

THE
CHRISTIAN
COMMUNITY

The Eucharist

Rudolf Frieling

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The Eucharist evolved out of the Last Supper, the ritual of the Mass. Frieling examines the archetypal structure of Gospel reading, Offertory, Transubstantiation and Communion, as well as describing the development of the early Christian service into the Mass, the reaction of the Reformation, and its renewed form in the Act of Consecration of Man.

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1 Introduction

On Maundy Thursday, the eve of the event on Golgotha, Christ Jesus celebrated the Last Supper together with his disciples. He offered up bread and wine and with them his 'body' and his 'blood,' and he charged the disciples, 'when you do this, do it in remembrance of me.' It is from this Last Supper that the Eucharist has evolved, the ritual of the Mass. In The Christian Community it is now celebrated in its new form, still containing the four main parts: reading of the Gospel, Offering, Transubstantiation and Communion.

The question is sometimes asked, is this elaborated ritual actually founded upon original Christianity? Is it based on the New Testament? The Protestant Church, for instance, tried to adhere closely to the letter of the New Testament, and rejected everything which in the further course of Christendom seemed to have been added to the text of the New Testament.

Without doubt the New Testament is the fundamental, classic book of Christianity. But we must not forget that for the first generations of Christendom the New Testament did not yet exist. The Epistles of St Paul were apparently written beginning about AD 50, the first three Gospels not before AD 60–70 and St John's Gospel not until AD 100. And it was not until the end of the second century that these writings were combined into what we now know as the New Testament. The canon of the New Testament was not fixed definitively until AD 393 by the synod at Hippo Regius in North Africa.

In this bringing together of the twenty-seven writings which constitute the wonderful spiritual organism of the New Testament, we venerate an act of divine guidance and providence, an act of inspiration. It is, nevertheless, the case that the first Christian generations had to do without these writings. Instead, they had the apostolic nearness of the Christ event — and they had the Eucharist. For a period of time the

Christian Church lived without the New Testament, but from its very beginning it *never* lived without the Eucharist. The first mention of the Eucharist is in the Acts of the Apostles, after the experience of the Holy Spirit at Whitsun, 'they broke bread in the houses with spiritual rejoicing' (Acts 2:46). This is the first Eucharist after Maundy Thursday, and already a first metamorphosis is apparent: the Last Supper was celebrated in a mood of leave-taking, overshadowed by the events to come. After Whitsun the mood was jubilant. The Greek word used here — *agalliasis* — means more than 'joy'; it is, rather, a kind of spiritual enthusiasm and exaltation. The Last Supper had been a farewell meeting. After Pentecost the meal was like a first dawn of his second spiritual coming.

Even at the very beginning of Christianity, the Eucharist was never merely a repetition of the Last Supper. Rather, it was like a seed which now began growing. One cannot hold it against a growing plant that it is different from the seed: there is identity, but there is also metamorphosis.

The Last Supper, on Maundy Thursday, is a kind of anticipation, a prophetic summary of the event on Golgotha. It reveals what Christ and his deed mean for man: that Christianity is not only 'doctrine' and 'ethics,' that Christ is not only a teacher and an example, but that he, a divine being, descended to earth and there, by passing through death and resurrection, transformed his divinity into humanity. He transformed the 'wave-length' of his divinity into that of humanity and thus became accessible and 'communicable.' Now we are to 'eat' and 'drink' him spiritually in order to become ever more permeated by his heavenly substance — this is the essence of Christianity. Christ offers himself to his followers: 'eat' and 'drink' me, take me into your whole being.

What was demonstrated in advance at the Last Supper was fulfilled through Golgotha, through death and resurrection; after this fulfilment the Eucharist is no longer the anticipation but the substantial emanation and raying forth of this great deed.

There is no mention of the disciples celebrating the Eucharist during the forty days to Ascension and the ten days from Ascension to Whitsun, but they begin immediately after Whitsun. At Ascension the being of Christ widened into a new form of existence, fully outgrowing his former Jesus-existence which had confined him to a particular location in the spatial world. In his Ascension, his divine origin was suffused with the humanness that he had borne through earthly life and death; thus his resurrection body achieved its full capacity to be omnipresent.

