to his family, his 'seed'. The whole history of the Old Testament and so of the people Israel, is nothing but the story of this covenant between God and this people, between this people and God who bears the name of Jehovah" (p. 74). Then, with great emphasis, Barth declares that "Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of the covenant concluded by God with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and it is the reality of *this* covenant—not the

idea of any covenant—which is the basis, the meaning and the goal of creation, that is, of everything that is real in distinction from God" (p. 76). Still further he goes on to describe the "extension of the covenant" far beyond those of Abraham's seed to a Church composed of Jews and heathen. Henceforth the people of God has a double existence—as Church and Synagogue. The Synagogue is "the shadow-picture of the Church, which accompanies it through the centuries, and, whether the Jews are aware of it or not, actually and really participates in the witness of God's revelation in the world" (p. 81). At an earlier point Barth has recalled with approval the story of the physician of Frederick the Great, who cited the Jews as a "proof of the existence of God". "In fact," he says, "if the question of a proof of God is raised, one need merely point to this simple historical fact. For in the person of the Jew there stands a witness before our eyes, the witness of God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and in that way with us all" (p. 75).

This whole chapter, when set over against Barth's emphasis in his other writings upon the Church as event, as the act of the exalted Jesus Christ through His Spirit, seems strangely foreign. In effect, Barth is saying that through His covenant with Abraham God laid hold of a particular racial strain, a selected biological succession, and guaranteed its separate continuance throughout the history of mankind. God Himself is so bound up with this particular racial strain that its very continuance can be regarded as an outward and visible proof of His own existence. It is true that the covenant was brought to fulfilment in Jesus Christ—though the meaning which Barth attaches to the word "fulfil" is far from clear. Through Him the covenant is "extended" to a visible Church—though again in what sense the Church is "visible" is nowhere made plain. In fact, the whole section is virtually beyond criticism just because such words as "covenant", "history", "fulfil", are used in so highly individualistic and arbitrary a way, that they hardly come within the range of understanding of any others except

Barth himself. He *appears* to mean that the Jewish people exists solely as the result of God's act in and through Abraham: that the Christian Church exists solely as the result of God's act in and through Jesus Christ. What the connection is, however, between the first (which he calls "the shadow-picture") and the second, it seems impossible to define in ordinary language.

Thus Barth's main position seems to be that the Church "*exists*, where, and in so far as it dares to live by the act of its living Lord".[6] This act was and is in the Spirit: it cannot be defined or delimited within human forms of speech. On the other hand, in an attempt to do justice to the Old Testament, Barth sets the Church within the context of the Abrahamic covenant, claiming that Jesus Christ "fulfils" the covenant and "extends" it into a visible Church. These two positions seem to be irreconcilable. The God of the covenant with Abraham is so different from the God of the Word in Jesus Christ that it seems impossible to make any vital connection between them. The truth is that "covenant", as Barth uses the term, is no true covenant. It is impossible to build up a doctrine of the Church in covenantal terms when the word itself is used to represent a purely arbitrary action of a deterministic kind. It is not thus that the Christian Church has understood its existence within the Covenant of Jesus Christ.

5

We have been compelled to reject the theory that the Church is the community whose nature and form are completely determined either by an initial Divine covenant or by a succession of Divine covenants wholly unrelated to one another in form or substance. This does not mean, however, that we should wish in any way to minimize the importance of the Covenant category within ecclesiological thought. In fact, in our judgment, the covenant is the most important of all the factors which constitute the life of the Church, and

we shall now seek to suggest some of the ways in which the Church partakes of the character of a Covenant-society.

(1) *The Church, like every participant in a human covenant, is related to the Other through a sign or symbol which institutes the covenant and gives form to the newly-established relationship.* The investigation of the origin and meaning of signs and symbols is one of the most complex of all fields of human enquiry. Possibly sounds and signs were first employed as a means of purely individual self-expression—the cooings and the gurglings and the limb movements of infant humanity. But even if this was the case, it was when verbal or visual signs became the means of inter-relationship and inter-communication that they assumed an immeasurably greater significance in human affairs. Certain relations in life belong to the very nature of things, and can be expressed in direct and natural ways. But if there is to be an extension of experience through extended relationships there must be the use of *indirect* means, and it appears to be precisely the function of verbal and visual signs to provide this means. Moreover, the extended relationships thus produced form the groundwork of extended community life. Thus extended community is a direct consequence of extended relationships expressed in signs. The sign provides the *form* of the new community.

Perhaps the most obvious example of this principle is to be found in the human institution of marriage. Man and woman are attracted to one another by natural forces over which they have no direct control: that is to say, there is nothing self-induced or self-generated in the urge which causes a man to desire union with a woman, or vice versa. The natural urge, moreover, may be allowed its consummation and a "togetherness" of a certain kind may be achieved. But it is a known fact that the sexes are not only drawn to one another by a mutual attraction; they are also repelled from one another by a second force which is not normally as strong as the first but which can never be ignored. There is always a certain dialectical ambivalence in the natural relationship between man and woman, and

it can easily happen that an achievement of a purely natural "togetherness" can be followed immediately by a sense of natural revulsion. The *natural* relationship is in itself an unsteady and unstable thing. But there is the possibility of another kind of relationship—one that is made more permanent and stable by the use of the indirect "signs" of verbal promises and dramatic actions. Marriage customs have varied in different parts of the world but their essential form has shown an extraordinary consistency. Through promises of faithfulness to one another, through the giving and receiving of a symbol of union with one another, a covenant is established. Henceforth the new social unit grows stronger or weaker in proportion to the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of the partners within the covenant.

Now it must be emphasized that in establishing a covenant, the natural relationship is not repudiated. Rather the covenantal is built upon the basis of the dialectical. Yet it must also be emphasized that the covenantal can be extended in its field of reference in space and time more easily than the natural can ever be. A sign does not depend upon immediate personal contiguity in the same way that a natural urge does. A promise can be made through the lips of an accredited agent or by transmission in writing: a gift can be sent across space or can be suggested by a symbolic form. So too a promise can be recalled to memory from the past, a symbolic action can be performed to represent a happening of an earlier time. Thus the covenant offers greater possibilities for the extension and permanence of community-forms than does the natural dialectical relationship alone.

How, then, are we to apply this principle to the relationship between God and His Church and to the question of the form of the Church? We believe that it is at the very heart of the Biblical view of life-in-society that God enters into relationship with men by means of covenants. He speaks to a man in a particular language. He pledges Himself by a particular sign. But what is this particular sign-language? It is, we suggest, *the pressure of a critical*

historical event. (It is the pressure of the regularities of nature which acts as a moulding influence upon the *natural* community.) Some critical, revolutionary event challenges a man to see God at work, to hear the voice of God calling him to identify himself with this judging-saving activity. In other words, God speaks to an Abraham, a Moses, an Elijah, a Jeremiah through the pressure of a critical event in human affairs. He reveals Himself as judging human pride and arrogance. He reveals Himself as saving the humble and meek. The prophet who responds to the call of God enters into the Covenant by accepting in faith the sign whose pattern has been disclosed in historical event. He pledges himself to the God who has spoken and the new relationship is established on the basis of the covenant-sign. Such a new departure, however, cannot be without its effect upon the wider community to which the prophet is related. His action has the effect of an earthquake tremor arousing and startling men, especially those in closest proximity to the seismic disturbance. But such a reflex action is not in itself sufficient to establish a new community after the pattern of the Covenant. It is only as others respond in faith to the sign which he transmits, the word which he proclaims, that the new community is moulded and shaped according to the form of the given Covenant.

Is the new Divine community, then, formed by the covenant alone? No, for the new revelation must relate itself to the already existing complex of dialectical relationships. Does the new Divine community correspond in every respect to a community established by a human covenant? No, for in making a human covenant man stands over against man and the parties to the covenant already share a vast area of life in common. The covenant serves to unite them within a particular section of human experience where hitherto they have stood apart. But in the Divine Covenant it is God who stands over against man and the parties to the covenant share nothing in common save that man has been created in the image of God. The covenant then brings them together within a wholeness of moral self-revelation. God

makes Himself known as the judge of man's historical life who condemns all pride and self-sufficiency: He makes Himself known also as the redeemer of man's historical experience, who sets him free to enjoy the blessings of forgiveness and fellowship. Man, on the other hand, confesses his own bondage and darkness: he casts himself upon the mercy of God to gain freedom and light. Thus there can be no *complete* correspondence between the Church of God and a human covenant-community. In the latter, man and man, group and group, commit themselves to one another within a common sign representing a pledged "togetherness" of historic destiny: in the former God and man, God and men commit themselves to one another within a common sign representing the judgment and salvation of God, the despair and hope of man. There is no completeness of mutuality, for God is God, and man is man. But out of His gracious self-limitation God commits Himself to man so that man may in an act of self-transcendence commit himself to God: and the Covenant-form must ever bear witness to this dialectical movement.

(2) *The sign which constitutes the form of the Church, like the sign which determines the nature of a human covenant, is directed primarily to the future rather than to the past.* Here is one characteristic difference between an organic and a covenant-union. For whereas, in Leslie Paul's vivid phrase, "The organism is nothing less than the incarnation of a stretch of time individually lived through, and a summary of the time racially lived through,"[7] a covenant is the proleptic expression of a stretch of time yet to be lived through, it is the pattern of a union which can only be fully realized in the *eschaton* itself. In his valuable discussion of the Covenant in his *Theology of the Old Testament*, Dr. A. B. Davidson points out that the covenant symbolism was by its very nature prophetic "for a symbolism from its nature always embodies ideas in their perfection" (p. 238). This does not rob the sign of its present religious worth, but it does make the reference primarily future—the union is to be realized *in via*.

