

On Church Social Meals
Olumuyiwa ASAOLU (asaolu@yahoo.com) [10/1/2011]

PREAMBLE

At my congregation, the idea of a special 'get-together' was mooted when the Youths requested church funds to supplement their proposed contributions towards hosting themselves to an 'end-of-the-year program' at our hall on the evening of December 31, 2010. The program was to *feature meals, exchange of gifts, entertainment by comedians, invitation of friends and interactions to testify of God's goodness*. The timing and modalities presented was suspect, so it was suggested that the whole church should consider having the program at another date, say early January 2011. A committee was setup to review and advice on this and after their report; the third Saturday was tentatively fixed. A get-together was proposed at the church premises in which individuals were to bring food for sharing. The public 'gift-exchange' idea was dropped to avoid discontentment, haughtiness of the rich and embarrassment of the poor in our midst for the church is to give to a member as he "hath need" –Acts 2:45b [Mt 6:1-4, 1 John 3:17-18]. No-one raised entertaining comedy again -Eph 4:29 & 5:4. Later on, some brethren expressed reservations having mistaken the program for a 'special Thanksgiving.' Many believe that we testify of the Lord's goodness in our lives and prayer requests and thus give thanks always in everything -Phil 4:6, 1 Thess 5:18. That cleared, few objected outright to the planned "social meal." Someone asked about the proposed frequency and guidelines of this new 'get-together' feature since it could become an established church activity, advising on the need to cautiously proceed so the precedent be not abused over time. Deliberations were inconclusive at the business-meeting and we were asked to '*go home and pray about it.*' This author decided to also study the scriptures (2 Tim 2:15) to attempt to ascertain the will of God (Eph 5:17) on this **matter of faith** so that we may know how to behave ourselves in the house of God.

INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of this lesson is to consider these interwoven questions:

- *Should the church socialize via meals and fun activities in the place of worship?*
- *Can the church organize and gather purely for the purpose of a get-together (feasting & recreation)?*
- *Is it permissible for the church to use food and entertainment to attract people?*

We are **not** considering the right or propriety of an individual hosting a get-together, party or celebration at home, any borrowed or rented venue, restaurant, etc. be it for birthday, wedding, naming ceremony, house warming, etc. Those are **social functions** to which an individual has right and which the invitees (brethren inclusive) may choose to honour with their presence if they so wish and have the opportunity -Mt 14:6, 1 Cor 10:27, Mt 22:3 & Jn 2:1-2. We are interested in whether it is scriptural OR expedient for the church as a body to host such get-together (social gathering) in which a member's absence would amount to 'forsaking the assembly.' The best guide is not what we feel or think, neither is it what denominations practice nor what tradition or historians suggests but what the New Testament says on this subject matter.

THESIS

The church meets for worship, fellowship and service. This is to accomplish her work of evangelism, edification, benevolence and to glorify God. Normally, church meetings are scheduled such that they would not conflict with generally accepted meal-times for individuals. Yet, if a church program is prolonged e.g. at a lectureship, the church may provide meals for those present just as Christ ensured that his listeners were not sent away hungry in Mt 14:13-22 & 15:29-39. Alternatively, light refreshments may be provided from the church purse as is done at our business meetings. These are incidentals and expedients as the primary purpose of such meetings was not to come and eat, as Christ advised -John 6:26-27. Even Acts 6:1-7 shows that the benevolent meals served was due to the prevailing contingency not that it was a planned 'get-together' or frolic.

Proponents call for the innovation of this get-together based on the following reasons:

1. Some people are not interacting within the church and this will afford us the opportunity to know ourselves and be united.
2. We do not visit ourselves at home because of the busy city-life ('this is Lagos') so we should collectively meet and eat in the church hall (or picnic at the lagoon side).
3. There is nothing wrong with introducing something new.

Those reasons are not compelling enough because:

1. The root causes of failing to interact are matters of the heart. If we really care for and wish to show love to one another, we would endeavor to interact beyond the church premises and scheduled activities. Besides, unity is more than meals; it is being of 'the same mind and the same judgment.' As pointed out, Judas betrayed Jesus after eating with Him.

2. If we can create time to visit our natural friends, relations and work colleagues, etc. we should prioritize visitation with brethren if we really see them as our spiritual family and potential business associates or confidants. Visitation is part of the distinguishing characteristics between 'the Sheep and the Goats.' It should be encouraged not circumvented and excused by situation ethics. Specific individuals and families do interact in the church and need only show more interest in some others.
3. There is need to '*prove all things*' about to be introduced or already practiced in the Lord's church whether such conforms to the scriptures. We must have Christ's authority in "*whatsoever ye do in word or deed.*" Churches of Christ must be on guard to ensure that human innovations do not '*cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned.*'

Church Social Meals are not expedient since the 'get-together for fun' concept violates the scriptures.

Acts 2:42, 46 *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers... And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.*

1 Corinthians 11:20-23, 34 *When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread... And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation...*

Jude 12 *...These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.*

2 Peter 2:13 *And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you.*

The Acts 2 passage indicates that the collective worship (at the temple) by the over three thousand strong congregation was different from the meat (meals) gladly eaten from 'house to house' as in Acts 16:33-34. While rebuking the Corinthians for abusing the Lord's Supper, Paul emphasized discerning 'the Lord's body,' stating that meals should be taken at home. Debauchery, showing off social class and offending another's conscience through food are condemned '*for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*' We are not to emulate the Israelites who purposely '*sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*' Jude warns Christians to earnestly contend for the faith and beware of false teachers who are ungodly, lascivious or carouse at their gatherings. The rendering in Jude is similar to that in 2 Peter 2. One can search in vain for harmony among Bible commentators on what the "love feasts" are in Jude 12. Note:

"Some believe the expression originally was just another designation for the Lord's supper as a feast in 1 Cor 5:8. Some think the word referred to meals which Christians ate together in their own homes as in Acts 2:46. Others feel that it referred to the type of feast which Christ recommends to individuals in Luke 14:12-13 to which the poor are to be invited, rather than associates who may reciprocate the invitation."

On the basis of the information we have in the New Testament, the above suggestions are plausible. Can we sincerely conclude the inspired writers are teaching and binding church sponsored social meals?? If the 'love feast' is something we must do, the Lord would have furnished us with adequate information and failure to do it would amount to sin. Also, if it was authorized it would be appropriate to fund it from the church purse. The scripturally detailed and scheduled feast clearly enjoined on Christians is the Lord's Supper -Mt 26:26-30, Acts 20:7. The Lord's Table is the only feast in which Jesus promised to participate today (Mark 14:25) and therein we are blessed -Luke 14:15. The physical conduct/spiritual condition of and warning to the sinful feast eaters in I Cor 11 and Jude are quite similar. If the 'feast of charity' is otherwise a random, discretionary get-together of individual saints, the Bible instructs such should be done at home, not mixed with our spiritual service.

