

COMMUNION

Communion

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The text

This edition is based on the texts of Mr North's books which first appeared on the website of Lanark Christian Fellowship many years ago.

We have exercised as much care as possible in the conversion into this format, but if you are aware of any errors, could you please let us know.

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Baptism and Communion – the Alpha and the Omega

The Way and the Life

A former pamphlet in this series was devoted to an examination of the scriptural significance of Baptism. In it emphasis was laid upon the introduction, practice, typical importance and spiritual meaning of the ordinance, and was undertaken with a view to establishing its proper place in the Church throughout the entire age. This pamphlet is a study on the companion subject of the Communion. This is most fitting, for Baptism and Communion are companion truths, and belong together as do a doorway and a room.

Perhaps it may be more suitable to the truth they represent if we think of them as a

gateway and an estate. This figure need not be regarded as incongruous; it shows no disrespect for Baptism. Baptism may truly be looked upon as a doorway opened for men by Jesus, granting access to Communion. The Communion is both the reason for and the ultimate goal of The Baptism. The Baptism was designed by God to be a personal crisis, the beginning of spiritual life: The Communion is the state into which The Baptism grants him immediate entrance, it is the end in view. The Baptism is the Alpha; The Communion is the Omega.

The Mystery of Faith

Water is the element in which the Baptism is symbolised; it represents the Holy Spirit. The experience of baptism betokens the powerful application of forgiveness, cleansing, death and resurrection to the believer, namely regeneration. Bread and

wine are the elements by which the Communion is represented. Participation in the act of communion is a personal testimony that the Baptism has taken place, and that the participant is eating and drinking Christ after the Spirit. As truly as the water of baptism represents the Spirit of God, the bread and wine of communion symbolise the body and blood of Christ. In these three, spirit, body and blood, (or if we slightly rearrange the order into one more readily suited to our minds, namely body, blood and spirit) we have the three basic elements without which life cannot exist.

Herein then lies the wisdom of the Lord in combining baptism with communion; in reality they are as indivisible as are body, blood and spirit. By the Baptism we are baptised into and made members of the body of Christ (who is) in the Spirit; by the

Communion we live in that body which is and can only be in the Spirit. The elements and enactments of these two ordinances set forth in proper relationship the mystery of the faith in clearest symbolism, and this is the reason why the Lord ordained them. The doctrine of their combined typical meaning is so unmistakably complete in itself that nothing need be added to it or them. They are as logically necessary to each other as are two parts of one whole, each of which needs the other to complete it.

That which God has Joined Together

The marriage of these two is finely displayed by Luke in Acts 2. The opening part of this chapter records the establishment of the Church on earth by the Lord Jesus. He accomplished this miracle by baptising the 120 into the Baptism which He had previously undergone at Calvary, and He did

it with or by means of the Holy Ghost. The major reason He endured His crucifixion was that this should be accomplished. Following the record of the founding of the Church and the swift addition of a further 5000 to them, Luke loses no time in telling us that 'they (all) continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship (Communion) and in breaking of bread (the symbol of Communion) and in prayers'.

So we see that right in the beginning, upon the very threshold of Church history God set the pattern — it was first baptism then communion. Every single member of that first church assembly went straight from one into the other. God and the apostles joined these two together that they should remain for all time the most fundamental and necessary ordinances of the Church. He added no other to them as though He were

implying that together with them it should form an obligatory trilogy of common acceptance among His people; He ordained these two and made them universally obligatory upon His Church, and that is all. Other ordinances there are and each has its proper place and in that place is binding upon the person or persons concerned, but consideration of them reveals that none is obligatory upon every member without exception as are these two.

The Eternal Communion

Of the two the communion, by its very nature, is by far the more spiritually significant. Baptism is plainly intended by God to represent a once-for-all-time-and-eternity experience; Communion, by implication, is in itself a constantly recurring act. By the ordinance of baptism, God revealed His intention that a man is baptised

to remain in that state; but he communes to commune again and again, in fact eternally. The Communion was and is and ever shall be; it was before Baptism, it is greater than Baptism, it shall still be when Baptism is practised no more. Baptism was created to bring people into the Communion, and unto the ordinance of communion.

Though the practice of baptism was introduced into time before the Communion was made known to men, in truth the Communion was before ever the world was created or time began. Yet, although this is so, the Communion, though hinted at in Old Testament scriptures, was not revealed to men until the time of the introduction of the New Covenant. The Communion belongs exclusively to the Church. Baptism had a place in the purposes of God during the closing days of the Old Covenant under the

ministration of John Baptist, but communion did not. In common with many other Biblical ordinances, baptism was introduced by a man under God's instructions, but not so the communion; that had to be brought in by God Himself. Man and means are always only to an end; they are temporary and must lead to the everlasting; the momentary must proceed to the permanent. Men and baptism are a means; God and Communion are eternal.

The Elusiveness of Infinity

Names used by men to describe the ordinance under consideration are many and varied. Each of them is descriptive of at least one aspect of meaning connected with its practice and is attached to it for that reason. Some of these names have been taken directly from scripture, others have been bestowed by men according to the doctrines

they wish to propagate, or the emphasis they wish to make. Sifting through them all, it may be true to say that those who believe the Bible to be the inspired word of God usually prefer to speak of this ordinance in the simple phrases used by the canonical writers. These scriptural terms are three in number, namely:

- (1) (the) 'breaking of bread',
- (2) 'the Lord's supper' or (in close association with this) 'the Lord's table',
- (3) 'the communion'.

Other names, such as the Mass or the Eucharist, have been bestowed upon the ordinance by men without authorisation or inspiration from God, but these will not be considered by us here.

1. THE BREAKING OF BREAD

The Common Meal

The first of the three scriptural titles is used in Acts 2.42. It is referred to in a list of four practices in which the Church steadfastly continued from the day of Pentecost onwards. It is a most homely phrase, obviously adapted by the writer from everyday life, and is admirably suited to create just the right atmosphere for the new-born family of saints. Luke deliberately sets it in that background with divine intention, thus introducing the ideas of naturalness and continuity.

Breaking of bread is a comprehensive term indicating to the eastern mind more than the literal wording of the phrase. It embraces the idea of participation in a

whole meal, a normal practice of life as Luke shows in verses 46 & 47. But in verse 42, breaking of bread is distinctively spoken of in connection with apostles, and fellowship, and prayers, and connects with these the virtues of steadfastness and continuity.

Obviously this is purposely done with the object of delineating early Church practice. In verses 46 & 47 the term is linked with the idea of ordinary (or is it extraordinary?) social hospitality; with singleness of heart the saints shared a common experience and life. The whole conveys the picture of a glad, joyful company, praising God and having favour with all the people.

In those few sentences Luke has presented two aspects of the Church's life:

(1) the Church extraordinary gathered together into one; (2) the Church ordinary dispersed abroad in their homes. He has

simply taken a phrase in common use, lifted it out of its normal setting and applied it in all its simplicity to what had by then become the one common meal of the Church, thereby giving it particular emphasis. By doing this he : (1) purposely changed the entire meaning of the phrase, (2) he set it in a new age-abiding context, (3) he established its vital necessity.

The Intimate Meal

The Lord Jesus originally instituted the ordinance. It all began so simply — though not without an element of drama — one night in an upper room in Jerusalem. Jesus and the apostles were at that time gathered together in a guest-chamber selected by the Holy Spirit; the Lord borrowed it specially for the occasion. He did this, Luke discovered, so that He might act as host to His chosen guests at the last supper they should eat

before He suffered. During this intimate time together, and as the Passover supper drew to an end, the Lord 'took bread and gave thanks and brake it and gave unto them'; it was such a simple, ordinary everyday act.

Undoubtedly Jesus had done something similar to it many times before; but what made it so different this time was the things He said; they were of such an extreme and complicated nature. To their amazement He spoke in similar vein also when He handed them the cup of wine, but the implicit simplicity of it all vested the occasion with extraordinary and unique meaning. Having described in his Gospel with what naturalness the Lord took and broke the bread, in full knowledge of what it all meant, Luke takes the fact in all its simplicity and uses it as a name for the ordinance which since has become the most dearly-loved

practice of the Church: the Breaking of Bread.

No name is more appealing to the heart of simple folk than this; in a natural way it implies sweet ideas of a father with his children, or of a husband with his wife and children. It suggests an entire family being fed by the breadwinner; a meal where each one present is an intimate blood-relative of him who sits at the head of the board, or else a specially invited guest. And that is just the feeling that both Luke and the Lord wish to convey. The ordinance must speak of mealtime, fatherhood, son-ship, brotherhood, love, intimacy, abundance, exclusiveness, sharing by breaking, which is the common manner of eating among people who do not ordinarily use table-cutlery. The bread was universal, central, one. They each broke their piece(s) from the

whole. The unit(y) was shown by each individual breaking it for himself; the act was vital, but more of this later.

2. THE LORD'S SUPPER

Jesus Christ is Lord

The second title, the Lord's supper, is used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11.20. The emphasis here is laid not so much upon the manner in which we partake of the ordinance as upon the nature and timing of it; it is the Lord's supper: it is the Lord's supper. A thorough reading of the chapters surrounding this section will be sufficient to convince every heart as to why Paul mentions the ordinance at this point. It is part of a lengthy and necessary rebuke to the church at Corinth.

