

Approaching a Heavenly Reality in a Temporal Realm: Robert Bruce's Theology of the Sacrament

By Frank L. Bartoe IV

There is often an attempt to bridge the gap that exists between the reality that the Scriptures describe in that eternal realm of glory and the reality that we seem to know best in this temporal realm. Is it possible to not only glimpse that reality that seems to be separated by this worldly reality, but truly engage the reality that resides in the heavenly realm? Alternatively, is it always to remain as a distant aspect of reality that will only be experienced when we arrive on the shores of glory? The heavenly reality is separated by the uncrossable temporal chasm that shall not be traversed until God's providential calling to the eternal realm. Although some would attempt to suggest an unmovable divide that exists between the temporal and eternal realm, nonetheless, some dare to rush that wall of division and remove the supposed obstacles that stand between them and the heavenly realities that are found in Scripture. This removal of those obstacles is done with an end in sight, which is to glimpse and grasp, to the fullest extent possible, the glorious reality that is known to reside in the realm of the heavens. Not only grasp, but experience it here, in the fullest sense possible, in the temporal realm which Robert Bruce describes as "that heavenly life offered in the word and sacraments' that ye may begin your heaven here, and get the full fruition of the life to come, and that in the righteous merits of Christ Jesus."¹ If this were not a possibility, it might be asked why God would have stooped down to his creatures and provided a supernatural revelation of himself, as well as establish the Sacraments for the church to participate. If he did not intend for his people to experience or 'taste' or to be "partakers of that heavenly life" in order that "ye may begin your heaven here," there would be a contrariety of absurdities.

Many questions surface when the concept of heavenly reality is considered, primarily when there is an apparent degree of separation between the heavenly

reality and the temporal realm. So, what is it that defines that heavenly reality? How can we, in a temporal realm, know—or better yet, experience—the reality that resides in the heavenly realm? Furthermore, what does the construct of that defined heavenly reality look like for the child of God? Not just what the reality looks like: more specifically, what does that heavenly reality look like in the temporal realm? It would seem that the latter portion of this question is more pertinent, in some sense, to us who reside in the temporal realm. Also, this latter question bears with it a great degree of weight and difficulty, for it would seem that to suggest that the heavenly reality can be identified, as well as understood, in the temporal realm brings us to an issue of mystery. Perhaps, on the surface, this may appear grandiose in its consideration, and probably for some a fanciful attempt to approach something that is a phantom with no real substance or content in this earthly realm of reality—it is chasing a phantom that is encapsulated in mystery. That is, how can one genuinely hope to approach a realm that is not of this realm, and not only approach that realm, but experience that realm to the extent that it can be known and understood?

The questions mentioned above about the possible connectivity and mystery surrounding the ability to be in one realm (temporal) and experience another realm (heavenly reality) seems to be a driving factor for Bruce's desire to explore the nature of the Lord's Supper. That is, the Lord's Supper encapsulates a degree of mystery, but also a great degree of glorious reality that some might dismiss as 'just' bread and wine. Hence,

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1. Robert Bruce, "Upon the Preparation to the Lord's Supper," in *Sermons*, ed. William Cunningham (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1843), 157. Hereafter *Sermons*.

the reason these questions seem to be the most appropriate, because Bruce does not merely present a familiar doctrine of the sacrament and leave it. Instead, for Bruce, there is a substantive reality that is to be engaged and experienced, which is encapsulated within the construct of the two realms (temporal/heavenly) coming face-to-face in the Lord's Supper. Consider the following remarks in the opening of his first sermon on the Lord's Supper, *Upon the Sacraments in General*, which presents an overall perspective of the substantive reality that Bruce identifies in the Lord's Supper:

There is na thing in this warld, nor out of this warld, mair to be wished of everye ane of you, mair to be craved and sought everie ane of you, nor to be conjoined with Christ Jesus, nor anis to be maid ane with the God of glory, Christ Jesus. This heavenly and celestial conjunction is purchased and brought about be twa special meanes: It is brought about be the mena of the word, and preaching of the gosþel; and it is brought about be the meane of the sacraments and ministrat-ion thereof.²

It is a stretching forth, or, as Bruce identifies it, the craving and seeking of the soul, by the mercy of God, to grasp, obtain, and secure a piece of the non-temporal realm. That is, to interact with a reality which is situated in the heavenly realm, which is a "heavenly and celestial conjunction" between the soul and its Redeemer that has been purchased by Christ. Therefore, as a result, the sacrament for Bruce is a fully implicative connecting point in the temporal realm that provides access to an eternal spiritual reality—the heavenly realm—while residing in the temporal realm. This connectivity between the two realms, for Bruce, is not just the mere ability to approach the heavenly reality, because that would seem to be an unnecessary limitation; instead, it is the ability to approach as well as fully enter into an aspect of that heavenly reality. Moreover, within this ability to approach the divine reality, there is an ability, to an extent, to grip, know, and experience it in the temporal realm. Likewise, the gripping of this heavenly realm is a necessity that establishes the basis for the other aspects of encountering this reality. The knowledge of this divine reality in the temporal realm has a perceptible characteristic that assists a fallen man, redeemed in Christ, to

have a real knowledge of the heavenly realm. Lastly, the experiential aspect of this Sacrament, for Bruce, contains a sweet solidifying nature that is inherent within the gripping and knowing this heavenly reality while residing in the temporal realm. It is this gripping, knowing, and experiencing the realm of heavenly reality while residing in this temporal realm that Bruce uses to construct a network of connectivity between the two realms. This connectivity brings the child of God, through the Sacrament, face to face with this glorious truth of the Sacrament that can, indeed, be held, known intimately, and experienced prior to his life in heaven.

AN INSTRUMENT OF INSIGHT—ANALOGY

If we are to give a brief consideration to the historical content that lies behind the thought that Bruce is developing throughout his sermons, we might ask whether Bruce's understanding is unique or whether he was promoting something new in his knowledge of the Sacrament. It is clear that Bruce was aware of other reformed positions on the doctrine of the Sacraments, at least, when we consider the content and substance of his understanding of the scriptural position on the Sacraments. However, due to the lack of writings and references throughout his sermons, it can be a challenge to say that this was from this author or that author. So are we to think that Bruce's understanding is unique, or that he was developing something new in his understanding of sacramental theology?

I would suggest that the analogy of proportionality is a fundamental component of Bruce's sacramental theology, and that the fact that we find this concept in Bruce's work would further suggest that he was aware of what John Calvin (1504–1559) and Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562) had to say about the Lord's Supper. This awareness on Bruce's part would have exposed him to a deep historical well to draw from when setting forth a scriptural position on the Sacraments, especially in light of Calvin's assessment of Vermigli's works on the Sacrament. "The whole doctrine of the Eucharist [Lord's Supper]," Calvin asserts, "was crowned by Peter Martyr, who left nothing more to be done."³

In addition, Bruce's approach to establishing the doctrine found in the Sacraments is interlaced with his reformed theology and his philosophical understandings of Aristotle and Aquinas. More specifically, this concept of the analogy of proportionality is a theory that originates with Aristotle and is incorporated by Aquinas,⁴ which functions as the foundation for Bruce to build his defense of the reformed position, not only of

2. "Upon the Sacraments in General," in *Sermons*, 5.

3. J. K. S. Reid, *Calvin: Theological Treatises* (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1954), 292.

4. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Truth*, trans. Robert W. Mulligan, S.J. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1952), q. 2, art. 3. "A thing is said to be proportionate to another in two ways. In one way, a proportion is noted

the Lord's Supper against transubstantiation, but also, for his theories of accommodation and of knowledge, which are intrinsically linked together.

