

1. Introduction: We have already discussed in what sense it can be said that the visible church is an essential element of the gospel—in the language of our confession “out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.” (WCF 25.2) The question all of this raises then is this: In what manner is the church, consisting of common and unholy things, set apart for such an uncommon and holy use? IN other words, what makes the church so “special” as to be especially attributed with the power of salvation? What do you think makes the church so unique and special?

Part 1: Issues in Sacramental Theology:

2. As per the above question, some “reformation” context to our confession is useful, especially as it introduces us to the Westminster language pertaining to sacraments, which as we will see is very much “Calvinistic.” In other words, how do you think John Calvin would answer the above question about the uniquely salvific quality of the church in relation then to sacraments? Is Christ uniquely present in a saving way in the sacraments—if so, then the Lord is uniquely present in, with and through the church unto salvation, albeit as we will see with a very important qualification as predicated upon the reformation emphasis on divine sovereignty acting through election and effectual calling especially as received by faith alone! Concerning then the sacrament of the Lord’s supper, Calvin writes:

*“no extent of space interferes with the boundless energy of the Spirit, which transfuses life into us from the flesh of Christ.”<sup>1</sup>*

What does this say then about the uniqueness of the church? Notice again how Calvin words this in his *Treatise on the Lord’s Supper* in so far as we are introduced to the concept of “sacrament.”

*It is necessary, first of all, that he be given us in the Supper, in order that the things which we have mentioned may be truly accomplished in us. For this reason I am wont to say, that the substance of the sacraments is the Lord Jesus, and the efficacy of them the graces and blessings which we have by his means..*

*...all the benefit which we should seek in the Supper is annihilated if Jesus Christ be not there given to us as the substance and foundation of all. That being fixed, we will confess, without doubt, that to deny that a true communication of Jesus Christ is presented to us in the Supper, is to render this holy sacrament frivolous and useless—an execrable blasphemy unfit to be listened to.*

*Thus it is with the communion which we have in the body and blood of the Lord Jesus. It is a spiritual mystery which can neither be seen by the eye nor comprehended by the human understanding. It is therefore figured to us by visible signs, according as our weakness requires, in such manner, nevertheless, that it is not a bare figure but is combined with the reality and substance . . . the sacraments of the Lord should not and cannot be at all separated from their reality and substance.*

*We must confess, then, that if the representation which God gives us in the Supper is true, the internal substance of the sacrament is conjoined with the visible signs; and as the bread is distributed to us by the hand, so the body of Christ is communicated to us in order that we may be made partakers of it.*

But then notice also how Calvin “qualifies” all of this—both as to distinguish between the Roman position, but also the Baptist position:

*To distinguish [Christ from elements], in order to guard against confounding them, is not only good and reasonable, but altogether necessary; but to divide them, so as to make the one exist without the other, is absurd.*

How then are the sacraments powerful unto salvation according to Calvin?

*The proper body and blood of Jesus Christ is received only by faith... Hence if we would worthily communicate in the Lord's Supper, we must with firm heartfelt reliance regard the Lord Jesus as our only righteousness, life, and salvation, receiving and accepting the promises which are given us by him as sure and certain, and renouncing all other confidence, so that distrusting ourselves and all creatures, we may rest fully in him, and be contented with his grace alone.*

3. Read WCF 27.1-2 What is a sacrament? Notice especially four distinguishing marks:

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Corpus Reformatorum*, 37: 48.

1. Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ, and his benefits; and to confirm our interest in him: as also, to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the church, and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to his Word.

2. There is, in every sacrament, a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified: whence it comes to pass, that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other.

- “Immediate Institution”
- “holy Sign”—i.e. it symbolizes that which is promised (see below)
- “holy... Seal”—i.e. it in some sense accomplishes that which is promised (see below)
- “Spiritual Relation . . . between the thing signified and the sign” or means of grace. (see below)

4. What does all this mean exactly? Do the sacraments “effect” anything in so far as salvation is concerned? Notice section 3—and the answer “yes and no” depending on how we mean it.