CONCLUSION

Social meals should be provided by individuals and participation at such event should be voluntary not church mandated/organized. To avoid misconceptions and sin, get-togethers are best held outside the church premises.

TOPIC: PRACTICAL LOVE [Edward Malomo-Young, Evang. COC Akoka 12/1/2011]

It will also attempt to remove our misunderstanding of love feast.

IMPORTANCE OF LOVE

No one can become a Christian without love I John 4:8 and no one can live a faithful Christian life without love John 14:15; I Cor 13:1-4. Love is expressed in sharing (fellowship), in visiting, in eating together, etc. This was seen in the life of the early church.

AN UNSELFISH CHURCH (ACTS 2:44-45)

Verse 44 and 45 of Acts 2 give a concrete examples of the fellowship mentioned in verse 42: "And all those who had believe were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need".

The world had never before seen anything like this! Most of those in the church had been strangers to each other just a few days before. They came from different backgrounds and cultures. In spite of this, they immediately began to care for each other, giving special attention to the weak and helpless! The Jews had neglected the needy, even though the law taught them to care for them. The Gentiles had never been concerned about the less fortunate. It is not surprising that the entire community was impressed by these followers of Jesus (2:47).

The application for us is stated in 1John 3:17: "but whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?" The answer to the question is clear: If my brother has genuine need and I have the ability to help him and do not, the love of God does not abide in me! God help us to be sensitive to the needs of our brothers and sisters, and ready to help even if it requires personal sacrifice! The principle implied in Acts 2:44,45 and expressly stated in I John 3:17 has one qualification: We are to meet our brother's need unless so doing would encourage him in indolence (cf. cf 2Thess 3:10). The early church met in a variety of locations, including public meeting places (such as the temple) and private homes (Rom 16:5; I Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phil 2). As far as we know, many years passed before churches began to constructing buildings in which to worship. A "church building" can be a valuable tool, but we should never think that it is indispensable to the work of the Lord. Therefore, there is nothing special about the worship place. Expression of love can be done in our home or worship buildings.

A HAPPY CHURCH

They also met daily in their homes, getting acquainted with their brothers and sisters and sampling each other's cooking. Further, they were happy to do this: " They were taking their meals together with gladness". (Emphasis mine). They had been plucked from the very fires of

hell by the grace of God; joy filled their hearts! It was natural to gravitate to others filled with the same joy; it would have been unnatural to do otherwise. (They did not merely endure one another; they enjoyed one another!)

Some of us have been Christians so long that we have forgotten the excitement of being purged from our sins (2 Peter 1:9) and have lost that special sense of happiness. We may need to pray like David, "Restore to me the joy of thy salvation" (Psalms 51:12).

A SHARING CHURCH

The fellowship and excitement that characterized these early Christians never goes unnoticed. Jesus had said, " By this all men will know that you are disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). We are not surprised to read the final words of chapter 2: " They were... having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved" (2:46,47). It is not mere coincidence that the phrase "day by day" is used both to refer to the fact that Christians continued daily with one mind (2:46) and also to the fact that people were daily added to their number (2:47). Christians with vital relationship with the Lord and each other attract other people! Matt 5:16

Today countless words are flooding from platforms, pulpits, and presses on "how to make the church grow". If we want to know how to effect God-pleasing church growth, we can do no better than to take a crash course on Acts 2:42-47.

FELLOWSHIP

Demonstrative love result in fellowship. When we are not open to fellowship with our brethren or to a message of truth, we also are expressing a negative attitude toward worship. The early church realizes the value of Christian fellowship. I have found that brethren who can eat together are the ones who work together.

Growing congregation are not only the one who meet together for worship, but also meet together for period of sharing, fellowship – love feast (Jude 12). This is why when fellowship is withdrawn from a brother, you are commanded not to eat with him (I Cor. 5:11). This is so because eating together was one of the practices of the early church. One of the best ways to get acquainted with a person is to eat with him.

Jude. 1:12 These men are unseen rocks at your love-feasts, when they take part in them with you, keepers of sheep who without fear take the food of the sheep; clouds without water rushing before the wind, wasted trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots, (BBE)

The feasts of charity, the agapai or love feasts, of which the apostle speaks, were in use in the primitive Church till the middle of the fourth century, when, by the council of Laodicea, they were prohibited to be held in the Churches; and, having been abused, fell into disuse according to Tertullian in his apology 39.

Among the ancients, the richer members of the Church made an occasional general feast, at which all the members attended, and the poor and the rich ate together. The fatherless, the widows, and the strangers were invited to these feasts, and their eating together was a proof of their love to each other; whence such entertainments were called love feasts.

The feasts of charity were certain banquets, which the brethren who were members of the Church kept altogether. It is called a feast or festival of love, because (1.) it revealed the love of Christ to the world; (2.) because it was the means of strengthening the mutual love of the disciples: a festival which love originated, and where love reigned. It is fellowship of love. See an example of all these in Acts.2:44-46.

This is one of the reasons our disfellowship is not having the same effect as that of the early church because we are not having genuine fellowship. One of the ways to have this fellowship is the agape meal of the early church. Acts 2:46; Jude 12; I Cor 5:11.

Does all the “breaking of bread” mean Lord Supper? Since this “breaking of bread” was done daily, and the Lord’s Supper is to be eaten only on the first day of the week, here the phrase must refer to a common meal. Eating together was an important expression of the fellowship of Christians. These fellowship meals were called “love feast” (Jude 12). Merely because a congregation increases in size does not mean its “growth” pleases God. God-pleasing growth does not involve compromise of the truth. God wants us to grow numerically as well as spiritually, but faithfulness to God always takes precedence over growth in number. A cancerous tumor is a growth, but it is an unhealthy, life-threatening growth.

The “love feasts” (KJV) “ feasts of charity” were in no way meant to be confused with the “ Lord Supper”, But were a common practice during the apostolic age, with the brethren eating together for social, charitable, and humanitarian reasons. “Hidden rock” is imagery used to show the danger of these false teachers the damage they could do, as true hidden rocks could sink ships travelling the rivers of those as well as those of today. These feast were suspended about the fourth century because these ungodly men turned them into ungodly revels.

Jude (11-13) Jude gives the examples of three great sinners in the Bible. Cain was a murderer and was cursed by God (Gen. 4). Balaam caused Israel to sin for money. He was killed by one Israelite (Num. 31:8). Korah rebelled against God’s chosen leaders and thus against God’s authority. He and his followers were swallowed by the earth (Num.16). The false teachers of Jude’s day were guilty of all three of these sins. They hated others and slandered them and thus were guilty of Cain’s sin. Like Balaam , money was a goal of their actions and their false teaching. Rebellion marked their attitudes toward God and spiritual leaders as it marked Korah.