This concept of the analogy of proportionality seems to be a significant instrument employed by Bruce to construct the framework and understanding of how it is that God has made it possible for sinful man to approach a heavenly realm while residing in a temporal realm. That is, Bruce uses this concept to identify and explain the nature of sacramental theology that speaks of an analogical revelation that is accommodating to the capacity of man's fallen nature. Therefore, I would suggest that this analogy of proportionality is a primary thread; and if one were to remove this thread of analogy, the whole of his position would unravel and lack the ability to convey the scriptural reality in the Lord's Supper.

The significance of the concept should not be underestimated, because it functions as a linking mechanism between different realms of reality, such as the temporal and eternal realms. Also, there is an intrinsic link between the concept of accommodation and the analogy of proportionality;⁵ that is, the analogy of proportionality appears to be inherently embedded within the doctrine of accommodation. At the bottom of this aspect of accommodation from the Creator to the creature is a subject-object connection that is fundamental to the relationship between the Creator and the creature, especially in the area of communication (knowledge), truth, and reality. The most concise and connecting statement of these two concepts (accommodation and analogy), for Bruce, is found in his sermon on 1 Cor. xi. 23, *Upon the Lord's Supper in Particular*, where he notes the benefits and the thankful heart that is related to the Sacrament that was instituted, and as a result we should "render to him heartie thanks that he hes [has] come downe as familiarlie to us, bowed the heavens, as it were, and given us the body and blood of his awin [own] Son."⁶ It is essential to note the relationship between accommodation and the concept of the analogy of proportionality as Bruce draws out in the previous statement. This is to say that the inherent necessity is derived from the fact that our capacity is on a creaturely level and consists of creaturely limitations, so the Creator has to "come downe as familiarlie to us." Not only did God come down, but he did it in such a manner as to acclimatize to our limited sinful capacity. This notion of God coming down speaks directly to the doctrine of *accomodatio*, which demonstrates the fact that God adapts himself to the capacity of the creature in revealing himself. The doctrine of accommodation was

a fundamental doctrine found in the writings of John Calvin and other reformed men of that time.

Bruce echoes this thought in his sermon on *Psalm LXXVI*, but in this specific reference he draws out other aspects of this accommodation, specifically its gracious nature, as well as the manner that he revealed himself which would be most fitted to our fallen nature. "The Lord sheweth himself," says Bruce, "exceeding gracious towards his people . . . that he hath revealed himself so homelie and so familiarlie to her, beside all the rest of the world, in sik sort that he hath made her acquaint with him, and made himself well known to her."⁷ There is something to this "familiarlie to us," for Bruce, because it speaks to the extent which the Creator God went to make himself known to his creatures; this was done in "that he hath revealed himself." This aspect of familiarity is a profound view of revelation that illustrates the divine accommodation to the fallen creature and employed earthly signs, which would indicate an analogical nature of the revelation given by God.

This divine accommodation is inherently linked to man being created in the image of God, although the reach is much greater than just the image of God in man.

between two things. For example, we say that four is proportioned to two since its proportion two is double. In a second way, they are proportioned as by a proportionality. For example, we say that six and eight are proportionate because, just as six is the double of three, so eight is the double of four; for proportionality is a similarity of proportions." Q. 2, art. 11. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, Vol. 1, ed. Anton C. Pegis (Random House: New York, 1944), 93. *The Summa Theologica*, I, q. 12, art. 1, ad 4. "Proportion is twofold. In one sense it means a certain relation of quantity to another, according to which double, treble, and equal are species of proportion. In another sense, every relation of one thing to another is called proportion. And in this sense there can be a proportion of the creature to God, in as much as it is related to Him as the effect to its cause, and as potentiality to act; and in this way a created intellect can be proportioned to know God."

5. Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Indiana University of Notre Dame Press, 2005). The author deals with Pseudo-Dionysius' knowledge of God in part one (first two chapters) of this book. Interesting to note that Pseudo-Dionysius "works out in great detail how we may know God from a knowledge of God's creatures, how that knowledge is limited, and how the soul may ascend to union with God." O'Rourke points out, "It will be most expedient to begin with the form of analogy of proportionality used by Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita. He characterized our knowledge of God as analogous in the sense that it must be transformed down to something compatible with our limited nature, and understood proportionality subjectively as referring to how a human subject transforms knowledge of the divine." See Diogenes Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (Atlanta, John Knox Press, 1985), 90.

6. "Upon the Lord's Supper in Particular," in *Sermons*, 37.

7. "Upon the Psalm LXXVI," in *Sermons*, 281.

That is, the whole of creation declares the power of God and is revealed. It could be stated that this relationship is embedded within the fabric of our existence (being), that is, God has created man in his image and within that image, he has infused knowledge of the Creator.⁸ The fabric of this embedded reality is something that Bruce will identify as a significant factor for a man being directed back to the Creator. “For, as to the creatures,” says Bruce, “there is never a creature that God created, but it is stamped with his awin stamp, and every creature bears his image; and looking to the image of God in the creature, suld it not draw thee to him ... for his awin image in his creature suld lead thee to himself.”⁹ Bruce is well aware of the remaining corruption of the old man that does cause a man to stumble over himself, and as a result of this corruption man sets his “heart upon the creature, and to leave the Creator.”¹⁰ Nonetheless, the boundless love of God has so designed his relationship with his creatures, that through the redeeming work of Christ the creature is, once again, drawn and led to the Creator.

8. Scott Oliphint, *Covenantal Apologetics: Principles and Practice in Defense of Our Faith* (Crossway, Wheaton, IL., 2013), 103. This is something that the professor of Apologetics at Westminster, K. Scott Oliphint refers to as the “psychological knowledge” rather than epistemological. Dr. Oliphint points out a distinction to made in reference to knowledge, he notes, “It is a knowledge, we could say, that is presupposed by any (perhaps all) other knowledge. For this reason, it may be best to think of it as more psychological than epistemological.” He continues, “That is, knowledge that is initially and centrally focused in the soul (*psyche*), rather than centrally focused in the mind.” This distinction of psychological and epistemological could use additional research on its implications. Furthermore, it suggests that there is an aspect of the subject-object relation that is in play here. The subject and object relation is internalized when it comes to the true knowledge of God, and that is projected externally to creation when a man has a regenerate mind. It has to be connected to the self-conscious connectivity in a similar manner that God is entirely a self-contained system; however, our pretended self-contained system has to be circumvented with the Spirit of God to reveal our true nature internally because nature cannot do this. This is the reason man’s knowledge of creation does not bring him to God but holds him accountable for that which is suppressed internally to give light of understanding of salvation...an internal dispersion is projected on the external objects of creation. This self-contained or self-sustained system characteristic of God does not translate to man; once again, man is not metaphysically like God; instead, he is to be ethically like God. However, within the confines of man’s soul, we find a containment or a system that is corrupted and finite.

9. “Upon the Preparation to the Lord’s Supper.” 155–156.

10. “The Christian Race,” in *Sermons*, 388.

11. Rev. Gerald B. Phelan, *St. Thomas and Analogy* (Milwaukee, Marquette University Press, 1973), 5.

12. Robert Bruce, *The Mystery of the Lord’s Supper: Sermons by Robert Bruce*, ed. Thomas F. Torrance (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 49.

13. *The Mystery of the Lord’s Supper*, 48.

