[PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.]

Why do so Many of our Church Members Seem Indifferent to the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper?

BY REV. FRANK POTTER.

You will see brethren, that I have said *seem* indifferent. I do not wish to set myself up as a judge or sensor in this matter, but since I have been settled in my present pastorate, I have been pained by seeing church members who attended the preaching service, leave the building at the conclusion of the first service, and so turn their backs on the Lord's table.

If I, as an under shepherd, cannot but feel keenly this course of action, surely the "Chief Shepherd" must feel that he has been wounded in the house of his friends.

I know that nothing connected with the church of Christ, has been the subject of more bitter or lasting controversy than this ordinance. In the first centuries of the Christian church, the celebration of the Lord's Supper was simple and scriptural. From the fourth and fifth centuries, the doctrine of the church deteriorated rapidly; till about the eighth century, when transtantiation was taught, and soon after the Romish dogma of transubstantiation, which leads to the doctrine of "the mass" wherein it is declared "that there is offered a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead." While some have thus invested it with attributes which have practically served to raise it to well nigh an equality with Christ himself, it is no reason why the followers of Christ should neglect its observance altogether.

In considering the subject proposed, it will be necessary—

I. To allude, briefly, to the nature of this ordinance. In so doing we notice (1) it is a divine institution.

"The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks, he break it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me."

It is plain from the scriptures, that this ordinance is no human invention, but commanded by Christ; and thus it bears the stamp of divine authority, and the seal of divine approval. Its being a command of Christ, should be sufficiently powerful to make it binding on all Christ's disciples.

Its very institution is a beautiful instance of the Saviour's loving and tender care for his people. He knew how liable we are to forget, even our dearest friends if they are absent from us. How many have taken "sweet counsel together," and have vowed eternal friendship; but in the course of time they have been separated, it may be by many miles of country, or the sea has rolled between them; at first a few letters have passed between them, but bye and bye they have become few and far between, till at last they cease altogether, and the friends are forgotten.

Some relationships have been severed by the ruthless hand of death, and how soon, also [illegible] departed one been forgotten: [illegible] been visited, and for a time flowers have been scattered and tears dropped on the sacred spot; but as time the mighty healer has toned down the grief, and other ties have been formed, these friends of bye-gone years are forgotten. So many things tend to make us forget the absent ones, the duties and responsibilities of life come pressing upon us, and demand our thought and attention.

Our gracious Lord knew all about our frail humanity and has given to us this ordinance that we may be reminded of his matchless love. Dr. Stanford, pointing to the Lord's table on one occasion, said very gracefully, "that is Christ's forget-me-not."

II. It is simple in its character.

The Romish church has enveloped and wrapped it around with pomp and mystery; but it was not so instituted by Christ; as instituted by him, it is beautiful in its simplicity. It is not a difficult thing. Suppose Christ had ordered his followers to do some perilous thing, they would have attempted its accomplishment. Suppose he had asked them to do some clever thing, how many of his humble followers would have been in despair because they could not fulfil his command. But here is an ordinance so simple, yet beautiful, which every one of his followers, even the poorest and the weakest can fulfil, needing no cleverness, no great intellectual acquirements, and no heroic deeds to be accomplished in order to fulfil his command; but simply eat and drink, it could not be more simple.

It is not an unpleasant thing, not a disagreeable thing; what a contrast to the painful penance and laceration of the body prescribed by false teachers.

It is pleasant to eat and drink. God in his infinite wisdom, has made the very process by which our physical life is sustained to be a pleasure to us.

III. It is expressive in its symbolical meaning.

(1.) It points backward to the greatest fact in history, the death of the Son of God

"This is my body broken for you, this cup is the New Testament in my blood shed for you." "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the the Lord's death till he comes."

In this ordinance the bread and wine symbolize his great sacrificial death. Arguments, promises, and doctrines are addressed to rational nature; but visible signs and emblems often make a deeper impression on the memory. Here in these elements, the eye, the touch, the taste are all appealed to.

