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'SHUT IN WITH THEE': THE MORNING MEETING AMONG SCOTTISH OPEN BRETHREN, 1840s-1960s

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T he Brethren movement had its origins in the early nineteenth century in Ireland and the south of England, first appearing in Scotland in 1838.[1] The morning meeting gave quintessential expression to the piety of the members and was central to its practice. In the 1870s a former Presbyterian who was looking for the ideal pattern of the Church witnessed his first Brethren morning meeting in the village of K—.[2] Converted in the revivals in the 1860s he was eventually to join this community. A number of years later he described his initial impressions.

> The seats were plain, and all alike, and in the place where I would have naturally looked for the pulpit, there stood a small table, covered with a white cloth, and on it a loaf of bread unbroken, and a cup of wine beside it....
>
> The worship of these simple, warm-hearted believers, was such as I had never seen or heard of before. There was no minister, no president; nearly all the brethren took part: some in giving out a hymn, some in prayer and thanksgiving, and several read short portions of the Word, making a few remarks. I particularly noticed that *all* directed our hearts to the Person and Work of Christ. There had been no pre-arrangement, yet everything done was in beautiful order and harmony. I had read of the guidance of the Holy Spirit in 1 Cor. xiv., but, like many others, I had thought it was something of the past: here I saw it before my eyes, and my heart was won by the simplicity and beauty of God's way. Then, after thanks being given, the loaf and the cup were passed round—not in that hasty manner I had been accustomed to, nor yet by officials set apart for the purpose, but from hand to hand among those there gathered;

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[1] Neil Dickson, 'Scottish Brethren: division and wholeness 1838-1916', *Christian Brethren Review Journal*, 41 (1990), pp.5-41.
[2] During this period, assemblies existed in Kirkfieldbank, Lanarkshire, and Kemnay, Aberdeenshire; the latter is the more likely identification in view of the origins of this anonymous individual's publisher, John Ritchie, in neighbouring Inverurie.

each slowly, reverently, partaking—in many cases with tears—of the Divinely chosen emblems. Never before did Calvary seem so near and real.[3]

The account emphasises discontinuity with the spectator's previous mode of worship. It juxtaposes the ordinariness of the surroundings with the supernaturalism of the event. Its language and imagery, doubtless coloured by memory, stress simplicity, solemnity and the lack of ritual; Christ as the focus of the gathering; the exclusion of human direction and an openness to the impulse of the Spirit. These were among the significant features of Brethren spirituality encompassed by the Sunday morning meeting or 'the breaking of bread'.[4] In 1848 the movement divided into 'Open' and 'Exclusive' factions,[5] Although the discussion in this paper will primarily be concerned with the Open Brethren in Scotland from the 1840s to the 1960s, much of it will be applicable to the movement outside these imposed limits.

Scottish Brethren inherited the service having several strands of continuity with earlier Christian worship already woven into it. The breaking of bread held in Dublin in 1829 to which Brethren origins are traced was held weekly, something which would be natural for most of the early leaders given their Anglican background. It had a set order of service, but gradually it allowed for spontaneous participation among its attenders.[6] Historians have speculated that a Scottish influence was at work in this transformation of worship.[7] The thinking of John Glas on mutual exhortation, it is surmised, could have reached the nascent movement through Thomas Kelly or John Walker who had founded congregations in Ireland in the early nineteenth century.[8]

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[3] Anon., *How I was Led Outside the Camp* (Kilmarnock, n.d.) [pp.5-7],

[4] For the latter term cf. Harold H. Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren 1825-1850* (London, 1967), p.299, n.190.

[5] For the various Brethren groupings see, F. Roy Coad, *A History of the Brethren Movement*, 2nd ed. (Exeter, 1976).

[6] J.G. Bellet to James McAllister, [J.G. Bellet et al.], *Interesting Reminiscences of the early History of 'Brethren' with Letter from J.G. Bellet* (London, n.d.). pp.7-8.

[7] Derek B. Murray, 'The influence of John Glas', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* [hereafter *RSCHS*], 22 (1984), pp.45-56.

[8] Harold H. Rowdon, 'Secession from the Established Church in the early nineteenth century', *Vox Evangelica*, 3 (1964), pp.76-88; Harold H. Rowdon, 'The problem of Brethren identity in historical perspective', *Biblotica storica* Toscana, 11 (1988), pp.159-174; Grayson Carter, 'Evangelical seceders from the Church of England, c. 1800-1850' (Oxford Ph.D. thesis, 1990), pp.287-9.

