

X. *The Sacraments.*

We believe that the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are effectual means through which, by common things and simple acts, the saving love of God is exhibited and communicated to His people, who receive them in faith.

We believe that in Baptism men are made members of the Christian society. Washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit signifies God's cleansing from sin and an initial participation in the gifts and graces of the new life. The children of believing parents are baptized and nurtured in the family of God so that they may in due time take upon themselves the yoke of Christ.

We believe that the Lord's Supper perpetuates the fellowship between Christ and His disciples sealed in the upper room, that at His table He is always present, and His people are nourished, confirmed, and renewed. The giving and receiving of bread and wine accompanied by His own words signifies the gracious self-giving of Christ as suffering and living Lord in such wise that His faithful people live in Him and He in them.

So we acknowledge Baptism as God's appointed means of grace at initiation into the Christian fellowship; and the Lord's Supper as His appointed means of maintaining the fellowship in health and strength, and as the act of worship in which the whole soul of man goes out to God and God's grace comes freely to man.

CHAPTER X. THE SACRAMENTS

By Common Things and Simple Acts. Matt 2: 11; Mark 14: 3-9; John 13: 1-15.

When life moves on the level amid the commonplace, talk is easy and flowing. Raise it a little to the plane of emotion, and sentences become broken. Lift it to the heights, and broken words die away, and all we have for self-uttering is the look, the gesture. Thoughts at their loftiest break into symbols. A grip of the hand, a glance of the eye, a shrug of the shoulders, and we sense the movement of the spirit within. So in the realm of religion, where the Eternal mystery has His unmeasured magnitudes to communicate to feeble understanding, there must needs be the sign or the symbol, the picture language of thought too deep for speech.

The Eastern mind was specially productive of sensitive imagery. The Old Testament has many an example. The mourner barefoot, with ashes sprinkled on his head (2 Sam. 15: 30; Ezek. 24: 17; Jer. 6: 26), the keys upon the steward's shoulder (Is. 22: 22), the mantle thrown over the woman in protection (Ezek. 16: 8), the sowing of a city with vegetation-destroying salt (Judg. 9: 45), and the crown placed upon the king's head—all these speak meaningfully and memorably. The incense rising from the altar (Ps. 141: 2), the stretching out of hands in petition for divine mercy (Ex. 9: 29; 1 K. 8: 22), the frontlets upon the forehead and arm marking out the people under the divine care (Ex. 13: 16), the blue of the cloudless sky, the colour of revelation, on the curtains of the sanctuary (Ex. 26: 1) and the fringe of an Israelite's garment (Nu. 15: 38)—these indicate how readily religious ideas and yearnings found expression in symbols. The Sabbath broke the succession of common days to remind men of how God completed the work of creation. Above all, the Temple itself was a symbol, the sign of the divine Presence, to which when the worshipper looked up he knew that no evil could befall his city. The prophets directed attention to the truths that they bore upon their souls by dramatic actions. When Ahijah wishes to declare that the kingdom of Israel is to

be divided, he tears his garment into twelve pieces (1 K. 11: 30); Ezekiel outlines on a tile the plan of the city, girdles it with mound and battering-ram, and gazes on his handiwork with uplifted hand, thus betokening Jehovah's impending judgment on Jerusalem; he reduces to scantiness his food and water to indicate the stern rationing that a siege brings (Ezek. 4). So in those who come in the Hebrew tradition we expect this love of the dramatic symbol with its double appeal to the mind and senses.

