

THE
SUPPER INSTITUTION.

BY

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"A SHINING LIGHT," ETC.

"THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME."

Philadelphia:
AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY,
530 ARCH STREET.

May
1860.

SCB
105

This interesting book is affectionately dedicated,
by the Publication Society, to J. WARREN MERRILL,
Boston, Mass., by whose liberality it has been stereo-
typed, and thus perpetuated.

TO
MY PARTICULAR FRIEND,
REV. S. DRYDEN PHELPS, D.D.,

This Volume

IS
FRATERNALLY INSCRIBED.

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P R E F A C E .

THE present treatise surveys the Lord's Supper as a very plain, yet most significant, sublime and spiritual Institution, given by our Lord to every church, as a church, gathered in his name, and ordered according to his word.

The work claims the merit of surveying the Supper in a new order, and of presenting some new views in regard to it. Special consideration is given to the question of church independency as involved in certain views of the Supper; and attention is also given to the various modern claims of what may be termed Communionism.

Such as the work is, not deprecating the candid criticisms it may elicit, for Christian and scholarly investigation is to be commended, I prayerfully submit it to the public, in hope that it may promote vital piety, and the unity and fellowship of the saints, by bringing us all into a closer union with our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave the explicit commandment, in reference to the Supper, "This do in remembrance of me."

February, 1860.

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THE SUPPER INSTITUTION.



CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN OF THE INSTITUTION.

1. THE variety of views that have been held in reference to the Lord's Supper, both among Catholics and Protestants, have necessarily led to practices equally differing, and often deeply injurious to the Christian life. Purity of faith is indispensable to purity of life in individuals and in churches. It is of great consequence, therefore, that we entertain correct views of the Lord's Supper, since the Institution has always had a conspicuous place and a commanding influence in the progress of Christianity. We hesitate not to say, in short, that a proper understanding and observance of this Institution is essential to the health, progress, and power of the churches of Jesus Christ.

2. Formerly, for a long period preceding the Great Reformation, the Supper was greatly misconceived both in its parts and relations. Since the Reformation, these misconceptions have been greatly diminished, and, we trust, they are continually growing less. Among Protestants this is evidently the case. But even among the latter, in some respects, we think, it is still misconceived, and therefore abused.

3. Every effort possible should be made to correct the false views of this Institution that have been disseminated. In hope of gaining a clear view of the Institution, we shall endeavor to look at it on all its sides and in all its parts.

4. The Supper is a purely Christian Institution. There is nothing about it derived from natural religion. Every thing about it relates to the Christian scheme. It can have no significance apart from the gospel. It can be understood, therefore, only by those who know the Christian faith, and have experienced its inward workings. The Supper, in part, epitomizes to the senses the Christian scheme, and affects the heart through the senses. It can be rightly observed and enjoyed only by those who have felt the Christian faith as a divine life in the heart; for the culture of the inner life through

the medium of the physical senses, the Institution was given. And, as we shall have occasion to show, this Institution can be lawfully observed only by Christian churches, as such, since they are ordained as the depositories of the faith and order of the Christian scheme. And we hold that each church is a complete and independent society of Jesus, or corporation; to be an embodiment and illustration, a living type and representative of the Gospel and of all the New Testament laws.

5. We learn of this Institution only, in the New Testament. Here we learn its origin, except in so far as it is an outgrowth of the Passover; the manner of its observance; and the purposes for which it was instituted. It matters not to us what others may think of this Institution, what ideas and associations others may have thrown around it; for all our views we shall go to the original source, the Inspired Record. It is easy, natural, and almost unavoidable, to accept the views prevailing around us—the views of our fathers and teachers, especially if these have run through many generations, and have become part of the religious literature of our times. But it is safer to drink from the fountain-head than from the streams

below ; the waters always partake of the qualities of the channels through which they run.

In all religious things the Bible is our perfect and only standard. Here we have a perfect word by which we must stand or fall. In regard to the Christian Dispensation, the New Testament is our only authority. For all Christian duties the New Testament is complete and final, however some theologians, commentators, and church authorities may venture to add or take away from it. This, to us, is the Law and the Testimony to which we appeal confidently, constantly and prayerfully. There exists too great a tendency, or disposition to adopt the current opinions about us, without first examining them ourselves in the light of the Scriptures. This tendency may be comparatively harmless in many things, but in religious matters it may often lead to the most ruinous results. We must give account unto God ; hence the word of God should be the only rule of our judgments and actions.

6. The Lord's Supper had a type in the old Hebrew economy or Theocracy. We allude to the Passover, of which we shall have occasion to speak hereafter. In a limited sense, the Passover prepared the way for the Supper ; for while it spoke of a particular past redemption

by the hand of God and was sanctified by blood ; it, at the same time, like all the Jewish ceremonies, had something in it pointing forward to Him of whom Moses and the prophets did write.

7. Before proceeding to give in order the accounts of the origin of the Institution, it may be suitable to speak of the terms or names by which the Institution^r has been, at different times and by different authorities, designated and known.

On account of its solemn and public character it has often been styled "A Sacrament," or "The Sacrament." Sacrament is a word borrowed from the Latin *Sacramentum*, denoting the oath, taken by Roman soldiers, of fidelity to a military commander and to the laws of the country. Manifestly this word is not the happiest one possible to denote an Institution which, alike in its form and spirit, widely differs from the taking of a military vow. Besides, the word is expressive of an ordinance simply. Hence it is much more applicable to baptism than to the Supper. Many have applied it to the ordinance of baptism. To this application there is but little to object, except the military sense of the term. But it is not a suitable term by which to indicate the Supper, which is a most tender Christian Institution.

The Supper is sometimes called "the Eucharist." Eucharist signifies, properly, giving of thanks. The Supper is so called from the thanksgivings and sacred hymns which accompany the service, and make a part of the celebration. In instituting it, we read that the Saviour gave thanks before breaking the bread and before distributing the wine; and the service closed by the singing of a hymn. The word Eucharist, then, is more appropriate than the word Sacrament to describe the service; but still it is not sufficiently comprehensive.

The Institution is not unfrequently called "the Communion." This expression has its appropriateness from the fact, that, in the service, or by means of the Institution, that is, through faith in the use of the symbols, the disciples are expected to commune with Christ, of whom the symbols speak. The object of the Institution is to appeal to the mind and heart through the senses, presenting Christ crucified before our eyes, and aiding us in communing with him. But some have also attached to the Supper the idea of a communion with our fellow-Christians. This idea, as we shall hereafter show, does not belong to the Institution, and ought always to be thoroughly excluded from it. Hence, it is very improper to speak, as many do, about

“communing with the church,” and “communing with the denomination,” and “communing with one another.” Now none of these kinds of communion can properly be attached to the Lord’s Supper: they have other and more appropriate modes of expression; they necessarily pervert and corrupt the Supper. In a certain so-called evangelical periodical, the following language was recently found: “The Catholic Communion of the Protestant world at the Lord’s Supper.” So, the word Communion is liable to abuse and misapprehension when used to denote the Lord’s Supper.

In the Roman Catholic Church the observance of the Supper is styled the Celebration of Mass. It is believed that the bread and wine, after various prayers and ceremonies, are transubstantiated or changed into the very body and blood of Christ. Mass is offered as an expiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead. In most Romish churches, the celebration of mass constitutes the principal part of the worship. That this service is a sad compound of error, credulity, superstition, and ruinous delusion, need not here be shown.

Among enlightened Protestants the Institution is commonly designated as the Lord’s Supper. It is so called because it was instituted by

our Lord, and instituted for the single purpose of commemorating his sufferings and death for his people. This, evidently, is the most suitable and truthful name for the Institution. The Supper speaks simply of Him who is our Pass-over, the Lamb of God for sinners slain. And the name, Lord's Supper, ought to prevent us from taking liberties with the Institution, and corrupting it by carnal and convivial elements as did the Corinthian Church, and from misconceiving and misapplying it to superstitious and miraculous ends, as among Papists, and also from perverting it to the expression of Christian esteem and fellowship among ourselves, as is the case with not a few Protestants. It is the Lord's Supper, and not our feast. In observing it, we are to commune only with Christ.

Of the various terms employed, then, the one that is most expressive and least liable to misapprehension and perversion, is the Lord's Supper. With not a little propriety it might be called the Christian Passover.

8. Accounts of the origin or founding of the Institution, are already given by the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

“And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Pass-over. Now, when the even was come, he sat

down with the twelve." "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake, and gave to the disciples, and said: Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave 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. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives." Matt. xxvi. 19, 20; 26-30.

"And they made ready the passover. And in the evening he cometh with the twelve." "And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake, 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 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. And when they had sung an hymn they went out into the mount of Olives." Mark xiv. 16, 17, 22-26.

"And they made ready the passover. 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, 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.” Luke xxii. 13–20.

In the mouth of two or three witnesses all things are established. How clear and explicit the testimony. How exactly the witnesses agree. The whole scene is perfectly delineated.

9. The Saviour and the twelve, who had left all and followed him, living together and meeting their common expenses out of a common purse, were, in the Jewish sense of the term, a family, and hence were authorized and required, as Jews, to observe the Passover. They were also a church or *ecclesia*, “a company called out by authority.” They were the first Church of Christ,

the germ of the larger body soon to be called and fully organized. As a Jewish family they observed the Passover. But as they were now about to take their stand and rank as a Christian Church before the world, the Saviour gives to them as the first Christian corporation, or church, the Supper Institution, as a memorial of himself, their Founder, Head and Life, and a pledge of his final coming to take his people to his heavenly home.

10. Having finished the Paschal Supper, he took of the elements that remained and instituted the new Christian Passover. He selects only bread and wine. He first gives thanks. He then breaks the bread, and explaining its symbolic appropriation, distributes it among them, saying : Take, eat ; this is my body which is given for you. After the same manner he takes the cup, saying : This cup is the new testament in my blood which is shed for you. At each step the Saviour is careful to explain the object of the Institution : as if he foresaw that it would be misunderstood and perverted. He charged the Apostles in most explicit terms to keep the Institution in its purity, saying : " This do in remembrance of me."

11. As the Passover was God's special institution, given to every family of the Jewish nation to

remind them of the divine interposition by which they were rescued from the bondage of Egypt, so the Christian Passover, or Lord's Supper, is Christ's special Institution given to every one of his churches, to remind all the members of their great deliverance from the bondage of Satan, and to keep before their eyes the person, and especially the sufferings, of their Deliverer.

12. This is indeed the Lord's Supper and not man's supper. It is not a mere feast to be used for any human gratifications. It should always be held as Christ instituted it, and for the purposes expressly named by him. And it will be noticed that Jesus says not one word about our communing with one another, or one word about making the Institution a test of our fellowship with other disciples. No; Jesus gave to the Institution a higher, nobler, more sacred, definite, and glorious purpose.

13. It will be noticed that the Saviour gave the Institution into the hands of the Apostles, his first church, or *ecclesia*, a company called out by his authority. He did not give it into the hands of the promiscuous multitude of believers; nor into the hands of the one hundred and twenty; nor into the hands of the seventy; for these were not as yet organized as a church; they stood not forth publicly as a Christian organization,

though they had been baptized. All except the twelve were simply as the materials out of which the first church was yet to be fully constructed. The apostles were the germ, the nucleus, the first incipient church ; hence to them alone the Supper Institution was committed. The others were soon connected with them.

Nor did the Saviour invite even his own mother, or his own kinsmen, to sit with the Apostles when he instituted the Supper. He gave, we repeat, the Institution to the church that then was. So the Institution belongs, we think, exclusively to churches, as the Passover belonged exclusively to Jewish families.

14. It was given not alone to the first church that was formed, but to every church that was afterwards organized. Paul says to the Corinthian Church, " For I have *received of the Lord* that which I also *delivered unto you*, That the Lord Jesus, the night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake, 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, in remembrance of me. For as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do

show forth the Lord's death till he come." 1 Cor. xi. 23-26.

So the Apostles, according to the command of Christ, delivered this Institution, as well as the ordinance of baptism and all the doctrines of the new kingdom, to the churches that were formed in different places through their instrumentality. The Supper was given to each church for the benefit of all the members, as a means of keeping the truth in their minds; as a sensible representation of the cardinal truths of the Christian system; as an appeal to their faith, through the medium of the senses, that their faith might often be stirred up, and so their hearts be refreshed and invigorated. Meanwhile it animated them with the assurance that the Lord would come to take his people to his heavenly kingdom.

Thus the Institution originated. Thus it has been delivered to us. It is a priceless Institution. In it we seem to see our Lord; to discover his love for us, and his sufferings in our behalf. By it we are animated to endure trials as seeing him who will speedily come to take us to himself. And by it we hold up the Lamb of God before the eyes of a perishing world. So in honor of Christ let it always be observed.

CHAPTER II.

STRUCTURE OF THE INSTITUTION.

1. THE better to appreciate the structure of the Supper Institution we may look back for a moment upon the Hebrew Institution—the Passover—out of which it may be said the Christian Passover sprang ; though in excellency the outgrowth far surpasses the root. The Jewish Passover was sublime in meaning ; but the Christian Passover has a meaning immeasurably higher. Still, the Old Institution was in a measure the type of the New. Both speak of a deliverance by the election, power and grace of God.

Jesus was not only the archetype of all the old sacrificial offerings, dating back to the days of Abel ; but especially of the Hebrew symbols, sacrifices, patterns and institutions. Every thing bore a part in mirroring forth Jesus in his person, in his offices, in his work, and in his administration. The Passover, so peculiar in its origin and structure, was wonderfully calculated to

speak of redemption by the interposition of God. And while it was a memorial of a past glorious interposition, it was, as well, a type of a forthcoming and yet more glorious intervention.