Certainly the Brethren were aware of their teachings, but a direct influence has been impossible to prove.[9] When the Bristol pioneers Henry Craik and George Müller were moving their congregation away from clerical administration of the sacrament, they quoted James Haldane's phrase for participation, 'social worship', although this might reflect contemporary usage rather than familiarity with Haldane's thought which itself was later influenced by Glasite teaching.[10] The Brethren and Edward Irving had mutual interests for a period. Although spontaneous worship was accepted, they held back from Irving's pentecostalism,[11] leading Ian Rennie to describe their worship as a 'laundered charismaticism'.[12] Such worship was probably further developed by the accession of a number of prominent Quakers in the aftermath among them of the Beaconite controversy of 1835-6.[13] At least one Brethren Scot noted the similarity between the morning meeting and the Quaker use of silence.[14] However, it was the mode of worship described in I Corinthians to which appeal was exclusively made[15]—a decisive reason for not citing contemporary influences. The mixture of Glasite mutual edification and Quaker impulsive contribution was dictated by a desire for Christian primitivism which was, it has been recently maintained, the central concern in the formation of the movement.[16]

That the Brethren morning meeting showed continuity with the traditions of some Scottish dissenters would explain why it proved acceptable to some within Scotland.[17] John Bowes, a former Primitive

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[9] Cf. W. B. Neatby, *A History of the Plymouth Brethren* (London, 1901), p.28.

[10] [George Müller], *A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller, written by Himself*, 6 vols, 9th edn. (London, 1895), 1, p.281; cf. James Alexander Haldane, *A View of the Social Worship and Ordinances Observed by the First Christians* (Edinburgh, 1805).

[11] Timothy C.F. Stunt, 'Irvingite pentecostalism and the early Brethren', *Christian Brethren Research Fellowship Journal*, 10 (1965), pp.40-8.

[12] Ian S. Rennie, 'Aspects of Christian Brethren spirituality', J.I. Packer and Loren Wilkinson, (eds), *Alive to God: Studies in Spirituality* (Downers Grove, Ill, 1992), p.201.

[13] Timothy C.F. Stunt, *Early Brethren and the Society of Friends, Christian Brethren Research Fellowship Occasional Paper No.3* (Pinner, 1970).

[14] A. Borland, 'The Lord's Supper', *The Believers' Magazine* [hereafter *BM*], 61 (1951), p.122.

[15] Anon., 'Plain words about the morning meeting', *The Witness* [hereafter *W*], 57 (1927), p.87; Robert Rendall to the editor, *W*, 75 (1945), p.79.

[16] James Patrick Callahan, *Primitivist Piety: the Ecclesiology of the Early Plymouth Brethren* (Lanham, My, 1996).

[17] The similarity of Glasite worship and that of the Brethren was shown by the reprinting among the latter of a correspondence initiated in New York (and printed there in 1820) among churches of a primitivist type as *Letters Concerning their Principles and Order from Assemblies of Believers in 1818-1820,* (London, 1889). In this correspondence several Scotch

Methodist preacher who had adopted Glasite practices in his congregation in Dundee, made contact with the early Brethren movement in the south of England in 1839,[18] and for the following two decades he was the principal disseminator of Brethren ecclesiology within Scotland. During this period there were strong Glasite influences on Scottish Brethren worship. In 1847 the assembly at Newmains, Lanarkshire, which became one of the most influential in the county, evolved from an Evangelical Union congregation apparently independently of contact with Brethren elsewhere,[19]19 probably due to an infusion of Glasite ideas. The Glasite phrase, 'the church should edify itself', was used for ministry from among the members, and one of them presided at the first communion, a Scotch Baptist practice.[20] The pattern favoured by Bowes can be seen from the brief description he gave of the worship of the congregation he founded in Lochee, Angus: 'we meet to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread; three or four generally speak.'[21] Continuity with Scottish dissenting traditions gave an advantage, but discontinuity was sharp for those coming from the mainstream Presbyterian tradition. At Neilston, Renfrewshire, the difficulty in the 1850s was in getting the members to adopt unstructured, open participation and to cease relying on one person fulfilling a ministerial office.[22]

Mid-Victorian revivalism, itself shaped by Brethren influence,[23] became the dominant context out of which the Scottish movement emerged, and the practice of open worship continued to attract Scotch Baptists to the movement.[24] It is, perhaps, a shared background in

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Baptist churches in Scotland described their customs in terms sufficiently close to those of the Brethren to be mistaken later for an earlier form of the movement in the country by C. J. Pickering et al., *1865-1965: The Half-Yearly Meetings of Christians in Glasgow* ([Glasgow, 1965]), p.3.

