

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN

**Exposition of the Sedes Doctrinae of the Lord's
Supper.**

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(Continued.)

Having designated the institutor and the time of the institution of the Eucharist, the revelation which the apostle received of the Lord and which he communicated in writing to the Corinthians states what was done and said at the institution. Before we begin with our exposition of the passages, however, we must examine that portion of the evangelists' records which corresponds to the expounded portion of Paul's record. In Matthew we find the words: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread," etc. — Ἐσθιόντων δὲ αὐτῶν, and in Mark: "And as they did eat, Jesus took bread," etc.

— *Καὶ ἐσθιόντων αὐτῶν*, while Luke omits these transitional words entirely and simply proceeds thus: "And He took bread," etc. With reference to the words of Matthew and Mark we must, then, ask: As they were eating what? And as the context clearly indicates, the answer can only be: As they were eating the Passover. Matt. 26, 19 sq.; Mark 14, 16 sq. Yet some (the Church of the Brethren — Dunkers; cf. Guenther's *Symbol.*, p. 43) deny this. While they agree with us in this, that the Lord's Supper was instituted in the night which preceded the day of Christ's death, *i. e.*, Thursday night, they differ with us in holding that the meal in conjunction with which the Eucharist was instituted was not the Jewish Passover, but a love-feast and that the celebration of the Passover took place in the evening which followed upon the day of Jesus' death, *i. e.*, Friday evening. Proof of this their view they would find in the 13th, 18th, and 19th chapters of the Gospel of St. John. The following is their argument: 1) That John 13, 1: "Now, before the feast of the Passover," shows that the washing of the disciples' feet and the discourses at the Last Supper were before the Passover; 2) that John 13, 29: "Buy those things that we have need of against the feast," shows that the supper mentioned in this chapter of John was not the Passover-feast; 3) that the incident mentioned John 18, 28: "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the Hall of Judgment; and it was early; and they themselves went not into the Judgment Hall lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover," that this incident occurred after the institution of the Last Supper, early on the day of crucifixion, before the Passover; 4) that John 19, 14: "And it was the preparation of the Passover and about the sixth hour," again shows conclusively that the Passover was not yet eaten when Jesus was before Pilate, on the day of the crucifixion, and after the Last Supper; 5) that John 19, 31: "The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath-day, (for that Sabbath-day was an high day,)" etc., — that this additional reference to the preparation, and also to the Sabbath as being a "high day," shows that the Passover was eaten on Friday evening after sunset, at the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath, which was a "high day" whenever the Passover fell thereon. (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3, p. 1928.)

From this the Dunkers draw the conclusion that the supper referred to in John 13, in connection with which the Eucharist was instituted, was a love-feast. And they hold it to be the Lord's will

that not only the Eucharist be perpetuated by the Church, but also the love-feast and the washing of feet, likewise mentioned in the same chapter of the Gospel of John; or rather, they hold that the three events, *viz.*, the Eucharist, the love-feast, and the washing of feet, form a whole, each event being an essential part thereof. They say: "1. Since the Last Supper was a new institution, there is no more reason for perpetuating one part than another. It is a unit, and each event of that night has its place and meaning. 2. Jesus commanded the disciples to perpetuate feet-washing John 13, 14—17; and likewise He commanded the Eucharist to be perpetuated as a memorial of Him, 1 Cor. 11, 24. 25. Why not the *agape*? 3. The *agape* was perpetuated by the apostles and disciples. They certainly understood Jesus to mean that the entire services of the Last Supper should be perpetuated, else they would not have done so." (*I. S. B. E.*, Vol. 3, p. 1929.)

Now, it is true that there is abundant evidence in the New Testament for the existence of the love-feast. Cf. Acts 2, 46; 1 Cor. 11, 20—22. 33. 34; Acts 20, 7. 11. The question, however, is not whether love-feasts were observed in connection with the celebration of the Eucharist in the Apostolic Age (this cannot be disputed); the real question is whether such feasts were observed as by divine command. We say they were not; there is no such command given in Scripture. Moreover, the claim of the Dunkers that the love-feast was celebrated as an essential part of the Lord's Supper in the Apostolic Age is also without solid ground. The fact is that the love-feast was related to the Eucharist as Christ's last Passover was related to the Sacrament which He grafted upon it. It preceded and led up to the Eucharist, but was quite distinct from it. Unless the Eucharist, in the Apostolic Age, had been discriminated from the love-feast, it would be difficult to explain how at a later period the two could be found diverging from each other so completely. Church history has it that the celebration of the Eucharist was soon entirely separated from the love-feast and that, while the latter continued to exist for some time as a social function of the Church, it gradually passed out of existence entirely, and that already before the close of the first epoch, *i. e.*, before 323 A. D.

