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The Lord's Supper.

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TEXT—Exodus xii. 23, 27. "And it shall come to pass when your children shall say unto you, what mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, it is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses." I. Corinthians xi: 25, 26: "This do . . . 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."

Jesus elevated the passover into the Lord's Supper, the central truth of the Christian religion, and the bond of union in the Church of God. But this sacrament which ought to have united the Church has through man's weakness divided it. So many deplorable superstitions surround the supper that its original design is in some sections of the Church almost entirely overlooked. My object this morning is not to controvert the conflicting of exegesis of this portion of the Word, but to give an exposition of the ordinance as I understand it in the light of the Gospel, removing as much as possible of the rubbish which during eighteen centuries gathered around this the grandest memorial monument ever erected, erected by the Master himself, to commemorate his own death, the death of the Son of God.

The Feast of the Passover was the most interesting ceremony in the Mosaic ritual, because it indicated a separation of the Israelites from the Egyptians, and as a nation their consecration to God. The Passover was to commemorate the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, yet it was instituted before the Exodus, just as the Lord's Supper was instituted before the death of Christ, although it was to commemorate that event. When God was about to send His angel to slay the first-born of the Egyptians, because Pharaoh refused to let the people go, Moses warned the Israelites, and commanded them in order to escape the doom of their oppressors, to slay a lamb, and to sprinkle the blood on the door post, and having roasted the flesh to eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. During the night every house not marked by the blood was visited by death, and in the morning there was a wail throughout the land of Egypt, and the Israelites marched out without striking a blow, for the Lord was their deliverer. When the Temple services were established the mode of observing the Passover was somewhat changed. After the slaying of the lamb at the Temple, and the sprinkling of the blood on the altar, the offerer took the flesh to his abode, and there ate it with his family, or his friends. Each group, as they met in sacred communion to celebrate the Passover, had its own peculiar history. Rich and poor relatives met around the table, disdain and envy being laid aside through consciousness of their being brethren. As you look at another group you see bereavement on every brow, for some of the seats occupied the year before are empty, and some of the lips which then lovingly addressed them are now silent in death. As they eat the Passover, all causes of estrangement are banished from their minds, and their hearts beat in sympathy with each other through realizing that they are brethren in the Lord, being God's chosen people, a people whom God set free from bondage by the almighty power of His grace. One of the most interesting groups that ever met to celebrate the Passover was Jesus and His disciples. It was the last and the greatest of all the passovers. As we enter the room where they are assembled we hear words indicating great changes which are about to take place in the Church of God. Hark! "As they were eating Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, take eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." The elements were not changed in their nature, for the bread and wine being emblems were bread and wine before the supper, and they were nothing more, or nothing less at the supper than bread and wine, for they were symbols, and their value depended not on any material or spiritual change in them, but on their significance.

The time at which the Lord's Supper was instituted seems strange. It was while the Passover was being observed, and before the crucifixion, although commemorative of it; and while the Mosaic economy stood, although it must be classed as one of the constituents of the Gospel dispensation. The reason for this can only be conjectured, as the Word is silent. By instituting the Supper then, Jesus showed His enemies who intended to crush Him unawares, that He knew all things, and that His death was part of the plan of salvation, and in trying to defeat His purposes, they were actually fulfilling them. Again, the Passover and the Lord's Supper were emblematic of the same truth, and it was therefore natural that they should be associated. The lamb of the Passover pointed forward, as the bread and wine of the Supper pointed backward to the same event, the death of Christ. Again, the bread and wine used in the Passover were the same as used in instituting the Lord's Supper, thus engraving the Supper on to the Passover, showing that the Church under

the Old and New Testaments are one and the same, and what the lamb of the Jewish Passover meant under the Old Testament the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper mean under the New Testament dispensation—deliverance from sin by the Atonement on Calvary. Besides, the Saviour wished to give the Supper the persuasiveness of a dying request; for He gave the disciples His valedictory, and enjoined them to commemorate His death, saying, "This do in remembrance of me."

