

Introduction

Prior to His arrest and previous to His ensuing passion, death, resurrection, and ascension, the Lord Jesus Christ assembled his disciples in the guest chamber of an unidentified man's dwelling for purposes of celebrating the Passover feast.¹ Following some discussion at the table, the Lord then issued the timeless words of institution directing His table fellows to partake of the bread and wine.²

It's no coincidence that the Lord presided over this feast with His friends immediately before the consummation of redemption. In fact, it was in large part indicative of man's historical destiny. Reparation of the estranged familial relationship between Father and son, creator and creature occasioned by the fall was the object of redress.³ The impediment of the sin laden old creature and his accursed habitation was definitively eradicated and the new man resurrected. The former orphan adopted into the household of God for Christ's sake, fully invested with all of the corresponding privileges, immunities and responsibilities thereto attending. The table gathering and associated feasting, the communion enjoyed between Christ and His church, defined the intended nature of the family ties. The new covenant and thus the new creation was dawning with the impending coronation of the Messiah, His eminence, the Lord Jesus Christ, and with it the life giving provision of the eternal King.⁴

The following commentary of Tri-City Covenant Church does not purport to warrant an exhaustive treatment of the ponderous subject matter of the Lord's Supper nor its expansive and developing implications. Rather, it is our humble purpose to underscore the importance of and encourage the church's faithful observance of this glorious sacrament. Increasing our understanding of its historical significance will prompt our better appreciation of its centrality in the life of the church as we appropriate its sanctifying influence in the Spirit. Beyond our fundamental duty to comply with all of God's commands predicated squarely upon His carte blanche authority, there resides in submission to His holy edicts the efficacious benefit that inures to the church.⁵

¹ Luke 22:7-12

² Matthew 26:26-28

³ John 17:1-26 (Immediately prior to His betrayal and arrest, Jesus reveals the object of His impending sacrifice in this illuminating and passionate petition to the Heavenly Father to recover and unite to himself His beloved church).

See also I Chronicles 17 (God in speaking with David foreshadows the impending reign of His son, Jesus Christ and the permanent establishment of His Kingdom among men).

⁴ Mark 14:25 (See also Isaiah 11:1-5. *Leithart, Peter J. Blessed are the Hungry: Meditations on the Lord's Supper, Canon Press, Moscow, ID 2000. Pg. 13)*

⁵ Westminster Confession, Ch.XXXVII, "Of the Sacraments".

For a more sweeping, biblical treatment of the subject matter, we refer you to two

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key texts both of which are periodically referenced in this essay: *The Lord's Service* by Jeffrey Meyers and *The Sociology of the Church* by James Jordan.

Indeed, given the breadth and depth of its meaning, our understanding and therefore our appreciation of the matter of the Lord's Supper will progressively mature as God draws us ever closer to himself by the power of the Holy Spirit.⁶ As with all means of grace, communion is a present but progressive reality, thanks to the King of the Realm. Therefore, at this point in history, we can confidently assert some degree of apprehension, but for the church to suggest complete knowledge seems inconsistent with the progressive nature of scriptural revelation as God mysteriously matures the hearts of the faithful. In his book, *Blessed are the Hungry*, Dr. Peter Leithart observed that "The Lord's Supper is the world in miniature; it has cosmic significance. Within it we can find clues to the meaning of all creation and all history, to the nature of God and the nature of man, to the mystery of the world, which is Christ. It is not confined to the first day, for its power fills seven. Though the table stands at the center, its effects stretch out to the four corners of the earth."⁷ Perceiving the Lord's Supper as a window into the "meaning of all creation and all history" seems to be a fair and accurate characterization in the light of scriptural teaching and ongoing kingdom experience, and most assuredly compels the true church to an ardent prosecution of its partially hidden but nonetheless accessible truths.

Yet apart from its seemingly elusive complexities, which itself evidences our continuing need for it, what is so profoundly simple and utterly anticipatory in the celebration of the Lord's Supper is that it is wholly a family affair. Our Heavenly Father beckons us weekly to His table to feed and instruct us. It defines the nature of our covenant relationship with our Creator and most compellingly reflects His paternalistic care of His church. As Dr. Leithart essentially pointed out, it contemplates the natures of man and God while implicating the mystery of Christ which is the beginning and expected end of the world for whose sake the world was preserved.⁸

Foundation

To enhance our understanding of the Supper, it's instructive to first consider to a limited extent the nature and character of God. Among the innumerable incommunicable attributes resident in our Lord, we do know that God is self sustaining and eternal.⁹ Although we certainly

⁶Ephesians 4:13

⁷*Leithart, Peter J. Blessed are the Hungry: Meditations on the Lord's Supper, Canon Press, Moscow, ID 2000. Pg. 11.*

⁸Jeremiah 29:10-14 (Through Jeremiah, God foretells of Israel's impending Babylonian exile, and though grievous, reveals His intent to deliver Israel from their captors. Speaks prophetically to the ultimate recovery of His people through Christ. The restoration of the church is a recurring theme in scripture and is our expected end.)

⁹Exodus 3:14; Revelation 21:6

cannot fully capture the essence of God in our fallen condition and given the finitude of our capacity, we can glean appreciable understanding of God's impression by virtue of His actions and the corresponding responses manifested at each point of creation. If insufficiently telling, God's ensuing treatment of the creation after its fall from grace, that is His mysterious self-imposed sacrifice and humiliation in the incarnation to preserve creation once corrupted, should prove conclusive.¹⁰

Compellingly, this infinite, omniscient being, in the exercise of His divine prerogative, determined to create this world of which we are a part and has faithfully preserved it. At no point is there any indication that God relies upon that which He created, nor that His existence is in any way dependent upon it.¹¹ He merely enjoys it. He explicitly declares His handiwork as being "good" following each day of construction. In creating man, the implicit pleasure of the Lord is established in the mere fact that He made man in His own image.¹² Moreover, at the conclusion of the sixth day, God beholding the entirety of His labors declares it to be "very good."¹³ There can be no question that God indeed was pleased with His creative exploits.

As demonstrated in the creation account and continuously confirmed by the historical record, the scriptural presentation of a benevolent God relentlessly disposed to provide for and preserve His children is indisputable.¹⁴ This is the same God who called His own out of Egypt, sent them manna from Heaven, placated their thirst in the wilderness, cleared Canaan for their entrance and occupation, that land of abundance flowing with milk and honey, culminating in the consummate act of provision with the introduction of the true bread of life, Jesus Christ. Consider too that subsequent to the creation of the heavens and the earth, God then created man and woman, placing them in the garden, a beautiful habitation copiously supplied.¹⁵ Moreover, unlike the animal kingdom, man being Almighty God's crowning work, God assigned His "image bearers" the special task of exercising derivative government and dominion over all of creation and its component parts.¹⁶ Upon this evidence alone, dare we question the depths of God's concern for

¹⁰John 3:16-17; Isaiah 9:6

¹¹*Leithart, Peter J. Blessed are the Hungry: Meditations on the Lord's Supper*, Canon Press, Moscow, ID 2000. Pg. 18, 2nd paragraph.

