



THE

LORD'S SUPPER.

To the Children of God.

"Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another."—1 Con. xi. 33.

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1 CORINTHIANS X. Xi.

HAVE you ever put such a question as this to yourself? For what purpose or act do the children of God meet together? Why do they assemble? You will probably answer, "I go to get a blessing on my soul in hearing a sermon, and Christians come together to have fellowship in prayer or singing hymns, or "-

But pause. Let me ask, What saith the Scripture? "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry and another is drunken;" that is, because of their evil habits the apostle Paul would not allow that the object for which they (the Corinthians) came together was properly carried out; but still it remains true that the purpose of their assembling was not to pray or to sing hymns, or to hear a discourse, but to eat, and that—the Lord's Supper.

But you will say, "How is this? I

only partake of the Lord's Supper once a month, or once in six months. If we are never to meet but with this object, we should be almost entirely deprived of the means of grace." This, however, need not be the case; for the Scripture says, "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread." The word of God, in relating the acts of the disciples, tells us how often they met; viz., once a week—on

the first day of the week—the day on which the Lord Jesus rose from the dead; so then if you or any are troubled at the thought of only having the socalled means of grace in the exact number of times you eat the Lord's Supper every year, it is your own fault, and not the fault of Scripture. You have only to follow the example of the first disciples in obeying the Lord's precept, and you will come together once a week in God's own way; namely, to eat the Lord's Supper.

Let me put this to you in another form. The Lord never told His disciples to come together to hear, as a matter of course, a sermon, or, as a matter of course, to sing hymns, or, as a matter of course, to pray (though, as we well know, these are happy exercises); but His command was —almost His last words when with the disciples were these—"This do in re-

membrance of me." (Luke xxii. 19.) He

never said so of any other common act of worship; He never enjoined any other. He told them indeed (Mark xvi. 15), "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" but this is not an act of worship on the part of the Church, but the delivery of a message of good-will to sinners in a state of condemnation. When they have received the message, and "believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb. x. 39), they come into the state of worshippers of

Church or assembly of believers.

This being understood, perhaps you will ask, Is there then to be no discourse, no singing of hymns, nor praying at this one meeting to eat the Lord's Supper? And are there to be no other meetings for Christians, where they may

"the Father in spirit and in truth"

(John iv. 23), and have part in the

be addressed, or speak one to another about their common Saviour? Doubtless all these things are for us; but (according to Scripture) they are consequent upon that one meeting, once a week, for the express purpose of eating the Lord's Supper. We are told in Acts xx. 7, "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them" (reasoned, conversed with them, διελέγετο). The meeting was to "break bread;" Paul being a disciple was of course there, and exercised his gift at that most fitting time. Whether he had been there or not they would have met. The preaching was not the first thing, and the breaking of bread the second. No; the breaking of bread was the act for which they came together; the preaching was secondary. Whatever there was of preaching, praise, or prayer, arose out of this-that they were come together to eat the Lord's Supper.

Two, or three, or any number, may

meet together for other purposes—as to pray (Matt. xviii. 19, 20); for admonition (Rom. xv. 14); for singing hymns (Eph. v. 19); for teaching (Col. iii. 16); or, it may be, for all these together (1 Cor. xiv. 26); but such meetings, every day of the week, if thought desirable, ought to be the result of that chief one on the first day of the week to eat the Lord's Supper.

Jesus did not rise from the dead on the first day of the year or of the month.

first day of the year, or of the month, but on the first day of the week. (Mark xvi. 9.) He has chosen that His resurrection day (instead of Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath) should mark the period of a week. On the first day from that time, the disciples were in the habit of meeting (John xx. 19, 26; Luke xxiv.

35, 36; Mark xvi. 14); and as we learn from 1 Cor. xi., the meeting was to eat the Lord's Supper, or to break bread. (Acts xx. 7.) If you are only doing this once in six months, or once a month, or once a year, it not only betrays ignorance of what the first (or eighth) day shows forth; namely, the resurrection of Christ and His members in Him (Eph. ii. 6), but it is only consistent that you should meet for other acts of worship, whether for thanksgiving, praying, or singing (I mean in the church, or assembly of believers), once in six months, once a year, or once a month; and if you meet to eat the Lord's Supper once a week, the other meetings in the week should be the result of this common ground of fellowship in the remembrance of Christ.

