

CHAPTER III.

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The fearful declaration, "eateth and drinketh damnation to himself," etc.—Its import.—The Symbolism of the bread; 1. One loaf; 2. The unbroken loaf; 3. The wheaten loaf; 4. The unleavened loaf; 5. The broken loaf; 6. The eating of the one loaf.

CHRIST has guarded no ordinance of his church with such solemn sanctions as he has his Supper. Notice the fearful words:

"Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of **the body and blood of the Lord.**

"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth **and drinketh damnation to himself**, not discerning the Lord's body."—(1 Cor. xi: 27, 29.)

They are sufficient to appall the stoutest heart! "Guilty of the body and blood of the Lord!"

"Eateth and drinketh damnation to himself!" It seems that he has left **one** ordinance at least that he will not allow profaned with impunity. The least these words can imply is certainly fearful enough to influence a Christian to the most serious inquiry for the proper observances of this rite.

WHAT DO THEY MEAN?

Grotius renders it:

"He does the same thing as if he should slay Christ."

Bretschneider:

"Injuring by crime the body of Christ."

Bloomfield:

"He shall be guilty respecting the body—*i.e.*, guilty of profaning the symbols of the body and blood of Christ, and consequently amenable to the punishment due to such an abuse of the highest means of grace."

Rosenmuller:

"He shall be punished for such a deed as if he had rejected Christ himself with ignominy."

Barnes:

“The obvious and literal sense is evidently that they should, by such conduct, be involved in the sin of putting the Lord Jesus to death.”—See *Barnes, in loco*.

I am satisfied that there is no expression in the Bible that has more troubled and distressed the most conscientious Christians than these. There are thousands who go to the Lord’s Table with fear and trembling on account of them, and other thousands of pious Christians, who, though their misgivings, are deterred from approaching it. This ought not, and need not, so to be.

Christ having commanded his disciples to “do it,” it is certain that we may know how to eat and drink **worthily**, as to secure the divine approval and blessing, rather than the deserved displeasure of God.

To explain the Supper so that the weakest Christian may know how to eat and drink **worthily**, and to discern the Lord’s body, is my object.

I see not well how this can be known unless the participant has some just knowledge of

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE SUPPER.

Prof. Harvey, in his late work on “The Church,” has this:

“The bread and wine are symbols divinely appointed to represent the body and blood of Christ, through which symbols the **sacrifice of Christ** is vividly presented to the mind, and by partaking of which the believer expresses in an outward and significant act, his **faith in that sacrifice**. The Supper is thus at once a symbol setting forth this central, vital fact, more distinctly than is possible in language; and a significant act, declaring the partaker’s personal reliance on this fact as the ground of his salvation. **Christ** is present in the ordinance, as according to his promise; he is always present in his **truth**, but, as truth finds its clearest and strongest expression in the symbol, he is present in the Supper in a more marked manner than in the Word; for, as in the Supper, the believing soul more clearly apprehends Christ, and more fully yields itself to him; so in it Christ more clearly manifests himself to the soul, and more fully communicates to it the fullness **of his life**.”

How important, then, that the expounders of the Word should clearly set forth and explain the symbolism of each act, so that the least intelligent and instructed member of the church can understand, and thereby be enabled to apprehend the great doctrines in connection with the sacrifice of Christ, and so more fully enjoy the blessings connected with the observance of the ordinance.

There are very many pastors who, in a pastorate of many years with a church, have never explained the symbolism of the Supper to the church or the people, and there are many thousands of gray-haired Baptists who have never heard an explanation of the symbolic teachings of the Supper. How can they be expected to more than commemorate “the mere historical **fact** that Christ died for sinners?”

The first thing to be considered is the symbolism of

THE BREAD.

Bread and flesh have ever been considered the support of life. When there is a supply of either with pure water, there is no danger of famine, whatever else may be wanting. These

essential elements of physical existence offer themselves as striking types and symbols of the source and support of spiritual life.

The flesh of animals was the first thing selected by God to be a type of Christ, the world's greatest sin offering. Subsequently bread of fine *wheaten* flour was added to the typical sacrifices of the Jews; and the **blood** of the slain beasts, which was their **life**, was appointed to be sprinkled.

When God would deliver his chosen people from their bondage in Egypt, he commanded them to sprinkle the blood of a lamb upon the doorposts of their houses, as a sign for the destroying angel to **pass over them**; and this sprinkling of blood was appointed to be a type of salvation through the blood of the Lamb of God. And the unleavened bread appointed for the children of Israel to eat for seven days, in connection with their Passover, was designed to typify the sole agency of God in their salvation. Now each of these—the **flesh**, the **bread**—supports of physical life, together with the *blood* of animals, which was their very life itself, were types of Christ, through whose sacrificial death we can alone receive the grace of spiritual life and nourishment. Christ applied these types to himself in his celebrated discourse recorded by John, sixth chapter:

“Except ye eat the **flesh** of the Son of man, and drink his **blood** ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that **eateth me** shall live by me.”

