

The Administration of the Lord's Supper

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FROM THE OUTSET, the sixteenth-century Scottish Reformed Church was firm in its pursuit of tutoring and examining communicants, and this preparation intensified in the weeks leading up to the administration of the Lord's Supper. The First Book of Discipline (1560) enjoined, "All ministers must be admonished to be more careful to instruct the ignorant than ready to serve their appetite and to use more sharp examination than indulgence in admitting to that great Mystery such as be ignorant of the use and virtue of the same. And therefore we think that the administration of the Table ought never to be without examination passing before and specially of them whose knowledge is suspect."¹

Throughout the year the minister was to catechize the young people on Sunday afternoon, with the rest of the congregation also present and learning. A fundamental problem was the illiteracy of most of the people.² As the Lord's Supper approached, usually about two or three weeks prior to the event, an *Examination* of both children and adults by the minister and elders was held at the church, to test the people's knowledge of the basic elements of the Christian faith. It was required that one be able to say the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments, and to answer questions from a brief catechism, and communicants at St. Andrews were to be at least sixteen years of age. The seriousness with which the authorities approached the Examination is indicated by a postponement of the communion at St. Andrews in 1600. After six weeks of examining the parish population, in which the communicants alone numbered over three thousand, the sacrament was delayed a week to allow the examination to be completed. In 1645 the General Assembly confirmed that this long-standing custom of examining congregations prior to communion was to be continued. Into the middle of the seventeenth century, the Examination constituted a demanding responsibility for ministers, who could be excused from meetings of Presbytery to allow them time for preparing the people in this way for the Lord's Supper.³

Moreover, the weekly catechizings which ran throughout the year remained an urgent concern of the church courts, because without these the people would not be able to face the Examination at the time of the communion. The General Assembly of 1639 ordained that, inasmuch as the fruits of the Gospel “cannot take effect except the knowledge and worship of God be carried from the pulpit to every family within each parish, . . . every minister, besides his pains on the Lord’s Day, shall have weekly catechizing of some part of the parish, and not altogether cast over the examination of the people till a little before the communion.”⁴

The labor of rightly preparing the people for the sacrament reduced the possibility of communion occurring at greater frequency than quarterly. The requirement to examine every communicant in the parish on each occasion that the Supper was observed meant that a single minister in a large parish would not be able to have more than one administration of the Supper in a year. The result was that into the eighteenth century a number of parishes received communion only once a year.⁵

Amidst so much concern to lead the people into sufficient reflection on the truth as would prepare them to come to the Lord’s table, several of the town churches towards the end of the sixteenth century began holding a Saturday afternoon service called the *Preparation*. This was the forerunner of the preaching services which came to be spread over several days at the time of a communion. The 1645 act of Assembly for regulating the administration of the Supper specified, “That there be one sermon of preparation delivered in the ordinary place of public worship upon the day immediately preceding.”⁶

Two preparation sermons from that period, by James Durham, minister at the Glasgow High Church until his death in 1658, indicate the thrust of the preaching which could be heard the day before a communion. In one sermon, Durham gives instruction about self-examination, and explains what it means to eat and drink unworthily at the Supper. In a second preparation sermon he shows how Christ makes his body discernible in the Supper. Thomas Halyburton, who died in 1712, used the preparatory service to lead his hearers to right thoughts about the nature and importance of the death of Christ, in a sermon on 1 Cor. 1:23–24, “But we preach Christ crucified.” Thomas Boston, in a preparation sermon from 1716, sought to impress upon the people the solemnity of being brought into table fellowship with God, speaking from Exod. 24:11, “And upon the

nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.” In another preparation sermon the same year, Boston spoke on Christ demanding admission to the hearts of sinners, from Ps. 24:9. William M’Culloch, minister of Cambuslang during the revivals there in the mid-eighteenth century, chose to warm his people’s hearts with thoughts of love and gratitude towards the Lord, when he took as his text for a 1749 preparation sermon the words of Ps. 34:8, “O taste and see that the Lord is good,” and for a preparation sermon in 1753 the words of 1 Peter 2:7, “Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious.”⁷

A further aspect of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century preparation for communion was the strenuous endeavor by ministers and Sessions to promote reconciliation among church members who were feuding or bore ill will toward one another. Persons who remained unreconciled were debarred from the Lord’s table.⁸

Occasionally a Session would appoint a sacramental fast, as at St. Andrews in 1598, when it lasted from eight o’clock on Saturday evening to four o’clock on the afternoon of the communion Sabbath. More commonly, the fast was simply going without breakfast before a morning communion, it being the “generally received opinion” at Irvine in 1604 that the sacrament should be received fasting. Around the beginning of the seventeenth century, fast days accompanied with preaching were taking place in the week prior to communion, and thereafter the position of the fast day at mid-week took hold, so that the schedule of services continued to expand beyond the Lord’s Day. In these developments we can see the emergence of the communion season.⁹

A Thursday Fast Day sermon by John Love at Greenock in 1785 contains an apology for observing times of self-abasement prior to the communion. His text is Gen. 18:27: “And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes.” Love remarked that, “Times of peculiar nearness to God, will be times of special abasement and humiliation of soul before him. Abraham was at this time admitted into great nearness to God, and we see the effect which it had upon him. He has not much to say. God’s people at these times have such views of their own vileness, as it is beyond the power of language to describe; it is not a time to pay compliments to God, in neatness or fluency of speech. . . . This observation will vindicate the propriety of appointing a day of fasting

and humiliation, preparatory to the dispensation of the Lord's Supper. It may be asked, What is the reason for such appointments? Is it not a feast of gladness and of triumph? It is true it is so, but who are they that are to be the partakers at this feast? Are they not sinners, who have many things about them to humble them? And it is most fit, that their humility and lowliness of spirit should bear some proportion to the dignity and glory of this ordinance, and to their nearness of access to God in it." ¹⁰

The *action sermon* was preached at the service in which the Supper was dispensed, and took its name from the sacrament's ancient designation as the *Actio gratiarum*.¹¹ James Durham's sermon on Matt. 22:4 is typical of a number of seventeenth-century sacramental sermons, in being an invitation to come to Christ in the marriage offer or at the gospel feast which has been spread. "In a word, would you know what we have to do with you, or what is our commission to you this day? This is even it, to tell you that the King hath made a marriage for his Son, and hath prepared and made all things ready for reuniting you to himself; yea, this same King that hath made this wedding ready, and hath carved out this way of throughing his design, by speaking to you in his word by his servants, speaks to you by us, and we speak to you in his name, and tell you, that our blessed Lord Jesus is wooing you; we declare, publish and proclaim it. O take notice of it. Our Lord Jesus is not far to seek, he is here waiting on to close the bargain with you. . . . Is not the Father ready? He hath given his consent. Is not the Bridegroom ready, when he hath done so much, and is waiting on your consent? The feast is ready, and the garments are ready, and there is no more to do, but to take and put them on; and faith exercised on him will do both. The contract is ready, and there is nothing to be changed or altered in it; and he is ready to accept of you, if ye will accept of him. Our blessed Lord Jesus says, he is content to marry you; and there is no more to do, but to subscribe your name to the contract."¹² An action sermon by John Willison of Dundee, published in 1720, and taking as its text, Rev. 23:17, "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," is another example of vigorously pressing the gospel invitation on the occasion of the administration of the Supper.¹³

