

extremely humble and small in your own eyes, gentle, gracious, and guileless as a dove. That you should cherish your own insignificance and try to increase it, using every possible opportunity of doing so with good will. Be forbearing and long-suffering with your neighbour in all tenderness of heart. Never brood over the mishaps that befall you; don't look at them, look at God, taking all things without exception as from his hand, agreeing to everything quite simply. Whatever happens, do not lose your inward peace, even when everything capsizes; for what are all the things of this life, in comparison with peace of heart. Confide all things entirely to God and find your own security and rest in his fatherly protection. God accepts your nakedness and simplicity; so remain and be at peace in a spirit of humble trust.'

May we not say in conclusion, that whenever anything is out of order, it is because we have got off the ground where we belong, and lifted ourselves up in exaltation? And because we have no means of keeping ourselves up indefinitely, we come crashing down—not to the ground where we belong, but to the depths of the pit we have opened up for ourselves, where the snakes abound, and the bull waits to devour us. Little wonder that Jesus asks us to learn explicitly only one thing from him—to be meek and humble of heart—'Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart', and he adds a promise, 'You will find rest to your souls' . . . the rest, integration, peace, which all men are seeking for, and which so few find.



GAMALIEL

(Questions should be addressed to Gamaliel, c/o the Editor, 'The Life of the Spirit', Hawkesyard Priory, Rugeley, Staffs.)

Q. Are the angels, strictly speaking, members of the mystical body of Christ?

SCHOOLTEACHER

A. Yes. St Thomas Aquinas touches on this point when he considers the headship of Christ, and asks himself whether Christ as man is head of the angels (*Summa Theologica*, IIIa, q.8, a.4).

He must be, he says, because where there is one body, there can only be one head. And we call a multitude of beings one body,

in the figurative sense, when they are all geared to one purpose, each in their several functions. And it is obvious that both men and angels are geared to one purpose, which is 'the glory of enjoying God'. So the mystical body of the Church does not only consist of men, but also of angels; and of the whole of this mystical body Christ as man is the head, because he is the nearest to God, and angels as well as men receive all divine graces through the channel of Christ's humanity.

St Thomas quotes St Paul in his support: God exerted his mighty power 'in Christ, raising him from the dead, and seating him at his right hand in the heavenly places, above every principality and authority and power and dominion, and over every name that is named, not only in this age but in the age to come; and he subjected all things under his feet, and gave him as supreme head to the Church, which is his body' (Ephes. i, 20-23).

It might be said with some justice that St Paul seems here almost to be contrasting the Church, the body of which Christ is the head, with the angelic powers of which Christ is the sovereign lord and conqueror. But St Paul's purpose in this epistle, and even more in Colossians, was to insist on the superiority of Christ over *all* creation, spiritual as well as material, and to fight what seems to have been a very strong temptation to some of his converts. This was the lure of a sort of spiritualism which would prefer angels to Christ, and put him rather low down in the heavenly hierarchy. St Paul was not therefore concerned with the position of good spirits in the City of God, which is the Church, which is the mystical body of Christ, but with the relationship of all spirits, good or bad, to Christ. And this relationship is for all of them, good or bad, one of subjection, as ministering servants if they are good spirits, or as conquered enemies if they are bad.

Once this is established, we can see that the good angels do have their place within the City of God, which is the Church, which is the body of Christ. Although they do not belong to it precisely as redeemed by Christ, as having 'washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb', they do belong to it, I think we must say, as being confirmed in their original innocence through Christ, and receiving all grace through him. Perhaps we can see how this is so if we remember the very ancient tradition in the Church about the test the angels underwent at the beginning of creation, the test which Lucifer failed in his pride, and which the good angels

passed in their humility. The test cannot have been simply that they should adore their Creator, because this, so to say, would come naturally to them. The suggestion of this ancient tradition is that they were required by God to bow down before man. If the good angels submitted, it is only right that it should have been by the grace that the Word incarnate would merit in his humanity.

Q. I understand children are generally taught in Catholic schools, that out of reverence for the body of Christ they should try to swallow the host when they go to holy communion without chewing or biting it. This worries me; it seems to be carrying realism rather far.

RECENT CONVERT

A. I certainly agree that this custom does seem to imply the drawing of a mistaken inference from the truth of the real presence. I would prefer to say that it is misinterpreting realism rather than carrying realism too far.

Though the custom is widespread it is not universal, nor necessarily very ancient. I have discussed the matter with some of my colleagues, and one of them mentioned a great-aunt of his, who said that when she was at school the children used to be caned if they were observed to swallow the host after communion *without* first chewing it! This is going to the other extreme, no doubt, but it shows a sounder theological attitude, less governed by the imagination.

Our Lord has really given us his real flesh to eat and his real blood to drink; but he has given them to us, not in their natural form, but in the form of a sacrament, that is of a sacred sign or symbol, in the form precisely of bread and wine, which are the basic elements of a meal. And so while Christ is really present in the sacrament, and the consecrated host really *is* the body of Christ, he is not *localized* in the sacrament; that is to say he is not present in it in the ordinary way in which a body is present in a place, in the way for example in which he was present in the upper room at the last supper. Nor, clearly, is the host the body of Christ in its natural guise and form. So then it is absurd to suppose that if we chew the host, we are somehow hurting the body of Christ, or doing him irreverent violence more than if we just swallow it. The body of Christ is given us in the sacramental form of bread precisely to be our food, to be our means of

communing with our Lord at a sacred meal. So the most reverent way possible of treating this sacrament at communion is to treat it as food. You show more respect for food if you chew it first than if you swallow it like a pill. In John vi, 55 our Lord says, 'He that eats my flesh . . . has life everlasting, and I will raise him up on the last day'. The Greek really uses a much stronger word than 'eats'; something more like 'munches'. The Jews were terribly shocked at what our Lord was saying on this occasion, and asked 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' But Catholics should not be shocked at the idea of munching the body of Christ. It is a proper, normal part of the sacramental gesture of communion.

The editor wishes to apologize to readers for the extreme lateness of this issue. The printers have made valiant efforts to catch up on the delay caused by the printing dispute, and but for further delays for which the editor, not the printer, is responsible, this number would have appeared a week to ten days earlier.

Readers are advised that the October issue will also appear a little later than usual.