But the fallacy of the whole argument of the Dunkers and the unscripturalness of the view lies in this, that they assume that it was not the Passover which was celebrated by the Lord and His disciples immediately preceding the institution of the Eucharist, but that it was a love-feast. This, however, cannot be the case.

The supper referred to in John 13 was the Passover; for this chapter corresponds to the chapters of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which contain the record of the institution, and there it is clearly stated that the institution followed upon the Lord's observance of the Passover with His disciples. Matt. 26, 19 sq.; Mark 14, 16 sq.; Luke 22, 13 sq.; cf. Luke 22, 15 b. 16 and John 13, 1 a, Luke 22, 15 a and John 13, 1 b; also Matt. 26, 21 sq., Mark 14, 18 sq., Luke 22, 21 sq., and John 13, 21 sq. But how, then, is the designation of the day of the crucifixion as being the *Preparation of the Passover*, John 18 and 19, to be explained? Various explanations have been offered. One is to the effect that the terms *φάγωσιν τὸ πάσχα*, "that they might eat the Passover," and *παρασκευὴ τοῦ πάσχα*, "the preparation of the Passover," refer, not to the preparation of the actual Passover and to the eating of the paschal meal, but to the preparation of a festival of "thank-offering"; cf. 2 Chron. 30, 22 sq.; 35, 7 sq. (During the entire week additional sacrifices were offered in the Temple, burnt offerings, meal-, drink-, sin-offerings, etc.) This explanation seems plausible in view of the fact that the term "passover" does not always mean the actual Passover. In Deut. 16, 2, *e. g.*, where offerings of the flock and the herd are mentioned, the Hebrew פֶּסַח (Passover) undoubtedly refers to "free-will offerings," which were brought to the festival of the Passover in compliance with Ex. 23, 15: "And none shall appear before Me empty." (Daechsel, Vol. 6, p. 307.) However, the better explanation is that of Dr. Dau, to the effect "that the Jewish custom at the time of Christ seems to have allowed some latitude as regards the time for eating the paschal lamb." (*I. S. B. E.*, Vol. 3, p. 1927.) Thus the difference between John (18, 28; 19, 42) and the synoptists is overcome, and we can safely interpret the words of Matthew and Mark as we have interpreted them, *viz.*, thus: As they were eating the Passover.

We repair to St. Paul's account of the institution. Proceeding to state what was done there, he says: The Lord Jesus "took bread," *ἔλαβεν ἄρτον*. With but one exception these words coincide with the corresponding words of the evangelists. The exception is found in the account of Matthew, who, according to the best text (Sinaiticus), adds the definite article, *the* bread, *τὸν ἄρτον*. The first element, then, which the Lord ordained for the sacramental purpose is bread, the constituents of which are flour and water. What kind of flour was used in the preparation of the bread cannot be definitely ascertained. However, it appears that barley was in early times, as it is to-day, the main breadstuff in

