

Communion and the Church  
(The Best of Dr. Francis Nigel Lee 2 of 10)  
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**Bible Text:** 1 Corinthians 11:20-33

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I almost shudder to start this discussion on the Church and the Lord's supper because it is a much vaster subject than baptism and we hardly scratched the surface of baptism in the last lecture. But we must make an attempt nonetheless.

First of all I would like to direct your attention to the very famous passage in 1 Corinthians 11 where Paul writes, "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper."<sup>1</sup> His meaning is, "You should be coming together to eat the Lord's supper, but you have been doing it in such a carnal way that one cannot really say that it is the Lord's supper that you have been eating on the occasions when you should have."

Why does he say that?

For [1 Corinthians 11:21] in eating in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:20

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:21-27

That is very heavy language for those who believe that the Lord's supper is simply a sign and not also a seal.

...shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation...<sup>3</sup>

Or better a condemnation, a judgment against "...himself, not discerning the Lord's body..."<sup>4</sup> The word "discerning" there is in the Greek διακρινων (dee-ak-ree'-non) which means to carefully discern and to detect, it seems to me, critically in what way the Lord is present there.

For this [reason] many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge [or discern] ourselves, we should not be judged.<sup>5</sup>

That means thoroughly judged.

"But when we are judged, we are chastened [by] the Lord."<sup>6</sup> The word there would mean spanked, disciplined, corrected.

[So] that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.<sup>7</sup>

Well, now, the Lord's supper here we refer, first of all, to the Westminster Confession chapter 29.

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; for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of himself in his death, the sealing all benefits thereof unto true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto him; and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other, as members of his mystical body.<sup>8</sup>

In the second paragraph the writers begin to take up a position against the Romish notion of the mass.

In this sacrament Christ is not offered up to his Father, nor any real sacrifice made at all for remission of sins of the quick or dead, but a

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:27-29

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:29

<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:30-31

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:32

<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:32-33

<sup>8</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith Ch 29, I

commemoration of that one offering up of himself, by himself, upon the cross, once for all, and a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto God for the same; so that the Popish sacrifice of the mass, as they call it, is most abominably injurious to Christ's one only sacrifice, the alone propitiation for all the sins of the elect.<sup>9</sup>

Now then. The Roman Catholic Church, as you know, believes that at the words of the priest the bread and the wine is actually changed into the full flesh and blood, deity and humanity, body and soul of the Lord Jesus Christ even though it still looks like bread and still looks like wine. This means, of course, that any crumb of bread that were to drop on the floor must be picked up immediately because it is deemed not to be bread, but to be part of the flesh of Christ. This further means that any wine left in the cup after the Roman Catholic mass, the mass is their version of the Lord's supper, needs to be consumed completely by the priest because we can't leave the blood of Christ around to deteriorate or to coagulate. It needs to be consumed.

Frankly, though, I think the easiest refutation of the doctrine of the mass is simply to take a look at the circumstances when Jesus instituted the sacrament. After all, Rome's feels that it stands strong by saying, "Well, we are the one church that literally believes what Christ literally said and what Christ literally said was this, 'This is my body. This is my blood.'"

Well, now if Christ said it, why not believe it? Some high Anglicans have the same view. Queen Elizabeth I is reputed to have invented this jingle when she got fed up of listening to Calvinists and Lutherans and Roman Catholics and Zwinglians fight one another as to in what sense Christ is present. Queen Elizabeth is reputed to have said, "Christ was the Word that spake it. He took the bread and brake it. And what that Word doth make it, that I believe and take it," which is a meek way of trying to obviate all theological definition.

However, you will notice that that, too, is just one more theory as to the way in which Christ is deemed to be present. Maybe he is there, but we are not going to attempt to say how he is there.

Well, I will attempt to say how he is there, but hopefully only within the confines of Scripture.

Now when our Savior instituted this sacrament he held out a piece of bread which is called bread and he clearly declared, "This is my body."<sup>10</sup> The question is whether the word "is" means "is" or means "becomes" or means "has become."

Now Rome, of course, claim that it alone has the right literal interpretation of those words. But Rome doesn't really have it. If Rome were to be correct Christ would not have said this is my body. He would rather have said, "This which was bread a moment

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<sup>9</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith Ch 29, II

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24

ago has no become my body.” He doesn’t say that. You see, or he would have said, “This has just become my body.” But he doesn’t say that. Instead he uses the word “is,” present continuous, not denoting a change of condition.

More cogently we must ask whether the body of the Lord Jesus that would be broken on the cross had already been broken at that time when he instituted the Lord’s Supper. And, of course, the answer is no. Was Christ’s human body still intact when he instituted the Lord’s Supper? Yes. Where was that human body? Totally under his skin, not one part of our Lord’s human body was then in the bread. And therefore it is quite clear the Savior was certainly not saying what the Roman Catholic Church assumes that that piece of bread had been turned into his body because his body was still intact, unbroken, under his skin at that time.

And so the word “is” there clearly means, as Protestants have always stressed, “represents.”

“This bread represents my body. This wine,” or rather this cup, meaning by association the wine in the cup, “is my blood.”

Of course, when he said the cup is my blood he obviously doesn’t mean the metal of the cup, but he means the liquid which is inside of the cup which represents his blood.