Jude now gives a vivid description of these false teachers. They were “ugly spots”. The love feasts of Christians were beautiful times of fellowship. But, just as a beautiful cloth is ruined by a stain, the actions of false teachers ruined the purpose of the feasts. They felt no shame because of their sinful behavior and caused others to stumble and sin.

THE CHURCH AS A FAMILY.

If the church is a family as expressed in the scripture, do you know any good family who does not eat together? This is one of the ways the church can be a loving family as seen in the early church. Like the synagogue, the church was much more than a gathering for worship. They both minister to the whole person. Let us look at the other scriptures brought to mind by food = love. The New Testament church engaged in love-feasts (Jude 12 and 2 Peter 2: 13). Yet, in many places today such is frowned upon-even discouraged or condemned.

Consider the command connected with withdrawing fellowship. ". . . with such a one, no, not to eat" (1 Cor. 5:11). What could be more motivating to be ashamed than to have a congregation withhold love, and

what better way than to refuse to eat with a person? Jesus ate with sinners (Matt. 9:11). He fed the multitudes (Mark 6:42 and 8:1). A host of other scriptures emphasize the idea of food =love. Applying this to the family, many families have withdrawn fellowship from each other. The never eat together! Yet, the words are quick to come, "Of course, I love you. "Apply this to what is conveyed if I say to a person of another race, "Sure I love you, but just don't eat with me." What is conveyed? What is conveyed from a mother to her family if she is always too tired to fix breakfast or lunch or supper? Or if she tells the husband or children to please eat somewhere else? What is conveyed if a husband is continually late for meals? Though we may think the point small, it is but one of the many ways in which we prove "They want to love one another, but they don't know how."

I Cor 11:22 has nothing to do with Love feast. It is talking about the abuse of the Lord supper. John you alluded to has nothing also to do with Love feast also. 2 Peter is a confirmation that eating together was part of the early church, but it should not be abused. All the commentaries written by brethren agreed that Jude was talking about love feast. The reasons why the youth wants us to eat it is non issue. What is important is that it is scriptural to have love feast or not. The youth of Akoka is a reflection of the larger church. Let us drop sentiments and open our eyes to the truth in the scripture.

CONCLUSION

Wouldn't it be wonderful to be part of a congregation like the one described in Acts2:42-47? Before you nod your head too vigorously, let me quickly add that we can be part of such a congregation if each of us will be what we should be: worshipping, reverent, unselfish, happy, and sharing. Remember that the Bible is a mirror to help us look at ourselves, not a magnifying glass to allow us to inspect others. May God help me to be kind of Christian who would fit in “the church I would love to be a member of”.

Let us demonstrate our love for each other.

On Church Social Meals Or Love Feasts
Olumuyiwa ASAOLU (asaolu@yahoo.com) [14/1/2011]

TEXT: Jude 12 ...*These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.*

2 Peter 2:13 *And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you.*

PREAMBLE: At my congregation, the idea of a special 'get-together' was mooted when the Youths requested church funds to supplement their proposed contributions towards hosting themselves to an 'end-of-the-year program' at our hall on the evening of December 31, 2010. The program was to *feature meals, exchange of gifts by balloting, entertainment by comedians, invitation of friends and interactions to testify of God's goodness.* The timing and modalities presented was suspect, so it was suggested that the whole church should consider having the program at another date, say early January 2011. A committee was setup to review and advice on this and after their report; the third Saturday was tentatively fixed. A get-together was proposed at the church premises in which individuals were to bring food for sharing. The public 'gift-exchange-balloting' idea was dropped to avoid discontentment, haughtiness of the rich and embarrassment of the poor in our midst for the church is to give to a member as he "hath need" –Acts 2:45 & 4:34-35 [Mt 6:1-4, 1 John 3:17-18]. No-one raised entertaining comedy again -Eph 4:29 & 5:4. Later on, some brethren expressed reservations having mistaken the program for a 'special Thanksgiving.' Many believe that we testify of the Lord's goodness in our lives and prayer requests and thus give thanks always in everything -Phil 4:6, 1 Thess 5:18. That cleared, few objected outright to the planned "social meal." Someone asked about the proposed frequency and guidelines of this new 'get-together' feature since it could become an established church activity, advising on the need to cautiously proceed so the precedent be not abused over time. Deliberations were inconclusive at the business-meeting and we were asked to 'go home and pray about it.' This author decided to also study the scriptures (2 Tim 2:15) to attempt to ascertain the will of God (Eph 5:17) on this **matter of faith** so that we may know how to behave ourselves in the house of God.

INTRODUCTION: The Bible mentions 'feast of charity' in Jude 12. Based on this, some contend that the church can promote, plan and hold parties or "love feasts" as a collective body. They further claim that the church should do so in order to bond Christians and may even use it to attract unbelievers and minister to the poor in the community. This lesson aims to ascertain the possible scriptural meaning(s) of 'feast of charity' and to consider the following interwoven questions:

- *Can the church throw a party or assemble solely to socialize via meals and fun activities?*
- *Is it scriptural for the church to organize, sponsor and conduct a recreational feast?*
- *Is it permissible for the church to use food and entertainment to attract people?*

We are **not** considering the right or propriety of an individual hosting a get-together, party or celebration at home, any borrowed or rented venue, etc. for any or no reason e.g. birthday, wedding, naming ceremony, house warming, etc. Those are *social functions* to which an individual has right and which the invitees (brethren inclusive) may choose to honour with their presence if they so wish and have the opportunity -Mt 14:6, 1 Cor 10:27, Mt 22:3 & Jn 2:1-2. We are interested in whether it is scriptural OR expedient for **the local church as the Lord's body to host such get-together or social feast gathering in which a member's absence would amount to 'forsaking the assembly.'** The best guide is not what we feel or think, neither is it what denominations practice nor what commentators suggest but what the New Testament says on this subject matter.

THESIS: The church meets for worship, fellowship and service. This is to accomplish her work of evangelism, edification, benevolence and to glorify God. The Lord said '*man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*' Jesus never invited people to a free food event; rather He only fed them after prolonged teaching in the wilderness where they could not get food to buy. Neither did the apostles who devoted themselves to the ministry of the word. Acts 6:1-7 shows that the meals served to the saints was due to the prevailing contingency not that it was a planned 'get-together' or frolic. Normally, church meetings are scheduled such that they would not conflict with generally accepted meal-times for individuals. So, if a church program is prolonged e.g. at a lectureship, the church may provide meals for those present just as Christ ensured that his listeners were not sent away hungry in Mt 14:13-22 & 15:29-39. Refreshments may be provided from the church purse as is done at our business meetings. These are incidentals and expedients as the **primary purpose** of such meetings or invitation to sinners should not be to come and