¹²Genesis 1:26

¹³Genesis 1:31

¹⁴Nehemiah 9:22-25; Matthew 15: 32-38; Luke 9:10-17; Psalm 65; Jeremiah 23:2-5; Jeremiah 3:15; Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 6:26-33; et al

¹⁵Genesis 1:29; 2:8-15

¹⁶Genesis 1:26-28

mankind.¹⁷

Contrast the state of man. Man, a created being, draws his life from God and his continuing existence is utterly dependent upon Him.¹⁸ As evidenced in the creation account, man is designed to consume and enjoy that which God has created.¹⁹ Since he is both matter and spirit, the nourishment needed is both physical and spiritual.²⁰ In his book, *The Sociology of the Church*, Rev. James Jordan comments on man's dependence as evidenced in man's natural inclination to eat when he observed that "the Scriptures give us the *primacy of eating*." Then quoting Alexander Schmemmann he continues, "Alexander Schmemmann has written that 'in the biblical story of creation man is presented, first of all, as a hungry being, and the whole world as his food. Second only to the direction to propagate and have dominion over the earth, according to the author of the first chapter of Genesis, is God's instruction to men to eat of the earth...Man must eat in order to live; he must take the world into his body and transform it into himself, into his flesh and blood. He is indeed that which he eats, and the world is presented as one all-embracing banquet table for man.'"²¹ Our essential inclination to eat is telling to say the least. Hunger and the gratification of the same dramatically reveals the nature of man's dependence upon a God readily disposed to placate our hunger, a Good Shepherd indeed. Our shared and seemingly insatiable desire for food and drink not only illustrates our utter dependence, but coupled with a God exceedingly desirous to satisfy speaks to the nature of this relationship and the relevance of the Table. "We deaden our ability to appreciate the process of feasting which points to the glorious nature of Yahweh who has blessed us with such wonderful and diverse gifts of food and taste combinations. The palate of tastes from wines to cheese, fruits and vegetables, grains and meat are as varied and wonderful as the God who created them [for us]."²²

In furtherance of this idea of man's dependence, Dr. Leithart eloquently enunciates several principles in his exposition on the theology of food. Chief among them is the proposition that

¹⁷Matthew 6:26-30

¹⁸Genesis 2:7

¹⁹*Leithart, Peter J. Blessed are the Hungry: Meditations on the Lord's Supper*, Canon Press, Moscow, ID 2000. Pages 18, 1st paragraph. (Gift of food is the climax of the six days of creation.)

²⁰Deuteronomy 8:3

²¹*Jordan, Rev. James B. The Sociology of the Church - Essays in Reconstruction*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR 97401. Pg. 31.

²²*Wilbur, Greg. Feasting from a Christian Perspective*, www.kingsmeadow.com, Newsletter #5 ARXAXIOM, September 2006. Pg. 2, 2nd paragraph.

“...food means dependence. We are eating creatures, who cannot live unless we take something from outside of us. Ultimately, we are dependent upon God. The food we eat is dead, and only

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God can cause it to become life to us.”²³ Clearly, the generative power to create life resides exclusively in Him that can alone resurrect it.²⁴ Fortunately for us, our God was so disposed to exercise this power unto life at both the initial point of creation and redemptively once the creature fell.

Finally, it is vital to point out that man’s utter dependence upon God is central to man’s contentment. In fact, while sin prompts us to deny this dependence and discount the nature of this relationship, true fulfillment is impossible without it. Consider Christ’s recounting of the story of the impoverished Lazarus and the rich man. After death Lazarus was received into Abraham’s bosom while the rich man was condemned to hell. Perceiving Lazarus from hell, the rich man beseeched Abraham in futility to grant him leave for the purpose of warning his brothers of their probable tormenting fate.²⁵ At the heart of the condemned man’s lament was the reality of life divorced from the presence of God. His condition was one of deprivation, antithetical to that which defines true sonship which is marked by presence and provision.

Covenant

An accurate discussion of the Lord’s Supper must necessarily be made in the context of the covenant paradigm. When we speak of the covenant we are essentially and unavoidably talking about God’s presence. God’s presence is effected by the extension of the covenant, and indeed He is a God who keeps covenant. Consider the rainbow that adorns the Heavenly throne of His eminence.²⁶ God’s presence translates into the promise of provision, and where there is provision there is necessarily communion. Covenant is a relational matter with specific relevance to mankind; recall man’s life dependence upon God who is otherwise poised to provide. Therefore, the covenant was equally operable in the Garden, Noah’s ark, post exodus wilderness, Canaan, and most certainly embodied in the corpus of the Christian church wherever the hearts and minds of today’s believers are found. In other words, where one finds God’s people, there too resides the covenant.

The covenant is admittedly a far reaching, multi-faceted concept, and most difficult to encapsulate, a comprehensive discussion of which is certainly beyond the scope of this paper.

²³*Leithart, Peter J. Theology of Food and Feasting*, www.leithart.com/archives/000806.php. Pg 2.

²⁴*Leithart, Peter J. Blessed are the Hungry: Meditations on the Lord’s Supper*, Canon Press, Moscow, ID 2000. Pg.19, 1st paragraph.(“By its very deadness, food discloses that, beyond our dependence on food, our life is completely dependent on the Word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”)

²⁵Luke 16:19-31

²⁶Revelation 4:3

Summarily stated, however, the covenant consists of the manner and means by which God relates

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to man advancing the cause of promise and fulfillment. “The ‘covenant’ structures God’s personal relationship with us. [It is] a formal, binding relationship between God and us...God’s covenant with us has a definitive shape and content. The covenant contains promises that are made to be kept by God and us, privileges that we are to enjoy, and stipulations that we must strive to obey.”²⁷ It is a legal arrangement between God and man establishing the operational environment within which God directs the affairs of men in time and in history for the purpose of preserving His people and the progression of His communion with them. It is foremost God’s claim upon His people. Implicit in this Divine claim of ownership is lordship. Hence, in every instance of covenant formation, from creation to the numerous succeeding renewals of the same, a covenant trust is established. God (covenant declarant) first asserts His lordship over man (covenant trustees/beneficiaries) declaring man’s duty to subdue the earth (trust corpus), that is exercise derived authority to effect dominion (trust purpose), after which He pronounces the directives (covenant terms/law) necessary to realize the articulated goal (trust purpose). Conformity on the part of the trustees to the trust terms (faithful stewardship, aka faith) will further the cause of the declarant’s trust purpose, dominion, which necessarily presupposes communion.

Covenant is about union, union between a needy people and a giving God. The Grantor issues the gifts to His intended beneficiaries, the grantees, on the condition that the grantees image the Grantor. The imaging gives rise to the reciprocal trust and submission the beneficiaries must demonstrate to receive the gifts. Rev. Brian Nolder, expounding on I John 4, specifically the duty of the church to love as God loves, observed that the multiplicity and oneness of the godhead is illustrative respecting the relational nature of the covenant. He stated that “God exists in the fellowship of persons. He therefore wants a creaturely reflection of this on earth.”²⁸ The poignant language that surrounds the formation and renewal of covenant between God and man is indisputably about trust, deliverance, reliance, and inheritance, all of which presupposes God’s presence in the midst of His people with whom He relates.²⁹

Of greatest relevance is that the ends of God’s covenant is redemptive in nature, deliverance being the predominant thrust. Deliverance from what one might ask? Deliverance from the sin imposed curse which resulted in the withdrawal of God’s presence. As the scripture reveals, the curse pronounced by Almighty God following Adam and Eve’s transgression was total. Every

²⁷*Meyers, Jeffrey J. The Lord’s Service-Worship at Providence Reformed Presbyterian Church, www.prpc-stl.org_images/10178754Lordsservice.htm. Pg. 11, 1st paragraph.*

²⁸*Nolder, Rev. Brian. God’s Love and Ours, guest sermon at Tri-City Covenant Church, Somersworth, NH 03878. August 12, 2007.*

²⁹Genesis 1:26-31 (Adam); 9:1-3 & 7 (Noah); 12:1-3 & 15:1,5, 18-21 (Abram); 26:1-5 (Isaac); Exodus 3:5-8 & 6:1-8 (Moses)

aspect of creation was contemplated by the curse, that is man, beast, and ground.³⁰ Beyond the toil, pain, and lament, that would encompass the life of man from henceforth, he would now be subject to death.³¹ Beyond physical termination, and exceedingly more significant was the certain and resulting ethical demise of man, vis a vis, the absence of communion with God.³² The severance of communion with the Creator clearly presented some ostensibly insurmountable difficulties for mankind.

The now altered relationship between Creator and creature occasioned by the introduction of sin posed quite a dilemma. Was the trust purpose definitively forfeited or merely frustrated? Would there be reconciliation? If so, moreover, how would a Holy God be reconciled to a sinful creature? In other words, how would we now approach God, or better stated, how would God choose to draw us to himself?

