

and hallow it. Every act of self-control of the Christian is also a service to the fellowship.

On the other hand, there is no sin in thought, word, or deed, no matter how personal or secret, that does not inflict injury upon the whole fellowship. An element of sickness gets into the body; perhaps nobody knows where it comes from or in what member it has lodged, but the body is infected. This is the proper metaphor for the Christian community. We *are* members of a body, not only when we choose to be, but in our whole existence. Every member serves the whole body, either to its health or to its destruction. This is no mere theory; it is a spiritual reality. And the Christian community has often experienced its effects with disturbing clarity, sometimes destructively and sometimes fortunately.

One who returns to the Christian family fellowship after fighting the battle of the day brings with him the blessing of his aloneness, but he himself receives anew the blessing of the fellowship. Blessed is he who is alone in the strength of the fellowship and blessed is he who keeps the fellowship in the strength of aloneness. But the strength of aloneness and the strength of the fellowship is solely the strength of the Word of God, which is addressed to the individual in the fellowship.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Ministry*

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"There arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be the greatest" (Luke 9:46). We know who it is that sows this thought in the Christian community. But perhaps we do not bear in mind enough that no Christian community ever comes together without this thought immediately emerging as a seed of discord. Thus at the very beginning of Christian fellowship there is engendered an invisible, often unconscious, life-and-death contest. "There arose a reasoning among them": this is enough to destroy a fellowship.

Hence it is vitally necessary that every Christian community from the very outset face this dangerous enemy squarely, and eradicate it. There is no time to lose here, for from the first moment when a man meets another person he is looking for a strategic position he can assume and hold over against that person. There are strong persons and weak

ones. If a man is not strong, he immediately claims the right of the weak as his own and uses it against the strong. There are gifted and ungifted persons, simple people and difficult people, devout and less devout, the sociable and the solitary. Does not the ungifted person have to take up a position just as well as the gifted person, the difficult one as well as the simple? And if I am not gifted, then perhaps I am devout anyhow; or if I am not devout it is only because I do not want to be. May not the sociable individual carry the field before him and put the timid, solitary man to shame? Then may not the solitary person become the undying enemy and ultimate vanquisher of his sociable adversary? Where is there a person who does not with instinctive sureness find the spot where he can stand and defend himself, but which he will never give up to another, for which he will fight with all the drive of his instinct of self-assertion?

All this can occur in the most polite or even pious environment. But the important thing is that a Christian community should know that somewhere in it there will certainly be "a reasoning among them, which of them should be the greatest." It is the struggle of the natural man for self-justification. He finds it only in comparing himself with others, in condemning and judging others. Self-justification and judging others go together, as justification by grace and serving others go together.

### *The Ministry of Holding One's Tongue*

Often we combat our evil thoughts most effectively if we absolutely refuse to allow them to be expressed in words. It is certain that the spirit of self-justification can be overcome only by the Spirit of grace; nevertheless, isolated thoughts

of judgment can be curbed and smothered by never allowing them the right to be uttered, except as a confession of sin, which we shall discuss later. He who holds his tongue in check controls both mind and body (Jas. 3:2 ff.). Thus it must be a decisive rule of every Christian fellowship that each individual is prohibited from saying much that occurs to him. This prohibition does not include the personal word of advice and guidance: on this point we shall speak later. But to speak about a brother covertly is forbidden, even under the cloak of help and good will; for it is precisely in this guise that the spirit of hatred among brothers always creeps in when it is seeking to create mischief.

This is not the place to discuss the limitations upon this rule in particular cases. They must be a matter of decision in each instance. The point, however, is clear and Biblical:

"Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes" (Ps. 50:20-21).

"Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" (Jas. 4:11-12).

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph. 4:29).

Where this discipline of the tongue is practiced right from the beginning, each individual will make a matchless

discovery. He will be able to cease from constantly scrutinizing the other person, judging him, condemning him, putting him in his particular place where he can gain ascendancy over him and thus doing violence to him as a person. Now he can allow the brother to exist as a completely free person, as God made him to be. His view expands and, to his amazement, for the first time he sees, shining above his brethren, the richness of God's creative glory. God did not make this person as I would have made him. He did not give him to me as a brother for me to dominate and control, but in order that I might find above him the Creator. Now the other person, in the freedom with which he was created, becomes the occasion of joy, whereas before he was only a nuisance and an affliction. God does not will that I should fashion the other person according to the image that seems good to me, that is, in my own image; rather in his very freedom from me God made this person in His image. I can never know beforehand how God's image should appear in others. That image always manifests a completely new and unique form that comes solely from God's free and sovereign creation. To me the sight may seem strange, even ungodly. But God creates every man in the likeness of His Son, the Crucified. After all, even that image certainly looked strange and ungodly to me before I grasped it.

