

# **PROPHESYING**

**In The  
Assembly**

*r.a.h.*

Price 10¢

***Present Truth Publishers  
514 Colfax Ave.  
Roselle Park, N. J.***

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## **WHAT IS A MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY**

We must not suppose that because a number of disciples are to be found together in a place that the gathering is necessarily an assembly meeting. There are meetings of the assembly and meetings that are not meetings of the assembly. No one, one trusts, supposes that a "gospel meeting" has a character similar to a meeting for the purpose of breaking bread. Would it not be strange to suppose that when Paul and his companions went into a town to preach the gospel and held a "gospel meeting" that it was a meeting of the assembly? Do you say that that is different than when a "gospel meeting" is held in a meeting room? How does it matter whether it is indoors or outdoors? in a certain building or not? whether saints are among the audience or not? Geographical locations are of importance to God's earthly people, Israel, and not to the Assembly of God. See John 4:20, 21.

It requires more than the presence of saints to constitute a gathering a meeting of the assembly. The "gospel meeting" is under the responsibility of the brother who is preaching the gospel. It has not an assembly character wherein the saints are gathered together unto the name of our Lord Jesus Christ for worship, prayer, ministry of the Word, or discipline.

Referring to Acts 19:9, 10, we find Paul separating the disciples and "reasoning daily in

the school of Tyrannus" for two years. We must not suppose that this was an assembly meeting, because Paul was using his gift on his own responsibility before the Lord, instructing the disciples, and borrowing room in Tyrannus' school in order to do it. We should view it as a meeting for instruction through the Lord's servant, in this case Paul. It did not matter whether Paul taught in a room borrowed from Tyrannus or used the room where the saints met to remember the Lord in His death, the nature of the meeting remained the same; it was to glean instruction in the Word from the servant of the Lord, Paul or another, as the case may be. It was really a lecture or an address, and not a meeting of saints gathered together unto the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to meet with Him in the midst.

What then, constitutes a gathering an assembly meeting? Or in other words, what gives a gathering of saints an assembly character in contrast to a coming together of disciples to hear an address, or show fellowship in the gospel, or to share their thoughts together on a portion of Scripture as in the "reading meeting."

Saints are gathered in assembly (i. e. come together on the principle of the assembly) when the saints come together to meet the Lord (Matt. 18:20) in the liberty of the Holy Spirit to use whomsoever He will (1 Cor. 14:5, 23, 24, 27-30). The gathering of saints with the Lord in the midst is effected by the Spirit of God. It is by Him that we "are gathered together" (Matt. 18:20), i. e., He is the One Who

gathers us together. It is the Lord being in the midst with liberty of the Spirit of God to use whomsoever He will that causes the gathering of saints to have assembly character. We should note, however, that we have examples of, or instruction about, gatherings of saints that have assembly character recorded in the Word of God. We are not given, by the Word, freedom to designate, as we desire, just any gathering of saints as being of assembly character. Therefore, it would be well for us to learn from scriptural example and instruction just which gatherings of saints may have assembly character.

Four meetings, one believes, may be shown to have assembly character from the Scriptures, which are our only source of information. They are as follows.

Breaking Bread. "And the first day of the week, we being assembled to break bread. . ." (Acts 20:7). See also 1 Cor. 11:17-34 where Paul had to correct the Corinthians about disorder at this assembly meeting. "When ye come together in assembly" (1 Cor. 11:18). Here they were coming together "in assembly." Saints may come together and yet not be gathered "in assembly" as at a "reading meeting" where we share our thoughts on a passage we have chosen to study together. (At an assembly meeting for ministry there is a definite limit as to how many may speak to edification (1 Cor. 14:29).

Note also verse 20, "When ye come together into one place." "One place" makes us think of the place of his appointment and "together"

makes us think of keeping the unity of the Spirit.

Ministry Of The Word Of God. We note in 1 Cor. 14:23 words similar to what we have in connection with the breaking of bread, namely, "If therefore the whole assembly come together in one place." 1 Cor. 14 deals with ministry of the Word of God in the assembly, not when an evangelist preaches the gospel or a teacher instructs us in the Word in a meeting held under his responsibility. We note that there is no indication of appointed or invited speakers in this chapter; indeed, the very opposite. We will have this chapter before us in greater detail later.