In the first pamphlet of this series it was shown that much of the trouble which existed in the church there was caused by open rebellion against the Lord. This was

quite blatantly displayed in their meetings; all authority was flouted, division promoted and love destroyed. As may be expected in these circumstances, when they came together carnal, egotistical demonstrations of powerless 'gifts' ruined the meetings. Instead of true communion, their gatherings became orgies of eating and drinking; weakness and sickness was prevalent among them, and a spirit of deathly lethargy hung over everything like a cloud. The result of this was that where formerly spontaneous life and ministry had flourished, heavy, monotonous ritual ruled the meetings. To make things worse, on one hand poverty abounded and on the other riches were callously and ostentatiously paraded; complete disorder reigned and the Spirit of God was grieved. They had sunk so low that

they could no longer distinguish between their own gluttony and the Lord's supper.

It was to this vitiated condition that Paul addressed himself when he wrote this letter. Therefore he did not hesitate to rebuke them sharply and to inform them plainly what he had received about it from the Lord. Strongly reproofing, he reminds them that when Jesus originally established the ordinance, He did so as Lord of the table, and that all He provided then was bread and wine. This therefore must be considered as law, and any refusal on their part to accept those bare elements could only be interpreted as an insult to their Host. They must understand that their action was nothing other than an open rejection of the Lord and His bounty.

Surely they knew that He not only commanded and provided the means of the

feast, but was also present at it Himself. Their behaviour was inexcusable; they were acting like brute beasts. They impudently substituted self-will for obedience, and denied and destroyed the purpose of the ordinance. Their suppers had become their greatest testimony to their profoundest ignorance. Paul's correction and instruction reveals that the feast is no more to be thought of or made an excuse for pagan orgies than to be thought of or made an excuse for the Jewish Passover. By it the Lord has outlawed and displaced both.

Food for the New Man

The time element inherent in the description of the meal holds very real significance also. Surprisingly it is a supper. We may think that had it been called a breakfast it would more properly have introduced the element of newness best suited to its institution. But

however strange it may seem to our western minds, supper in the east was not the last meal of the day but the first. Unlike our days, which begin and end at midnight, Jewish days began and ended at sunset. The first meal of our day is breakfast, but theirs was supper. Realisation of this fact brings a whole new range of meaning to the ordinance.

The Lord purposely instituted His supper with meagre elements so that we should understand that they are to be regarded as purely symbolical. In themselves they have no value at all, and to look upon them as nourishment for the mortal body would be foolishness. We are being pointed to the fact that God's great concern when instituting the first meal of His new day was that we should see it to be nothing other than a testimony of His provision of nourishment

for the inner spiritual man. To the outward man the provision is negligible — a token, that is all. To the carnal appetites it is ridiculous, and God intends it to be so too. He is not at all concerned to feed the carnal man. Likewise He is not primarily concerned to sustain the outward man either. His first and great emphasis is upon the inward, spiritual man. The feast is provided for him, because he is God's eternal concern.

This meal is of strictly limited supply to the physical body, and by it God plainly insists that in the new era it is the new man that must be fed, and he can only feed on the reality of which the bread and wine are symbols. He must realise that he is a member of a new body, and that body is Christ's (1 Corinthians 12:12); Christ's body is no longer a body of flesh and blood. God's new man by regeneration must be

nourished and built up so that he may function in and build up the body of Another, even Christ. If a man desires the Lord Jesus Christ to live in his body of flesh and blood, he must realise that he himself must live in and for a body which is not flesh and blood.

The feast teaches us that the Lord laid down His body of flesh and blood (in a tomb) for the sake of others. It must also teach us that God expects each of the members of Christ to lay aside the needs and concerns of his body of flesh and blood for the sake of that other greater body. The body of Christ is entirely spiritual. It must be seen also that this is to be done not merely for the duration of the supper. Far beyond the momentary act, each person must understand that by partaking of the elements he thereby testifies that this is his

lifelong concern. God has designed that token nourishment should be taken in a purely symbolical act of eating and drinking, and done deliberately in order to show that the soul feasts solely on spiritual food; this is what participation in the feast implies.

This ordinance, by its bare elements, outwardly stands as a permanent demonstration of self-denial exercised before all; it must also speak of inward denial of the flesh. Both these are necessary in order that the spirit may live in health and strength and endlessly apply itself to the task of edification of the body of Christ. The whole is done for others; real life lies in living to lay down our lives for one another; this is the will of the Lord, the Head of the body. It is His table, His supper, and we are His guests and members of His body. Jesus Himself set both the table and the living

example of which it speaks. In reality, had we eyes to see it, He is the table upon which the feast is spread. He also sits at the head of the table presiding in fullness of love and power, proclaiming in our ears and to our hearts the need for this constant memorial and reminder of sacrificial love.

The Bread of God

At that first great feast no-one was hungry or thirsty, for each one of them had already eaten well. Roast lamb was the main item of the good, solid Passover meal they had all taken just beforehand. Presumably, when about to establish His supper, the Lord first carefully selected from the remains of that former ordinance some bread and wine.

Having done this, He gave thanks to God and proceeded to install the new feast. He did so by elevating the two ordinary elements from their ordinary usage and ordaining them to

speak to us of His body and blood. By this He established them to be for ever the memorials of His sacrificial death. Quite as obviously, since they were not selected for their food value, they were pressed into use as being most suited to His purpose.

Moreover, their frugality and simplicity testify also to our Lord's tender discrimination, for they are not beyond the means of the very poorest members of His Church.

From that time forward, these alone are to be the viands served at His royal banquet. If therefore any person among the Corinthians ate and drank anything other than these, or under any pretext sought to indulge carnal appetites when sitting at His table, they would do so at risk and to their own condemnation. On the other hand if any member of the body of Christ knowingly

eats or drinks less than both these, or does not partake of the supper at all, his action or abstinence is reprehensible. To say the least it is impolite, at the worst it is an insult to the Lord; the rest is best left unspoken. In this matter we are not consulted at all, nor are we asked for an opinion about the substance or amount of the provision. We are summoned by His command to attend, and under His supervision do we all partake.

The Royal Simplicity

Considering the honour bestowed upon men, and realising God's purpose in granting us the favour, our hearts should respond with joy that we are invited to such a princely feast. We are left aghast that such blasphemous behaviour as that which Paul censures should ever have been imagined by the Corinthians, but it was. Looking for a reason for such a grossly wrong attitude, we

are forced to the conclusion that to them Jesus was no longer Lord. He was not even Lord in the sense in which Paul speaks earlier in the epistle when, quoting David, he says, 'the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof'. The fact that the Lord of all the earth decided to use only bread and wine at His table, when He had all fullness from which to choose, should have caused them to realise that there must be some very important reason for the choice.

He quite purposely did not reserve a piece of lamb from the Passover feast and press that into service. Had He done so we might have seen some very real meaning in it, but He did not do that. Without need to restrict Himself at all, He quite deliberately chose bread and wine. Then let us not fail to learn the lessons which the Corinthians had not learned. When He bade two of His disciples

go to a certain place and there make ready the meal for His coming, it was with full knowledge of what He would do following the Passover. Had He wished, He could quite easily have ordered extra things to be placed on the menu, but He did no such thing. He knew the two elements best suited to His intentions would be there, and no better media than bread and wine could possibly be found anywhere on earth. They were present in the room and nothing could be more admirably suited to His purpose to reveal to them the truth He wished them to know.

They were royal enough dainties in any case, for had not Melchisedec, priest of the most high God king of righteousness and peace, brought forth these same elements for Abraham in the beginning? At the dawn of Hebrew history their most famous patriarch

ate and drank of these same things and was blessed of God. Bread and wine are the traditional food and drink of kings and priests and prophets and patriarchs of God. Bread and wine spoke then to Abraham, as they speak now to us, of a past sacrifice and of royalty and sainthood and those mysteries of God we cannot now investigate.

Except it Die

Beside this, the meagre meal is so full of further meanings, which although not at first apparent are nevertheless there for us to enter into and enjoy. We know that 'except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die' there can be no bread. But bread is an end-product; it does not grow on the top of a stalk. Bread is a result of a process, of which death is but the beginning. To reproduce itself the corn must pass through many stages of change. For transformation it must

be planted in the ground for death, that through death it should spring into resurrection. That is only a beginning though, for then it must endure reaping, garnering, winnowing, crushing, sifting, mixing, kneading, baking. All these must play their parts before it is finally bread, and even then it must be broken again before it can be eaten. So many and varied are the processes and changes through which grain must pass before it becomes bread and food that except one knew the facts, it would be quite impossible to recognise the relationship between the corn of wheat and the finished product.

It is like that also with wine, for like the bread, wine is the end-product of a long and skilful process, It is the heart-sap, the life-blood of the vine drawn from the root and formed into fruit upon its branches, that it

may be smashed and extracted at last as wine. But unlike the hard, tough grain of corn, the grape needs no grinding; the fruit of the vine is tender and succulent, and easily yields its juice to pressure. Yet although this is so, pressed and crushed it must be — trodden in the wine vat — until in the end nothing of the original shape and size can be seen, only the dark red blood and bits of skin and pips remain to remind us of its origins. The fruit turned to wine at last lies utterly liquid and still in the vat. In Christ's day it would have been transferred from thence to the specially prepared skin of a slain animal, no longer bearing any resemblance to its own original form and shape and size — new wine in a new skin. Ultimately it would have been poured directly, or via some other vessel, into the cup

There they stood on the table before Him that night, bread and wine; nourishing dust and tasty, refreshing liquid; each the memorial of a life laid down, changed and utterly refined. These were His choices for the meal, and who would challenge the discerning purpose with which He made His selection, or question and flee from the love which ordained the simple elements?