Strong and weak, wise and foolish, gifted or ungifted, pious or impious, the diverse individuals in the community, are no longer incentives for talking and judging and condemning, and thus excuses for self-justification. They are rather cause for rejoicing in one another and serving one another. Each member of the community is given his partic-

ular place, but this is no longer the place in which he can most successfully assert himself, but the place where he can best perform his service.

In a Christian community everything depends upon whether each individual is an indispensable link in a chain. Only when even the smallest link is securely interlocked is the chain unbreakable. A community which allows unemployed members to exist within it will perish because of them. It will be well, therefore, if every member receives a definite task to perform for the community, that he may know in hours of doubt that he, too, is not useless and unusable. Every Christian community must realize that not only do the weak need the strong, but also that the strong cannot exist without the weak. The elimination of the weak is the death of fellowship.

Not self-justification, which means the use of domination and force, but justification by grace, and therefore service, should govern the Christian community. Once a man has experienced the mercy of God in his life he will henceforth aspire only to serve. The proud throne of the judge no longer lures him; he wants to be down below with the lowly and the needy, because that is where God found him. "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate" (Rom. 12:16).

### *The Ministry of Meekness*

He who would learn to serve must first learn to think little of himself. Let no man "think of himself more highly than he ought to think" (Rom. 12:3). "This is the highest and most profitable lesson, truly to know and to despise ourselves. To have no opinion of ourselves, and to think

always well and highly of others, is great wisdom and perfection" (Thomas à Kempis). "Be not wise in your own conceits" (Rom. 12:16).

Only he who lives by the forgiveness of his sin in Jesus Christ will rightly think little of himself. He will know that his own wisdom reached the end of its tether when Jesus forgave him. He remembers the ambition of the first man who wanted to know what is good and evil and perished in his wisdom. That first man who was born on this earth was Cain, the fratricide. His crime is the fruit of man's wisdom. Because the Christian can no longer fancy that he is wise he will also have no high opinion of his own schemes and plans. He will know that it is good for his own will to be broken in the encounter with his neighbor. He will be ready to consider his neighbor's will more important and urgent than his own. What does it matter if our own plans are frustrated? Is it not better to serve our neighbor than to have our own way?

But not only my neighbor's will, but also his honor is more important than mine. "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (John 5:44). The desire for one's own honor hinders faith. One who seeks his own honor is no longer seeking God and his neighbor. What does it matter if I suffer injustice? Would I not have deserved even worse punishment from God, if He had not dealt with me according to His mercy? Is not justice done to me a thousand times even in injustice? Must it not be wholesome and conducive to humility for me to learn to bear such petty evils silently and patiently? "The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit" (Eccles. 7:8).

One who lives by justification by grace is willing and ready to accept even insults and injuries without protest, taking them from God's punishing and gracious hand. It is not a good sign when we can no longer bear to hear this said without immediately retorting that even Paul insisted upon his rights as a Roman citizen, and that Jesus replied to the man who struck him, "Why smitest thou me?" In any case, none of us will really act as Jesus and Paul did if we have not first learned, like them, to keep silent under abuse. The sin of resentment that flares up so quickly in the fellowship indicates again and again how much false desire for honor, how much unbelief, still smolders in the community.

Finally, one extreme thing must be said. To forego self-conceit and to associate with the lowly means, in all soberness and without mincing the matter, to consider oneself the greatest of sinners. This arouses all the resistance of the natural man, but also that of the self-confident Christian. It sounds like an exaggeration, like an untruth. Yet even Paul said of himself that he was the foremost of sinners (I Tim. 1:15); he said this specifically at the point where he was speaking of his service as an apostle. There can be no genuine acknowledgment of sin that does not lead to this extremity. If my sinfulness appears to me to be in any way smaller or less detestable in comparison with the sins of others, I am still not recognizing my sinfulness at all. My sin is of necessity the worst, the most grievous, the most reprehensible. Brotherly love will find any number of extenuations for the sins of others; only for my sin is there no apology whatsoever. Therefore my sin is the worst. He who would serve his brother in the fellowship must sink all the way down to these depths of humility. How can I possibly

serve another person in unfeigned humility if I seriously regard his sinfulness as worse than my own? Would I not be putting myself above him; could I have any hope for him? Such service would be hypocritical. "Never think that thou hast made any progress till thou look upon thyself as inferior to all" (Thomas à Kempis).

