

LETTER

For many years, as Session Clerk of a Presbyterian Church, I had to cope with the nature of the invitation to be given to participants in forthcoming communion services. According to the New Testament the Lord's Supper was shared by the members of the Body of Christ, and was not a public ceremony for all and sundry. The early church was careful to dismiss even catechumens before the mysteries were celebrated. Therefore the invitation to participation in the Supper should be given to all who are members of any branch of Christ's Church. If this means that some partake without discerning the Lord's body, and therefore eat and drink judgement on themselves (1 Cor 11 27-29), that is the fault of the communicants, not of the invitation. But if the invitation is to all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, then a difficulty is placed in the way of the conscientious worshipper: he can no longer partake of the supper on the objective basis of his church membership, but has to ask himself "Do I love the Lord Jesus sufficiently to justify my participation? Do I love him in sincerity?" Doubts of his worthiness begin to enter his mind. We are back in the bad Pelagian days of the 18th century when many church members abstained from sitting at the Lord's Table because it was too carefully 'fenced' and they did not consider themselves qualified to partake of so holy a sacrament. If someone who desires to receive communion has not bothered to get himself of the membership roll of any church, the Lord might well ask him what he was doing at the marriage-feast of the Lamb without a wedding-garment (Matt 22 11-13).

Yours sincerely,
J M Ross, London
10.3.87