

Worship in the Breaking of Bread

Worship is the response of the human spirit – a response to the movement of the Holy Spirit down deep in our heart – it is the Amen to the revelation of truth, and the Amen to revelation of Him who is Truth – the Only-Begotten and Beloved Son of God – our precious Lord Jesus Christ. Without the initial movement of the Blessed Spirit, we cannot worship in a way that pleases the Father.

William MacDonald once said this,

“Every generation must guard against the danger of slipping into denominational, sectarian ways of thinking. Down through the centuries, there have been great movements of the Holy Spirit in which certain truths have been recovered out of the rubble of tradition, formalism and ritualism. The first generation, that is, those living at the time of these movements have been intelligent concerning the scriptural principles involved. But then the second and third generations have tended to follow the system routinely because their parents were in it, and because they themselves were brought up in it. There has been a decline of true conviction and an increasing ignorance of the biblical basis of the pattern followed.

Thus the history of most spiritual movements has been aptly described in the word series: man ... movement ... machine . . . monument. At the outset there is a man, anointed in a special way by the Holy Spirit. As others are led into the truth, a movement develops. But by the second or third generation, people are following a system with sectarian, machine-like precision. Eventually nothing is left but a lifeless, denominational monument.”

He continues and then shares some thoughts regarding the Breaking of Bread Meeting.

“Most of us realize that the ministry of the Holy Spirit has been greatly quenched by the introduction of ritual and liturgy. The use of printed prayers, of stereotyped messages for certain days of the "church calendar," of a prescribed order of service that must be followed without deviation-these things fetter the Holy Spirit in the meetings of the local church. But we must guard against more subtle ways of quenching Him. For instance, we must guard against manmade rules in our worship meetings. In some places, there is an unwritten law that there must be no ministry before the breaking of bread. Or that the meeting must not go beyond a certain time. Or that in worshipping we must not dwell on our own sins or unworthiness. Or that we must sit or stand when praying or singing. All such rules quench the spirit of spontaneous worship and lead to formalism.

Why did this come about? Was it always this way? Where did such man-made rules, as Brother MacDonald called them, come from? As he said before, when certain truths needed to be recovered from formalism and ritualism, God would raise up certain men, anointed by the Holy Spirit, to lead his people into those truths. But, unfortunately, after a couple generations, the people of God would once again fall back into man-made traditions. But the freshness of recovered truth was first seen by those anointed by God in that first generation. So let us consider his observation, let's go back to the beginning when those first brothers were first anointed in a special way by the Holy Spirit regarding New Testament assembly principles and see what the Holy Spirit showed to them.

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Hebrews 13:7

J. G. Bellett's Witness about the Beginning

“It was in the year 1827 that the late Archbishop of Dublin, in a charge delivered to the clergy of his diocese, recommended that a petition should go up to the legislature seeking for increased protection for them in the discharge of their ministerial duties as the teachers of religion in these lands.

John Darby was then a curate in the county Wicklow, and often did I visit in his mountain parish. ..In the beginning of 1828 I had occasion to go to London...Mr. Groves, who was a dentist of distinguished practice in Devonshire, some short time before this had offered himself to the Church Missionary Society, and in order to fit himself for its service had entered our college...In the close of 1828 he visited Dublin, though he had seceded from the College...Walking one day with him, as we were passing down Lower Pembroke Street, he said to me, "This, I doubt not, is the mind of God concerning us, that we should come together in all simplicity as disciples, not waiting on any pulpit or minister, but trusting that the Lord would edify us together, by ministering as He pleased and saw good from the midst of ourselves."

At the moment he spoke these words I was assured my soul had got the right idea, and that moment I remember it as if it was yesterday, and could point you out the place — it was the birth place of my mind, dear James, may I so speak as a brother...”

“Edward Cronin had been by profession an Independent, and a member of York Street, but his mind at the same time was under a like influence, I may say, with us all. In a private room he had the Lord's Supper with, I believe, three others, while I was going still to Sandford Chapel and J. N. Darby was still in county Wicklow as a clergyman...But on returning to Dublin in the November of that year, F. Hutchinson was quite prepared for communion in the name of the Lord with all, whosoever they might be, who loved Him in sincerity, and proposed to have a room in his house in Fitzwilliam Square for that purpose... he also prescribed a certain line of things as to the services of **prayer, singing and teaching** that should be found among us on each day [Lord's Day]...Thus we continued from November, 1829. Sometime before this I had become acquainted with J. Parnell (now **Lord Congleton**), and in that month (November, 1829) and through the spring of 1830, he was occasionally in Dublin and frequently amongst us. He became very familiar with Edward Cronin, and in the month of May, purposing to let the Lord's Table in the midst of us become somewhat more of a witness, he took a large room in Aungier Street belonging to a cabinet maker. There the meeting was transferred during that month. This tried me still more — the publicity of it was too much for me. I instinctively shrank. F.

