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PART II.*

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Borden was a shrewd but popular proprietor; and the allotments, mostly the choicest glens among the mountains, were quickly absorbed by enterprising colonists, and there we find, among the families that clustered about the foothills, those of Alexander, Anderson, Berry, Coulston, Cowden, Campbell, Eakins, Fulton, Hayes, Henry, Hoover, Gray, Jamison, Kelly, Kennedy, McNutt, McDowell, Montgomery, Patton, Lowry, Robinson, Rhea, Stahlnecker, Stewart, Stephenson, Todd, Thompson, Walker, Wilson—and they formed a very considerable community at New Providence. The upper end of the Valley, where they were, was from ten to thirty miles wide, slightly undulating and underlaid with limestone, watered by copious streams from the mountain's side; while the coves and glens furnished excellent grazing ground for the cattle; altogether a fair and bountiful region. They built a stockade fort and the next work they did after building their cabins was to erect a log meeting-house where worship was periodically held with supplies sent from Pennsylvania.¹

* For Part I, see the preceding (March, 1922) issue of the JOURNAL, pp. 178-186.

¹ Foote, *Sketches of Virginia*, Series II, p. 58.

THE POSTURE OF THE RECIPIENTS AT THE LORD'S
SUPPER: A FOOTNOTE TO THE HISTORY
OF REFORMED USAGES.

BY THE LATE PROF. B. B. WARFIELD, D.D., LL.D.

What was revolted from by the Reformers as idolatry of the worship of the Church of Rome, culminated and found particular expression in the ceremonies of the mass. Much of the disputation at the Reformation centered, therefore, around the Lord's Supper; and the restoration of it to its original significance and mode of administration was one of the marks of the Protestant churches. The position of the recipients of the elements became, accordingly, among other matters of more intrinsic importance connected with this rite, an object of interest and even of controversy. The fundamental fact, determinative of all such questions for the Reformed, is that the Supper is a feast and is to be administered at a table. This fact is thus expressed by Heinrich Heppe in his summary of the Reformed doctrine of the Supper:¹ "And since further the Lord's Supper is not an act of sacrificing, but a feast of communion resting on the sacrifice of Christ, it is not to be celebrated on an altar, but on a table, the table of the Lord."

Heppe does not think it necessary to adduce any further voucher for the truth of the representation that this is the Reformed doctrine, than the simple statement of Burmann's² that the first Supper was instituted "at the common table," and therefore the papists are wrong in erecting altars in the churches, and the Lutherans only less so in giving the tables the form of altars. That he confines himself to Burmann's testimony is not due to poverty of witnesses at his disposal; but to lack of occasion for adducing witnesses to a fact so notorious. From the very beginning of their existence, the Reformed churches had insisted that the Supper is a meal and

¹ *Die Dogmatik der evangelischreformirten Kirche*, 1861, p. 456.

² *Synopsis Theologiae*, 1699, VII, X, 45.

is to be administered at a table. Philip Schaff describes for us³ "the first celebration," at Zurich, "of the communion after the Reformed usage . . . in the Holy Week of April, 1525, in the Great Minster." "The communicants were seated around long tables, which took the place of the altar, the men on the right, the women on the left. They listened reverently to the prayers, the words of institution, the Scripture lessons, . . . and to an earnest exhortation by the minister. They then received in a kneeling posture the sacred emblems in wooden plates and wooden cups." Except for the circumstance that the elements were received kneeling, this might stand as a description of a typical Reformed celebration of any age.

The Reformed did not, it is true, consider the posture of the recipients in the Lord's Supper of intrinsically large importance.⁴ Our Lord, they noted, at the institution of the Supper, distributed the elements to recumbent recipients. There is no reason, however, they thought, why we should perpetuate that posture; and it is probable that no one desires to do so. It was the primitive posture only because it was the customary posture of participants in a feast at that time and in that region. It belongs, therefore, to the accidents of the celebration; and naturally no other attitude substituted for it can take a higher than accidental place. The posture of the recipient is in itself an indifferent matter, to be determined by the choice of each church in accordance with the customs of its land and day. We may very properly receive the elements standing, as was done in antiquity⁵ and is done now in some

³ *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. VII, p. 60. If any one wishes to read a more vivid description of the scene, he will find it in J. H. Merle D'Aubigné's *History of the Great Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (First American Edition, Vol. III, 1842, p. 273): "The people then fell on their knees; the bread was carried round on large wooden dishes or platters, and everyone broke off a morsel for himself; the wine was distributed in wooden drinking cups; the resemblance to the primitive Supper was thought to be the closer." Cf. Rietschel, in Herzog (*New Schaff-Hersog*, Vol. VII, p. 38).

