

LAYMEN AS CO-OPERATORS WITH THE APOSTLES

by DOM RALPH RUSSELL

II.

(The first part of this article appeared in the January number.)

AT Pentecost the Holy Spirit came down not upon the Apostles alone but upon the whole hundred and twenty there assembled. He "filled" them all and the extension of the gift of tongues to them marked them as co-operators with the Apostles in the work of spreading the faith. The development of the graces of baptism enabled them to attain the perfection corresponding to this duty. We will now consider the congregation as a whole.

1. *The whole congregation co-operates with the Apostles.*

"They were all persevering in the teaching of the Apostles and in the communion: the breaking of the bread and in the prayers . . . All those who believed, united together, had all things in common, and they used to sell their properties and possessions and share the price among all, according to the needs of each. And every day, persevering unanimously in the Temple and breaking bread in their houses, they took their share of food with joy and simplicity of heart praising God and winning favour with all the people. And each day the Lord added those who were to be saved to their fellowship." (Act ii, 42, 44—47), cf. DBS. *Eglise* (Médebielle).

This is the description of the Christian community immediately after the baptism of the three thousand at Pentecost. The gift of the Holy Spirit, so far from making individualists, led all to "persevere in the teaching of the Apostles." The Gospels were not yet written, but the doctrine and commands of Christ were received, as He had Himself provided, from the lips of those whom He had chosen (Acts i, 2, 24). They had been with Him from the beginning (John xv, 27; Acts i, 21—22). He had trained them and invested them with His own authority and sent them to take His visible place (John xx, 21), to be the official witnesses of His Resurrection, supreme proof of His mission and divinity (Acts i, 8; x, 40—42) and to make disciples of all nations (Matt. xxviii, 19; Mark xvi, 15—20). Now He had sent that Spirit of Truth whom He had promised would lead them into all truth, and remind them of all He had said (John xiv, 17, 26; xvi, 12). The Acts show them "persevering" in their "ministry of the word" (Acts vi, 4). In one of his vivid sketches, St. Luke tells us "every day, in the Temple and from house to house, the Apostles ceased not to teach and give the good tidings of Jesus Christ" (v, 42). Previously they had been ordered by the Sanhedrin to be silent and had replied "we cannot not

speak" (iv, 20) and on their second arrest the authorities had complained that they had "filled Jerusalem" with their doctrine (v, 28). This their witnessing to the truth of Christ, to the Resurrection and the coming of the Holy Ghost, they confirm with "great power," with numerous miracles and "signs," with inspired understanding of the meaning of the ancient prophecies, with supernatural assurance which astonished even their enemies (ii, 43; iv, 13, 33; v, 12, etc.).

As they would later issue universal epistles, so now they rule the community with uncontested authority, regulating its spiritual and practical affairs, though their desire to be free—for prayer and the "ministry of the word"—makes them institute deacons to "minister to tables" (i, 21; iv, 35; v, 3; vi, 2—4). When new communities arise, they interest themselves in their advancement and difficulties, coming to inspect, confirm and reprimand the converts and instituting presbyters (viii, 14; xi, 22; xiv, 23; xv, 2). They are a college, "The Twelve" and they act as such (vi, 2; viii, 14; cf. xv, 28). At their head is He who has care of the whole flock (John xxi, 15—18), who sees to it that the number of their College is filled up (Acts i, 15). He is their spokesman (ii, 14, etc.) who, filled now with the Holy Spirit, boldly faces the rulers of Israel (iv, 8). We find Him, too, as the practical organizer, presiding over the money affairs of the community (v, 3). The crowds revere the power of His very shadow (v, 15). After the persecution, when the Church is again at peace, He goes on an "apostolic visitation" from town to town (ix, 32). On His own responsibility, He takes the great doctrinal decision to admit the gentiles into the Church (x, 34, 35, 47, 48) and repeats it as decisive at the Council of Jerusalem (xv, 7—11). Peter, the Rock on which the Church was built, was now repentant, and giving strength and stability to his brethren (Matt. xvi, 18; Luke xxii, 32). But he had learnt all the better to say to the first gentile convert: "Rise up. I too am a man" (Acts x, 26). He could still fear men too much and merit reproach from a fellow apostle for not living courageously with the Gentiles (Gal. ii, 11—14). He could still argue with his Lord (Acts x, 14). And it was this very human man who towards the end of his life sent forth that first epistle of Peter whose theme has been called "the apostolate of the Christian life." (cf. G. Thils, *L'Enseignement de saint Pierre*, Gabalda, 1943.)