Ralph Erskine's action sermons were often a meditation on intimate fellowship with Christ, as in his 1733 discourse on Rev. 7:17, "For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them."¹⁴ By the nineteenth

century, the action sermon was frequently a meditation on the atoning death of Christ, and the effect of that death in bringing salvation, as in a sermon preached in 1845 by John Duncan, on John 12:31-33, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."¹⁵ But other topics included the penitent's prayer, "Save me, O Lord, and I shall be saved," in an 1825 discourse by Andrew Thomson.¹⁶

At the end of the sixteenth century there was often a service of thanksgiving on Sunday afternoon, but after about 1630 it began to be held on Monday, and by the eighteenth century Monday generally came to be regarded as the thanksgiving day of the communion season.¹⁷ An example of an early thanksgiving sermon on a Sunday afternoon is Durham's discourse on Ps. 85:8, "He will speak peace to his people, and to his saints, but let them not turn again to folly." Another is from Phil. 1:27, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ." The object of these addresses by Durham is to encourage communicants to press forward in the grace they have received. "There are two great works that the ministers of the gospel have to do. One is to engage people to Christ, and to persuade them to receive him and close with him; the other is to induce them to walk worthy of him." "It is hard to know, in spiritual exercises, whether it is more difficult to attain some good frame, or to keep and maintain it when it is attained; whether more seriousness is required for making peace with God, or for keeping of it when made; whether more diligence should be in preparing for a communion, or more watchfulness after it."¹⁸

By the end of the seventeenth century, and in many places down to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the uniform practice was that three sermons were preached on the fast day, two on Saturday, two on the communion Sabbath, and another two on Monday. There are a number of instances in the early eighteenth century of a minister handling the same text in sermons delivered over three days of a communion season, with each sermon bringing forth different aspects of the passage.¹⁹

In the last quarter of the seventeenth century there are several instances of large numbers of people coming together from other parishes to attend a communion season. During a period of persecution, communion was administered at open-air conventicles when thousands would be present. During the course of the eighteenth century, it became customary to erect tables and a shelter outside the church for services which ran simultaneously

with the serving of the tables within the church. The shelter for outdoor preaching, made of wood and shaped like a sentry box, with an door in the back, was known as the *tent*. Many ministers from the surrounding area would come to assist. James Begg, born in 1808, describes the communion seasons he knew as a boy in his father's parish of New Monkland, in Lanarkshire. "Large gatherings of people assembled at the communion seasons . . . Besides much week-day preaching by able ministers on such occasions, the church was crowded on the Sabbath during the long but deeply interesting service, whilst five or six sermons were at the same time preached to an immense congregation at 'the tent.' . . . These great and memorable seasons of communion were of much value, by breaking in upon the routine of the ordinary Sabbaths, confirming at the mouths of many witnesses the great truths of the Gospel, giving the people of the whole district an opportunity of hearing the most powerful preaching, and refreshing and stimulating the ministers themselves by pleasant and edifying intercourse with each other."²⁰

John Kennedy, born in 1819, spoke of his father's communion seasons at Killearnan on the Black Isle, in Ross-shire. The crowds of hearers, coming from perhaps forty parishes, were given hospitality by the local inhabitants. "As many as 10,000 people have met on a communion Sabbath, and nearly 2000 communicants have sat at the table of the Lord. These large assemblies, were, of course, in the open air. . . . There were two great advantages attending these 'public communions,' as they were called. An opportunity of fellowship was given by them to Christians from all parts of the country, who would not else have met or known each other on the earth; and the Gospel was preached to a great multitude of sinners by a variety of ministers, amidst the prayers of a great many of God's people."²¹

The benefit received by children in attendance at these communion seasons is further exemplified by the case of William Symington, born in 1795. "His early religious impressions appear to have been all more or less intimately connected with the services, continued over several days, which usually accompany the dispensation of our Lord's Supper in Scotland. . . . It was then customary for members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church to travel to great distances from their homes, that they might enjoy opportunities of communion with their Saviour and with one another; and it was not unusual for pious parents, yearning

for the salvation of their children, to take with them on these occasions such members of their families as were fit for the journey, that they might profit by what they saw and heard. There can be no doubt that the novelty of the scene, the voice and venerable appearance of the stranger-ministers, the varied addresses and appeals from the tent, the solemn distribution of the tokens, the crowds of reverent worshippers assembled on the mount of ordinances, the filling and emptying of the successive tables spread on the green field under the open sky, the more private exercises of godly fathers on the evenings of the preaching days, and the deep-toned religious conversation with which they beguiled the way as they traveled in groups to and from the appointed place, all tended to produce hallowed and lasting impressions on the susceptible minds of youth. These were not only times of precious reviving and strengthening to maturer saints, but times when many of ‘the seed of the blessed of the Lord’ were led to take hold of God’s covenant with their fathers.”²²

A final citation as to the impressions received from these communion seasons comes from a son born in 1841 to the Edinburgh minister Alexander Moody Stuart. “Communion services in St. Luke’s seemed to possess a peculiar sacredness. They were looked forward to with earnest desire and expectation of blessing, and were diligently prepared for. From the beginning of the week before a sacramental Sabbath, Dr. Moody Stuart turned the thoughts of all at family worship to the approaching holy ordinance, reading generally in the gospel of John from chapter XII onwards. He strove to excite in the hearts of all his household a sense that a special blessing might and should be received at such a time, and that its amount would largely depend on earnest and careful preparation for it. In leading the household in prayer, the acknowledgment of sin, and the pleading for Divine blessing, were fuller and more importunate than usual. . . . There was something remarkable in his manner even when distributing the tokens. In recent days I have heard one say that it was only on meeting his look of solemnity and searching power that the significance of the act was realized. It seemed as if he had a present awing sense of his responsibility in admitting guests to his Lord’s Feast. At these seasons there was an atmosphere diffused which the gathering of the prayerful and expectant people and their beloved pastor combined to create, as if the Lord were in very deed remembering His promise, ‘I will be in the midst of them.’ ”²³

From 1560 down into the nineteenth century, the practice in the Church of Scotland was for the communicants to come forward and sit at long tables erected in the church for the occasion. The First Book of Discipline declared that, “The Table of the Lord is then most rightly ministered when it approacheth most near to Christ’s own action. But plain it is, that at the Supper Christ Jesus sat with his Disciples; and therefore do we judge that sitting at a table is most convenient to that holy action . . .” The Book of Discipline also ordained that each church was to have “a bell to convocate the people together, a pulpit, a basin for baptizing, and tables for ministration of the Lord’s Supper.” Because seating was otherwise unavailable in sixteenth-century churches, benches were set up alongside the tables. The area in which the tables and benches stood was then enclosed with a makeshift paling or fence. The tables were to be covered with linen tablecloths, and there were also linen covers for the bread basins and the wine cups. These sacramental linens, when they grew threadbare, were not discarded, but as late as the eighteenth century were customarily given to the poor for use as winding-sheets.²⁴

The Scottish commissioners to the Westminster Assembly insisted that the Westminster Directory for Public Worship include language suggestive of sitting at the communion table. The Directory allows that, “the table being before decently covered, and so conveniently placed, that the communicants may orderly sit about it, or at it, the minister is to begin the action.” The Church of Scotland’s 1645 General Assembly, when approving this Directory, declared its intent to maintain the Scottish practice, declaring the sense in which it received the Directory’s provisions. “Provided always, that the clause in the Directory, of the administration of the Lord’s Supper, which mentioneth the communicants sitting about the table, or at it, be not interpreted, as if in the judgment of this Kirk it were indifferent and free for any of the communicants not to come to and receive at the table . . .”²⁵