When God was leading his people through the desert by the hand of Moses, they hungered and longed for the flesh-pots of Egypt, and He sent the flesh of quails and manna from heaven, and thus supported them for forty years. Now this flesh and this **bread** God designed to be types of Christ, whom he promise to give for the life of his people, and the Jews always understood that they were typical of their Messiah, who was to be to them **spiritually** what that flesh and bread was to their fathers. They well understood this in **theory**; and when Jesus, claiming to be their Messiah, declared himself the **true** bread that came down from heaven—*i.e.*, the antitype of the manna, they had no excuse for misunderstanding his meaning. They never for one moment believed that they were to **literally** eat the flesh and drink the blood of their Messiah when he came, in order to enjoy his promised blessings, but by receiving him, and believing him, and obeying him.

In the following passages Christ asserts himself the antitype and substance, of which the flesh and manna were the shadows:

“I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. **I am the living bread**, which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give him is **my flesh**, which I will give for the life of the world. Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the **true bread** from heaven. For the bread of God is **he** who cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world.”

Nor did Jesus leave them uninstructed as to what he meant by this flesh and blood, or what the eating of his flesh and the drinking of his blood did signify:

“And Jesus said unto them, **I am the bread of life**; he that **cometh to me** shall never **hunger**, and he that **believeth on me** shall never **thirst**” (v. 35). “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (v. 47). “What if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was

before? It is the **Spirit** that quickeneth; the **flesh** profiteth nothing; **the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life**" (v. 63).

The reader should bear in mind that in all the passages in which Christ speaks of his **body, flesh, and blood**, given for the **life** of the world, he does not mean his literal body, flesh, and blood, but the "**words**"—**doctrine**—he taught them; in a word, the plan of salvation consummated by his vicarious sufferings in that body of our flesh, and by his blood shed for the remission of sins. It is by apprehending and cordially receiving the great truths represented to our minds by these expressive symbols that we eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, so that he becomes life eternal to us. A few passages will make this very clear to every mind:

"Whoso abideth not in the **doctrine** of Christ hath not God. He that abideth in the **doctrine** of Christ hath both the Father and the Son" (2 Jno. 9). "For that life which I now live in the flesh I am living by that **faith** of that God and Christ who loved me even, to the delivering himself up on my behalf" (literal)—Gal. ii: 20.

This, then, was "the bread of life" on which Paul lived. The **bread** of the Lord's Supper, then, is not a symbol of the literal body or person of Christ, but of **life through the sacrificial death of Christ**—it is our fellowship, our participation of that which we symbolize in partaking of the bread.

§ I. THE ONE LOAF.

Here are the passages that refer to the first element:

"He took **a loaf**, and, having given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body that on your behalf is **offered** or **given**" (literal). "As often as ye eat **this** loaf ye do show the Lord's death until he come."

"Because there is **one loaf**, we the many are **one body** [organization], for we all partake of the **one loaf**."—(1 Cor. x:17.)

"The **loaf** we break, Is it not the communion—*i.e.*, participation—of the **body** of Christ?"

In determining the symbolism of the elements, we should avoid the error most commentators have fallen into—*i.e.*, making the bread and wine, which are symbols, symbolize the literal "body" and "blood" of Christ, which he teaches us, are but **figures**—figures of life through his sacrificial death—"the doctrine of Christ"—"the Gospel of our salvation." Symbols in no language symbolize symbols. Types never typify types in the spiritual world, any more than shadows cast shadows in the natural world.¹

The **bread** of the Supper, then, symbolizes just what Christ taught the Jews his flesh and blood represented to them, viz., the "**words**" he spoke, "his **doctrine**," "the **faith** of the Gospel."

If I have rightly apprehended the symbol, the **one loaf** symbolizes the "one faith" of the Gospel—the one plan of salvation through Christ. There was but one Divine Savior, and it is not supposable that he would originate but one system of doctrine, and it is therefore expressly stated that there is but "**one faith**"—not our act of faith, but **the** faith of the Gospel.²

¹Not a few of our most scholarly writers and preachers speak of the Lord's Supper as the **antitype** of the Passover. If I have done so, it has not been through ignorance, but inadvertence.

²There is no "our," but a **definite** article in the original.

When we look upon “the **one loaf**” upon the table, we are symbolically taught that there is but one Savior, who is our bread of life, and but one Gospel—**one saving faith** or “doctrine of Christ,” one “plan of salvation,” one name given under heaven whereby we may be saved, and that one is **Christ**.

