

THE  
**CHRISTIAN SYSTEM,**  
IN REFERENCE TO THE  
**UNION OF CHRISTIANS,**  
AND A  
RESTORATION  
OF  
**PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY,**  
AS PLEAD IN THE  
**CURRENT REFORMATION**

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## Breaking the Loaf

Man was not made for the Christian institution; but the Christian Institution for man. None but a master of the human constitution--none but one perfectly skilled in all the animal, intellectual, and moral endowments of man, could perfectly adapt an institution to man in reference to all that he is, and to all that he is destined to become. Such is the Christian Institution. Its evidences of a divine origin increase and brighten in the ratio of our progress in the science of man. He who most attentively and profoundly reads himself, and contemplates the picture which the Lord of this Institution has drawn of him, will be most willing to confess, that man is wholly incapable of originating it. He is ignorant of himself, and of the race from which he sprang, who can persuade himself that man, in any age, or in any country, was so far superior to himself as to have invented such an Institution as the Christian. That development of man, in all his natural, moral, and religious relations, which the Great Teacher has given, is not farther beyond the intellectual powers of man, than is the creation of the Sun, Moon, and Stars beyond his physical strength.

The eye of man cannot see itself; the ear of man cannot hear itself; nor the understanding of man discern itself: but there is one who sees the human eye, who hears the human ear, and who discerns the human understanding. He it is, who alone is skilled in revealing man to himself, and himself to man. He who made the eye of man, can he not see? He who made the ear of man, can he not hear? He who made the heart of man, can he not know?

It is as supernatural to adapt a system to man, as it is to create him. He has never thought much upon his own powers, who has not seen as much wisdom on the outside, as in the inside of the human head. To suit the outside to the inside, required as much wisdom as to suit the inside to the outside, and yet the exterior arrangement exists for the interior. To fashion a casement for the human soul exhibits as many attributes of a creator, as to fashion a human spirit [313] for its habitation. Man, therefore, could as easily make himself, as a system of religion to suit himself. It will be admitted, that it calls for as much skill to adapt the appendages to the human eye, as the human eye to its appendages. To us it is equally plain, that it requires as much wisdom to adapt a religion to man, circumstanced as he is, as to create him an intellectual and moral being.

But to understand the Christian Religion, we must study it; and to enjoy it, we must practise it. To come into the kingdom of Jesus Christ is one thing, and to live as a wise, a good, and a happy citizen is another. As every human kingdom has its constitution, laws, ordinances, manners, and customs; so has the kingdom of the Great King. He, then, who would be a good and happy citizen of it, must understand and submit to its constitution, laws, ordinances, manners, and customs.

The object of the present essay is to develop one of the institutions or ordinances of this kingdom; and this we shall attempt by stating, illustrating, and sustaining the following propositions:--

PROP. I.--*There is a house on earth, called the house of God.*

The most high God dwells not in temples made with human hands; yet he condescended in the age of types to have a temple erected for himself, which he called his house, and glorified it with the symbols of his presence. In allusion to this, the Christian community, organized under the government of his Son, is called his house and temple. 'You are God's building,' says Paul to a Christian community. This building is said to be 'built upon the Apostles and Prophets--Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.' 'Know you not that you are the temple of God? The temple of God is holy, which temple you are.'<sup>1</sup>

But in allusion to the Jewish temple, the Christian church occupies the middle space between the outer court and the holiest of all. 'The holy places made with hands were figures of the true.' The common priests went *always* into the first tabernacle or holy place, and the high priest *once a year* into the *holiest of all*. Thus, our Great High Priest [314] went *once for all* into the true 'holiest of all,' into the real presence of God, and has permitted us Christians as a royal priesthood, as a chosen race, to enter always into the only holy place now on earth--the Christian church. 'As living stones we are built up into a *spiritual house*, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices most acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.'<sup>2</sup>

But all we aim at is to show that the community under Christ is called '*the house of God*.' Paul once calls it *a house of God*, and once *the house of God*. An individual or single congregation, he calls '*a house of God*.'<sup>3</sup> I have written to you, 'that you may know how to behave yourself in a house of God, which is the congregation of God.'<sup>4</sup> And in his letter to the Hebrews,<sup>5</sup> speaking of the whole Christian community, he calls it the house of God.<sup>6</sup> 'Having a Great High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near,' &c. It is, then, apparent, that there is under the Lord Messiah, now on earth, an institution called *the house of God*; and this resembles the *holy place* between the outer court and the holiest of all, which is the position to be proved.

PROP. II.--*In the house of God there is always the table of the Lord.*

As there is an analogy between the Jewish holy place, and the Christian house of God; so there is an analogy between the furniture of the first tabernacle or holy place, and those who officiated in it; and the furniture of the Christian house of God, and those who officiate in it. 'In the first tabernacle, said Paul, which is called *holy*, there were the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread,' or the loaves of the presence. On the golden table every Sabbath day were placed *twelve* loaves, which were exhibited there for one week, and on the next Sabbath they were substituted by twelve fresh loaves sprinkled over with frankincense. The loaves which were removed from the table, were eaten by the priests. These were called in the Hebrew, 'the loaves of the faces,' or the loaves of the presence. This emblem of the abundance of spiritual food in the presence of God for all who dwell in the holy place, stood always upon the golden [315] table furnished by the twelve tribes, even in the wilderness. The light in the first tabernacle was not from *without*, but from the seven lamps placed on the golden candlestick; emblematic of the perfect light not derived from this world, which is enjoyed in the house of God.

If, then, in the emblematic house of God, to which corresponds the Christian house of God, there was not only a table overlaid with gold, always spread, and on it displayed *twelve large loaves*, or cakes, sacred memorials and emblems of God's bounty and grace; shall we say that in that house, over which Jesus is a Son, there is not to stand always a table more precious than gold, covered with a richer repast for the holy and royal priesthood which the Lord has instituted, who may always enter into the holy place consecrated by himself.

But we are not dependent on analogies, nor far fetched inferences, for the proof of this position. Paul, who perfectly understood both the Jewish and Christian Institutions, tells us, that there is in the Christian temple a table, appropriately called the Lord's Table, as a part of its furniture. He informs those who were in danger of being polluted by idolatry, 'that they could not be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of demons.'<sup>7</sup> In all his allusions to this table in this connexion, he represents it as continually approached by those in the Lord's house. 'The cup of the Lord' and 'the loaf,' for which thanks were continually offered, are the furniture of this table, to which the Christian brotherhood have free access.

The Apostle Paul reminds the saints in Corinth of their familiarity with the Lord's table, in speaking of it as being common as the meetings of the brotherhood. 'The cup of blessing for which

we bless God, is it not the joint participation of the blood of Christ? The loaf which we break, is it not the joint participation of the body of Christ?' In this style we speak of things common and usual, never thus of things uncommon or unusual. It is not the cup which we *have* received with thanks; nor is it the loaf which we *have* broken; but which we *do* break. But all that we aim at here is now accomplished; for it has been shown that, *in the Lord's house there is always the table of the Lord*. It is scarcely necessary to add, that if it be shown, that in the Lord's house there is the Lord's table, as a part of the [316] furniture, it must always be there, unless, it can be shown that only some occasions require its presence, and others its absence; or that the Lord is poorer or more churlish at one time than at another; that he is not always able to keep a table, or too parsimonious to furnish it for his friends. But this is in anticipation of our subject, and we proceed to the third proposition.

