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A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith

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Robert L. Reymond, Ph.D., *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998).

Dr. Robert L. Reymond is Professor of Systematic Theology at Knox Theological Seminary in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. He holds B.A., M.A., and Ph. D. degrees from Bob Jones University and has done doctoral and post-doctoral studies in other Seminaries and Universities. He is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America, who has lectured in various countries in Europe and the East. Prior to taking the chair of Systematic Theology at Knox Theological Seminary he taught at Covenant Theological Seminary for more than twenty years. Then too, he has authored numerous articles in theological journals and various reference works, and has written some ten books. To say the least, Dr. Reymond is a well educated, highly trained, and skilled theologian.

In the book under review, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*,¹ Reymond has given the church a comprehensive and contemporary statement of Reformed Theology. As stated on the dust cover, this book “is saturated with Scripture” and biblical exegesis, and the author is “always encouraging the reader to measure the theological assertions by the ultimate standard of Scripture itself.” In Reymond’s own words, “this present volume attempts to set forth a systematic theology of the Christian faith that will pass biblical muster” (xix). In the opinion of the present reviewer, it does just that. It is the best one volume Systematic Theology work that exists.

¹ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998). The pagination found in this review is from Reymond’s book.

This is not to say that the book is without defect. There are several areas in which it is weak. For example, Dr. Reymond holds to the “critical” or Alexandrian text theory of New Testament manuscript analysis, rather than the Majority text view (569n, 575n, 951). He errantly speaks of a form of “non-propositional” revelation (5), an oxymoron if there ever was one, because truth can only be revealed by means of propositions. And more than once he refers to knowledge being justified by means of history and experience (478, 678), whereas Scripture alone is the sole means of justifying knowledge, a fact which Reymond himself attest to, both in this book (111-126) and, in much greater detail, in another volume as well.² These glitches, however, should be viewed as mere aberrations.

Dr. Reymond, unapologetically Reformed and Calvinistic in his thinking, is a strong adherent to the Westminster Standards. He follows the theological outline of the Westminster Confession of Faith in this volume. After the “Introduction,” one section of which — “The Justification of Theology as an Intellectual Discipline” — is worth the price of the book itself, Part One studies Scripture (“Bibliology”), Part Two assesses the doctrines of God (“Theology proper”) and man (“Anthropology”). Part Three deals with the Covenant of Grace, the doctrine of the Person and work of Christ (“Christology”), and salvation (“Soteriology”), Part Four examines the church (“Ecclesiology”), and Part Five inquires into “the last things” (“Eschatology”). The volume concludes with seven Appendices, including a “Selected General Theological Bibliography.” In each and every one of the sections, Reymond, in a very

² Robert L. Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1976)

scholarly fashion, interacts with the various alleged orthodox and non-orthodox opinions of scholars of antiquity and the present era.

As noted, admirably, as with Calvin and the Westminster divines, Dr. Reymond begins his treatise, with epistemology (the theory of knowledge). He does not begin with how we know there is a god, and then go on to seek to prove that this god is the God of the Bible. (In fact, in Chapter six the author reviews the “traditional proofs” for God’s existence and shows them all to be fallacious [132-152].) He begins with revelation. The doctrine of God follows epistemology.

Further, his approach to Scripture is presuppositional. There is no proof higher than God’s infallible, inerrant Word. It is the *pou sto* (“[a place] where I may stand”) for all knowledge. Says the author: “When God gave his Word to us, he gave us much more than simply basic information about himself. He gave us the *pou sto*, or base that justifies both our knowledge claims and our claims to personal significance” (111).

Robert Reymond will have nothing to do with a paradoxical theology. As a breath of fresh air, he calls for a rational theology (103-110). This is not a Cartesian rationalism, which is free from biblical revelation, presupposing the autonomy of human reason. Rather, it is a Christian rationalism, as espoused by men such as Augustine, Calvin, and Gordon Clark, that claims that “God is rational...[and] this means that he thinks and speaks in a way that indicates that the laws of logic...are laws of thought original with and intrinsic to himself” (109). Hence, God’s “in-scripturated propositional revelation to us —the Holy Scripture — is of necessity also rational” (110). Without such a rational theology, the systematizing of Scripture would be impossible.