This broken bread is an emblem of his body which was broken for us; this wine is an emblem of his blood shed for us; "this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you," said the gracious Redeemer.

This new covenant ratified and sealed with his own blood, the covenant made with the Father, the blood of the everlasting covenant.

"Without shedding of blood is no remission." If there is no atonement then this ordinance is stripped of its meaning. It typifies as plainly as possible, his blood freely shed and poured out for us.

The Unitarians seem to pervert this ordinance when they can celebrate it and see no atonement, and nothing beyond a memorial banquet in memory of a most heroic sufferer for virtue.

These emblems point to this great soul suffering as he sweat great drops of blood in the garden, as he prostrated himself on the ground and cried, "O my Father if it be possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou will."

(2.) It is symbolical that our life is supported by faith in Christ's death.

A modern divine has well said, "Christ the bread of the soul, must be taken as food, the first thing the body wants is food, and the first thing the justified soul needs is food; and Christ is the food of the soul, for without Christ the soul would die. The Lord's Supper sets forth by the bread and wine the supper of the spiritual life. By the material symbol, Christ appeals to the soul through the body, everything is simplicity itself, and it appeals straight to the soul, and teaches the soul what it has to do to live; it must live on Christ. It is an outward help to an inward life, and if we do not possess that inward life, the outward help will be of no avail. The soul must eat, the soul must drink, and without the soul the Lord's Supper is nothing. We look through the bread and wine and discern the Lord's body, that upon which the saved soul lives."

(3.) It also manifests to the world, our belief in Christ's sacrifice.

"As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do *shew* the Lord's death till he come.

If the world ask, What mean ye by this service? We proclaim to them the fact that we commemorate the death of our Saviour, on whose work we build our hopes for the blotting out of past sins, for our absolution in the future, and our passport to the Paradise above. It is pleasing to remember that in all ages of the Christian Church, there have been some who have thus shewn the Lord's death. The table has never been a crowded table, where the guests have been requested to wear the "wedding garment;" Neither has it been a forsaken table, some were always as constant at the Lords Supper on earth, as they are now at the "Marriage Supper of the Lamb" in heaven. Many of them commemorate His death at the risk of their own lives. The mountain tops were not too cold, nor the caves of the wilderness too damp, nor the tombs at midnight too dreary for the first Christians, when persecution drove them to secret communion services. They loved their Lord, and therefore testified their attachment to Him at all hazards, and under all hardships.

Such were the premitive believers, the world then thought them fools; but now even the world itself applaud their heroism, and remembers them more than it does the guests of the Belshazzars and Cæsars of antiquity. Having glanced at the nature of this ordinance, let us pass on to notice in the second place—

II. Some of the apparent reasons for this indifference.

(1.) The loss of first love in some cases will explain the neglect of this ordnance.

When they were first brought home to Christ and tasted the sweetness of redeeming love, they were always in their places, and there was a beauty and joyousness about those first seasons of Communion never to be forgotton, and they would say in the words of Cowper:

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."

Alas for those who are kept away from this cause, their state must indeed be sad, when love to Christ has so far dwindled that they feel no desire to celebrate the dying love of their Lord and Saviour.

(2.) A sense of unworthiness keeps some away.

Some are terrified at the strong passage in Corinthians where we read:

"Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not descerning the Lords body."

I would not seek to lessen in any degree the strength of this passage, by welcoming to the table those who are known by their lives to be unfit to partake in this ordinance. But is it not a fact that many who quote this passage, do not sufficiently discern between feeling *unworthy*, and eating and drinking *unworthily*.

To eat and drink unworthily is to eat without due reverence, as some of the Corinthians did, who came to it as they would to some common feast, to satisfy their hunger and satiate their thirst, and even going to excess, and thus grossly profaned the Lords Table.

To eat and drink unworthily is to eat and drink without faith or love, without proposing a right end in the action.