How, then, is true brotherly service performed in the Christian community? We are apt these days to reply too quickly that the one real service to our neighbor is to minister to him the Word of God. It is true that there is no service that compares with this one, and even more, that every other service is performed for the sake of the service of the Word of God. Yet a Christian community does not consist solely of preachers of the Word. We can go monstrously wrong here if we overlook a number of other things.

### *The Ministry of Listening*

The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. Just as love to God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them. It is God's love for us that He not only gives us His Word but also lends us His ear. So it is His work that we do for our brother when we learn to listen to him. Christians, especially ministers, so often think they must always contribute something when they are in the company of others, that this is the one service they have to render. They forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking.

Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians, because these Christians are

talking where they should be listening. But he who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God either; he will be doing nothing but prattle in the presence of God too. This is the beginning of the death of the spiritual life, and in the end there is nothing left but spiritual chatter and clerical condescension arrayed in pious words. One who cannot listen long and patiently will presently be talking beside the point and be never really speaking to others, albeit he be not conscious of it. Anyone who thinks that his time is too valuable to spend keeping quiet will eventually have no time for God and his brother, but only for himself and for his own follies.

Brotherly pastoral care is essentially distinguished from preaching by the fact that, added to the task of speaking the Word, there is the obligation of listening. There is a kind of listening with half an ear that presumes already to know what the other person has to say. It is an impatient, inattentive listening, that despises the brother and is only waiting for a chance to speak and thus get rid of the other person. This is no fulfillment of our obligation, and it is certain that here too our attitude toward our brother only reflects our relationship to God. It is little wonder that we are no longer capable of the greatest service of listening that God has committed to us, that of hearing our brother's confession, if we refuse to give ear to our brother on lesser subjects. Secular education today is aware that often a person can be helped merely by having someone who will listen to him seriously, and upon this insight it has constructed its own soul therapy, which has attracted great numbers of people, including Christians. But Christians have forgotten that the ministry of listening has been committed

to them by Him who is Himself the great listener and whose work they should share. We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the Word of God.

### *The Ministry of Helpfulness*

The second service that one should perform for another in a Christian community is that of active helpfulness. This means, initially, simple assistance in trifling, external matters. There is a multitude of these things wherever people live together. Nobody is too good for the meanest service. One who worries about the loss of time that such petty, outward acts of helpfulness entail is usually taking the importance of his own career too solemnly.

We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God. God will be constantly crossing our paths and canceling our plans by sending us people with claims and petitions. We may pass them by, preoccupied with our more important tasks, as the priest passed by the man who had fallen among thieves, perhaps—reading the Bible. When we do that we pass by the visible sign of the Cross raised athwart our path to show us that, not our way, but God's way must be done. It is a strange fact that Christians and even ministers frequently consider their work so important and urgent that they will allow nothing to disturb them. They think they are doing God a service in this, but actually they are disdaining God's "crooked yet straight path" (Gottfried Arnold). They do not want a life that is crossed and balked. But it is part of the discipline of humility that we must not spare our hand where it can perform a service and that we do not assume that our schedule is our own to manage, but allow it to be arranged by God.

In the monastery his vow of obedience to the abbot deprives the monk of the right to dispose of his own time. In evangelical community life, free service to one's brother takes the place of the vow. Only where hands are not too good for deeds of love and mercy in everyday helpfulness can the mouth joyfully and convincingly proclaim the message of God's love and mercy.

### *The Ministry of Bearing*

We speak, third, of the service that consists in bearing others. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Thus the law of Christ is a law of bearing. Bearing means forbearing and sustaining. The brother is a burden to the Christian, precisely because he is a Christian. For the pagan the other person never becomes a burden at all. He simply sidesteps every burden that others may impose upon him.

