

Thoughts

ON THE

Lord's Supper



BY

RUSSELL ELLIOTT.

To be obtained of the Author :

73 DURHAM ROAD, WIMBLEDON, LONDON,
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Thoughts on the Lord's Supper.

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: thus do in remembrance of Me.

After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come.

—1 Cor. xi. 23-26.

The Lord's Supper—do we understand it? do we perceive what our Lord intended by its institution?

Let us think of several things which mark its importance. First, it was a dying request. "The Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread." Second. All the shadows of those last hours before the Cross were gathering round Him. We think only of the most important matters at such moments. Third. The request that accompanied the institution was: "**This do in remembrance of Me.**" This gives it such a personal touch. Lastly, so important is it, that, not only did the Lord institute the feast while on earth, but He re-affirms it from heaven. So desirous is He of our remembrance, that years afterwards, when He had ascended on high,

and was seated at God's right hand, amid all the glories of heaven and amidst its praises, the apostle Paul receives it again; so that he is able to declare to the church at Corinth, "**I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.**" (1 Cor. xi. 23.) And then follow the inspired words which have moved so many hearts ever since, and are part of the charter of the Church, and which have been read thousands upon thousands of times throughout all ages of the Church's history, and are amongst the words the redeemed most cherish. Thus we see how exceedingly precious, as well as important, is the Lord's Supper.

'Twas on that night of deepest woe,
 When darkness round did thicken;
 When through deep waters Thou did'st go,
 And for our sins wast stricken,
 Thou Lord did'st seek that we should be
 With grateful hearts remembering Thee.

Again, there are only two Christian ordinances, and this is one of them. The other is Baptism. This latter comes first, and is the introduction to the other. Thus, if we look at the first epistle to the Corinthians, Chapters x. and xi., we find this Divine order maintained. Baptism is mentioned at the opening of Chap. x., then immediately we have a reference to the Lord's Table, and following upon this, in Chap. xi., the Lord's Supper.

These two—the Lord's Table and the Lord's Supper—though very closely allied, are yet to be distinguished. The Lord's table is mentioned first, and then we have a reference to several other matters before there is any allusion to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Table is part and parcel of Christianity itself; and every true believer is a partaker of the Lord's Table, whether he actually partakes of the Supper or not. The expression "partakers of the Lord's Table" occurs only once in the New Testament, and it is used in contrast with the table of demons (1 Cor. x. 21).* We are

*How extraordinary that although the subject of the Lord's Table is introduced with the exhortation, "Flee from idolatry," to show how utterly inconsistent idolatry is with a profession of Christianity, it has itself been made the occasion for idolatry of the most insidious kind.

not to think merely of a material table, as if the Lord's Table, as spoken of in this chapter, was the table upon which the elements rest. Such is not the idea at all. The word "table" must be taken in a figurative sense. When we invite friends to "our table" we certainly do not invite them merely to a piece of wood, but to what we **provide** for them. Our table is our provision for their need. So the Lord's Table is Christ's provision for the needs of His people; only the needs here are spiritual.

"Partakers of the Lord's Table." As believers in Him, we partake of all the benefits that accrue from His death. This is quite apart from the actual eating of the Supper, as we shall presently see.

We cannot help noticing that the great word in connection with this aspect of the subject is "Communion,"—sometimes the word is "fellowship" or "partakers." It occurs under one or other of these forms altogether six times in as many verses; and is represented by two words in the original, which signify to be "partners," to have "a common share," to be "associates." All Christians participate alike in the benefits of Christ's death. Thus they have "Communion." They are all equally "partakers of the Lord's Table."