In addition, there is another inherent link to be identified in Bruce’s approach to his sacramental theology, because there is a connection between Bruce’s theory of accommodation and the element of analogy that he employs in his sacramental theology. It could be suggested that the two are building blocks of the same foundation or, perhaps, the one is the outworking of the other. That is, without the concept of accommodation there could be no talk of the analogy of proportionality, because the Creator would have remained hidden from his creatures and the creature would continue locked up in their inability to know the Creator, and this would be diametrically opposed to God’s creative order. The penetrating nature of analogy is pointed out by Gerald B. Phelan, who notes that the “corporeal sense is arrested at the surface of the thing perceived; but the intellect penetrates into the very depths of the object and, conceiving within itself, as in the womb of the spirit, a likeness of the thing, sees it as it is there to be seen.”¹¹ Indeed, it is this reality that, for Bruce, is a true reflection of the “goodness of the ever-living God who has invented so many wonderful modes of conjunction, all in order that we might be conjoined to Him, and that this great and mystical conjunction between the God of glory and us may be increased.”¹² A significant factor of this increase is brought about by God’s design of man to be recipients of his revelation. For Bruce, this also speaks to the necessity of this analogy to exist, at least, in the temporal realm; and it would seem that the necessity is removed when one transitions from the temporal realm to being in the presence of—or face-to-face with—Christ. Therefore, the necessity of the analogy of proportionality is twofold: one, to meet the creaturely capacity to understand a heavenly reality that is contained in the Sacrament; and second, because Christ is no longer physically present for us to have a visual perception of him.

First, the necessity of the analogy of proportionality is a fundamental aspect of our temporal reality that allows for us, in our human capacity, to encounter, experience, and know heavenly realities—more specifically, the reality of the Sacrament. That is, there must be a “likeness and proportion between these two [sign and thing signified],” says Bruce, “for if there were no proportion and analogy between the sign and the thing signified by the sign, there could be no Sacrament nor any relation between them.”¹³ It would seem to be a pointless venture to attempt to draw out the significance of an object that bears no relation to the substance of that reality. Therefore, this thread of the conceptual construct must exist in order for us to benefit from the reality of

the Sacrament. So if we could not make the necessary correlation or connection between the elements that are found in the Sacrament, it would seem that the items have no real significance, at least insofar as they relate to the reality conveyed in the Sacrament. If this were the case, it would bring about several absurdities into any attempt to understand the Sacrament.

Secondly, the analogy of proportionality and the sign are not a contemporaneous existence of the analogy and Christ being present to my physical eye, because this would suggest an absurdity. Accordingly, Bruce asks: "Is not the sign in the Sacrament appointed to lead me to Christ, and to point out Christ to me?"¹⁴ What other purposes would, or could the sign serve if Christ was present to my eyes? What "need would I have of the bread?" asks Bruce, "If I saw Him present with my own eye, as I see the bread."¹⁵ What Bruce is describing, in setting the relational reality together with the sign and the thing signified, is that this relational reality is a crucial component in understanding the substance of the reality contained within the sign offered up in the Lord's Supper. "Thus in the first place," says Bruce, "this conjunction consists in relation which arises from a certain similitude and likeness which the one has to the other."¹⁶ This relational component is, to an extent, the construct of reality that God has acclimated within the framework of creation. Bruce has effectively tethered the whole of our reality construct to know, rightly, the Creator.

This understanding provides the foundation, as well as the necessity of understanding how God indeed does condescend to his creatures and in doing so has constructed creation in such a manner that his creatures might know the manifold goodness of God. However, he did not stop there, but so created the constitutional construct man's soul (mind, intellect, affectionsetc.) and the world, so that it might speak of the truths of an incomprehensible God (Creator). Additionally, God devised such laws of creation and the internal structure of man's soul that, through the analogy of proportionality, as Bruce would state, we could have a glimpse of the spiritual reality of our Creator and Redeemer. Clearly, Bruce was not the only one declaring this truth; instead, he found himself in good company regarding this concept of the God who has stooped down to his creatures that he might make himself known to the degree that they could understand. We see this very fundamental concept permeating the theology of John Calvin and his *Institutes*. However, Bruce's approach to working out the reality of this accommodation in his employment of the notion of the analogy of proportionality

was unique, at least, in the sense of employing this Aristotelean-Thomistic concept of analogy to explain the reality of the Sacrament.

Therefore, according to Bruce, the relation that he finds in the Lord's Supper and explained by the analogy of proportionality should be considered as the "suiting of the sign ... to strengthen and confirm his weak faith, quihilk is weak in us all...then, for the strengthening of his weak faith, it was necessair that he should have sought a sign."¹⁷ Once again, we find the rationale for this nature of the analogy of proportionality connected with the weakness of our faith. Bruce makes the following connection with this aspect of analogy, and as a result he puts forth the effort of drawing out the significance of signs and their stabilizing nature to a weak faith. This is a central thought in Bruce's fourth sermon, *Upon Isaiah, Chapter XXXVIII*. "The king seeketh a sign..." says Bruce, "to strengthen his beleaf in the Lord's promise. He beleeveth the promise, yet his beleaf was weak; and to strengthen his weak beleefe he seeketh the sign."¹⁸ It is essential to note the connectivity between the sign sought and offered and the relation of belief to the sign. In this case, the sign is sought to establish, further, the belief of the King. By design, the Creator has established the nature of our reality construct that it is continuously reliant upon him for existence and meaning, because "the finite cannot fully receive what is infinite. Nor is the creature able to comprehend its creator totally and perfectly."¹⁹ This limitation or restriction of man's ability to grasp God is "according to their capacity."²⁰ Therefore, the truth of

14. *The Mystery of the Lord's Supper*, 44.

15. *The Mystery of the Lord's Supper*, 44.

16. *The Mystery of the Lord's Supper*, 48.

17. "Upon Isaiah, Chapter XXXVIII," in *Sermons*, 198.

18. "Upon Isaiah, Chapter XXXVIII," 215.

19. "Upon Isaiah, Chapter XXXVIII," 118.

20. *Ibid*, 119. See Wolfgangus Musculus, *Common Places of Christian Religion*, translated by John Man of Merton Colledge in Oxforde (London: Henry Bynneman, 1578), 1071. "For those matters which be so hidden and far from our sense, that thee lieth no way unto them, neither by thinking, saying, hearing, feeling, talking, nor reasoning, they indeed cannot be known. Much less those things can be known, which be not at all, nor ever were in the nature of things, neither shall be at any season. Again, unless there capacity of understanding in him which would be know, whereby he may be able to know what, and of what sort the same is which he doth see, hear, handle, smell, and taste, and he hath understand and know nothing more than the beast which does lack reason, no not in those things which; be within the compass of all our senses, and be of themselves most manifest. What is of more understanding next after God, than an angel: and yet for all that the Angels cannot know the thoughts of mans heart, much less the secrets of God, unless that they be opened unto them. For the Lord is the sear of our hearts, the depth of which is otherwise

what Bruce sets forth in his doctrine on the Lord's Supper is echoing the teaching of Calvin, especially when we consider it in light of Calvin's teaching on knowledge of God, which clarified that "all knowledge of God is analogical and sacramental, not direct. This is what revelation means."²¹ It is the analogical and sacramental nature of reality that is identified and built upon, hence, the manifold goodness of God in stooping down to his fallen creation and in creating an environment where God is ultimate yet knowable to the creatures made in his image.