PROP. III.--*On the Lord's table there is of necessity but one loaf.*

The necessity is not that of a positive law enjoining one loaf and only one, as the ritual of Moses enjoined twelve loaves. But it is a necessity arising from the meaning of the Institution as explained by the Apostles. As there is but one literal body, and but one mystical or figurative body having many members; so there must be but one loaf. The Apostle insists upon this, 'Because there is one loaf, we, the many, are one body; for we are all partakers of that one loaf.'<sup>8</sup> The Greek word *artos*, especially when joined with words of number, says Dr. Macknight, always signifies *a loaf*, and is so translated in our Bibles, 'Do you not remember the *five loaves*?'<sup>9</sup> There are many instances of the same sort. Dr. Campbell says, "that in the plural number it ought always to be rendered loaves;" but when there is a numeral before it, it indispensably must be rendered a loaf or loaves. Thus we say one loaf, seven loaves; not one bread, seven breads. 'Because there is one loaf,' says Paul, we must consider the whole congregation as one body. Here the Apostle reasons from what is more plain, to what is less plain; from what was established, to what was not so fully established in the minds of the Corinthians. There was no dispute about the one loaf; therefore, there ought to be none about the one body. This mode of reasoning makes it as certain as a positive law: because that which an Apostle reasons from must be an established fact, or an established principle. To have argued from an assumption or a contingency to establish the unity of the body of Christ, would have been ridiculous in a logician, and how unworthy of an Apostle! It was, then, an established institution, that there is but one loaf, inasmuch as the Apostle establishes his argument by a reference to an established fact. Our [317] third proposition is, then, sustained that *on the Lord's table there is of necessity but one loaf*.

PROP. IV.--*All Christians are members of the house or family of God, are called and constituted a holy and a royal priesthood, and may, therefore bless God for the Lord's table, its loaf, and cup--approach it without fear and partake of it with joy as often as they please, in remembrance of the death of their Lord and Saviour.*

The different clauses of this proposition, we shall sustain in order--'*all Christian are members of the family or house of God*.'<sup>10</sup> 'But Christ is trusted as a Son over *his own family*; whose family we are, provided we maintain our profession and boasted hope unshaken to the end;'*--are called and constituted a holy and a royal priesthood*.'<sup>11</sup> You, also, as living stones are built up a spiritual temple, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices most acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.' In the [9th verse of the same chapter](#) he says, 'But you are an elect race, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood;' and this is addressed to all the brethren dispersed in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

May not, then, *holy and royal* priests thank God for the Lord's table, its loaf, and cup of wine? May they not, without a *human* priest to consecrate the way for them, approach the Lord's table and

handle the loaf and cup? If the common priests did not fear to approach a golden table, and to place upon it the loaves of the presence; if they feared not to take and eat the consecrated bread, because priests according to the flesh--shall royal priests fear, without the intervention of human hands, to approach the Lord's table and to partake of one loaf? If they should, they know not how to appreciate the consecration of Jesus, nor how to value their high calling and exalted designation as kings and priests to God. And may we not say, that he who invested with a little clerical authority, derived only from 'the Man of Sin and Son of Perdition,' if borrowed from the Romanists, says to them, 'stand by, I am holier than thou'--may we not say that such a one is worse than Diotrefes, who affected a pre-eminence, because he desecrates the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ, and calls him common and [318] unclean, who has been consecrated by the blood of the Son of God? Such impiety can only be found amongst them who worship the beast, and who have covenanted and agreed that none shall buy or sell, save those who receive a mark on their foreheads, and letters patent in their hands. But allow common sense to whisper a word into the ears of priests' "laymen," but Christ's '*royal priests*.' Do you not thank God for the cup while the priest stands by the table; and do you not handle the loaf and cup when they come to you? And would not your thanksgiving have been as acceptable, if the human mediator had not been there, and your participating as well pleasing to God, and as consolatory to yourself, if you had been the first that had handled the loaf or the cup, as when you are the second, or the fifty-second, in order of location? Let reason answer these two questions, and see what comes of the haughty assumptions of your Protestant clergy!! But this only by the way.

I trust it is apparent that the royal priesthood may approach the Lord's table *without fear*, inasmuch as they are consecrated to officiate by a blood, as far superior to that which consecrated the fleshly priesthood, as the Lord's table, covered with the sacred emblems of the sacrifice of the Lord himself, is superior to the table which held only the twelve loaves of the presence; and as they are, to say the least, called by as holy and divine an election, and are as *chosen a race* of priests, as were those sprung from the loins of Levi.

PROP. V.--*The one loaf must be broken before the saints feast upon it, which has obtained for this institution the name of "breaking the loaf."*

But some, doubtless, will ask, 'Is it not called *the Lord's supper*?' Some have thought, amongst whom is Dr. Bell, that [1 Cor. xi. 20.](#) applies to the feasts of love or charity, rather than the showing forth the Lord's death. These may read the passage thus:--'But your coming together into one place is not to eat a Lord's supper; for in eating it every one takes first his own supper; alluding, as they suppose, to a love feast eaten before *the breaking the loaf*.' But this Lord's supper is contradistinguished from their *own* supper. And might it not as reasonably be said, you cannot call *your* showing forth the Lord's death a Lord's supper; for before eating it you have eaten a supper of your own, which prevents you from making a *supper* of it? You do not make it a [319] Lord's supper, if you first eat your supper. Nor, indeed, could the Corinthians call any eating a "Lord's supper," conducted as was the eating of their own suppers; for one ate and drank to excess, while another who was poor, or had no supper to bring, was hungry and put to shame. Could this be called a supper in honor of the Lord!

But as the Lord had eaten a religious supper, had partaken of the paschal lamb with his disciples, before he instituted the breaking of the loaf, and drinking of the cup, as commemorative of his death, it seems improper to call it a supper; for it was instituted and eaten *after a supper*. Not in the sense of one of the meals of the day, can it be called either dinner or supper; for it supplies the place of no meal. *Deipnos*, here rendered *supper*, in the days of Homer, represented breakfast.<sup>12</sup> It also signified food in general or a feast. In the times of Demosthenes, it signified a feast or an evening meal. But it is of more importance to observe, that it is in the New Testament used figuratively as well as literally. Hence, we have the gospel blessings compared to a supper. We read

of the 'marriage supper of the Lamb,' and 'the supper of the Great God.' Jesus says, 'If any man open to me, I will (*deipneso*) take supper with him and he with me.' When thus used it neither regards the time of day, nor the quantity eaten. If applied, then, to this institution it is figuratively, as it is elsewhere called "*the feast*." For not only did the Lord appoint it, but in eating it we have communion with the Lord. The same idiom with the addition of the article occurs in [Revelation i. 10](#), '*he kuriake hemera*,' the Lord's day. Upon the whole it appears more probable that the Apostle uses the words *kuriakos deipnos*, or Lord's supper, as applicable to the breaking of the loaf for which they gave thanks in honor of the Lord, than to their own supper or the feasts of love, usual among the brethren. If we say in accordance with the Apostle's style, the Lord's day, the Lord's table, the Lord's cup, we may also say the Lord's supper. For in the Lord's house these are all sacred to him.

As the calling of Bible things by Bible names is an important item in the present reformation, we may here take the occasion to remark, that both "the Sacrament" and "the Eucharist" are of human origin. The former was a name adopted by the Latin church; because the observance was supposed to be an oath or vow to the Lord; and, as the term [320] *sacramentum* signified an oath taken by a Roman soldier, to be true to his general and his country, the presumed to call this institution a sacrament or oath to the Lord. By the Greek church it is called *the Eucharist*, which word imports *the giving of thanks*, because before participating, thanks were presented for the loaf and the cup. It is also called the communion, or "*the communion of the saints*;" but this might indicate that it is exclusively *the communion of saints*; and, therefore, it is more consistent to denominate it literally 'the breaking of the loaf.' But this is the only preliminary to the illustration and proof of our fifth proposition.

