

“ONE BODY IN CHRIST”—THE REALITY AND PRACTICALITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST AS REVEALED IN THE BOOK OF ROMANS

BY RON KANGAS

The apostle Paul is unique among the writers of the New Testament in speaking of the Body of Christ: “We who are many are one Body in Christ” (Rom. 12:5); “now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually” (1 Cor. 12:27); “He...gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His Body” (Eph. 1:22-23); “out from whom all the Body...causes the growth of the Body” (4:16); “we are members of His Body” (5:30); “He is the Head of Body, the church” (Col. 1:18); “holding the Head, out from whom all the Body...grows with the growth of God” (2:19). Perhaps the most common assertion made by theologians and Bible scholars with respect to these statements regarding the Body is that the expression *the Body of Christ* when used as a designation of the church is merely a metaphor—a figure of speech functioning as an implied comparison in which a word or phrase denoting one kind of object or action is used in place of another to suggest an analogy or likeness between them (as in “he was a lion in the fight”). According to this doctrinal perspective, the church is like a human body or comparable to one’s physical body but in reality is not a body of any kind. Unlike the Pauline view derived from revelation and experience—an inside view of a believer actually living in the Body of Christ—a metaphorical understanding of the Body is an outside view, the view of one who has neither seen nor touched the spiritual essence of the mystical Body and thus does not know the intrinsic significance of the Body of Christ in its reality and practicality. This essay is an initial attempt to delineate aspects of Paul’s inside view of the Body of Christ and to bring to light, from the Epistle to the Romans, crucial aspects of the reality and practicality of the Body of Christ.¹

The Reality of the Body of Christ—the Corporate “Me”

We enter into the revelation of the Body of Christ in Romans through Acts 9. Paul’s knowing of the Body began with his vision of the resurrected Christ and with the simultaneous realization that Christ and the believers are a corporate person—the corporate “Me” mentioned

by the Lord Himself. “Breathing threatening and murder against the disciples of the Lord” (v. 1) and persecuting “this Way unto death, binding and delivering to prisons both men and women” (22:4), Saul thought that he was merely persecuting persons who had called on the name of the Lord Jesus and who believed in Him. Suddenly a light brighter than the sun flashed around him, and he heard a voice saying, “Why are you persecuting Me?” (9:4). When he asked, “Who are You, Lord?” the resurrected Christ said to him, “I am Jesus, whom you persecute” (v. 5). We need to ponder the significance of this “Me.” Saul of Tarsus was persecuting disciples, but the Lord revealed that he was persecuting a divine-human corporate person identified as “Me.” Exhibiting uncommon spiritual insight and understanding, Witness Lee remarks,

A corporate “Me,” comprising Jesus the Lord and all His believers. Saul did not have this revelation. He thought that he was persecuting Stephen and other Jesus-followers, who were in the Way, which he considered heresy (24:14). He did not know that when he persecuted these he persecuted Jesus, for they were one with Him by being united to Him through their faith in Him. He considered that he was persecuting people on earth, never thinking that he touched anyone in heaven. To his great surprise a voice from heaven told him that He was the One whom he was persecuting and that His name was Jesus. To him this was a unique revelation in the universe! By this he began to see that the Lord Jesus and His believers are one great person—the wonderful “Me.” This must have impressed and affected him for his future ministry concerning Christ and the church as the great mystery of God (Eph. 5:32) and laid a solid foundation for his unique ministry. (Recovery Version, Acts 9:4, note 1)

When the resurrected and ascended Christ appeared to the one who was persecuting Him by persecuting those who followed Him and were one with Him, Paul met not only the personal Christ—the exalted and glorified God-man Jesus—but he also met the corporate Christ—

the Christ indwelling and expressed by His believers in a corporate way. Such a revelation shattered this young religionist and became a governing vision to which he was obedient for the remainder of his life (26:19). Of course, the term *Body of Christ* is not employed in the narrative of Acts, but what Paul encountered was the reality of this Body, a reality that includes the personal Christ as the unique Head of the Body, the church, and the corporate Christ (“Me”) as His corporate expression.

Not long after seeing this heavenly vision Paul began to experience the life of the Body of Christ. When he asked, “What shall I do, Lord?” the Lord said to him, “Rise up and go into Damascus, and there it will be told to you concerning all the things which have been appointed to you to do” (22:10). Instead of directly telling Saul what He wanted him to do, the Lord chose to speak to him through Ananias, to whom He revealed that “this man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how many things he must suffer on behalf of My name” (9:15-16). The Jesus who had appeared to Paul on the road sent a member of His Body to represent Him and to speak to Paul on His behalf (v. 17).

And [Ananias] said, The God of our fathers has previously appointed you to know His will and to see the righteous One and to hear the voice from His mouth; for you will be a witness to Him unto all men of the things which you have seen and heard. (22:14-15)

Ananias then directed Saul, saying, “Rise up and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (v. 16). Having met the wonderful “Me,” the corporate Christ, Saul began to practice the very thing he had opposed—calling on the name of the Lord.

Later, in his Epistle to the churches in Galatia, Paul would testify, “It pleased God...to reveal His Son in me” (1:15-16). When the Son of God was revealed to Paul and in Paul, he not only saw Christ Himself; he also received a revelation of the Body of Christ, the corporate Christ, the church as the mystery of Christ. “By revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I have written previously in brief, by which, in reading it, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ...as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit” (Eph. 3:3-5). This mystery is that “in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are...fellow members of the Body” (v. 6). If we read Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians with an exercised spirit, an unveiled heart, and an enlightened mind, we can perceive Paul’s understanding in the mystery of Christ, an understanding that began with knowing the wonderful “Me” on the road to Damascus and culminated with a marvelous revelation and governing vision of the Body of Christ in the book of Romans.

