

Holy Communion in the Theology of John Knox

By Glen J. Clary

In the historical exhibition at St. Andrews Castle, we find an image of John Knox as the fiery preacher of Scotland. With outstretched arm and clinched fist, Knox is leaning over the pulpit—boldly proclaiming the Word as the trumpeter of God. This is the image that usually comes to mind when one thinks of John Knox. Yet there is another image of Knox that is equally true to history—an image that portrays him, not only as a minister of the Word, but a minister of the sacrament. In Sir David Wilkie’s portrait of Knox (see cover, and page 255), we find our Reformer serving the sacrament of Holy Communion to a small band of believers sitting at a table. This image of Knox bears eloquent testimony to the legacy of our Reformer as the restorer of the sacrament of Holy Communion in the realm of Scotland.

In this article, we will examine Knox’s doctrine of the Lord’s Supper as it is presented in his own writings. We will focus primarily on the early development of his faith, in order to understand the influences that shaped his eucharistic theology. What we hope to demonstrate is that his doctrine of the Lord’s Supper was basically set at the beginning of his ministry.¹ We will further demonstrate that that doctrine was essentially Bucerian or Calvinistic. In short, we will attempt to vindicate Knox’s claim that his eucharistic theology and practice remained consistent throughout his entire ministry.

STRIKING AT THE ROOT

On 29 May 1546, a group of sixteen men gathered before sunrise in the priory churchyard near St. Andrews Castle, where the notorious Cardinal David Beaton resided. The men stormed the castle and forced their way into Beaton’s chamber, where they found the terrified Cardinal crying out, “I am a priest! I am a priest! Ye shall not slay me!” Then, one of the men shouted, “Repent thee of thy former wicked life, especially of the shedding

of the blood of that notable instrument of God, Master George Wishart, which, albeit the flame of fire consumed before men, yet cries it a vengeance upon thee; and we from God are sent to revenge it.” Then, striking him with a sword, he shed his blood, and the dying Cardinal fell to the ground moaning, “I am a priest! I am a priest! Fie, fie! All is gone.”² A few weeks earlier, Beaton had presided over the ecclesiastical court that condemned and executed George Wishart. Since his return to Scotland in 1543, Wishart had been promoting the Reformation by an extensive preaching tour, which took him from his home town of Montrose to places as far apart as Dundee, Kyle, Perth, Leith and Lothian.³

THE AUTHOR: Rev. Glen J. Clary holds a Master of Divinity degree from Westminster Theological Seminary. He is currently a doctoral candidate at Erskine Theological Seminary, studying Christian worship with Dr. Hughes Oliphant Old at the Institute for Reformed Worship. He was ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 2005 and is currently serving as Pastor of Immanuel OPC in West Collingswood, NJ. His article, “Ulrich Zwingli and the Swiss Anabaptists: Sola Scriptura and the Reformation of Christian Worship,” appeared in the 2010 issue.

1. Richard Kyle, *The Ministry of John Knox: Pastor, Preacher, and Prophet* (Wales: The Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd., 2002) 143; hereafter cited as Kyle, *Ministry*.

2. John Knox, *The History of the Reformation of Religion Within the Realm of Scotland*, edited by C. J. Guthrie (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000) 65–9; hereafter cited as Guthrie; John Knox, *John Knox’s History of the Reformation in Scotland*, edited by William Croft Dickinson (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949) 76–8; hereafter cited as Dickinson. On Cardinal Beaton, see Margaret H. B. Sanderson, *Cardinal of Scotland: David Beaton, c.1494–1546* (Edinburgh: J. Donald Publishers, 1986).

3. On George Wishart, see James William Baird, *Thunder Over Scotland: The Life of George Wishart, Scottish Reformer, 1513–1546* (California: Green Leaf Press, 1982); hereafter Baird, *Wishart*; Jasper Ridley, *John Knox* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968) 36–44; John Durkan, “George Wishart: His Early Life,” *Scottish Historical Review* 32 (1953): 98–99; Charles Rogers, *Life of George Wishart the Scottish Martyr with His Translation of the Helvetian Confession* (Edinburgh: William Paterson, 1876); Guthrie, 52–69; and Dickinson, 60–74.

He frequently addressed packed congregations in parish churches, but on some occasions, when “his entry to the church was barred by the authorities,” he had to address the “crowds at open-air rallies in the fields nearby” (Ridley, 37). “Christ Jesus is as potent in the fields as in the kirk,” said Wishart (Rogers, 24). When his itinerate ministry led him to Lothian, late in 1545, he encountered John Knox, who was so moved by his preaching that he joined “the little band of friends and admirers who guarded Wishart as he travelled from one safe house to the next. It was usually Knox who carried a large two-handed sword before Wishart, to frighten off his enemies.”⁴ This arrangement, however, abruptly came to an end, for Wishart was suddenly arrested and brought to St. Andrews Castle, where he was executed as a heretic on 1 March 1546.⁵ His supporters were outraged by his death. Some of them even vowed vengeance on “the bloody butcher” Beaton. John Knox wrote,

4. Rosalind K. Marshall, *John Knox* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd., 2000) 9; cf. Ridley, 38–44. Knox was already a supporter of the Reformation before meeting Wishart; see *John Knox: An Introduction to His Life and Works*, ed. Richard G. Kyle and Dale W. Johnson (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock) 40–2; hereafter cited as Kyle-Johnson; cf. W. Stanford Reid, *Trumpeter of God: A Biography of John Knox* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1974) 19, 24–31.

5. According to Ridely, Knox would have been martyred too if Wishart had not compelled him to flee for his own safety. “If Knox had stayed with Wishart some nine hours longer, he would have been burnt as a heretic in 1546” (Ridley, 44). Wishart “died to assert his testimony against sacerdotal arrogance and priestly corruption, which are the curse of nations. In his blood the Scottish Church took root, and so long as his countrymen cherish Protestantism and love liberty his memory will be fragrant” (Rogers, 62).

6. After his ordination, Knox served as a tutor and papal notary; see *John Knox and the British Reformations*, ed. Roger A. Mason (England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 1998) 117–29.

7. On Henry Balnaves, see Hugh Watt, “Henry Balnaves and the Scottish Reformation,” *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 5 (1935): 23–9; James Edward McGoldrick, *Luther’s Scottish Connection* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1989) 63–9; John Knox, *The Works of John Knox*, 6 vols., edited by David Laing (Edinburgh: Printed for the Bannatyne Club, 1846–64; reprint New York: AMS Press, 1966) 3.403–542; hereafter cited as *Works*. Cf. James K. Cameron, “Aspects of the Lutheran Contribution to the Scottish Reformation 1528–1552,” *Lutheran Theological Journal* 19 (May 1985): 12–20.

8. His pupils were Francis and George Douglas and John Cockburn. Their fathers (Hugh Douglas of Longniddry and John Cockburn of Ormiston) solicited Knox to go to St. Andrews, “that he himself might have the benefit of the castle, and their children the benefit of his doctrine” (Guthrie, 70); cf. Dickinson, 81–2; Ridley, 50–3; and Reid, 44–6.

9. As Knox put it, they “began earnestly to travail with him, that he would take the preaching place upon him” (Guthrie, 71).

10. Guthrie, 72; cf. *Works*, 1.186–8; and Ridley, 53–5.

11. Knox has left us a rather detailed description of this sermon; see *Works*, 1.189–92.

After the death of this Blessed Martyr of God, began the people in plain speaking, to damn and detest the cruelty that was used. Yea, men of great birth, estimation, and honour, at open tables avowed, that the blood of Master George should be revenged, or else it should cost life for life (Guthrie, 65).

Less than two months later, the despised Cardinal met his bloody retribution.

With the departure of Wishart from this world, Knox would soon take up his prophetic mantle. Although he had been ordained as a priest on 15 April 1536, Knox did not preach his first sermon until more than ten years later.⁶ Ironically, he would first blast the trumpet in the same town where his master was martyred. The men who slew Cardinal Beaton barricaded themselves inside the castle walls and waited in vain for the English military to come to their aid. These so-called “Castilians” were gradually joined by other supporters, and their number grew to more than 120 men, among whom were Henry Balnaves (an important political figure) and John Rough, who became their chaplain.⁷ Immediately after Easter in 1547, John Knox, together with three young pupils under his care, also sought refuge inside the castle walls.⁸ Knox found the protection he needed, but he did not find “a perfect school of Christ” as he would later discover at Geneva (Reid, 45). In fact, the castle was “a hotbed of revolutionaries. Only a few of the men resident in the castle—such as Henry Balnaves and John Rough—possessed purely religious motives” (Kyle-Johnson, 43). When these two men heard Knox lecturing his students on the Fourth Gospel, they were so impressed with his teaching that they urged him to take up the public ministry of the Word.⁹ Knox refused to do so without a proper call. He was finally persuaded, however, when John Rough boldly charged him from the pulpit:

In the name of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ, and in the name of these that presently call you by my mouth, I charge you, that ye refuse not this holy vocation, but ... that ye take upon you the public office of preaching, even as ye look to avoid God’s heavy displeasure, and desire that He shall multiply His graces upon you.¹⁰

“Only after an outburst of tears and days of sequester in his room did Knox accept this unusual call to preach” (Kyle-Johnson, 43). When he finally stepped into the pulpit at the end of April 1547, he preached his first sermon on the seventh chapter of Daniel.¹¹ Knox argued that the last beast of Daniel’s vision represents

the Roman Church because it “had arisen out of the ruins of the Roman Empire” (Kyle, *Ministry*, 90). Therefore, the Roman Church is none other than the Man of Sin, the Antichrist, and the Whore of Babylon (*Works*, 1.190).¹² His denunciation of the Roman Church was so vehement that his listeners could be heard saying, “Others cut the branches of the Papiſtry, but he ſtrikes at the root, to deſtroy the whole.”¹³ Knox was thirty-two years of age when he commenced his preaching miniſtry. From that day forward, he considered preaching his chief calling.¹⁴ Knox “was moſt at home in the pulpit, where he ſaw himſelf as God’s mouthpiece and he deſcribed his preaching as ‘blowing the trumpet’” (Mason, 20). The effect of his preaching was profound. One contemporary deſcribed it as follows: “His voice, thundering from the pulpit, was able, in one hour, to put more life in us than 500 trumpets continually bluſtering in our ears” (Mason, 20).

KNOX’S PRINCIPLE OF WORSHIP

Knox’s firſt blaſt of the trumpet ſtirred up a hornet’s neſt within the Roman clergy. John Winram—the Superior of the Auguſtinian monaſtery who had recently been appointed Vicar-General of the diocese of St. Andrews—received a letter from Archbishop Hamilton, reproving him for allowing “ſuch heretical and ſchismatical doctrine to be taught” without oppoſition (Guthrie, 75).¹⁵ The decision that Knox ſhould preach in the pariſh church at St. Andrews “would certainly have been ſanctioned by Winram, if not in fact inſtigated by him” (Dunbar, 26). Although he was ſympathetic to the Reformation and undoubtedly agreed with much of Knox’s criticism of the Roman Church, Winram was not prepared to ſide with the Reformers.¹⁶ He decided, therefore, to hold a convention of Grey and Black Friars at which Knox and Rough would be allowed to explain their views. When the two men appeared before the convention, they were preſented with a liſt of articles ſummarizing their controversial doctrines, including the following:

1. Man may neither make nor deviſe a religion [worſhip] that is acceptable to God, but he is bound to obſerve and keep the religion [worſhip] that he has received from God, without any change.
2. The Sacraments of the New Teſtament ought to be adminiſtered juſt as they were inſtituted by Chriſt and practiced by the Apoſtles. Nothing ought to be added to them or diminished from them.