Next, certain distinctions between the Lord's Table as referred to in chapter x., and the Supper as spoken of in chapter xi. need to be noticed. In connection with the latter the apostle specially refers to their coming together: "**When ye come together therefore into one place.**" Three times he refers to this coming together, in a few verses (vv. 17-20). But when he refers to the Table in chapter x., he says nothing about coming together. That is one distinction. Another is, the **Cup** is mentioned first, in connection with the Lord's Table, but in the Supper the bread comes first. And this is the universal practice in regard to the Supper, to partake of the bread first. No one would think of taking the cup first. Yet unmistakably it occupies the first place in chapter x. No doubt there is a reason for this. And we believe that explanation is to be found in what has already been suggested, that the word "table" speaks of the provision Christ has made for every one of us by His death. And the precious blood of Christ is the ground of all our blessing. Therefore the Cup is mentioned first. Before we come to

the Supper, we must know that we are blessed. That is the sense in which we are partakers of the Lord's Table. I cannot remember the Blesser until, first of all, I have partaken of the blessing, and consequently, the first allusion of the apostle is to "the cup of **blessing**." "The cup of blessing which we bless" (give thanks for) (1 Cor. x. 16).*

What a Table He has spread for us! How full with blessing beyond measure is this Cup! To His Table the Lord would welcome us as His guests. What blessings He has provided! Forgiveness, justification, acceptance, the children's place, the gift of the Holy Spirit, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Our present and eternal gain are all included in this cup of blessing. The apostle John declares, "**The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.**" And again, "**I write unto you children because your sins are forgiven you for His Name's sake**" (1 John i. 7, ii. 12). The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews tells us that Christ by His sacrifice accomplished all God's will. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." That is, we are set apart to God in all the value to Him of that one offering. "For by one offering he hath **perfected forever** them that are sanctified" (Heb. x. 10, 14). To be partakers of the Lord's Table then means to be partakers of blessing. God does not see or remember our sins; He only sees us as perfect as the work of His beloved Son is perfect.

THE CONNECTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER WITH THE PASSOVER.

These two institutions stand in very close relation, but they are not the same. It was during the last Passover the Supper was instituted, and the one supersedes the other. The Passover is fulfilled in the death of Christ, according to His own pronouncement. "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

*Another distinction is, in connection with the Table it is **blessing** and **breaking**; with regard to the Supper it is **eating** and **drinking**.

more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God" (Luke xxii. 15-16). This fulfilment was accomplished in His own death. So Paul can write: "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." The Passover was connected with that night of judgment in Egypt, when all the first-born of the Egyptians were slain, and those of Israel were delivered. It was the blood of the slain lamb which made the difference. Christ, our Passover, is slain for us, and as He will never die again, the Passover is fulfilled. And so we come to the Supper in all the serenity of mind produced by the knowledge of sins put away. God neither sees them nor remembers them. "When I see the blood I will pass over you," was His word to Israel (Ex. xii). "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," is God's assurance to us (Heb. x. 17). Thus the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper speak of an accomplished sacrifice, **never to be repeated.**

THE TRUE PREPARATION FOR THE SUPPER.

But while the Passover is fulfilled and has given place to the Supper, there are certain correspondences between the two, and also certain lessons to be drawn from the earlier festival. The instruction as to the Passover was introduced with the words, "**This month shall be unto you the beginning of months.**" "The sprinkling of blood" was the commencement of their life with God—they began a new history.

So the Lord's Supper is a reminder of the new covenant. "This cup is the new covenant in My blood." We stand upon new ground—the ground of assured forgiveness, and of God's unalterable favour. The first words our Lord uttered when He came into the midst of His own on the morning of His resurrection were, "**Peace, unto you.**" The possession of that peace is the true preparation for remembering the One Who brought it to us. God has nothing against us. Our sins were all laid to Christ's charge and He answered for them on the Cross. "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

Further, in the Passover those who were sheltered by the blood fed upon the lamb roast with fire. So in the

Supper we remember Christ, and we feed upon Him.
 "Take eat, this is My body which is given for you."

Lastly, these were the instructions given as to the mode of eating the Passover: "**Thus shall ye eat it: with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand.**" They were not to remain where they were. The blood which sheltered them from God's judgment severed them from Egypt. So the apostle adds in connection with the Supper: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death **till He come.**" His death delivered us from this present evil world; and His coming again will set us free from it entirely and forever (Gal. i. 4).

