

The Sacraments (Baptism, the Lord's Supper)

We have come to the end of a long road and almost to the end of the *Institutes*. You can take a certain amount of pride in knowing that you have read through most of this book. You have not read every last word, but maybe someday you will want to read the rest of it. Not many people actually read through all of the *Institutes*; not may Presbyterian ministers have read through all of the *Institutes*. I have asked them, and they say they have it in their plans to someday read through all of the *Institutes*. I think people read parts of it frequently, but to go through almost all of it is unusual. It is an accomplishment, so congratulations.

We have one last time to meet where we will look at the last chapter. It is Calvin's treatment of civil government. All of Book IV has to do with the church down through chapter 19. Chapter 20, the last chapter, has to do with civil government. Quite a large section of the *Institutes* in Book IV has to do with the sacraments. Chapter 14 through 19 is Calvin's treatment of sacraments in general, then baptism, the Lord's Supper, his refutation of the Roman Catholic Mass, and his refutation of the five other "false sacraments" of the Roman Catholic Church.

Today we will look at sacraments. Calvin goes into a lot of detail here, but I need to keep my remarks brief for us to just get a general idea of what Calvin deals with in these chapters. Let us pray using the words of John Calvin.

"Grant, all mighty God, that as You have in various ways testified and daily also prove how dear and precious to You is humanity as we enjoy daily so many and so remarkable proofs of your goodness and favor, O grant that we learn to rely wholly on Your goodness, so many examples of which You set before us and which You would have us to continually experience that we may not only pass through our earthly course but also confidently aspire to the hope of that blessed and celestial life which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ alone, our Lord. Amen."

Augustine heavily shapes Calvin's teaching on the sacraments. We expect that now because Augustine heavily shapes almost all of Calvin. Bucer, the man with whom he worked for three years in Strasburg, also influenced him. Luther influenced him, and to a certain degree Zwingli influenced him. The *Institutes* are certainly stamped with Calvin's own originality and with his own way of putting together the various ideas that he sets forth in these chapters on the sacraments.

Calvin gives several definitions of a sacrament, one of which is found in Book IV, chapter 14, section 1. He says of Augustine's short definition that a sacrament is a visible form of an invisible grace. Calvin says it is a fine idea that sacrament is a visible form of an invisible grace, but Calvin thinks that is too brief. Even though it is right and good, it needs to be developed a little further. One of his definitions of a sacrament is "an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of His good will toward us, in order to sustain the weakness of our faith, and we in turn attest our piety toward Him, in the presence of the Lord and of His angels and before men."

Let us take that definition and work with it for a bit. You will notice that in the very first sentence of chapter 14, Calvin says we have in the sacraments another aide to our faith related to the preaching of the Gospel. He links immediately the sacraments to the preaching of the Gospel. The sacraments can never stand alone apart from the Word. Preaching is an aide to our faith, and we have discussed that as one of the true marks of the church. Another aide to our faith is the sacraments. The sacraments are

related to the preaching of the Gospel. Calvin's definition begins with the idea of an outward sign. Remember that Book IV deals with the external means that God uses to invite us into the society of Christ and to hold us therein. In Book III, Calvin discusses in great detail those internal operations of the Holy Spirit. Now in Book IV he discusses the role of the church, the place of the sacraments, and the function of the civil government. These are external means of blessing that God gives to us.

The two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, in Calvin's view, are outward signs. He says God gives us these outward signs because of the weakness of our faith. These signs are for our benefit to help to nourish and encourage our faith. By the sacraments, God provides first for our ignorance and dullness and then for our weakness. Having heard the Word preached, we still need something else. We need something more, not different or separate from the Word, but something to nourish, encourage, strengthen, and aid us in accepting, believing, and being assured by the promise that we hear in the Word. The sacraments function in that way. Calvin says that God condescends to lead us to Himself by these earthly elements. It is not that the Word is weak and something else has to be added because the Word is not sufficient. The Word is all-sufficient and powerful, but we are weak. Calvin says it is because we are weak that we need these aides and external outward helps. Second, Calvin says we have these outward signs because we cannot be welded together unless we are bound in some partnership of signs or visible sacraments. These are the two reasons God gives us these external aides. They strengthen our faith, encourage us, assure us, and bind us together as one body in Christ. Baptism binds us together and so does the Lord's Supper.

