

THE MASTER'S TRUMPET

Issue 4 (December 2006)

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The Master's Trumpet is published by the North American presbytery of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), on the internet at www.masterstrumpet.org, and in a printed edition available at an annual subscription of \$25 U.S. to addresses in North America, and \$30 U.S. or £20 to addresses elsewhere. Single issues are \$8 U.S. Subscriptions should be sent to *The Master's Trumpet*, P.O. Box 2331, Fairfax, VA 22031-2331, U.S.A. Subscriptions and donations should be by check drawn on a U.S. or foreign bank, or through bank transfer or credit card at www.paypal.com to payment@masterstrumpet.org.

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From the Editors

THE FIRST ESSAY IN THIS ISSUE ponders the biblical call to pray that the Holy Spirit would authenticate his word in the minds and consciences of those who hear it. Petitions for effusions of the Spirit that would make the word effectual are an indispensable element in the disposition and hope of the church. Thus William Hamilton Burns, speaking in 1838 at the grave of a predecessor whose ministry had been remarkably blessed, addressed his congregation at Kilsyth, Scotland, with these words: “God is not dead. The gospel has lost none of its power. It is we Christians who have lost our power with God. God is able right now to give us the same kinds of blessing that he gave this church one hundred years ago, and even greater. Are you willing to let God search your hearts, to see that there are no sins which grieve God and keep back the blessing?”

The second piece is a reflection from 1865 on the necessity of a minister maintaining spiritual vitality if his congregation is to be blessed. Alexander Moody Stuart (1809–1898) explores how a deepened awakening in a preacher’s personal life will have an effect on his congregation, and indicates the remedy by which a minister may recover an abiding nearness to God. He speaks also of the extraordinary faith sometimes given that the preaching would now be blessed for saving good, noting that this confidence is often present in times of heightened spiritual blessing, as in the ministry of Whitefield and in the 1859 Irish revival.

Our examination of the historic Scottish Presbyterian mode of administering the Lord’s Supper includes end notes useful for directing ministers to published addresses which illustrate the themes of a communion season.

The final article, from the pen of Adam Gib (1714–1788), is a prescription that preaching should point sinners directly to Christ, cautioning that they should not first seek to determine whether they are among God’s elect. The question to be set before sinners is their present need for Christ’s righteousness for justification at the tribunal of God. Once a man turns his eyes to that open door into the house of mercy, and enters through it, he will gain a perspective on what God was doing for him from eternity.

Unction in Preaching

Maurice Roberts

WE OFTEN PRAY FOR UNCTION ON THE PREACHING OF GOD'S WORD but we seldom pause to define what we mean by this term. We know instinctively as Christians that for preaching to be effective it needs something from above to enhance and empower the spoken word. This need which we feel, and which moves us to pray, does not imply any defect in the word of God. Rather, it recognises that there is inadequacy in those who preach that word and also a profound deficiency in the heart of those who hear it preached. Consequently, when we pray, as we should pray, for unction in preaching we are rightly confessing to God that something supernatural is necessary if His word is to have its proper effect on our hearers.

At least three things are assumed in our mind when we pray for this quality of unction to accompany the preached word. We assume, firstly, that the man who preaches God's word is spiritual. That is to say, we expect him to be what in his position he ought to be, a true man of God, who has experienced conversion and a call to the work of the ministry. Along with this assumption we expect the preacher to come before the congregation with a message from God's word over which he has prayed in the secret place.

Secondly, we assume that the sermon which the preacher is about to deliver is sound in doctrine. It is absurd to seek God's blessing to rest on falsehood or fanaticism. Hence, the very proper desire of the Christian heart to have an anointing on the ministry implies a belief in the full divine authority and inspiration of holy scripture. Indeed, the very reason why unction is desired upon the preaching of God's word is the sincere conviction that the message of the Bible is of extreme importance and urgency. The cry for unction on the message presupposes that nothing men could hear on earth is of such urgency as the message which God directs to our mind.

Then, thirdly, the prayer for unction recognises that the impact of the message of scripture will be greater or lesser depending on the unseen and mysterious factor of God's grace. All spiritual work is carried on

under the influence of God's own sovereign activity. All the means of grace need for their efficacy an invisible hand to wield them so that they may overcome all resistance and bring the human soul into obedience to God and into conformity with His will.

In the light of the above we may define unction in preaching as a secret and yet powerful influence of God's Spirit on and with the sermon which authenticates the message to the minds and consciences of those who hear it.

That such an unction was desired by the Apostles of Christ in their day is clear from their own writings. So, Paul can write: "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:4-5). Again, Paul writes to the Thessalonians to this effect: "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (1 Thess. 1:5). From such passages in the apostolic writings as these it is clear that the first preachers of Christianity were conscious of a distinction between preaching which is "in word only" and preaching which is "in power." This "power," or unction, is something which they looked for, prayed for and expected.

It is very clear that the early Church prayed for God's grace to be felt in their preaching and that they did not merely assume that God's grace would be always present automatically. Neither the fact that their preachers were eminently holy and sound men, nor the fact that they were endowed with apostolic gifts led the early Christians to expect God's unction to be on the preaching of God's word as a matter of course. On the contrary, they prayed for this unction to be given to them. Of this fact we have evidence in the following prayer which is recorded in scripture: "And now, Lord, . . . grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word." (Acts 4:29). The sequel is found in this wonderful answer to their prayer: "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31).

This concern on the part of the Apostles and early Church to preach well is reflected also in Paul's request to the Ephesians, in which he asks them to pray "for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, . . . that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph. 6:19-20). It surprises us

not a little, as we ponder these words, to realise that even Paul, one of the greatest preachers the Church has ever known, was alive to the possibility that his preaching might decline in boldness. Even Paul possessed the fear that he could fail to preach the gospel with all proper authority. Much more do we in our day need to be concerned over this failure of our preachers to be bold with a boldness which only God can give.