At Whitsun, in an act of spiritual awakening, the disciples cast off the spell of gloom and stupor under which they had lived through the preceding weeks. It is, after all, a remarkable fact that the appearances of the risen Christ after Easter had not yet been able to induce the disciples to preach their message to people beyond their own intimate circle. However, at Pentecost they proved strong enough to do so. As Christ at Ascension had overcome the last confines and restrictions of his existence, so the disciples overcame their limitations of consciousness and will-power at Whitsun. They began to celebrate the Eucharist by 'breaking bread in the houses.' Christ's prophetic saying, that he would celebrate his meal 'anew in his father's kingdom' (with which he united himself at Ascension), began to fulfil itself.

2 The New Testament

The New Testament does indeed tell us about this celebration of the Eucharist 'in the houses,' but it does not reveal exactly how it was done. Nowhere in the New Testament do we find a complete, detailed description of it. The reason is obvious: the Eucharist was a living presence in each congregation, and every baptized Christian took part in it; there was no need to describe something which was known to everyone. As for the non-

Christian readers of the books of the New Testament, there was good reason for not telling them about a ritual into which they were only to be initiated after baptism. From the very beginning the Eucharist was an intimate celebration 'in the houses,' it was *esoteric*. It was therefore not described in books available to the general public. The New Testament contains the spiritual message of Christ and of his deed; it was never intended to be a compendium or text book of the Christian ritual.

Christianity not only consists of its 'message,' it also offers human beings the possibility of having a mystic share in this, its new life — to experience the reality of Christ in actual substance, and to communicate with him in intimate contact. This sphere which extends beyond the message — the 'thing itself' towards which the message is pointing — is the Christian ritual. Many Protestants succumb to the basic error of failing to see that the Christian sacramental stream of life is *older* than the New Testament, is *independent* of it, and that it is subject to its own *evolutionary laws* and requirements of organic growth.

3 Early Christian services

The early Christians had two different types of service. One was a public meeting which had the purpose of preaching the message of Christ to everyone willing to listen. This public service with its scripture readings, sermon, hymns and prayers followed the form of the Jewish synagogue service.

The second kind of meeting was reserved for those who had been baptized. It was held in private homes until such times as churches could be built.

During the second century the two kinds of service co-existed. Contemporary reports are very scarce, due to the 'esoteric' character of the second half of the service. In about AD 150, Justin the Martyr gave some general indications of how the service was conducted. The first part was completely

public. It was the 'message,' and everyone was welcome. Justin records that there were readings from the 'memoirs of the Apostles' (that is, the Gospels). Following this, all who were not baptized were dismissed from the service. Only the 'faithful' were allowed to stay for the further celebration of the sacrament, which, following the 'message,' was regarded as 'the real, essential thing.' It was experienced as at least a mystical foretaste of that life towards which the 'message' pointed.

In the structure of the 'Mass of the faithful' outlined by Justin, we can discern the basic main parts of Offertory, Transubstantiation and Communion: the Offertory consisted in bringing one's gift to the altar — whereby we should not forget that in those days the giving of material gifts inseparably entailed an inner devotion and dedication of the soul in a kind of spiritual parallelism; a rather different situation than in our more abstract times. The Offertory is the soul's response to the message.

This provided the spiritual basis for the great Eucharistic prayer spoken by the leader of the congregation over the bread and wine. According to Justin, Transubstantiation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ was effected by this Eucharistic prayer. There then followed the holy meal, the Communion.

This structure of four main parts: the public delivery of the Message followed by the intimate celebration of Offertory, Transubstantiation and Communion is not accidental. It follows deeper necessities. The sequence of these four acts is archetypal.