George Gillespie, one of the commissioners to the Westminster Assembly, has left a written rationale for bringing the communicants to the table and seating them around it. He noted that this practice conforms most closely to Christ’s original action, and yet transcends anything incidental in the circumstances of the Passover meal. The practice reflects the biblical language about the disciples sitting down to eat and drink at Christ’s table in his kingdom. Gillespie finds in the

Lord's Supper a foreshadowing of the marriage supper of the Lamb, the feast at which Christ will entertain us when we have communion with him in glory, and considers that this is most clearly exhibited when we use a covered table for eating and drinking in a public place, with guests coming up to and sitting at the table. Eating at a man's table is a sign of friendship with him. Notice is also taken of the significance which is ascribed to the table in 1 Cor. 10:21, "Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils." Further, if the elements are distributed throughout the house, there is not the manifest sharing of the bread and cup, as there would be by passing these around the table: "Take this and divide it among yourselves." Finally, Gillespie observed that both rich and poor communicants come to the table to feast together.²⁶ Of course, sitting at the table also represented resistance to the Romanist custom of kneeling to receive the sacrament. But even when kneeling was pressed upon the church by James VI in the early seventeenth century, those few who conformed were not expected to go further than kneeling while gathered around the table.²⁷

A later, full-length vindication of the practice of communicants sitting at the table was published in 1824 by James Begg of New Monkland, the father of the man whose account of communion seasons was cited earlier. The elder Begg observed that, "A pew is not a table in the common acceptation of the term in this country, nor can it answer the design of a table. A table is designed and used in the ordinary purposes of life for social entertainment; and when people surround it as friends, and eat and drink together, they enjoy the pleasures of society, and cultivate esteem and affection for each other." Begg was responding to the introduction into Scotland of the novel practice of carrying the elements to the people while they remained in their pews. The innovator was Thomas Chalmers, who made the change after he became minister of St. John's Church, Glasgow. Begg's monograph was followed by an overture from his Presbytery to the General Assembly of 1825. In response, the Assembly ruled that it was still the law of the Church of Scotland to "dispense the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the people seated at or around the Communion table or tables," though the Assembly of 1827 would not prevent the serving of communicants in pews at the Glasgow churches where this had been introduced. When the Free Church of Scotland was formed in 1843, its Lowland congregations largely followed this new arrangement for

distributing the elements. The seating of communicants at a table faded away for the most part in the south of Scotland, leaving a reminiscence in the occasional use of white cloths that are fastened onto the book boards of a number of pews to which the communicants are invited.²⁸

After the action sermon, the minister gave an address known as *the fencing of the table*, in which he described those who could appropriately come to the Lord's table, and those who are not qualified to partake. The term is probably derived from its usage in Scots law, where it signifies "to open the proceedings of the Parliament or a Court of Law by the use of a form of words forbidding persons to interrupt or obstruct the proceedings unnecessarily." Thus John Willison's 1720 example of the "speech before going down to the table" includes the declaration, "I must first set a rail about the table, that none who have no right to the table, and children's bread, may come near it." The minister would both debar the unworthy, and also give words of encouragement and invitation to those who ought to partake of the sacrament. Walter Steuart of Pardovan, writing in 1709, recounts that the minister would come down to the table and then "fenceth and openeth the tables." Pardovan observed that, "If there has been an unexactness or omission in the exercise of discipline, through which some are admitted whom the word of God forbids to approach on their peril, this doctrinal debarring may scare such from partaking." Such warnings were mandated in the Book of Common Order, which was prepared by the English refugee congregation in Geneva in 1556 and brought back for use at the Scottish Reformation, and are included in Alexander Henderson's description of a communion service, published in 1641.²⁹

A representative example of the fencing of the table is found in a remarkable volume published in 1703, the *Synaxis Sacra*. In it we have specimens of the sermons and addresses given on each of the days in the communion season. Its author was John Spalding, minister of Dundee from 1691 until his death about 1699, and clerk to the meeting of Presbyterian ministers following the indulgence in 1687. In his example of the speech that was made before going to the tables, Spalding commences by speaking about what is signified in the Supper, and then proceeds to speak of who is excluded from the sacrament, and who is welcomed.

Here is what Spalding says by way of debarring those who ought not to be at the table. "I am by virtue of the keys of the kingdom committed to us ministers, to shut the door of this ordinance upon those whom Christ

hath judged unworthy thereof, and to exclude swine from these pearls. And therefore, I in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, as one of the meanest of his heralds, do excommunicate and debar from this holy ordinance, generally, (1) All these that deny and oppose the way of salvation by faith in Christ Jesus, and look for salvation another way. (2) All these that keep up and foster any known sin and transgression, and have no mind to shed with it, and will not be in Christ's common to rid them of it. (3) All those that will not resign up themselves to Christ Jesus to be saved, ruled, and disposed of by him at his pleasure. And (4) all these that will not embark and incorporate with his true church, and side with his unspotted truth, kingdom, and interest on earth, and so generally all that are not, nor are content to be disciples and followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. More particularly, according to the duties required and sins forbidden in the ten commandments, as expressed in our Catechism, and by the same authority, I debar, (1) All continuing and unrepenting atheists, that deny the true and living God. (2) All idolaters that worship more gods than one, or any other things in the stead of God, or the one true God in a corrupt way, not approven and appointed in his Word. All open and avowed persecutors of Christ in his people and truth, and opposers of true Protestant religion, as it hath been long established and practiced in this land. (3) All blasphemers of God and the blessed Trinity, perjurers, and breakers of lawful oaths and covenants, and keepers of all sinful and unlawful oaths and engagements, heretics, and corrupters of the Word of truth with damnable errors. All rank reigning hypocrites, who profess religion only in hypocrisy, and for base sinister ends; all apostates and vile backsliders from the truth and way of salvation by Christ Jesus, and from the blessed reformation of religion, that this church in the latter days hath obtained. (4) All open and avowed profaners and breakers of the Lord's Day. (5) All disobeyers of lawful magistrates, superiors, and parents in their lawful commands and authority. (6) All murderers and manslayers, except in public justice, lawful war, or self defense. (7) All adulterers, fornicators, incestuous, sodomites, buggers, and unclean persons. (8) All robbers, thieves, and oppressors of the poor in their just rights and goods. (9) All false witness bearers, and suborners of others thereto, to the prejudice of others in their name, person, or estate; and so all betrayers of, and refusers to suffer for the truth of Christ, when called to it. And (10) all grudgers and envyers at the good either of the soul, or bodily estate of our neighbour,

or coveting unjustly what is his.”³⁰ Such a review of each of the ten commandments became common in the fencing of the table.