⁴ We are summarizing in this paragraph the discussion of Bernard de Moor in his *Commentary on John Mark's Compendium*, Vol. V, p. 624.

⁵ Dionysius of Alexandria, third century, describes a participant of the

of the Reformed churches, as, for example, in France.⁶ They may properly be received walking, as is done in the church of Leewaarden in Frisia, in order to suggest readiness for service. They may properly be received also sitting, as is usual in Reformed churches, because this is the customary attitude at feasts in the countries they inhabit, and the Lord's Supper is a feast and should be celebrated as a feast. They may even, so far as the posture itself is concerned, properly be received, in order to express our humility, kneeling—though this surely is an indecorous attitude at a feast. Not only is this posture that of the Romanists, but it obtains also among many German Protestant churches and in the Church of England, and, we may add, also among the Bohemians.⁷

The elements may properly be received in any of these attitudes. But they are not equally desirable attitudes, and the complication of kneeling with the idolatry of the mass has rendered it now, though no doubt indifferent *per se*, eminently improper. Unsuitable in itself to the festival symbolism of the rite, it has become, through its association with the idolatry of the mass, at the least very compromising. There are really

Lord's Supper as "standing by the table and stretching forth his hands to receive the blessed food" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, VII, ix, 4; McGiffert's translation, p. 297). But De Moor need not have confined himself to this instance. Samuel Cheatham (Smith and Cheatham, *Dictionary of Christian Archaeology*, I, p. 416) sums up an extended survey of the early notices by saying: "All the testimonies of ancient writers adduced in this article, so far as they determine anything on the point, describe the communicants as receiving *standing*. As this was the usual posture of prayer and praise on every Lord's Day and during the Easter solemnities, the faithful would naturally communicate standing on such days." Apparently the patristic posture of reception may be broadly said to be standing.

⁶ De Moor with apparent emphasis says he has himself seen them do it thus in France; but it was not only in France that the custom was in use.

⁷ In the Bohemian Confession of 1609 (Müller, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Reformierten Kirche*, p. 487) we read: "And after these things have been done thus, the ministers with all reverence distribute the sacrament; the people on their part receive it piously and religiously, as far as possible [ut plurimum] kneeling, free from all idolatry and superstition, with thanks and praises."

left, therefore, since the posture of walking is a mere local eccentricity, only the two postures of standing and sitting, to choose between. The National Synod of Dort of 1578 gave its judgment in these terms:⁸ "We think standing or sitting in the administration of the Supper a matter of indifference (we omit kneeling on account of the superstition and peril of the adoration of the bread), and the churches may make use of whichever manner seems to them most convenient." And the Hungarian Confession of 1562 (called by Müller the "Erlauthal Confession," that is, the Confession of "the true church" *in valle Agrina*), determines in the same sense. "*Stando sedendo libere sumimus*," it says.⁹ But, that liberty may not be carried too far, it adds: "We prohibit the superstition of kneeling, prostration, stretching out the hands, because they are signs of adoration." In accordance with this judgment, the customary posture of reception in the Reformed churches is either sitting or standing. In the Reformed German churches they stand;¹⁰ in Scotland and Holland they sit.¹¹ A somewhat similar difference in custom obtains in the Lutheran

⁸ Art. 69. De Moor quotes Beza and Voetius to the same effect.

⁹ Müller, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformirten Kirche*, 1903, p. 300.

¹⁰ At the International Conference of the Evangelical Alliance at Basle in 1879 there was a united Communion Service in the Cathedral, "where a great crowd, of various nations, walked to the communion table, and there received (standing) the sacred elements from the hands of the clergy in their black gowns" (J. B. Figgis, *Keswick from Within*, 1914, p. 73). Cf. J. Westbury Jones, *Figgis of Brighton*, 1917, p. 114: "The vast congregation made up of representatives of the different churches, went up in files to the Holy Table; the communicants, according to the Lutheran form, received the elements standing, and a verger led them back to their seats." Standing is, no doubt, the general Lutheran form; but it is the form of the German Reformed also, and it is accordingly the form in use in the American German Reformed Churches.