How apt are we to follow the teaching of man in everything, and not the word of God; and how applicable to the present

times are those words of the Lord (Mark xii. 24), "Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God?" May the Lord give you the spirit of obedience. The special act which the disciples were told by the Lord to perform was to eat the Lord's Supper, according to His words, "This do in remembrance of me." We have hitherto shown that they met for this purpose on the first day of the week, and that other meetings for edification were subordinate to this one: the object of this paper is to show that the Lord's Supper is for believers, and that there is no ministerial act in it. It is a meeting at which not only is there no need for the presence of a "minister," in order to its due and proper observance, but if there should be one present, he has no official right to the breaking, giving thanks for, or distribution of, the bread and wine. It is an

institution into which ministerial offices, as such, do not enter. It tells believers of their common privileges; it is the assurance of common blessings: "Ye being many are one body and one bread; for ye are all partakers of that one bread." Inasmuch as "ministers" are brethren, they have to do with it, but only as brethren. There is no room for any other title. Paul was a great apostle, but here he was just in the place given to the weakest believer; viz., "made nigh by the blood of Christ." The Lord's Supper is, so to speak, hurt in the degree in which the presence of an ordained person is deemed necessary. For in such case the thought of the supper is apt to get lost in the word "sacrament;" and instead of the "one body" it becomes "minister and people." Superstition too enters, and the bread and wine are liable to be invested with a mysterious character, It is right to be plain on this point (although it is not said in a levelling spirit, as if one wished to detract from the respect which gift and godliness, according to God's order, ought always to command among Christians, because thereby we are helped on to much truth.

Remark first, that the institution of the Lord's Supper had nothing which

was ministerial in it. The Lord, just before His death, sat down with a small company, and said, "This do in remembrance of me." Paul speaks of it in these words: "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you. That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." Could anything be more simple? Just as in the institution

of the Passover—the germ of all sacrifice -there was no special direction as to who was to kill it, as if to keep out of the way any priestly idea, and to confine the thought to a family eating safely within, whilst destruction was going on without; so this institution of the Lord's Supper seems intentionally free from every priestly idea, in connection with the Lord Jesus and His death. You may say, however, that only the apostles partook: this may be; but the reply is, that the apostle Paul refers the scene to the whole Church, that is, to every believer, and be it remembered that He "received [it] of the Lord." (1 Cor. xi. 23.) He makes the Lord's words apply to the entire body. He does not, on the one hand, tell us that some have a higher post than others at this meal; nor, on the other, that it is only for the apostles or their successors, so called. It either belongs to those

who sat down with the Lord exclusively, with no distinction or priority among them, or it belongs to the whole body of believers, with no distinction or priority among them; and the reasoning of the apostle shows that it belongs to the latter. His words about this meal are addressed to those who are brethren - "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat;" again, when he says, "The cup of blessing which we bless," "the bread which we break," he is speaking of the whole assembly. The thought upon his mind is not about ministry; he writes, throughout the epistle, "to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints," that is, saints made so by their call. He speaks of their privileges as believers, symbolized under the bread and wine. They each brake off and ate a piece of that common bread, the emblem of Christ's broken

body, and by that act set forth their communion with one another, through union with one common Head; "for we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread;" (1 Cor. x. 17.) and also, they gave thanks for that cup of blessing, of which they drank, as in a figure, of the precious blood of Christ who had redeemed them: "This cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for you." They did it in remembrance of Him, as showing His death till He come again. (1 Cor. xi. 25, 26.)

Further—In reading 1 Cor. xi. we find that great disorder prevailed at Corinth at the Lord's Supper. "In eating, every one took before another his own supper, and one was hungry and another drunken." Nothing could be more unseemly or grieving to the Spirit. What was the apostolic remedy? Did he say,

have a "minister" present, and so avoid such scenes? or did he propose a rule in the keeping of which such outbreaks should be restrained? Nothing of the sort. His words are, "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another." Where is the room for such a precept to the Churches as now existing? Man has long since devised a remedy of his own. Among some, for instance, a peculiar minister—one called priest or presbyter, must be present to consecrate and distribute the bread and wine-he must be the first to touch it; among others, it is held expedient that one who has had hands laid on him should preside. In either case, things in these days are too well ordered, than that the injunction "tarry one for another" can come into practice; but the arrangements, nevertheless, are not scriptural. God's way is to vest the care of the Lord's