It is in light of Bruce's use of the analogy of proportionality that we need to consider some of the critical components of this analogy of proportionality. In the previous section, there were two crucial components introduced, and they play a vital role in the construct of analogy, that is, the subject-object relational reality and the notion of perception. As has been noted elsewhere, Bruce's sacramental theology is comprehensive in its structural format. Therefore, we need to look more closely at the role that perception plays in his sacramental theology, more specifically, as it relates to the issue of potential distance that may exist between the two realms (temporal and heavenly). Also, it is necessary that we give further consideration to what is entailed in the subject-object relational reality in the Sacrament. The latter will be considered first, and we will return to Bruce's definition of perception and its significance in closing the gap that exists between the temporal and heavenly realm after considering the subject-object relation.

THE CONJUNCTIVE CONNECTIVITY OF THE SUBJECT-OBJECT RELATION

We find, within Bruce's understanding of the Sacrament, an inherent connectivity that consists of the subject-object relation when the child of God approaches the Supper. That is, within this relational construct there is a linking element that in some mysterious manner the physical object is exposed to a spiritual reality, and that reality is fully experienced, at least, to the extent that it is possible. One of the questions that must be addressed pertains to the importance or significance

unsearchable. Again: what is more clearer than the Sun and yet for all that, those things which have not reason, are not able to know what the Sun is, and what the course and use of it is."

21. T.H.L. Parker, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), 109.

22. "Upon the Lord's Supper in Particular," 60.

23. "Upon the Lord's Supper in Particular," 60.

of this relational dynamics and, more specifically, to the impact on those who participate in the sacrament of the Supper.

There is something more than surface level that unfolds in this relational connectivity; that is to say, the subject-object relation has a dynamic dimension to it that is different from encountering other aspects of creation. For example, one can encounter a tree and stand in a subject-object relation of knowledge; however, within that relation, there is nothing more than an object (the tree) that stands with no real significance conveyed to the subject. This same insignificant subject-object relation could be said for a good deal of creation; however, when a redeemed soul approaches the Sacrament of the Supper, the dimensional dynamics of that relationship are transforming and implicative on the subject that is exposed to the object, in this case, the elements of the sacrament, and the relationship becomes more complicated. You have a creaturely element (man as subject) and the creaturely elements (bread and wine as objects) in this relationship. However, in this, it is not merely the creature (subject) standing in relation to the creature (object), because in this particular instance there is an unveiling to a dimension of reality that is not found in the other creaturely objects in the subject-object relationship. Therefore, for Bruce, there is a transporting factor to be considered in this relationship, and this transporting factor is the communication of reality: a more real reality.

The connectivity of the subject and the object is brought about by the gracious work of Christ through the Spirit of God, and this gracious work unites, to some extent, our grasping of the object and the spiritual substance that resides behind the object presented. That is, Bruce makes it clear that this linking aspect of the physical object and the spiritual reality must be grounded in the heart that has been renewed by the Spirit of God. There is a conjunction, in other words, a 'secret conjunction' that is "brought about by [by] faith, and by [by] the Holy Spirit." It is the latter that makes the reality of truly taking hold of the body and blood of Christ, or, as Bruce states, it is the manner which we faith-grip ahold of the body and blood of Christ.²² To suggest otherwise would be contrary to the scriptural reality which leads Bruce to ask: "Quhat [what] avails the faith, that fleets in the fantasie, and brings a naked knowledge, without the opening of the hart, and consent of the will?"²³ This 'naked knowledge' is what he identifies as knowledge lacking the faith or knowledge that is derived from a heart that is not rooted in faith. So, the separation or the 'great' divide between the two

realms are not necessarily the two realms, themselves; instead, a knowledge that is not clothed in faith. It is not that the Christian does not, in some sense, encounter this heavenly reality all around him; however, there is something more to be found in approaching the Supper that is a reality that is more real - an ultimate reality.

It should not surprise us to approach an area of duality in the reality that surrounds the elements, for Bruce, especially in light of the construct of the subject-object relationship and the varying dimension of that relation. It is with a proper understanding of Bruce's construct of the subject-object relation that we can consider another aspect of the nature of the reality that is encapsulated when the sacrament of the Supper is encountered. Bruce points out that there is a dual apprehension to be considered with the Lord's Supper, and from these two apprehensions he makes the connecting point of the spiritual reality in the heart and mind of a person.²⁴ This subject-object relation directs us back to the fundamental aspect of Bruce's understanding of the Supper: that is, the approaching, glimpsing, and experiencing of a heavenly reality in the temporal realm. This idea of duality should not be taken to be a parallel reality that does not interact; instead, it should be considered as a fully interactive heavenly reality that intrudes into the temporal time-space realm and confronts us.

In some sense, it would appear that, for Bruce, the redeemed soul approaching the sacrament of the Supper, especially, for the first time is an actual first encounter with a more real reality than ever before encountered. This more real reality is the result of what had taken place prior to approaching the table with a redeemed soul, that is, "the Lord being to scatter the cluds of our natural mind and understanding," says Bruce, "and begin to chase away this thick mist of the dark saull, and places therein a spunk of heavenly light, quhilk flowis out of Christ" (Bruce, "Upon the Preparation to the Lord's Supper," 123). The redeeming work of Christ applied by the Spirit of God to a "dark saull" that has the darkness replaced by a "spunk of heavenly light" will cause the objects of reality to be differently perceived. That is, the objects of reality seem to have their facades peeled away; this peeling away of the various facades of reality brings into greater focus that which is real, or more real. So, Bruce identifies this unveiling of what is real because "we see that all things in the world, beside the living God, are vanities, deceivable allurements, unconstant shaddowes, fleetand and flowand without ony byding, and then we see that our hearts and minds was set on ill contiualle" (Ibid., 123). It is here that we see the various unstable layers that were covering the

kernel of reality that Bruce wants to expose and to expose this kernel there needs to be a peeling away of these instabilities, such as, the "deceivable allurements, unconstant shaddowes, fleetand and flowand without ony byding" (Ibid., 123).

The network of reality and its construction is being reconstituted by the work of the Spirit, through Christ, and the result is that reality is redefined, and the significance of that reality has a greater impact on the subject exposed to that reality. We could say that reality has become more real than it was prior to the work of the Spirit. So, it would seem that there is an aspect of gradation in our reality, especially, when the mind is transformed from this world of darkness into a realm of light; because this unveiling with light is considered the "first work of the Spirit" (Ibid., 124) that removes the instability that is characterized by Bruce as "unconstant, shaddowes, fleetand, flowand, without ony byding" (Ibid., 123). However, we should not banish the speculative nature that may be considered as a part of the gradation of reality, because it is merely a means to convey the intensity of the reality that is being encountered by the soul when it comes to Christ, especially in the Sacrament. Bruce states it in the following words: "it were ane idle and ane foolish thing for me to see my salvation, except I get grace to be partaker of it" (Ibid., 123).

