

Life Together: Chapter 1, Community

The believer feels no shame, as though he were still living too much in the flesh, when he yearns for the physical presence of other Christians. Man was created a body, the Son of God appeared on earth in the body, he was raised in the body, in the sacrament the believer receives the Lord Christ in the body, and the resurrection of the dead will bring about the perfected fellowship of God's spiritual physical creatures. The believer therefore lauds the Creator, the Redeemer, God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for the bodily presence of a brother. The prisoner, the sick person, the Christian in exile sees in the companionship of a fellow Christian a physical sign of the gracious presence of the triune God. Visitor and visited in loneliness recognize in each other the Christ who is present in the body; they receive and meet each other as one meets the Lord, in reverence, humility, and joy. They receive each other's benedictions as the benediction of the Lord Jesus Christ. [Page 19]

Through and In Jesus Christ¹

- 1) The Christian no longer seeks his salvation ... in himself, but in Jesus Christ alone.
- 2) Without Christ there is discord between God and man and between man and man.
- 3) When God's Son took on flesh, he bodily took on our being, our nature, ourselves.

Christian brotherhood [sic] is Not an Ideal but a Divine Reality²

Because God has already laid the only foundation of our fellowship, because God has bound us together in one body with other Christians in Jesus Christ, long before we entered into common life with them, we enter into that common life not as demanders but as thankful recipients. We thank God for what He has done for us. We thank God for giving us brethren who live by His call, by His forgiveness, and His promise.

Christian Fellowship is Spiritual Not a Human Reality³

Jesus Christ stands between the lover and the others he loves. I do not know in advance what love of others means on the basis of the general idea of love that grows out of my human desires—all this may rather be hatred and an insidious kind of selfishness in the eyes of Christ. What love is, only Christ tells in his Word. Contrary to all my own opinions and convictions, Jesus Christ will tell me what love toward the brethren really is. Therefore, spiritual love is bound solely to the Word of Jesus Christ. Where Christ bids me to maintain fellowship for the sake of love, I will maintain it. Where his truth enjoins me to dissolve a fellowship for love's sake, there I will dissolve it, despite all the protests of my human love.

¹ Pages 21-26. Key lines are 1) page 21; 2) page 23; 3) page 24

² Pages 26 - 30. Quoted passage is on page 28

³ Pages 31 - 39. Quoted passage is on page 35