Relative to the forfeiture question, God immediately declares His holy purposes after the fall in the corresponding pronouncement of the curse wherein He reveals His plan of redemption in what constituted the first messianic prophecy of the Bible. Speaking to the serpent God declared, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”³³ Implicit in this proclamation issued by our God, we have the revelation that irrespective of sin, the “seed of the woman” (man) would somehow be adversely opposed to evil. This of course was speaking to the inevitable entrance of the Savior who would usher in a new creation comprised of “new Adams” through Him. Indeed, the creation was not doomed to forfeiture. Covenant communion between man and his God would prevail. In inerrant form, Almighty God purposed to preserve mankind. The love and provision of God would perpetuate culminating not surprisingly in the marriage supper of the lamb, the “eschatological goal of all of God’s covenantal works.”³⁴

This then brings us to the second question relative to the means of restoration. After all, sin was a reality and all men stood before God convicted thus confronting the imposition of the seemingly inescapable death sentence. If restoration was indeed the anticipated end, what would be the disposition concerning the matter of sin and its accompanying capital penalty? What would be God’s appointed way of drawing us into His holy presence in view of sin? The Word of God explicitly enunciates that the road to redemption would be through liturgy marked

³⁰Genesis 3:14-19

³¹Genesis 2:17

³²Revelation 2:11 (second death)

³³Genesis 3:15

³⁴*Meyers, Jeffrey J.. The Lord’s Service-The Grace of Covenant Renewal Worship, Canon Press, Moscow, ID 2003. Pg.34, 2nd paragraph.*

by sacrifice and offering.³⁵ “Biblical sacrifice is not a technique invented by man in order to secure something from God. Rather, God has graciously provided man with a way of entering into His presence, and that is the way of sacrifice.”³⁶

Why sacrifice? The matter of sin as an impediment to communion with and worship of the Holy God had to be contested both definitively and progressively. “After man was cast out of Eden, worship was crippled. What man was excluded from was not the right to hear God’s Word and to offer Him praise. Rather, he was excluded from the sacrament of the Tree of Life....[and thus excluded] from the fulness of worship because of sin.”³⁷ We see this in the limited and anticipatory nature of old testament worship, a careful study of which will reveal that excepting for the priests, or temple servants, the conduct of tabernacle or temple worship essentially excluded the people. In any case, since death was the assigned penalty for the crime implicated, blood would have to be shed.³⁸ Man being corrupted was unable to effectively redeem himself, for in fact, his rebellion against God required of him both his life (blood) and inheritance. Adam, testator of the old covenant, left death and utter deprivation to his posterity. Christ, testator of the new covenant, who too would have to die being a man poured His blood out for the life of the church, “that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”³⁹ Obviously the bequest from Christ was emphatically superior to that bequest made by Adam. The author of Hebrews, writing to the early Jewish Christians, observed that “where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.”⁴⁰ Citing Romans 5:12-21, on this point of transition from the covenant sealed by the first Adam to that of the second, Dr. Leithart identified this transition “from the reign of death resulting from sin to the reign of those who receive the grace of God and the gift of righteousness. It is clear that each reign was established by the actions of a single man. Through the first Adam came sin, which fulfills itself in death, but through another came the reign of life. Jesus is the Other Man whose actions overturn everything that Adam’s actions did. Through His obedience to death, Jesus has brought an end to

³⁵Leviticus 1:2; 2:1; 3:1-2; 4:23; 5:11; 7:38

³⁶*Meyers, Jeffrey J.. The Lord’s Service-The Grace of Covenant Renewal Worship, Canon Press, Moscow, ID 2003. Pg.76, 1st paragraph.*

³⁷*Jordan, Rev. James B. The Sociology of the Church - Essays in Reconstruction, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR 97401. Pg. 115.*

³⁸Hebrews 9:22; Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; Revelations 7:14

³⁹Hebrews 9:15. See also Phillipians 2:7-8

⁴⁰Hebrews 9:16-17

the old regime and inaugurated a new.”⁴¹ Furthermore, in reference to the apostle Paul’s characterization in his second letter to the church at Corinth, specifically chapter 3, verses 1-11, Dr. Leithart reiterated that the “contrast between the Old Covenant as a ministry of death and condemnation and the New Covenant as a ministry of life and glory reflects the contrast of Adam and Christ.”⁴²

Covenant Renewal Worship

Old Testament Typology & New Testament Fulfillment

As previously suggested and substantiated by biblical warrant, the intended purpose of history was the restoration of creation with sacrifice serving as the means to the articulated end. While the whole of scripture chronicles the restoration process, we clearly have a marked but congruent division between the old testament sacrificial rite and that of the new testament. The former being a type of the latter. Both are equally important because both were conceived and instituted by the Author of Creation and are predicated upon the dual covenant themes of promise and memorial.

Ultimately the manner in which redemption was procured, through the death and resurrection of the Son of God, had been foreshadowed through old testament ritual. The sacrificial system instituted by God under Moses’ prophetic shepherding, that which was observed by God’s people in tabernacle and temple worship with some intervening periods of sinful abeyance leading up to the point of Christ’s advent essentially served as a prototype pending conception of the real thing, an uninterrupted transition from de facto to de jure worship, if you will.

So what relevant efficacy did the old testament sacrificial rite possess for the church? It displayed the blood to stay the wrath of God by regularly proclaiming to Him His promise to redeem the world in the form of bloody sacrifices and offerings(memorial) while establishing the pattern of divinely prescribed liturgy. Communion with God was to be occasioned through the purging of sin through the spilling of blood.⁴³ The divinely ordered practices of Sabbath worship and celebrative feasting looked forward to the pouring out of Jesus’ blood which would be our

⁴¹ *Leithart, Peter J. Blessed are the Hungry: Meditations on the Lord’s Supper*, Canon Press, Moscow, ID 2000. pp.148-9.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Pg. 149.

⁴³ Hebrews 9:22. See also I Chronicles 21:18-27 (David thwarts the wrath of God prompted by his unlawful census with a penitent sacrifice offering.) Notably, in every instance where God proclaimed His covenant extended to His people, whether it was Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Josiah, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, David, etc. beyond issuing some affirmative injunction material to the dominion task, responsively the receiver would set up an altar and sacrifice. God’s covenant presence requires sacrifice. This idea of sacrifice among other themes is further developed in the book of Leviticus, ostensibly the sequel to the book of Exodus.

covering.⁴⁴ Most prophetic among them being the institution of the Passover and its annual memorial kept thereafter.⁴⁵ The viability of God's sustained covenant with man was predicated upon the promise of deliverance which was an event yet to come. The exodus memorialized in the annual celebration of Passover was a precursor to the ethical deliverance of man from enslavement to sin. Thus, the urgency of the church to remind God of this promise is at the heart of our communal worship and celebration. "Forget not your promise of deliverance Oh Lord as declared to our fathers." It's the submission of anticipation, looking forward to the arrival of the Messiah. The sacrificial offerings were man's repeated proclamations of the promised redemption. "Wait, Yahweh is coming! Remember this promise of restoration, Oh Lord, when you behold the blood of the sacrifice, for the incarnation is approaching."

It is this redemptive offering and promise that the church repeatedly claims by way of memorial before her Heavenly Father. Citing Exodus 3:15 & Psalm 20:7, Rev. Meyers says this, "By means of the memorial God's people dramatically rehearsed the covenant to Yahweh so that He would act to fulfill His covenant promises. The name 'Yahweh' is given to Israel for this very purpose: 'This is my memorial name' (Exodus 3:15). In other words, this is the name that you must use in prayer to remind me to keep my covenant; when you do so I will come to your aid."⁴⁶ It was the crux of the old testament sacrificial rites in the anticipatory sense and is precisely that which we proclaim each and every time we participate in the Lord's Supper *ex post facto*. "God has established the eucharistic memorial as the preeminent means of arguing covenant blessings from Him. The importance of weekly communion should be obvious from this."⁴⁷

To this end, and contrary to conventional wisdom, the signs instituted by God to serve as reminders of His covenant promise were primarily intended for himself. Notably, after the flood waters receded, and in the formation of the covenant with Noah, God, in reference to the rainbow He himself would set in the clouds, declared, "And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh."⁴⁸ The benefit of the token was to signal God's remembrance. Notice how God, speaking in the 1st person, used the personal pronoun "I" in the

⁴⁴Revelation 7:14

⁴⁵Exodus 12

⁴⁶*Meyers, Jeffrey J.. The Lord's Service-The Grace of Covenant Renewal Worship, Canon Press, Moscow, ID 2003. Pg. 219.*

⁴⁷*Jordan, Rev. James B. The Sociology of the Church - Essays in Reconstruction, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR 1999. Pg. 37.*

⁴⁸Genesis 9:11-17

subjective case thereby revealing the party performing the action of remembrance.