We have said that the loaf must be broken before the saints partake of it. Jesus took a loaf from the paschal table and broke it before he gave it to his disciples. They received a broken loaf, emblematic of his body once whole, but by his own consent broken for his disciples. In eating it we then remember that the Lord's body was by his own consent broken or wounded for us. Therefore, he that gives thanks for the loaf should break it, not as the representative of the Lord, but after his example; and after the disciples have partaken of this loaf, handing it to one another, or while they are partaking of it, the disciple who brake it partakes with them of the broken loaf--thus they all have communion with the Lord and with one another in eating the broken loaf. And thus they as priests feast upon his sacrifice. For the priests ate of the sacrifices and were thus partakers of the altar. The proof of all that is found in the institution given in [Matthew xxvi](#), [Mark xiv](#), [Luke xxii](#), and [1 Cor. xi](#). In each of which his breaking of the loaf, *after giving thanks*, and *before* his disciples partook of it, is distinctly stated.

It is not, therefore, strange, that the literal designation of this institution should be, what Luke has given it in his Acts of Apostles thirty years after its institution. The first time he notices it is [Acts ii. 42](#), when he calls it emphatically *te klasei tou artou*, the breaking of the loaf, a name at the time of his writing, A. D. 64, universally understood. For, says he, in recording the piety and devotion of the first converts, 'they continued steadfast in the teaching of the Apostles, in the fellowship, in *the breaking of the loaf*, in the prayers--praising God.' It is true, there is more than breaking a loaf in this institution. But, in accordance with general, if not universal usage, either that which is first or most prominent in laws, institutions, and usages, gives a name to them. Thus we have our *Habeas Corpus*, our *Fieri Facias*, our *Nisi* [321] *Prius*, our *Capias*, our *Venditioni Exponas*, names given from the first words of the law.

But to break a loaf, or *to break bread*, was a phrase common amongst the Jews to denote ordinary eating for refreshment. For example, [Acts ii. 46](#). 'Daily, with one accord, they continued in the temple and in breaking bread from house to house. They ate their *food* with gladness and simplicity of heart.' Also, after Paul had restored Eutychus at Troas, we are informed he brake a loaf and ate. Here it must refer to himself, not only because it is used *indefinitely*, but because he that

eats is the same number with him that breaks a loaf. But when an established usage is referred to, the article or some definite term ascertains what is alluded to. Thus, [Acts ii. 42.](#) it is '*the breaking of the loaf.*' And [Acts xx. 7.](#) it is 'They assembled for *the breaking of the loaf.*' This loaf is explained by Paul, [1 Cor. x. 16.](#) '*The loaf which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ.*' This proposition being now, as we judge, sufficiently evident, we shall proceed to state our sixth.

PROP. VI.--*The breaking of the loaf and the drinking of the cup are commemorative of the Lord's death.*

Upon the loaf and upon the cup of the Lord, in letters which speak not to the eye, but to the heart of every disciple, is inscribed, "*When this you see, remember me.*" Indeed, the Lord says to each disciple, when he receives the symbols into his hand, "This is my body broken for *you.* This is my blood shed for *you.*" The loaf is thus constituted a representation of his body--first whole, then wounded for our sins. The cup is thus instituted a representation of his blood--once his life, but now poured out to cleanse us from our sins. To every disciple he says, For *you* my body was wounded; for *you* my life was taken. In receiving it the disciple says, "Lord, I believe it. My life sprung from thy suffering; my joy from thy sorrows; and my hope of glory everlasting from thy humiliation and abasement even to death." Each disciple, in handing the symbols to his fellow-disciple, says, in effect, "You, my brother, once an alien, are now a citizen of heaven; once a stranger, are now brought home to the family of God. You have owned my Lord as your Lord, my people as your people. Under Jesus the Messiah we are one. Mutually embraced in the everlasting arms, I embrace you in mine: thy sorrows shall be my sorrows, and [322] thy joys my joys. Joint debtors to the favor of God and the love of Jesus, we shall jointly suffer with him, that we may jointly reign with him. Let us, then, renew our strength, remember our King, and hold fast our boasted hope unshaken to the end."

"Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love;  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above."

Here he knows no man after the flesh. Ties that spring from eternal love, revealed in blood, and addressed to his senses, draw forth all that is within him of complacent affection and feeling, to those joint heirs with him of the grace of eternal life. While it represents to him '*the bread of life*'--all the salvation of the Lord--it is the strength of his faith, the joy of his hope, and the life of his love.<sup>13</sup>

This institution commemorates the love which reconciled us to God, and always furnishes us with a new argument to live for him who died for us. Him who feels not the eloquence and power of this argument, all other arguments assail in vain. God's goodness, developed in creation and in his providence, is well designed to lead men to reformation. But the heart, on which these fail, and to which Calvary appeals in vain, is past feeling, obdurate, and irreclaimable, beyond the operation of any moral power known to mortal man.

Every time the disciples assemble around the Lord's table, they are furnished with a new argument also against sin, as well as with a new proof of the love of God. It is as well intended to crucify the world in our hearts, as to quicken us to God, and to diffuse his love within us. Hence it must in reason be a stated part of the Christian worship, in all Christian assemblies; which leads us to state, illustrate, and sustain the following capital proposition, to which the preceding six are all preliminary.

PROP. VII.--*The breaking of the one loaf, and the joint participation of the cup of the Lord, in commemoration of the Lord's death, usually called "the Lord's Supper," is an*

*instituted part of the worship and edification of all Christian congregations in all their stated meetings.*

*Argument 1.* The first Christian congregation which met [323] in Jerusalem, and which was constituted by the twelve Apostles, did as statedly attend upon the breaking of the loaf in their public meetings, as they did upon any other part of the Christian worship. So Luke records, [Acts ii. 42.](#) 'They continued steadfast in the Apostles' doctrine, in the fellowship, in *the breaking of the loaf*, and in the prayers.' Ought we not, then, to continue as steadfast in the breaking of the loaf, as in the teaching of the Apostles, as in the fellowship, as in the prayers commanded by the Apostles?

*Argument 2.* The Apostles taught the churches to do all the Lord commanded. Whatever, then, the churches did by the appointment or concurrence of the Apostles, they did by the commandment of Jesus Christ. Whatever acts of religious worship the Apostles taught and sanctioned in one Christian congregation, they taught and sanctioned in all Christian congregations, because all under the same government of one and the same King. But the church in Troas met upon the first day of the week, consequently all the churches met upon the first day of the week for religious purposes.

Among the acts of worship, or the institutions of the Lord, to which the disciples attended in these meetings, the breaking of the loaf was so conspicuous and so important, that the churches are said to meet on the first day of the week for this purpose. We are expressly told that the disciples at Troas met for this purpose; and what one church did by the authority of the Lord, as a part of his instituted worship, they all did. That the disciples in Troas met for this purpose is not to be inferred; for Luke says positively, [Acts xx. 7.](#) 'And on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together for the breaking of the loaf, Paul, being about to depart on the morrow, discoursed with them, and lengthened out his discourse till midnight.' From the manner in which this meeting of the disciples at Troas is mentioned by the historian, two things are very obvious--1st. That it was an established custom or rule for the disciples to meet on the first day of the week. 2d. That the primary object of their meeting was to break the loaf. They who object to breaking the loaf on the first day of every week when the disciples are assembled, usually preface their objections by telling us, that Luke does not say they broke the loaf *every* first day; and yet they contend against the Sabbatarians, that they ought to observe *every* first day to the Lord in commemoration of his resurrection. The Sabbatarians raise the same [324] objection to this passage, when adduced by all professors of Christianity to authorize the weekly observance of the first day. They say that Luke does not tell us, that they met for any religious purpose on *every* first day. How inconsistent, then, are they who make this sentence an express precedent for observing *every* first day, when arguing against the Sabbatarians, and then turn round and tell us, that it will not prove that they broke the loaf *every* first day! If it does not prove the one, it is most obvious it will not prove the other; for the weekly observance of this day, as a day of the meeting of the disciples, and the weekly breaking of the loaf in those meetings, stand or fall together. Hear it again: 'And on the first day of the week, when the disciples assembled to break the loaf.' Now all must confess, who regard the meaning of words, that the meeting of the disciples and the breaking of the loaf, as far as these words are concerned, are expressed in the same terms as respects the frequency. If the one was *fifty-two* times in a year, or only *once*; so was the other. If they met every first day, they broke the loaf every first day; and if they did not break the loaf every first day, they did not meet every first day. But we argue from the style of Luke, or from his manner of narrating the fact, that they did both. If he had said that on *a* first day the disciples assembled to break the loaf, then I would admit that both the Sabbatarians, and the semiannual or septennial communicants, might find some way of explaining this evidence away.