For the Apostles were not the whole Church. They formed one community with the rest of the hundred and twenty and the new converts. The sight of this united congregation, with its common life in the manner of Christ's disciples, a life of prayer, sacrifice, gladness, praise, love and practical charity, reinforced the witness of the Apostles' miracles and preaching, so that they "won the goodwill of all the people" and the Lord daily added converts "to the same unity" (Acts ii, 47), cf. Jacquier, *Les Actes des Apôtres*, in loc. In other words, it was because

of their charity and unity that the whole congregation was *apostolic as a congregation*. If miracles and prophecy and preaching emphasize the apostolate of "faith," here is the apostolate of charity, of the Christian life. St. Luke finds this congregation so attractive that he cannot leave off describing it:

"The multitude of those who believed had one heart and one soul, and none of them called any of his possessions his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the Apostles gave testimony to the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon all of them. Neither was anyone destitute among them" (iv, 32—34).

Again, having spoken of the miracles of the Apostles, he tells how all the Christians were together in Solomon's porch, and that while others did not dare to join the group, the people praised them and many men and women believed (v, 12—14) (cf. Jacquier). Each time the Apostles are mentioned together with the unity of all the Christians. Let us examine this further.

To the formation of the Church at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit brought not only faith but also charity, unifying love, the fruit of Calvary. "The love of God," says St. Paul, "has been poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom. v, 5). It is significant that he uses the same word which St. Peter, in the text of Acts, quotes from Joel about the "pouring forth" of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts ii, 17, cf. Joel ii, 28). The union of hearts among the first Christians is constantly mentioned in the Acts, the word "unanimous" occurring ten times and marking "the perfect union of spirit and heart which existed between the apostles and the first faithful" (Jacquier on Acts i, 14; cf. ii, 46; iv, 24; v, 13; xv, 25 and MMV ὁμοθυμαδόν). Love attracts love (cf. John xiii, 35). It was this which made the people "praise them" (v, 13; cf. I Peter ii, 12; iii, 16).

2. *Communion Manifold: the Apostolate of Love.*

Looking again at the text with which we started this article, we see that it says "they were all persevering . . . in the communion: the breaking of the bread and in the prayers" (Acts ii, 42). The delicate balance of the phrases is obscured in the Vulgate's translation "in the communication of the breaking of bread." What is "the communion?"

The word "communion," (κοινωνία, with κοινωνέω "share in common" and κοινωνός "companion," from the adjective "common" κοιός)¹ runs like a thread through the New Testament from the

¹ "Common," as in English, could mean both "belonging to more than one" and "vulgar," in the Jewish sense of ritually profane or impure, cf. Mark vii, 2, "with common, that is unwashed hands." But the revelation made by Christ was that nothing save what comes from the heart is impure vv. 15ff, and the meaning of that revelation was opened to the early Christians by St. Peter after his vision, (Acts x, 14, 15, 28; xi, 8, 9; cf. Rom. xiv, 14; I Tim. iv, 4). Henceforth all things were "in common" and all were holy.

moment when Peter, with James and John his "sharers in common" or "partners" in the fishing business, leaves all things at the call of Jesus (Luke v, 10), to when Peter's Second Epistle tells the Christians that according to the promises given through Christ they have become "sharers in common," "partners" in the divine nature, (II Peter i, 4). Here is a summary of the development and riches of the Christian "vocation" (v, 9). The rendering of the words in our English versions is various: partner, sharer, fellowship, communication, communion, etc. The changes are perhaps more correct as translations of shades of meaning, but we miss something of the repetition of the original. In what follows, we have tried to keep the word "communion" or "common," only ringing the changes, as St. Paul does, with "share" or "participate," e.g., "what is the participation of justice with iniquity or communion of light with darkness" (II Cor. vi, 14; cf. Heb. ii, 14). On the showing of modern scholarship, "to share" was a synonym for "to have communion in" (MMV κοινωνέω and μετέχω). When we thus discover the inner meaning of the "communion" of the Jerusalem community, we shall understand why the first congregation was so "apostolic," we shall have a model for our own congregations, and we shall have found the best Christian answer to "communism."¹