Let us look a little more at what Calvin says about sacraments in general. Chapter 14 is about the sacraments, and chapters 15 and 16 make specific application of these ideas to the two sacraments of the Christian church. Calvin says the sacrament is a seal of the promise, which is given to us in the Word. We hear the promise in the preaching of the Word. It is the promise of God's mercy toward us in Christ, in which our faith rests. The sacrament seals that promise, and it is joined to the promise as an appendix. One of Calvin's images is of a book with an appendix. The sacrament is joined to the promise as an appendix is joined to the book. It is not going to tell us something different. It is the same message and the same Christ that is being presented both in the Word and in the sacrament. It is joined as an appendix with the purpose of confirming and sealing the promise itself. It underscores and repeats the promise. We both hear the promise and see the promise. Following Augustine, Calvin liked to use the idea of the sacrament as a visible Word. We have an oral Word as we hear the sermon, and we have a visible Word as we see the water, bread, and wine and as we participate in the sacraments. The sacrament is secondary and supplementary. It adds nothing to the promise as such. The preached Word is sufficient of itself, and the sacrament can never stand by itself. Calvin felt that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper should always follow the preaching of the Word. He had hoped in Geneva to have the sacrament of the Lord's Supper celebrated every Lord's Day, but he could not have his way in it. Calvin, even in the church in Geneva, could not always dictate or determine what was going to happen. He had to settle for monthly communion and later quarterly communion. It was Calvin's thought, desire, and ideal to have weekly communion.

It is rather strange that in Reformed tradition, when it was free to select a frequency of the Lord's Supper, it tended to follow the state requirements instead of Calvin's own ideal. Presbyterian churches are moving toward more frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper now than in the past. In churches in Scotland, for instance, it was customary to celebrate the Lord's Supper only once a year. That seems a far cry from what Calvin had hoped would come to pass.

So the sacrament, for all its importance, is secondary and supplementary. It cannot stand by itself. It always must accompany the Word. It is not unimportant because it does confirm and seal the promise. It repeats, dramatizes, and illustrates the Word.

A local church in Scotland in the post-Reformation period generally celebrated the Lord's Supper once a year. It was infrequent, but it was very extensive when it was celebrated. For instance, people would start meeting early in the week. They would have meetings and different services leading up to communion Sunday. They had a preparatory service on Friday or Saturday. Communion Sunday would last all day Sunday, and there would be a thanksgiving service on Monday. It was like a whole week of services surrounding the actual celebration of the communion on Sunday. The amount of effort in time that went into it made churches tend to do it only once a year. People in Scotland received the Lord's Supper more than once a year because these communion occasions were popular, and visitors from other church would come. Even though you would have the Lord's Supper celebrated in your own church only once a year, you could go to a dozen neighboring churches and receive the Lord's Supper during their communion occasions. I think the infrequency was a problem, but the emphasis on preparation was a good thing. We tend to be able to celebrate the Lord's Supper more frequently today, but we do not have a similar emphasis on preparation.

If we have the Lord's Supper every week, as Calvin wanted to, there is a fear that it will become too routine and common. That is a concern, but it is almost like saying if you preach the Gospel every week it will become too routine and common. As an analogy, the Gospel is very good news, and so is the message of the sacraments. Really good news does not become routine and common. If someone tells you really good news, like you have inherited a million dollars, you do not get tired of hearing it. You want to hear it over and over again. You want to be sure it is true and be assured of it. Ministers and elders have a responsibility to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in ways that bring fresh ideas and renewed assurance and confidence in the service itself. There has to be a sense of the wonder of what we are doing. One way to avoid dullness is to read through Calvin again. When he gets into describing the Lord's Supper, he reaches a point of ecstasy. Then he finally says, after he has worked at it for a long time, that he still does not completely understand it. He would rather experience it than understand it. There is something wonderful about it in Calvin's experience and teaching.

