

Holy Communion or Eucharist Issues and Concerns.

The question:

Is the Eucharist rite, as performed at present, tailored towards serving the true “bread of life” claimed by Jesus as his body and blood? Or, has much meaning been lost to Church-lead liturgical rhetoric and multigenerational habitual acceptance?

The rite of Holy Communion is a standard fare of Christian congregations world wide. As a child going to church with my parents it was difficult to understand just how participants believed or related to what was going on. When attending the Eucharist and listening to the text involved, it seemed the focus revolved around a “sacrifice of blood and body shed for remission of the sins of the world”. The words, **“Take, eat; this is my Body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”** And, **“Drink ye all of this; for this is my Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins. Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me.”** would be droned forth as an expression of habit with seemingly little meaning or mystery ascribed to them. This was just something you did because your parents performed the act. There was little discussion of why the traditions were the way they were. As a matter of fact, questions of reason exposing faith assumptions were openly discouraged. “Just having faith” itself was emphasized. Challenging ideas were often responded to as “not showing respect in God’s House”.

So what was a seeker of truth to do? The outward form of the Eucharist, taken literally as rendered by liturgical verse, seemed, in itself, to symbolize some sort of bloodthirsty rite of cannibalism! Some Christian sects consecrated the wine and bread believing both were thus somehow magically changed or “transubstantiated” into the actual blood and fleshly body of Jesus. Other churches “blessed” the elements and, by their own self appointed authority, assumed they now had a “holy” God given potency to represent the biological body of Jesus.

It was time to independently investigate Bible passages these rites are based on. It was time to see, in the context of the Gospels themselves, what Jesus might have hinted as to what he really meant when he said, **“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Matthew 26:26-28**

What then, is the inner meaning of Jesus’ words? Why did Jesus emphasize the “eating of his body” when he knew full well the gut reactions generated in his audience by voicing such stark controversial symbolism?

Church liturgies often use short simple excerpts from scripture in their services. The often used quote **“Take, eat, this is my Body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”** as taken by itself, could easily be literally interpreted as a physical body to be eaten as flesh and blood. Yet, when taken in full context with other Biblical writers such as John 6:48 quoting Jesus as also saying, **“I am that bread of life,”** and in John 6:51 **“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world”**, it is clear Jesus is revealing a truth easily missed in the standard communion service.

Sometimes even one word in a phrase can represent a foundation for faith, even though, that same word is missing in other Gospels telling the same story. A good example is seen in

scriptures of Matthew, Luke, Mark and Corinthians. In Matthew 26:28 we read, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Some believers claim that the word "remission" here refers to the "physical washing away of sins by the blood of Jesus". But the other three versions of the same story use different words to describe the enlightened message or inner meaning alluded to here. Mark, 14:24 "And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many," Luke 22:17-19, "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves... And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me," and Corinthians 11:24-25, "And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me."

Upon examination the word "remission" (see above) is only found in Matthew's account. All renditions are somewhat different. The main consistent phrase is, "this is the blood of/in the new testament".

"Blood of the new testament, which is shed for many" may certainly bear some reference to the suffering of Jesus for the sins of the world as he fulfilled the ancient Jewish Law. But if the word "blood" is read as a Hebrew term for "life; (*) ["The life of the soul or the personality, of any being is in its blood."](#) it also can be seen as a description of submitting his personal will to the Will of God, sacrificing his life "blood" enabling the giving of the bread of life to many.

Jesus was seen, in his time, as breaking an ancient prohibition against drinking the blood of animals. He was very deliberately and bluntly providing his Jewish audience with a choice; is your allegiance bound to ancient customs or will you open your heart and follow me?

Yet through it all, the overriding message meant for the world at large; Jews, Gentiles, Samaritans and Pharisees; is the all important "born again" transformation experience; salvation through "Bread Of Life" awareness of the Word offered through his teaching.

The word "broken" seen in Corinthians is often used in argument that Jesus suffered broken bones upon his death. Yet, none of the other accounts seem to support this claim. Instead words such as "divide it among yourselves"; "given for you" he broke it" etc. would seem to suggest the act of portioning out bread to guests at a table.