This "communion" was far more than a communism of goods or even a philosophic brotherhood. It was the union between the converts, the faithful and the Apostles entered by repentance, faith and baptism, together with the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts ii, 38), and consummated by union with Christ and with one another in Christ. Communion with men meant communion in Christ and communion in Christ meant communion with men. "What we have seen and heard" says the Beloved Apostle in his first epistle, "we declare unto you, that you also may have communion with us, and our communion may be with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ" (I John i, 3), and he adds, "if we say that we have communion with him and walk in darkness, we lie . . . but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have communion with one another" (vv, 6, 7). Here we find the Communion leading us into the life of the Holy Trinity—as a sharing in the life of the Holy Trinity which at the same time embraces all Christian life: "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me and I in thee, that they may be in us" (John xvii, 21; cf. I John v, 20).

In St. Paul—to take some illustrations only—we have "communion of faith" (Philem 6), "communion in the Gospel" (Phil. i, 5), "communion of spirit" (ii, 1), "communion on the sufferings of Christ" (iii, 10). The Corinthians have been called by God "into the communion of his Son" (I Cor. i, 9) and communion

¹ The little account which follows was suggested to me by the able study *The Common Life in the Body of Christ* by the Anglican scholar L. S. Thornton (Dacre Press).

of life with Christ is "the master idea, one might almost say the unique idea" of the first epistle to them, while the second epistle fitly ends by desiring for them all a share in the life of the Three Divine Persons: "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit" (II Cor. xiii, 13; cf. *Allo in loc.*). There is also a sharing in or communion with the sins of others, (Matt. xxiii, 30; Eph. v, 5—11; I Tim. v, 22; II John 11; Apoc. xviii, 4).

"They were persevering in the communion." We begin to see the depth of meaning in this account of the early Christians, and why their communion with Christ and with one another brought a transformation of their whole life, spiritual and temporal. "The multitude of those who believed had but one heart and one soul, and none of them called any of his possessions his own, but they had all things *in common*" (Acts iv, 32).

Here is the true "communism" of Christians which was expressed in "communion" of temporal goods. But it was a voluntary "communion" in consequence of which no one among them was in need. St. Luke gives two instances of its working—the generosity of Barnabas and the humbug of Ananias and Saphira. What St. Peter says to Ananias—"unsold, the property was thine; after the sale, the money was at thy disposal" (v, 4; KNT)—makes it quite clear that the Christians were not obliged to give up their possessions and indeed the house of Mary the Mother of Mark is presently mentioned as if it was her own (xii, 12).

In a word, the "communion" of the Christians was the life of the Church and one of the greatest moments in her history was when the leading Apostles gave to St. Paul and Barnabas "the right hands of communion" (Gal. ii, 9) thus publicly recognizing the fact that the Catholic Communion had within its unity spheres of apostolate to gentiles as well as Jews: "that we should be for the gentiles and they for the circumcision." Here we have the modern meaning of "being in communion with the Church" and that the gentiles belonged to this communion was "the riches of the glory of the mystery" which Paul preached among the nations (Col. i, 27), for they were "to win the same inheritance, to be made part of the same body, to share the same divine promise in Christ Jesus" (Eph. iii, 6; KNT).

Immediately on this recognition of the gentiles' spiritual communion in the Church, we find the active, practical charity implied in Catholic Communion, the same charity which flowed from the first "communion" in Jerusalem. The Apostles asked only "that we were to remember the poor" that is to say the Jerusalem Christians who had now fallen into poverty, "which," adds St. Paul, "was the very thing I had set myself to do" (Gal. ii, 10; KNT). For this he undertook one of the greatest enterprises of his career—one for which he risked

his life—the collection which he made so zealously and carefully throughout his churches for the poor “saints” in Jerusalem. It was of the highest importance (cf. Allo, *Seconde Epître aux Corinthiens*, Excursus xiii). It put the “communion” into action by embodying the veneration and the sacrificing generosity of the pagan converts towards the Jewish mother-church which had given them the faith. It also helped to stop St. Paul’s work being hindered by Judaizing critics. Thus it manifested and fostered the unity and mutual charity of the whole Church. This is why St. Paul recuts to his collection in no less than four epistles as well as in Acts (Gal. ii, 10; I Cor. xvi, 1—3; II Cor. viii, ix; Rom. xv, 26, 27; Acts xxiv, 17). And his word for the collection is “communion”; in fact this is an ordinary word for “contribution” (cf. Rom. xii, 13). “Macedonia and Achaea,” he tells the Romans, “have spontaneously determined to *make a communion* towards the poor of the saints in Jerusalem . . . and indeed it is *they* who are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have had *communion* in their spiritual goods, they owe it to them to serve them with their temporal goods” (Rom. xv, 26, 27; cf. I Cor. ix, 11). Here is the delicacy of Christian charity, the Catholic doctrine of almsgiving which is founded upon the “communion” wherein the poor put the rich in their debt by their prayers and the rich have the privilege of serving them. No wonder that St. Paul devotes two whole chapters of the second epistle to the Corinthians to a perfect charity sermon about this “communion” (cf. II Cor. viii, 4; ix, 11—13; Gal. vi, 6; Phil. iv, 14, 15; Heb. xiii, 16; I Tim. vi, 18).