eat -Jn 6:26-27. While rebuking the Corinthians for abusing the Lord's Supper, Paul emphasized discerning 'the Lord's body,' stating that meals should be taken at home. Debauchery, showing off social class and offending another's conscience through food are condemned **'for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost'** -Rm. 14:17. Note that the reason for which my congregation jettisoned 'public-gift-exchange' is similar to that which the inspired apostle Paul gives to forbid individual Christians from bringing their foods into the church assembly in 1 Cor 11:22! We are not to emulate the Israelite worshippers who disdained their spiritual meat and drink and purposely **'sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play'** -1 Cor 10:1-7. Jude warns saints to earnestly contend for the faith and beware of false teachers who are ungodly, lascivious or carouse at their gatherings, just like 2 Peter 2. One can search in vain for harmony among Bible commentators on what the "feast of charity" is. If the 'love feast' is something the church must do, the Bible would have furnished us with adequate information and failure to do it would amount to sin. Besides, it would be appropriate to fund it from **the church purse, don't you agree??** The scripturally detailed and scheduled feast clearly enjoined on Christians is the Lord's Supper -Mt 26:26-30, Acts 20:7. The Lord's Table is the only feast in which Jesus promised to participate today (Mark 14:25) and therein we are blessed -Luke 14:15. The physical conduct/spiritual condition of and warning to the sinful feast eaters in I Cor 11 and Jude are quite similar. If the 'feast of charity' is otherwise a random, discretionary get-together of individual saints, the Bible instructs such should be done at home, not mixed with our spiritual service. It would be contingent on all churches of Christ today to celebrate "love feasts" as congregational social meals if it were a commandment, binding example or implication of scripture (necessary inference). Is it authorized in any of these ways? Can we sincerely conclude the inspired writers are teaching and binding 'church sponsored social meals'?? Proponents of 'modern love feasts' or congregational social meals call for this get-together based on reasons which are not compelling enough, as refuted below:

1. Some people are not interacting within the church and this will afford us the opportunity to know ourselves and be united.

Answer: The root causes of failing to interact are matters of the heart. If we really care for and wish to show love to one another, we would endeavor to interact beyond the church premises and scheduled activities. Besides, unity is more than meals; it is being of 'the same mind and the same judgment.' As pointed out, Judas betrayed Jesus after eating with Him -Mt 26:23-25, 47-50.

2. We do not visit ourselves at home because of the busy city-life ('this is Lagos') so we should collectively meet and eat in the church hall (or picnic at the lagoon side).

Answer: If we can create time to visit our natural friends, relations and work colleagues, etc. we should prioritize visitation with brethren if we really see them as our spiritual family and potential business associates or confidants. Visitation is part of the distinguishing characteristics between 'the Sheep and the Goats.' It should be encouraged not circumvented and excused by situation ethics. Specific individuals and families do interact in the church and need only show more interest in some others.

3. There is nothing wrong with introducing something new.

Answer: There is need to *'prove all things'* (1 Thes 5:21) about to be introduced or already practiced in the Lord's church whether such conforms to the scriptures. We must have Christ's authority in *"whatsoever ye do in word or deed"* -Col 3:17. Churches of Christ must be on guard to ensure that human innovations do not *'cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned'* -Rm 16:17

4. The early church met in a variety of locations, including public meeting places (such as the temple) and private homes ...there is nothing special about the worship place. Expression of love can be done in our home or worship buildings.

Answer: The above is probably meant to suggest that whatever individual(s) can do at home or elsewhere is permissible when the church is gathered at the worship place or can be done by the church as a whole. That is not TRUE. For example, may a Christian as an expression of love to his brethren install a cable TV in the place of worship for them to watch the English Premier League? Should one provide music and dancing at the worship place as an expression of love and joy? Or thereat render to the spouse 'due benevolence'? I am sure you get the point that while the physical building or location may not be sacred, the gathering of the church is! The church assembled is more than some Christians meeting for business, social, political or carnal purposes.

5. The early church 'met daily in their homes, getting acquainted with their brothers and sisters and sampling each other's cooking'... [One of the ways to have this fellowship is the agape meal of the early church. Acts 2:46;

Jude 12...] Does all the “breaking of bread” mean Lord Supper? Since this ‘breaking of bread’ was done daily, and the Lord’s Supper is to be eaten only on the first day of the week, here the phrase must refer to a common meal.

Answer: Acts 2:42, 46 *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers... And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.*

The early church ‘*continuing daily with one accord in the temple*’ referred to their worship and intensive study. Obviously, ‘sampling each other’s cooking’ is inherently a private affair. The Bible shows such happened in **individual’s houses** where they ate their meat (meals) just as Paul ate at the converted Jailor’s house in Acts 16:33-34. It is agreed this was a common meal. IF this is the ‘love feast’ as alleged then the over three thousand strong early church partied daily on a rigid rotational basis but such is presumptuous, not evident from the text.

6. Growing congregation are not only the one who meet together for worship, but also meet together for period of sharing, fellowship – love feast (Jude 12). This is why when fellowship is withdrawn from a brother, you are commanded not to eat with him (I Cor. 5:11)

Answer: It is an invalid assumption to consider the epitome of sharing and fellowship to be love feast and conclude that is what 1 Cor 5:11 alludes to. The Church is to stop eating with the disfellowshipped not by ‘bouncing’ them from supposed church organized parties but mainly through exclusion from the Lord’s Supper.

1 Corinthians 5: 8 Therefore let us keep **the feast**, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. 11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; **with such an one no not to eat.** 12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

Note that in vs 8, Paul alluded to the Lord’s Supper [LS] as ‘the feast.’ It is the communion or hallmark of our fellowship with the Lord and one another (1 Cor 10:16-17, 20-21 & Acts 20:7). His message in vs 12-13 is akin to 1 Cor 11:31-32 on the need to judge ourselves that we be not condemned with the world. The commanded LS is more important than the voluntary meals ate ‘from house to house.’ Besides, while the entire church may refuse to visit and dine with one withdrawn from, the Christian relation (e.g. spouse) would not be able to do so!

7. Among the ancients, the richer members of the Church made an occasional general feast, at which all the members attended, and the poor and the rich ate together. The fatherless, the widows, and the strangers were invited to these feasts, and their eating together was a proof of their love to each other; whence such entertainments were called love feasts.

Answer: The above is offered as an explanation on Jude 12. The proponent relied more on ‘*Tertulian in his apology 39*’ than on the apostles in making such claims. Even if this were to be true, it still proves my point that a “love feast” is entertainment which is to be voluntarily offered by richer individuals. It is not a mandated function of the church neither is it the “**meal of the early church. Acts 2:46**” as earlier claimed in section 5! Perhaps more suitable passages might be Mt 25:35 & Jms 2:15-16 for the invitees of the ancients stated above are more than those whom Christ recommends to individuals ‘*when thou makest a feast*’ in Luke 14:12-13.

8. The feasts of charity were certain banquets, which the brethren who were members of the Church kept altogether. It is called a feast or festival of love, because (1.) it revealed the love of Christ to the world...

