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# THE CHURCHMAN

*A Monthly Magazine and Review*

CONDUCTED BY

CLERGYMEN AND LAYMEN OF THE  
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## The Lord's Supper as Presented in Scripture.

### A LAYMAN'S VIEW.

#### IV. THE LORD'S SUPPER AS SPIRITUAL FOOD.

THIS is the last of our studies on the Lord's Supper. In the first, we considered it in its institution by the Lord Jesus as a *sacrament*, which it truly is ; in the second as a *remembrance* of an absent Lord, which is the aspect most familiar to us, and to a great many the only one known. The third aspect was as a *communion* with a present Christ, which is more rarely spoken of ; and to-day we consider it as a *supper* of spiritual food, which is perhaps the least understood of all four.

To regard the Lord's Supper as a material meal is obviously wrong, and is condemned in 1 Corinthians xi. 24, 34. "Have ye not houses to eat and drink in ?" "If a man is hungry let him eat at home." There is no doubt that if any come to the table of the Lord for material food, they are wrong ; but that they should fail to come for spiritual food is condemned perhaps more strongly still, for in verse 29 it says : "He that eateth and drinketh (that is to say, takes the Lord's Supper), eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, if he discern not the body." (The words "unworthily" and "of the Lord" are omitted by the best scholars.) That is to say the Supper is to be a present spiritual meal for the soul, not merely the remembrance of spiritual food taken at some bygone time. It is not, however, material sustenance in any form.

Now the only possible way to "communicate,"—to remember the Lord's death, to spiritually eat the Lord's body and drink the Lord's blood—is by the Spirit of God ; otherwise, as I have already pointed out, though we may all partake of the one bread, we may not take the Lord's Supper at all, for this is a purely spiritual meal. Every one who breaks off and eats a piece of the loaf, partakes of the bread, but only those communicate who are in the Spirit.

Let us look, therefore, at Revelation i. 10. "I was in the Spirit on the Lordly Day." <sup>1</sup> The word "Lordly" is an adjective, and

<sup>1</sup> That St. John, writing at this late date, speaks here of the actual day by then well established as the Lord's day, is, I think, proved in Alford. That he may also refer to the day of the Lord in a broader sense must not, however, be denied : such double use of words being common in Scripture.

I have already indicated in the first article how it occurs only in one other connection in the whole of the New Testament, and that is in the words "Lordly Supper." We take, I repeat, the Lordly Supper on the Lordly Day. That is to say, it is a distinguished supper, a supper above all other suppers, to be partaken of with reverence and worship on a day equally distinguished. The word used here and in Corinthians is very remarkable, and refers to the literal first day of the week, the day that takes the lead of every day in the week, the day pre-eminent above all days. So (as I have pointed out) on the Lordly Day of resurrection, at the Lord's (not Lordly) table, we take the Lordly Supper of our Lord's death.

Now three things happened to St. John when he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and the same three things will happen to us if we are in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. The first is mentioned in Revelation i. 10, "I *heard*"; the second in verse 12, "I *saw*"; and the third in verse 17, "He *touched* me." These are the three things that happen to every one who is truly in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, at the Lord's Supper; there is hearing, seeing, and touching, or contact.

Let us also turn to 1 John i. 1, "That which was from the beginning," that is the eternal word—Christ; "which we have heard," that is hearing Christ; "which we have seen," that is seeing Christ; "which we beheld," that is looking earnestly at what we are seeing; "and our hands have handled," that is touching Christ; and the object and result of this presentation of Christ is "that your joy may be full." All our hearts are filled full of joy when we hear, when we see and when we touch the Lord. The same order is shown here, as we observed in Revelation from being in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

*Hearing, seeing, touching.* Let us consider these three progressive stages of Christian experience.

The first thing that brings us to the Lord's table is *hearing*. We hear the Saviour's voice. Happy are those who come in obedience to a Divine call and not from mere custom! It is blessed to hear His voice 'midst the thousand voices of the world. It is not merely the voice of the Church that calls us; it is not the voice of habit; it is not the voice only of desire. It is the voice of our Saviour ringing in our ears: "This do in remembrance of Me." We come to the Supper because we hear His voice.

We are, therefore, gathered together solely by the Spirit of God ; because it is only the Spirit of God that can make us hear the voice of God, and any one who hears His voice is " in the Spirit on the Lord's Day " ; and I repeat again, no one who is not in the Spirit on the Lord's Day can communicate ; they may partake of the elements, but they cannot rightly communicate, except by the Spirit. It was the voice that called the prodigal son from the swine-trough to the father's house to feast upon the fatted calf roast with fire ; and it is the same voice that first called so many of us from our " swine-troughs " in the world, and now brings us to our Father's house, to feast in communion with the Father and with the Son on the memorials of our Lord's death. This is the first step 'to true communion at the Lord's Supper.