The Lord of Love

The bread, He said, is His body; it shall forever speak of the outward form in which His life was contained on earth. The wine, He said, is His blood; it represents to us the soul of Jesus of Nazareth, the essence of the inward life of a Man who lived totally after the Spirit. All that could possibly be pressed and wrung from Him, all His flavour and savour is in The cup of the New Covenant. It was as though He was saying, 'bury my body

and lo, it shall rise up into the bread of everlasting life; liquidate Me and I shall but turn into the wine of spiritual life. Bruise Me, crush Me, grind Me, destroy Me in this form, bury Me and I shall rise, springing up again to become the indestructible life of millions more'.

In that Man was stored the covenanted Man. That life will only nourish and stimulate new men. None but they can partake of it. What He gives at His table will not feed flesh, nor does it fill the stomachs of men. It is only a token to the bodily appetites. The bread is a crumb, the wine a sip, but to those who see and understand in heart it is the feast of the Lord. To these all the loving appeal of Him attracts and commands their beings; they feel it in His voice, they see it in the bread and cup in His hand. 'Do this in remembrance of Me' He

says. He is love, but He is the Lord of love. He is to be obeyed. 'Do it', He says.

But Lord, what is it Thou hast done? 'I saw the bread lying upon the table, I saw the cup standing by its side and I took the bread and broke it. I knew it was myself, so I took and broke it myself. I broke myself for thee. I knew that thou couldst not take me until I broke and gave myself to thee personally. I likewise took the cup. I knew the wine in it was my blood and the cup was the New Covenant in it. I knew that it had to be shed on the cross, but I poured out myself, my life, my all, for thee beforehand, and I took the cup of my life and drank it to covenant with thee in my blood. I knew that unless I did so thou couldst not live. That is what I did and this is what I still do. Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake as I did for thee?

Wilt thou do this in remembrance of me?' If we do it, let us do it with understanding.

3. THE COMMUNION

The Language of the Heart

The third title, 'the Communion', used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:16 & 17, names the aspect of the ordinance with which we all should be most concerned. In a very special way this phrase is language of the heart, for it leads us right into the heart of God and the deepest reason for instituting the feast. The scriptures make plain the fact that Paul and Luke were brought together by the Lord to become travelling companions in the gospel; they were also fellow-contributors to the sacred canon. Whether or not they had access to the same human sources of information for their respective writings, we do not know, and we have no certain knowledge either as to whether or not they talked over the things they each later

committed to the Church in permanent form. Perhaps they did so; it seems improbable that under the circumstances it should be otherwise. Certainly they were both inspired by God, and it is observable that in many things they spoke alike. We know that neither Paul nor Luke was present at the original gathering in the upper room, but each of them had a very wholesome grasp of what took place there, and what the ordinance is all about.

Paul claims that for the purposes of his ministry the Lord specially informed him of the events which took place there. He gives a somewhat streamlined account of the occasion, which seems to gather up into itself all the important features mentioned by the others. To read Paul is to become aware that whenever he partook of the bread and wine he did so in a twofold way.

To him the feast was at once the Communion of the blood and the body of Christ, and also the Communion of the Church. This was most important to him and many are the lessons we must learn from him about it.

The first of these — and it is a thing of outstanding magnitude — is that this ordinance is the Communion. It is an endearing enough term, but long acquaintance with it has not been sufficient to help us to a proper understanding of its greatest meaning. Over-familiarity must not be allowed to lull us into thinking of it in any ritualistic manner; note that it is not spoken of as a communion, or a communing, or a communication, but the Communion. This is a most important point, and the apostle is at great pains to make us aware of it. It ought to be repeatedly emphasised among us, lest

in the context of successive acts, as week succeeds week, it becomes one of many, just 'a communion' The fact that by practice it becomes one of many is perhaps the least important thing about it. We must be sure to discern and learn what God is wanting us to know, for it is indispensable to us.

It is unavoidably true that to a certain degree during the administration of the ordinance, verbal communing and communication do take place, but that is irrelevant. Were it to be omitted altogether, it would make no difference to the ordinance, for it is not a necessary part of the feast. In any case it is clear that Paul is not here referring to a meeting or a specific occasion; he is underlining the eternal truth of the media and actions involved in the ordinance. We must always remember that whatever be the ordinance, the thing

ordained is of far greater importance than any occasion upon which it is observed. As we have already seen, the symbols or outward elements in which the truth is constituted, and by which it is typified, are very carefully chosen by the Lord. Because of this, they also act as a visual aid by which we are the better able to see Him who is greater than the lesson, namely God Himself.

The Living Body

This being so, when we use the term 'the communion' as a name for the ordinance, we must not let the simplicity of Paul's words rob us of the great truth he is revealing here. He is not just speaking of 'the communion' in order to introduce an alternative name for the ordinance, lest through sentimentality we lose esteem for a sacred observance; he is directing our

attention to a far more wonderful thing than that: 'the communion of the body of Christ'. He is explaining what the Communion really is.

Well-considered, this is a most amazing statement. Luke's homely title, 'Breaking of Bread' is descriptive of 'manner', and Paul's later title, 'the Lord's Supper' lays a much-needed emphasis, but here he spells out what it is actually taking place when we engage in breaking bread and drinking wine at the table of the Lord. He is revealing to us the spiritual meaning lying behind the memorial act. Most basically of all, the feast is the Communion. This is the real reason for doing it.

There is scarcely a better figure by which we could learn the fact and result of Communion than a living body with blood flowing through its veins. The human body is

a universe of its own; it is a marvellous entity, a glorious union of many co-ordinated parts, each one of which, if studied for its own sake alone, would enthral and hold our rapt attention. Yet of all these systems and organs within the human frame, the most vital is the blood's union with the flesh. Blood without a body cannot live, nor can a body live without blood. Body and blood are so completely one that it is normally impossible to think of one without the other, nor does it ever cross our minds to do so. Except by the discoveries of modern science, it is quite impossible to preserve life in either the blood or the body if these two be separated, and to attempt to do so would be most unusual and abnormal. The union between body and blood is so wonderful that no better non-scientific word

could be found to describe their oneness than this word communion.

The Common Preciousness

The Greek verb from which the English word communion is translated can best be understood by the phrase, 'the act of making common'. In this connection 'common' does not mean base, or of a low order, or lesser nature, as when we compare that which is precious or rare or of high degree with that which is base or of low degree. It describes that which is in plentiful supply and belongs to everybody, yet is of a quality so rare, having a function so basic and necessary, that it is extremely precious — as breath is to lungs, or nature to being, or light to day.

For our purposes, beyond the bare meaning of the word, communion may best be thought of as common union involving the

action of the will, a result which is achieved by an act. In this case the act is something done deliberately with specific intention, and being done, makes or causes whatever is involved and intended in the act to become the common property of all; it is purposeful sharing. This is one of the most precious things about the feast, and is probably the reason why its elements are reduced to merest tokens.

The real food and drink of the spiritual meal are the body and blood of the Lord, who instituted the feast because He knew it was the best way of telling us that He wanted to give Himself to us. Jesus' symbolic act of breaking and giving His body and shedding and sharing His blood was a demonstration of His future intention to make Himself and His personal communion through organic union common to all His own. In order to

become effective in us, that original act must be reciprocated and repeated by us — we must take and eat and drink also.

I and My Father are One

Simply stated, the Communion Jesus made possible and inaugurated for men is nothing other than the common union that exists between the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. It is the eternal state of life which the three persons of the Godhead enjoy in one Being. The Lord Jesus came with the double intent of bringing men into the Communion in heaven, and establishing this same kind of Communion among men on earth. Because Jesus was in that heavenly Communion He was completely qualified to say:

(1) to men: 'I and my Father are one'; 'My Father worketh hitherto and I work'; and

(2) to His Father: 'as Thou Father art in me and I in Thee, that they may be one, even as we are: one'.

The degree of union known by God in Himself is unique; we understand it to be exclusive. With a hush in our hearts we read the simple phrases, astonished to learn the basis of the Communion opened to us. The perfection of union in God alone enjoyed by the three glorious persons of the ever-blessed Trinity is now ours, nothing less.

Of all the realisations to which the Church of God could possibly come, this is the most overwhelming. It is wonderful in the extreme. Yet more wonderful still, what appears to us men as so absolutely unique, is quite common and ordinary among Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It is almost unbelievable that He wishes to make this

Communion which is the common state of God alone, common to us, but it is so.

This does not make us equal with God. It relates us to God and one another in the same kind of union by which God is one. It will at once be seen that this Communion cannot be achieved by any form of common decision or consent by people to belong to one another. Just as plainly also it is not an agreement among a group of people to become members of, and form, and belong to 'a church'. Again it is certainly not a method of establishing any kind of schismatic exclusivism among men, to which ends sadly enough some have misguidedly used it. This Communion is the actual experience of the state expressed in Jesus' words to His disciples, 'ye shall know that I am in my Father and ye in me and I in you,'

and to His Father, 'that they may be one in us'.

In its outward form among us, the communion is a parabolic enactment, involving the use of minimal tangible elements perfectly understandable to men, and the purpose of it is to display the method whereby the Communion of God was established for men by Christ on earth. This method is plainly declared to us by each of the men who wrote about the ordination, whether they were present at the original gathering or not. That this is so is strong evidence of God's powerful insistence that this method should be kept permanently before us. All who participate in the feast must see it as clearly and cherish it as dearly as did those earliest members of the Church of Christ.