For Calvin, the sacraments are not merely signs of grace but means of grace. In other words, the Lord's Supper and baptism and their elements do not merely point to grace, but they are channels and instruments of grace. They are means by which God gives unto us grace. God uses the sacraments to sustain, nourish, confirm, and increase our faith. He nourishes faith spiritually through the sacraments. As you read Calvin through these chapters, you get the idea that this is not just a sign. It is more than a sign; it is a means of grace. On this point Calvin is much closer to Luther than he is to Zwingli. He is concerned about Zwingli's view. He says the teaching that the sacraments are merely signs of grace weakens their force. They are not only signs and confession but also aids to our faith. It is not just thinking about something; it is receiving something. The sacraments are not just a representation but also a presentation. They are not only a showing but a giving. That is what he means by sacraments as means of grace.

If Calvin is opposed to Zwingli's memorialism in the Lord's Supper as being too much of a representation and not a presentation, he is certainly opposed on the other hand to the Roman Catholic view that the sacraments in and by themselves confer grace. It is God who confers grace. He is the giver of the gift. He uses the sacraments, which He has promised to do, and we thank Him for it, but the sacraments do not inherently possess the means to nourish, bless, and strengthen the Christian. Even

though Calvin occasionally uses the expression “sacred water,” he does not mean that the water takes on a mystical power in itself. Calvin does not agree with the Roman Catholic view of transubstantiation, that the elements of the Lord’s Supper are transubstantiated into the blood and body of Christ. He does not believe that they have in themselves some kind of inherent power. Calvin says this teaching attaches to the sacraments some sort of secret powers. The sacraments do not promote or confirm faith by themselves. They are not merely signs, but they are not inherently capable of conferring grace by themselves.

Zwingli is concerned to be as far away from Luther as he can, because he thinks Luther has gone too far toward the Catholic point of view. There is, however, quite a bit of recent work on Zwingli that indicates that we may have misunderstood him somewhat. In other words, Zwingli may not have taught a mere memorialism. His text at the Lord’s Supper was “do this in remembrance of me.” That sounds quite cerebral, and some scholars think that Zwingli’s idea of memory has much more power than the way we use the word “memory.” More research needs to be done on Zwingli to see if he is actually closer to Calvin than we think. Calvin was still, even in 1559, concerned that Zwingli’s view was too weak. Calvin and Bullinger signed the Consensus Tigurinus, which is the consensus of Zurich. Bullinger was Zwingli’s successor in Zurich. In this the Zwingli-Bullinger view of the Lord’s Supper and the Calvinist view were brought together. The big question is if Calvin compromised there. Was it a true meeting of the minds or did they paper over the differences? That consensus resulted in one Reformed faith rather than two. Then there was the Lutheran tradition and the Reformed tradition. If it had not been for the Consensus Tigurinus, we would have had three: Zwinglian, Calvinist, and Lutheran. We will talk more about that when we come to the Lord’s Supper itself.

Sacraments do not confer grace, nor do they promote or confirm faith by themselves. There is not inherent in the elements that which can accomplish the work of nourishing us, as Catholics taught. The sacraments always work in connection with the Word. Calvin says, “Let the Word be added to the element, and it will become a sacrament.” Sacraments are always in connection with faith; receiving the sacraments in unbelief nullifies the value of the sacraments. The sacraments are still powerful, but the value of the sacraments for the individual is lost if there is no faith. Only those who take Word and sacraments with “sure faith” understand it. Calvin has a helpful illustration of this in Book IV, chapter 14, section 17. It is the illustration of wine poured over a vessel, but the vessel has not mouth to receive it. It is a jug or jar without an opening. If you pour wine over it, it is still wine, but it does not enter the vessel. Calvin says the same thing is true when the sacraments are received without faith. They confer no advantage or profit without being received by faith.