When we come to the New Testament we see in Jesus Himself the great symbol of God. He is the Word, the one by whom and through whom God utters Himself, declares His mind towards men and their salvation, the will to redeem. And that Word of His is no mere adventure into history on the part of the Eternal, no sudden whim or makeshift device to set right the maladjustment of the human race with Himself. That Word defines for us what He essentially is, what He inevitably is as the Righteous and Loving Father of men. Jesus is the disclosure of the mystery of God. In God there is that splendour of holiness, that grandeur of purpose, that depth of mind and range of interest that no common words can tell with adequacy. Between the magnitude of God and the littleness of man an intermediary was needed, an interpretation of the Eternal to the creatures of time. That interpretation took the form of a man, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; that man of Nazareth was God uttering Himself in moving pity and acts of tender healing, in words of light and of judgment, in deeds of power and depths of agony, an exhaustless panorama of the divine will projected on the screen of time. He is the living symbol of the majesty and glory of God. His every parable presents a facet of eternal truth, His precepts and paradoxes sum up the issues of our human destiny, His challenges bring all men everywhere to the bar of judgment. And it is curious to note how every crisis in His evolving story stands out before men today as charged with a universal significance. That He should take His place with sinners in a baptism for repentance, that God's call should confront Him with temptations such as we know in the conflict between the higher and lower appeal, that He should have His moments on the Mount and His agony in a Gethsemane and His irrevocable steps towards Calvary—all these are symbols of the divine meaning in life and signposts on the way everlasting before us.

In the later stages of His life, in the last appeal to men in Jerusalem, He deliberately resorts to symbolic actions, as if He would fain sum up His message in accents unforgettable. He elects to play out the final scenes where human eyes must see Him. What are the focal points of an ancient city's life? Are they not the city gate, where all must come and go, and the Temple of God, the Holy Place of His Presence, where all must draw near in reverence? Here He entered of set calculation, humbly riding on an ass, declaring that He came offering to win His sovereignty by the ways of peace; and there He cleansed the Temple of its empty ceremonialism and commercialism and opened up the one clear avenue to God, the way of prayer.

Peace and Prayer: could His accent fall on finer words? Peace is the dream long deferred of the citizens of this war-torn world, and prayer is the gateway that gives despairing man entrance into life again.

And what are the focal points of a home? Are they not the door by which all come and go and the table where all gather for sustaining and fellowship? At the door stood the water-pots of cleansing water, and who can forget how He took a towel and girded Himself and washed the disciples' feet, declaring for all time that the Christian home is founded on mutual willingness to serve in the humblest capacity? And at the Table He took bread and broke it and gave, and likewise a cup after supper and said: "Drink ye all of it," so setting before us the exhaustless symbol of all human need to receive and the divine love that satisfies to the uttermost.

Towel and Table—fit emblems surely of the unstinted completeness of the divine self-giving.

"Symbol" is a general term for a significant action in the whole wide range of human life, a handclasp between friends, the tattered flags that once led armies into battle and find their place as memorial emblems in a cathedral, the seals that guarantee a legal document. But "sacrament" is a term we have come to apply specially in the religious sphere. It is a Latin term and was used of the soldier's oath of loyalty. But that word states the practical Roman's view of things, the human side of the question. Much richer is the Greek word that *sacramentum* translates: *mysterion*—mystery. That proclaims the divine side of the sacrament. It is a truth of God, a momentous word about His

eternal nature and purpose, a declaration of communication that the divine makes to mortal men. Our sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are handed down to us by the Church as divine appointments wherein by common things and simple acts the will of God to save men is set dramatically forth and His love is communicated to His people who come in faith to receive that gift.

It is our human way to talk of going to church and celebrating the sacraments—as if these were matters of our own decision. But before we go forth God has made manifest His presence there in the sanctuary and waits to meet us, and before we take our place at the table of the Lord He sits there as Host. Grace ever goes before our human response. That is what lies behind the claim that these sacraments are effectual means. When Peter in the first days of the early Church set the seal on the admission of Cornelius and his household by baptizing them, he was not just following the happy inspiration of the moment or unthinkingly taking over into the new movement an old piece of ritual. He was acting by the leading of the Spirit, as is shown by the fact that with the rite came the Spirit. Already there was evidence in the solemn life-changing that accompanied the rite, the hallmark of the divine approval. It is not ours to look round and find other ways and means of expressing the bond and solemn pledge between man and God. The fact is there that under the divine leading these symbols have been handed down from Christian age to Christian age as proven acceptable sacraments that God has been pleased to use and make effectual throughout the long history of the Church. Young people in camp, in love with the open air and the fellowship of like-minded associates under the spell of conference life and worship, may gather on Sunset Point and feel that there in the glory of the reddening sky is fitting symbol of the beauty of God. True, that is a sacramental experience, and the emotion of that hour is of God. But it is the common things and simple acts that have been hallowed by the piety and love of the generations that will prove to us the most effectual means of entering into the meaning and the mystery of the divine self-giving.