Therefore, the gradation of reality is twofold, at least here, in regards to the twofold apprehension that the real reality requires congruity between both modes of apprehension. So, it is as if one looks upon the object that can be mentally perceived, yet does not have the capacity to fully comprehend the nature of reality before him. Thus the dualities in apprehension can exist apart from one another; however, true apprehension cannot exist without the congruity between both the mind and the heart apprehending in unity. That is to say, "apprehension of the mind" (Ibid., 125), according to Bruce, "is not enough, except ye get the apprehension of the heart also" (Ibid., 125). The conviction of the conjoining necessity of the two apprehensions is something that Bruce goes to great lengths to illustrate, in order to make clear that the reality of one has no real existence without the reality of the other. He drives home this conjoining necessity with the following consideration:

For look in quhat place the eye serves to thy bodie; in that same room serves knowledge and understanding to thy saull; and looke in quhat place thy hand and thy mouth, the taist and the stomack, serves to thy body

24. "Upon the Preparation to the Lord's Supper," 124-126.

in that same room serves the hart and affection to thy saull; sa that as our bodie cannot be nourished except our hand take, and our mouth eat the meat.²⁵

It is important to point out that Bruce's understanding of this reality is somewhat comprehensive, at least to the extent that we are capable of experiencing and knowing reality through the various senses God has set within the creation of man. Are not all of the numerous facets of man's ability to know and to be engaged in knowing and serving in a manner that it was created? Has not the construct of man been done in such a way that there is a capacity to know, experience, as well as appreciate the reality around them? For what purpose does an eye serve if it is not capable of seeing? What benefit is there to a soul that is not capable of knowledge and understanding? What purpose would the mouth serve if it was incapable of consuming and tasting the required nutrients for the body?

Therefore, to suggest that one can imbibe in the sacrament of the Supper and is lacking the conjoining of apprehensions (mind and heart), because "our saules cannot feed on Christ, except we gripp him, and embrace him heartelie be our will and affection" (Ibid., 127). So what would appear to the natural mind to be an incongruity of two realms of reality (heavenly and temporal), is not incongruous at all for the one who with conjoined apprehension (mind and heart) "feed[s] on Christ." Furthermore, there is another dimension to this conjoined necessity that Bruce makes sure to identify and this he relates to the construct (the content of conjoining)—that is, there is a necessity of the right content in the conjoining of the mind and heart. That conjoining rightfully consists in "hearing the word preach be him that is sent" and the receiving of the sacraments. Accordingly, Bruce points out that the "word and the sacraments are not able of themselves to nurish this faith in us, except the working of

the Halie Spirit be conjoynd with their ministrerie" (Ibid., 128).

Consequently, the whole frame of reality is bound together by various aspects of conjoining (mind-heart and word-sacrament); however, this frame of reality does not exist in a vacuum. Instead, this conjoining nature is a what Bruce identifies as a "spiritual band," and this band is "for ye man understand this principle in the Scriptures of God; our saull cannot be joined nor bound with the flesh of Christ, nor the flesh of Christ cannot be joined with our saull, but be ane spiritual band . . . he is conjoynd with us be ane spirituall band, that is, be the power and the virtue of his Halie Spirit."²⁶ Hence, it the grounding of this conjoining reality that is brought about by the "working of the Halie Spirit" that conjoins and makes it an effective reality where the heavenly realm comes face-to-face with the temporal realm in the Supper. It is impossible for it to be otherwise, because "this heavenly light and supernatural understanding," Bruce says, is "whereby we see God [and] is proper only to the true members of Christ Jesus. . . . This supernatural light and understanding is offered by the Word, and is given to us by the Spirit of God; for the natural man, as long as he remaineth in his naturalitie, cannot perceive the things of God."²⁷

CLOSING THE GAP OF THE TWO REALMS—PERCEPTION

In the previous section, we addressed some of the various characteristics of analogy as it pertains to the comprehension. However, we need to give further consideration to Bruce's understanding of perception. There is another aspect to the nature of perception that needs to be considered, that is, we need to identify the full functionality of the nature of perception as it relates to the Sacrament, at least, in Bruce's understanding of the Sacrament. Therefore, it is essential for us to consider the details of Bruce's concept of perception and its ability to close the gap that exists between the possible distance between the temporal and heavenly realm.

It could be asked whether we perceive or have a perception of the one without the other. Bruce has already answered this question; however, there is something more to this conjoining reality, which pertains to the function of perception. What is it that creates distance from one object or another? Is it the physical relation of one object to another that should define the distance? Is it the locality of one object to another that should determine the distance of an object from another? Although, these are, indeed, measurements that can be employed to identify the distance of an object, there

25. "Upon the Preparation to the Lord's Supper," 127.

26. "Upon the Lord's Supper in Particular," 66. Bruce reiterates, in the following words that seriousness of the relationship of the conjoining that takes place and must stay in place. "Take me away," Bruce says, "ane of thir twa things fra the sacrament, ye tyne the relation, and, tyning the relation, ye tyne the sacrament. Confound me ane of thir two with the uther; make ather a confusion or permixion of them, ye tyne th relation, and, tyning the relation, ye tyne the sacrament. Turne me over the ane into the uther, sa that the substance of the ane starts up and vanishes in the uther, ye tyne the relation, and sa ye tyne the sacrament. Then, as in every sacrament there is a relation, sa, to kepe the relation, ye man ever kepe twa things severally in the sacrament." See Bruce's *Upon the Sacrament in General*, 8.

27. "Upon the Psalm LXXVI," 282.

is another aspect that Bruce introduces in consideration of the concept of distance between one object and another—perception.

This concept of perception is a fundamental aspect of Bruce's sacramental theology, so much so that he devotes a good portion of two out of four sermons on 1 Corinthians 11:28, *Upon the Lord's Supper in Particular* (1589), to addressing the nature of perception and the characteristics of perception as it relates to our experience of the Sacraments. In doing this, Bruce employs his understanding of perception to draw the two realms (temporal and heavenly) closer together: he uses the concept of perception to close the gap that exists between the temporal and heavenly realm—more specifically, as it pertains to the two different realms having some form of contact here in the temporal realm.

Midway through his third sermon, *Upon the Lord's Supper in Particular*, Bruce is responding to the Papist corrupted perspective on the presence of the blood and body of Christ. In doing so, he dials in on the importance of a proper scriptural understanding of perception and its relation to our understanding of what is meant by being 'present.' In his response to the Papists, Bruce offers up what he conceives to be the solution of the potential issues that surround the presence of the blood and body of Christ; however, in addition, he provides a means for also dealing with the gap that exists between the two realms. He asks: "Quhat we mean be [by] the word "present;" how a thing is said to be present and absent?"²⁸ This becomes the basis of setting forth the difference to be found in something being present or absent, and, for Bruce, this is directly situated in one's ability to perceive or not perceive. "I say, things are said to be present," Bruce states, "as they are perceived be [by] any outward or inward sense, and as they are perceived be [by] any of the senses, sa are they present" (Ibid., 95). This response serves to illustrate the comprehensive inner-connectivity or the reticulating nature of Bruce's understanding of the Lord's Supper.

This perception is not limited to the ability to see, as we would typically associate it with perception; instead, for Bruce, there is a comprehensive nature to this perception, and it is all-inclusive, whether it be an outward or inward perception. So, for example, "gif it be perceived be [by] the outward sight of the eye, be [by] the outward hearing of the ear, be [by] the outward feeling of the hand, or taist of the mouth, it is outwardlie present" (Ibid., 95). Some correlation exists with the inward nature of perception as well, so, "gif any thing be perceived be [by] the inward eye, be the inward taist and feeling of the saull, this thing cannot

be outwardlie present, but it man [mußt] be spiritalie and inwardly present to the saull" (Ibid., 95). And it is from this observation that Bruce concludes that the nature of distance (present or absent) is directly related to the capacity of perception: that is, if something is not perceived outwardly, then it must be outwardly absent; if something is not perceived inwardly, then it must be inwardly absent. Therefore, "everie thing is present as it is perceived" (Ibid., 95). So the notion of distance or the potential gap between the temporal realm and heavenly finds a possible solution in what Bruce identifies in perception. For Bruce, the matter of distance that we may contrive in our minds between the temporal realm and heavenly realm is, perhaps, not as great as we would make it be. Instead, we need to change the terms of our understanding of what is meant by something being at a distance (present or absent) from us or something that is not present, rather, absent from our presence. "It is not distance of place," says Bruce, "that makes a thing absent, or propinquitie of place that makes a thing present" (Ibid., 95–96). That is, for Bruce, the distance has more to do with one's perception, he states that "it is only the perception of any thing, be any of thy senses, that makes a thing present, and the not perception that makes a thing absent" (Ibid., 95–96).