2. Let us glance at the structure of the Passover. We find the record in Ex. xii. "Speak ye unto the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth of this month (Abib—the first month) they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it, according to the number of souls; every man according to his eating shall make you count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year; ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood and strike it on the two side-posts and on the upper door-post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it." "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are; and when I see the blood,

I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generation; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever." "It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations." "This is the ordinance of the Passover." "A foreigner and a hired servant shall not eat thereof. In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth aught of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye brake a bone thereof. All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land; for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. One law shall be to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you."

3. Such in substance was the frame and form of the Passover, given to the Hebrews to perpetually remind them of their salvation from Egypt by the hand of God, and their consequent

obligation to be his peculiar people, and to walk in all his commandments. This Institution has been carefully kept by the Jews to this day. The Saviour continued to observe it till he brought in a better—the Christian Passover. When he was about to be given up as a sacrifice for us, and his blood was to be poured out as the price of redemption, he first observed the old Institution, as being yet valid until the higher redemption should be achieved, and then transferred or changed the old Institution to new, and higher, and more spiritual and luminous ground: he transformed and transfigured it into the simplicity, light, and glory of the new Dispensation. The Christian Passover commemorates the death of Christ, and memorializes his atoning work, signifying that those that are his are passed over by the angel of justice on account of the appropriation of his blood in their behalf. In the Supper, an Institution all simple in structure yet all sublime in significancy, we have the consummation and fulfillment of the sacrifices rendered by Abel and Enoch, and Noah and Abraham, and all Israel. All the Jewish offerings and the Paschal Lamb pointed to Him who hung on Calvary, and whose blood cleanseth from all sin.

4. The obligation of believers, the true seed of Abraham, to observe the Passover, ceased,

when the Lamb of God offered himself once for all, having now instituted the Supper to take the place of the old type. And now all the Jewish ceremonies ceased to be binding : the object they contemplated had come. The Theocracy gave place to the Dispensation of the Spirit, with more simple and significant modes of worship. The symbols yielded to the substance ; the types to the archetype ; the dim faith to the inner life. The stars cease to give light when the sun is risen. Henceforth all the circumcised in heart, being enlightened by new measures of the Spirit, and being admitted by the new ordinance of baptism into the house of God, which is his Church, are to observe the Supper instead of the Passover.

5. To make the Supper Institution as simple as possible, while it should yet embrace symbols sufficient to recall the great ideas needed for the refreshment and invigoration of true faith, the Lord omitted the use of flesh and blood and bitter herbs, and chose only bread and the fruit of the vine ; the bread to be broken as a symbol of his broken body ; the wine to be poured out as a symbol of his shed blood ; and both to be shared by all the members of the new families—the churches—as a symbol of their vital union with Christ their living Head. Thus, with these

simple elements—the elements by which the body is nourished and strengthened—every church, in whatever country, or age, or condition, might hold before their own eyes, and to the gaze of the perishing around them, memorials of Christ crucified as the hope of every soul.

6. We may now come to consider what things are essential in the valid observance of this Institution. And we first inquire whether it is necessary to always use unleavened bread. Unleavened bread was used by the Saviour, since no other kind was to be found in a Jewish house at the celebration of the Passover. But nothing is commanded on this point. And we are not informed whether the first churches, planted by the Apostles, used leavened or unleavened bread. Were my own choice consulted, I should always prefer bread that had no leaven in it, as, by the power of association, it would assist my mind in recalling more vividly the first observance of the Institution. The Roman Catholic Church has always used unleavened bread, which, being small and thin, is termed the wafer. But the wafer is not broken and distributed to the laity of that church; it is simply dipped into the cup and then barely applied to the lips. Now Protestants have usually preferred leavened bread, because it is more convenient, and perhaps, withal,

from a fear of imitating some of the superstitions of the Papacy. Still, as nothing has been commanded on this point, and the example of the first churches is silent, and as it is usually more convenient, we ought not to assert that the use of unleavened bread is essential to the valid observance of the Institution. On board of a ship it would be convenient to use unleavened bread, and perhaps under some other circumstances. I suppose the proper rule is, to use such bread as we usually make in our families. Any other rule might lead to superstitious notions in regard to the qualities of the element, and so obscure the higher meaning and the spirituality of the Supper. All that is necessary is, that we use bread, and that we break it with devout thanksgiving, and distribute it among ourselves—always recognizing it simply as a symbol of the Lord's body broken for us.

7. In respect to the cup, the Saviour has left no command in regard to the kind or quality of wine to be used. Here again we are left to do the best we can in our circumstances. Certainly it would be advisable to use, if possible, such wine as is not intoxicating. The wine used on Jewish tables, and used by the Saviour in the Passover, was not intoxicating. Manifestly the judicious and proper rule is to use, in each country, the wine that is

common. We regard it as essential, however, that the cup should contain "the fruit of the vine." This was used, doubtless, not simply because it was found on the Passover table, but also because it is most expressive of blood, and because it was pressed out by violence, as was the blood of the Saviour.

8. The frequency with which the Institution should be observed is nowhere specified by our Lord, or by his Apostles. Here again we are left to consult our circumstances and necessities.

It may be observed annually, semi-annually, quarterly, monthly, or weekly, as a church may think proper. The Saviour only commanded that it should be kept, and always kept strictly in remembrance of him. He was less anxious about times and outward circumstances than about the object of the Institution, and the spirit in which it should be observed. That it should be observed frequently, has been inferred from the usage of the first churches, and from the words of Paul. "For *as often* as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." 1 Cor. xi. 26. It is supposed that the apostolic churches established the Supper weekly, in support of which opinion reference is made to Acts xx. 7. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples *came to-*

gether to break bread, Paul preached unto them." But whether this was the practice of the church at Troas or not, since the Agapæ are doubtless here alluded to, it might not have been the usage of all the churches. In short, the New Testament contains no rule in regard to the frequency with which the Institution should be celebrated. Some Protestant Churches, in Scotland, in England, and in this country, observe it on every Lord's Day. In some countries the Romish Church has, for ages, celebrated mass every Sunday. In the Presbyterian Church in this country, the Supper is celebrated either twice or four times a year. Some churches keep it once in two months. But the majority of Protestants, I think, observe it monthly. Every church, of course, is at liberty to choose its own time, as may best promote its right observance, and conduce to the spiritual improvement of the body.

9. A few bodies of Christians, at different times in the history of the church, have associated with the Supper, as if it were an integral part of the Institution, the custom of washing each other's feet. This is done in imitation of that tender and expressive act of our Lord, when, after Supper, he laid aside his garments and took a towel and girded himself—after the manner of

the humblest servant—and poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

They suppose that the Saviour intended to establish a positive rule when he said: "If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." But the Saviour, we conclude, intended to establish a principle and not an outward act, a moral rule in respect to our duties toward each other, and not a particular mode or ceremony of washing each other's feet. Besides, we find no such custom prevailing in the apostolic churches in connection with the Supper. In the act mentioned, our Lord not only manifested his great love for his people, and his wonderful condescension, he also intended to convey to them the important idea that all their purification was from him, that he alone could make them walk in purity and safety. Peter so understood the Saviour's explanation of the act, and hence, after objecting, yielded, saying: "Lord, not my feet only, but my hands and my head." This ceremony was no part of the Supper, for that, we read, "was ended." Still if any are conscientiously moved to observe such

a ceremony, either in connection with the Supper, or at another time, we would not make them offenders for such a cause. It is far better, however, wholly to omit unnecessary things, lest they obscure the truth and the necessary forms.

10. Ought the Supper to be celebrated in the evening? The Paschal Lamb was eaten in the evening; hence it was evening when our Lord instituted the Supper. But there is neither positive law nor example found in the New Testament as to the time of day for its observance. This, like the question of its frequency, is left to the judgment and convenience of the churches. It must be admitted that the evening would furnish associations not belonging to the hours of light, and hence those churches that choose to solemnize the Institution in the evening are not to be reproved. Always, our best convenience, and especially the profit of the church, are to be consulted.

11. The question of posture in the reception of the elements may require a thought, since the practice in this matter is somewhat variant. Ought we to recline? or sit? or stand? or kneel? The Jews reclined at the table; hence Jesus and the Apostles reclined, doubtless, at the Passover and at the Supper. A suitable rule, we suppose, is, to follow the custom of the country

in which we live ; an uncommon attitude would be liable to distract our own mind and to convey to the minds of others the idea that forms and positions were essentials of the Institution.

In this connection, I cannot refrain from noticing the unhappy and unphilosophical remarks of Dr. Dwight, since they have often been repeated and endorsed by others. He says : " Those who contend so strenuously for immersion as essential to the ordinance of baptism, from the meaning of the word *baptizo*, and the few hints which they think they find in the language of the Scriptures, are bound, on their own principle, to spread a table in the evening, to sit in a reclining posture, and thus to celebrate this sacrament on the evening preceding every Lord's Day. All this ought also to be done in a large upper-room, contained in a private dwelling."* Now the time, place, exact posture, and frequency of celebrating the Institution, are not the Institution, or the essential parts of the Institution, because not embodied in the command ; they are only accompanying circumstances. Whereas, baptism is an essential thing, because it is embodied in the Lord's command. Immersion is the central idea and act of the ordinance, as the

* Theology, vol. 4, p. 356.

word *baptizo* declares, and as the *not* "a few hints," but the *constant* and *distinct* allusions found "in the language of the Scriptures," also bear witness. Immersion is not *a* mode, but *the* mode of baptism: it is in *the* mode that the ordinance consists. Christ's statute is fulfilled only by baptism and not by sprinkling or pouring. And in regard to this ordinance we might remark, that the matters of time, place, and exact posture are not the essentials, because not embraced in the command, but merely the accidents or circumstances connected with the ordinance, and hence may be different in different cases.

We are not at liberty to change any of the essential parts of the Supper Institution, or to appropriate it in any other way than the New Testament directs. There must be the bread and the cup. There must be thanksgiving and praise. There must be a remembrance of Christ and a recognition, by faith, of what he has done for us. The Institution must be kept by churches and churches only.

And here, as a matter of plain history, it is but right to add, that the Baptists, beyond every denomination of Christians, have guarded the structure, the essential form, the spirit, the limits, and the application of the Lord's Supper, as well as the ordinance of baptism, from miscon-

ception and abuse, holding singly and persistently to the laws and examples of the New Testament; for which course, unfortunately, they have often been charged with closeness, narrowness, and bigotry.

12. The Church of Rome, consistent with her claim to the Keys of the Kingdom and of plenary power alike to legislate and abrogate in sacred things, has both changed the ordinance of baptism in its ordinary form and in its application, and changed the essential structure and appropriation of the Lord's Supper. As she freely confesses, and for reasons assigned, she changed baptism into sprinkling, and then administered her sprinkling even to infants. By the same authority, she withheld the cup from the laity, only allowing their lips to be touched with the wet wafer, having erected the monstrous dogma of transubstantiation, or the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the consecrated elements. And to complete her error and guilt, she claims, in the celebration of mass, the power of offering the transubstantiated elements as a propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead. The conduct and condition of the Church of Rome may at least remind us of the necessity of adhering closely to the precepts and precedents of the New Testament.

13. The question may here be asked, By whose hands particularly shall the Supper be administered? We reply, by the hands of the church observing it, through the regular and proper officers of the church. The Institution was given not to the Apostles as mere apostles, not to ministers, not to deacons, but to churches as churches. Churches are the only corporations or legally organized bodies known in the New Testament, and appointed by Christ. All ordinances and institutions must, from the nature of the case, be given to corporations or legally organized bodies. The Supper Institution therefore is given to each New Testament church. And as the official acts of a body should be performed by the regular officers of the body, the Supper should be administered by the pastor of the church, assisted, as may be necessary, by the deacons. The right and power of administration is always in the church, inhering in the body by the authority of Christ. Officers act for the church, as the servants of the body. And under peculiar circumstances, a church may invite the officers of another church to assist them in performing the public or official acts of the church. But in no case should a church surrender its independency or any of its corporate rights. Their faithfulness to Christ, and their responsibility for the order of the gos-

pel, should stimulate them in defending the purity and powers of the house of God.

14. But a greater question arises; why do we, under the dispensation of the Spirit, need such an institution at all; and how is it adapted to do us spiritual good? To this we reply: According to a fixed law of our nature we receive most of our impressions, even of spiritual things, directly or indirectly through the senses. Indeed this may be termed the great educational law of human nature. We are well aware that all our first ideas of things are obtained through the channels of our senses. And if we carefully consider the matter, we shall find that however far we may have advanced in any department of knowledge, being now able to proceed some lengths and ascend some heights, by the power of internal and original suggestion and abstract thought, yet we are always greatly helped by sensible objects. We always, to say the least, need our senses as auxiliaries and prompters. The deepest and most abiding impressions are made upon our minds through the senses. The sight of our eyes, and the hearing of our ears, and the thrills of touch, do deeply affect our hearts. This great law is constantly experienced, but is not sufficiently studied and husbanded in the enjoyments, obligations, and labors of life.

We may read of a man's dying a painful and dreadful death; but to witness such a death makes a very different impression. We may hear of a terrible conflagration; but to see immense buildings wrapped in red, wrathful flames rolling up to the sky in wild fury while the huge piles fall blazing and crashing to the ground, affects us far more deeply, and leaves upon us ineffaceable impressions. Pictures are always more impressive than narratives, because they enter, as it were, into us by the natural inlets of our nature; they reach the soul through the shortest and most natural channels. All educators ought to remember this fact, and follow this great principle or law of our nature. Sensible objects and manifestations are adapted to impress and instruct us far more than bare narratives and recitals; and this is by a fixed law of our organism.