The unction which we seek undoubtedly affects both preacher and hearer. This is seen in the case of Stephen, whose anointed preaching was with overwhelming power: “They were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake” (Acts 6:10). Similarly, we read: “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were ignorant and unlearned men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). Again, we are informed: “With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33).

There is no other explanation for the extraordinary effects of the preaching given by the Apostles than that they themselves were full of the Holy Spirit and had the Spirit’s presence with them as they declared the truths of God: “We are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him” (Acts 5:32). So spoke Peter. This same power was unquestionably the reason why astonishing effects were seen also after the preaching of Paul and Barnabas in a Gentile setting: “And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God” (Acts 13:44). Indeed, such power was visible in the testimony of Paul and Barnabas at one point that they had difficulty in persuading some of their hearers that they were men and not gods! (Acts 14:18)

However we understand this biblical teaching about unction there is no doubting that it is the explanation as to how a tiny band of preachers in apostolic times could “turn the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). Undeniably the early preachers of the gospel of Christ were men wonderfully empowered to preach the truth in such a way that society as a whole underwent a mighty revolution in religion and manners.

A number of questions may spring to mind as we seek to understand this subject of divine unction. Was this a phenomenon confined to the early Church? Does this unction on preaching always result in the conversion of those who hear it? Is unction related always and only to

times of religious revival? Are we warranted to pray for unction on our own preaching in this modern age?

Whilst it is surely correct to assert that the charismatic gifts were intended only to last for a time, it would seem that there is no good reason to believe that the unction on preaching was confined to the early period of the Church. The history of later ages shows that preachers of great power have been raised up by God in many lands and at different times. This is especially true of the Reformation and countries where the doctrines of grace have spread. It is true also of the great age of pioneer missionaries. Puritans, Methodists, Non-Conformists and others have at various times witnessed remarkable power attending the preaching of the gospel. If we today have little experience of it, the reason is not because this unction was confined to apostolic times.

Does the unction of God's power on men's preaching always result in the conversion of the hearers? Whilst preaching in the power of the Spirit is likely to convert some, it certainly does not necessarily convert all who hear it, nor is it meant to do. The secret purpose of God through preaching is to save those for whom Christ died, that is the elect. This is reflected in such scriptures as the following: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Rom. 11:7). "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only" (1 Thess. 1:4-5). "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). Such texts prove that preaching, however powerful, will not save any but those whom God has appointed to salvation. Gospel truths are "foolishness" to all others (1 Cor. 1:18).

The association of unction with revival is an important one. There is no doubt that in times of blessing preaching always takes on a new power and results, by definition, in the gathering in of many converts to Christ. We are to look at the Pentecostal era as the first of many great revivals which God has graciously sent upon His church. Hence, in all true subsequent revivals we find the same factors at work: the raising up of preachers, the powerful activity of the Holy Spirit to make the preached word effectual, and the marvellous phenomenon of many converts, who are brought to rejoice in the cross of Christ.

There is every reason why Christians should stir themselves up to believe in the unction of God's Spirit upon preaching and in the whole

subject of revival. Indeed, no subject more urgently cries out to us to be believed in and acted upon in our times.

To encourage fresh prayer for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon all our services and preaching, we here give three moving quotations from the past. It is intended, by these historic instances of God's answers to His people's prayers in the past, to stir up prayer for a fresh work of grace among us all in our own day.

We take as our first example the amazing work of God which began in New York in the late 1850s. Jeremiah Lanphier, a newly-appointed city missionary to New York City, faced with the huge task of attempting to get people to church, decided to start a noon prayer meeting each Wednesday. He made and distributed a leaflet to offices and warehouses which invited workers to come to his North Dutch Reformed Church in Lower Manhattan to pray during the lunch hour from 12.00 noon till 1.00 p.m. They were welcome to come for five minutes—or else for a full hour. The door of the prayer meeting room was opened at noon on 23rd September 1857. Half an hour went by and no one came. Then, first one and then another came—six in all. These men prayed together.

By October, as attendances increased, it was decided to hold these meetings daily. Within six months no fewer than ten thousand businessmen were gathering daily for prayer in New York. Within two years it is believed that one million professing converts were added to the American churches. This awakening shortly after passed over the Atlantic to Ulster, Scotland, England and Wales—then on, like a tide of blessing, to Australia, South Africa and South India. The number of converts is past all computation. This famous work of God began, at least in part, through a tiny prayer meeting. Is it not a challenge to us today to believe in God and to cry to Him for a fresh anointing on our souls and our preaching?

The second example of how God can anoint a man is drawn from an account of a remarkable work of God in Wales. It illustrates perfectly how God can transform a man's preaching by giving him this gift of unction. The scene is a farmhouse near the famous Mount Snowdon in August 1817. Here a little-known preacher named Richard Williams was to take a service. There were few present. Many from the area had gone to hear the great John Elias, who was to preach in a nearby town. Williams began the first part of the service as well as he could and then came to the sermon. Then an experience of God's anointing took hold of

the preacher. As one account puts it, “The humble ‘exhorter’ stood forth a prophet of the Most High, in Pentecostal glow, and the house was filled with the Pentecostal cry of awakened souls . . . Within five weeks of that day there was scarcely a house in the vale but the breath of prayer had filled it.” The revival spread on to other parts of Wales. But the start was this unction given to Mr Richard Williams.

Our last example comes again from Wales and refers to the revival in that land which began, as we have seen, in New York in 1857. The Spirit of God brought the revival to Ulster in 1858—and then to Wales in 1859. The man who received the anointing on this occasion was David Morgan, who was greatly used in this revival. David Morgan became interested in the whole subject of revival through hearing a fellow Welshman, Humphrey Jones, who had experienced the revival in America at that period and had come home to his native Wales to tell of what he had seen and felt.