¹¹ G. Rietschel in *Herzog (New Schaff-Herzog)*, Vol. VII, p. 38) traces the custom of sitting in the Scotch and Dutch usage alike, to the influence of the orderly service drawn up by John à Lasco in 1550 for the church of the Dutch Refugees in London. "The communion bore the character of a family meal. The minister, elders and members of the congregation sit around the table as far as there is room," . . . and this process is repeated as often as is necessary.

churches, but there between standing and kneeling; in Wurtemberg and Bavaria they stand, in Schleswig-Holstein they kneel; and both postures are in use in the American Lutheran churches. In the Anglican Church the posture is kneeling.

The circumstance that the custom of receiving the sacrament kneeling has been retained from the old church by the Church of England, has given the history of the posture of reception an altogether peculiar character in Britain. The Scots followed the ordinary Reformed habit of sitting; and, working out in its support a fully developed theory, zealously propagated it, matching the gradually hardening English doctrine of the necessity of kneeling with an equally strong assertion of its complete inamissibility. It was not the Scots only, however, who looked askance at the English custom. It was from the first alien also in England itself to the feelings of the more advanced Protestants; and it remained always an offence to the leaders of the more Reformed wing of the Church of England. We find William Tyndale, for example, speaking of the celebration of the sacrament, evidently from the point of view that conceived the proper posture of the recipient as sitting. "Come forth reverently unto the Lord's table," he says,¹² "the congregation now set round about it and in their other convenient seats." . . .

Cranmer, on the other hand, insisted on retaining the posture of kneeling, and thus secured for this posture, in the end, the status of the prescribed mode in the Church of England. Until the framing of the second Prayer-Book of Edward VI, in 1552, kneeling had not indeed been specifically ordered; and the injunction to it was inserted into that Book in opposition to growing criticism, and retained in the face of a vigorous assault upon it led by John Knox, who was then one of the King's Chaplains. Through the influence of Knox, who came up to London after the Book had been printed off, a supplementary rubric was, against the protest of Cranmer, inserted on a fly-leaf, in which it was explained that the posture of

¹² "Of the Supper of the Lord"—*Works*, Parker Society Edition, Vol. III, pp. 265f.

kneeling which was directed was not to be interpreted as implying that any adoration is done, or ought to be done, either unto the sacramental bread or wine then bodily received, or unto "any real and essential presence there being of Christ's natural flesh and blood." It was to be understood solely as a mark of thankfulness for the benefit received through the ordinance. This rubric, however, was expunged under Elizabeth; and although its restoration was repeatedly asked for by the Puritans, in the course of her reign¹³ and subsequently, it was not restored until 1661, and then in a form which high Anglicans are accustomed to represent to themselves as somewhat weakened.¹⁴

The dissidents in the Congregation at Frankfurt, even in their most extreme demands, we observe, did not get so far as "kneeling at the holy communion." "We gave up . . . kneeling at the holy communion," they say.¹⁵ Indeed, the English clergy themselves seemed little inclined at the accession of Elizabeth to press the rubric which prescribed this attitude. There was even a suggestion made that standing and kneeling might be made alternative modes. Cecil proposed such a rubric to Bishop Guest, and Guest agreed that the two might be treated as indifferent alternatives. The motive lay, of course, in the fact that standing had Patristic warrant, and, as T. W. Perry says, "it was the external form of devotion in the Greek Church."¹⁶ Later in Elizabeth's reign, it is interesting to

¹³ See, for example, *A View of Popishe Abuses yet Remaining in the English Church*, 1572, one of the two admonitions prepared under the influence of Cartwright and presented to Parliament in that year. There is an allusion to it in Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. X, p. 509a.

¹⁴ Cf. F. Proctor and W. H. Frere, *A New History of the Book of Common Prayer*, 1901, pp. 83ff; and J. H. Blunt, *The Annotated Book of Common Prayer*, 1866, p. 199. Also L. Pullan, *The History of the Book of Common Prayer*, 1900, pp. 316ff.

¹⁵ Cox and others to Calvin in *Original Letters of the English Reformation*, 1754.