Then the minister proceeds to open the table, by describing those who may and should come forward to receive communion. “I in the same name and authority (and blessed, blessed be his name) am to set open again the door to (1) All these that are broken in themselves, and see no relief but in Christ Jesus; O ye poor, blind, naked, lame, dumb and deaf, come. (2) All ye that have so much as a greedy look, a heart hankering and languor after Christ and his righteousness; O ye serious desirers, earnest thirsters, and hungerers, come get (though ye cannot be satisfied) come get a hungry fill of Christ; O ye creepers, though ye cannot walk nor run, come borrow legs and wings from Him. (3) All ye who are this day holding up your heart and life to God, desiring he may write all his law on it, and stamp his image there, and make you like himself, holy, as he is holy. And (4) All ye that are content to take up your cross and follow him, and are in love with suffering for his cause, and resolve when he calls you to it, to put it on as your crown and glory, and trust him for through-bearing under it. I charge and command you in the King’s name, that ye approach and take your sacrament, and eat and drink before him, and seal that ye will bide by these things, in spite of principalities and powers, etc. Let neither the pride of any worthiness bring thee, nor the sense of any unworthiness keep thee aback.”³¹

Robert Murray M’Cheyne fenced the table at an 1840 communion with a searching appeal to the case of Ananias and Sapphira. “To take that bread and that wine is declaring that you do close with Christ—that you take Him to be your Saviour—that God has opened your heart to believe. . . . Ananias came declaring that he had got the Spirit’s work upon his heart. . . . By coming to the table, you profess that you are under the Spirit’s teaching. If you are not, you lie unto the Holy Ghost! . . . Now, do you know that you have not come to Christ? Do you know that you are unconverted? And will you sit down there and take the bread and wine? Take heed, Ananias! Thou art not lying to a man, but unto God. Perhaps there is one among you who is secretly addicted to drinking, to swearing, to uncleanness. Will you come and take the bread and wine? Take heed, Ananias! Perhaps there are two of you, husband and wife, who know that neither of you were ever converted. You never pray together, and yet you agree together to come here. Take heed, Ananias and Sapphira!”³²

A further means of guarding admission to the sacrament was through the use of communion tokens, which a Session handed out to those who were eligible to partake of the Supper. The communicant would present the token to an elder upon approaching the table. This was a necessary safeguard when there were thousands of people authorized to come to the table, but not all of whom would be known to each elder. Tokens were already in use at St. Andrews in 1560. Not only metal tokens, but also leather ones, and paper “tickets” written by the Clerk of Session, were known in Scotland. Another adjunct of the communion service in the Scottish Reformed Church was the collection of an offering for the relief of the poor, which was received at the door of the church, or on approach to the table.³³

Following the action sermon, a psalm was sung while the minister came down from the pulpit and took his place at the end of the table. He invited the communicants to join him at the table, and as they came, each handed their communion token to one of the elders. The sixteenth-century Church of Scotland did not allow anyone to come to the table who had not been present for the sermon; for this reason, the Session at St. Andrews in 1598 ordered that the doors be locked at the end of the psalm with which the service opened. Henderson noted that the communicants were seated “without difference of degrees, or acceptions of persons.” Then the elders or deacons processioned into the church from the vestry, bearing the bread and the wine, and placing the elements on the table. As they entered, the congregation would be singing a psalm, and in later years this was usually Psalm 24, “Ye gates lift up your heads.” The tune, *St. George’s Edinburgh*, published in 1820, was specifically written by Andrew Thomson for use during what is called “the bringing in of the elements.” The tune was produced on the Thanksgiving Monday of a Paisley communion season, in collaboration with the church’s accomplished precentor, R. A. Smith.³⁴

The practice in the early seventeenth century was that the minister then read the words of institution, and briefly expounded the nature and use of the sacrament, and the duties of communicants. Taking the bread in his hands, he gave thanks, and, as Henderson put it, prayed “earnestly to God for his powerful presence, and effectual working, to accompany his own ordinance, to the comfort of his people now to communicate.” He thereafter broke the loaf of bread and first partook of it himself and then distributed it to those seated near him, and the communicants

passed the basins of bread around the table. When all at the table had eaten, the minister took the cup and first drank of it himself and then passed the cup to those near him. The elders assisted with the movement of the elements around the table. Steuart of Pardovan comments that “ordinary bread is to be used; and it is most decent it be leavened wheat bread,” though some districts of Scotland used an unleavened shortbread. The wine was to be of a red color, and was usually claret in the early days, or port after the beginning of the eighteenth century. Every sitting of a group at the table was ended with a blessing. In the towns, there might be as many as fifteen to twenty relays of people coming up to successive sittings at the long tables, and Henderson indicates that Psalms 22 and 103 were sung during this coming and going. Psalm 103 was also usually given out for the conclusion. At St. Peter’s, Dundee, where M’Cheyne was the minister, the dispensing of the sacrament on a Sabbath in 1841 lasted from one o’clock in the afternoon until nearly seven in the evening, because of the small tables and the large numbers of people drawn from elsewhere for the occasion.³⁵

Thomas Boston noted that Christ’s institution assigns significance to four actions to be taken by the administrator. First, he is *to take up into his hands* the bread, and the cup into which the wine has been poured. “Nothing is more distinctly mentioned than this, Matt. 26:26–27: ‘Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.’ . . . And this represents the Father’s choosing and designing the Son to be Mediator, Ps. 89:19: ‘I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.’ So in this action we may see, (1.) Man perishing for want of spiritual food, Adam and all his posterity starving in their souls, and so their case crying for bread. (2.) God in his eternal love destinating bread for a starving world. (3.) The Son of God, as the party on whom the lot fell, to be bread for them. Behold the bread the Father took, Isa. 42:1.”³⁶

The second sacramental action is that *the elements are consecrated* by the word of institution, and by thanksgiving and prayer, “so that they are no more to be looked upon as common bread and wine, but the sacred symbols of Christ’s body and blood. So they are changed in respect of their use.” Care was to be taken that, following the prayer of thanksgiving, a

declaration be made that the elements had been set apart for a sacramental use. Boston wrote of a communion in 1715 at which the significance of this declaration affected him strongly: “The elements after consecration being declared to be no more common bread and wine, but sacred symbols of the body and blood of Christ, I felt in my spirit a sensible change accordingly; I discerned the sacramental union of the signs and the thing signified, and was thereby let into a view of the mystical union. I saw it, I believed it, and I do believe it this day. I do not remember myself ever to have been so distinct in the view and faith of this glorious mystery; and that with application, for I do believe that Christ dwells in me by His Spirit, and I in Him by faith. And the objection, How can this be? is silenced. I feel the sacrament of the supper to be a divine ordinance; I see it, and believe it. This is the second time I have most remarkably felt that change on my spirit, upon the declaring as above said. May I never miss to declare, as said is, in the administration of that ordinance.”³⁷

In sermons published in 1590, the Edinburgh minister Robert Bruce explained to his congregation at St. Giles that, “That bread has a power flowing from Christ and His institution, which other common bread has not: so that if any of you would ask, when the minister in this action is breaking or distributing that bread, pouring out and distributing that wine; if you would, I say, ask what sort of creatures these are? This is the answer: They are holy things. You must give this name to the signs and seals of the body and blood of Christ. . . . Why? Because the blessed institution of Christ, has severed them from that use whereunto they served before, and has applied them to an holy use; not to feed the body, but to feed the soul. . . . Now the second thing is, how long this power continues with the bread; how long that bread has this office. In a word, I say, this power continues with that bread during the time of the action; during the service of the Table. . . . But look how soon the action is ended, so soon ends the holiness of it: look how soon the service of the Table is ended; so soon that bread becomes common bread again, and the holiness of it ceases.”³⁸