Answer: This claim contradicts the earlier one in section 7 above where it was asserted that non-Christians especially the poor were invited. This equivocation **further contradicts Jn 3:16; 10:17-18 & 1 Jn 4:9, Rm 5:6-8, 1 Cor 11:23-28 on how the love of Christ is revealed to the world!** Let it be sounded loud and clear that my Saviour’s love is revealed through his voluntary death and atoning work, not through parties or church social meals. It is proclaimed via preaching and the Lord’s Supper. Human entertainment/feast can at best reveal the participants professed love for one another and at worst their love for ‘*drunkenness, revellings and such like...*’

9. Eating together was an important expression of the fellowship of Christians. These fellowship meals were called “love feast” (Jude 12)... The ‘love feasts’ (KJV) ‘feasts of charity’ were in no way meant to be confused with the “ Lord Supper” [sic], But were a common practice during the apostolic age, with the brethren eating together for social, charitable, and humanitarian reasons.

Answer: Can someone please explain to us how the church in the apostolic age and we today, could be '*eating together for social, charitable, and humanitarian reasons*'?

10. Let us look at the other scriptures brought to mind by food = love. The New Testament church engaged in love-feasts (Jude 12 and 2 Peter 2: 13). Yet, in many places today such is frowned upon-even discouraged or condemned.

Answer: I humbly disavow this so-called **food = love** equation which is nowhere found or implied in the scriptures! The Bible only implies that God = love, (1 John 4:8,16). If food = love as claimed then we have the necessary inference that 'God = food'; a situation which would approximate those described in Phil 3:18-19.

11. If the church is a family as expressed in the scripture, do you know any good family who does not eat together?

Answer: The church as a good family eats together every Lord's Day (1 Cor 11:33-34), but that may not be obvious to those who are desirous of eating natural meals in entertainment settings - 1 Pet 2:5,11.

12. I Cor 11:22 has nothing to do with Love feast. It is talking about the abuse of the Lord supper. John you alluded to has nothing also to do with Love feast also. 2 Peter is a confirmation that eating together was part of the early church, but it should not be abused.

Answer: The Lord's Supper aside, eating together was and is still a part of the church. The Bible shows that the eating of common meals or feasting was not a church organized affair but was done by individuals in their personal and privately capacities, from 'house to house.' Surely, Paul more than corrected the abuse of the LS.

1 Corinthians 11: 17 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. 18 For first of all, **when ye come together in the church**, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. 19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. 20 **When ye come together therefore into one place**, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. 21 For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. 22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. 23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:... 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. 33 Wherefore, my brethren, **when ye come together to eat**, tarry one for another. 34 And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

Inspired Paul differentiated between individuals meeting or home stay/visits and when '*the whole church be come together into one place*' as in 1 Cor 14:23, Heb 10:25. The Holy Spirit clearly shows in this passage that "the church assembled" is not the proper forum or venue for natural feasting or social meals. **Christians should eat such meals at home not at worship, so even if the church meets in your house, let feasting take place ONLY after the service has been concluded!** That means after the closing prayer and before the feasting commence, one could be excused from such individually hosted "love feast" for some reason and not be charged of being guilty of abandoning a church program.

13. All the commentaries written by brethren agreed that Jude was talking about love feast. The reasons why the youth wants us to eat it is non issue. What is important is that it is scriptural to have love feast or not.

Answer: The commentaries that one consults may be influenced by one's bias but truth is not determined by majority opinion but by rightly dividing the scriptures. The Youths reasons are tackled in 1-3. Yes, Jude talked of the feast of love but he did not state or instruct that it is a church organized party, don't read that into the text!

14. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be part of a congregation like the one described in Acts 2:42-47?

Answer: Surely, and one is grateful to God that we are such to some extent. Many members visit and eat with other saints, invite one another to their personal celebrations and family events. We mourn or rejoice with fellow Christians whenever occasion demands apart from making impromptu visits to 'enjoy the company and kitchen' of close associates! Surely, there is room for improvement and more interactions but we do NOT have to pervert the assembly of the saints to achieve this, **for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink but...**

CONCLUSION: Congregationally mandated and organized 'social meals for fun' violates the scriptures.

ON LOVE FEAST by Edward Malomo-Young [10/3/2011]

A Rebuttal to Bro Asaolu's Submissions

Occasionally one meets good brethren who strongly oppose eating in the church building or love feast. This is a major point of doctrine among our non-institutional brethren. Hopefully, the following thoughts will benefit those who hold such reservations. There are lots of Bro Asaolu's preambles which are not necessary for this discussion because they are non-issue as far as this discussion is concern. The issue for discussion here is ***Is Love Feast Scriptural?*** The word social feast has no bearing also here. The Bible calls this feast ***Love feast***. Let us learn to call Bible things Bible names. A lot of the passages he alluded to show that he does not understand those passages or he is just misusing these scriptures for they have nothing to do with love feast. For example "...man shall not leave by bread alone" and so what? Because man shall not leave by bread alone, we should not partake of love feast or what is the relationship?

He said that the church meet for worship, fellowship and service. This statement wreck havoc to his position. What is fellowship? It is *Koinonia* meaning **sharing**. The early church shared everything they had except their spouses. (Acts 2,4) I cannot understand why he does not want us to have fellowship meal which the Bible teaches and call love feast when he said that the early church met for fellowship, for sharing including their meals.

Contradictions: He said that the church can eat together if their program is prolonged and later said it is not scriptural to eat in the church hall. According to him, the church can eat together at the business meeting, but said later that it is not scriptural to eat together. What is the meaning of this? What type of contradiction is this?

I believe that by time we trash out the issue of how the Bible authorizes, my brother will understand that love feast is scriptural and there is no sin involved in the church holding it.

Authority Is Established by Direct Statement

When one says that God authorizes by example, inference, and ***command***, the word "command" relates to the area of direct statements (everything not included in example and inference). The word "command" is, therefore, too restrictive. It doesn't even begin to cover the situation. The word "command" relates to an area in which there are (as to nature) ***eight*** different kinds of statements, and it covers only ***one out of the eight***. It is certainly true that there are many "direct statements" in the Bible which we do not use in seeking to establish Bible authority in relationship to our obligations. But, the fact remains that there ***are*** "direct statements" in the Bible which may be used to establish Bible authority. I Cor 5:11 talks of not eating with the unrepentant sinner. If the brethren were not having fellowship of love (love feast), why the command not to eat with the unrepentant sinner. My brother should understand that direct statement can come in negative form like the one in this passage.

Authority is established by example

The word "example" means, according to the dictionary, "That which is to be followed, or imitated: a pattern." We mention this definition to point out that an "example" is to be followed or imitated. An example is "binding." Literally hundreds of times in recent years the question has been asked: "When is an example binding"? In my opinion, this is the wrong question. Obviously, if it is an example it is binding, and if it is not binding it is not an example. The question ought to be: When does the Bible *account* of an *action* constitute an example? Determining when the account of an action constitutes an example requires (1) application of the principles of Biblical *Hermeneutics*, (2) application of the principles of *logic*, and (3) due consideration of the *totality* of the Bible teaching with regard to the subject at hand. Examples of love feast are seen in the following passages Jude 12; II Peter 2:13; Acts 2:46.