To eat and drink unworthily, is to eat and drink under the guilt of any known sin not repented of. Those who thus eat and drink unworthily, saith the Apostle, "shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

They shall incur the guilt of the profanation of this sacred institution. If we do not receive the symbols of the Lords death worthily, we share the guilt of that death; for by that means we "crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame."

But there is an infinite difference between thus eating and drinking unworthily, and feeling unworthy to come to the Lords Table. This the best and holiest men have felt.

Unworthiness in the person ought not to exclude any; for however unworthy we may feel in ourselves, if we penitently believe in Christ's meritorious death for us we worthily communicate. Our worthiness to be a partaker consists in feeling our unworthiness.

(3.) May not another reason for this neglect be from not fully understanding the meaning and importance of this ordinance.

There may be a lack of teaching on this subject. Baptism holds an important place in our teaching, and rightly so. But would it not be as well to seek to teach the people as to this ordinance also. It is ours to declare "the whole counsel of God, and none of Christ's commands are to be passed over. We are apt to forget in our anxiety to reach the unconverted, that Christ has said "Feed my sheep" as well as "go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." It is an important work to build up those who have been once brought to a knowledge of the truth.

Not to weary you, I hasten to the last part of my subject, which is to glance at some of the effects of neglecting this ordinance.

(1) It is a positive loss to the Christian himself.

For surely, properly partaken of, it is a means of grace, while the elements themselves cannot impart grace, yet the participating in this ordinance may strengthen our faith, deepen our humility, increase our love, and enkindle afresh our gratitude. It is also a means of communion with Christ. I do not know that he has promised any special blessing in keeping this ordinance; and yet, has it not been the experience of most of Christ's people that they have enjoyed special manifestations of the Saviour's love as they have sat around his table? With some the joy has been ecstatic. Dr. Doddridge says of Colonel Gardner, that he seemed to enjoy an abstraction from surrounding objects, and his soul seemed to be wrapped up in holy contemplation. On one occasion, on the Monday he apologized to Dr. Doddridge for being so absent, he said "his heart was flown upward before he was aware, to him, whom, having not seen, he loved, and he was rejoicing in him with such unspeakable joy, that he could not hold it down to creature comerse."

(2.) It often leads to decline in the Christian life.

"We cannot treat with indifference and neglect any of Christ's commands without feeling a corresponding decline of piety. How often has it happened, that when this service has been neglected, that it has been the first step to backsliding, a turning away from the narrow way into some bye-path meadow which has led further and further astray, until the very enemies of Christ have been embraced as friends.

(3.) It is a source of weakness and loss to our churches.

How many have put on Christ by baptism, and have come a few times to the Lord's Table, but after a time have remained away, and to-day we know not where to find them; whereas, it seems to me, if they had fully followed up the means of grace, and in celebrating the Lord's Supper, had been constantly reminded of their solemn obligations to Christ and his church, they might have been saved from wandering so far away. I know it has been a safeguard to me, and especially so in my early Christian life, for when temptation was around me, I felt that I was a member of the church, and that if I fell, I should not only bring dishonor on myself, but also upon the church of Christ, and give occasion to the enemies of Christ to blaspheme.

Brethren, I am conscious that I have very imperfectly handled this subject, and that I have failed to express fully what I feel in reference to it, but I am glad of the opportunity of bringing it before you, believing that the time spent in considering this important subject will not be wasted.

Church Connections.

"Nellie," said her husband very soon after the young couple had settled in their new home, "we must make up our minds where we shall have our church home; don't you think so?"

"Yes," answered his wife. "I do not like going into a strange church and being shown to a seat. I do not feel at home at all."

"You would feel less at home if you were not shown to a seat, would you not, my dear?" suggested her husband quirzically.

"Oh, you know what I mean, you tease," said Nellie. "But I want a seat of my own, and I want to go to a church as if I belonged there. Yes, I am quite ready to settle the question as to where we shall go. Indeed, I don't see but that it is settled for us. The First church is nearest, and so far as I have seen it is a pleasant congregation."

"We could go to the Carter Avenue church; it is not much farther."

"No, not a great deal, but still enough to make a difference to me in stormy weather," said his wife.