3. The Maſs is an abominable idolatry, blaſphemous to the death of Chriſt, and a profanation of the Lord’s Supper.¹⁷

“The ſtrangeness of theſe articles,” explained Winram, “has moved us to call for you to hear your own answers” (Guthrie, 76). Knowing that Winram was already inclined toward the Reformation, Knox tried to maneuver him “into ſupporting Proteſtantism openly by affirming the diſputed doctrines” (Dunbar, 27). Winram, however, was unwilling either to approve or condemn the articles, for he was preſent not to judge but only “familiarily to talk” (*Works*, 1.195). When he inquired about the denial of the Church’s right to deviſe religious ceremonies, Knox explained that the Church ought to do nothing except in faith and that it muſt not go before but is bound to follow the voice of the True Shepherd (John 10:4). Papiſtical inventions deſigned to adorn the ſacraments—ſuch as the uſe of ſpittle, ſalt, candles and oil in the baptiſmal rite—are not ordained in Scripture and, therefore, cannot be done in faith. For ſomething to be done in faith, it muſt derive from the Word of God, for “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17).

[Therefore] if ye will prove that your ceremonies proceed from faith, and do pleaſe God, ye muſt prove that

12. “It has been ſuggeſted that the inſpiration for this inaugural ſermon, in particular Knox’s ideas on the apocalypse, were derived principally from English ſources – or at leaſt from English translations of continental works” (Mason, 36); cf. Richard G. Kyle, *The Mind of John Knox* (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Preſs, 1984) 215–35; hereafter Kyle, *Mind*.

13. Kyle, *Ministry*, 90; and *Works*, 1.192.

14. His “total commitment to preaching and to what preaching alone can achieve provides the real key to understanding Knox as a man, a Chriſtian, and a reformer;” J. Douglas MacMillan, “John Knox—Preacher of the Word,” *Reformed Theological Journal* (November 1987) 6. Unfortunately, only a few examples of his ſermons have been preſerved in writing; ſee *Works*, 1.189–92; 4.87–114; 6.221–71. Cf. Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worſhip of the Chriſtian Church*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004) 429–32; and Pierre Janton, *John Knox (ca. 1513–1572): L’homme et l’oeuvre* (Paris: Didier, 1967) 403–505.

15. Guthrie, 75. On John Winram, ſee Linda J. Dunbar, *Reforming the Scottish Church: John Winram (c. 1492–1582) and the Example of Fife* (England: Ashgate, 2002).

16. Winram did eventually join the Reformed Church, and in 1560 he participated in drafting *The Scots Confession of Faith* and *The Firſt Book of Discipline*. He alſo ſerved as Superintendent of Fife from 1561–75. On Winram’s changing religious convictions, ſee Dunbar, 15–36.

17. Guthrie, 76; *Works*, 1.193–4; cf. Peter Lorimer, *John Knox and the Church of England: His Work in Her Pulpit and His Influence Upon Her Liturgy, Articles, and Parties* (London: Henry S. King and Co., 1875) 6–7.

God, in expressed words, has commanded them; or else shall ye never prove that they proceed from faith, nor yet that they please God, but that they are sin, and do displease him, according to the words of the Apostle, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Lorimer, 7).

At this, Winram retorted, "Will ye bind us so strait that we may do nothing without the express word of God? If I asked for a drink, would that be sin? Yet it is not commanded in Scripture" (cf. Dickinson, 89). Knox replied,

I would not we should jest in so grave a matter. I wonder that ye compare things profane and holy things so indiscreetly together. The question was not nor is not of meat and drink, wherein the kingdom of God consists not [Romans 14:17], but the question is of God's true worshipping, without which we can have no society with God. And here it is doubted if we may take the same freedom in the using of Christ's sacraments that we may do in eating and drinking; one meat I may eat, another I may refuse, and that without scruple of conscience. I may change one with another, even as oft as I please. Whether may we do the same in matters of religion? May we cast away what we please and retain what we please? If I be well remembered, Moses, in the name of God, says to the people of Israel, "All that the Lord thy God commands thee to do, that do thou to the Lord thy God; add nothing to it, diminish nothing from it" [Deuteronomy 12:32]. By this rule think I that the Kirk of God will measure God's religion, and not by that which seems good in their own eyes (Lorimer, 7–8).

From the very beginning of his ministry, Knox was deeply devoted to the purification of Christian worship. Indeed, his "regard for worship took top priority in all his labors as a Reformer."¹⁸ The convention of Grey and Black Friars gave Knox "his first opportunity of laying down the thesis at which he was to hammer for the rest of his life: that all ceremonies devised by

18. Kevin Reed, "John Knox and the Reformation of Worship in the Scottish Reformation," in *Worship in the Presence of God*, edited by David Lachman and Frank J. Smith (Greenville, SC: Greenville Seminary Press, 1992) 295; cf. Richard G. Kyle, "John Knox and the Purification of Religion: The Intellectual Aspects of His Crusade Against Idolatry," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 77 (1986): 265–80.
19. Eustace Percy, *John Knox* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1965) 56.

20. On the significance of this principle in the Reformation era, see Glen J. Clary, "Ulrich Zwingli and the Swiss Anabaptists: Sola Scriptura and the Reformation of Christian Worship," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 6 (2010): 108–24.

21. Thomas McCrie, *The Life of John Knox* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1976) 32.

man for the worship of God, without express warrant of Scripture, are idolatry."¹⁹ Knox's demand for biblical warrant was grounded in his radical commitment to the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* (see Kyle, *Mind*, 30–8). Scripture is the only infallible authority and, therefore, the final arbiter in all matters of worship. It is the supreme liturgical norm. According to Knox, only what God has commanded in Scripture is permissible in worship; everything else is idolatry. Knox draws this principle primarily from Deuteronomy 4 and 12, which he summarizes as follows:

[T]he plain and straight commandment of God is, "Not that thing which appears good in thy eyes, shalt thou do to the Lord thy God, but what the Lord thy God has commanded thee, that do thou: add nothing to it; diminish nothing from it" (Dickinson, 91).

This rule is the architectonic principle of Knox's theology of worship, which he uses assiduously to destroy the idols of popery.²⁰

COMMUNION AT ST. ANDREWS

Although the convention ended without resolution of the articles in question, Winram soon found a more effective way of checking the Reformers than by disputations such as this (Ridley, 58). Winram "arranged for every learned man in the priory and University to preach in the parish church on Sundays, so that there was no vacant Sunday" on which the Reformers could preach (Ridley, 58). Knox, however, was permitted to preach on weekdays, which afforded him the opportunity of commenting on the Sunday sermons as he saw fit (Dickinson, 93). The labors of Knox "were so successful during the few months that he preached at St. Andrews" that, besides the garrison in the castle, a great number of the townspeople "renounced popery, and made profession of the Protestant faith," by participating in the Lord's Supper.²¹ In his *History of the Reformation*, Knox recalls the event:

God so assisted his weak soldier, and so blessed his labours, that not only ... those of the Castle, but also a great number of the town, openly professed, by participation of the Lord's Table, in the same purity that now [c.1566] it is ministered in the churches of Scotland, with that same doctrine, that he [Knox] had taught unto them (Dickinson, 93).

This evangelical celebration of Communion early in

1547 was “an important milestone on the road from a mere Protestant Movement to a Reformed Church.”²²

Knox’s claim that the Communion rite was administered “in the same purity” as it was later administered in Scotland after the Reformation has inspired much speculation. It is often assumed that “in the same purity” means “in accordance with the Genevan model” (Burnet, 2); that is, in accordance with *The Genevan Book of Order* (1556) or *The Book of Common Order* (1564). The latter was in use at the time that Knox wrote his *History*. However, it “cannot have been precisely the same service that was used in Scotland after 1560, as this had not yet been drafted” (Ridley, 59). Without any supporting evidence, Ridley suggests that the Communion rite of 1547 may have been “a form of service that Wishart and Rough and other Scottish Protestant ministers had developed for themselves, being based in all essentials on the Protestant services of Strasbourg” (Ridley, 59). “This would mean that the form used was either that of Martin Bucer or of Valerian Poullain, who used a liturgy derived from one prepared by Calvin, his predecessor as pastor of the French church” (Reid, 50–1).²³ Ridley’s suggestion is interesting, but it cannot be proven. We do know, however, that, in his preaching tours, Wishart had administered the Lord’s Supper according to the Reformed model. In Knox’s first Communion service, he apparently followed the example of Wishart.²⁴ Wishart owed a great deal to the eucharistic theology of the Swiss Reformers, whom he visited in the late 1530s.²⁵ In fact, on his return to Scotland in 1543, he brought with him his English translation of *The First Helvetic Confession of Faith*, which Knox undoubtedly studied.²⁶ Knox’s doctrine of the Lord’s Supper “was basically set during the earliest stages of his ministry” (Kyle, *Ministry*, 143). His claim that the 1547 Communion service was celebrated “with the same doctrine” as it was later administered in Scotland in the 1560s indicates that his early eucharistic theology was not Lutheran but Reformed.²⁷ Scholars are divided, however, as to which specific Reformed label to hang on him. Did he follow Zwingli, Bullinger, Bucer or Calvin—or can we be no more specific than the general Reformed label?²⁸

To the extent that Bucer’s, Calvin’s and even Bullinger’s views bore resemblance, any specific label on Knox must be conjectural. Rather it would seem that Knox’s early Eucharistic thought emerged from the abundant interchange of sacramental thought taking place at that time (Kyle, *Mind*, 170).

That Knox was no mere carbon copy of Calvin has been

widely recognized in our day, yet Calvin’s influence on him should not be minimized.²⁹ It appears, however, that he did not begin any serious study of Calvin’s

22. George B. Burnet, *The Holy Communion in the Reformed Church of Scotland, 1560–1960* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960) 2.

23. On Bucer’s liturgy, see Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961) 159–79; hereafter Thompson, *Liturgies*; and Bard Thompson, “Reformed Liturgies in Translation Part 2: Martin Bucer,” *Bulletin of the Theological Seminary of the Evangelical and Reformed Church XXVIII*, 1 (January 1957): 1–18. On the Strasbourg liturgy of Poullain and Calvin, see Thompson, *Liturgies*, 185–210; Valerandus Pollanus *Liturgia Sacra (1551–1555)*, edited by A. C. Honders (Leiden, 1970); and Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship* (Black Mountain, NC: Worship Press, 2004) 80–96.