David Morgan had heard Humphrey Jones several times before the crucial night which was to make Morgan a powerful instrument in the hand of God. He had been a minister for some years—a good man but not an exceptional preacher. But on this night David Morgan was deeply moved as he listened to Humphrey Jones. He put it like this: “I went to bed that night just David Morgan as usual. I woke up the next morning feeling like a lion, feeling that I was filled with the power of the Holy Ghost.” His preaching now led to many, many persons coming under conviction and being converted to Christ. This went on for over two years. Amazingly, after two years or so, he went to bed at night and woke up “David Morgan once more.” He lived for some fifteen years more, but his preaching was ordinary. That special unction had gone.

There are few subjects that are so pertinent to the ministry today as this one. There is much good, sound preaching. But where is that power of which we have heard from the days of our fathers? Let us leave the subject as Dr. Lloyd-Jones leaves it in his excellent book *Preaching and Preachers*, with the question, What are we to do about this? Dr. Lloyd-Jones concludes like this: “Seek Him! Seek Him! . . . But go beyond seeking; expect Him. Do you expect anything to happen when you get up to preach in a pulpit? . . . Are you expecting it to be the turning-point in someone’s life? Are you expecting anyone to have a climactic experience? That is what preaching is meant to do.” Dr. Lloyd-Jones found this to be true in his own experience of preaching. Is it not time we too sought it?

The Spiritual Condition of the Ministry in Its Influence on the People

Alexander Moody Stuart

The following was read at a private conference of ministers on the 20th of February 1865.

IN SELECTING THIS SUBJECT FOR CONSIDERATION THIS EVENING, I wish to be understood as regarding it simply in itself, and not in comparison with ministerial learning or activity, or other qualifications; and if I should seem to overlook these, it is not at all in the way of disparaging them, but only of stating the paramount claims of this one qualification for ministerial usefulness.

It is almost overwhelming for a minister to consider the *likeness* of the people to the priest, to see his own image reflected on them for good or for evil, himself multiplied a hundredfold. No doubt the absence of this likeness is often very observable. You may see a member, an elder, a deacon, a precentor or doorkeeper in a church, sitting for twenty years under a ministry of a very marked character, without a single feature transferred from the pulpit to the pew; and over many of his hearers, the most faithful pastor must often complain, "I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought." But on the other hand, the minister is very commonly reflected in many of his people, and his cast of thought is frequently exaggerated in its reappearance among them.

For example, in Brainerd's converts among the Red Indians, his doctrines and his own experience were brought out in a depth of humiliation, such as in saying that they were willing to be condemned, beyond what he had himself preached, yet the natural fruit of his preaching, and still more of his spiritual experience. The work of the Spirit was both evident and great in their own individual conversion; yet it seemed, in almost every case, to take the type of their spiritual teacher and father. This was, doubtless, the embodiment in them of his intense

and singular earnestness. But there is no reason to doubt that a similar process is taking place, to a greater or less extent, in all our congregations, and that our people are imbibing both our doctrine and our spirit, our earnestness, our humility, our love, our faith, our repentance, our joy, our prayerfulness, or our sloth, our self-sufficiency, our narrow-mindedness, our worldliness; our heavenliness, our lively hope, our spiritual insight, or our blindness to the unseen and the future, to God, to Christ, to heaven, to hell, and the value of the souls of men.

Independently of preaching, and even of personal intercourse, our *spiritual state* tells continually upon our people. Their impressibility on the Sabbath depends much on prayer through the week; and their praying for us and for themselves depends much on our praying for them. And then on the Sabbath how much hangs, not merely on the words that are spoken, but on the spirit in which we speak, in which we preach and pray. Especially in extemporaneous prayer, we are in constant danger of sinking into a formality perhaps more lifeless than if we were using a form; a formality which we must all have detected in ourselves, by falling into the groove of the same words for want of fresh life within. Or if in such a state we make an effort at the moment toward real prayer, the prayer is constrained and laboured, instead of the spontaneous utterance of our thoughts. When the mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart, out of spiritual desire, spiritual sorrow, or spiritual joy, what conciseness, what tenderness, what power is in the supplication, taking the people along with us in all our petitions, or else making them to feel their own lack of the spirit of grace. This one ordinance in our church, of public prayer without a form of words, shuts us all up to a very peculiar necessity of becoming and continuing to be men of prayer; shuts us up under the pressure of a severe penalty, resting on ourselves and on our people week by week, as the sure consequence of our failure. Then in our preaching it is often what is within us, in the hidden thought of our own hearts, that influences our hearers more than the mere words that are flowing from our lips.

But to be more specific, it is *freshness* of spirit that tells more on people than any other mental condition. Freshness of desire, of faith, of hope, of repentance, of love, seems to have far greater moving power than the amount of actual spiritual attainment. A minister's attainment appears to produce no effect on his people in comparison with his progress. It