The Christian, however, must bear the burden of a brother. He must suffer and endure the brother. It is only when he is a burden that another person is really a brother and not merely an object to be manipulated. The burden of men was so heavy for God Himself that He had to endure the Cross. God verily bore the burden of men in the body of Jesus Christ. But He bore them as a mother carries her child, as a shepherd enfolds the lost lamb that has been found. God took men upon Himself and they weighted Him to the ground, but God remained with them and they with God. In bearing with men God maintained fellowship with them. It is the law of Christ that was fulfilled in the Cross. And Christians must share in this law. They must suffer their brethren, but, what is more important, now that

the law of Christ has been fulfilled, they *can* bear with their brethren.

The Bible speaks with remarkable frequency of "bearing." It is capable of expressing the whole work of Jesus Christ in this one word. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows . . . the chastisement of our peace was upon him" (Isa. 53:4-5). Therefore, the Bible can also characterize the whole life of the Christian as bearing the Cross. It is the fellowship of the Cross to experience the burden of the other. If one does not experience it, the fellowship he belongs to is not Christian. If any member refuses to bear that burden, he denies the law of Christ.

It is, first of all, the *freedom* of the other person, of which we spoke earlier, that is a burden to the Christian. The other's freedom collides with his own autonomy, yet he must recognize it. He could get rid of this burden by refusing the other person his freedom, by constraining him and thus doing violence to his personality, by stamping his own image upon him. But if he lets God create His image in him, he by this token gives him his freedom and himself bears the burden of this freedom of another creature of God. The freedom of the other person includes all that we mean by a person's nature, individuality, endowment. It also includes his weaknesses and oddities, which are such a trial to our patience, everything that produces frictions, conflicts, and collisions among us. To bear the burden of the other person means involvement with the created reality of the other, to accept and affirm it, and, in bearing with it, to break through to the point where we take joy in it.

This will prove especially difficult where varying strength

and weakness in faith are bound together in a fellowship. The weak must not judge the strong, the strong must not despise the weak. The weak must guard against pride, the strong against indifference. None must seek his own rights. If the strong person falls, the weak one must guard his heart against malicious joy at his downfall. If the weak one falls, the strong one must help him rise again in all kindness. The one needs as much patience as the other. "Woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up" (Eccles. 4:10). It is doubtless this bearing of another person in his freedom that the Scripture means when it speaks of "forbearing one another" (Col. 3:13). "Walk with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (Eph. 4:2).

Then, besides the other's freedom, there is the abuse of that freedom that becomes a burden for the Christian. The sin of the other person is harder to bear than his freedom; for in sin, fellowship with God and with the brother is broken. Here the Christian suffers the rupture of his fellowship with the other person that had its basis in Jesus Christ. But here, too, it is only in bearing with him that the great grace of God becomes wholly plain. To cherish no contempt for the sinner but rather to prize the privilege of bearing him means not to have to give him up as lost, to be able to accept him, to preserve fellowship with him through forgiveness. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness" (Gal. 6:1). As Christ bore and received us as sinners so we in his fellowship may bear and receive sinners into the fellowship of Jesus Christ through the forgiving of sins.

We may suffer the sins of our brother; we do not need to

judge. This is a mercy for the Christian; for when does sin ever occur in the community that he must not examine and blame himself for his own unfaithfulness in prayer and intercession, his lack of brotherly service, of fraternal reproof and encouragement, indeed, for his own personal sin and spiritual laxity, by which he has done injury to himself, the fellowship, and the brethren? Since every sin of every member burdens and indicts the whole community, the congregation rejoices, in the midst of all the pain and the burden the brother's sin inflicts, that it has the privilege of bearing and forgiving. "Behold, you bear them all, and likewise all of them bear you, and all things are common, both the good and the bad" (Luther).

The service of forgiveness is rendered by one to the others daily. It occurs, without words, in the intercessions for one another. And every member of the fellowship, who does not grow weary in this ministry, can depend upon it that this service is also being rendered him by the brethren. He who is bearing others knows that he himself is being borne, and only in this strength can he go on bearing.

Then where the ministry of listening, active helpfulness, and bearing with others is faithfully performed, the ultimate and highest service can also be rendered, namely, the ministry of the Word of God.