Consider too the sign God issued to Abraham for purposes of sealing His covenant with Abram and his seed after him.⁴⁹ Since the appointed token was otherwise concealed, who other than God himself, and of course those circumcised, could perceive it? On the occasion of the institution of the Passover, after He instructed Moses and Aaron to take the blood of the sacrificed lamb and strike it on the side and upper doorposts of the Israelites' dwellings, God himself declared, "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."⁵⁰

What of Israel's passing through the midst of the Jordan en route to Canaan? Following God's direction, Joshua led the Israelites safely through the midst of the Jordan to the other bank abutting Jericho, God having cut off the course of Jordan's waters before them. Then, for a memorial, Joshua arranged twelve stones at the place where the feet of the ark bearing priests stood after which the "waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before."⁵¹ Who other than the Lord himself could view the stones now completely submerged in the midst of the river? Our remembrance is incidental at best, the object purpose of the tokens assigned were principally for the recall of Almighty God.⁵²

This whole business of signs and remembrance is akin to a courtroom drama and underscores the importance of our appreciation and avail of God's attention and presence. Since covenant implicates the existence of a relationship, it necessarily assumes God's presence. Therefore, we must remain vigilante in our perpetual claim upon redemption and its privileges for these are the fruits of God's presence. Seated on the bench of judgement is our Lord. Man, the petitioners, literally plead for their lives asserting vicarious standing in Christ (claim of salvation) with a corresponding right to recovery of the lost inheritance (remedy). Given our justiciable cause, and associated interest in the outcome, we must repeatedly move the Eternal Judge to restore our position and inheritance. The covenant signs serve to remind God of our standing (forgiveness) and inheritance (ultimately our place at the Table). "Thus, we pray 'in Jesus' Name,' reminding God of the death of our Savior, and asking Him to keep His promises

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⁴⁹Genesis 17:10-11

⁵⁰Exodus 12:12-13

⁵¹Joshua 4:15-18. See also, *Horne, Rev. Mark. Circumcision to Passover*. Taped Lecture

hosted by Oakwood - Covenant Fellowship Church, 250 Oakwood Ave. Troy, NY 12182. August 12, 2006.

⁵²Exodus 32:9-14; Numbers 14:11-19; Exodus 34:5-7, 3:13-15, 28:29.

because Christ has died in our stead. Similarly, the eucharistic memorial is done before the throne and eyes of God, for Him to see, to remind Him of the death of Christ, and to argue blessings from Him.”⁵³ Covenant renewal is the regular assertion by the covenant beneficiaries of the promises made by the covenant benefactor.

The advent of the new testament was not a revocation of the old, but rather a fulfillment of that which was foreshadowed. Jesus came to fulfill. Since the rites of animal sacrifice could not effectively secure redemption, as King David aptly pointed out, the old testament sacrificial memorials anticipated the fruition of the new creation marking the recovery of man.⁵⁴ The truth of the matter is that blood displayed stays the wrath of God. The impetus for the stay was anticipatory, that is in anticipation of the coming Messiah who alone would bear the wrath of the Father and satisfy the sentence, effectively liberating man from his enslavement to sin. At the heart of Israel’s celebration of the appointed feasts, not the least of which was the annual observance of the Passover feast, and the conduct of the old testament sacrificial system was to foreshadow the arrival of the paschal lamb. “The Passover was an eschatological feast as they ate the roast lamb by whose blood they had been redeemed. Already in the Old Covenant believers were tasting the powers of the age to come through these sacramental elements. I am alluding here to Hebrews 6:4-5. Hebrews 11:13 adds that Old Covenant believers died not having received the fulfillment of the promises, but they anticipated the day of fulfillment in Christ. Jesus teaches the same thing in John 8:56. The Passover was also an act of covenant renewal as God’s people ate the Gospel and were called again to life of holiness in the Feast of Unleavened bread.”⁵⁵

Beckoning His people out of Egypt, God commenced the process of formally establishing Israel as a priestly nation unto himself, to in fact reside with them.⁵⁶ God set about the business of establishing His kingdom on the pillars of memorial and promise beyond mere deliverance from the Egyptian taskmasters, but to ethical restoration metaphorically implied in the institution of the passover and referenced in the song of Moses.⁵⁷ Leading them through the midst of the Red Sea (baptism), God then fittingly escorts the congregation through the wilderness appeasing their thirst at the wells of Elim and from the rock at Horeb. Their hunger He satisfies with quail

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⁵³*Jordan, Rev. James B. The Sociology of the Church - Essays in Reconstruction, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR 1999. Pg. 37.*

⁵⁴Psalm 51:14-17

⁵⁵*Clark, R. Scott. The Compromised Church: The Present Evangelical Crisis, John H. Armstrong, General Editor, Crossway Books, Wheaton, Ill. 1998. (www.the-highway.com/supper_Clark.html)*

⁵⁶Exodus 13:17-22 (pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night)

⁵⁷Exodus 12; 15:11-13

and manna descending from the heavens. Later judges are appointed to administer the Mosaic law given at Sinai, the Holy Mount, and the tabernacle is later constructed. God had begun the renewal process leading His people to salvation whereupon they would receive the true bread of life (Christ), and the life giving water (Holy Spirit). This was the motivation behind Israel's anticipated but no less ominous pilgrimage to the promised land, and to a greater extent that same motivation which provokes the church's pursuit to possess the world.⁵⁸

The fact is that the sacrifice ushering in the new covenant was superior to the "figures" and "shadows" exercised in the old rite because it represented the processes's full maturation.⁵⁹ Otherwise stated, the new testament was the fulfillment of the old system.⁶⁰ Jesus Christ was the first fruits of the New Creation.⁶¹ In Him, the fulfillment of the covenant promises declared since the beginning of time were, are and continue to be realized. As previously stated, the core of the promise was the ethical resurrection of man, the ransom having been satisfied and communion with God restored.⁶² Although the consummation of redemption did not occur until Christ's resurrection respecting the Lord and His approaching Kingdom, the old testament types were not rendered innocuous, in fact, they were an integral part of redemptive history. Primarily serving as a memorial to God, these rites, by the exploits of the Spirit, served to edify God's people, albeit to a limited extent. This is most evident in the fact that the Israelites had to go to the tabernacle or temple to meet with God, and even in this the conference was qualified in that with the exception of the priests, particularly the high priest on the annual observance of the Day of Atonement, the laity were permitted only to assemble in the outer court outside the holy place and the holy of holies. God's presence or the Spirit's effect was no less real, however, just inhibited by the sin that beset man. Certainly the Bible clearly reveals the Spirit moving effectively in the midst of covenant Israel.⁶³ However, there is no tenable argument to refute the reality that these types served to anticipate the "better covenant", which was established upon

⁵⁸Matthew 28:18-20 (Post resurrection declaration of the Great Commission by our Lord)

⁵⁹Hebrews 9:15-28; See also, *McMahon, Matthew Dr. The Lord's Supper Part I* (radio broadcast), www.wildboarnews.solideogloria.com/2007/05/lords-supper-part-i.html. See also, *Meyers, Jeffrey J.. The Lord's Service-The Grace of Covenant Renewal Worship*, Canon Press, Moscow, ID 2003. pp. 59-60, citing Geoffrey Wainwright's book, *Doxology: The Praise and Worship of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life*, Oxford University Press, New York 1980. pp174-75.

⁶⁰Acts 13:31-33; Matthew 5:17-18

⁶¹Jeremiah 31:31 ff; I Corinthians 15:20-28

⁶²Revelation 14:1-5; 21:1-6; Hebrews 9: 23-28

⁶³Numbers 24:2, 27:8; I Samuel 10:10; II Chronicles 15:1.

better promises.”⁶⁴ The fullness of the Spirit’s power and glory would descend upon God’s church with a fury, the likes of which had not yet been witnessed by mankind.⁶⁵

As we have seen, since the inception of covenant worship, a specifically prescribed approach to God was mandated. This manner of approach was articulated by Moses who received and wrote the “book of the covenant.”⁶⁶ Most assuredly, God’s presence in the midst of Israel⁶⁷ was conditioned upon meticulous observance of covenant prescriptions, or what we would call liturgy. In addition to its memorial value, the old rite also set the pattern for liturgical worship, or the manner of ascent to meet with and commune with God.