Now it was in accordance with this great law of our nature, that the Lord Jesus, the author of our nature and the plan of salvation, appointed the ordinances of Baptism and the Supper. He knew that it would be best for his people, and for the world, that there should be a visible boundary to his churches, speaking of what was necessary on the part of all who should enter his visible kingdom; and also a visible institution in each of his churches, speaking of the vital con-

nection of each of the members with himself. Here is evinced Christ's wisdom and goodness and love. Baptism is a beautiful and speaking ordinance, epitomising to the mind, through the senses, alike to the person baptized and to those who witness the baptism, the great doctrines of salvation, showing the necessity of a new birth, a death to sin, a resurrection to newness of life, a vital union with Christ, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The Supper Institution is equally significant, but of other truths. It is a picture of Christ crucified. It is the death of the cross pressed home upon the awakened attention of believers through the senses of hearing, sight and touch. What a simple, rich, effectual representation of Christ crucified is the Supper Institution when properly observed! As a means of grace, accommodated to our natures, no narrative could compare with it.

The solemn preparation; the serious assembling; the prayerful and penitent language employed in the introduction; the earnest thanksgivings uttered; the breaking of the bread; the silent participation; the second giving of thanks and imploring the Holy Spirit's presence; the pouring of the cup; the silent participation while each soul commences with Christ and prays for perfect cleansing; and then the common hymn of praise; all give to the Institution a

meaning, a solemnity, a force, a spiritual power beyond the scope of language to express. It is an unrivalled Institution, as confessed by all who, having the proper qualifications of heart and of life, have enjoyed it. As in significancy, so in force, it far surpasses the old Passover. The parts of the Institution are all perfectly simple, and so are easily contemplated by the mind. The manner of observing it is plain, easy and natural, hence the mind is not diverted or in the least distracted. The symbols are appropriate, as denoting that our spiritual life is drawn from Christ and sustained by him. The breaking of the bread and the pouring of the wine are lively portraits of the sacrifice, sufferings and death of Christ. There is nothing wanting to make the scene complete, impressive and instructive. We seem to hear, and see, and feel that Christ our Passover was slain for us ; and we grasp anew the hope and promise of seeing him as he is, and sitting down with him in his heavenly kingdom. And no Christian, who thoroughly studies this Institution, will feel that he can afford to neglect the ordinance of Christ, by which he is admitted into a visible family of our Lord, so that he can share, among the duties of a Christian life, the privilege and joys incident to a proper observance of this preëminently beautiful, significant and profitable Institution.

CHAPTER III.

DESIGN OF THE INSTITUTION.

1. THE central idea of an Institution is found in its Design. Unless we comprehend this, it will be profitless to study its origin or contemplate its structure. And, as we shall have occasion to show hereafter, not a few who observe the Lord's Supper, seem not fully to have apprehended its design. Every form of Christian service and worship should be attended with its fitting spirit and in view of its proposed ends. And happy is that church that duly keeps the Supper Institution in anticipation of its true purposes.

2. In seeking after the design of the Supper, our views may be somewhat assisted by glancing at the purpose of the Passover which the Supper has supplanted. The Paschal Supper was a simple, but grand, old Institution, designed to memorialize the salvation of the Hebrew families on that terrible night when the destroying angel swept his

dark, cold wings over the doomed land of Egypt. Well might all the children of Abraham that came out of the land of their prison-house, remember the night of their departure; that solemn night when, "at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of the cattle;" when "there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead;" when the children of Israel "took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders," and they went "out of the land in haste." The Hebrew families were spared in the deadly visitation, because the blood of the Paschal Lamb was found on their door-posts.

We can easily imagine how, in after years, these families, as they prepared and ate the Passover, called to mind the scenes of their wonderful deliverance, and the great grace of the Lord their God. The Paschal Lamb, the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, the blood, the attitude of travelers, all were "tokens" of those wonderful scenes in which their salvation began. In their thoughts and conversation, while keeping the Institution, they lived over again their former experiences,

and so felt fresh gushings of gratitude and praise to the God of their salvation. We can see at once that no words, no reading of records, no commemorative songs, no stately history, no recital, could have so preserved and impressed the memory of that wonderful deliverance upon the minds and hearts of the Hebrews through all their history, as did the observance of the **Passover**.

And, as if to make its effect more direct, distinct, and national, the Lord gave the Institution to every single family of the nation, with the specific command that each family should observe it by itself. Thus every Hebrew man, and woman, and child even, was made, as it were, to see and feel and taste that the Lord their God was a Saviour.

3. But the **Passover** is far surpassed in simplicity, significance and moral effect by the **Christian Supper**. The **Supper** memorializes a spiritual deliverance, a moral rescue far greater than any temporal emancipation, and is withal a solemn pledge of the second coming of our Deliverer to take us to the heavenly Canaan. It speaks of a mightier and more enduring intervention than that by which Israel was released from his prison-house, and redeemed from the land of oppression; it speaks of a salvation from the bondage of sin and the grasp of Satan,

a salvation from eternal death and an inheritance with the Son of God in his Father's kingdom above.

4. The leading design of the Supper Institution is to present to our minds the Lamb of God who taketh away our sins. This is the central, vital truth of the Christian System, and indeed of the whole body of revelation. The Supper re-enunciates the substance of the gospel; that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life; that the Son of God, who thought it not robbery to be equal with the Father, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that we, through his obedience and sufferings, might be saved. The breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the crimson cup, show us the body and blood, the life and death, the obedience and sacrifices of the Son of God. By the symbols, we are enabled and even compelled to recall, as we could not by reading or reflection upon a record, the tragedy of Calvary, the Drama of the Cross—the theme of angels, and the central truth of earth's history.

No words, no songs, no paintings, could accomplish, in the mind, and on the heart, the results that are effected by witnessing and sharing the Supper. We have looked upon paintings and engravings of the Supper scene; some have these suspended on the walls of their dwellings: some have the scene painted on the walls of churches; but these representations of the pencil, though they may aid in making the record felt and remembered, fail to impress us as deeply and as personally as a participation in the Supper, where the living voice, the tangible elements, and the whole order of the Institution, under the command of Christ—all are gently, strongly pressed home upon the soul through the senses.

5. Not of facts only, but of doctrines as well, does this precious Institution of the gospel speak. In speaking of the Cross, it of necessity speaks of the great doctrines of the Christian system that cluster on the Cross like jewels on a crown.

Here we seem to hear it reasserted that all men are lost; that all are under condemnation; that works and prayers and sacrifices are in themselves of no avail; that salvation is impossible except through another, and that one the victim offered on Calvary.

Here we seem to see in vivid portraiture the

doctrine of atonement; that the sins of men must be expiated by sufferings, by the sacrifice of a life infinitely valuable, by the shedding of blood so efficacious that it can cleanse from all sin.

Here we discover anew, and contemplate with thanksgiving, the great doctrine that by grace we are saved through faith; that unless God in his love had formed a purpose of mércy toward us, and had laid help on One mighty to save, we all had perished under the hand of justice.

In contemplating the great fact that the death of the Son of God was necessary in procuring our salvation, we discover the greatness of sin and the deep dye of our guilt. Nothing less than a sacrifice of infinite value could meet our case and cancel our sin. Had it been possible to save man by a less sacrifice, the only begotten of the Father would not have been delivered up for us: had it been possible, the cup of sufferings and death would not have been pressed to the lips of God's Son.

Moreover, the dignity and worth of the victim; the thoroughness of his manifold sufferings; and the fact that his propitiation was accepted by the Father, as evinced by his being raised from the dead, shows us the certainty, as well as the greatness, of our deliverance. He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him to death for us,

will he not also with him freely give us all things ? And if we are saved by his death, much more shall we now be saved by his life, for he ever liveth to make intercession for us ; and he has given us the Supper as a pledge of his constant love and care, and his purpose to take us to himself. As our lives are hid with Christ in God, the destroying angel will pass over us in the last great day.

Thus in the Supper Institution the cardinal truths of the Christian system are written out as with a visible and ever-recording hand. These truths are made almost to utter themselves audibly. And every true believer is made to hear and feel them. The Supper is an instructive, engaging, speaking, preaching Institution. And it preaches more plainly, more truthfully, more eloquently, more touchingly, more persuasively, than any lips could preach ; for all human lips have some stains and some unhappy associations.

6. But further. The Supper is monumental ; it was designed, withal, I think, to stand among the proofs of the life and mission of Christ. It is a witness to the gospel history as well as to the gospel doctrines. It is a historical witness, very much as was the Passover to the Jews, and as is the Fourth of July to the inhabitants of our country. And it perpetuates

a greater event than the emancipation of the Israelites, and a greater act than the declaration of a nation's independence; it marks the capital event of the world's history, and the final act that brought deliverance to a suffering and helpless race. Some monument, then, of the event and act, is highly appropriate; a monument so simple that it may be carried to the end of the earth, and so significant that the lowest and humblest may contemplate it and read the great things that it perpetuates. And to extend it as far as possible, with all its attendant blessings, the Saviour put it into the hands of every true company of disciples, however small, who in love to their Lord should sacredly keep it.

The same office, in part, belongs to the ordinance of baptism. This ordinance was instituted as the peculiar initiatory rite of admission into the family privileges, rights and duties of Christ's new and visible kingdom. It was a new rite, chosen expressly for its significancy, and as the door or act by which the convert or new-born person enters a church of Christ. It is therefore, in part, a monumental ordinance, certifying the origin, the nature, the regenerating power and life-imparting spirit of the gospel. And Jesus himself, though not needing this ordinance for himself, but in fulfillment and ratification of the

order of his kingdom, of the path of duty, as an example to all who should believe on Him, and propose to follow Him, was meekly baptized by John in Jordan's waves.

But the Supper Institution is a more striking and more constant monument of the setting up of the new dispensation. No one, who is in a reasonable frame of mind, can witness either the ordinance of Baptism or the Supper Institution, observed according to the requirements of the New Testament, without recalling the scenes that transpired on the banks of the Jordan and in the upper room and on Calvary. Baptism and the Supper are monuments all luminous with gospel history and radiant with suggestions of gospel truth.

7. The world-wide custom of preserving the memory of great personages and perpetuating great events by monuments, institutions and periodical celebrations, is, within certain limits, a wise practice, conformed to the demands of our nature and conducive to private and public good. We love to celebrate events in which we have a personal interest. By outward ceremonies, as well as by words, we love to recall to our minds all that pertains to some great event which involved our welfare and the interests of mankind. And when we owe our dearest privileges and en-

joyments and hopes to the labors and sacrifices of an individual—as to a Washington—we delight to delineate his form and features on canvas ; we give his name in charge to the marble and to the sweet lyre ; we perpetuate his sacrifices and his virtues by the historic page and the monumental pile. Thus doing, we express our gratitude ; we honor what is noble in our natures ; we benefit ourselves by cherishing and endeavoring to emulate what is praiseworthy ; and we also stimulate others to love and practice good deeds.

8. In conformity with these impulses of our nature,—this great constitutional law of humanity, not wholly obliterated or perverted by man's fall,—the Author and Finisher of eternal salvation has wisely and mercifully furnished us, not only with an inspired record of the plan of salvation, but also with the deeply significant, truth-conveying, truth-speaking ordinance of Baptism and the Supper Institution, in which we all, who have tasted of his grace, may personally participate for our own good and the world's benefit. In loving, grateful obedience to our Lord, we accept these monuments and hold them up before the world.

9. As a proof of any given event, the celebration of a certain day, or the existence and habitual observance of a monumental institution, is

an evidence much stronger than mere documentary proof. It is an easier thing to forge documents than to forge institutions. Books and papers have often been palmed off upon an unsuspecting and credulous community; whole countries even have for a time been thus deceived. But it is quite a different task to set up customs, and celebrations, and monuments, and institutions, and make the people believe that these have existed from the period of the event falsely named; no country was ever thus deceived. Memorial usages must have a substantive foundation, a real historical origin. Think, for a moment, how difficult it would be to persuade the inhabitants of any country, except our own, that they themselves and all their ancestors had celebrated the Fourth of July as a day when a great republican revolution was inaugurated among them.

10. Quite as easy would it have been, at any time, to have palmed off upon the Christian world the idea that all the churches then existing and all that had preceded them had been in the habit of observing the Supper Institution when such had never been the fact. The Supper, then, is a monumental proof of the origin and truth of the gospel. And when to this consideration we add the numerous other irrefragable proofs of the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament

Scriptures, we see something of the solid historical basis of our holy religion. And when we, still further, add the internal evidences of the divine character of the New Testament, and the evidences of Christian experience—each convert being a witness of a divine life imparted to him above the power of nature to impart—and, to all, superadd the early miracles wrought by Christ and the Apostles, and the long line of martyrs in the churches, with the numerous writings of Christian men in every department of knowledge by which the history of Christianity is imbedded and embalmed in the world's history, we shall discover that the proofs of Christianity are a mighty, magnificent, royal, impregnable fortress.

11. Again: As the Supper Institution is a standing monument of the fact that Christ came into the world to seek and save the lost, and gave his life a ransom for sin-bound souls, so likewise is it a sure prophecy and pledge that he will return again to close up the dispensation which he established, and take his ransomed people to his Father's house on high.