table in the keeping of the whole body of believers; and so Paul does not speak to one man-the "minister"-but to all the Church, about these disorders. "When ye come together therefore into one place." As spiritual persons they are supposed to know what is comely in spiritual things. We are not advocating confusion or license, far from it, but it is not the way of God to keep order by carnal rules. When the flesh exhibits its evil, the wisdom and energy of the Spirit come in to correct it. So it was at Corinth. If there had been formal rules there, such as we see at present, those scandals never could have taken place, but then the very scandals brought out the disease of the body, and a remedy could be applied. Life, though in weakness, is preferable to death-"A living dog is better than a dead lion."

Our object now is to show that the

Holy Ghost dwells in the Church, and that His way is not to make one man in a congregation the sole minister, but that He divides "to every man severally as He will." It is in the assembly of the saints that the Spirit of God may be counted on to manifest who are God's ministers.

Otherwise it might be asked what we gain by this weekly meeting so strongly urged, and why this putting aside of a special minister? We might indeed

gain by this weekly meeting so strongly urged, and why this putting aside of a special minister? We might indeed answer the first part of this question by saying that there are points of truth connected with the first day of the week—that day on which the Lord arose from the dead, and that there are truths which belong to the supper itself (1 Cor. xi. 26); and that there are blessings of necessity attendant upon obeying the command, "This do in remembrance of

me;" with faith in His presence in our midst. But if an answer be required to the second part of the question, viz., "why this putting aside of a special minister?" it must be admitted that practically we lose, unless it can be shown that by putting aside one minister, place is given for several; that is, unless the way is left open for the manifestation of gifts, with which several, instead of one, may have been endowed by the Holy Ghost for the supply of the varied need of believers.

Those former points were but stepping stones for the declaration of this further truth, and of the manner of its practical working. Truly the ministry of the word is not to be set aside; this would be to set aside God's special manner of comforting His children. Let it only be remembered that God's way differs from man's—God brings forth His own ministers (many)

from the actual assembly of saints;

-man brings forth his own (one) from

the university or the college; God's words are, "Obey them that have the rule over you;" man's, "Obey him that has the rule over you." The Lord said, on leaving His disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you." (John xvi. 7.) It is this One who opens the mouths of the children to speak in praise of the Father and the Son: for we have to remember that this Comforter speaks of Christ (John xiv. 26), receiving of His things and showing them to us. (John xvi. 13-15.) If then it is said, "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns," &c., we say, of course, that these hymns

celebrated Christ, of whom the Spirit is ever full.

But the form under which Christianity now appears is this. We see the children of God joined to certain bodies, either with stated or occasional pastors over them, who conduct stated services; and (at greater or less intervals) the Lord's Supper is one of them. They come together, not to worship and wait upon the Lord, who speaks by whom He will, but to hear the appointed minister. The meeting cannot be held without him; if he is absent there can be no ministry, and therefore no meeting. They neither understand that there may be meetings for edification without any ministry of teaching or preaching (Eph. v. 19, 20; Col. iii. 16); nor that there may be others among them, whom the Holy Ghost has constituted ministers, as capable of edifying their brethren as he whom they came to hear.

This failure arises not only from want of apprehension of the loving care of the ascended Lord for His Church, but also from the low notions which prevail about the person of the Holy Ghost, -God-as truly as the Father is God, or the Son is God. How many talk of Him merely as an influence. They have an indistinct idea of some emotions by which they apprehend Christ, or worship God, and these they call the influences of the Holy Spirit. But what saith the Scripture of this Divine person, and of His relationship to us individually and corporately? "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God?" (1 Cor. vi. 19.) Again, "Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." (Rom. viii. 9.) If then it be true that the Spirit of

God is not an influence, but a Divine

person dwelling in each and every be-

liever (and in Scripture the attributes of

God, as omniscience, &c., and of a per-

son, as speaking, directing, &c., are again and again given to Him), it is just as true that He dwells in the Church corporately. Paul thus writes, " Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them." (2 Cor. vi. 16.) And again, "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. ii. 22.) Observe then,-it is the privilege of believers, whether individually or corporately, to be conscious of the presence of the Holy Ghost as abiding with them "for ever." (John xiv. 16.) His official place is here below in Christ's stead. (John xvi. 7.) It is this which distin-

guishes the Church from the world.