24. See Duncan B. Forrester and Douglas M. Murray, eds., *Studies in the History of Worship in Scotland* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996) 38; cf. Burnet, 1; William McMillan, *The Worship of the Scottish Reformed Church, 1550–1638* (London: James Clarke, 1931) 24–5; and John Howie, *The Scots Worthies* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson, & Ferrier, 1870) 22, 28. The Communion liturgy used by Knox during his ministry in Berwick-upon-Tweed (see below) bears resemblance to the liturgy of Zurich. For this reason, McMillan suggests that Knox was exposed to the Zurich Communion rite by Wishart, and therefore, the 1547 Communion service at St. Andrews may have been drawn partly from the Communion liturgy of Zurich; see McMillan, 24–8; and Lorimer, 290–7.

25. Baird, *Wishart* 73; cf. Duncan Shaw, “Zwinglian Influences on the Scottish Reformation,” *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 22 (1986): 119–39.

26. Richard L. Greaves, *Theology and Revolution in the Scottish Reformation: Studies in the Thought of John Knox* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian University Press, 1980) 97. For Wishart’s translation, see Rogers, 63–73; for a modern translation, see James T. Dennison Jr., ed., *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation: Volume I, 1523–1552* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008) 342–52. *The First Helvetic Confession* was an important confessional symbol produced in 1536 to unite the Protestant churches of German-speaking Switzerland. It was composed by Heinrich Bullinger, Simon Grynaeus, Oswald Myconius, Kaspar Megander and Leo Jud. Martin Bucer and Wolfgang Capito, who were present at the synod that adopted the confession, influenced its final form, especially its chapter on the Lord’s Supper; see Greaves, 96–100.

27. The case of Sir James Balfour, discussed in Knox’s *History*, confirms this; see Dickinson, 93.

28. See Kyle, *Ministry*, 143, 208; cf. Ridley, 92. On the eucharistic theologies of Zwingli, Bullinger and Calvin, see Paul Rorem, *Calvin and Bullinger on the Lord’s Supper* (Bramcote, England: Grove Books Limited, 1989); and Joseph C. McLelland, “Meta-Zwingli or Anti-Zwingli? Bullinger and Calvin in Eucharistic Concord,” in *Huldrych Zwingli, 1484–1531: A Legacy of Radical Reform*, edited by E. J. Furcha (Montreal: McGill University, 1985) 179–95.

29. Percy and McEwen, for example, minimize the influence of Calvin on Knox’s eucharistic thought; see Percy, 230; and James S. McEwen, *The Faith of John Knox* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1961) 45–60; cf. Greaves, 86–110, 217–18. For a corrective of Percy and McEwen, see James Kirk, “The Influence of Calvinism on the Scottish Reformation,” *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 8 (1974): 157–79; and V. E. D’Assonville, *John Knox and the Institutes of Calvin* (Durban: Drakensberg Press, 1969) 6–22.

writings until he arrived in England in 1549 (McGoldrick, 71). At St. Andrews, the primary source of his eucharistic faith would have been Wishart's translation of *The First Helvetic Confession*, which contains a "Calvinistic type" of eucharistic theology, "older than Calvin himself."³⁰ According to Gerrish's taxonomy, this confession teaches "symbolic instrumentalism" rather than Zwingli's "symbolic memorialism" or Bullinger's "symbolic parallelism" (Gerrish, 232). In other words, it teaches the eucharistic theology developed by Bucer and, later, by Calvin.³¹ It is certainly an exaggeration to say, as some have said, that "Bucer made Calvin a Calvinist," yet Bucer's influence on Calvin was significant, and their views on the Lord's Supper were strikingly similar.³² Thus, Knox's early eucharistic faith was in line with the Bucerian or Calvinistic type of eucharistic theology presented in *The First Helvetic Confession*, which we will briefly summarize.

First of all, the confession denies that the sacraments are merely empty signs.³³ The sacraments are "tokens of secret things; that is, of godly and spiritual things," but

30. B. A. Gerrish, "The Lord's Supper in the Reformed Confessions," *Theology Today* 23 (July 1966) 232; hereafter cited as Gerrish.

31. Bucer and Capito did influence the confession's chapter on the Lord's Supper, which was written with "an eye to reconciling Lutheran and Zwinglian views;" Kyle, *Mind*, 169; cf. *Common Places of Martin Bucer*, ed. David Wright (Appleford: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1972)

32. On Bucer's eucharistic theology, see *Martin Bucer: Reforming Church and Community*, ed. David Wright (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 72–82; Wright, *Common Places*, 313–400; Ottomar Frederick Cyprus, *Basic Principles: Translation and Commentary of Martin Bucer's "Grund und Ursach," 1524* (Dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1971; Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 2003); W. P. Stephens, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1970) 238–59; Hastings Eells, "The Contributions of Martin Bucer to the Reformation," *Harvard Theological Review* 24 (January 1931): 29–42; and Hastings Eells, "The Genesis of Martin Bucer's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper," *The Princeton Theological Review* 24 no 2 (1926): 238–55.

33. Kyle, *Mind*, 170. For Bucer's influence on Calvin, see Wright, *Martin Bucer* (1994) 32–44; François Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963) 137–44, 332–3; and Bard Thompson, "Bucer Study Since 1918," *Church History* 25 (March 1956) 64–70. While there may be minor differences between Bucer and Calvin on the Lord's Supper, these differences should not be exaggerated; see Joseph McLelland, *The Visible Words of God: An Exposition of the Sacramental Theology of Peter Martyr Vermigli* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957) 272–3.

34. On the doctrine of the Lord's Supper in *The First Helvetic Confession of Faith*, see Gerrish 232–3; and Lorimer, 141–5.

35. Rogers, 69. Although it is a rather free translation of the Latin text, we will use Wishart's translation of *The First Helvetic Confession of Faith*, since this is the version that Knox would have studied. Wishart's English has been updated in accordance with modern usage.

36. Hughes Oliphant Old, *Holy Communion in the Piety of the Reformed Church* (Unpublished Manuscript) 171.

they are not "naked signs;" rather, they consist of the signs and things signified together.³⁴ Indeed, the signs convey and offer the spiritual things that they signify (Gerrish, 232). The signs of the eucharist are the bread and wine, but the thing signified is the communion of the body and blood of Christ. In the Lord's Supper, we find salvation and the forgiveness of sins, and these things "are received by faith even as the signs and tokens are received by the mouth of the body" (Rogers, 69). The sacraments are not only "badges and tokens of Christian fellowship," they are "signs of the grace of God, by which ministers work with God, to the end that" what he has promised is brought to pass (Rogers, 69). They are instruments through which God truly gives what he promises (Gerrish, 232). Although men are used to dispense the sacraments, the power and efficacy of the sacraments are ascribed to God alone. In the Lord's Supper, Christ offers us his body and blood, "that is, His own self truly to His own, for this purpose, that He might live more and more in them and they in Him" (Rogers, 70). Union with Christ is, therefore, the purpose of the sacrament. By faith, we are united to him; we dwell in him and he in us. "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood," said Christ, "dwells in me and I in him" (John 6:56). The faithful communicant enjoys true communion with the body and blood of Christ—not because his body and blood are "joined naturally to the bread and wine" or are locally present in them or contained in them "by any carnal or marvelous presence" (Rogers, 70). Rather, the body and blood of Christ are truly communicated because the bread and wine are sacramental signs "by which the true communion or participation of the Lord's body and blood are exhibited by the Lord himself, through the ministrations of the Church, not to be perishable food for the body but to be nourishment and food for eternal life" (Rogers, 70). Thus, the real presence of Christ is affirmed, yet any carnal or local notion of presence (be it Lutheran or Roman Catholic) is denied. Christ is present spiritually; that is, by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Christ is offered as food for the soul, not for the body, and is eaten with the mouth of faith. In the Lord's Supper, "we behold with the eye of faith the death and blood of the crucified one. We remember our salvation and health, not without a taste of the heavenly life, and a true feeling of eternal life" (Rogers, 70). Thus, the Lord's Supper is a "participation in a heavenly reality."³⁵ We not only commemorate an event in the past, we encounter the living and exalted Christ of the present and experience a foretaste of everlasting glory (Rogers, 70). Therefore, when we celebrate Communion, we exult and rejoice with a

joy inexpressible in words, and “with all our power and strength,” we give thanks to God “for so wonderful a benefit of Christ toward us” (Rogers, 70). This is the doctrine of *The First Helvetic Confession of Faith*. This is the doctrine that Knox was teaching at St. Andrews in 1547 when he administered his first Communion.

THE “IDOLATROUS” MASS

The ministry of Knox at St. Andrews suddenly came to an end when a fleet of twenty-one French ships arrived in June of 1547.³⁶ The Castilians were soon forced to surrender, and some 120 men, including Knox, were herded into the galleys as prisoners. Knox spent the next nineteen months “confined as a galley slave, fixed in irons and forced to row between Scotland and France” (Kyle-Johnson, 43). When Knox was released in February of 1549, he was free to go wherever he wished, with the exception of Scotland. He chose to labor in England because the fields there were ripe for the harvest.³⁷ Since the death of Henry VIII in January of 1547, the Reformation in England had made significant progress under the leadership of Edward Seymour (Duke of Somerset) and Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury.³⁸ Somerset and Cranmer were gathering together a body of international Reformers to assist them in creating a Protestant state in England and to educate men at Oxford and Cambridge for pastoral ministry.³⁹ Thus, at the invitation of the Archbishop, scholars from the Continent—including Peter Martyr Vermigli, Martin Bucer and Jan Laski—came to England in the late 1540s.⁴⁰ These continental Reformers had a lasting impact on the faith and worship of the Church of England.⁴¹ When Knox began his service in the English Church, Somerset and Cranmer had already made significant reforms. They had introduced the administration of Communion in both kinds, “directing that the wine, as well as the bread, was to be given to the congregation” (Ridley, 88). Images and crosses had been removed from churches, and prayers to the Virgin Mary and to the saints had been condemned (Ridley, 88).

A few weeks before Knox arrived in England, they made the greatest advance of all. The Act of Uniformity enacted that after Whitsun 1549 the old Latin church service should be replaced by the English service in the first *Book of Common Prayer* which Cranmer drafted (Ridley, 88; cf. MacCulloch, 409).

In fact, Knox arrived in London just in time to obtain an early copy of Cranmer’s new *Prayer Book* hot off

the press (Lorimer, 10). Knox had gained quite a reputation by preaching at St. Andrews, and his name was already well-known among the English Protestants.⁴² On 7 April 1549, the Privy Council paid him £5 “by way of reward,” which indicates that the payment was made in gratitude for his services or “as a tribute to past

36. Dickinson, 94–7; cf. E. Bonner, “The Recovery of St. Andrews Castle in 1547: French Naval Policy and Diplomacy in the British Isles,” *English Historical Review* (June 1996): 578–98.

37. Cf. Kyle-Johnson, 47. On the Reformation in England, see A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London: BT Batsford Ltd., 1989); Philip Hughes, *The Reformation in England*, vol. 2 (London: Hollis and Carter, 1953); and G. Constant, *The Reformation in England*, vol. 2, translated by E. I. Watkin (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1942).

38. It should be noted that Edward Seymour (Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector) was the uncle of the boy-king, Edward VI. On Cranmer, see Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); C. H. Smyth, *Cranmer and the Reformation Under Edward VI* (London: SPCK, 1973); Jasper Ridley, *Thomas Cranmer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop and Martyr* (London: Church Book Room Press, 1956); and Francis E. Hutchinson, *Cranmer and the English Reformation* (London: English Universities Press, 1951).

39. Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) 26.

40. Vermigli taught at Oxford, and Bucer at Cambridge, while Jan Laski (John à Lasco) was appointed Superintendent of the Strangers’ Church of London. On Vermigli, see *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformation*, ed. Frank A. James III (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004) 26–112, 215–37; McLelland, *Visible Words*, 1–68; *The Life, Early Letters and Eucharistic Writings of Peter Martyr*, ed. Joseph McLelland and Gervase Duffield (Oxford: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1989) 9–94; and Marvin W. Anderson, *Peter Martyr: A Reformer in Exile (1542–1562): A Chronology of Biblical Writings in England and Europe* (Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf, 1975). On Bucer, see Martin Greschat, *Martin Bucer: A Reformer and His Times*, translated by Stephen E. Buckwalter (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004); Wright, *Martin Bucer* (1994) 144–75; *Martin Bucer and the Book of Common Prayer*, ed. Edward C. Whitaker (Great Wakering: Mayhew-McCrimmon, 1974); Constantin Hopf, *Martin Bucer and the English Reformation* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1946); Hastings Eells, *Martin Bucer* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1931); and Andrew E. Harvey, *Martin Bucer in England* (Marburg: B. Heinrich Bauer, 1906). On Laski, see Michael S. Springer, *Restoring Christ’s Church: John à Lasco and the “Forma ac ratio”* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Dirk W. Rogers, *John à Lasco in England* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994); Basil Hall, *John à Lasco 1499–1560: A Pole in Reformation Europe* (London: Williams Trust, 1971); and Hermann Dalton, *John à Lasco: His Early Life and Labours*, translated by Maurice J. Evans (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1886).

41. We have already seen how Bucer’s doctrine of the Lord’s Supper influenced Knox’s eucharistic thought during his early ministry in Scotland. In England, he was similarly influenced by Jan Laski. See Rogers, *John à Lasco in England*, 162–4; Ridley, 107–8, 113; and William D. Maxwell, *The Liturgical Portions of the Genevan Service Book Used by John Knox While a Minister of the English Congregation of Marian Exiles at Geneva, 1556–1559* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1931) 76, 94, 184.

42. McCrie, 40; Marshall, 31; and Lorimer, 16.

achievements.”⁴³ Knox was licensed to serve as a minister in the Church of England, and his first appointment was the parish church in Berwick-upon-Tweed in the northern part of the country where the Tweed River forms the border between England and Scotland.⁴⁴ This part of England was still largely unaffected by the Reformation. Berwick was in the diocese of the Bishop of Durham, Cuthbert Tunstall, who had opposed every Protestant reform introduced by Cranmer.⁴⁵ Knox, however, “would get no sympathy from Cranmer and the leaders of the Protestant faction if he resisted Tunstall’s authority,” for every priest was expected to obey his bishop, just as every bishop was expected to obey the Protector and the Privy Council (Ridley, 90).

Upon his arrival in Berwick, Knox began a pulpit crusade against the idolatrous worship of Rome. In particular, he strongly denounced the Mass as an abomination before God and blasphemous to the death of Christ. By 1550, this war against the Mass had attracted the rage of Bishop Tunstall, and Knox was summoned to appear before the Council of the North in Newcastle on 4 April 1550 to defend his teaching (Kyle-Johnson, 47). It was decided that he should deliver his defense from the pulpit of “the Church of St. Nicholas, a large, Gothic building with a handsome lantern tower which is still a feature of the Newcastle skyline today” (Marshall, 36). Along with the Bishop and the Councilors, “a number of other persons, including some eminent theologians, who had been invited to attend” were present to hear his defense (Ridley, 95). “If the Council intended to intimidate Knox, their strategy failed badly” (Kyle-Johnson, 48). Tunstall was not prepared to take any action against him for fear of how the Privy Council might react (Ridley, 97). Thus, when Knox finished his speech, he was

43. Ridley, 85; cf. Lorimer, 15; and *Works*, 3.79. Marshall suggests that when Knox was introduced at Court, he may have preached before Somerset (Marshall, 31).

44. “It is hard to believe that he [Knox] did not have a hand in the decision, for in Berwick-upon-Tweed he could not have been closer to Scotland. Indeed, for most of its history, Berwick had actually been Scottish, standing as it does on the north bank of the River Tweed ... (Marshall, 32); cf. McCrie, 40.

45. Ridley, 90. “Twenty-five years before, as Bishop of London, he [Tunstall] had been in charge of the first drive against Lutheran books and the first English Bibles; and throughout his twenty years as Bishop of Durham he had played a leading part in the doctrinal struggles among the bishops, as the ally of Gardiner and a foremost member of the Catholic faction” (Ridley, 90). Tunstall’s opposition to the Reformation, however, was only one of many reasons why Berwick would have been a very difficult place for Knox to minister; see Ridley, 90, 85–90.

46. *Works*, 3.33–4. Knox’s English has been updated in accordance with modern usage.

allowed to return to Berwick and resume his ministry, without any hindrance (Marshall, 37). Knox preserved a written copy of his defense, which he later published under the title *A Vindication of the Doctrine That the Sacrifice of the Mass is Idolatry* (see *Works*, 3.29–70). Here is a brief summary of the *Vindication*.

First of all, Knox observes that for the Roman Church, the Mass is the ground and foundation of religion. It is the central act of divine worship. Abolish the Mass, and no true worship remains (*Works*, 3.34). To the Roman clergy, therefore, nothing could be more absurd than to claim that the Mass is idolatry, an abomination before God, blasphemous to the death of Christ and contrary to the Lord’s Supper, yet this is exactly what Knox will attempt to prove.⁴⁶ If he cannot prove it “by plain and evident Scriptures,” he will recant his teaching as “wicked doctrine” and confess himself “worthy of grievous punishment” (*Works*, 3.34). Knox builds his case on two logical syllogisms. The first one is as follows:

All worshipping, honoring, or service invented by the brain of man in the religion of God, without his own express commandment, is idolatry. The Mass is invented by the brain of man, without any commandment of God. Therefore it is idolatry (*Works*, 3.34).

To establish the major premise of this syllogism, Knox calls on several biblical witnesses. The first witness is Saul’s unlawful sacrifice, for which he was sharply rebuked by the Prophet Samuel. “Thou hast done foolishly; thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee ... [therefore] thy kingdom shall not continue” (1 Samuel 13:13–14). “Here is the ground of all his iniquity,” says Knox, “and from this proceeds the causes of his dejection [ejection] from the kingdom: that he would honor God otherwise than was commanded by his express word” (*Works*, 3.35). Since “no commandment was given to the King to make or offer to God any manner of sacrifice,” his act was unlawful. Thus, God does not accept any worship offered to him without it having “the express commandment of his own Word to be done in all points” (*Works*, 3.35–6). Neither Saul’s preeminence, nor his precarious situation, nor his good intentions could justify his actions (*Works*, 3.36).

In 1 Samuel 15, Knox finds another witness from the life of Saul to support his case. When Saul defeated the Amalekites, he spared the best of their livestock that they may be offered to God. Saul was of the opinion that he had obeyed God because—although it was contrary to God’s command—he had acted with good

intentions, and God would surely be pleased with the offerings. Once again, however, he received a stern rebuke. The Lord delights more in obeying his voice than in burnt offerings and sacrifices; thus, to obey is better than to sacrifice. “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry” (1 Samuel 15:22–23). From this story, Knox concludes:

Disobedience to God’s voice is not only when man does wickedly contrary to the precepts of God, but also when of good zeal, or good intent . . . man does anything to the honor or service of God not commanded by the express Word of God, as may be plainly seen in this matter. For Saul transgressed not wickedly in murder, adultery, or like external sins, but saved one aged and impotent King . . . and permitted the people . . . to save certain beasts to be offered unto the Lord; thinking that God should therewith stand content and appeased, because he and the people did it of good intent. But both these Samuel called idolatry: first, because they were done without any commandment of God; and, secondly, because in doing thereof he thought himself not to have offended. And that is principal idolatry when our own inventions we defend to be righteous in the sight of God, because we think them good, laudable, and pleasant. We may not think us so free nor wise, that we may do unto God, and unto his honor, what we think expedient. No! the contrary is commanded by God, saying, “Unto my word shall ye add nothing; nothing shall ye diminish from it, that ye might observe the precepts of your Lord God” [Deuteronomy 4:2]. Which words are not to be understood of the Decalogue and Moral Law only, but of statutes, rites, and ceremonies; for God requires equal obedience of all his Laws (*Works*, 3.37–8).

Another biblical witness that Knox finds is the strange fire of Nadab and Abihu. These two sons of Aaron fell under divine judgment because they offered strange fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded (Leviticus 10:1–3). Therefore, it is plain, says Knox, that neither the preeminence of the person who “makes or sets up any religion, without the express commandment of God, nor yet the intent whereof he does the same, is accepted before God” (*Works*, 3.38). God only accepts the worship he prescribes. He rejects all that is added to it and “punishes the inventors and doers thereof” (3.38). Therefore, the Church has no power, says Knox, “to set up, devise, or invent honoring of God, as it thinks most expedient for the glory of God” (3.40). Jesus said, “I will be with you to the end of the world,” and “wherever two

or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 28:20; 18:20). From these sayings, says Knox, the Roman Church has falsely concluded that it has “all power” and “cannot err” and that whatever it does, “God accepts and approves” (*Works*, 3.40). To the contrary, the Church is still bound by the precept, which has never been abrogated: “Not that thing which appears righteous in your own eyes, that shall you do, but what God has commanded, that observe and keep” (Deuteronomy 12:8, 31–32). Jesus himself teaches the same principle when he says, “My sheep hear my voice, and a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him” (John 10:3–5).

To hear his voice . . . is to understand and obey the same; and to flee from a stranger, is to admit none other doctrine, worshipping, nor honoring of God than has proceeded forth of his own mouth; as he himself testifies, saying, “All that are of the truth, hear my voice” [John 18:37]. And [likewise] Paul says, “The Kirk is founded upon the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles” [Ephesians 2:20]; which foundation, no doubt, is the Law and the Evangel. So that it may command nothing that is not contained in one of the two; for if it does so, it is removed from the only foundation, and so ceases to be the true Kirk of Christ (*Works*, 3.40–1).

Jesus Christ is the sole King and Head of his Church. He alone has the authority to make laws that his subjects are bound to obey (*Works*, 3.41). The Church has no power to create laws, for all its power comes from and is subject to the authority of Christ (3.41). Knox exclaims,

O God Eternal! hast thou laid none other burden upon our backs than Jesus Christ laid by his Word? Then who has burdened us with all these ceremonies, prescribed fasting, compelled chastity, unlawful vows, invocation of saints, and with the idolatry of the Mass? The devil, the devil, brethren, invented all these burdens to depress imprudent men to perdition (*Works*, 3.42).