The definite article is, in the Greek and in the English tongue, prefixed to stated fixed times, and its appearance here is not merely definitive of one day, but expressive of a stated or fixed day. This is so in all languages which have a definite article. Let us illustrate this by a very parallel and plain case. Suppose some 500 or 1000 years hence the annual observance of the 4th of July should have

ceased for several centuries, and that some person or persons devoted to the primitive institutions of this mighty Republic, were desirous of seeing the 4th of every July observed as did the fathers and founders of the Republic during the hale and undegenerate days of primitive republican simplicity. Suppose that none of the records of the first century of this Republic had expressly stated, that it was a regular and fixed custom for a certain class of citizens to pay a particular regard to the 4th day of every July; but that a few incidental expressions in the biography of the leading men in the [325] Republic spoke of it as Luke has done of the meeting at Troas. How would it be managed? For instance, in the life of John Quincy Adams it is written, A. D. 1823, "And on the 4th of July, when the republicans of the city of Washington met to dine, John Q. Adams delivered an oration to them." Would not an American, a thousand years hence, in circumstances such as have been stated, find in these words *one* evidence that it was an established usage, during the first century of this Republic, to regard the 4th of July as aforesaid. He would tell his opponents to mark, that it was not said that on *a* fourth of July, as if it were a particular occurrence; but it was, in the fixed meaning of the English language expressive of a fixed and stated day of peculiar observance. At all events, he could not fail in convincing the most stupid, that the primary intention of that meeting was *to dine*. Whatever might be the frequency or the intention of that dinner, it must be confessed, from the words above cited, that they *met to dine*.

Another circumstance that must somewhat confound the Sabbatarians, and the lawless observers of the breaking of the loaf, may be easily gathered from Luke's narrative. Paul and his company arrived at Troas either on the evening of the first day, or on Monday morning at an early hour; for he departed on Monday morning, as we term it, at an early hour; and we are positively told that he tarried just seven days at Troas. Now, had the disciples been Sabbatarians, or observed the seventh day as a Sabbath, and broke the loaf on it as the Sabbatarians do, they would not have deferred their meeting till the first day, and kept Paul and his company waiting, as he was evidently in a great haste at this time. But his tarrying *seven* days, and his early departure on Monday morning, corroborates the evidence adduced in proof, that the first day of the week was the *fixed* and *stated* day, for the disciples to meet for this purpose.<sup>14</sup>

From the [2d of the Acts](#), then, we learn that *the breaking of the loaf*, was a stated part of the worship of the disciples in their meetings; and from the [20th](#) we learn, that the first day of the week was the stated time for those meetings; and above all, we ought to notice that the most prominent object of their meeting was to break the loaf. Other corroborating evidences of the stated meeting of the disciples on the first day for religious purposes, are found in the fact, that Paul [326] says he had given order to all the congregations in Galatia, as well as that in Corinth, to attend to the fellowship, or the laying up of contributions for the poor saints on the first day of every week. 'On the first day of *every week* let each of you lay somewhat by itself, according as he may have prospered, putting it into the treasury, that when I come there may be no collections'<sup>15</sup> for the saints. *Kata mian Sabbaton* Macknight justly renders, '*the first day of every week*;' for every linguist will admit that *kata polin* means every city; *kata menan*, every month; *kata ecclesian*, every church; and, therefore, in the same usage, *kata mian Sabbaton* means the first day of every week.

Now this prepares the way for asserting not only, that the disciples in Troas assembled on the first day of every week for 'the breaking of the loaf,' but also for adducing a third argument:--

*Argument 3.* The congregation in Corinth met every first day, or the first day of every week, for showing forth the Lord's death. Let the reader bear in mind that he has just heard that Paul commanded the church in Corinth, or every saint in Corinth, to contribute according to his ability, by putting into the treasury every first day his contributions to avoid collections when Paul came. This is agreed on all hands to prove the weekly meeting of the saints. Now, with this concession in mind, we have only to notice what is said, [chap. xi. 20](#). 'When you come together in one place, that is, every week at least, *this is not to eat the Lord's supper*.' To act thus is unworthy of the object of your meeting. To act thus is not to eat the Lord's supper. It is not to show forth the Lord's death.

Thereby declaring that this is the chief object of meeting. When a teacher reproves his pupils for wasting time, he cannot remind them more forcibly of the object of coming to school, nor reprove them with more point, than to say, 'When you act thus, this is not to assemble to learn.' This is the exact import of the Apostle's address, 'When you assemble thus, it is *not* to eat the Lord's supper.' We have seen, then, that the saints met every first day in Corinth; and when they assembled in one place it was to eat the Lord's supper, a declaration of the practice of the primitive congregations as explicit as could incidentally be given, differing only from a direct command in the form in which it is expressed. But it is agreed on all hands, that [327] whatsoever the congregations did with the approbation of the Apostles, they did by their authority. For the Apostles gave them all the Christian institutions. Now as the Apostle Paul approbated their meeting every week, and their coming together into one place to show forth the Lord's death;--and only censured their departure from the meaning of the institution, it is as high authority as we could require for the practice of the weekly meeting of the disciples.

But when [Acts ii. 42. and xx. and 7. 1 Cor. xi. 20 and chap. xvi. 1 & 2](#), are compared and added together, it appears that we act under the influence of apostolic teaching and precedent, when we meet every Lord's day for the breaking of the loaf. But this is still farther demonstrated by a fourth argument drawn from the following fact:--

*Argument 4. No example can be adduced from the New Testament of any Christian congregation assembling on the first day of the week, unless for the breaking of the loaf.* Let an example be adduced by those who teach that Christians ought to meet on the first day of the week not to break the loaf, and then, but not till then, can they impugn the above fact. Till this is done, a denial of it must appear futile in the extreme. The argument, then, is, Christians have no authority, nor are under any obligations to meet on the Lord's day, from any thing which the Apostles said or practised, unless it be to show forth the Lord's death, and to attend to those means of edification and comfort connected with it.

*Argument 5.* If it be not the duty and privilege of every Christian congregation to assemble on the first day of every week to show forth the Lord's death, it will be difficult, if not impossible, from either scripture or reason, to show that it is their duty or privilege to meet monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, annually, or indeed, at all, for this purpose. For from what premises can any person show that it is a duty or privilege to assemble monthly, which will not prove that it is obligatory to meet weekly? We challenge investigation here, and affirm that no man can produce a single reason, why it should or could be a duty or a privilege for a congregation to meet monthly, quarterly, or annually, which will not prove that it is its duty and privilege to assemble every first day for this purpose.

*Argument 6.* Spiritual health, as well as corporeal health, is dependent on food. It is requisite for corporeal health, that the food not only be salutary in its nature, and sufficient in its quantity, but that it be received at proper [328] intervals, and these regular and fixed. Is it otherwise with moral health? Is there no analogy between the bread which perishes, and the bread of life? Is there no analogy between natural and moral life--between natural and moral health? and, if there be, does it not follow, that if the primitive disciples only enjoyed good moral health, when they assembled weekly to show forth the Lord's death, that they cannot enjoy good moral health who only meet quarterly or semi-annually for this purpose?

