

THE
TABLE OF THE LORD.

BY
“MNAΣΩN.”

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WHATEVER means God in His wisdom may take to send us to a renewed independent study of His word, it will always issue, if rightly used, in renewed blessing and enlargement to our souls. If it be carried on in humility and with quiet waiting upon God, it will result not only in clearer apprehensions of the divine word, but also in, that which is the end of all divine teaching, increased acquaintance with God and Christ.

With this conviction I take occasion from some brief remarks presented in a single page of a recent number of a cognate publication, entitled, "The Table of the Lord," to go over again the testimony of Scripture on this subject, for my own profit, and, if the Lord so please, for the profit of my readers also.

With the remarks, so far as they refer to a point of Scripture, I entirely agree; not however that I think the communion of Christians is to be restricted to the

correctness of their exegesis, nor that it is regulated by it, however important that in its place may be. For communion to be possible—at least “communion with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ”—whether at the table of the Lord or elsewhere, there must be the possession of a life that is divine. But connected with that, as with all life, there are aspirations and energies which go far beyond the utmost illumination of the mind and understanding, and are surely met and responded to by Him who is its giver and its source. Scripture teaches us expressly that deep in the heart of the believer there are unutterable groanings, which the Holy Spirit produces and so takes up as to become intercession to God, which, it is declared, He fully understands; albeit they receive not from us either the mouldings of intelligence or the utterance of words. Moreover, it must not be forgotten, in our desire for scriptural knowledge (and that desire cannot be too strong), that in the history of the Church, the men who have left the

deepest impress of their labours upon it, and who have carried with them most unequivocally the stamp and seal of God in connection with their service for Christ and souls, have not always been the most consistent expositors of Scripture, nor pre-eminently distinguished for the clearness of their views. It is well for us to remember an observation of Bengel, in reference to those who in the early ages of Christianity sought to escape from its worldliness and the incoming tide of its corruptions, that "Secluded separatists are seen generally to have more light than life." But above all, it becomes us to remember the words of Him who, not without reason, said to His disciples, "If ye *know* these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Errors of the most opposite character are ever ready, through the malice of the enemy, to entangle our souls; and we are secure only as we are kept in lowly subjection to the Lord, taking the yoke of Christ, and habitually judging ourselves in the light of the Word. For, if ignorance of Scripture exposes us to

the shafts of Satan and cripples us in our souls, both as to communion, and service, and walk, as it surely does, there is danger of error also from the opposite side. To souls emancipated from the trammels and systems of men and alive to the darkness and corruptions which, through the practical disregard of Scripture, deform so large a portion of the professing church, there is no error nearer, especially to minds possessing a certain degree of activity and intelligence, than that of mistaking the mental perceptions of truth for its living power—apart from which most surely Christ will never be graven on the heart. This mistake—such are our hearts!—is by no means uncommon; though no two things can well be more unlike, as all will acknowledge who are ever so little versed in the opposite actings of the enemy and of the blessed Spirit of our God.

As to the table of the Lord, the name of *Christ* is confessedly connected with the communion there, which is its happiest and most distinctive part. “Lord”

is the title of dignity and authority; necessary in its place, but, if we think of its correlative, suggesting the idea of *subjection*, not that of communion. Both titles are employed (1 Cor. x., xi.) in reference to the table, and both in their legitimate and distinctive force; and it should have been observed that the title which bespeaks communion is as much in contrast with the evil of idolatry as that which marks the table as a place of dignity and judgment is in contrast with the table of demons, &c. And the question is, not whether the table could exist and Christianity remain if Christ were not Lord; but whether the title connected with communion having been once changed for that of authority, because evil was there, is resumed, when the continuous character of the ordinance is given, and of course its communion implied, which it is not.

In the gospels we find the first institution of this memorial of self-sacrificing love, which, in its accomplishment and results, for God's glory and man's blessing, stands out in eternal relief from the

hoary chronicles of time, and is the single and only inscriptive pillar in the wide universe, where all created intelligences can plainly read the full moral character of God—where all created intelligences may learn what evil is and what is goodness. From it *the principalities and powers* in heavenly places receive their instruction in “the manifold wisdom of God;” *angels* stoop down, desiring to look into its holy mysteries; while as to *man*, it binds with eternal ties to God and Christ the soul that has learnt, though in feeblest measure, the story of the grace which is there inscribed.