The third sacramental action is *the breaking of the bread*. “This,” says Boston, “is an essential rite of this sacrament, it being sometimes called by this very name, Acts 20:7. It signifies the breaking of Christ’s body for us, and consequently the shedding of the blood.” Bruce comments that both the breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the wine are symbolic actions necessary to be observed: “There is not a rite nor ceremony in the

sacrament of the Supper, but is a sign, and has its own spiritual signification with it: as namely, looking to the breaking of the body and blood of Christ. . . . Therefore the breaking is an essential ceremony: the pouring out of the wine also is an essential ceremony. For as you see clearly, that by the wine is signified the blood of Christ, so by the pouring out of the wine, is signified that His blood was severed from his flesh; and the severing of those two makes death: for in blood is the life; and consequently it testifies His death. The pouring out of the wine, therefore, tells thee that He died for thee, that His blood was shed for thee; so this is an essential ceremony which must not be left out.” This part of the action entailed pouring the wine into the cup from a large flagon which had been placed on the table. The fourth action named by Boston is *the giving of the bread and wine to the communicants*, which “signifies Christ’s giving himself, with all his benefits, to the worthy receiver, which is really done in the right use of this sacrament. This is plain from the words, Take eat, etc.” Here Bruce speaks of the distribution as another essential ceremony pertaining to this sacrament. “And what does the eating testify to thee? The applying of the body and blood of Christ to thy soul. So that there is none of these rites but have their own signification; and there cannot one of them be left out, but you shall pervert the whole action.”³⁹

The act of Assembly in 1645 for regulating the administration of the Supper provides that there would be exhortations at each table, and these were already occurring at Irvine in 1613. The inclusion of such exhortations was widespread by the end of the seventeenth century. By the nineteenth century they were known as *table services*. David Brown, writing in 1874, describes the practice in the Lowland Free Church congregations. The minister, standing at the head of the table, read the words of institution, and only after offering the consecration prayer did he address the communicants. When this first table service had been delivered, the elements were distributed. Then the minister would stand up again and address the communicants a second time. After all the tables had been served, the minister would return to the pulpit and there might be a final exhortation directed to the entire congregation.⁴⁰

Often the tenor of the first table service was to direct the communicants to meditate affectionately on Christ and his death and sufferings, as they awaited the distribution of the elements momentarily. Another approach was to bring words of encouragement to those who are painfully conscious

of their sin and unworthiness. Here is an example from John Duncan, speaking in 1867 on “The Believer’s Defects and God’s Provision.” “And I think the felt result of examination as to some, perhaps all of you, has been, sad defect; sad defect of knowledge to discern the Lord’s body, sad defect of faith to feed upon Him, and sad defect of repentance, love, and new obedience; I say defect, I say not, absence. Led and encouraged by the Spirit of God, . . . you have come forward; with defective knowledge, with defective faith, with defective repentance, with defective love, with sadly defective new obedience; defective, not absolutely wanting. . . . For all defect, provision is made. For defect of faith, there is Christ’s perfect faithfulness. He was faithful to Him that appointed Him. And in this ordinance, that is shown. . . . For the defect of love, provision is made in Christ’s perfect love. And that is shown in this ordinance. ‘Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?’ ‘Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee.’ But if Christ had asked—He did not ask—but were it asked, and the soul that truly loves will ask itself the question, ‘Lovest thou Me as I deserve to be loved?’ oh what a defect would be found there, what a feeble response to such love as that wherewith He loves, what a feeble spark encountering that infinite flame! But for all defect, provision is made. ‘Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down His life for His friends.’ ” ⁴¹

There are published table discourses which show great eloquence and godly pathos. Around the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Marrow man James Webster used the first table service to stir up the people’s longing for the Savior, as they gathered at his table to commemorate his act of love. “Hungry guests, come to Christ’s banquet of bread and wine; needy people, come to his unexhausted treasure, to his exuberant fulness That’s a sweet word, Rev. 3:20, Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man open to me, I’ll come in and sup with him, and he with me. What! are you opening your eyes to look on Christ, opening your hands and mouth to receive Him, yet do open your hearts on the first call to idols and lusts, and keep them shut against Him. Lord, break the strong, iron bolts and bars of brass, that are on our hearts, the bars of ignorance, of atheism, of carnality, of presumption, of discouragement, of unbelief, that keep Christ standing long without. May our mighty Samson carry them all away, may he who made the lock, and knoweth all the turnings and windings thereof, put in his key and make open doors. . . . What, will ye not give him possession

of his own? Your souls are his by a manifold right, He made them, He redeemed them, He preserveth them in life. Ye have disposed them in baptism unto him, and are just now to ratify and confirm and seal that disposition; open all the powers and faculties of your souls . . . O let your consciences be laid open to the force and authority of his precepts! Ah, say ye, though I open, He will not enter? I promise you in his name, He shall, the King of Glory shall come in. Will he knock, and not enter upon your opening? . . . I would advise you to cast wide open the everlasting doors, and his entrance shall be more solemn. . . .” Webster closes with the words, “Blessed Lord, make the King’s keys, enter, enter, and dislodge Satan, lusts and idols. Come in and let me have real, sensible, intimate, and lasting communion with thee. O sup with me.”⁴²

The second table service, which followed the distribution of the elements, took the form of a call to believers to walk as disciples pledged to Christ. An example from M’Cheyne is worded very simply, but has a disarming candor: “Why then should you be like the world? the world are not going to the same place—the world are going to hell, we to the many mansion house. Why then should we be like the world? Brethren, let me speak plainly to you. Be not like the world in secret. The world in secret plot mischief on their bed. Let there be the most complete friendship between you and God. And then, be not like the world in your family. . . . Oh, brethren, if there is one thing I long for more in this place than another, it is to see you governing your own house well, bringing up your family for heaven, and not for the world. And, brethren, do not be like the world in not praying. . . . Be not like the world in your sorrow, they have got angry sorrow. Be not like them. . . . Do you want to be holy? Then God wishes to make you holy. Then God’s will and yours are one. Say, then, Make me holy, I want to be holy. Holiness is the brightest attribute of Jehovah. Ah! I fear we are not living up to what is in Christ, or we would not live as we do. . . . Let us give ourselves away to Christ—solemnly to him; give your wills and affections to him for time and for eternity.”⁴³

The concluding exhortation in the communion service typically sought to discriminate between various conditions represented by those present throughout the church. In an exhortation by Spalding, the first to be singled out are the most hard-hearted. “There are some gross and wilful slights of Christ, over whom He is lamenting and weeping, O if

thou hast in this thy day considered the things that belong to thy peace! This may strike you through with many sorrows, that you have been a grief of heart to him to this day. What a blessed bargain have ye lost, that have let this market go; O who can number thy losses, a crown, a kingdom, a Christ, a soul, and all gone at once! and all through want of heart; the price was in thy hand both of opportunity and convictions, resolutions, offers, entreaties, etc. But thou had no heart for it, and so the bargain, the birthright is gone by you, and ye know not if ever it shall come your way again; this may be the last offer, the last summons, the last alarm, the last fair warning that ever ye shall get.” Spalding goes on to address those who felt disappointed that they did not receive more felt blessing at the table, and those whose cup overflowed.⁴⁴