But the symbolism of the Supper, like that of baptism, has a complex application. As each loaf represents the body of Christ, so it is designed to represent each church as “**a body of Christ**.” Paul said to the church at Corinth: “Ye are a body of Christ.” And, as the loaf is one – an organic unity, complete in itself – so the participants eating of the loaf must be “**one body**,” one organic unity; and if so, only the members of one church can jointly partake of it together.

§ 2. THE UNBROKEN LOAF.

Then, symbolizes the **unity** of the faith of which Christ is the Author and Finisher, the Beginner and Perfecter; and that nothing less than a whole Gospel—the whole work of Christ—will save a soul. It required all he did to save one soul from death, so that all he did must constitute the ground of our trust. We may not accept a part and reject a part: accept a part of his “all righteousness,” and supplement it with our own; accept a **partial** salvation by grace, and complete it by our works. No one ever was saved by such a faith.

As respects the Church, the symbolism of the **unbroken loaf** demands that the church, celebrating the rite, should be unbroken by schisms or factious parties. It is recorded of the church at Jerusalem, during the first great revival, that all that believed were of **one accord**; and, in the case of that church, the thing signified agreed with the symbol—**unbroken unity**. But Paul severely rebuked the church at Corinth because of its **divided** state; rent, as it was, by heresies and factions, it was wholly disqualified to eat the Supper.

§ 3. THE WHEATEN LOAF.

The kind of flour of which the bread was to be made for the typical sacrifices, under the law, was by no means an unimportant matter. Flour from **any** grain used for food was not permissible. Only **one kind** of flour was allowed. God specifically commanded that the bread that was offered upon his altars should be **wheaten bread**, and we must believe that God had a design in this particularity—that it had some reference to its typical teaching. This we know, that it was the most **costly** bread that was used—that it was the only kind deemed fit for the table of **kings** or persons of dignity. We can see that this fitly symbolized the costliness of the sacrifice requisite for our redemption; the exceeding preciousness of the Gospel—the **faith** that alone can save a lost race.

“For the **redemption** of their souls is **precious**, and ceaseth forever.”—(Ps. xlix:8.)

“For the merchandise of it [wisdom] is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.”—(Prov. iii: 14.)

“Thanks be to God for his **unspeakable gift**.”—(2 Cor. ix: 15.)

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and **precious** promises.”—(2 Peter i:4.)

§ 4. THE FINE WHEATEN LOAF.

It must not merely be bread of **wheat** flour, but it must be **fine flour** of wheat. In his specifications concerning the quality of the flour allowed in the sacrifices, God specified **fine** flour nineteen times. There must have been a sufficient reason for this, though we may not apprehend it. If it pointed to the purity—the immaculateness—of the person of Christ, it certainly was an appropriate type, for he was holy and undefiled; if to the “doctrine of Christ”—the unadulterated **faith** of the Gospel, of which Christ was the Author and Perfecter, as I understand it—then it is most strikingly appropriate, and in harmony with the symbolism of the types. Nothing can be **purer** and **sweeter** than **superfine flour of wheat**. There is no deleterious **foreign** matter in it, and it can be safely trusted to support life. So it is a **pure Gospel** alone that saves us; mixed with error, it is a savor of death.

“The **words** of the Lord are **pure words**; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.”—(Ps. xii: 6.)

The **words** of the Lord constitute the **faith** of the gospel.

“The **words** that I speak unto you, are spirit and are life.”—(Jno. vi: 63; Prov. xxx: 5.)

So should the body—church—partaking of the pure bread, be correspondingly pure and healthy in all its influences; the **faith** of its members unadulterated; its doctrine pure, free from the least poison or defilement of error. Paul especially refers to the importance of **wholesome words** and **sound doctrine**, etc:

“If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in **words of faith** and of **sound doctrine**, etc. (1 Tim. iv: 6; also i: 10, vi: 3 and 14.)

§ 5. THE UNLEAVENED LOAF.

We are not left in the least doubt as to the **kind** of bread Christ used when he instituted the Supper. He took one of the loaves, or cakes, that had been scrupulously prepared for the Passover. To meet the plea of those who claim that “the **kind** of bread” we use at the Lord’s Supper is a matter of indifference, and that Jesus doubtless used the unleavened loaf because “it was the most convenient” and therefore we may use the most convenient, article of bread. I submit the **fact**, that Christ designed the bread of his Supper to symbolize the self-same truth, fundamental to the plan of salvation, that the **unleavened** bread of the Passover, and of the burnt offerings under the law, was appointed to typify; namely, the great doctrine that our salvation is alone of grace through the sacrificial death of Christ, that we “are saved by **grace** through faith, and that not of ourselves.” This fact determines the kind of bread the churches must use at the Supper, if they would not vitiate its symbolism. **Leaven** is dough in a state of partial fermentation and decomposition—**rottenness**; and placed in a mass of sweet dough speedily excites fermentation, and, if left, the whole mass is speedily corrupted and made unfit for use. It is therefore most befittingly used as a type and a symbol of any doctrine or principle that **depraves** and **corrupts**. When God instituted the Passover he commanded, on pain of death or excision from his people, that no one should eat it with **leavened** bread. (Ex. xii: 15.) No Christian will charge God with capriciousness in the selection of unleavened bread. He