We are asked to commemorate the death of Christ, not by a mournful, but a joyous feast, eating bread and drinking wine. Although this may seem strange, yet, when we consider the relation of God and man to each other, it is just what we might expect. Through the death of Christ, the moral government of God was so effected, that He could be just and the justifier of all them that believe. It is a mistake to suppose that the only purpose of Christ's death was to reconcile man to God by the manifestation of Divine love. While we recognize the greatest love in the death of the cross, we hold that if man could be saved without the death of Christ, that death was not a manifestation of love but of folly. The righteousness essential for the salvation of man shows that Christ died as our substitute, and that His death for our salvation was imperative. Pardon to the sinner comes through the effect the death of the Saviour had on the moral government of God. But more than this is necessary to bring man and God together; for sin produces enmity to God in man's heart. This enmity can be removed only by the Holy Spirit, which is sent through the atoning work of the Son of God to change the heart of man. Christ satisfies the demands of God's justice, and the Holy Spirit removes the enmity from man's heart. When by the power of the Spirit the sinner's eyes are opened so that he sees the love of the Father in the work of the Son, he confesses that he was in error in looking on God as a hard Master, and in contrition he casts himself at the foot of the cross, asking forgiveness. Thus Calvary becomes the meeting-place of the Creator and the creature,



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God and the sinner. There "enmity and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other." If we deny that Christ was a voluntary sacrifice, and His work absolutely necessary for man's salvation, there is no solution to the problem that we are commanded to commemorate His death by a joyous feast. But if we admit that Christ died as the substitute for sinners, and that man could not be saved but by the sacrifice of the cross, and that through faith, Christ's work becomes ours, the difficulty vanishes, the problem is solved. Surely we ought to remember Christ, who has opened for us the way of salvation, with ardour rising into enthusiasm. But we must know Christ by faith as our Saviour in order to be able to remember Him; for we cannot remember Him unless we have known Him. The unsaved are represented in the Word as dead, and the dead cannot remember what they never experienced; therefore, the first call to them is not "This do in remembrance of me," but "Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead and Christ shall give thee light." The spirit of love is that by which the Lord's Supper was instituted, and it is only by the same spirit it can be properly observed. How pleasing to God and profitable to ourselves that we sit at the Lord's table, hearts throbbing with love and hands strengthened with faith, to unite in Israel's song of joy and gladness: "We will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." It is impossible to profit by observing the Supper, or to prosper in spiritual life, if Christ and His love are remembered only in partaking of the emblems of the Sacrament. "That righteousness which is like the great mountains, and that mercy which is high above the heavens," should be clearly kept in view by the pilgrim as he journeys to his glorious home beyond the Jordan. The more we view Christ as we journey on, the more worthy of remembrance He appears to be, till we exclaim over the memorials of His love, "Worthy the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

The words "Do this in remembrance of me," may be rendered, Do this for my memorial—meaning, Do this that you may remember me; or, Do this that you may put me in remembrance of you. The analogy of Scripture bears out the latter interpretation better than the one generally given. While the symbols are to remind us of Christ, they are also to remind Christ of us. The remembrance is mutual, just as the union is mutual—"Ye in me, and I in you." The bow in the cloud was not only a reminder for man but also for God: "I will look upon it," said God, "that I may remember the everlasting covenant." The bow reminds Noah of God's promise, but He knew that it also reminded God of His promise. So the Lord's Supper is a pledge that Christ will never forget His covenant with God on our behalf. While the Lord's Supper puts Christ in mind of us, it also puts us in mind of Christ. It is like a beautiful monument set up on the grave of our dear Saviour, whose inscription is legible to the ends of the earth. The foundation stone of this monument was laid by the Son of God Himself, eighteen hundred years ago; and each communicant has been building it ever since; for, by eating this bread and drinking this cup, they do "show the Lord's death till He come." In the Gospel, as in the Lord's Supper, Christ is offered, but in the latter He is offered to those who have already accepted Him, represented by the symbols; while in the former He is offered to those who have not received Him. Christ can be more fully accepted by conscious possession in the Supper than in the Gospel.