### *The Ministry of Proclaiming*

What we are concerned with here is the free communication of the Word from person to person, not by the ordained ministry which is bound to a particular office, time, and place. We are thinking of that unique situation in which one person bears witness in human words to another

person, bespeaking the whole consolation of God, the admonition, the kindness, and the severity of God. The speaking of that Word is beset with infinite perils. If it is not accompanied by worthy listening, how can it really be the right word for the other person? If it is contradicted by one's own lack of active helpfulness, how can it be a convincing and sincere word? If it issues, not from a spirit of bearing and forbearing, but from impatience and the desire to force its acceptance, how can it be the liberating and healing word?

Moreover, the person who has really listened and served and borne with others is the very one who is likely to say nothing. A profound distrust of everything that is merely verbal often causes a personal word to a brother to be suppressed. What can weak human words accomplish for others? Why add to the empty talk? Are we, like the professionally pious, to "talk away" the other person's real need? Is there anything more perilous than speaking God's Word to excess? But, on the other hand, who wants to be accountable for having been silent when he should have spoken? How much easier is ordered speech in the pulpit than this entirely free speech which is uttered betwixt the responsibility to be silent and the responsibility to speak!

Added to the fear of one's responsibility to speak there is the fear of the other person. What a difficult thing it often is to utter the name of Jesus Christ in the presence even of a brother! Here, too, it is difficult to distinguish between right and wrong. Who dares to force himself upon his neighbor? Who is entitled to accost and confront his neighbor and talk to him about ultimate matters? It would be no sign of great Christian insight were one simply to say at



this point that everybody has this right, indeed, this obligation. This could be the point where the desire to dominate might again assert itself in the most insidious way. The other person, as a matter of fact, has his own right, his own responsibility, and even his own duty, to defend himself against unauthorized interference. The other person has his own secret which dare not be invaded without great injury, and which he cannot surrender without destroying himself. It is not a secret dependent on knowledge or feeling, but rather the secret of his freedom, his salvation, his being. And yet this correct judgment lies perilously near to the deadly dictum of Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?" A seemingly sacred respect for another's freedom can be subject to the curse of God: "His blood will I require at thine hand" (Ezek. 3:18).

Where Christians live together the time must inevitably come when in some crisis one person will have to declare God's Word and will to another. It is inconceivable that the things that are of utmost importance to each individual should not be spoken by one to another. It is unchristian consciously to deprive another of the one decisive service we can render to him. If we cannot bring ourselves to utter it, we shall have to ask ourselves whether we are not still seeing our brother garbed in his human dignity which we are afraid to touch, and thus forgetting the most important thing, that he, too, no matter how old or highly placed or distinguished he may be, is still a man like us, a sinner in crying need of God's grace. He has the same great necessities that we have, and needs help encouragement, and forgiveness as we do.

The basis upon which Christians can speak to one another

is that each knows the other as a sinner, who, with all his human dignity, is lonely and lost if he is not given help. This is not to make him contemptible nor to disparage him in any way. On the contrary, it is to accord him the one real dignity that man has, namely, that, though he is a sinner, he can share in God's grace and glory and be God's child. This recognition gives to our brotherly speech the freedom and candor that it needs. We speak to one another on the basis of the help we both need. We admonish one another to go the way that Christ bids us to go. We warn one another against the disobedience that is our common destruction. We are gentle and we are severe with one another, for we know both God's kindness and God's severity. Why should we be afraid of one another, since both of us have only God to fear? Why should we think that our brother would not understand us, when we understood very well what was meant when somebody spoke God's comfort or God's admonition to us, perhaps in words that were halting and unskilled? Or do we really think there is a single person in this world who does not need either encouragement or admonition? Why, then, has God bestowed Christian brotherhood upon us?

The more we learn to allow others to speak the Word to us, to accept humbly and gratefully even severe reproaches and admonitions, the more free and objective will we be in speaking ourselves. The person whose touchiness and vanity make him spurn a brother's earnest censure cannot speak the truth in humility to others; he is afraid of being rebuffed and of feeling that he has been aggrieved. The touchy person will always become a flatterer and very soon he will come to despise and slander his brother. But the humble

person will stick both to truth and to love. He will stick to the Word of God and let it lead him to his brother. Because he seeks nothing for himself and has no fears for himself, he can help his brother through the Word.

