

Sunday, Oct. 20.

"THEY BROKE BREAD TOGETHER"
Acts 2:46 (Moffatt)

[1946]

Cleland, James T.

Dearly beloved, we are met to celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion. We come together voluntarily, from different denominations and from varying traditions. Perhaps it would be well if we explained to one another what the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper means to each of us.

In its simplest interpretation this is a Memorial Feast. Man has an instinct for remembering the great events of the past, birthdays and anniversaries, the independence day of a country and the ^Ppassover festival of a nation's deliverance. Sir James Barrie, quoting some unknown author, said: "God gave us memory that we might have roses in December." Through memory we may recapture the fragrance and beauty of the past so that the present may be made lovelier and more gracious. Thus, through this memorial, the spirit of our Lord and Master is brought to light and life that He may work ^{God's} His will with us. We come here to remember Him. He wanted it. For He said: "This do in remembrance of me."

Others of us see in the table spread a symbol of the covenant relation between God and man. There is an ache in the heart of man to

be right with God and the Jewish Christian tradition has tried to satisfy that longing by talking of a covenant between the creator and the creature which effects this relation. Our Bible is divided into two main sections, the Old Covenant between God and Israel which was ratified with blood by Moses, and the New Covenant made between God and the individual, longed for by Jeremiah and ratified in blood by Jesus. Let us not be appalled by the idea of blood poured forth. In Scotland many of those who signed the Solemn League and Covenant for religious independence opened a vein in their arms and inscribed their signature in their own blood taking as their name the Covenanters. As old as ^{by} History and as new as this morning is the Arab conception of blood brotherhood symbolized by the ^{cutting} opening of veins in the arms of those who ^{and} seek this relationship and allowing their blood to mingle. The wine on the table reminds us of the Covenant, and here we seek to renew it. It signifies the fact that we belong to God and He belongs to us. Jesus said: "This cup is the new covenant, ratified by my blood."

For yet others this is the Holy Communion; communion between man and God. The old Mystery Religions believed that ^{man} we might gain eternal life by

eating the body and drinking the blood of the ^g God or of his
 substitute, and while in the reformed ^{Protestant} tradition we do not believe
 that as a stark fact, yet we preserve the symbol which teaches us
 that in a spiritual sense the spirit of man comes into living
 fellowship with the spirit of God through the elements. Two
 of the prayers printed for us in our order of worship stress this
 fact. "That we may evermore dwell in Him and He in us"; and "Almighty
 and everlasting God we most heartily thank thee, for that thou dost
 vouchsafe to feed us who have duly received these holy mysteries
 with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of thy
 Son our Savior Jesus Christ." We would have in us the life that was
 in Him also.

A Memorial, a Covenant, a Communion. So we come, from different
 churches, for different reasons, to the one table. It belongs to our
 Lord Jesus Christ. We come not that we may become one, but because
 we are one in him who invites us to be his guests.

James T. Cleland