*Argument 7.* But in the last place, what *commemorative* institution, in any age, under any religious economy, was ordained by divine authority, which had not a fixed time for its observance? Was it the commemoration of the finishing of creation signified in the weekly Sabbath? Was it the Passover, the Pentecost, the Feast of Tabernacles? Was it the Feast of Purim either? What other significant usage was it, the times or occasion of whose observance were not fixed. How often was circumcision to be administered to the same subject? How often Christian immersion? Is there a

single institution commemorative of any thing, the meaning, or frequency, of the observance of which, is not distinctly, either by precept or example, laid down in the Holy Scriptures? Not one of a *social* character, and scarcely one of an individual character. The commemoration of the Lord's death must, then, be a weekly institution--an institution in all the meetings of the disciples for Christian worship; or it must be an anomaly--a thing *sui generis*--an institution like no other of divine origin. And can any one tell why Christians should celebrate the Lord's resurrection *fifty-two* times in a year, and his death only *once, twice, or twelve* times? He that can do this will not be lacking in a lively imagination, however deficient he may be in judgment, or in an acquaintance with the New Testament.

Having written so much on this subject formerly, I shall now introduce a few persons out of the many men of renown who, since the Reformation, have pled this cause. We shall not only introduce them to our readers, but we shall let them speak to them.--

*John Brown*, of Haddington, author of the Dictionary of the Bible, and teacher of theology for that branch of the Presbyterian church called the "*Secession*," has written a treatise on this subject. We shall give him the task of stating and removing the objections to this apostolic institution. [329] The reader will perceive that there are many impurities in his style; and although his speech betrays that he has been in Ashdod, still his arguments are weighty and powerful.

He offers various arguments for the weekly observance of this institution, and states and refutes nine objections to the practice. A few of the strongest we shall quote:--

"All the arguments I ever knew advanced in support of the unfrequent administration of the Lord's supper, appear to me altogether destitute of force. The following are the principal:--

"*Objection 1.* The frequent administration of this ordinance, in the apostolic and primitive ages of Christianity, was commendable and necessary, because the continual persecutions that then raged, gave them ground to fear that every Sabbath might be their last; whereas now we are not in such danger, and therefore need not so frequent use of this ordinance.

"*Answer.* Ought we not still to live as if every Sabbath were to be our last? Have we now a lease on our life more than these had? Did not many Christians in these times live to as great an age as we do now? Indeed, is it not evident, from the best historians, that the church was generally under no persecution above one-third of the time, that weekly communion was practised? But, say they had been constantly exposed to the cruelest persecution, the objection becomes still more absurd. If they attended this ordinance weekly at the peril of their lives does it follow that now, when God gives us greater and better opportunity for it, we ought to omit it? Does God require the greatest work at his people's hands, when he gives least opportunity? Or does he require least work, when he gives the greatest opportunity for it? What kind of a master must God be, if this were the case? Besides, do not men need this ordinance to preserve them from the influence of the world's smiles as much as of its frowns?--"Let us invert this objection, and try if it has more force. It would then run thus: The primitive Christians received the Lord's supper weekly, as their souls were in greater danger from the smiles and allurements of the world, which are usually found more hurtful to men's spiritual concerns than its frowns; and as they had greater opportunity for doing so by their enjoying peace and liberty; yet this frequency of administering and partaking is not requisite now, as we, being under the world's frowns, are in less hazard as to our [330] spiritual concerns; and especially, as we cannot attend upon it but at the peril of our lives, God having expressly declared that he loves mercy better than sacrifice.

"*Objection 2.* The primitive and reforming times were seasons of great spiritual liveliness, and of large communications of divine influences to the souls of believers; whereas it is quite otherwise

now. Therefore, though frequent administration was then commendable; yet, in our languishing decayed state, it is unnecessary.

*Answer.* Ought we to repair seldom to the wells of salvation, because we can bring but little water at once from them? Ought we seldom to endeavor to fill out pitchers at the fountain of living waters, because they are small? Is not this ordinance a cordial for restoring the languishing, strengthening the weak, recovering the sick, and reviving the dying believer? How reasonable, then, is it to argue that languishing, weak, sick, and dying believers, must not have it often administered to them, just because they are not in perfect health?"--"Would not the objection inverted read better? The primitive Christians had this ordinance frequently administered to them, because, being decayed and withered, weak and sickly, and receiving only scanty communications of divine influence at once, it was necessary for them to be often taking new meals: whereas, we being now strong and lively Christians, and receiving on these occasion such large supplies of grace, as are sufficient to enable us to walk many days under this powerful influence, have no occasion for so frequently attending on that ordinance, which is especially calculated for strengthening languishing, weak, sickly believers.

*Objection 3.* If the Lord's supper were frequently administered, it would become less solemn, and, in time, quite contemptible, as we see is the case with baptism, through the frequency of the administration of that ordinance.

*Answer.* Is this means of keeping up the credit of the Lord's supper, of God's devising or not? If it is, where is that part of his word that warrants it? The contrary I have already proved from Scripture. Since, then, it is only of man's invention, what ground is there to hope it will really maintain the credit and solemnity of the ordinance? Did not the Papists of old, pretend to maintain and advance its solemnity, by reduction of the frequency of administration? Did they not take away the cup from the people, which Calvin says was the native consequence of the former? Did [331] they not annex the administration of this ordinance to those seasons which superstition had aggrandized; namely, Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas? Did they not annex a world of ceremonies to it? Did they not pretend that it was a real sacrifice, and that the elements were changed by consecration, into the real body and blood of Christ? And, did all this tend to the support of the proper credit of this ordinance? On the contrary, did it not destroy it? Though the doctrine of transubstantiation procured a kind of reverence for it, yet, was this reverence divine? or, was it not rather devilish, in worshipping the elements? Now, how are we sure that our unfrequent administration of this ordinance will more effectually support its solemnity? Is it not strange that we should have so much encouragement from the practice of the Apostles, the primitive Christians, and the whole of the reformed churches, to profane this solemn ordinance; while the most ignorant and abandoned Papists are our original pattern, for the course that tends to support its proper honor and credit? What a strange case this must be, if, in order to support the credit of God's ordinance, we must forsake the footsteps of the flock, and walk in the paths originally chalked out by the most ignorant and wicked antichristians?

"Besides, if our unfrequent administration of this ordinance render it solemn, would it not become much more so, if administered only once in seven, ten, twenty, thirty, sixty, or a hundred years?"--"Shall we not then find, that those who pray once a month or hear a sermon once-a-year, have their minds far more religiously impressed with solemn views of God, than those who pray seven times a day, and hear a hundred sermons within the year?"

"Let us invert this objection, and see how it stands. All human devices to render God's ordinances more solemn, are impeachments of his wisdom, and have always tended to bring the ordinances into contempt. But unfrequent administration of the supper is a human device, first invented by the worst Papists, and therefore it tends to bring contempt on this ordinance, as we see sadly verified in the practice of those who voluntarily communicate seldom."

The means by which the weekly observance of the supper was set aside, Mr. Brown states in the following words:--

"The means by which the unfrequent administration of this ordinance appears to me to have been introduced into the church, do not savor of the God of truth. The causes [332] that occasioned its introduction appear to have been pride, superstition, covetousness, and carnal complaisance. The eastern hermits, retiring from the society of men, had taken up their residence in deserts and mountains, and, being far removed from the places of its administration, seldom attended. This, though really the effect of their sloth and distance, they pretend to arise from their regard and reverence for this most solemn ordinance. It being easy to imitate them in this imaginary holiness, which lay in neglecting the ordinance of God, many of the eastern Christians left off to communicate, except at such times as superstition had rendered solemn, as at pasch; and contented themselves with being spectators on other occasions. On account of this practice, we find the great and eloquent Chrysostom, once and again, bitterly exclaiming against them as guilty of the highest contempt of God and Christ; and calls their practice a most wicked custom."