Discipline. Discipline is exercised by the assembly, not by an individual or a few individuals. The case in 1 Cor. 5:4 was handled in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ ("ye and my spirit being gathered together, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ"). "For what have I (to do) with judging those outside also? ye, do not ye judge them that are within?" (1 Cor. 5:12). Saints may counsel together about matters requiring discipline but it is the assembly that acts.

Prayer. "Again I say to you, that if two of you shall agree on the earth concerning any matter, whatsoever it may be that they shall ask, it shall come to them from my Father who is in (the) heavens. For where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them " (Matt. 18:19, 20).

"Peter therefore was kept in prison, but unceasing prayer was made by the assembly to

God concerning him" (Acts 12:5). Of course, saints can pray together outside the assembly just as Phillip's daughters would necessarily prophesy outside the assembly.

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Calling Saints Together. It remains to remark about one other point. "And having arrived, and having brought together the assembly, they related to them all that God had done with them, and that he had opened a door of faith to the nations" (Acts 14:27).

One does not believe that this gathering was of assembly character though those that comprised the assembly were brought together. Brought together by whom? One believes that "are gathered" of Matt. 18:20 signifies an act done by the Spirit of God. But here Paul and his companions brought together the assembly: therefore, one judges that this gathering was not of assembly character but one in which, none-the-less, the assembly would have deep interest.

## **THE ASSEMBLY MEETING**

### **IN 1 COR. 14**

Liberty Of The Spirit To Use Whom He Will.

It has been pointed out that 1 Cor. 14 has for its subject godly order connected with the ministry of the Word of God in the assembly as verses 4, 5, 19, 23, 34 and 35 confirm (also the regulation of speaking in tongues, of course, but this need not be considered now).

The nature of an assembly meeting in which the Word of God is ministered to us is just as

simple in principle as in an assembly meeting for breaking of bread. When we are assembled to break bread we come in confidence of meeting the Lord for the purpose of worship, and for remembering Him in breaking bread. Do we expect Him to be in our midst? Surely we do! And do we make arrangements as to who will take part and what will be said? Surely not! But why not? Why, because when we come together in one place in assembly character for the breaking of bread we expect the Holy Spirit to be free to lead the priests of God in the exercise of their privilege as worshippers! We come to meet with the Lord in the midst. (Rev. 1:6; 1 Peter 2:5).

When we assemble for ministry of the Word of God we come to meet with the Lord (not to hear so and so) just as when we assemble to break bread, without human arrangement, and with the Holy Spirit free to lead two or three prophets to speak to edify the assembly (the gifts of display of power, i. e., tongues, healing, etc. having served their purpose and so no longer necessary). 1 Cor. 14:30 shows that there was to be no pre-arrangement at such an assembly meeting. Indeed, there is to be no pre-arrangement as to who will take part or what will be said at any assembly meeting except, of course, for discipline and in this case we are expressly told by the Word that a certain case had to be dealt with (1 Cor. 5:3-5). Otherwise there is no pre-arrangement indicated in Scripture for an assembly meeting. We meet with the Lord in the midst to hear His voice in the ministry of the Word of God, the Spirit

being free to use whomsoever He will to realize this.

Why do we assemble for ministry of the Word? Let's look into our hearts. Is it not often in the hope of hearing brother so and so speak? This is because it does not sufficiently engage our thoughts that we go to meet the Lord. Do we assemble for the breaking of bread and have in mind hearing this or that brother? No, our object is to meet the Lord for worship. Well, the meeting for ministry of the Word according to 1 Cor. 14 should be approached in the same manner. We assemble to hear His voice through whomsoever the Spirit uses. That's it. We do not go to hear an address or a lecture (which is proper in its own place) but to meet with Himself to receive from Him a word in season.