Hutchinson, as I remember, would also rather have continued in the private house, so that I believe I did not join them for one or two Sundays, and I am not sure that he did, but the others were there at once. J. Parnell, W. Stokes, E. Cronin and a few sisters, and shortly several were added.¹

The Witness of George Muller and Henry Craik

“The Lords Supper

1. No command has been given in Scripture as to frequency of celebration, but the example of the apostles and early Christians suggest every Sunday (Acts 20:7).

2. As to the character of the meeting at which the Lord’s Supper is celebrated, since it is symbolic of common participation in the benefits of our Lord’s death and our union to Him and to each other (I Cor. 10:1, 17), opportunity should be given for the exercise of gifts of teaching or exhortation and communion in prayer and praise (Rom. 12:4-8; Eph. 4:11-16). Though the meeting should not normally be in the hands of a single man, those who have gifts of teaching or exhortation should feel their responsibility to edify the church.

3. It seems preferable for each individual to break the bread for himself rather than that one of the elders should. This course is favored by the letter of Scripture (‘The bread which we break’, I Cor. 10:16, 17); it gives expression to the fact that all, by their sins, have broken the body of our Lord; and it shows more clearly that the ordinance is ‘an act of social worship and obedience’ which does not require to be administered by ‘some particular individual possessed of what is call a ministerial character.’²

The Witness of J. N. Darby

“Chapters 12 and 14 are separated by a chapter on love. Charity comes in, by the bye, in the middle, to teach them how to use their gifts. He brings in love too, as the root of all right action, as of everything else; and then he goes on to the order and exercise of gift. We have the doctrine in chapter 12, and the exercise of gifts in chapter 14. There is no law as to the order of the morning meeting. If a person had a word to say before the breaking of bread, I should not object; but I enjoy prominence given to the breaking of bread on the Lord's day morning.”³

“The two grand elements of Christian worship are the presence of the Holy Spirit and the remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ, which is commemorated in the Supper. But in this worship the affections which are connected with all our relationships with God are developed.”

1) God, in His majesty, is adored.

2) The gifts even of His providence are recognized.

¹<http://www.stempublishing.com/authors/bellett/rem.html>

² Rowdon, Harold H., *The Origins of the Brethren*, (Pickering & Inglis Ltd.), 1967, pg. 126

³ Darby, J. N. *Notes on 1 Corinthians 14* <http://bibletruthpublishers.com/notes-on-1-corinthians-14/john-nelson-darby-jnd/collected-writings-of-j-n-darby-expository-5/la62956>

- 3) He who is a Spirit is worshipped in spirit and in truth.
- 4) We present to God, as our Father-the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ-the expression of the holy affections which He has produced in us; for He sought us when we were afar off, and has brought us near to Himself, as His beloved children, giving us the spirit of adoption, and associating us (wondrous grace!) with His well-beloved Son.
- 5) We adore our Savior-God, who has purged us from our sins, and placed us in His presence without spot,
- 6) His holiness and His righteousness, which have been so marvelously displayed in our redemption, being to us a source of joy which passes not away;
- 7) for, through the perfect work of Christ, we are in the light as He Himself is in the light.

It is the Holy Spirit Himself who reveals to us these heavenly things, and the glory which is to come, and who works in us so as to produce affections suitable to such blessed relationships with God. He it is who is the bond of union between the heart and these things. But in thus drawing out our souls He makes us feel that we are children of the same family, and members of the same body; uniting us in this worship by means of mutual affections and feelings common to all towards Him who is the object of our worship. Jesus Himself is present in our midst, according to His promise. In fine, worship is exercised in connection with the very sweetest recollection of His love, whether we regard His work upon the cross, or whether we recall the thought of His ever fresh and tender affection for us. He desires our remembrance of Him.⁴

The Witness of L. M. Grant

“Because of the greatness of the Person of Christ, the Spirit of God has much indeed to bring to our attention concerning Him that will draw out our willing adoration. In remembering Him we may go back to His eternal fellowship with the Father before the world was, to the Father's sending Him as the expression of all the glory of God, His marvelous incarnation, the blessed union of God and Man in one Person, His spotless life of devoted obedience to God and of kindness toward man, His faithful ministry of grace and truth, His bearing patiently the persecution of men. Then we remember the great and precious sacrifice of Himself, when alone He bore the anguish, not only of the hateful abuse of His creatures, but of being forsaken by God as the true sin offering accursed for our sakes. For it is not only that we remember His death: we remember Him, and announce His death. We remember Him then in all these circumstances through which He has passed, all leading to the great focal point of His wondrous sacrifice.