[18] John Bowes, *The Autobiography: or the History of the Life of John Bowes* (Glasgow, 1872), pp.221-32.

[19] David J. Beattie, *Brethren: the Story of a Great Recovery* (Kilmarnock [1939]), p.202.

[20] John Smith to John Bowes, 12 Oct 1848, quoted in Bowes, *Autobiography*, pp.454-7.

[21] John Bowes, 'The work of God at Dundee and Lochee', *The Truth Promoter* [hereafter *TP*], 7 (1859-61), p.11.

[22] 'Extracts from the Journal of John Bowes', *TP*, 3 (1853-5), pp.238-40; *ibid.*, *TP*, 6 (1858-9), pp.127-8.

[23] John Kent, *Holding the Fort: Studies in Victorian Revivalism* (London, 1978), p.116; D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989), p.117.

[24] Neil Dickson, 'Brethren and Baptists in Scotland', *The Baptist Quarterly*, 33 (1990), pp.372-87.

contemporary revivalism which, despite the discontinuities, gave the anonymous observer in K— the feeling that his searching was at an end when he witnessed his first morning meeting. A greater stress on extempore prayers and hymn singing, more suited to impulsive views of the Spirit current in contemporary revivalism rather than the Glasite practice of exhortation, came to predominate at the morning meeting. This was not accomplished everywhere immediately. During the 1870s assemblies were formed in the north east independently of Brethren elsewhere, and Scotch Baptist influences were initially present among them.[25] In 1873 the first breaking of bread at Insch, Aberdeenshire, was a series of scripture readings, with a prayer of thanksgiving at the dispensing of each element, followed by a hymn and an exhortation.[26] But by the following year the service had been assimilated to the pattern of alternating prayers and hymns which John R. Caldwell, editor of the principal Brethren magazine, *The Witness*, stated was the normal pattern of a morning meeting.[27] His successor Henry Pickering described in 1934 what he termed 'the ordinary way', used in ninety per cent of some 10,000 assemblies worldwide, with 'each accredited brother being absolutely free to take part in hymn, prayer, reading or ministry. The only arranged brother being one to give out names and notices.' But some assemblies in Glasgow had what Pickering called 'The Twofold Meeting', with the first hour following the 'ordinary' pattern and, after an interval, a further hour at which a pre-arranged preacher would speak.[28] 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 1880s 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

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[25] Dickson, 'Scottish Brethren', pp.16-20.
[26] Insch, Fordyce Hall, Minute Book 1873-91, p.1.
[27] J.R. Caldwell, 'Object of the Lord's Supper', *W*, 22 (1892), pp.126-7.
[28] HyP[ickering]., 'The order of the morning meeting', *W*, 54 (1934), p.85.

a corporate act.[29] Such prescriptions about the morning meeting led to controversy in many assemblies,[30] and eventually their advocates seceded in 1892-3 to form what became the Churches of God.[31] 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,[32] 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 burnt offerings; others favoured concentrating on either the meat offering (interpreted as a type of Christ's perfect humanity) or the burnt offering (thought to signify Christ's devotedness in death to God) only.[33] 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.[34] The worshippers were sympathetically retracing the life of Christ to the cross and the morning meeting was to follow this progress.[35] 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'.[36] The seeming oxymoron of a spontaneous liturgy in these uses of the Old Testament led to accusations of ritualism.[37] Those who promoted them were also wanting to intensify sectarianism. They combined with their teaching on the morning

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[29] F.A.B[anks]., 'The feast of remembrance and testimony', *The Northern Witness* [hereafter *NW*], 16 (1886), p.74-5; cf. ibid., 'Question CCXXV', p.80; 'Question CVI', *NW*, 12 (1882), p.111; 'The Believer's Question Box', *BM*, 37 (1927), p.90.

[30] E.g., W.H. Clare, *Pioneer Preaching or Work Well Done* (London & Glasgow [1925]), p.88.

[31] For a description of the breaking of bread in the Churches of God, see G. Willis and B.R. Wilson, 'The Churches of God: pattern and practice', B.R. Wilson, ed., *Patterns of Sectarianism: Organisation and Ideology in Social and Religious Movements* (London, 1967), Appendix, pp. 285-6.

[32] J.N.D[arby]., *Hints on the Tabernacle, the Sacrifices, the Day of Atonement, the Feasts, and the Coverings of the Holy Things* (London, n.d.), pp.25-59; C.H.M[ackintosh]., *Notes on Leviticus*, 2nd edn (London [1861]).