A Deep, Divine Thought

As a complete presentation of the full gospel of God concerning His Son and as an outline of the basic truths of the Christian life and the church life, the Epistle to the Romans contains a deep, divine thought—the profound revelation that, in Christ, God became man so that, in Christ, man may become God in life, nature, and expression but not in the Godhead to produce and build up the organic Body of Christ as the corporate expression of Christ, who is the embodiment and expression of the Triune God. God became man (8:3) so that, in God’s complete salvation, sinners may be redeemed, justified, reconciled, regenerated, sanctified, renewed, transformed, conformed, and glorified to become the sons of God, who are the same as God in life and nature, to become the members of the Body of Christ (1:3-4; 3:24; 5:10; 8:14, 29-30; 12:2, 4-5). Because God sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin (8:3), sinners—serpentine beings, children of the devil—can be redeemed, reconciled to God, and justified by Him in order to receive, through regeneration, eternal divine life and thus become children of God (v. 16). Through incarnation God became man, and through the resurrection of Christ man may become God. This is revealed in Romans 1:3-4, which speaks of “His Son, who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.” The Son sent by God in the likeness of the flesh of sin came out of the seed of David and thus was born as a genuine man, even a God-man who is the mingling of divinity and humanity in one person. The Lord’s incarnation was God becoming man, for incarnation brought the infinite God into a finite man, causing Him to become the Son of Man. The Lord’s resurrection was man becoming God, for in resurrection He, in His humanity, was begotten of God (Acts 13:33-34), and His humanity was uplifted into the divine sonship, causing Him to become the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29). Now, in God’s economy, the firstborn Son of God, the first God-man, is the prototype for the production of many God-men, many sons of God, who are the same as the firstborn Son in life and nature. From this we see that the purpose of God’s judicial redemption and organic salvation is to have Christ reproduced in millions of believers, who begin as children of God and grow into mature sons of God. Through God’s organic salvation carried out by the divine dispensing of the Triune God as life into redeemed tripartite human beings, the children of God are growing in life to become sons of God led by the Spirit (5:10; 8:2, 6, 10-11, 14). These sons of God, the many brothers of Christ as the firstborn Son of God, are the members of the Body of Christ—the goal of the divine economy and the focal point of the divine revelation in Romans. This brings us to the unveiling of the Body of Christ in Romans 12:4-5.²

The Perfect Will of God

In chapter 12 Paul links the will of God—“prove what the will of God is” (v. 2)—with the Body of Christ—“one Body in Christ” (v. 5). God’s eternal purpose is the have the church, the Body of Christ, consummating in the New Jerusalem (Eph. 1:9-11, 22-23; 3:11; Rev. 4:11; 21:2). God is a God of purpose (2 Tim. 1:9), having a will of His own pleasure, and thus He created all things for His will so that He might fulfill His pleasure (Eph. 1:5, 9; Rev. 4:11). According to His good pleasure, God made a purpose, a plan, in eternity and for eternity, a determined intention that is called the eternal purpose. This plan was made in Christ, with Christ, through Christ, and for Christ according to God’s desire and pleasure (Eph. 1:9-11; 3:11). God Himself is the initiation, the origination, the source, and the sphere of His eternal purpose, which nothing can overthrow, for which He is operating all things, and regarding which He did not take counsel or seek advice of anyone (1:11). As revealed in Genesis 1:26, which should be read and understood in light of the book of Ephesians, God’s eternal purpose is to have a corporate man to express Him with His image and to represent Him with this authority, thereby subduing and recovering the earth for the perfect will of God.

From eternity past God’s purpose has been to gain such a group of people to be the Body of Christ for the corporate expression of God the Father in the Son as the Spirit (Rom. 8:9-10, 14, 16, 28-29; 12:4-5). *His purpose* in 8:28 refers to this purposeful determination in God’s plan—God’s intention to produce many sons, many brothers of His firstborn Son, to be the components of the Body of Christ (v. 29). In keeping with this glorious purpose, the book of Romans reveals that God has saved us and called us according to His purpose, His plan according to His will, to put us into Christ, to put Christ into us, and to make us one with Christ in order to share His life, nature, and position for the Body of Christ. In Romans 12 the will of God is that we whom God has chosen, redeemed, reconciled, justified, and regenerated may live in this age as members of the Body of Christ. To live the Body life, therefore, is to “prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect” (v. 2). If we live as proper members of the Body, serving and functioning in a local church as

the practical expression of the Body, we will be persons in the will of God. Only those who actually live in the reality of the Body of Christ are truly will-of-God persons.

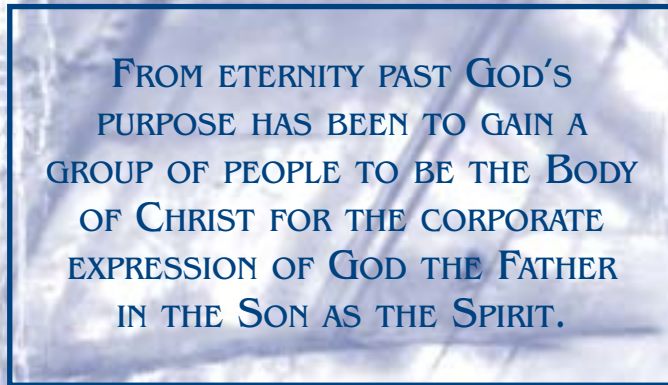
One Body in Christ

Now we must go on to see that we are one Body in the organic union with Christ. “Just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (vv. 4-5). “One Body in Christ”—this is the crucial matter. Romans 12 speaks of the Body from the angle of the organic union, from the uniting life, from a life that unites us together, not only with Christ but with all the other members of the Body. We are one Body in Christ, having an organic union with Him. The Body is not an organization, a society, or a community held together by human means; on the contrary, the Body is altogether an organism produced and maintained by the union in life that we have in Christ.

The Body is an organic entity held together in the organic union with Christ, and the actuality of the Body is realized in our remaining in the

organic union with Christ. If we do not see the organic union that we have with Christ, we cannot understand what the Body of Christ is (1 Cor. 1:30; 6:17; 12:12-13, 27). In order to be in the reality of the Body of Christ, we need to fully and consistently experience the organic union in Christ, with a thorough realization that we are organically one with Christ in life. As we remain in the organic union, abiding in Christ as branches in the vine, we are actually living in the Body of Christ (John 15:1, 4-5).

The living of the Body life in the organic union with Christ involves our entire tripartite being (Rom. 12:1-2, 11). We need to present our body a living sacrifice to God, we need to be renewed in our mind for the transformation of our soul, and we need to be burning in spirit with God as the fire. If we do not live in the organic union and if we do not have our body offered, our soul transformed by the renewing of our mind, and our spirit burning, then, in a practical sense, we are outside the Body and apart from the Body. We may engage in theological discourse and zealous activities, but we will be devoid of the reality of the Body.



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The Experience and Enjoyment of the Grace of God Issuing In the Body of Christ

It is not inaccurate to say that Romans is framed by Paul's speaking concerning the grace of God. "To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, the called saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:7). "The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you" (16:20). We have been justified freely by grace (3:24), and now we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand (5:2). The grace of God and the free gift in grace of the one man Jesus Christ have abounded to us (v. 15), for this grace has superabounded (v. 20). In our daily living we may receive the abundance of grace (v. 17), and this grace reigns unto eternal life (v. 21). We are under grace (6:14-15), having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us (12:6). Contrary to the narrow and superficial traditional doctrine of grace as being merely unmerited favor received from God, the New Testament reveals that grace is actually the Triune God Himself—the God of all grace (1 Pet. 5:10), the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 13:14), and the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29).