Certain lessons, which throw their light upon, and have their application to, the Supper may be drawn from the opening verses of Luke xxii., with reference to the Passover. The chapter begins with an allusion to "the feast of unleavened bread." This was an inseparable accompaniment of the Passover. It reminds us that sanctification cannot be severed from justification. We have already quoted the words, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us," which occur in 1 Cor. v. The apostle immediately links with them a reference to the feast of unleavened bread. "**Therefore let us keep the feast (holy day), not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth**" (v.v. 7-8). Here, then, we have an additional preparation for the Lord's Supper—Holiness. If Christ died to save us from our sins, He equally died to separate us from sin.

How is this practical sanctification to be secured? We think the answer is found further on in this same chapter. In reply to our Lord's injunction to his disciples, "Go and prepare us the Passover," the disciples enquire, "Where wilt Thou that we prepare;" and they are told, "There shall a man meet you bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in." "A pitcher of water." We need the constant cleansing of water by the word (Eph. v. 26). Our Lord prayed, "Sanctify them by Thy truth; thy word is truth." Yes, the practical preparation for partaking of the Lord's Supper is the washing of water by the word. By this means the defilement we have contracted during the week is remov-

ed. It is remarkable that it was on the occasion of the Supper the Lord washed His disciples' feet; telling them that in no other way could they have part with Him (John xiii. 8). With the result that John leaned his head upon the bosom of Jesus. Only as we are consciously enjoying His presence beforehand, can we enjoy communion at the Supper, or be conscious how near Christ can be to us, and we to Him, on that occasion. John does not mention the Lord's Supper but dwells upon the true moral preparation for it—feet washing.

“ Follow him into the house where he entereth in.” At the Supper we are in seclusion with Christ. The world has been left behind, and we have entered in. “ He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love.” It is indeed to the banqueting house we are brought, for the next verse speaks of the **guest chamber**. “ Where is the guest chamber where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples.” Does not this give us further light as to the character of the Supper? It is the Upper Room, the Guest Chamber. We are there as His guests. He invites us. He spreads the feast. And what entertainment He provides! We can think of

“ All our redemption cost,
All Thy redemption won.”

It is a “feast of love divine.” He shows us His hands and His side.

HIS DESIRE AND OUR REMEMBRANCE.

There is one word in this chapter, we have been considering, which we should never forget. True, it referred to the Passover, but it has, at least, equal, if not stronger, application to the Lord's Supper. “ And He said unto them, With **desire** I have **desired** to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” It was the Lord Who had said, “ **Go** and prepare us the Passover that we may eat.” It was His suggestion. The desire to be remembered by us is equally His suggestion. It is His desire. This should be enough to awaken a response in the heart of every Christian. Our remembrance! this is what He craves.

And this remembrance of Christ in the Supper belongs to the very essence of it. We remember Him. And we do so in connection with all that which makes the very strongest appeal to us. "Greater love hath no man than this," He once said, "that a man lay down his life for his friends." And then He added: "**Ye are My friends,** if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John xv. 13-14). We come together as His friends to think of all He has done for us, and to retrace that wondrous path which culminated in the obedience of the Cross.

It is not a little remarkable that of the three Evangelists, the words "**This do in remembrance of Me,**" are recorded only by Luke. They are recorded also by Paul. On closer inspection we may discover a reason for this. One explanation may be that Luke must have gained a great deal from his long and close association with the apostle. But there seems to be another and a deeper reason. Luke's subject is the Man Christ Jesus. Each evangelist presents a special aspect of our Lord's Person, Life and Ministry; and while John gives us the Godhead, Luke presents the Manhood. Is it not in keeping with his subject that he should specially mention the words, "**This do in remembrance of Me?**" One Who is Man it is Who asks to be remembered. How near this suggestion seems to bring Him! How real His request becomes in this light! There was, amidst all else that is greater than we can comprehend, the perfect human desire, we so well understand, not to be forgotten.

The apostle John does not mention the Supper. Is this not equally appropriate? And does not Luke's account borrow additional emphasis and meaning from this very fact? Both the record and the omission express the truth, each in their own appointed way.