That the Church is viewed in the Bible primarily as an

eschatological, rather than as an ontological community, seems hardly open to question. In the Old Testament the "sign" of the Church is the word and career of the prophet, or the Messiah, or the Servant, or the Son of Man: in the New Testament it is the Christ Himself, in word and deed. In the Old Testament the Church began to be constituted but the Covenant was always pointing towards the future: in the New Testament the Church attains a fuller realization, though again the "sign" of its existence is still directed towards the *eschaton*. The Church is not identical with the Kingdom of God, but life in the Kingdom is her destiny, and that destiny has been marked upon her by the sign of the Son of Man. To say this is not to give a complete summary of Biblical ecclesiology—there are sections such as the Epistle to the Ephesians where the ontological nature of the Church gains serious consideration. But the main stream of Biblical theology runs towards the future, and the form of the Church must be understood within its eschatological frame of reference.

Yet, as we have already partly suggested, there is a difference between the Church and a human covenant-community even in this respect. In a human covenant both parties clasp hands with their eyes towards the future and with a mutual pledge to achieve together some better destiny than they have hitherto known. But each is on the same level at least in this respect—that neither has had experience of the future, and neither can in any way control the future. The past of each is carried over into the future and must to some extent influence the future, but more than this we cannot say. Yet when God initiates the Covenant the situation is clearly different. Though He may so limit Himself within the time process that the movement forward in covenant with man is a real experience of relationship and not a fictitious one, the end must be sure, the goal of God's purpose must be ultimately attainable. Thus a complete equality and mutuality there cannot be. Even in the Covenant-form as expressed in Jesus Christ there is a core of Divine self-realization, an earnest of the fulfilment of the

Divine purpose, however hard it may be to define it in human language. Thus the Church's Covenant looks to the future and yet it is not an entirely uncertain future. Changes and chances there will be, but at last the Church must enjoy the fulfilment of its Covenant-charter in the eternal Kingdom of God.

(3) *The Church's covenant, like a human covenant, can only be maintained within the living dialectic of a continuing conversation between the covenanting parties.* Once a covenant has been made the forces operative in every historical situation begin to work upon it. On the one hand the forces of conservatism seek to "dig themselves in" by appealing to the literal provisions of the covenant agreement. On the other hand the forces of radicalism seek to "contract themselves out" by appealing to the new demands of a new age which call for new forms of social organization. If these opposing groups can be kept together within a continuing conversation and inter-relationship there is always the hope and possibility that the covenant can be modified and re-interpreted without being jettisoned altogether. But in human affairs there is no certainty that the opposing groups can be kept together. The conservatives may withdraw into a place of isolation and set up their covenant as the four walls of a house of the dead. The radicals may project themselves into an unreal world where there is no place for a covenant which reminds man of the actualities of his historical situation. Thus any human covenant may perish within the dialectic of the historical process. In fact the path of human history is littered with broken treaties and discarded agreements, bearing witness to the opposing as well as to the uniting forces which are always operative in human affairs.

Now the Church as a Covenant-society is not exempt from the influences of these dialectical historical forces. In fact as we trace the history of the Covenant-community through the Bible and down through the centuries of Christian experience we see how again and again the Church came near to perishing within either a rigid conservatism or a rootless radicalism. Yet the Church has not perished for on one

side of the Covenant there stands not a human partner, but a Divine. The conversation which is necessary to the perpetuation of the Covenant cannot be finally broken off for God does not cease to speak. He seeks out a man, He finds a remnant and He *renews* the Covenant. The form of the covenant is not wholly new for it is related to the past: yet it is new in vitality and power, for it is related to the future, and holds out afresh the promise of fellowship and life in the Kingdom of God. The Church's covenant is not unaffected by the dialectical forces of history: at the same time it is not finally overcome by them but is constantly renewed in its conflict with them by the Word of the Living God.

(4) *The Church's Covenant, like a human covenant, is based upon man's freedom of self-determination.* Nothing is more characteristic of human covenants than their absolute dependence upon the voluntary principle. If there is coercion, it is meaningless to speak of covenant. This does not mean that either party to the covenant can act in a completely uncontrolled and unconditioned way. A man who enters into a covenant carries his past with him even if he solemnly repudiates his past: he is also still related to a particular environment, even if he intends to break free from that environment. Each party is influenced by unseen forces: each party is limited by natural laws over which he has no direct control. Yet in the last resort each party believes that in the making of the covenant he or she acts in a voluntary way. Impulsive forces might drive them together but in a covenant they themselves determine to stay together. Before the covenant is made it is open to either party to withdraw. Once it is made the only freedom is that which exists for the deepening and the strengthening of the covenant relationship.

Now in two respects this pattern of free self-determination is not wholly applicable to the Divine Covenant-community. In the first place—and this is a consideration which enters into all that we have so far said about a covenant between corporate communities—it is questionable how far a society can act with what could legitimately be called *self-deter-*

mination. Can the members of a society ever become so intimately related to one another that the society as a whole acts with a single intention in the way that an individual, for instance, voluntarily changes his position? A good deal has been written about "corporate personality" in Israel. It is pointed out that Israel is often personified in the Old Testament, and the nation as a whole is addressed as if it were a single, self-determining individual. But although this view of society as one all-inclusive organism is certainly to be found in the Old Testament, and although prophets and psalmists in apostrophe and rhetoric continually refer to the nation as a single whole, yet the steady movement throughout the Bible is towards the development of a sense of responsibility in the individual, related as he undoubtedly is to the corporate whole. When *moral* principles are at stake a society cannot act immediately as a single person. A decision may have to be made in the name of the whole, and this decision is potentially binding upon the whole. But the whole can only act effectively towards the implementation of the decision in so far as each single member of the society confirms the decision by his own voluntary act of self-determination. In ideal, in imagination, in a figure of speech, the community can be viewed as a self-determining personality. In crises, such as a declaration of war, a nation can act as one man. And yet, in the last resort, we know that we are speaking ideally, or imaginatively, or metaphorically, when we say that France understands Germany better than Britain, or that the United States declared war on Germany in 1941. It is true that an individual may hand over a measure of his own responsibility to a representative in a particular field of activity. But if he hands over his *whole* responsibility he ceases to be a man, and a society acting entirely as an individual would be a society of automata and not of free men. The freedom of the individual can only be safeguarded by denying a similar measure of freedom to the community of which he forms a part. Thus a society entering into a covenant acts with less freedom than an individual in similar circumstances. The correspondence is not exact.

In the second place, if man stands over against God in a covenant-relationship there is obviously a serious difference between the quality of the freedom exercised on either side. Certain limitations on man's freedom we have already mentioned, but there is a more serious limitation still: it is the limitation imposed by the entail of sin. And whatever may be the limitations to which God in His grace subjects Himself, there can be no question of any limitation of this kind. God in His freedom to give and to demand stands over against man who is limited in his capacity to receive and to obey by his own past sin, and by the sin of the society of which he is a part. In such a case where free grace stands over against narrow self-centredness, where freedom in truth and righteousness confronts false standards and unworthy ends, a covenant can be made only in suffering and pain. Intimations of this pattern of experience may be found even within the sphere of human relationships—as witness the record of Hosea's covenant-relations with his wife. It is, however, the witness of the Bible that it is in *God's* relations with mankind that the pattern comes to full expression. God stands over against Israel as husband to adulterous wife, as father to ungrateful children, as king to rebellious people, as the holy and living One to a band of idolaters. There can be no coming together, no co-venant, except through tension and conflict. Yet in the sign of the suffering prophet, the sign of the suffering Servant, the sign of the crucified Son of God, God's freedom is manifested even to the point of the willing bearing of travail and shame. And in a sense man's freedom is also manifested, even though it be the freedom to despise and reject the offer of the uttermost grace of God. The freedoms are utterly unequal—indeed they are in mutual opposition to one another. Yet out of the clash of opposing freedoms the Covenant is made, and man still has the opportunity to go forward to discover a true freedom in a willing surrender to the Covenant Grace of God.

The Covenant of the Church is the Cross. It condemns the pride and rebellion of *all* men: it offers grace and sal-

vation to all those who will freely accept the Gospel. The freedom of the Church within the Covenant is less than that of an individual within a human covenant, for the form of the Covenant is not of the Church's making, and the response to the Covenant can never be single and direct in the way that the committal of the individual should be. Yet it is universal in scope and everlasting in reference. It is truly named a Covenant, for in it God and man come together in mutual reconciliation. Man, though conditioned by countless factors in his natural and social environments, is yet able to say "I will" to the Divine "I will" and so to take his place voluntarily and effectively within the community of which he has already, potentially and ideally, been constituted a member. However hard it may be to reconcile man's free decision with God's electing grace, the paradox must be maintained, and man's status as a free citizen of the Covenant-community, the Church, must be upheld.

Let us summarize the argument of this chapter. The presence of a "dialectical" pattern both in the processes of nature and in the movements of history can be confidently assumed. The "covenant" pattern through which two parties unite within a common purpose is one of the chief forms of creative social organization. The Church may be regarded as the Covenant Society brought into being by God's gracious act in which He has covenanted and re-covenanted Himself to man. In so far as the Church continues to live in the world it is subject to the dialectical processes in the economic and social orders which affect all other human societies. Yet in so far as its existence is within the Covenant it is moving forward to its true goal. As we have seen, the dialectical and the covenantal patterns have much in common, but whereas the dialectical may be roughly described as an upward movement through the constant interaction of contrary principles, the covenantal implies a forward movement through the constant interrelationship of personal agents. Thus the earthly history of the Church discloses a dialectical pattern comparable to

that of society at large. Yet it is the faith of God's people that the Church is also held within a Divine dialectic and that in this dialectic of the Covenant relationship the Church is enabled to transcend the dialectical processes of nature and history, and to enjoy already sacramental foretastes of its final life of fellowship in the eternal Kingdom of God.

Chapter Twelve

HEIRS OF THE COVENANT IN ONE BODY

I

THE most common diagnosis of the cause of our present discontents is that they spring from the steady decay of home and family life. Juvenile delinquency is said to be due to lack of parental control: nervous ailments are traced to wrong relationships in the home: unrest and dissatisfaction in society at large is said to be a reflection of frustration and discontent in the life of the family. Whether this diagnosis is correct or not, it bears witness to a deep-seated conviction which is still retained at least in the Western world—the conviction, namely, that no nearer approach to the ideal community can be found than that which obtains in an integrated and yet richly varied family-life. The family is the basic social unit, and this means that if the family grows weak the life of the whole society is imperilled.