Reproof is unavoidable. God's Word demands it when a brother falls into open sin. The practice of discipline in the congregation begins in the smallest circles. Where defection from God's Word in doctrine or life imperils the family fellowship and with it the whole congregation, the word of admonition and rebuke must be ventured. Nothing can be more cruel than the tenderness that consigns another to his sin. Nothing can be more compassionate than the severe rebuke that calls a brother back from the path of sin. It is a ministry of mercy, an ultimate offer of genuine fellowship, when we allow nothing but God's Word to stand between us, judging and succoring. Then it is not we who are judging; God alone judges, and God's judgment is helpful and healing. Ultimately, we have no charge but to serve our brother, never to set ourselves above him, and we serve him even when we must speak the judging and dividing Word of God to him, even when, in obedience to God, we must break off fellowship with him. We must know that it is not our human love which makes us loyal to the other person, but God's love which breaks its way through to him only through judgment. Just because God's Word judges, it serves the person. He who accepts the ministry of God's judgment is helped. This is the point where the limitations of all human action toward our brother become apparent: "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him (for the redemption of their life is costly, and it faileth for ever)" (Ps. 49:7-8, A.R.V.).

This renunciation of our own ability is precisely the prerequisite and the sanction for the redeeming help that only the Word of God can give to the brother. Our brother's ways are not in our hands; we cannot hold together what is breaking; we cannot keep life in what is determined to die. But God binds elements together in the breaking, creates community in the separation, grants grace through judgment. He has put His Word in our mouth. He wants it to be spoken through us. If we hinder His Word, the blood of the sinning brother will be upon us. If we carry out His Word, God will save our brother through us. "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (Jas. 5:20).

### *The Ministry of Authority*

"Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister" (Mark 10:43). Jesus made authority in the fellowship dependent upon brotherly service. Genuine spiritual authority is to be found only where the ministry of hearing, helping, bearing, and proclaiming is carried out. Every cult of personality that emphasizes the distinguished qualities, virtues, and talents of another person, even though these be of an altogether spiritual nature, is worldly and has no place in the Christian community; indeed, it poisons the Christian community. The desire we so often hear expressed today for "episcopal figures," "priestly men," "authoritative personalities" springs frequently enough from a spiritually sick need for the admiration of men, for the establishment of visible human authority, because the genuine authority of service appears to be so unimpressive. There is nothing

that so sharply contradicts such a desire as the New Testament itself in its description of a bishop (I Tim. 3:1 ff.). One finds there nothing whatsoever with respect to worldly charm and the brilliant attributes of a spiritual personality. The bishop is the simple, faithful man, sound in faith and life, who rightly discharges his duties to the Church. His authority lies in the exercise of his ministry. In the man himself there is nothing to admire.

Ultimately, this hankering for false authority has at its root a desire to re-establish some sort of immediacy, a dependence upon human beings in the Church. Genuine authority knows that all immediacy is especially baneful in matters of authority. Genuine authority realizes that it can exist only in the service of Him who alone has authority. Genuine authority knows that it is bound in the strictest sense by the saying of Jesus: "One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren" (Matt. 23:8). The Church does not need brilliant personalities but faithful servants of Jesus and the brethren. Not in the former but in the latter is the lack. The Church will place its confidence only in the simple servant of the Word of Jesus Christ because it knows that then it will be guided, not according to human wisdom and human conceit, but by the Word of the Good Shepherd.

The question of trust, which is so closely related to that of authority, is determined by the faithfulness with which a man serves Jesus Christ, never by the extraordinary talents which he possesses. Pastoral authority can be attained only by the servant of Jesus who seeks no power of his own, who himself is a brother among brothers submitted to the authority of the Word.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Confession and Communion*

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"Confess your faults one to another" (Jas. 5:16). He who is alone with his sin is utterly alone. It may be that Christians, notwithstanding corporate worship, common prayer, and all their fellowship in service, may still be left to their loneliness. The final break-through to fellowship does not occur, because, though they have fellowship with one another as believers and as devout people, they do not have fellowship as the undevout, as sinners. The pious fellowship permits no one to be a sinner. So everybody must conceal his sin from himself and from the fellowship. We dare not be sinners. Many Christians are unthinkably horrified when a real sinner is suddenly discovered among the righteous. So we remain alone with our sin, living in lies and hypocrisy. The fact is that *we are* sinners!

But it is the grace of the Gospel, which is so hard for the pious to understand, that it confronts us with the truth and