4 Archetypal structure

As described in medieval texts, the sequence of steps on the *soul's mystical path* follow the same archetypal pattern. First, there is awakening by hearing the spiritual message; then follow 'purification,' 'illumination' and 'mystical union.' When the soul has accepted the 'message' (Gospel Reading),

'consciousness becomes conscience.' The soul becomes aware that it must be transmuted in order to harmonize with the 'message.' A process of cleansing and purification, and an inner uplifting of the soul have to follow (Offertory). The soul having responded to the spirit, the spiritual world will in its turn make *its* response: it can now manifest itself by transfiguring the earthly world. The world of matter ceases to be merely material and becomes translucent (Illumination-Transubstantiation). Finally, man grows into the spiritual realm with all his being, including his flesh and blood (mystical Union-Communion).

Because these deeper laws and requirements of the mystical life of the soul correspond to Christ's redeeming deed, we may recognize the fourfold pattern in the very structure of his deed itself, beginning with the three years between the baptism in the Jordan and the event on Golgotha. These three years during which Christ preaches the message of the presence of the kingdom of God are, as it were, the first main part, the great Gospel. Then he goes up to Jerusalem to sacrifice himself on the altar of Golgotha — the great Offertory. His resurrection at Easter and the further evolution of his transmuted body through the forty days to Ascension Day represent the great Transubstantiation. And finally, at Whitsun, his deed comes to life in the souls of the disciples. The flame of the Holy Spirit is kindled in each individuality — the great Communion. In this way the Eucharist in its four main parts shows the same structure as the sequence of redeeming events in Christ's earthly life, as described in the New Testament.

5 Pre-Christian mysteries and the eastern Church

The Christian liturgy evolved in different ways in different countries. Certain ceremonies which originated in the pre-Christian mysteries found their way into Christian sacramentalism. There is nothing wrong in principle with this influx of pre-Christian values, since it is a kind of fulfilment of the appearance of the mysterious magi from the East who offered their gold, frankincense and myrrh to the Jesus child. Christ is the fulfilment not only of the Old Testament but also of the old mystery religions. Concerning the worth of the old pre-Christian mysteries, the word of St Paul holds good, 'all is yours' (1Cor.3:22), provided that the following words are felt with sufficient strength, 'but you are Christ's.' Thus gold, frankincense and myrrh were legitimately adopted by the developing Christian liturgy.

This process of unfolding and enriching of Christian liturgy can be compared to the growth of a plant. This is directed by a spiritual archetype, an invisible centre of forces, which 'hovers' above the visible plant. It is this archetype which causes the nourishing substances taken up by the plant to 'fill out' the dynamic lines of the inherent structure of the plant organism. Thus the plant thrives and grows, but it does not become something different from the archetype. Although it passes through a series of metamorphoses, the plant is not alienated from itself and does not lose its identity.

In a similar way, a living, divine archetypal entity hovers above the historic development of the Eucharist. Through the centuries the divine ideal has irradiated the liturgical 'organism' so that, in the main, it has unfolded in accordance with the spiritual, archetypal structure.

There is, of course, one great difference between the growth of a plant and anything relating to man: wherever man comes into the picture, there enters the shadow of his

'Fall,' his alienation from his divine origin. So the growth of Christian sacramentalism has not only been like the unfolding of a plant, but we may also observe in it the shadow of man's imperfections. Alien elements crept in, and in some aspects the original patterns were obscured. Certain elements were adopted, although they had not been sufficiently digested and assimilated. As we shall see later, they were not sufficiently permeated by the spirit of genuine Christianity.

The Mass developed differently in East and West. To this day, the Greek Orthodox Mass preserves many features of the ancient mysteries: the altar is hidden from view behind a screen — the *iconostasis*, the 'wall of pictures.' The priest performs the liturgy largely in seclusion. Only at special moments do the doors of the iconostasis open, for instance when the Gospel is carried out in solemn procession, and later in the Offertory when — still more solemnly — the bread and wine are brought forth and then returned for the Transubstantiation. It is only occasionally possible to catch a brief glimpse through the central door.