But what is the secret of family life at its best? The secret, we believe, is to be found in the fact that in a family the organic and covenantal principles which have formed the subject of our enquiry are held together in a creative relationship. The organic principle is represented by the biological character of the family-unit, by the continuity of life with the past, by the embodiment of a particular cultural tradition, by the constant physical contacts of the members which reach their highest expression in the sexual union of husband and wife, by common eating and drinking, by common sympathy and even suffering, by the variety-in-unity of different ages, different sexes, different capacities, different interests, which are all to be found within the one family organism. In a very real sense the family is embodied in every member: the parts attain their true meaning only within the life of the whole. Yet the covenant principle is

also represented. The different personalities which constitute the family constantly encounter one another, sometimes in tension, sometimes in deepening fellowship. The life of the family is not simply a smooth unfolding of an inherent biological pattern. There are inevitably tensions. On the other hand there are still deeper reconciliations. An adjustment here, an act of comprehension there, a renunciation, a sharing of another's joy—in direct relations with one another the members of the family can grow in character, in insight, in purposefulness, in charity. Thus through the constant interplay of the organic and the covenantal principles there comes into existence a growing "togetherness" as well as a developing freedom, a unity in diversity, a fulfilment of the destiny of the individual within the framework of the corporate whole. This is the ideal, however far it may exceed the normal standard of attainment.

Now it would be generally agreed that one of the causes of the breakdown of the family has been the increasing mechanization of human life with the resultant freedom of movement within the social framework. These factors have also affected other forms of community life—the village, the craft, the small business. Men are no longer intimately related to a particular environment and their life together loses much of its organic quality: they are no longer intimately related to one another, and the covenantal quality of their social life is also lost. Yet attempts have been made to recover these qualities on the large scale by making either the organic or the covenantal the essential guiding principle of the life of the wider community.

We have seen this process at work on the one hand in the great socialistic experiments of modern times. These have differed in their particular patterns—the nationalistic socialism of Germany, the communistic socialism of the U.S.S.R., the democratic socialism of the United Kingdom. But all are alike in believing that there is a certain inherent structure in the very nature of things which can provide the pattern for the ideal human society. In this connection the word "organic" has been used very loosely to describe any

state in which the welfare of the particular individual is subordinated to the welfare of the whole: in this sense the three societies already mentioned could all be called "organic". But the more important distinguishing mark of socialistic politics of modern times is that in each case the attempt is made to organize society *scientifically* so that its form may correspond to the processes which can be observed in the universe at large. The Nazi ideology was built upon the fundamental assumption that the world as such is a vast mechanism: society then must also be organized on mechanistic principles, and every part must be made to function smoothly within the totalitarian whole. The Soviet ideology is built upon the fundamental assumption that the world is an all-inclusive dialectical process: society must so be organized that it will gear into this process and be conformed to the material order which is itself completely determined by the dialectical principle. British Socialism is built upon the assumption that there is a certain variety in the constitution of the universe, and that because every particular country has its own geographical and historical conditions, every national state will take on something of the character of its own particular environment. Its traditions help to sustain its life and must not be changed overnight; its economy is intimately related to the natural resources of the country, and no theoretical planning must ever forget this fact. At the same time even Socialism in Britain is convinced that there *is* an ideal pattern for the State and that its nature can be discovered by patient investigation and careful analysis. Further it is convinced that *all* members of the State must work towards conformity to this given pattern, however much it may still attempt to provide room for individual variations.

The twin dangers to which every society is exposed which builds the structure of its common life upon the supposed given-ness of the natural order, are the dangers of becoming more and more rigid in its theory, and more and more coercive in its practice. This has already been demonstrated in Germany and Russia, and it remains to be seen

whether Britain, and perhaps China, can avoid these perils. Once it has been assumed that society *must* have a particular pattern if it is to conform to the inexorable processes of natural development, it becomes difficult to resist the conclusion that the state *must* be moulded into this shape at the earliest possible moment. So it becomes natural for those in positions of responsibility to begin to use force in order to make their theories come true. Our own contention would be, as we shall suggest later, that the only way of avoiding these perils is by giving the fullest possible scope to the operation of the covenantal principle within the organic environment. Even so, it is open to question whether this principle can even survive within a system whose total structure is determined by some theory of organic given-ness. Undoubtedly British Socialism is striving at all costs to preserve the values of the parliamentary system, and of free discussion in speech and writing. But its first allegiance is to its socialistic theory, and it is a very real question whether the values which it wishes to preserve will not gradually be eviscerated within the comprehensive organic pattern of the whole.

Turning to the other side of the picture, we are aware of nations which have sought to make the covenantal pattern the main guiding principle of their comprehensive social life. So long as the Whig and Liberal tradition remained strong this was true of Great Britain, though the covenantal principle has always operated in close relation to the given organic context. But the countries which provide the best illustrations of the operation of this other principle are the U.S.A. and Canada. Their whole communal existence has been allowed to develop on the assumption that the less there can be of central planning the better and that there is no given structure within the natural order which man cannot master and mould for his own benefit, and (within the context of free competition) for the benefit of his fellows too. Until quite recently "the whole" has been a vague and shadowy conception for it has been constantly expanding in its purely physical aspects and constantly changing in its

human constituent elements. Gradually it has come to include a certain well-defined territory and a fairly homogeneous population, but still the present varieties are so great and the possibilities of future developments and mutations so unlimited that it is hard for the imagination to think of it in what might be called an organic way. So what has proved to be the way of advance within the local community is assumed to be the way of progress for the nation as a whole. Free debate, free competition, free manipulation of the material order, freedom to co-operate for mutual advantage—these have been the positive principles of local development. On the negative side, a minimum of regulations have been accepted for the prevention of disorder and anarchy but there has ever been a deep distrust of any legislation which might limit the freedom of individuals or of the community to relate themselves pragmatically to new situations as they might arise.

The twin dangers to which all societies are exposed who build the structure of their common life upon the basis of free relationships between its individual members (in competition as well as in co-operation), are the dangers of being without any clear common policy and of failing to act decisively in any given crisis. The covenant method works admirably when men meet face to face, consider matters of common interest, agree upon certain limitations of individual freedom for the obvious common advantage, commit themselves to united action to meet the threat of some common foe. But when men can no longer meet face to face, when matters debated by their representatives at the centre are no longer obviously related to the interests of those on the circumference, when limitations are proposed which seem to threaten the freedom of the individual for no reason that he can understand, then the difficulties of framing a truly common policy are almost insuperable. And even when, by processes of education, men are brought to realize that certain patterns of conduct are likely to prove beneficial for the welfare of the whole society, it is still not easy to induce them to commit themselves to vigorous action when no

immediate advantage of their own is at stake and when there is no certainty of corresponding action on the part of other members of the community.

Perhaps the outstanding example in modern times of the breakdown of the covenantal principle in the context of a large-scale community was provided by the League of Nations. Debates continued interminably, but a common policy seldom emerged, and when the necessity for action arose, individual members were either unable or unwilling to act on their own initiative, and before anything like common action could be engineered the crisis had passed and it was too late. Already it is clear that the same perils endanger the effectiveness of the United Nations Organization. It minimizes the importance of organic factors and assumes that through the meeting together of chosen representatives common policies can be framed and common decisions to act taken. But the creative character of a meeting between the representatives of the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. cannot, except in an altogether minimal degree, become a bond of relationship between an ordinary citizen of Moscow and his *vis-à-vis* in New York. Actions which may seem desirable as men consult together at Lake Success have to pass through so many channels for confirmation before anything can actually be done that there tends to be a despair of achieving creative action. And what is true of the League of Nations and of the United Nations tends to be true, on a smaller scale, of the great federal democracies of the United States and Canada—though in their case organic processes have had time to advance to a certain maturity before it has become necessary for the nation as a whole to commit itself to definite policies and united actions. The fact is that the covenantal principle can only operate effectively within a truly organic context—though our own conviction is that a society in which the covenantal principle is given the place of priority is in a healthier condition than that in which the covenantal is definitely subordinated to the organic.[1] Whether this is so or not, there can be little doubt that if the United States and Canada are to continue

to exist as federal democracies they will need to give increasing attention to those organic patterns which form the essential framework of any society which seeks to function as a whole rather than as a confused medley of unconnected parts.

What we have just said of great secular societies is equally true in the ecclesiastical realm. The Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox provide examples of organic societies on the large scale and they have clearly fallen prey to those same dangers which have beset the organic state. Nothing is more characteristic of the Church owning the papal allegiance than its movement towards a rigid uniformity in theory and towards a coercive discipline in practice. The Eastern Orthodox has avoided the centralized uniformity of Rome and has been content to leave the use of force in the hands of the secular authority. But at least in official circles there has been an unwillingness to allow for any divergencies from the traditional dogma of the Church or for any vital relationships to new conditions and new environments. On the other hand nothing is more characteristic of the history of Protestantism than its many attempts to weld together its constituent parts by framing Church constitutions and confessions of faith. After periods of revolutionary change in which individual initiative and group loyalties have played the major part, attempts have regularly been made to construct loose federations of those congregations or ecclesiastical societies which share a common concern and approximate to one another in their faith and order. Conferences of accredited representatives take place, a covenant or confession or set of articles or constitution or agreed report is drawn up, an assembly or convention or conference or synod or council is appointed to meet at regular intervals and so the covenant principle is adopted as the determinative feature of the larger society. But the very same weaknesses have manifested themselves in Protestant Church circles as have been already noted in the field of politics. The remoteness of the representatives from their accrediting groups, the tendency of conferences to deal in abstractions which have no vital relationship to existential

situations and the powerlessness to implement in practice what may have been agreed upon in the central assembly—all these weaknesses have made the progress of schemes for larger federations within Protestantism slow and often discouraging. Whereas in Catholic circles overmuch reliance has been placed upon the organic (and often the mechanistic) principle in isolation, within Protestant circles the tendency has been to rely too much on the covenantal (and often the contractual). Some better way must be found if the one Church of Christ is to become a living reality within that large-scale society which is a necessary concomitant of the unified physical world of our day.