And we know that it was still bread and wine after the meal and had not in any sense become the flesh and blood of Christ during the meal on those words of Christ because if you read the accounts in the gospels carefully you will see that after the meal those substances are still called bread and wine. They divided it and they drank the wine. And then Jesus said, do you remember, after the distribution of the wine, “I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”<sup>11</sup>

If Rome were correct Jesus wouldn’t have said that. He would rather have said, “I will no more drink my own blood with you until I drink it with you anew.” Or, “I will no more drink my blood with you which I have just...or I will no more drink this blood of mine with you which I have just changed into my blood from the wine which it used to be.” It doesn’t say that. He continues to call it wine.

So, you see, that superficially attractive as the Roman Catholic view is, it is not the teaching of Scripture.

Now the catechism, or rather the confession of faith says that the Romish view is not just erroneous, but that it is the popish sacrifice of the mass and is most abominably injurious to Christ’s one only sacrifice.

First it calls it the popish sacrifice of the mass.

Now, let me say a little bit about those three words “popish, sacrifice and mass.” First of

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<sup>11</sup> Mark 14:25

all, it is called the popish sacrifice. In other words, the Roman Catholic theory of the Lord's supper does not derive from Scripture says our confession. It derives from the pope. And, indeed, it was indeed by the decrees of the pope—particularly in they later Middle Ages, I may say, rather than the early Middle Ages—the doctrine of Roman Catholic transubstantiation was not finally frozen into its form now until at least 10 centuries after Christ so that all of the Church fathers that Rome regards as Roman Catholic Church fathers that existed before, say, the year 1000 AD hold views which cannot be proven to be the present view of the Roman Catholic Church today.

Indeed, some even say that the Roman Catholic doctrine of the mass was not clearly stated until the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 AD, which is pretty late. And now Rome tells us she is always the same, she never changes. Well, of course she changes. It was only in 1870 that Rome decided that the pope is infallible. That means you could have become a Roman Catholic in 1869 if you hadn't believed the pope was fallible, but in 1871 you have now got to believe in addition to all the other Romish rigmarole that the pope is infallible to become a Roman Catholic.

It was only in the 1950s that Rome decided for the first time that Mary definitely ascended into heaven which meant that if you had become a Roman Catholic in 1949 you needn't have believed that. Today to be a good Roman Catholic you have got to believe it. Rome never changes? How nonsense. Rome is always changing. The next thing they will be telling us—if the Spanish priests get their way—that Mary is the co redemptrix of the universe along side of Jesus Christ. And where will it end?

So I am saying that Rome herself did not fully believe the doctrine of Roman Catholic mass before approximately 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> century AD. It is a popish view.

Second, it is a view that regards the Lord's supper as a sacrifice, a sacrifice. Now this, of course, is quite abominable and blasphemous because all of the Old Testament blood sacrifices, the ceremonial laws all pointed forward, the book of Hebrews tells us, to that one and only sacrifice that took place on Calvary which took place once and for all and which is irrepeatable and when Jesus breathed his last breath he said, τετελεσται (te-ta-les'-tai) "It is finished."<sup>12</sup> It is completed. It is done with.

Well, now Rome is very subtle. Rome says, "Ah, but you misunderstand us, you poor Protestants. We do not believe, we are not claiming that the mass is another sacrifice than Calvary. That is not our position. What we say the mass is Calvary. What happens at the Roman Catholic mass is Calvary reenacted all over again."

But if that be so, then Christ must be suffering every time that the priest says these words and he is put on the altar.

Rome says, "No, no. It is a non suffering sacrifice."

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<sup>12</sup> John 19:30

Now I must ask two things. How on earth can a sacrifice be a sacrifice if it doesn't involve suffering? No way, not a blood sacrifice anyway. Second, even if this absurd notion of a non suffering sacrifice were to be correct, it would only prove the Protestant position and that is that whatever the Lord's supper or the mass is, it is not the same as what happened on Calvary because on Calvary it was a suffering sacrifice and even Rome, even Rome does not claim that what happens at her mass is exactly the same that happened on Calvary in as much as Rome claims that no suffering of Christ is involved during the mass.

Therefore the mass is clearly not a reenactment or an extension of Calvary in the full sense of the word as Rome has attempted to say.

In the third place—and this, perhaps, gets us into the area of infant communion—we are told that it is the popish sacrifice of the mass. Now this word mass—M-A-S-S—is a Roman Catholic word which Rome uses to describe her version of the Lord's Supper, the mass. The word "mass" is derived from the Latin *missa*—M-I-S-S-A—derived from the expression *missa est*, which means, "They have been sent out." What is the meaning?

Well, the meaning is simply that in the medieval church after a few words of liturgy at the beginning of the service the Roman Catholics would wait until the children had been sent out of the church before the mass would be held. And it was only when the children were sent out of the church that the priest would say *missa est* that means they have been sent out meaning we can now go to the *missa*, to the mass, you see.

Now, I think this is very strong evidence that in the early medieval Roman Catholic Church the communion was not given to children as some today allege that it was. It is true that today Rome does admit its own children to the mass, but not before the children have turned this magical age of seven. I can assure you that I, as a Roman Catholic, never went to the mass until I was seven. I can also assure you that between the ages of seven and eight—and when I was eight I became an atheist—I went to the mass far more frequently than I have ever been to the Protestant Lord's supper since becoming a Christian when I was 21 and I have just turned 47.