"The First church is larger," said Charlie; "perhaps we young country folks would be overshadowed there."

"Well, Charlie," said his wife, "I do not mind being overshadowed. There will be plenty of work for us if we are ready to do it, and I am not a bit afraid but we shall have all the place we are worthy of—that is if you are ambitious for place. I am not."

"Nor am I for myself, my dear wife," answered the husband, "but I don't want the talents of the sweet singer of the Gladeville church, or the teacher of the infant class, of the president of the Young Ladies Missionary Band, etc., etc., to be buried out of sight."

"In other words," laughed Nellie, "you are ambitious that your wife should shine, so that you may make her honors a reason for taking things easy yourself. Is not that so, sir?"

"Well, Nellie, I never like to see anything wasted, and I am sure your talents ought not to be," was the reply. "But, seriously, is there not more opportunity for our making ourselves more useful in a small church than in a large one?"

"No, I don't see that there is," said his wife. "I mean to do what lies in my power wherever we go, and I don't see that one's utmost is more in one place than in another. But then if you prefer the Carter Avenue church, we will go there."

"No, dear, I have no preference for it over the other. The First church is more convenient. I was questioning a little what might be duty in the matter, but if we go into the First church to work it is all right."

So that matter was settled, and the next Sabbath saw them at the close of the morning service in conference with the pew committee of the First church, with the result that the young couple secured their sittings before they left the church. It was not a part of their programme to be known to church sextons as "rounders." At the first opportunity, moreover, they presented their letters of membership, and so became thoroughly identified with the church.

It was some months after, that a neighbor, Mrs. Boulder, called one day on Nellie, and the conversation after a while ran on church relations.

"Aren't you very lonely, Mrs. Benson, in the First church?" asked Mrs. Boulder. "I should think you would be, after coming from your home church in the country. Besides, the First church people are so stiff and unsocial."

"Oh, I think you are mistaken, Mrs. Boulder," said Nellie. "That has not been our experience at all, and their friendliness has taken away the sense of loneliness that I must confess I had little of at first. The church is somewhat larger than the one I had grown up in at home, and where I knew everybody. So that it was quite a contrast for a while."

"Well, I know we tried going there when we first moved here, but no one took any notice of us, and so we went to Union Street. They are not much better there, but we get along. I don't think church people are very friendly anyhow."

"They ought to be, Mrs. Boulder," said the young wife, with a very becoming matronly dignity, "and for my part, I have been treated better than I deserve in the First church. My dear old pastor in the church at home said to me just before I left, 'My daughter, he that would have friends, must show himself friendly.' When you get into new church relations do not stand on your dignity and expect the others to make all the advances.' My husband and I have tried to act on that advice, and without putting ourselves forward in the least, we have tried to show that we are not meaning to stand on one side, waiting to be coaxed. We don't rush out of church as if we were afraid some one would speak to us, (Nellie little knew as she spoke, how hard she was hitting Mrs. Boulder), we have gone to work in the Sunday-school, and we arrange our engagements so as to have Wednesday evening clear for prayer meeting. We always find someone has a pleasant word for us after the meeting."

"Of all things," exclaimed Mrs. Boulder, rising to take her leave, "sociability in a First church prayer meeting! I think, my dear, you must be the first person that has discovered it."

Nellie found out after a somewhat longer residence in the place, the reason Mrs. Boulder had failed to find any friendliness in the First church. "Yes, Mrs. Benson," said the pastor's wife, "we all tried hard to win Mrs. Boulder, but we could do nothing with her. While she attended the church, she and her husband would leave the moment that service was over, and no one could get a chance to speak to them. They did not come to the Sunday-school or the prayer meeting, and when any of us called, she particularly was very cold and stiff, and we had to give her up."

"How pleasant your church people are, my daughter," said Nellie's mother, who was visiting them a few months after the young folks had taken up their abode in their new home. "You seem to have a great many acquaintances, at least, and some of them talk like friends."