The offerings of Leviticus speak of all this. **The burnt offering** (Leviticus 1) emphasizes the personal worth and preciousness of the Lord Jesus as He who offered up Himself in entire devotion to His God and Father, as John's Gospel teaches. All goes up to God as a sweet savor, greatly delighting His heart. Certainly, in this precious aspect we are privileged at the breaking of bread to present the Lord Jesus as the theme of our adoration to God.

The meal offering (Leviticus 2) speaks of Him in the fragrant beauty of His humanity, every particle of the fine flour indicating some precious virtue of His manhood, all of which is an offering to be presented to God by hearts affected in thankful adoration of His Person. The Spirit of God surely delights to bring Christ to our attention in this way, and the Father no less delights in our thus presenting Christ to Him.

⁴ Darby, J. N., *On Worship*, (numbers in the quote were added) <http://bibletruthpublishers.com/on-worship/john-nelson-darby-jnd/collected-writings-of-j-n-darby-doctrinal-2/la62446>

The peace offering (Leviticus 3) was that which was shared by the offerer, the priest and God; each having his portion and each thus sharing in communion the value of the sacrifice of Christ, as is so sweetly taught in Luke's Gospel. In this case, Christ is presented to God as the offering by whom peace and concord are established between God and believers, and certainly in this way, too, saints are privileged to present the Lord Jesus to God, by the power of the Spirit.

The sin offering aspect of Christ's sacrifice (Leviticus 4:1-5:13) is that of His bearing, in dreadful anguish, the unalleviated judgment of God against sin, the root principle of all evil which has so affected creation and which nothing else but His own sacrifice could bear away. Without this, we could have no part in Him or with Him. Mark's Gospel gives us this viewpoint of the offering of Christ, and we too, in remembering the Lord, are thus found presenting Him to God in this sin offering character, by whom alone sin is judged and we made fit for His presence.

The trespass offering (Leviticus 5:14-6:7) is that viewpoint of the sacrifice of Christ that is the most elementary, yet deeply precious too, for it speaks of that which was necessary for the remission of sins—not the root principle of sin, but the acts of wrong-doing. Can we not also present the Lord Jesus to God as the One whom we thank and praise and adore for His having saved us from our sins by the blessed sacrifice of Himself? Matthew presents this aspect of the offering of Christ and it is in this Gospel that our Lord says when introducing the Lord's supper, "This is My blood, of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28)."⁵

But then the traditions of men began to enter the worship of the assemblies.

An Account by Neil Dickson

“His successor Henry Pickering described in 1934 what he termed ‘the ordinary way,’ used in ninety percent of some 10,000 assemblies worldwide, with ‘each accredited brother being absolutely free to take part in **hymn, prayer, reading or ministry**...The loose organizational structure of the Open Brethren movement meant that variations could be tolerated...There was, however, a number of attempts to develop a **firmer liturgy** at the morning meeting which reflects the sociology of the movement. During the 1880’s a group, which had as its focus the magazine *The Needed Truth*, evolved, among other new thinking and practices, certain prescribed actions during the breaking of bread. F. A. Banks, the seminal teacher of the new ideas, maintained that the brother ‘who says in the assembly, ‘Let us give thanks,’ ere he breaks the loaf loses his individuality, and is, for the time being, the mouthpiece of the church.’ He should then publicly break the bread as a corporate act. Such prescriptions about the morning meeting led to controversy in many assemblies, and eventually their advocates seceded in 1892-3 to form what became the Churches of God. **Other liturgical formats were developed**, especially in the inter-war period of the twentieth century. The Brethren read the Old Testament typologically. Developing ideas contained in Exclusive Brethren writers, some taught that **during the morning meeting there should be a progression through the typological significances of the Levitical sacrifices: the sin, peace, meat and burn offerings; others favoured concentrating on either the meat offering ...or the burnt offering ... only.** During this period the evangelist Isaac Ewan was the individual who developed the most **exact liturgy** of the occasion based on the Old Testament sacrifices. The