As is hopefully evident at this point, God was purposing to save men, ab initio (from the beginning). This we saw in the pronouncement of the curse and the allusion to the coming Messiah. However, from that moment in time, the movement of God in history was to the salvation of men. The Old Kingdom was a mirror of the future kingdom which contemplated both heaven and earth - the redemption would be total in essence and scope. Mankind was the object of recovery, not the animals or fowl sacrificed. The animals, as will momentarily be explained, were employed for substitutionary purposes only. Undoubtedly they were looking ahead to the atonement secured by Christ. They themselves were incapable of securing redemption.⁶⁸ Their symbolic significance functioned to pacify the Lord’s indignation, averting the deserved punishment. Essentially a measure undertaken to stall the imposition of sentence pending the arrival of the promised savior, the redemptive advocate.

With Christ’s entrance into history, the preceding days of types and anticipation yielded to the veritable reality of Immanuel, God with us. “All the bloody signs of the Passover feast were fulfilled in the body and blood of Jesus. The day of types and shadows was gone; the reality had arrived.”⁶⁹ The dramatic and glorious proclamation of this occurs at the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ at the River Jordan.⁷⁰ In the preceding verses of the account as John the Baptist “prepares the way of the Lord,” he specifically contrasts in verses eleven and twelve his water baptisms

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⁶⁴Hebrews 8:6-12; Jeremiah 31:31-34 (prophecy concerning the New Creation).

⁶⁵Acts 2:17-21 (Peter quoting the prophet Joel on the coming of Pentecost).

⁶⁶Exodus 24:4

⁶⁷Exodus 29:45-46

⁶⁸Psalms 51:16-17; Hebrews 9:6-10; Isaiah 4:2-6.

⁶⁹Clark, R. Scott. The Compromised Church: The Present Evangelical Crisis, John H. Armstrong, General Editor, Crossway Books, Wheaton, Ill. 1998. (www.the-highway.com/supper_Clark.html)

⁷⁰Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11

with that of Christ's fiery baptisms.⁷¹ Baptism by the Holy Spirit signaled that the Messiah was here. It was Christ's arrival on the scene and the implied but no less emphatic disclosure of His Messianic office, particularly revealed in the context of feasting. We see this in what Rev. Mark Horne characterized as the "food fights" that ensued between the Lord and the Jewish religious establishment surrounding Christ's Table manners and companions.⁷² In response to the Pharisees' objection concerning His table fellows, they being publicans and sinners, citing Matthew chapter nine, verses twelve and thirteen, and supporting parables given by the Lord, Horne points out Christ's exacting rebuttal. Likening himself to a treating physician, Christ here implicitly pronounces His messianic office. At His Table, Jesus not only eats with his fellows, He **absolves** them of their sins. The ethical cleansing of men required the resurrection power resident in Christ. When He performed His restoration miracles, whether it was exercising demons, curing physical maladies, or forgiving sins (John 8:11), Christ was effectively announcing His messianic office.⁷³

The paschal lamb which had long been foretold was among men, and on their behalf would enter the true Holy of Holies for the remission of sins. Christ would not enter "into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but [would soon enter] into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."⁷⁴ The veil was broken, atonement made; the advent of the new heaven and the new earth occasioned by the Lord's self offering. "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."⁷⁵ Unimpeded throne access was gained for the Church adding a whole new dimension to God's presence and provision.

⁷¹Acts 11:16

⁷²*Horne, Rev. Mark. The Lord's Supper, recorded lecture at the Oakwood Covenant Fellowship Church's Summer Conference, 250 Oakwood Avenue, Troy, NY. August 12, 2006.*

⁷³Mark 1:21-34, 5:21-34; Luke 8:48-54,17:11-19; Matthew 9:1-6, et al

⁷⁴Hebrews 9:24-28

⁷⁵Revelation 21:1-7. (The recreation of the world had begun: Christ was making all things new marked by the absence of death, tears, sorrow, and pain for by His own declaration, such former things are passed away.) See also, II Corinthians 3:13-14.

This leads us into the inevitable discussion of the relevance of forgiveness (justification) and its inextricable tie to feasting (sanctification), or otherwise stated, atonement and communion as it applies to the redemption of man.⁷⁶ For it is the matter of forgiveness that explains the seemingly disjointed nexus between the old testament sacrificial system and the celebration of the Lord's supper in new testament times. In fact, the inalienable association of forgiveness and communion was advanced in the daily temple offerings, Sabbath worship, and celebration of the appointed feasts.⁷⁷ These were days of holy convocation, ceremonial assemblies of the faithful to perpetuate the identified covenant communion with Almighty God, both anticipating forgiveness of sin and feasting with the Lord. Today, as members of the Heavenly Kingdom on earth, we celebrate the presence of forgiveness in our continual feasting with the Lord.

Mr. Meyers aptly observed that "the end or goal of God's covenant is always a feast. God invites us to a meal. We come to church on Sunday to eat with Jesus and one another to feast in His presence."⁷⁸ Notably, throughout His earthly ministry we find Christ spiritually nourishing man while feasting. The idea that feasting with the Lord is forgiveness is cardinal. Therefore, whoever will sup with the Lord, likewise receives Him and thus forgiveness.⁷⁹ Such a class of people are identifiably the church; it's the glorious communion enjoyed between God and His people occasioned through forgiveness. Naturally, in consuming the sacramental elements of bread and wine, our bodies do indeed draw incidental physical nourishment. However, in forgiveness, what we enjoy in our communion with the Lord is the progressive appropriation of His character for Christ's sake and by the activity of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁰ In fact, this is what sacramental worship is essentially about. Reduced to its Latin parts, the term sacrament means "Holy Mind." In salvation, we experience the forgiveness of sins and the corresponding access to God's Holy Mind or character. God's reclamation of fallen man necessarily preceded the process of man's re-creation, the object purpose of which is the reconstitution of man into the image of God, "Till we all come...[into] the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:..."⁸¹

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⁷⁶John 6:31-40. (Christ metaphorically refers to himself as the Bread of Life, the "consumption" of which will give eternal life, definitively placating one's hunger and thirst.)

⁷⁷Exodus 34:18 ff; Leviticus 23; Deuteronomy 16:13-15

⁷⁸*Meyers, Jeffrey J.. The Lord's Service-The Grace of Covenant Renewal Worship*, Canon Press, Moscow, ID 2003. Pg.34, 2nd paragraph. See also, Revelation 7:15-17.

⁷⁹*Leithart, Peter J. Theology of Food and Feasting*, www.leithart.com/archives/000806.php. Pg 4, 2nd paragraph. (Simon rebukes Jesus for His gracious reception of the woman of ill repute.) See also John 6: 31-40 (Christ is the Bread of Life, the "consumption" of which translates into eternal life)

⁸⁰II Peter 1:3-4

⁸¹Ephesians 4:13 (Perfect man defined.)

Covenant renewal worship is where God especially meets His people and effects our progressive transformation. “Because of sin, it was necessary for God to lay hold on man, break and restructure him, and send him back into the world.”⁸² In addition to its memorial function previously discussed, this is where the old testament practice of sacrifice and offering illuminates the nature of what believers experience each Lord’s Day on the occasion of their corporate gathering, both individually and collectively. Because forgiveness through the expiation of sin is an indispensable prerequisite to union with God, vicariously through the offered animal, the worshiper would undergo preparations for entrance into God’s presence. In commenting on this sacrificial pathway, Mr. Meyers observed that “the movement of the liturgy is an *ascent* into God’s presence along the pathway He has established. Just as every sacrificial animal passed through three ‘zones’ and underwent three major ‘operations’ on its way up the altar and into the presence of God, so also the human worshiper travels the same sacrificial pathway up the ‘holy mountain’ into God’s presence. By faith we understand our progress during the Lord’s Day service to be God’s graciously drawing us into His presence, making us fit in Christ for fellowship with Him.”⁸³ Each Lord’s Day, God repeatedly leads us through this sacrificial course subjecting us to its transforming impression.