*The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them; neither doth the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it: but upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution, which contains, together with a precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers.*

- NO: grace is “not conferred by any power in them; neither doth the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it. Thus, the elements themselves are not in any way transformed as to have any power in themselves (no “holy water” or “holy bread/wine” if by this it is meant they are anything other than they are naturally)
- YES: grace is conferred... *upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution, which contains, together with a precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers.* (“holy water” and “holy bread/wine” in so far as they are instruments used by the Holy Spirit to confer grace and salvation “TO THE ELECT” as received and confirmed by faith alone.

In other words, by means of the spiritual presence of Christ that is uniquely related to the sacraments (section 2), the sacraments are powerful to affect that which is being promised. Does this mean that the nature of the power is necessarily exhibited, or even necessarily immediately exhibited vis-à-vis the participant? NO! Again in the words of our confession, only “ordinarily” as per the relation of the church to salvation. In other words, the sacraments are a “means of grace” and not “the agent of grace.” The “agent of grace” is the Holy Spirit, even as God the Holy Spirit is sovereign. (John 3:8)

Notice then how all this works out, for instance, in the two sacraments:

As a “holy Sign:”

- 1) What is signified in Christian **Baptism**? WCF 28.1 *of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life.*
- 2) What is signified in the **Lord’s Supper**? WCF 29.1 *of His body and blood, called the Lord’s Supper, to be observed in His Church, unto the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of Himself in His death;*

As a “seal” i.e. what exactly does it effect? Notice again the sacramental relation: *Spiritual Relation . . . between the thing signified and the sign.* i.e. what is signified is somehow applied in, with and through the sacraments—

- **In Baptism:** *ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life.* Thus, WCF 28.6  
*by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God’s own will, in His appointed time.*

However, note the important qualifications as “according to the counsel of God’s will, in His appointed time” (i.e. “not necessarily and not necessarily immediately”) as then predicated upon the work of the Holy Spirit and how this is explicitly related to the power of Baptism to save:

*Not necessarily: WCF 28.5 yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated, or saved, without it: or, that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.*

Not necessarily immediately: WCF 28.6 *The efficacy of Baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered*

(Read Mt.28:19, Titus 3:5, 1 Peter 3:21, Gal.3:27, 1Cor.12:13, Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Rom.6:3-4 and ask, does it not seem to "affect" salvation in some sense?)

- **In The Lord's Supper: WCF 29.1** *the sealing all benefits thereof unto true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in Him, . . . to be a bond and pledge of their communion with Him, and with each other, as members of His mystical body.* Thus 29.5, and then section 7

*Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements, in this sacrament, do then also, inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally but spiritually, receive, and feed upon, Christ crucified, and all benefits of His death: the body and blood of Christ being then, not corporally or carnally, in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet, as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.*

(Read 1Cor.10:15 and language of "koinonia". See also John 6: 51, 55-56, 63, etc)

However, again, note the important qualifications in the above statement as to preserve the sovereignty of God acting in the Holy Spirit.

5. Notice then how the Westminster (Reformed) view compares to other traditions:

1) According to Romanism, the Sacramental union is strictly physical. As Ursinus put it: "The Papists imagine that the sign which are used in the celebration of the Lord's Supper are changed into the things signified. But a change is no union." This means that the error of Romanism is to see the grace given in the Sacrament as something done in us, by virtue of the change of the sign into the thing signified.

2) According to Lutherans, the Sacramental union is local, "as if the sign and the thing signified were present in the same space, so both believers and unbelievers receive the full sacrament when they receive the sign." [Berkhof, ST, 618] (Note, Some would argue that Luther himself and Calvin were much closer on the topic than their respective denominational histories express—e.g. in a sense Calvin would also argue for locality, albeit vis-à-vis the mystery of spiritual union—but again the important reformed qualification of "not necessarily and not necessarily immediately").

3) According to most Evangelicals (who are strongly influenced by Pietism, Anabaptism, and radical Zwinglianism), there is no Sacramental union at all. The signs remain mere signs or symbols and do not communicate grace. They are given to us merely to commemorate the work of Christ through the use of the symbols. (Compare for instance the London Baptist Confession [which started with the WCF and intentionally took out all sacramental language and concepts] with the original WCF. See further addendum).