What Is Prophecy? Perhaps one way to grasp in a measure what prophesying is, is to point out some things which, strictly speaking, it is not. "What shall I profit you, unless I shall speak to you either in revelation, or in knowledge, or in prophecy, or in teaching"? Prophecy may have in it revelation, knowledge and teaching but here God's word distinguishes among these various things. It is of great importance to note that Paul says he may speak "in revelation. . . or prophecy." Note that there is, therefore, a distinction between these things.

It would seem that no one would doubt that prophecy may involve revelation; indeed, some would say revelation is always involved. This is not so. Prophecy does not necessarily in-

volve revelation, that is, speaking in a way in which one speaks by inspiration, and so, free from error. If it does mean that, then the reader must acknowledge also that we have revelation today and people speaking by inspiration today. Why? "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part: but when that which is perfect has come, that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Cor. 13:10). When shall that which is in part, namely, knowing and prophesying, be done away? When that which is perfect is come. When is that? When we are taken home to glory. Therefore we have prophecy until the Lord comes. Now, if prophesying must involve revelation, and so inspiration, then we have revelations until the Lord comes. But that is not so. We have seen that verse 6 clearly distinguishes between revelation and prophecy. Certainly Scripture shows that prophecy may involve revelation but what has been said shows that there is not only a distinction between these two things but that there may be prophesying without revelation. 1 Cor. 13:10 clearly establishes this fact unless the reader is prepared to state that there are revelations given until the Lord comes. (If the reader objects to the comparison with revelation and says prophecy always involves predictions, not revelations, then the problem still faces him for he must be prepared to state that we have predictions of the future today). The reader should note very carefully, then, that 1 Cor. 13:9, 10 establishes the fact that we prophesy until the Lord comes.

It is very important to see that the prophetic ministry may or may not involve re-

velations and that prophecy and revelation are to be distinguished.

Now, at last, what is prophesying? A prophet is one who speaks a message for God whether giving a revelation or speaking a message based upon a revelation previously given. Notice that in verse 37 it is said "If any one think himself to be a prophet or spiritual. . . ." Notice that these two words are linked together. "The spiritual discerns all things" (1 Cor. 2:15). Spirituality has to do with discerning the mind of God. The prophet, on the other hand, speaks the mind of God. This implies communion with God. And in speaking, it might be but five words (verse 19). This ministry has to do with the heart and conscience (verse 24 and 25), it has to do with the state of the hearers, with the needs of their hearts, with instruction of the conscience, with encouragement by the way, with consolation, and with building up of the assembly: The prophetic ministry in the assembly is speaking the mind of God for the present need, of those assembled, as known by the Spirit and only He can really know it and raise up suitable ministry to meet the state of the assembly. Prophecy, then, is speaking God's mind for the present need and in such a manner as to speak "as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11).

And sometimes we don't like what we hear especially if our conscience is instructed. Yes, we sometimes lightly esteem what we hear. Is it not so? "Do not lightly esteem prophecies" (1 Thess. 5:20).

## **"OPEN" MEETINGS OR ADDRESSES ?**

**It is not really a question of one or the other. Let us have both. We are thinking now of ministry of the Word of God for believers, not of preaching the gospel, which must also have a place. Nor are we considering a gathering of saints where there is not the necessary gift to have an open meeting, but the lack of necessary gift, one believes, is more rare than we sometimes suppose. And it may be that the lack of such meetings where such gift has its opportunity for development is a serious cause of the apparent lack of this kind of gift.**

**Assuming that there is gift which the Spirit can use in the open meeting, why do we not have such a meeting regularly? Is it because we suppose the saints will soon tire of what may be very much weakness? Do we then think that we have liberty to also change the nature of the other assembly meetings or eliminate them? Perhaps the reason that we do not have open meetings regularly as we do other assembly meetings is because we thought it was not necessary. But, one believes, 1 Cor. 14 sets the example. Do you not think that the tone of 1 Cor. 14 assumes that the Corinthians had such a meeting regularly and that that is a good example for us?**