We being Many One Bread

Any one of the Gospel writers' accounts will serve to instruct us on the point, but of them all, Luke, who wrote his Gospel from material gathered from eyewitnesses, is the most specific. His report concerning the breaking of the bread is as follows: 'and He took the bread and gave thanks and brake it and gave unto them saying, this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me'. The Lord gave them bread which He had Himself broken, saying it was His broken body. In other words He broke His own body and gave it to them, instructing them to do this same thing to each other. Matthew and Mark add that Jesus also said to them, 'take, eat'; so we arrive at the aggregate of the synoptists' records on this point.

Paul adding later to these says, 'we, being many, are one bread: for we are all partakers

of that one bread'; so saying he introduces a completely new dimension of thought.

Joining all the records together, we arrive at the compound truth that by taking and eating the body of Christ and in turn doing as He did, we not only eat His body and remember Him in and for His unique act, but following His example also become that body to repeat and perpetuate this sacrificial act. We cannot enact redemption, but by the symbol we can and must testify that we can only be in the Communion by sacrifice.

This is My Body

This is the special emphasis which Paul makes, and how grateful we must be to him for revealing it. As earlier suggested, it may be that he and Luke had talked over the events of that historic institutional occasion and had seen the whole import and meaning of the Lord's actions and words.

What did He actually do then? What did His words mean? What may we rightly infer from them? How ought we to perpetuate the simple rite? Finally the apostle was able to set down what he had 'received of the Lord', and that seals the matter. His inspiration from God was both to immediately deliver to the Church, writing down for all time, 'the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He brake, and said, this is my body which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me'.

Thoughtful reading of all the scriptures concerned may lead to the conclusion that when establishing the ordinance, as well as following a familiar course of action and making a request and giving a command, the Lord may also have set an example as to the method He wanted us to adopt. We cannot

be exactly sure what took place, but it is practically certain that He did one of two things: (1) He broke the bread and gave a piece to each one individually directly from His own hands, without it passing through the hands of another: or (2) He broke and gave to one of the disciples that he should do the same to another and he to another and so on until all were fed.

To Love is to Give

In these two alternative methods two different aspects of communion are represented. The former order lays the emphasis on taking and eating; or receiving only, and directly, from Him. This method is exemplified among us today when communion is administered to a company of people by one man or a few chosen men only, and no-one else. When this method is adopted it is probably because people

believe that only one or a few may be ordained to represent the Christ from whom alone the communicant must receive the elements. In this case the devout Christian believes that he receives the spiritual communion direct from Christ and at that time eats the spiritual flesh and drinks the spiritual blood by faith.

The latter method, without minimising the import of the former, shifts the emphasis from receiving only, to both receiving and giving. This is of much greater significance, for it reveals a far deeper truth; it exemplifies the most fundamental principle of truest love and union known by God. More than that, it also demonstrates that kind of sacrificial giving exemplified by the cross alone. By realising that 'we being many are one bread' and by the self-breaking symbolised by breaking the bread, the cross

is kept central at the heart of the Church. God wants it kept there, for that is where sacrificial self-breaking for others was accomplished among men on earth.

The Lord knew He could only give Himself to us by crucifixion, and that is why everything He did in the upper room was anticipatory of the cross. The feast was entirely conceived and inaugurated taking the cross for granted. Golgotha was the only place where it could be fulfilled and the cross was the only means He could use if He was to give Himself in the way He desired. Unless He did so, God's will could not be done, or His own wish be consummated; the whole design was to establish the Communion on earth among men.

The Greatest Glory

But the act of real Communion is not intended only to demonstrate the greatest sacrifice that Christ Himself had to make. It also portrays the perpetual sacrifice which all the members of His body need personally to make if the Communion is to be sustained. Giving Himself up to the cross to die was Jesus' greatest personal glory, but for Him to make it the greatest glory of other persons also is the miracle of miracles. Doing so, He has perpetuated and glorified His own glory to the glory of the Father. When He broke and gave the bread to others, it was as if He was saying, 'if you wish to remember me properly, do this and do it like this'.

So, although their uncomprehending minds could but dimly grasp His meaning, one of them took the bread from Jesus' hands and in obedience did likewise. He first took from

Jesus both the bread from which the piece had been broken and the broken piece and having done so, ate the piece he had received from the Lord. Afterwards he broke off another piece from the bread (body) broken for him and gave both the bread from which he had broken the fragment and the piece itself to the next person. Whoever it was then ate the piece, repeated the process of eating, breaking and passing, and so it went on until each person had joined in the act and by doing so was brought into the communion.

Broken for You

It is noticeable that none of the synoptists use the particular word 'broken' in the same way Paul does when he introduces it into his statement. However, all three tell us that the Lord gave the blessed and broken bread to the apostles with the words, 'this is my

body', and Luke uses the word 'given'. But although they do not record the fact which Paul reveals, His body was evidently broken in His hands and theirs. It was a marvellous lesson, even if at that time they did not fully apprehend it. Soon His beaten, bruised and bleeding body was to hang disjointed and cursed upon the cross. But He did not give them that body. He gave them the body which was sitting in full view before them, whole and vigorous and sinless. Yet, according to the truth He came to impart, there it lay symbolically broken by His own hands in their sight. This then is the first of the great lessons we must learn from Him about Communion.

Just previously they had together kept the final feast of the old order. The Passover lamb they had eaten had been dismembered and wholly consumed

according to divine command. Its bones, said the Lord, must on no account be broken — disjointed, lacerated, cut or torn asunder it may be, but its frame must be retained whole. And that is exactly how it was with Jesus in the end at Calvary.

The observant John faithfully tells us this in recording what he saw at the cross when the soldiers came to Jesus hanging in the midst of the two thieves. Intending to hasten the death of all three and about to break Jesus' legs in the customary manner, they found Him already dead. Unable to believe it, one of them plunged a spear into His side, and out flowed blood and water. He was dead all right. He needed not to have His legs broken — He had died and was buried whole. The scripture was fulfilled. Neither man nor devil nor sin, nor all that these together could do broke Jesus. He took all and at the end could

still offer Himself, as unbroken as He was spotless, to God for us.

One Body

Yet that night in the upper room He took bread and deliberately broke it. In the event, He offered Himself to God whole, but to us He gives Himself broken. He did it knowingly — they saw Him do it; He broke Himself for us. The broken body is given to us; the body is ours. We are His body, His broken yet mysteriously whole body. 'Take', He says; 'eat'; He insists that we make it ours. 'This is my body', and Luke adds, 'which is given for you, this do in remembrance of me'. O sacred Covenant!

Whenever we take the elements of the communion, we must enter afresh by understanding into the Communion. The body, though broken, is still wholly given

with thankfulness on Jesus' part; blessed and broken as it is we must take it; more, we must eat it, we must do it — in remembrance of Him. He wants us to do exactly that; He does not want us to try and remember Him. How can we remember a person we have not seen? We can only recall what others have said of Him. But if we love Him we will do this, for by repeating His action we commemorate what He did. This is the remembrance: He wants the Church to receive the gift of the body. It was only broken for us to eat it. It did not need to be broken for God to eat it — He took it unbroken. God eats God whole, man eats God broken, and feeding on the fragments finds a whole God.

That Others may Eat

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul opens wider still the immensity of truth, more widely than

any other man has done: 'the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' Paul saw that when Jesus said, 'this do', He did so having Himself broken the bread. Like John in another connection, the apostle 'saw and understood'. No wonder he later pleads with us to put away childish thoughts and things and speech and understandings and become men. To be in this wondrous Communion we must do more than receive and eat the bread; as Jesus Himself, we too must break the bread. He broke it for others to eat, so we too must break it that others may eat.

The logic of it is inexorable. He laid down His life for us; we must lay down our lives for the brethren. He broke it for us so that we should see and follow His example.

We must or we shall not commune. Strange though it may seem, the act of breaking, not

the act of eating, is specified as the act of communing. He broke for others to eat; so must we. In the act of breaking it is as though for the purposes of communing, each member of the body in turn momentarily becomes as the Head Himself who brings the whole body into the Communion. The Communion is of the whole body, Head and members. That, beloved, is the most high and holy of all our privileges, even as it was His on that solemn, dreadful day.

Give Ye Them to Eat

Here let us pause to note one of the most remarkable features of the four Gospels, namely the manner in which the synoptists differ from John in their presentation of the Lord. In one way or another, the first three writers cover the whole life-span and activities of the Lord, but not so John.

Differing from them he leaves un-mentioned the bulk of historic facts which they record, and presents the soul of Jesus. Among many other things, John is very selective about the number of miracles he records. He chooses to omit the majority of those mentioned by his fellow-writers, but includes some the others do not record. Unusual as we see this to be, in it we observe the absolute sovereignty of God, for He caused all four of them to give space to one particular miracle, namely the feeding of the five thousand. This is the more remarkable for the fact that we may not have thought it important enough to warrant such repetition.

Strange as it may seem, this may quite easily be the most important miracle that the Lord Jesus ever performed; certainly to no other is so much prominence given. We may ask then why it is that when others appear to be

of more importance, this miracle should be the one to which attention is so repeatedly drawn. The reason for its prominence may well be this — by it the Lord taught His disciples one of the greatest lessons connected with the (as yet unknown) Communion. John, in his sixth chapter, recounts how calculatedly the Lord conducted the whole episode. First He performed the miracle, then He proceeded to use it as a text for the exposition of such unique and revolutionary teaching that many of His followers left Him — they were angered and shocked by it all. He had outraged their sense of decency, and challenged their credulity and negated cherished beliefs.

