

No. 35.

Arthur G. Benson

The Lord's Supper.

Exodus 12: 3-15. Psalm. 34: 1-9.

Luke 22: 14-35. John 13: 3-38. Matt 26: 17-30.

138

471

Of human kindness meets return
Not all the blood of beasts.

Witness ye men & angels now
The promise of my father's love.

According to thy gracious words.
Blessed Saviour thee I love.

How sweet & awful is the place.
Jesus, I my cross have taken.
What shall I render to my God.

Luke 22: 19.

"Do this, in remembrance of me."

Such were the simple but solemn words in which, just before his death, Jesus enjoined upon his first disciples the duty of observing the Lords supper: "Do this in remembrance of me!" The sacrament was most manifestly designed as a perpetual institution, and, hence, however particular & special may have been the application of these words to the disciples, they were obviously meant to apply to all men.

You purpose, dear friends, to come around the Lords table on the coming Sabbath, and

(it has seemed to me) nothing could be ^{more} ~~so~~
appropriate as preparatory to that solemn
Service, than now to examine into the sig-
nificance of this sacrament. Let us therefore
give a hurried glance at its design and
intention. What is intended by it and in it.
For what and for whom was it instituted?
We shall in the course of our investigation
have occasion to speak of the feelings wh.
it should inspire and of the obligations
it must ever involve and impose. Our prin-
ciple aim however will be briefly & simply to
explain the nature of the Supper.

1. We are to do this in remembrance of Jesus
as our ^{deliverer - Saviour.} (prophet.) In this view it is a simple memorial, both of his life & death. It is intended to call him to remembrance as slain for us. As oft as we eat this bread & drink this cup, we do show the Lords death till he come.

When the Saviour ate the Last supper with his disciples, his crucifixion and dying agonies lay ⁱⁿ full ^{view} before him. And to his human eye, at least, the prospective scene was one over which brooded clouds & thickest darkness, unbroken by a ray of light. Even

the radiant smile that beamed from the Father's face, and which had never before forsaken him was withdrawn.

Knowing that his death was near, he desired to establish for his disciples some memorial which might serve to remind them of his sufferings and expiring agonies endured for them. And the memorial that he selected was correspondent with the godlike simplicity of his character and life.

A mere earthly hero who desired to be held in remembrance would have ordered some costly triumphal arch, sculptured all over with the

records of his achievements; Some splendid cathedral lifting its sacred walls to enshrine his dust; Some magnificent mausoleum or massive monument to perpetuate his name & memory, a blossoming of Stone over his grave.

Some human King, desirous of an immortality in the hearts of his subjects would have put up, while living, some enduring sepulchre like those which lift their pyramidal peaks far up into Egyptian skies. Or, like the Duke of Marlborough would have ^{planted} beautiful trees to commemorate the positions of contending armies, and his own victorious leadership, so that even the returning spring should hang out the banners of

his triumph from every forest twig.

But not so the divine Jesus. He left no such perishable & material monument to his memory. He left no writings to immortalize his name; he appointed no anniversary to be celebrated as his; he ordered no costly shrine to stand up in his witness. With the simplicity & at the same time sublimity which pertained to his divine nature he simply broke bread & poured out wine as symbolic of his body & blood sacrificed for all, bade his disciples eat & drink and said, "This do, in remembrance of me." None but a God could have done this.

Such an appointment is accordant with his divine character. It is so entirely free from ostentation or display, yet so effectual with all that the more we meditate about it, the more we admire it.

There is something in a meal partaken of in common, which is itself a great token of affection. Among the orientals there is so high a sense of honor, that the meanest robber wd. scarcely commit depredations upon your property after he had eat at your table. And if one hands a cup of wine to another at a meal it is regarded as so sacred a pledge

that neither can ever lift his sword against
the other. When we sit down to eat togeth-
er, even though we may be strangers, after we
have ^{partaken} eaten together at a common board, we
feel a new bond between us. There is something
in a common meal suggestive of affection &
friendly feeling. The Jewish notions upon
these matters were very decided. When the Pal-
mist said that his friend who had eaten
bread with him, had lifted up his heel a-
gainst him, he expressed the extreme of dis-
honor. And when Jesus in the ears of his own
disciples quotes & applies these words to Judas

the disciples understood by them the deepest depravity, treachery & guilt. Sitting to eat together savors of the family relation & a common meal is a feast of love. So that the very idea of a supper is itself suggestive of Christ's dying affection for us.