“It is irrational to attempt to decide on the strength of general metaphysical theory how God must act in bestowing good gifts

on His creatures. The one question we can ask with sanity about such a matter is the *historical* question how in fact God is found to deal with us.”¹

Baptism . . . in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Matt. 3: 1-17; Matt. 28: 19; Luke 3: 7-14.

The rite of Baptism is rooted in the life experience of Jesus. He came to Jordan to the baptism of John. There on the threshold of His ministry He chose to stand with sinners as in the end He died with sinners. His call and ministry are inextricably bound up with the need of men for their supreme deliverance, the deliverance from the thralldom of sin. There is never any suggestion that Jesus felt in Himself the consciousness of sin except the enigmatic question, Mark 10: 18. But He had the unique sensibility that made Him one with His brethren, and it was that compelling sympathy that drew Him from the quiet uneventful life of a carpenter in Nazareth. The trumpet had sounded throughout the land in the commanding voice of a prophet, and that call was to repent, for the Kingdom of God was at hand. It was never the way of Jesus to think that He could cultivate a religious intercourse with God and yet stand outside the common life of His people. He knew that it was in the heritage of Israel that His lot was cast, and the God of His fathers did not enter into personal relationship even with Him apart from other human persons. Within the complex of the social whole of which He was a part God was moving with ominous power. God was shaking the nation by the sound of the axe at the trembling tree and the sweep of the winnowing fan, and His place was there among the awakened penitents of His own people. If an Isaiah or Jeremiah had not felt the tension of their nation's loss and imminent peril, they would never have heard the call of God; and it was because Jesus was bearing His countrymen on His heart that He came with them to Jordan, and, humbling Himself with them in the hour of contrition, He was startled by a divine intimation. Baptism may seem like the singling out of an individual to a lone encounter with God, and in a measure such it is. But there is this other essential aspect: it is within the nation, within the family, that God descends upon the individual.

¹ A. E. Taylor, quoted in Riddell, *What We Believe*, p. 308.

Again, that baptismal rite of John was not an isolated piece of ritual. John was a preacher, and the rite was but the culmination of the impact of the Word upon the souls of His hearers. Such was the keenness of the moral challenge that even publicans became uneasy about their compromise with conscience and soldiers lost their callousness towards their violent vocation. Now both publicans and soldiers were concerned with a national situation, the tax-gatherers being Jews who had become quislings accepting service under the hated alien oppressor, the legionaries being drawn from other subjugated peoples and probably having a fellow-feeling for the people they were policing with methods sometimes of cruel terrorism. Did John's proclamation of the Kingdom lay upon citizens and people a new sense of international honour and justice? At least there was the sharpness of the sword of truth in his declamation: it penetrated to tender consciences and stabbed them to life. But the total effect of the message was not towards revolution, but towards the changing of the inner man, a moral transformation rather than a civil upheaval. Baptism came as the consummation of this awakening, carrying into the presence of God who alone could give release to those who had become burdened with the weight of their sins.

The next thing to be observed is the divine response. The heavens were opened and Jesus heard a call. It was not such a voice as greeted the ordinary penitent. With the nature of that voice we are not here concerned. What is conspicuously plain, however, is that a divine surprise was unfolded. This was not what John Baptist had looked for when he opened his mission under the pressure of the divine Spirit. We have no knowledge that to Jesus under His human limitation any prior intimation was given. It was a clear case of the divine initiative above and beyond all human expectation. For this day God had planned. Before the urge seized the Baptist and before the penitents felt the prompting to come to Jordan, the Providence of God had marked this day for the coming of no ordinary penitent, but for the anointing of the Messiah of God for His healing and liberating ministry. Here is something to be remembered when we prepare to hedge about the ritual with faithless belittling of its possibilities. Who knows when the higher destiny may be laid upon the head even of a child in a mother's arms?