explained to the Jews **why** he instituted the unleavened bread of the Passover. It was to teach them and their children, in the generations following, that he, their Sovereign Lord, alone and unassisted, had delivered them and brought them up out of Egypt: “Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place; there shall no leavened bread be eaten.” Their salvation was of the Lord **alone**. To symbolize this fact, all leaven of every sort was to be diligently sought for in all their coasts for seven days, and burned with fire; and by this they were given to understand that God was jealous of his honor, and that no part of their salvation was ever to be ascribed to their self-help, to man or idol.

In all their sacrifices of the Jewish worship, which typified salvation through the coming Messiah, no leaven was allowed to be used. **Unleavened wheaten bread of fine** flour was alone permitted. It typified the central doctrine of the gospel, salvation only by the grace of God through Christ. To add any thing of self-help, or any created assistance, vitiated and effectually destroyed the whole plan,—would be like adding **leaven** to a mass of pure dough. The least reliance upon works renders **null** the grace of God. The apostle says: “If it is of works it is no more grace, else works are no more works, and if of grace it is no more words, else grace is no more grace.” This is the pure unadulterated doctrine of the gospel—salvation by grace. Understanding this enables us to see the force of the Savior’s warnings against “leaven”—how that a little **leaven of false doctrine**, surreptitiously hid away in the churches, and left unpurged, would, like leaven hid in measures of meal, soon corrupt the whole mass of them. It should be immediately purged out. Paul seems to allude to this when he said, “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”

Christ also warned his disciples to beware of the “**leaven** of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” It was not their leavened bread, as he himself explained, but their leavened doctrine—comparable to modern Arminianism, legalism, and Ritualism—a dependence on **self-righteousness** and deeds of law, moral or ceremonial, for salvation. There can be no doubt that Christ symbolized the false doctrines of self-righteousness for salvation as leaven, and this is what it typified; while the pure unleavened bread of the sacrifices and the Passover typified, as we have seen, the doctrine of salvation by grace only, through the sacrificial death and mediation of Christ.

Paul uses leaven in the same sense, as a symbol of a corrupted faith—any thing in heart or life foreign and opposed to the teachings of the gospel of Christ. He evidently alludes to the symbolism of the Supper when he instructed the church at Corinth to exclude from its fellowship an ungodly man. The influence of this man in the church, Paul compared to **leaven**; “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump;” “Be not deceived, evil associations corrupt good manners;” “Purge out, therefore, the old leaven—vice and sin—that ye—the church at Corinth—may be a new lump, as ye are **unleavened**.” Christians, by their profession, are holy, pure in heart, and therefore ought to be in their faith and their lives. Paul invariably uses “leaven” as a symbol of a corrupt doctrine, of a mixed, and therefore unsaving faith. He declared to the churches of Galatia that the doctrine taught by the Judaizing teachers, who were generally members of the church at Jerusalem, was “**leaven**.” It was in principle that self-same doctrine of the Pharisees, which Christ called “leaven,” and of which he warned his disciples to beware—*i.e.*, Judaism—dependence on deeds of law, self-righteousness for salvation in whole or in part. Its name with us is Arminianism, which teaches that only so long as a Christian works is he saved. Let the reader study the whole fifth chapter of Galatians, and especially the second, third and fourth verses:

“Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. Christ is become of non-effect unto you: whosoever so you are justified [literally who are justifying yourselves by law] are separated from Christ; ye are fallen off from the grace. This persuasion cometh not of him who calleth you. A little **leaven** leaveneth the whole lump.”³

False doctrine is leaven, and unleavened bread, without question, symbolized the fundamental doctrine of **salvation by grace only**.

But Paul, in his first letter to the church at Corinth, likens all ungodliness of heart and life to leaven—every thing in the daily conduct of its members contrary to the spirit of the gospel, and destructive of its influence to **leaven**,—and commands the church to purge out all such members before celebrating the Supper, as the head of a Jewish family was required to carefully remove all leaven from his house and burn it with fire before the Passover could be eaten. “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye—the church at Corinth—may be a new—pure—lump, as ye are unleavened—pure. For Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; let us keep the feast—the Supper—not with the old leaven of **malice** and **wickedness**, but with the **unleavened bread** of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. v: 8). With a loaf of **leavened** bread upon the table, Paul’s allusion here would be without meaning, as his allusions to a burial in baptism would be if sprinkling or pouring was the act.