**But further, notice this point about 1 Cor. 14. It is evident that the Corinthians were much taken up with showy gift. They liked the sensational (just like us, aren't they?) so much**

so that the apostle takes great effort to urge them to give the prophetic ministry its God-given place in the assembly which, apparently, they counted of little importance. Our danger today is not with tongues but looking to speakers, looking to preachers, looking to those who are able to give a "good" address. Thank God for "good" addresses; thank God for every gift of public utterance given to the body of Christ especially when scripturally used. Meetings for addresses as such, have their place, but beloved saints of God, what about 1 Cor. 14? Notice the choice of words used by God's Spirit in order to put in its right place what man held of such great account. "If anyone speak with a tongue" (verse 27) not, "let two or three gifts of tongues be used." No doubt this was divine wording in view of the fact that the gift of tongues would soon be withheld and yet it also shows the contrast with the prophetic ministry which, along with knowledge, was to remain until the Lord comes (1 Cor. 13:10). "And let two or three prophets speak." Are we hindering them from speaking by not holding this meeting of the assembly? The Word of God says, "let two or three prophets speak." Are we letting them or are we hindering them by not holding this meeting? "If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet (one who speaks the mind of God) or spiritual (one who discerns the mind of God) let him recognize the things that I write to you, that it is (the) Lord's commandment" (verse 37). Therefore, the exhortation to let two or three prophets speak is the commandment of the Lord.



## **GIVING THIS MEETING ITS PLACE**

Perhaps the reason we lack on this matter is, as has been said, because we do not see the force of 1 Cor. 14. Perhaps it is that we have not been digging in the Word and communing with God as we should, because we have been busy with this and that, and such a meeting would soon bring out our state, as does the worship meeting also, and we know it will. Is it not so, brethren?

The following words are taken from Five Letters on Worship and Ministry in the Spirit by W. Trotter.

"But beloved brethren, while our conviction of the truth and importance of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's presence cannot be too profound, let me beseech you to remember, that the presence of the Holy Ghost in the assemblies of the saints is itself a fact. It is simple faith in this we need. We are prone to forget this. And forgetfulness of this, or ignorance of it, is the main cause of our ever coming together without profit to our souls. If we did but come together to meet God: if we did but believe when we are assembled that He is really present, what an effect this must have on our souls! The fact is, that as really as Christ was present with his disciples on the earth, so really is the Holy Ghost now present in the assemblies of the saints. If in any way His presence could be manifested to our senses, — if we could see Him as the disciples did see Jesus, — how would our souls be solemnized and subdued. What deep stillness, what reverent attention,

what solemn waiting on Him, would be the result. How impossible that there could be any haste, or rivalry, or restlessness, if the presence of the Holy Ghost were to be thus revealed to sight and sense. And is the fact of His presence to be less influential because it is a matter of faith instead of sight? Is He any less really present because unseen? It is the poor world that receives Him not, because it does not see Him and shall we take its place and forsake our own? 'And I will pray the Father for you,' says Jesus, 'and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you' (John 14:16, 17).

"'But ye know him.' Would that we did, beloved! More and more am I persuaded that our great lack is that of faith in His personal presence. Have there not been times when His presence has been realized as a fact? and how blessed were such seasons! There might be, and there were, intervals of silence; but how were they occupied? In solemn waiting upon God. Not in restless anxiety, as to who was next to speak or pray; not in turning over the leaves of Bibles or hymn books to find something that we thought suitable. No! nor in anxious thoughts about those who were lookers on, wondering what they would think of the silence that existed. God was there. Each heart was engaged with him; and for any to have broken silence, for the sake of doing so, would have been felt to be an interruption in-

deed. When silence was broken, it was with a prayer that embodied the desires, and expressed the breathings of all present; or a hymn in which all could with fulness of heart unite; or a word which came home to our hearts with power. And though several might be used in such hymns, and prayers, and ministrations, it was as evidently one Spirit who guided and arranged the whole, as though a plan of it had been made before-hand, and each one had had his part assigned. No human wisdom could have made such a plan. The harmony was divine. It was the Holy Ghost acting by the several members, in their several places, to express the worship, or to meet the need of all present.