Indeed, when all complete accounts are read, the evidence of wonderful symbolism invoking the need to adopt, "take in" or "eat" the "body" of the enlightened transforming awareness the Christ bestows into one's personal life, actions, inner realization and soul is compelling.

As the scriptures quoted and the studies in this treatise makes clear, it is not enough to pick a "favorite" word, verse or passage and adopt it as proof of some favored orthodox traditional view or accepted rite practice. The ancient writers were recalling from their own memories the stories Jesus told. Therefore it stands to reason; each rendition will be a little different.

Thus the actual words Jesus uttered are lost in the sands of time. Thankfully, we do have many of the same events recorded by different authors. We must be careful however not to

slip into the ideology of believing every word written by the many Bible writers are themselves revealed inerrant word by word accounts of what Jesus said.

The best we can do or hope for, to come closest to the meanings Jesus possibly had in mind, is, through an attitude of prayerful open-minded search, to line up and compare similar stories as found in the Gospels and see how they back each other up while looking for their central meanings. (Then, of course, there are various translation and editing issues turning up as modern day scholars do thorough investigations on the subject.)

When entering a church and listening to the dialogue perpetuated as the actual words of Jesus containing the complete meaning of the “Last Supper”; I ask” How can this be? It seems much of the rendition has been edited out to conform to the convenience and necessities of a ritualized rite within the confines of a standardized structured church service.

I give you a sample of clergy advising clergy on matters of meaning within the Bible and majority thinking within a typical church congregation. The source is the Rev. Ken Collins’ Web Site at <http://www.kencollins.com/pray-32.htm>

“□ Do not misquote Jesus.

Jesus said, “This is my body,” not “This *represents* my body,” or “This *symbolizes* my body.” You can lose credibility or even parishioners if they perceive you as creatively misquoting Jesus—even if they agree with your interpretive intent. For the purposes of a church rite, it doesn’t really matter what the meaning of “is” is. Save that discussion for Sunday School or the sermon.

□ Do not say “this is my body, broken for you.”

That is a poorly attested variant reading of 1 Corinthians 11:24. The gospel writers go to a lot of trouble to assure us that Jesus’ bones were not broken. The Passover lamb, and thus also the Lamb of God, would be disqualified by any broken bones. I know a pastor who got a tongue-lashing from a biblically literate parishioner over this.

The word “broken” appears in the King James Version because it is in the Majority Text, which was compiled without proper textual-critical methods. The current speculation is that “broken” was inserted by a scribe who was thinking of the Eucharist. “This” could refer to the bread, not the body. Nevertheless, it’s best to avoid that wording, because most people interpret it as meaning that Jesus’ body was broken, which is not true.”

Question: Are not churches doing a real disservice to their congregations by fostering beliefs based, often not on what Jesus meant and usually made clear in his complete dissertations, but rather, on what the churches themselves have edited and placed in a different context within their own contrived methodologies and traditions? Perhaps we should leave the rites and rituals of a traditionalized worship service and focus on study, praise and worship of God. Let us honor the Word of God by perusing and comparing the complete texts, and with open mind and heart, be accepting of the possibility of greater perspective, wider insight and deeper appreciation, wisdom and love. Let us stop picking “favorite fragments” as a basis of faith.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus clearly and logically explains the allegorical relationship between the nourishment of God's Word, which will never leave you in hunger or thirst, partaking of the bread and wine and the eating of his body. Although this Gospel does not contain the actual "Last Supper" story, it may well be prudent to examine what Jesus is recorded as saying. The Gospel of John leads us to greater understanding and meaning of what Jesus' true intent may have been as he addressed those in the temple.

John includes a very lucid explanation given by Jesus regarding the true inner spiritual meaning of the symbols of his body and the bread of life.