Furthermore, and in rather succinct fashion, Rev. Meyers, in speaking of covenant renewal liturgy as a parallel to the sacrificial ritual, reduces the progression of worship and the corresponding journey of the worshiper into a five fold covenantal pattern.⁸⁴ God beckons us to draw near to Him (Call to Worship); the animal, representative of the worshiper, is then slaughtered with the blood sprinkled on the altar (Confession and Absolution); after which the sacrifice is cut up in preparation for its ascent (Consecration); consumed by God’s fiery presence, the animal’s flesh is turned into smoke and subsumed by God’s glory cloud (Communion Meal); finally, the worshiper, fully empowered, is dismissed to serve in the kingdom (Commissioning).

The Father calls His children into His throne room ,(Call to Worship), whereupon they die to sin (Confession), being thus hid with Christ they enjoy resurrection with Him (Absolution), thereafter receive the Lord’s instruction through the reading and preaching of the Word (Consecration), culminating in a common meal at the Table of the Father (Communion Meal), who thereafter sends His emissaries out refreshed to engage the kingdom’s work (Commissioning). Notice, confession and absolution precede the ascent and ensuing communion with the Holy God.

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⁸²*Jordan, Rev. James B. The Sociology of the Church - Essays in Reconstruction, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR 1999. Pg. 36..*

⁸³*Meyers, Jeffrey J.. The Lord’s Service-The Grace of Covenant Renewal Worship, Canon Press, Moscow, ID 2003. pp.78-79. See also, *Jordan, Rev. James B. The Sociology of the Church - Essays in Reconstruction, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR 1999. Pg. 27.**

⁸⁴*Ibid., Pg.56.*

Re-creation, therefore, is a dual reality. There is justification by blood, that is the declaratory judgment of our God for the sake of Christ which invests in the elect the righteousness of the Son of Man; a status determination which asserts the believer's innocence. Then you have sanctification, the progressive component of the re-creation process, through which a steady diet of Word and sacrament, incrementally transforms the believer into the image of his God of which covenant renewal worship assumes preeminence.⁸⁵

Conclusion

A disclaimer of sorts was submitted at the outset of this exposition predicated squarely upon the gravity of this formidable subject matter. It is a matter of immeasurable import and we have merely scratched the surface of this essential aspect of covenant life. It is a subject worthy of continued study and an exercise mandating uninterrupted participation on the part of the Church. Suffice it to say, it is eminently clear in scripture that observance of the Lord's Supper is essential to the life and unity of the Christian church. As such, some additional points warrant comment.

First and foremost, and we believe significantly, is the absence of any sustained historical dispute in Christian orthodoxy relative to the proposition that at the Table, the Triune God meets His people and nourishes them. The nature of God's presence in this sacrament and the frequency of its celebration, however, continue to be matters of ongoing debate. In the former instance, we espouse the view that advances the belief that in partaking of the bread and wine, the sacramental elements, we are mysteriously appropriating the spirit and character of God.⁸⁶ "Just as it is Christ who is preached to us in the Gospel, so it is Christ we eat in the Supper. Not that the elements are transformed; no, they remain bread and wine."⁸⁷ We mysteriously but literally consume the Word made visible through the eucharistic elements. As we saw earlier, we are progressively being re-created in the image of God, most profoundly in weekly covenant renewal.

Interestingly, we are told in the opening verses of John's gospel that God the Father and God the Son (Word) were distinguishable persons in the Godhead yet perfectly unified establishing Christ's true divinity.⁸⁸ In verse fourteen we see that the Word was made flesh, establishing

⁸⁵Clark, R. Scott. The Compromised Church: The Present Evangelical Crisis, John H. Armstrong, General Editor, Crossway Books, Wheaton, Ill. 1998. (www.the-highway.com/supper_Clark.html). (Citing Calvin's Institutes, Mr. Clark underscores the reformed theological doctrine of "duplex beneficium," referring to the twofold benefits of justification and sanctification sealed to the people of God through Christ.)

⁸⁶John 6:53-63 (Emphasis on verse 63)

⁸⁷Clark, R. Scott. The Compromised Church: The Present Evangelical Crisis, John H. Armstrong, General Editor, Crossway Books, Wheaton, Ill. 1998. (www.the-highway.com/supper_Clark.html). (Citing Calvin's refutation of the doctrine of transubstantiation)

⁸⁸John 1:1-5

Christ's true humanity. Then, in verse fifty-three we are admonished by Christ that "except [we] eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, [we] have no life in [us]." Thereafter in verse fifty-eight Christ identifies himself as the bread that descends from Heaven that those who partake may have eternal life. Gloriously, we are appropriating the nature and character of our God and ourselves being made more unified with Him and correspondingly with each other. The Church's progressive incorporation into the harmonious fellowship of the triune Godhead necessarily enables its intended reflection of the same.

Dr. Matthew McMahon, radio broadcaster in southern Florida commenting on John Calvin's view of the Supper said this, "Union with Christ is crucial to Calvin's understanding of the Supper. Christ is the life giving bread that has come down from heaven and upon which our souls feed unto true blessedness (John 6:55). Christ is invisible food and invisible drink for us to feed upon. We are members of His flesh and bones, and the bond of this union is the Spirit of Christ. Christ is present in the Supper by way of the sign of the bread and wine. The name of the thing, that is the body and blood of Christ, is transferred to the thing signified. These signs presuppose the presence of Christ and manifests that presence via those signs. They are real grace signified and sealing real things exemplified in their signs of grace. Christ said, 'This is my body...' Calvin concurs. But he asks, 'In what sense?' The expression is figurative. The bread is Christ's body, and the wine is His blood. But these elements hold forth Christ to us, which demonstrate the truth of the reality for those who partake by faith. The reality is conjoined with the sign. Calvin rightly says that we do not less truly become participants in Christ's body in respect of spiritual efficacy, than we partake of the bread. Calvin says, 'In His sacred Supper He bids me take, eat, and drink His body and blood under the symbols of bread and wine. I do not doubt that he himself truly presents them, and that I receive them.'"⁸⁹

When you consider the progression of liturgy and the stages through which the worshiper travels, it is absurd to suggest that one is experiencing the fullness of God's grace without participation in a fully orbed covenant renewal worship service, the culmination of which is the communion meal enjoyed at the Table of the Lord. "God gives man certain food to eat, denying him other food. Setting this special food before us is God's proclamation to us of the covenant. Eating the food given by God is our reproclamation to Him, our memorialization of the covenant... We remind God of the covenant not in the act of holding up the 'consecrated elements,' or even in the prayer of thanksgiving. Though these things are not wrong in themselves, it is the doing of the rite itself, culminating in the act of eating, that is the reminder to God. When God hears us take His word and amen it back to Him in prayer, He is reminded to keep the covenant. When God sees us take the body and blood of His son and amen it by eating

⁸⁹McMahon, Dr. Matthew. The Lord's Supper Part II - Calvin's View, The Wild Boar News Podcast radio broadcast. (www.wildboarnews.solideogloria.com/2007/05/lords-supper-part-ii-calvins-view.html) See also, Meyers, Jeffrey J.. The Lord's Service-The Grace of Covenant Renewal Worship, Canon Press, Moscow, ID 2003. Pg.224. Hodge, Charles. An Overview of the Lord's Supper, (www.glenwoodhills.org/etc/printer-friendly.asp?ID=367).

it, He is reminded to keep the covenant. The heart of the eucharistic action, thus, is not some act of ‘consecrating the elements,’ but the act of eating itself.⁹⁰