¹⁶ This notion comes strongly into view in Bingham's argument (*Orig. Eccles.*, Book xv, ch. v, No. 3; vol. vi, pp. 406-451). He reaches the conclusion that "the ancients received the elements, sometimes standing, sometimes kneeling, never sitting."

observe, the despairing Puritans vainly petitioned to be permitted to receive the elements standing. They no longer cherished any hope of being allowed to sit; and standing commended itself to them as a practice in use in the Continental Reformed Churches.¹⁷ A proposition providing "that the order of kneeling" at the communion "may be left to the discretion of the ordinary" was rejected in the lower House of Convocation in 1562 by only a single vote, and that a proxy.¹⁸ But the Queen was of less tolerant temper, and insisted on the posture of kneeling. In actual practice, we may be sure, throughout her reign as in those of her successors, the posture of reception varied from locality to locality, in accordance with the more or less marked Puritanism of the ministrant or recipients.¹⁹

It must be borne in mind that this long controversy in the English Church concerned not the place but the attitude of the reception of the elements. Whether they were received kneeling or sitting, the people remained in their accustomed places in the church. The elements were consecrated at a small table so placed that all might see them, and were then taken by the minister and given to the communicants at their seats. It was part of the reactionary movement which cul-

¹⁷ Cf. T. W. Perry, *Some Historical Considerations, relating to the Declaration on Kneeling Appended to the Common Office of the English Book of Prayer*, 1863, p. 64, citing Strype, *Ann.*, Vol. I, p. 83. A great deal of interesting historical material has been gathered by Perry, whose purpose is to plead for an objective doctrine of the Presence in the Lord's Supper, and for the propriety of kneeling reception.

¹⁸ Strype, *Annals*, Vol. I, pp. 336-339.

¹⁹ The liberty claimed in this matter reached its culmination, of course, in the uproarious times of the mid-seventeenth century. The *Mercurius Rusticus* for 1646, p. 22, tells of the town of Chelmsford, that it was so full of sectaries, "especially *Brownists* and *Anabaptists*, that a third part of the people refuse to receive the blessed Sacrament, unless they may receive it in what posture they please to take it. They have among them two sorts of Anabaptists, the one they call the Old men or *Aspersi*, because they were but sprinkled; the other they call the New men, or the *Immersi*, because they were overwhelmed in their Rebaptism." It was particularly the Brownist protest against receiving the Lord's Supper kneeling which caused this difference as to the attitude of reception.

minated in the domination of Laud, to insist upon the table being placed altar-wise at the eastern end of the church, upon a raised platform, and railed in as a peculiarly sacred place, to which the people should be brought in order to partake of the sacrament. Under this rule, the railing in of the communion table was required under penalties, and there are, therefore, among the cases of maladministration reviewed by the Long Parliament and reversed, a number which concern the excommunication and arrest of church-wardens for refusing to rail in the communion table.²⁰ Parliament, in all cases of the sort brought before it, ordered the rails to be removed, the chancels to be leveled to the same plane with the rest of the church, and the tables to be removed to some other convenient place in the church.²¹ The case of Dr. Layfield may be taken as a particularly instructive one for our purpose. He was reported to Parliament, as a delinquent, by the Grand Committee for Religion on November 25, 1640. Among the charges was that "he refused to give the sacrament to his people unless they came to the altar, though having offered reverently kneeling to receive the same in the body of the church." Further, he had "caused one Boulton to be excommunicated for not coming to the rails to receive, and refused to read his absolution." "He said he would not for £100 come from the rails to give the sacrament, nay, he would rather lose his living."²² Here, kneeling in the body of the church emerges as the regular mode of receiving the sacrament, the statutory mode; while the requiring of the recipient to come to the rails is the reactionary innovation. The advanced Protestant mode of reception, differed, therefore, from the statutory and more usual method in use in the Church of England, solely in the posture of the recipient. The recipients in both methods remained at their seats; only, the more advanced Protestant—the Puritan—remained seated, while the Anglican assumed the attitude of kneeling. Accordingly, the Independents, who represented

²⁰ *E.g.*, *Lords' Journal*, IV, p. 56.

²¹ *E.g.*, *Commons' Journal*, II, p. 278; III, p. 220; *cf.* Rushworth, V, p. 358-9.

²² *Commons' Journal*, II, p. 35.

the advanced party in this, remained seated throughout the church at the celebration of the communion, and were served by the minister in this scattered distribution, to the great scandal of the Scots.

For the Scots revolted from the Independent method of celebrating the sacrament, as savoring of irreverence, with almost as much repulsion as from the Anglican method, as savoring of superstition. The "accommodation" proposed by the author of the tract, "*Consilium de reformanda Ecclesia Anglicana*" (London, 1643), published on the eve of the Second Reformation, which proposed to treat sitting or kneeling in the reception of the communion as an *adiaphoron*,²³ would have in no wise pleased the Scots, who would have been unable to content themselves with either method as practiced in England. For the Scots had a way of their own of celebrating the communion of which they were very tenacious. This way required not merely that the recipients should sit, but that they should sit at the table as guests at the festival of the Lord.