Moreover, the nature of biblical truth calls on us to understand that God’s revelation to us is “univocally true”. That is, what we have in Scripture is not just an analogy of the truth. We have the truth itself. And since God is omniscient (knowing all truth), if we are to know anything, we must know what God knows. Necessarily, then, there is a univocal point at which our knowledge meets God’s knowledge. To be sure, man does not know as much as God knows, i.e., he does not have the same degree of knowledge as God does, but he has the same kind of knowledge (95-102).

Commendably, in the face of so much controversy in our day over the issue of the “spiritual gifts” and the canon of Scripture, the author is a strong advocate of the

Confessional view:³ the gifts have ceased and the canon is closed. In his “What About Continuing Revelations and Miracles in the Presbyterian Church Today?”⁴ a book wholly devoted to this subject, Reymond effectively presents his case in great detail. Particularly relevant is his exegesis and analysis of 1 Corinthians 13:8-13, a passage in which Paul deals with, not the second advent and the final state, but the cessation of the spiritual gifts and the close of the canon.⁵

Part Two (“God and Man”), like the rest of the book is excellent. But several things should be highlighted. First, the author adheres to a literal six day creation and a relatively young earth. He writes: “I can discern no reason...for departing from the view that the days of Genesis were ordinary twenty-four hour days” (392); “the tendency of Scripture...seems to be toward a relative young earth and a relative short history of man to date” (396).

Second, Reymond argues against the traditional view of “The Father’s Eternal Generation of the Son” (324-341), showing that it is (at least) implicitly subordinationistic. He analyzes the writings of the Nicene Fathers, revealing how their uncaring use of language, as well as their misuse or misunderstanding of the Greek *monogenes*, led to this subordinationist view. Reymond buttresses his positions by citing Calvin at length. The conclusion reached is that “John Calvin contended against the subordinationism implicit in the Nicene language” (327).

Third, Reymond’s “A Biblical Theodicy” (“the justification of God in the face of the existence of evil”), is very well done (376-378). In summary: “The ultimate end which God decreed he regarded as great enough and glorious enough that it justified to himself both the divine plan itself and the ordained incidental evil arising along the foreordained path to his plan’s great and glorious end” (377).

Part Three (“Our ‘So Great Salvation’”) begins with “God’s Eternal Plan of Salvation” (461). Herein the author forcefully (and convincingly) argues in favor of a supralapsarian view (that God logically decreed to elect and reprobate prior to his decree to bring about the fall of man) of the logical order of the decrees, rather than the infralapsarian view (that God logically decreed to bring about the fall of man prior to his decree to elect and reprobate). God, writes Reymond, “has a single

³ Westminster Confession of Faith I:1, 2, 6.

⁴ Robert L. Reymond, *What About Continuing Revelations and Miracles in the Presbyterian Church Today?* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1977).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 30-36.

eternal purpose or plan at the center of which is Jesus Christ and his church” (465). Or, in other words, God’s single eternal plan is redemptive in nature: “Creation’s *raison d’être* is to serve the redemptive ends of God” (398).

Hence, the logical order of the decrees must begin, not with the creation of the world and all men, as infralapsarians would have it (480), but with “the election of some sinful men to salvation in Christ” (489). Whereas infralapsarians maintain that their view is correct because it is closer to the historical order of the events as they take place, the supralapsarian disagrees. A rational mind, of which God’s is the epitome, first makes a plan (the decrees) and then executes the plan in the reverse order of the decrees (492-496). This being the case, the logical order of the decrees is not just a matter of theological hairsplitting, as some would contend. The rationality of God is at stake. And Reymond has correctly expounded for us the biblical position.

As mentioned above, prior to studying the doctrine of Christ, the author examines “The Unity of the Covenant of Grace” (503-541). He then goes on to scrutinize Christology, including “The Supernatural Christ of History” (545-581) and “The Christ of the Early Councils” (583-622). Dr. Reymond’s analysis of Christ’s “cross work” and the limited atonement (623-702) (Reymond himself prefers the term “particular redemption”) is extraordinarily well done. Part Three concludes with a study of “The Application of the Benefits of the Cross Work of Christ” (703-794) — the order in which salvation is applied to the elect (the *ordo salutis*), from “effectual calling” through “glorification.”