As the things symbolized must agree with the symbol, all those members whose lives are **leavened** with such conduct, and “walk” as Paul specifies in this epistle, as well as in that to the churches of Galatia, must be put away, “purged out” of the church, else the feast is kept with “**old leaven**.”

“But now I have written unto you **not to keep company**, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such as one, **no, not to eat**.”

To these characters in his letter to the churches of Galatia, he adds these works of the flesh:

“Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, witchcraft, murders, **revelings** (or **dancings** of all sorts, for this is the literal import of the term, **komoi**, translated revelings in our version) **and such like**; of the which I tell you before as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”—Gal. v: 19-22.

The one unleavened loaf, therefore, symbolizes two things:

1. The one, pure unadulterated faith of the gospel—the uncorrupted doctrine of Christ—viz., that salvation is solely by the grace of God in Christ Jesus.
2. That the body—the church—should, like the loaf of which it partakes, be unleavened, *i.e.*, before God and man a **pure** body.

From this it is demonstrably clear that an Arminian in faith can not eat the Lord’s Supper worthily,—I mean one who believes in “falling from grace,” as it is called, because he believes that **some deed** of **some law**, though it be the “law of pardon” or good words of some sort, must

³With this explanation the reader can the better understand the parable of the leaven, and of the mustard seed, for both teach the same thing. A little false doctrine hidden, and surreptitiously introduced into a church, if left to work out its natural result, will leaven the whole body, as a little leaven will corrupt a whole mass of dough. It should be purged out. The church of Christ, though small in his day, he foretold would become large, so that “the fowls of the air”—wicked persons, would **lodge** in it. What is the effect of a multitude of birds lodging in forest trees?

be added to God's grace, and continued on the part of the Christian, or he can not be saved. The symbol of the unleavened loaf forbids his approach on peril of eating and drinking damnation to himself.

Such being the symbolic significancy of the bread used in the Supper—which I think no intelligent Christian will deny—it can not be a question but that the bread must be an **unleavened** loaf. A church that is so regardless of the symbolic teachings of the Supper as to use any kind of bread,⁴ can not scripturally discipline her members, should they decline to become **particeps ciminis** in her violation of the divine law of Supper.

Suppose my church should adopt a fruit-cake for the bread, and molasses and water, or raisin-water for the “fruit of the **vine**,” would it be right for me to partake in **violation** of the law of Christ? Could the church discipline me for refusing to come to **her** table, for it would not be the **Lord's**? For the violation of what law would she try me? She can make no law. She can not modify any appointment of Christ. She might as well discipline and exclude a member for refusing to attend a **Saturday** conference which Christ never required at his hands.

§ 6. THE BROKEN LOAF.

“Christ took the loaf and broke it, saying, This is my body that is broken for you.”

He could not have meant that his breaking of the loaf should symbolize his literal broken body, because it is written, “not a bone of him was broken;” but he explains (John vi: 5) “the bread that I will give him is my **flesh**, which I will give for the life of the world.” “For my flesh is meat **indeed**”—*i.e.*, represents in the Supper what the flesh, bread, and blood of all the atonement sacrifices under the law typified; viz., **salvation through the sacrificial death of Christ**.

The breaking of the loaf, then, symbolized the grace of God, which is unto life, **provided** and made **accessible** by the voluntary offering up of Christ for his people. The loaf broken before our eyes symbolically teaches and assures us that all the covenant obligations Christ assumed for his people have been fully discharged; that the infinite satisfaction, justly due to the divine government from us, which demanded the sufferings of the Infinite Redeemer, have been made, so that the free gift of eternal life through Christ can be offered to a lost race.

Christ himself broke the loaf—prepared it to be eaten; so he himself provided bread of life for his people. No man took his life from him, he himself laid down his own life. While he, the Lord of glory, veiled in our **flesh** and **form**, was the offering—**bread**—he himself was the only **priest** in the universe who could offer it up for us—**he freely offered up himself**. He **furnished** and **offered** the offering, and thus became the **author** and **finisher** of the **faith**. Glorious symbolism! Salvation's feast prepared by Christ at infinite expense and graciously offered to the perishing famine-stricken millions of earth! Christ has broken the bread—nothing of it remains to be done. All things are now ready! He has fulfilled the all righteousness the violated law demanded!