⁵ Grant, L. M., *The Liberty of the Spirit in the Lord's Supper*, <http://www.mwtb.org/site/other-resources/online-books-and-pamphlets/the-liberty-of-the-spirit-in-the-lords-supper.html>

worshippers were sympathetically retracing the life of Christ to the cross and the morning meeting was to follow this progress. The crucial moment of the service was when the brother who gave thanks for the emblems walked to the table on which they were placed and broke the bread and poured out the wine thus 'shewing forth the Lord's death.' The seeming oxymoron of a spontaneous liturgy in these uses of the Old Testament led to accusations of ritualism. Those who promoted them were also wanting to intensify sectarianism. They combined with their teaching on the morning a desire to exclude non-Brethren from participation in the Lord's Supper...."⁶

Why did this happen? Perhaps, it would be best to conclude with an observation made by J.N. Darby long ago, and then, most recently, by William MacDonald.

"The writer is aware that some think that the worship of the Father is on a higher plane than thanksgiving to the Son in the breaking of bread. And beyond doubt it calls for more maturity in the truth, and more spiritual power in the worshipper. But in reality can anything be higher than the adoration of the blessed Lord, once the holy sufferer, now the risen Head and exalted Savior? Everything should lead up to that supreme act of thanksgiving at the holy Supper. Yet even there the Spirit of God might guide, not to separate the Persons of the Godhead, but to join them in praise, and so to direct address of the Father, though there is doubtless a peculiar fitness in addressing the Lord Jesus at His table. But who is entitled to dictate or exclude, since scripture shows us the contrary? Let us abide, simple and subject, to God's Word."⁷

And William MacDonald said this.

"Christians must be taught to test everything by the Scriptures. This is our only authority. The question is not, "How do we do it in 'our assemblies'?" but "What does the Bible teach about it?" Our loyalty must be first, last and always to the Lord and to the principles of His Word. And we should never blindly assume that any group of believers has a monopoly on the truth, is adhering to the New Testament in its entirety, or is immune from drift and departure."⁸

So let's go back to the precious Word of God, and see what is the mind of the Lord regarding the worship at His Table.

⁶ Swanson, R. N., Ed., Continuity and Change in Christian Worship, *Shut in with Thee: The Morning Meeting Among Scottish Open Brethren, 1840s-1960s*, Dickson, Neil (The Boydell Press, 1999), 279-281

⁷ Darby, J. N., *Giving Thanks to the Father*, <http://bibletruthpublishers.com/giving-thanks-to-the-father/john-nelson-darby-jnd/bible-treasury-volume-n4/1a70772>

⁸ MacDonald, William, *To What Should We Be Loyal?*

The Lord's Table in Scripture

The Context

Acts 20:7-12 And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.⁸ And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.⁹ And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.¹⁰ And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing *him* said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.¹¹ When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.¹² And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

The Content

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Moulton and Milligan

διαλέγομαι [pg 150]

P Oxy X. 1349 (iv/A.D.) ἐπειδὴ ἐξῆλθα ἀπὸ σοῦ ἐχθὲς μὴ διαλεχθεῖς σοι περὶ τῆς κυθίδος (*i.e.* κυθρ. = χυτρ.). P Petr III. 43 (3)¹⁵ (B.C. 240) ἔτι δὲ @οὐ]κ ἀγνοεῖς ὡς σοὶ διελέγην περὶ τοῦ ση@σ]άμου, "you know how I conversed with you about the sesame" (Edd.). BGU IV. 1080¹¹ (? iii/A.D.) καθὼς οὖν ὁ ἀδελφός σου Ἀμμωνᾶς διείλεκταί μοι περὶ ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν ὑμῶν πραγμάτων. P Flor II. 132³ (A.D. 257) τοῖς κωμάρχαις τῆς Ταυρείνου διελέχθην περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ὀνηλάτου. These instances will suffice to show that διαλέγεσθαι has in the vernacular the use seen in Mk 9³⁴. Elsewhere in the NT, as Bp E. L. Hicks points out in *CR* i. p. 45, "it always is used of **addressing, preaching, lecturing,**" a use which he shows to be predominant in inscriptions.

Acts 17:2, 17-19 2 And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths **reasoned** (διαλέγομαι) with them from the Scriptures. 17 So he was **reasoning** (διαλέγομαι) in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. 18 And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"-- because he was **preaching** Jesus and the resurrection. 19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new **teaching** is which you are proclaiming?"