And I would further like to testify that with all of that frequent use of the mass between the ages of seven and eight it really did not have true significance to me at all. And all of those masses put together did not really succeed in explaining to me how Christ's death on the cross had washed away my sins once and for all in anything like the way that one single communion service that I have enjoyed since becoming a protestant these last 26 years has ever had.

Therefore, you must excuse me that I react a little sharply to the notion that is now beginning to take place in some Protestant circles that we should admit children to the Lord's table. Nay, more, that we should admit infants to the Lord's table. Nay, more, that there may even be a sense in which an unborn fetus partakes of the Lord's table when the mother of the fetus takes the wine and the wine works through the bloodstream and into the fetus and therefore it can be said that the infant has already partaken.

To me this is an amazing development that fills me with quite a lot of grief as a Protestant simply because why not be consistent? Why not say, then, well if a pagan mother who is pregnant gets baptized that the baby has already been baptized at the time she was baptized and therefore why bother to baptize the baby when born either as an infant or in later life because the infant has shared in the baptism of the mother.

You see, I don't believe that the argument follows. But I will hopefully go into this aspect a little more because there is a movement in some Protestant churches today such as the backslidden, impure Presbyterian Church of the United States, Southern Presbyterian Church and sadly even in the Reformed Churches of Holland today to open up the Lord's table to covenantal children and I feel there is sufficient grounds in Scripture to regard this as an unprotestant retrogressive step.

Well, now the popish sacrifice of the mass. The children are gone. We can now, as those who are seven years of age and above, come to the mass. The confession says that this popish sacrifice of the mass is most abominably injurious to Christ's one only sacrifice. It calls it an abomination. Why is it an abomination?

Well, because for one thing it confuses the sign with the thing signified, doesn't it? Just as in the other sacrament Rome tends to confuse the water of baptism with the blood of Christ which alone can cleanse us from our sin.

Second, in as much as the water of baptism is not the blood of Christ and in as much as the elements used at the Romish mass is not the blood of Christ, it is a lie in calling something something else which it is not. It confuses the creature of blood and wine with the Creator whose human nature in dying on the cross it is supposed to depict.

It is not just an abomination, though. It is alleged to be injurious, injurious. That means an insult to Christ's sacrifice and injurious to those who use it. The Catholic mass is not just a less pure form of the Lord's table. It is positively injurious to its use.

Why so? Well, you see, because before the people are given the elements in the Roman Catholic Church the priest elevates the elements and everyone bows down and worships a hunk of bread. But the First Commandment says that Jehovah alone is to be worshipped. And for us to worship anyone else, any other creature, any other person, but particularly a piece of bread as if that piece of bread were the one who created the heaven and the earth is blasphemy. And that is why the Heidelberg Catechism question 80 doesn't hesitate to call the Romish mass an accursed idolatry [?].

And today, of course, this language is embarrassing for our modern wishy washy Protestants that want to get back in the worldly council of churches and the ecumaniacal movement and to get back to union with Rome.

Well, we have got to understand that if we don't like the strong language there is something wrong with our commitment as Protestants to the faith of our forefathers.

What is changed? Rome? Yes, to some extent it has. Rome is more apostate today than she has ever been since the time of the Reformation. But sadly we have changed, too. We are less Protestants today than our forefathers ever were, at least some of us are, but I trust not those of us listening to this tape.

Now then.

The Lord Jesus hath, in this ordinance, appointed his ministers to declare his word of institution to the people, to pray, and bless the elements of bread and wine, and thereby to set them apart from a common to an holy use; and to take and break the bread, to take the cup, and (they communicating also themselves) to give both to the communicants; but to none who are not then present in the congregation.<sup>13</sup>

I have had some furious debates at Presbyterian General Assemblies on those words. I do not like Presbyterian preachers taking a little bottle of wine and some crumbs of bread to the side of people in hospital. To me it stinks of crypto Romanism. I must say with the confession that the Lord's supper is not to be given to any who are not present in the congregation. The most that can make me happy is to take the whole congregation—or a large part of it—into the hospital and for everybody and not just the Protestant priest, alias the Presbyterian pseudo Presbyterian minister—take a bit of bread and wine and to give it to the one person in the hospital bed. This is not the teaching of our confession.

Private masses, or receiving this sacrament by a priest, or any other, alone; as likewise the denial of the cup to the people; worshipping the elements, the lifting them up, or carrying them about for adoration, and the reserving them for any pretended religious use, are all contrary to the nature of this sacrament, and to the institution of Christ.

The outward elements in this sacrament, duly set apart to the uses ordained by Christ, have such relation to him crucified, as that truly, yet sacramentally only, they are sometimes called by the name of the things they represent, [This is my body, this is my blood.] to wit, the body and blood of Christ; albeit, in substance and nature, they still remain truly, and only, bread and wine, as they were before.

That doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of bread and wine, into the substance of Christ's body and blood (commonly called transubstantiation) by consecration of a priest, or by any other way, is repugnant, not to Scripture alone, but even to common-sense and reason.<sup>14</sup>

If I believe this I am required to believe that the Roman mass is repugnant, repugnant. It is repugnant to three things. First, it is repugnant to Scripture. Second, it is repugnant to common sense. And, third, it is repugnant to reason. In other words, I am required to

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<sup>13</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch 29, III

<sup>14</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch 29, IV, V, VI



believe that the Roman Catholic view of the Lord's presence is unscriptural, is nonsensical and is unreasonable and therefore repugnant.