In Part Four (“The Church”) Reymond sets forth a biblical Ecclesiology. In “The Nature and Foundation of the Church,” he studies this doctrine from a “biblical theological” standpoint, i.e., how it historically unfolds, beginning in the Old Testament and continuing into the New (805-836). The writings of all of the New Testament authors are studied in some detail. The author then goes on to examine “The Attributes and Marks of the Church” (837-862), stressing “faithfulness to and the pure and true proclamation of the Word of God” (851), and “The Authority and Duties of the Church” (861-893), again stressing “that the church must ever be committed to the study, the preaching, and the teaching of the Word of God” (878). Reymond’s teaching in this latter section of the “regulative principle” of worship (868-877): that “true worship may include only those matters which God has either expressly commanded in Scripture or which may be deduced from

Scripture by good and necessary consequence” (870)⁶, is particularly refreshing, especially in a day when we see so many alleged Reformed scholars denying this scriptural duty of worship. He then goes on to explore the biblical view of church government.

Dr. Reymond is a Presbyterian, and presents his case for this form of government with biblical thoroughness (895-910). In so doing he exposes the errors in Episcopacy, Congregationalism, and Erastianism. Part Four ends with “The Church’s Means of Grace” (911-976), wherein the author deals with Scripture (which is a means of grace in itself), and the Sacraments and prayer (which are means of grace only as understood and applied by and with the Word of God).

Finally, Robert Reymond gives us an impressive and fully biblical “Eschatology” (979-1093). First, he investigates five eschatological theories that have surfaced over the last one hundred and fifty years: the liberal eschatology of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Consistent Eschatology of Albert Schweitzer, the Realized Eschatology of C. H. Dodd, the Existential Eschatology of Rudolf Bultmann, and the eschatological views of Dispensationalism. All of these are heretical (in greater and lesser degrees) in one form or another. And Reymond dispenses with them in short order. He concludes: “With such eschatological confusion running rampant today in scholarly circles, never has the need been greater to return to Scripture and to see what God’s Word says concerning this vital, all-important, capstoning locus of theology” (986).

The author then goes on to do just that. He begins in the Old Testament, which eschatologically views the coming of God’s kingdom as one undivided whole. Then as he goes on to teach, when the New Testament opens we find that this kingdom comes in two stages. The first stage is one of grace, the second one of glory. Reymond traces this New Testament concept, beginning with the teaching of John the Baptist, and continuing in the ministry of Christ and his kingdom parables, and then through the balance of the New Testament writings. The author trenchantly argues his case that a biblical eschatology must hold to what he calls an “eschatological dualism,” espousing both the “already” of an inaugurated kingdom, and the “not yet” of a future cosmic kingdom of glory, which will be ushered in at the second advent of Jesus Christ. In his own words: “Old

⁶ The Westminster Confession of Faith (XXI:1) defines the regulative principle as follows: “The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.”

Testament eschatology pointed forward both to today's 'now' (soterically oriented) eschatology and to the 'not yet' (consummating) eschatology of the age to come that will commence with Jesus' return, but eschatological clarity awaited Jesus' prophetic insights to distinguish these two ages" (1064). And within this biblical eschatological framework there is no room for a 1000 year reign of Christ on earth. In other words, a Premillennial eschatology cannot be supported by the teaching of Scripture: "All of the New Testament writings project the same eschatological vision; none of them teaches that a millennial age should be inserted between Jesus' 'this age' and 'the age to come' (Matthew 12:32)" (1064).

Dr. Reymond calls himself an Amillennialist, but some would say that he sounds more Postmillennial. The reason: although he (correctly) sees no "golden age" prior to the final state, he appears to be very optimistic about the spread of the gospel during the present kingdom ("this age") reign of Christ.