Gingrich ὁμιλέω

ὁμιλέω *talk, converse* Lk 24:14f; Ac 20:11; 24:26.* [*homily, homiletics*] [pg 138]

Luke 24:14 And they were **conversing** (ὁμιλέω) with each other about all these things which had taken place.

The Character

Acts 20:7-12 And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul **preached** (διαλέγομαι) unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.⁸ And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.⁹ And there sat in a window a certain young man named **Eutychus**, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long **preaching** (διαλέγομαι), he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.¹⁰ **And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him** said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.¹¹ When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and **talked** (ὁμιλέω) a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.¹² And they brought the young man alive, **and were not a little comforted**.

For what purpose did the Holy Spirit allow the **incident of Eutychus** to occur at the Breaking of Bread meeting? And why did the incident at the Lord's Table conclude with the thought that they "**were not a little comforted**?"

At the original Table our Lord repeated the need for the disciples to love one another. He used the word "love" twenty-nine times in chapters 13 through 17 in the Gospel of John. And what is amazing is that the word "love" is used more times in these five chapters about the Last Supper than is used in any of the other Gospels. It is used 14 times in the entire Gospel of Luke and not once at the account of the Last Supper. It is used only 5 times in the entire Gospel of Mark and not once in the account of the Last Supper. And, finally, it is used 9 times in the entire Gospel of Matthew and not once in the account of the Last Supper.

Why, then, we must wonder, would the Holy Spirit include the account of the importance of "love" in the last Gospel written, when it was absent from all the other Gospels? And why is it revealed that the Lord spoke of such love so many times at that Last Supper. Perhaps, it was because, by the late date of the Gospel of John, all the other apostles were dead and gone to be with the Lord, and only John was left; and because he witnessed a "divisive spirit" taking root in the body of Christ, he records for the disciples all the words of "love" given by the Saviour at that Last Supper.

Paul had successfully stifled the divisive spirit in Corinth; but he later warned the elders from Ephesus it would return. Indeed, the Holy Spirit prophesied it would come, and in John's day it had once more taken root, being manifested in such Christians as Diotrephes.

And, so, perhaps, because of the danger of division, the Holy Spirit reminded the saints that the parting desire of the Lord was that his children should love one another with the same love that he manifested to us. Perhaps, [through the account of Eutychus](#) at Troas, the Holy Spirit is reminding Christians, for all time, that at the most sacred time of remembrance – the Lord's Table, it is appropriate to remind each other that we should love one another, doing so in honor of his last and parting wishes.

If the Lord blessed that sacred meal with the admonition to love one another, it cannot be injurious at all to the solemn character of the Table to once more exhort each other to love one another. It cannot detract from its sacred purpose, for if we judge that it does, we must conclude the Lord, himself, detracted from its sacred purpose. That is impossibility. The most holy Lord could never leave us an example that might desecrate that most sacred communion. It cannot detract from its sacred purpose, because it affirms the sacred purpose of the meal – to remember Him, which would include all that was on his heart. For what better memory can be recalled to our heart by the Holy Spirit than the memory that our Saviour's dying wish was that we should love one another. For when we love one another, we love him (Matt. 25:37-40), and is that not the purpose of the Lord's Table – to remember Him, to love Him, to honor Him? And if one might still object, and say to us, "Speaking about things that pertain to us ourselves is not appropriate at the Lord's Table." We might reply to them, with the format of a reply made by another Christian, made for different reasons, concerning a different topic, at a different time, but equally appropriate here with a slight change of words.

"Yet as to our liberty in Christ to speak forth in thanksgiving, love, and ministry at the breaking of bread meeting can there be in any Christian mind a doubt? But if my Lord should say to me, about such ministry at his Table, "Why speakest thou thus" I would reply, "Dear Lord, seeing Thou didst speak thus at *Thy* Table, I thought, dear Lord, it would be safe to speak thus at *this* Table."

Sometimes the Holy Spirit defies our logic concerning the sanctity of the Table. We might ask, to what purpose? Perhaps, to remind us it is not our Table, to remind us that **He is the Lord** in our gathering, and to remind us **He moves as He wishes**. The Holy Spirit never left us minute and prescribed rules for the Breaking of Bread meeting. It is left quite open, only with general guidelines to help us. Let me give an example from Harry Ironside.