It has been and it is "the cause of manifold superstitions, yea, of gross idolatries."<sup>15</sup>

And we must really ask whether Protestants still really believe that the Romish mass is idolatry. Well, if they don't believe it, I think they need the courage to say that the Westminster fathers were wrong. But then, of course, that says something about the quality of Protestantism today.

"Worthy receivers..."<sup>16</sup> And now this against the Zwinglians and their Baptist descendants.

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..<sup>17</sup>

Now you see why I said in respect to the other sacrament of baptism that although regeneration is presumed to have taken place before baptism nevertheless at the time of baptism a sealing action of the Holy Spirit does take place. So, too, in this sacrament of the Lord's supper. Although regeneration is presumed to have taken place prior to receiving the Lord's supper, nevertheless, at the very moment of receiving the bread and the wine, there is a real, inward, spiritual reception and feeding upon Christ himself.

And this is the element of truth in Rome.

But the manner in which we feed upon Christ is in a spiritual way. In other words, it is not the bread and the wine which become Christ's who feeds us in a material way any more than it is the water of baptism that becomes the blood of Christ which cleanses us in a material way. No. The water, the bread, the wine are channels of grace through which the Holy Spirit works in a non carnal, spiritual way, not involving transubstantiation and seals Christ as truly present in the sacrament to all of those who are in a state of grace, caused by the Holy Spirit alone prior to the reception of the sacrament at the time that the sacrament is received.

In other words, the Lord's supper is not just a sign. It is also a seal. It really conveys grace. It really strengthens our faith. But it doesn't initiate faith. It doesn't cause faith, but it strengthens faith already present.

Well, now, we receive, if we are God's elect and are in a state of faith

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<sup>15</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch 29, VI

<sup>16</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch 29, VII

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

[We receive] 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.<sup>18</sup>

Now, then:

Although ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements in this sacrament...<sup>19</sup>

They shouldn't use the Lord's table at all, but if they do after being warned and they go and do it nonetheless.

... yet they receive not the thing signified thereby.<sup>20</sup>

You see, you must have been born again before you receive the sacrament in order to receive the strengthening grace of God in the sacrament. If you have not been born again all that you receive is what? Denude, empty, bread and wine, but not the Holy Spirit at that time.

They receive not the thing signified; but by their unworthy coming thereunto are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, to their own damnation.<sup>21</sup>

Or, perhaps better, condemnation.

Notice there are two categories of people that are mentioned here who use it unworthily. First, the ignorant, second, the wicked. This is not the same. Wicked people are people who know that they do not believe and who yet use the sacrament which they shouldn't.

Ignorant people are people that are not necessarily wicked and who may, indeed, even be believers, but they are ignorant or not in a state of cognitive knowledge of what is involved in this sacrament.

You may say, "Ah, but doesn't that apply to infant baptism, too?"

No, it doesn't because there are a lot of dissimilarities between baptism and the Lord's supper which I hope we have time to get into tonight before we close down.

All ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table, and can not, without

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch 29, VIII

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

great sin against Christ, while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto.<sup>22</sup>

And this is why although I would never assume that an infant covenant child is wicked in the sense that is not entitled to the sacrament, I think we must say with our Baptist brethren that the covenantal infant is ignorant if not of Christ, then indeed of the manner in which Christ is present in this sacrament. And that, I think, is another argument which I may have time to develop later as to why I believe that the Scripture suggests that it is inappropriate for infants to use the Lord's table, but not to use baptism.

Now let us go, in conclusion—and it will be a longish conclusion—to the Larger Catechism. Perhaps it won't be such a long conclusion. I will be just be selective here so that we don't stay here all night.

Wherein do the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper differ?<sup>23</sup>

Question 177.

The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper agree, in that the author of both is God; the spiritual part of both is Christ and his benefits; both are seals of the same covenant, are to be dispensed by ministers of the gospel, and by none other; and to be continued in the church of Christ until his second coming.<sup>24</sup>

But, in addition to those similarities between baptism and the supper, there are also dissimilarities according to the Bible. Question 177 tells us what these dissimilarities are and this speaks very centrally, I believe, to the issue of and against the practice of infant communion.

Wherein do the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper differ?<sup>25</sup>

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.<sup>26</sup>

Now, as time would permit us, let us take a closer look at this. This is saying the first reference between baptism and the supper is in the frequency with which these two

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 177

<sup>24</sup> Westminster Larger Catechism, Answer 176

<sup>25</sup> Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 177

<sup>26</sup> Westminster Larger Catechism, Answer 177

different sacraments are to be received by the same person. Baptism is only to be received once. But the Lord's supper, obviously, is to be received repeatedly.

Let's not ask at this stage how frequently. Several times a day, thus Rome; every Sunday, thus the Churches of Christ; once a month or so, thus the Methodists; once a quarter, thus most Presbyterians; or once a year, thus the Jehovah Witnesses. Maybe the Jehovah Witnesses are the closest to the truth on this matter and on no other matter of anything that they believe. But we will leave that for the moment.

I would make this observation that in as much as baptism replaces the circumcision and in as much as the Lord's table replaces the Passover we can, perhaps get some guidance as to the frequency of the Lord's supper by seeing the New Testament does not speak to that matter, by seeing whether the Old Testament says anything about the frequency of the Passover. And, as you know, the Passover was to be observed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan every year, in other words annually. But even in the Old Testament at the time of Hezekiah you will recall that at the time of Josiah, King Josiah's great Passover there were one or two Passovers held I think one month after the other.