"And why should it not be always thus? I would repeat it, beloved brethren, the presence of the Holy Ghost is a fact, not merely a doctrine. And surely if in fact He be present when we are assembled together, no fact can compare in importance with this. It is surely the grand, the all-absorbing fact, from which everything besides in the meeting ought to derive its character. It is not a mere negation. That the Holy Ghost is present, means more than that the meeting is not to be ordered by human and precious arrangement. He must order it if He be present. It means the opposite of this. True, there must be no human restrictions: but if He be present, no one must take any part but that which He assigns, and for which He qualifies him."

## THE TEACHER & THE PROPHET

Some Distinctions. It may be helpful, at this point, to suggest a few distinctions between the ministry of a teacher and a prophet. It is not to be supposed that the prophetic ministry may not include teaching or that teaching may not include prophesying. But there is a distinction and, broadly speaking, it is this; the prophet addresses the heart (1 Cor. 14:3) and exhorts (Acts 15:32) and the teacher addresses the understanding (Col. 2:7, 8; 1 Tim. 4:6, 11).

We must distinguish, according to 1 Tim. 6:2, between teaching and exhorting. In teaching, one seeks to enlighten and instruct the understanding and though the teacher's desire is that these things will lead to increased occupation with God, to which all ministry of the Spirit tends, it is not principally exhortation to practice piety and righteous living, nor is it consolation and comfort of saints which is his object, and etc., though all ought to be to edification. His object is the simple and clear presentation of truth so that the people of God may be helped to accurately understand revealed truth and to show them how to fill their minds from the divine treasury of wisdom and knowledge, the Word of God which contains "the truth as it is in Jesus." The teacher may hold a meeting on his own responsibility and as he has, no doubt, in some measure (Eph. 3:16) the word of knowledge (1 Cor. 12:8), he

may instruct as long as the deposit of divine truth he has accumulated lasts. The prophet has more before him the application of truth to the heart with regard to the state of heart. 1 Cor. 14:3 shows that this ministry of the Word has pre-eminently the state of soul as a consideration. This is known to the Searcher of the hearts and so when assembled together to meet with the Lord in the midst, how blessed it is to have that suitable ministry from Himself, through the prophets, to meet our needs at the moment.

Are There Prophets Today? Before considering this question let it be observed that whether prophets remain or not does not affect the point that prophesying remains as 1 Cor. 13:10, 11 shows; i. e., even if the reader thinks there are no prophets today, the fact is that prophesying, that which prophets speak, remains according to 1 Cor. 13:10, 11. It may be, and no doubt often obtains, that one prophesies without being a prophet (sisters prophesied outside the assembly, Acts 21:9, and also 1 Cor. 11:5) just as one may teach without being a teacher; compare 1 Tim. 5:17 with 1 Tim. 3:2. We learn from these two verses that all overseers had to be "apt to teach" though all did not "labour in word and teaching", so that some taught (evidently not publically) without being teachers. But yet teaching is the function of a teacher and prophesying is the function of a prophet.

Again notice the distinction in the divine regulation of the kinds of tongues and the prophets,

in 1 Cor. 14:27, 29. The apostle contrasts what was soon to disappear and what was to remain. His words express toleration of tongues but commendation of prophesying (see verse 39). The wording of the instruction regulating tongues is such that it does not indicate necessity of the use of this gift but just gives the regulation if it should be that one speaks with a tongue. But with the prophets the Word says "let two or three prophets speak." Therefore, let us do it.

Ephesians 2:20 is the verse generally used to show that prophets are no longer with us, they having, it is thought, passed off this scene with the apostles. It is thought that this Scripture shows that we are built upon the apostles and prophets, they being the foundation. Notice that this Scripture points out that we ("fellow citizens of the saints, and the household of God," i. e., the assembly) are built upon something. Upon what? Upon the foundation. We have here something being built (verse 21 gives the growing aspect) and something already built (verse 22 gives us the truth that God has already a complete habitation on earth). If we turn now to 1 Cor. 3 we again find the thought of a foundation and building. Here we are instructed (verse 11) that there is but one foundation, Jesus Christ and none other, no, not even apostles and prophets. Apostles and prophets are not the foundation, therefore, but Christ is the foundation of the apostles and prophets upon which they build. Verse 10 tells us to be careful how we build on the foundation and 1 Cor. 3 shows that this building is specifically in connection with the temple of God, the assembly. It is true