The reasoning goes something like this:

1. I (Jesus) decree I bring to you everlasting life. (article of faith assumption)
2. I (Jesus) decree I am that bread of life. (article of faith assumption)
3. Former generations ate grain based bread but are now dead.
4. But those who eat the bread I offer gain everlasting life, they will not die.
5. Therefore, since the results are different, the bread in each case is different. One comes down from heaven and is "living"; the other is baked in an oven and is dead.
6. I myself am the living bread from heaven. (Another name for the bread of life.)
7. Thus the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.
8. As this bread gives eternal life; to receive it, you must partake of my flesh and blood.
9. For he who eats and drinks of my body will have eternal life.
10. The Living Father sent me, and I live by the Father; so he who eats me lives by me.

Both the logic and the required faith to accept the assumptions of truthfulness in this claim are unmistakable. No wonder many who heard this highly unusual teaching, offering mystic everlasting union through what they were deliberately led to perceive was a heinous act of cannibalism, left the premises in disgust. It seems Jesus was testing the understanding and faith of many. Jesus even said as they were leaving, "That no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father".

The Christ, the Word of God that has been from the beginning, as dwelling in Jesus, is of eternal spirit. As it is spirit of enlightenment it stands to reason its gifts bestowed to mankind are also of the enlightened spirit. The body referred to here is also of the non-corporal spirit. Thus, if you receive the Word into your heart; eat and ingest into your soul, you are obtaining inner radiance and light; not blood and flesh.

It seems clear then that the rather misleading ancient rituals of Holy Communion requiring some form of transubstantiation or other means of identifying food items, as representing the physical body of Jesus of Nazareth, are not accurate; the primary point is lost. The casual churchgoer, who perceives Holy Communion activities as representing the fleshly body of Jesus, as opposed to the symbolic "bread of life", is, in a sense of being overly attached to comfortable habits, traditions and ordained truth; in much the same league as those who left the synagogue so long ago.

Here are the complete unabridged words of Jesus as seen in John 6: 47-66 Read for yourself the full explanation and follow the logic inherent in this lesson by the Master. (The verses where Jesus presents this and the lesson involved are separated for easier study.)

6:47- Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

6:48 I am that bread of life.

6:49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

6:50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

6:51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

6:52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

6:53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

6:54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

6:55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

6:56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

6:57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

6:58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

6:59-66 These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

**From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.
(King James Bible, John 6:47-66)**

Here are three famous renditions of the “Last Supper” as told by Matthew, Mark and Luke.

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

(King James Bible, Matthew 26: 26-29)

And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me.

And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?

And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.

The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.

And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.

And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.

And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

(King James Bible, Mark 14: 18-26)

And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.

And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

(King James Bible, Luke 22:14-20)

Corinthians is full of lessons and insight regarding the “Last Supper”.

First, is a paraphrase of the content, written by myself, followed by the actual Biblical text.

11:20-22: Mentions the eating of food when one is hungry which is not praiseworthy.

11:24-27: is the “Last Supper” story.

11:28-30: One must examine oneself to discern the Lord’s body. “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” In other words, the eyes of many are not open to discern the true meaning of the Lord’s body. They perform rites in blind acceptance without thought. True transformation and meaning has eluded them.

11:31-32: For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” We must stand in unworthiness before God and God, in His mercy, will grant what will enable us to overcome the anxieties and tribulations of this world.

11:20-22: When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

**11:24-27: For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:
And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.**

**After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.
For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.**

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

**11:28-30: But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.
For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.**

**11:31-32: For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.
But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.**

**11:33-34 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.
And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation.
And the rest will I set in order when I come.**

(King James Bible, 1 Corinthians 11:20-34)

Yet, in spite of the strong evidence presented in the Bible itself of the symbolic meaning of the body and blood of Jesus representing the “Bread of Life”; the various liturgical texts continually dwell on the “sacrifice of his body given for you”, and “This is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.’ There is little mention of the “Bread of Life” in any form, nor are passages such as,” **This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.”** And **“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world,”** rarely, if ever, heard in a Communion Service.

Teachers and clergy in study sessions and sermons often claim the “Bread Of Life” embodiment or representation is inferred within standardized Sacrament liturgical texts but this, in itself, begs the question: “Should a pivotal point of Jesus be hidden within the confines of church-contrived tradition or simply be brought out in the forefront open in plain sight of the people thus avoiding misunderstanding and confusion?”