A second example of the final exhortation at a communion is from the ministry of Alexander Moody Stuart, not long after the Disruption. The preacher, in exhorting the Lord’s people, is speaking from Luke 14:22, “Yet there is room.” “The feast is not closed; the door is not shut yet; the supper is not done: if you go out quickly, another company may be brought in. Go out and tell those that are farthest off to come: those in the lanes and closes; tell them there is room. There is great guilt resting on us because while we are willing enough that those who choose should come in, we are not willing to go forth to those who need to be compelled to come in. It is sometimes hard to compel; it needs faith in the living God. I do not think our consciences are awake to the command, ‘Compel them to come in.’ The command is that you use such arguments and entreaties, that men shall be constrained to come in. It implies that you go to those who are exceedingly averse to come, and also that those who are averse may be made willing, and be constrained by God’s servants. If Jesus says to you at the table, ‘Go, compel them to come in!’ you may not say, ‘No; I will sit at Jesus’ feet, and hearken to His word.’ You are ready to say, ‘We must get more of Christ first,’ but this is the way to get more of Christ; this tries our faith, our love to God and man. But you may say, ‘Men will say, What right have you to judge my case?’ It may be they are more ready to be drawn to the feast than you think. But how hard it is to tell an old story, and to tell it as if it were new! But it is not hard to tell what we have newly seen. We cannot refrain from telling that. And it is because we are so little in the inner room ourselves that we cannot tell men, ‘Yet there is room.’ If we were

fresh in the grace of God; if we saw the heart of Christ that there is room there, we could not but go out and compel men to come in. There is none but can go to some one. If you are not willing to be contradicted, gainsaid, despised, in asking men to be reconciled to God, you are not fit for the kingdom of heaven. If we had in us any freshness of the love of Christ, and if we were taking that love forth till it reached the hearts of men, it would be very hard for them to refuse it. There is room in the compassion of God, but not in our frozen hearts.”⁴⁵

In June 1843, the month after the Disruption and only a short time after the death of his friend Robert Murray M’Cheyne, Andrew Bonar addressed his country congregation at a communion in the open air. His closing exhortation, following the serving of the tables, was from Song 4:6, “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away.” First at Collace, and later at Finnieston, in Glasgow, Bonar had his people cast their eye forward to the return of Christ, closing the services of a communion Sabbath with the singing of Ps. 98:5–9: “Because he comes, to judge the earth comes he: He’ll judge the world with righteousness, his folk with equity.” On a communion Sabbath in 1872, the aging Bonar wrote in his diary, “I sometimes think that to the Lord’s people, dying will be very like going to the Communion Table. There is a little anxiety, and sometimes a little bustle, about the going in to the table; but that is soon over, and all is calmness, and we do nothing else but keep looking upon the Lord.”⁴⁶

Notes

¹ *The First Book of Discipline*, ed. James K. Cameron (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1972), 184.

² *First Book of Discipline*, 182.

³ George B. Burnet, *The Holy Communion in the Reformed Church of Scotland 1560-1960* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1960), 48–50, 161–162; *Register of the Minister, Elders and Deacons of the Christian Congregation of St. Andrews*, ed. David Hay Fleming (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1889–1890), 2:XC1, 809–810, 930; *Acts of General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1638–1842* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Printing & Publishing Company, 1842), 120.

⁴ Burnet, *Holy Communion*, 158–160; *Acts of General Assembly*, 43.

⁵ Another reason that communion was not more frequent was the church’s determination to counter the Romanist opinion that communion

should be received on such holy days as Christmas and Easter for which the Scottish Reformed Church found no warrant in Scripture. Accordingly, the First Book of Discipline mandated, “Four times in the year we think sufficient to the administration of the Lord’s Table, which we desire to be distincted that the superstition of times may be avoided so far as may be.” G. D. Henderson, *The Scottish Ruling Elder* (London: James Clarke & Company, [1935]), 44–45; *First Book of Discipline*, 183–184; David Hay Fleming, *The Reformation in Scotland* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1910), 312; William McMillan, *The Worship of the Scottish Reformed Church, 1550–1638* (London: James Clarke & Company, [1931]), 190–195; Burnet, *Holy Communion*, 184–185.

⁶ *Register of St. Andrews*, 2:XCIII, 862; Burnet, *Holy Communion*, 50–51, 182–183; *Acts of General Assembly*, 120; Andrew Edgar, *Old Church Life in Scotland* (Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1885–1886), 1:125–126.

⁷ James Durham, *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ* (Edinburgh: T. Lumisden & J. Robertson, 1745), 14–44, on 1 Cor. 11:29; Thomas Halyburton, *The Works of Thomas Halyburton* (London: Thomas Tegg & Son, 1835), 581–588; Thomas Boston, *Memoirs* (Edinburgh: Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier, 1899), 307–308; Thomas Boston, *The Whole Works of Thomas Boston* (Aberdeen: George & Robert King, 1848–1852), 3:93–117, 10:99–112; William M’Culloch, *Sermons on Several Subjects* (Glasgow: David Niven for Robert Farie, 1793), 81–107 and 242–264. Other examples of preparation sermons are found in David Dickson, *Select Practical Writings of David Dickson* (Edinburgh: Assembly’s Committee, 1845), 90–109 on 2 Tim. 2:19; Samuel Rutherford, *Fourteen Communion Sermons* (Glasgow: Charles Glass & Company, [1877]), 60–88 on Luke 14:16–17, and 89–114 on Heb. 12:1–5; James Webster, *Sacramental Sermons and Discourses at the Lord’s Table* (Edinburgh: John Reid Junior, 1705), 85–103 on John 7:37 and 5:40, and 131–143 on Rom. 3:25; Ralph Erskine, on “The Joyful Approach of the Saviour, Cheerfully Welcomed by the Church’s Echo of Faith,” from Ps. 40:7 and Song 2:8, in *The Complete Works of Ralph Erskine* (Philadelphia: William S. Rentoul, n.d.), 2:378–401; John Willison, *The Whole Practical Works of John Willison* (Aberdeen: D. Chalmers & Company, 1817), 580–584 on Josh. 3:5; John Kennedy on “The Duty of Self-Examination,” from 2 Cor. 13:5, in [John] Kennedy, *Sermons by Dr. Kennedy* (Inverness: Northern Chronicle, 1888), 119–129. Boston sometimes preached a preparation sermon on the

Sabbath before the communion, as in 1722, from Matt. 5:6: “Hungering After Righteousness,” and in 1727, from 2 Chron. 30:8: “The Duty of Yielding Ourselves to the Lord.” Boston, *Works*, 3:272–280, 397–410.

⁸ Burnet, *Holy Communion*, 52–55, 169–172; Walter Steuart of Pardovan, *Collections and Observations Concerning the Worship, Discipline and Government of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: J. Dickson & C. Elliott, 1773), 100–101.

⁹ Burnet, *Holy Communion*, 51–52, 130–131; Edgar, *Church Life*, 1:126–134; McMillan, *Worship of Scottish Church*, 226–228; *Register of St. Andrews*, 2:860–861, 884; George Burnet, *Bishop Burnet’s History of His Own Time*, (Oxford: University Press, 1833), 1:117.

¹⁰ John Love, *Sermons Preached by the late Rev. John Love* (Glasgow: for the subscribers, 1853), 212–213. The text for a fast day sermon by Thomas Boston in 1712 was Ezek. 18:29, “Are not your ways unequal?” and one in 1722 considered “The Evil of Christ’s Friends Lifting Up Their Heel Against Him,” from Ps. 41:9. Boston, *Works*, 3:253–260, 4:203–209. Cf. fast day sermons by Ebenezer Erskine on Ezek 37:9 (1715) and on Ps. 138:6 (1721). Ebenezer Erskine, *The Whole Works of Ebenezer Erskine* (Edinburgh: Ogle & Murray, 1871), 1:39–60, 108–124.

¹¹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition, s.v. “action”; John Macleod, *Scottish Theology In Relation to Church History Since the Reformation* (Edinburgh: Knox Press, 1943), 96.