Conclusion

Robert Reymond has done the church a great service. In a day when Reformed theology has fallen on hard times, even within our allegedly Reformed and Calvinistic seminaries, Reymond has given us a biblically based, Confessionally sound Systematic Theology. In it he calls the church to a scripturally grounded theology, a rational theology, a God-centered theology, and a theologically articulate ministry.⁷ It is the hope of the present reviewer that the Reformed church will pay heed to this four-fold call. Thank you, Dr. Reymond for your great contribution to the advancement of Christ's kingdom.Ω

Reymond On the Imputation of Adam's First Sin

This view [of the immediate imputation of Adam's sin to all his descendents], held by Charles Hodge and John Murray, appears to be much more in accord with the Pauline analogy between Adam and Christ than the realist view does in that it is the only view that does justice to both halves of the analogy. It does not deny for a moment the natural union between Christ and his posterity, but it urges that the *natural* union only determined the "direction of application" which the governing principle of *representational* union took. Determined to do justice to the representative principle which alone governs the relationship between Christ and the justified, it regards the relation between Adam's first

sin and the sin of the race as also grounded in *federal representation*. In other words, just because Adam was the federal representative of the human race in the covenant of works, in his righteous judgment God imputed Adam's first transgression to the race that was federally related to him. Charles Hodge, an immediate imputationist (which view we discuss below), believed, however, that what God imputed was only *reatus poenae*, the judicial obligation to satisfy divine justice, or the liability to punishment, and not *reatus culpa* (the liability to guilt). But it would surely be a violation of simple justice were God to hold a person liable for punishment whom he did not at the same time regard as guilty of the sin being punished. Murray, more consistently I would judge, insists that Romans 5 intends that we understand that both *reatus culpa* and *reatus poenae* and not just the latter were imputed to the race. Indeed, he insists that God imputed to the race, as an implicate of the race's representational solidarity with Adam, both Adam's guilt and Adam's corruption (that is, his disposition to sin). After all, he notes, Paul does not say that God only imputed Adam's liability to punishment but rather that he imputed Adam's *sin* itself (which necessarily entails both guilt and corruption) to the race.

Reymond On Assurance of Salvation as a State of Mind

In spite of the complexity of this issue, however, the Calvinist insists that certain propositions are still undeniably true. The first is that there is such a thing as *false* assurance (which can flow out of what we have called here temporary faith) that one is in the favor of God and the state of salvation (see Westminster Confession of Faith, XVIII/i). Furthermore, we would without hesitation insist that it is this *false* assurance that these people in the verses cited above have. He would also insist that some vital fruit or evidence of genuine salvation was doubtless missing from their "Christian experience" which put to the lie their assurance and, for the discerning, their profession as well. The missing fruit, if they had examined themselves in the light of Scripture, they themselves could most likely have discerned. For example, in the Hebrews 6 case the missing fruit was the total absence of *growth in understanding* of even the "elementary teaching about Christ" – a fruit that surely "accompanies salvation" (see Hebrews 5:11-14; 6:9), while in the 2 Peter 2 case the missing fruit was the complete absence in the false teachers of *any holy religious affections* (see Peter's characterization of them in 2:3 as greedy and deceptive, in 2:9 as unrighteous, in 2:10 as following "the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority," and in 2:10-19 as "slaves of corruption," bold, arrogant, and blasphemous). •

⁷ For more on this four-fold call, see Robert L. Reymond, *Preach the Word: A Teaching Ministry Approved unto God* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1988).

The Use of the Communion Table in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

by James Begg

(Continued from the January 1999 issue)

Section Four

The use of the Communion Table in celebrating the Sacrament of our Lord's Supper, is in conformity with the laws, and authorized practice of the Established Church of Scotland, since the Reformation.

The late innovation of substituting pews for the Communion Table, is a violation of the laws of the Established Church of Scotland, and a departure from the constant authorized practice of the Church. At the Reformation, our pious ancestors in Scotland endeavored to bring every part of the public worship of God to the Scripture pattern, and particularly the manner of celebrating the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. They acted on that leading principle of the Reformation, "That the holy Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice." On this principle, they removed from the manner of celebrating this ordinance, not only the superstitious and idolatrous practices, which had been introduced in the darkest ages of popery, but even some unscriptural practices which had obtained among the Fathers in the early ages of the Christian Church.