As evidence illustrating the above issues and concerns, two examples of Eucharist Liturgy are given. The first is a Methodist Church service, the second is excerpted from a Catholic Mass.

Methodist Communion Liturgy

On the night in which he gave himself up for us,
Our Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread
gave it to his disciples, and said:
"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."

Likewise, when the supper was over, he took the cup,
gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:
"Drink from this, all of you,
this is my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,
we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving
as a holy and living sacrifice,
in union with Christ's offering for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died;
Christ is risen;
Christ will come again

The original Catholic liturgy read as a central premise from which the Holy Eucharist is designed seems to vaguely acknowledge the reality, the symbolism of the body of Jesus as a metaphor for the Word of God but the central emphasis is on “our unworthiness in manifold sin” and Jesus’ blood and body given as a sacrifice to cleanse the sins of the world.

Three Eucharist Masses are excerpted here.

Holy Eucharist I

“disciples, saying, "Take, eat, this is my Body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Likewise, after supper, he took the cup; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of this; for this is my Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins. Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me."

...And we most humbly beseech thee, O merciful Father, to hear us; and, of thy almighty goodness, vouchsafe to bless and sanctify, with thy Word and Holy Spirit, these thy gifts and creatures of bread and wine; that we, receiving them according to thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood.

And we earnestly desire thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; most humbly beseeching thee to grant that, by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we, and all thy whole Church, may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his passion.

Holy Eucharist I 335

And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies, to be reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto thee; humbly beseeching thee that we, and all others who shall be partakers of this Holy Communion, may worthily receive the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son Jesus Christ, be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction, and made one body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him.

And although we are unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service, not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord;

By whom, and with whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honor and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without end. AMEN.

336 Holy Eucharist

.... Grant us therefore,
gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ,
and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us. Amen.

The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee,
preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat
this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on
him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving.

The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee,
preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this in
remembrance that Christ's Blood was shed for thee, and be
thankful.

or with these words

The Body (Blood) of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you in
everlasting life. [Amen.]

or with these words

The Body of Christ, the bread of heaven. [Amen.]
The Blood of Christ, the cup of salvation. [Amen.]

Almighty and everliving God, we most heartily thank thee
for that thou dost feed us, in these holy mysteries, with the
spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of thy
Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and dost assure us thereby of
thy favor and goodness towards us; and that we are very
members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son, the
blessed company of all faithful people; and are also heirs,
through hope, of thy everlasting kingdom. And we humbly
beseech thee, O heavenly Father, so to assist us with thy
grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do
all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with thee and the
Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end.
Amen.

The Bishop when present, or the Priest, gives the blessing

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep
your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of
God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be
amongst you, and remain with you always. Amen.

The Deacon, or the Celebrant, may dismiss the people with these words

**Let us go forth in the name of Christ.
People Thanks be to God."**

Here is more illustrating and exemplifying the symbolism of the Body, Bread of Life, and the Lord's Supper. Scriptures quoted below are from the Islamic Holy Quran, Baha'i Faith and Hindu Bhagavad-Gita

112 When the disciples said: O Jesus, son of Mary! Is thy Lord able to send down for us a table spread with food from heaven ? He said: Observe your duty to Allah, if ye are true believers.

113 (They said:) We wish to eat thereof, that we may satisfy our hearts and know that thou hast spoken truth to us, and that thereof we may be witnesses.

114 Jesus, son of Mary, said: O Allah, Lord of us! Send down for us a table spread with food from heaven, that it may be a feast for us, for the first of us and for the last of us, and a sign from Thee. Give us sustenance, for Thou art the Best of Sustainers.

(The Qur'an (Pickthall tr), Sura 5 - The Food)

THE SUPPER OF THE LORD

The Supper of the Lord which His Highness the Spirit ate with the apostles was a heavenly supper and not one of material bread and water, for material objects have no connection with spiritual objects. As at that time material food was also present, therefore the leaders of the religion of Christ thought that it was material food which was changed into spiritual food. 391

The proof that it was not material food is this: The apostles upon many occasions partook of material food with His Highness Christ, yet the supper of that night became designated as the "Lord's Supper." From this designation it is plain and evident that they ate heavenly food at that supper. That heavenly food consisted of the love of God, the knowledge of God, the mysteries of God and the bestowal of God.