What God appointed that day for Jesus was not a call merely,

but that power that makes possible the execution of the call. The Holy Spirit descended as a dove and continued to abide upon Him, empowering Him for ministries manifold and for the untold tasks and agonies in the conflict with wicked earthly potentates. In the strength of that Spirit He went on to open up new truth, to cast light upon human blindness and obstinacy, to combat to the end in Gethsemane and on Calvary the forces of darkness and of death. That is the sort of aftermath the Church came to associate with the rite of Baptism: it was usually marked by the coming of a new spirit with power to lift up the hands which hang down and to strengthen the feeble knees on the ways of spiritual endeavour.

Now what was there on the human side that made possible the strong rousing trumpet call of the Baptist and the wide response of the people of God? Was it not that they all, preacher and converts alike, shared the heritage of faith, faith in a God who with a mighty hand had led their fathers out of Egypt and through the days of a triumphant Babylon and a swaggering Sennacherib and the half-madman half-genius Antiochus had continued to restore and sustain His own? The legacy of a Moses and an Elijah, a Hosea and an Amos, an Isaiah and a Jeremiah, had passed into the culture of this nation, so that, though tossed often into the maelstrom and welter of pagan corruption and superstition, they had a saving something that kept them conscious of their uniqueness and so made them unquenchable and unafraid. And that faith had been quickened by the Baptist's bold heralding of the Kingdom. He spread the assurance that the Almighty Deliverer was on the march again, and soon He would appear on Mount Zion with His legions of the Spirit. "Lift up your hearts, O Israel! Your redemption draweth nigh!" Under the spell of such a conviction nations are reborn and the Spirit of God descends upon the Son of Man. It is upon Nathanael's poor in guile and rich in faith that the angels begin to come and go.

Cleansing . . . and an initial Participation in . . . the New Life.
Rom. 6: 4-11; Col. 2: 11-13; 1 Cor. 10: 1-13.

Baptism then under John marked the admission of men into the company who set their faces with hope towards the coming

Kingdom. The door was held wide open for all who would hear and repent, but the effect of the rite was to constitute the remnant within the nation who were to save the whole. They definitely turned away from the evils of the past and sought the forgiveness of God with His strengthening for the new life. The rite set its seal upon that decision. They held fast together, those followers of John, though many entered into the larger fellowship of Jesus. Paul found the adherents of John still in being at Ephesus (Acts 19: 1-5) long years after John was martyred, and on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates today live a people, tinsmiths and silversmiths, differing from the races around, who still honour John Baptist as their prophet and practise the ancient ritual of their founder. These are known as Mandaeans or Sabians. But Paul found that these men had suffered the penalty of those who refuse the larger light of the Gospel: they lacked the gift of the Spirit.

The early Church evidently took over the rite and cherished it from the beginning. That is reflected in the concluding injunction of the Risen Christ in Matt. 28: 19. The Fourth Gospel assures us that Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples (4: 2), and we have evidence of its wide acceptance where it is assumed in, for example, the conversation with Nicodemus: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (3: 5). After Pentecost Peter calls for repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2: 38). "See, here is water," cries the Ethiopian eunuch, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8: 36). Peter, seeing the Holy Ghost fall on his hearers in the house of Cornelius, "commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10: 44-48). Paul's personal experience of the Risen Christ does not render unnecessary his baptism: "Arise," said Ananias, "get thyself baptized, and so wash away from thyself thy sins, invoking his name" (Acts 22: 16). The fact that proselytes on admission to Judaism were baptized as well as circumcised would make it natural, almost inevitable, that the disciples should adopt the rite for admission to the Church. It was so utterly appropriate as a symbol of cleansing, renunciation of the old false allegiance, acceptance of the new Lord and His way of life. They would be confirmed in their use of the rite by the manifest approval from on high in the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8: 17; 19: 6).