Authority Is Established by Implication

We often speak of "necessary inference." The word "necessary" is not necessary. There is a vast difference between "inference" and "assumption." Many things are called inference which are not inferences. Acts **16:15** states that Lydia and her household were baptized. It is often said that therefore, Lydia was married, and that she had children, and that at least some of these children were infants, and that-*therefore-it* is scriptural to baptize infants. There is a great amount of *assumption* here, but *no inference!* When an action, fact, or teaching is *absolutely demanded* by the Biblical information at hand-without being specifically stated-then that action, fact, or teaching is inference. If Saul of Tarsus became a Christian, and if one cannot become a Christian without repenting, then we boldly declare that he repented. Remember, bound because God implied it not because man inferred it! Lot of inferences from the passages mentioned above including I Cor 5:11 for love feast.

Authority Is Established by Expediency In the carrying out of our obligations there is an area of expediency. Every obligation which God ever gave involved expediency. In connection with every obligation which God ever gave it may be truly said that (with regard to carrying out that obligation) God *did* say HOW, and yet that He *did not* say HOW Expediency involves human judgment. So far as concerns church obligations elders of the congregation are authority in the realm of expediency. Expediency is that which expedites. *An expedient is that which is in harmony with the Scriptures, in which there is inherent advantage, and which may be selected by the elders in carrying out any obligations of the church -that obligation growing out of that for which there is approved example, and inference, or a direct statement.* We should keep in mind also that there is *no expediency where there is no obligation. The obligation for the love feast is "...continued steadfastly in... fellowship(Acts 2:42) and "...do not eat with him."*(I Cor 5:11) *Since there is obligation for love feast, it expedites if we eat together in the church hall. Love feast satisfy all the principles of how the Bible authorizes, therefore it is scriptural.* Remember that if it satisfies one, it is scriptural. But it satisfies all.

Out of the passages my brother appealed to buttress his point, there is only one that looks like it has relationship with eating in the church hall. He is not the only one who appeals to this text, but *anti* brethren or *non-institutional* brethren. These folks can appeal to but one text: *“what, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the church of God... in this I praise you not”*(I Cor. 11:22). Does this scripture deal with eating in our modern “church building?” If not, their contention fails from a lack of Biblical prohibition. Remember that our modern meeting houses, owned by the church for their assemblies and activities, did not exist until the third century. Whatever the Corinthians were doing, they were not eating in a “church house”, for they had no “church buildings” like ours in which to meet or eat. Early Christians met in homes (Rom 16:5), at public places like temple porches (Acts 2:46) and in private buildings (Acts 19:10).

The problem of the Corinthians was more than eating in the Church building. The context shows that they were mixing a common meal with the Lord’s Supper (I Cor.11:20-21). Some were selfishly refusing to share their common meal with poor brethren who had little or nothing (11:21). For those two wrongs, Paul rebuked them. The same actions would be wrong today. But do we find modern disciples mixing common meals with worship assemblies or refusing to share with the poor, Our fellowship meals occur before or after our assemblies for worship and all place their food on a table for all to share. Such “love feasts” were common among early disciples (Jude 12).

The problem would disappear if we correctly understand the word “church”. The word is used three ways in scripture. “Church” can refer to God’s family of saved people on earth. We read of “the Church of God at Corinth” (1 Cor. 1:2). When a congregation assembles for worship, it is called the church (1Cor. 11:18). At no point does the Holy Spirit refer to the place of assembly as the Church. This common use of the term has come down to us from Catholic and Protestant usage. Herein lays the root of the problem. When Paul condemns eating in the Church, these brethren mistakenly assume he means church building. In reality he speaks of the assembly. **All conclusions draw from a faulty premise are likewise faulty.** The church building is not holy like the temple was. It is not defiling God’s holy sanctuary to use it for other purposes than worship and study.

Numerous congregations first met in the homes of brethren. If it is wrong to eat a common meal in the same building where the church worships, were they forbidden to eat in their own homes?

Many brethren who condemn eating in the building have offices in the meeting house. Can they drink a cup of coffee or tea, or eat their lunch while at work at their office? Yet, if it is sin to eat a common meal in the Church building as they affirm, then their soft drink or snack

would be sinful, even as a business meeting coke and biscuit meal for 50 or a hundred brethren.

Those who condemn using church funds to provide “kitchen facilities” have no problem with using the same for providing toilet facilities in the churches house. What scripture do they cite for such conveniences?

Some congregations, who condemn others for eating in the church house, build a preacher’s house on the same plot with God’s money. His family eats in the church’s house and then the congregation has showers, parties and meals in the basement or recreation room thereof. If it is wrong to use the Lord’s money to provide eating facilities for the congregation, they have sinned. If it is only wrong to eat in the “church house” they have made that a holy sanctuary which God did not. Sectarians did that!

If it is sinful to eat physical food for the physical body in the church house, do mothers sin who feed their babies in the church building or give a two year old a cracker to quiet him during the worship? God’s truth is consistent. But those who cling to this view rarely are.

Those who are strong in faith and can understand these matters must be careful not to trample on the weak consciences of those who cannot (Rom. 14:20-21). There may be times when we voluntarily lay aside our rights for the well being of a weak brother or sister. The weak brother must be allowed to abstain from joining in such social activities on “church property” until his conscience can approve such (Rom. 14:23). This is the position I place those who have problem with love feast and that is why the church stops it. We should never use our facilities for any activity wrong in itself... even we would not use our homes or businesses for such (1Thess. 5:22).

In conclusion, The Church of Christ speaks where the Bible speaks and is silent where the Bible is silent I Peter 4:11. This means that the Bible is the standard. We must not change. We must not substitute. We must not allow what God condemns. **We must not condemn what God allows.** We must not violate the laws which God has made. **We must not make laws which God has not made.** Therefore, to reject Bible authority is to reject Christianity. To reject Christianity is to reject Christ. To reject Christ is to reject the only way of salvation to man and to reject the only way of salvation is to go to hell. Let us return to the ancient land mark for the salvation of our souls.

RE: EATING IN THE CHURCH [16/3/2011]
A reply by O.S. Asaolu (asaolu@yahoo.com) to Bro. Malomo-Young's rebuttal
of my article '*On Church Social Meals or Love Feasts.*'

I will simply identify and refute perceived flaws in Bro. Malomo-Young's latest article.
For clarity, he shall be quoted in the numbered list below, then answered.

1. Occasionally one meets good brethren who strongly oppose eating in the church building or love feast... There are lots of Bro Asaolu's preambles which are not necessary for this discussion because they are non- issue as far as this discussion is concern. The issue for discussion here is *Is Love Feast Scriptural?* The word social feast has no bearing also here.