This identification of the nature of present or absent and the necessary distinction that Bruce draws out here, is sure to have rippling implications throughout the whole understanding of the reality contained, as well as experienced when one approaches the Lord's Supper. What Bruce is doing, is establishing boundaries that cannot be crossed, regardless, of one's attempt to cross them. In this case, the distance that exists cannot be closed by man's natural capacity to perceive; instead, it requires more than what man is capable of doing, that is, perceiving inwardly, which he has noted on several occasions throughout his sermons that it is a spiritual perception. So, let us take this concept of perception as it relates to distance (present or absent) in reference to the capacity to perceive outwardly or inwardly and consider it in reference to the Sacrament.

"I call signs in the Sacraments," says Bruce, "whatever I perceive and take up by my outward senses."²⁹ There is a great deal of content contained in the "whatever I perceive" in the sign of the Sacrament, which Bruce is not willing to minimize because the significance of the reality found in the bread and the wine, that is, he is not willing to accept a simple one-to-one correlation (bread

28. "Upon the Lord's Supper in Particular," 95.

29. *The Mystery of the Lord's Supper: Sermons by Robert Bruce*, 34.

= body, wine = blood). If Bruce were to settle for the simple correlation of the (bread=body, wine=blood) he would be betraying his system that he has built, more specifically, the very notion of the analogy of proportionality would be leveled to the ground and bear no real meaning if it was a one-to-one correlation. Instead, what we find in the perceivability is the chief function of the “signs in the Sacraments,” according to Bruce, “they are instruments to deliver and exhibit the thing they signify, and not only because of their representation are they called signs” (Ibid., 36). Instead, “I call them signs,” says Bruce, “because they have the Body and Blood of Christ conjoined with them” (Ibid., 35). The weight of reality that transports from what is signified and conveyed to the man who comes into contact, by faith, with the bread and the wine is the weight of a heavenly reality that lies behind the thing signified and conveyed to the man of faith. This is of utmost necessity, because if they merely represented or signified something absent, “then any picture or dead image,” Bruce declares, “would be a Sacrament, for with every picture the thing signified comes into your mind” (Ibid., 36). He illustrates this by a picture of a king which will, inevitably, produce an image of the king in our mind, so that we will conclude that this picture is the king’s picture. “If, therefore,” Bruce concludes, “the sign of the Sacrament did no more than that, all pictures would be Sacraments” (Ibid., 36). With this imagery, Bruce is responding to the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church and their employment of images. At the same time, he is establishing the basis of God’s accommodating nature of revelation to the fallen man to glimpse, know, and experience a realm that is outside the temporal.

It should be noted that the reality contained in the Sacrament, for Bruce, cannot exist as a mere picture or image—at least, not for the child of God. Instead, it is a substantive reality, not only an exhibition of reality; it also “delivers the thing that it signifies to the soul and heart, as soon as the sign is delivered to the mouth” (*Mystery of the Lord’s Supper*, 36). Therefore, “it is for this reason, especially, that it is called a sign,” (Ibid., 36) and, in essence, it would be as if the king in the picture described above were to step out of the frame and become a reality that you can grasp, know, and experience. It is clear that there is no “picture of the king that will deliver the king to you,” just as there is “no other image that will exhibit the reality of which it is the image; therefore no image be a Sacrament” (Ibid., 36).

The spiritual necessity that must reside within the capacity of perception is a fundamental reality that must be intertwined with the ability to accurately perceive the reality God has set forth in the Lord’s Supper. It is here that we should note that perception is more than perception because the image of the perception does not necessarily make it a reality. However, that is not the case with regard to the Sacrament, because the perception of the reality contained within the Sacrament brings the heavenly reality home to the soul “as soon as the sign is delivered to the mouth,” says Bruce (Ibid., 36). Here we have the temporal realm acting as an access point to grasp, experience, and know the heavenly reality within the Sacrament. This is only fitting, especially when we consider that the “Lord has appointed the Sacraments as hands to deliver and exhibit the things signified” (Ibid., 36). As a result, we can approach the true penetrating nature of this analogy of proportionality, particularly when it has been coupled with a soul that is redeemed in Christ, because there is another level to be explored, understood, and grasped. That is, the corporeal sign in this temporal realm is not the end of the weighty reality which is being conveyed. Instead, in Bruce’s sacramental theology, it becomes a type of access point to the more substantive reality—the heavenly realm—while yet in the temporal. The latter part is indicative of the employment of the analogy of proportionality, and there is no place where it is more fittingly appropriated than in dealing with the Sacrament.

Although the sign of the thing signified draws the attention of the perception on the surface (i.e., the bread is perceived by the eyes of the person participating), this is only the beginning of engaging the reality. This is the beginning, because the intellect needs to be coupled with faith, which allows it to breach the surface of the object and arrive at the depths of the object. By the illuminating power of the Spirit, perception is now accompanied by the comprehension of the “likeness of the thing, [and] sees it as it is there to be seen.”³⁰ So, there is a presuppositional aspect to the penetrating nature of analogy, and this presuppositional aspect is that the analogy must be seated within the proper setting of a redeemed soul. Consequently, unless the analogy of proportionality has been coupled with a soul that is redeemed in Christ, it is incapable of reaching another level to be explored, understood, and grasped; the analogy is incapable of coming to fruition, and it will lack the necessary structure and substance to truly function. The fundamental significance of the spiritual perception and the full functionality of the analogy of proportionality is expressed by Bruce’s answer to the question: what

30. Rev. Gerald B. Phelan, *St. Thomas and Analogy* (Milwaukee, Marquette University Press, 1973), 5.

kind of perception is necessary for the Lord's Supper? "I establish," Bruce answers, "no kind of perception of Christ but a spirituall perception; he cannot be received nor perceived but be faith; and faith is spirituall. Therefore, in the sacrament, I establish only a spirituall perception of Christ, and not ane orall, carnall, or fleshie perception. This is the ground."³¹

Therefore, in our limited capacity as fallen creatures, we can yet encounter heavenly reality; however, before this can happen there is the fundamental necessity of conjoining that must take place between a spiritually renewed heart and mind. Subsequently, the two must come together for perception to move from the object and glimpse the depths of the heavenly reality that God has conveyed to his children through the bread and wine. It is not possible for the depths of this reality to be experienced, nor is there any other way to close the gap between the temporal realm and the heavenly realm. Any attempt to close the gap outside the scriptural bounds and a consideration of man's fallen nature is sure to end in all kinds of absurdities—so much so, that we can let "the heart of man devise, imagine, and wish; he durst never have excogitat to have sik a thing as the Son of God; he durst never have presumed to have pearsed the clouds, to have gane sa heigh, and to have craved the Son of God, in his flesh, to be the food of his saull."³²

THE LOCALITY OF CONVERGING REALITY: THE SOUL

Up to this point, there have been various aspects of reality both in the heavenly and temporal realm. We have identified the conjoining aspect of this reality that is solidified in the Holy Spirit. Also, we have considered the aspect of distance as it pertains to the perception and absence of an object in relation to another object. All of this speaks to the comprehensive nature of Bruce's understanding of sacramental theology, and all of this would seem to amount to nothing more than the image of the king on your wall if this sacramental reality was not, somehow, connected with the experience of the believer. So, we need to ask, where does the heavenly reality and the temporal realm converge? The answer to this question directs us to another congealing aspect of this encountering of a heavenly reality in the temporal realm. Also, the answer brings us to the edges of the experiential aspect of Bruce's sacramental understanding: that is, it is a thriving reality throughout the whole of man, not just some theoretical reality to be known. Instead, the Converging of this reality, for Bruce, is centered in the very place that God has established his image—the

soul of man. As a result of this converging point, we find the outworking of this glorious encounter between two realms manifesting experientially for the child of God.