4) According to the Reformed, the Sacramental union is a spiritual bond, effected by God the Holy Spirit, and received by faith, so that by receiving the sign (bread, water, wine), the thing signified is also received (the promises of the covenant, the forgiveness of sins and participation in the resurrection life of Christ). "Where the sacrament is received in faith, the grace of God accompanies it. According to this view the external sign becomes a means employed by the Holy Spirit in the communication of divine grace" [Berkhof, ST, 618].

The sacramental union between the "sign" and "the thing signified" is nicely summarized in Article 33 of the Belgic Confession:

*We believe that our good God, mindful of our crudeness and weakness, has ordained sacraments for us to seal his promises in us, to pledge his good will and grace toward us, and also to nourish and sustain our faith. He has added these to the Word of the gospel to represent better to our external senses both what he enables us to understand by his Word and what he does inwardly in our hearts, confirming in us the salvation he imparts to us. For they are visible signs and seals of something internal and invisible, by means of which God works in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. So they are not empty and hollow signs to fool and deceive us, for their truth is Jesus Christ, without whom they would be nothing.*

Part 2: Issues in Sacramental Practice:

6. Who is authorized to administer the sacraments and what Biblical rationale can be given for this? (27.4)

- E.g. Baptism is said to be "into the visible church." (28.1) What are some of the implications of this? How would we determine then if a baptism was "valid?" Is it biblical to "re-baptize" a person? (28.7)  
What is CPC's position on Roman Catholic participation? (See CPC Position Paper on RC Baptism)  
Note especially: 28:7. *The sacrament of Baptism is but once to be administered unto any person.*

The gist of the CPC position, in so far as the PCA has left it up to each local session to determine its own policy, is as follows:

"CPC will recognize Roman Catholic baptisms as a valid Christian baptism, such as not to re-baptize anyone seeking membership at CPC who was previously baptized in the Roman Catholic Church."

*Minutes of CPC Session, Nov. 21, 2003*

**1. What makes Baptism valid?**

It is resolved that Christian Baptism is valid in so far as it IS administered by a visible and apostolic Church under the three fold conditions of a) use of water b) Trinitarian formula and c) intentionality with respect to Christian baptism as per the Great Commission and the apostolic foundation. (Mt. 28) (LC # 162, 165)

**2. What makes a visible church?**

It is therefore determined that a "visible church" is defined by its ministry of word, sacraments and government, all to at least minimally preserve the "apostolic" content pertaining to each as minimally affirmed by the so called "ecumenical creeds" as historically understood in its intended and literal sense. \*(see WCF 25.3, 4, 5) For example: ***The Nicene Creed***

**3. In Regards to the Roman Catholic Church?**

As by the confessional statement of the Roman Catholic Church in its post Vatican II *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, it is believed that the Roman Catholic church has in at least a minimal sense, the three marks of the church such as to be a visible and apostolic church... notwithstanding our concern that the Roman Catholic church has so added to the sufficiency of Christ as to severely *diminish* the power of the gospel while not all together mitigating it.

- E.g. The Lord's Supper is properly administered in the context of the visible church only. See below

7. Who are the recipients of the sacraments according to our confession of faith?

- Baptism: (See *A Baptism that Saves*, Preston Graham)
  1. Those who are baptized into the context of the visible church that as defined by the apostolic marks of a true church (New Covenant based confession, sacraments, government)  
*WCF 25.3 "Unto this catholic visible church, Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God for the gathering and perfecting of the saints."*
  2. All Believers *and* their children  
*28:4. Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized.*

Why Children? (See *A Baptism that Saves*, Preston Graham)