To the record of Luke I now turn, that we may be cheered by the living freshness of the gospel narrative as well as instructed in the intrinsic character of the divine institution, which is the subject of our enquiry. In Luke xxii. 14—24 we read, “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 break it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest."

It needs that little be added to this touching narrative, which produces its own effect; while the simplicity of its

terms like the light is unnoticed and unthought of as it fixes our intensive gaze on the objects it reveals. We not only read the narrative, but are transported by it into the midst of the scene that is described. But before further remark I will present in a synoptic view the words of the institution of the supper as given in the three gospels.

MATT. XXVI. 26—28.

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

MARK XIV. 22—24.

"And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many."

LUKE XXII. 19, 20.

"And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given (διδόμενον) for you; this do in remembrance of me (εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναμνησιν). Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament (ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη) in my blood which is shed for you."

It might *a priori* be assumed that, in its first institution, every essential characteristic of the Lord's Supper and Table would be found. The truth of

this conclusion subsequent scripture confirms. In its first institution, the ruling feature, that which alone gave it its gracious and authoritative character, was the presence and the command of Christ. In the midst of His disciples He is presented as Lord and Master of the table, and in infinite grace and condescension, its willing *servitor* too. This gives it its essential character. Its significance must be read in the death in all its bearings and issues, He was about to undergo—the death of the *founder* of the feast, which it then prefigured, and ever after recalls. Now Christ's bodily and earthly presence with His disciples, when the supper received its indelible character, at once destroys the figment of any "real presence" in the elements of bread and wine; and negatives, at the same moment, the dogma that the ordinance receives validity from its administration, by consecrated or other hands. Christ Himself, at its institution, *was* the administrator (who will deny it?), if place for an administrator can be

found in the naked and sublime simplicity of this monumental act. Christ *was*, and *is*, the sole administrator at His table, and *will be* to the end. For when I turn to the special revelation which was received by Paul, from a risen and ascended Christ, in reference to this cardinal expression and symbol of Christianity, what do I find but a simple repetition of the words of the original institution? But was this special revelation given to Paul merely to attest the truth of the gospel narrative, and certify the Church of a *past*, barren, historical fact, which he could well have learnt by other means, and have received from other hands? It was not. The intention of the Lord in giving it (I speak with unhesitating words and adoring heart), the *intention of the Lord* in giving it was to show that, while circumstances necessary to be changed are changed, in all other respects its essentiality remains. These are His words: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which

he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." Thus far the revelation is but a recapitulation of what is presented historically in the gospels, and almost in the literal terms of Luke, where alone the particular expressions "*εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναμνησιν*" are found. All that is added by Paul, substantively, or in literal words, as a new revelation, is that which stamps its unchanging character on the supper as instituted by the Lord as long as it is destined to be observed: "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." (Ver. 26.) And this is the place to ask, Was there any *personation* of the Lord Jesus by Paul? that *he* now, instead of Christ, should pronounce the words that alone authenticate to the

faith of him who eats the supper, his *title* to be there, and from which alone is derived the validity of his act? Do I hear the voice of *man*—apostle! bishop! priest! minister! in the words, “this do ye in remembrance of me?” No; but the words of Him “who loved me and gave *himself* for me,” and who says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments”—words that echo through the chambers of my soul, where, as a wretched sinner, they speak to me of cancelled guilt, of judgment passed, of “death abolished,” of “life and incorruptibility brought to light”—words that give me power to obey, and stamp validity on my act, when I so obey—if indeed I be not a wretched despiser of “the precious blood of Christ,” or a formal hypocrite at best. Paul’s presence or absence, and the presence or absence of any other, never for a moment was essential to the celebration of the supper, nor affected in the remotest degree the validity of the act. If it did, let it from Scripture be shown. In the simplicity of Scripture history I read, “Upon the first day of the week,

when the *disciples* came together to *break bread* [the normal character and object of their meeting] *Paul preached to them.*" (Acts xx. 7.)