This corresponds to the era of the pre-Christian mysteries, when the priest was the initiate and the people stood outside. The iconostasis represents the world of spirit-pictures, visionary images seen by the inner eye; at the same time it conceals the spiritual realities which are the basis of the visions. The mystic heart of the Eucharist is celebrated behind the screen and is reserved for the priest. There is too great an emphasis on the separation between the 'mystagogue' behind the screen and the layman standing outside. In this form of Christianity the pre-Christian element has not been transformed sufficiently.

The Greek Orthodox Church also preserves reminders of the original separation of the public and the esoteric parts of the Mass, even if only in a formal way. Before the Offertory, those not baptized are solemnly dismissed. Prior to beginning the Transubstantiation, the priest calls out: 'The doors! The doors!' calling to mind the early Christian times when the doors were really locked against those who did not belong.

6 The western Mass: an act

In the western Mass there is no iconostasis, so that the altar is visible to the congregation. Yet here also the congregation is excluded too much from what the priest is doing. This was not the case in the first centuries, when the people stood closely around the priest and were able to hear and understand every word he spoke. Later, the priesthood increasingly withdrew into a splendid but not quite Christian isolation. Latin, originally a living language, of course, was later preserved and as it were 'mummified' in the Roman Church, which, unlike the Greek Church, imposed its language upon other nations. Furthermore, it became customary and eventually officially decreed, that the 'canon,' the great Eucharistic prayer of Transubstantiation, should be recited in a low murmur. Thus the congregation was excluded from the most important part and was only allowed to follow with a general feeling of devotion, without being able to hear individual words.

In addition, in 1415 in the western Church the chalice was withheld from the laity and became the privilege of the priest. A further element not quite in harmony with genuine Christianity is the attitude of *authority* which imposes dogma and demands blind obedience, sometimes even enforcing it with the power of the state.

Originally, the Eucharistic service — and particularly the great prayer of Transubstantiation, the Eucharist proper — had the character of an 'action,' an *act*. In fact, it was very often called *actio*, and the corresponding verb was 'to make,' 'to do.' We even find the formulation, 'to do the Passion and the Resurrection of Christ.' Christ's word at the Last Supper, 'do this,' was understood in a deeper sense. It was not only that the ceremony of Holy Thursday was to be repeated, but that the whole event of Golgotha — Resurrection and Ascension as well as Passion — was to be brought to life anew. In the Eucharist Christ's central deed of redemption became actual and alive.

This touches upon a deep mystery of Christianity. In everyday practical life we sometimes find that help given to someone in need turns out not to be so helpful in the end. It may have the effect of weakening his efforts to help himself, instead increasing his indolence and dependence on others. In fact, great wisdom is necessary when giving someone assistance, if it is to be truly helpful.

The supreme example of this is the deed on Golgotha. It was planned by divine providence in such a way that it could be a truly constructive aid to man, able to stimulate to the utmost the spiritual energy of those in need of help. Christ's redeeming deed does not work 'automatically.' It cannot make us holy without our conscious and willing participation. An 'automatic' salvation of that kind would certainly spare mankind all its tragedies, but it would undermine man's freedom and dignity. Christ's deed has been so fashioned that it remains a dormant potentiality so long as it is not made effective and active by our free agreement and cooperation. We are supposed to do something ourselves in order to release the full divine energy of this deed. When we respond, we become sensitive to the spiritual power welling forth from Christ's deed; as Christians we grow, mystically, into the deed of Golgotha, it becomes alive in us. Man is, then, not just a passive object but also an active participant in his salvation. Indeed, it is precisely by joining the mystic stream of the redeeming deed that man himself is redeemed.

It is true that the deed of Golgotha was accomplished and completed on a particular date, in a particular place 'under Pontius Pilate.' Nevertheless it continues to flow in the supersensory world as a continuing stream of eternal activity generated by that event in the Holy Land. We might compare this to what happens when a stone falls into the water: it stirs up ripples which move outwards from the centre in continuing waves. Something like that happened in the supersensory world when Christ accomplished his deed. It was a historic fact fulfilled on earth once and for all, and it released a 'wave'

in the higher worlds. These 'waves' can be received by means of that mystic 'instrument,' the Eucharist. The spiritual guides of the world wait for us to go out towards that deed and join with it.

