

scriptures (1 Cor. 2:6-16). This is Christianity in its foundation principles as contrasted with the world's wisdom and power.

The fruit of these three great principles that make up Christianity is seen in 1 Cor. 3. The temple of God is formed by Paul, the wise master-builder; God had handed over the work of His temple to him to lay the foundation, namely, Christ Jesus, and to other Christians as the builders to build upon it. The walls were being built of gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; and the builders were warned as to the material with which they would build it; but the assembly or the temple was God's, and God the Holy Spirit dwelt in it. All this is brought in as a corrective to the evil of divisions, which was the fruit of that human wisdom that created great philosophers in Greece, as the heads of human opinion and schools of thought. This leaven was working among the saints at Corinth. The true corrective power was for the saints to see that the vineyard was God's, that the building was God's, that they were the temple of God, and that God the Holy Spirit dwelt amongst them as in a house. Paul, Apollos, and Cephas were but laborers in the vineyard and in the temple, servants of Christ, stewards of the mysteries of God; but the assembly was His, not theirs.

Thus we see that, Christ having been rejected of the world, it has been judged by His cross; and God having exalted Him to His right hand in consequence of His obedience unto death, the Holy Ghost has come down from heaven, and baptized all believers into one body {1 Cor. 12:13}, and builded them together on earth to be His habitation, His temple. How important, then, for the saints in these last days to gather on these principles, to realize the judgment of the flesh, their place in Christ where He is, and their union with Him by the Holy Ghost come down, as members of His body, builded together as God's temple and under God's rule.

It is only as thus gathered that God can in any way own a remnant as {meeting as} His assembly. For where the people of God are united together in any other way than to Christ, the Head of the church in heaven, and where they submit to human rules and ordinances, instead of the Holy Ghost, they are verily a sect; they are not gathered as God's assembly, and He cannot own them as such.

Now the church set up in its responsibility to God

is the way in which it is looked at in the Epistle to the Corinthians, especially in the first ten chapters. It is looked at in chapter 3 as the temple of God, founded by Paul, built up by Christian builders, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in it. In chapter 12 it is the body of Christ, as we shall see further on.

1 Cor. 5 introduces us to the assembly of God gathered together to exercise discipline and the Lord's table is introduced as the place on earth from which the evil that had got into the assembly was to be put away (see vv. 4, 5, and 7, 8). Consequently the Lord's table held a special place, as it were, in God's temple, that is, the then gathered assembly; just as the feast of the Passover had its place amongst the Israelites as the memorial of their redemption out of Egypt. At that feast the lamb was slain, the blood was sprinkled, and each household fed on the roasted lamb inside their house, under the shelter of the blood, and at the same time put away all leaven out of their house. So Christ, our Passover, has been once sacrificed for us on Calvary's cross, and Christians gather to the Lord's table, on the ground of the blood of Christ, to remember this, and feed on the Lamb slain, which they see by faith in the memorials spread before their eyes, having put away all evil from amongst them, of which the leaven was the type (see vv. 6-11). If any Israelite ate leavened bread, he was cut off from the congregation of Israel; so a Christian who eats the Lord's supper, having fallen into sin morally or doctrinally, ought to be put away from the assembly.

Thus we see that the Lord's table holds a most important place as the gathering place for the assembly of God. It is the memorial of redemption from sin, Satan, and the world, and consequently sin and untruth can have no place there. If it enters as a public known thing, it must be judged and put away, as the leaven was put away from the houses of the children of Israel when they kept the Passover. Thus the death of Christ holds a double place; whilst it is that which saves and redeems us, it is at the same time that by which all evil is judged.

Thus the temple of God is kept clean; thus the assembly preserves its character of being an unleavened lump (vv. 6, 7). Formed by the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God on the ground of redemption, and by the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, the assembly was a new creation outside the world; it is called practically to walk up to

its standing, by exercising discipline and putting away manifested evil from the midst.

This the assembly at Corinth were not doing. A man had committed adultery among them; and, instead of mourning that such a sin was there, and that it was not taken away from them, they were puffed up, and glorying in their gifts. The apostle, therefore, writes to them, and connecting the holy name of Christ with the assembly, and bringing to their remembrance His power for the judgment of the evil, he forces them to do it, not for the destruction of the man's soul, but on the contrary for the destruction of the flesh; the outside thing which he would not judge, that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

All this brings out that God's assembly is the place of judgment for the saints on earth. The world is outside, and God will judge it in the day of judgment; but the responsibility of the gathered assembly is to guard the Lord's character and doctrine; hence discipline must be exercised. There, also, difficult cases amongst the saints should be settled by some wise brother or brethren; for saints should never take their causes before the world's law-courts (see 1 Cor. 6:1). The world's law-courts are the place of judgment for the world; but the assembly of God, of which the Lord's table is the place of gathering, is the place of judgment for the children of God.<sup>1</sup>

1 Cor. 10:14-22 brings out the more blessed place the Lord's table holds in connection with the communion of the saints, and the unity of the body of Christ. It is the place where the fellowship of the saints with Christ, and His death, and with one another, is exhibited, and that on the ground of the unity of the body of Christ.