2

What then is the better way? We have been moving steadily towards our main conclusion that both principles are essential for the life and growth of any true society, whether on the scale of the individual family or on that of the universal whole. Our greatest dangers in every realm of life to-day are narrowness and over-specialization. With the breakdown of the home or small community of which we have spoken, man has become aware of his solitude, and his feelings of malaise and loneliness have become ever more intense. So he has turned to some sectional group—a club, a union, a church, a party—to find that sense of fellowship in wholeness which he craves. Thus only, it seems, can he find security and freedom and discipline and a worthwhile goal. But all too easily the sectional group, valuable as it is in providing for the satisfaction of these needs at certain stages in his career, becomes an end in itself and the vision of the all-embracing whole is lost. If it is retained, it tends to be pictured simply as a vast magnification of the smaller society with which he has become familiar. He gives himself up to a study of the history and traditions and structure of his own particular group and applies his results to the larger society which is in process of formation. Provision

for variety he regards as compromise: allowance for future change he regards as disloyalty to the past: flexibility he regards as inconsistency. So we are in danger both in Church and State of seeing the emergence of vast unities which are both narrow in design and terribly limited in their possibilities of creative development.

But from many sides we are being told to-day that the existence of two inter-related principles can mean not weakness but strength, not mutual stultification but mutual fructification. Consider, for example, the domain of science. Whitehead has a fascinating section in *Science and the Modern World*, in which he comments on the two theories (Newton's and Huyghens') concerning the physical nature of light. "The two theories," he says, "are contradictory. In the eighteenth century Newton's theory was believed, in the nineteenth century Huyghens' theory was believed. To-day there is one large group of phenomena which can be explained only on the wave theory, and another large group which can be explained only on the corpuscular theory. Scientists have to leave it at that, and wait for the future, in the hope of attaining some wider vision which reconciles both. . . . We should wait: but we should not wait passively, or in despair. The clash is a sign that there are wider truths and finer perspectives within which a reconciliation of a deeper religion and a more subtle science will be found. . . . A clash of doctrines is not a disaster—it is an opportunity."[2] This last sentence may be regarded as a key to Whitehead's whole philosophy for, as Miss Dorothy M. Emmet, one of his most sympathetic interpreters, writes "He develops the idea that depth or intensity of order depends on the capacity to hold together diverse elements in experience as contrasts, instead of dismissing them as incompatibilities. It is the razor edge between the dismissal of contrasts in favour of stable, if trivial, uniformity, and their admission at the cost of the disintegration of the organism."[3] At times, as Professor Hocking has suggested, Whitehead may have carried his own doctrine of organism to an unjustified extreme but one may imagine that none would have been more willing than

he to consider the implications of the "looseness, waste, emptiness, and relative independence" in the universe to which Professor Hocking himself draws attention.

Again, in his notable book on *Biological Principles*, Professor J. H. Woodger examines what may be called the materialistic and the developmental views of the physical organism and urges that each must be abandoned as an ultimate theoretical interpretation of the nature of the world of sense. "What is wanted," he says (and he is speaking of science in general), "is more co-operation and less competition between rival theories. The notion that one theory excludes another and is to be regarded, therefore, as a competitor to be destroyed arises from our desire to regard our work as conclusive and exhaustive of what there is to know. But the simple consideration already urged that one system of abstractions cannot possibly from the nature of the case be exhaustive will show us how mistaken such an attitude is. We put the emphasis on the wrong place when we take our ambitious constructive schemes too seriously as a foundation to which everything must conform, when in truth they are only superstructures always liable to revision when increasing knowledge demands it."[4] How well this might have been written of rival ecclesiologies!

Or we may turn to the field of history. We live in a day when the interpretation of the meaning of history has ceased to be an exercise confined to academic or ecclesiastical circles: the man in the street wants to know whether there is anything in the past which throws light upon his present difficulties and his future destiny. Is there a pattern discernible in history—or a purpose, or a goal? These are questions which have become matters of urgent debate, and one theory after another has been formulated to provide a satisfactory interpretation of the long journey of mankind through the centuries of recorded history. For some while these interpretations tended to be in terms of a single idea—the history of progress or of moral improvement or of cultural advancement or of gradual evolution. But it has become increasingly clear that no single idea will cover all the facts. History is not

simply a history of necessity—though the element of givenness in any situation can never be ignored. Neither is history simply a history of spontaneity—though the element of novelty in any situation must always be given due place. The material environment has always acted as a limiting factor on man's inventiveness: but it has also acted as a stimulus and a challenge to his endeavours. History is the record of the unyieldingness of material structures: it is also the record of the splendour of spiritual achievements. It is set in a framework of great reliabilities and continuities: yet it is made up of dramatic changes and unexpected developments. It discloses massive integrations and at the same time is punctuated by revolutionary crises.

Thus the most recent interpretations of history seem unwilling to allow that any single theory can comprehend the whole. No theory which is tied entirely to material factors or to social developments or to individual achievements or to purely spiritual forces will do. Full allowance must be made for the influence of economic conditions but also for the inventiveness of the human mind, for the steady continuity of the corporate whole but also for the unexpected originality of the individual personality. To seize upon one aspect of the truth and assume it to be the whole is to sacrifice the varieties and uncertainties of history to the interests of a simple dogma and to rob human life of its zest and adventure.

Thus it is not cowardice nor love of compromise which causes us to insist that neither the organic nor the covenantal principle can be made the key to unlock all the mysteries of the Church's life. It is the recognition rather that the universe and man's existence in the universe cannot be interpreted in terms of any single set of human categories. The clash of thought in Europe between those who hold that political unity can be achieved in a functional or organic way and those who hold that it can only be reached in a federal or covenantal way is not likely to be resolved by a complete victory for either side. If unity is to be achieved it is quite certain that it can only be stable if it gives full place

to both the functional *and* the federal principles, and the sooner this is recognized the better for all concerned. So it is in the life of the Church. The Church is the Body of Christ: the Church is also the people of the New Covenant. The Church is a Sacramental Organism: it is also a Federal Organization. The Church is the social organism of the Divine Logos manifested in time: the Church is also the covenantal community of the Divine Redeemer constituted through His Cross.

The organic idea stirs our imagination to view the Church as a whole in its intimate timeless relation with Christ Himself: to view it as committed to share with Him His vocation to witness and suffering: to view each single member and each local congregation as essential parts within the functioning of the whole: to view these parts as related to one another in the sharing of mutual duties and responsibilities: to see the Church as the One Body indwelt by the One Holy Spirit and governed by the One Head: to see the Church as possessing a continuing life and a harmoniously ordered existence—the outward expression of this continuity and order being found in its ministry and its forms of worship: to see the Church finally as the Body of the Logos manifested in time as the precursor and the extension of the Divine Incarnation. The covenant idea stimulates our minds to conceive of the Church as a living community, related to Christ through a Covenant established in history: to view it as thereby committed to a life of personal obedience and faith: to see each single member consciously committing himself to accept the grace of God and to yield himself to His service: to see all members related to one another as they become fellow-workers in the Kingdom of God: to see the Church as the People of the New Covenant, enjoying the liberty which the Divine Spirit creates: to see the Church as finding its continuity and its order in the Covenant-sign which expresses the grace and the requirements of God: to view the Church finally as the community called into being by the Divine Redeemer, appearing in shadow under the Old Testament dispensation and in substance under the

New. These are some of the notable implications of the organic and federal principles which have emerged in the course of our enquiry. As Professor T. W. Manson has well said, there is a deep-seated paradox involved in thinking of the Church as on the one hand the result of the Atonement and on the other hand as the continuation of the Incarnation. Yet it is a paradox which we cannot avoid if we are to be faithful to the New Testament. "It is," he says, "part and parcel of Christianity itself. Somehow we have to maintain both sides of the paradox: that the Church is the Body of Christ, a living, growing organism, born when He was born; and that the Church is the community of the redeemed, whose redemption is purchased by the death of Christ and appropriated by the faith of the believer."[5] Thus we cannot isolate either of these aspects of truth and declare that one or the other provides a full theory of the nature and function of the Church. Nothing can prevent us from giving a priority to one or the other. But to emphasize one to the virtual exclusion of the other is to go against the evidence of the Bible. We have no right to expect to find in the field of ecclesiology a unified simplicity which is unattainable in any other department of scientific enquiry.

3

Two suggestions of a practical kind emerge from our discussion:

(1) If it is true that for the establishment of a stable society the organic and federal principles need to be closely intertwined, then it follows that the first stage in the movement towards the reunion of Christendom should be the uniting of those bodies *within any particular region* which recognize the need for a larger corporate unity, and are at the same time already committed to the Covenant-Word of God as the essential principle of their own existence. We emphasize the particular region, for although it is now possible to think in terms of one world, for a long time to come

the influence of a well-defined geographical environment is likely to be the most powerful organic factor working in the life of any given society. This geographical environment includes, of course, historical traditions, economic conditions, and cultural patterns. This relationship to the natural environment is of immense significance when men seek to formulate schemes of union, and it is not surprising that the most impressive unions so far achieved have been those of the Church of *Scotland*, the United Church of *Canada*, the *South India* United Church, the Methodist Church in *Britain*, and the Methodist Church in the *U.S.A.* In all these cases the uniting bodies had come to realize their already existing unity in the revealed Word of God, for each recognized that its very life depended upon the Covenant-Word of God to which the Scriptures bear witness. This dependence might be expressed in different ways, but no one of these Churches would have dared to claim that it had the power in and through its own tradition and present experience to express the full revelation of God: it recognized that God had spoken in grace and command, that a living testimony had been borne to His Word in the Scriptures, and that it was the duty and privilege of every Church to subordinate itself to this Word in obedience and faith. Thus in common confession that God had called them into fellowship with Himself through His Word and in a common sharing of a certain organic tradition and environment, it was possible to establish a fuller organic union within these various regions, with each uniting Church taking its place within a larger whole.