Having established the premise that all service invented by man in the worship of God, without his own express commandment, is idolatry, Knox goes on to defend his claim that the Mass is merely an invention of man, set up without any commandment of God (*Works*, 3.47). Here, Knox is referring particularly to the canon of the Mass in the Roman liturgy. The papists themselves, says Knox, teach that various parts of the canon were created by one pope or another, who lived long after the age of

the Apostles (*Works*, 3.48–9). Hence, the Apostles could not have used the Mass because it did not exist in their day. For this reason, argues Knox, one must conclude that the Mass is an invention of man. Even the so-called “words of consecration” (which the papists believe to be the very heart of the Mass) have been altered by the Roman Church (*Works*, 3.50–1). In short, nothing of the Lord’s own institution remains pure and undefiled in the Mass. “I think it is in vain,” concludes Knox, to labor further to prove that the Mass is “invented and devised by the foolish brain of man,” and therefore, “it cannot be denied to be idolatry” (*Works*, 3.51).

At this point, Knox turns to the second syllogism on which he builds his defense, namely, “All honoring or service of God, whereunto is added a wicked opinion, is abomination. Unto the Mass is added a wicked opinion. Therefore it is abomination” (*Works*, 3.52). The wicked opinion that has been joined to the Mass, explains Knox, is that the Mass is a propitiatory sacrifice for the remission of sins.

It has been held in common opinion. It plainly has been taught; by law it is decreed; and in the words of the Mass it is expressed, That the Mass is a Sacrifice and oblation for the sins of the quick and the dead: so that remission of sins undoubtedly was believed by that same action and work presently done by the Priest (*Works*, 3.54).

Scripture plainly teaches that justification comes only from “the mere mercy of God, without all deserving of us, or of our work proceeding of ourselves.” Thus, to say that the Mass is a sacrifice offered to God for the forgiveness of sins is an abomination (*Works*, 3.54). Furthermore, Scripture plainly teaches that Christ’s sacrifice was perfect and need not be repeated (Hebrews 7:26–27; 9:26; 10:14, 18). To teach that the Mass is a repetition of Christ’s sacrifice is, therefore, “extreme blasphemy” (*Works*, 3.56).

Consider now, Brethren, if the opinion of the Mass be not vain, false, and deceitful? Caused they not you to believe it was a Sacrifice, whereby remission of sins was obtained? And you may plainly perceive that no sacrifice there is, nor at any time was, for sins, but the death of Jesus Christ only. For the sacrifices of the Old Law were only figures of that very and true sacrifice once offered by Jesus Christ. And in them was commemoration of sins made, but neither was remission of sins obtained, nor purgation made by any such sacrifice.... And yet, to the great blasphemy of Christ’s death, and open denial of his Passion, it has been affirmed, taught,

and believed, that the Mass was a Sacrifice for the sins of the quick and the dead: which opinion is most false, vain, and wicked. And so, I think, the Mass to be abominable and Idolatry no man of indifferent judgment will deny (*Works*, 3.61–2, 64).

In the last part of the *Vindication*, Knox explains how the Mass and the Lord’s Supper are diametrically opposed to each other (*Works*, 3.64). First of all, they are contrary in institution. The Lord’s Supper was instituted to call to our remembrance the perfect sacrifice of Christ by which we are redeemed,

[in order to] move us to unfeigned thanksgiving unto God the Father, and to his only Son Jesus, who has restored us again to liberty and life, and this is it which Paul commands, saying, “As often as ye shall eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, ye shall declare the Lord’s death till he come” [1 Corinthians 11:26]. That is, you shall laud, magnify, and extol the liberal kindness of God the Father, and the infinite benefits which you have received by Christ’s death (*Works*, 3.64–5).

The Mass, on the other hand, was instituted “to be a Sacrifice for the sins of the quick and the dead: for doing of the which Sacrifice, God is bound not only to remit our sins, but also to give unto us whatever we will ask” (*Works*, 3.65).

The Supper of the Lord is the gift of Jesus Christ, in which we should laud the infinite mercy of God. The Mass is a Sacrifice which we offer unto God, for doing whereof we allege God should love and commend us. In the Supper of the Lord, we confess ourselves redeemed from sin by the death and blood of Jesus Christ only. In the Mass, we crave remission of sins, yea, and whatsoever thing we list, by working of that same work, which we presently do ourselves.... Last, in the Supper of the Lord, we confess ourselves eternal debtors to God, and unable any way to make satisfaction for his infinite benefits which we have received. But in the Mass, we allege God to be a debtor unto us for oblation of that Sacrifice, which we there presently offer, and dare affirm that we there make satisfaction by doing thereof, for the sins of ourselves and of others (*Works*, 3.65–6).

Secondly, the Lord’s Supper is contrary to the Mass with regard to its administration. In the Lord’s Supper, the minister does not stand alone at an altar dressed in priestly vestments, but he and the congregation sit together at one table, where everyone partakes of both

elements.⁴⁷ In the Mass, however, the congregation merely watches the priest perform a sort of liturgical drama: gesticulating, muttering, bowing, turning, crossing, uplifting and nodding (*Works*, 3.67). In short, there is nothing of the Lord's institution in the Mass but only superstition and sorcery. It is, therefore, contrary to the Lord's Supper. Knox concludes his defense by briefly summarizing his main points:

But now briefly, let these contradictions be collected. In the Lord's Supper are offered thanks for the benefits which we have received of God. In the Mass, the Papist will compel God to grant all that he asks of him, by virtue of that Sacrifice; and so alleges, that God should refer thanks unto him that does Mass.

In the Supper of the Lord, the actors humbly do confess themselves redeemed only by Christ's blood, which once was shed. In the Mass, the priest vaunts himself to make a Sacrifice for the sins of the quick and the dead.

In the Lord's Supper, all the partakers at that table grant and confess themselves debtors unto God, unable to refer thanks for the benefits which we have received of his liberality. In the Papistical Mass, the Priest alleges that God is a debtor to him, and unto all them for whom he makes that Sacrifice. For he does affirm remission of sins to be obtained thereby: And in that the Mass is blasphemous to Christ's death.

In the Lord's Supper, all sit at one table; no difference in habit nor vestment between the Minister and the Congregation. In the Papistical Mass, the Priests are placed by themselves at one Altar ... and are clad in disguised garments.

In the Lord's Supper, finally, all do eat of one bread and drink of one cup. But in the mischievous Mass, one man did eat and drink all (*Works*, 3.68–9).

CHRIST, THE PRIMARY ACTOR

While the Protestant Reformers were all in agreement that the sacrifice of the Mass is idolatry, none of them attacked the Mass as vigorously or as vehemently as John Knox. However, it would be a mistake to assume that Knox was exclusively polemical in his eucharistic theology—that he labored only to destroy the idolatrous Mass and had nothing positive to contribute to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. While it may be true that his

primary focus on the subject was his war against the Mass, it is also true that Knox had a very rich, positive doctrine of the sacrament. In fact, in the same year that Knox gave his vigorous defense before the Council of the North (1550), he also composed a brief confession of the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper, which he appended to the *Vindication* and to which he gave the following title:

Here is briefly declared in a summary, according to the Holy Scriptures, what opinion we Christians have of the Lord's Supper, called the sacrament of the body and blood of our Savior Jesus Christ.⁴⁸

Although the *Summary* is only seven paragraphs in length, it is, nevertheless, brimming with rich theological insights on the doctrine of the sacrament. “If Knox wrote in a polemical tone in his critique of the Mass, his very brief summary of the meaning of the Lord's Supper is positive, affirming, and beautifully written” (Kyle-Johnson, 50–1).

The first thing we notice in the *Summary* is that the Lord's Supper is not a work of man but of God. Christ is the subject of each sentence. He “lifts us up unto heavenly and invisible things.” He “confirms and seals up to us his promise.” He “represents ... and makes plain to our senses, his heavenly gifts.” He “gives unto us himself.” He “gathers us unto one visible body.” He “calls us to remembrance of his Death and Passion” (*Works*, 3.73). Christ is clearly the one who acts. He is the subject; man is the object or indirect object of each verb. Thus, the sacrament is a divine work not a human work. Commenting on the *Summary*, James McEwen wrote:

47. *Works*, 3.66. For Knox, this table gesture (that is, sitting together at a table to partake of the elements) is an essential part of the sacrament. Indeed, Knox seems to teach that it is of the essence of the sacramental sign. See Old, *Communion*, 237–8; MacCulloch, 525–30; and Lorimer, 251–89. Knox's practice of sitting at the Lord's Table to celebrate Communion became a significant feature of Scottish Communion piety that held sway in Scotland until the time of Thomas Chalmers; see Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, “The Posture of the Recipients at the Lord's Supper: A Footnote to the History of Reformed Usages,” in *Selected Shorter Writings*, vol. 2, edited by John E. Meeter (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001) 351–69.

48. *Works*, 3.73. For convenience sake, we will refer to this document simply as the *Summary*; see *Works*, 3.72–5. The *Summary* appears to have a quasi-confessional status, as one can see from the consistent use of the plural pronoun “we” throughout. In fact, Lorimer suggests that Knox used it in his Communion liturgy (Lorimer, 293). We agree with Lorimer's suggestion, but we would add one qualification, namely, that only the first five paragraphs of the *Summary* were used as a Communion Exhortation. Paragraphs six and seven seem to have a different purpose (see below).

In this little document, in a remarkable and striking way, the whole action of the sacrament is referred to Christ. There is nothing at all about what “we” do, or what the Church does. The sacrament is not looked on as a ministerial act, or a Churchly ordinance. It is, first and last, something that Christ does for us (McEwen, 56).

McEwen’s comment is basically correct, but it needs qualification. The *Summary* does, in fact, have something to say about what we do in the sacrament. When the Lord “calls us to remembrance of his Death and Passion,” we respond with praise and thanksgiving (*Works*, 3.73). The sacrament is a *eucharist* (εὐχαριστία) in which we give thanks to God. Just as Christ gave thanks at the last supper, so too, when we come to the Lord’s table, we offer prayers of thanksgiving and sing psalms of thanksgiving. In fact, Knox’s Communion liturgy strongly emphasizes this eucharistic dimension of the sacrament. This is clearly seen in his Eucharistic Prayer, which is a thanksgiving for creation and redemption.⁴⁹ In the *Genevan Book of Order*, we find the following instructions after the Communion Invitation:

The exhortation ended, the Minister cometh down from the Pulpit, and sitteth at the Table, every man and woman in like wise taking their place as occasion best serveth: Then he taketh bread, and giveth thanks, either in these words following, or like in effect:

49. On Knox’s Eucharistic Prayer, see Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship: Reformed According to Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2002) 136–7; Thompson, *Liturgies*, 303–4; *The Liturgy of the Church of Scotland Since the Reformation: Part II, the Book of Common Order, Commonly Known as Knox’s Liturgy*, ed. Stephen A. Hurlbut (Washington, D.C.: The St. Albans Press, 1945) 49–50, 58–9; Maxwell, 124–6, 134–6; George W. Sprott, *The Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland Commonly Known as John Knox’s Liturgy* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1901) 123–5; and Charles Washington Baird, *Eutaxia: Or, the Presbyterian Liturgies: Historical Sketches* (New York: M. W. Dodd Publisher, 1855) 91–137; hereafter *Eutaxia*. Cf. Old, *Patristic Roots*, 14, 299–301; and Hughes Oliphant Old, *Leading in Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995) 235–8.