What is the second. It is *sight*. The Queen of Sheba rightly tells us that sight is far more than hearing ; the half cannot be known unless we see ; and we must notice that in Greek there are three words for sight. There is the sight of the eyes—physical ; the sight of the mind—intelligent sight, when I not only see, but understand what I see. I may see a white material with my physical eyes, but with the eyes of my mind I see it is a linen cloth and understand what it is for. Lastly, there is the spiritual sight that does not see the cloth at all, but sees why it is there, and what its presence signifies, and this is the third sight.<sup>1</sup>

The spiritual sight is what we first get in the verse we have read in 1 John i. 1, " that which we have seen " ; and that is the highest sight. Jesus fills our eyes, and we spiritually see Him, if we are in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. But then we read, " that which we beheld " ; that is a lower mental sight, when we look intelligently with our eyes and understand. Coming, therefore, in the Spirit on the Lord's Day to the Lord's Supper, the first thing that strikes the eyes of our heart is that our blessed Lord is in the midst—a spiritual vision only vouchsafed to those in the Spirit. Then we see on the table the bread and the wine, or as the Scripture says, " the bread " and " the cup " ; for though we have reached the twentieth century after Christ, the bread and the cup are there unchanged to this day.

<sup>1</sup> All three are in St. John xx, and a different word is used for each ; in the fifth verse we get physical sight ; in the sixth, mental ; and in the eighth, spiritual.

Now though we see this with our ordinary sight, if we are in the Spirit, we begin to understand that what we really see is not the bread and the cup ; but what we see by spiritual vision, and what our hearts are full of at the sight, is the body and blood of our Lord : in other words, His death ; that is what we see in the bread and the cup. Just as the prodigal son first of all saw his father and had his heart so full of his father that nothing else mattered but his kiss ; and then, when he had seen his father, he had time to look upon what his father had brought for him—the robe, the ring, the shoes, and the fatted calf upon which he was to feast in his father's house ; so here, in spiritual vision, we first see Jesus, and then His death in these elements.

If this were only a remembrance, this sight would suffice, and all that would be needed would be to put the bread and the cup on the table and look at it ; and as we gazed, God would use that material vision to bring to our souls, if we were in the Spirit, the spiritual vision of our Lord's body and blood : in other words, the remembrance of our Lord's death ; for if the Supper be nothing more than a remembrance, there would be no need to eat anything. We remember the Lord's death as perfectly when we see these memorials as when we partake. There is no difference in the remembrance ; and yet it would not then be truly a Supper.

It is not a supper if, having been invited, you come and see the table spread and contemplate it and then go away. That is not a meal. One thing is wanting, and that is absolute contact with the food, by eating and drinking it. Therefore there must be something more than hearing and seeing at the Lord's Supper ; there must be the third experience of St. John. The *contact*, and in this case contact is spiritually realized by spiritually partaking. Contact can be established in different ways : I may touch Christ as the woman touched the hem of His garment ; or He may touch me as He touched Jairus' daughter ; or lastly, both may take place as in Mark viii. 22, where the hands of the Saviour and of the sufferer touched each other. For my salvation I must not only hear His voice and see Him, but I must touch Him. " Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves " ; that is the first contact with Christ by faith in our salvation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To the Jews the figure used of " eating and drinking " for " believing " was familiar.

There are special seasons when this blessed contact is realized and brought home to the soul, such as whenever the spirit touches Christ in prayer, or in reading the word of God ; but pre-eminently so at the Lord's table. What do I come here for ? To remember Christ ? That is true ; but to remember Christ I have no need to eat anything. Is there nothing more ? Most assuredly, for I have to eat bread, and as I eat I have to discern the Lord's body, otherwise I eat and drink judgment to myself. I have to drink the cup, but as I drink I have to discern the Lord's blood. It is not as I *look*, but as I *eat*, that I take the Lord's Supper.

Let us pause here for one moment and recapitulate.

I have to take the bread, and I get material contact with the touch. When I eat the bread and drink the wine, I am in absolute contact with it ; it is no longer in one place, while I am in another, but the two are brought together for the first time : it is contact ; it is touch.

Material touch ? Yes, but if I am in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, this bread that I take materially is a mere outward symbol of what I take spiritually. " This is my body " ; therefore what I take materially as bread, to me spiritually is Christ's body broken for me. In like manner, when I drink the wine, if I am in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, I take the blood of Christ which was shed for the remission of my sins : if I am not in the Spirit, it is merely wine. Thus then is our spiritual food and spiritual drink, enjoyed by contact.