The Christ of Many Members

Observing the Lord's procedure and instruction during the administration of the

miracle, we see how He used the occasion to teach us the very truth we need to learn about Communion. Reading through the four accounts, we find that the Lord insisted that the apostles themselves should feed the multitudes. It is clear from the very first that He had no intention of feeding them Himself; knowing they did not have the ability, He actually commanded the apostles themselves to do it. This was far beyond their resources, but John tells us 'He knew what He would do'. Jesus knew exactly the way He would use the situation, and had determined He would make it an absolutely unforgettable occasion for them all. His apostles would feed the people that day, as He said, and they would never forget how it was done, nor the lesson they learned.

The sequence of events leading to the discovery of the lad with the five loaves and

two fishes is so well-known that we need not recount it. We will, however, detail the activities that followed upon the discovery: He took the bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitudes. That was the order of events by which the miracle was manifested. The Lord, according to His word, did not give the bread to the multitudes Himself. What He actually did was to give the bread to the disciples and the disciples with the bread in their hands to the multitudes.

The implications of His actions are perhaps very different from what we may at first have thought, and more amazing. The disciples did not break the bread themselves at that time, but could they have had prior knowledge, they would have learned a wondrous lesson from what they observed that day. By insisting that they give the

broken bread to others, the Lord involved them in the act. In performing the miracle the Lord made them co-workers with Himself, and applied a basic principle of eternal truth to them and the multitudes. He could only go so far at that time though; He would teach them the greater spiritual implications of the miracle later, under far different circumstances. The Lord reserved the deepest meaning of the miracle to be learned privately by His own at the Communion. The miracle, though illustrating part of the truth, was still only anticipatory.

As from the Head

All real Communion is and must forever be based upon the principle of personal breaking and giving. Too readily we fill the place of the receiver only, when we ought also to be the giver. Any person wishing to be in communion with another must be

ready to take the position of supplier, and not primarily the place of the suppliant. Having first received of Him, we ought, as He, to break the bread in order to give to others also. That is the way Communion, THE Communion, is established.

We normally break off our own piece and eat it and pass the loaf on to the next person; or else perhaps give it back to the person who handed it to us. Perhaps also we believe that symbolically we are passing the body of Christ from one to another. But O how much we miss and forfeit thereby, for He is trying to show us that we should break and give to others. Ought we not to discern 'the body of Christ' as Paul exhorts us and know what it is and that we are particular members of it? We must do this thing. We are not to try and remember Him hanging with unbroken body on a tree, wounded,

cursed and dying, crying out in agonised bewilderment as untold contradictions meet in His mind, crowning His baffled head with unanswerd and unanswerable enigmas.

We must understand the mystery in our hands and give ourselves with the bread we break and pass on to others, for that is the communion of the body. By this means we partake from one another as from the Christ who is the Head of the body in each member. If we were to do it like this, we should receive from one another in an entirely new way, for this kind of enlightened reform would bring us more nearly to the meaning of the real Communion.

The Testimony of Union

It is paradoxical, that breaking, the symbol of disunion, should be the testimony of union,

but it is so. The whole mystery of redemption is bound up in this 'act of making common'. By it we are brought most nearly to the heart of God. The Communion that God wanted man to enter into and enjoy was His own. It had been unbroken from the beginning; it was divine. How then could humans enter into it? There was no known way, no breach, no door, no opening for men. It needed an act of breaking of extraordinary significance, and it must be by God in order to make it available to us.

So it was that John Baptist came to prepare the way of the Lord, and the Lord who is the Way came. 'I am the door' He said, 'I am the way', 'do this in remembrance of me'. He who is the Way made a way for men to enter into God's Communion. Jesus came and hung out on a cross, cursed and forsaken by God and man, to make a way where there

was no way, and a breach where there was none. That man should forsake Him was inevitable, but it was equally inevitable that God should forsake Him too. It was utterly indispensable to the plan, for only by God doing so could the breach be made. He therefore did it. At Golgotha the break in THE COMMUNION was made for man to enter in — into THE COMMUNION — into God. We have been called into the fellowship communion of His Son.

The Bread which I will Give

On that dreadful day when the Lord instituted the communion in the upper room, He hoped beyond everything else that those men would understand what He was saying. They witnessed what He was doing, but could He make them see what He meant by it? O that the living truth may reach their hearts and never lose its meaning to them

lest it fall into deadening formality and carnal repetition. He had earlier said, 'the bread which I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world; whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day'.

However, although at that time He was opening up truth relating to the Communion, He was not then directly speaking of the Communion. He was informing His hearers of the basic facts and means of eternal life, warning them of the dangers of mere believism, that is of believing without receiving. Man can only live by eating and drinking Him every day. The daily exchange of our life for His — the constant preference for, choice and appropriation of His life above and instead of our own — is the only continuing means of eternal life.

Although there is an association of ideas linking these two things together, to do this is quite a different thing from partaking of the elements of the communion, and is much more important. Without this, the Communion of the body is utterly impossible, for except a man already has Jesus' eternal life, he has no place at the Lord's communion table, and if he should attend, only eats and drinks damnation to himself.

In Living Union

By the act of eating and drinking the communion, a man is testifying of his own fitness to be a member of the body of Christ, he is saying that he is worthy to do this because he is living in present communion with Christ. He does not come to the feast to be made a member of Christ thereby, neither does he come in order to have

himself restored to Life in Christ and communion with his fellow-members; he comes to testify that he is in living union with Christ. Thereby he is helping to build up the body of Christ, in communion or common-union with all the saints.

Otherwise participation is in vain; worse still, continued eating and drinking is destructive to self and obstructive to others.

It is because of the seriousness of this dreadful possibility that Paul says, 'let a man examine himself'. When a man eats and drinks, he must do so from the position of self-examination and self-judgement. He must judge whether or not he is in The Communion, and has been living in communion with the Lord. If this has not been so, he must rectify that state or else he may not eat and drink. If he is eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ, he is

living as Christ in this world; if not he has no part in the feast. Eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ is permitted to those who, in a common union of life, display their love and loyalty to Him and His Church.

The Intimate Cup

The act of drinking the wine of communion is a symbol of a much more intimate and personal nature than that which is displayed by eating the bread. The wording of the command given by the Lord on the night of institution is very poignant and pointed. Paul says He gave both the command and the cup to the disciples 'when He had supped'; it was the night of His betrayal and apprehension. Although His manner was the same as when He gave the bread, His actions this time were different. He drank of the cup Himself before He handed it to those whom He

loved. He blessed the cup, gave thanks for it, sipped from it and shared it among His disciples with these words, 'this cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for you — for many — for the remission of sins, drink ye all of it, this do as often as ye drink it in remembrance of me'. In this comprehensive statement, gathered from all the records, many things are brought together: the cup, the shed blood, the New Testament, remission of sins, Jesus, you, many; seven in all.

The Blood of the Covenant

It is noticeable that although Matthew and Mark do not mention the Cup, both speak of the shed blood, while Luke and Paul both speak of the Cup and of the blood, but not of its shedding. However, there is that of which they speak with unanimity, namely all the writers draw our attention to the real

content of the blood — the New Testament. This is obviously the most important point. Matthew and Mark use the word 'many' when speaking of the blood-shedding; the former alone adds that it was shed for the remission of sins. Luke is very pointed about it, moving from the wider sphere of 'many' to the more exclusive 'you', while Paul speaking directly to the Corinthian church uses no such term, but simply says, 'this cup is the New Testament in my blood, this do ye as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me'. The later apostle adds a further comment upon the rite with this illuminating question, 'the cup which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?' So we see that Paul, like Luke, does not mention the blood-shedding at all, neither does he talk about sin or persons, whether many or few. He does, however, emphasise the Lord

Jesus and the cup and the New Testament and the blood, and by talking of communion introduces an entirely new dimension. Paul's double emphasis upon the cup, joined together with Luke's report of Jesus' actual words, draws attention to the fact that the cup is directly mentioned three times in all. Add to this the knowledge that both Matthew and Mark also refer to it in the context of the supper and a significant fact emerges, namely that in this context a comparatively unimportant item such as a cup suddenly becomes invested with a very special meaning — it is the cup.

There is a noticeable change of language here. When speaking of the other element of communion, no article is used, 'He took bread'; but when speaking of blood, the definite article is used, 'the cup' or 'this cup'. This cup is the New Testament in His blood

which was 'shed for many' — how many we are not told. When the Lord spoke the words He was telling those men that, important as they were to Him and the Church, His blood was not shed just for them, but for many more than they.

As it had been Slain

It is beyond doubt that by the use of the word 'many' a necessary limiting factor is introduced. In the immediate context of their acquaintances, for instance, the blood of Christ was not shed for such persons as Judas. But even so the Lord's first intention in using the word was not limitation.

Consistent with His former words and actions, He was still bent upon widening the apostles' vision. He was thinking also of the whole creation — human and divine. His blood was shed in relation to God's purposes with angels and all Israel. It has significance

in every sphere of life, but only the Church of Jesus Christ may drink it. Jesus' blood was not shed for angels' redemption, it was shed for many, but not all of God's creation. He was restating His compassion on the multitudes, causing the few to lift up their eyes and look beyond themselves and that little room — on the many.

When they drank the wine that night, the blood was still in His veins, yet He spoke as though it had been already shed; He had spoken in this same way when He had broken the bread. Everything was steeped in mystery. They did not then understand His words and actions; only afterwards did comprehension come. To ritual was added meaning, and later understanding by the Spirit. The Lord was acting and speaking according to plans made before the foundation of the world. To Him the future

and the past are always as the present. He is and always has been and ever shall be. He later said of Himself, 'I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore.