The two places where union was probably hardest to achieve were in Canada and in South India. In each case one of the uniting bodies had strong links with a parent Church in another land. The Presbyterian Church in Canada traced its descent from those who had emigrated from Scotland and Ireland, and its traditions of worship, of language, of theological system, and of organization were derived from the Church of the Fathers. Would it not be a fatal severance of organic ties to join in union with other

bodies? The chief misgivings in this case centred around the theological system, though one may conjecture that other half-conscious links with the past were even harder to break. As is well known, the outcome was that a considerable section of the Presbyterian Church declined to enter the union, but this refusal did not hinder the united body, possessing as it did a firm foundation in which organic and federal elements were combined, from going forward to experience a gradually deepening sense of integration in common work and witness.

The situation in South India was even more delicate and difficult by reason of the fact that each one of the uniting Churches had close links with a Church in the mother-land, England. In the case of the Anglican Church in South India, the ties were particularly strong by reason of the fact that the Church of England has always laid greater stress than either the Methodists, the Congregationalists, or the Presbyterians on continuity of organic life through liturgies, sacraments, succession of orders, and teaching. To run the risk of losing this continuity by entering into vital relationship with other traditions was a serious step to take at any time; but it was made the harder in this case by reason of the severe pressure which was brought to bear from the parent Church. Some of this pressure was negative in the sense that there was little enthusiasm for the union to be achieved. Other pressures, however, were of a more direct and positive kind. They appealed to the doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ and urged that by entering into the projected scheme of Union, the four dioceses of South India would fail to retain the given organic structure in its fullness. In spite of all these pressures, however, the South India United Church is now a reality, and one may believe that again in spite of a certain divergence from more abstract organic principles, the three bodies have so much in common through their relationship to the one common environment and through their dependence upon the Covenant-Grace of God, that the union will be consolidated and will grow stronger every year as the members of the

different Churches meet one another, work with one another, and worship with one another in the presence of the one Lord. Undoubtedly the organic ties must be strengthened by the development of truly indigenous forms of worship and of Church teaching: the covenant ties must be strengthened by personal meetings in the context of God's Word and by common fellowship in witness thereto. The Anglicans in South India have, by their action, declared that loyalty to the Covenant-call of God is the *primary* principle within Christ's Church, however greatly organic ties and traditions may need to be valued and conserved. The Church of England and the other autonomous Churches within the Anglican fellowship must judge whether this action is tantamount to a severance of the organic ties which bind the whole communion together, or whether they are willing so to identify themselves with the action that these ties can be made to include the whole of the newly-created body. Whatever happens, it is likely that the action of the uniting bodies in South India will precipitate similar action in other regional areas, even though reunion on a larger scale may not at present be possible.

4

(2) In the whole area of Church relationships there are none more delicate than those which exist between Anglicans and Presbyterians. In many ways these two communions are extraordinarily close together: in their sense of the high calling of the Church in God's purpose, in their sense of the dignity which properly belongs to the worship of God, in their emphasis upon sound learning and upon the place of the mind in the service of God, in their concern for decency and order in all the affairs of the Church of God, above all in their devotion to and dependence upon the Word of God as their standard of faith and conduct. Yet the fact is that for nearly three centuries in Great Britain they have been living their lives apart (there were many vicissitudes in the

relationship between 1560 and 1660) and although the contacts in the U.S.A., in Canada, in Australia and New Zealand, and in East Africa have been closer, the heritage of the Church of *England* on the one hand and that of the Church of *Scotland* on the other hand has constituted a serious barrier to any kind of formal reunion even in those areas. It is in the U.S.A. that the dependence on the parent bodies has been least, and it is there that a scheme of union was conceived and almost realized. Yet it failed, partly, it would seem, because of a true instinct on the part of the Episcopalians which made them hesitate to unite with one part of a communion which had not yet achieved unity in its own environment (the two largest Presbyterian bodies in the U.S.A. are not yet organically united with one another), partly because of a false theory which claimed that the organic wholeness of the total Anglican Communion would be endangered by this step.

Now what lies behind this perplexing situation? On the one side there is the fact that the organic principle has always been a most powerful determining influence upon the life of the Church of England. In the sixteenth century every effort was made to conserve the continuity of the life of the "whole body of the realm" as far as this was possible. Church buildings were retained, episcopacy was retained, a liturgy was retained, the connection with the State was retained—in fact the Church of England emerged as a Church thoroughly *purified*, but not as a Church *revolutionized*. The following century saw many efforts to bring about the revolution, but the final settlement at the Restoration left the Church in much the same condition as it was in the early years of Elizabeth's reign: a due succession of bishops, the diocesan form of organization, a uniform liturgy, traditional ritual and ceremonial in worship, all together serving to maintain the unity and continuity of its organic life. And when the Church was "planted" in the Colonies (an organic image) the same principles operated. Continuity with the life of the mother Church must be maintained at all costs, and the chief instruments for this purpose

proved to be the Prayer Book with its forms of worship and its standards of faith and order, together with Episcopacy which represented sacramentally the organic connection with the parent body. Thus the growth of the Anglican Communion has been primarily an organic growth. The covenant principle has not been without its influence—in England in the rise of Evangelicalism, in America in the establishment of synodical forms of government and in the creation of canons and constitutions to serve as the statutory law for the ordering of diocese, province or general convention—but it would be hard to make a case for its primacy in the ongoing life of the Church.

On the other side of the situation lies the undoubted fact that the covenant principle has been the determining factor in the continuity of the life of the Church of Scotland. In the sixteenth century the temper of Scotland was revolutionary. The abuses and corruptions of the former system were such that nothing save radical changes could bring the possibility of a new religious life within the reach of the people. Organic links were not totally destroyed—there was still a sense of national unity within the Church, still a close relationship with the State, still an ordered ministry and worship. But a revolutionary principle was introduced by the publication of the *Scots Confession* in 1560. This was the symbol of the revolution, for henceforward the *primary* principle of the Church's life was to be its faithfulness to the proclamation set forth in the *Confession.* In 1580 the dependence upon the covenant principle was made even more explicit, for then the people committed themselves to the National *Covenant,* which was to act as the standard and criterion of their corporate faith and conduct. As in the Church of England, there ensued a period of changes and uncertainties, but ultimately in 1647 the General Assembly approved the *Westminster Confession* as "the publick and avowed Confession of the Church of Scotland", and this was finally ratified and established by an Act of Parliament in 1690. From that date the unity of the Church of Scotland has been primarily a *covenanted* unity, though the organic elements

of which we have already spoken have never ceased to play a prominent part in the development of its life. To-day there is its official connection with the State, its possession of ancient churches, its intimate relationship with every aspect of the national life, its high regard for the due ordering of its ministry and worship—but still there is the sense that all these must in the last resort be subordinated to the Word of God, who has related Himself through covenant with the whole body of the Church. At any time, and in any place, it is possible for any individual member to make his appeal to the declared revelation of God as of higher authority than any tradition which belongs to the development of the Church in history.

The expansion of the Church to other parts of the world has brought about an intensification rather than a lessening of the dependence upon the Covenant principle. Those who left the homeland carried with them traditions of practice and belief, but the all-important standard for the life of the Church was the *Westminster Confession. This* was clear and definite: it could be reproduced in any place: it could at once be set up as the articles of constitution of the Church in any new area. Thus we find that in Ireland, in Canada, in the United States, in Australia and New Zealand the *Westminster Confession* has been even more determinative in the early life of the Presbyterian Church than in Scotland itself. Always in Scotland there was the steady continuing influence of the organic complex. To be sure, parts of this were carried overseas in the memories and customs of the early settlers, and many attempts were made to reproduce the exact conditions of the home Church in a foreign environment. But these elements were certain to become less and less influential as time went on, and meanwhile the foundation of the Church which could not be shaken was the Covenant to which witness was borne in the Confession of Faith. Here was the essential bond uniting the members of all the Churches in the new lands to one another and to the parent bodies from which they came. Doubtless this sense of living commitment to the Covenant tended in course of time

to harden into a concern for strict orthodoxy in faith and conduct, but that the Covenant was the primary principle of Church growth and development within the Presbyterian Churches could hardly be denied.

5

We spoke earlier of the influence of the covenant principle within the Anglican Communion. From the beginning the Church of England has recognized that Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to *salvation* and that men are justified by faith *only*. In other words, for the salvation of the individual the Word of God is all-important and all-sufficient. Therefore it is essential that the Word of God should be read and expounded in the Church in order that men may find eternal salvation through Christ Jesus. But when it came to order and discipline and the whole system of interrelationships in the Church, there was far less willingness to allow that these had been determined by a given revelation of God at any particular time or place. The Puritans wished to make this a fundamental principle: that God's Covenant for the ordering of the community had been given in much detail, and that it was the duty of the Church to conform itself to this standard in every respect. This view, however, though it gained considerable prestige in academic circles, never won acceptance in the country as a whole, and after the Restoration was never again a serious factor in the life of the Church of England.