And so I think we will have to conclude that even the Passover was sometimes held more frequently than once a year, but I certainly cannot see that it was held every Sunday, still less every day. And for this reason and not just for traditional Calvinistic reasons I am perfectly satisfied with the historic Presbyterian practice of communion four times a year. In fact, that may be a little on the frequent side, but I will leave it at that.

However, the important distinction between baptism and the supper is, of course, that baptism was to be received once only and never to be repeated. The Lord's supper was to be repeated from time to time after it was first received. This is clear. This is obvious.

And, by the way, do you notice exactly the same is true in respect to the two Old Testament sacraments? Circumcision was to be received but once and for all. In fact, once circumcision has been received there is no way it can be repeated. Whereas the Passover was to be repeated with some regularity thereafter, after being received once.

Now why is it that baptism is only to be administered once and never to be repeated? Well, first of all because it is irrepeatable, just as circumcision is which it replaces. But, secondly and most importantly, because baptism is the sign of our regeneration. Remember, baptism is not the sign of our conversion. It is the sign of our regeneration.

Now, perhaps, you are beginning to understand why I spent such a long time in the first lecture belaboring this point of infant regeneration, you see. We are regenerated only once. You are either born again or you are not born again. You are either on the way to heaven or on the way to hell. You either become a child of God or you are still a child of Satan. And glorious, Calvinistic truth, the fifth point of TULIP in the decrees of Dordt, once you are saved, you are always saved. You can become a bad Christian. You can backslide, but once you have been born again, praise God, you can never get unborn again. Isn't that wonderful?

But, of course, if you do backslide you need to renew your covenant constantly from time to time and even if you don't backslide you still need to renew your covenant and become more and more dedicated.

Well, now you can see why it is appropriate that the sign of regeneration which regeneration takes place but once, should also be a sign that takes place but once and that just as regeneration is the beginning of the way of salvation in the life of the Christian, so, too, it is appropriate that the sacrament that seals regeneration, namely baptism, be administered at the beginning of the believer's life. And when would that be? Well, the moment it comes out of the womb, of course or as soon as appropriate thereafter, beginning of the life.

However, when you come to consider the other sacrament, that is, the sacrament of the Lord's supper, you see that the Lord's supper is not a sign of regeneration. It isn't. What is it a sign of? It is a sign of conversion, better of reconversion, better of dedication and rededication, better it is a sign of spiritual nourishment of the soul. Or, as we are told here it confirms our continuance and our growth in Christ.

That is why it is inappropriate to give the sign of conversion to those that we do not yet deem to have become converted or reconverted for that matter, you see.

And that is why I insisted that those that die in infancy that are elect are regenerated before they die but I frankly admitted—at least I hope I did and let me admit it now if I didn't—that they die unconverted and go to heaven as regenerate, unconverted, saved sinners. Therefore they qualify for baptism. But they don't qualify for the Lord's table because to come to the Lord's table you need to be converted.

And what does that mean? That means that you personally and consciously need to have turned away from your sin. You personally and consciously need to have turned towards your Savior. You personally and consciously needed to have dedicated yourself to your Savior and to have understood how your Savior saved you by his death on the cross. And I would further suggest that you also need to be able to understand how this holy bread and wine represents Calvary. In other words, before you communicate at the Lord's table you need to be able to discern how the bread and the wine point to Calvary which they depict. You need to be able to discern that this is not a sign by way of transubstantiation, by way of consubstantiation, by way of Zwinglianism, but you need to have enough sense and development to understand the Calvinistic doctrine of the Lord's presence that this is a sign and a seal.

Now, then, now, then, if you look at the practice of catechizing of covenantal children in reformed churches, particularly if you look at the shorter compendium or the [?] of the Heidelberg Catechism, you will have noticed that the bulk of the questions and answers is concerned with Calvary and in what sense the Lord's table to which the catechumen is about to be admitted is to understand how Christ saves him and in what way the bread

and the wine that he is about to start using points to Calvary, not consubstantiationally, not transubstantiationally, on Zwinglianly, but as a sign and a seal.

Hence, the logic of catechizing the child of the covenant with a thorough knowledge of Calvary and how Calvary is reflected in this sign of conversion, this repetitive sign before he or she is first admitted to the Lord's table.

I hope to develop this a little further in one second.

Now this means, of course, that a further [?] is that the one sacrament is to be admitted to infants and the other is only to be admitted to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves. This is the fourth distinction between the two.

The first distinction: baptism is to be administered but once. The Lord's supper frequently.

Baptism is a sign of regeneration which takes place but once. The Lord's supper is a sign of conversion and rededication which should take place in many times in our lives.

The third distinction: baptism involves the use of water as the Lord's supper involves the use of bread and wine.

Fourth and last here mentioned distinction: baptism is to be administered even to infants born in the covenant, whereas the Lord's supper is to be administered only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves.

Now, those using the Lord's table need to have come to a certain number of years and ability to be able to examine themselves. What do they need to examine?

Well, first of all, to make quite sure that they really are personally conscious believers. Second, that they have turned from their sin and really do believe in Christ and understand what is involved. Third, that they are able to discern the Lord's body.