The Scotch method, as we have seen, was in accord with that in use in the Dutch Reformed Churches,²⁴ and indeed even received support from the earlier English Reformers. Tyndale, for example, as we have seen, speaks of the people as seated "round about the table"; although he adds, "and in their other convenient seats." From this we may perhaps infer that in the custom he was commending, as many as could be accommodated at the table sat there as a sort of object lesson; while the rest of the communicants sat throughout the room as convenience dictated—a mode of administering the rite to which Gillespie objects on the ground that "if some come to the table, and some not, this is not agreeable to that *isourmia*,

²³ See Mitchell, *Baird Lecture on The Westminster Assembly*, p. 118, note.

²⁴ This is the way the principle is expressed by A. Kuyper (*Collegedictaat: Locus de Sacramentis*, p. 179)—the Dutch method being the same as the Scotch:—"The Lord's Supper must be a feast. The Lutheran, Romanist and Anglican Churches, which set out no table, go thus wholly wrong. It is not as mendicants that we are received. But Jesus spreads a feast for his friends, and as King invites His people to His table."

or equal honour and dignity, which all the communicants ought to have; natural decency, as well as scriptural warrants, are of equal concernment to all the communicants.”²⁵ The Scots naturally found more support, however, from the custom of the foreign Reformed in England. For, as Henderson urged in the debate at the Westminster Assembly, “The Church of France, when it is in London, sits.” It was so provided in John à Lasco’s *Forma*, which was in use in 1551, and was printed at Frankford in 1555.²⁶ His description of his service, as held in London in 1555, closely resembles that of the Scotch tradition. The communion table, set in the sight of the congregation, with the recipients ranged on three sides, the *Ecclesiastes* in the middle, lies open on the fourth side to the view of all the people. To it, then, the people, each party in its turn, come, sit, receive, rise and depart, one of the ministers reading the 6th chapter of John or other appropriate Scripture, as company gives way to company. “In the French Church at Canterbury,” said Herbert Palmer, in the course of the debate at Westminster, “twelve hundred communicants receive it thus.” And, he pleads, “we who have gratified one another for satisfaction of particular brethren, ought to give satisfaction to the Church of Scotland” in this.²⁷

²⁵ *Miscellany Questions*, XVIII; *Works*, II, p. 956. In the debates at the Westminster Assembly of the Subcommittee on the Directory (Gillespie, p. 101) it is recorded that “Mr. Marshall, Palmer, Herle, and Goodwin, too, said it was enough that the elements be blessed on the table, and that some sit at table, but that the elements may be carried about to others in their pews or seats.” To this Gillespie responded that Christ made use of a table and that with significance (Luke 22: 30); that a table was used at Corinth and the apostle calls it “the Lord’s table” and gives it a significance; and further: “The nature of a feast requireth that the guests be set at table, and that all the guests be set about it, for the use of a table is not for some, but for all the guests, else no table is necessary but a cupboard.” These points are enlarged on in the discussion in his *Miscellany Questions*, XVIII.

²⁶ See *Opera*, ed. Kuyper, II, p. 10, and cf. p. 62-3.

²⁷ Leishman, *The Westminster Directory*, 1901, p. 124, directs attention to a passage in Goulburn’s *Life of Dean Bingham* (II, p. 16) from which it appears that something like the Scotch custom may not have been unknown in certain instances in the Church of England. Dr. Goulburn

Certainly the Church of Scotland was insistent for satisfaction in the matter. Kneeling, of course, it put out of the question. An attempt had been made to impose this on it in the Laudian persecution through which it had just passed; and that attempt had been resisted as requiring of it sheer idolatry. It is only necessary to read over the allusions to the matter in Samuel Rutherford's *Letters* to learn the uncompromisingness of the Scottish attitude. He warns his parishioners at Anworth, from whom he had been torn, to stand fast in the faith of Christ as they had received it—as in other things, so also in this, that they “should in any sort forbear the receiving the Lord's Supper but after the form that he had delivered it to them, according to the example of Christ our Lord, that is, that they should sit, as banqueters, at one table with our King, and eat and drink, and divide the elements one to another.”²⁸ So, says he,²⁹ they will escape “the superstition and idolatry in the instant of receiving the Lord's Supper.” The express idolatry of the kneeling reception he argues in formal Latin syllogisms,³⁰ and then throws these syllogisms into nervous passionate English in an attempt to hold back a wavering nobleman from guilty conformity. “I verily believe,” says he,³¹ “that there was never idolatry at Rome, never idolatry condemned in God's word by the prophets, if religious kneeling before a consecrated creature, standing in the room of Christ crucified, in that very act, and that for reverence of the elements (as our Act cleareth), be not idolatry. Neither will your intentions help, which is not of the essence of worship; for then, Aaron, saying ‘To-morrow shall