But what is the source, the fountain head of this Christian charity, of the whole “communion”? The communion of Christians with each other flows from their communion in Christ, and the principal source of their communion in Christ is their common sharing in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. This is taken for granted by St. Paul when he has to rebuke some Christians at Corinth for taking part in pagan sacrifices. In doing so he mentions the Jew’s “communion” with their altar through eating the Jewish sacrifices and the pagans’ “communion” with devils through eating idolatrous sacrifices, and contrasts them with the Christians’ Communion in the Body and Blood of Christ: “The chalice which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ? Because there is one Bread, we in our multitude are one Body, for we all have a share from the one Bread” (I Cor. x, 14—21).

Here is summed up what we mean by “Holy Communion.” Sharing in the one “Bread” gives us communion with Christ and between ourselves. Holy Communion is the source of the inter-communion of the whole congregation, source therefore of its charity and unity. The one Bread which unites Christ with the Christian (cf. John vi)

effects their union with one another, thereby consummating that incorporation with Christ and with one another which baptism begins. The early Christians dwelt lovingly on this aspect of the Holy Banquet, on this re-presentation of the Last Supper, and saw it symbolized in the grains ground together to make the One Bread, the grapes pressed together to make the Wine (Didache 9, i, etc.). And at the same time, they, with St. Paul, are affirming the Real Presence of Christ beneath these signs, for it is precisely *because* they are united to Christ, because "the Bread which we break is the communion of the Body of Christ" and "the chalice which we bless is the communion of the Blood of Christ" that Christians in sharing It, come into communion with Him and one another (cf. I Cor. xi, 27; and Ignatius Ant. Ad Phil. iii; Ad Smyrn. vii, i). Moreover they are sharing in a sacrificial Banquet, as appears both from the comparison with Jewish and gentile sacrifices and from the symbolism of the separation of the Body from the Blood of Christ, that sacrificial Blood of the New Testament (cf. Heb. xii, 24; Matt. xxvi, 28, etc.). The Mass is always the source and centre of Christian unity, and we attain to its charity by receiving together the Sacrificed. In our days when the reception of Holy Communion has happily become far more frequent, and yet the fraternal charity which should be its fruit is often stifled by our individualism, we should revive amongst us the consciousness that the reception of the Holy Eucharist is not a private devotion but is meant to issue in the united love of Christian Communion. This has always been understood by the great theologians. "The unity of the Mystical Body," says St. Thomas, "is the fruit of the True Body which we have received" S. Th. III, q. 82, a. 9 ad 1. Here is the way to make a parish apostolic.

One Christian congregation resembles another. We can travel back in thought from our own congregation and that of the Corinthians to the early community in Jerusalem. Remembering that St. Luke was an intimate disciple of St. Paul and a very accurate writer, we shall not fail to recognize that he was expressing himself very carefully when he said "they were persevering in the communion: the breaking of the bread" (Acts ii, 42). The expressions explain and enfold each other: the "communion" found its source and centre in the Eucharist; the Eucharistic Banquet expanded into the "communion." The close connection with St. Paul's "bread which we break" (I Cor. x, 16) and Our Lord's "breaking of bread" at the Last Supper (xi, 24; Luke xxi, 19), and the parallel between "the communion: the breaking of the bread" and St. Paul's "we all share in the one bread" (I Cor. x, 17) make it clear that the "breaking of bread" is the Holy Eucharist. It is mentioned again in a further description of the life of Christians: "breaking bread from house to house, they took their share of food in joy and gladness" (Acts ii, 46). To hold the thousands of new

