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Religious.

COMMUNION.

BY DR. HOVEY.

Fourth Article.

None but members of some Christian Church whose "conversation becometh the gospel of Christ" and who "strive together for the faith of the gospel," should be invited to the communion.

In support of this position we remark:

1. That becoming connected with a Christian church naturally precedes partaking of the Lord's Supper. It has already been shown that baptism is properly the first public act of consecration to God and his service. By submitting to this rite one solemnly vows his faith in the triune God and his purpose to obey him in all things. He takes his place under the banner of Christ, and pledges himself to have no other master. And what next? The great army is made up of companies, one here and another there, and he can have no regular connection with it unless he joins one of the companies, unless he enters a particular church. Uniting with a local church is therefore the immediate sequence and, as it were, the natural counterpart of the baptismal vow. Hence the latter is often called "the door into the church," and membership is supposed to follow it as a matter of course. There are, to be sure, exceptional cases; persons are sometimes converted and baptized where there is no church and when they are unable for a time to become members of one. This was true, we suppose of the eunuch whom Philip baptized. But such instances do not affect the general rule. It is still true that in all ordinary circumstances church membership follows directly after baptism; certainly it precedes admission to the Lord's table. Besides, it must be borne in mind that partaking of the holy supper is an act to be repeated until the close of life, while uniting with a Christian church is an act to be performed but once, unless a repetition is made necessary by local changes. At what point of time, then, shall the church relation be established? Surely not at the close of one's Christian life and service nor in the middle of that service, but obviously at the beginning of it. No good reason appears for assigning it any other place.

In support of our position we remark:

2. That the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance. It was meant to be observed and administered, not by individual Christians at will, nor by irresponsible companies of believers, but by the churches of Christ as such. This statement is justified by the language of Paul to the Corinthians. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? Because it is one bread, we, the many, are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." "When ye come together in church, I hear there are schisms among you; and I partly believe it. . . . When, therefore, ye come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper; for in eating each one takes before another his own supper." "Have ye not houses to eat and drink in? Or despise ye the church of God, and put to shame them that have not?" "So then, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, wait for one another. If any man is hungry, let him eat at home, that ye come not together to judgment." Several points of great interest are fixed by these words of the apostle:

In the first place, the Corinthian Christians were evidently accustomed to "meet together" in order to observe the Lord's Supper. No less than four times within the space of a few verses does Paul connect their coming together in one place with the celebration of the eucharist. This was their custom; there is no hint of any irregularity; it was their uniform practice. Whether they commemorated the death of Christ daily or weekly or monthly, we are not told, but the language cited above makes it certain that they always met together for this service. Indeed, it seems to have been the proper and avowed object of their assembling. Although the

way in which some of them partook of the love-feast before the eucharist betokened little respect for the latter, they met professing, without doubt, to eat not their own but the Lord's Supper. No other view explains the repeated and emphatic manner in which their "coming together" is connected with this ordinance.

In the second place they could not properly observe it without coming together. This is not said, but implied. Many things could be done by Christians separately. "Have ye not houses to eat and drink in?" "If any man is hungry, let him eat at home." But it does not seem to have entered the apostle's mind that the Lord's Supper could be eaten at home. No word of his letter intimates the propriety of such an act. His language firmly points to the whole body of Corinthian believers as presenting themselves at the Lord's table. Fixing his mind on the members of this body, he says: When ye come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper,—your professed, as it should be your real object,—but, as your conduct shows, it is for each one to eat his own supper, which might have been taken at home. Again, being present with them in spirit, he explains in one respect the import of communion: Since the consecrated loaf is one bread, we, the many, are one body; for all of us—*oi pantes*—partake of the one bread. By signifying thus our union with Christ and dependence on him for spiritual life, we signify our union with one another, and the church of many members is represented as one body. According to these passages, the eucharist was observed by the collected church, and no abuses which might attend such an observance of it could justify individuals or families in celebrating it at home.