At the very heart of our subject, then, lie these words, "This do in remembrance of Me." Above and beyond everything else, this ordinance brings Himself before us. We do not come to it to remember our **sins**, nor even to remember our **blessings**, but something higher, sweeter, better is before us—**HIMSELF**. He is greater than our sins, for He has put them away; and better than our blessings, for He is the **BLESSER**. There is a way of making ourselves the object and the centre, for alas!

self will creep in even on the most solemn and sacred occasions. No doubt we cannot think of the Cross without being reminded of the fact, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body;" still at this supreme moment, it is not the thought of our own benefit that should be uppermost, but all that the Cross meant to Him and the love He manifested. **We remember Him.** Our blessing will not be less because of this.

FOUR ASPECTS OF THE SUPPER.

There are four aspects of the Supper, or, to put it in another way, there are four names by which it is known, and each name enshrines and expresses some truth.

1. The Lord's Supper is sometimes called the **Sacrament**. This term has become associated with superstitious ideas, but taken in its simple and original sense the word sacrament expresses a certain truth. The Latin word, **sacramentum**, from which it is derived, was the Roman soldier's oath of allegiance. In the Lord's Supper we express our allegiance to Christ.

In connection with this thought it is important to notice the way in which the apostle Paul introduces the subject in 1 Cor. xi. His opening words are a reference to the betrayal. "The Lord Jesus the same night in which He was **betrayed** took bread." Why should the betrayal be mentioned? Something like thirty years had passed since that unhappy and tragic event. Paul was not even present. Why recall it? It was necessary. The Lord was betrayed by one belonging to the innermost circle. This was never to be forgotten. The Lord would fasten that fact upon the minds of all who profess to be His followers. And so, when we come to the Supper, we have, so to speak, to pass that notice, warning us of what the human heart is capable, and reminding us of one solemn truth in connection with the Supper, viz., that every time we remember Christ we express our allegiance to Him, in contrast with the betrayal.

2. The Lord's Supper is also called the **Eucharist**—the simple meaning of which is **thanksgiving**. We should

approach it in this spirit. It is a feast of thanksgiving. Our Lord's own example is our pattern. In Matthew xxvi. 26 it is recorded, "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it," or, as the margin reads, "Gave thanks." He did the same with regard to the Cup, He "gave thanks." We may well ask, How could He give thanks when the bread and wine spoke of His own death? It was for that very reason. He knew His death to be the fulfilment of all the promises, and of all that had been foreshadowed by the sacrifices offered year by year continually. In that death sinners would find all they needed; and God would be glorified. The salvation of unnumbered hosts, and the satisfaction of Divine justice, would be the blessed result of the laying down of His life. It would bring God and man together. All this was present to His mind, and as He thought of all that His death meant, He gave thanks. The Saviour's heart must have been full at that moment. And if so, should not ours be, as we contemplate all that His death means? As we eat the bread and drink the wine we are reminded of the infinite worth and far reaching effect of the sacrifice of Calvary. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show **the Lord's death** till He come."

The Lord's death! What cause for thanksgiving! The bread and the wine are symbols of it, and it is as we perceive all that His death involved we truly remember Him, and at the same time the Supper becomes to us the means of the very greatest blessing. In God's account, that event is the greatest that ever happened in this world. Every other sinks into insignificance beside the majesty and importance of the Cross.

"All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime."

It is the Lord's death. He Who had called everything into existence, and to whom all belonged, gave up His life.

In that death all glories meet. It was a perfect **sacrifice** where nothing was kept back; for there the fountain of love in His heart was opened up and spent itself without reserve. There, too, He accomplished the will of God, though at infinite cost to Himself. Love to God and love to man were both displayed in fullest measure. And the believer can say, to-day, what a believer said many hund-

reds of years ago: "The Son of God Who loved **me** and gave Himself for **me**" (Gal. ii. 20). In the presence of all this what can we do but give thanks? The Lord's Supper becomes indeed a Eucharist.

3. And this leads us to say a word about the third aspect—the Lord's Supper is the **Communion**. Thus we read in 1 Cor. x. 16:—

"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?"