That which takes the place of Christ's *bodily* presence, at the supper (His spiritual presence is never vacated), is the living, continuous authority of His word, given power to, in the soul of the communicant, through faith, by the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit. This, as it will at once be seen, explodes the miserable assumption of anything in the ordinance being dependent on priestly "*intention*" in its administration. For administration there is none, save, as I have shown, by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.* And what is this but a part,

* Any supposed administration in the act of one who breaks the bread and hands the cup is set aside at once, if we think that the breaking of Christ's body, if it is supposed to be expressed in this act, was accomplished through the power of Satan by the hands of the Jews: and it is of His body as already "*broken*" that we partake. It is a mere circumstance, because the bread cannot break itself, nor the cup hand itself. Moreover, in communion the blessing of the cup

and only a part, of the fulfilment of His word of promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world?" Or, apart from all connection with official position, of the apostles or their boasted successors, "Where *two or three* are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them?"

The notice of the table of the Lord in the Acts does not call for much remark. It is seen in chapter ii. as an essential feature of Christianity, where it is recorded, after the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, that "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Of the three thousand who were pricked in the heart and received the testimony of grace through the word of Peter, it is said, after they were baptized, that "they

is not an *individual*, much less a ministerial, act. It is declared by the apostle to be the corporate act of the believers, gathered to the table. "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.)

continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Ver. 42.) In chapter xx. we are brought into the midst of the sphere of Paul's labours amongst the Gentiles, and find a recurrence of "the breaking of bread," which chapter ii. had already shown us was the characteristic practice of the Church when composed only of Jewish converts. Here the mind is at once arrested by the simplicity of the historical account, and, I might almost say, the *homeliness* of the aspect in which the supper is presented: "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together TO BREAK BREAD!"—that is all. From this it is at once seen that it was for this object, in special, that the disciples came together, whatever subsidiary ministrations or services might grow out of it and be connected with it; as we find here Paul *preaching* to them, and in Corinthians the gifts of the Spirit in exercise. But all that is presented in the narrative is the normal practice of the disciples on the first day of the week.

In 1 Corinthians x. 16 we get the grounds and nature of the believer's communion at the table of the Lord. "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?" Yet this is not pursued nor dwelt upon, as if it were the apostle's primary object. For as the title of Lord is introduced in contrast and conflict with the power of demons, so the *communion*, the believer's most precious part, in the supper, is presented in contrast and conflict with the communion connected with the idolatrous sacrifices of the heathen. He introduces it in connection with warnings drawn from the proofs of Israel's apostasy; and commences his direct instruction as to communion with the words, "My dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." And that there might be no vagueness in the exhortation, he shows by the example of Israel that those who eat of the sacrifices were partakers of the altar (Jehovah's altar), and so far had communion with the God of Israel; and

that in like manner a participation in the heathen sacrifices involved communion with the idols to whom they were offered. And after the declaration that “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils, not to God,” he adds, “and I would not that ye should have fellowship [or be *κοινωνοις*] with devils.” He then introduces the title of authority in contrast with the power of these demons. Still the communion is there. And how well may the heart linger over the wondrous words in which it is expressed—“the communion of the *blood* of Christ!”—“the communion of the *body* of Christ!” What elements are here! What thoughts do they open out to the soul! What worship do they awaken in the heart! It is not possible for the spirit of a believer to be under the living power of the truths these words express, and not be lifted up above all the beggarly elements of the world and, for the time at least, emancipated from the influence alike of its joys and sorrows; while it echoes back the language that broke eighteen hun-

dred years ago from the apostle's lips, while dwelling on this theme, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." It is the *death* of Christ that is before our souls in the communion of the supper. It is His voice of love in agony and death that at His table speaks to our hearts. And while yielding up the soul to the controlling power of the words, "Ye do show the Lord's death till he come," how does it yearn for some better embodiment of its emotions than is sometimes sought to be presented in our united worship, by a half-mechanical reading of certain scriptures referring to the death and passion of our Lord, and by the singing of hymns fitted to the same. Oh ! how far is this from the just consequences of the living guidance of the Holy Spirit ! But our God is gracious. And who can measure the extent of His forbearing love ? Albeit it must not be forgotten, that "they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."