Answer: Eating in the church building does NOT necessarily equate to love feast! My preambles contained background information on what I was addressing and why! Yourself and the youths were actually the ones who introduced phrases like 'social, entertainment, etc.' in this subject matter. Lest you have forgotten, you wrote:

...The 'love feasts' (KJV) 'feasts of charity' were in no way meant to be confused with the " Lord Supper", But were a common practice during the apostolic age, with the brethren eating together for **social**, charitable, and humanitarian reasons. [Emphasis mine]

The Youths stated that "the program was to *feature meals, exchange of gifts, entertainment by comedians, invitation of friends and interactions to testify of God's goodness.*"

2. The Bible calls this feast *Love feast*. Let us learn to call Bible things Bible names. A lot of the passages he alluded to show that he does not understand those passages or he is just misusing these scriptures for they have nothing to do with love feast. For example "...man shall not leave by bread alone" and so what? Because man shall not leave by bread alone, we should not partake of love feast or what is the relationship?

Answer: To miss the reason for which I cited "Man shall not leave by bread alone," John 6:26-27, Roman 14:17, 1 Cor 10:1-7, etc. is very telling indeed on who really 'does not understand those passages.' As for calling Bible things Bible names, I have no problem with that.

3. The early church shared everything they had except their spouses. (Acts 2,4) I cannot understand why he does not want us to have fellowship meal which the Bible teaches and call love feast...

Answer: That is a misrepresentation for you have dilly-dallied on what constitutes the fellowship meal to be called love feast [more on this later]. I do continue to affirm that as God's spiritual family, we have fellowship meal every time we bless the bread and the cup of the communion of Christ as written in 1 Cor 10:16-21.

4. He said that the church can eat together if their program is prolonged and later said it is not scriptural to eat in the church hall. According to him, the church can eat together at the business meeting, but said later that it is not scriptural to eat together. What is the meaning of this? What type of contradiction is this?

Answer: I neither "said it is not scriptural to eat in the church hall" nor "it is not scriptural to eat together."

Why make things up to conjure an alleged contradiction? Your allegation is unfounded because:

In my first article, I concluded on Page 2 that "*Social meals should be provided by individuals and participation at such event should be voluntary not church mandated/organized. To avoid misconceptions and sin, get-togethers are best held outside the church premises.*" In point number 11 on Page 4 of my second article which you now claim to be rebutting, I stated that "*The church as a good family eats together every Lord's Day (1 Cor 11:33-34), but that may not be obvious to those who are desirous of eating natural meals in entertainment settings - 1 Pet 2:5,11.*" In point number 14 of same, I wrote "*Many members visit and eat with other saints, invite one another to their personal celebrations and family events. We mourn or rejoice with fellow Christians whenever occasion demands apart from making impromptu visits to 'enjoy the company and kitchen' of close associates!...*" Let us apply 1 Thess 5:21 in ascertaining if the church may scripturally meet PRIMARILY for feasting/partying and entertainment purposes and compel attendance. To compare incidental serving of refreshment at prolonged edification programs with your desire for scheduled services where every member must bring gifts for "love feast" is inexcusable and constitutes an attempt to becloud the issue. To demand after protestations, that members bring 'only food' for sharing is still to require a gift in this so-called special service.

5. ...If the brethren were not having fellowship of love (love feast), why the command not to eat with the unrepentant sinner...

Answer: Fellowship of love does NOT necessarily equate to your concept of love feast. I answered this very question in my previous article. While the apostolic injunction '*...I have written unto you not to keep company... with such an one no not to eat...*' covers the kind of eating done '*from house to house*', it is **primarily** to be obeyed with respect to '*the communion of the body and blood of Christ*!'

6. Examples of love feast are seen in the following passages Jude 12; II Peter 2:13; Acts 2:46.

Answer: I have previously shown that it is incongruent to assert with certainty that Acts 2:46 describes "love feast" given what the text actually says contrasted with your own conflicting definitions of the phrase. While a member may scripturally invite brethren to come feast at a house or desired venue, there is no biblical authority for **a directive that every member must bring food to the religious assembly for a love feast** as a social, charitable or humanitarian service. That is the crux of the matter! No-one should try to mislead church members that they ought to *collectively* throw an entertainment party from their individual resources for the Bible makes it very clear that sharing / giving should be voluntary and "not by compulsion."

7. There is a vast difference between "inference" and "assumption." Many things are called inference which are not inferences... When an action, fact, or teaching is **absolutely demanded** by the Biblical information a t hand-without being specifically stated-then that action, fact, or teaching is inference... Remember, bound because God implied it not because man inferred it! Lot of inferences from the passages mentioned above including I Cor 5:11 for love feast.

Answer: If only YOU would practice your own teaching above and stop reading things INTO the text! Let us look at the passage under consideration; 1 Corinthians 5:11 *"But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat."*

There is nothing in 1 Cor 5:11 to warrant the inference of your "love feast." Why? BECAUSE God implied severally that eating may be done by brethren WITHOUT it **absolutely demanded** to be a congregationally mandated/organized party! Please note that while Jude 12 and 2 Pet 2:13 mentions 'feast of love / love feast,' neither passage shows how it was organized and we have to look into other scriptures to see details of feasting[s] participated in or undertaken by the church. Thus, 1 Cor 5:11 could refer to when an individual voluntarily invite brethren to meals in his/her house (Acts 2:46 & 16: 15,34) and / or when the whole church meet to eat the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:20-26). The love feast is truly the Lord's Supper that is mandated by Christ since the church has no authority to originate a feast for herself -Col 3:17. In this spiritual meal called "the feast," the whole church can effectively obey and truly enforce the instruction in 1 Cor 5:7-13. As noted in my previous rebuttal, a relative such as a wife would find it literally impossible *'not to keep company* unless **you are now advocating that covetousness, railing, drunkenness and extortion are scriptural grounds for marital divorce!** Conversely, my hermeneutics [unlike yours] guarantee that a faithful Christian would be able to spiritually put away and not eat with a disfellowshipped family member, without necessarily abandoning the home.

8. The obligation for the love feast is "...continued steadfastly in... fellowship(Acts 2:42) and "...do not eat with him."(I Cor 5:11) Since there is obligation for love feast, it expedites if we eat together in the church hall.

Answer: This really is not whether we should continue steadfastly in fellowship or if it is sinful to eat in the church hall but *in what manner and under which circumstances?* When you claim that 'there is obligation for love feast,' **which definition of love feast are you alluding to?** I ask since you gave four inconsistent definitions for it as:

- a. the agape meal of the early church (Acts 2:46...)
- b. period of sharing, fellowship – love feast (Jude 12...)
- c. Among the ancients, the richer members of the Church made an occasional general feast, at which all the members attended, and the poor and the rich ate together. The fatherless, the widows, and the strangers were invited to these feasts, and their eating together was a proof of their love to each other; whence such entertainments were called love feasts.
- d. The feasts of charity were certain banquets, which the brethren who were members of the Church kept altogether.