The assembly is the body of Christ (see 1 Cor. 12:12, 13). The Lord's table is the place where that unity is exhibited by the members, all partaking of the one loaf, the symbol of unity (see 1 Cor. 10:17).

This is put in contrast with Israel, and the Gentiles, in 1 Cor. 10:18-22. The Israelites, by

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1. I do not mean that all cases of judgment must be actually settled at the Lord's table; on the contrary, to do so would be to bring confusion into a most sacred feast. Still it is the place where the saints gather, and the place whence all evil is put away.

partaking of the sacrifices offered on the altar of Judaism, showed their fellowship with that system of worship. The Gentiles, by partaking of the sacrifices offered on their altars, showed their fellowship with that system. But they offered to demons, consequently it was fellowship with demon worship.

At the Lord's table the Christian exhibits fellowship with the Lord, and His altar, His death, and that as a member of the body of Christ with the others gathered on that ground {i.e., basis}. This would show the Corinthians the utter impossibility of mixing up fellowship at the Lord's table with fellowship with devil worship. Thus we see that the Lord's table holds the very central place in Christian worship; so much so that if saints are not gathered as members of Christ's body to that table, there is no exhibition of the church of God in the place. The Lord's table is where the members of Christ are gathered as members of one body, to show it by partaking together of the one loaf, which is the symbol of unity, and where the authority and claims of the Lord are owned. It is the Lord's table. The Lord therefore invites; the assembly, as representing Him there, receives in His name (Rom. 15:7).

In I Cor. 11-14 we have {directions for} an orderly exhibition of the assembly and its working. Chapter 11:1-16 gives the introduction to it, in showing God's present order in His creation, and the place the man and the woman hold in regard to it. Thus whilst these verses go wide of the assembly, yet they bring out the place the man and the woman hold in it. And this, too, explains why there are regulations about the praying and prophesying of the woman with her head covered, this having reference to her place in creation: whilst, inside the assembly, there is the absolute prohibition, in other places, to speak when the assembly is gathered together.

1 Cor. 11:17-31 shows plainly that the Lord's supper is the assembly meeting, though the apostle would not allow that the way in which they were celebrating it was to eat the Lord's supper. They were mixing it up with a common meal, and making it a time of feasting, forgetting altogether its real import.

To correct this the apostle lets us into the secret of having had a spiritual revelation from the Lord in glory in reference to the administration of the Lord's supper. Before leaving the world (we know, in fact,

before the Lord's death) He instituted the feast, putting it in the place of the Passover, which was the memorial of Israel's redemption out of Egypt. But the full revelation of Christianity had not been brought out then. But now the Lord, having been finally rejected by Israel as a nation, had taken a new place at the right hand of God, so that not only was the kingdom of heaven set up in a new form, but the assembly of God, the body of Christ, was formed. The special revelation of this mystery was given to Paul, namely, that Jew and Gentile were now fellow-heirs, members of one body, common partakers of God's promise through Christ by the gospel (Eph. 3); and the Lord's table was the place where the truth was exhibited, as we have seen in 1 Cor. 10. In the kingdom the Jew always had the first place, and the Gentile was to get the blessing sent through him; but in the body of Christ there is no difference -- Jew and Gentile are quickened out of a state of death together with Christ, are raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. The cross of Christ ends the enmity; the law of commandments contained in ordinances that kept them apart is abolished, and one new man is formed, united together on earth by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, and to Christ the Head in heaven.

The further revelation connected with the unity of the body of Christ did not annul the former institution as given us in Luke by the Lord Himself. In fact we have it renewed from the glory in almost the identical words that we have it in Luke, only with the further light which had come in since the rejection of the Lord. Thus the individual remembrance of the Lord, which is so precious in the original institution, is still there. The little photograph, as it were, of our absent Lord, as pictured in the broken bread, and poured out wine is handed round to each one. "Do this in remembrance of me," comes out in all its original freshness. But, besides the original thought of the Lord's absence, is brought in the blessed thought of His coming. "As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." It is the gathering of the family of God at the Lord's supper to remember their absent Lord, to remember His death for them, to show His death till He come. The aspect of the Lord's death is rather His death for us here, which seals to us all the blessings of the New Testament, though also we show His death, which leads us on to the judgment of the flesh (see vv. 26,

27). In chapter 10 it is fellowship with the sacrifice -- we participate together as members of the body of Christ in His death; but here it is more individual -- we remember the Lord dying for us. We shew His death till He come. But this last thought, as I said, leads us on to the judgment of the flesh, for the flesh killed the Lord; to allow it at the Lord's table, to eat and drink in an unworthy manner, is then to allow that which killed the Lord, and to be guilty of His body and blood. Thus we are led to individual self-judgment. And where there is not this in exercise, the Lord's hand is laid on us in chastisement, sickness or even death, to the end that the flesh in us may be judged.