This active participation in Christ's deed through the celebration of the Eucharist was experienced vividly in the first Christian centuries. But because of the lack of real esoteric insight this feeling ('whenever we celebrate the Eucharist, we *do* Christ's death and resurrection') could not be expressed in clear concepts. This meant that in the western Mass the basic idea of the Mass as an 'action' and a 'sacrifice' was misunderstood increasingly— with fateful consequences.

Without this insight, the conception of the Eucharist as a repetition of Christ's deed is in danger of being understood less and less, and this is actually what happened in the Roman part of the Church. In time, the idea that the Church had been entrusted with the tremendous privilege of 'repeating Golgotha on the altar' became a means of exerting power. Human egotism entered in. In the Roman West (not in the East) it became customary to use this spiritual power for purposes so mundane that the Eucharist was debased to the level of an article to be bought and sold. A wealthy man, for instance, could have a hundred Masses celebrated for his personal benefit — something not available to the poor! Thus that wonderful institution, the Mass for the Dead which, from the earliest times had been used to accompany and help departed souls, became embroiled in sordid commerce: a real, tragic disaster.

7 The Reformation

It is no wonder that this fateful development, the profanation of the Mass, called up the great reaction of the Reformation. The tragedy was that this powerful reform movement lacked esoteric knowledge of the mysteries of Christianity and so was

bound to miss the mark. The reformers saw the commercialization of the Mass, but in their opposition they went too far and 'threw the baby out with the bath water.' To their understanding, the Catholic priest pretended 'to repeat the event of Golgotha on the altar,' (that is, *spiritually*). They could only think of Christ's deed as a historic fact; they had no knowledge of the continuation of the mystic stream released by the original historic event. Thus they were unable to apprehend the way in which the deed of Golgotha comes to new life every time the Eucharist is celebrated. They were therefore bound to think it a sacrilegious presumption to place this sacramental action alongside Christ's unique and all-sufficient deed. They could not grasp the mystical relationship between that deed and the altar. Ultimately, when they saw the growing commercialization of the Mass for the Departed, they rejected the Mass in its entirety as being sacrilegious and idolatrous.

The reformers tried to get back to the original sources of Christianity, but they knew no other source than the Bible, which they approached without any esoteric understanding. It did not enter their awareness that the sacramental stream of Christianity is *older* than the New Testament and developed *independently* of it. It was therefore inevitable that they should be unable to succeed fully in their attempt to fashion a communion service exactly along the lines of the Scriptures. The result was that the Protestant service consists mainly of what in the Eucharist was the first part (the public service), with readings from Scripture, hymns, prayers and sermon; to which, now and then, is added the Communion, the fourth part. The Offertory and the Transubstantiation are omitted. In this way, the wonderful overall structure of the Christian Mystery has been lost.

8 The Act of Consecration of Man

The Act of Consecration of Man, the Eucharist as it is celebrated in The Christian Community, can be regarded as a kind of 'reincarnated' Mass, born anew in our modern age. The supersensory pattern and archetype which 'hovered' above the evolution of the Eucharist through the centuries comes to outer expression once more. In the Act of Consecration of Man the four main parts are clearly articulated. The aim is not to imitate exactly the ceremonies of the first Christian centuries. That would be to negate the inherent purpose of the progress of time; attempts to replicate bygone 'golden ages' usually end up by creating caricatures. We have to be Christians now, in our own century, though this does not mean, of course, that we must involve ourselves in the materialistic errors and excesses of our times. But, despite its shadow side, our epoch — like every other — also has a divine potential of its own.

The language of the Act of Consecration of Man is modern. It contains formulations of thought which were not yet possible in the liturgical vocabulary of the early Church. It speaks, for instance, in quite a new manner about the mysteries of the cycle of the year. This cycle also comes to visual expression through the considerably enlarged number of liturgical colours.