⁴A church in this State, of which the writer was a member, used a **silver cake** bought at the confectioners, to make a nice table. He wrapped the piece he took from the plate in his handkerchief, and on going out threw it into the gutter. Many of our churches use **baker's bread**, a compound of **Irish potatoes**, flour, **alum** and **leaven**. Very many use the common light bread from the table. Why not **corn bread**, or **Graham**, or **Buckwheat bread** as well?

“Nothing, either great or small,
Remains for me to do;
Jesus died and paid it all,
All the **debt** I owe.”

§ 7. THE EATING OF THE ONE LOAF.

“He took a loaf, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, **Take, eat**; this is my body, which is broken for you [to eat.]

“The bread which we break, is it not the Communion—fellowship—of the body or church of Christ?”—1 Cor. xi.

The first thing that strikes us in these Scriptures is the fact that Christ did nothing more than to “**give thanks.**” He did not use a word that indicated transubstantiation—any change wrought upon the bread; nor did he “**consecrate it,**” impart to it a mystic, supernatural efficacy, but he simply gave thanks. And we should effect to do nothing more, and leave transubstantiation with the Catholics, who would make a sacrifice; and **consecration** with the Protestants, who would make a **sacrament** of it. We can all join with the pastor in giving hearty thanks for these speaking symbols of his love. The **bread** Christ held in his hand was not by him intended to symbolize his “mystical body,” if any one knows what that is; nor his literal body, but just what the flesh and blood of all the atonement sacrifices typified—just what the bread and flesh God sent from heaven to preserve the lives of the children of Israel typified—the offer of eternal life through the sacrificial sufferings of Christ in literal flesh. This doctrine of Christ is the flesh, the **body** of Christ by which we became dead to the law. (See Rom. vii: 4.)

Let Christ explain this:

“**I** am that **bread** of life. I am the **living bread** which came down from heaven; if any man eat of **this** bread he shall live forever. Except ye eat the flesh...of the Son of God ye have no life in you...He that **eateth** me, even he shall live by me.”

The command of Christ to his children to “take and eat of the loaf” of his Supper, implies vastly more than to masticate a piece of unleavened bread in historical commemoration of the fact that Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary, was crucified. If this is all that is meant by “discerning the Lord’s body,” the unregenerate could discern it as well as the Christian. It is **to eat Christ himself** in the sense he meant when he said above, “He that **eateth me** shall live by me.”

It means, then, that while we perform the **physical** act of eating material bread, we should, by faith, gratefully review Christ’s gracious work of redemption, the living sacrifice of himself for our sins, realizing in our hearts a conscious participation in the benefits of his death, and thus renew our faith, and confirm our trust in, and quicken our love for Him as our divine Redeemer. With such an exercise of faith and heart we should leave the table refreshed like a strong man with an abundance of meat.

Thus we symbolize our personal relations to Christ our Life.

But by eating of the one loaf with our brethren, we symbolize that we are **fellow-members of the same particular church with them**—members one of another of **the self-same body**. While the act only **implies** that all who partake are professed Christians, it is **appointed** by Christ to symbolize **church relations**—*i.e.*, that all who partake are incorporated in the same local church—one body. A correct translation of 1 Cor. xvii will make this clear. The allusion

to the symbolism of the Supper here in only by way of illustration, as is the apostle's allusion to baptism in Rom. vi.

"Because there is one loaf, we the many [members of the church at Corinth] are one body: for we all partake of the one loaf."

That is, we use but one loaf to symbolize the fact that we are all members of but one visible church, which the term body evidently refers to. The idea of **organic unity**—one body—rules the expression. The many particles of flour were, by chemical affinity, incorporated into oneness—**one** loaf; so the members of each local church by spiritual affinity, and **one act of profession**, are incorporated into **one** organism.

"For in one spirit we are all baptized into **one body** and all have been made to drink into one spirit."—(1 Cor. xii: 13.)

Paul's instruction to the church at Corinth (1 Cor. xi: 2) corroborates the above interpretation—*i.e.*, that the Supper was placed under the guardianship of each local church, and symbolizes **church relations**; they were to "tarry one for the other"—**observe it as a church**. So important is the right understanding of this subject, so generally overlooked and misunderstood, that I submit the opinions of several standard authorities:

Macknight:

"The Greek word **artos**, especially, when joined with words of number, **always** signifies a **loaf**, and is so translated in our Bibles: Matt. xvi: 9—'Do ye not understand, neither remember the five—**artous**—**loaves** of the five thousands?' Matt. iv: 3—'Command that these stones be made—**artous**—**loaves**.'"

Olshausen:

"As all who constitute the Church (hoi pantes) eat of one and the same bread so this common participation converts their plurality (hoi polloi) into a higher unity—a "body of Christ" in a comprehensive sense—so that the Church itself may be called Christ." (xii: 12).