I am sure we would all fee aghast, at first, to what occurred. Why? Because we love his Table and we hold it sacred. But see what the Holy Spirit chose to do at one

breaking of bread meeting, realizing that all the Spirit does is always done to sanctification. Perhaps, this might give us pause in so quickly judging others, for it is a terrible thing to assign something done, as not being of the Spirit, when, in reality, it was the Holy Spirit doing it all along! We should all take to heart the words of our Lord in Matt. 12:31, knowing, of course, that a child of God cannot commit such a sin, but, at the same time knowing it is a serious matter to falsely accuse a brother of not being in Spirit.

An Account of Harry Ironside Regarding the Sanctity of the Table

A dear Japanese man who attended some meetings in Sacramento, California, was troubled about his soul, but would not come to Christ because of his love for money. He would say, "If I accept this Jesus as my Savior, I do not see how I can make money." So we told him he would have to make a choice between two alternatives: being rich on earth but poor in eternity, or being poor on earth but rich in eternity. When I use the pronoun we, I am referring to myself and a Japanese evangelist who was associated with me at the time, and through whom I met this man.

A year went by and I returned to the city of Sacramento for more meetings. One night when I was preaching the gospel on the street corner, I saw this little Japanese man in the audience. There was an expression of concern on his face that stirred my heart. At the close of the meeting he stepped up and shook my hand and said, "I so glad to see you again."

I said, "And so am I glad to see you. Have you accepted Christ as your Savior yet?"

Tears filled his eyes as he said, "No, I fight against Him. I cannot give up. If I accept Him, I cannot make money. Do you have some meetings here where you are speaking?"

I said, "Yes," and told him where the meetings were being held.

He said, "On Sunday do you have a meeting in which you eat the bread and drink the wine showing how Jesus died?" I said, "Yes, next Sunday morning."

"I come," he said.

So on Sunday morning we gathered together to participate in the Lord's supper and as the meeting commenced, the Japanese man came in and sat up front. I was praying that God might speak to him and as the meeting went on it was evident that he was greatly perturbed. Finally the people of God partook of the bread and the fruit of the vine while this heathen man looked on. Just as the elements were replaced on the table, he rose and said, "I like to pray."

I thought, *My! I wish I had told him that he would not be expected to take part in the meeting!*

But he prayed like this: "O God, I all broke up. For one whole year I fight You. I fight You hard. Your Spirit break me all to pieces. O God, today I see Your people eating the bread, drinking the wine, and telling how Jesus died for sinners like me. O God, You love me so. You give Your Son to die for me. I cannot fight You anymore. I give up. I take Him as my Savior."

It did not spoil our meeting at all to have him take part with such a prayer. We realized that this simple ordinance had preached to him, for Scripture tells us, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do [preach] the Lord's death till he come." At the close of the meeting we gathered about him to rejoice with him

and then he turned to me and said, “Jesus say before He go away, when you believe Him, you bury in water, show old life gone, new life begin. I like bury.”

“You want to be baptized?” I asked. “I will see you during the week and perhaps we can do it next Sunday.” Referring to the Japanese evangelist, he said, “A year ago he tell me Jesus Christ coming back again, so?”

“Yes,” I said, “that is true.” “He coming soon?”

“He may.” “He not come before next Sunday?” “Well, I can’t say; He might come before then.” “Then I no like to wait till next Sunday. I like show I no fight any more. I like be buried today.”

I said, “Forgive me for trying to put it off; we will go down to the river this afternoon.”

And so in the afternoon, dressed in his best, he came with the Japanese mayor (we called the richest man in the Japanese settlement “mayor”) and forty other Japanese merchants behind him. We preached the Word and he gave his testimony, and then he was buried in the waters of baptism.

The Lord’s supper, if given the place our Savior intended it to have, will constantly preach to the world and will say more than any words of ours can say.⁹

⁹ Ironside, Harry, *I Corinthians Commentary*, (Loizeaux, Neptune, New Jersey, 1938) Pg. 212-14

Some Rules for Open Ministry

Four Verbs

1 Thessalonians 5:17-21 pray without ceasing; ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹ Do not **quench** the Spirit; ²⁰ do not **despise** prophetic utterances. ²¹ But **examine** everything *carefully*; **hold fast** to that which is good;