50. Hurlbut, 49–50. Concerning Knox’s Eucharistic Prayer, Maxwell writes, “Although it does not use any of the time-honoured words or phrases of the Western liturgies, it is nevertheless truly eucharistic and follows the order of the primitive liturgies: Adoration and Thanksgiving for Creation and Redemption, Commemoration of the Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, and the Last Supper, concluding with a Doxology” (Hurlbut, 58; cf. Maxwell, 134). Although Knox did not include an Epiclesis in his Eucharistic Prayer, “The Revision of 1629 suggested to the Assembly contains a very ‘careful’ and partial Epiclesis: Merciful Father, we beseech thee that we receiving these thy creatures of bread and wine—according to thy Son our Savior his holy institution—may be made partakers of his most blessed body and blood. Send down, O Lord, thy blessing upon this Sacrament that it

O Father of mercy and God of all consolation, seeing all creatures do acknowledge and confess thee as Governor and Lord, it becometh us, the workmanship of thine own hands, at all times to reverence and magnify thy Godly Majesty; first, for that thou hast created us to thine own image and similitude, but chiefly because thou hast delivered us from that everlasting death and damnation into the which Satan drew mankind, by the means of sin, from the bondage whereof neither man nor angel was able to make us free, but thou, O Lord, rich in mercy and infinite in goodness, hast provided our redemption to stand in thine only and well beloved Son, whom of very love thou didst give to be made Man like unto us, in all things, sin except, that in his body he might receive the punishment of our transgression, by his death to make satisfaction to thy justice, and by his resurrection to destroy him that was author of death, and so to bring again life to the world, from which the whole offspring of Adam most justly was exiled.

O Lord, we acknowledge that no creature is able to comprehend the length and breadth, the deepness and height of that thy most excellent love, which moved thee to show mercy where none was deserved, to promise and give life where death had gotten the victory, to receive us into thy grace when we could do nothing but rebel against thy justice.

O Lord, the blind dullness of our corrupt nature will not suffer us sufficiently to weigh those thy most ample benefits: yet, nevertheless, at the commandment of Jesus Christ our Lord, we present ourselves to this his Table, which he hath left to be used in remembrance of his death, until his coming again, to declare and witness before the world, that by him alone we have received liberty and life, that by him alone thou dost acknowledge us thy children and heirs, that by him alone we have entrance to the throne of thy grace, that by him alone we are possessed in our spiritual kingdom, to eat and drink at his Table, with whom we have our conversation presently in Heaven, and by whom our bodies shall be raised up again from the dust, and shall be placed with him in that endless joy, which thou, O Father of mercy, hast prepared for thine Elect before the foundation of the world was laid. And these most inestimable benefits we acknowledge and confess to have received of thy free mercy and grace, by thine only beloved Son Jesus Christ, for the which therefore, we thy Congregation, moved by thy Holy Spirit, render thee all thanks, praise, and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.⁵⁰

In addition to this emphasis on εὐχαριστία, Knox teaches that the Lord's Supper is a *sacramentum* in which we pledge our allegiance to Christ by publicly professing our faith. The Lord's Supper confirms and seals—not only God's promises to us—but our faith by which we receive them (*Works*, 3.74). We will examine this sacramental dimension of the Lord's Supper later. What we wish to point out here is that Knox does, in fact, have something to say about what we do in the Lord's Supper. However, he does not begin to say what we do until he has first set forth all that Christ does. Moreover, he does not simply say that “we remember” but “the Lord calls us to remembrance,” or that “we praise” but the Lord “stirs up our hearts to praise.”⁵¹ Thus, even when describing what we do in the sacrament, he emphasizes the work of Christ. Jesus Christ is the primary actor, and all that we do is in response to his work.

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL DIMENSION

In the first paragraph of the *Summary*, Knox teaches that the Lord's Supper consists of two realities, an earthly and a heavenly.⁵²

First, we confess that it is a holy action, ordained of God, in the which the Lord Jesus, by earthly and visible things set before us, lifts us up unto heavenly and invisible things. And that when he had prepared his spiritual banquet, he witnessed that he himself was the lively bread, wherewith our souls are fed unto everlasting life.⁵³

Since we are earthly beings, “it is needful for us that God should make use” of earthly and visible things “to represent to us spiritual and heavenly things, for otherwise we could not comprehend them” (Dennison, 511). Christ uses these earthly elements to lift us up to heaven. He draws us into his presence and brings us to his heavenly table where he has prepared for us a spiritual banquet. The Lord's Supper is a spiritual feast celebrated in the presence of the risen and ascended Christ (Old, *Communion*, 177). This is better understood in terms of eschatology than in terms of mysticism. In modern theological terminology, one might say that Knox sees in the sacrament an element of realized eschatology (Old, 171). In the Lord's Supper, Christ—having already inaugurated his kingdom and being exalted at the Father's right hand—lifts us up to heaven and gives us a foretaste of the messianic feast of the age to come.

To the eyes of faith, the Supper is a sign of the heavenly

banquet, and through faith, those who participate in the sacred meal receive a foretaste of the heavenly reality. The bread and the wine of Communion are a spiritual food which nourishes us unto eternal life (Old, 174).

Knox found this eschatological dimension of the sacrament in the teaching of Jesus, particularly in the bread of life discourse, where Jesus says,

Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever (John 6:54–8).

Since the Lord's Supper is a heavenly event, in order for us to enjoy the spiritual reality signified by it, we must lift up our hearts to heaven where Christ dwells at the right hand of the Father (Dennison, 517; cf. *Institutes*, 4.17.18). For this reason, Knox included the language of the *Sursum corda* in his Communion Invitation.⁵⁴

may be unto us the effectual exhibitiv instrument of the Lord Jesus” (cf. Maxwell, 135).

51. *Works*, 3.73. Knox may have been influenced by Zwingli's later eucharistic writings, which present a complicated Platonic understanding of remembrance “in which the active subject is not so much the believers who remember the past but God who reminds them of it in the present” (Rorem, 165); cf. Gottfried Locher, *Zwingli's Thought, New Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 1981) 214–28, 314–26.

52. The first article of *The Wittenberg Concord* (1536) attributes this concept to Irenaeus; see Wright, *Common Places*, 362.

53. *Works*, 3.73. Contrary to some scholars who minimize the influence of Calvin on Knox's eucharistic theology (see footnote 29), we should note that the last statement of this paragraph is Knox's free translation of a sentence in an early edition of Calvin's *Institutes*; Calvin writes, the Lord's Supper is “a spiritual banquet, wherein Christ attests himself to be the life-giving bread, upon which our souls feed unto true and blessed immortality;” cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, translated by Ford Lewis Battles, edited by John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960) 4.17.1. In the *Summary*, we discover the obvious influence of Calvin on Knox's eucharistic theology. In fact, as in this case, we see unmistakable traces of literary dependence on the writings of Calvin. It is difficult to identify, however, what particular writings of Calvin were studied by him. Knox seems to be familiar with Calvin's 1538 Catechism, his *Short Treatise on the Lord's Supper* (1541), his *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1546), and one or more of the early editions of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536, 1539, 1541, 1543).

54. The *Sursum corda* goes way back in the history of the liturgy, and the Reformers were well aware of its antiquity (Old, *Communion*, 173). Calvin writes “the practice always observed by the early Church, when about to celebrate the Supper, was solemnly to exhort

Knox borrowed this practice from Calvin, who, in turn, borrowed it from William Farel.⁵⁵ These Reformers, to be sure, never used a responsive *Sursum corda* in their Communion prayers, for “these so-called Eucharistic dialogues would have been all too mechanical to appeal” to their understanding of prayer (Old, *Communion*, 173). But they did retain the language of the *Sursum corda* in their Communion Invitations because it was agreeable to their doctrine of the Lord’s Supper. In Farel’s liturgy, before the distribution of the elements, the celebrant exhorts the congregation:

Therefore, lift up your hearts on high, seeking the heavenly things in heaven, where Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father; and do not fix your eyes on the visible signs which are corrupted through usage. In joy of heart, in brotherly union, come, everyone, to partake of our Lord’s Table ... (Thompson, *Liturgies*, 223; cf. Old, *Patristic Roots*, 75–6).

This exhortation warns the congregation “not to look for Christ on the altar nor cleave to the signs that had been spoiled by the Mass” (Thompson, *Liturgies*, 187). Rather, “these creatures of earth, these signs of God’s redemptive *condescension* were supposed to transport the believer *above* the material realm, to the Risen Lord in the far reaches of heaven” (*Liturgies*, 187). Following the lead of Farel, Calvin includes a similar expression in his Communion Invitation.

[Let] us lift up our spirits and hearts on high where Jesus Christ is in the glory of His Father, whence we expect Him at our redemption. Let us not be fascinated by these earthly and corruptible elements which we see with our eyes and touch with our hands, seeking Him there as though He were enclosed in the bread or wine. Then only shall our souls be disposed to be nourished and vivified by His substance when they are lifted up above all earthly things, attaining even to heaven, and entering the Kingdom of God where He dwells. There-

the people to raise their hearts on high, to intimate, that if we would adore Christ aright, we must not stop at the visible sign;” John Calvin, *Tracts and Letters*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009) 188. Cyprian provides an ancient witness to its use; see Cyprian, *On the Lord’s Prayer*, in *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, vol. 5, edited by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1897).

55. This so-called Reformed *Sursum corda* was apparently the creation of Farel, since it first occurs in his *La Maniere et fasson* (1524); see Thompson, *Liturgies*, 187.

56. From Calvin’s 1538 Catechism; see I. John Hesselink, *Calvin’s First Catechism: A Commentary, Featuring Ford Lewis Battles’s translation of the 1538 Catechism* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997) 35.

fore let us be content to have the bread and wine as signs and witnesses, seeking the truth spiritually where the Word of God promises that we shall find it (Thompson, *Liturgies*, 207; cf. Calvin, *Tracts*, 2.197–8).

In like manner, we find the language of the *Sursum corda* in Knox’s Communion liturgy prior to the Eucharistic Prayer.

Then, to the end that we may be worthy partakers of his [Christ’s] merits, and most comfortable benefits, which is the true eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood, let us not suffer our minds to wander about the consideration of these earthly and corruptible things (which we see present to our eyes, and feel with our hands), to seek Christ bodily present in them, as if he were enclosed in the bread or wine, or as if these elements were turned and changed into the substance of his flesh and blood; for the only way to dispose our souls to receive nourishment, relief, and quickening of his substance, is to lift up our minds by faith above all things worldly and sensible, and thereby to enter into Heaven, that we may find and receive Christ, where he dwelleth undoubtedly very God and very Man, in the incomprehensible glory of his father, to whom be all praise, honour, and glory, now and ever. Amen (Hurlbut, 49; cf. Thompson, *Liturgies*, 302–3).