Yet in the eighteenth century the Covenant-principle began to operate in another form in the context of the Evangelical Revival. At first Evangelicalism was chiefly concerned with bringing men to a *conscious* acceptance of what was theirs by right as members of the Body of Christ. The Church of England had always been concerned for men's salvation through justification by faith: the Evangelicals desired that men might be joyfully *conscious* of their acceptance with God, and of their consequent duty to bear

witness to the Gospel of their salvation. But it could not fail to happen that those who had come to such a consciousness would desire to relate themselves to each other for mutual help and encouragement, and it is in this way that the Covenant principle has operated as a powerful factor, both in Methodism and in Anglican Evangelicalism, during the past two centuries. The societies of those who had come to a consciousness of salvation through the Gospel of Christ, and desired to commit themselves entirely to His service, were in a real sense Covenant-communities. Their deep dependence was on the Word of God's Grace. Their consecration to His service was in direct obedience to His command. Ultimately, in the case of the Methodists, the Covenant-principle (in a somewhat different form from that of the Presbyterians) became the governing principle of their Church polity. In the case of Anglican Evangelicals, however, there has continued to be the desire to remain within the organic framework of the Church, though they have continued to draw much of their inspiration and guidance from the smaller societies—missionary societies, devotional societies, Bible-reading fellowships, assemblies for the deepening of the spiritual life—to which they have belonged. They have never thrown over the dominance of the organic principle in all matters connected with the form of the Church, though they have insisted upon the primacy of the covenant-principle in matters of faith and fellowship.

We are thus faced with a situation of great complexity. In England, Church order and polity makes the organic principle primary, appealing still to Hooker's classical exposition in the sixteenth century. In Scotland, Church order and polity is regulated primarily by the Covenant principle, the appeal still being made to the Institutes and the *Westminster Confession*. Yet in England the covenant principle continues to operate powerfully within certain sections of the community at least, while in Scotland the influence of the organic principle is still strong, if only in a semi-conscious way. In the New World we find Anglicans and Presbyterians living together in the same environment,

and thereby being gradually conformed to a new organic pattern which they hold in common. At the same time we find Anglicans clinging to the Church forms which they have inherited from the past, Presbyterians clinging to standards of formal confession which have always occupied the place of primacy in their tradition. How these two great communions can be drawn together in view of these deep-seated differences constitutes perhaps the most serious problem in the ecumenical movement at the present time.

Considering first the Church of England and the Church of Scotland it is evident that the situation which we have described has been made even more complicated by the emergence of the powerful Anglo-Catholic school of thought in the Church of England. This group, which began by emphasizing the autonomy of the Church in relation to the State and its direct continuity with the Church of the early centuries of Christian history, has gone on to build up an elaborate theory of the nature of the Church conceived on purely organic principles. We have in the course of our study considered the work of certain representatives of this school, and it is clear that for them unity and continuity are the two essential features of the life of the Church. Moreover, these features are expressible in an outward pattern which includes essential dogma, essential forms of worship, and essential ministry. There is a readiness to allow that there may be secondary doctrines, variable forms, and dependent ministries, but it is claimed that unity and continuity can only be guaranteed by the essential structures of which we have spoken. Thus the organic principle, which in the history of the Church has been employed chiefly in metaphorical or mystical ways, becomes in the teaching of this school an ontological principle by which alone the true nature and form of the Church can be determined. The relationship to the *particular* organic environment is regarded as a matter of secondary interest: the *structure* of the organism apart from its environment is regarded as of paramount importance. Scripture is summoned to the aid of this philosophy by being interpreted as the record of the organic

history of the people of God, and the theory is further supported by an appeal to the organic categories of Greek thought. But the organic category is only one, and that not the more important of the principles which the Bible uses in describing God's relations with His chosen people, and so far as Greek categories are concerned, valuable though they may be in providing illuminating insights, they cannot possibly be made the *scientific* framework for social thought to-day. While the Anglo-Catholic school of thought holds tenaciously to its philosophy of organism there seems little hope of further advances in the creative relationship between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland. One can only wait for it to abandon its rigid philosophy of organism and to be willing to bring into the *ecumenical* church its emphasis upon structures and continuities in worship and in life, which is so valuable a feature of its outlook. Meanwhile there is good reason to believe that the Church of Scotland is already concerned about the importance of the elements of form and tradition in the life of the Church, and the more this interest can be fostered amongst the members of its own communion, the more possible will it be to achieve union when the time is ripe.

In the New World the situation is eased by the fact that both communions are now living together within a common environment. At the same time it tends to be complicated on the one side by the concern of many Episcopalians for the unchangeable character of sacramental forms rather than for the continuity of a comprehensive organic life, on the other side by the concern of many Presbyterians for rigid standards of orthodoxy rather than for the constant renewal of conversation within the Covenant. Some things, however, can be affirmed with confidence. If a truly united Church is to come into being, it must give full place to both the organic and the covenantal principles of which we have spoken. This means that the more Episcopalians and Presbyterians can relate themselves creatively to the environment in which they live—to its natural forms, its particular resources, its traditions, its social patterns—the more they

will be drawn together on the level of Creation, which, it must be insisted, is a God-given level and one that is of continuing relevance to the life of His Church. At the same time, the more they can come together in order to re-discover the richness of the meaning of the Divine Covenant—its grace, its promise of freedom, its call to faithfulness, its disclosure of a saving purpose—the more they will be drawn together on the level of Redemption. There will always be those within the Episcopal Church who envisage the true Church of God as a Divine Organism with an unchangeable structure and an unbroken continuity of sacramental life: they can only conceive of union through absorption—a union which would swallow up forever the dynamic and creative dialectic of the Church's life. There will always be those within the Presbyterian Church who envisage the true Church of God as a Divine Community, whose members are pledged to uphold a given code of belief and conduct: they can conceive of union only in terms of complete assent to the given standard—a union which would involve a rigid uniformity and would allow for none of the variety-in-unity which constitutes the glory of God's creation. But it is not impossible that as the members of each community live together and work together their organic unity will gradually be strengthened, while every covenant that they can make together, committing themselves to a common purpose and common expectancy under God, can bring them nearer the goal when together they will constitute one flock under one Shepherd.

In these more practical considerations we have concentrated our attention on the possibility of the formation of regional unions of the Church. This does not mean that we are indifferent to the work of the World Council of Churches. We believe that the exploration of the possibilities of regional union should be the first step, for then, in truly organic fashion, the smaller unities can be integrated into a still larger whole. At the same time the World Council can be of value in keeping ever before the mind of the Churches the great unity which all must seek, and in promoting the meet-

ing of accredited representatives of different communions, so that pledges of purpose and agreements to action may be effected over matters of common concern. It was noteworthy that the delegates to Amsterdam committed themselves afresh to God and *covenanted* with one another to constitute the World Council of Churches. If every Assembly of the Council can witness a renewal and an extension of the Covenant, then real progress will be made towards the final end that must ever be kept in view.

Further, we have to a great extent limited our references to the contemporary scene to those who stand within either the Episcopalian or the Presbyterian tradition. This does not mean that we are unaware of the deep interest in movements towards reunion being manifested amongst Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Disciples. But, whereas the covenantal principle has certainly played a part in the historical development of each of these communions, it is probably true to say that it has never provided for them the normative pattern of relationships within the one Divine society as it has for Presbyterianism. At all events it can be said with assurance, that within the tradition stemming from Calvin there has ever been a greater emphasis upon the one Church in its visible manifestation than has been the case amongst those who have lived within a congregational form of polity. If, however, the local church or congregation comes to be regarded as the particular expression or outcropping or appearance of the one Divine covenant-community, then much that has been said in reference to Presbyterianism can be extended to include other Protestant communions. But obviously the sectarian principle as such, valuable as it may be in its own time and place, cannot be made the basis or even a major constituent part of the structure of a single ecumenical Church.

6

A living organism which is flexible enough to include vigorous covenanted fellowships within its integrated life: a

federated community which is diversified enough to include growing organic societies within its constitutional covenant. These, we believe, are the two possible interpretations of the nature and function of the Church (and indeed of society as a whole) in the purpose and design of God. Can we then make a final decision as between these two and say that one or the other is the correct interpretation and therefore to be accepted as the goal of all our striving? The evidence, we believe, is not sufficient to enable us to make such a decision in the realm of theory, and on the basis of such a decision to construct an exact architect's blue-print for the future form and constitution of the Church. For the fact is, as all experience tells us, that exactness of form and constitution can only be gained at the expense of expansion of life and liberty. Let each man and group therefore decide in which direction their chief expenditure of energy is to be outpoured, and at the same time let them ever be mindful of the other side, remembering always the great saying of Marcus Aurelius that "just to look at things from another angle than that from which we have seen them hitherto may actually mean the beginning of a new life."

To this end there is nothing so necessary as a constant return to Christ and His Cross. The Church as the Body of Christ: one in her derivation from Him and in her dependence upon Him: continuous in her extension of His Messianic ministry, in self-identification with the world, in self-surrender to God: living and growing as she constantly receives the energy of His Holy Spirit: ever achieving fresh integrations in her expanding life as she grows up into Christ in all things and becomes filled with all the fullness of God. The Church as the People of the Blood-Covenant, the Covenant of His Cross: all redeemed from bondage by His entrance into the conflict: all justified from guilt by His obedience unto death: all purified from sin by His willing self-sacrifice: all reconciled to one another and to God by the blood of His Cross: all assured of victory through His resurrection: all inheritors of the Kingdom through His righteousness: all enjoying access to the presence of God

through His intercession: all inspired by the hope of the glory of God through the outpouring of His Spirit. These are the guiding beacons of our faith and of our hope. And if we desire a deeper synthesis let us meditate first upon the words of a stabilizing Protestant and then upon those of a revolutionary Catholic. Calvin in commenting on Genesis 15: 10, points out that it was an ancient custom for allies or soldiers to pass between severed parts

> "that being enclosed together within the sacrifice, they might be the more sacredly united in one body".

William Langland, the author of *Piers Plowman*, expresses the matter thus:

> "For on Calvary of Christ's Blood, Christendom gan spring
> And blood brethren we became there, of one body one".

APPENDIX

IN four recent books there is an extended treatment of the Doctrine of the Church, either as set forth by Luther himself or as interpreted by Lutheran theologians. The books are:

(*a*) Gustaf Aulen, *The Faith of the Christian Church*, Muhlenberg Press, 1948.

(*b*) Edgar M. Carlson, *The Reinterpretation of Luther*, Westminster Press, 1948.

(*c*) H. H. Kramm, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, James Clarke and Co., 1947.

(*d*) Wilhelm Pauck, *The Heritage of the Reformation*, Beacon Press, 1950.