UNDERSTANDING THE MYSTERIES

Shouldst thou come with the whole of thy being to God and be attracted to the lights of the Kingdom of God and be enkindled by the fire of the love of God, then wilt thou see that which thou canst not see today, wilt comprehend the inner significance of the Word of God and thoroughly understand the mysteries contained in the holy Books.

But as to the Jewish doctors, Christian priests and monks who read those Books, verily, they know the letter only and they utter the words, as parrots, without understanding their inner meanings. They comprehend them not, because they are engrossed in worldly desires and lusts and their hearts are attached to mundane allurements. Verily, are they not heedless of God and understand nothing and find not the right path?

(Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'i World Faith - Abdu'l-Baha Section, p. 390)

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

The body is composed, in truth, of corporeal elements and every composition is necessarily subject to decomposition; but the spirit is an essence, simple, pure, spiritual, eternal, perpetual and divine. He who seeketh Christ from the point of view of His body hath, in truth, debased Him and hath gone astray from Him; but he who seeketh Christ from the point of view of His Spirit will grow from day to day in joy, attraction, zeal, proximity, perception and vision.

Thou hast then to seek the Spirit of Christ in this marvelous day. The heaven whither Christ ascended is not an infinite space. His heaven is much rather the kingdom of His Lord, the Munificent. As He said, "The Son of Man is in heaven." It is known then that His heaven is beyond the boundaries that surround existence and that He is elevated for the people who adore.

Pray God to ascend to this heaven, to taste of its food -- and know thou that the people have not understood to this day the mystery of the Holy Scriptures. They believe that Christ was deprived of His heaven when He was in this world, that He had fallen from the heights of His elevation and that later He ascended to this elevated pinnacle -- that is to say, towards the heaven which doth not exist, for there is only space. They expect that He will descend from this heaven seated upon a cloud. They believe that there is in the heavens a cloud upon which He will be seated and by which He will descend; while, in reality, the clouds are vapors which rise from the earth and which do not descend from the heavens. The cloud mentioned in the Holy Scriptures is the human body, because it is a veil for them, like a cloud, which prevents them from seeing the Sun of Truth which is shining in the horizon of Christ. (Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'i World Faith - Abdu'l-Baha Section, p. 388)

**Who eat of food after their sacrifice
Are quit of fault, but they that spread a feast
All for themselves, eat sin and drink of sin.
By food the living live; food comes of rain,
And rain comes by the pious sacrifice,
And sacrifice is paid with tithes of toil;**

**Thus action is of Brahma, who is One,
The Only, All-pervading; at all times
Present in sacrifice. He that abstains
To help the rolling wheels of this great world,
Glutting his idle sense, lives a lost life,
Shameful and vain. Existing for himself,
Self-concentrated, serving self alone,
No part hath he in aught; nothing achieved,**

(Hindu, Bhagavad Gita (Edwin Arnold tr))

**Those men, passion-beset, violent, wild,
Torturing- the witless ones- My elements
Shut in fair company within their flesh,
(Nay, Me myself, present within the flesh!)
Know them to devils devoted, not to Heaven!
For like as foods are threefold for mankind
In nourishing, so is there threefold way
Of worship, abstinence, and almsgiving!
Hear this of Me! there is a food which brings
Force, substance, strength, and health, and joy to live,
Being well-seasoned, cordial, comforting,
And there be foods which bring
Aches and unrests, and burning blood, and grief
Being too biting, heating, salt, and sharp,
And therefore craved by too strong appetite.
And there is foul food- kept from over-night,
Savourless, filthy, which the foul will eat,
A feast of rottenness, meet for the lips
Of such as love the "Darkness."**

(Hindu, Bhagavad Gita (Edwin Arnold tr))

(*) For Hebraic "Bread of Life" see:

http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Hebrew_Roots/Unclean_foods/Other

See the mother site at <http://onenessbecomesus.com>