In the third place the Christians at Corinth came together "in church" to observe the holy supper. When Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians, the word (*ecclesia*) had already become the appropriate designation for organized body of Christians. It was either applied to the whole company of believers in every age, or to a local church, as that of Antioch. In the passage before us it must be used in the latter sense, a sense which it generally has in this epistle. Hence the words (*en ecclesia*) signify in church form or capacity, and give evidence that the Corinthian believers celebrated the Lord's Supper as a church.

Plainly, then, the Lord's Supper was observed by the saints in Corinth as a church, and any disorderly or selfish conduct attending it was not only a grief to individuals, but an act of contempt to the church, as such. This appears to be the obvious meaning of Paul's language. Bearing in mind, then, the repeated statement that the Corinthian disciples "came together" to observe the Lord's Supper, the clear intimation that they could not observe it properly without coming together, and the plain testimony that they met in "church" to observe it, we feel ourselves authorized to say that they broke bread as a church, and treated the Lord's Supper in all respects as a church ordinance. It is therefore needless to examine further the apostle's words on this point.

For the Christian Messenger.

IMMORTALITY.

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE WICKED: A discourse preached by Rev. W. G. Goucher, in the Baptist Meeting House, Yarmouth, on the evening of July 31; and published by request.

Life and immortality brought to light through the Gospel.—2 Tim. i. 10.

Several important statements are made in this text. Death is said to be abolished. Life and immortality brought to light; that is, rendered conspicuous through the Gospel, by Jesus Christ. Every man, both saint and sinner, has an interest in each and every one of these statements. They are matters of faith and hope. No higher authority can certainly be required on any subject, and every man ought to be satisfied with and heartily yield to Christ's teaching on every end of the question. If life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel, we can certainly find them in the gospel, and the principal

purpose of this discourse is to consider its teachings on the subject of immortality, especially the immortality of the wicked. One particular reason we have for laying stress at this time upon the immortality of the wicked, and examining the subject in gospel light, is that while but few deny the immortality of the righteous dead, there has lately arisen in these parts a number of semi-Sadducees (See Matt. 22. 23.) who deny the immortality of the wicked dead.

Upon the first statement of the text, the abolition of death, we do not design at this time to say much. The text says Christ "has abolished death." This is partly prospective. He has gained and holds a present power over it, which was exhibited in instances during his life,—such as the resurrection of Lazarus, (John 11. 33, 44) and of Jarius' daughter, (Mark 5. 41, 42.) And also by his own resurrection. The fear of death is also abolished to those who believe in Jesus, according to Heb. 2. 15, "And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." And again, Luke 6. 74, 75, "Might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life." By the inspired apostle Paul, in 1 Cor. 15. 26, it is declared "The last enemy shall be destroyed, death." We have quoted it without the italics. John in his Apocalypse saw the cessation of Death. He saw it cast into the lake of fire 20. 14 of Revelations. We will detain you no longer with remarks on the abolishment of death, though it is an interesting and important subject, but will at once proceed to consider the last statement of the text, for we have selected this passage at this time because it contained the remark "Through the gospel hath brought life and immortality to light."

In discoursing upon this subject we will dwell upon

1. Life and immortality in general.
2. Notice the objections of the objectors to the immortality of the wicked.
3. Present the teachings of Scripture, especially of the New Testament, on the subject, showing that the gospel has brought to light the immortality of the wicked as well as of the righteous.

1. In the discussion of this subject, at the outset the inquiry naturally comes up, "What is immortality?"

For a correct answer to this we turn to Webster's Standard Dictionary of the English language, and we find his definition to be incorruptible, the quality of ceasing to be, exempt from death, &c. With this agrees the term as used by the apostle in 1 Tim. 6. 16. Speaking of God as the Eternal King, in contrast with earthly kings, he says, "Who only hath immortality." That is, who of all kings is alone undying or incorruptible. So in the first chapter and seven-and-thirty verse of the same letter, Paul writing of the character of God as King of kings, styles him, King eternal, immortal, invisible. That is, the self-existent, undying, unseen, the only wise God. Then also in Romans 2. 7, writing of the patient and persevering believers, Paul describes them to be seeking for honor, glory, and immortality. Here the semi-Sadducees seize a text supposing they have solid foundation, but their self-deception is evident, as you will see when I tell you their theory is,