And then the bread broken for nourishment is a most happy emblem of a sacrifice, made for spiritual life & growth. And the wine which stimulates and energizes is a beautiful token of that blood which was poured out as a fountain of cleansing & holiness.

But setting aside the peculiar propriety of the supper itself, let us remember that it was

also the Passover. This meal was marked by
three cups. The third cup was called the cup
of blessing and terminated the meal proper &
it was in connection with this third cup
that our Lord instituted the Sacrament.

Now the Passover was established in connec-
tion with the last of the plagues in Egypt. It
commemorated the fact that when the angel
of Death that smote all the first born of E-
^{came to the houses etc.}
gypt, he passed over the houses of the Israel-
ites, seeing the blood of the paschal lamb on
the door posts. The Passover was then a me-
morial of a gracious deliverance. It typified

that greater redemption, ^{from eternal death} by the sprinkled, of
Christ our paschal lamb, from eternal death.
The Lords supper therefore corresponds to and
displaces the Jewish passover. The type was
swallowed up in the antitype. We can readily
see therefore why the ^{Eucharist} communion was institu-
ted thus at the close of the passover meal. It
was highly significant and appropriate, as
calling to remembrance the fact that Christ
our passover was sacrificed for us. It is
like that passover a memorial of our great
deliverance from death, through the blood
of Jesus, led as a lamb to slaughter.

2. But secondly we are to do this in remembrance of Jesus as (our prophet) not only a dying Saviour, but as our priest. In this sense the Lords supper is a renunciation. For Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God to offer gifts + sacrifices for sin. Christ is our priest to atone for us, and when we eat his supper we should remember him as bearing our sins in his own body upon the ^{Cross.} tree, and renouncing those sins. When we remember how he was crucified for our iniquities, we sh^d crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts,

mortify our members which are upon the earth.
I have before spoken of the Lords supper as
a memorial and as such correspondent to
the Passover. I now affirm it to be a re=
nunciation of sin and as such correspon=
dent to the Jewish sacrifices.

There is a wrong impression current with
regard to these ancient institutions of the He=
brews. We associate with them too often the pow=
er of cleansing from ^{guilt} ~~sin~~. Now sacrifices have
in view, one or more of three things, the expres=
sing of gratitude, the procurement of favor
or the atonement for sin. But a sacrifice

as such can have no inherent efficacy.
Can the blood of bulls or of goats or the
ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean
of themselves remove the foul stains wh.
have left their dye upon the soul itself?
Obviously not. If the sacrifice were it-
self efficacious, then Cain's offering would
^{not} have been rejected, for he brought a present &
sacrificed to Jehovah. Yet we read that while
Abel's was accepted, Cain's was not. Where was
the difference? Simply in this. Abel brought
his offering as symbolic of a saviour to come.
He looked forward by Faith to a Redeemer

not yet realized, though promised. He knew
that the lamb which bled upon his altar c^d
have no prevailing power to wash away his
sin. But in the ^{prophecies} symbol he beheld the savi-
our which was to come. His faith laid hold
upon christ, ^{reaching forward, thro' the yet unhistoried centuries} stretching its grasp, into the un-
seen future and placing its firm & fixed gaze
upon the Lamb of God that taketh away the
sin of the world. Here Cain was deficient. He
saw no Saviour; he possessed no faith.

And so of all Jewish Sacrifices. They had
no virtue or efficacy inherent in themselves.
They were only accepted on the ground of that

faith which they symbolized & expressed.
A sacrifice then was in no sense, itself, —
an atonement for sin. Jesus was the great
and only atonement, and they simply kept
him in remembrance. They held him up to
the view of the soul, as its great ^{divinely} sacrifice, ap-
pointed (of God) that his blood, who through the
eternal spirit offered himself without spot un-
to God, might purge their consciences from dead
works to serve the living God.