One thing that is so important for Calvin’s view of the Lord’s Supper is that the sacraments work in connection with the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit, as we have seen in Book III, who is the agent of our faith, repentance, and Christian life. In Book IV it is the Holy Spirit who uses these outward means to bless, strengthen, and aid us. Calvin says, “The sacraments properly fulfill their office only when the Spirit, that inward teacher, comes to them.” Without the Word, faith, or the Holy Spirit, the sacraments are strong and powerful yet invalid because these three are required for the sacraments to perform the work that God plans for them to perform. All of that has to do with the first part of Calvin’s definition of the sacraments. He goes on to say, “We in turn attest our piety toward God.” That was an emphasis that Zwingli made very strongly. It is not his primary emphasis, but it certainly is a strong one in his teachings. The sacraments are our profession to each other and to the world that we belong to God. They are our badge, profession, and testimony. Calvin includes that in his definition and mentions it from time to time. His emphasis is far more on the work of the Holy Spirit in using the sacraments to nourish our faith than on our receiving the sacraments to testify to the world and to one another that we are in Christ. That is a valid idea as well, so Calvin comes to that in Book IV, chapter 14, section 13 and elsewhere.

Let us look at the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. There are two chapters on baptism. Calvin, as we expect, rejects the Roman Catholic position that baptism washes away original sin and regenerates the person. According to Calvin and the Protestants, that is not the correct view of the Bible. That meant for the Roman Catholics that without baptism there was no salvation. Calvin greatly valued baptism and would not for a moment countenance a person ignoring baptism. But he does say, "From this sacrament, as from all others, we obtain only as much as we receive in faith." Baptism is not *ex operato*; it is not an automatic means of grace that produces salvation. If faith is not there, then nothing is there as far as we are concerned. Calvin even goes further to say, "When we cannot receive the sacraments from the church, the grace of God is not so bound to them but that we may obtain it from faith by the Word of the Lord."

Let us say, hypothetically, that we are in such a place where there is no church, we are too distant from it, or in times of persecution we are not allowed access to the sacraments. Calvin says we can get the value of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper without the sacraments if we are forbidden to have them. That can never be used as an excuse to ignore them, though. Calvin does not tie the two together like the Roman Catholics do to say that without baptism there is no salvation. Calvin would say in extreme situations when there is no baptism available then God's grace can be given directly through the Word without the sacraments. There is no such need in Calvinism for "emergency baptisms" such that took place in the Catholic Church. If a baby was born and it seemed likely that it would not live for more than a few minutes, then anybody could baptize, including the midwife, in the Catholic tradition. This is because of the urgency of applying the water to the baby if there would not be regeneration. For Calvin there was no emergency if baptism could not be properly performed. God is not bound to the sacrament. We are bound to the sacrament, but God is not. We cannot ignore it or refuse it when it is available, but God's grace is not tied to the sacraments. If the mode is not available, it can be given through the Word without the sacrament if necessary.

Calvin's position over against the Roman Catholic position is that baptism is not a means by which the inherent value of the water cleanses away sin and regenerates the person. As he already made clear in his chapter on the sacraments in general, Calvin said baptism is more than a token or mark by which we confess our religion before men. It is that, but it is more than that as well. It is a means of grace instituted by Christ to bestow blessing on the believers. It is more than a testimony; it is an actual means by which we receive God's blessing, grace, and assurance. We are strengthened, helped, and assured by our baptism. Luther is strong on this, and when he was being assailed by the devil sometimes his last resort was to say, "I have been baptized." That was Luther's rejection of the temptations of the devil. Calvin does not say it exactly that way, but in Book IV, chapter 15, section 3 he says, "Therefore as often as we fall away we ought to recall the memory of our baptism, fortify our mind with it, that we may always be sure and confident of the forgiveness of our sins." The idea of assurance plays a big role in Calvin's view of baptism. In times of temptation or spiritual dullness, we need to remember that we have been baptized. That gives us hope and encouragement that we can be sure and confident of the forgiveness of sins. The Roman Catholic Church added penance at the second plank. Baptism was the first, but they believed the assurance of baptism could be lost by sin. Confession and penance are necessary in order to recover what was lost in baptism. Calvin calls penance a fictitious sacrament; it is not needed. We have everything we need of the promise in our baptism. We do not need penance as a follow-up to baptism.