We see then ample warrant in our tradition for this rite of Baptism. We recognize it as a rite which the Spirit of God has taken and blessed in the past history of the Church. It is a form in which we may look for the divine initiative, even the divine surprise. But its value normally depends on a mental preparation in ourselves. There must be concern for the soul within, a grief for and hatred of our sin, and a turning definitely away from it. And that concern of ours is most alive when we are caught up in the life of our nation and times and realize that we are part of a social whole in the corruption and folly of which we are deeply involved and for which we accept a measure of responsibility. But here is a step that we must take in faith. It is then, in the mood of our sincere contrition, that the Holy Spirit can lay hold on us with power and, continuing with us, can give us of the gifts and graces of a new life. It thus marks our admission to a new life. But it is not a life that we can live alone. It is admission to the Christian society which by its common worship and fellowship will lift up our souls and sustain our goings. Thus it properly takes place in a Christian church before the face of the Lord's people, or, if that be not possible, in the precincts of a Christian home where are members representative of that larger company of the faithful.

The Children of Believing Parents. Mark 10: 13-16.

Baptism under John's preaching and in the early Christian missions would be chiefly of adults, just as it must be today in the foreign fields. The first appeal naturally is made to mature men and women, and for such coming into the Christian community was a real life change, the abandonment of Jewish or pagan practices, and the swearing of allegiance to a new master and a new standard of conduct. Immersion seems to have been the form of initiation in the first Christian church as in the case of Jewish proselytes. That is the implication when Paul speaks of being "buried with him by baptism" (Rom. 6: 4). To him the plunge beneath the waters fittingly pictured the parting from all the old life just as Jesus in death separated from His life in the flesh; while rising from the waters the convert emerged to a new existence as Jesus rose to a new life at the Resurrection. But what of the case of children? "The idea that a parent should enter a religion or covenant-relation with God as an individual

merely, *i.e.* by himself as distinct from his immediate family, would never occur to the ancients, least of all to a Jew. There were no 'individuals' in our sharp modern sense of the term. All were seen as members of larger units, of which the family was the chief in the time of Christ." With any change in the faith the household also changed, so that children would pass into the Christian Church in the same act as the father. Thus when Peter received the household of Cornelius (Acts 10: 47), or Paul the household of Stephanas (1 Cor. 1: 16), that would mean that the children also passed under the care of the Christian Church. Just as a little proselyte was baptized into Judaism without his intelligent consent, so this feeling of solidarity would warrant the baptism of a Christian child. And so today in the close social unity of the Christian family the child is under the influence of the Spirit of Christ from the beginning, and that fact is only receiving its just recognition in the act of baptism. But it is not only in the solidarity of the family that the child lives and grows, but in the wider fellowship of the Church, and in acknowledgment of that fact the proper place for the rite is the community church. We cannot be "in Christ" unless at the same time we are in His Church. Thus the whole congregation of His people receive and accept responsibility for the nurture of the growing child. The Sabbath School and the worship of the sanctuary as well as the home training and the beauty of the family altar will make an atmosphere in which the Christian gifts and graces of the Spirit will appear.

The Lord's Supper perpetuates the fellowship between Christ and His Disciples sealed in the upper room. Matt. 26: 17-29; Mark 14: 22-25; Luke 22: 14-30; John 6; John 13-17; 1 Cor. 10: 16-22; 1 Cor. 11: 23-34.

Should we not, then, recall the historical situation and probe as far as we reverently may into the thought and purpose of Jesus when He held the last supper with His closest followers?

It was the night of His betrayal. By the act of one of His own chosen ones He was to be handed over to the authorities. For love of man He had ministered daily and was ready to give His all, and yet one of His intimates on whom He had lavished

*J. Vernon Bartlet, *ERE* vol. ii. p. 379.