The grace of God is God Himself in Christ as everything to us for our enjoyment (John 1:17; 1 Cor. 15:10; cf. Gal. 2:20), and the real Christian living is the experience and enjoyment of grace (2 Cor. 12:9; 2 Tim. 4:22). We have faith and love through the Lord's superabounding grace (1 Tim. 1:14). By grace we receive salvation in life through Christ's resurrection and ascension (Eph. 2:5-8). We have obtained access into and stand in God's abounding grace (Rom. 5:2). In this grace we can enjoy God's eternal comfort and good hope (2 Thes. 2:16). We can come forward with boldness to the throne of grace to find grace for timely help (Heb. 4:16). We can receive God's abounding supply of grace (2 Cor. 9:8) and constantly enjoy God's multiplying grace (1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Pet. 1:2; Rev. 22:21). We may enjoy God's greater grace through humility (James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5). In our experience of the grace in God's economy, we enjoy the Lord's presence in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22; cf. Luke 1:28, 30). We need to live out Christ as God's righteousness by the grace of God (Gal. 2:20-21). We need to experience the perfecting of the Lord's sufficient grace, Christ's overshadowing power, in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). By grace we can overcome the usurpation of temporal and uncertain riches and become generous in ministering to the needy saints (8:1-2). The God of all grace perfects, establishes, strengthens, and grounds us through our sufferings (1 Pet. 5:10). We need to be good stewards of the varied grace of God (4:10; Eph. 3:2). Our word should convey Christ as grace to others (4:29). We need to experience Christ as grace to be a surpassing one and to labor abundantly for the Lord (1 Cor. 15:10). We need to receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness to reign in life (Rom. 5:17, 21).

From the foregoing we can see that the New Testament believers' living under the grace in God's economy is a total living of experiencing the processed and consummated Triune God as grace (Gal. 6:18; Heb. 4:16; Rev. 22:21). The Christian living is the living of grace, the experience of grace, for the Christian life is essentially a life of having God as our grace (2 Cor. 1:12). A total living means that our entire living is a living of the Triune God processed to be grace to us (13:14). The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit of grace, is with our spirit, which has been regenerated to be the dwelling place of the processed and consummated Triune God (Heb. 10:29; Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23; Philem. 25; 2 Tim. 4:22). We are those who have received grace, which is the Triune God—the Father given to us in the Son, and the Son realized as the Spirit dwelling in our spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 6:17). The Lord being with our spirit is grace being with our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22; Gal. 6:18). When we turn to our spirit, we enter through the gate of heaven and touch the throne of grace in heaven through Christ as the heavenly ladder (Heb. 4:16; Gen. 28:12-17; John 1:51; Eph. 2:22). The riches of God's grace surpass every limitation, for they are the overflowing riches of God Himself for our enjoyment (Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:10). Grace is God Himself as our life to be one with us, to save us, to make His home in us, and to be formed in us (Col. 3:4; Eph. 2:8; 3:17; Gal. 4:19). To grow in grace is to grow in the increase of God (2 Pet. 3:18; Col. 2:19). Humility invites God's grace; if we are humble, God will give Himself as grace to us (1 Pet. 5:5-6; James 4:6). Because we are saints, the grace of the Lord must be with each one of us in every aspect of our daily life (Rev. 22:21).

The consummation of the believers' experience and enjoyment of the grace of God is the church as the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:4-6; 1 Cor. 15:10; 12:27; Eph. 1:6-8, 22-23; Rev. 21:2). This means that our experience of the grace of God in our living issues in the reality and practicality of the organic Body of Christ (Eph. 1:6, 22-23; 2:8; 3:2; 4:4, 16, 29). The more we experience and enjoy the grace of the Triune God and live by this grace, the more there will be a consummation—the Body of Christ in its reality and practicality. Every part of the organic Body of Christ is an issue of our experience and enjoyment of the grace of the processed and consummated Triune God in our spirit (Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23).

Knowing the Body of Christ in Life

We have pointed out that in Romans Paul speaks of the Body of Christ from the perspective of the believers' organic union with Christ, a union that is of life, by life, with life, and in life (5:10, 17, 21; 8:2, 6, 10-11). This life is the eternal, uncreated, indestructible life of God, which has been given to us in the Son (1 John 5:11-12). This life is the life of the Body of Christ, and we may

know and experience Christ as the life of the Body; then through our experience of this divine life we may know the Body of Christ in life.

Christ is the life of the Body, and, as such, He is our life (Col. 3:4, 10-11). In order to experience Christ as our life, we need to see that we have one position, one life, one living, one destiny, and one glory with Christ (vv. 1-4; cf. 1 Cor. 6:17). Our position is that we are in Christ; because we are in Him, we are where He is—sitting at the right hand of God (Col. 3:1; John 17:24; Eph. 2:6). The Son's position is in the Father (John 10:38; 14:10); we are in the Son (1 Cor. 1:30), so we are in the Father (John 14:20; 1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:1).

It is when we are in the spirit that we are in Christ, in the Father, and in heaven practically and experientially. The life of God is the life of Christ, and the life of Christ has become our life (Col. 3:4; John 5:26). For Christ to be our life means that He is subjective to us to the uttermost (1:4; 14:6; 10:10; 1 Cor. 15:45; Rom. 8:10, 6, 11). It is impossible to separate a person from the life of that person, for a person's life is the person himself; thus, to say that Christ is our life means that Christ has become us and that we have one life and living with Him (John 14:6; Phil. 1:21). With Christ as the believers' life there are three characteristics that distinguish it from the natural life. This life is a crucified life, a resurrected life, and a life hidden in God (Gal. 2:20; John 11:25; Col. 3:3-4; Matt. 6:1-6, 16-18).

Christ must be our life in a practical and experiential way, and according to the book of Romans, we need to be saved in His life (Col. 3:3-4; 1 Cor. 15:45; Rom. 5:10). To be saved in the divine life from the present age of the world is by the sanctification of the consummated Spirit (12:2; 6:19, 22). To be saved in the divine life from our natural being is by the transformation of the life-giving Spirit (12:2). To be saved in the divine life from individualism is by being built up in the Body of Christ (v. 5). To be saved in the divine life from self-likeness is by the conformation of the life-imparting Spirit (8:29). To be saved in the divine life is to reign in divine life (5:17). To be saved in the divine life will result in the victory over Satan (16:20).

In chapter 8 of Romans we see that it is through the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity that we experience Christ

as the life of the Body of Christ. In this chapter the matter of the divine dispensing is revealed in a full and rich way. The fact of the divine dispensing is indicated by the word *give* in verse 11; the giving of life is actually the dispensing of life into our being. In this one verse we see the Divine Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—and we also see the process through which the Triune God has passed: “If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.” Through the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity as life, we may be saturated and permeated with the divine life for the Body of Christ. The church as the Body of Christ is produced, supplied, sustained, and built up by the dispensing of the Triune God as life into our being. This is the life of the Body of Christ.