Dr. Knapp:

V. 17. "While we all eat of one and the same bread (a portion of which is broken for each), we profess to be all members of one body—*i.e.*, **of one church**."—*Christian Theology*.

Dr. Adam Clark, the standard Methodist commentator, says:

"The original would be better translated thus: **Because there is one bread or loaf, we who are many are one body**. As only one loaf was used at the Passover, and those who partook of it were considered **one religious body** [family], so we who partake of the eucharistical bread and wine in commemoration of the sacrificial death of Christ are one spiritual **society**," etc.

Albert Barnes:

1 Cor. x: 17. **Are one bread**. "One loaf, one cake. That is, we are united, or are one. There is evident allusion here to the fact, that the loaf or cake was composed of many separate grains of wheat, or portions of flour united in one; or, that, as one loaf was broken and partaken by all, it was implied that they were all one. We are all **one society, and one body, one society**."

Prof. Curtis, who has profoundly studied this ordinance, says:

“The meaning of this passage must turn upon the sense we ascribe to (Greek words). Most commentators [they are Pedobaptists, and therefore the advocates of the Universal Church theory] seem to suppose that it means ‘the many,’ and is equivalent to ‘all Christians’ [and some Baptists claim it means ‘all Baptists’], but on this we remark:

“1. That the article combined with the plural, here, by no means necessarily gives it the sense of ‘the many,’ and might, perhaps, fairly be translated ‘many,’ as in Matt. xxiv: 12—‘And because the love of many (toon polloon) shall wax cold;’ or, as in 2 Cor. ii: 17—‘We are not as **many (oi polloi)** which corrupt the Word of God.’ So our English translators render it in the passage we are considering. The sense would then be fairly paraphrased thus: ‘Because, every time we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, there is **one loaf** used, of which all the communicants participate. We who eat of it, and who are naturally many, **become thereby symbolically one body with the rest of the communicants**, because we all participate of that one loaf.’

“2. Even if ‘**oi polloi**’ be translated ‘the many,’ it must still mean that we are proved to be **one body** [one church], not with all Christians [nor with all Baptists], but with all with whom we partake of the symbolic elements. The meaning of **pantes**—‘all’—in the next clause, is in terms circumscribed to those who participate of the same loaf.”—*Com.* P. 2945.

Prof. Curtis has this upon 1 Cor. xi: 20, 21-33:

“We consider the Lord’s Supper, then, as a symbol of **church** relations. When we say this, we mean that there is a fellowship in church relations, professed with those Christian with whom we visibly celebrate. We desire to show that this is the **true view of the Lord’s Supper**. ‘When ye come together therefore into one place,’ says the apostle, ‘this is not to eat the Lord’s Supper. For in eating every one taketh before other,’ etc. ‘Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another’ (1 Cor. xi: 20, 21, and 33). The apostle here clearly alludes to it as **the universally current opinion**, that the Lord’s Supper was a **church** ordinance, so far as this, that it was completely celebrated in one place, **by one church**. When he bids ‘them tarry for one another,’ he clearly intimates that it expresses the relations of the members of **that church to each other**, as such.”—*Com.* Pp. 85, 86.

Again:

“Thus, then, it is **clear** [*i.e.*, from 1 Cor. xi] that the Lord’s Supper is given in charge to those visible churches of Christ, in the midst of which he has promised to walk and dwell (Rev. ii: 2). To each of these it belongs to celebrate it as **one family**. [Then certainly not as parts of different families or bodies.] The members of that particular church are to be tarried for, and it is to be a symbol of their relations, as members, to each other.”—*Progress of Baptist Principles*, p. 307.

If this be so, then is intercommunion impossible.

Dr. Richard Fuller, in his work on “Baptism and Communion,” says:

“As the Passover was a **meal for each family only**, so the Supper is a family repast, **for the members of that particular church in which the table is spread**. This is so plain to our minds, hearts, and consciences, that there is never any discussion about it.”

Dr. A.P. Williams, in his work on the “Lord’s Supper,” says:

“Now here (1 Cor. x: 16, 17) **it is plainly** argued that this joint participation in the one cup, and the one bread, is designed to show that the participants are but **one body**, and, as such, they share this joint participation.”

Dr. Harvey, Prof. of Theology in Hamilton Seminary, N.Y., in his late work, “The Church,” p. 221, says:

“It is a symbol of church fellowship.

“When a man eats of that ‘one bread,’ and drinks of that ‘one cup,’ he, in this act, professes himself a member of that ‘one body,’ in hearty, holy sympathy with its doctrines and life, and freely and fully **subjecting himself to its watch-care and government** (1 Cor. x:17). Hence, in 1 Cor. v: 11, the Church is forbidden to eat (in the Lord’s Supper, as the context clearly shows) with immoral persons, thus distinctly making the ordinance a symbol of church-fellowship.”