In chapter x. 21 we have the introduction of the title of "Lord," which is continued without a change all through the instructions in relation to the supper,* from verse 23 to the close of chapter xi. This title is unquestionably connected with the presence of evil, and is brought in as its corrective. Still in the standing designation of the supper and table, which Christians have adopted, and the Scriptures have supplied, it is manifest that the aspect of the Lord's dignity and claim to subjection, presented in its observance, are not to be allowed to fade from our minds. The title itself, however, is far from resting on the narrow basis of this chapter, as has been attempted to be shewn, in a practical way, in a paper in the February number of this work, entitled, "The authority of Christ as Lord." The pre-

* I do not draw any practical distinction between "the table" and "the supper." There is a difference, of course, in the natural figures; but any conclusions of a practical kind drawn from this must, I think, be deemed precarious, if the truth of the deductions be not in other scriptures plainly expressed.

sence of evil and disorder, it is conceded, gave occasion for the introduction of the title, but divine wisdom saw fit to continue it unchanged, as the designative mark of the observance of the supper until the end.

Besides, in the communion of the table it is plain that our condition may be such, spiritually I mean, (our chapter is an example in point, though followed with grosser disorder than is to be looked for now), that the Lord must not only present Himself in our midst with the touching expressions, as it were, of "behold my hands and my feet!" but also with the solemn overshadowing of His dignity and authority too. So that—if our souls contract a too careless familiarity with the grace which cost Him His precious blood, and His body broken on the cross, in order that He might manifest it to us, wretched sinners that we were!—we might, at least, be bowed and awed by the dignity of His mien and by the glancing of the diadem seen upon His brow.

I well remember, many years ago,

when amidst the activities of an anxious life, and of service in the gospel, made arduous by its being among a rural population, and in widely distant places, before the facilities of railroads, that my soul, having lost the freshness of its communion, was recalled to it, with intense humiliation and thankfulness, by pressing upon others Job xxxviii. and the three following chapters. It might seem to many to be a portion of truth very remote from containing in it the elements of communion, and yet I believe it is very intimately connected with it. For if the heart, familiarized with the thoughts of grace and liberty, carries itself carelessly before the Lord—and, alas! how often is it so—He must needs unveil His majesty that we may learn that it is God with whom we have to do. But it may be objected, you could not then have known the liberty of the gospel and your standing in Christ as dead and risen in Him. Far from it. It was the main topic of my ministry and the sheet-anchor of my soul. But I was made to feel that the “strange fire” of

the priests, who had unquestioned right of approach to Him, was met by the fire of God's judgment. And I was taught by it the meaning of the solemn oracle that came forth from the ark of God's presence, explanatory of His act of judgment, "I will be sanctified of them that draw near unto me!"

There is another passage in the Corinthians I would refer to as throwing light on the table of the Lord, and as presenting the personal, practical holiness required in those who are associated with it. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our pass-over is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor. v. 7, 8.) This passage, it is true, does not refer directly and exclusively to the table of the Lord, but to the discipline that is called for in the assembly of believers, that their practical condition may correspond to their character in grace. But,

“Christ our passover is sacrificed for us,” brings before the soul the full redemption which is ours by the sacrifice of Christ. “Let us keep the feast,” &c., refers to the feast of unleavened bread, which the passover introduced to, and is the expressive type of the holiness that is to characterize a redeemed people. But the passover cannot be restricted to that which was eaten in Egypt with bitter herbs, &c. For in that there was no peaceful *communion*; because God was acting as a judge, and the blood upon the doorposts, while it gave security to those within the house, shut God out of it. Yet cannot the table of the Lord be separated from this aspect of redemption, since on the cross the Lord Jesus was indeed bearing the judgment of God for our sins. But the instructed mind is led by the expression to that memorable passover which Israel kept, after they had crossed the waters of Jordan, in the plains of Jericho, as described with all its significant circumstances in Joshua v. But in the passage before us it is the feast of unleavened

bread, which lasted seven days, after the passover, that is in prominence. This is the feast that was to be kept, "not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." The application is plain. In our lives and associations and all the circumstances of life, as redeemed by the blood of Christ, we are to be distinguished not by the principles and habits of our old nature, much less by the activity of actual evil—"malice and wickedness," but by the uncorrupted principles of "sincerity [or pureness] and truth." God grant it may be so with us and with all His people!