We need to realize that although we are members of the

Body of Christ (12:5), the life in us is not a member life but a Body life, for all the members of the Body share the same life. Each member shares in common the same life together with all the other members—the Christ who is the life of the Body. In the Body of Christ, when one member is joined to the Body experientially in the organic union with Christ, the Head,

and has fellowship with the Body, the life of that member is the life of the Body, and the life of the Body is his life. It is this life that joins us together and mingles with us to become the Body of Christ. However, if we are still living according to the flesh and in ourselves and if we are still serving in our natural ability, the life of the Body, which is Christ Himself in us, has no way of being manifested, and there is no way for us to know the Body. Only when our flesh has been dealt with, our self has been denied, our outer man has been broken, and our natural life has been shattered by the cross will the divine life within us cause us to realize that we are members of the Body of Christ and that the life in us cannot be individualistic or independent of the Body. Furthermore, this life will require us to have fellowship with all the other members and be joined to them, bringing us into this fellowship and the experience of being joined together and of truly being one Body in Christ.

We need to know the Body in life (1 John 5:11-12; Col. 3:4; 2:19; Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11; 12:4-5). The Body of Christ is formed by Christ as life in us; this life mingles



with us to become the Body of Christ (1 John 5:11-12; Col. 3:4; 1:18; 2:19). Knowing the Body in life is the result of our experience of life and spiritual growth (1 John 2:12-14). If believers remain immature and inexperienced in life, they will not be able to know the Body in life; rather, to them, the Body will be nothing more than a concept or doctrine. In order to know the Body and touch the reality of the Body, we must progress in the experience of life and the growth of life (1 Cor. 3:1-2; 14:20). Only after we have advanced in the spiritual life can we know the mystery of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:12-13, 15-16). In order to know the Body and live in the Body, we need to deal with the flesh, the self, and the natural constitution (Gal. 2:20; 5:24; Matt. 16:24), becoming persons in resurrection who live by the resurrection life of Christ. This is the life by which we know the Body of Christ and through which we live as one Body in Christ.

Living a Grafted Life

If we would live in the reality of the Body of Christ, we need to live a grafted life (Rom. 6:5; 11:17). The Bible reveals the relationship that God desires to have with man is that He and man become one (1 Cor. 6:17). God desires that the divine life and the human life be joined together to become one life (John 15:1, 4-5). This oneness is an organic union, a union in life—a grafted life. The concept of the divine life and the human life being grafted into one is mysterious, beyond the natural concept, and foreign to human thought. In grafting, two similar lives are joined and then grow together organically (Rom. 11:17-24). Grafting can be effective only if the lives to be grafted are similar. Because our human life was made in the image of God and according to the likeness of God (Gen. 1:26), it can be joined to the divine life. Our human life resembles the divine life; therefore, the divine life and the human life can be grafted together and then grow together organically.

In order for us to be grafted into Christ, He had to pass through the processes of incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. Christ became flesh to be the seed of David, the branch of David, so that we may be grafted together with Him (John 1:14; Matt. 1:1; Isa. 11:1; Zech. 3:8; Jer. 23:5; 33:15). As human beings, we are branches, pieces of wood. Christ came as the branch of David to be the same as we are so that He and we could be grafted together. Christ was “cut” on the cross so that we could be grafted into Him. Christ’s becoming the branch of David does not by itself mean that He could be grafted together with us. Grafting requires cutting; two branches cannot be grafted together unless both are cut. Christ was “cut” when He died on the cross. We were “cut” when we repented and received the Lord. After the cutting occurs, the joining and the organic union take place; therefore, in grafting we have the cutting, the joining, and the organic

union. After Christ was “cut” on the cross, He was resurrected to become the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17). By becoming such a Spirit, Christ was ready for grafting. Once we repent and receive the Lord, He enters into our spirit as the life-giving Spirit, bringing the divine life into us. This life is a life of death and resurrection. As the life-giving Spirit, Christ brings the key to death and resurrection into us, the believers, so that we may die and be raised with Him. In this death and resurrection we are grafted together with Him. As regenerated ones, we should live a grafted life—a life in which two parties are joined to grow together organically. After we have been grafted into Christ, we should no longer live by ourselves; rather, we should allow the pneumatic Christ to live in us (Gal. 2:20). We should no longer live by our flesh or by our natural being; instead, we should live by our regenerated spirit, a spirit grafted with Christ. Through this grafting we are united with Him, mingled with Him, and incorporated with Him to become in Him an enlarged, universal, divine and human incorporation—the Body of Christ.

The grafted life is not an exchanged life but the mingling of the human life with the divine life (v. 20). Some Christian teachers regard the Christian life as an exchanged life. According to this concept, the Lord asks us to give up our poor life in exchange for His superior life. According to this concept, we yield our human life to the Lord, and He replaces it with His divine life. The Christian life is not an exchanged life but a grafted life—the mingling of the human life with the divine life (Rom. 6:3-5; John 15:1, 4-5). There is no exchange, or trade, of lives. Instead of exchange, there is the dispensing, the infusing, of the divine life into the human life and the mingling of the divine life with the human life. The most wonderful reality in the Christian experience is that the believers in Christ are united with Christ in the way of life. Whatever Christ is and whatever He has done are altogether for one thing: that He and we could be organically united and live a grafted life.

In the grafted life the human life is not eliminated but is strengthened, uplifted, and enriched by the divine life (Rom. 11:17-24). In the grafted life the branch still retains its same essential characteristics, but its life is uplifted and transformed by being grafted into a better life. The higher life subdues the lower life. The higher life enriches, uplifts, and transforms the lower life. In the grafted life the divine life works within us to discharge the negative elements (2 Cor. 3:18). The divine life works in a gradual way to eliminate whatever is natural. The divine life swallows our defects and infirmities. The negative element in our disposition is killed, and then, instead of casting away our disposition, the Lord uplifts it and uses it. In the grafted life the divine life resurrects God’s original creation (John 11:25). Instead of giving up His creation, God

will reclaim it and restore it by the resurrection power of His divine life. God intends to bring all the aspects of our being into resurrection (Phil. 3:11). As the divine life discharges the negative things, it works to resurrect God's original creation. In this way our original functions—the functions given to us at creation—are restored, strengthened, and enriched (Gal. 2:20). In the grafted life our faculties are uplifted (Eph. 4:23). As the divine life resurrects our faculties, it uplifts them to the highest level. This produces in the believers a highly developed character. In the grafted life the divine life supplies the riches of Christ to our inward parts (Rom. 12:2). Our resurrected and uplifted faculties are supplied with the riches of Christ. Through such a supply we are renewed in our mind, emotion, and will. In the grafted life the divine life saturates our whole being. The riches of Christ permeate us and cause a genuine metabolic change—transformation (2 Cor. 3:18). By this saturation and permeation of the divine life, we are conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). This is the living of the Body of Christ in reality.