¹² Durham, *Unsearchable Riches*, 56–57.

¹³ John Willison, *Works*, 291–296. Other instances are found in the action sermons of Thomas Boston, on Luke 14:23 (1710), on Ps. 81:10 (1711), Hosea 2:19 (1714), on “Christ’s Invitation to His Bride,” from Song 4:8 (1716), on 1 John 4:14 (1724). Boston, *Memoirs*, 243–244; Boston, *Works*, 3:118–129, 6:279–305, 7:491–519, 9:482–490. Cf. Ebenezer Erskine’s sermon, “Christ in the Believer’s Arms,” from Luke 2:28 (1724), and James Fisher on Ps. 24:7 (1755). Ebenezer Erskine, *Works*, 1:148–177; David Young and John Brown, *Memorials of Alexander Moncreiff and James Fisher* (Edinburgh: A. Fullarton & Co., 1849), 245–267.

¹⁴ One might also cite his sermons on John 5:25 (1744), on Ezek. 36:25 (1746), on faith reposing in Christ, from Song 2:3 (1749), on Christ coming to his people, from Song 2:8 (1750), and on Christ’s love-suit to his people, from Song 2:13 (1751). He also has action sermons on the Father placing all things in the hands of the Son, from John 3:35 (1731)

and John 16:15 (1747). Ralph Erskine, *Works*, 2:217–243, 4:10–31, 118–144, 6:143–206, 382–414, 479–512, 523–555.

¹⁵ John Duncan, *Pulpit and Communion Table* (Inverness: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1969), 100–112; cf. 210–218 on John 1:29 (1840). Cf. also David Dickson, *Select Practical Writings*, 110–132, on Isa. 52:13–15; Boston’s sermon, “The Best Security Against the Day of Wrath” (1713), from Heb. 11:28, and a discourse on the redemption accomplished by Christ as the believer’s ground of consolation, from Rev. 1:17–18, in Boston, *Works*, 9:13–27, 10:133–145; Ralph Erskine’s sermons on Zech. 13:7 (1720), on Isa. 42:8 (1722), and on the mediator’s approach to God on our behalf, from Jer. 30:21 (1724), in Ralph Erskine, *Works*, 1:9–56, 128–181, 2:102–145; James Fisher on “Christ the Sole and Wonderful Doer in the Work of Man’s Redemption,” from Judg. 13:19 (1745), in Young and Brown, *Memorials of Moncreiff and Fisher*, 214–244; Andrew Thomson, *Sermons and Sacramental Exhortations* (Edinburgh: William Whyte & Company, 1821), 32–52 on Rom. 5:7–8 (1829).

¹⁶ Thomson, *Sermons and Sacramental Exhortations*, 353–377 on Jer. 17:14. For a further selection of topics, cf. Thomas Boston on “The Acceptable Manner of Drawing Near to God,” from Heb. 10:22 (1715); Ebenezer Erskine on “God in Christ, A God of Love,” from 1 John 4:16 (1726), and on Luke 1:78 (1728); John Willison on Song 2:4; Thomas M’Crie on the love of Christ, from Rev. 1:5 (1831); Robert Murray M’Cheyne on John 17:24 (1840). Boston, *Works*, 9:408–423; Boston, *Memoirs*, 281; Ebenezer Erskine, *Works*, 1:273–292, 317–349; Willison, *Works*, 584–590; Thomas M’Crie, *Works of Thomas M’Crie* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1857), 4:317–328; Andrew A. Bonar, *Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray M’Cheyne* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 467–473.

¹⁷ McMillan, *Worship of Scottish Church*, 228–229; Burnet, *Holy Communion*, 60.

¹⁸ Durham, *Unsearchable Riches*, 72–94, 132–153; quotations on 72 and 132. Cf. a sermon about Christ “brought in triumphing on horseback,” from Rev. 19:11–14, by Samuel Rutherford on a day of thanksgiving in 1634; Dickson on Isa. 41:14–15, “Fear not, thou worm Jacob,” for a Monday service after the communion. Samuel Rutherford, *Fourteen Communion Sermons*, 7–26; Dickson, *Select Practical Writings*, 132–149. Boston preached on Phil. 1:21, “For me to live is Christ,” on the Monday of a 1706 communion season; on Caleb following the Lord fully, from Num. 14:24,

at a service in 1712 following the dispensation of the Lord's Supper; on 2 Tim. 2:1 on a communion Sabbath afternoon in 1722. Boston, *Works*, 3:280–287, 4:239–247, 9:299–313. Ebenezer Erskine spoke from Song 7:5 on the evening of a communion Sabbath in 1717, and on “Courageous Faith,” from Ps. 23:4, on the Monday after a communion in 1733. Ebenezer Erskine, *Works*, 1:61–78, 2:194–216. Ralph Erskine in 1723 preached on 1 John 4:19, following the administration of the sacrament, and on “The Militant's Song, or, the Believer's Exercise While Here Below,” from Ps. 101:1, on a Monday thanksgiving day the same year. On a thanksgiving day about 1724, he spoke from Col. 2:6, and on a communion Sabbath evening in 1732 from Ezek. 43:12, on holiness as the universal law of God's house. In 1733 his text for a thanksgiving day was Gen. 28:15, in 1742 he spoke on Rev. 2:10 on the Monday of a communion season, and Rom. 8:28 was his text for a Monday thanksgiving in 1747. Ralph Erskine, *Works*, 1:423–521, 2:154–186, 338–377, 3:526–558, 4:157–185, 6:222–267. From the nineteenth century, there is Alexander Moody Stuart's communion Sabbath evening sermon on Ps. 40:5. A. Moody Stuart, *The Path of the Redeemed* (Edinburgh: MacNiven & Wallace, 1893), 123–141. Cf. Duncan, *Pulpit and Communion Table*, 48–59 on 1 Cor. 3:21–23 and 6:19–20 (1864), 60–69 on Ps. 73 (1867), 175–184 on Heb. 10:19–23 (1841), 184–198 on Eph. 3:20–21 (1844), and 233–243 on Rev. 21:9 (1845).

¹⁹ Henry Moncreiff Wellwood, *Account of the Life and Writings of John Erskine* (Edinburgh: George Ramsay & Company, 1818), 148; Steuart of Pardovan, *Collections and Observations*, 104.

²⁰ Burnet, *Holy Communion*, 150–155, 226–228; Robert Wodrow, *Analecta* (Edinburgh: Maitland Club, 1842–1843), 67, 172; Thomas Smith, *Memoirs of James Begg* (Edinburgh: James Gemmell, 1885), 13–14. Cf. Steuart of Pardovan, *Collections and Observations*, 104. Thomas Boston preached from the tent outside the church at his first communion at Simprin, in 1702. Thomas Boston, *Memoirs*, 163; cf. 189, 421, 464.

²¹ John Kennedy, *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire* (Inverness: Northern Chronicle Office, 1927), 113–115, 220–222. Cf. Donald Sage, *Memorabilia Domestica; or, Parish Life in the North of Scotland* (Wick: W. Rae, 1889), 129–130.

²² Alexander MacLeod Symington, “Memoir,” in William Symington, *Messiah the Prince* (London: T. Nelson & Sons, 1881), xxv–xxvi.

²³ Kenneth Moody Stuart, *Alexander Moody Stuart, D.D.: a Memoir*

(London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1899), 122–123.