What is presented, then, and represented in the two distinctive ordinances of Christianity is *the death* of Christ. Baptism, as a figure, reaches only to death—the death of the old man in the death of Christ. "We are buried with him by baptism into *death*." But resurrection comes not in baptism, neither is it represented by it. This comes "through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him [Christ] from

the dead." But baptism, in its significance, is the closing of the grave of Christ on the old man, which is not, in principle, and ought not to be in practice, raised again. "We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. vi. 4.) So also as to the table of the Lord, what is expressly said of it is, "Ye do show the Lord's *death* till he come." But, as in baptism, the believer is not lost in death, which is but the death and burial of the old man, but rises again in the resurrection of Christ to a new life; so also at the table of the Lord, we show the death of One who though He stood in the breach for us and bore the judgment of our sins, yet was He not lost in death (that were immitigable sorrow, supposing redemption were possible to us so), but was raised from the dead, and ascended on high, is coming again to take His people to Himself.

In the Lord's table the Church is not viewed in its abstract perfectness as

the body and bride of Christ. This aspect of it is not, cannot be, represented in an ordinance which is designed for earth, however blessedly it may be true of those who are true partakers of it. It is for the body of actual believers in the world, who, as partakers of redemption through Christ's death and bitter sufferings, confess their allegiance to Him whom the world, to its condemnation, has rejected. No ordinance can reach up to the height of the Church as seated in the heavenly places in Christ. Hence it is not in connection with Ephesian doctrine that the table of the Lord is presented, but Corinthian; and the absence of reference to it in the Epistle to the Ephesians may be accounted for on the same principle as the absence from it of the coming of the Lord, as the hope of the Church, is accounted for. But is it by this denied that the coming of the Lord is the hope of the Church? Far from it. It is but giving to Ephesian and Thessalonian doctrine their just aspect and bearing.

In Ephesians we have the revelation

of the mystery and the Church presented in its divine perfectness in the counsels of God as the body and bride of Christ, and also presented on earth as "the habitation of God through the Spirit." In the Corinthians we have the Church in its witness on earth, and the ordering of its gifts and ministries by the Spirit unto this end; and moreover, presenting a sufficient reason (if one were needed) for insisting on truths fundamental to Christianity, and without which neither it nor the table of the Lord could be. For it is in this Epistle especially that Christ's title of Lord is insisted on; and the doctrine of the resurrection is elaborately argued, and argued on the precise ground that without it Christianity would cease to exist. Philippians gives us the position of believers in this world, i.e., of pilgrims going through it, to join a risen Christ in heaven (by the cross and suffering, if God see good), but having no other object for their affections and no other hope. In Thessalonians the fulness of instruction is given concerning the truth of the coming of

the Lord, guarding it also against all the perversions of the enemy; while it presents too the responsibilities of the kingdom and its rewards. Hence the nature of its exhortations. "Ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory," (1 Thess. ii. 11, 12,) and "that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer." In the Colossians the apostle tells us that he was a minister of the gospel "which was preached in the whole creation which is under heaven." He says also that he was made a minister of the Church to fulfil [complete, if you please] the word of God. And here we find him in the intensity of his zeal and labours seeking to make known "the glory of the mystery amongst the Gentiles . . . warning every man and teaching every man, that he might present every man perfect in Christ." In like manner in the Ephesians he declares his mission to be to "preach among the

Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things." (Chap. iii. 8, 9.) In his leave-taking of the elders of Ephesus, with a tinge of unutterable sadness he gives this remarkable description of his active ministry. "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (Acts xx. 25—27.) To Timothy he says, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life," and then adds, "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in his times he shall

shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." (1 Tim. vi. 13—15.) The contemplation of the wondrous scene of our Lord at the bar of Pilate is necessary to show what the "good confession" of a Christian is.