An objection not formally stated by Mr. Brown, which I have frequently heard, is drawn from the words, '*as often as you do this, do it in remembrance of me.*' From these words, it is pled that we are without law in regard to the time how often; and consequently cannot be condemned for a partial or total neglect: for 'where there is no law, there is no transgression.' '*As often*' is used not to license the frequency, but to denote the manner. '*Always do it in remembrance of me.*' The connexion in which these words occur regarding the manner or design of the observance, and not how often it may, or may not be celebrated, it is a violation of every rule of interpretation to infer another matter from them, which was not in the eye of the Apostle. Besides, if the words '*as oft*' leave it discretionary with any society how often, they are blameless if they never once, or more than once in all their lives, show forth the Saviour's death. This interpretation makes an observance without reason, without law, without precedent, and consequently without obligation.

Next to Mr. Brown, we shall introduce a few extracts from *William King*, Archbishop of Dublin. The Editors of the *Christian Examiner* presented a very valuable extract from Mr. King, in their 7th of May number of the first volume, from which I quote the following, pp. 163, 165, 166, 167:--

"The following remarks on this institution of our Saviour, are copies from a '*Discourse concerning the [333] Inventions of Men in the Worship of God,*' by William King, of Ireland. He was born at Antrim, 1650; educated at Trinity College, Dublin; and held successively the dignities of Dean of St. Patrick's, Bishop of Derry, and Archbishop of Dublin. He died in 1729. His method, in this discourse is to examine and compare the worship of God, as taught in the Scriptures, with the practice of the different religious sects of the day:--

'Christ's positive command to do this in remembrance of him, &c., must oblige us in some times and in some places; and there can be no better way of determining when we are obliged to do it than by observing when God in his goodness gives us opportunity; for either we are then obliged to do it, or else we may choose whether we will ever do it or no; there being no better means of determining the frequency, than this of God's giving us the opportunity. And the same rule holding in all other general positive commands, such as those that oblige us to charity, we may be sure it holds likewise in this. Therefore, whoever slights or neglects any opportunity of receiving which God afford him, does sin, as certainly as he, who, being enabled by God to perform an act of charity, and invited by a fit object, neglects to relieve him, or shuts up his bowels of compassion against him, concerning *whom* the Scriptures assure us that the love of God dwells not in him. And the arrangement is rather stronger against him who neglects this holy ordinance; for how can it be supposed *that man* has a true love for his Saviour, or a due sense of his sufferings, who refuses or neglects to remember the greatest of all benefits, in the easiest manner, though commanded to do it by his Redeemer, and invited by a fair opportunity of God's own offering.

"It is manifest that if it be not our own fault, we may have an opportunity every Lord's day when we meet together; and therefore that church is guilty of laying aside the command, whose order and worship doth not require and provide for this practice. Christ's command seems to lead us directly to it: for, 'Do this in remembrance of me,' implies that Christ was to leave them, that they were to meet together after he was gone, and that he required them *to remember him at their meetings whilst he was absent*. The very design of our public meetings on the Lord's day, and not on the Jewish Sabbath, is, to remember and keep in our minds a sense of what Christ did and suffered for us [334] till he come again; and this we are obliged to do, not in such a manner as our own inventions suggest, but by such means as Christ himself has prescribed to us, that is, by celebrating this holy ordinance.

'It seems then probable, from the very institution of this ordinance, that our Saviour designed it should be a part of God's service in all the solemn assemblies of Christians, as the passover was in the assemblies of the Jews. To know, therefore, how often Christ requires us to celebrate this feast, we have no more to do, but to inquire how often Christ requires us to meet together; that is, at least every Lord's day.'

Next we shall introduce an American Rabbi of very great celebrity, Dr. John Mason, of New York. The passages which I quote are found in a note attached to page 188th of the New York Edition of Fuller's *Strictures on Sandemanianism*.

"Mr. Fuller does not deny that the Lord's Supper was observed by the first Christians every Lord's day, (nor will this be denied by any man who has candidly investigated the subject,) but he seems to think that [Acts xx. 7.](#) does not prove that it was so; others, eminent for piety and depth of research, have considered this passage as affording a complete proof of the weekly observance of the Lord's supper. Dr. Scott, in his valuable Commentary, observes on this passage, '*Breaking of bread*, or commemorating the death of Christ in the eucharist, was one chief end of their assembling; this ordinance seems to have been *constantly administered every Lord's day*, and probably no professed Christians absented themselves from it, after they had been admitted into the church; unless they lay under some censure, or had some real hindrance.'

"Dr. Mason, of this city, in his *Letters on Frequent Communion*, speaks on this subject with still greater decision. 'It is notorious, that during the first three centuries of the Christian era, communions were held with the frequency of which, among us, we have neither example nor resemblance. It is also notorious, that the original frequency of communions declined as carnality and corruption gained ground. And it is no less notorious, that it has been urged as a weighty duty by the best of men, and the best churches, in the best of times.'

"Weekly communion did not die with the Apostles and their contemporaries. There is a cloud of witnesses to [335] testify that they were kept up by succeeding Christians, with great care and tenderness, for above two centuries. It is not necessary to swell these pages with quotations. The fact is indisputable.

"Communion every Lord's day, was universal, and was preserved in the Greek church till the seventh century; and such as neglected *three weeks* together were excommunicated.

"In this manner did the spirit of ancient piety cherish the memory of the Saviour's love. There was no need of reproof, remonstrance, or entreaty. No trifling excuses for neglect were ever heard from the lips of a Christian; for *such* a neglect had not yet degraded the Christian's name. He carried in his own bosom sufficient inducements to obey, without reluctance, the precepts of his Lord. It was his choice, his consolation, his joy. These were days of life and glory; but days of dishonor and death were shortly to succeed; nor was there a more ominous symptom of their approach, than the decline of frequent communicating. For as the power of religion appears in a solicitude to magnify

the Lord Jesus continually, so the decay of it is first detected by the encroachments of indifference. It was in the *fourth* century, that the church began very discernibly to forsake her first love.

"The excellent Calvin complains that in this day, professors, conceiving that they had fully discharged their duty by a single communion, resigned themselves for the rest of the year, to supineness and sloth. 'It ought to have been,' says he, 'far otherwise. *Every week*, at least, the table of the Lord should have been spread for Christian assemblies; and the promises declared, by which, partaking of it, we might be spiritually fed.'"<sup>16</sup>

We shall now hear the celebrated John Wesley. After *fifty five* years' reflection upon the subject, he decides that Christians should show forth the Lord's death every Lord's day. He prefaces 106th Sermon, [Luke xxii. 19](#), with this remark:--

"This discourse was written above fifty and five years ago, for the use of my pupils at Oxford. I have added very little, but retrenched much; as I then used more words than I now do. But I thank God, I have not yet seen cause to [336] alter my sentiments in any point which is therein delivered."

The Sermon is titled "The Duty of Constant Communion," concerning which the Reformer says--

"It is no wonder that men who have no fear of God, should never think of doing this. But it is strange that it should be neglected by any that do fear God, and desire to save their souls; and yet nothing is more common. One reason why many neglect it, they are so much afraid of *eating and drinking unworthily*, that they never think how much greater the danger is, when they do not eat or drink at all."

In speaking of *constantly* receiving the supper, Mr. Wesley says--

"I say *constantly* receiving. For as to the phrase *frequent* communion, it is absurd to the last degree. If it means any thing else but constant, it means more than can be proved to be the duty of any man. For if we are not obliged to communicate *constantly*, by what argument can it be proved that we are obliged to communicate *frequently*? yea, more than once a year? or once in seven years? or once before we die? Every argument brought for this, either proves that we ought to do it *constantly*, or proves nothing at all. Therefore that undeterminate unmeaning way of speaking, ought to be laid aside by all by all men of understanding. Our power is the only rule of our duty. Whatever we can do, that we ought. With respect either to this, or any other command, he that, when he may obey if he will, does not, will have no place in the kingdom of heaven."