The first pair represent the Swedish tradition, the second pair the German. An examination of all four reveals a substantial measure of agreement concerning the distinctive elements of Lutheran ecclesiology. I venture to summarize these in the following way.

(1) Luther's approach to every Christian doctrine was along the pathway of his own religious experience. He had been nurtured within the Church, and he never departed from his fundamental conviction that the Church is "the mother who bears and fosters every individual Christian". But the great institutional Church in which he had grown up had failed to lead him to that deep apprehension of the mercy of God for which his soul craved. This had come to him through the Gospel of justification by faith, the Gospel which had been proclaimed by Paul, had been preserved in the Church, and at length had sounded in his own ears and had brought peace to his own heart. "All his religious experience," writes Dr. Kramm, "was concentrated on justification by faith alone" (*op. cit.*, p. 76).

This did not mean, however, that Luther would now abandon all concern for the Church and concentrate his attention upon the individual's private religious experience. Rather he became more aware than ever of the importance

of the corporate life of the Christian fellowship if only it could be understood and experienced in the proper way. It was not that the Church was unnecessary, but rather that the Church must re-discover its true character. It was not the case that any man could discover the true nature of his relationship to God by retreating into the seclusion of the cell or the hermitage, but rather that the Church, if it could only re-discover its true function, could be the means by which the individual could be led to a knowledge of the forgiveness of sins and life in the Spirit. The supreme question was therefore: How is the Church constituted and what is its true nature?

(2) In answering this question the central concept in Luther's mind was that of fellowship-in-love. In the case of Paul, in the case of himself, the immediate corollary of the new relationship with Christ through faith was an outpouring of the self towards others in fellowship and love. The justified man, in Luther's famous phrase, becomes a Christ to his neighbour. "The consequence of being one with Christ is that we are one also among ourselves . . . none is for himself but everyone shows and spreads himself among his fellows in love" (quoted Pauck, p. 27). To represent such a warm vital experience of intimate personal relationships no institutional categories could suffice. So, for Luther, the favourite term for the Church was "community"—a community of believers or of saints or of Christian people: to be nurtured within the community was man's supreme privilege for it was there that the Gospel was at work, creating fellowship and producing an ever-deepening experience of love in the Spirit.

That the Gospel is the means which God uses to create and re-create the Church has been one of the greatest emphases of the modern school of Swedish Lutheran theologians. The Gospel comes from God to man and awakens faith in his heart. Man bears witness to the Gospel and becomes the means of awakening faith in the neighbour. Faith works itself out in love and the whole community is bound together within the *agape* which flows from God to man and from

man to man within an ever-widening fellowship. This is the mystical Body of Christ, the one Body vivified and animated by the one Spirit.

(3) The important question now arises: Is it possible to define the fellowship-in-love with greater precision? Is there a particular structure which belongs to this community? Is there a pattern of relationships which distinguishes the Church from all other social groups? In general Luther's answer and the answer of modern Lutheran scholars seems to be "No". Professor Pauck is cautious and is content to maintain that Luther denied absolutely "that the Christian Church is an institution of definitive forms, a constituted body whose nature is unrealizable except by a permanent maintenance of integral outward forms". However, he goes on to say that "it was far from him to deny that the Christian Church required concrete orders of organization, polity, procedure, teaching, worship, and morals," though whether Luther considered any *particular* orders or patterns to be supremely desirable, if not essential, he does not here indicate (Pauck, *op. cit.*, p. 30). Dr. Kramm is more definite. He believes that Luther was unalterably opposed to any complete uniformity in the patterns of the Church's life; moreover, he was convinced that forms imposed by absolute authority were wrong. But beyond this Luther actually welcomed variety and believed that forms of government or worship were to be determined by "*human* deliberation, bearing in mind the actual situation in which the Church finds itself in the different countries and at various times" (Kramm, *op. cit.*, p. 73). "*Adiaphora* is the term by which the Lutherans described those elements of ritual and Church constitution which are neither demanded nor forbidden by Scripture. They are, therefore, examined by Luther under the categories of whether they are desirable or dangerous" (*Ibid.*, p. 93). On the whole, Luther himself was conservative and anxious not to change existing forms unnecessarily. But it is clear that he saw little value in continuity or unity of outward form in itself. The continuity of the Gospel and the unity of the Spirit were all important. Any forms and struc-

tures which would preserve this continuity and this unity were acceptable to him.

This principle has been re-stated by Bishop Aulen for the Church to-day, and we shall quote his words *in extenso*. "The unity of the Christian Church," he says, "is a unity in and through the Word and the sacraments. It is, however, not a unity consisting in organizational uniformity. . . . On the contrary, *this* unity may exist under different external forms. This means only that the Holy Spirit can accomplish his creation of fellowship under various forms. To maintain the opposite would, according to faith, mean that we place the forms above the Spirit. (This, we suggest, does not necessarily follow: it might mean that we *recognize* that the Spirit does use particular forms in the manifestation of His activity.) . . . The organization of the Church must have a certain amount of elasticity to adapt itself to changing conditions. The principle is then always that the organization must be of such a character, that under various conditions, it serves in the best possible manner as an instrument of the Gospel for the establishment of the fellowship" (Aulen, *op. cit.*, pp. 340–341).

Our main reaction to Luther and his modern interpreters in this matter is, not that they are wrong in their rejection of rigid forms and structures, but that they do not sufficiently indicate what are the criteria to be employed in determining the forms which they admit are necessary for the life of the Church. It is easy to see that Luther himself recoiled from the medieval system which regarded such institutions as the papacy and the mass as divinely given and as permanently binding. He, on his part, believed that forms and structures were of secondary importance, so long as the life of the Spirit was untrammelled and free. In his insistence that local conditions and the circumstances of a particular age have to be taken into account we believe that he was entirely right: in this he was upholding the organic principle which we have emphasized in the course of our study. But it does not seem to us that Lutheran theologians have examined this principle carefully enough thus far. Some attention has indeed

been paid to the "orders" and the "hierarchies" of human society as created by God, but there has been a tendency to view these in an almost entirely authoritarian way—the "hierarchies" of father in the family, prince in the state, teacher in the congregation—without taking into account the vast complexities of any truly organic society. Does the Spirit express Himself through particular forms, even in the created order? Are there social structures which, even through historical experience, have proved themselves to be essential for safeguarding the freedom of the Gospel? Are there any particular deductions regarding form and structure to be derived from the New Testament concept of the Church as the Body of Christ? How can varieties be held together within a truly organic unity? These are questions on which more light would be welcomed from those who stand within the Lutheran tradition. Those from without, who ask these questions, are not looking for exact definitions, but they are unwilling to regard these questions as irrelevant and as relating purely to matters which can be dismissed as *adiaphora*.

(4) The heart of Luther's theology, the heart of modern re-interpretations of Luther, is the Gospel. If Lutheranism can in any sense be regarded as an organic structure, its animating force, its life-giving principle is the Gospel. Through Word and Sacrament the Gospel is proclaimed, and it is only within the area of this proclamation that the Church exists. The only "succession" about which Luther cared was the Gospel. It was the one and only true mark of the Church. Not only did the Gospel create and sustain the Church: the Church's function is to retain and proclaim the Gospel.

This magnificent emphasis upon the centrality of the Gospel is, perhaps, the finest characteristic of the Lutheran tradition. Yet there are two questions which seem still to require examination. In the first place, from the standpoint of our own particular enquiry, we are disposed to ask whether the Gospel is to be equated with the Covenant? That there are close connections between these two categories

is obvious. For example, the part played in developed Lutheran doctrine by Law and Gospel corresponds closely to the part played in developed Reformed doctrine by the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. Or again Luther's own regard for the Gospel as the "sole vehicle of the grace of God" could be paralleled by Calvin's regard for the Covenant as the means by which the grace of God has been revealed to men. Yet there are also differences of emphasis. For Luther and his followers the keynote of the Gospel has been the forgiveness of sins. That God should have looked upon sinful man in grace, that he should have accepted him as righteous, that he should have made him the object of His divine *agape*, this, to Luther, was the wonder of all wonders which the Gospel made known. For Calvin and his followers, on the other hand, the keynote of the Covenant has been election. That God should have called this man and that man, that He should have taken him into fellowship with Himself, that He should have given him a share in His own purposive activity, this, to Calvin, was the supreme wonder which the revelation of the Divine Covenant made known. This difference need not be stressed overmuch. In the Biblical tradition, in Reformation theology, and in developments of doctrine in post-Reformation times it is possible to see that men, in seeking to bear witness to the primacy of Gospel or of Covenant, were striving after substantially the same end, were upholding substantially the same principle.

The second question is this. If the Gospel creates the Church, if the proclamation of the Gospel is an essential mark of the Church, is there a definitive norm of the Gospel, is there a verbal structure to which the Gospel as proclaimed must conform? The *Augsburg Confession* insists that the Gospel must be preached *purely* and that there must be agreement on the "doctrine of the Gospel" if there is to be a true unity of the Church. But what is the criterion of the purity of the Gospel? All too easily within later Lutheranism the Gospel has been hedged around with formularies and definitions, which have themselves come to be regarded as

essential parts of the Gospel. But for Luther himself, and for many of his modern interpreters, it is probably true to say that the one essential mark of the Gospel is that it declares God's gracious forgiveness of the sins of those who have no claim whatsoever upon His forbearance or love. "The essence of the Gospel," Carlson writes, "is the forgiveness of sins, through which burdened consciences secure comfort and release" (*op. cit.*, p. 119). Only a slight acquaintance with Aulen's work will reveal how large a place the forgiveness of sins occupies in his theology. He points out that "forgiveness of sins" is ultimately identical with "justification", but he believes that the former term is more comprehensive and less open to misinterpretation than the latter. "Forgiveness of sins" is really the beginning and the end of the Christian life. "Forgiveness is not an act that occurs only once, at a certain time, and establishes once and for all the basis on which the Christian life exists. On the contrary, forgiveness belongs to the whole of Christian life, since this life depends on the fact that 'the grace of God is new every morning'. If forgiveness is the basis of the realization of fellowship with God, it means that forgiveness is both the essential foundation of the Christian life and its continually active power" (Aulen, *op. cit.*, p. 292).