that Paul laid the foundation, but others build on it. One does not doubt that others besides apostles and prophets may build on this foundation as Eph. 4:11-14 surely shows, but it seems that Eph. 2:20 singles out apostles and prophets as being peculiarly connected with building on the foundation and 1 Cor. 14 shows that prophecy is especially connected with edifying the assembly. Manifestly apostles are no longer with us, but it does not necessarily follow that we no longer have prophets. Eph. 2:20 does not show that we do not have prophets while 1 Cor. 13:10 shows that we most definitely have what is peculiarly the prophet's ministry until the Lord comes.

Other portions of the Word which speak of the gift of prophecy are Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10 and 1 Cor. 13:2.

One other Scripture has been thought to show that prophets are no longer in the body of Christ; that is 2 Peter 2:1, from which it is thought it is indicated that after apostolic times teachers replace prophets altogether. But what we are told here is that just as there were false prophets among the people in the past, in this dispensation it would be the teacher who would bring in destructive heresies. Let the reader judge if this is so. Is it not exactly what has happened? How have destructive heresies been brought in amongst the people of God; while the church of God held "open meetings" in which two or three prophets speak? Perhaps it has happened on a rare occasion but most of the church does not even know what an "open meeting" is. The deeds are done by

teachers who have, no doubt, the "word of knowledge." Knowledge in itself puffs up and easily lends itself to the dissemination of destructive heresies. This is what we are told in 2 Peter 2:1. It has nothing to do with showing that we do not have prophets today but shows us the vessels by which destructive heresies will be brought amongst God's people now in contrast to the vessels used previously.

One believes that there are no Scriptures which show that the gift of prophecy would not continue in the body of Christ, but rather that 1 Cor. 13:10, 11 indicates that it would remain until our Lord comes.

### **MISC. THOUGHTS**

Some Additional Thoughts on 1 Cor. 14. 1 Cor. 14:29 tells us plainly how many prophets may speak. Verse 40 says, "But let all things be done comely and with order." To have more than three speak is disorder in God's assembly.

The others are to judge. The saints were to exercise discernment about what they were hearing; they were to search the Scriptures about what was brought to them.

"Let the first be silent." This does not mean that the first speaker notices that someone has a revelation and should therefore immediately sit down. What? One speaking by the leading of the Spirit of God is supposed to suddenly cut his message off? Is that how the Spirit of God operates? That would be disorder but "God is not (a God) of disorder" (v. 33). The Corinthian disorder was that if one got a revelation

he thought that he must therefore immediately share it without giving opportunity for the first speaker to complete his message. "Let the first be silent" says the Word. This admonition is directed to the one who received the revelation in order that he might give time for the first speaker to finish, "for", says the Word, "ye can all prophesy one by one." There is to be no breaking into the message of another but rather give him opportunity to first be silent, i. e., bring his ministry to a close.

"For ye can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all be encouraged" (verse 31). Not that the apostle supposes all were prophets, because he says "(are) all prophets?" (1 Cor. 12:29), but tells the saints to desire this divine enablement (see 1 Cor. 14:1, 5, 39). He does not, therefore, suppose that all are prophets, nor is he here granting permission for all to prophesy when assembled, but states the possibility of it. He exhorts the saints to desire this spiritual manifestation and if it were as widely distributed as all in the assembly there is room for all to prophesy, one by one, but no more than two or three on one occasion. Also, as noted before, one is not to interrupt another but rather prophesy one by one. One more point in connection with this verse is this; it does not mean "All the prophets can prophesy." That's like saying all the teachers can teach, all the exhorters can exhort, etc., a mere truism.

"And spirits of prophets are subject to prophets." The gift of prophesy is under the control

of the prophet; the prophet is not under the control of the gift. The prophet will not, therefore, be under some uncontrollable impulse such as those are when speaking by the power and impulse of a demon. Nor may the prophet claim to transgress the commandment of the Lord (verse 37) in regard to the limit of speakers by saying it was the Spirit of God that caused him to do so. The Spirit of truth always acts according to the Word of truth.

