

On The Meaning of “Break” as Pertaining to the Loaf of the Lord’s Supper

(As defined by two of the most able scholars of both Greek and Hebrew:
Adam Clark, LLD, FSA & Alexander Campbell)

Adam Clark on Matt 26:26, “*And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.*”

“We often read in the scriptures of “*breaking bread*”, but never cutting it. The Jewish people had nothing similar to our high raised loaf: their bread was made broad and thin, and was consequently brittle, and to divide it there was no need of a knife. The breaking of the bread I consider essential to the proper performance of this solemn and significant ceremony, because it was designed by our Lord to shadow forth the wounding, piercing, and breaking of His body upon the cross; and, as all this was essentially necessary to the making a full atonement for the sin of the world, so it is of vast importance that this apparently little circumstance, AS THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD, should be carefully attended to, that the godly communicant may have every necessary assistance to enable him to discern the Lord’s body. That the breaking of this bread to be distributed, and is a necessary part of this rite is evident, first by the continual mention of St. Paul and all the evangelists, when they speak of the institution of this sacrament, which shows it to be a necessary part of it. Secondly, our Lord said, “1 Corinthians 11:24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, “*Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you.*” (1 Cor. 11:24). But when the elements are not broken, it can no more be said, “this is my broken for you”, than were the elements not given. Thirdly, our Lord said, “*this do in remembrance of me*”, eat this bread, broken in remembrance of my body broken on the cross; now when there is no body broken is distributed, there, nothing can be eaten in memorial of this broken body. Lastly, the Apostle, by saying “*The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*” sufficiently informs us that the eating of a BROKEN body is necessary to that end. (1 Cor. 10:16). Hence it was that this rite, of distributing bread BROKEN continued for a thousand years, and was, as Humbertus testifies, observed in the Roman church in the eleventh century. At the present the opposite is as boldly practiced as if the real scriptural rite had never been observed in the church of Christ.” From *Clark’s Commentaries*.

Alexander Campbell on the one loaf at the Lord’s table.

“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 and 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 had 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 same 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 eat of the sacrifices and were partakers of the altar. The proof of this found in Matt. 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, and 1 Cor. 10. In each of which his breaking of the loaf after giving thanks and before His disciples partook of it, is distinctly stated.” From “*Christian System*”, page 329.

In his report of the churches he visited (pg. 353), setting forth their method and manner of procedure in the public assembly on the first day worship, when he came to the manner of partaking the Lord’s Supper, the one officiating at the table, “RAISED THE LOAF 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.”

Note: These two accounts agree perfectly with the scriptural writings cited. This practice was continued by churches of Christ for over a thousand years until the year 1928, when several preachers began to advocate that we should not (significantly) break the bread before passing to the congregation, but should merely “break off” a piece (and eat it) before passing to the congregation. This, of course, required proof that Christ “broke off” a piece and ate it, which they cannot do, inasmuch so that the scriptures do not teach it. This scriptural practice is still practiced by a small minority of congregations throughout our nation to the present day.

Many are the arguments advanced by the advocates of this innovative practice, but always falling short of success because it cannot be proven. This, however, is not the thrust of this article: merely the testimony of these two scholars, one of which was a member of Christ’s body.

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