Thus the forgiveness of sins is the source and the content of the outgoing love of God which brings life and healing to mankind. Other aspects of the Christian faith are secondary. The proclamation of Christ as the revelation of God's forgiving love drawing sinful man into fellowship with Himself is the heart of the Gospel. The historical form of Christ incarnate, the pattern of His work and career while on earth, even the form of His continuing work through the Spirit do not belong to the essence of the Gospel. God in Christ forgiving the sins of mankind is the Gospel: only this Gospel creates the Church: only the fellowship which lives by this Gospel can be regarded as the Church of Jesus Christ.

A few things may be said in conclusion. Luther's own conservatism in the matter of outward forms, together with the close links between Lutheranism and the national tradi-

tion which exist in many countries, have been on the side of organic continuity in the life of the Church, even though little emphasis may have been laid upon it in theory. Bishop Aulen may seek to minimize the importance of sociological categories and organizational forms in Church-theory, but it is safe to say that they have played an exceedingly important part in the actual historical development of the Church of Sweden. Lutheran theologians may have wished hitherto to take the concept of the Church as the Body of Christ and interpret it in a purely mystical or spiritual sense, but it is doubtful how far this is possible in the light of Scripture and of the record of historical Christianity. On the other side, while it is true that too much stress must not be laid upon differences of terminology, it seems fair to say that the emphases contained in the Lutheran doctrine of the forgiveness of sins are not identical with those which are implicit in the covenant-idea. The covenant contains within it a fuller recognition of a two-way traffic. To be sure, man cannot inaugurate the covenant but man can become related to God in the covenant in such a way that he, with his fellow-believers, moves forward towards the goal of the Kingdom of God. However important the word of forgiveness may be, by itself it seems to form too restricted a basis on which to build the whole structural life of the Church. Bishop Aulen's desire to avoid on the one hand the peril of mechanical materialization, and on the other hand the peril of spiritual dissolution, is an aim with which we should be in full sympathy, but we believe that it is possible to define more positively than he is prepared to do the poles between which the form of the Church finds its expression. Nevertheless, it would be hard to find a more satisfactory combination of organic and covenant ideas than that included in Bishop Aulen's definition of Church membership:

> "To be a member in the Church of Christ means to be incorporated into that new solidary interrelationship in which the Spirit is active" (*op. cit.*, p. 416).

NOTES

Chapter One

1. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 367.
2. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgita*, p. 366.
   The author draws attention to a passage from Gerald Heard's book, *Man the Master*, in which he argues that human society must always have a four-fold structure.
   The Seers—the eyes or antennae.
   The politicians—the hands.
   The technicians—the motor centres.
   The basic mass—the feet.
3. J. H. Hutton, *Caste in India*, p. 101.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
5. *Coriolanus*, Act 1, Scene 1.
6. E. Barker, *The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*, p. 127.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
8. P. 127.
9. W. A. L. Elmslie, *How came our Faith*, pp. 129–30.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
11. C. R. North, *The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah.*
12. T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus*, p. 183.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

Chapter Two

1. H. C. Trumbull, *The Covenant of Salt*, p. 6.
2. G. Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, p. 278.
3. J. Pedersen, *Israel III–IV*, p. 334.
4. H. Frankfort (Ed.), *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, p. 329.
5. Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 513.
6. A. Büchler, *Studies in Sin and Atonement in the Rabbinic Literature of the Firs Century*, pp. 117–118.

Chapter Three

1. Cf. Vincent Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice*, pp. 46–48.
2. These ideas have been made familiar through the writings of H. Wheele Robinson and Aubrey R. Johnson. For Jesus' possible use of this idea se Matt. 10: 40; 25: 31–46.
3. J. Pedersen, *Israel I–II*, p. 267.
4. R. Newton Flew, *Jesus and His Church*, pp. 53–4.
5. Cf. E. G. Selwyn, *I Peter*, pp. 286–91.
6. The fact that the words appear again in Acts 7: 48; 17: 24 makes i probable, though not certain, that they should form part of the origina saying.
7. L. S. Thornton, *The Common Life in the Body of Christ*, pp. 14–15.
8. See *Mysterium Christi*, pp. 225 ff.
9. W. L. Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles*, p. 161.

10. L. S. Thornton, *op. cit.*, pp. 256–7.
    The Apostolic Ministry, pp. 55 ff.
    G. Johnston, *The Doctrine of the Church in the New Testament*, pp. 87–9.
    W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, pp. 55–57.
11. *Op. cit.*, p. 57.
12. C. H. Dodd, *The Moffatt Commentary*, p. 195.
13. L. S. Thornton, *The Common Life in the Body of Christ*, p. 222.

Chapter Four

1. Though the covenant references in the accounts of the Institution of the Lord's Supper may well go back to the period before Paul began to write his letters.
2. Sherman E. Johnson has pointed out to me that there may be evidence of the Covenant way of thinking in certain sayings and parables of Jesus even when the term itself is not used. The Parable of the Great Supper is a striking example of this possibility.
3. Cf. Vincent Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 136 ff.
4. *Op. cit.*, pp. 132–3.
5. R. Otto, *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man*, pp. 289–90.
6. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 162.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
8. Cf. W. D. Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

Chapter Five

1. J. F. Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine*, p. 356.
2. *Adv. Haer.* 4.33.10.
3. *Ibid.*, 3.24.1.
4. In *Theological Studies*, Vol. 9, p. 48.
5. *De pecc. mer.* 1.31.60.
6. In *Ps.* 26. *En.* 2 : 2.
7. Quoted E. Mersch, *Le Corps Mystique Du Christ*, Vol. 2, p. 85.
   Father Mersch's monumental work provides a comprehensive view of the Fathers' use of the Body-concept.
8. *Serm. de script.* N.T. 116.6.6.
9. *Serm.* 267.
10. *Ep.* 185.50.
11. *De Bapt.* 3.16.
12. Quoted J. J. McElhenny, *The Doctrine of the Church*, pp. 63–4.
13. In *Ps.* 90. *Serm.* 2.1.
14. *Regnum Dei*, p. 184. Quoted *Theological Studies*, Vol. 9, p. 78.
15. *Theological Studies*, Vol. 9, pp. 83–4.

Chapter Six

1. *Expositio in Symbolum, in Art.* 9. (Congar's translation.)
2. M.-J. Congar in *The Thomist*, Vol. 1, p. 343.
3. P. 22.
4. S. Th. 3.8.1.
5. J. T. Dittoe in *The Thomist*, October 1946, p. 474.

6. S. Th. 3.8.3.
7. S. Th. 3.8.4.
8. S. Th. 3.8.1.
9. S. Th. 2.183.2.
10. Quoted A. P. D'Entrèves, *The Medieval Contribution to Political Thought*, p. 29.
11. J. Bowle, *Western Political Thought*, p. 210.
12. S. Th. 3.8.5.
13. *Ecclesiastical Polity*, 1.16.8.
14. 1.10.1.
15. 1.11.2.
16. 1.16.6.
17. 3.1.2.
18. 3.1.7.
19. 3.1.14.
20. 5.56.7.
21. 5.56.11.

Chapter Seven

1. *Adv. Haer.* 4.9.1.
2. *Institutes*, 2.10.1.

Chapter Eight

1. J. T. McNeill, in *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 22, pp. 251–69, Vol. 24, pp. 96–107.
2. Perry Miller, *The New England Mind*, p. 503.
3. H. Shelton Smith, *Faith and Nurture*, pp. 134–5.
4. Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 375–6.
5. Quoted Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 406.
6. Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 435.

Chapter Nine

1. A. S. Geden in Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 8, p. 803.
2. F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *Introduction to the History of Christianity A.D.* 590–1314, p. 4.
3. H. A. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p. 4.
4. *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, p. vii.
5. Cf. E. Barker in *The Legacy of Rome*, pp. 47–48.
6. Quoted in F. S. C. Northrop, *The Meeting of East and West*, pp. 88–89.

Chapter Ten

1. Leslie Paul, *The Meaning of Human Existence*, p. 61.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 71–72.
4. Joseph Needham, *Time: The Refreshing River*, p. 249.
5. J. T. Dittoe in *The Thomist*, October 1946, pp. 474–75.
6. See, for example, the article by Father Ignatius McGuinness in *The Thomist*, Jan. 1948.

7. *The Church of God*, p. 14.
8. *Christ, the Christian and the Church*, p. 111.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
10. Quoted A. J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (Abridged Edition, p. 210).
11. J. H. Woodger, *Biological Principles*, p. 332.
12. A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, p. 112.
13. Woodger, *op. cit.*, pp. 451–52.

Chapter Eleven

1. Needham, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
2. *Op. cit.*, pp. 399–400.
3. K. Barth, *Credo*, p. 140.
4. K. Barth, *The Knowledge of God and The Service of God*, p. 171.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 172.
6. See *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, Vol. 1, p. 67.
7. *Op. cit.*, p. 45.

Chapter Twelve

1. Commenting on the last few paragraphs Sherman Johnson has written in words with which I should find myself in complete agreement: "Either in church or state, the process of give-and-take, of change and adjustment by free agreement, can take place only when bonds and common ways and traditions are strong enough so that there is no fear that debate, voting and resolution will dissolve the body politic. But the healthiest society is that in which everyone agrees that the last and decisive word is found in free discussion and consent; when it is agreed that no static structure and no dialectical process is absolutely determined; where a prophet or seer can always arise and bear witness to a truth that may not previously have been appreciated and try to convince his fellows that he is right. Shared life is essential; 'thought control' is dangerous."
2. *Op. cit.*, pp. 183–85.
3. D. M. Emmet, *Whitehead's Philosophy of Organism*, pp. 217–18.
4. Woodger, *op. cit.*, p. 271.
5. *Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 49, pp. 200–201.

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