Now what does that mean? Well, there are some that say recently that to discern the body merely means to regard themselves as belonging to the Church that goes to the Lord's table. However, if you look at that expression, "discern the Lord's body," in the passage in which it is found, 1 Corinthians 11, it seems to me to be saying something else because the chapter starts off by saying, "How can you people say that you are to the Lord's supper if when you arrive at the place where the supper is to be held some of you get drunk and others of you stuff yourselves with bread. Don't you have homes of your own to have banquets in? Have you forgotten that the purpose of this coming together is not to have a communal congregational meal? We are all one happy family as even a child and a baby can stuff itself without knowing what it is doing. But," says Paul, "you must discern the true purpose why you have come together. It is not for a congregational meal or a banquet at all. That you have got homes to do. And you can certainly break bread in a different way after you [?] with one another in one another's homes. That is

[?]. But when you come together for the Lord's supper, it is the Lord's supper that you must be partaking of. You need to be able to understand what is happening, when it happens, how it happens, precisely what it is that happens. You need to have discernment which, to some extent, at least, involves the intellect."

Now, not only in those circles which would like to go to infant communion today, but even in other circles which would want to continue to restrict the communion, only to such as have come of sufficient age, there is a movement that I consider very unfortunate that would want to have a banquet in the church immediately before, right after the banquet the bread and the wine are sacramentally broken.

Now I myself would disfavor this practice. I wouldn't be implacably opposed to it as long as people could distinguish at exactly which point the banquet would end and at which point the sacrament would follow or the other way around. But, you see, it would be so easy if the church banquet were held immediately before the Lord's supper it would be so easy for some people to confuse these two things and to begin to think that one was part of the other. It reminds me a bit of the foot washing Baptists and the Seventh Day Adventists who wash one another's feet immediately before they come to the Lord's table and then before you know it they are actually teaching that strict foot washing is an integral part of the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

Of course it is very interesting that they see to it that only women wash women's feet and men wash men's feet and I certainly favor that. But they should admit that this is not what did happen when the Lord washed the feet of all of the apostles.

But when you put two things together that are dissimilar such as foot washing on the one hand and the Lord's supper on the other, or when you put two things together that are essentially dissimilar, such as the *agape* meal, the love meal, the *koinonia* meal, the congregational banquet on the one hand and the Lord's supper on the other and you have one right after the other, do you know what happens? The minds of the people begins to get vague as to where the one ends and the other starts.

That is why every time I baptize a person I always gear the entire service, including the sermon, to speak to this one subject of baptism and nothing else. And I do not favor having a sermon on any other subject under the sun than something connected with baptism or the covenant at the time that baptism is performed. There is to be one thing done at a time. Otherwise if you put a number of dissimilar things together what will happen is the baptism becomes a perfunctory thing. Let's get the infant out of the way and baptized so I can get on with my main thing which is the sermon. What a horrible attitude. Why the baptismal sermon is important. Why would the baptized or the adult, as the case may be, the entire congregation should be thinking of the meaning of baptism under covenant and not something else, an extraneous at that time.

So, too, we must distinguish between the congregational banquet on the one hand and the supper on the other. And the best way to do it is to segregate the times at which these two dissimilar functions take place.

You see, the problem in Corinth that Paul is addressing himself to was precisely the fact that they were having a banquet in the church right at the same time at, or immediately before they were supposed to be holding the Lord's supper and what happened at this banquet is they drank too much wine and ate too much food and they were not in a suitable condition after that to give their attention to the chief reason for that meeting, namely the Lord's supper.

And what does Paul say? He says, "Well, that's fine. This is wonderful. Continue with this congregational banquet before the Lord's supper."

He says, "Absolutely not. Get rid of this congregational banquet at this time. Don't you have houses of your own to banquet in?"

You see, he wants them to concentrate on what is happening at this table.

Well, now, the catechism says the supper is dissimilar from baptism in that as far as the supper is concerned only such as are of years and ability to examine themselves are to come to the table, such as are of years and ability.

First, the concept of years and ability. Can an infant really examine himself or better can we know that the infant isn't examining himself? Let me ask it differently. Is it important that those coming to the Lord's table should examine themselves? Is it important? Paul says it is very important. Paul says that when those coming to the Lord's table have not examined themselves the wrath of God is kindled against the whole congregation and those who have not discerned the Lord's body when partaking of the table, some of them are sick and some, indeed are dead because they have eaten and drunken a condemnation over themselves. Not necessarily damnation. That, perhaps, is a little strong in the King James and it is not a *κατακρίσις* (ka-ta- kree'-sis) in the Greek, but it is a *κρίσις* (kree'-sis), a crisis because they have not had a *διακρίσις* (di-a- kree'-sis) or sufficient examination and discernment. But nevertheless they have injured themselves by not discerning.

So it is a matter of much importance that those that come to the Lord's table must have discernment.

Can an infant clearly discern and communicate his discernment to the rest of the congregation as to the presence of the Lord's body and of this not being confused with a congregational banquet and that it does have something to do with the death of Christ and the proclamation of Christ's death until he comes? I would be inclined to think this is not at all likely.

So I question the ability of an infant, or for that matter, of a young child to be able to examine himself or herself.



But then, furthermore, we are also told that this to be confined to only such as are of years to do this, of years. Now we must ask ourself. Does the Word of God anywhere suggest a minimum age of years at which a covenant child comes to the Lord's table? And this is a very difficult matter to answer, but let me try and answer it in the following ways.