[33] A. Borland, 'The Lord's Supper', *BM*, 61 (1951), pp.1-2.

[34] W.R. Lewis and E.W. Rodgers to the editor, *W*, 82 (1952), p.120.

[35] I.Y. E[wan], 'When should the bread be broken?', *Present Testimony* [hereafter *PT*], 6 (1940-1), pp.984-8.

[36] J.R[odgers]., 'In the beginning', *PT*, 4 (n.d.), pp.1110-12; Andrew Borland, 'The Lord's Supper', J.B. Watson, ed., *The Church: a Symposium* (London, 1949), p.78.

[37] A. Borland, 'The Lord's Supper', *BM*, 60, (1950), pp.73-5; Lewis and Rodgers to the editor, W, 82 (1952), p.120; G.C.D. Howley, 'The Church and its members', in, *A New Testament Church in 1955* (Rushden [1956]), p.21.

meeting a desire to exclude non-Brethren from participation in the Lord's supper. The several liturgical formulae offered were part of attempts to evolve a sectarian distinctiveness, a recurring and significant phenomenon in Brethren history.

Mainstream opinion tended to be less doctrinaire and more pragmatic as, in Open Brethren fashion, some variety in belief was allowed (though within strict Fundamentalist limits). This can be seen in what was seemingly the principal liturgical issue to agitate the movement (if the number of occurrences in questions to *The Witness* is taken as an index): the permissibility of 'ministry' at the morning meeting. Worship was defined as being active,[38] whereas 'ministry' (or Bible teaching) was received passively. Applying this logic rigorously, the more sectarian individuals disapproved of devotional homilies or even Bible reading at the breaking of bread. However, the consistent advice from *The Witness* was that they should be permitted since precise rules could not be laid down.[39] Pragmatism too dictated whether one plate for the loaf and one cup only should be used. Some felt that the loaf should be passed round unbroken with each breaking bread individually, thus showing personal participation in Christ.[40] More than one cup was also resisted as it seemed erode the symbolism of the participants' unity.[41] But, it was argued, larger assemblies needed to use two or more plates and cups to expedite the distribution of the emblems and, moreover, rules should not be established.[42] However, a line was drawn at using individual cups in case the 'Romish' practice of using wafers was also introduced.[43] The less sectarian wing of the movement also saw it as necessary to cultivate a proper understanding of the occasion.

The morning meeting was shaped by the central facets of Brethren practice and doctrine. By the inter-war period certainly, the preferred

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[38] J.R. Caldwell, *Epitome of Christian Experience* (Glasgow [1917]), p.111.
[39] See the correspondence in: *NW*, 8 (1878), pp.17-18; *W*, 29 (1899), pp.82-4; *W*, 30 (1900), pp.131-2; *W*, 33 (1903), pp.34-6; *W*, 41 (1911), pp.33-4; *W*, 44 (1914), pp.177; *W*, 45 (1915), pp.176-7; *W*, 48 (1918), pp.18-19, 26-8, 43-4, 60, 90-1; *W*, 55 (1925), pp.112-13; *W*, 56 (1926), pp.208-9, 384-5; *W*, 57 (1927), pp.153, 159; *W*, 59 (1929), p.280-1; *W*, 60 (1930), p.66; *W*, 74 (1944), pp.95-6; *W*, 75 (1945), pp.15-16, 21-2; *W*, 77 (1947), p.141; cf. *BM*, 31 (1921), pp.55-6.
[40] John Dickie to the editor, 4 July 1855, *TP*, 4 (1855-6), p.95; 'The Believer's Question Box', *BM*, 57 (1947), p.317; A. Borland, 'The Lord's Supper', *BM*, 60 (1950), pp.97-8.
[41] 'The Believer's Question Box', *BM*, 45 (1935), pp.22-3.
[42] See the correspondence in: *NW*, 16 (1886), p.80; *W*, 54 (1924), p.422; *BM*, 45 (1935), pp. 22-3, 134, 190-1; John Ritchie, *BM*, 29 (1919), p.71; *BM*, 43 (1933), p.48.
[43] HyP[ickering]., 'Questions and Answers', *W*, 49 (1919), p.176.