may indeed with new hearers, or in another pulpit, because it has there the effect of freshness, but not with his own congregation. The greatest of all effects has sometimes been produced by a preacher awakened and inquiring, and carrying his people along with him step by step; directing his people toward a Saviour still only sought for by himself, and at length finding Him along with them. Reality in the ministry, as everywhere else, carries with it immense power. We must of necessity declare the whole counsel of God, irrespectively of our present attitude toward any part of that counsel; but provided we keep nothing back that is profitable to our hearers, we shall always speak with most power when we describe the truth from our own point of view. In that fervent eulogy of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Song of Solomon, in which the bride sets Him forth to others as the "chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely," it is not Christ present to herself that she describes, but Christ absent from her, and intensely longed for by her. More lovingly and more gloriously than anywhere else, she there delineates to the daughters of Jerusalem her great Bridegroom in all his attractions. The picture is as full as if He were most brightly revealed at the moment; yet confessedly He is not seen by her, but only vividly remembered and ardently desired by one who "sought him, but could not find him, and called him, but he gave her no answer." Freshness or reality is, as we have said, that which is most of all influential for good in the ministry, [and] hence, therefore, one great and constant element of success in a young minister endowed with any measure of spiritual life, even when that life is largely supplemented by the merely natural fervour of youth. Hence, likewise, almost the whole power that has been found recently in lay preaching. Laymen, for the most part, as soon as they lose this one element of influence, lose everything. But as long as they retain it, this alone gives them far more power for good than all the rest without it; for as in the days of Solomon so now, "the living dog is better than the dead lion."

Immediately connected with freshness of spirit or the "dew of youth," there is another spiritual element of incalculable power in preaching, that is *faith*. There is no gift more valuable for the ministry, than faith in God that He will not let his word return to him void. When the minister's soul, however, relapses into death, faith of necessity dies. "Dead faith" is as weak as everything else that is lifeless, and lively faith is never separate from freshness of spirit, either as its root or its

offshoot. But besides that faith in the promise of God which we are so apt to let go, and should all cherish habitually in preaching the Gospel, there is another development of faith of a subtler and rarer character, yet undoubtedly the mightiest element of all in the success of the Word. This faith is most rare and precious, hard to find, not easy to retain, and difficult to describe; yet wonderfully simple to the soul to which it is given, and marvelously communicative in its effect on the souls of others. No doubt it is a peculiar gift of God, and sovereignly bestowed for a special end, but it is not uncommon under any powerful work of the Spirit in a neighbourhood. At such a time it is often habitual or abiding in the heart; and the man who is thus "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost" seems to be enabled to carry this faith with him to other places, where there had been no work of the Lord, and to be used to kindle the fire of Divine love where all was dark and frozen before.

This faith is not the same as trust for personal salvation, and does not necessarily flow from it; possibly it may be supernaturally given even in the absence of saving faith altogether. It is not natural confidence, nor is it spiritual expectation in a general way; both of which a minister may possess, along with far lower power and less abundant fruit than may be found in others who are weak and burdened and even depressed. This faith itself may be accompanied with great depth of weakness; for Paul surely possessed it at Corinth, where many were turned to the Lord, when he knew nothing but Christ and Him crucified; yet it was in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. I have conversed about it with some of the most thoughtful and successful Irish ministers after their great revival was past. They said that during that whole period, as compared with the previous years of their ministry, the chief and most characteristic difference, both in the state of their own souls and in their preaching, consisted in faith; a faith which they had never known before, and which they could not command or recall afterwards, but which was then simple and abiding in their own hearts, and in their daily ministrations to the souls of others, individually or in public. They believed, and therefore spoke; they spoke and believed that God would own their words, and that their preaching would by the Spirit work conviction, enlightening, and salvation; and they were not disappointed. Daily believing thus, daily they were not put to shame, for the Lord himself confirmed the Word daily with signs following. That was a sovereign gift in a peculiar

season. Yet such men as Whitefield almost seem to have been habitually endowed with a faith nearly akin to this; and in coveting earnestly the best gifts, we should all earnestly pray, "Lord, increase our faith."

But apart from this more special faith, freshness of spirit appears to be the chief element in spiritual influence, and this has its origin and daily maintenance only in *personal intercourse* with the living God, the Father of the spirits of all flesh. "My covenant was with him of life and peace; he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. If they had stood in my council, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings." (Mal. 2:5-6; Jer. 23:22.) To stand in Jehovah's secret conclave or council, to "hear and mark his words," to get them there fresh for ourselves, and so to carry them fresh to the people, is the great condition of ministerial success. Other things we may have, or lacking them we may be losers by the want; but this is essential to life, and for it everything else must give place. Whatever time it takes, we must have this intercourse with our Master. "Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran; I sent them not, nor commanded them, therefore they shall not profit this people at all." (Jer. 23:21, 30, 32.) No doubt this prompt running seems to save time and labour. We have not found God, Christ, the Spirit, for ourselves; but we have the words of the Lord, and we may run with these at once to the people, especially when by going first to Himself we could not get other words after all. But our Lord brands these as "stolen" words, even when they are His own, but heard only at second-hand by us; and denounces the hasty self-sent messenger as wholly profitless to the people.

Our warfare is maintained in an enemy's country, and our first essential for safety, not to speak of victory, is to keep the line of our communication clear with home; with the base of our operations, with the source on which alone we depend for all our supplies, for our bread and water, for our shields and armour of defence, for our arrows and arms of assault. If we are surrounded and cut off from our only source of supply, we are inevitably defeated; and in that event we must first of all fight our way back to Him who sent us, we must retreat into our refuge and fort and rock of defence. This we must do at whatever cost of time and effort, at whatever loss of other operations however urgent, otherwise we are ourselves lost.

Now, surely in us and in every believer the soul can be kept in some right attitude toward God, unless we fall into culpable neglect. We cannot prevent temptation or the harassing of Satan; but through grace we may strive against it, and faithful conflict with the enemy is as pleasing to the Captain of our salvation as victory itself. We can neither destroy the old man nor arrest his working; but the cry, "O, wretched man, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" is a state of health and fidelity as well as the shout of triumph, "Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ." We cannot prevent the hiding of our Heavenly Father's face, nor is it safe to affirm that such hiding is always in proportion to our provocations; but in the darkest hour the attitude, "I wait for the Lord as they that watch for the morning," finds the cheering promise, "He that walketh in darkness and hath no light, let him stay himself upon his God." The soul of every child of the kingdom and of every minister of the Gospel ought always to be in some right state toward God; if not of joy for his presence, yet of grief for his absence; if not of victory, yet of true conflict; if not of spiritual vigour, yet of humiliation for weakness; if not of cleaving to the Lord with purpose of heart, yet of distress for cleaving to the dust. Our hearts ought to be always right toward God; and if we are not culpably slothful, they may be always right in this wide, yet true sense of the term. They may be, habitually and permanently, not drawing back from the Lord, not sleeping as do others, not divided and double-minded, not shut up in things seen and temporal.