Living in the Mingled Spirit

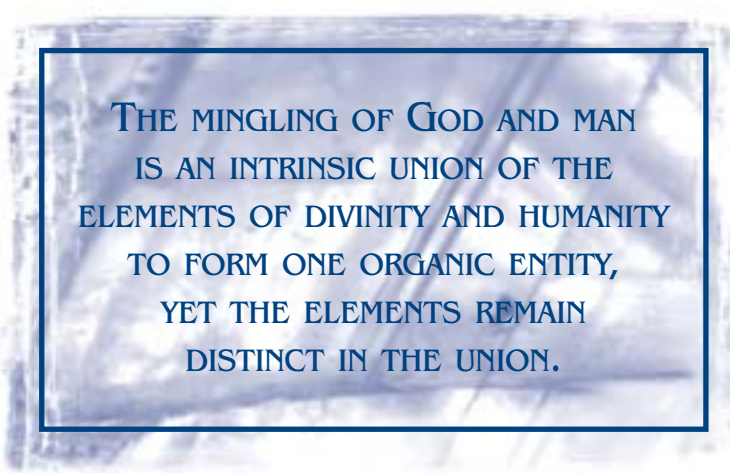
God's unique purpose is to mingle Himself with us so that He becomes our life, our nature, and our content, and we become His corporate expression (John 14:20; 15:4-5; Eph. 3:16-21; 4:4-6, 16). The mingling of God and man is an intrinsic union of the elements of divinity and humanity to form one organic entity, yet the elements remain distinct in the union.

The will of God is the mingling of God with man, and the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose depends on the mingling of divinity and humanity (1:5, 9; 3:11). The Lord Jesus Christ is the mingling of God and man (Luke 1:31-35). The Christian life is the mingling of divinity and humanity; to be a Christian means to be mingled with God, to be a God-man (2 Tim. 3:17). In His economy God mingles Himself with us to become one entity with us (1 Cor. 6:17). We may be saved to the extent that we and God are completely mingled as one, having one life and one living (John 15:4-5; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:19-21).

The Body of Christ is the enlargement of Christ, the enlargement of the One who is the mingling of God and man (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:16). We need to understand the Body of Christ from the perspective of the mingling of divinity and humanity (vv. 4-6). In the Gospels the

mingling of God and man produced the Head; in Acts the enlargement of the mingling of God and man produced the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16). In Ephesians 4:4-6 four persons—the Body, the Spirit, the Lord, and God the Father—are actively mingled together. The Father is embodied in the Son, the Son is realized as the Spirit, and the Spirit is mingled with the believers. This mingling is the constitution of the Body of Christ. The processed and consummated Triune God mingles Himself with His chosen people in their humanity, and the mingling is the genuine oneness of the Body of Christ (v. 3; John 17:21-23).

We need to see a vision of the mingled spirit—the divine Spirit mingled with our regenerated human spirit (1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:4). The Father is in the Son, the Son is the Spirit, and the Spirit is now mingled with our spirit (John 14:9-10, 16-18; 1 Cor. 15:45; 6:17; Rom. 8:16).



The union of God and man is a union of the two spirits, the Spirit of God and the spirit of man (1 Cor. 2:11-16); the union of these two spirits is the deepest mystery in the Bible. The focus of God's economy is the mingled spirit, the divine Spirit mingled with the human spirit; whatever God intends to do or accomplish is related to this focus (Eph. 3:9, 5; 1:17;

2:22; 4:23; 5:18; 6:18). The mingled spirit is both the Spirit of the Lord and our spirit (Rom. 8:4; 2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Cor. 15:45; 6:17). The mingled spirit is a spirit that is one spirit with God and that is the same as God in His life and nature but not in His Godhead (1 John 5:11; 2 Pet. 1:4). The divine Spirit and the human spirit are mingled as one within us so that we can live the life of a God-man, a life that is God yet man and man yet God (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:19-21). The God-man living is the living of the two spirits, the Spirit of God and the spirit of man, joined and mingled together as one (1 Cor. 6:17). The mingled spirit is the key to the Christian life (Rom. 8:4; Eph. 2:22). To be proper Christians, we must know that the Lord Jesus today, as the embodiment of the Triune God, is the Spirit indwelling our spirit and is mingled with our spirit as one spirit (2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Cor. 15:45; 6:17). By being one spirit with the Lord, we can experience Christ as the all-inclusive One and take Him as everything (1:2, 24, 30; 2:8, 10; 3:11; 5:7-8; 10:3-4; 11:3; 12:12; 15:20, 45, 47). God's unique requirement of us as believers is that we live and walk by the Spirit in our spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25; 6:18). Ultimately, the Bible requires only one thing of us—that we walk according to

the mingled spirit. The key to everything in the Christian life is found in the wonderful Spirit who is in our regenerated spirit and who has become one spirit with our spirit (Phil. 1:19; 4:23; 2 Tim. 4:22). To live in the spirit is to let Christ fill and saturate us until He permeates our whole being and is thereby expressed through us (Eph. 2:22; 3:16-21).

The Body of Christ is absolutely a matter in the mingled spirit; thus, to be in the reality of the Body of Christ is to be in the mingled spirit and to live in the mingled spirit (Rom. 8:4-6; 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 6:17; 12:12-13, 27). The church as the Body of Christ is a group of people who allow God to be mingled with them and who are mingled with God (Eph. 3:16-21). The reality of the Body of Christ is a corporate living by the God-men, who are united, mingled, and constituted together with God by the mingling of humanity with divinity and divinity with humanity (4:1-6, 15-16). In actuality and practicality, the Body of Christ is the mingled spirit. The Body of Christ is the corporate Christ composed of the Head and the Body with many members; this corporate Christ is the mingled spirit. To live, act, and move in the mingled spirit is to live, act, and move in the Body of Christ. To be in the mingled spirit is to be the Body of Christ actually and practically.

This is Paul's thought in Romans. Paul indicates that the mingled spirit is the unique organ for God to bring forth and build up the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 1:9; 7:6; 8:4, 14, 16; 12:4-5). We must serve God in the regenerated spirit by the life-giving Spirit, not in the soul by the power and ability of the soul (1:9). In order to reign in life for the Body life, we must be in the mingled spirit (5:17, 21). The mingled spirit is a source of newness in our service to God (7:6). The secret of God's organic salvation is the Spirit with our spirit (5:10; 8:16). The Body of Christ is an organism composed of a group of people who live, walk, and have their being according to the mingled spirit (vv. 4-6). The mingled spirit is the spirit of sonship; if we are led by the Spirit in our spirit, we are sons of God in reality (vv. 14-15). We need to pray in the mingled spirit (vv. 26-27). In the mingled spirit we live a life of the highest virtues for the Body of Christ (12:9-21). In the mingled spirit we live to the Lord and not to ourselves (14:7-9). In the mingled spirit we live the kingdom life with righteousness, peace, and joy (v. 17). When we live in the mingled spirit, we can be of the same mind, and with one accord and one mouth we can glorify God (15:5-6).