It is widely recognized that the ascension of Christ is an important feature of Reformed eucharistic theology, but for Calvin and Knox, it is equally important to recognize that although Christ has ascended into heaven and has, therefore, ceased to reside on earth, “no distance can prevent his power from feeding his believers on himself and bringing it about that they still enjoy ever-present communication with him, though he is absent from that place.”⁵⁶ As Knox explains in the *Summary*, this “feeding” or “communication” is accomplished by the miraculous and secret power of the Holy Spirit, “for whom it is not difficult to associate things that are otherwise separated by an interval of space” (Hesselink, 148; cf. *Works*, 3.73).

THE COVENANTAL DIMENSION

In the second paragraph of the *Summary*, Knox highlights the covenantal dimension of the Lord’s Supper.

And therefore, in setting forth bread and wine to eat and drink, he confirms and seals up to us his promise and communion (that is, that we shall be partakers with

him in his kingdom); and [he] represents unto us, and makes plain to our senses, his heavenly gifts; and also gives unto us himself, to be received with faith, and not with mouth, nor yet by transfusion of substance. But so through the virtue of the Holy Ghost, that we, being fed with his flesh, and refreshed with his blood, may be renewed both unto true godliness and to immortality (*Works*, 3.73).

Although the word “covenant” does not appear in the text, the idea of confirming and sealing the promises of God is at the heart of a covenantal understanding of the sacraments (Old, *Communion*, 36). The Lord’s Supper is a sign of the new covenant by which Christ “confirms and seals up to us” his promise of salvation. As early as 1520, Martin Luther suggested that the Lord’s Supper might be understood better in terms of the biblical concept of covenant rather than in terms of scholastic theology.⁵⁷ Luther’s suggestion was based on the words of institution, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (1 Corinthians 11:25). In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther writes,

Let this stand, therefore, as our first and infallible proposition—the mass or Sacrament of the Altar is Christ’s testament, which he left behind him at his death to be distributed among his believers. For that is the meaning of his words, “This cup is the new testament in my blood.”⁵⁸

After explaining that a testament or covenant is essentially a promise, Luther observes that when we examine the promises of God in Scripture, we discover that God usually adds to each promise “some sign as a memorial or remembrance of the promise” (Luther, *Three Treatises*, 162). As examples of this, Luther points to the sign of the rainbow in God’s covenant with Noah and the sign of circumcision in his covenant with Abraham.⁵⁹ “We read of many such signs of the promises of God in the Scriptures,” says Luther (*Three Treatises*, 162). Applying this teaching to the Lord’s Supper, Luther concludes,

So in the mass also, the foremost promise of all, he adds, as a memorial sign of such a great promise, his own body and his own blood in the bread and wine.... We may learn from this that in every promise of God two things are presented to us, the word and the sign, so that we are to understand the word to be the testament, but the sign to be the sacrament. Thus, in the mass, the word of Christ is the testament, and the bread and wine are the sacrament ... the mass is nothing else than the divine

promise or testament of Christ, sealed with the sacrament of his body and blood (*Three Treatises*, 162, 166).

Luther’s great insight into the covenantal nature of the Lord’s Supper was embraced by many of the Reformers including Calvin and Knox.⁶⁰ In the Lord’s Supper, says Calvin, “we have both a covenant, and a confirmatory pledge of the covenant.”⁶¹ The covenant is first proclaimed in the Gospel and then sealed in the Supper. The promise always precedes; “the symbol is added because it confirms and seals the promise itself and makes us more aware how the Lord provides appropriately for our slender capacity” (Hesselink, 33; cf. *Institutes*, 4.14.3). The sacrament gives us certainty and assurance that the promise is truly ours—that Christ himself is truly given to us as our spiritual nourishment.

For seeing that we are so weak that we cannot receive

57. Old, *Communion*, 39. For Luther’s criticisms of scholastic eucharistic theology, see Martin Luther, *Three Treatises* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970) 144–52. In 1520, Luther wrote two significant works on the Lord’s Supper that emphasize the covenantal nature of the Sacrament: *A Treatise on the New Testament, that is, the Holy Mass* and *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. For the latter, see *ibid.*, 123–260; for the former, see Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 35, edited by E. Theodore Bachmann (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1960) 75–111.

58. Luther, *Three Treatises*, 154. In a later work, Luther says, “Briefly, the testament is the blessing or forgiveness of sins, Christ is the mediator of the testament, the dead body and the blood of Christ are truly the revealing and the sealing of the testament, the bread and wine are the symbols of the confirmed testament, which remind [us] of redemption and union” (Rorem, 163).

59. The example of circumcision was particularly important for Luther with regard to the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Abraham “received the sign of circumcision,” says Paul, “as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith” (Romans 4:11). Luther cites this text to defend the saying, “Not the sacrament, but the faith of the sacrament, justifies” (Luther, *Three Treatises*, 188). “Thus circumcision did not justify Abraham and his seed, and yet the Apostle calls it the seal of the righteousness by faith [Romans 4:11], because faith in the promise, to which circumcision was added, justified him and fulfilled what the circumcision signified. For faith was the spiritual circumcision of the foreskin of the heart, which was symbolized by the literal circumcision of the flesh.” “Thus it is not baptism that justifies ... but it is faith in that word of promise to which baptism is added. This faith justifies, and fulfills that which baptism signifies” (*idem*).

60. In Zurich, Zwingli and Bullinger significantly developed this covenantal perspective on the sacraments; see Jack Cottrell, *Covenant and Baptism in the Theology of Huldreich Zwingli* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1971); and Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991). On the covenantal perspective of Oecolampadius, see Old, *Patristic Roots*, 15–6.

61. John Calvin, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005) 383.

him with true heartfelt trust, when he is presented to us by simple doctrine and preaching, the Father of mercy, disdaining not to condescend in this matter to our infirmity, has been pleased to add to his word a visible sign, by which he might represent the substance of his promises, to confirm and fortify us by delivering us from all doubt and uncertainty (Calvin, *Tracts*, 2.166).

The covenantal dimension of the Lord's Supper underscores the inseparable relationship between Word and sacrament. When Knox says that the Supper confirms and seals the promise of God, he defines the sacrament by its relationship to the Word. For Calvin, the sacrament receives its life from the Word and cannot exist apart from it.⁶² Without the Word, the sacrament has no meaning and conveys no benefit (McEwen, 50). The sacrament is "never without a preceding promise but is joined to it as a sort of appendix, with the purpose of confirming and sealing the promise" (*Institutes*, 4.14.3). Thus, the administration of Communion must be preceded by the ministry of the Word. Like Calvin, Knox placed the Word first and the sacrament second.⁶³ This priority of the Word, however, does not mean that the sacrament is peripheral or nonessential. Christ has ordained and commanded both Word and sacrament to be used in his Church, and the bold presumption of man, says Knox, must never separate them (*Works*, 4.121). "No man, is so regenerate, but that continually he has need of the means which Christ Jesus" has appointed to be used in his Church, namely, "the Word truly preached and the Sacraments rightly administered" (4.121).

62. Glen J. Clary, "John Calvin: Servant of the Word," *Ordained Servant* 18 (2009) 87. Knox wrote, "Where Christ Jesus is not preached ... the Sacrament has neither life nor soul" (*Works*, 6.14).

63. Kyle, *Ministry*, 135. We should note here that since 1960—when Dr. James McEwen gave the Croall Lectures at New College, Edinburgh—scholars have sharply debated "whether Knox subordinated the sacrament to the Word or made them more co-central" (Kyle, *Ministry*, 135). The debate may be followed in the following works given in chronological order: Percy, 65, 229–30; McEwen, 45–60; D'Assonville, 18–19, 81–3; Reid, 51; Greaves, 103–5; Kyle, *Mind*, 172–4; and Kyle, *Ministry*, 135–6.

64. Hughes Oliphant Old, *Themes and Variations for a Christian Doxology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992) 111–2; cf. Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship: Reformed According to Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2002) 118. On the covenant ceremony in Exodus 24, see Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2004) 497–511; Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 1998) 21–4; and Tse-Gun Song, *Sinai Covenant and Moab Covenant: An Exegetical Study of the Covenants in Exodus 19:1–24:11 and Deuteronomy 4:45–28:69* (Cheltenham and Gloucester: College of Higher Education, 1992) 109–87.

As Luther observed, the key text for this covenantal perspective on the Lord's Supper is "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (1 Corinthians 11:25). These words indicate that what happens in the Lord's Supper is the making of a covenant. "It is our Lord who gives it and his people who accept it. We accept it by sharing a meal with our Lord and with our brethren in Christ" (Old, *Patristic Roots*, 16). In the words of institution, Christ echoes the words of Moses, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you" (Exodus 24:8). Hughes Oliphant Old summarizes the covenant ceremony recorded in the twenty-fourth chapter of Exodus:

[First] Moses reads to the assembled people the book of the covenant, and the people make a vow: "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient" (v. 7). Then Moses takes the blood of the sacrifice, sprinkles half of it on the altar and half on the people. This signifies the covenantal union that brought God and his people together in a common life. [Then, Moses declares,] "Behold the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words" (v. 8)... Finally, Moses took the elders up on the mountain, and "they beheld God, and ate and drank" (v. 11). The meaning of this is clear: in the sharing of the meal one enters into table fellowship with God ... this is fellowship or, even better, communion at its most intimate.⁶⁴

Here we have "the prototype of the worship of God's people down through the centuries" (Old, *Preaching*, 1.22). The covenant is first proclaimed, and then it is sealed with sensible signs, namely, the sprinkling of the blood and the sharing of a meal in the presence of God, which are types of baptism and the Lord's Supper. It is precisely this covenantal understanding of the sacrament that Knox has in mind when he says that Jesus "confirms and seals up to us his promise and communion ... and represents unto us, and makes plain to our senses, his heavenly gifts" (*Works*, 3.73).

THE REAL SPIRITUAL PRESENCE

In the *Summary*, Knox rejects the idea that only bread and wine are given in the Supper and not the true body and blood of Christ as well. Jesus Christ is truly present and presented and received in the sacrament. He gives himself to be received with faith. Christ is the matter or substance of the sacraments, "for in him they have all their firmness, and they do not promise anything apart

from him” (*Institutes*, 4.14.16; cf. Calvin, *Tracts*, 2.169). To deny that Christ is truly given in the Supper is to render the sacrament frivolous and useless (Calvin, *Tracts*, 2.170). “If God cannot deceive or lie, it follows that” the Lord’s Supper “accomplishes all that it signifies” (2.172). The visible signs of bread and wine are not empty figures. They are instruments through which the true body and blood of Christ are truly given and received. The signs should neither be separated from, nor confused with, the reality they signify. Sign and reality must be distinguished but not divided (cf. Calvin, *Tracts*, 2.172). As we saw in our examination of *The First Helvetic Confession*, Knox rejected the idea that the body and blood of Christ are either joined naturally to the bread and wine or locally confined in them or placed in them by any carnal presence. Instead, following the lead of Bucer and Calvin, he taught that the true body and blood of Christ are *spiritually* communicated to us through the agency of the Holy Spirit. In the Supper, we receive Christ “with faith, and not with mouth, nor yet by transfusion of substance. But so through the virtue [power] of the Holy Ghost, that we, being fed with his flesh, and refreshed with his blood, may be renewed both unto true godliness and to immortality” (*Works*, 3.73).