Palestine. Judg. 7, 13, 14, *e. g.*, the "cake of barley-bread" is said to be the "sword of Gideon." John 6, 9, 13 we also find barley-bread mentioned, the multitude being miraculously fed on "five barley-loaves." But also wheat was widely used as a breadstuff then, as it is now, the wheat of the Syrian plains and uplands being remarkable for its nutritious and keeping qualities. (Cf. *I. S. B. E.*, Vol. 1, p. 515.) — Regarding the nature or quality of the bread used at the institution, however, we are not left in doubt. Matthew specifies that the Lord took *the* bread, the bread that was at hand, and from circumstantial evidence we know that this was unleavened bread; for it was the time of the Passover; Jesus was celebrating the Passover with His disciples. Now we know that unleavened bread was to be eaten with the Passover-meal, and that by divine command, Ex. 12, 8, just as with all sacrificial meals, Ex. 23, 18; 34, 25; Lev. 7, 12. Yes, unleavened bread was to be eaten not only at the feast of the Passover, but also during the entire seven-day festival which followed, Ex. 12, 15; 12, 18; 13, 6, 7; 23, 15; 34, 18; Lev. 23, 6; Num. 28, 17, *viz.*, the Festival of Unleavened Bread commemorating the first days of Israel's journey from Egypt, Ex. 12, 14—20. The eating of leavened bread was strictly prohibited during the entire week under the penalty of excision, being cut off from the congregation of Israel for ignoring the divine precept. Ex. 12, 15, 19. Thus it is clear and certain that the bread used at the institution was unleavened bread. Even if Matthew's definite specification, *the* bread, were missing, the very fact that the Lord instituted His Last Supper immediately upon, or shortly after, His observance of the Passover would preclude any other interpretation of the words in question. — As regards the form of the bread, nothing definite can be stated. It was, no doubt, baked in larger cakes and therefore needed to be broken for the purpose of distribution, and it was, perhaps, quite thin, as appears to be indicated in Ex. 29, 23; Lev. 8, 26; Num. 6, 19; 1 Chron. 23, 29, where the unleavened bread is called a wafer, or cake. In Matt. 26, 23 and Mark 14, 20 ("dippeth with Me in the dish") there seems to be a like indication, inasmuch as "it is still significantly customary at a Syrian meal to take a piece of such [thin] bread and, with the ease and skill of long habit, to fold it over at the end held in the hand so as to make a sort of spoon of it, which then is eaten along with whatever is lifted by it out of the common dish." (*I. S. B. E.*, Vol. 1, p. 516.) — To sum up, then, we may say regarding the bread used at the institution of the Eucharist, 1) relative to the chief constituent, *i. e.*, the flour,

that it was *presumably* wheat- or barley-bread; 2) relative to the form of the bread, that it was prepared in larger cakes, or wafers, and that it was *presumably* thin; 3) relative to the nature, or quality, of the bread, that it was *certainly* unleavened bread.

"And when He had given thanks, He brake it," *καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν*, thus Paul proceeds. Luke uses the same words, while Matthew and Mark write thus: "He blessed it and brake it," *εὐλογήσας ἔκλασεν*. In the phrase of the latter the object to be supplied is *bread*; He blessed, consecrated, the bread. In the phrase of Paul and Luke the object to be supplied is *God*; He thanked God, thanked His heavenly Father, for the great gift He was about to give to His disciples, and by this prayer of thanksgiving He consecrated, set the bread apart from its common use, and dedicated it to the sacred purpose which it was to serve. As regards the contents of this prayer, wherein it consisted, Scripture is silent; but we cannot go wrong in assuming that Jesus thanked His heavenly Father for the rich blessings which, by means of this Sacrament, He would impart to His disciples and to His whole Christian Church on earth. — This done, He broke the bread; He severed the larger cake, or wafer, in His hand, breaking it into as many pieces as was necessary in order that each disciple might receive thereof. Some (the Reformed churches) would have it that Jesus' object in breaking the bread was to symbolize thereby to His disciples, picture before their eyes, His impending death on the cross, and, in keeping with this view of theirs, they hold that the breaking of the bread is an essential part of the Sacrament and must therefore occur during the time of the celebration thereof. However, we find in the words of institution not even the slightest indication that such was the Lord's object in breaking the bread. Moreover, to say that such was the Lord's object and purpose is to charge Him with a poor choice of symbols; for the fact is that the Savior's body was not broken on the tree, John 19, 33; it was rather in fulfilment of Scripture that "a bone of Him should not be broken," John 19, 36. In view of this, and by reason of the absence of any indication in the record pointing to a symbolical act on the part of the Lord, it is certain that the bread was broken solely for the purpose of distributing it among the disciples. Neither is the act of breaking the bread, then, an essential part of the Sacrament. Whether it be prepared in small parcels, or wafers, convenient for distribution, or in larger cakes, or loaves, and be then broken before or during the celebration of the Sacrament, is immaterial.

Herewith Paul concludes his account of what was done during the first part of the institution and proceeds to state what was said there. The synoptists add the words: "And [the Lord Jesus] gave [the bread] to them" [the disciples], *καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς*. What the evangelists expressly state, however, *viz.*, that Jesus gave, handed, the bread to His disciples, is embodied in Paul's account, in the word *take*, by implication. The fact that the Lord requested the disciples to take the bread implies that He passed, or extended, it to them.

(*To be continued.*)