The Body of Christ Expressed as Local Churches

A genuine local church is an expression of the Body of Christ in a certain locality. The church revealed in Matthew 16:18 is the universal church, the unique Body

of Christ, whereas the church revealed in 18:17 is the local church, the expression of the Body of Christ in a particular locality. The one universal church—the Body of Christ—becomes the many local churches—local expressions of the Body of Christ. The unique Body of Christ is expressed in many localities as the local churches (Eph. 4:4; Rev. 1:4, 11).³ All the local churches are expressions of the unique Body of Christ in the universe. Every local church is part of the unique, universal Body of Christ, a local expression of this Body (1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27). Universally, all the local churches are one Body, and locally, every local church is a local expression of the universal Body; therefore, a local church is not the Body but only a part of the Body, an expression of the Body. The universal Christ has a part of Himself in every local church; every local church is a part of Christ, and all these parts constitute the Body (Eph. 1:23; 2:22). For the church to be real and practical, there is the need of the local churches. Without the local churches we cannot have the universal church, for the universal church is composed of all the local churches. We cannot live directly in the universal church; it is impossible for us to live in the universal church without living in a local church (Rev. 1:11; 2:1).

The local ground of the church is basically the unique oneness of the Body of Christ practiced in the local churches (Eph. 4:4; 1 Thes. 1:1). Both the universal Body of Christ and the local churches are uniquely one. There is one unique Body in the whole universe, and there is one unique local church in each locality respectively. This unique oneness is the basic element in the church life (Acts 1:14; 2:46; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 1:27; 2:1-2). The churches in different localities are for the universal expression of Christ (Eph. 1:23; Rev. 1:4, 11; 22:16).

The Body of Christ is unique in the universe, but it needs to be expressed on earth (Rom. 12:4-5; 16:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:12-13, 27; Col. 3:15; 4:15-16). The local churches are the expressions of the Body of Christ (Rom. 16:16). The Body of Christ and the local churches are two sides of one entity; the local churches are the Body of Christ, and the Body of Christ is the local churches. The Body of Christ is the organism of the Triune God, and the local churches are for the fellowship and communication of the Body of Christ (vv. 1-23). The local churches are the gathering point of our enjoyment of God's salvation in life (5:10; 16:16). As we enjoy God's life in the church life, we are saved from self-view and self-goal and care for the building up of Body of Christ (12:3; 14:7-9, 17-19; 15:1-3).

The book of Romans begins with the designation of Jesus Christ to be the Son of God for the mass reproduction of the many sons of God as the members of the Body of Christ, and the book ends with the practice of the local churches as the expression of the Body of Christ (1:3-4;

8:29; 12:4-5; 16:1, 16). The local churches are the practical expression of the Body of Christ (vv. 1-5, 16, 23). Although the churches appear in different places, they are not separate, and although they are local, they are still part of the unique universal Body of Christ (12:4-5; 16:16). On the one hand, the Body of Christ is expressed in localities city by city as the local churches (Rev. 1:11). On the other hand, because the fellowship of this Body is universal, these local churches are still one (1 Cor. 10:16; Eph. 4:4). For the practice of the Body life, all the local churches must receive all genuine believers unconditionally, according to the way God and Christ receive them (Rom. 14:1-3; 15:5-7). Romans 16 displays the real and practical Body life; here we see that all the churches and all the saints live in the universal fellowship of the Body of Christ. In his greetings Paul unveils some crucial indicators of the proper church life both in a particular local church and among the churches: serving the church, risking our lives for the church, having the church in our home, acknowledging that the church is the church of Christ, and extending hospitality to everyone in the church and being a host to all the churches (vv. 1-5, 16, 23). We must be governed by the vision of the Body of Christ and follow in the footsteps of Paul (who took the lead in the fellowship of concern among the saints and between the churches), by bringing all the saints in all the churches into the blending life of the entire Body of Christ (vv. 1-23). When we live in the fellowship of the Body of Christ and express this Body in the local churches, the result will be God's crushing Satan under our feet, our enjoying the grace of Christ and the peace of God, and the giving of glory to the only wise God (vv. 20, 27).

Having the Consciousness of the Body of Christ

According to the teaching of the Bible and our spiritual experience, there is something called the consciousness of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:26-27; 2 Cor. 11:28-29). Since we are members of the Body, we should be conscious of the Body and have a feeling for the Body. An example of Body-consciousness is found in Romans 12:15: "Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep." In order to live the Body life in reality and practicality, we must care for our fellow members and be full of feeling for the Body. First, we need to take the feeling of the Head as our own feeling. Paul took care of

the Body of Christ by taking Christ's feeling as his own feeling; the Lord's feeling became his feeling for the Body (Phil. 1:8).

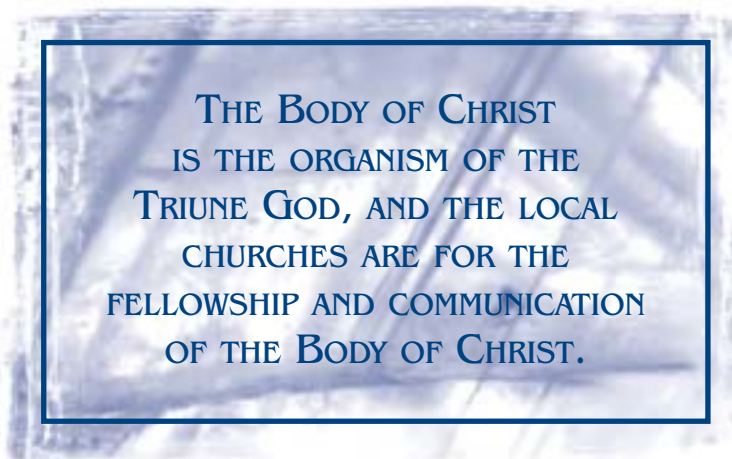
The consciousness of the Body of Christ comes from the enjoyment of Christ (Col. 2:16-19). The dear, precious One whom we enjoy as our food, drink, and breath is the Head of the Body (1 Cor. 10:3-4; John 20:22; Col. 1:18; 2:19). What we enjoy of Christ is actually something of Him as the Head; thus, when we enjoy Christ, we hold Him as the Head (vv. 10, 16-17, 19). It is the enjoyment of Christ that causes Him to be our Head subjectively and experientially (Eph. 3:8, 17; 4:15). When we enjoy Christ, He, the Head, causes us to become conscious of the Body. The more we enjoy Christ, the more we will realize experientially that the Christ whom we enjoy is the Head of the Body; this realization will make us conscious of the Body and cause us to love all the mem-

bers of the Body. The Christ whom we enjoy is the Head who causes us to be conscious of the Body; therefore, the issue of enjoying Christ and holding Him as the Head is that we become conscious of the Body of Christ.