Through the death of Christ we are partakers in blessing. Communion means, joint participators in what is common to all. The Lord's Supper partakes of this character and expresses this fact. "For we being many are one bread, one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread" (v. 17). Every believer owes his blessing to the same cause; and the same blessings belong to all equally. The babe in Christ has the same title as the oldest believer. Differences there may be in experience, in capacity, in enjoyment, but no difference in title. At the Lord's Supper we are all on common ground. This is why it is called "the communion of the blood of Christ." This, and this alone, gives any of us title to Christian blessing.

And this is one reason why we break bread together—we are participators—partners, if you like—in common blessings. And all who share in this have an equal right to partake of the Lord's Supper. If we can give thanks for the blessing, no one has any right, other things being equal, to hinder us remembering the BLESSER.

But not only is there communion with one another, there is also communion with God and with Christ. As an illustration the apostle calls attention to the history of Israel.

"Behold Israel after the flesh; are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" (v. 18).

That is to say, the altar was God's altar, and to be a partaker of the altar was to feed upon that which belonged to God. God and the worshipper had part in the same sacrifice. How much more true is this when we come to that death which was the fulfilment and antitype of all

the sacrifices! In His one sacrifice, the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offering meet. The believer sees Christ made sin for him, and can joyfully exclaim, in the language of Scripture, "He Himself bear our sins in His own body on the tree." Yet it was at the same moment that "Christ by the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God;" and thus He accomplished the will of God, and was never more acceptable to Him than at that hour. Then it was that, in a special way, the fragrance of Christ ascended to God as a sweet savour. So, while we discover in His death that which meets our need, we also see in that same sacrifice something for God surpassing all our thoughts. For we hear Christ saying in prospect of that hour, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." And again, "The Cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" While a cup of **blessing** is put into our hands, we are permitted to think of a far different cup, which He drank on our account. Thus communion is not only with God but also with Christ. What can lead to deeper communion with Him than to ponder all we owe to His sufferings, and with anointed eyes seek to penetrate, as far as we may, into the mystery of them? As we retrace the path which led to Gethsemane and the Cross, and seek to realise the conflict of the one, and the forsaking of the other; as the agony of the Garden and of Calvary are recalled; as we witness His submission to the will of God and all that He endured at the hands of man; our hearts while touched with awe, overflow with adoration, wonder, and gratitude.

4. And now, lastly, we come to the aspect which, in some respects, is the most important of all, and, yet, the least understood. It is the Lord's **Supper**. We are so to enter into the meaning of His death that we feed upon Him. We ought to be believers in the real **Presence**, in the true sense of that term.

We are creatures of extremes. Romanists have gone to one extreme, but have not many Protestants gone to another? Has there not been a rebound from the false doctrine of Transubstantiation which has left the ordinance, as Protestants observe it, somewhat **too** bare?

Let us consider, for a moment, with deep reverence (but may it also be with deep insight) the actual words of

our blessed Lord, when He instituted the Supper. In Matt. xxvi. 26 we read: "**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.**" We cannot believe that Christ, on such a momentous occasion, would speak in any careless, haphazard way, without choosing His words. And He deliberately says, "**This is My body.**" We have no right to introduce any words as explanatory of His meaning. Are we justified, for instance, in putting the word "represent" in place of "is?" Our Lord did not say, "This **represents** My body," but, "This **is** My body." And He surely knew what He was saying, and knew also the controversy that would rage round His words. Yet He deliberately uses the words quoted, and no other. The reason surely is that "This **is** My body," conveys the real truth more nearly than if He had said, "This **represents** My body." No one surely would dispute the fact that the bread does **represent** His body, but the actual words used contain a profounder truth.