The question directly arises, What are the ways of this Divine person in connection with Christ the Head, and how does He manifest Himself in the Church? Let Paul answer—"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administrations (ministries), but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit. . . . All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." (1 Cor. xii. 4-11.)

If it be asked why this power of the Holy Ghost should be manifested at the Lord's Supper? The answer is,—it is the true Church meeting. Here the Church

is seen in its oneness. And as the gifts

are for the edifying of the Church (1 Cor. xiv. 5), of course, when the Church assembles, there should be found gifts for edification. The manifestation of the Holy Ghost is not by any means confined to this meeting, but the Lord's Supper is where the Church is seen in its corporate condition. There is a fitness in the meeting to the ways of the Spirit. Let us, then, come together as simple believers to the table of the Lord; and there let us wait on the Lord, who will give us, in His own time, by His Spirit, gifts of teaching, exhorting, admonishing, &c. (Eph. iv. 11-13.) The more we feel our need, the more shall we cry

feel our need, the more shall we cry to Him to supply that need. The Church itself will be the judge of the gift. The mind of the Spirit in the speaker will be answered by the mind of the Spirit in those spoken to, and there will be place given for him who possesses the gift, to use it.

It is no question here, as to whether gifts exist in the same characteristic power as when the epistles of Paul were written. The main question is this, What is the mind of God as revealed in His Word, as to the way in which His children ought to meet, and the place in

It may not be amiss, in conclusion, to touch upon a point little understood; namely, that the Lord's table is a table of Worship, and that its

that meeting which belongs to the Holy

Ghost? (1 Cor. xii. 7.)

Worship proceeds upon a direct recognition of some truth made known to the soul by God Himself. Thus Abram (Gen.

services should always preserve that cha-

xii. 7, 8) "builded an altar unto the Lord who appeared to him." There had been a distinct revelation from God to him.

"And he removed from thence unto a

mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord." He had a manifestation of God made to his soul, and he calls upon His name in the certainty of the truth made known to him. This was worship. But this is not all; for according to the epistle to the Hebrews, which may be called a treatise on Worship, we have boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, with a High Priest over the house of God. (Heb. x. 19-22.) So that worship consists not alone in praise

to Christ for what He has redeemed us

from, but for what He has brought us

to. And this is not individual, but the

ascertained position of the whole Church

of God. They have the sense of redemption. They worship in the express favour of God, their acceptance being made known to them by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. They are purged worshippers, having no more conscience of sins.

The ground of all this is the death of Christ, set forth in the bread and cup, of which we partake. It is a substantial truth, which moves the affections and gives rest to the conscience. It is something to feed upon and enjoy.

The world, it is evident, cannot enter

The world, it is evident, cannot enter into worship on the eighth day, which commemorates, not creation, but redemption—a redemption certified to us by the resurrection of the Lord on the first day of the week. As unbelievers they do not enter into this rest (Heb. iv. 3), and therefore cannot worship; for it is as being in the life of Christ risen that we

remember His death. If we can only apprehend the idea of worship, many of our difficulties and objections will vanish. Not only shall we be content with very little that is outwardly imposing in the way of words, but our spirits will become delicately sensitive to anything at such a meeting, foreign to the spirit of adoration, thanksgiving, and praise. The presence of the Lord realized in our midst, more than compensates for any weakness in ministry, however much we value it. Whilst partaking of the bread and cup we think upon Christ Himself, and with the psalmist exclaim, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord!"

How gracious of the Lord not to constitute His table upon the ground of attainment, but of redemption, so that in the midst of sensible weakness we may look back to the cross as the ground of

our title of every blessing. Happy that soul, who entering in some little measure (alas! how feebly the very best) into the sufferings of Christ, when He drank the bitter cup of death, makes it also a table where advancement in the knowledge and love of Christ may be realized.



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Ye must be born again. John iii. 7.

Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. . . . And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. 1 Peter i. 23, 25.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. 1 John v. 1.

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John iii. 16.

If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. Rom. x. 9.

Jesus said, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. John v. 24; Rom. vi. 23.