Women are to be silent in the assembly of God's saints. It is not a question of gift (for a sister may prophesy, cf. Acts 21:9, 1 Cor. 11:5) but a question of place, and the assembly meeting is not the suitable place for the exercise of a woman's gift. Her service to the Lord and His people finds its sphere elsewhere.

"Let all things be done comely and with order" (verse 40). This is not the signal for God's saints to arrange things to suit their tastes but is an exhortation for us to follow the injunction of this chapter. When we conduct the assembly meeting for ministry of the Word of God according to the divine pattern we are doing so with order. Someone has well said, "One may well be astonished at men quoting 1 Cor. 14:40 for any order which is not that of the chapter, nor of Scripture at all. They avail themselves of the authority of God's word for their own order whatever it be, while trampling under foot the only order which divine revelation sanctions or which was intended to be established for God's assembly."

Mechanical Music in Connection With Assembly Meetings. For a valuable and full treatment of this subject the reader would do well to obtain an article Singing In The Spirit which may be obtained from the publisher.

In an article like this, a few words on instrumental music in regard to assembly meetings is not amiss. The following Scriptures are those which deal with music in our dispensation. 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16.

We note the complete absence of the mention of instrumental music in these verses. Is this not remarkable? especially when we consider how saints of God hanker after this from elaborate organs down to a modest piano. How is it that some feel at liberty in God's things to introduce amongst a spiritual company what was suited to man in the flesh and to a worldly sanctuary? From whence comes this freedom to go beyond what is written, dear saints of God? You have been called to a position so much more excellent than the Jews. Why is it that what was perfectly suitable as a type under a past dispensation is so attractive to your heart when we know that it was but a type of which we have the substance.

Priests were a select group in the past dispensation but now all are priests (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6). Levites had a select service in connection with the Tabernacle and Temple but all saints today have a Levite service (i. e. a gift to be used, 1 Cor. 12:7, 11; 1 Pet. 4:10; Rom. 12:4-6). The past dispensation had its singing men and singing women but today all saints are singing men and singing

women in God's house, the assembly. We don't have a choir. That's for Judaism! That's for the time of type and shadow! Today, God the Spirit tunes the heartstrings of God's saints to bring forth sweet melody to God Who is a Spirit and Whom the true worshippers worship in spirit and in truth. Yea, how He desires it (John 4:23, 24). Musical instruments also belong to Judaism. It is suitable to man in the flesh, not a company of spiritual ones gathered together unto the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Mechanical music is out of place in the midst of such a company. The Word speaks of such things as "lifeless things giving a sound" (1 Cor. 14:7. See also 1 Cor. 13:1). Contrast the melody in the heart.

Now, many saints of God see clearly that mechanical music has not a place in the worship meeting. Why then shall it have a place in the "open meeting"? They are both meetings of the assembly. How is it that what is unsuitable to one could be suitable to the other?

For some reason, mechanical music seems to go with a certain arrangement of chairs; that is, when all the seats are turned in one direction. How well it would be that when we come together in assembly to receive ministry of the Lord in the midst that the arrangement of our chairs would indicate this even as at the breaking of bread. One feels sure that more saints would then also feel how mechanical music is just an intruder into a scene like that.

A Word on The "Reading Meeting". A "reading meeting" does not have assembly character. We simply desire to study together a suggested

passage, each contributing what is profitable. The passage is usually, but not always suggested in advance, i. e., the subject is not necessarily open. Whether the subject is open or not does not, however, affect the fact that it is not an assembly meeting. We trust that even so that subject is one which our God would have us look into but, never-the-less, the advance notice of a choice of passage is just as much out of place at an assembly meeting for ministry as it would be to suggest on some weeknight that the worship on the coming Lord's day will be centered around the Lord as the Lamb of God.

Besides which, 1 Cor. 14 directs that ministry in the assembly shall be by two or three, and therefore if a "reading meeting" is a meeting of the assembly, only two or three may minister.

This does not mean that it is not important or profitable that we study the Word together. Such an informal study gives occasion for those who have not a gift of public utterance to share things that they have gleaned and also for profitable questions to be asked and discussed.

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