"Does then the bread become the **actual** body of Christ?" someone may be inclined to ask, "and are the Romanists right after all?" Nothing of the kind. The whole point is how, and in what sense did Christ mean "This is My body?"* What we should be careful about is that in escaping from **error**, we do not ourselves **miss** the truth, and rob the Supper of some of its meaning. We do not improve matters by depriving our Lord's words of their real significance. He said, "Take, eat; this is **My** body."† What a feast, what a supper, the Lord meant this ordinance to be to us! But we need not the adventitious aids of magic or mystery. If the bread itself became the **actual** body of Christ, if everything depended upon a change in the **elements**, the whole meaning and benefit of the rite would be lost. And yet Christ said, "This is My body." What did he mean? Perhaps, here, an illustration may help us.

An artist has completed a picture of your mother, and for the first time, since her death, it hangs upon your wall. A friend calls, and on seeing the picture, enquires, "Who

*We must discern the underlying spiritual meaning.

†And Paul speaks of "discerning the Lord's body."

is that?" And you reply without hesitation, "It is my mother." "Your mother," is the reply, "why, that is only paint and canvas!" True, from one standpoint, and yet not true. In a very real sense, that picture is your mother. And your words, "That is my mother," contain a profounder meaning than if you had merely said, "That represents my mother." For often, as you gaze at it, you pass beyond the material, beyond the paint and canvas, and your mother is before you, and with you, and you are once again with her, in her very presence.*

Now this is exactly what the Supper should be to us, as far as anything human can approach the divine. We pass beyond the bread to that of which it speaks; we enter into the significance and spiritual meaning of that death, of which the bread is a token, and to our enraptured hearts His "flesh is meat indeed" and His "blood is drink indeed."

But supposing someone suggested to you, "Oh, that is actually your mother, is it?" How you would recoil. "My mother," you would say, "has been in heaven long since."

This aspect of the subject may further be illustrated by a reference to Luke xxiv: to what occurred in the house at Emmaus. On the journey thither, "it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them." And then we are confronted with the astonishing announcement "Their eyes were holden that they should not know Him." Now, without going into the reasons for this, let us enquire, By what means did Christ, at last, make Himself known?

First of all, the disciples were treated to the most wonderful exposition of Scripture to which mortal ears

*Many will remember Cowper's lines on "My Mother's picture," and how vividly he recalls her: "Thy constant flow of love that knew no fall." The illustration has also been used of a £5 note. Three things may be said about it: (1) As to itself it is only paper and ink, and paper and ink it always remains. (2) It represents the worth of £5. (3) It is five pounds. So with the picture: (1) It is only paint and canvas. (2) It represents a person. (3) To one who retains that person in their affection it means more. Cowper did not describe the picture, he described the person.

had ever listened, until, as they confessed afterwards, their hearts burned within them. But, be it noted, this did not open their eyes. When they reached their own home their fellow traveller was still a stranger to them. They, however, invite Him to become their guest, and He responds. We now arrive at the very crux of the story.

“And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them, and their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.”

Now why did the Lord select such means to open their eyes? Perhaps, first of all, to make them realise that His very death, which they, up to that moment, had regarded as such a calamity, was really to be the greatest means of blessing, by bringing them into closer and more intimate relationship than ever could have existed between Him and them as Israelites. The broken bread spoke of His death. Through that death He had become theirs in a fuller and deeper sense than otherwise could have been possible.

But there is surely more in the incident even than this. The record, “**He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them,**” is word for word what we have in connection with the institution of the Supper. Did not our Lord mean to convey to His Church for all time, that the breaking of bread would be the means by which He would make Himself known to His people: as those two so gladly and triumphantly confessed when they returned to the others, and “told what things were done in the way, and how **He was known of them in breaking of bread?**”

Think of what this meant to them! Wearied and dispirited they had set out on that journey, and when our Lord first joined them the record is they were “sad.” Since then they had traversed eight miles, and now the hour was late and it was dark. But one vision of Christ changed everything. So effectually are they carried beyond all fatigue and despondency, so completely filled with joy at having seen him, that “they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem.”

This is exactly what the Supper should be to us. It should mean a vision of Christ. We should come away each one saying, He was known of me in the breaking of

bread. We should be made glad because we have seen the Lord.