Paul says, "As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death *till he come.*" For the instruction, encouragement, and strengthening of his disciples, the Saviour intended that the Institution should both

point backward to the great Day of Atonement—when the earth trembled, the rocks were rent, the sun was veiled and the graves gave up a portion of their dead, because the Son of God hung on his cross, a sacrifice for a guilty, perishing race,—and then point forward to the next greatest day of earth's history, when this same Wonderful Personage, no more a servant and a sufferer, but a Mighty King, shall come in the clouds of heaven, with all his holy angels with him, to take his trusting followers to his heavenly glory. In further proof of this prophetic office of the Institution, we have the words of the Saviour himself: "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.*" How full of meaning then! A memorial of salvation furnished; a pledge of redemption to be completed: looking back to Christ on the cross; looking forward to Christ coming in the clouds of heaven, and afterward distributing joys to the redeemed in heaven. How full of truth! Abounding in the sweetest, tenderest, most subduing memories; overflowing with promises and encouragements the most pure, elevating, sublime and sanctifying! What a heavenly entertainment!

12. The Supper was designed, as we have seen, to be a direct and powerful means of grace, when

understandingly observed. Such it has always been felt to be where simple, earnest, intelligent piety has flourished and unfolded itself. It is a means adapted to all the members of a church, whether high or low, old or young; for the symbols are so simple and expressive, that a picture, with all its liveliness and power of easy suggestions, is addressed even to the lowest capacity. Not as in listening to preaching and in reading, where intellectual culture is often demanded; here the senses aid the mind and supply in part the lack of power in conducting intellectual processes, and the Holy Spirit breathing upon and in the soul, interprets the symbols, impressing the heart in a way that enables us to feel, if we cannot utter, the sentiments:

“How sweet and awful is the place,
With Christ within the doors;
While everlasting Love displays
The choicest of her stores.”

13. If, as an elegant, philosophical writer has observed—and who can doubt the truth of the observation—“We are insensibly transformed into the image which is continually in our eye—we are readily and almost necessarily assimilated in character to the objects of our habitual contemplation;” if this be true—if this be a law of

our nature, how wisely, and we must add, how mercifully has the Saviour husbanded this law for our highest moral good, by presenting his own blessed self—our Lord—our Pattern—our righteousness—our Life—before us as an object of habitual contemplation. The law and method of growing in grace and in the knowledge of holy and divine things, of growing up into the image of God, is found in “looking unto Jesus;” in following Jesus; in studying his character, his life, and his sufferings. Thus, under the Spirit’s power, we are changed from glory to glory; we are transformed in character into his perfect image. It is in this connection that we discover one of the high and holy designs of the Supper Institution. O, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and mercy of Christ in the provisions of his Gospel!

14. Lastly—we should ever bear in mind that the Supper was appointed as a means of communing with Christ. It was given to each church for the purpose of assisting every member in remembering, contemplating, and, by faith, holding spiritual converse, or communion, with Him who is the way, the truth, and the life. The Supper, in all its parts, speaks of Christ, and of Christ only; no other object is introduced; no other subject is even associated with

it. And the Saviour expressly commanded—
“This do in remembrance of me.”

15. The Supper Institution was not designed to express our fellowship for one another. Such, therefore, as use it, or rather pervert it, in order to express their relations and feelings toward each other, however proper and praiseworthy their feelings may be in themselves, make an unauthorized and quite improper use of the Institution. Manifestly there is nothing found in the narrative of the origin—nothing in the plan of the structure—nothing in the mentioned or implied design—nothing in the parts taken separately—nothing in the order of the whole of the Institution, to convey the idea that, by means of it we are to commune with one another. And it is certainly wrong to pervert this priceless Institution from its original and single and sublime purpose of holding up Christ before us for our contemplation, to the lower purpose of signifying and expressing our relations and attachments to each other. My Christian brother has not died for me, nor poured out his life for my salvation. Nor have I given my life a ransom for others. There is nothing in the Supper Institution that speaks of what I have done, that I should there be an object of special contemplation by others. Those emblems speak not of what you have done

for me, that I should use them as a token of my fellowship and communion with you. Have we been crucified that we should take those emblems to speak of what we have suffered and what we deserve from others. We may love one another; we may have fellowship for each other; we may have true spiritual communion with each other; we may express our regard for each other by words, by deeds, by uniting in praise and prayer and in Christian labors; all this is proper and necessary. But we may not pervert the Lord's Supper into our supper, and make it a criterion of creature gratifications and creature communion. The Supper speaks altogether of what our Lord and Saviour has done to save our souls from death. The Saviour has set this Institution in each church, that all his true followers might have him before them as the Founder, Head and Life of the church, and habitually cherish him as the object of their contemplations. In observing the Supper, nothing should intervene between Christ and our souls. No man, for the sake of exalting the church to which he belongs, for the sake of depreciating any other church, for the sake of magnifying religious offices, or for any other plea whatever, even the smooth plea of charity, ought to urge me to do what the Saviour has not commanded in keeping the Supper, and what indeed

the Saviour has evidently excluded in saying: "This do in remembrance of me." We must not rob Christ for the sake of pleasing one another. Our Lord has provided abundant occasions, and opportunities, and means, for expressing and freely cultivating our tenderest regards for our fellow-Christians, without marring and perverting the Supper Institution. Some think that Judas shared the Supper with the eleven. Certainly he participated in the Passover. In this participation there surely was no intended pledge of spiritual fellowship. The Saviour did not appoint the Supper as a mode of expressing his approbation and fellowship for those who loved him. He did not invite the seventy, or the hundred and twenty, or even his dear mother, to thus evince their communion with their fellow-disciples. No; he had quite another purpose in view, as we have before stated. He gave the Institution to his churches to be a church institution, memorial and promissory of himself.

16. The Supper Institution, when properly observed in the churches of Christ, is a powerful conservator of Gospel truth. An excellent writer has remarked upon the Sabbath: "This truth, from the history of the world, will bear to be recorded in letters of gold, that the true religion

will exist among men only when they strictly observe the Sabbath." We might add, that true Christianity, spiritual and saving religion, will exist best in those churches where the Supper Institution is clearly apprehended in its great design of holding up the Lord Jesus Christ, and is devoutly observed as the means of communing with Him and not with one another. We defend, then, the structure, the design, and the spiritual character of the Supper in view of the honor of Christ and the purity of his churches. The holy Institution is all beautifully set with truths and doctrines, with facts and promises, with mementos and pledges, by the hands of the Redeemer. And let nothing else be intruded to conceal or obscure what the divine hand has set in order and made sufficient for his people. It was when men had succeeded in changing the form and application of the initiatory ordinance of God's house, and in perverting the Supper Institution, that they were enabled to corrupt the life of the churches. Having bribed the sentinel at the door, and having poisoned the well of water within, they subverted the household and transformed the church of the living God into a temple filled with traffickers and the idols of their superstitions. When the walls of the city

are thrown down, the enemy can come in at pleasure.

17. Churches, like individuals, have a body and a life; a frame and a spirit: the body must be in health that the soul may be at ease; the frame must be perfect that the spirit may act freely. Indeed, of Christianity in the world, it may be said, it is a life, dwelling in, and working through, a body of doctrines and a frame of outward duties; every doctrine is an expression of the divine indwelling life; every duty and outward observance or act of obedience, is an exercise for the development, the culture, and also the dissemination of the hidden, heavenly life. Baptism is of no avail except to the person who has been born again. The doctrines of grace, to the un-renewed man, are more unsuited than the armor of Saul on the limbs of David; if put upon an unprepared man, they prevent proper action. The Supper Institution is proper only for a church, and is properly observed only when it is celebrated with a view of refreshing all the members of the church by bringing Christ into their habitual contemplation, with the view of holding alike the ministry and the membership, with all their varying gifts, around Christ as the centre and the heart of the body. And

as every church should represent Christ to the world, the Supper is a needed church Institution, being a visible representation of the world's Redeemer, and an epitomized presentation of the cardinal doctrines of the redemptive scheme.



CHAPTER IV.

LIMITS OF THE INSTITUTION.

1. HAVING treated of the origin, the structure, and the design of the Supper Institution, we come now to consider its limits. This is not an unimportant division of our subject. Every Institution must necessarily have some limits; its application must be bounded. If it be stretched beyond its proper and appointed boundaries it loses its character and use, and will sooner or later lose even its structure, and consequently fail, in proportion to its misappropriation, to accomplish its designed results. That it has been stretched beyond its lawful limits, we shall hereafter have occasion to show.

2. The Passover, which the Lord's Supper historically succeeds, may, at least, furnish an analogy in the limits assigned to that once important Institution. The Paschal Supper was committed to families, as families, and the Hebrews were strictly forbidden to observe it in any other capacity. They were commanded to

take "a lamb for a house;" and it was added: "in one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth aught of the flesh abroad out of the house." The design of this order is evident. The institution, with all its impressive lessons, was thus brought home to every house and to every person. Had it been observed by the Israelites in a national capacity, or by the several tribes in their tribal relations, it would plainly have been less definite in its lessons, and far less impressive in its moral character. When the Lord saved his people from oppression and death in Egypt, he chose, for his own glory and the good of his people, to place a memorial and pledge of his mercy and protection, in every house, that thus every Jew might distinctly feel that the Lord was his God and that He cared for his house and for the members of his family. The plan of the divine interposition and the institution that memorialized it, were alike marked with that wisdom and mercy which belong to the ways of God. He that set the inhabitants of the earth in families, gave to his ancient covenant people at least one family institution, that in the primal, and nearest and dearest relations of life they might have one significant memento and pledge of divine favor and protection. So every house contained an altar of grace.

3. Now, very much as the Passover was committed to Jewish families, the Supper Institution is committed to Christian churches, the only appointed organizations under the New Dispensation. It seems plain that the Supper was given to churches, as churches. To whom else, we may inquire, could it be given? Must not every ordinance and every institution be put into the hands of some specified body or organization? Who ever heard of an ordinance that was to be executed by no one in particular; that was given to no class of persons to be administered? What king or legislator ever acted in this manner? And who ever heard of an institution that belonged to everybody in general, and nobody in particular? Every institution is put into the hands of some corporation duly organized and fully recognized by the legislating power. But there is no corporation named by Christ except churches. The New Testament knows no organizations but "companies of believers called out by authority" of Christ, that is churches. Hence to churches was committed the faith and order of the gospel—the keeping of the oracles of God, the defense of the faith, the ministry of the word, the ordaining of Christian officers, the administration of baptism, the keeping of the

Supper, and the spread of the gospel through the world.

The Saviour instituted the Supper with the twelve, and committed it, as we have seen, to their hands. Now they were the first church, the first *ecclesia*—"company called out by authority;"—they were the first who had left all and followed him. The other disciples "were added" to these, and so added to a regular church, coming under regulations and accepting specified duties. So the Supper was not given to believers promiscuously, but to an organized or banded company of believers under the authority of Christ.

True, there were many baptized believers in and around Jerusalem at this time. But, in this formative period of the church, much material had to be prepared and made all ready for the house before the house was erected. Afterward the pieces were added to the building as fast as they were made ready. The Apostles constituted the frame of the house and were so raised; then, or soon after, the believers around them were "added unto them." And only those that were "added," that is, only members of the *ecclesia*, or company, were admitted to share in the Supper Institution.

And so, everywhere, at least, so far as we can learn from the New Testament, among the first

churches this rule was followed, of holding the Supper Institution as a church institution, and admitting only church members to participate in its celebration. The Apostles and the members of other churches, when with any of the churches, united with these churches in observing the Institution, but not with the notion of communing with men, but of communing with Christ, for the Institution had not yet lost its spiritual significance; and yet the churches held the Institution in their own keeping, as committed to their hands. They held the Supper as belonging not to churches collectively, and not to ministers separately or collectively; but always to churches, separately and singly, as the families or societies of Jesus.

4. Neander, in his "Planting and Training of the Christian Church," though he seems not to have fully grasped the idea of the corporate character and independency of the first churches, has some remarks that bear pertinently on the subject in hand. He says: "The form of the Christian community, and of the public Christian worship, the archetype of all the later Christian *Cultus*, arose at first, without any preconceived plan, from the peculiar nature of the higher life that belonged to all true Christians. There was, however, this difference, that the first Christian

community formed as it were one family; the power of the newly-awakened feeling of Christian fellowship, the feeling of the common grace of redemption, outweighed all other personal and public feelings; and all other relations were subordinated to this one great relation."* All felt bound by their common relation to Christ, so that Christ was their Head and Heart. He also remarks: "Whoever acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah, received him consequently as the infallible divine prophet, and implicitly submitted to his instructions as communicated by his personal ministry, and afterward by his inspired organs, the Apostles. Hence baptism, at this period, in its peculiar Christian meaning, referred to this one article of faith, which constituted the essence of Christianity, as baptism *into Jesus*, into the name of Jesus; it was the holy rite which sealed the connection with Jesus as the Messiah."† He adds: "The celebration of the Holy Supper continued to be connected with the common meal, in which all as members of one family joined, as in the primitive Jewish church, and agreeably to its first institution."‡

And in his "Church History," he says of the celebration of the Supper, "no one could be

* "Planting and Training of the Christian Church," p. 28.

† Ibid. p. 27.

‡ Ibid. p. 103.

present who was not a member of the Christian church, and incorporated into it by the rite of baptism." * * * "These celebrations, from their very nature, were designed only for the members of the church."*

The intimation of Neander, that the first churches lacked organic character, is in part true, and in part, we are compelled to think, not wholly true. The New Testament was not yet written and compiled. All things were done by order of the Apostles, to whom Christ, "through the Holy Ghost, had given commandment," and who were, therefore, instructed in "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." They promulgated the truths and established the laws that they had received. The planting of the first churches, both among Jews and Gentiles, where there was so much that was uncongenial and even diametrically opposite to Christianity, required an easy but yet a definite process. The first development of these churches, like churches now planted among the heathen, under the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit, must have been free, like the growth of a family, but yet truly organic, and according to pre-established laws.