It would appear that in the process of experiencing the Lord's Supper, there is a movement from getting a glimpse at an aperture of reality to an exceedingly more significant ultimate reality identified in the heavenly realm. Thus it is an incremental exposure that continuously betrays its truth and glory in the Supper, and as the exposure increases, there is a corresponding expanding of the boundary of reality. Let me repeat that: it is an expanding boundary of the reality that is found in the soul of a redeemed child of God, as well as the temporal realm expanding to the out edges of the heavenly realm. For Bruce, this is the very nature of the Sacrament: that is, it is a glorious inter-relation of both the temporal and heavenly realms that are interacting, so to speak, within the soul—so much so, that Bruce, in his third sermon, *Upon the Lord's Supper in Particular*, states that,

[Christ] is spirituallie and heavenlie present to thy saull, and the mouth is thy saull, quhilk is faith; for it were a preposterous thing to make the thing signfie present to thy bellie, or to the mouth or eye of thy bould for gif as were, it suld not be spirituallie present; because every thing is present as it accords to awin nature: It is a bodlie thing, it is bodilie present; and gif it be a heavenlie thing, it is spirituallie present.³³

Accordingly, the existence of this present, not absent, reality in the soul brings about a more momentous outworking of the sacraments, because the "sacraments are appointed that I might have him mair fullie in my saull; that I might have the bounds of it enlarged; that he may make the better residence in me."³⁴ Bruce notes that this experience is meant to increase the boundaries of my soul, and "he hes greater bounds in thy saull be the receaving of the sacrament."³⁵ What is this greater bounds or enlarging of the boundaries in the soul? Is it not the converging of two realms coming face-to-face with each other through the fact that Christ "is spirituallie and heavenlie present to thy saull, and the mouth of thy saull quhilk is faith"?³⁶ He continues, "For be the sacrament my faith is nourished, the bounds of my

31. "Upon the Lord's Supper in Particular," 48.

32. "Upon the Lord's Supper in Particular," 48.

33. "Upon the Lord's Supper in Particular," 97.

34. "Upon the Sacraments in General," 29.

35. "Upon the Lord's Supper in Particular," 49.

36. "Upon the Lord's Supper in Particular," 97.

sauill is enlarged, and sa, quhere I had but a little grip of Christ before, as it were betwixt my finger and my thumb, now I get him in my haill hande; and ay the mair that my faith growes, the better grip I get of Christ Jesus.”³⁷ This is the congruity found in a soul that has grasped hold of Christ, not only in our knowledge but in our ability to experience a heavenly realm while residing in a temporal realm.

Any who might question the experiential aspect of this relation reality between the temporal and the heavenly, as it meets in the soul who approaches the Lord’s Supper, need only read the last sermon listed in Robert Bruce’s Sermons, which is fittingly titled, *The Christian Race, The Heavenly Footman*. In this sermon, Bruce expounds the active reality found in Hebrews XII. 1, “Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” It would seem that even in this selection of text we see Bruce directing us to the reality that is encountered with the Lord’s Supper, that is, what great cloud encompasses us when we approach the table? What great weight are we laying aside when we encounter the element of the Lord’s Supper? What great degree of patience and encouragement is offered up in the bread, and the wine for the child of God? Thus it is most fitting that this text would conclude his work on the Sacrament, especially the experiential application of the reality of the two realms. This reality Bruce depicts in the following:

And, first, (says he,) cast off every thing that presses down, every weight that holds you down, and every thing that glues you to the earth and to the world; whatever it be that suffers not your heart to ascend upward, or to aspire to that heavenly kingdom, but holds your nose perpetually grunting upon the earth, and glues your soul to the ground, and to the world, that is a burden to you; whatever earthly thin it be that thou sets thy affection, desire, and lust upon, that earthly thing is a burden to thee; it glues thy heart to the creature, and conjoins thee so with the earth, that it is not possible that thy heart can look upward; therefore it is necessary that their weights and burdens be taken off the heart and affection, that the affection which is in the hear may have greater liberty to go forward in the race, and get the prize.³⁸

37. “Upon the Lord’s Supper in Particular,” 50.

38. “The Christian Race,” 387.

39. “Upon the Psalm LXXVI,” 280.

40. “Upon the Psalm LXXVI,” 38–39.

Therefore, we should “dress our hearts” with such a reality and seek to be a people of God that “have felt in experience his inward and outward deliveries, both in soul and in body.”³⁹ That is to say, that our affections are to be moved by the heavenly truths, and not just moved, but defined by an expression of the glorious heavenly truth that is found when we approach a portion of that heavenly kingdom in the Sacrament.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to explore some of the various filaments that are twined together in Bruce’s understanding of the reality that is contained within the Lord’s Supper and identify some of the fundamentals aspects that are necessary for us to understand the substantive reality that is rolled up in the Lord’s Supper. We have seen that throughout the whole construct of Bruce’s understanding of the Sacrament is a network of connectivity that binds it altogether, that is, there are individual aspects to this reality; however, the reality would not be what it is without the bonding together the individual aspects of this reality in order to know the whole. So, Bruce’s approach, it would appear, was an ongoing effort to peel back the layers of this weighty doctrine to exposes the various aspects of the reality contained in the kernel of the Lord’s Supper. In performing such a task, he has exposed the ultimate reality in the Sacrament, and Bruce shows how this substantive reality converges as a glorious truth within the soul of a child of God.

Therefore, the glorious reality that is encapsulated in this Sacrament is a realm of connectivity that, in some sense, draws two realms (temporal and heavenly) together and this connectivity between the two realms is a foretaste of that ultimate reality that awaits the child of God in glory, a “heavenly life offered in the word and sacraments.” This sacramental reality “testifies,” says Bruce, “siklike, of our new birth, that we are begotten spiriually to a heavenly life; it testifies, siklike, of the joyning of us in the body of Christ.” Yet, there is more to this than a mere testimony; rather, “it is a testimony, sa it is a seal.”⁴⁰ Although for Bruce there is more than this testimony and seal, because the reality of the testimony and seal must take root within the heart of man. So it does, indeed, testify and seal up this reality in our hearts, “make us in our harts,” says Bruce, “to feele the taist of that heavenly life begun in us; that we are translated fra death, in the quhilk we were conceaved, and impeded in the body of Christ.” So it is, the manner that God has so designed for the soul of man to be “fed and nurished to that heavenly

life."⁴¹ Hence, it is the glorious translation from the temporal reality into a heavenly experience of reality that awaits the soul in Christ.