We know that in electricity there must be actual contact, or there is no current. One little cut to the electric wire and all the lights are extinguished. So in prayer : we can go down on our knees and yet there may be no conscious contact ; we may not succeed in reaching God. We may be at the Lord's Supper, and there may be no contact at the time realized with Christ, as alas ! our souls know only too well. I suppose there are none of us but have to acknowledge that both in prayer and at the Holy Communion we have been conscious of hearing and seeing, but not of contact or touch, and thus no current passes. This Divine contact is the deepest spiritual reality that is possible to a Christian soul ; it is the deepest because when you touch Christ as at the Lord's Supper, you can go no farther. There are many touches. God is feeling after us, and we feel after Him. This is the touch that is mentioned in the sermon

on Mars Hill, that of a man feeling in a dark room. There is touching the "hem of the garment," by which we are saved; for the moment we touch Christ Himself we are never the same persons again. When we touched Him first, it was eternal life to the soul, or if you like, when He touched us, as when He touched the leper. Then when we touch Him, as we are allowed to do in communion, in prayer, by the power of the Spirit of God on many occasions, is a further step; but the Lord's Supper is, above all other occasions, the one when we are assembled for the express purpose that we may touch Him spiritually, and our souls be refreshed by the spiritual food He there provides. We approach the table of the Lord, not only that we may hear, that we may see, but that we may feed spiritually upon these memorials of His dying love. This, I repeat, is more than looking at them. "Looking" will call to remembrance; but eating is far more, and I think that this is the part of the Lord's Supper that many still feebly apprehend, if at all.

In "hearing" we may be a long way off; the prodigal son was away in the far country when he heard the father's voice telling him of the food and the plenty in his father's home. In seeing, we are nearer, at the Lord's table, and we see the elements. But in eating and drinking there is contact, there is touch; and when the soul touches Christ spiritually, and when there is renewed in fresh spiritual power that union with Christ that is always ours, then the soul is filled with Divine love, is refreshed, is strengthened, and goes on its way rejoicing.

I have seen people come away from this Holy Communion unable to speak for joy, not wishing to talk to any one, because they have talked to Christ. That is contact; that is the Lord's Supper in truth.

The soul, as it were, finds Christ afresh, in this spiritual contact. It was not until the son was seated at the father's board that he was transfigured, and became a child again, and "began to be merry." So it is with us. It is realization of the touch that fills us with joy. Until then there is always something wanting.

There is no limit to the joy or the power that our souls may receive when we are in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. The joy is indeed "unspeakable and full of glory"; and the soul becomes clothed with the beauty of Christ.

There is much more therefore in this supper than mere remem-



brance. That is the purport of it ; but God's cup always overflows, and there is a great deal more in what He gives me than words can express. " In remembrance of Me," gives us the purpose of the institution of the Lord's Supper, which is, primarily, the remembrance of our absent Lord ; but the result to us is twofold—communion with one another in the body of Christ, and spiritual food and refreshment to our souls at the table. These are the two results that are given us in the Word of God.

There is one other point in the result to us, and that is the transformation or transfiguration. Whenever the soul touches Christ, at conversion, in prayer, or at any other time, there is a transfiguration ; there is a change, a progressive change into the likeness of Christ. It was while our Lord prayed that He was transfigured, and it is when we pray that we are transfigured according to 2 Corinthians iii. 18 : " We all beholding with unveiled face the glory of the Lord are changed." <sup>1</sup> When do we behold the glory of the Lord ? When we touch Him in prayer, at the Lord's table and at all times of spiritual communion, and these contacts should progressively transfigure us into the image of our Lord. It says we are changed ; not all at once, but little by little, into the same image, as from glory to glory.

How ? " By the Spirit of the Lord." It is being " in the Spirit on the Lord's Day " that is the whole secret. It is not partaking of the Supper only ; it is not the form of service attached to it ; it is not the presence or the absence of ecclesiastical surroundings ; it is not confession, or fasting that will ensure true communion ; it is being " in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." The Spirit is always in me, but " being in the Spirit " is something more than that ; it is, that at the time, He possesses and guides and controls my thoughts, opens the " eyes of my heart " to see and share and enjoy the spiritual feast ; that is what it means to be in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. Nowhere is the profound truth of these words, " the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life," more clearly seen than at the Lord's Supper. Therefore we must understand that this Supper is a true spiritual meal ; it is not merely a remembrance of having once been fed when we accepted Christ in His death as our Saviour.

I think the truth is well expressed in the words of a very old cate-

<sup>1</sup> The word " changed " is " transfigured," and is the same word as in Mark ix. 2.

chism <sup>1</sup> which strikes me as embodying the matter very simply :—

“ They that worthily communicate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper do therein feed upon the body and blood of Christ, not after a corporeal or carnal, but in a spiritual manner, but *really* and *truly*.”

This seems to embody the teaching of the Word of God on the subject.

We therefore find the Lord's Supper, thus taken, becomes a true spiritual feast “ until He come,” an effectual channel of refreshment and food, an appointed means of gaining spiritual likeness and power.

As I close this study one feeling predominates: “ How unspeakably short we have come of the depths of enjoyment and communion that our souls might know on these sacred and blessed occasions.” May God in His mercy Who has preserved to us still this Holy Communion in all its reality, give with it the spiritual power for the true apprehension of the Lord's Supper.

A. T. SCHOFIELD.

<sup>1</sup> The Westminster Confession.