1 Cor. 12 brings out the truth of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the assembly, and His workings in the several gifts He gives to men; then the unity of the body, formed by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and its working in the members. Thus, the Lord's supper being the great assembly meeting, we are prepared to see there how the Holy Ghost works in the assembly, which is now wholly viewed as the body of Christ, not using one member only (for the body is not one member, but many), but working in the unity of the whole body which should be there exhibited; many members, and yet but one body. Thus the principle of one-man ministry and many different bodies is entirely set aside. The double principle in the order of God's assembly, is many members, yet working in one body. 1 Cor. 13 shows the true character of Christ and the Spirit, which is love, the true bond of union of the members. 1 Cor. 14 regulates the working of the assembly, for the Corinthians had turned the liberty of the Spirit into license. But all through the principle is, the reality of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the assembly, His free workings in the members of the body which He Himself formed, and His character love, which should mark each member. In the assembly the women were to keep silence, for it was not permitted to them to speak.

Thus we have seen in this blessed epistle the assembly in its double aspect of being the temple of God, and the body of Christ. In the former aspect it was the fruit of the wisdom of God in contrast with that human wisdom which was forming sects and parties, following leaders. It was founded on the cross of Christ which judged the flesh, Christ Himself in the glory, God's wisdom and the Holy Ghost come down here as the Revealer and Communicator of that

wisdom. In 1 Cor. 5 the Lord's table is seen as the gathering place of the assembly on earth, a place from which all evil must be put away, as the leaven from the houses of the Israelites when eating the Passover. Thus the assembly is the place of judgment for the saints on earth, where also amongst wise brethren any difficulties among the saints may be settled (chap. 6). In 1 Cor. 10 the Lord's table is seen connected with the thought of the assembly being the body of Christ. There the saints have communication together over the Lord's death. There they exhibit the unity of the body. This also guards them from fellowship with any other false system of worship. In 1 Cor. 11 we see the Lord's supper plainly shown forth to be the assembly meeting, yet seen rather in the family aspect of the supper, the saints there individually remembering the Lord's death till He come, and exercising themselves in habitual individual self-judgment before they come there, so that the flesh might not dishonor the Lord. The great thing to realize is that it is the Lord's table -- the Lord's supper. The Lord is present in Spirit, though actually absent in body. His authority, therefore, should be owned there. According to the word in Eph. 4: 4, 5, there is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The ground of gathering is the unity of the body, the center of gathering is the Lord's person, the place of gathering on earth is the Lord's table.<sup>2</sup> Here the Christians gather to be occupied with the Lord Himself, to break bread (Acts 20:7) in remembrance of His death, and to worship the Father through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5).

May the Lord bless these few thoughts to the reader, that he may be enlightened both as to the true place the church holds, and as to the place the Lord's table holds in connection with it.

A. P. Cecil, *The Bible Treasury* 12:183-186.

2. {The worship is in the holiest -- see Hebrews.}

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## *The Lord's Table, and Its Place in the Church*

The Epistle to the Romans lays the foundation of Christianity. There, first, we see man, whether Gentile or Jew, a guilty sinner under the judgment of God which awaits him, and God as a justifier through Jesus and His blood; secondly, man, connected with Adam, born in sin, and God a deliverer through the same Jesus, whom He gives us His gift of eternal life (Rom. 1-7). The fruit is that the Holy Ghost is also given to him that believes, and Rom. 8 shows his full place as being in Christ, and Christ in him, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in him, bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. In this position he waits for his body of glory, and the deliverance of creation by the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven.

First Corinthians follows in beautiful order. The individual place of the Christian having been settled, his corporate place in the church of God is then seen. We have there the internal condition of an assembly of God laid before us, and the true place the church holds in the midst of the world explained. It is addressed to the assembly of God at Corinth, which is looked at under two aspects, namely, the body of Christ and the temple of God. In 1 Cor. 1-10, the church is looked at as the temple of God, and in chapters 10-14 as the body of Christ. This double portion is seen in the first few verses, where the saints are first looked at as sanctified in Christ Jesus, and then as those who in every place called on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (see chap. 1:1-8).

The first great point in the epistle is to bring out the three great foundations on which Christianity as a corporate thing is founded; to correct that human wisdom which was acting amongst the saints, and creating Paul, Apollos, and Cephas into heads of schools of opinion, and thus forming sects. These three great foundations of corporate Christianity are first, the cross of Christ as the judgment of everything of man as looked at in the flesh (see chap. 1:1-29). Second, Christ in glory made unto us wisdom, righteousness, justification, and redemption (vv. 30, 31). Third, the Holy Ghost come down here as the Revealer and Communicator of that wisdom of God, which was written in Spirit-taught words, namely, the