seating plan at the breaking of bread in many assemblies used the unfixed seats to form a square with the table carrying the elements in the middle.[44] It is a spatial arrangement that is not focused on one individual but which suggests the involvement and common status of the worshippers. In the Church all were clergy.[45] The use of the square pattern also suggested that the centre of the gathering was Christ. Much was made of Christ's promise to be 'in the midst' of those gathered in his name. 'It was decided', noted the minutes of one assembly when the square pattern was adopted in 1926, 'to alter some of the seats to permit of the table being placed in the "midst" on Lord's Day mornings.'[46] The service was also rooted in the doctrine of the movement. Brethren theology tended to concentrate on the redemptive significance of the second Person of the Trinity to the exclusion of the relationships of the other Persons to the world. The death of Christ had a central place. The cross was seen to be the foundation of the gospel just as salvation by blood was perceived as the principal theme of the Bible.[47] This primary focus in Brethren theology dictated the purpose of the morning meeting: the emphasis of the service therefore fell on commemorating the person of Christ, especially his death.[48] Brethren belief in the believer's positional perfection in Christ,[49] and the freedom from introspection derived from their doctrine of assurance,[50] gave a confidence to their worship. But the focus on Christ's death meant that the tone of the morning meeting was sombre. Reference to the believer's subjective experience was excluded.[51] 'The special object for which the Lord assembles His people thus,' wrote John Ritchie, the founding editor of *The Believers'*

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[44] S.R. Hopkins, 'Questions and Answers', *W*, 59 (1929), pp.18-19.

[45] R.T. Hopkins 'Friday's Conference', *Northern Evangelistic Intelligencer*, 2 (1872), p.73; cf. [J.L. Harris], 'On Christian Ministry', *The Christian Witness*, 1 (Jan 1834), p.9.

[46] Tillicoultry, Bankfoot Evangelical Church, 'Minute Record of the Assembly & Oversight Business Meeting. From 1st Jan. 1925 — Ann St. Gospel Hall, Tillicoultry', Half Yearly Business Meeting, 20 March 1926.

[47] J.R. Caldwell, *From the Cross to the Kingdom*, rpt (Glasgow, 1983), p.188; Alexander Stewart, *Salvation Truths* (Kilmarnock, n.d.), p.10; John Ritchie, *From Egypt to Canaan* (Kilmarnock, n.d.), pp.21-3.

[48] J.R. Caldwell, 'The weekly gathering of saints', *W*, 38 (1908), pp.173-5.

[49] Harold. H. Rowdon, 'The Brethren concept of sainthood', *Vox Evangelica*, 20 (1990), pp.91-102.

[50] Rennie, 'Brethren spirituality', p.205.

[51] J. Murray, 'Cause and Condition', *BM*, 57 (1947), pp.178-9; cf. M[ackintosh], *Leviticus*, pp.86-8.

Magazine, 'is to "Remember Him" in the breaking of bread.'[52] The morning meeting gave vital expression to both the Christocentrism of the movement and its liberty of ministry among male members.

Features of Brethren spirituality also controlled the occasion. Three of its defining ones will be isolated in the discussion which follows: supernaturalism, separatism and cerebralism. The absence of a chairman or presiding minister at the morning meeting was stressed to emphasise that its centre was Christ. It was the supernaturalism implicit in this understanding of the service which had appealed to the anonymous observer at K—. Simplicity was perceived as an essential characteristic of the apostolic Church,[53] and the word was frequently used with reference to the breaking of bread. 'It is a simple ordinance,' Caldwell noted, 'observed in a simple manner, and by a simple people.'[54] The New Testament gave no liturgy; therefore, it was argued, one should not be developed.[55] The use of ecclesiastical art and architecture were strongly criticized,[56] a point underlined by the plainness of the surroundings in which the Brethren worshipped. Instrumental music at the morning meeting was also eschewed. The stress on simplicity helped to heighten the sense of the supernatural. The divine was not mediated through material objects and rituals, as in the Old Testament, but God worked directly on the human spirit. The dispensation of ritualism was past and Christians lived in the dispensation of the Spirit.[57] If the worship was directed, then it was the Holy Spirit 'as Guide and Sovereign Distributor of gifts' who was leading as he moved in the hearts of those present, using them as 'fit mouthpieces to express the assembly's worship'.[58] If there was a president, then it was the Lord himself who presided.**[59]** The direct faith that the Brethren had inherited from popular nineteenth-century Evangelicalism, with its strong sense of supernaturalism,[60] lent itself

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[52] John Ritchie, *Assembly Privileges and Responsibilities* (Kilmarnock, n.d.), p.5.

[53] Callahan, *Primitivist Piety*, pp.51-4.