speaks of “those quiet Holy Communion services in the chancel of St. Mary's, where, according to old custom, we did not leave our seats, but the fair linen cloths were placed all around the chancel over the broad book-desks. He would come down, and as he administered,” &c. But it does not appear that the recipients did not *kneel*. To receive each man in his place *kneeling* is indeed “according to old custom” in the Church of England.

²⁸ *Letters* (Bonar's ed., New York, 1850), p. 122.

²⁹ P. 357.

³⁰ P. 163.

³¹ P. 260; cf. pp. 343, 359, 376.

be a feast for Jehovah,' that is, for the Golden Calf, should not have been guilty of idolatry; for he intended only to decline the lash of the people's fury, not to honor the calf. Your intention to honor Christ is nothing, seeing that religious kneeling, by God's institution, doth necessarily impart religious and divine adoration, suppose that our intention were both dead and sleeping; otherwise, kneeling before the image of God, and directing prayer to God, were lawful, if our intention go right." His exhortation to his correspondent is, therefore, "to refuse to bend his knee superstitiously and idolatrously to wood or stone, or any creature whatever." It would have been quite useless to cast oneself against this stone wall, and the English in truth had no impulse to do it.

Standing came as little into question here as kneeling, although many in the Assembly were not averse to it, and the Independents later made it an alternative with kneeling or sitting in their Savoy liturgy. Sitting, then, was agreed on, though with no great enthusiasm on the part of the English. But when it came to the demand that the sitting should also be at the table, there came a direct clash which promised to be final, and was overcome only by mutual concessions and ambiguities. Not only did Baillie asseverate that the Scotch would stand to their custom, as might be expected of one so deeply committed as he was to the "old ways," but even the more accommodating Henderson declared: "We, sent from the Church of Scotland, are all of one mind on this point: we can hardly part from it,—nay, I may add we may not possibly part from it." The English were just as firm on the other side. Baillie³² gives this account of the situation in the Subcommittee of the Great Committee: "We agreed so far as we went except in a table. Here all of them oppose us and we them. They will not, and saith the people will never, yield to alter their practice. They are content of sitting albeit not as a rye institute;³³ but to come out of their pews to a table they deny the necessitie of it. We affirm it necessary and

³² *Ibid.*, II, pp. 148-9.

³³ That is, they agree to accept sitting, but not by strict prescription.

will stand to it." In the Assembly itself the debate of this one point—the communicating at a table—consumed three weeks;³⁴ "the unhappie Independents insisting that there should be no coming up to any table, but a carrying of the elements to all in their seats athort the church."³⁵ The non-Independents, under appeals like that of Palmer, already quoted, were willing to yield the matter for the sake of the Scots, but the Independents persisted. "This day," says Baillie on one occasion,³⁶ "we were vexed that in the Assemblie, we thought we had passed with consent sitting at the Table; but behold Mr. Nye, Goodwin, and Bridge cast all in the howes denying to us the necessity of any table, but pressing the communicating 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 joine with us, only Mr. Assessor Burgess, who then was in the chair, beginning to speak somewhat for us but a little too vehementlie, and so mett with by the Independents that a shamefull and long clamor ended their debaite. This has grieved us that we fear the end of our worke, alwayes [however] we expect it shall be better."

The truth was the debate was a struggle between the Scots and the Independents, the rest of the Divines feeling no great personal interest in it, but being willing to favor the Scots as a piece of courtesy. The result was the formulation of the rubric in the words: "The communicants orderly sitting about the table"—which Baillie³⁷ correctly describes as "a general expression which by a benign exposition would infer our Church practice." Of course the Scots were not satisfied with this, and in the review of the Directory (having received instructions from Scotland) they asked for a recommitment of the passage, or else that their sense might be expressed in the margin. This, says Lightfoot,³⁸ "cast a long and large de-

³⁴ *Ibid.*, II, p. 204.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, II, p. 195.