Respecting the frequency of observing the Lord’s Supper, we find the scriptural precedent coupled with the apostolic practice of the early church rather compelling. Consider the edict given on the occasion of the Supper’s institution recounted in each of the gospels, wherein God issues an injunction to His assembled saints to essentially partake of the elements of bread and wine as a memorial of His sacrificial offering.⁹¹ Indeed, given the fact that the Supper was convened on the occasion of the Passover feast, a holy convocation unto the Lord, the impending redemptive offering himself presiding over the meal, seems to establish, at minimum, the need for regular observance.⁹² Moreover, in the days immediately following Pentecost, the church broke bread daily ostensibly rendering daily communion lawful.⁹³ Finally, Doug Wilson observed citing Acts 20:7, “the situation stabilized, [and] we come to see the practice of the early church, settling in for the long haul. ‘And upon the first day of the week, when the apostles came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight...’”⁹⁴ It was utterly fitting that on the occasion of the re-creation of the world, Sabbath worship be observed. After all, it was the commemoration of Christ’s redemptive work in effect replacing the Hebrew Sabbath as a regular period of worship.⁹⁵ As such, when we gather to “eat this bread and drink this cup, [we] do show the Lord’s death till he come.”⁹⁶ That is we again assert in the Name of Christ, our salvation in Him that God might remember and impart to us all the covenant blessings promised, and in the Supper, literally appropriate the same in faith. To neglect the observance of the Lord’s supper on the Lord’s Day only withholds the covenant benefits sealed thereto. Any position advanced that otherwise suggests anything less than weekly observance seems to oppose the reality of the case and may likely be, by default, tantamount to eating at the table of demons.⁹⁷

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⁹⁰*Jordan, Rev. James B. The Sociology of the Church - Essays in Reconstruction, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR 1999. Pg. 38..*

⁹¹Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:17-20

⁹²*Biggs, Rev. Charles R. The Importance of the Lord’s Supper Frequently Observed in Christ’s Church (www.aplacefortruth.org/Frequency.Supper.word)*

⁹³Acts 2:46

⁹⁴*Wilson, Doug. Weekly Communion, Article, Volume 11. Issue 4, Credenda Agenda. (www.credenda.org/issues/11-4.php)*

⁹⁵Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2, Acts 20:17; Revelation 1:10.

⁹⁶I Corinthians 11:26

⁹⁷I Corinthians 10:18-22

Second, participation in the Lord's Supper is clearly a corporate exercise. On the occasion of the Supper's institution, Christ was seated with His assembled disciples when the command was issued. Furthermore, on the eve of His passion, Christ's petition to His Heavenly Father clearly revealed the corporate nature of the recovery, that is that Christ was fulfilling the cause to unite God's people to himself.⁹⁸ Moreover, the old testament rite of sacrifices and offerings occurred in the midst of the assembly of God's people, the children of promise, on the occasion of the Sabbath and on any of the enumerated feasts, for they were holy convocations unto the Lord. Mr. R. Scott Clark accurately observed that "Jesus conducted His ministry and instituted the Supper in a corporate setting, at a feast; and the New Covenant feast was intended to be a communal act of worship as well, not a private spiritual exercise. (See Acts 2:42-46;20:7-11; I Corinthians 5:7-8; 10-11.) It is beyond question that there are strong individual elements to the Christian faith—one must himself apprehend and appropriate the Gospel. The Bible, however, 'deals with man, not only as a solitary unit in his relation to God, but also as a member of a spiritual society, gathered together in the name of Jesus.'"⁹⁹

Finally, we have the matter concerning the implications of the Church's vertical union with God. Consider for a moment the actions of the Lord Jesus Christ immediately following the feast of the Lord's Supper. He instantly alighted from His chair and began to wash the disciples' feet.¹⁰⁰ Given the Lord's successive actions of instituting the Lord's Supper and serving His disciples, one cannot but assume an existent correlation. As we progressively mature in the faith through the process of sanctification as God transforms us vertically, He simultaneously knits us together horizontally. The Church is after all one body comprised of many members.¹⁰¹ Like our triune God, we too must live cohesively in love and truth as our God does; this is the operation of the imaging principle. The fact of the matter is that our created purpose was to image the likeness of our Creator ethically.¹⁰² To essentially prove indistinguishable from our Father, to be identifiably His own. It is through the waters of baptism that we are admitted into the Holy family, and it is through covenant renewal worship that we learn the family's manner of conduct via the appropriation of God's character. "Calvin explains that each of the two sacraments [baptism and the Lord's Supper] is related to the believer's mystical union with Christ. The sacrament of baptism is connected with the believer's initial union with Christ. The

⁹⁸John 17

⁹⁹Clark, R. Scott. The Compromised Church: The Present Evangelical Crisis, John H. Armstrong, General Editor, Crossway Books, Wheaton, Ill. 1998. (www.the-highway.com/supper_Clark.html). (Citing *James Bannerman. The Church of Christ*, Vol.1, Edinburgh, 1848. Pg. 2.)

¹⁰⁰John 13:1-14

¹⁰¹I Corinthians 10:16-17

¹⁰²Genesis 1:26

sacrament of the Lord's Supper is connected with the believer's ongoing union with Christ. In the Lord's Supper, the believer is nourished and sustained, and his communion and union with Christ is strengthened and increased. The Lord's Supper is intimately tied to the believer's ongoing sanctification and growth in grace. Those who do not regularly partake of the Lord's Supper separate themselves from their source of nourishment and life."¹⁰³

So what is the manner of conduct that emerges from this progressive unification with God through Christ? Love of neighbor. The actively maturing Christian progressively masters the art of self denial (dies to self) in deferential recognition and concern for neighbor (esteem for others). It is the way of the Trinity, and it thus should be the way of God's Church.

In the letter he penned to the Roman church in and around 57AD, Paul implores the Christian converts to present their bodies a living sacrifice unto the Lord.¹⁰⁴ In this admonition, we have language saturated with sacrificial offering overtones that smack of the Levitical system. This stands to reason. Christ served as the first fruits of the New Kingdom because he bore the wrath of His Father even unto death, His body being broken and His blood poured out that the Church might live. The Church's reunion with the Father was occasioned vicariously through Christ's propitious sacrifice at the Cross, the single most preeminent act of self denial in deference to the promotion of others, and is the standard to which we are called. The depth of humility demonstrated by our Lord before the Heavenly Father is the culmination of the perfecting process. It is the point of our restoration to Him, for as our predecessor-in-arms, King David, keenly observed, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."¹⁰⁵ God was not remotely interested in the animals brought to the bronze altar, what He was devising to do was re-create man in His own image and it was the Word made flesh that would be the anointed vehicle. In the work of salvation, Christ's total submission to the Father's will even to the point of unjust humiliation and crucifixion most poignantly evidenced the essence of our God's nature and character. Oh, what a legacy!

Christ's re-creation of man, restoring man's intended ethical disposition of total submission to the Father and corresponding commitment to the service and exaltation of others is at the heart of our duty to each other and in the discipling of the nations. It is at the Table where we both celebrate and learn this important truth. Indeed, it is the natural by-product of our union with God through Christ and is in fact the object purpose, hence the washing of the disciples' feet following the communion meal. Notably, at the early point in His earthly ministry when Christ began to seek out friends (brothers) to advance the mission, He explicitly announces the purpose

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¹⁰³Biggs, Rev. Charles R. The Importance of the Lord's Supper Frequently Observed in Christ's Church (www.aplacefortruth.org/Frequency.Supper.word), quoting Keith A. Mathison's book, Given for You, pp 275-76.

¹⁰⁴Romans 12:1-2

¹⁰⁵Psalms 51:17

of the calling.¹⁰⁶ Not coincidentally then, after the work of redemption was accomplished and just prior to His ascension, again speaking to His friends, Christ pronounces the Great Commission ordering the church to both teach and baptize the nations. This was the point of it all! The Word was extended to us in Christ, and we, the receivers of the Promise, were likewise required to serve as conduits of this Word of life and freely share it with others both in word and deed. Reconsider Christ's prayer to His Father moments before His arrest, specifically verses nineteen and twenty of John's gospel. "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;..."¹⁰⁷ The entire petition was about uniting the church with the Father; it was about the restoration project underlying Christ's incarnation. Here Christ specifically alludes to the church's responsibility to propagate the Word to those successors in interest not yet alive at the time of Christ's earthly appearance. This gives rise to the reality and importance of the church's representative capacity.