[54] J.R. Caldwell, 'Christ the sin offering', *W*, 24 (1894), p.56.

[55] HyP[ickering]., 'What is meant by the breaking of bread?', *W*, 56 (1926), pp.283-4.

[56] J.R. C[aldwell]. 'Questions and Answers', W̲, 24 (1894), p.84; John Ritchie, 'The Church in its worship', *BM*, 28 (1918), p.77; John Douglas, *Lessons from the Kings of Israel and Judah* (Ashgill, 1997), p.14.

[57] G.A[dam]. and J.R.C[aldwell]., 'Questions and Answers', *W*, 24 (1874), pp.83-4.

[58] Alexander Marshall, 'The Lord's two ordinances', *W*, 19 (1889), pp.164-6.

[59] J.R. Caldwell, 'The breaking of bread: the meaning, mode, and practical observance. Notes on I Corinthians xi. 23-6', *W*, 39 (1909), p.78.

[60] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, pp. 78-97.

to this understanding of the morning meeting.

Separatism and cerebralism also had a place in perceptions of the morning meeting. The world was excluded, and all were agreed that it was for believers only. Judas had left the Last Supper, J.R. Caldwell was at pains to establish, before Christ broke bread, for it was a feast for disciples only.[61] The division of the Sunday services into a morning meeting for Christians and an evening one for unbelievers emphasised the separation.[62] It was captured in a hymn by the Glasgow solicitor, Alexander Stewart:

> Shut in with Thee far, far, above
> The restless world that wars below,
> We seek to learn and prove Thy love,
> Thy wisdom and Thy grace to know.[63]

The verse also makes plain that central to the meeting was quietness so that there might be meditation on the love of Christ.[64] This requirement produced a leisurely service in which it was expected there would be silences.[65] Caldwell felt the ideal length of the morning meeting was two hours, with the participation of the Lord's supper reasonably close to the start so that it 'might be lingered over in blessed meditation'.[66] Isaac Ewan wanted it nearer the end, moving towards it 'softly, reverently, meditatively'.[67] Caution was advised against too vocal a service, for silence involved all those present, including the women who were, apart from a period after 1863, excluded from audible participation in praying, announcing a hymn or in ministry.[68] 'All should be exercised', counselled Ritchie, 'waiting upon God, meditating on Christ, during times of silence'.[69] The accounts which have survived of the earliest breaking of bread services bear testimony to the powerful awareness of the numinous that those present sensed. The observer at K— noted the participants' emotion; at Peterhead during the first morning meeting, it was

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[61] J.R. Caldwell, 'The breaking of bread', <u>W</u>, 39 (1909), pp.77-9.
[62] Caldwell, *Christian Experience*, pp.102-3.
[63] *The Believer's Hymn Book* (Glasgow [1885]), No.129.
[64] J.R. Caldwell, 'The oneness of the Body', *W*, 38 (1908), p.190.
[65] John Cowan, 'Self-control', *BM*, 60 (1950), pp.255-6.
[66] J.R.Caldwell, 'Questions and Answers', *W*, 22 (1892), p.127.
[67] I.Y.E[wan]., 'When should the bread be broken?', *PT*, 6 (1940-1), p.987.
[68] Neil Dickson, 'Modern prophetesses: women preachers in the nineteenth-century Scottish Brethren', *RSCHS*, 25 (1993), pp.89-117.
[69] Ritchie, *Assembly Privileges*, p.4.

remembered (perhaps with some exaggeration), the floor was wet with the tears of those present.[70] Although cerebralism was to become more dominant (as shall be seen below), these gatherings when the movement was young could be emotional occasions.

Social and cultural influences were present in the spirituality which directed the morning meeting. The stress on simplicity and solemnity and the supernaturalism of the occasion arose out of the cultural context. They increased the state of awe favoured by nineteenth-century Romanticism.[71] Paradoxically, the desire for separation from 'the restless world' was formed in part by strong negative reactions to nineteenth-century society. The heavy reliance on meditation, like the adoption of an impulsive ministry, was possibly one of the Quaker influences on Brethren thinking.[72] But its use also pointed to the cerebralism of the movement. Rennie has noted that 'Brethren spirituality appears restricted, cerebral and serious'.[73] Among other things, this cerebralism was seen in the numerous conversational Bible readings held by Brethren, their love of the minutiae of the dispensationalist scheme of biblical interpretation, and the substantial publishing programme undertaken by the movement.[74] At the morning meeting it was evinced in the ability of the members to engage in silent meditation on doctrine and the text of scripture and, during public participation, to cite effortlessly from memory biblical passages relevant to the theme of the prayers and hymns. These factors, combined with the prescription that the experiential should be excluded, ensured that the breaking of bread would become heavily weighted towards the use of the mind. Pentecostal churches, for example, which appealed to similar social classes but were without the intellectualism of the Brethren, had to rely on a professional ministry.[75] But the Scottish Brethren movement was built on men such as Isaiah Stewart, a coal miner in Lanarkshire and assembly member