His sweetest and best gift of friendship had turned traitor and for a handful of silver was throwing back His love tokens in His face. Black ingratitude was confronting Him, and even priests, those reared and appointed for the service of the God of His fathers, were waiting with malignity and proud triumph for His destruction. The human family He had served with ceaseless love and devotion spurned and despised Him, and yet He went on to the end. "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you." When He might well have turned away and had no more dealings with His kind, He sought the face of men. He hungered for their presence with Him. He drew them closer to Himself. This supper was on His initiative: He had planned and sought it, and it was with gladness that He saw it realized before His enemies struck Him from His last chance of intercourse with His own. This will of Jesus to hold men to Him to the last was not a weak human's clinging to a last spar of hope. This was God's will, the divine determination to accomplish a saving act for an ungrateful race. It was Passover time, and every pious Israelite was looking back over the long years of the faithfulness of God who led them out of Egypt and in hundreds of crises since had never failed them. Through Jesus God was declaring His desire, His passionate desire, to keep the Passover with them still, and this time to astonish His people with a new and more effective deliverance than they had ever known. This was the act of a love that will not let us go. At every communion let us realize that it is on the Lord's invitation that we come. He spreads the Table and He is the Host, the ever present gracious Head of the Table.

His own words.

1. "This is my body broken for you" (1 Cor. 11: 24). Before the cruel cross claimed the frail body it was given and that freely. The Good Shepherd of His own accord gives His life for the sheep. "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10: 18). "For their sakes I sanctify myself" (17: 19). Of His own accord Jesus rose from supper, laid aside His garments, and took a towel (13: 4). Herein is the supreme glory of the Atonement: not in its pain or humiliation or cruel suffering, but in this, that *voluntarily* He gave Himself up. God Himself had inter-

vened again on the human scene: not in far off Egypt and not away down the years, but here in this room and in this age and for us his unworthy and undeserving people He gave His only son. This is the supreme surprise and mystery of all time, that God so loved the world that between us and the inevitable doom our sins brought upon us He interposed Himself. God who sends His rain upon the just and the unjust consummates His love in this that for the ungodly the Righteous One lays down His life. Whereas of old men thought to buy the favour of a capricious God by heaping high His altars with their sacrifices, lo! He sweeps away these tokens of a fitful and imperfect penitence and on the altar the Christ lays Himself, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. As Dr. W. B. Selbie* has put it: "In a world where everything has its price and gifts are measured by their costliness, it seems impossible to believe that—

"Tis only God who is given away.

"Tis only heaven may be had for the asking.

Yet this is indubitably the core of the Christian gospel."

2. "This cup is the New Covenant in my blood" (1 Cor. 11: 25). A compact in ancient days was sealed by blood. By sharing in the sprinkled blood of a victim the two contracting parties were made one. So Moses had sprinkled blood on the people and on the altar of God (Exod. 24: 4-8), and thus the Old Covenant was ratified. Now the New Covenant dreamed of by Jeremiah was being inaugurated not by the shedding of alien blood, but by the voluntary self-giving of the Son of God. That New Covenant meant *forgiveness*: all the evil entail of sin was taken away for ever. And the new relationship with God was one of *inwardness*: no formal bond cemented by external rites like circumcision and the works of the law, but a fellowship so near and intimate that Paul could say: "It is no longer the old selfish ego who exists in me, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2: 20). "The life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." With silver cords, light as air yet strong as iron, the bonds of love with which a Peter and a John

* *God and Ourselves*, p. 66f.

were bound to the Master, so are we bound to God the Author of our salvation in everlasting gratitude. It is a union that is created by perfect understanding. The great heart of the Eternal that keeps nothing back is manifest in the life and dying of Jesus: and our love answering that cleaves to the love that gave itself. It is a covenant of knotted hearts: the God who is personal receives and sets His affection on each individual person who comes to Him in humility and contrition of soul. And it is a covenant that is marked by *universality*: it is wide open to all. As Jesus let His love go freely out to a Samaritan woman and a Roman centurion, to a rich young ruler and an outcast Magdalene, to a guileless Nathanael and a much-stumbling Peter, so this covenant of the soul with God is open to every prodigal son who awakens in the far country and betakes himself to the Father's home. Here is no place for the pride that counts itself worthier and, drawing itself up in anger, will not go in, for that but brings the Father to the door pleading: "All that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad" (Luke 15: 31f.).