Occasionally during His ministry among men the Lord had let out little hints of this secret, but for the greater part of the time He had kept it concealed. This episode in the upper room was one of the times when He deliberately allowed a ray of heavenly light and purpose to shine through. 'The New Testament in my blood which is shed', He said. Although it was still coursing in His veins, in His heart it was already shed; He had not just recently become the Lamb of God. He did not become the Lamb when John identified Him at Jordan, or when men nailed Him on the tree; He was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

He is the Lamb of God now upon the throne. He ever shall be the Lamb in the bosom of the Father in New Jerusalem. He was already the Lamb of God, whether at birth or baptism or crucifixion. He came forth unto men from an ordination and designation in a past eternity, He was speaking that night of the age-abiding love and purpose of God. When He took that cup and spoke, He was looking 'way out beyond that room and those men; His heart saw and longed for the many more.

His actual physical blood was shortly to be shed, some at the whipping-post in the prison, some from His thorn-crowned head in Herod's palace, some in Pilate's judgement-hall, some along the road to Golgotha, some upon the hands of the soldiers as they crucified Him, but mostly it flowed from the cross to the ground, which

opened her mouth to receive it. Pigment and plasma of physical blood stained and soaked into a cursed earth. But it did not redeem it. Men shed it to curse their God; they trampled it underfoot; but it came upon the heads of the Jews. It was the innocent cause of Judas' suicide; it validated and consummated all past atonements and redeemed the Church.

In Covenant with Jesus

Jesus knew all this when He gathered His own together for the sacred occasion that night. So into the cup He poured the entire meaning and intention of God, as yet stored in the blood still flowing in His body. His desire was that by that cup He should tryst with them and they with Him to enter into covenant and communion with Him. At that time He personally was in an eternal bond with His Father that He should bring many

sons to glory; what He wanted them to do was to share in that oath of commitment. At that time they knew nothing of it, but they loved and trusted Him. 'Drink ye all of it', He said, offering them the cup, and they drank it.

He had already given them the bread of His body; it was all part of the communion; but a bloodless body is a dead body. In order to have life they must have the blood of that body too; so with Him they drank His blood from the covenant cup. Within it was the covenant He had made with His Father. By a solemn exchange of immutable promises they had committed themselves each to each, that God's will may be accomplished; the commitment was absolute. Because of the nature of this oath, not all people may drink it; it can only be shared by those who are prepared to enter into covenant with the

Father and the Son, and upon the same grounds. It is only for His elect; it is not for all; only those who have entered into the spiritual truth displayed by the outward act are members of His Church, and they alone. The many for whom His blood was shed for remission of sins must have clear understanding that they have been forgiven those sins for this purpose. Having been freed from guilt and shame and punishment, they must forthwith enter into sacred covenant with Jesus. Without reservation they must as one solemnly agree with Him to fulfil His Father's will. This involves the absolute necessity that they should become members of His spiritual body and share the spiritual content of His blood. In other words each member must have His nature and personality, and live as He in this world. For this every member must have His Spirit. It is

this covenant in its entirety implied by the wine in the cup, which at the feast was referred to as the blood of His bodily life.

He intended the cup to mean and convey to us the entire spiritual content of His combined Godhead and Manhood. Although the blood of this life was spilt on the ground and trampled underfoot at Calvary, the life of the blood was not spilt on the ground; by symbol that was poured into the cup. God's will cupped the life of Jesus unto us; it was as the secret mixture of the divine life with the human. For this He became first a babe, and guarding the sacred union through boyhood and youth grew to manhood. Having perfected it in the fires of temptation He kept it for this moment when He could share it with them. It was for them, only for them, and all the 'many' they represented,

though at the time they did not understand what that meant.

You and I are One

Profounder truth than He could then express lay deeper in the cup waiting to be revealed. In Him resided all the seed chosen by God before the world began. Everyone who has been born or shall yet be born of the Spirit is of the life which was in His blood, and already a member of His spiritual body. He is the Seed of all the seed; all are in Him and together with Him comprise His body. 'You are part of Me', He was saying, 'You and I are one'. This is one of the more important reasons why He said, 'do this in remembrance of Me'.

It is by doing these things that we 'show forth the Lord's death', said Paul. He has given us His body to eat and His blood to

drink and partaking according to His will, we exhibit His death. What a wonder this is; it is almost a paradox. And yet how true it is, for except He had died the food and drink would not have been available. He laid down His life for us. We remember the all-important occasion, the great triumph, the demonstration of conquest, the achievement of the impossible. The act of breaking the communion in order that we may enter into it is the most important of all the many important things which Jesus accomplished on the cross.

Obedient unto Death

Hanging there He was more deeply concerned about creating the possibility of Communion for men than anything else. He knew that the whole reason for His incarnation and life would climax in that most dreadful moment of forsakenness. It

had been known to Him before the foundation of the world. He had faced and undergone it in anticipation then, but the actual manifestation of it lay yet ahead. By the sovereign choice of Jehovah, He was designated the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world, and the immensity of the result of His consent lay weighty upon Him from that point onward — as heavily as when, millennia later He lay sweating in Gethsemane adjacent to Golgotha.

Similarly, when God defined and Moses wrote down the many different sacrifices required by law for the multiplicity of sin's atonements, it all loomed up again in His heart and brought nearer the awful day. It had been ever with Him; there had never been any respite from it, always He was the slaughtered Lamb, the slain lion, the dove destroyed as if it was the dragon. Yet

nothing withheld Him from the eternal purpose, and one day, having humbled Himself into a man, at Father's request He went lower still, right out alone into the long-foretold and oft-figured death.

The Supreme Task

Golgotha was the chosen place where it should all be accomplished; from all eternity God had planned for this. Crucifixion was Roman and barbaric, but to Him the cross was a chosen instrument. In the flesh He would suffer the necessary human counterpart of an eternal principle of life. He told Pilate that he could have had no power to crucify Him except it was given from above. How could a heathen man unaided apply God's principles to God? Wood makes a cross for the outward man, but a human judge could not apply the spiritual principle of death to God's Son — only God could do

that. God decided that the impossible was going to be achieved that day on the cross. So hanging there at last, Jesus related the unrelatable; He resisted unto blood, yet accepted with all His power; strove with all His might against sin, yet yielded the strength of His body unto death; hating satan, loving God; abominating sin, absolving the sinner, He made the way for God and man to be one.

This was His supreme task, involving many things, each important in its place. Like this, His greatest task, they could only be accomplished here and at the same time. But great as each was, not the unimaginable volume of their united weight, nor the vastness of their combined scope could in any degree resemble the magnitude of the work He had come here chiefly to do. Sacrifice for sin, total redemption, the act of

justification and regeneration itself all depended and turned upon this one thing to which He bent all His power — was it possible to open the Communion to men and to create men for the Communion?

The Union of Love

God is The Communion. He is the original unique, eternal life concerning which the Bible is written. Three persons living together in one being is the same as three persons living together in communion; the bond of such perfectness can only be love. Into this Communion the Lord Jesus came to bring us. Yet how He should accomplish it none but His Father and He with the Holy Ghost knew. It is no wonder He said, 'I am the way'; there surely can be no other. The final end in view was so horrific that the final moment of decision was greeted with

repeated cries — 'Abba, Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me.'

His pleas at that late hour did not mean that He was drawing back or refusing to go through with the ordeal. He had known and committed Himself to the sacred covenant from the foundation of the world. How could He withdraw from that? By sacred symbol and heartfelt words He had already established the commemorative feast among the apostles. To Him it had been done as though it was all over already, His heart had been brimming with love at the time and still was. With everything in His own hands He deliberately took and broke and gave the bread, and poured out and circulated the wine for His friends to eat and drink. He had no intention of going back on His words and actions. His oath had been as much to them as to His God and Father.

Men only trust with whom they trust, and He had invited their trust without attempting to explain to their understanding all that was involved in what they were doing. They would not — could not — have understood had He attempted it anyway. But He does not ask man's total commitment only to betray it. His cries in the garden were not the cowardly cries of the traitor; He does not betray men. That man lying before God was not failing for fear, He was enquiring of His Father whether or not after all some other way could be found. But no, The Communion of God could only be established for men by Him; there was no other. Being both human and divine, He was the sole hope of men, the true Communion of God and man, He must bear the greatest contradictions of all.

And Myrrh

He cried out from the fires of agony, His sweat pouring from Him for all the world like drops of blood, but the chosen on whose behalf He cried were lying asleep behind Him. He had no illusions. He fully realised that they represented the whole vast company of people, who, oblivious as they, would be for ever unaware. Yet neither their sleep nor their inability to watch with Him through one dark hour embittered His soul; He loved them. He had always known that when He reached the last terrible ordeal now lying so close just ahead of Him, He would be out on His own. He knew that in the final event no-one would be with Him, not even God.

That had been perfectly understood between Father and He from the beginning. Long ago in eternity past He had agreed to it before ever He undertook to be made a

man. So desire it as He may, He did not really expect men to stay with Him; why, even God was going to forsake Him. Peter, James and John, who had been chosen by Him to become future pillars of His Church, completely failed Him; they were a disappointment to Him, but He felt no bitterness. All He sought of them was human love and companionship while He committed Himself afresh to His Father's will, that was all. But it was not to be. And so to crucifixion.

A Land not Inhabited

He went to the cross knowing exactly what He must do. It had been talked about, thought through and prayed over again and again. On the Mount of Transfiguration He met Moses and Elijah, His glorified servants, to discuss with them the forthcoming event. He had looked radiantly lovely then, His face

changed and His garments had shone with unearthly whiteness as they talked together of the departure He should accomplish at Jerusalem. Strangely enough the word they used while in conversation together about His death was 'exodus' or 'outgoing' (Gk.).