Adequate time given to the Word of God and prayer will usually suffice for the righting of the heart. It may not soon effect its restoration, but it will commonly obtain at least this blessed issue, "My desire is toward thee, and to the remembrance of thy holiness." A passing desire will not suffice, for the sluggard desireth and hath not; a brief effort may bring only a transient amendment; the ordinary exercise of devotion may end and leave the spirit as lifeless as when they began. In that case we cannot always resolve with Robert M'Cheyne, on a particular occasion, "I cannot begin my work; for I have not yet seen the face of my God"; for the work may be such that we must enter upon it, however ill prepared. But we may often follow this example; our work may often lie over till we have seen the face of our God, and be both faster and better done through the holy delay and the Divine help; and to a spirit resolved to "seek first His kingdom and righteousness" the delay occasioned by

the search will commonly be very brief. Especially before laying ourselves down to rest after the labours of the day, we may refuse to take sleep to our eyes or slumber to our eyelids without some fresh apprehension of the promise attached to the Word of Life when held fast by the soul, "When thou goest it shall lead thee, when thou sleepest it shall keep thee, and when thou walkest it shall talk with thee." There will be little sleep lost by such a resolution, while that which is given will be the sleep of the Lord's beloved. But in a minister's daily walk with God one unwatchful hour may involve grave loss to himself, which, if not soon repaired, may entail a serious injury to his people.

But along with spiritual freshness, through abiding nearness or continual returning to God, there must for a long ministry be also its sure fruit in spiritual *growth*, and therefore spiritual variety. If there is the same man in the pulpit with the same people in the pews for many years, there is a great risk of his rehearsing the same thoughts to unimpressed listeners. Now, while reading and study and other means are necessary to variety, and largely conducive to it, there is nothing so helpful as personal spiritual growth, because there is no such sameness as the sameness of death. Life is variety, death is sameness. Waking, either bodily or spiritual, is in the midst of an ever-varying scene: but in outward or inward sleep, one time is the same as another; darkness and light, winter and summer, spring and harvest are the same. If the state of the pastor's soul varies, not by fickleness but by healthy growth, the Word of God is unto him stored with varied fulness. In its treasures there are the milk and the strong meat, the honey, the oil, the wine, and the finest of the wheat; and the barley bread, the bitter herbs and the vinegar. And if there be health and growth in his soul, he will taste for himself the goodness of God in all these, and be helped in a wise stewardship to give meat to the household in due season.

But we note finally, that a minister should seek indefatigably to be an *example* to his people, and ought therefore to aim at being the holiest man in his congregation, the meekest, the lowliest, the kindest, the most joyful, most watchful, most prayerful, the strongest in faith, the liveliest in hope, the highest above self, the nearest to God and to heaven, the purest or the least spotted image of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our falling almost infinitely short of this standard, is no reason why it should not be our earnest, constant, and determined aim. The sight of many members

of our flock before us will not therefore fill us with grief, but with joy; yet we ought to grieve deeply for our own lagging behind them in the race. Perhaps ministers, while far from being the least, are not commonly the most spiritual in their churches. Now, certainly, on every account a minister ought to be the holiest man in his congregation. His spiritual life is of ten times more importance than that of any other member in his church; and his calling and position are far more favourable to holiness than any other vocation. There is in all these things the exercise of a high sovereignty, and the base things and the weak, and the things that are not, are evermore exalted by Him who chooseth the poor in this world rich in faith, that no flesh may glory in His presence. Yet as no other place in the flock requires grace like the pastor's, so none is so favourable to grace. His calling shuts him up, more than any other, to the daily and weekly need of Divine help, and grace is promised and given according to need; given, that is, to faith apprehending both the need and the promise. He is tempted by Satan as no other member of his church is tempted, and stronger temptation, if resisted, ensures more abundant grace; he is prayed for by his people as no other member is prayed for; and above all, He who walks amid the golden candlesticks holds him more than any other as a star in his own right hand.

Our very helps we do indeed transform into hindrances, when instead of rising to the level of our sacred calling, and being sustained by it there, we drag it down to the level, and therefore far below the level of any other calling; ministering in things holy as if they were common things, instead of walking as a holy priesthood unto God. But the truth remains, that ministers ought to be the highest Christians; and blessed be God, the fact remains that the highest specimens of saints have been ministers of the Gospel in all ages of the Church, and the accompanying fact that it was their being great among the saints that rendered them great in the ministry. Such has been the case not in one age nor in one class of ministers, but in every age and in every character of the sacred calling. Moses and Elijah, John and Paul, were quite as eminent among the saints of God as among the ministers of his Word. But so amongst intellectual and studious men were Augustine, Owen, Edwards, and hundreds of others, higher as saints in the kingdom than as preachers of the Gospel; and probably nearer to God and liker to Christ than any of their hearers. So likewise with working pastors of parishes, with Newtons and Venns

in England, with Calders in the Highlands and Bostons in the Lowlands of Scotland, and with men like M'Cheyne in our own day; they were eminent in the ministry, chiefly because they were eminent in grace, and they could, with Paul, say truly to their people, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