3. "Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14: 25). Jesus would not have it that His friends should merely look *back* with sadness on a life that was closed, a death that He was dying for their sakes. He would have them look *forward* to the glorious consummation to come. Great as was the cost and the pain of parting and self-giving, it was not in vain. The sacrifice must be seen in the light of the joy to come. The typical festive occasion to the ancient mind was a banquet—for banquets were few and only given on great occasions like the marriage of a king's son. So they pictured the Kingdom to come under the image of a banquet. And Jesus points forward to that glorious climax of history: the reign of God finally a reality in human hearts, the long story of creation and human sojourning ending at last in God's purpose being fulfilled in a society of men and women redeemed to a glad and exuberant life—like drinking wine of a nobler vintage than earth had ever known. "Ye do shew the Lord's death *till he come*" (1 Cor. 11: 26). There is this note of triumph in our communion celebration. Christ did not die in vain. That purposefulness of God that did not spare His only son is ever marching on through the

defeats and the frustrations of life to an ultimate resounding vindication. Calvary is no tragedy, but a stage in the process by which love captures the heights. "I appoint unto you a kingdom" (Luke 22: 29), He assures His bewildered followers. Could they have seen the victories of the Christian faith throughout the ages, would not their dark foreboding have been rebuked? So before our equally bewildered eyes He opens up this vista: man's last enemy is overthrown. God *has come* to rule over mankind. The fact that twenty centuries after Calvary we sit at His table and take the cup means that the final emancipation of man is at hand, that that transfiguration must dazzle human sight:

"When Thy face looketh out from all men's faces."

4. "As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains but was gathered together and became one, so let thy church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom, for thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever." These words occur in the account of the original Eucharist given in the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, a second-century manual of Church instruction, and conserve a thought that is expressed incidentally in our Gospel narratives. The loaf was evidently interpreted at times as a symbol of the *unity* of the Church. And in the act and words of Jesus there was the call to close the ranks, to cement the fellowship, to make real the unity of heart and mind implied in the common sharing of the bread and the cup of the Covenant. The Kingdom in its glory and complete consummation is still on the horizon of our time, but meantime we have foretaste in the Church of the life God wills for us. It behoves us to seek the unity of the body of Christ. We are as branches in the One vine, drawing from the same source of vital self-giving. If He unites us at the centre, how can we suffer aught of earthly origin to separate us at the circumference? When Paul stood up against Peter (Gal. 2: 11) and rebuked him to his face, it was because Peter, by withdrawing from eating with Christians who did not keep the Jewish food laws, was making it impossible to observe a common Lord's Supper—and a Church divided there is divided indeed. Paul was aghast at the peril of such disunion; and surely at our common memorial meal it is our unity in Him that we should cherish.

5. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one

another" (John 13: 34). "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13: 14). It is a peculiarity of the Fourth Gospel that it has no account of the institution of the Lord's Supper. It attaches a sacramental discourse on the Bread of Life to the Feeding of the Five Thousand (ch. 6). It may be that the author wishes to insist that the gifts we enjoy flow from the stupendous fact that God became man in Christ Jesus, and not only from the fact of His death. Then at the point in the narrative where we expect the account of the institution of the Supper we have the story of the feet-washing, as if he wished to declare that it was only too easy to remember Jesus in a ritual act: there must be another and a deeper remembrance, a willingness to give ourselves in unstinted service to our fellow-men. People of John's day had a childish faith in the mere performance of a rite, believing that the mere doing of it had a magical effect, and so he pushes into the foreground a practical act of Jesus that taught the lesson in an unmistakable way. In sharing the bread and the wine, the disciples were called on, not merely to recognize how much they were receiving at Jesus' hand, but also to pledge themselves to the same spirit of self-giving. Could they receive from one who gave all without feeling the obligation to go out and do likewise? That is certainly the charge of Paul when he says: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12: 1). While the dominant thought in the act of communion must ever be how certainly God has given without measure for our salvation, yet there is the inevitable consequence: "Freely ye have received, freely give." At the table we are like good soldiers who renew the *sacramentum*, the oath of loyalty to our King and Lord.