The consciousness of the Body of Christ is the sense of Christ's life within us (Col. 3:4, 15; Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11;

12:4-5). The mystical Body of Christ is formed by Christ as life in each of us, mingled with us (Col. 3:4; 2:19). If we are still living in our own natural human life, we cannot know this life, which mingles with us to form the Body of Christ (Matt. 16:24; 1 Cor. 2:14; 3:1-3; 12:12-27; Eph. 4:13-16). The Bible and our experience prove that, though each one of us is a member of the Body of Christ, the life in each one of us is not a *member* life but a *Body* life (1 John 5:11-12; Rom. 12:4-5). In the Body of Christ, when one member is joined to the Body or is having fellowship with the Body, his life is the life of the Body, and the life of the Body is his life (1 John 1:1-3). This life mingles with us to become the Body of Christ.

Concerning the consciousness of the Body of Christ, we need to begin with the sense of the divine life within us (Rom. 8:6). This sense originates from the Spirit of God and from God's life in our spirit (vv. 2, 10). The divine life within has feelings, and our regenerated spirit also has feelings (vv. 6, 16; 2 Cor. 2:13). This sense is called the sense of life, and it is also the consciousness of the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:15; 1 Cor. 12:26-27). If we exercise



this sense, it will cause us to be conscious of matters related to the Body. If we cultivate this sense, it will enable us to detect problems in the Body. If we exercise this sense often and if we love God and care for the church, this sense will become the sense of the Body (2 Cor. 11:28-29). Because of self-consideration and love for our particular work, our inner sense is suppressed; this shows that our sense of being in the Body is not adequate and that we still remain in ourselves (Rom. 12:4-5).

The Body of Christ is universal, the life within us is universal, and the sense of the Body is universal (1 Cor. 12:26-27; 2 Cor. 11:28-29). Once the divine life and the Spirit enter into us, we should have a universal sense—the consciousness of the Body (Rom. 8:2, 10-11; 12:4-5, 15). The sense of the Body is a universal matter, but this sense is restricted in us because of our own feelings and views (Prov. 14:10; 2 Cor. 6:11-13). The more we experience the Lord's breaking and are delivered from ourselves, the more we will discover that the sense of the Body is universal. If we have the sense of the Body, when others suffer or are blessed, we will identify with them and feel the same hardship or blessing.

The consciousness of the Body of Christ is closely related to our frame of mind (Col. 2:18; 3:2; Rom. 12:2-3; Eph. 4:23). Our frame of mind is our perception of things and is very critical; when there is the proper and thorough perception of matters, our frame of mind is normal. If we do not have an adequate understanding of the Body of Christ, our frame of mind is not proper, and we will not be able to have a common recognition of the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 4:22-24). The more we are transformed by the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:2), the more we will live according to Paul's word in verse 3: "I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a measure of faith." If we would live the Body life in reality and practicality, all self-exalting thoughts and arrogance must be eliminated so that we may be sober-minded in our thinking.

This requires that our mind be renewed by having all the negative elements within it swallowed up by the life of Christ. Then we will esteem ourselves according to the faith that God has apportioned to us, that is, according to the measure of God's element that has been transfused into us. (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 3, note 1)

If our frame of mind is proper and if we are sober-minded in the way that we think of ourselves, we will have the consciousness of the Body, care for the feeling of the Body, honor the organic order of the Body, and always do what is best for the growth and building up of the Body (Eph. 4:16).

One Body—the Unique Oneness of the Body of Christ

If we have the consciousness of the Body of Christ, sensing in our spirit the Christ who is the life of the Body and being aware of the feeling of the Body, we will spontaneously realize that the Body is one and touch the unique oneness of the Body of Christ. Paul was keenly aware of this: "We who are many are *one Body* in Christ"; "in one Spirit we were all baptized into *one Body*"; "the members are many, but the body *one*"; "might reconcile both in *one Body* to God"; "*one Body* and one Spirit"; "let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts, to which you were also called in *one Body*" (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:13, 20; Eph. 2:16; 4:4; Col. 3:15, emphasis added). The Body of Christ is uniquely one universally; the Body can exist and survive only in oneness. The Body of Christ, being organic and absolutely a matter of Christ as life, is undivided and indivisible, as Christ is (1 Cor. 12:12-13; 1:13). Thus, contrary to the common practice among Christians today, the apostles utterly condemned division, divisiveness, and all manifestations of sectarianism. In addition, because the Body is one, Paul instructs us in Romans 14 and 15, based on the common faith and the common salvation (Titus 1:4; Jude 3), to receive all genuine believers in Christ, without making issues of differences in doctrine or practice. Such universal receiving is necessary if we are to obey the apostolic command to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). The Body of Christ, with its unique oneness, is of the eternal, uncreated divine life; therefore, the oneness of the Body is divinely organic and full of the divine life, which is the factor of the organic oneness of the Body.

As amazing as it might sound, the oneness of the Body of Christ is actually the triune, organic, living God Himself (vv. 4-6). The issue of the one God and Father, the one Lord, and the one Spirit is one organism—the Body of Christ (1:3-23). The oneness of the Body of Christ is unique because it is a oneness in the uniqueness of the Triune God (John 17:6, 11, 14-23). God the Father is the source as our nature and life, God the Son is the element of this nature and life, and God the Spirit is the essence of the element. Because we have the Triune God within us as the source, the element, and the essence, we are one. In this oneness with the Triune God, we have oneness with one another; this is the oneness of the Body of Christ. Because the Body of Christ is the mingling of the Triune God with His redeemed and transformed people, the Body itself is the oneness.

According to Ephesians 4:4-6, the Body of Christ, the church, is four-in-one: the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the Body. Ultimately, the church, the Body, is a group of redeemed and regenerated people who are in union with the Triune God and mingled with the Triune God (3:16-21). Ephesians 4:4-6 reveals four persons—one Body, one

Spirit, one Lord, and one God and Father—mingled together as one entity to be the organic Body of Christ. The Father is the origin, the Son is the element, and the Spirit is the essence; these three are mingled with the Body. The Father is embodied in the Son, the Son is realized as the Spirit, and They are all in us; therefore, we are “four-in-one,” a divine and human constitution (John 14:10-11, 16-17, 20; Eph. 3:16-21). Because the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all one with the Body of Christ, we may say that, in the divine economy (not in the eternal, immutable Godhead), the Triune God is now “the four-in-one God”; these four are the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the Body. To have a spiritual understanding of this profound divine-human reality is to know with deep assurance that the Body of Christ is uniquely one and that we truly are one Body in Christ.

In our experience the unique oneness of the Body of Christ is “the oneness of the Spirit” (4:3). The Spirit is the essence of the Body of Christ, and because of this, the Spirit is the reality of the oneness of the Body of Christ (1 John 5:6; John 16:13). This is actually a oneness of the mingling of the processed and consummated Triune God with all the believers in Christ—a oneness that was imparted into the spirit of the believers when they were regenerated by the Spirit of life with Christ as life (17:6, 11, 14-23; 3:5-6; Rom. 8:2). Now we need to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace with the transformed human virtues mentioned specifically in Ephesians 4:1-3. In the practice of the reality of the Body of Christ, we should live out this unique oneness in genuine local churches, which are established on the ground of the unique oneness of the one Body of Christ. The reality of the universal Body of Christ, with its unique oneness of, in, and with the Triune God, must, according to God’s will and economy, have a practical expression on earth in local churches with Christ as the unique foundation laid upon the ground of the oneness of the universal Body of Christ. In their daily life in such churches, seeking believers learn to keep the oneness of the Spirit and, through the growth of Christ as life within them, are ushered into the reality of the one Body.