Let no one raise the question, whether or not that homely meal at Emmaus was **actually** the Lord's Supper. Such academic questions are out of place. The Lord made it such to them. And, at all events, the Supper is intended to do for us what that bread, which He blessed and broke, did for them. The deep underlying truth is the same in both cases, and we cannot escape the meaning of the lesson conveyed in the fact that the Lord chose to use the symbol of His death to open their eyes. So with us. Unless we pass beyond the symbols to the thing symbolised we miss the real import and intention of the Supper. Unless we see the Lord, we miss the feast which should have been ours. And this is perhaps why the apostle Paul lays such emphasis upon **this** bread and **this** cup in 1 Cor. xi. 26-27; and in a following verse speaks of "not discerning the Lord's body." It is the bread and the cup that reveal Him. He becomes known of us in the breaking of bread. His death should be before us in all its wondrous character. The poured out love of Christ—the love displayed in His supreme sacrifice, is what we feast upon, even if only for a moment. But that moment suffices, and our experience is the same as that of the early disciples: "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord?" "He showed unto them His hands and His side." This is the Supper. What a powerful appeal those hands and side must have made. They told of all that had been endured, as well as accomplished. And seen in a living Christ, risen from the dead, they declared that a wondrous victory had been gained. What strength, what joy, what new life are imparted to us—as to those two we have been thinking of—as we find ourselves in the presence of such love and of the One in Whom it has been expressed.

JOHN VI.

Does John vi. refer to the Lord's Supper? While from one standpoint it would be quite correct to answer this question in the **negative**, yet there remains something to be said on the other side. Primarily, the subject of our Lord's discourse here is not the Supper but that which underlies the Supper and precedes it. These words were

not spoken in the Upper Room, and they take precedence of what was said on that occasion. The utterance recorded in verse 53 is decisive as to that: "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, Except ye eat (or have eaten) the flesh of the Son of Man, and drunk His blood, **ye have no life in you.**" "Except ye have eaten . . . no life." Now, as we do not come to the Supper to obtain life, here is an eating which, as we have already indicated, precedes the Supper.*

Notwithstanding this, the Supper and the sixth of John may be said to coalesce. For there is a further and continuous eating spoken of in the very next verse. "Whoso **eateth** My flesh, and drinketh My blood." And this repeated eating is referred to again and again in the following verses, and our Lord adds, "My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." May it not be said with perfect truthfulness, if there is ever a moment when we should realise what these words mean it is at the Lord's Supper? As we have said, we should rise from that feast exclaiming, "His flesh is meat **indeed**, and His blood is drink **indeed.**" Which means not that there is any change in the elements themselves, but that we have been enabled

*It may be well to make clear the distinction between the Romish doctrine of Transubstantiation and the doctrine of the Reformed Church of England. We quote from the late Bishop Ryle: "The true point is, whether Christ's real body and blood are really present in the elements of bread and wine, as soon as they are consecrated in the Lord's Supper, and independently of the faith of him who receives it. Romanists and semi-Romanists say that they are so present. We say they are not." The following is a quotation from Archdeacon Denison, a ritualistic clergyman of the Church of England: "The act of consecration makes the real presence. Oh, priests of the Church of God! to us it is given to be the channels and agents whereby the Holy Ghost doth there make the body and blood of Christ to be really, though invisibly, and supernaturally, present, under the form of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper; to us it is given to give His body and His blood unto His people." Whereas in the twenty-eighth article of the Church of England it is stated: "The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner." The main point of distinction is, in the one case everything is made to depend upon a change in the bread and wine and the power of the priest, in the other there is no change in the elements, but all depends upon the faith and spiritual apprehension of the communicant. It is remarkable that any calling themselves Christians should have fallen into the very same error as the Jews, as recorded in John VI.—an error which

to enter into the spiritual meaning of the Lord's death and all that it reveals. Corporeally, we have partaken of bread and wine, but spiritually, we have fed upon Christ. That is, if the Supper has been to us what it should have been. The point we wish to stress is the "discerning the Lord's body." To many, we fear, the symbols are only bare signs, and nothing more, and they seldom or never pass beyond the figure. Our Lord said, "Take, eat, this is My body." The soul cannot feed upon mere bread and wine. Nor does the mere act of partaking of these elements constitute a true remembrance.