It was an early practice to give the sacrament to children, which our ancestors in Scotland rejected as contrary to Scripture, because they were not able to examine themselves as directed by the Apostle, 1 Cor. 11:28. It was an early practice to send the consecrated elements from the Communion Table to people in their private houses, especially the sick, there being no authority from Scripture for such disorderly and private administration. It was the early practice for the communicants to *stand* around the Communion Table, and sometimes to *kneel*, which practices were rejected by our Presbyterian ancestors, as not agreeable to the pattern exhibited by Christ and the Apostles, at the institution of that ordinance, nor to our table posture; and the posture of *sitting* at the Communion Table was adopted, as most conformable to both. It was an early practice for each communicant to receive the elements from the officiating minister; but our Presbyterian ancestors rejected this, and the nearest communicant

received the bread and wine from the officiating minister, and then passed them from hand to hand, because Christ said, Luke 22:17, "Take this and divide it among yourselves," which, though applicable to the cup in the Passover, was considered by them as equally applicable to the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper.

At the Reformation in Scotland, and the times immediately following, there was no dispute among our ancestors whether there should be a *Communion Table*. In the twenty-third Chapter of the Confession of Faith, agreed on by the General Assembly, 1560, the Communion Table is expressly mentioned. It is there called "the *holy table*, and *table of the Lord Jesus*." In the first Book of Discipline, agreed on by the Assembly, 1560, and ratified by the Privy Council the same year, it is distinctly stated, head second, 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 supper Christ Jesus sat with his disciples; and therefore do we judge that *sitting at a table* is most convenient to that holy action;" and in head ninth, under the title of reparation of Kirks, it is provided, that "every Kirk must have doors; close windows of glass; thatch able to withhold rain; a bell to convocate the people together; a pulpit; a bason for baptizing; and TABLES for ministration of the Lord's Supper."

Ministers were enjoined by Act of Assembly, in December 1562, that in the ministration of the sacraments, they should observe the order of the English Kirk at Geneva, where Mr. Knox had been sometime minister. This Act was renewed by the Assembly, 1564; and the order of Geneva for ministration of the sacraments, etc. was usually prefixed to the version of the Psalms then used in the Church of Scotland, and was the Directory for worship then observed, commonly called the Book of Common order. This order expressly mentions *sitting* at the Communion Table, and refers throughout to that practice. In the exhortation before dispensing the sacrament, the minister says, "In the name and authortie of the eternall God, and of his Sonn Jesus Christ, I excommunicate from *this Table* all blasphemers of God, all idolaters, all murtherers, all adulterers, all that be in malice or envie, all disobedient persons to father or mother;" etc. etc. charging them, as

they will [“]answere in the presence of him who is the righteous Judge, that they presume not to prophane this most holy table,” etc. etc. On the other hand, the minister encourageth the penitent in terms of that order, “Seeing that our Lord hath indued us with will and desire to renounce and withstande our owne affections, with a longing for his righteousnesse, and the keeping of his commaundementes, we may be now right well assured, that those defaultes and manifold imperfections in us, shall be no hinderance at all against us, to cause him not to accept and impute us as worthie to come to *his spirituall table*,” etc. etc. The order proceeds thus, “The exhortation ended, the minister commeth downe from the pulpit, and sitteth *at the table*, every man and woman in likewise taking their place as occasion best serveth; then he taketh bread and giveth thanks, either in these words following, or like effect.” Here follows the form of blessing or consecration. “This done,” saith the order, “The minister breaketh the bread, and delivereth it to the people, who distribute and divide the same among themselves, according to our Saviour Christ’s commandement, and likewise giveth the cuppe. During which time some place of the Scriptures is read, which doth lively set forth the death of Christ,” etc. etc. After this the minister giveth thanks in the manner there directed. Then the order proceeds, “the action thus ended, the people sing the 103d Psalme, My soul give laude unto the Lord, etc. or some other thanksgiving, which ended, one of the blessings before mentioned is recited;” namely, those in Numb. 6:24-25, and 2 Cor. 13:14, “and so they rise from the table and depart.”