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[70] [Alex Buchan], 'First Message in York Street Hall by Mr. Alex Buchan on 26th June, 1965' (cyclostyled sheet, n.d.), in the possession of the author.
[71] Neil Summerton, 'The practice of worship', *Christian Brethren Review*, 39 (1988), p.36.
[72] Stunt, Brethren and the Society of Friends, pp.23-5.
[73] Rennie, 'Brethren spirituality', p.195.
[74] Neatby, *Plymouth Brethren*, p.278; G M Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: the shaping of twentieth-century evangelicalism: 1870-1925* (Oxford, 1980), pp.48-62; J. A. H. Dempster, 'Aspects of Brethren publishing enterprise in late nineteenth century Scotland', *Publishing History*, 20 (1986), pp.61-101.
[75] Bryan R. Wilson, *Sects and Society: a Sociological Study of Three Religious Groups in Britain* (London, 1961), p.63-75.

from 1882 until his death in 1934, who rose early to read the Bible before he started work at 5 a.m. and was prominent in his assembly for his participation at the breaking of bread.[76] The movement appealed to the more articulate members of the working classes and lower-middle class which had been produced by mass literacy. Alongside the emotional warmth infused by supernaturalism existed a colder cerebralism.

Not only did the principal features of Brethren spirituality shape the morning meeting, but the service was in turn expected to mould the lives of the members. The breaking of bread was the most significant moment of the week, 'the greatest privilege,' Ritchie wrote, 'and the highest form of fellowship with God and His people, to which the believer is called upon earth'.[77] It was the service above all others at which attendance was obligatory.[78] The need for careful preparation of soul was stressed.[79] Because of the worshippers' dependence on the promptings of the Spirit, it was important that the individual's life was also kept open to his influence. 'If there is to be spirituality in worship on the first day of the week,' wrote Ritchie, 'there must be spirituality in life and godliness in walk, on the six days that precede it.'[80] The Brethren, as extreme anti-ritualists, held the commemorative, Zwinglian view of the Lord's supper,[81] but individuals such as Caldwell and Andrew Borland, an editor of *The Believers' Magazine*, approached the Calvinist position, maintaining that the believer at the Lord's table fed by faith on Christ.[82] 'That will make better Christians of us,' wrote Caldwell, 'it will separate us from the world and its ways, bind us together in divine love and unity, and give us victory over sin and Satan.'[83] A link was made between the

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[76] Lesmahagow, Hope Hall, Roll Book 1876-1907, p.67; 'Isaiah Stewart', *W*, 64 (1934), p.167; Kilmarnock, writer's collection, J. McCallum, 'The Roll Call'.
[77] . J. Ritchie, 'The Lord's Supper', *BM* 10 (1901), p.140.
[78] HyP[ickering], 'Witness Watchtower', *W*, 60 (1930), p.114.
[79] J.A. Ireland, 'The breaking of bread', *W*, 78 (1948), pp.43-4; R. Eadie, 'The Lord's Supper', *W*, 87 (1957), pp.102-7; John Ritchie, 'Hints for behaviour in the assembly', *BM*, 16 (1906), p.32; John Ritchie, 'The Church in its worship', *BM*, 28 (1918), p.76; A. Borland, 'The Lord's Supper', *BM*, (1951), pp.1-2, 99, *BM*, 62 (1952), pp.1-2, and *BM*, 63 (1953), pp.17-19.
[80] John Ritchie, 'The Church in its worship', *BM*, 28 (1918), p.76.
[81] Peter Manson, 'A Sunday morning meditation', *W*, 78 (1948), pp.17-18; Ireland, 'breaking of bread', pp.43-4.
[82] A. Borland, 'The Lord's Supper', *BM*, 60 (1950), pp.97-8, *ibid.*, 61 (1951), pp.49-51; Borland, 'The Lord's Supper', pp.75-6.
[83] J.R. Caldwell, 'Christ the peace offering', *W*, 24 (1894), p.137; cf. Ritchie, 'The Lord's Supper', *BM*, 10 (1901), p.141.