For Bruce, this ability for the temporal and the eternal to come into contact with one another is the incredible capacity of a Christ-redeemed soul to be "partakers of that heavenly life offered in the word and sacraments."⁴² Undeniably, it is through Christ that God delivers "spiritual and heavenly things"⁴³ and it cannot be other than it is, that is, for one to grip, know, and experience this heavenly reality in the temporal requires more than something natural. "Now, the thing signified is of another nature;" says Bruce, "for it is another heavenly and spiritual thing, therefore, this heavenly thing is not given by an earthly man." As a result of the nature of this thing being "heavenly and spiritual," it is an impossibility for "this uncorruptible thing is not given by a natural and corruptible man; but Christ Jesus has locked up and reserved the ministries of this heavenly thing to himself alone."⁴⁴ This simple, yet complex, reality drives us to the core of the heavenly reality and its source for us in this temporal realm. Hence, the reason that those who would come to this table with the natural un-regenerated mind are no closer to the heavenly reality since the natural soul has not the capacity to grasp that reality outside of Christ, because "Christ Jesus, the Mediator, gives you the heavenly thing in the sacrament."⁴⁵

It is through Christ, as the Mediator, that any child of God is able to approach the heavenly realm while here in the temporal. So, properly does Bruce conclude the fifth, in a series of five sermons titled: *Upon the Preparation to the Lord's Supper*, with a summation of the glorious complexity of reality that exists within the Sacrament that allows for the Christian to stand in the temporal realm and grasp, know, and experience the heavenly realm. "Therefore," Bruce concludes, "the Lord of his mercie illuminates your minds, and work some measure of faith and love in your hearts; that ye may be partakers of that heavenly life offered in the word and sacraments; that ye may begin your heaven here, and get the full fruition of the life to come, and that in the righteous merits of Christ Jesus."⁴⁶ ■

practised his profession in Edinburgh. He was on his way to becoming a judge, but a remarkable spiritual experience "on the last night of August 1581" sent him to study for the Church. He was licensed by the Presbytery of St. Andrews in 1587, and almost immediately called to this charge. He was Moderator of the Assembly summoned to meet on 6th February 1588 to consider means of defence against the threatened invasion of the Spanish Armada. In October 1589, when James VI (who both respected and feared him) sailed to Norway to fetch his bride, and parties in Edinburgh were somewhat excited, the King appointed Bruce an extra-ordinary Privy Councillor, and such was his influence that he kept all quiet, and on his Majesty's return received a cordial letter of thanks, 19th February 1589–90. He crowned the Queen 17th March 1590, and was again Moderator May 1592. His power and success as a preacher were very remarkable, and he continued to enjoy the King's favour till 1596, when, giving offence by his opposition to James's prelatist tendencies, he, with others, was banished from Edinburgh. He was allowed to return after a time, and in May 1598 was admitted to the Little Kirk. At first he refused the imposition of hands, not judging it an essential part of the ordination ceremony, but ultimately he consented to accept it "as a ceremony of entry only." In August 1600 the Gowrie Conspiracy took place, and Bruce being one of those who entertained doubts as to the treason of the Ruthvens, refused to offer up thanks in the manner prescribed for the King's deliverance. As a result (and spite of the efforts of his friends to get the matter settled), Bruce was ordered to quit Edinburgh, and prohibited from preaching anywhere in the kingdom upon pain of death. The last thirty years of his life were spent in various places. From 1605 to 1609 he was confined to Inverness, where he met with much hard treatment from Lord Enzie and others, but where his preaching was much appreciated by his friends. On a vacancy he supplied the charge of Forres for a time, after which, on the solicitation of his son, he received permission to return to his patrimonial estate of Kinnaird, near Stirling, where he repaired at his own expense the church of Larbert, and discharged all the duties of the ministry, officiating sometimes also at Stirling. Occasionally he resided on his other property at Monkland. "Wherever he had an opportunity of preaching, great crowds attended; he preached with remarkable power, and his own life being in full accord with his preaching, the influence he attained was almost without parallel in the history of the Scottish Church." In 1620 he was again banished to Inverness, where, broken in

In Brief: Robert Bruce

Robert Bruce, born 1554, second son of Sir Alexander B. of Airth and Janet, daughter of Lord Livingston and great-granddaughter of James I. [of Scotland]; educated at St. Leonard's College, St. Andrews; M.A. (1572); studied law in Paris and

41. "Upon the Psalm LXXVI," 39.

42. "Upon the Preparation to the Lord's Supper," 157.

43. "Upon the Sacraments in General," 11.

44. "Upon the Sacraments in General," 24–35.

45. "Upon the Sacraments in General," 25.

46. "Upon the Preparation to the Lord's Supper," 157.

health and in increasing weakness, he remained till 1624. On King James's death in 1625 the severity against him was much mitigated, and by King Charles's order he was allowed to return to Kinnaird, where he died 27th July 1631. In person he was tall and dignified, with a majestic countenance and venerable appearance in the pulpit. He had a knowledge of the Scriptures beyond most of his time. Andrew Melville described him as a "hero adorned with every virtue, a constant confessor and almost martyr to the Lord Jesus," whilst Livingstone of Ancrum said: "Mr. Robert Bruce I several times heard, and in my opinion never man spoke with greater power since the Apostles' days..." Hew Scott, *Faith Ecclesiae Scoticae; the succession of ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation*, volume 1 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1915), 54-55.

"Mr. Robert Bruce [1554-1631], minister at Edinburgh. He began to preach about the year 1590, and died about the year 1632. He was second son of the laird of Airth, from whom he had the estate of Kinnaird, and was bred in France at the law, designed to have been one of the Lords of Session; but coming home, he was moved by the Spirit of the Lord to set to the ministry, and having studied sometime at St Andrews, when he began to preach there were found more than ordinary gifts in him, so as he was most earnestly and unanimously called to be minister at Edinburgh, but for a long while only preached, and could not be moved to take on the charge till one of the ministers by advice of the rest entrapped him. For that minister on day giving the communion had desired Mr. Robert, who was to preach in the afternoon, to sit by him, and when he himself had served two or three tables he removed out of the church, as being shortly to return, but sent in word to Mr. Robert Bruce by some of the elders, that

he would not return at that time, and that therefore Mr. Robert behooved to serve the rest of the table, or else the work must be given over. When, therefore, the eyes of the elders and the whole people were on him, and many also called out, he did go on, and celebrated [administered] the communion

to the rest with such assistance and motion, as had not been seen in that place before, and for that cause he would not thereafter receive in the ordinary way the imposition of hands, seeing before he had the material of it, to wit, the approbation of all the ministry, and had already celebrated the communion, which was not, by a new ordination to be made void.

No man in his time spoke with such evidence and power of the Spirit: no man had so many seals of conversion; yea, many of his hearers thought no man since the apostles spoke with such power. He had a notable faculty in searching deep in the Scriptures, and of making the most dark mysteries most plain, but especially in

dealing with every one's conscience. He was much exercised in conscience himself opposing Episcopacy that was creeping in; and because he would not join in giving thanks for the delivery of Gowrie's Conspiracy, for which he saw not sufficient evidence, the king removed him from Edinburgh. He was at first imprisoned in the castle of Edinburgh, after that confined in Inverness, yet at last he got liberty to dwell in his own house of Kinnaird, where the paroch of Laber having neither church nor stipend, he repaired the church, and discharged all the parts of a minister, and many from other parts came to hear him. I was there his hearer for a great part of the summer 1627..." John Livingstone, "Memorable Characteristics and Remarkable Passages of Divine Providence," in *Select Biographies*, 2 vols., ed. W. K. Tweedie, (Edinburgh: Printed for the Wodrow Society, [1845]), 1.305-306. ■



Robert Bruce, engraved by J. Stewart from an original miniature in the possession of James Bruce, Esquire of Kinnaird.