Though we may have some objections to the style in which John Wesley speaks of the meaning of this institution, as we have indeed to that of all the others from whom we have quoted, yet we would recommend to the whole Methodistic community the close perusal of the above Sermon. It will be found in vol. 3, pp. 171-179.

The Elders among the Methodists, with whom John Wesley is such high authority, we would remind of his *advice*, found in his Letters to America, 1784, lately quoted in the Gospel Herald, Lexington, Kentucky. "I ALSO ADVISE THE ELDERS TO ADMINISTER THE SUPPER OF THE LORD ON EVERY LORD'S DAY."

So much for John Brown, John Mason, and John Wesley, and the authorities which they quoted. While quoting [337] the sayings of the Johns, I am reminded of something said by the great John Milton, the "immortal bard" of England. In his posthumous works, he says; "The Lord's supper (which the doctrine of transubstantiation, or rather anthropophagy, has well nigh converted into a banquet of cannibals,) is essential to be observed, and may be administered by any one with

propriety, as well as by an appointed minister. There is no order of men which can claim to itself either the right of distribution, or the power of withholding the sacred elements, seeing that in the church we are all alike priests." "The master of a family, or any one appointed by him, is at liberty to celebrate the Lord's supper from house to house, as was done in the dispensation of the passover"--"all Christians are a royal priesthood: therefore any believer is competent to act as an ordinary minister according as convenience may require, provided only he be endowed with the necessary gifts, these gifts constituting his commission." Thus did the famous John Milton make way for the weekly observance of the supper, by divesting it of the priestly appendages and penances of the dark ages.

A cloud of witnesses to the plainness and evidence of the New Testament on the subject of the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper, might be adduced. But this we think unnecessary; and as we would avoid prolixity and tediousness, we shall only add a few extracts from the third volume of the *Christian Baptist*, 2d ed. p. 254, in proof of the assertion--*all antiquity is on the side of the disciples meeting every first day to break the loaf.*--

All antiquity concurs in evincing that, for the *three first centuries*, all the churches broke bread once a week. Pliny, in his Epistles, Book x. Justin Martyr, in his Second Apology for the Christians, and Tertullian, De Ora. page 135, testify that it was the universal practice in all the weekly assemblies of the brethren, after they had prayed and sung praises--"Then bread and wine being brought to the *chief brother*, he taketh it and offereth praise and thanksgiving to the Father, in the name of the Son and Holy Spirit. After prayer and thanksgiving, the whole assembly saith, *Amen!* When thanksgiving is ended by the *chief guide*, and the consent of the whole people, the *deacons* (as we call them) give to every one present part of the bread and wine, over which thanks are given.'

"The weekly communion was prepared in the Greek [338] church till the *seventh century*; and, by one of their canons, 'such as neglected *three weeks together*, were excommunicated.'<sup>17</sup>

"In the *fourth century*, when all things began to be changed by baptized Pagans, the practice began to decline. Some of the councils in the western part of the Roman Empire, by their canons, strove to keep it up. The council held at Illiberis in Spain, A. D. 324, decreed that 'no offerings should be received from such as did not receive the Lord's Supper.'<sup>18</sup>

"The council at Antioch, A. D. 341, decreed that 'all who came to church, and heard the Scriptures read, but afterwards joined not in prayer, and receiving the sacrament, should be cast out of the church, till such time as they gave public proof of their repentance.'<sup>19</sup>

"All these canons were unable to keep the carnal crowd of professors in a practice for which they had no spiritual taste; and, indeed, it was likely to get out of use altogether. To prevent this, the Council of Agatha, in Languedoc, A. D. 506, decreed that 'none should be esteemed good Christians who did not *communicate* at least *three times* a year--at Christmas, Easter, and Whitsunday.'<sup>20</sup> This soon became the standard of a good Christian, and it was judged presumptuous to commune oftener.

"Things went on in this way for more than 600 years, until they got tired of even *three* communications in one year; and the infamous Council of Lateran, which decreed auricular confession and transubstantiation, decreed that 'an annual communion at Easter was sufficient.' This association of the 'sacrament' with Easter, and the mechanical devotion of the ignorant at this season, greatly contributed to the worship of the Host.<sup>21</sup> Thus the breaking of bread in simplicity and godly sincerity once-a-week, degenerated into a pompous sacrament once-a-year at Easter.

"At the Reformation this subject was but slightly investigated by the reformers. Some of them, however, paid some attention to it. Even Calvin, in his Institutes, lib. 4. chap. xvii. sect. 46, says,

'And truly this custom, which enjoins communicating once-a-year, *is a most evident contrivance of the Devil*, by whose instrumentality soever it may have been determined.'

"And again (Inst. lib. 6, chap. xviii. sect. 56.) he says, [339] 'It ought to have been far otherwise. *Every week*, at least, the table of the Lord should have been spread for Christian assemblies, and the promises declared by which, in partaking of it, we might be spiritually fed.'

"Martin Chemnitz, Witsius, Calderwood, and others of the reformers and controversialists, concur with Calvin; and, indeed, almost every commentator on the New Testament concurs with the Presbyterian Henry in the remarks on [Acts xx. 7](#). 'In the primitive times it was the custom of many churches to receive the Lord's supper every Lord's day.'

"The Belgic reformed church, in 1851, appointed the supper to be received every other month. The reformed churches of France, after saying that they had been too remiss in observing the supper but four times a year, advise a *greater frequency*. The church of Scotland began with *four* sacraments in a year; but some of her ministers got up to *twelve* times. Thus things stood till the close of the last century.

"Since the commencement of the present century, many congregations in England, Scotland, Ireland, and some in the United States and Canada, both Independents and Baptists, have attended upon the supper every Lord's day, and the practice is every day gaining ground.

"These historical notices may be of some use to those who are ever and anon crying out *Innovation! Innovation!* But we advocate the principle and the practice on apostolic grounds alone. Blessed is the servant, who, knowing his Master's will, doeth it with expedition and delight!

"Those who would wish to see an able refutation of the Presbyterian mode of observing the sacrament, and a defence of weekly communion, would do well to read Dr. John Mason's Letters on Frequent Communion, who is himself a high toned Presbyterian, and consequently his remarks will be more regarded by his brethren than mine."

Thus our seventh proposition is sustained by the explicit declarations of the New Testament, by the reasonableness of the thing itself when suggested by the Apostles, by analogy, by the conclusions of the most eminent reformers, and by the concurrent voice of all Christian antiquity. But on the plain sayings of the Lord and his Apostles, we rely for authority and instruction upon *this* and *every other* Christian institution.

It does, indeed, appear somewhat incongruous, that [340] arguments should have to be submitted to urge Christians to convene weekly around the Lord's table. Much more in accordance with the genius of our religion would it be, to see them ever solicitous to be honored with a seat at the King's table, and asking with intense interest, might they be permitted so often to eat in his presence, and in honor of his love. To have to withstand their daily convocations for this purpose, would not be a task so unnatural and so unreasonable, as to have to reason and expostulate with them, to urge them to assemble for weekly communion.

But as the want of appetite for our animal sustenance is a symptom of ill health, or approaching disease; so a want of relish for spiritual food is indicative of a want to spiritual health, or of the presence of a moral disease, which, if not healed, must issue in apostacy from the Living Head. Hence among the most equivocal prognosis of a spiritual decline, the most decisive is a want to appetite for the nourishment, which the Good Physician prepared and prescribed for his family. A healthy and vigorous Christian, excluded from the use and enjoyment of all the provisions of the Lord's house cannot be found.