- i. The logic of baptism as an entrance and converting ordinance (vs. renewal) in relation to the doctrine of effectual calling (see above on "efficacy" of baptism as a converting ordinance)
- ii. The apostolic example of "household" baptism, albeit without explicit reference to the faith of the various "subordinate" members of the household, while explicitly referencing the faith of the head of household. (Acts 16:15-33, 18:8 Notice as well the teaching in 1Cor. 7:14)
- iii. The hermeneutic principle of continuity between baptism and circumcision (Col.2:11-13) and the suspect "narrowing" of the terms of communion for the New Covenant visible church relative to the Old Testament church IF one were to exclude those members (children) that were previously admitted to the visible church under the Old Covenant.
  1. Compare then the language of Acts 3:25 Gal.3:8 as per baptism with Gen.17:7-9.
  2. Notice that the thing signified in circumcision is exactly the same as the thing signified in baptism (see above)
  3. Notice as well that in the transition from Old Covenant to New Covenant, that the stress of "believers baptism" only seems to be greater, given that all converts to Christianity from Judaism were baptized into the New Covenant church. And yet, it is clear that adult

conversions in the Old Testament were no less required to be circumcised as converts were required to be baptized under the New Covenant, and yet children of believers were also entered into the church of their parents vis-à-vis circumcision in Old Testament as well. I.e. no difference—believers and infant circumcision no less than believers and infant baptism today.

- Lord's Supper:  
Read 1 Cor.11:23-29.  
Observation:
  - The very presence of this passage indicates the possibility of partaking of the Lord's Supper improperly, as to do more harm than good evidently.
  - And the essential condition of one partaking of the Lord's Supper is that he/she be capable of "examining" themselves.
  - This examination assumes a standard (1 Cor. 10:16) as per our union with Christ even as this is related to our union with the body of Christ.
  - Note also that this examination cannot be done privately lest Paul's prior teaching authority of the church to demit a person from the Lord's table presupposes that the person is admitted by the church. (See 1 Cor. 5:3-13)

Therefore,

(a) Infants and those unable to "examine him/herself" ought not to participate in so far as it is a "renewal" sacrament vs. an entrance or even "converting" sacrament (note qualifications—not necessarily converting, not necessarily immediately converting).

E.g. The first class of people excluded from the Lord's table are who are in a state of ignorance and/or developmental immaturity such that self-examination is not possible both intellectually and/or with an adult sense of self-awareness. This is the historic position of the Presbyterian tradition, as noted by 19<sup>th</sup> century pastor Ashbel Green.

*"to infants, or to any who are grossly ignorant of the fundamental principles of the Christian religion, whatever may be their age, all individuals who are absolutely incapable of that examination which the divine command explicitly enjoins." (Ashbel Green, Lectures on the Shorter Catechism of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Vol. II, Presbyterian Board of Pub.: Philadelphia, 1841, p. 402)*

Here again, the crucial element then of covenant renewal as to participate in the sacramental efficacy of the Lord's Supper is that one participates in it "by faith alone." Self-conscious faith is a prerequisite to the efficacy of the Lord's Table to renew faith. Unlike Baptism, the Lord's Supper is NOT a converting ordinance (thus administered as a means TO conversion), but a renewal ordinance (as a means of renewing that which has already been converted). This then means that the efficacy of the Lord's Supper is tied to it being received by faith! Note for instance, John 16 and the significance that is placed on "faith" in order to receive the benefit of "eating and drinking" (a clear reference to the Lord's Supper by Christ), and then John Calvin's comments on this:

Question 177: *Wherein do the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper differ?*

Answer: *The sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper differ, in that Baptism is to be administered but once, with water, to be a sign and seal of our regeneration and ingrafting into Christ, and that even to infants; whereas the Lord's Supper is to be administered often, in the elements of bread and wine, to represent and exhibit Christ as spiritual nourishment to the soul, and to confirm our continuance and growth in him, and that only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves.*

AS to the clear efficacy of the Lord's Supper to strengthen and renew our faith and union with Christ unto eternal life:

**6: 53** So Jesus said to them, **"Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; 55 for my flesh is true food and my blood is true**

*drink. 56 Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. 57 Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me.*

The efficacy of the Lord's Supper is related to the "spiritual" vs. literal/corporeal" presence of Christ in/with/through the Lord's Supper:

*62 Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63 It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But among you there are some who do not believe."*

As to the efficacy being tied to the eating and drinking in/with/by faith alone:

*27 Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal." 28 Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."*