Calvin is not a Donatist. He does not insist that for baptism to be valid a holy person must administer it. A minister of the Gospel must administer it, but if that ordained minister does not live the life that he ought to, if there is hypocrisy or fault in some way, that does not invalidate the baptism. The Donatists in the fourth century believed that it was invalidated based on the life of the minister. Calvin rejects that,

and Augustine was the first to reject it. It was a battle that he fought himself in his own time. In Book IV, chapter 15, section 8, Calvin quotes Augustine in his dispute with the Donatists, "Whosoever may baptize, Christ alone presides." We do not have to be concerned about the authenticity or spirituality of the minister who baptizes. An illustration is given in Book IV, chapter 15, section 16 that says, "If a letter is sent, provided the handwriting and seal are sufficiently recognized, it makes no difference who or of what sort the carrier is." We get the letter, recognize the writing, and know it is authentic. We do not have to worry too much about whether the postman is a spiritual man or not. The minister is applying the water, but it is Christ who presides. For that reason, in Calvin there is no second baptism. He was even willing to admit that Roman Catholic baptism was valid baptism. Calvin did not require people coming out of the Roman Catholic Church into the church in Geneva to be baptized again. In his view, baptism in the trinitarian name is valid, whoever administers the baptism.

Calvin was not concerned about the mode of baptism. It could be immersion, pouring, or sprinkling. In Book IV, chapter 15, section 19, he says, "These details are of no importance." As long as water was used, Calvin felt that that satisfied the sacrament. He did hold that the original mode in his view was immersion. He did not immerse people in Geneva, and that was of no concern to him. The amount of water or the way in which water was administered was incidental to the sacrament. If immersion typifies certain aspects of baptism, sprinkling typifies other aspects of it just as validly. For Calvin, that was not an issue. He talks further about this in his commentary on Acts 8:38 where Philip and the Ethiopian both go down into the water. Calvin says, "Here we see how the rite of baptism was administered long ago. The whole body was immersed in water. It has now become the practice for the minister to sprinkle only the body or the head. A small difference in ceremony, however, ought not to lead us to divide the church or disturb it with strife." That is a remarkable statement when you think of the division in the church between Baptists, who insist on immersion, and others who have other modes. It has divided the church, but for Calvin it should not.

If mode was inconsequential for Calvin, infant baptism was not. Infant baptism was extremely important. Chapter 16, which is the chapter on infant baptism, is longer than chapter 15, which is the chapter on baptism. I do not think length always means everything, but it does show the concern that Calvin had with infant baptism. His main scriptural basis is the unity of the covenants. Calvin thinks that infant baptism protects that teaching. Rejection of infant baptism would destroy that teaching. The Anabaptists, in order to establish the connection between circumcision in the Old Testament and baptism in the New Testament, tried to make the Old Testament as carnal as they possibly could. They said it was an earthly and political covenant, not a spiritual covenant. Calvin, as we know from our earlier study, strongly holds to the unity of the covenants. What the Old Testament teaches so does the New; what the Old Testament displays so does the New. There are sacraments in the Old Testament, and we have the same sacraments in the New Testament. Consequently, circumcision is linked to baptism, and Calvin over and over again emphasizes that God established a covenant with Abraham that included children. There was a sacrament or mark of that conclusion, which was circumcision. The church is the covenant community now, and children are included in this community as they were included in the old one. Calvin could not conceive that the new covenant in any way could be less full or inclusive than the old. If the old covenant promised blessing to the children, then the new covenant would too. If the old covenant had a place for the children, then the new covenant would too. If the old covenant had a mark for the children, then the new covenant would too. Often people will say, "Show me a place or verse in the New Testament that commands infant baptism." It is hard to find one. We have a passage in Colossians that seems to link circumcision and baptism, and we have household baptisms, but there are questions about that. I think Calvin's basic argument is that he does not expect a verse to say what has always been done in the plan of God should continue to be done because of the linkage of the old church and the new church, the old covenant and the new covenant. He would probably expect that if the