But why do I enlarge? The truth that is to be formative of our souls, as belonging to God and Christ, is as various as "the manifold wisdom of God," and is as various in its application as the varied relationships in which the believer can be placed; as *varied*, in reality, as are the varied exigencies of the saints as seen by Him who has marked, in His wisdom, their course on earth, and who best knows the fitted training for them as heirs of the glory with Him, which is yet to be revealed. Our wisdom, therefore, in the ministration of truth, is to find a place for all for which Scripture finds a place—"rightly dividing the word of truth." There is no antagonism in truth. The whole of Scripture, not a part, is essential to the apprehension of the due range of practical min-

istrations amongst the saints, that they may "build themselves up in their most holy faith," and be taught "to walk and please God." And if the Holy Spirit be leant on for this, He will guide to its discriminative use, for these ends of God, in His church. Truths justly esteemed to be fundamental, and so not enlarged upon, by one whose labours for the Church may be doctoral, and so mainly engaged in evolving the truth from the divine records for its enlightenment, may, and must be, insisted on again and again in their practical bearing, in pastoral ministrations, by any who are in a position to heed the words of the apostle, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts xx. 28): and who are guided by the example of the Apostle Peter, who said, "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea,

I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance." (2 Peter i. 12, 13.)

The undue or exclusive insistance upon any truth, however important in itself and unquestionable, not only sins against the example of Scripture, but also (through the infirmity of our nature and the ever-watchful craft of the enemy) almost invariably awakens in the mind a feeling of opposition against it. And if this feeling, once awakened, be not watched against, and the Lord sought to about it, the transition is most easy to the rejection of the particular truth altogether and the adoption of its opposite error.

But before I dismiss this paper, which has already passed the ordinary bounds of such contributions, I return briefly to the accounts presented in the gospels of the institution of the supper, and more especially to that which has been quoted in full from Luke.

In what are called the synoptical gospels, it is given with its distinctive groupings of subordinate truths and

circumstances (infinitely interesting to trace) accordant with the distinctive character and purport of each, while the grand central truth is given in its divine essentiality by them all. In the account presented by Luke we have the Lord giving to His disciples the paschal cup saying, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say unto you, that I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until *the kingdom of God shall come.*" In Matthew it is, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until the day *when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*" The world and Israel had rejected Him in the grace in which He came, and had rejected "the kingdom of God" in His person; and now until it be established by judgment and power (as in Daniel vii.), there is nothing left to Him but Nazarite separation from the world—separation to suffering and to heavenly glory. But this is not the cup of *communion*: that comes afterwards. While the heart is occupied with the infinite grace of this scene, and is melted by the sorrows of

Him who is saying in ineffable love, "this is my *body* which is given for you," and "this cup is the new testament *in my blood*," with what harshness and dissonance do the words break upon the ear, "and there was a strife among them, which of them should be accounted greatest!" Alas! for human nature, at its best! But they loved the Lord—and they loved themselves too; and one blushes at the incongruity of their thoughts and feelings so out of harmony with the love that was here displayed. But are *we* quite prepared that the same hand should remove the vail from our bosoms and our assemblies? "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

The Gospel of John, it has been long since observed, is the presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ in His essential glory as the Son of God, and so above all dispensation, and also stamping with their relative worth all the official titles and offices which, in the accomplishment of redemption, He sustains. Hence there is no mount of transfiguration in