The cyclical year, experienced spiritually, can bring us into contact with the living Christ who wields in the realm of the forces of life (the etheric forces). The insight that the earth is a living organism can be comprehended by the modern mind with the help of anthroposophy — thanks to which other esoteric wisdom has also become accessible — and it has found its way into these modern liturgical texts. They speak in a new way of sun, stars, rainbow, clouds, air, and of the breath of the earth.

9 Gospel and Offertory

The first part of the Act of Consecration of Man, the Gospel reading, is based upon a new understanding of the Scripture.

The second part, the Offertory, has as its basis a new understanding of the meaning of sacrifice. One might object, how can we give anything to God since everything belongs to him in any case? It is true that everything originally belonged to him: our souls, too, were at one time with God and belonged to no one else. But God himself gave to man the privilege of freedom and independence. It is not due to our merit, nor is it by our doing that our self can exist as an independent being. It is the greatest gift of God that he sets us free as individualities, but of necessity this greatest privilege brings with it the greatest risk and danger: the highest mountains have the deepest chasms. We can make wrong use of our independence and so cut ourselves off from our divine origin — which, to a degree, is what has happened. We tend to take it for granted that our 'self' and the faculties of thinking, feeling and will are our own absolute property; but we shall not find our salvation unless we acknowledge that our 'self' with its faculties is entrusted to us by God. We are expected freely to unite our gift of freedom with the divine aims. Is there, then, anything that a human being can give to almighty God?

The answer is yes; but how is this possible? As regards our human freedom, it is a result of God placing limits upon his own omnipotence — in our favour. To each individuality he has given a share of his own creative privilege of freedom, and he expects us to make the right use of it.

It is not just some dogma but a fact of everyday experience that my 'self,' poisoned as it is by egotism, is not one with God. Although the 'self' originated in God, it has taken on traits which have alienated it from its original owner. The religious act of offering, therefore, means trying to place the 'self' with

its faculties at God's disposal again. The more we try to do this, the more aware we become of how difficult it is. Yet as, week by week, we seek to offer our inner activity to Christ, we can experience some progress. This is the inner path along which we are led in the Offertory of the Act of Consecration.

10 Transubstantiation

In the first centuries, the Christians had no doubt that the Eucharist was more than a symbol. As Justin the Martyr said about bread and wine, 'For we do not receive them as ordinary food or drink, but as by the word of God, Jesus Christ our saviour took on flesh and blood for our salvation; so also, we are taught, the food blessed (literally: *eucharistized*) by the prayer of the word which we received from him, by which through its transformation our blood and flesh is nourished, this food is the flesh and blood of Jesus who was made flesh.' Here we find the conviction that through the recitation of certain words of prayer, bread and wine become something more than merely things of nature. Throughout eight centuries of Christian life this was never in doubt. No special doctrine or dogma was needed, because there were still people who had a certain degree of clairvoyance; they had immediate, first-hand experience of a real, spiritually visible happening during the service. When the host (the bread) was elevated at the altar, they beheld it within a sunlike aura which radiated a spiritual light.

As time went on, this natural clairvoyance gradually faded, especially in the western part of the Church where intellectual thinking was developing more strongly than in the East; for the abstract intellect worked destructively upon the natural, inborn clairvoyance. As a result, the first conflicts and doubts about the reality of the Eucharist arose in western Europe in the ninth century. Eventually, in order to protect the Church against the

inroads of intellectual doubt, Transubstantiation was made an official dogma of the Roman Catholic Church in 1215.

Although *Luther* had an indistinct sense of the Eucharist as being something more, the Reformers broadly speaking regarded the Eucharist as merely symbolic. In this connection it is interesting to note that in 1673 the English Parliament passed the 'Test Act' which made it obligatory for anyone aspiring to public office to declare on oath that he did not believe in Transubstantiation. The dispute between Catholicism, holding fast to the dogma of Transubstantiation, and Protestantism which denied it, ended in a stalemate. Neither side had an esoteric understanding of the problem in question.