³⁶ June 28, 1644; *Letters*, II, p. 199.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, II, p. 204.

³⁸ P. 306.

bate," at the close of which it was concluded thus to have it in the text, "about the table or at it as in the Church of Scotland," and so, adds Lightfoot, "they retain their custom and we of England are left at liberty." And "so"—this is his conclusion of the whole matter—"it was the sense of the Assembly that we might at liberty either cause the communicants to sit at the table or at some distance about it." When the Book went up to Parliament, the words, "as in the Church of Scotland," were stricken out and the rubric left reading merely: "the Table being decently covered, and so conveniently placed, that the Communicants may orderly sit about it, or at it"—which certainly gives no direct prescription at all. Accordingly, when the Scotch Assembly came to establish the Directory and to put it into execution (February 3, 1645), it added this proviso: "Provided always, That the clause in the Directory of the Administration of the Lord's Supper which maintaineth 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; or as if we did approve the distributing of the elements by the minister to each Communicant, and not by the Communicants among themselves."

The upshot of the matter at the Westminster Assembly, then, it may be said, was that each party was left to enjoy its own custom. Only, the Scots have not, in point of fact, abided by their custom. They have on the contrary gradually assimilated their usage to the much disliked Independent method of distributing the elements to communicants seated "athort the church." In one of the chapters of his *Miscellany Questions* (XVIII), Gillespie argues the whole Scotch position with his wonted point; and indeed there was much to say for it. Centrally, this is to be said for it: that in this, above all other methods of administering the Lord's Supper, the main significance of the rite as a sacrificial feast is preserved. Gillespie touches the very core of the question when he remarks that in its general notion and nature the Lord's Supper "is an *epulum*, a banquet or feast"—"no sacrifice but *epulum ex oblatis*, a feast upon the body and blood of Christ, offered upon

the cross for us;" and "therefore we ought to come to the table of the Lord to receive the mystical food in the sacrament, as well as we come to our ordinary table for our ordinary food."³⁹ Here is the very essence of the rite proclaimed and placarded before us in the very mode of its administration; and this is a very valuable thing to preserve.

But it may be said that necessity knows no law; and this mode of celebrating the sacrament was doomed by its inconvenience. Whenever large companies were to partake, the repetition of the tables interposed a strain upon both ministers and people which was scarcely endurable: and the matter was complicated by the break which the successive tables made in the sense of communion in the participation of the sacrament. How can that be thought of as a common feast shared in by all, at which only small companies successively partake? The desire for simultaneous communion of the whole congregation thus powerfully reinforced the natural impulse to shorten and simplify the service. The result has been that even in Scotland, after all the strenuousness of the Scotch insistence upon this mode of administering the sacrament, it has given way, and passed practically out of use. It was no less a man than Thomas Chalmers who was the instrument in giving it its death blow.⁴⁰ In order to accommodate the large numbers of communicants in his new church of St. John's, at Glasgow, to which he was transferred in 1818, "his people were allowed to communicate in their pews."⁴¹ Those of the Tron Church, which he had left, followed their example. Complaint was made to the General Assembly,⁴² which reaffirmed the old law

³⁹ Pp. 94, 96.

⁴⁰ William Hanna, *Memoirs of Chalmers*, Vol. II, pp. 392ff. Cf. Leishman, *The Westminster Directory*, p. xxxviii. The actual method of Chalmers' celebration seems to have been to spread white cloths on the book-racks of certain pews so as to simulate a table. Chalmers draws a very distressing picture of the confusion and inconvenience attending the old way of celebration at successive tables, when the number of communicants was large. He himself tells us that he was not the originator in the Scottish Establishment of the new method (*Memoirs*, p. 393).

⁴¹ Leishman, as cited.

⁴² *Acts*, 1825, p. 34.

of the Church. Attempts to enforce the law (1827), however, failed⁴³—and that was the beginning of the end. “The tables” are to-day seldom seen in Scotland.