* "Planting and Training of the Christian Church," vol. 1, p. 327.

And even the New Testament, we find to be less a book of statutes, specifying all the particulars, the minutiae of church organization and church duties, than of general principles which, under the interpretation of the Spirit, who is in every convert, are made abundantly to supply the lack of details. When men's hearts are right and their motives rise out of a pure spirit, as is supposed in the case of every regenerate soul, they need but few statutes and technical rules: they need but examples and hints, if these only come from the will of Christ: they do indeed need a few rules, for human nature is not a fountain, in itself, of law and light. And where this right disposition of heart is wanting, as in the case of the unregenerate, no statutes and rules would supply the defect. In the Christian scheme the Holy Spirit disposes Christians to accept all truth and to do right, and the New Testament, unlike the statute books of men, contains only a few statutes of a leading character and makes up the rest of the sum of duties by examples and hints, leaving, of necessity, some things to shape themselves according to new circumstances. As the entire government of God over us is adapted to moral agents in a state of probation, long drawn, particularizing and exhaustive statutes, like many human codes, would be inappropriate

and would conflict with the necessary laws of our freedom and our responsible development. Too much government would crush, rather than promote, our moral growth.

Every church is organized according to the given laws of Christ and the precedents found in the New Testament. And every church is complete in itself, like a family, and is perfectly independent, having no corporate or organic connection with any other church, or any other organization. Under the laws and examples of the New Testament, a church is competent to transact all business and direct all its efforts. All its officers are to be freely chosen; and these may be few or many, as the magnitude of the church and its duties may require. They are chosen to serve the church and to preach Christ to the world. In the service needed in the church, the public teacher, pastor, or bishop, will, of course, administer the rites of the church, will administer the ordinance of baptism, and, as the chosen head of the spiritual family, preside at the Supper. Every church is complete in itself. In the absence of its ordained officers, the body may still act, either by inviting an officer of another church to act for them, or by deputing one of their own number. So there can be a church without a bishop, as there can be a state

without a king. And both Baptism and the Supper are in the hands of churches. In short, every church is competent and is empowered to present the gospel, in all its parts, functions, and powers, to the world, as much so as though no other church existed on the face of the earth. Yet each church should act toward every other church, planted on the same divine grounds, according to the great irreversible moral law: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Then each church, in its completeness and independency, will know no jars or ill-will with other churches, but will be filled with responsibility, and surrounded with perfect freedom to exercise all its gifts and power, in honor of Christ and for the world's evangelization. Would that such a state of things everywhere existed in the churches of Christ! Then would peace be restored, light would break forth, and earth's millennial day be ushered in.

5. Another question of limit arises. Ought the Supper ever to be carried out of the church assembly to accommodate any of the members of the church? Not only in ages past of the history of Christianity, but even now, in many churches, we meet with a practice of carrying the Supper, in whole or in part, to private dwellings to be dispensed to the sick and infirm. This

was not so in the earliest times. After carefully examining this question, especially after considering the results of this practice in the views which it begets of the Institution itself, we are disposed to express an opinion against the practice. The idea that the Supper must be received by those who cannot come into the church assembly, and the consent of the church to carry the Institution to them, naturally favors, if it does not directly engender, the dangerous notion of sacramental efficacy. Now, if from sickness or extreme infirmity, one is not able to submit to the ordinance of baptism, he is exempted from its obligations; the condition of an individual is no sufficient apology for changing an ordinance, giving it another form and hence another force. "It is required of a man according to that which he hath, and not according to that which he hath not." The same remark may be applied to attendance on public divine worship: when individuals cannot attend they are not required to be present; grace shall be given to them to supply their lack. So also in regard to the Supper; if any cannot come into the church assembly, the Lord will bless them at their homes, if they truly desire his presence; and he will, by the Spirit, comfort and nourish their hearts. There is nothing saving in Baptism or in partaking of

the Lord's Supper. They are only means of grace to the regenerate, appointed for such as are able to share them. If the Supper has been committed to the church to be celebrated in the church assembly, let it be so kept. The individual is not the church, any more than a single Jew was a Hebrew family.

6. But it is the duty of all the members of a church, who are able to attend the public worship of the church, to be present with the church in the observance of the Supper Institution. As no redeemed soul is excused from putting on Christ before the world by baptism, where circumstances will allow, since a refusal to obey a specific command is evidence of the want of an obedient heart, and the refusal strikes at the organization of churches, and is, so far, a subversive blow to the Kingdom of God among men; so a refusal to assemble with Christians, especially with the church to which we belong, and to join them, in obedience to Christ, in celebrating the Supper Institution, evinces a want of Christian temper or Christian knowledge. The Saviour has issued no superfluous commands. When he said: "This do in remembrance of me," he addressed every member of every church that has the ability to obey him.

7. Our conclusions thus far are these: the

Supper Institution does not not belong to synods, or councils, or presbyteries, or associations, or consociations, or conventions, or priests, or ministers, or private individuals, but to churches as churches. Hence it has often been carried beyond its legitimate limits. It has been appropriated also to purposes which its Founder never contemplated.

8. This brings into view again a misapplication and serious perversion of the Institution touched upon when speaking of its design ; namely, its appropriation to purposes of Christian fellowship and what has been called Christian communion, that is, the communion of Christians with each other in the use of the Supper. Now it is evident from the history of its origin, from the study of its structure, from its design as explained by the Saviour and understood by the Apostles, as also from the separate services named and the symbols employed, that the Institution is limited to the one purpose of holding communion with Christ. Its plain limits, therefore, utterly exclude the idea of our attempting to commune with one another by this means. By attaching this idea to the Supper, we greatly impair the uniqueness, and lower the dignity, and obscure the high and holy purpose of the Insti-

tution. And certainly we have no right to add to it or take from it.

9. What says Neander of the ideas belonging to and limiting the Institution in the early churches? "Hence Christ said, when he distributed wine and bread among his disciples, that this bread and this wine were to be to them—and consequently to all the faithful of all times—his body and his blood: the body which he offered for the forgiveness of their sins, for their salvation, for the establishment of the new theocratic relation; and as these outward symbols represented to them his body and his blood, so would he himself be hereafter spiritually present with them, just as truly as he was now visibly among them; and as they now sensibly partook of these corporeal means of sustenance, which represented to them his body and his blood, so should they receive him, the Saviour, present in divine power, wholly within them for the nourishment of their souls; they should spiritually eat his flesh and drink his blood, (John vi.) should make his flesh and blood their own, and cause their whole nature to be more and more penetrated by that divine principle of life which they were to receive through their communion with him."*

* Church History, vol. 1, p. 324.

These remarks of the great historian may be regarded as a beautiful exposition of the words of Christ to his disciples, "This do in remembrance of me:" meanwhile they delineate the views of the Supper held in the first churches. All ideas, consequently, of creature communion or the expression of Christian regards, by means of the Supper, are out of place, and even positively injurious to the unity and holy design of the Institution.

10. The unauthorized appropriation of the Supper of which we have been speaking, has sought a justification in the current use and common acceptance of the word communion. But here the evil hides behind its own works; endeavors to justify itself, like the old spirit of the Pharisees, by a false gloss which it has succeeded in putting upon the words of Scripture. Hence we object to the use of the term Communion for designating the Supper; many have attached, and still hold, a wrong idea with the term. It is safer to designate the Institution as the Lord's Supper. The word "communion," as applied to the Supper, occurs but once in our version of the New Testament: "The cup of blessing 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? For we,

being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. True, this word, in the original, is the same as that found in Acts ii. 42; 1 John i. 3, and in other passages (*koinonia*), which is there translated "fellowship"—its proper meaning. This would have been, perhaps, a better translation in the passage quoted; and Paul's argument (verses 16–21,) would be more clear with such a translation; indeed, in verse 20, the same word occurs again, where our translators have rendered it "fellowship." But does Paul's argument favor the particular idea of fellowship or communion against which we have protested? His argument is thus succinctly and truly stated by Olshausen: "As, confessedly, the partaking of the holy Supper, is a *means of fellowship with Christ*; and that of the Jewish sacrificial feast of fellowship with the altar, and with him to whom the altar is dedicated, that is, God; so do the heathen sacrifices form a fellowship with devils." There is indeed a fellowship, a peculiar and glorious fellowship in the body, the church, but it is derived from the communion or fellowship of each member with Christ, the Head and Life. Of this fellowship, mentioned in verse 17, Olshausen thus pertinently speaks: "As all who constitute the church eat of one and the same

bread, so this common participation converts their plurality into a higher unity, a 'body of Christ,' in a comprehensive sense, so that the church itself may be called Christ (xii. 12)." The participation, therefore, or the fellowship, we see, is with Christ; and with one another in no other sense than through Christ; not directly with one another. This last fellowship is not an object directly sought, or even had particularly in mind, but is one of the reflex influences of the direct and sought fellowship with Christ. We will only add the remark of Christian Knapp on this passage. "It denotes the profession which Christians make, by partaking in common, of their interest in Christ, of the saving efficacy of his death for them, and their own actual enjoyment of its consequences."*

11. Since then this institution is not a Fellowship Supper, or Communion Feast, for the expression of our charity and affection for one another, but the Lord's Supper, in which we are to remember and hold spiritual communion or fellowship with Him, we might reply to those who style our views and taunt our practice as "close communion," in the language of Paul to the Corinthians, who had, by connecting the Supper

* Theology : Book ii., Part ii., Art. xiv., Chap. ii.

with their Agapæ or Love Feasts, changed the holy Institution in great part into a convivial celebration: "What! have you not houses to eat and to drink in? Or, despise ye the church of God and shame them that have not?" Have ye not other places and other modes of expressing your fraternal regards? Must the church of God and the body of Christ be lowered down to the purposes of mere human fellowship? Must we transform the emblems of Christ's body and blood into mere tokens of our esteem for one another? "What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. When you come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper;" but to eat and drink to one another, to eat your own fellowship supper.

12. Again; some plead for extending the privileges of the Supper Institution to those who have never united with a church, have never put on Christ before men according to the solemn initiatory ordinance appointed by the Redeemer. They tell us, "This is the Lord's Table, and hence all his children should be permitted to partake of it." Such have forgotten that the Lord did not, when instituting the Supper, invite all his children to partake of it. The Lord spreads his table in his house. Then let his children enter

the house and identify themselves with the family. As no uncircumcised person could eat of the Passover, so no unbaptized person may come to the Institution which Jesus has established for the nourishment of his churches. Because it is the Lord's Table, we keep it in the place and for the purposes commanded by the Lord. Were it our table, we might invite all our neighbors and fellow-citizens to share it with us.

13. By his wisdom and authority has not God set us as families in the earth? Is not every family perfect and independent, as a body, according to a law of Heaven? However much we may regard each other as members of the great human brotherhood—and no one will deny that we ought to love and cherish each other by many fraternal acts—ought we therefore to disregard the independency and the corporate integrity of families? And are there not certain rights, privileges, and duties that God has set in families, and confined in families alone? Because we are families, must it be supposed that we are aliens and enemies to one another, or that we are uncharitable, narrow and bigoted? This great law of God, by which we are set in complete and independent families, each enjoying and holding certain rights and privileges as sacred and untransferable, and all holding the same—is

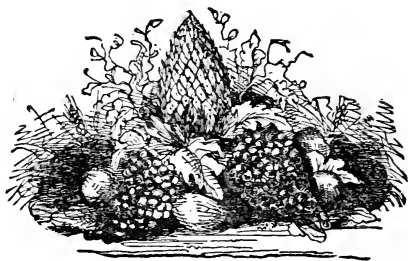
it not the very and only order by which purity, concord, and prosperity are promoted? Nothing is more evident. Communism and the theory of Free Love, which have boasted so much good in words, and achieved so much shame in practice, may not supplant the old divine order of families. The open communion doctrine applied to families has not borne such fruits as commend the practice to general adoption. If we would preserve the best interests of society and the world, we must preserve the family relations intact, and order them all according to the laws of God.

14. In a way quite analogous to this, and with no less wisdom, mercy, and authority, has God ordered things in his spiritual kingdom among men. Christians are to be set in churches. Each church is complete in itself and invested with inalienable rights, privileges, and duties. As no one could enter a Jewish family and partake of the Passover except he had been circumcised, so no one can lawfully enter a church and partake of the Lord's Supper except he be baptized. While, as in families, there should be no surrender of rights, and no interchange of prerogatives, there should be, and, where the proper spirit prevails, there will be, exhibitions of courtesy and love, and

the ready discharge of numerous fraternal offices. The maintenance of our rights is never inconsistent with the exercise of the tenderest brotherly regard. Each church may be called a bride of Christ; and with this relation in view, we may say the fellowship is to be shared alone; others may not intrude themselves into God's house, as invested with rights and privileges. No unbaptized person can be a member of the church; only members of the church are to enjoy the privilege of the Supper Institution.

15. Correct views of churches, their structure, their powers, their prerogatives, their limits, their independency, and their duties, are of vital consequence to all who would share the blessings of the gospel and be laborers together with Christ, in spreading his kingdom among men. Such views would immediately remove many unhappy misconceptions and misunderstandings among the people of God of every name. Then would be apprehended the proper limits of the Supper Institution, as also its proper design and its intended benefits. In maintaining the completeness and the rights of churches, Christian charity, and the duties of Christian reciprocity and courtesy, would receive no injury but would thereby be

greatly extended and strengthened. And then over the Lord's Table, in each church, we might hope to see the inscription in large and golden letters, as if written by the hand of the Saviour, the words which he gave us in reference to the holy Institution: "This do in remembrance of me."