In our days, anthroposophy can offer a new approach, a modern way of grasping that 'body' and 'blood' are not only material substances. It is certainly due to the physical matter within it that we have a body that is visible, but the body as such is a spiritual structure, a field of formative forces. The spiritual organism that permeated the body of Jesus, and which manifested itself to the disciples after the Resurrection, can be transferred, mystically, to those who bring their inner life into harmonious relationship with the living Christ. Similarly, his blood can be transferred to us, not as material substance, but as the streaming power of burning spiritual love which permeated the blood of Jesus. The body and blood of Christ are not material substances, but neither are they mere symbols. They are real supersensory forces which are needed in the development of the inner nature of man; and they are within our reach.

At the same time, it is not by chance that it is bread and wine that are central to this most important act of Christian worship; they both have a long history behind them of cultural and ritual application. Bread and wine are substances in which the earth approaches the spiritual quality of the body and blood of Christ most nearly; this gives them a special capacity to become the earthly bearers of the heavenly body and blood of Christ. Bread and wine are related to body and blood with a kind of predestined affinity, and are brought

together through the spiritual power of the Eucharist. When the Eucharist is celebrated with *sincerity, devotion* and inward *energy*, the awareness of the presence of the living Christ can be so strengthened and concentrated that his spirit and soul do not only weave in the spiritual atmosphere of the sacrament: they are able to work into the sphere of body and blood by descending into the *life forces* of the bread and the wine. This is, incidentally, one reason why non-alcoholic wine is used in the Act of Consecration of Man.

Perhaps the foregoing has been enough to show in what way the third part of The Act of Consecration of Man, the Transubstantiation, can be understood as a spiritual reality. It is not a matter of a new dogma; a dogma is a truth which is thought to be on principle beyond human insight, and which is therefore imposed by an authority, to be accepted with blind belief. But as soon as a spiritual truth can be approached with free insight, it need no longer be a dogma — rather it becomes ever more an *experience*. Thus it is left open to members and friends of The Christian Community to decide for themselves to what extent they wish to engage with these new concepts that are being offered. It is a matter for each individual to what extent he or she wishes to grow into the experience of the supersensory reality in the Eucharist.

11 Communion

When Communion, the fourth part of the Eucharist, is preceded by a true Transubstantiation in which bread and wine become bearers of higher forces, it, too, becomes something more than a symbolic act. Without the three preceding steps — hearing the Gospel, the inner activity of Offering and the response of the spiritual world in the Transubstantiation — Communion by eating bread and drinking wine would be a rather trivial thing. True Communion is the climax of a *process*

in which the activity of the Spirit draws so near that it touches our whole nature, including our flesh and blood, inwardly restoring even our body to its pristine purity.

The best preparation for Communion is to give one's utmost attention, devotion and inner effort to everything that precedes the Communion itself. No one is excluded by a foreign language or by the priest's inaudible murmur, and that makes it possible to enter with all one's spiritual energy, including thinking, into what is taking place, and to take an active part in it. Indeed, the active inward participation of those attending the service can be a significant element in its spiritual quality.

These, then, are some of the elements which show how, in the Act of Consecration of Man, the Eucharist has undergone a metamorphosis which reveals its divine archetype. The sterile stalemate and fruitless dispute between Catholicism and Protestantism is overcome by taking a third step which transcends both of them, whilst yet including the real values of both: the Act of Consecration of Man brings together the mystic depth of Christian sacramentalism and the freedom and independence of the human individuality.

Its name, the Act of Consecration of Man, is new. The old name, Eucharist, means 'thanksgiving.' The new name suggests that man must do something himself; it indicates that the real thanksgiving which we owe to Christ is to make an active response to his redeeming deed, and that we should open ourselves to receive his hallowing influence. We human beings have not yet reached our full human stature, nor have we reached the goal expected by God; but through this inflowing power of Christ we can be transfigured ever more towards becoming 'the image of God.' Thus our true *Eucharist*, our great thanksgiving for Christ's deed, is to strive toward the goal of becoming truly human through the Act of Consecration of Man. Every human being can discover this if he sets aside the necessary time, week by week, year by year and learns to unite his own being with that which works through the Act of Consecration of Man.