"Yes, mother dear, they are friends," said her daughter, "and it makes our home ever so much more pleasant that we have found such delightful church relations."

"You see they did not hold themselves aloof," said the pastor's wife to Nellie's mother.—*Illustrated Christian Weekly.*

Niagara's Tremendous Depth

William Hosea Ballou says in the New York *Times*:

The mysterious and awful depth of Niagara's canon is a fruitful subject of comment. Some portions of it are reasonably supposed to be bottomless. When the railroad bridge was constructed here, some ambitious persons attempted to sound the canon directly beneath it. They filled a large tin pail with stones and lowered it with a rope. The current merely played with it. Then they took a strong cord, attached a bar of railway iron to it, which actually floated, owing to the fierce counter-currents. A few years ago, the United States Lakes' Survey came here, and as recorded of the survey, I know of the remarkable data obtained. We saw at once that the current would buoy up a large sinker, and proposed to test the smallest possible weight. We took a lead weight in form of a plumbob, weighing thirteen pounds, and attached to it a small but strong cord. Then we secured the services of one of the ferry boatmen and started out into the stream. The boatman was ordered to row as nearly under the falls as possible, and the result will never be forgotten by a member of the party in that skiff. As we approached, the roar became more and more terrible, until we were not only unable to hear, but the lips positively refused to open and utter a sound. For several days afterward some of the party were so deaf as to unable to distinguish one word from another. The lead was cast first near the American falls, where bottom was found at 83 feet. Near the main falls we found 100 feet of water. Here the oarsman's strength failed, and the little craft began to dart down stream. At every cast of the lead the water grew deeper, until in front of the inclined railway the old guide and most of the party became terror-stricken and refused to go further down the stream. Here the lead told of 192 feet. We were then able to complete the depths lower down by simply ascertaining the width of the stream. Directly under the lower bridge the water narrows considerably, and deepens to 210 feet. Lower down at the Whirlpool rapids, the gorge becomes very narrow, and the currents terribly fierce. Here the computed depth was 350 feet. One place in the gorge is still narrower, and would exceed a depth of 400 feet. When the depth of water is taken into consideration, the height of canon walls above the service must not be forgotten. The walls range from 260 to 360 feet in height, often perpendicular, so that the depths of the canon range from 350 to 700 feet.—*Sel.*

Women in Corea.

A Corean woman has no moral existence. She is an instrument of pleasure or of labor, but never man's companion or equel. She has no name. In childhood she receives indeed a surname by which she is known in the family and by near friends; but at the age of puberty, none but her father and mother employ this appellative. To all others she is "the sister" of such a one, or "the daughter" of so-and-so. After her marriage, her name is buried. She is absolutly nameless. Her own parents allude to her by employing the name of the district or ward in which she has married. He parents-in-law speak of her by the name of the place in which she lived before marriage, as women rarely marry in the same village with their husbands. When she bears children, she is "the mother" of so-and-so. When a woman appears before the magistrate for trial, in order to save time and trouble, she receives a special name for the time being. The women below the middle class work very hard. Farm labor is done chiefly by them. Manure is applied by the women, rarely by the men. The women carry lunch to the laborers in the field, eating what is left for their share. In going to market, they carry the heavier load.

In the higher classes of society, etiquette demands that the children of the two sexes be separated after the age of eight or ten years. After that time, the boys dwell entirely in the men's apartments, to study, and even to eat and drink. The girls remain secluded in the women's quarters. The boys are taught that it is a shameful thing even to set foot in the female part of the house. The girls are told that it is disgraceful even to be seen by males, so that gradually they seek to hide themselves whenever any of the male sex appear. These customs, continued from childhood to old age, result in destroying family life. A Corean of good taste only occasionally holds conversation with his wife, whom he regards as far beneath him. He rarely consults her on anything serious; and, though living under the same roof, one may say that husband and wife are widely separated. The female apartments among the higher classes resemble in most respects those of India. The men chat, smoke, and enjoy themselves in the outer rooms, and the women receive their parents and friends in the interior apartments.