Now I am greatly mistaken if the Lords sup-
per does not directly & precisely correspond
with and take the place of the Jewish sac-

rifices, as a renunciation of sin, and uncleanness, just as we have already shown that as a memorial of deliverance it corresponds with and displaces the passover. I am aware that this view may be somewhat novel, and it may at first sight, startle one to hear this sacrament called the Christian sacrifice for sin; yet is it not? and does not the possible repulsiveness of the view result from the fact that we are wont to associate with the old Jewish sacrifices some degree of inherent efficacy which they did not possess?

We insist that as the hebrew in his sac-

rifices looked forward to a coming Redeemer, so we in our sacramental supper look back to a Redeemer already come.

As there was no inherent efficacy in the sacrifice, ^{wh. was prospective} so there is none in the sacrament, ^{wh. is retrospective}. The Jewish faith which was accepted as righteousness, reached forward to the future; ours likewise accepted reaches backward to the past. When the Jew offered his lamb, if he saw the lamb of God in the symbol, and laid hold upon him by faith, his faith as expressed in the sacrifice availed to apply to him the atonement of Jesus. It washed away his sin.

Precisely so it seems to me is it with us, when we approach as partakers to the table of our Lord. These elements have no power to promote our spiritual growth or cleansing; but they are appointed of Jesus as the expression of our faith in him & our dependence on him for salvation. What the sacrifice was to the Jew this sacrament is to the Christian, and if he looks back to the great sacrifice with humble faith, his sins are forgiven & washed away, just as were the Jews.

The observance of the Lords supper then is no less binding upon the Christian than was the sacrifice upon the Jew. And I believe I speak as God

would have me speak when I say that it is
as displeasing in Gods sight and as perilous
to christian growth to neglect the Lords table as
to the Hebrew it would have been to neglect the
Sacrifices. Were they instituted of God? and is not
this also. Were they requisite as expressions of
faith? Is not this also. Were they appointed to keep
before the soul Jesus? Is not this also? What wd.
have been thought of a Jew who ceased to offer sac-
rifices because he did not see his way clearly to go
to the Sacrificial altar. Yet it is no less absurd now
for individuals to plead a similar excuse for
neglecting or abandoning the table of Christ.

3. But my third and last remark is that the Lords supper brings Jesus to our remembrance as our King to rule in and reign over us. In this view it is ^{properly} a sacrament. What now is a sacrament. It has come to be used as meaning an outward & visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, or more particularly, a solemn religious ordinance imposed by Christ to be observed by his followers, by which their special relation to him is created or their obligations to him renewed & ratified. Baptism is called a sacrament, because by it persons are separated from the world, brought into the visible ch.

and laid under particular obligations to obey his precepts. The eucharist or communion of the Lords supper is also called a sacrament, for by commemorating the Love of Jesus and his death, we ~~arouse~~ ^{renew} our special relation to him & renew our obligations to be faithful to our divine Master.

Now all this is true but there is one part of the definition which is too often practically overlooked. It is this ^{acknowledgment or} renewal of obligation. The primitive meaning of sacrament will furnish us an illustration pertinent to this point. When a soldier entered the Roman army he

took what was called a *saecramentum*, or oath of obligation. This by its very terms was a vow of service. It bound him to eternal alliance with Rome. He promised under the sanction of most sacred appeals to the gods that he would always stand by the Roman eagle. He bound himself always to follow the general of her armies over land & over sea through fire and sword, by night & by day, for triumph or defeat, for life or death, for meal or woe.

And so to the Christian the sacrament is a humble vow of service, first taken or re-

newed whenever he approaches the table
of his Lords. He comes as a soldier to enter
the Army of Jesus, or to re-impose upon him-
self the solemn sacramentum. It is his vow
of service. It binds him to eternal alliance,
with the Christian church. He promises always
with the help of God to stand up for Jesus;
always to keep near the holy cross. He binds
himself to follow ^{Christ} ~~Jesus~~ his captain, through
evil as well as good report, come life or come
death. He promises to endeavor according to
his ability with prayer and watching, to
fight manfully the good fight of faith; to

slay every bosom sin, to grapple with every
spiritual foe, to beat back every adversary
of the church. Such is the vow of service in-
to which it is the privilege of the christian
to enter when he partakes of the sacrament-
al emblems. He is bought with a price; there-
fore should he glorify God in body & spirit
which are Gods. He is no more his own. He
has given himself entirely away to Jesus, bo-
dy & spirit, energies physical, intellectual &
emotional. He holds himself absolutely at the
disposal of his divine master. He is determined
to endure hardness as a good soldier of J.C.