children are not to be included, then there would be a verse in the New Testament that would say, "Just as you circumcised your male children in the old covenant, so now circumcision is changed to baptism, which is the sacrament of initiation. But do not apply it to children anymore." But there is no indication that the Bible moves in that direction at all in Calvin's thought, so children are included. The infant who is baptized has not repented and does not have faith. Baptism is into the covenant community. The parents and the church take the vows in the place of the child. Calvin says that it does not mean that there is no repentance and faith, but the child is baptized into future repentance and faith. Calvin makes a point that the blessings of the sacrament are not always tied to the moment of the sacrament. The full blessing of baptism is realized later in the life of the covenant child.

In his chapters on officers and ministers of the church, Calvin argues that there are certain people who are called to preach the Word and administer the sacraments. They have to be properly called and instituted for that office. That restricts who can perform baptism; midwives are not ordained ministers. But once you have an ordained minister then the baptism that he performs is valid, whatever the inner spiritual condition of his heart. If he is a hypocrite or backslidden, it does not affect the validity of the baptism. But Calvin does restrict it to ordained officers in the church. Reformed tradition has followed him in that, but not all traditions do.

In the Reformed community, a baby who seemed to be dying would still be baptized. It was not viewed as an emergency, though. If the baby died almost immediately before the child could be brought to the church and properly baptized, it was not viewed as a disaster. God has His ways of reaching people apart from the sacraments if that is necessary. I am not sure how quickly the Reformed church would want to baptize a baby. Babies were baptized early, at just days or weeks old. All children were baptized very early, but if the baby died within a few minutes or an hour or so and could not be baptized, it was not viewed as a big problem.

I heard two students at Concordia Seminary discussing this one day when I was over there in the library. The child of one of them was to be baptized, and the student wanted to wait a week or two so his father could come. He was very disturbed about waiting a week or two in case the child might die or something happened. They were going back and forth on if the child should be baptized this Sunday without the father or next Sunday with the father. I thought about how we do not have to worry too much about that kind of thing. We can baptize infants as soon as we can, but there is no fear that if the baby should die in the meantime that all is lost. I baptized my grandson last August. He was about six months old then. He had been scheduled to be baptized in April, but both he and his mother came down with chickenpox. So we could not baptize Ian in April when he was three months old, so we had to wait until August. My wife said, "If we wait much longer, it will be a believer's baptism!" She has high regard for his intelligence.

Let us look at the Lord's Supper now. We are going fast through all of it, and it does not answer all of your questions about baptism, but at least it gives you the lay of the land regarding Calvin's thought. Calvin rejected the Roman Catholic position of the Lord's Supper. He agreed with Zwingli that after the ascension Christ retained a real body of flesh and blood located in heaven. He rejected Zwingli's memorialism, though. Calvin agreed that Christ's body was in one place in heaven, but he was uncomfortable with the idea of observing the Lord's Supper primarily to remember what Christ did for us. Luther's focus was on "this is my body." Calvin appreciates both of those texts. We remember the death of Christ on the cross in the Supper, but we also feed upon Him here and now. It is not just on His Spirit or His divinity, but we feed on His body. Calvin is not hesitant to say, "We do eat His flesh, and we drink His blood in the Lord's Supper." He agreed with Luther that there is a real reception of the

body and blood of Christ.