Clearly this is not the exceptional, but the normal state of the Gospel ministry; because, other things being equal, men with most grace should give themselves most readily to the ministry; and in the ministry most grace is provided for them, because they have most need of it and most use for it. Yet we seem to be too often contented with a sadly lower state. We have all to mourn a hundred deficiencies in other respects; and there are other defects which bulk much more largely with our people, and often more largely with ourselves. Yet there can be no doubt, both from the Word of God and from the dying testimony of faithful men, that when it comes to death and judgment, and the giving in our account, the words, "Without me ye can do nothing," will stand out in all their simple and awful magnitude; that things great and many done without Christ, though in his name, will go for nothing, while the least word spoken or act done in His strength will abide for ever. "Herein is my father glorified, that ye bear much fruit," is to every one of us a great call and stimulus to manifold and unceasing exertion; but there is light never to be neglected, thrown on the nature of the fruit, and the manner of the fruitbearing, by the accompanying words, "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."

Alexander Moody Stuart, *The Spiritual Condition of the Ministry in Its Influence on the People*, Edinburgh 1865.

The Administration of the Lord's Supper

Sherman Isbell

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 acceptations 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.

The Open Door of the House of Mercy

Adam Gib

Adam Gib, "Concerning Arminian Errors upon the head of Universal Redemption," *The Present Truth: A Display of the Secession-Testimony*, Edinburgh 1774.

IN THE ORIGINAL TRANSACTION OF THE NEW COVENANT, all the promises bear a special and particular direction to the elect,—all their names being, as it were, severally recorded therein; so that the promises, as there laid, are an expression of God's gracious purpose concerning each of them particularly, and them only: But the matter is far otherwise, in the administration of that Covenant by the Gospel. For the Gospel, as it were, brings forth an extract from that glorious original,—in which extract, the promises bear only an *indefinite* direction; a blank being left, where the names of the elect are recorded in the original; So that these promises, as laid out to men in the Gospel, do abstract from all regard to any as *elect*,—to any, more than others; or they have a respect to them only as *sinner*s, mankind sinners.

And these absolute promises to mankind sinners as such, in the Gospel, are not to be *immediately* considered as an expression of God's *purpose*, or as a declaring of what he will do, in the performance thereof; but they are to be immediately considered, as an expression of God's free *offer* so to do and perform: Which offer is freely and equally made to every hearer of the Gospel, warranting them all to apprehend and apply the promises by faith, and while the possession of all promised blessings, is to be certainly obtained in the way of believing,—the Lord never failing to sustain faith's appropriation of the promises, so as to perform the same unto all believers. Neither are these promises to be considered as an expression or declaration of God's *purposes* to any in particular, but as they come to be accepted and rested upon, or as persons are determined to fill up their names in the blank, by the hand of faith: Which all Gospel hearers are equally and immediately warranted to do, by God's offer and call.

Such then is the direction or endorsement which the absolute promises of justification and eternal life, through Christ, bear to mankind sinners indefinitely, in the Gospel: And such is the claim they have to these promises, a claim every way sufficient to faith, having no dependence on God's intention or design, as to whom the promises were originally made for. And seeing they make an exhibition of Christ to all Gospel-hearers,—in his person, offices, atonement and righteousness; or do bring him and his whole redemption to every sinner's door, in a full and free offer: This is a glorious foundation, a sufficient ground,—for the general call of the Gospel.

The particular objective destination and intention of our Lord's death, cannot belong to the ground of the Gospel call or of faith,—any more than *election* can do, while these are materially the same thing. As people are not to make any inquiry, whether they be among the elect, before they venture to believe in Christ: This is just the same thing, upon the matter, with saying,—that they are not to make any inquiry, whether they be among the persons for whom or in whose names Christ shed his blood, before they venture to receive and rest upon him in the Gospel offer.

In the case of a sinner's justification, "Law and justice have no respect to the particular objective destination or intention of Christ's satisfaction and righteousness, as any way belonging to the *pleadableness* thereof at the bar of law and justice." Which is the same thing as to say,—that the sinner is not to plead upon any *former purpose* of God or Christ concerning him, in the providing of this satisfaction and righteousness; but he is to plead upon the *thing itself*, as presently and freely exhibited to him in the gospel: And this plea is sustained at the bar of law and justice, so that he is acquitted there,—for the sake of this satisfaction and righteousness, not for the sake of any former purpose of God or Christ concerning him, in the providing thereof.

In whose behalf is it, that law and justice have a respect unto the justice-satisfying and law-magnifying nature of Christ's atonement and righteousness? Is it not in behalf of every mankind-sinner indifferently? But it is "in behalf of every sinner who is found betaking himself thereunto by faith, upon the divine warrant," (which has been explained), "as the same is *unto all and upon all them that believe*, without any difference." It is the express testimony of Scripture, and a most material testimony in the present case,—which, if duly considered, might be decisive of the whole controversy, that the New Covenant righteousness is *unto all and upon*

all them that believe, for there is no difference. At the bar of law and justice, no regard is paid to any difference among men, either from their outward characters in the world, or from God's foregoing determinations and appointments concerning them: No consideration is had of who were elected, or who in particular were the purposed and designed objects of our Lord's death. There is no further question at that bar,—but who are taking up their stand by faith, upon the glorious foundation of Christ's righteousness (including his atonement); and it is sustained for all such, unto their justification: It is *unto them* all, for the full benefit thereof; and it is *upon them* all, as their sufficient clothing,—their robe of righteousness.