Have you noticed that Luke chapter two tells us that when Jesus was 12 years of age he apparently for the first time accompanied his parents down to Jerusalem where they as a caravan were going to participate in the Passover?

Now, when the ask why we are given this piece of information the answer is not altogether clear, but I would offer you the following explanation. That in as much as in modern Judaism today a child is deemed to become a man when the first pubic hairs begin to grow and when in the case of a male when the beard begins to grow, that this marks the transition from childhood to manhood and that inasmuch as in modern Judaism a portion of the law is read by the Jewish child when he becomes a teenager, age 13 to be precise, that age 13 is the time at which one comes of years as far as the church is concerned and as far as the assumption of church maturity is concerned.

I would suggest, then, that Jesus himself when he was 12 years of age accompanied his father on caravan to the Passover in Jerusalem not for Jesus himself to participate that year in the Passover, but for Jesus for the first time to see how it was done so that during the next year he would catechize and be prepared to come to the Passover as a mature 13 year old adult Jewish male the next year when he turned 13 after reading a portion of the law.

Now, you say, "Well, that is a nice fanciful theory, but is that all the Scripture you have got?"

No, I have got a little more, a little more. And with this let me close it out or we could be here a long time. In Exodus chapter 12 we are told of the institution of the Passover which has now been replaced by the Lord's supper. We are given two very valuable pieces of information, I believe, in that account. The first piece of valuable information relative to this minimum age is the statement in Exodus chapter 12—and I think I had better read it because it is pretty important. In Exodus and chapter 12 verse four we are given this information. "And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb."<sup>27</sup>

Now I believe the operative words there is the phrase "every man according to his eating."<sup>28</sup> If you look at the Hebrew it does not say every נפש (neh'- fesh) according to his eating. But it says every אִישׁ (eesh) according to his eating. In other words, it does not say every human being participates, but it says every man participates. In other words those who participated were men, אִישׁ (eesh).

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<sup>27</sup> Exodus 12:4

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

Second, you will notice “according to his eating, according to his eating.”<sup>29</sup> Those words alone, even if it didn’t refer to a man according to his eating, if were to say every human being according to his eating, that, I think would eliminate all infants that are still being suckled by their mothers in as much as they would not be on regular food such as roast lamb legs, matzo and strong alcoholic wine used at the Passover. In fact, even a Jewish rabbi told me in DC several years ago, about 10 years ago, “Well, you certainly wouldn’t give alcoholic wine to a small child, would you?” And he was using this to defend the modern Jewish practice that the wine is withheld from the Jewish child at the Passover today.

So then those that participate are according to their eating, not according to the count of how many human beings you have there, the eating.

What is it they are eating? Well, those substances that they were eating.

But, second, notice it says “every man according to his eating.”<sup>30</sup> In other words this was restricted only to men. This may seem a bit of a shock to you. It was to me when I realized it, but there is really no evidence at all that any woman, any mature female ever used the Passover in Old Testament times. It was restricted, as was circumcision, only to the male sex. In New Testament times, of course, with a transition of circumcision to baptism and the transition, too, of the Passover to the Lord’s table, it seems that the female sex is now admitted, showing, of course, that the female sex is restored to the position of grace after the state of disgrace into which man fell even through the agency of Eve in the beginning.

But this seems to be limited to each man according to the eating.

The third observation is it doesn’t say that it was limited to every male who had the ability to eat, but it was limited to every man, you see. And the word used here is עֹשֶׂה (eesh). Now what is עֹשֶׂה (eesh)? עֹשֶׂה (eesh) is that which has virility, beardedness almost to be blunt, semen, puberty has been reached, the law has been read, the catechism has been done and now one has become a man and partakes with the other men in the sacrament.

Last piece of information and then I must close. And when I quoted this it convinced Dr. Morton Smith on this issue. We had been debating it up till then. Exodus chapter 12 and verse 26. It is still talking about the Passover.

And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD’S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.<sup>31</sup>

Just two observations about these two verses in closing. First observation: What is it that the children ask their fathers? Verse 26. “What mean ye by this service?”<sup>32</sup> Those asking the question, the children, are not themselves participating. If they had been participating they would have asked, “What do we mean by this service? What are we doing here?”

But that is not what they ask. They say to their fathers, “What mean ye by this? Why are you doing this thing?” In other words, why aren’t we doing these things?

The second observation, the reply of the fathers to the children is, in fact, catechizing them. Then you shall say to your children, “It is the sacrifice of the LORD’S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.”<sup>33</sup>

And, you see, it is when the elders are satisfied that the children of the covenant have started asking these intelligent questions and have received suitable answers and have been suitably catechized and have rehearsed the child’s understanding of the meaning of the sacrament to the satisfaction of the elders, then the child of the covenant and not before is admitted to full communicant membership in the Church of the Lord Jesus.

[?] probably a million, but we better go home soon.

[off mic voice]

Yes, that is a good question and a matter of a little difficulty. I will try to answer it very briefly. There are churches that have tried to standardize it. You probably know in some reformed churches in Holland they discourage and some of them prohibit covenant children coming to the Lord’s table before they are 21. And that, of course, they would say would be the age of maturity when Numbers one verse four, wasn’t it, people were admitted to the army.

I know in South Africa they wrestled with this problem for 100 years and in sometimes they have said, “Well, when the child is 14.” They got it as low as 12 at one time. Then they pushed it back to 16 and then to 18 and at the moment they are at 16. Frankly, I must say, “What is the Scripture for these ages?”