CHAPTER V.

ABUSES OF THE INSTITUTION.

1. THAT the Christian scheme, whether taken as a whole or in its parts, whether viewed in its doctrines or its development, whether considered in its rites or its devotional acts, should have been, by many, misunderstood, perverted and abused, is what might have been expected, and was distinctly foretold. This scheme originated in heaven, and is unlike any thing that was familiar to men. It necessarily takes on something of a visible form and order, but is in essence a spiritual life, a kingdom set up in the hearts of men. And being not only a spiritual, but a holy kingdom, it is not, and cannot be, apprehended by men while in a state of nature. To be understood, it must not only be revealed to men, but must be revealed in men: man's depraved heart and blinded mind cannot perceive it. By unrenewed men, every thing is looked upon in a worldly light, and is understood according to the

tastes and desires of a carnal nature. Hence the churches of Christ, which are spiritual organizations, though they must have a visible form, have been contemplated as only certain new forms of society, for the production of human happiness, and the advancement of certain classes of doctrines and principles. Viewed in this worldly light, forms of belief, or creeds, have been mistaken for true faith in the soul; the outward ceremony of baptism has been accepted for that purification and new life which the ordinance only symbolizes; and the Supper Institution has been either interpreted as a service, indicating our fellowship with each other, or as a supernatural means of imparting to man that grace of salvation which we feel that we need. Hence men have ever been disposed to fashion the kingdom of God on earth after the most approved patterns of earthly kingdoms, and to construct churches after their favorite ideals of civil communities. This tendency to corrupt Christianity began at a very early age, even before the Apostles had ceased from their labors.

2. The first gross abuse of the Supper Institution of which we have a record, was in the church at Corinth, and is mentioned in 1 Cor. xi. 20-34. This case, as far as can now be ascertained, was

something like the following; the members of this church, after a prevailing custom of the times, by which persons of the same guild or profession met for professional and social entertainments, assembled frequently for social intercourse, and the enlargement and strengthening of their bond of union. These meetings and entertainments were termed *Agapæ*, or Love Feasts. At the close of these entertainments the church was accustomed to celebrate the Lord's Supper. This custom existed generally among the first churches, and continued, as historians tell us, for a long period, until abuses of the original design crept in, and led, first, to the separation of the Supper from the Feasts, and finally, to the abolition of the Feasts themselves. Christian Knapp thinks it was customary for the more wealthy members of the church to bring the food and drink necessary for these *Agapæ*; and that from what remained after the Feast, the church celebrated the Lord's Supper. If such were the custom, we can readily imagine how, from the natural tendency of feasts, from the unavoidable vein of vanity and extravagance incident to their preparation, in such a rich, luxurious, and intemperate city as Corinth, certain indulgences and extremes would soon obtrude themselves, and lead to the state of things deplored by the Apostle. It appears that

the convivial element had so far obtruded itself into the Lord's Supper, as nearly to destroy the Christian and spiritual character of the Divine Institution. This abuse should be a warning against associating with the Supper practices and ideas that do not belong to it.

In respect to these *Agapæ*, it may be remarked that they were not commanded by any Christian authority; they were of a voluntary character, and were copied from a social usage of the times. Of course they were of an innocent character, while kept within the limits of prudence and sobriety; and under proper conduct, might conduce to pleasant and beneficial ends. Some think that reference is made to this kind of entertainments in Acts xi. 46: "And they continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people;" furthermore, certain ones "sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need." These *Agapæ* are undoubtedly referred to by Jude, when he says: "These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you." v. 12. A similar allusion is made by Peter: "Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own

deceivings, while they feast with you." 2 Eph. ii. 13.

3. The second great abuse of the Supper Institution that crept into the churches, was that by which the elements were supposed to be invested with a supernatural character. The process by which this great error secured its foothold in the churches, was slow. The error was a consequence of an opinion that prevailed everywhere around the churches. From the beginning of history, men had been familiar with the idea of sacrifices. Thus the world was prepared to accept the idea of the sacrifice of Christ. No religion was estimated as having efficacy that did not employ sacrifices. But the gospel demanded no sacrifices of the people; it pointed all men to the one great, efficacious, final sacrifice that had been offered on Calvary. The first Christians held the Supper simply as commemorative of this sacrifice. Now it was objected to Christians, especially by the heathen, that they had no sacrifices in their worship: to which it was replied that they had an Institution which to them answered the same purpose, as it brought before their minds the one effectual sacrifice that had been offered for all men. But by degrees, as the spiritual life grew feeble, and the desire to conciliate the enemies of the cross sprung up, some

Christians "became accustomed to regard the Supper, not merely as a festival in memory of the sacrifice of Christ, but as an actual repetition of this sacrifice." The words of Christ, instead of being accepted in their deep, and deeply important spiritual meaning, were accepted in a literal sense! "Except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, ye have no life in you." These words were applied to the Supper Institution, and the Supper was brought over to the worldly and heathen stand-point of a sacrificial Institution. Henceforth, the grossest errors found a ready entrance into the bosom of the church.

Says Irenæus! "The idea of a sacrifice in the Supper of the Lord, was at first barely symbolical; and originally this idea did not even have reference to the sacrifice of Christ. The only thing originally had in view, was the spiritual thank-offering of the Christians, of which the presentation of the bread and wine, the first fruits of nature's gifts, served as a symbol! while no doubt the consciousness of the new relation to God, in which the redeemed were placed by the sufferings of Christ, lay at the base of the whole transaction."

"Afterward," says Neander, "the reference to the death of Christ was made more prominent, yet so that it still continued to be no more than

the idea of a commemorative, symbolical representation of this sacrifice. But, as one error begets another, it was quite natural that the false notion of a particular priesthood in the Christian church, corresponding to that in the Old Testament, should give birth to the erroneous notion of a sacrificial worship, which should stand in the same relation of correspondence to that of the Old Testament; and so it came about that the whole idea of sacrifice in the Lord's Supper, which in the first instance was simply symbolical, took a direction altogether wide of its true import and bearing, toward the magical." It is necessary to add, that these views first appeared through Cyprian, in the church in North Africa. Hence Neander continues: "As the church in North Africa was the first to bring prominently into notice the necessity of infant baptism, so, in connection with this, they introduced also the communion of infants; for as they neglected to distinguish with sufficient clearness between the sign and the divine thing which it signified, and as they understood all that is said in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, concerning the eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ to refer to the outward participation of the Lord's Supper, they concluded that this, from the very first, was absolutely necessary to salvation." And, as "the

false element once existing in the germ, it soon unfolds and spreads, unless repressed by a mightier reaction of the sense of truth," and as no such reaction of general prevalence occurred, the false element pervaded the major part of the Christian world, and drew into its fellowship a multitude of kindred destroying elements.

4. In the progress of this spiritual declension, "the celebration of the Lord's Supper became the seal of all religious consecration; it was thus used at the conclusion of a marriage, and at the solemnities in commemoration of the dead." To what debasing extremes the Romish Church, following this false and superstitious bent, has carried the Lord's Supper, making it wholly something else, in reciting masses for the dead, we need not now stop to rehearse. In proportion as the true inner life in the churches became feeble, there was a tendency toward the doctrines and practices of heathenism; true doctrines were overborne by errors; the ordinances of the gospel were supplanted by Pagan rites; and the body, deserted of the Holy Spirit, was brought into captivity to hierarchal assumptions, and ruled by popes. As a legitimate consequence, outward ceremonial acts were exalted and relied upon as efficacious to salvation.

5. With the rise and dominancy of the Papal

Power, carrying out its great central idea that it held the keys of the kingdom of God on earth, there arose, by necessity, the notion that the religious life to be imparted to the world dwelt in the hierarchal church as in a mother; that the saved were to be the offspring of the Church. Instead of the true gospel doctrine that each redeemed soul draws his life directly from Christ through the inward working of the Holy Spirit in the use of divine truth, the carnal and destructive notion obtained that men were to receive salvation from the Church by baptism, by vows, by confession, by the Lord's Supper, and by tribute. To make sure her supremacy, to vindicate her Catholic claim, and to draw all men to her bosom, the Papal church assumed the power of imparting life by the sacraments; she taught baptismal regeneration, and asserted that masses availed even for the dead. To be saved, then, men must be baptized into her bosom, and partake of those elements which in her hands were transubstantiated into the very body and blood of Christ. And as Church and State were united, or more properly the State was included in the Church, to be a member of the one was to be a member of the other. So all power was consolidated in the Church. Thus was completed

the corruption, the tyranny and blasphemy of the Papal Power.

In this sad condition, with here and there, in secluded spots, a few candlesticks burning with the original fire, things remained through the Dark Ages. Finally, through the sovereign mercy of God, the fires of the Reformation were kindled in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. But even in that great spiritual and intellectual upheaval, many of the abuses that had crushed the Supper Institution, still adhered to the partially emancipated portions of Christendom. The Reformed Churches were not utterly renovated; the old leaven was not thoroughly purged out. Hence some of the Protestant Churches of the present day have more or less of the old, false notions and abuses of the Papal Church.

6. The National Churches and great ecclesiastical establishments now existing, have inherited many of their views and practices from the Romish Church. The great test of membership with the Lutheran Church is "communion with that Church" or participancy in the Lord's Supper. So is it with the Greek Church. So is it with the Abyssinian Church. The same is true of the Church of England. In these churches it is required to be sprinkled in infancy—but the Greek Church has always maintained immersion

for baptism—to assent in mature years to the Articles of Faith and the Laws of Church Government, and then to “commune with the Church.” Experimental religion may indeed co-exist with these requisitions, but it is not insisted upon as a qualification for church membership; indeed, spiritual religion seems to be very imperfectly understood in these establishments.

As baptism was first raised by the Papal Power to the rank of a saving or regenerating ordinance, and then changed in form, to adapt it to the cases of sick persons and infants, so in like manner the Lord’s Supper was exalted to a sacrificial rank, and then changed in its mode of administration to meet the cases of clinics and little children. Modern establishments, calling themselves Protestant, have indeed thrown off some of the grosser corruptions of Rome, but they still cling to many things that do not belong to the New Testament churches. They hold the Supper Institution with many Romish dogmas and perversions.

7. The long-existing, unlawful connection of Church and State has exerted a mighty power in procuring and perpetuating some of the abuses of the Supper Institution. By this means the holy spiritual Church Institution was transformed into a religio-political act and requisition; and

as such it has come down to our times. Every member of the State must be a member of the Church. And as the State found it inconvenient, if not impracticable, to fix upon other tests by which to determine who were members of the Church, it adopted the rule of regarding as members such, and only such, as "communed with the Church."

And to-day, in most parts of Europe, no man can hold a civil office who does not, as they term it, commune with the National Church. "In Sweden," says Dr. Baird, "a man cannot give his testimony in a court of justice who has not taken the sacrament of the Lord's Supper within the year immediately preceding." Until a few years since no person could hold an office in England, or be a member of Parliament, or even graduate at a university, unless he communed with the Episcopal Church at least once a year. To detail the evils of such a state of things to Church and State, to public and to private morals, is unnecessary.

8. In the early history of this country, and until within less than a hundred years, in Massachusetts, in Connecticut, and in some other of the Colonies, only members of the Churches could be electors or hold civil offices; and the fact of

church membership was determined by the fact of their communing with the Churches.

9. And yet another, and if possible, a more unhappy abuse of the Supper obtained among the colonists. Gradually the opinion obtained, which among the first colonists had been regarded as a Romish heresy, that the Supper was a means of conversion or spiritual renovation. Finally, the Rev. Solomon Stoddard, grandfather of Jonathan Edwards, boldly asserted that a man sometimes "may, and ought to, come to the Lord's Supper, who knows himself to be in a natural state," and that the Supper "is *instituted* to be a means of regeneration." This doctrine was first an offspring, and then a defense of the old Half-way Covenant which was the offspring of infant-sprinkling. And this Half-way Covenant was the source of a multitude of errors and corruptions in New England. The Rev. Solomon Williams, one of its defenders, who attempted to break a lance with Jonathan Edwards, but had his weapons turned back upon himself, asserted that there were two ends contemplated by Christ in appointing the Supper; viz., "That such as have grace already, should be under proper advantages to gain more; and that those who have none, should be under proper advantages to obtain grace." These

views were crowding spiritual life out of the churches, and excluding experimental religion from our land, when the Lord interposed, and pouring out his Spirit in a most wonderful manner, rescued our fathers from their errors, and inaugurated a new era for his people in this country. This interposition we look back upon with devout gratitude, and call it The Great Revival, or Awakening.

10. The Presbyterian and Congregational Churches in this country are now nearly, or quite, purged of the old Stoddardian leaven; though a natural opening remains for the infusion of the old leaven; viz., infant-sprinkling. The higher life, the pure spiritual element in these churches, will, we trust, forbid the re-entrance of the old error, till, finally, the door of the churches, as appointed by Christ, shall be again set up; viz., the baptism of believers only, and so the corrupting heresy be effectually excluded forever.

11. Yet these Churches, together with Episcopalians and Methodists, still cling to one old error, and a sad abuse of the Supper Institution, regarding it as a method and means of communing with one another, of exhibiting their fellowship for each other, of proving their fraternal and Christian regards for individuals and for

churches. So they celebrate the Supper in their churches, taking special pains to invite and urge the members of other churches and denominations to "commune with them," and regarding themselves as slighted and their Christian characters doubted, if not impeached, if any neglect their invitation, though the neglect may arise from conscientious convictions, that the Supper is strictly a Church Institution and given only as a means of communing in spirit with Christ, and not with one another. They also celebrate the Supper in their general gatherings, their Conventions, Conferences, Diocesan Assemblies, Missionary Conventions, and Évangelical Alliances, thus practically asserting that the Supper Institution does not belong to single churches, but is the common property of professed Christians, and a means of pledging to one another their Christian esteem and affection.