The sovereign Lord has a *secret counsel* in heaven, where this righteousness is considered as wrought out for his chosen people; and allotted for them only, as such. But he likewise has an *open court* on earth, where the judgment is set in the sinner's conscience, by an efficacy of his word; law and justice being seated on the tribunal. And it is a fundamental statute of his kingdom,—that in this court the Surety-righteousness be proceeded upon, according to the *intrinsic merits* of the cause; in behalf of every law-condemned sinner who is taking up his plea and rest thereupon by faith, as the same is freely exhibited to him in the gospel: And all this without any regard to that peculiar consideration which is had of persons, in the secret council above. Thus, though *elect* and *believers* will prove to be all one in the event, yet the matter is ordered by such a mystery of divine wisdom and sovereignty, as to leave no bar in the way of believing,—with respect to any, wherever the gospel comes.

And so the case is represented, in Acts 10:43: “To him give all the prophets witness; that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” According to the tenor and method of dispensation, at the bar of law and justice, it is not whosoever was elected,—or whosoever was designed and intended to be an object of Christ's death, in the former transaction of the New Covenant; but it is *whosoever believeth in him*, upon the present administration of that Covenant by the gospel, that *shall receive remission of sins*, the door being equally open to all, in the way of believing.—Again, though it is only *all that the Father giveth* him who in the event shall come to him, yet our Lord says, John 6:37, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”: The door stands open to every comer, whose warrant

and entertainment depends upon the opening of this door to him in the gospel; and not upon there having been any particular view of him in the former appointment or offering up of the great sacrifice for sin.

The sum of the matter is this: That the Lord is pleased to gather his elect from among others, by such a dispensation of the gospel as takes no more notice of them than others. All the peculiar respect which the purchased redemption has to them, all the particular respect which Christ had to them in his death,—is altogether abstracted from, in the dispensation of the gospel. The glorious Redeemer, with his plenteous redemption, is equally set forth to all by the gospel, for being received and rested upon, according to the present revelation and exhibition to every one,—not according to what views were had of particular persons, in the original providing of such a Redeemer and redemption. And this unlimited method of dispensation, is what the Lord blesseth for gathering in his elect: while they are gathered in upon no other ground, by no other invitation or welcome, than what is common to them with all other hearers of the gospel, who therefore must be left inexcusable, under an heinous aggravation of their guilt and punishment.

It is justly declared, in the seventh article of the Synod's act about doctrine, That "the formal *ground and reason of faith*—doth *no wise* lie in any particular objective destination of Christ's satisfaction and righteousness, or in any particular objective intention wherewith he made and fulfilled the same: But it *wholly* lies in the glorious Person and Offices of Christ, with his satisfaction and righteousness,—as freely and *equally* set forth by the Gospel, unto all the hearers thereof;—with the Lord's gracious call and command, for *each* of them to come over by faith unto this glorious foundation; and with absolute promises of justification and eternal life through Christ to mankind-sinners as such in the Gospel, the possession of which blessings is to be certainly obtained in this way of believing." What is here said about the ground upon which faith proceeds, and the reason of its procedure in closing with Christ, has been explained already,—as it respects the Gospel call, while faith yields obedience to that call, in coming over to the same ground upon which the call proceeds,—and unto which it freely invites.

There is a full warrant to believe, or a general right of access to Christ by faith, which all the hearers of the Gospel have before they believe,—and whether they ever believe or not; and, in this respect, the

provision of the New Covenant is *their own mercy*: Which warrant or right, faith believes and improves. Yet faith is not a mere believing of an interest which the person had before; and it is no way a believing of any supposed interest in Christ's blood,—from its having been shed for the person, as for every person. But a *particular* saving interest in Christ and his blood, is acquired by faith; such as the person had not before, or which did not hold true of him before he believed.

Neither is it a mere possession upon a former right, that faith thus obtains. For as the general right of access to Christ, which all the hearers of the gospel have,—is only a right for coming to deal in the market of free grace; none can have any personal right in what is there set forth, any personal title thereto, till he buy the same in that market: Where the sinner's side of the bargain, *without money and without price*,—is just a giving up with all self-righteousness, and all creature-portions for his soul; in taking hold of God's covenant by faith. And thus he is brought into the bond of the covenant, or personally instated therein; so as to be vested with a covenant right and title, which he had not before: He takes out a personal *right of interest* by faith, upon the ground of that general *right of access* which he formerly enjoyed. Wherefore, Faith takes possession of Christ and his blood, with his whole righteousness and salvation,—just by taking out a new interest, a new claim of right and property therein; as it apprehends and applies the glorious charter of the New Covenant.

The declarations and promises of the Gospel are made to men with relative words, or terms suited for appropriation, such as, *you, your, thou, thee, thy*: And when these enter into the ear of faith, they immediately point out or specify the person; as all holding true of him in particular.—The Gospel is primarily dispensed to the congregation of the dead, men who are spiritually *dead in trespasses and sins*, as it is the glorious channel of divine influence for quickening them. And while a sinner continues thus dead, he can have no real apprehension of Gospel declarations and promises as belonging to him: Yea, it then continues to be one of God's secrets, whether he shall prove to have any particular lot in that matter. But whenever the person is spiritually quickened, and thus brought to the hearing of faith, immediately the word of grace strikes the ear of faith, as spoken to him: And he credits it with terms of approbation.—*Me, my, mine*.

But the *warrant*, the formal ground and reason of the person's faith or persuasion, as to all this matter,—doth no way consist in what *experience* he has of the Lord's special and saving way of dealing with him. As when a friend is offering any thing by way of a free gift to a person,—it never comes to be personally his own, till he actually receives it: And then he claims it as his own, not on the footing of *his act* in receiving it, but of his friend's *offer* by which he was warranted to receive it and keep it. Just so, as to faith's claim of right in Christ, (with his satisfaction, righteousness and whole salvation),—it is no way founded upon a person's experience of the Lord's enabling him to receive by the appropriation of faith, nor yet upon his own act in receiving: But it is altogether founded upon the Lord's free *offer* and *call* in the Gospel, as what still continues to be the ground of claim.