holiness of the occasion and the members' lives.[84] Although the debate over excluding non-Brethren from the Lord's supper was never conclusively resolved, the majority view eventually was that they should be.[85] Guarding the separateness of the morning meeting was the first line of defence in the battle to maintain the purity of the sect. Regarded as the crucial means by which spirituality was advanced, it became (to borrow a phrase from the Salvation Army) the holiness meeting of the movement, the core of the members' devotion.[86]

Cerebralism came to be dominant in the spirituality. The Brethren shared many of the concerns of the nineteenth-century holiness movement and they influenced Pearsall Smith.[87] In the north-east assemblies higher-life teaching was initially accepted.[88] The morning meeting suited this spirituality admirably for both stressed surrender to the Spirit. A pseudonymous 'Crucified Man' criticized those who were too active during the service for 'Doing! Doing Doing!'. Using an image favoured by Romantic poets and holiness teachers alike, he wrote that believers at the breaking of bread 'ought to be like the Aeolian harp, on which the winds of heaven play sweet music—the Holy Ghost playing sweet music on their soul to the glory of God, and His grace'.[89] Yet it was the intellectualism of the Brethren which eventually prescribed how the morning meeting should be conducted. The opening hymn set a theme for each meeting and participants were expected to follow it,[90] leading one individual to complain in 1964, with some rhetorical exaggeration, that the young 'find themselves concentrating on recognising the theme, seeking to link each hymn, prayer or meditation together, sometimes by a process of mental gymnastics little short of Olympic standard'.[91] It was presumed that the more intelligent contributions would show some familiarity with the typological significance of the Old Testament offerings.[92] The

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[84] George Adam, 'The holiness of the Lord's Table', *W*, 30 (1900), p.154.

[85] Dickson, 'Scottish Brethren', pp.23-36.

[86] J.A. Ireland, 'Why I sit at the Lord's Table', *W*, 70 (1940), pp.121-3; T.A. Kirkby, 'Why we prize the morning meeting', *W*, 71 (1941), pp.203-4; Borland, 'Lord's Supper', p.77-8.

[87] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, pp.157-9; Roger N. Shuff, 'Open to closed: the growth of exclusivism among Brethren in Britain 1848-1953', *Brethren Archivists and Historians Network Review*, 1 (1997), p.12.

[88] Dickson, 'Scottish Brethren', pp.18, 38 n.62.

[89] A Crucified Man, 'Worship meetings', *The Northern Assemblies* (1872), pp.5-6.

[90] J.R. Caldwell, 'Ministry at the Lord's Table', *W*, 41 (1911), pp.33-4.

[91] W.E. Howie to the editor, *W*, 94 (1964), p.230.

[92] Kilmarnock, Central Evangelical Church, Ella [Jack], *Central View*, 20 (March, 1994), pp.10-

objective focus of the service required a capacity for abstract thought, and this need for intellectual understanding acted also as a brake on emotionalism.[93] Cerebralism produced a less spontaneous, more restrained service.

The Open Brethren in Scotland are an example of a sect which, unusually for Protestant Evangelicalism, gave a central place to a sacrament in the life of its members. Ironically, it gave them similarities with Catholic traditions.[94] The morning meeting was a perfect vehicle for Brethren theology, practice and spirituality. However, spontaneity and change were suppressed over time, not just by those who attempted to enforce a stricter liturgy. The routinization of charismata also took place. By 1939 Henry Pickering was complaining of the monotony of the alternating hymns and prayers[95] and in 1945 one Glasgow lay preacher cited as proof of a spiritual deterioration the curtailment of the Spirit at the morning meeting.[96] The tension which existed in Brethren spirituality also restrained innovation.[97] A heightened supernaturalism produced an emotional sense of the occasion, but this coexisted with a drier cerebralism which eventually came to be dominant at the breaking of bread. The detailed understanding of the morning meeting which had been evolved constituted a powerful influence in repressing change to the received pattern of worship.

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[93] Cf. Summerton, 'Practice of worship', p.35.

[94] Ian M. Randall, 'Movements of evangelical spirituality in inter-war England', (University of Wales Ph.D. thesis, 1997), pp.201-5, 218-20; Donald Bridge and David Phypers, *The Meal that Unites* (London, 1981), pp.135-142, 175.

[95] HyP[ickering], 'What place is given to scripture at the morning meeting?', *W*, 69 (1939), p.109.

[96] W.A. Thomson, *W*, 75 (1945), pp.15-16.

[97] Cf. Rennie, 'Brethren spirituality', p.206.