Living in the Fellowship of the Body of Christ

Since the Body of Christ is uniquely one universally, the

fellowship of the Body of Christ is also uniquely one universally (Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3, 7; 1 Cor. 10:16-17). This fellowship is the flow of the eternal life within all the believers who have received and possess the divine life (Eph. 4:4-6). The circulation of blood in our physical body is a good picture of the fellowship, the flow of the divine life, in the Body of Christ. Just as there is the circulation of blood in the human body, so there is a circulation in the Body of Christ—a circulation that the New Testament calls fellowship. The health of our physical body depends on the circulation of our blood; likewise, the health of the Body of Christ depends on the fellowship of the Spirit. The fellowship of the Body of Christ is simply the circulation, the current, of the Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1-2). This unique fellowship is the stream of the divine life; as the stream of the divine life flows within us, there is the fellowship of the Body of Christ (Acts 2:42). The divine fellowship is the reality of living in the Body

of Christ; by being restricted in this fellowship, the Body of Christ is kept in oneness (1 Cor. 1:9; 12:12-13, 27).


The unique fellowship of the Body of Christ is related to the unique oneness of the Body of Christ (6:17; 10:16-17; 12:20). The fellowship, the circulation, of the divine life in the Body brings all the members of the Body into one-

ness (Eph. 4:3-6). This oneness is the oneness of the Spirit and also the oneness of the Body of Christ (vv. 3-4; 1 Cor. 12:12-13). The unique fellowship is the genuine oneness of the Body of Christ as the unique ground for the believers to be kept one in Christ. Thus, the fellowship among the churches is the fellowship of the Body of Christ. Because there is one Spirit, there is only one Body, and there is only one circulation of life in the Body; this circulation is the fellowship of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:4; 1 John 1:3, 7). A local church is a part of the unique Body of Christ, and the fellowship of the Body is universally one; in fellowship there is no separation (Rev. 1:11; 2:7). No church or region should isolate itself from the fellowship of the Body. Rather, the local churches should fellowship with all the genuine local churches on the whole earth to keep the fellowship of the Body of Christ (Col. 4:16). Among all the churches that compose the one universal Body of Christ, there is no organization, but there is the fellowship of the Body of Christ (Phil. 1:5).

Whenever we come to the Lord’s table, we come to practice the fellowship of the Body (1 Cor. 10:16-17;

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UNIQUENESS OF THE TRIUNE GOD.

11:24-26). The Lord's table is a testimony that we who belong to Christ are one. If we isolate ourselves from the fellowship of the Body, we are not qualified to partake of the Lord's body, because the loaf on the table in the Lord's supper signifies the entire Body of Christ. As we enjoy Christ in partaking of His blood and body at His table, we express and practice the fellowship of the Body of Christ, the unique fellowship among the churches (Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3, 7; Phil. 1:5; 2:1). This is a testimony that we are living in the reality and practicality of the one, universal Body of Christ.

The apostle Paul first encountered this reality when he saw a light brighter than the sun and heard the resurrected and ascended Christ in glory asking him, "Why are you persecuting Me?" Paul had been persecuting and seeking to destroy this "Me," because he was ignorant not only of Christ Himself as the Head of the Body but also of the corporate Christ, the Body with the Head. This vision and encounter shattered him, and he was broken under the awesome revelation of the Body-Christ (about which he wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13). He was led by members of the Body into the life and fellowship of the Body of Christ, and from that time onward he devoted himself to the Lord for the fulfillment of His heart's desire—the growth and building up of the Body of Christ as the corporate expression of the Triune God. May the Lord, for His Body, produce many little "Pauls" who will live in the Body and for the Body, thereby gaining the honor of being well pleasing to Him (2 Cor. 5:9). 

Notes

¹The Body of Christ is the mystical Body of the universal, all-extensive, all-inclusive Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:10). Christ is more vast than the universe (3:18), and this Christ has a Body. Our Christ, whose Body we are, is the Head over all things. Christ is the Head over all things to the church, the church is the Body of this universal Christ, and the Body of this universal Christ is the fullness of the One who fills all in all. This means that the Body is the fullness, the corporate expression, of the Christ who fills all things. Christ Himself is universally vast and extensive, and the Body is the fullness of this universally vast and extensive Christ; thus, the Body also is universal. Today the believers in Christ need a vision of the immensity of the universal Body of Christ.

²The Body is the intrinsic significance of the church. Without the Body as its content, the church makes no sense and has no meaning. Only when we touch the reality of the Body of Christ do we know the real meaning and purpose of the church.

³The New Testament clearly and emphatically reveals that just as the universal Body of Christ is uniquely one, so the expression of the Body in a locality must also be uniquely one. Thus, in a locality there should be only one church—the expression of the one Body in that locality (Acts 8:1; 13:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thes. 1:1; Rev. 1:11; 2:1).

Works Cited

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Receiving the Believers for the Body Life

We must receive the saints according to God's receiving of them. Whomever God has received, we are compelled to receive. We have no choice...Our heavenly Father has brought forth many children, many Christians, and He has received them all. Therefore, we also must receive them, not according to our tastes or preferences, but according to God's receiving.

However, most of the receiving of the believers in Christianity is not according to God's receiving, but according to doctrinal concepts. Consider the example of baptism. There are many different concepts about baptism. Some people insist on sprinkling, some on immersion, others argue about the name in which we baptize people, and still others argue against physical baptism, claiming that baptism is purely spiritual. How many different schools of opinion there are over this one matter of baptism! This is dreadful...

Paul knew how important was the matter of receiving the believers and consequently he devoted all of chapter fourteen plus part of chapter fifteen to this subject. In Romans 12 we see the Body. In Romans 14 we are given a warning. If we do not take heed to this warning, we shall use doctrine as a knife to cut in pieces the very Body revealed in chapter twelve. Many Christians talk about the Body of Christ according to Romans 12; nevertheless, they are responsible for killing the Body and for cutting it into pieces by wielding the knife of doctrinal divisiveness. This is why the Body that is revealed according to Romans 12 must be lived out according to Romans 14. Without Romans 14 we are unable to have the proper practice of the Body unveiled in chapter twelve. Many Christians pay attention to Romans 12, but neglect Romans 14, talking about the Body, but remaining divisive and divided because they continue to hold to their doctrinal concepts. They are unwilling to drop them. Thus, it is impossible for them to experience the Body life.

From the *Life-study of Romans* by Witness Lee, pp. 330-331, 333