We can only conjecture what it may have meant to Moses, who led and wrote a book about the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, or to Elijah, in whose spirit John Baptist came to Jordan to introduce his Lord to Israel. We only know that to Jesus it meant something much more than either of His companions in glory could comprehend, or be expected to understand. Were they thinking and conversing with Him of His exodus from the world to the Father, or from the grave to glory with the multitude of captives released by Him from captivity? They may have been; it is quite likely that these things were

referred to in course of conversation, but to Jesus, even if all the world should be gained thereby, such an exodus would not have been the greatest of all.

The heart that beat beneath His glistening robe was occupied with far more weighty and tragic things than those. For Him the exodus meant outgoing from God. All the world, the whole universe, and all eternity itself hinged on the moment when He should go out from God as did the scapegoat of old into 'a land not inhabited' — by God. It was the darkest moment of time, the black hole of the ages, the supreme test of God; but in Gethsemane, with face on the ground and body bathed with sweat, He finally attained unto it with strong crying and tears. Rising from the dust, Adam the second strode out triumphantly to accomplish God's will with stronger cries and blood at Calvary.

That We may Enter in

Jesus had ever lived in communion with His Father. Nothing had ever broken their communion, it was The Communion — The Fellowship. No-one else was in it but God — Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Cherubim and Seraphim adored and worshipped and served the glorious and mighty three who enjoyed but one Life and Being. With admiring eyes and wondering hearts they hovered around and waited upon their God and King to do His will, yet they were not in The Communion they beheld. But the man Jesus was ever in that holy Communion. On coming to earth He laid aside much, but not that; all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily.

Being made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, He lived on earth as an only-begotten with a father. He only came

out from God because Father longed to have many other sons like Jesus with Him in that same Communion. But how? How were they to accomplish it? Could it really be done, and if so when and where? At which point could it be arranged for men to enter into the Communion of the Holy Three? God thought out a plan, charged Jesus with it and commissioned Him to create this opening for men. Therefore, sanctified and sent into the world, His was the duty both to be, and to make the way whereby His Father's and His own wishes should be fulfilled.

Thou art My Beloved Son

We have to be in the Communion. God has never asked us to celebrate it; it is not a service. We have not been instructed to keep it; it is not a memento. We have not been exhorted to observe it; it is not a spectacle. We must be in it. We are either in

or out of this Communion. Every man desiring to enter it must go the same way as Jesus the Christ, and in order that he should do so, all the merits of Christ will be imputed to him. Therefore, except a man repent and accept this grace, he cannot enter into the Communion, but must remain forever without. But so surely as he sees and confesses to his basic state of excommunication from God through Adam's sin and seeks salvation from it, he will be forgiven, cleansed and justified from all things and brought into the Regeneration.

However, all these, great as they are, are but the overtures of God's grace, the means and preparations for the highest honour of all, which is entrance and acceptance into the Communion of God. O the honour of being greeted with the words, 'thou art My beloved son, this day have I begotten thee',

and again 'I will be to him for a Father and he shall be to Me for a son'. This is the very holiest of the holies. Not now a secret place of the Most High within a tent, a figure of the true copied out from a heavenly pattern, but a Being, and that Person — God. The sons of Israel had a land, the sons of Aaron had a tent, but the sons of the Father have God. Israel never had communion, they had a Passover; they never had reconciliation, they had atonements (many); they never had regeneration. They had redemption, sanctification, purification and a host of other necessary, though lesser things that God provides for men, but we have God Himself.

After the Order of Melchisedec

How carefully Jesus distinguished between the Passover and the communion in the upper room that night. Just which of these

was the last supper it is hard to decide. Whichever meal it was, it was surely the last one He ate with them on this earth; except for the fish and honey He ate before them in the evening of resurrection day, we do not know that He partook of another meal. In the case of the communion it is perhaps more true to look upon it as a breakfast rather than a supper, for it was the first meal of a new era, even as the Passover was on the day it was inaugurated.

Upon that occasion God also instituted a great time-change for His people. True enough it was eaten at night, but although it was the last meal of the day, it was the first meal of an era then dawning as new as could be for Israel. But when Jesus partook of it with His disciples in His day, it was truly a supper, for it was the final meal of the closing dispensation of the law which He

fulfilled. Fulfilling it He removed it, swiftly replacing it with another which was to be the inaugural meal of the opening dispensation of grace, a breakfast indeed.

There must be no ground for mistake though, no confusing the two meals. He made a complete break between them by an interlude of foot-washing. 'Rising from supper and laying aside His garments He girded Himself' for the task (how significant the words seem now) and washed His disciples' feet ere He allowed Himself to institute and they to partake of the communion. They had walked that old path long enough, now they must walk the new. They who were not priests of the Old Covenant were to be priests of the New; they were to handle and eat the New Sacrifice and drink the New Blood.

The Supreme Sacrifice

It was all symbolical; there was nothing sacerdotal or actually sacrificial about their actions as they sat at that table of love in communion with their Lord. Matthew was a Levite, but he gave no attendance upon priests fulfilling their duties at an altar that day; with his companions he was elected to become a priest of the New Covenant and his great High Priest was installing him with them into office. There was no doubt that by these things the Lord was introducing to them all a wholly new concept of priesthood. 'Do this', He said, 'in remembrance of Me, and broke the bread and gave it to them.

What He did was an example and exposition of voluntary self-breaking for the purposes of self-giving with a view to total self-distribution. The supreme sacrifice so soon to be offered was at that moment being

tendered to them as their example.

Presently they were to see Him give Himself up to those who should finally put Him to death; He even restrained Peter from fighting to prevent it. There was to be no resistance; He gave Himself. Treacherous betrayal, cowardly denial, brutal savagery, mock trial, false condemnation, cruel crucifixion and cold death must be suffered with dignity and take their toll, but none of these would find Him a reluctant slave forced to do things against His will.

Whatever He felt about it in Himself, His act was love. He, the High Priest, did this, therefore all the priests must do the same. They could not make the reconciling sacrifice, but cannot live except they make the spiritual one.

Only once need the redeeming sacrifice be made; Jesus Himself only did it once. It was

the final act in the end of the age of atonement by bloodshed for sin. Unlike men of old, or of His own generation, He never made the actual bodily sacrifice daily or even yearly, but once and eternally. Yet according to the plan of the ages He instituted the communion on the anniversary of the day when the feast which most nearly corresponded to it was originally established in Israel. No other day but this would have served the purposes of God — He always does everything with absolute correctness in age-abiding affinity with truth.

A Kingdom of Priests

It was pure perfection. By God's command throughout Israel's national history the annual Passover was a most individual occasion. On that day instead of the Aaronic family functioning in their substitutional

capacity for all Israel, each householder became a priest unto God. Every family took and slew its own lamb and handled and sprinkled the blood for themselves. In addition to that, instead of one family of male priests exclusively eating some selected portions of the sacrifice in God's house by divine command, each member of the race took and handled and ate his or her share of the entire lamb in his or her own house. So we see with what wondrous felicity and inspired insight, as well as absolute simplicity, the Lord instituted the basic meal of His New Covenant. The Passover was conceived, inaugurated and framed for this very reason. The Lord Jesus did it all precisely in order to introduce to them the next phase of God's predetermined plan to establish His kingdom in the hearts of men.

The Passover lamb(s), whether slain initially in Egypt, or successively in the desert, and finally in Canaan, were not brought to an altar to be consumed in fire by God. Only what was left over, that is what was more than the people could eat, was burned up. Even then it was not burned upon an altar as a sacrifice, nor was it offered up by a priest. It was done by the master of the house. Israel's Passover lamb was not offered up to God; on the contrary God gave it to Israel. By eating the lamb Israel offered and gave themselves to God. As He said, Israel is my firstborn.

The Passover feast was commanded to the people by God with direct intention, the implication of the ritual was that the entire nation should consider themselves to be priests. This was the righteous ground upon which God could later say of Israel that they

were a kingdom of priests unto Him. At that time the Aaronic priesthood had not been ordained, nor had the men of the tribe of Levi any more privileges than the men of every other tribe. The head of every house was the priest, he slew the lamb and sprinkled the blood according to God's commandment. Israel was God's house, His firstborn — every single one of them. They were a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people to Him, and as such needed no special priests. Only later for practical purposes was the priesthood established and men ordained to be servants in God's house.

A Chosen Generation

Reading Peter's first epistle, it becomes very evident that he had a very clear grasp of these things. In chapter 2, verse 9, he plainly states it; he further substantiates it in

chapter 1, verse 2. The blood of individual and national redemption was first shed in Egypt where Israel were strangers. It was not shed at the altar of the Tabernacle. At that time it did not even exist. When at last the altar was made, the blood shed there was the blood of atonements, not redemption. Redemption took place in Egypt by national bloodshed, not in Canaan by priestly bloodshed.

When the Passover was subsequently remembered, the priesthood had been established, but even the priest, as well as people, had to shed the blood of redemption for himself and his own house just as everyone else. He could not do it for another or another's house, but only for his own. When he was elected he could shed the blood of atonement for another. Indeed he was purposely ordained to do that, but

he had to shed the redeeming blood for himself and his family. This was not done at the altar, but at his own house; the Passover was as absolutely personal as God could make it.