No man is immortal, naturally, neither body, soul, or spirit. Man, by believing, becomes immortal in every department of his constitution. The wicked will, at the great judgment day at the end of time, be sentenced and all his faculties of ability to suffer cease. In other words will be annihilated. They thus, we may here remark, make man largely the creator of himself; entirely the creator of his future existence. It stands thus:—Every man is capable of believing in Christ. Every man who chooses to believe in Christ, by that act of believing renders himself immortal, or creates himself an eternal existence. Now you see the text last named gives them no support. For they say every individual believer by that act renders himself immortal. But Paul in the connection of this text in Romans, is writing to a people who had some time before this believed, and he by contrasting the life and end of the wicked with that of the righteous, is encouraging them by patient continuance in well doing, to seek for honour, glory and

immortality. If immortality signifies exemption from annihilation, and is the product of faith, Why still seek for it? Why seek for what they have? The woman in the gospel who seeks for the piece of silver, ceases to seek for it as soon as she has found it, and begins to rejoice, Luke 15. 8, 9. It is evident then that it is not this exemption, that those mentioned persons seek, but rather in keeping with the text, perfection of character, freedom from corruption. This is in harmony with the apostle's statement in the 10th verse. Speaking of the success of those believers endeavours, denotes their attainments by the word "peace" that he denotes by the term "immortality" in the 7th verse. But glory honor and peace shall every man attain to that worketh good. The apostle in his letter to Timothy, from which we have selected our text, does not say that the gospel creates immortality, nor that men, the subjects of gospel favors, have any power to create it; nor that any religious exercise, such as repentance, or faith, or love, produces it; nor that it has a birth in any way connected with or dependent upon these exercises. Nor does he say that men living under the legal dispensation knew nothing of immortality; nor that the inspired writers, whose writings comprise the Old Testament, make no mention of it. He only says that it is made lucid through the gospel. More light is given on the subject. The gospel may primarily mean the accounts given, by the four evangelists, of Christ. Yet we see no impropriety in applying the term to the whole of scripture bearing directly upon christianity. None of the inspired writers wrote anything contrary thereto. Nor did the apostles make any new revelations. They commented upon the gospel doctrines. They detail the directions and instructions that the evangelists give in summary. They call attention to its truths, and comfort and edify christians and warn sinners.

If immortality was not so clearly taught in the early age of the world, as in the gospel age, it was taught, and in some instances very impressively taught too. God gave to the world in its infancy a signal demonstration of this doctrine as related to human beings in the translation of Enoch, (Gen. 5. 24), and another of the same kind at a later period in the translation of Elijah, (2 Kings 2. 11). The first of these was before the destruction of the wicked by the flood, the latter some time after. But each at a time when men had become excessively wicked. These demonstrations were not only high encomiums on a high order of piety, but were in the absence of a written revelation, a supply of evidence to all men, both just and unjust, of a future existence, an existence beyond the present one. The conviction of immortality in that age appears to have very generally obtained. Bad men, as well as good entertained a consciousness of it. The wicked Balaam, mentioned in the 23rd chap. of Numbers, speaking what God in that instance prompted him to say, exclaims "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." This he undoubtedly spoke with respect to an immortal state, and under the conviction of an intimate and characteristic connection between the present and future. His business also shows that he believed the doctrine of immortality.

The afflicted Job was a believer in and taught immortality; Job 19. 26. David also believed and wrote of it, Sam. 12. 23; Psalm 17. 15. The Prophets also write under a consciousness of immortality. It frequently juts out in their writings. At times they pointedly notice it. See Isaiah 66. 24; Daniel 12. 2.

The Old Testament is very largely historical and prophetic, and generally when man is mentioned in those connections, he is spoken of as a human being, just as in any other history. As for instance: The Duke of Wellington at the great battle of Assaye, fought on the 23rd of September, 1803, with a force of 5000 men, totally defeated 60,000 under Scindia, and the Rajah in person; gaining one of the most complete victories recorded even in the annals of Indian warfare. Or again, The population of Nova Scotia, according to the last census, was three hundred and thirty thousand eight hundred and fifty-seven, (330,857).

In these and all similar instances, mankind are mentioned as human beings, which is all