Such is the order of the English Kirk of Geneva,¹ which was observed in the Church of Scotland by enactment of the General Assembly, 1562 and 1564, subsequent to the Reformation, and frequently referred to in after times as the practice of our Church. In this order, sitting at the Communion Table is prominently presented to our attention. The table is called the “*holy table*, the *spiritual table*, and every man and woman take their place at the *table*, as occasion best serveth.”

At and after the Reformation, there was a party attached to the Episcopal forms of worship and government, which considerably increased after the accession of James VI to the throne of England. That Prince favored the Episcopalians, and exerted himself greatly in their behalf. Under the influence of the Court, the General Assembly which met at Perth in the year 1618, enacted that communicants should kneel at the

Communion Table, and other things favorable to the Episcopal form of worship. These were usually called the articles of Perth. This was the cause of much confusion and dissention in Scotland, and for some time both the practice of kneeling and of sitting at the Communion Table obtained, and caused much dispute. Those attached to Episcopacy, insisted on the practice of kneeling, while the Presbyterians considered sitting as more agreeable to the Scripture pattern, and our own table posture. This struggle continued for nearly twenty years, until the meeting of the General Assembly at Glasgow, in the year 1638. In that Assembly the Articles of Perth were condemned, and the order of Geneva was again approved as a directory for worship, and the ministration of the sacraments. The Presbyterian form of worship and government now acquired the ascendancy; the order of Geneva was observed, and the communicants came in companies, and sat down at the *Communion Table*, according to that order. In this state, matters continued until the meeting of the Assembly at Westminster, in July 1643.

The object of this Assembly was to unite the whole island in one Confession of Faith, one form of Church Government, and one directory for the worship of God. It was then designed to establish the form observed by the Presbyterian Church of Scotland; and commissioners from the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland were sent to the Westminster Assembly, to assist in this good work. Our commissioners, it appears, had to struggle about the Communion Table, both with the Episcopalians, on the one hand, and the Independents, on the other. On the 20th of May, 1644, they wrote a letter to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, giving an account of their progress, in which they say, “We cannot but admire the good hand of God in the things done already;” and among other things they state, “that altars were removed, and the communion in some places given at the *tables*, *with sitting*.”

In a letter from the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to the Westminster Assembly, dated June 4, 1644, they say, “We are greatly refreshed to hear by letters from our commissioners there with you, of your praiseworthy proceedings, and of the great things the Lord hath wrought among you, and for you;” and, among other things, they congratulate them, “That the sacraments were sincerely administered, according to the pattern in the mount,” referring to the account received by them of the “communion being given at the table, with sitting.”

The struggle, however, with the Episcopalians, was then short, and the victory was easily obtained. But very

¹ The above quotations are made from the order prefixed to the old version of the Psalms, used in the Church of Scotland, from the copy in the public library of the University of Glasgow, printed at Middleburgh in the year 1594.

different was the case with the Independents. The struggle between our Presbyterian commissioners and the Independents in the Westminster Assembly, respecting the Communion Table, was long and arduous. The Independents warmly opposed the use of a Communion Table, and going in companies to the table, according to the practice of our Presbyterian Church. Principal Baillie of Glasgow College, one of the commissioners from the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to the Westminster Assembly, gives, in his letters, an account of that opposition, from which I make the following extracts: --

In Letter forty-fifth, dated London, April 2, 1644, he says, "Our paper anent the sacraments we gave in. We agreed, so far as we went, except in a *table*. Here all of them oppose us and we them. They will not, and say the people will never, yield to alter their practice. They are content with sitting, albeit not as of a rite institute; but to come out of their pews to a *table*, they deny the necessity of it; we affirm it necessary, and will stand to it. The Independents' way of celebrating seems to be very irreverent. They have the communion every Sabbath, without any preparation before, or thanksgiving after; little examination of people; their very prayers and doctrine before the sacrament are not to be directed to the use of the sacrament. They have after the blessing a short discourse, and two short graces over the elements, which are distributed and participate in silence, without exhortation, reading, or singing, and all is ended with a psalm, without a prayer."