What is required of the Church? Total submission; the comprehensive commitment of all gifts and resources to the cause of the Father. This was the sacrificial precedent of our covenant benefactor, King Jesus, foreshadowed by the sacrifice and offering of covenant Israel, and it too must be our testimony.¹⁰⁸

Further, in discipleship, there is the matter of first getting one's proverbial house in order before one can serve as a pattern for others. A house divided cannot stand. The Church's unity must be palpable to the observing world to achieve the optimum allure of the Word. Where do you suppose this is made possible? The Table of the Lord.¹⁰⁹ Our collective eyes must be fixed upon the Lord and His testament for whose cause we gather. For Christ is the Head of this family and we His children. If we will follow in His train, our salt will not lose its savor. The Church's unity is inextricably connected to its unity with the Lord. Consider Paul's exposition to the church at Ephesus on the new life enjoyed in Christ wherein he sets forth the headship of Jesus Christ and from this the resulting bond forged among the family membership.¹¹⁰

Contextually speaking, Paul's emphasis on Christ's role as head of the Church (V.15) and believers composing the body (V16) was prompted by a syncretistic heresy that plagued the

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¹⁰⁶Matthew 4:19 (Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.)

¹⁰⁷John 17:19-20

¹⁰⁸Luke 14:25-35 (Christ expressly articulates the essence of bearing one's cross. "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.")

¹⁰⁹John 14:21

¹¹⁰Ephesians 4. See also, John 15: 1ff (Christ as the vine, the Church the branches. From the vine life is given the branches which bear the fruit of the vine.)

Colossian church and in Paul's view threatened the Church at Ephesus. This emerging heresy combined elements of paganism, Judaism and Christianity, the aggregate of which theoretically dethroned the Lord Jesus thereby nullifying His redemptive role and thus the cause of unity. The Doctrine of Christ was under attack. Paul was clearly aware of the adverse implications presented.

Desirous to set the record straight, Paul wrote this letter to the Church at Ephesus developing the logical outcome of Christ's headship of the Body through which believers enjoy an intimate relationship with Him and correspondingly with one another. Further, Paul admits, that this unity though existent, is not fully realized. We will have arrived, it's inferred, when we reach the estate of glorification, when our knowledge and union with Christ is as a perfect man, which is by definition, "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." This is the story of the re-creation of man! This will be the new creature fully matured. Our unity perfected, completed. The inevitability of verse 13 speaks of history's movement progressively toward the eternal, unencumbered assembling of God's Table fellows, who will freely and without reservation, unequivocally declare the sovereignty of the King, together feasting at His Table. Here we have an allusion to the Book of Revelation where we observe the heavenly host and elders assembled in the Throne room proclaiming this very thing; an appropriate posture of the Bride toward the Husband. Consider that before time, God was gathered with His Heavenly host - His table fellows. Man was subsequently created and ingrafted into the Family - incorporated into the Table Fellowship. Through sin, man absented himself from Table fellowship - rejected the prerogative of the Master of the Feast. In Christ, the otherwise self-imposed orphans are restored to His Table.

As reinstated family members, we need to grow in the knowledge of the Lord toward that degree and condition described in verse thirteen. As sons and daughters of the Living God, we must resolve to relent not in our pursuit of maturity unto the stature of Christ,..Perfect Man!!! **Therefore, the apostle Paul's charge here is a call to maturity & growth!** Notably, the unity between the Church and the Father contemplates a vertical and a horizontal component. Submission to the Father is the vertical reference while submission among the members is the horizontal reference. Vertically, we receive the gifts Christ as Grantor distributes to the Body of believers, the grantees. The proper reception and maximum benefit of these gifts is contingent upon our faithfulness to recognize Christ as our Head, and to diligently embrace the outward means of grace God has made available to us, particularly in the Church's participation in prescribed liturgical worship with the Supper being the goal. Since these gifts, though diverse, are given to serve the ends of unity,..when employed in faith, the horizontal application is advanced. As Christ draws His Church closer to Himself vertically, He mysteriously promotes the progressive unity of His people by investing the diversity of gifts amongst its members for the progressive perfecting of their interrelationship. A healthy and robust vertical yields a profitable horizontal. Unity with Christ translates into unity with each other.

It is the acknowledgement of our corporate identity in Christ and the importance of its members with the varied gifts invested by the Head, that underscores the meaning of the

metaphor cited in verse sixteen. The imaginative side of the metaphor, “the joints fitly joining the whole body” conveys the literal side of the comparison which emphasizes the complimentary purposes each member’s gifting serves for the family in its entirety.

The saints of Christ must mutually esteem each other irrespective of position, station or gifting.¹¹¹ The unity that must define our family is paramount, and is especially manifest in the context of the Table. How we relate when we assemble at the Father’s feast is really the litmus test. Consider Paul’s rebuke of the congregation at Corinth. He essentially indicts them for failing to assemble in spirit and in truth for each pursued the divisive interests of self over that of others, thereby severely compromising the unity resident in them. “...when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you:...When you come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper.”¹¹² The saints had failed to discern the body of Christ. Paul, logically then, proceeds to remind the congregation of the institution of the Lord’s Supper, the Church’s unifying principle. He goes on to emphatically point out in verses twenty-nine and thirty that inappropriate Table manners, that is a posture of inattention to the preservation of the body, is condemnation to self and beckons judgement upon those contemptuously gathered. Setting the record straight, Paul then clarifies that which constitutes proper Table etiquette.

In the assembly of saints, there is no room for competing programs. The superiority of the Church corporate far exceeds that of the individual. We therefore must be resolute in promoting and advancing the forward progress of the Church body, which is the Kingdom of God. Christ himself pronounced the supremacy of this truth in the parable of the marriage feast.¹¹³ Here the king (God), or master of the son’s (Christ) wedding feast eradicates the false bride from the gathering, he who was improperly attired. In his commentary on the Supper previously referenced, Rev. Horne accurately observed that the evicted man was representative of the Pharisees. The Pharisees had ignored the unity of the body showing no concern for the sheep, and in fact, in their selfish arrogance, were serving to exclude them. The absence of the white wedding garment, the robe of righteousness, was their scarlet letter and occasioned their demise.¹¹⁴ As such, the King ordered His servants to “Bind him hand and foot, and take him

¹¹¹I Corinthians 12:12-26 (Paul creatively underscores this idea of mutual esteem among the members of the Church. He likens the body of believers to the human body, establishing the component parts’ necessary contribution to the health and vitality of the whole.)

¹¹²I Corinthians 11:18,20

¹¹³Matthew 22:2-14

¹¹⁴*Horne, Rev. Mark. The Lord’s Supper, recorded lecture at the Oakwood Covenant Fellowship Church’s Summer Conference, 250 Oakwood Avenue, Troy, NY. August 12, 2006.*

away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”¹¹⁵

As the Church of Christ, we must be ever mindful of the Lord’s headship, and conduct ourselves accordingly. We must resolve to embrace every day with the same unwavering commitment to both appreciate and mutually encourage the members of the Kingdom family wherever they may be found. Thus, when we gather on the Lord’s Day, particularly as we assemble around the Table of the Lord, humility and forbearance must be our covering.¹¹⁶ If we will do this enduringly, we can then begin to capture the attention of the watching world for indeed then will they most assuredly see the love of our Father in us. In such times, the Church is most effective in discipling the nations, for competency around the Table translates into competency in discipleship. By the grace of God, may we cease never to gather weekly with the heavenly host in bona fide covenant renewal worship in order that we might, in the great and eternal tradition of Christ, show the Father’s love.

Let us collectively resolve to heed the words of our Redeemer King that we might be found well approved at His coming to judge the world: “When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”¹¹⁷

The success of the Church’s mission is irrevocably tied to the faithful worship of our God and Master. Echoing the guarded words of Rev. Jordan, “...the memorial is always present before the eyes of God. If men pray to God for blessing on the basis of the memorial, then the memorial reminds God to bless them. If men ignore the memorial, forgetting God’s mighty acts, then the memorial still stands before God, but it calls down His curse.”¹¹⁸

The principal and suitable prayer our Lord instructed us to pray identified the object of creation as being a mirror reflection of Heaven. “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” Notably, and immediately following, then, is the reference to our daily bread, our daily provision inextricably connected to our forgiveness; this being the essence of our communion with God. The re-institution of communion with God was the covenant mission, and the manner of reversing Adam’s undoing could only be accomplished through sacrifice, specifically Christ’s sacrifice. Thanks be to God!!!

¹¹⁵Matthew 22:13

¹¹⁶Luke 14:8-11

¹¹⁷Luke 14:12-14

¹¹⁸*Jordan, Rev. James B. The Sociology of the Church - Essays in Reconstruction, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR 1999. Pg. 40.*