John, nor garden of Gethsemane. So also there is a striking absence of all reference to the institution of the supper in it. We only know from this gospel that there was any supper at all in the most incidental way. It is simply said, "supper being ended," &c. There is nothing to distinguish it from the passover—no breaking of the bread; no blessing, and giving the cup. Not that these were absent; but our Lord being presented in this gospel as the eternal life—the Son quickening whom He will, and giving eternal life to those whom the Father hath given Him, it is not the continuance of an ordinance on earth that is in prominence, but the association with Himself in that life which had been displayed on earth in the accomplishment of redemption, and which was now to be resumed in heaven and in heavenly communion. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came from God and went to God; he riseth from supper," &c. The passover here is simply viewed as the point of exit of our Lord

from this world, necessary to His return to the Father. And all that we find connected with the supper, is not its institution as a commemorative ordinance on earth, but the unfolding of what grace would do in putting into association with Himself in the communion and the heavenly glory to which He was going, those whom He could acknowledge as "His own which were in the world;" and whom having loved, "He loved unto the end." All that is intermediate between the expression "supper being ended," &c., and "arise, let us go hence," is the washing of the disciples' feet, and the expression of that grace which would be in exercise on high on their behalf, until His coming again to receive them to Himself. Every part of Scripture has its place.

Divested of the corruptions and incumbrances that have been heaped upon it, the table of the Lord is the social ordinance of Christianity, designed for the collective communion of those that are His. It is the rallying point of the soldiers of the cross. The continuous

living monument of that which is the central truth and foundation of the gospel and of Christianity. It is the place, too, of holy communion, from which all leaven of evil is to be banished; and where nothing in doctrine or practice is to be allowed that will not sort with the ends of Christ's death. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are, unleavened." The grace that has set believers before God in Christ in unleavened perfectness, is urged as the obligation to separate from all that practically would contradict that position. The consequence of the neglect of this is declared in the words, "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" In the simple narration of Scripture we read, "Upon the first day of the week the disciples came together to break bread." And this first day of the week received its indelible character from its being the day of the resurrection of the Lord. And still further, it was the day especially selected by Him, after His resurrection, to renew

His intercourse with His disciples, appearing in their midst and saying, "Peace be unto you." Whatever disorders might exist in the church of Corinth, disorders that were corrected by apostolic authority, it is plain that it was the *primal* meeting of believers. The apostle notices it thus, "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper," &c. But then connected with this we have the unfailing promise of the Lord, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This I do not limit to the presence of the Spirit in the Church, nor confound with it, however it is only by His power and presence that it can be realized. Neither do I limit the accomplishment of this blessed promise of the Lord to the gathering of believers around the table of the Lord; though I do expect pre-eminently to find its fulfilment there: and I do not think that the true elements of worship and communion remain where this is not apprehended. I need not insist on all the blessed consequences of the realization of the Lord's presence. He will surely not be present to *do nothing*. And if the disciples in their journey to Emmaus said "one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked

with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke xxiv. 32) will it be less so with His saints now? It is not, I fear, enough borne in mind that the absolutely distinctive characteristic of the world and of His people is given in the expressive words of our Lord, "*The world seeth me no more, but ye see me.*" And again, "I will not leave you orphans, *I will come to you.*" And once more, "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest* myself to him." And if the individual heart ought not to be, cannot be, if taught aright, satisfied without these manifestations of the Lord, which the world cannot know, are they to be less realized when meeting in His name, to which His pledge and promise are especially attached?

One moment more I snatch, to urge from the apostle's example this practical corollary: If I am called to this communion of the body and blood of Christ—if I am thus in constant, habitual contact with the unspeakable grace and love of the cross, there is surely a correspondent obligation to confess before the world the Master whom I serve, the Lord to whom I belong. In the apostle's touching appeal at the close of the Galatians, when he had brought to an issue his conflict with the corrupters of

the gospel and the boasters in human ordinances, he teaches us what alone we ought to value in the world, and what character in it we should always bear. He says, "They desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. vi. 13, 14.) He then adds, "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." (Ver. 17.) All that he valued in the world was the cross. All that he cared to be known by amongst men was by the brand-marks of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the wounds and lacerations of His body in the service of the gospel, he would have men plainly see whose servant and bondsman he was. For these *στιγματα* were the marks branded on slaves to indicate their owners.

May our hearts be so intent on confessing and serving the Lord Jesus, that if we are permitted to carry with us in our bodies or in our spirits any impress of the opposition of the enemy's power, we may be able to see in this the marks of the Lord Jesus, and so be able to say in the profound quiet of our souls, "Let no man trouble me," conscious to ourselves whose initials we bear!

"ΜΝΑΣΩΝ."