There is, however, another side. Though counting for nothing in society, and nearly so in the family, they are surrounded by a certain sort of exterior respect. They are always addressed by the formulas of honorific language. The men always step aside in the street to allow a women to pass, even though she be of the poorer classes. The apartments of the women are inviolable, even to the minions of the law. A noble who takes refuge in his wife's room may not be seized. Only in case of rebellion is he dragged forth, for in that case his family are reckoned as accomplices in his guilt. In other crimes, the accused must in some way be enticed outside, where he may be legally arrested. When a pedler visits the house to show his wares, he waits until the doors of the women's apartments are shut. This done, his goods are examined in the outer apartments, which are open to all. When a man wishes to mend or go up on his roof, he first notifies his neighbors, in order that they may shut their doors and windows, lest he risk the horrible suspicion of peeping at the women.—*The Hermit Nation.*

—How many old subscribers will send us in a new name this week?

Crime in Britain.

Referring to the latest Parliamentary reports of the Inspectors-General of Prisons, we find that, although the Roman Catholic population of Ireland is about three and a half to one, the criminals are in the ratio of six Romanists to one Protestant. Proceeding thence to Scotland, we are able to adduce further evidence to the same effect. On July 23, 1877, Sir R. Cross stated in the House of Commons "that about one-third of all the prisoners in Scotland were Roman Catholics" (*Times*, July 24, 1877). The statement is startling. The population of Scotland, as given by the preceding census, was 3,358,818. The number of Roman Catholics was estimated, in 1871, to amount to 277,300, or less than one-twelfth of the population. Yet this one-twelfth furnishes one-third of the criminals. More than this, the Census Commissioners for Scotland, in their report published in 1875, attributed the increase of crime in Scotland to the immigration of Irish Roman Catholics. The same cause was assigned by the statistical writer of the *Times* as accounting for the excess of Romish criminals in England (*Times*, October 27, 1874, and January 6, 1876), and the *Times* remarks "that it is unfortunate for the rate-payers of England and Wales that two-fifths of these criminals have selected these countries, and not their own, for the scene of their depredations."

Let us take the case of Liverpool, where the Irish element is found to be especially strong. The report of the Chief Constable of Liverpool (*Times*, November 26, 1877) states: "It is among the Roman Catholics that the most extraordinary records are obtained; an absolute majority of the prisoners, male and female, belong to that communion. Of the 12,285 prisoners during the year, 8,453 were Roman Catholics (3,882 men and 4,571 women)." These facts are corroborated by the resident Roman Catholic clergy. Father Nugent, the Roman Catholic chaplain to the Liverpool prisons, in his report for 1877, states: "Drink and prostitution fill the female side of the prison. Of the 4,571 women, 1,310 were committed for drunken and riotous conduct and 1,555 for disorderly behaviour upon the streets." Liverpool, according to the Census Returns, then contained a population of 443,938, of which about 150,000 were Roman Catholics; so that whilst the Protestant population was in the proportion of about three to one, the Roman Catholic prisoners were more than double the number of Protestants.—*St. James' Chronicle.*

An Unsanctified Smell.

A Christian worker from Boston was holding some evangelistic services in a neighboring town. At the conclusion a deacon of the church came to him and said:

"So you think you are sanctified, do you?"

"Well, yes, I rather think I am."

"Then you think that you can't sin any more?"

"Oh, no! I do not think that; I am afraid I shall."

"Well," said the deacon, "I don't think I am sanctified."

"No," replied the brother, with a little hesitation and deliberation, "I should not think you were, you don't smell like a sanctified man."

The deacon was soaked with tobacco juice from head to foot. The conversation closed; he went home and thought. For the first time in his life the idea dawned on him that there was any difference between the smell of a sanctified man and the tobacco user. He could not readily dismiss the matter from his mind. The words stuck to him, until at last he renounced the filthy weed, and it is to be hoped he smells more like a sanctified man.

Surely when men "lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness," pipes and tobacco will quite likely be discarded, with the other abominations.—*The Wayside.*

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