In the early days of the Church's history we find the apostle had to rebuke those who were turning the Lord's Supper into a supper of their own. We find the two expressions used in v. v. 20 and 21 (1 Cor. xi.) They were "not discerning the Lord's body." Surely the apostle's rebuke meant something more than that they were to eat less. Do we necessarily "discern the Lord's body" because we eat only a fragment, whereas they ate much more? Is that to be the only difference?

It is remarkable what stress the apostle lays upon **this** bread and **this** cup, as if to distinguish it, and then he speaks of discerning the Lord's body. Is it possible to escape the significance of this? The inspired writer seems specially anxious to guard us from error on either side. In v. 26 he speaks of "**bread**" and "**cup**;" in the next verse of "the body and blood of the Lord;" and then in the succeeding verse he reverts again to "bread" and "cup;" and once more in v. 29 it is "the Lord's body." What does this repeated change of expression teach us but that the elements **in themselves** remain **only** bread and **only** wine, and yet that to our spiritual insight they mean a great deal more.

If the partaking of the Lord's Supper meant nothing

the Lord had to rebuke. They interpreted His words as meaning the partaking of His literal flesh and blood: "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" Our Lord sets aside all such carnal ideas by saying: "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life." Showing that it is a spiritual feeding upon His death that He means. And this is exactly what He means in the words of the institution of the Supper: "Take, eat, this is My body."

more than the coming together to eat bread and drink wine as a mere formal way of remembering Christ, would the apostle have used such awfully solemn words as are contained in v. 27?

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, **SHALL BE GUILTY OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF THE LORD.**”

The elements **in themselves** are merely bread and wine, but **to us** “the body and blood of the Lord.”*

No wonder it is added, “Let a man examine himself.” Do we not often fail here and so come to the Supper unprepared, and consequently miss the blessing? Not that we eat unworthily perhaps, in the same way as the Corinthians, yet our remembrance may have been little better than a formal act. And might it not be said, “For this cause many are weak and sickly,” applying the words in a spiritual sense? Their literal meaning is physical weakness and death, no doubt, but of one thing we may be quite sure, that, if the Lord’s Supper meant to Christians all that the Lord intended, there would be far fewer weak and sickly believers about. To some it is the merest form, though gone through, no doubt, with becoming solemnity; to others, it is little better than a superstitious rite. To how few, comparatively, does the Lord reveal Himself so that they feed upon Him, and He becomes to them the very bread of God and wine of heaven.

“Blessed Supper of Thanksgiving,
Feast of more than angels’ food.”

May the Lord’s Supper be to us what the Lord intended. It was for His own sake and for ours that He instituted it. That we might express our allegiance to Him in the scene of His rejection; that, as His death speaks to us, we might “give thanks;” that it might be the moment of deepest communion—with God, as we think of all that was offered to Him—with Christ, as we enter into the hour of His deepest need—and with one another as joint partakers of the benefit. And this will make it a true REMEMBRANCE. And thus: Lord, Thou

*Thus though John vi. does not refer to the Supper, the Supper refers to John vi., for both refer to feeding upon Christ in death.

wilt be known of us in the breaking of bread, and we shall understand the deep meaning of Thine own words: "Take, eat; this is My body." Then Thy flesh will be "meat indeed," and Thy blood "drink indeed," as we feed upon all that is most sacred and most sweet. And where can we find this but in that death which removes our judgment and reveals Thy love.

Thus the truths so beautifully expressed in the hymn will be realised by us:—

- “ To Calvary, Lord, in spirit now
 Our weary souls repair,
 To dwell upon Thy dying love
 And taste its sweetness there.
- “ There, through Thine hour of deepest woe,
 Thy suffering spirit passed;
 Grace there its wondrous victory gained,
 And love endured its last.
- “ Dear suffering Lamb! Thy bleeding wounds,
 With cords of love divine,
 Have drawn our willing hearts to Thee,
 And linked our life with Thine.”

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