The Scottish and Irish Presbyterians and the English Independents, as was natural, each brought to America its own manner of administering and receiving the Lord's Supper. It is probably to the tenacious hold of the Presbyterians on their view of how it should be celebrated that Jonathan Edwards alludes in 1744, when he speaks of “some Presbyterians that have lived with us, having desired baptism for their children, who yet lived in neglect of the ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ, because of a difference in some trivial circumstances of the administration, from the method of the Church of Scotland.”⁴⁴ No Presbyterian of that day would have permitted him unrebuked to call the difference trivial. It was a matter of principle with the Presbyterians to employ this manner of celebrating the sacrament and no other; their tenacity in it was part of their religion. It is interesting to observe accordingly that when churches in “the Western Country,” which had been founded by Congregationalists, wished, under the “Plan of Union” of 1801, to become Presbyterian, they fully understood that their change of affiliation required a change also in their method of administering the Lord's Supper. The church at New Hartford, New York, for example, founded by immigrants of New England traditions, and organized as a Congregationalist Church, in 1791, became Presbyterian in 1802. At the meeting when its Presbyterian organization was completed by the election of elders, October 9, 1802, it was “unanimously agreed that in the future, at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the elements should be distributed to the communicants, being seated at tables spread in the aisles, and

⁴³ This is the way Chalmers describes the result (*Memoirs*, p. 398): The Church “allowed me, the one party, to continue the table service in the way I had found to be most convenient, but, instead of laying aught like severity or rebuke upon the other, she, while disappointing them of their plea, dismissed them at the same time with a look of the most benignant complacency.”

⁴⁴ See Dwight's *Life of Edwards*, p. 208.

the congregation should not be dismissed until after the whole service was performed." ⁴⁵ In the course of time this Presbyterian method of celebrating the sacrament ceased to be used by the congregation, now long Presbyterian. It is significant that the historian is compelled to note that there is no record in the minutes of the church session of such a change being made. Times changed and with them customs; so little was principle involved that the change was accomplished unobserved. Less and less insistence was placed everywhere upon usages which had sunk to the rank of mere habits, and the day came at last when the Scotch mode of celebrating the Supper had become merely an antiquarian curiosity to be observed rarely in the churches of Scotch origin. The usage of the other Reformed churches in America has made much the same history. In the larger churches to-day the old Reformed mode of celebration is to be found in use only in individual congregations which have preserved it as an old observance, to which they cling affectionately on sentimental grounds. And diligent inquiry has failed to reveal a single church, large or small, however intelligently concerned for the Reformed custom, or however conservative in temper, in which the new method of celebrating the Supper has not made inroads, and in which it does not promise ultimately to become customary.

It is not, however, by mere tradition, or merely on the grounds of sentiment, that the Reformed method of celebrating the Lord's Supper is commended. Wherever circumstances admit of its use, this is assuredly the ideal method of celebrating the Supper. But it would be visionary to hope that it can ever reëstablish itself or maintain itself in its integrity in large congregations, especially if, in obedience to an exhortation of the Westminster divines, they commune frequently. Perhaps a compromise between the two tendencies, towards perfect symbolism on the one hand and commodiousness of administration on the other, might more readily commend itself. Such a compromise we have seen recommended by William Tyndale

⁴⁵ Oliver A. Kingsbury, *Centennial Day of the New Hartford Church*, New York, 1891, p. 33.

and by the best judgment of the Westminster divines, excepting the Scots. We mean the serving of a table, to be occupied on three sides, leaving the fourth open to the congregation. At this table, as many as can be seated at it might be placed, while the elements might be conveyed from it to the rest. The "setting up a difference" between communicant and communicant, which George Gillespie very properly objects to in this method, might be measurably avoided by placing the office-bearers alone at the table, and having them, after themselves communing, arise and convey the elements to the participating congregation.

It will be said, and very properly said, that it is practically this which is done in the mode of celebrating the Supper which is now in ordinary use among us. When the minister takes his place behind the table bearing the elements, and the elders range themselves in front of it or at its sides, and thence convey the elements to the people—are we not all gathered about the table of the Lord? The difference between this actually employed method and the method of administration suggested is certainly not great. There is evidently more of the old Reformed method of administering the Supper still remaining with us than, at first blush, we might be inclined to suppose. It is not apparent, indeed, why we should not recognize our customary method as essentially the same with the old Reformed—bearing the same significance and preserving the same implications. What has been done is in effect the conversion of the whole church, for the moment, into a table. This is made more apparent when, as in the case of the celebrations held by Chalmers and after him by very many (and also in the mode of celebrations described by Goulburn, as formerly customary at St. Mary's), white cloths are spread on the book-racks of the pews. But it is as real, even when this is not done. The whole church has become the Table of the Lord, and all seated in the one are seated at the other.

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