12. This use of the Supper, and these ideas of communing with churches and with individuals, are no small abuses; they divert the Institution from its original design; they seriously impair its spiritual character; they necessarily leave in the minds of all false impressions of the object, the limits and personal benefits of its observance. And when we insist, according to the laws and examples of the New Testament, that only bap-

tized believers, united in a church capacity, are authorized to observe it; and it is strictly a Church Institution; and that the members of a church, in celebrating it, are not to aim at communion with each other, but simply communion with Christ by faith in the use of the symbols; we are met with censure, charged with uncharitableness, with closeness, narrowness, sectarianism, and bigotry. Our close adhesion to the New Testament, and our purpose of strict loyalty to Christ, are severely reprobated because they conflict with these old Romish dogmas of church communion. But as we are made enemies for the truth's sake, we cannot help it. We claim not perfection or infallibility. But we do claim that our views and practice have the support of the New Testament, which is all the perfection and infallibility necessary. And we love all Christians of every name, but we love Christ more. Hence our close and unmoving adhesion to the Scriptures. This is our single and sufficient defense.

13. Our position is this. We understand that regeneration by the Holy Spirit is the first thing to be labored and looked for among men. Regeneration brings a person into the invisible Church of Christ. It is the duty of every newborn soul to be baptized; and it is the duty of

only such. Baptism is a voluntary act and brings the person into a visible church. Every visible church is founded on the laws and precedents of the New Testament, being complete in itself and perfectly independent. The Lord's Supper is a Church Institution, given to each church for the spiritual benefit of its members, to remind them of what Christ has done for them, and prepare them to receive these spiritual gifts which Christ dispenses to his members through the Holy Spirit's operations.

14. An accusation has been brought against our position. It has been asserted that in our refusing to commune with Pedobaptists, and in not inviting them to commune with us, we virtually declare that they are not Christians, or at least that we have no Christian fellowship for them. This accusation is quite false, as a consideration of our position has shown; for we hold the Supper as a Church Institution, and we exclude from it the purpose of exhibiting our fellowship for others. Thus we look upon the Supper very differently from our accusers. It has also been said that our position virtually declares that Pedobaptist churches are no churches at all. To this we simply reply, we have never asserted that Pedobaptist churches are no churches at all; the accusation is an infer-

ence drawn by the Pedobaptists themselves; with how much propriety, they must judge. With how many errors real Christian character may co-exist we know not; or with how many false views and practices a Christian church may exist we know not: in these things we do not presume to judge; only the Lord himself, the judge of all, can decide these difficult questions. But we are not allowed by him to practice or to fellowship known errors. This is our simple and sufficient defense.

15. We take the laws of Christ, as found in the New Testament, for our law in all religious things. We know no other authority. And while we love all who love Christ, and can manifest our fellowship for them by "the holy kiss," by "feasts of charity," by "the hand of fellowship," by "love unfeigned," by mutual prayers, by united songs, by co-operative labors, and by many other unmistakable evidences, yet we cannot build with them in churches unless they follow the laws of Christ. By his laws we endeavor to shape all our views and practice, and we leave all others to do the same for themselves; and we leave them also to be judged by Christ, the only Lord and Judge of the conscience. We know nothing at all of baptismal regeneration; that we leave to Romanism and kindred

systems. We know nothing of sprinkling and pouring for baptism; that also we leave to the Papal Power, with which it originated, and to those who in this respect are willing to follow the Hierarchy. We are ignorant of any thing supernatural, an *opus operatum*, sacramental sacrifice, in the Lord's Supper, and also of communionism as held by modern Pedobaptists; these ideas we leave to such as have faith in them. How they are to be reconciled with the laws of God we do not know.

16. It must be conceded to the Baptists—for our history is plain and full on this point—and no well-informed man can for a moment entertain a doubt here—that we have uniformly, constantly, and strenuously contended for pure, spiritual churches after the New Testament model. Without intermission, and to the utmost of our power, we have labored to build and preserve evangelical churches. Undismayed in view of fires, and prisons, and stripes, and fines, we have maintained the doctrines and principles given by Christ and the Apostles. No denomination of Christians has suffered, in defense of the faith once delivered to the saints, so much as we. We have endured from the days of Christ until now—though sometimes few in numbers, but never weak in faith—whatever a wicked

world and false churches have been able to cast upon us of scorn, disabilities, misrepresentations and abuses. And still we survive, stronger than ever, to toil on, and to sacrifice in the same cause of truth and righteousness. Now, to plant and maintain simple New Testament churches is no unimportant work. In the existence and activity of such churches, is involved the purity of the gospel and the final hope of the world. Christianity can put on its true spirit, and strength, and go forth to the conquest of the world, only by means of such churches as are made up of truly converted members, who have voluntarily and gladly taken upon them, in the solemn ordinance of baptism, the vows of Christ, and hold themselves as the purchased property of the Redeemer, to live by his laws and to labor for his glory. Spiritual, independent, self-denying, aggressive, uncompromising churches, filled with unfaltering zeal for the laws of Christ and a passion for the salvation of souls, is God's chosen agency for the world's renovation. To realize such churches has ever been the aim of the Baptists; it is due to ourselves that we should make this honorable claim; its justice, the history of our struggles and sufferings will abundantly demonstrate. Like the fathers that have gone before us, we are willing to wait the verdict of time. Some of our great

principles have already risen to general acknowledgment. Others are coming into the ascendant. We have only to stand fast and be faithful. Our views of the Lord's Supper are now being severely tried. Against these, the Pedobaptists would seem to have joined the forces once bent in vain against other of our peculiarities that have now triumphed. If true and firm in this hour of trial, our victory will be complete, and the world will finally have occasion to bless us as the servants of Christ, who held the truth and order of the gospel for the world's highest good.

17. With what show of justice are we censured for not admitting to the Lord's Supper unbaptized persons, when it has been an admitted rule of all Christians, in all ages, that baptism must precede the privileges of the Supper? Dr. Wall tells us, "No church ever gave communion to any persons before they were baptized." Bishop White refused to administer the elements to an evangelical Quaker. "Indeed, all ordinances belong, not to the invisible church, as such, but are committed to the visible churches of Christ." The attempted censure, then, really amounts to this—that we are unwilling to call sprinkling and pouring baptism, even when administered to unconscious babes. If this be censurable, we will bear the censure.

18. Another misconception deserves notice. It is said, that, since our Pedobaptist brethren, really *believe* that they have been baptized, they are therefore to be treated as though they had been. This is making the belief of men the rule of life, instead of the law of God: and it is making the belief of each man the rule by which all other men should be governed. We need only mention this plea to discover its impracticability and absurdity. The Quaker believes he has been truly baptized. The Catholic believes he is one of God's elect. The Universalist believes that he has been redeemed by Christ. Paul, while persecuting the church, believed that he was doing God's service.

19. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. Let every man walk by his own faith, and not by the faith of another. And let every church walk by its own faith, accountable to Christ only. Liberty of conscience is a golden, priceless principle. It is tyranny and wickedness in individuals, in churches, and in States, to impose upon men religious rules which their consciences repudiate, and which the law of God does not inculcate. In regard to church membership and the Supper Institution, we hold, in short, that the persons who have been merely sprinkled in infancy are unbaptized, because the

act of baptism is immersion, and the act is meant to be a profession of repentance, and faith in Christ. As the person sprinkled in infancy has neither been immersed, nor made, even through the reception of the sprinkled water, any profession whatever of discipleship, he is wholly unbaptized. And being wholly unbaptized he is unqualified to enter a church, and therefore unqualified to share the privileges of a church, and to participate in the Lord's Supper, which is a Church Institution.

20. We have treated, perhaps, at sufficient length, of the abuses of the Supper Institution. We have been obliged to speak at some length, of the structure, powers, and rights of churches. More might have been said upon this important subject, but we have presented only what seemed necessary to defend the character and position of the Lord's Supper. It seemed necessary to present all that we have said to meet the subtle, yet shallow and false pleas of modern communionism, which we regard as a very serious perversion and abuse of the Supper Institution. In conclusion we simply say, for the honor of Christ, for the purity of churches, for the conservation of evangelical truth, and for the culture of spiritual religion and eminent, efficient piety, in the members of every church, let the Supper Institution be

understood as Christ has explained it, and be kept in the churches in the manner and for the purposes mentioned in the New Testament. And while we carefully, zealously maintain it in its visible form and outward position, let us not forget its high and holy spiritual character and sanctifying design.



CHAPTER VI.

BENEFITS OF THE INSTITUTION.

1. We come now to contemplate the special benefits resulting to us and to the world from the proper observance of the Lord's Supper. And we hope this may be found the most interesting and profitable division of our subject. Certainly, the subject is calculated to bring us nigh to Christ, and to refresh our hearts by personal communion with him.

2. It may be regarded as a great general fact, or principle—and it is one of the first consequence to us—that every precept and every appointment of Christ is calculated to draw us near to him, and to bind our souls in closer fellowship with him. And while they directly secure these holy, sanctifying ends, they tend indirectly to the world's enlightenment and salvation. For, by our fellowship and vital connection with Christ, he is brought into the world and revealed to men. Christ is glorified in us, and is set forth among

men, when we imbibe his spirit, his feelings, his purposes, his great love for the perishing. Whatever then brings us close to Christ, brings, by necessity, the greatest spiritual blessings to us, and the greatest mercies to all around us. The requirements of Christ, we may say, are the ordained channels through which salvation and all great spiritual blessings come down to the children of men.

3. As a channel for conveying to our souls, truth and grace, light and love, the Lord's Supper stands unrivalled and complete. It is simple in its structure but full of tender, touching, lofty, and subduing truths. It is a memorial of the greatest event that ever transpired on earth—the crucifixion of the Son of God. It is confirmatory of the most precious fact which relates to man—that Christ dwells in his saints in every age, and works with them as instruments for the evangelization of the world. It is prophetic of the most solemn and august event lying in the future—the second coming of Christ to judge the world, to pronounce eternal doom upon the wicked, and to take his adopted children to dwell with him forever in the heavenly country. In short, the Supper speaks of Christ, for sinners slain; of Christ, the bread of heaven; of Christ, the believer's life; of Christ, the coming Judge of all the earth. Many and

precious, then, must be the benefits resulting from a correct understanding, and a legitimate use, of the holy Institution.

4. The Saviour appointed the Supper Institution as a direct means of retaining and cultivating the divine life implanted in the soul by the Holy Spirit. In consideration of the laws of our nature, we hardly exaggerate when we say, the Supper is indispensable as a means of preserving spiritual religion in the churches, and therefore in the world: for it will be found to be true, as a general thing, that the gospel has flourished in its purity, and achieved its highest spiritual results, brought forth its most excellent fruits, where correct views of this Institution have most freely obtained, where men have observed it as a means of spiritual intercourse with Christ. It would seem that bare doctrines and narrations—mere verbal representations of the scheme of redemption—were insufficient for a race of sinners, so far fallen under the dominion of sense as to need a gospel that should appeal, in some part at least, to their senses, and reach their souls through the avenues of the body. So the Lord, in all ages has employed, more or less, sensible objects as symbols and agents to convey to the minds of men spiritual objects and spiritual blessings. Thus the laws and promises of God were,

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by sacrifices, by sabbath solemnities, by the Passover, by the multiplied visible interpositions of God, and the manifold outward rites ordained of old, printed upon the minds of patriarchs and the children of Israel, as no bare verbal communications could ever have impressed them. And under the gospel dispensation, multitudes have been struck with deep and lasting convictions from barely witnessing the ordinance of baptism; and thousands have felt their hearts burn with holy fire, as if it had been caught from heaven, while contemplating and receiving the emblems used in the Lord's Supper. Here we may again recall the great educational law—one as true in regard to religion as in reference to ordinary education—a law too often overlooked, if indeed generally known—that truth first reaches the mind through the medium of the senses. In short, all education begins with the senses, and, at all stages, is much aided by the senses, in the use of diagrams, pictures, outlines, and visible representations. So, the material creation is the vehicle for the immaterial, the physical, for the spiritual. So then, the Supper Institution, with its emblems, is a needed and effective means of grace, a medium or channel through which truth and spiritual blessings are

communicated to the souls of all proper participants.

5. The Supper Institution may also be compared to a framework, which visibly holds before us the cardinal doctrines of the gospel, those which, being kept distinctly and freshly in our minds, preserve the scheme of redemption in its integrity and its power. Christianity is, indeed, a new and divine life in the souls of men; but this life is fed by truth, and unfolded by the Spirit of God dwelling within and applying or appropriating divine truth. And the Supper continually holds before our eyes the truths most needed. As the electric current must have its transmitting wires, so the divine life from Christ, the source, must have its proper and adapted framework through which to reach our sense-encompassed souls. A commentator has truly said: "The gospel is a *Divine act*, which continues to operate through all ages of the world, and that not in the first place outwardly, but inwardly, in the depths of the soul, and for eternal purposes." But the *Divine act* is operative through the word of God and through the duties required of men, that is, through the doctrines and rites of the gospel, and not apart from these: it is effective inwardly through the channel of things outward. The union of doctrines

and external rites is for the sake of the divinely implanted life within ; they are like the body in which the life dwells, and through which it exhibits itself, in part to the world. It is important that the body be perfect and healthy. There may be life in a deformed body ; even some limbs may be amputated without the loss of life ; but in all cases the life is impaired and denied perfect action ; and with the loss of some parts of the body follows life itself. The Reformation under Luther was incomplete, and, in main, lapsed back, in the land of its origin, into a dead ecclesiasticism, because the reformer did not restore Baptism and the Supper Institution to their original order and purity ; so there was no sound body to sustain the inner life. Pedobaptism and communionism are manifest obstacles to the culture of spiritual religion ; they belong rather to a system of ecclesiasticism, and a religion of outward forms and friendships ; they belong not properly to the Spirit of Christ, as they have no authority from his word. It is true, we find genuine piety co-existing with the practice of sprinkling infants for baptism, and the appropriation of the Lord's Supper to the purposes of Christian friendship and fellowship ; but this only shows the abounding goodness of our God, since even our errors and malpractices cannot utterly

defeat the operations of his grace. And, with how great ecclesiastical idiosyncracies and conscientious errors and inconsistencies true piety may co-exist, no man is able to say. But this does not justify known errors.