In Letter sixty-four, June 1644, he says, "We are proceeding in our Assembly. This day, before noon, we got sundry propositions of our directory for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper passed; but in the afternoon we could not move one inch. The unhappy Independents would mangle that sacrament. No catechizing nor preparation before; no thanksgiving after; no sacramental doctrine, or chapters in the day of celebration; no coming up to any *table*; but a carrying of the elements to all in their seats athort the Church; yet all this, with God's help, we have carried over their bellies to our practice. But exhortations at tables we yet stick at. They would have no words spoken at all. Nye would be at covering the head at receiving; we must dispute every inch of our ground. Great need had we of the prayers of all God's people."

In Letter sixty-sixth, June 28, he says, "This day we were vexed also in the Assembly; we thought we had passed with consent sitting at the table; but behold Mr. Nye, Mr. Goodwin, and Bridges, cast all in the hows, denying to us the necessity of all in their seats, without

coming up to a table. Messrs. Henderson, Rutherford, and Gillespie, all three disputed exceedingly well for it, with arguments unanswerable; yet not one of the English did join with us, only Mr. Assessor Burgess, who was then in the chair, beginning to speak somewhat for us, but a little too vehemently, was so met with by the Independents, that a shameful and long clamour ended their debate."

In Letter sixty-seventh, July 5, 1644, he says, "As for the Assembly, these three weeks Mr. Nye, and his good friend Mr. Herle, have kept us on one point of our Directory alone, the recommending of the communicants coming up to the table to communicate. Their way of communicating, of some at the table, and some about it, without any succession of companies to more tables, is that whereon we stick, and are likely to stick longer."

In Letter sixty-eight, July 12, he says, "In our Assembly we go on as we may. The Independents and others kept us long three weeks upon one point alone, the communicating at a *table*. By this we came to debate the divers coming up of companies successively to the table; the consecrating of the bread and wine severally; the giving of the bread to all the congregation, and then the wine to all; and so twice coming up to the table, first for the bread, and then for the wine; the mutual distribution, the table exhortations, and a world of such questions, which, to the most of them, were new and strange things. After we were over-toiled with debate, we were forced to leave all these things, and take to us general expressions, which, by a benign interpretation, would infer our church practices, which the most promised to follow; so much the more as we did not necessitate them by the Assembly's express determination. We have ended the matter of the Lord's Supper, and these last three days have been upon baptism. We have carried, with much greater ease than we expected, the publicness of baptism. The abuse was great over all this land. In the greatest parish of London, scarce one child in a year was brought to the church for baptism. Also, we have carried the parents' presenting of his child, and not the midwives, as was their universal custom."

It thus appears from the statements of Principal Baillie, that the Communion Table was a subject of much discussion in the Westminster Assembly for some months; the Independents insisting upon communicating in their pews, as they had been accustomed; whilst our Commissioners from the Church of Scotland insisted that the communicants should come up in companies to the Communion Table. After long and serious

discussion, it was decided as in the Directory, which states, 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, with sanctifying and blessing the elements of bread and wine set before him,” etc. etc.; and after the blessing the Directory proceeds, “That the minister, being at the *table*, is to take the bread,” etc.

The Directory thus states the necessity of a table, not a table from which the great body of the communicants are excluded, according to the late corrupt innovation, but a “table that the communicants may orderly sit about it, or at it,” in opposition to the communicants sitting in their pews, as had been argued by the Independents. The Directory for worship, agreed on by the Assembly at Westminster, was examined, approved, and established, by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, by an Act, dated Feb. 3, 1645. This Act was passed unanimously, and “requires, decerns, and ordains, that according to the *plain tenor and meaning thereof*, and intent of the preface, it be carefully and uniformly observed, and practiced by all the ministers, and others, within this kingdom, whom it doth concern;” – thus preventing every minister from introducing any innovation, or making any deviation from the form of worship established in the Directory, “according to the *plain tenor and meaning thereof*,” and which is to be “carefully and uniformly observed and practiced by all the ministers, and others, within this kingdom.” So that no discretionary power is left for any minister to make innovations according to his own pleasure on the established form of public worship.