converts, no place save the Temple was big enough. So they celebrated the Eucharist in different houses. The meal also mentioned is the meal in common—the *Agape* or Love Feast—a ceremonial meal taken in conjunction with the Eucharist after the example of the Last Supper, and at which charity was exercised by the sharing of food. The practice however gave rise to abuses, e.g., at Corinth (I Cor. xi, 17) and the custom of holding it was later abandoned. Incidentally we may notice how much work of co-operation with the apostles was done by those members of the congregation who opened their doors to them for preaching and celebrating the Eucharist. May we not suppose that many of those who had feared to join the Christians openly when they were in a group in Solomon's Porch for their prayers (Acts v, 12, 13; cf. ii, 42, 46), came privately to these houses to seek entry to their fellowship? There is many a modern parallel, and throughout the New Testament we find references to such houses.

We have now seen how the great vision of the Christian "communion" in doctrine and in practice is the proper answer to "communism." We have seen how it was embodied in the unity in Christ of the primitive community and the Catholic outlook and universal charity of the whole early Church. We have seen how it was not merely economic in the narrow modern sense, but extended to all life—the supernatural life of the spirit which has communion in the Holy Trinity and the practical charity which extends this all-embracing communion to the needy. We have seen it spring from the charity of Christ, consummated and fed by Holy Communion, and how the unity and charity of the whole congregation form one of the most potent instruments of conversion, reinforcing the sign of the unity of faith: "Not for these only do I ask, but for those also who will believe in me through their word, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me and I in thee, that they too may be in us; so that the world may come to believe that thou has sent me" (John xvii, 20, 21).

Note—The Members of the Congregation co-operate with the Apostles.

This article could be extended to cover St. Paul's doctrine on the active functions and graces given to each member of the Mystical Body by the Holy Spirit to "build up" the Body of Christ. We should thus be led to consider congregations—like the turbulent and flighty Corinthians—composed of members by no means so religious as those of the primitive community in Jerusalem, and we should see development of the active charity of the "communion" (or the "Body of Christ") both in spiritual and in temporal works. We could also speak of the congregations which St. Paul asks to help him *as* congregations, or says have helped him in his apostolate—not forgetting the work of the churches mentioned by St. John in the Apocalypse. From them we could pass to the large lists which St. Paul gives of his individual "co-operators" and the houses which gave him

hospitality and in which he preached the faith, and to those first Catholic Actionists, Aquila and Priscilla. But this would require much more space, and once we have understood what is meant by the active charity of the "communion," we have the key to understand the later developments. Less has been written about the "communion" than the Mystical Body. Together, both in theory and practice they make the answer of Catholic Society to Communist Society.

N.B. DBS=*Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément.*

MMV=*Moulton and Milligan, Vocabulary of the Greek Testament.*

KNT=Mgr. Knox's translation of the New Testament.

THE "ORDERLY ACCOUNT" OF SAINT LUKE

by DOM LAMBERT NOLLE, O.S.B.

SAINT LUKE'S words "to write to thee in order" (Luke i, 3) need not necessarily be taken as meaning an exactly chronological order throughout his Gospel. There is no difficulty in seeing a chronological sequence in the first two chapters, nor in those following chapter eight. But even in those passages Lagrange, who generally takes the beloved Physician as his guide, grants exceptions in x, 14, 15; also xi, 23.

When we look at the order of the second and third temptations (Matt. iv, 5—10; Luke v, 15) the first Evangelist seems to give a better sequence of events. In the otherwise excellent "Synopsis Latina" of J. Perik, S.S., his consistent adherence to the order of St. Luke leads to dismemberment of several chapters of St. Matthew and though we may deny the chronological order of the first Evangelist it is rather disconcerting to see his chapters 8, 9 and 10, scattered over five or six different places.

No one will venture to say that St. Luke's account of St. John the Baptist (iii, 1—20) is strictly chronological, e.g., that the events described in verses 19—20 closely followed those of the preceding verses and came before verse 21. St. Luke is an artist who likes to give full pictures. If we take this view we shall find how he throws light or beauty on passages of the other Synoptics. We can see this from his treatment of two events.

I. VISIT(S) TO NAZARETH.

(Matt. xiii, 53—58; Mark vi, 1—6; Luke iv, 16—30.)

If we look closely at the three Gospel accounts we shall notice a striking difference between the first two and the third, and it would seem an over simplification to combine the three into one. If we hold there were two visits it is clear that the account of St. Luke must