²⁴ *First Book of Discipline*, 90, 203; Burnet, *Holy Communion*, 25–28, 197–198; McMillan, *Worship of Scottish Church*, 233–237, 242–243; *John Knox's Genevan Service Book 1556*, ed. William D. Maxwell (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1931), 137. The Scottish Confession of Faith (1560) speaks of the sacrament as “the Supper or Table of the Lord Jesus.” *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century*, ed. Arthur C. Cochrane (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 179.

²⁵ *Acts of General Assembly*, 115–116.

²⁶ George Gillespie, *A Treatise of Miscellany Questions* (Edinburgh: Gedeon Lithgow for George Swinton, 1649), 218–231.

²⁷ Burnet, *Holy Communion*, 70, 77–78.

²⁸ Burnet, *Holy Communion*, 268–271; James Begg, *A Treatise on the Use of the Communion Table* (Glasgow: Maurice Ogle, 1824): quotation from 16; Charles Greig M'Crie, *The Public Worship of Presbyterian Scotland* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1892), 447.

²⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition, s.v. “fence”; Willison, *Works*, 296–298, and cf. Ralph Erskine, *Works*, 6:332: “Therefore a rail must be put about the table of the Lord” (1748); Steuart of Pardovan, *Collections and Observations*, 102–104; Alexander Henderson, *The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: James Bryson, 1641), 21–22. Cf. the Book of Common Order: “Therefore if any of you be a blasphemer of God, an hinderer or slanderer of his word, an adulterer, or be in malice or envy, or in any other grievous crime, bewail your sins, and come not to this holy table: lest after the taking of this holy sacrament, the devil enter into you as he entered into Judas, and fill you full of all iniquities, and bring you to destruction, both of body and soul. Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord. Repent you truly for your sins past, and have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour, seeking only your salvation in the merits of his death, and passion, from henceforth refusing and forgetting all malice and debate, with full purpose to live in brotherly amity, and godly conversation, all the days of your life.” *Genevan Service Book 1556*, 122–124.

³⁰ John Spalding, *Synaxis Sacra, or, a Collection of Sermons Preached at Several Communion, Together with Speeches at the Tables* (Edinburgh: Heirs and Successors of Andrew Anderson, 1703), 173–174. In order to indicate “the state and character of those who are respectively invited

to the Holy Supper, and debarred and discharged from partaking of it,” Hugh Martin expounded Gal. 5:24 and Rom. 6:6. Hugh Martin, *Christ For Us* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1998), 171–180.

³¹ Spalding, *Synaxis Sacra*, 174–175. Cf. a similar invitation to the contrite, in the Book of Common Order. *Genevan Service Book 1556*, 123–124.

³² Bonar, *Memoir and Remains of M’Cheyne*, 473–475, on Acts 5:1–14. Other models for fencing the table are found in Ralph Erskine, *Works*, 1:56–70, 4:31–34, 144–148, 6:206–208, 556–559; Robert Murray M’Cheyne, *A Basket of Fragments: Being the Substance of Sermons* (Aberdeen: James Murray, n.d.), 130–134, 361–365; John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976–1982), 3:275–279.

³³ Burnet, *Holy Communion*, 34–35, 49, 56, 62–63, 198; McMillan, *Worship of Scottish Church*, 220–221, 244–245; *Register of St. Andrews*, 1:34–35; Steuart of Pardovan, *Collections and Observations*, 101; Boston, *Memoirs*, 441–442.

³⁴ Burnet, *Holy Communion*, 42, 56–57; McMillan, *Worship of Scottish Church*, 216–218; *Register of St. Andrews*, 2:862; Henderson, *Government and Order*, 22; James Love, *Scottish Church Music* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1891), 278–279; R. F. Burns, *The Life and Times of Robert Burns* (Toronto: James Campbell & Son, 1872), 117.

³⁵ Burnet, *Holy Communion*, 28–31, 59–60, 102–103, 194, 263; McMillan, *Worship of Scottish Church*, 164–167, 172–174, 199–203; Henderson, *Government and Order*, 20–25; David Calderwood, *Altare Damascenum* (n.p.: n.p., 1623), 777–778; Steuart of Pardovan, *Collections and Observations*, 98, 104–105; Adam Gib, *Vindiciae Dominicae* (Edinburgh: Murray & Cochran, 1778), 24–25; Samuel Rutherford, *A Peaceable and Temperate Plea for Paul’s Presbyterie in Scotland* (London: John Bartlet, 1642), 316–317; Kirkwood Hewat, *M’Cheyne From the Pew* (Stirling: Drummond’s Tract Depot, [1913]), 69, 72–74.

³⁶ Boston, *Works*, 2:484–485; John Willison, *Works*, 181.

³⁷ Boston, *Works*, 2:485–486; Boston, *Memoirs*, 285.

³⁸ Robert Bruce, *Robert Bruce’s Sermons on the Sacrament*, ed. John Laidlaw (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1901), 53–54.

³⁹ Boston, *Works*, 2:486; Bruce, *Sermons*, 54–55.

⁴⁰ McMillan, *Worship of Scottish Church*, 173–174; John Duncan, *In the Pulpit and at the Communion Table*, ed. David Brown (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1874), 157–158. An early table address by

Samuel Rutherford, from about 1643, is printed in Rutherford, *Fourteen Communion Sermons*, 278–290; cf. Andrew Gray, *The Works of Andrew Gray* (Aberdeen: George & Robert King, 1839), 490–497, for four table addresses delivered by Gray in 1653, at Kirklistoun.

⁴¹ John Duncan, *Rich Gleanings After the Vintage from “Rabbi” Duncan* (London: Charles J. Thynne & Jarvis, 1925), 123–126; cf. 109–113, 115–119, 129–132, 135–140, 143–145. Note also Duncan’s impressive table service, “Mount Sinai and Mount Zion,” in *Pulpit and Communion Table*, 27–29, and also 86–87, 142–145, 218–225; Willison, *Works*, 298–304; Ralph Erskine, *Works*, 1:70–75, 2:392–398, 4:34–38, 148–151, 6:417–419, 559–564; Bonar, *Memoir and Remains of M’Cheyne*, 476–477; Murray, *Collected Writings*, 3:280–288. Spalding, *Synaxis Sacra*, 175–223, offers thirty-four table speeches.

⁴² Webster, *Sacramental Sermons and Discourses*, 167–169.

⁴³ M’Cheyne, *Basket of Fragments*, 136–138 (1842). For other table addresses delivered after the distribution of elements, cf. Duncan, *Rich Gleanings*, 113–114, 120–122, 126–128, 132–134, 140–142, 145–147; Duncan, *Pulpit and Communion Table*, 30–31, 87–89, 145–147.

⁴⁴ Spalding, *Synaxis Sacra*, 223–226.

⁴⁵ Stuart, *Alexander Moody Stuart*, 91–92. Other fine examples of exhortations after the tables are Willison, *Works*, 304–305; Ebenezer Erskine, *Works*, 1:349–353; Ralph Erskine, *Works*, 2:146–153, 4:152–156, 6:518–523; Thomson, *Sermons and Sacramental Exhortations*, 52–66, 296–305, 377–394; Bonar, *Memoir and Remains of M’Cheyne*, 477–479; M’Cheyne, *Basket of Fragments*, 369–376.

⁴⁶ Marjory Bonar, *Reminiscences of Andrew A. Bonar* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1895), 18, 60–61; Andrew A. Bonar, *Diary and Letters* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1894), 292.