That Dr. Harvey clearly apprehends the “one body,” in this passage, as referring to the **one local** church at Corinth, he leaves us in no doubt, for an invisible church has neither watch-care nor government, and there can be no reasonable doubt that this is the apostle’s meaning, despite the efforts of the advocates of the Universal Church theory. He is also clear that the eating of the “one loaf” symbolizes the fact that each member eating professes himself a member of **that one church, and in hearty subjection to its government, which a member of another church could not do**. The reader can see that intercommunion with members of other churches **is as certainly forbidden** as it is with immoral persons, for the one as certainly vitiates the symbolism as the other.

Dr. Wm. C. Buck, D.D., in his great work, “The Philosophy of Religion,” has these strong comments on 1 Cor. x: 17:

“That it was the design of the Lord to signify, in the use of this ordinance, **the unity of each church as one body**, is distinctly asserted by the apostle; for he assures us that ‘one bread’ is the symbol of ‘one body;’ and he further teaches us that ‘we,’ the apostles, break **the** ‘one bread’—loaf—and bless the ‘one cup,’ and we have proof, as clear as a ray of light from heaven, that they copies, with punctilious exactitude, the pattern set them by the Messiah. We may therefore consider this a **settled principle** in the practical philosophy of this rite.”—p. 456.

While I might add other distinguished authorities, I will conclude in the language of Prof. Curtis:

“That the Lord’s Supper is a symbol of **church relations**, subsisting between those who unite together in the participation of it, can be shown in many ways.”—p. 136.

CONCLUSIONS.

The following axiom will assist us in drawing our conclusions from the above exegesis of the passages:

AXIOM.

The rite is vitiated and null when the thing symbolized does not exist.

Two things are symbolized when a church celebrates the Supper:

- I. That a spiritual relationship exists between the participants and Christ, effected through his sacrificial death and atonement.
2. That visible church relations exist between all those who jointly partake of the “one loaf;” that though many individual Christians, yet all constitute one organic unity—“one body”—**one particular church**.

1. We conclude, therefore, that the Supper can be celebrated only as a **church** ordinance—*i.e.*, by a particular church; and, as such, a church can not invite other than her own members to a joint Communion, without vitiating the symbolism of the one loaf, since the thing signified would not exist—*viz.*, church relationship of all the communicants.

2. We conclude, that, since the Supper was divinely appoint to be observed as a **church** ordinance, it would be a profanation of the ordinance for a Christian to attempt to observe it **privately**; or for a company of such to observe it **socially**, since the symbolism would be vitiated.

3. We conclude that should you go to the table of a church, of which you are not a member, and partake, not being a member, you would to all intents and purposes be eating as an **individual**, and would eat and drink unworthily. The invitation of the pastor or of the church would not change your relation to that church or its ordinance, for two reasons: 1. The **invitation** of the pastor or church to partake, does not make you a member of that church, and you can not partake of the Supper scripturally or **worthily** with any church of which you are not a member; and, 2. The pastor nor the church has any authority to give such an invitation, and therefore the invitation gives you no warrant to disobey Christ, by violating the laws he has appointed for the observance of his ordinance. **You can only eat it worthily in the church of which you are a member.**

Prof. Curtis says:

“It [the joint participation of the Supper] therefore **unquestionably** indicates **visible church relations as subsisting among all who, by right, unite together in its celebration. Occasional communion**, by invitation, must follow therefore the principles established for the regular celebration of this ordinance. We may not bend the rule to the exception, but the exception to the rule.”—*Prog. Bap. Prin.*, p. 303, 304.

This means that those visitors wishing to Commune, must first unite with the church – **actual church relationship must exist between all the communicants and the church** to preserve the divine symbolism.

4. We have good reasons to conclude that Infinite Wisdom appointed the symbolism of the one loaf, to impress his people by keeping the fact constantly before their eyes, **that the churches of Christ are each complete and independent bodies, and that he never designed a national or universal church**, such as Catholics and Protestants have originated. It may have been for this, as well as other reasons, that he guarded its perversion with such appalling sanctions. It is certain that had this ordinance always been observed as delivered, there never would, for there never could, have been a national or universal church originated. The divine directions are that all the members of each church **assemble at one place**, and for the church to tarry until the members are assembled, and **to all eat and drink together**. But national, provincial, or universal churches (?) like those of the Catholics and Protestants never did, never **can**, assemble to eat the Lord's Supper.

From the second century there has been a strong tendency to church **confederation** and **centralization**. It is a noticeable fact that all who have apostatized from the true churches, both Catholics and Protestants, have adopted the national or universal church theory!

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