But as several things in the Directory are, in the language of Principal Baillie, stated in “general expressions, which, by a benign interpretation, would infer our church practices;” and as the *Communion Table* had been a matter of so much debate between the Independents, in the Westminster Assembly, and our Scottish Commissioners, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in their Act, 1645, approving and establishing the Directory for worship, have inserted a special clause of exception or explanation respecting the *Communion Table*. The words of the clause are: “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;” – thus prohibiting all communicants from receiving in any other way, than at the *Communion Table*, and, as the Act respecting the

whole Directory bears, “according to the *plain tenor and meaning thereof*.” This clause is evidently directly against the practice of the Independents, and intended to guard against all such innovations as that lately introduced.

In a letter from the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, to the Assembly at Westminster, dated Feb. 13, 1645, they plainly and decidedly state their reasons for introducing this clause. Say they, “We have thought necessary to declare and make known, that the clause in the Directory for the administration of the Lord’s Supper, which appointeth the table to be so placed, that the communicants may orderly sit about it, or at it, is not to be interpreted, as if, in the judgment of this Kirk, it were indifferent for any of the communicants not to come to, and receive at the table; in which particulars we still conceive and believe the order and practice of our own Kirk to be most *agreeable and suitable to the word of God, the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the nature of that heavenly feast and table*.” They farther add, “Nevertheless, in other particulars we have resolved, and do agree, and we do most willingly part with such practices and customs of our own, as may be parted with safely, and without the violation of any of Christ’s ordinances, or trespassing against Scriptural rules, or our Solemn Covenants.”

It thus appears, that the reasons of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in 1645, for introducing this clause of explanation respecting the *Communion Table*, were at once wise, pious, and conscientious. They were willing to part with such of their own practices and customs as did not violate any of Christ’s ordinances, or trespass against Scripture rules; but in this particular they declare their adherence to the order and practice of their own Kirk, which at that time was that of Geneva, as appointed by Acts of Assembly, 1562 and 1564; according to which, “every man and woman take their place at the *table*, as occasion best serveth;” and this they consider as “*most agreeable and suitable to the word of God, the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the nature of that heavenly feast and table*.” Such then is the law and determination of the Church in this matter; and the Act of Assembly, 1645, is approved by the fifteenth Act of Assembly, 1705.

Many are the laws of the Church of Scotland, guarding against all innovations, contrary to the purity and uniformity of worship authorized and practiced in our national church. The thirteenth Act of Assembly, 1639, and the fourteenth Act of Assembly, 1641, both of which are confirmed by the eleventh Act of Assembly, 1695, are all directed to this object, as well as the ninth Act of Assembly, 1697, commonly called the Barrier Act.

The fifteenth Act of Assembly, 1707, is particularly directed to this object; and to this Act every probationer, at receiving license, and every minister of the Church of Scotland, at his ordination, in the most solemn manner, promises subjection and obedience. In answer to questions put to them, they are taken bound, in the most solemn manner, "to maintain and defend the doctrine and worship of the Church as presently authorized and practiced, and contained in this fifteenth Act of Assembly, 1707, and to follow no divisive courses from said doctrine and worship."

By the twenty-second Parliament of James VI, chap. 6, in the year 1647; it is ordained, "That kirks be provided with basons, and lavers for baptisms, and cups, tables, and table cloths for the holy communion, at the expense of the parishioners; and that the minister keep the same; and he, and his heirs, and executors, be answerable therefore, in case they be either lost, or used to profane uses."

The Act of Assembly establishing the Directory, 1645, was confirmed and ratified in all the heads and articles thereof, by an Act of Parliament, dated Feb. 6, 1645: and since the Revolution, the worship of the Church of Scotland, is secured by the Acts of Parliament 1690 and 1693, and by the Act of security, 1707. This forms an essential article in the union with England, and is secured by the coronation oath of the sovereign; so that the form of worship, authorized and practiced in the Established Church of Scotland, is as well secured as any laws, ecclesiastical or civil, can possibly render it.

From this statement it is evident, that the late innovation of excluding communicants from the Communion Table, and substituting pews for the Table, is a violation of the laws of the Established Church of Scotland, as well as a departure from the constant authorized practice, which ought to be corrected without delay. It is exceeding proper and becoming, that the laws of the church on this subject should be carried into effect; that unity and uniformity in public worship of God, may be observed in all parts of our Established national Church: for if every one is allowed to make alteration, as he shall judge agreeable or convenient, nothing but disorder and confusion will follow.Ω

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