At the Colloquy of Regensburg in 1541, Calvin signed the Augsburg Confession, which was an amazing thing. It has a very Lutheran statement on the Lord's Supper. I am not sure of all of his thinking. He was able to sign the Consensus Tigurinus, which is on the Zwinglian side, and he was able to sign the Augsburg Confession, which is on the Lutheran side. We do not view Calvin as wishy-washy; he never comes across that way. But this means that Calvin's view of the Lord's Supper was quite subtle and nuanced. It partakes of much of what Luther says, but he never goes as far as Luther to accept the idea of the ubiquity of the body of Christ. He agrees with Zwingli there. If Christ's body is ubiquitous, if it is everywhere, then it is not a real body. Calvin protects the teaching of Christology in the Council of Chalcedon that the body of Christ is a real body like our bodies. We are not ubiquitous in our bodies and neither is Christ. His body is in one place in heaven at the right hand of the Father. Luther agreed with that, but to him, "the right hand of the Father" meant everywhere. Luther said "the right hand of the Father" was everywhere, but Calvin said it was in a definite place in heaven. The difference comes down to the location of the body of Christ.

Calvin said Christ is spiritually present in the Lord's Supper, but that is a rather simple way of saying something that is complex in Calvin. Let us go through some charts that illustrate the different views, and we will best understand Calvin's view as we contrast it to others. The Catholic view is transubstantiation, which means that what starts out as bread and wine changes into body and blood of Christ. This happens when the priest pronounces the words of the institution, "This is my body, this is my blood." Then no longer do you have bread and wine, but you have body and blood. When the person receives the sacrament, he or she does not receive bread and wine but body and blood. For that reason, you have a reserved sacrament. Once a certain amount of bread or wine is changed into the body and blood of Christ, you cannot just throw it away. It is sacred now, so the sacrament is reserved to be used later or to be carried through the streets in the festival of Corpus Christi (the body of Christ). This is where people actually bow and worship the elements now transubstantiated into body and blood.

I was just reading a booklet from a Greek Orthodox Church, which was arguing for the safety of the common cup. The Orthodox use the common cup in an age of AIDS and other fears about transmission of diseases. This was arguing that it is quite safe, and no one has to worry about it because it is the body and blood of Christ. That is not going to poison you. Another interesting point that I had not thought about was that in the Orthodox Church the priest consumes all that is left over. Once the common cup has been passed around, the priest drinks whatever is left. This little pamphlet was arguing that our priests are quite healthy. That is the Catholic view.

Zwingli's view is that the bread and wine remain as such, and the recipient receives bread and wine. As the recipient is receiving the elements of the Lord's Supper, he or she should meditate on the death of Christ. That is the memorialistic view of the Lord's Supper. "Do this in memory of me." Calvin felt that was lacking. He rejects the Roman Catholic view as heresy, and he rejects Zwingli's view as very weak. It is not that we do not do that, but Calvin thought there was much more there than Zwingli seemed to present. In the Consensus Tigurinus, Bullinger moved more toward Calvin, and Calvin moved a bit toward Bullinger. Consensus Tigurinus is not the traditional Zwinglian view, or Calvin could not have signed on to it. Calvin had a lot of respect for Luther's view, but he did not embrace it exactly.

Luther's view is that you have bread and wine, they remain bread and wine, but in, with, and under the bread and wine is the body and blood of Christ. That is later called consubstantiation, but it was not a term used in Luther's time. The recipient receives all of this; as you eat the bread and wine with your

mouth, you also take into your mouth the body and blood of Christ. Calvin did not agree with that because that implies the ubiquity of the body of Christ. It implies the body of Christ is wherever the Lord's Supper was celebrated. Luther felt the body of Christ was everywhere, and the means by which we have access to the body of Christ is through the Lord's Supper. Luther taught that the body of Christ is present here in this room because Christ is omnipresent in His body as well as His Spirit. We would not have access to the body of Christ unless we were celebrating the Lord's Supper in this room.