6. "This do in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11: 24). Two of the narratives of the Lord's Supper, those in Matthew and Mark, omit this distinct injunction of our Lord, and there are those who claim therefore that there was no explicit command to keep this memorial rite. But it would only be more wonderful if the rite sprang *unasked* out of the needs and inspiration of the first believers. The injunction then came irresistibly upon the early Church from the Risen Lord, for from the beginning it was in this act that they cherished and renewed their spiritual

life. "He was known of them in breaking of bread" (Luke 24: 35). "And they . . . breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" (Acts 2: 46).

He is always present.

It is doubtful if our words "This do in remembrance of me" do justice to the Greek phrase used. Dr. Anderson Scott argued strongly that the meaning is rather "with a view to recalling me." Christ was called back into such vivid nearness by the action that His presence was actually felt by the worshippers. Whatever the exact meaning of the phrase may be, there is no doubt about the testimony of Christian experience: there, as on no other occasion, when we handle the memorial bread and wine, when our thoughts rest on the almost incredible completeness of His self-giving and our hearts are stirred at the fact of our own unworthiness to receive, we are aware of a living touch upon our souls, the pressure of a Presence overwhelming in its intensity. The old Scots preacher, Robert Bruce, put it with rare power: "Speers thou quhat new thing we get in the sacrament? I say, we get Christ better nor we did before: we get a better grip of Christ now. That same thing quhilk thou possessed be the hearing of the word, thou possesses now more largely. For be the sacrament my faith is nurished, the bounds of my soull are enlarged, and sa, quhen I had but a little grip of Christ before, as it were betwixt my finger and my thumb, now I get Him in my haill hand: for aye the mair my faith growes, the better grip I get of Christ Jesus."

The Protestant thought of Christ's presence is to be sharply distinguished from the Roman Catholic idea. There the presence is at the call of the priest: "One word out of his mouth compels the Creator of the Universe and of Heaven to come down to earth, strips Him of His greatness and hides Him under the form of the Bread."⁵ In the consecration of the elements it is maintained that the bread and wine are changed into the very body and blood of Christ, and these the priest offers to God as a sacrifice: this sacrifice has propitiatory power and is regarded as a means of winning graces and blessings from

⁵ *Christianity according to St. Paul*, p. 191.

⁶ Quoted by C. A. Scott, *Romanism and the Gospel*, p. 132.

God. Such claims the Protestant does not make. God's grace comes freely, he believes, and needs no constraint of any form. By the elements he sees pictured dramatically forth the gracious self-giving of Christ made once and for all on Calvary, and as mind and imagination kindle in contemplation of what God thus did for men in Christ Jesus, he receives true benediction. But that receiving is by no mysterious change in the bread and the wine, but by the opening of his soul in faith to the God who has thus drawn near offering forgiveness to the penitent and peace to the troubled. It is a mystery only in the Pauline sense that the grand purpose of God for man, long hidden, was made finally and demonstrably clear when Jesus came and consummated a life of ministry by giving Himself up even unto death. In His infinite compassion God had pity on men enslaved to sin and powerless to break the evil entail. Argument or human speculation could not discover the mind of God; so He took action, and made revelation once for all of a love so generous and unrestrained that it could be made credible only when One came in flesh and blood and lived out the reality and intensity of that love. The bread and wine bid us come to such a love in faith, and coming we are at that table nourished, confirmed, and renewed. Such outflowing love commingling with our faith and gratitude makes a spiritual union so close that it can be said that "His faithful people live in Him and He in them." Stirred in mind by the most momentous truth ever made known to man, and touched in imagination by the simple yet telling emblems of the passion of our suffering and living Lord, we are lifted to an elevation of worship "in which the whole soul of man goes out to God and God's grace comes freely to man."