But much depends upon the *manner* of celebrating the supper, as well as upon the *frequency*. The simplicity of the Christian institution runs through every part of it. While there is the form of doing every thing, there is all attention to the thing signified. But there is the form as well as the substance, and every thing that is done, must be done in some manner. The well bred Christian is like the well bred gentleman--his manners are graceful, easy, artless, and simple. All stiffness and forced formality are as graceless in the Christian as in the gentleman. A courteous and polite family differs exceedingly from a soldier's mess mates or a ship's crew, in all the ceremonies of the table. There is a Christian decency and a Christian order, as well as political courtesy and complaisance.

Nothing is more disgusting than mimicry. It is hypocrisy in manners, which, like hypocrisy in religion, is more odious than apathy or vulgarity. There is a saintishness in demeanor and appearance, which differs as much from sanctity, as foppery from politeness. The appearance of sanctimoniousness is as much to be avoided as actual licentiousness of morals. An austere and rigid pharisaism sits as awkwardly upon a Christian, as a mourning habit upon [341] a bride. Cheerfulness is not mirth--solemnity is not pharisaism--joy is not noise--nor eating, festivity.

But to act right in any thing we must feel right. If we would show love, we must first possess it. If a person would walk humbly, he must be humble: and if one would act the Christian on any occasion, he must always live the Christian. Persons who daily converse with God, and who constantly meditate upon his salvation, will not need to be told how they should demean themselves at the Lord's table.

The following extract from my Memorandum Book furnishes the nighest approach to the model, which we have in our eye, of good order and Christian decency in celebrating this institution. Indeed, the whole order of that congregation was comely:--

"The church in ----- consisted of about fifty members. Not having any person whom they regarded as filling Paul's outlines of a Bishop, they had appointed two senior members, of a very grave deportment, to preside in their meetings. These persons were not competent to labor in the word and teaching; but they were qualified to rule well, and to preside with Christian dignity. One of them presided at each meeting. After they had assembled in the morning, which was at eleven o'clock, (for they had agreed to meet at eleven and to adjourn at two o'clock during the Winter season,) and after they had saluted one another in a very familiar and cordial manner, as brethren are wont to do who meet for social purposes; the president for the day arose and said: 'Brethren, being assembled in the name and by the authority of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, on this day of his resurrection, let us unite in celebrating his praise.' He then repeated the following stanza:--

"Christ the Lord is risen to-day!  
Sons of men and angels say;  
Raise your joys and triumphs high,  
Sing, O heavens! and, earth, reply!"

"The congregation arose and sang this psalm in animating strains. He then called upon a brother, who was a very distinct and emphatic reader, to read a section of the evangelical history. He arose and read, in a very audible voice, the history of the crucifixion of the Messiah. After a pause of a few moments, the president called upon a brother to pray in the name of the congregation. His prayer abounded with thanksgivings to the Father of Mercies, and with [342] supplications for such blessings on themselves and for all men as were promised to those who ask, or for which men were commanded to pray. The language was very appropriate; no unmeaning repetitions, no labor of words, no effort to say any thing and every thing that came into his mind; but to express slowly, distinctly, and emphatically, the desires of the heart. The prayer was comparatively short; and the whole congregation, brethren and sisters, pronounced aloud the final *Amen*.

"After prayer a passage in one of the Epistles was read by the president himself, and a song was called for. A brother arose, and after naming the page, repeated--

"'Twas on that night when doom'd to know  
That eager rage of every foe;  
That night in which he was betray'd  
The Saviour of the world took bread."

"He then sat down, and the congregation sang with much feeling.

"I observed that the table was furnished before the disciples met in the morning, and that the disciples occupied a few benches on each side of it, while the strangers sat off on seats more remote. The president arose and said that our Lord had a table for his friends, and that he invited his disciples to sup with him. 'In memory of his death, this monumental table,' said he, 'was instituted; and as the Lord ever lives in heaven, so he ever lives in the hearts of his people. As the first disciples, taught by the Apostles in person, came together into one place to eat the Lord's supper, and as they selected the first day of the week in honor of his resurrection, for this purpose; so we, having the same Lord, the same faith, the same hope with them, have vowed to do as they did. We owe as much to the Lord as they; and ought to love, honor, and obey him as they.' Thus having spoken, he took a small loaf from the table, and in one or two periods gave thanks for it. After thanksgiving, he raised it in his hand, and significantly brake it, and handed it to the disciples on each side of him, who passed the broken loaf from one to another, until they all partook of it. There was no stiffness, no formality, no pageantry; all was easy, familiar, solemn, cheerful. He then took the cup in a similar manner, and returned thanks for it, and handed it to the disciples sitting next to him, who passed it round; each one waiting upon his brother, until all were [343] served. The thanksgiving before the breaking of the loaf, and the disturbing of the cup, were as brief and pertinent to the occasion, as the thanks usually presented at a common table for the ordinary blessing of God's bounty. They then arose, and with one consent sang--

"To him that lov'd the sons of men,  
And washed us in his blood;  
To royal honors rais'd our heads,  
And made us priests to God!"

"The president of the meeting called upon a brother to remember the poor, and those ignorant of the way of life, before the Lord. He kneeled down and the brethren all united with him in supplicating the Father of Mercies in behalf of all the sons and daughters of affliction; the poor and the destitute, and in behalf of the conversion of the world. After this prayer the fellowship, or contribution, was attended to; and the whole church proved the sincerity of their desires, by the cheerfulness and liberality which they seemed to evince, in putting into the treasury as the Lord had prospered them.

"A general invitation was tendered to all the brotherhood if they had any thing to propose or inquire, tending to the edification of the body. Several brethren arose in succession, and read several passages in the Old and New Testaments, relative to some matters which had been subjects of former investigation and inquiry. Sundry remarks were made; and after singing several spiritual songs selected by the brethren, the president, on motion of a brother who signified that the hour of adjournment had arrived, concluded the meeting by pronouncing the apostolic benediction.

"I understand that all these items were attended to in all their meetings; yet the order of attendance was not invariably the same. On all the occasions on which I was present with them, no person arose or speak without invitation, or without asking permission of the president, and no person finally left the meeting before the hour of adjournment, without special leave. Nothing appeared to be done in a formal or ceremonious manner. Every thing exhibited the power of

godliness as well as the form; and no person could attend to all that passed without being edified and convinced that the Spirit of God was there. The joy, the affection, and the reverence which appeared in this little assembly, was the strongest argument in favor of their order, and the best comment on the excellency of the Christian institution." [344]

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- <sup>1</sup> [1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.](#) [314]  
<sup>2</sup> [1 Peter ii. 5.](#) [315]  
<sup>3</sup> [1 Tim. iii. 15.](#) [315]  
<sup>4</sup> Greek, oikos Theou. [315]  
<sup>5</sup> [Heb. x. 21.](#) [315]  
<sup>6</sup> Greek, ho oikos Theou. [315]  
<sup>7</sup> [1 Cor. x. 21.](#) [316]  
<sup>8</sup> [1 Cor. x. 17.](#) [317]  
<sup>9</sup> [Mat. xvi. 9.](#) [317]  
<sup>10</sup> [Heb. iii. 6.](#) [318]  
<sup>11</sup> [1 Pet. ii. 5.](#) [318]  
<sup>12</sup> Iliad 2, line 381-399. and 8, line 53-66. [320]  
<sup>13</sup> Christian Baptist, vol. 3, No. 1. In that volume, in the Fall of 1825, were written four essays on the breaking of bread, which see. [323]  
<sup>14</sup> C. B. pp. 211-212. [326]  
<sup>15</sup> [1 Cor. xvi. 2.](#) [327]  
<sup>16</sup> Mason's Letters on Frequent Communion, pp. 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, and 42. Edinburgh Edition, 1799. [336]  
<sup>17</sup> Erskine's Dissertations, p. 271. [339]  
<sup>18</sup> Council Illib. Can. 28. [339]  
<sup>18</sup> Council Antioch. Can. 2. [339]  
<sup>20</sup> Coun, Agatha, Can. 18. [339]  
<sup>21</sup> Bingham's Ori., B. xv. C. 9. [339]