*35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."*

*40 This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life*

*47 Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever;*

Note then WCF 29:

*7. Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements, in this sacrament, do then also, inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally but spiritually, receive, and feed upon, Christ crucified, and all benefits of His death: the body and blood of Christ being then, not corporally or carnally, in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet, as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.*

*8. Although ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements in this sacrament; yet, they receive not the thing signified thereby; but, by their unworthy coming thereunto, are guilty of the body of the Lord, to their own damnation. Wherefore, all ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with Him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table; and cannot, without great sin against Christ, while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto.*

Commenting on John 6:63—**the flesh is useless!!** Calvin says this:

*The ancients fell into a gross error by supposing that little children were deprived of eternal life, if they did not dispense to them the Eucharist, that is, the Lord's Supper . . . With respect to young children, the ordinance of Christ forbids them to partake of the Lord's Supper; because they are not yet able to know or to celebrate the remembrance of the death of Christ . . . For it is certain, that he now speaks of the perpetual and ordinary manner of eating the flesh of Christ, which is done by faith only.*

Notice then the distinction between confirmed faith and unconfirmed faith is important to keep? What with respect to the reformed view of effectual calling is kept in tact?

(b) Those not a member of some gospel believing Church ought not to participate:

*29:1. Our Lord Jesus, in the night wherein He was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of His body and blood, called the Lord's Supper, to be observed in His Church, unto the end of the world . . . and, to be a bond and pledge of their communion with Him, and with each other, as members of His mystical body.*

Note also confessional language "be admitted" (29.8) implying that we don't admit ourselves, but are "admitted" as to bring ourselves under the authority of Christ as being mediated within the church context (See further Mt. 16—binding and loosing, keys, etc)

In that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is intended to promote and reflect the common unity of the body of Christ in the assembled form (1 Cor.10:16), and this unity presupposes a submission "one to another" vis-à-vis the covenantal context of ecclesial authority, the person who is not a member in good standing of some gospel believing cannot therefore sustain an examination of him/herself in view of 1 Cor. 11:17-17-22, even as addressed to those who "assemble as a church". (1 Cor. 11:18) For this reason, the Presbyterian Book of Church Order invites all those who "are communicants in good standing in any evangelical church" to participate and therefore excluding those who are not (by evangelical, it is meant any gospel believing church).

E.g. One could make the case that in the absence of real "flesh and blood" that is related to the elements themselves, the "flesh and blood" aspect of the Lord's Supper is in relation to the "body of Christ" vis-à-vis the church. Christ's command to "love the Lord" is actualized necessarily in, with and through the church (love your neighbor . . . defined in covenantal terms, in the communion of saints as then assumes a covenantal membership wherein the obligations and duties within a consensual and confessional way is enjoined together) **Thus, 1Cor. 10:16!** Note as well that if the church is given authority to "remove" people from the communion table (1Cor.5:3-13), the implication is that those removed were admitted under the authority of the church. Otherwise, the command to "remove" is nonsensical, lest we suppose that the church has some kind of temporal authority (church and state).

(c) Unrepentant sinners who have been excommunicated by Christ from the visible church as mediated through the means of discipline that is granted to the church (Mt. 16, see further next week):

The final group of people excluded are those that through either self-examination or by the censure of Church officers have been found to be immoral or scandalous and in a state of unrepentance and therefore should be prohibited from participating in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. (1 Cor.11:27) This in effect is the meaning of "ex-communication". (See also 1 Cor. 5:3-13, "remove the wicked man from among yourselves.")

What is "unrepentant"? c.f. Justification- whatever it is, it cannot be that which then negates the very terms of communion at Christ's table as per the unmerited and free grace of Christ as received by faith alone! Key here is not to necessarily equate "repentant" with "not sinning." This is a judgment call that is made by the church in relation to the credibility of true and saving faith. A person could be struggling in some sin and remain in communion with Christ vis-à-vis the Lord's table in so far as it is a sin that has been confessed to Christ via the church and is submitting to the church and her oversight in their struggle against sin!