Calvin's view is that the body of Christ is in heaven. Christ is everywhere because He is God, and God is everywhere. But the body of Christ is in heaven, and it is His body that we are concerned about in the Lord's Supper. The Lutherans felt that the reform never got around to seeing that we feed on the body of Christ. The Lutherans might have said, "Talk, talk, talk, but not a body in sight." The body, if not in sight, was certainly available in Calvin's theology. The body of Christ is in heaven, and as the believer on earth receives the Lord's Supper, that believer receives the bread and the wine and, at the same time, the body and blood of Christ because of the work of the Holy Spirit. That is why we call Calvin's view a view of the spiritual presence of Christ. That does not mean that Christ is just present in His Spirit in the Supper and not in His body. But it is through the work of the Holy Spirit that we are brought into nourishing relationship with the body of Christ. It works in two ways. First, the Holy Spirit lifts up our hearts to unite us with Christ in His fullness, including His body in heaven. So we are united to Christ and we feed on Christ. We feed on the body of Christ, but the body of Christ is not on earth or in the elements. It is in heaven, and it is the work of the Holy Spirit to lift us up so that we are united to Christ.

Second, the Spirit not only lifts us up but at the same time also spiritually brings Christ down to us in His body and blood. It is not literal movement of the body of Christ; it is the value of our being nourished by feeding upon Christ that is accomplished by this twofold work of the Holy Spirit, uniting us to Christ. You might say the problem for Luther was inaccessibility. The way to get the body of Christ was through the Lord's Supper. For Calvin the problem was distance. Christ is in His body, not here. But the Holy Spirit is here. The Holy Spirit can unite us in this twofold action of bringing us up and bringing Christ down to nourish us through the Holy Spirit. The Lutherans became a little agitated with the Calvinists over this idea of the work of the Holy Spirit. Calvin's answer would have been that the Holy Spirit is real. This is not imaginary. The Holy Spirit is a real person who is part of the triune Godhead. The Spirit can do what no one else can do. The body of Christ can nourish us even though that body is in heaven. The Spirit can eliminate the distance.

For Calvin there is a twofold eating in the Lord's Supper. Sometimes this is called Calvin's parallelism. We eat the bread and wine with the mouth, but we also eat with the "mouth of faith" the body and blood of Christ. It is a twofold eating. As you take the Lord's Supper next time, remember you chew bread, drink wine, and eat Christ in His body and blood by faith through the work of the Holy Spirit. That is Calvin's view of the Lord's Supper.

I do not think that always comes out in our celebration of the Lord's Supper in Reformed circles or in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). A lot of people tend more toward Zwingli. You do not necessarily have to say that Calvin is right and Zwingli is wrong, but we certainly should understand what Calvin talks about. If we use Calvin's conception of the Lord's Supper, there is much more emphasis on the actual eating of the body of Christ and what that means. It is a rather complex view. It is easier to understand the Catholic view, Zwinglian view, or even the Lutheran view. Calvin admits that it is complex. After he writes all those pages on the Lord's Supper, he ends it by saying that that is as far as he can go. He admits that he does not really understand how it works. That is what he thinks happens because it is what he thinks the Bible teaches. He cannot explain it or understand it exactly, but he

would rather experience it than understand it anyway. There almost seems to be a Calvinist mysticism there, but there is a proper mysticism in Calvin when words have to stop and we can say no more. That does not mean that the truth has stopped or that the validity of the sacrament has stopped. It simply means that our mental understanding ceases. We cannot understand a mystery. This is a mystery, how we, in eating this bread and this wine, sitting in church, can actually be feeding upon the very body of Christ and be nourished, assured, and strengthened by that.

That is Calvin on the sacraments. I am sure I left a lot of things unanswered, but at least it is a road map through this material. We will look at civil government next time.