Because the gathering of the saints was led by the Spirit of God and not by some prescribed liturgy, there was always the possibility that something might be said, or shared that was not of the Spirit. I would dare say, since none of us are infallible or inspired by the Holy Spirit, much of what we say is not of the Spirit but is of ourselves, or is a mixture of ourselves and the Holy Spirit. God knew this would be the weakness of having an open meeting. It did not take him by surprise. He knew beforehand what would result, but he gave it to us for a purpose. He did it to give us an opportunity to be like Christ, to be longsuffering and patient, filled with the love that is Christ's. He did it to humble us. He did it so that we could learn to be like Christ in showing the same longsuffering and love to each other that he constantly showed to his own disciples, disciples, who were always saying things in error. But does that mean that things that might be spoken in mistake, (excluding heresy, of course), must be ignored? No, of course not, but it must be recognized, not by a judgment of what is not in Spirit, but by a judgment of what is in Spirit! Paul gives us two negatives and two positive commands to follow in our open meetings. First, we should not *quench* or *despise*. These are the negative injunctions. Second, we must *examine* and *hold fast*. These are the positive injunctions.

When we judge the “words” of another, (again, excluding heresy or things opposed to Scripture), as not being said in Spirit, we are saying my judgment is infallible. My judgment is 100% accurate. There is not one iota of error in what I say. Now, if we cannot claim such infallibility, then, perhaps, we should not say it, for we could be in grave danger of speaking falsely in the name of the Lord; we could be in grave danger of assigning something that was really said by the leading of the Holy Spirit to some other power. When this judgment is made known either by a frown, or by actual sharing among ourselves, it causes a quenching of the Spirit in the hearts of others. It throws cold water upon the fervency of the Spirit and narrows all talking to the conformity of a select few.

Next, if such judgments are ignored, there is a danger of it leading to a “despising” in the hearts of the arbitrators. Eventually, the one who arbitrates will find he might “sigh” when the brother gets up to share something. He might also find he no longer listens carefully to anything that is said, for, in actuality, a *despising* has taken root in his heart, whether he realizes it or not. And what is ironic is such despising and not paying

attention to what another brother is saying, is a willful disobedience to words that are most assuredly known to be *in the Spirit*, the words of Paul in I Thess. 5: 20-21.

Paul warns us not to *quench* or *despise*. What he does command us to do is to *examine* and *hold fast*. It produces a completely different mindset.

Examining everything carefully, presupposes that what is shared in open meetings might be a mistake or contain mistakes. It presupposes that we cannot but help to bring into our exhortations, our own thoughts and ways. It presupposes none of us becomes infallible, but are fallen creatures in need of the filling of the Spirit and the denial of ourselves. Thus, Paul makes it plain that no one should be proud. Everyone should be humble, for we all are of the same nature. None of us is perfect or infallible.

Knowing this, we should carefully follow whatever is shared by another, looking for the things that bear witness to our spirits by the Holy Spirit. We should look for the good, not for the bad, for in finding the good, we will automatically recognize the bad, and in that recognition we will realize that we are not perfect in every word we say either, and we will know that as the Lord forgives us our mistakes, he will forgive him. It is really a very humbling exercise, but it leads to the final positive command – *hold fast* to what is good.

When we humbly listen to another brother, looking for that which is good, that which bears witness to our spirits, we rejoice and *hold fast* to that which the Holy Spirit ministers to our heart through the brother. As for rest, we trust in the discipline and guidance of our Chief Shepherd. We trust that in our brother and in ourselves, when we speak, the Holy Spirit will more and more sanctify us so that when we do speak, that which is good, and can be held on to, will eventually outweigh that which is not perfect and not of the Holy Spirit.

These are the rules given to us by God for the gathering together of his saints – *quench not, despise not, examine all, and hold fast to the good*. When we obey these four verbs the Spirit can lead us into a worship that will please the Father.

As such, at the Table of the Lord, our hearts should **not** be focused on each other, but our hearts should be focused on the Lord, all the while listening and looking for something that might be said by any brother to which our hearts can say *Amen* to the glory of God the Father. Such a humble response will be spiritual worship to God, if, indeed, it comes from our spirits. But what if our hearts can find nothing to say *Amen* to, what should we do?¹⁰ First, we can thank the Lord for that brother, and pray that the Lord would guide him and fill him with the Spirit and, at least, worship God by saying *Amen* to Lord for the grace of God that was given to the brother and for the love to God he is expressing in

¹⁰ Of course, this is assuming no heretical or hurtful things were said, which, if such is the case, would be taken care of by the oversight of the elders.

public worship. And second, we can also worship God by realizing that even though I could not find anything I might say *Amen* to, yet the *Amen* is found in that that brother and myself, with everyone else present, have been made into *one bread*, not because of any righteousness in ourselves, but simply because of the love, mercy and grace of the Lord. This is discerning the Lord's body aright. We are all one bread! **The Lord tells us we should not feel harsh feelings to any brother, at any time, but most assuredly we should not at the Table spread by our Lord.** One of the main burdens of the Lord at the institution of the Lord's Table was that we should abide in his love and always love one another. And most assuredly, love – that love – will always cover a multitude of sins we might see in our brother. Love – that love – will never take into account a wrong suffered. Love – that love, will always bear all things, believe all things, and hope all things.