9. Out of the passages my brother appealed to buttress his point, there is only one that looks like...

Answer: I previously wrote four pages, citing several passages to point out about FOURTEEN perceived flaws in your position and lesson. Why respond to 'only one' viz 1 Cor 11:22? Are you feigning ignorance that I detected and refuted your **erroneous** statements such as "*scriptures brought to mind by food = love...* A host of other scriptures emphasize the idea of food =love; *The feasts of charity ...revealed the love of Christ to the world,*" etc.? Just be informed that in the light, it is impossible for a man to run away from his shadow.

10. Out of the passages my brother appealed to buttress his point, there is only one that looks like it has relationship with eating in the church hall.

Answer: My article which you purport to rebut was not focused on 'eating in the church hall.' Rather, it showed that ... *Congregationally mandated and organized 'social meals for fun' violates the scriptures irrespective of the venue!* By this, I mean a church party or feast purely compelled and contrived for entertainment / recreational purposes and it is my submission that such is not an obligation of the church. Your concept of what constitutes the love feast and how it is to be done today is what I am questioning with logic and scriptures, I am not disputing that love feast is mentioned in the Bible or whether the Corinthians were not eating in a 'church house.' You should have noticed that since your public lesson of Jan 12 misunderstood that point from my very first private article of Jan 10, I elaborated the aim in my e-mailed lesson of Jan 14. It is **whether the church as the Lord's body may scripturally ... throw a party or assemble solely to socialize via meals and fun activities and... use food and entertainment to attract people... in which a member's absence would amount to 'forsaking the assembly.'** Preacher, you are affirming that the church may do these things and I find that alarming.

11. He is not the only one who appeals to this text, but *anti* brethren or *non-institutional* brethren. These folks can appeal to...

Answer: My brother, let us refrain from subtle 'argumentum ad hominem' in both our e-mails and our lesson write-ups. Such is common among those who for lack of a sound argument, resort to prejudicial labeling and making unfounded charges against the personality of an opponent rather than addressing issues in a debate.

12. The problem of the Corinthians was more than eating in the Church building. The context shows that they were mixing a common meal with the Lord's Supper (1 Cor.11:20-21). Some were selfishly refusing to share their common meal with poor brethren who had little or nothing (11:21). For those two wrongs, Paul rebuked them. The same actions would be wrong today.

Answer: Your submission above is a half-truth BECAUSE **you failed to proceed to the next verse for the divine solution** which Paul the apostle enjoins Christians everywhere to forever apply to that problem!

13. But do we find modern disciples mixing common meals with worship assemblies or refusing to share with the poor, Our fellowship meals occur before or after our assemblies for worship and all place their food on a table for all to share.

Answer: My Bro. Malomo-Young of Church of Christ, Akoka in Lagos, Nigeria! Where and when do you engage in this '...our fellowship meals [that] occur before or after our assemblies for worship and all place their food on a table for all to share?' You should audit and edit whatever you are '*Copying and Pasting*' from the Internet. The thinking behind your presented statement is disdainful of the apostle's explicit directive in 1 Cor 11:22. Trying to circumvent inspired instruction with the implied excuse that 'modern disciples' are smart enough to evade the Corinthians problem begs the issue and constitutes an offense towards those willing to obey the Lord in this matter. Let it be sounded loud and clear that there is really no smart way of doing what God has prohibited.

14. When Paul condemns eating in the Church, these brethren mistakenly assume he means church building. In reality he speaks of the assembly... When a congregation assembles for worship, it is called the church ...The church building is not holy like the temple was...

Answer: How could you in good conscience write such AFTER I had stated in point 4, Page 2 of my last article that "...while the physical building or location may not be sacred, the gathering of the church is! The church assembled is more than some Christians meeting for business, social, political or carnal purpose"? Furthermore, in point 12 of Page 4, it was shown that 1 Cor 11:22 means '..."the church assembled" is not the proper forum or venue for natural feasting or social meals.' My appeal is that you should read your opponent's clear statements and respond to the aspects, with which you disagree, stop fabricating things and arguing with yourself.

15. Numerous congregations first met in the homes of brethren. If it is wrong to eat a common meal in the same building where the church worships, were they forbidden to eat in their own homes?

Answer: Already addressed in point 12 Page 4 of my last article: "...*Christians should eat such meals at home not at worship, so even if the church meets in your house, let feasting take place ONLY after the service has been concluded!* That means after the closing prayer and before the feasting commence, one could be excused from such individually hosted "love feast" for some reason and not be charged of being guilty of abandoning a church program." That would be one's feast for individuals and not a 'church function' per se.

16. ...Those who condemn using church funds to provide "kitchen facilities" have no problem with using the same for providing toilet facilities in the churches house. What scripture do they cite for such conveniences? Some congregations, who condemn others for eating in the church house, build a preacher's house on the same plot with God's money. His family eats in the church's house...

Answer: You claim to be rebutting my position yet makes and answers your own arguments, ignoring my THESIS and the numerous passages I cited in my article. Your statements above are hardly important for those matters are not the subject of this discussion! They would constitute a proper analogy IF some now teach and direct that "every saint ought to live in the church house, a special service must be scheduled during which every Christian must use the toilet for 'social, charitable and humanitarian reasons,' or every member of the Preacher's household must bring his food to the assembly's presence before that family could be said to eat together."

17. ...The weak brother must be allowed to abstain from joining in such social activities on "church property" until his conscience can approve such (Rom. 14:23). This is the position I place those who have problem with love feast and that is why the church stops it...

Answer: You have again clearly acknowledged that you are advocating that the church as a body should plan and carry out 'social activities' on 'church property' and now label any dissenter as a 'weak brother.' You further aver that such a person **must** be allowed to abstain from joining in...

By these you have conceded the debate because the church is a spiritual body established for spiritual, not social activities. Scripturally, it is individuals who plan, organize, fund and execute social activities such as entertainment feasts, weddings, birthdays, graduation, etc. Such may invite Christians but the invitees are not and can NEVER be guilty of forsaking the assembly of the saints if they abstain from such gatherings. Your labeling such as 'weak' does not enhance your position and is a misapplication of Romans 14.

Is the Lord's Supper a social activity which the church can stop or postpone indefinitely? No! But your 'social meal for fun' concept of "love feast" is not of faith and has been stopped by the inspired apostles in the 1st century, by the council of Laodicea in the 4th century [going by the commentaries you earlier quoted] and by the Church at Akoka in the 21st century! Consider 2 Cor 13:1.

I do agree with your conclusion that "...the Bible is the standard... let us return to the ancient landmark for the salvation of our souls." Thanks for the exchanges which need to be rested for now, I have learned from them and hope you have too. I will continue my studies so that, if necessary, I will publicly teach or debate it some day.