That truth about Christ and his blood, which justifying faith immediately terminates upon, is a matter of *present truth*, and considered only as such.—In the case of justification, or at the bar of law and justice, faith has no backlook on divine purposes and intentions; it takes no consideration of what may have been formerly true about the person, in any counsels of the Father and the Son concerning him; it makes no inquiry, whether any particular eye was had to the person, in the former appointment and offering up of Christ's sacrifice: But it looks straight out to Christ as revealed in the word, to his blood and righteousness as there set forth; and on the ground of the free exhibition, it applies all to the person's self;—or it takes up a saving interest in Christ, a claim of property in his blood and righteousness, by the *appropriation* which has been explained. And this interest, this claim of property, is not a *former truth*, which faith took rise from as the ground and reason thereof, but it is a *present truth*, which faith terminates upon as the material object thereof,—in the supernatural mystery of its appropriating act. Thus faith apprehends the blood of Christ as a full payment of the person's debt, a full satisfaction for his guilt in particular; it *believes* that his blood is so, it pleads and rests upon the same as such. But in what sense is it, that faith takes the blood of Christ to be such a payment and satisfaction for the person? Not in the sense of its having been *formerly designed* to be so, but of its being *presently sustained* to be so, at the bar of law and justice,—according to the sovereign method of grace. Whom it was particularly that Christ offered up the atonement for, and for whom the Lord received it off his hand, is a matter no way considered in the present case: But God and Christ are

presently offering this atonement in the word of grace, to be received by faith; upon which ground faith receives it, appropriates it, and rests upon it,—as an atonement for all the person's guilt, unto eternal salvation.

As faith is thus exercised upon Christ, it enters by him into the house of mercy; and here a most glorious prospect lies open to its view: So that it looks backward, upon the purposes of divine love and grace toward the person from all eternity; and it looks forward, with a lively hope, upon the person's salvation to all eternity.—No man is called or allowed, at first instance, to look back on any counsels of the Father and the Son concerning him; by believing that Christ intentionally died for him in particular. But the person must first turn his eyes straight forward to the open door of the house of mercy, so as to enter thereby; and he thus comes within view of all the glorious things in that house, from the one end of it to the other. Jesus Christ is *evidently set forth* to sinners, *before their eyes, crucified among them*; a present revelation and offer is made of him as crucified, or dead,—for them to rest upon, in the way of receiving him by faith: And faith receives him with appropriation,—saying, *Christ is mine, his satisfaction and righteousness are mine*: It speaks not immediately of what *was*, or *will be*; but it says, he *is* mine, these *are* mine,—upon the ground of that present offer which faith accepts. Moreover, the believing of this present interest in Christ, is directly a faith of *eternal life and salvation by him*; as lying secured in the merit of his death: And it is directly a believing,—that *whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for the person*; as faith deals not immediately with the former intending, but with the *present sustaining* of all this for the person.

Such is the direct exercise of faith, in the case of justification: And when it thus appropriates its object, it has a glorious privilege, under the Holy Spirit's influence,—of going farther and farther out upon its object in the word; so that it looks backward and forward through the wide field of grace, in ascending the hill of God. It rises up to a view of election, in the Lord's everlasting love; to a view of Christ's amazing love, in laying down his life for the person; and to a view of the soul's portion in the land afar off, which makes to rejoice in hope of the glory of God.—But still it is a *present interest* in Christ by a present receiving of him, that sinners have immediately ado with. And as it is the duty of all who hear the Gospel, to take out or verify this saving interest to themselves,—by the appropriation of faith; so these other blessed interests (here spoken of) will always be found inseparably connected therewith, in the chain of free grace.

WORSHIP SERVICES

Westminster Presbyterian Church, Bethesda, Maryland
Sabbath services 2 PM and 6 PM, 7801 Persimmon Tree Lane.
Minister: Rev. Sherman Isbell, 3155 Lindenwood Lane, Fairfax, VA 22031,
telephone 703.359.0192, e-mail rsisbell@masterstrumpet.org.

Pilgrims' Hope Presbyterian Church, Cumberland, Maryland
Sabbath service 2 PM.
Information: Elder David Biser, 18105 Vernon Estates Drive, Oldtown,
MD 21555, telephone 301.478.5764, e-mail dbiser@masterstrumpet.org.

Free Church Atlanta, Winder, Georgia
Sabbath services 11 AM and 2 PM, 1115 Jefferson Highway.
Minister: Rev. Warren Gardner, 1115 Jefferson Highway, Winder, GA
30680, telephone 770.867.5765, e-mail wegardner@masterstrumpet.org.

Greenville Presbyterian Church, Greenville, South Carolina
Sabbath services 10 AM and 1 PM, One Cleveland Street.
Supply: Rev. Robert McCurley, 1115 Jefferson Highway, Winder, GA
30680, telephone 770.867.5765, e-mail rdmccurley@masterstrumpet.org.

Dayton Free Church, Dayton, Ohio
Sabbath services 12:30 PM and 6:30 PM, New Burlington Friends Meeting
House, 2938 Cemetery Road, Xenia, Ohio.
Supply: Rev. Sean Humby, Apt. F, 2456 Wyoming Street, Dayton, OH
45410, telephone 937.252.1156, e-mail shumby@masterstrumpet.org.

Smiths Falls Reformed Church, Smiths Falls, Ontario
Sabbath services 11 AM and 6 PM, corner of Abbott and Elm Streets.
Information: P.O. Box 102, Smiths Falls, Ontario K7A 4S9, Canada.
Interim Moderator: Rev. John MacLeod, Free Church Manse,
Portmahomack, Tain, Ross-shire, Scotland KIV20 1YL, telephone
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