6. The Supper Institution, by inviting and urging, in the most simple, easy, and persuasive manner, the participant to contemplate Christ in his person, in his life on earth, and his sufferings, brings to the soul the highest possible blessings. There is nothing that so vitalizes, animates, cheers and strengthens the Christian soul, and so subserves the Christian life, warming and unfolding it to holy proportions and aims, as clear views of the Redeemer. In a deep, spiritual sense, Christ is the bread of heaven by which the redeemed soul is nourished and developed. Except we, by faith, eat his flesh and drink his blood, there is no life in us. The Supper presents to our minds his flesh and his blood. True it is, persons receive from his hands eternal life, and some are enabled to live in some measure above the world, who have never put him on by baptism, and have never partaken of the Supper; indeed every soul must be born again before accepting of baptism, whereby they enter a visible Church, and so, come to the Supper; but the life within, given from above, is best nurtured in the church

of Christ, and by the means appointed for its invigoration and development. Believers that remain outside of the house of God are always weak and sickly; like sheep outside the fold, they are full of fears, being exposed to the attacks of the beasts of prey. The redeemed soul should keep near to Christ, should follow him, walking in his foot-prints, and ever holding spiritual converse with him. And did not the Redeemer say, "If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love." The path of obedience is strewn with blessings. The commandment to keep the Supper in remembrance of him is a means of abiding in his love.

7. Now, what is the greatest blessing that a Christian can enjoy? Is it not intimate, intelligent, constant communion with Christ? And what is the highest blessing that a church can enjoy? Is it not to have Christ dwelling in its midst? What is the greatest conceivable benefit that could come to the churches throughout the world? Would it not be to have him who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, ever walking among the golden candlesticks? Christianity becomes a dead religion, it sinks into formalism and ecclesiasticism when the presence of Christ is withdrawn. The Supper was ordained as a means of maintaining his divine

presence among his followers, since thereby specially we have fellowship and communion with him. This is what is now and always needed; needed above all things; needed by every Christian; needed by every church; needed over all Christendom. We all need personal intercourse with the adorable Redeemer. Were we habitually to contemplate his wonderful person, uniting the divine and the human; to ponder his lowly, benevolent, self-denying, holy life; to study his heavenly teachings; to trace his foot-prints through all his redeeming mission; to gaze often upon his perfect character and example; to survey continually his struggles and his sufferings in our behalf; to follow him to the temple, to the garden, to Bethany, to Genesareth, to Olivet, to Jerusalem, to Gethsemane, and to Calvary; could we so far catch his spirit and imbibe his example as to reproduce, in any good measure, his influence—then would the golden age of Christianity be brought in; then would the apostolic days and deeds be again realized; then would the kingdom of God come, and both angels and men might sing again, “Peace on earth, and goodwill to men.” The proper observance of the Supper is calculated to thus bring Christ into the churches, and to hold him there as the object of habitual contemplation, and thus to secure

readily and permanently the benefits and blessings to which we have alluded.

8. Whatever tends to transfer or transmit Christ's life, his thoughts, his feelings, his purposes, his love, his grace, his compassion for sinners, and his zeal for the Father's glory, to his professed people, must result in benefits innumerable and blessings unspeakable. The Supper Institution, when properly understood, when kept in its proper place, and in its proper manner, uncorrupted with Romish superstitions and unperverted by Protestant communionism; when kept simply and sincerely by each church in remembrance of Christ—tends directly and powerfully, by a law of our nature, husbanded through the divine appointment, to transfer Christ's character by transmitting his life to his people.

9. We long for the bright and blessed day to come, when all believers shall come to that position in belief and practice, which will enable them to see the Institution standing on the high and holy ground where the Saviour placed it—to see it radiant with rays of truth from the throne of Christ, and full of gracious memories and intimations like a divine, historic, and prophetic oracle. If we will make all things ready for the great benefit—all things in our hearts, in our lives, in our churches—and will stand with

our loins girt about with truth, and the sandals of a ready obedience upon our feet, truly, praying "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"—then we may expect that Christ will walk among the churches, and reveal his glories and his redeeming power. But he will bring with him Calvary and the Cross, since these we need in order to honor him duly, and to be properly qualified to preach the gospel to the perishing. By means of His Supper Institution he has set Calvary and the Cross in each of his churches. A blessed appointment, abounding alike in wisdom and mercy.

10. In confirmation of our views, we might appeal to the experiences of multitudes. Nor is the argument from experience an unimportant one. It is natural to infer, that right views and practices will find an approval from within, since the Lawgiver in Zion is the author of our natures, the ever-present Lord of our consciences, and has adjusted his requisitions to our natures and necessities. He has ordained churches to promote the nurture and development of the higher life in his children, and to secure the propagation of the gospel among men. Where churches have been planted after his laws, these results have been happily realized; thus experience attests to the character of churches rightly constructed.

Again, it is said of baptism, that it is the answer of a good conscience toward God ; that is, when a believer accepts this ordinance in the right manner, with the spirit, he experiences the approval of God and receives a peculiar blessing. And, in this connection, it is worthy of mention, that, while multitudes have been dissatisfied with sprinkling for baptism, no one was ever dissatisfied with immersion, when administered properly on profession of repentance and faith. True obedience to the behests of Christ is always followed by conscious blessing. So, of the Lord's Supper ; when it has been properly observed—observed within the limits, in the manner, and for the purposes specified by the Lord—peculiar blessings have been realized. Evangelical churches have had an experience not found in the Catholic Church, nor in formal ecclesiastical establishments. And churches that hold the Supper as an Institution belonging to them as churches of the Lord, and keep it strictly in remembrance of Christ, realize richer and sweeter spiritual benefits than such as cumber and confuse the Institution with their own communionism. We appeal confidently to the experience of thousands who have observed the Supper as he has commanded, in remembrance of Christ. Has not your faith been increased, your love been kindled, your zeal

been inflamed? Have you not had new views of the condescension, the compassion, the abounding grace of the Son of God? Have you not had new discoveries of the nature and desert of sin? Have you not had more abasing views of yourselves, while at the same time, the person and the work of the Redeemer shone more luminously before your penitent yet rejoicing souls? Yes, how often, as if utterly forgetting all around us, as if transported to Calvary, as if in presence of the Cross; and as if in sight, too, of the mediatorial throne, our hearts have been dissolved in penitence, in love, in wonder, and in praise. And as we have gazed on the Cross, all melted and enraptured with the view—no longer wondering that all nature sympathized in that scene when the Son of God, on whom rested the destiny of our race, poured out his life—have we not seemed to hear the stirring appeal to our obedience coming from the lips of the dying Saviour—

“This I did for thee—
What hast thou done for me?”

What pen can delineate the benefits, the blessings, that flow to us through a proper spiritual observance of the Supper Institution! “The cup of blessing 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?"

11. No well-informed Christian can afford to neglect the observance of this holy, symbolical, heart-quickening Institution. It is a divinely appointed means for communing with the Author and Finisher of our salvation. It is a chosen remembrance of Jesus as he once was, and a sacred pledge of his reappearance with glory. Let, then, the sacred Institution stand in its simplicity, and moral sublimity, in the centre of every church; and let every enrolled follower of Jesus approach it worthily, discerning the Lord's body. And as the face of Moses shone with heavenly lustre as he came down from the mount where he communed with God, and as a celestial brightness encompassed those that were with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, so may a radiance divine, through the Spirit's power, be caught from Jesus in this holy Institution, so that our hearts may burn within us, and our faces shine with moral beauty, and our lives be radiant with the spirit and power of Christ.

12. We can hardly pause in speaking upon this important subject. Like the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, we are ready to make tabernacles and dwell here. Nothing is

more delightful than to be in the presence of Christ, when he is revealing his glories. Still, we must turn away, and go down again into the field of toil. But let us carry with us a new spirit, and new hopes, and a stronger faith. When our work is done, we shall be taken to the mount above; and be ourselves not barely transfigured, but transformed into the likeness of Him whom we now adore and serve. There we shall enjoy the everlasting Passover. Our present contemplations may close with a few practical reflections, calculated to direct us in the path of duty and of service till our brief period of stewardship shall be ended.

13. We now proceed to offer a few closing remarks.

The statute book for Christians and Christian churches, is the New Testament. The Old Testament is invaluable, containing as it does, the history of the divine dispensation, prior to the coming of Messiah, together with prophecies, biographical sketches, sacred psalms, and all the rites and statutes which God ordained from time to time. They will never lose their charm, and their power to instruct us; but they do not constitute the statute book of the new dispensation. The new Will and Testament of the Redeemer, is our specific guide; by this, all things are made

new: this we accept in its letter and its spirit, and by it we are thoroughly furnished in faith and forms for Christian life, and church building. We have no law which cannot be found here. And in vain may popes, or priests, or councils, or synods, or conferences, or associations, ask us to add to, or take from this complete and divine standard. We are unmoved by arguments from human authority. We yield not to the traditions of pious fathers, nor to the long-continued customs of great ecclesiastical bodies. Our single and constant appeal is to "the law and to the testimony."

If in our understanding of the Supper Institution, we are at present in the minority among professed Christians, let not this consideration of itself have any weight upon our views and practices. We once stood alone in our views of "soul liberty." We once stood alone in our practice of church independency. Nor is the kingdom of God dependent upon views and decisions of majorities, but upon the truth held consistently, perseveringly, and in love. Let us be anxious only to have the mind of Christ. It is sufficient evidence of the weakness and unsoundness of the positions of those who object to our views, that they endeavor to support them by arguments drawn from human sympathies, eccle-

siastical usages, and the doctrines of expediency, and not from the lips of the Saviour. If our principles can be shown to be antagonistic to the letter and spirit of the New Testament, we are ready at once to renounce them. The question with us is one of loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us never be afraid to preach and publish our views. Truth cannot suffer by being exposed to scrutiny and criticism : gold will endure the fire ; and let the dross be burned up. Doubtless we are in fault that we do not preach and write more upon the Supper Institution, that those who differ from us may be less excusable for misrepresenting our principles and practice. We are confident that our opponents, when made fully acquainted with our views, could not fail to see that they are consistent in themselves and have the clear support of the New Testament.

But whatever may be the conclusions and practices of others, let us adhere to the divine standard, and always keep the Supper Institution, both in form and spirit, exactly as our Lord left it to us. If others feel that they must employ the sacred Institution as a test of brotherly affection, using the consecrated emblems as tokens of their regard for each other ; let us not be swerved by their practice, but hold the Institution in its original rank, and for its original purposes, as

sacred to Christ alone. By it let us commune with our Lord, and attempt no other communion. Thus keeping it, no serious errors or difficulties can arise; but from every false view and unscriptural appropriation of it, sooner or later, dangerous errors are sure to spring forth, as all the pages of ecclesiastical history will testify. As soon as we depart from the simple scriptural ground we occupy, we open the doors of our churches to every form of doctrine and practice that may take on the name of Christian. If our opponents were fully to carry out the views they advocate, they would welcome to the Supper Institution, Romanists, Unitarians, Campbellites, not a few Universalists, and all who should claim that they were Christians. Let us, then, still continue to guard the churches of Christ against corruptions, by guarding the door of the church, and by guarding especially the Supper Institution, against which special and vigorous attacks are now being made.

Every church must announce the celebration of the Supper, and employ such a form of invitation to those present, as may seem best. Perhaps it would be unwise to propose any form to be universally adopted. Were I to devise a form to be read by a church before observing the Institution, it would be something like the following:

We understand the New Testament to teach :

First: That the Supper Institution belongs to churches as such, and not to believers promiscuously, or to churches collectively :

Second: That in the use of the symbols, in the order appointed by Christ, we are to commune by faith with Christ, and not with one another :

Therefore: While we protest against the use of such phrases as "Christian fellowship," "close communion, and "open communion," as used by many in reference to this Institution ;

We invite, to sit with us in observing the Supper, all members in good standing of churches coinciding with us in views and practice, who are providentially with us ; and such we invite, not to commune with us, but to join with us while we endeavor to obey Christ in remembering and communing with Him.

Finally, what we all most need as Christians, and as churches is :

First: The disposition, the mind, the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ ; since this alone will open the mind and heart to the reception of truth, and incline our feet forward in the paths of obedience :

Second: A determination to study thoroughly, and follow faithfully, the precepts and examples

of the New Testament, in whatever direction, and to whatever sacrifices they may lead us :

Third: Patience to wait for the progress and triumphs of the Kingdom of Christ among men, a willingness to do and suffer without rewards here, hoping, through the sure promises of our Lord, for bliss and glory eternal in the Kingdom of God above.

And now, if any are unable to see the things of which we have spoken, as we see them, and hence feel called to differ with us, we may say to them in the language of Hezekiah's prayer for the "many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulon:" "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary."

THE END.

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