Edward Groves once said this,

“First, it may be there is only courage and ability to give out a hymn, then to read a suitable portion of the Word ; afterwards, as the heart becomes enlarged, there is power and utterance given to engage in prayer, and so on for a few words of exhortation. And this progress is wonderfully quickened, if, (instead of coldly criticizing), the silent worshippers... [might] bear him...on their hearts, in prayer!”¹¹

Which, if I may add, will ascend to God as worship, worship that will please the Father's heart, for such worship will come from the Spirit moving in our spirits, not only reminding us that our righteousness is but filthy rags, but, at the same time, reminding us that the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us by the shedding of his precious blood, is the righteousness accepted by God the Father, by which he joins us all together in *one bread*. And by affirming this thought, we affirm His love to us, our other brother's love to God, and our love to one another. What better way to remember the Lord, than to honor the dying wish of our Saviour, to love one another – for when we recognize the love of one another, we are, in reality, loving and remembering Him.

Draw me, we will run after thee! -- The king hath brought me into his chambers -- We will be glad and rejoice in thee, We will **remember thy love more than wine. They love thee uprightly.**

Song of Solomon 1:4 (Darby)

I cannot think of a better way to close this message than with some words by William MacDonal, and then by Lord Congleton, one of the first brothers anointed by the Holy Spirit to bring God's people back to the simplicity and order of the Lord's Table. This word of exhortation was given at the Breaking of Bread

¹¹ Groves, K. Edward, *Conversations on Bethesda Family Matters*, (W. B. Horner & Son, London 1885), pg. 52

*meeting over 150 years ago. At the table he speaks of our state of poverty before God, in order to keep the hearts of the saints **humble before God and humble with each other** so that we might worship and enjoy the feast of the love of God.*

William MacDonald

“We often make a man an offender for a word. Perhaps a young believer will express thanks to God for dying for him. Must he be rebuked for this? We all know that God, the Father did not die. And doubtless the young believer knows it too. But in the self-consciousness of taking part publicly, he is apt to express himself poorly. Should he be made ashamed of his first, faltering act of public worship? Is it not better to hear his sincere though faulty adoration than not to hear it at all?”

“Generally speaking we believe that the Holy Spirit will guide the worship of His people along a certain theme. But suppose a brother gives out a hymn that seems to be quite unrelated to this theme. Must he be embarrassed for this? Is it not better to sing the hymn and pray that as he matures sufficiently to discern the theme in the meeting, he will do so without losing any of his warmth and affection for the Lord? Which reminds us of a certain preacher who was asked, "What would you do if some brother gave out a hymn that was obviously not in the Spirit?" He replied, "I'd sing it in the Spirit." As we seek to give the Holy Spirit His proper place in the assembly, let us beware of rules that quench Him and that kill spontaneity and unaffected worship.”¹²

The Witness of Lord Congleton (John Parnell) with the actual words said at the Breaking of Bread meeting by Lord Congleton based on Lu. 15 (c. 1849-51)

"The Lord has called us to a table of pure, unmixed grace. This parable shows out the grace of the Father, and the table around which we gather shows out His grace to us. How prone we are to think that if we were only in a better state of soul we should see more good in ourselves. This is a great mistake, for if the Holy Ghost were dwelling in us in power we should see more of our own badness, and we should have a much worse opinion of ourselves than we have; for as we see more of what Christ is, we see more of our own vileness, for His light will make apparent to us what now we see not. The Holy Ghost does not take of our things or of our attainments in grace, but takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. This seeking to find some good thing in ourselves before accepting the grace of God is only pride. Seeing, therefore, that there is no good in us, He calls us now to feast on His love to us, and even now to enter on its enjoyment. We are called undistractedly to enjoy this feast of the love of God, the wondrous Giver, the wondrous Lover, in all our poverty, weakness, and worthlessness."¹³

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¹² MacDonald, William, *To What Should We Be Loyal?*

¹³ Groves, Henry, *'Not of the world', memoir of lord Congleton*, (John F. Shaw & Co., London, 1884) Pg. 83