In the New Covenant however all is one. Whatever it is that God has intended and provided for us is comprehended and included in the once shedding of the blood of Jesus, but it was not so in Israel. What a wonderful scheme God devised when He ordained multiplicity of blood-offerings for Israel. By them He set forth the things which differ that we may easily distinguish truth. Where redemption is concerned we must each know by experience that we are an individual member of the chosen generation (which was redeemed in and out from Egypt), a royal priest, a holy person, a being peculiarly precious to God, to show forth the

praiseworthy virtues of Him (the Lamb whom we have eaten) who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

The Lesser Light

The Children of Israel ate their lamb in the dim glow of the artificial light which lit their mean hovels in Egypt. True it was better than the midnight darkness without, or the stygian gloom which a few days earlier had enwrapped and depressed all Egypt beyond Goshen in the prophetic blackness of doomsday now swiftly advancing. But compared with ours, their light held no marvels, although it held joy that the firstborn of the home was preserved in life. Peter, who was there in the upper room with the other apostles and the Lord, ate the Passover lamb according to the law. Whether at that time he understood the silent testimony to his own priesthood

involved therein is open to question, but there is no questioning the fact that he thoroughly grasped the implied meaning of his nation's and his own personal past history when he wrote his epistles. He knew then that he was indeed a royal priest.

The Lord in the Midst

Bearing all this in mind, perhaps we can furnish a reason for the foot washing episode described by John. It certainly was an outstanding action by the Lord. He knelt and washed His disciples' feet at the time they were passing from the old, typical redemption of Israel to the new, present, actual and eternal redemption of God's people. The Lord was deliberately intending to end the repetitious Passover and the annual attestation to their priesthood it implied. No longer was their meal to consist of slain lamb and herbs of bitterness eaten

behind doorways sprinkled with blood within, and under which Jehovah their almighty Saviour stood for their protection. Instead the meal which was established only in unleavened bread and a cup of wine was eaten with and in the presence of the Lord who was in the midst. They saw the Lord, heard Him and handled Him and He saw and heard and handled them; they were in true fellowship and were proclaiming that fact. They were the first priests of the new order; seeing what He did and doing it as He said they bore testimony to permanent, personal redemption. Their act symbolised complete reconciliation to God for the purpose of regeneration into His communion, in which every man is a priest communing with his God and with his fellow-priests, one glorious family, nation, temple, body. So it was that the Lord brought in and established in

symbols the real communion for His Church for the rest of time.

We have Fellowship

In this simple meal, properly understood, lies the true basis of all spiritual sacrifices, Although by it we primarily show His death till He come, by it also we show forth our own death till He come. It is the simplest yet profoundest manifestation of both Christ's and the Church's universal sacrifice. Doing this we proclaim that we, as He, are a broken body — a breaking body and yet a whole body. The symbol of our unique union is demonstrated by breaking bread in common. It is utterly paradoxical, and yet that is why and how it is so true. We do this in remembrance of Him who did it thinking of us. He did it in prospect, we do it in retrospect, for the Communion is the

foundation of the priesthood so dearly loved and taught by Peter.

Not only he, but John also taught it, although he does not introduce the theme as such; rather his thought is brotherhood through son-ship. Listen to him as he unfolds the same glorious truth in another way.

'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and handled of the Word of Life. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that you also may have fellowship (communion) with us, and truly our fellowship (communion) is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ if we walk in the light as He is, in the light we have fellowship (communion) one with another'. This is the way in which Communion and Priesthood are spoken of by John. In their own different

ways all the New Testament writers make the Communion the central theme of their message.

Into the Holiest

Following the birth and institution of the Church on earth, there is no record of the communion meal being repeated between the time of the actual Passover at which Christ died and rose again and the occasions referred to as 'breaking of bread' in Acts chapter 2. The reasons for this are: (a) the feast is only for the Church, (b) the Lord had first to complete and crown the system of atonements under which Israel had for centuries existed as a redeemed nation. By His superior death He fulfilled atonement and replaced it with Reconciliation, He then entered into the Holiest in heaven and poured forth the Spirit. By this He promulgated that Reconciliation and

installed the Communion in the Church. Until this was done there could be no Communion, for it was not yet established for men.

Communion is referred to by Paul as 'of the Holy Ghost', who, John tells us, was 'not yet given' while Christ was on earth. The Communion was therefore impossible for men until Pentecost. Because this is so, the fact arises that just as the Communion is impossible outside of the Spirit, so also is it impossible outside of the Church. Therefore, of all things that could possibly happen to a person, excommunication is to be the most dreaded, viz, to be refused the symbols of communion because cut off from the Communion. The sentence symbolises being cut off from God and the Church — damned.

Union with God

After leaving Egypt, except during the Passover, no man but he who belonged to the family of Aaron was a priest in Israel. During that era the heavily-veiled presence of God testified to the nation that everything was covered, Even the substitutionary lambs and blood, and all offerings for atonement, gracious as they showed God to be, declared God's policy of covering sin until He who was the unique and original Lamb should come and shed His reconciling blood. At that time being made man's sin, He completely bore it away and making man God's righteousness, brought him into union with God.

The thought of reconciliation started in the counsels of the Trinity in the heart of God; just when we cannot tell. Conceived originally in the mind and will of God, it had for its foundation the oneness of the Trinity. Brought to earth in the incarnation, it

was displayed to perfection in the union of God and man in the Man-God, Christ Jesus. Later it was effected for man by God in Christ at Calvary and is now made effectual to man in the Holy Ghost. This effect is finally displayed by man and God in Communion.

Ye do Show Forth

The passage most quoted when the saints partake of the elements is to be found in 1 Corinthians 11. In the tenth chapter Paul speaks of the elements in quite the reverse order from which each of the synoptists refers to them and indeed to his own order in the later chapter. Some have found difficulty with this; some even have suggested that by so doing, Paul has set forth an alternative method for the order of the feast. Most find it incomprehensible. In any case we may well ask why the apostle in

this passage should so definitely place the cup before the bread. He undoubtedly did so in wisdom under the inspiration of God, but why this should be so remains a mystery to the majority. The truth is that in doing this Paul pens one of his most profound and inspiring passages, introducing the surprising statement by saying that he speaks as to wise men. He asks all to judge what he has to say. With what wisdom God has given us let us do just that.

Members One of Another

Paul is here speaking in plainest terms of the Communion of the body of Christ. His emphasis at this point is not on the usual theme of remembrance of Christ and our communion with Him, but on our communion with one another as members of His body. Upon thought this is seen to be just another way of speaking of communion

with Christ. He has already stated in an earlier chapter that each member of the body is a member of the Christ of many members. His main stress in this section is perhaps best expressed in a phrase he uses to the Ephesians: 'we are members one of another'. This is the mood in which he approaches the commemorative meal here — it is 'the communion of the blood' 'the communion of the body', it is the communion of member with member.

Because this is his particular intention at this point, he departs from the usual order and speaks of the elements in the order by which we originally enter into the Communion. The later time-honoured order is the perfectly correct and logical way in which we partake of the elements once we are in the Communion. But to enter into the Communion we must first drink His blood,

for the New Covenant is specifically stated to be in His blood. Every man who would enter into and become a member of the body of Christ must realise that he may only do so by drinking the blood of Christ. Having entered by the blood into Christ and become members of the body, we afterwards continue in the communion by the symbolism of first breaking and eating of the bread, and having done so, taking and drinking of the cup.

The Cup of Trysting

How truly we each in turn bless the cup so full of blessing to us, which signifies the sum total of all heavenly blessings in Christ. It gathers blessing unto itself as we thankfully own our communion to be in His precious blood and in turn bless and add our blessings to it. The symbolic blood in the cup is not to be thought of in this aspect as

redemptive, sanctifying or cleansing, but as the blood of the cup of trysting and covenant, cumulative of blessing. It is His blood containing the blessings of His life, to which we add the eulogistic, heartfelt blessings of our life also, so that it overflows with the blessings of Christ and His Church. It is the communion of the body; the Head with the members and the members one with another and all together.

We eulogistically aggregate the conscious mystic communion of our lives too as we break the bread, for it is we who are that one bread. In the other passages it is written that the Lord is the bread, and so He is, and thanks be to God that this is the aspect most deservedly emphasised. But in the jubilation of our thanksgiving for this, let us not overlook the clear insistence of the apostle here, 'we being many are one bread and one

body'. The bread is ours and us, the wine is ours and us, the body is ours and us, the blood is ours and us. O the miracle of it! 'All things are yours', writes this inspired man, 'and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's; ye are the body of Christ and members in particular; as the body is one and hath many members so also is Christ'

We, being Many, are One Body

What truth! What a Communion! Such a communion is The Communion indeed. The breach has been made, the gap closed, the way made clear and the end achieved, Hallelujah! By this we see the immensity of the folly and sin of schism. God hates and condemns it. Schism is that which breaks the Communion among men. Difference of opinion does not, but deliberate schism does, Its worst feature is that it appears (if it does not attempt) to falsify the truth

that The Communion cannot be broken ever again.

O how great is the need amongst us to discern the body of Christ in these days. Praise God, Communion does not rest upon denominational emphases or exclusivism, or the various 'communions' of men, but is of the Holy Ghost. We who are regenerate have all been made perfect in one and are come to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn ones written in heaven. The full gathering is there. On earth we are of necessity separated into little groups, but there on Mount Zion we are all gathered together, one large assembly around the throne in New Jerusalem, with an innumerable company of angels and perfected spirits in the presence of God the Judge of all and of Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant and the speaking blood. Our

communion is in the Spirit with the Father and with His Son through grace and love.

The Communion is entire. It is of the whole body. We all together with our Head are the Christ's body; the body and the blood and the Spirit are all ours now. We with God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, are all one. That is the Communion. Hallelujah"