However, I do think we have an indication of age, namely, the fact that we are told that Jesus went to watch this Passover when he was 12. And may I suggest that Jesus was far more mature when he was 12 than we are when we are 112. And if he waited until he was 12 I think we should wait at least until we are 12 or 13.

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<sup>31</sup> Exodus 12:26-27

<sup>32</sup> Exodus 12:26

<sup>33</sup> Exodus 12:27

Second, that a Jewish child becomes a man when he is 13, as a teenager and after catechizing and that I seem to get this impression, too, from Exodus so my own thought is, it at all possible, let's hold the line at age 13.

I have been in agony in a church in Mississippi that insisted and my elders bludgeoned me into, against my will, in having a nine year old child whose parents never came to church rushed through the catechism in one week flat to admit him to the Lord's table and the church never saw him after that hardly.

Of course when president Jimmy Carter's little daughter Amy or whatever it was got immersed when she was nine this gave a terrible impetus even to the capitulation of Presbyterians in America to what they wrongly think is the Presbyterian version of immersion, namely admission to the Lord's table. But this is what happens when you have got to fight against the Spirit of the time rather than go to the Word of God.

So I admit that the Word of God is not easily discernible and assemblable on this matter, but I have shared from you from the Word of God, I trust, the reasons why I feel it appropriate and probably according to the general tenor of Scripture to try and hold the line at age 13.

Yes.

[off mic voice]

That is a very good question. I would say as far as the sacrament of regeneration is concerned, baptism, that intellectually handicapped, deformed children of believers should certainly be baptized. Of course they should because to be regenerated does not involve that degree of personal discernment which conversion does. Second, let me read you two sentences from our confession of faith which speaks to this very issue, although in a different context. And they are found in chapter 10 and paragraph three of the confession. "Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit who worketh when and where and how he pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word."<sup>34</sup> And in the footnote there it only points to 1 John 5:12 and Acts 4:12 which says, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."<sup>35</sup> "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."<sup>36</sup>

In other words, you are either in Christ or you are not in Christ. If you are in Christ you are saved. If you are not in Christ you are lost whether you are an infant, mentally retarded or whatever.

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<sup>34</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith Ch 10, III

<sup>35</sup> 1 John 5:12

<sup>36</sup> Acts 4:12

So I would say that a mentally retarded child of the covenant born as a deformed infant should certainly be baptized presuming that regeneration has taken place. As to whether he should come to the Lord's table when he grows older, my own inclination would be no. Why? Because I believe that adequate catechizing and a sufficient degree of intellectual grasp of the mechanics of conversion and the understanding of how Christ is present at the Lord's table is requisite even for a normal child. Why, then, should I prejudice the normal child and advantage the handicapped child in respect to the second sacrament. I don't see how I can do that.

I don't believe it is really a problem because, after all, my own children are 14 and 11 at the moment. I believe they have believed in Jesus ever since they were born. They give every evidence of it. They love the Lord. They read their Bible each day. And they don't feel the urge that many American kids feel to grab the bread and the wine and to swallow it when they are six or seven years of age.

I must admit that I do feel at this point and some of my friends feel very strongly does this not drive a wedge between me and my own children. Well, not really in as much as I do not want my children—and they understand this—to disadvantage themselves by partaking of the second sacrament not correctly discerning the Lord's body. I imagine it won't be long now when they will express the desire to come to the Lord's table and will feel that they sufficiently understand and then, of course, we will catechize them with the elders and they know their catechism pretty well already and then, of course, they will be admitted with the approval of the session to communicant membership.

But they are already members in the church invisible from conception and in the church visible from baptism.

Well, now a retarded boy of, say, 16, who really can't understand the Lord's presence, is presumed to be a member of the church invisible from conception, is known to be a member of the church visible since his infant baptism why then the urgency of getting him to the Lord's table? I can't see it. Because bear in mind that even adult people who have communicated many times if they fall into a state of sin or ignorance or a cloud over their life are best warned to stay away from the Lord's table for as long as this is not cleared up. And if it is never cleared up they should never come to the Lord's table again, you see. And now in the case of the retarded person, until such time as he clears up sufficiently in the opinion of the session, to meaningfully communicate so as not to drink a judgment on himself he should stay away from the Lord's table even if it be life long. It won't make any difference to his salvation.

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And remember that John Calvin in defending the reformation's regulative principle of worship or what is sometimes called the scriptural law of worship, commenting on the words of God "...which I commanded them not, neither came into my heart," from his commentary on Jeremiah 7:31 writes, "God here cuts off from men every occasion for making evasions than he condemns by this one phrase, 'I have not commanded them,' whatever the Jews devised. There is then no other argument needed to condemn superstitions than that they are not commanded by God. For when men allow themselves to worship God according to their own fancies and attend not to his commands, they pervert true religion. And if this principle was adopted by the papists, all those fictitious modes of worship in which they absurdly exercise themselves would fall to the ground. It is, indeed, a horrible thing for the papists to seek to discharge their duties towards God by performing their own superstitions. There is an immense number of them as it is well known and as it manifestly appears. Were they to admit this principle that we cannot rightly worship God except by obeying his Word, they would be delivered from their deep abyss of error.

"The prophets words, then, are very important when he says that God hath commanded no such thing and that it never came to his mind as though he had said that men assume too much wisdom when the devise what he never required, nay, what he never knew."