7. How frequently should the church practice the Lord's Supper? I.e. How should we understand our confessional use of "perpetual" in relation to the frequency of practicing the Lord's Supper in Worship?

*Note: 29:1, for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of Himself in His death*

Observations in support of "weekly" communion:

1. Apostolic frequency as noted in Acts:  
*"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers."*  
Acts 2:42  
  
*"So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people."* Acts 2:46-47a
2. The apostolic "purpose" of covenantal worship as related to the Lord's Supper especially:  
We read about a Lord's Day service at the church in Troas in Acts 20:7-12. There it is said that *"the disciples came together in order to break bread"* (Note the *"breaking of bread—a clear reference to the Lord's Supper"*) (1Cor.10:16, 11:23-24)
3. The apostle Paul's instructions to the church of Corinth imply a frequent communion as the basis for his instructions (See 1Cor 10, esp. v.15-18, and 1 Cor. 11, esp. 17ff) E.g. Notice especially 1Cor.11:17-20, when Paul reprimands the Corinthians, he says *For first of all when YOU COME TOGETHER AS A CHURCH . . . Therefore when YOU*

*COME TOGETHER IN ONE PLACE, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.*" The instructions in 1 Cor. 11:23-26 seem to imply that the Lord's Supper is an essential element of worship, along with prayers, word, fellowship/collection.

4. Whereas it would seem that the apostolic church practiced communion daily at the very beginning after Pentecost, We get insight into worship in more normal times in Paul's letter to the church at Corinth wherein corporate worship was no longer a daily experience but a weekly experience on the Lord's Day (1 Cor. 16:2; cf. Acts 20:7).
5. Against the idea that more frequent communion would diminish the effect—notice first how this implies a memorialist sort of logic (as if there is not real, albeit spiritually mediated, presence of Christ to strengthen and confirm our faith and union with Christ). Second, notice that this same logic could be applied to all the other elements in worship, and yet we wouldn't think of meeting together without, say, the ministry of word or prayers, (perhaps only collection 😊)

8. How is one admitted to the sacraments—privately or under the authority of the church? And what are the implications vis-à-vis membership, excommunication, etc. Notice then how this all relates to our next topic concerning "church government and discipline." What is the "good news" that people do not admit/demit themselves to the Lord's Supper?

9. Should a person who is a member in good standing of a gospel believing church yet struggling with sin privately decide to not partake of the Lord's Supper on a given Sunday? Why? (Notice again the logic of the gospel and the confession as previously taught concerning justification by faith alone, etc. Notice also the issue of "authority" in relation to the Lord's Supper and why again this is a good thing.)

Quotes:

In a sermon on 2 Samuel 6.2, John Calvin says the following concerning Baptism and the Eucharist:

We should not take these signs as mere visible things, symbols to nourish our spiritual senses. But we are to know that God there unites his power and his truth: both the reality and the effect are there with the symbol; one must not separate what God has joined together.

The fact that Calvin sees fit to speak on the sacraments in a sermon on this particular passage is interesting in its own right. But that's another topic for another day. I point to this statement from Calvin here simply because I think it gets at the heart of what I consider the fundamental principle of Calvin's sacramentology: distinction but not separation (*distinctio sed non separatio*). For Calvin, the sacramental elements and the realities they signify are to be distinguished, but never separated. The Westminster divines agree on this, "There is, in every sacrament, a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified: whence it comes to pass that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other" (WCF 27.2).

This is a point on which there is often much confusion, with regard to both those within the Reformed fold as well as those opposed to Reformed theology. But if we could grasp and never lose sight of this most important point, much of the confusion would be resolved. We must maintain a distinction between sign and thing signified. But also, and just as importantly, we must maintain their union as well. By his Word the Lord assures us that Christ is truly offered to us in his sacraments. "For", as Calvin also writes in the *Institutes*,

his word cannot deceive us: "Take, eat, drink: this is my body, which is given for you; this is my blood, which is shed for forgiveness of sins." By bidding us take, he indicates that it is ours; by bidding us eat, that it is made one substance with us; by declaring that his body is given for us and his blood shed for us, he teaches that both are not so much his as ours. (IV.17.3)