Do you say in your heart it is fearful to
enter into such a vow of service. True it
would be, if you ^{were} assumed such obligations
in your own strength; but you must do it
in humble reliance on him who is both able
& willing to keep you from falling. The true
Christian may tremble as he remembers his
own weakness, but he hears the voice of Jesus
saying my grace shall be sufficient for thee,
and the sweet assurance fills his heart that
his saviour will make his own strength per-
fect in his weakness. He says Christ strength-
ening me I can do all things.

I need hardly add that such a vow is to be esteemed inviolably sacred.

The Roman Soldier esteemed no obligation superior to his sacramentum. He would adhere to it to the forsaking of his family home and even to the resigning of life.

At the time of the Eruption of Mount Vesuvius, whose ^{rivers} flood of liquid lava buried for ages the cities of Herculaneum & Pompeii - the latter city was under Roman sway. There were long continued premonitions of the outbreacking flood of fire. The inhabitants were at the time of the Eruption assembled in the

great Pompeian Amphitheatre; witnessing the
heathen plays. Upon the first beginnings
of the discharge from the Crater, the inhab-
itants commenced to flee, and passed in in-
numerable swarms out the gates of the city
seeking a place of refuge. But it is beauti-
fully narrated of the Roman sentinels that
although stationed at the city gates, where
escape was most likely to be successful, they
stood at their posts & died there. Rather
than violate their sacred oath ever & in all
circumstances to stand by Rome, they re-
mained at their posts & faced a horrible

death. I seem to see them now, watching
the advancing tides of molten fire, resolute-
ly maintaining their stand where they had
sworn to live or die, until swept away ^{or engulfed} ~~upon the crest of~~ by the
irrepressible river of flame. And now whitened &
bleached in the lava, the traveller to Pompeii
may see the bones of those brave old Romans.
Heroic souls! Oh for your constancy, your pa-
triotism, your resolution, your heroism, your
fidelity ^{realized in the ranks of the Christian soldierly army} transferred to Christian bosoms. Oh,
that the soldier of Jesus Christ might thus stand
faithful to his master, amid all the temptations
to desertion and the exposures to death.

Thus I have endeavoured to set forth the simplicity & significance of the Lords supper. It is a memorial of Jesus' death; it is a renunciation of our sins; it is a promise of service to Jesus. (And we have only now to add that) we have aimed to divest this holy ordinance of all mystery. The test of fitness is simply & easily applied. Do you desire Jesus as your prophet, your priest, your King? Are you desirous to commemorate his dying love? Are you willing to renounce your sins and depend on him for salvation? Are you willing to take upon you the vows of God? Then we welcome you, this table! Who shall dare to drive you away, Since Jesus bids you welcome!

Composed. West Winsted Conn. Sept. 6. 1859.
Preached W. Winsted Conn. Friday eve. Sept. 9. 1859.
Brooklyn. Dr. Hitchcock's, Prep. Lecture. Wednesday. Nov. 30.
Binghamton N. Y. Sabbath A. M. August 12. 1860. Communion
13. St. Pusch. Preparatory Lecture. Friday eve. May 9. 1862.
1st Pusch Troy Friday Eveg Prep. Lecture Jan 30 1863
Congregational Church of Norwalk. Friday P. M. May 1. 63.
Waterford N. Y. Friday P. M. March 5th 1864.
Detroit Mich Friday P. M. March 12 1869.
Detroit M. Repeated Sabbath A. M. Nov. 7. 1865.

Remarks at Table - Friday March 12 1869

Order of Ceremonies at Passover -

1. Cup. Eucharist. Leader of small assembly takes cup of wine & water. gives thanks for good mercies and especially deliverance. Passes it round
 2. Then washes hands. compare John 13 - Christ washing feet.
 3. Then takes unleavened bread & bitter herbs and eats - and passes around
 4. Then a little child - ordinarily son of household in asks what mean ye &c
 5. Then follows the $\Pi \Gamma \Delta \Gamma$ Haggadah or Declaration from Ex. 13 to declare or shew forth.
- Hence our Lord says ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come.