The sharing in the Lord’s body, which . . . is offered to us in the Supper, demands neither a local presence, nor the descent of Christ, nor an infinite extension of His body, nor anything of that sort; for, in view of the fact that the Supper is a heavenly act, there is nothing absurd about saying that Christ remains in heaven and is yet received by us. For the way in which He imparts Himself to us is by the secret power of the Holy Spirit, a power which is able not only to bring together, but also to join together, things which are separated by distance, and by a great distance at that.⁶⁵

In the vigorous debates between Luther and Zwingli on the sacrament, Zwingli insisted that Christ is eaten *spiritually* (*manducatio spiritualis*) in the Supper. The natural, material body of Christ is in heaven, and therefore, says Zwingli, it is “not eaten by us, literally or in substance, and all the more not quantitatively, but only sacramentally and *spiritually*” (Dennison, 189). Although Bucer and Calvin use similar terms, their interpretation of the *manducatio spiritualis* is not identical to Zwingli’s. For Zwingli,

To eat the body of Christ *spiritually* is nothing else than to trust in *spirit* and heart upon the mercy and goodness of God through Christ, that is, to be sure with unshaken

faith that God is going to give us pardon for our sins and the joy of everlasting blessedness on account of his Son, who was made wholly ours, was offered for us, and reconciled the divine righteousness to us. . . . To eat the body of Christ sacramentally, if we wish to speak accurately, is to eat the body of Christ in heart and *spirit* with the accompaniment of the sacrament.⁶⁶

While Bucer and Calvin agreed with Zwingli’s denial of the local and bodily presence of Christ in the Supper, they criticized his failure to explain how Christ is truly present in the sacrament and how his body and blood are actually given and received (see Calvin, *Tracts*, 2.195). As Calvin put it, Zwingli “laboured more to pull down what was evil than to build up what was good” (*ibid.*, 2.196). Therefore, both Bucer and Calvin attempted to correct this fault—chiefly by emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in the Supper.⁶⁷ Calvin explains,

[Christ is] given to us in the Supper *spiritually*, because the secret virtue of the Spirit makes things which are separated by *space* to be united with each other, and accordingly causes life from the flesh of Christ to reach us from heaven (Calvin, *Tracts*, 2.578).

For Zwingli, the *manducatio spiritualis* is essentially negative, since he primarily uses it to refute the eucharistic doctrines of Luther and Rome. For Bucer and Calvin, however, it is essentially positive, since they primarily use it to refer to the role of the Holy Spirit. To be sure, Bucer and Calvin do use the term in contrast to eating in a natural or carnal manner, but they are quick to add that this does not mean that Christ is present only in *spirit* or only in the believer’s imagination. At the Wittenberg conference in 1536, Bucer attempted to clarify this point for the Lutherans who were present.

By our expressions affirming that the body of Christ is eaten *spiritually*, and that Christ is presented to the

65. Hesselink, 148; cf. *ibid.*, 35; Dennison, 544; and Calvin’s comment on John 17:21 in John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005) 184.

66. Dennison, 190. On Zwingli’s understanding of *spiritual eating*, see *ibid.*, 186–93; cf. Zwingli’s arguments against Luther at the Marburg Colloquy in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 38, edited by Martin E. Lehmann (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971) 5–89; and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Zwingli and Bullinger* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1953) 176–238.

67. Cf. Hesselink, 147–9; Stephens, 238–59; B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) 131, 137–8, 175; hereafter Gerrish, *Grace*; and Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957) 203–10.

mouth of faith, we were not proposing some kind of imaginary or pretended presence. We merely sought to exclude that material presence (called a “bodily” presence) which had brought the world to such depths of madness as to believe that the Lord is contained bodily in the sacrament so long as the outward appearances of bread and wine remain, and that this sacramental presence of itself conveys some benefit and averts all evils, with the result that men had made the mere sight and carrying around of this sacrament of the highest importance, despite the absence of all teaching or mention of faith. Nevertheless we admitted that we had not always given so full an exposition of the presence of which we were now speaking (Wright, *Common Places*, 360–1).

That Knox followed Bucer and Calvin on this matter rather than Zwingli is evident in the *Summary*, for he defines the spiritual communication of Christ’s flesh and blood in terms of the work of the Holy Spirit.

[Christ] gives unto us himself, to be received with faith, and not with mouth, nor yet by transfusion of substance. But so through the virtue of the Holy Ghost, that we, being fed with his flesh, and refreshed with his blood, may be renewed both unto true godliness and to immortality (*Works*, 3.73).

In the last two paragraphs of the *Summary*, Knox turns his attention to the doctrine of transubstantiation. What we find most interesting here is that not one harsh word is spoken against transubstantiation. To be sure, Knox believed it was a blasphemous fable and passionately condemned it on numerous occasions. In the *Summary*, however, his tone is entirely pastoral. His aim was not so much to denounce transubstantiation but to comfort weak Christians, who were being terrified by papists, who insisted that if the bread is not transubstantiated into the body of Christ, there is no hope of salvation for anyone. They further insisted that the doctrine of transubstantiation is so essential to our salvation that a denial of it results in eternal damnation. Therefore, in

68. Kyle and Johnson write, “In the last two paragraphs, Knox once again goes on the offensive citing Scripture and selecting church fathers to prove that belief in transubstantiation will lead to damnation.... Belief in the bread and wine as the transubstantiated body and blood of Christ as an article of faith will lead to eternal damnation” (Kyle-Johnson, 51). In our opinion, Kyle and Johnson have misinterpreted the meaning and purpose of these last two paragraphs. Knox does not say that affirming transubstantiation will lead to damnation; rather, he says that denying transubstantiation will not lead to damnation. Other than this minor fault, Kyle and Johnson have written a superb introduction to the life and works of John Knox.

a pastoral manner, Knox endeavors to relieve the troubled conscience of the fearful Christian. To accept the doctrine of transubstantiation does not save anyone; to reject it does not condemn anyone.⁶⁸ Knox writes,

And as concerning these words, *Hoc est corpus meum*, “This is my body,” on which the Papiſts depend so much, saying, That we muſt needs believe that the bread and wine are transubſtantiated into Chriſt’s body and blood; We acknowledge that it is no article of our faith which can ſave us, nor which we are bound to believe upon pain of eternal damnation. For if we ſhould believe that his very natural body, both fleſh and blood, were naturally in the bread and wine, that ſhould not ſave us, ſeeing many believe that, and yet receive it to their damnation. For it is not his preſence in the bread that can ſave us, but his preſence in our hearts through faith in his blood, which has waſhed out our ſins, and pacified his Father’s wrath towards us. And again, if we do not believe his bodily preſence in the bread and wine, that ſhall not damn us, but the abſence out of our heart through unbelief (*Works*, 3.74).

In the Roman liturgy, the miracle of transubstantiation occurred when the priest recited the canon of the Mass with the intention of consecrating the elements. Thus, the words of institution—*Hoc est corpus meum*—came to be seen as a magical formula or incantation, and all of the “mimicry and buffoonery” that was added to the celebration of the sacrament only confirmed this superstition (Calvin, *Tracts*, 2.193). “Hence their consecration,” says Calvin, “is only a species of sorcery, seeing that by muttering and gesticulating like sorcerers, they think to constrain Jesus to come down into their hands” (2.191). As in the Roman liturgy, Knox’s liturgy also includes the words of institution, but in Knox’s liturgy, these words are recited—not as a formula of consecration—but “rather to set forth the warrant and true manner of the sacrament” (Thompson, *Liturgies*, 292). To make this clear, Knox appended the following statement to the end of *The Genevan Book of Order*:

And as for the words of the Lord’s Supper, we rehearse them, not because they should change the substance of the bread or wine, or that the repetition thereof, with the intent of the sacrifice, should make the Sacrament, as the Papiſts faſely believe, but they are read and pronounced to teach us how to behave ourſelves in that action, and that Chriſt might witneſs unto our faith, as it were with his own mouth, that he hath ordained theſe ſigns to our ſpiritual uſe and comfort ... ſo that

without his word and warrant there is nothing in this holy action attempted (Hurlbut, 52).

Thus, the words of institution were retained in Knox's Communion liturgy, but they were not used in the same way or for the same purpose as in the canon of the Mass. In the last paragraph of the *Summary*, Knox anticipates and answers one objection to his denial of transubstantiation.

Now, if they would here object, that though it be truth, that the absence out of the bread could not damn us, yet we are bound to believe it because of God's Word, saying, "This is my body," which who believes not as much as in him lies, makes God a liar: and therefore, of an obstinate mind not to believe his Word, may be our damnation. To this we answer, That we believe God's Word, and confess that it is true, but not so to be understood as the Papists grossly affirm. For in the Sacrament we receive Jesus Christ spiritually, as did the Fathers of the Old Testament, according to St. Paul's saying [1 Corinthians 10:1-4]. And if men would well weigh, how that Christ, ordaining this Holy Sacrament of his body and blood, spoke these words Sacramentally, doubtless they would never so grossly and foolishly understand them, contrary to all the Scriptures, and to the exposition of St. Augustine, St. Jerome, Fulgentius, Vigilius, Origen, and many other godly writers (*Works*, 3.74-5; cf. Calvin, *Tracts*, 2.185).

If transubstantiation is not true, then how are we to understand the words of Jesus? Knox gives two answers to this question. We have already examined his first answer, namely, that Christ is received spiritually in the sacrament. His second answer, however, adds a new thought. When Jesus said, "This is my body," he spoke these words sacramentally. In other words, since the bread is the sacrament and figure of the body, "the name of the body of Jesus Christ is transferred to the bread" (Calvin, *Tracts*, 2.172). There is a sacramental union between the sign and the reality, such that the name or title of the reality may be given to the sign. For this reason, Jesus refers to the bread as his body.

THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL DIMENSION

In the third paragraph of the *Summary*, Knox highlights the ecclesiological dimension of the Lord's Supper. Knox writes that in the sacrament,

the Lord Jesus gathers us unto one visible body, so that we become members one of another, and make altogether one body, whereof Jesus Christ is the only head.

And finally that by the same Sacrament, the Lord calls us to remembrance of his Death and Passion, to stir up our hearts to praise his most holy name (*Works*, 3.73).

"This means, if words mean anything," remarks McEwen, "not just that Christ gathers and creates the Church, but that He gathers it by this sacrament, and that on this sacrament He finds it" (McEwen, 56). It is by the Lord's Supper that Christ gathers us "unto one visible body" and knits us together so that we become "members one of another." Knox found this ecclesiological dimension of the sacrament in the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians, where Paul says, "Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17). That is, although we are many in number, we become one body when we all share in the one bread of the Lord's Supper. The reason is that in the Supper, Christ "makes himself common to all" and "makes all one in himself" (Hesselink, 35; cf. *Institutes*, 4.17.38). The Supper unites us to Christ, and *in him*, we are united to one another. Since Christ is one person and cannot be divided, all who are *in him* form one single and indivisible body. In the sacrament, Christ communicates himself to us in such a manner that "he is made completely one with us and we with him" (*Institutes*, 4.17.38). We dwell in him, and he in us, and this mutual indwelling of Christ and the saints is the root that produces the unity of the Church. Calvin explains,

Now, since he [Christ] has only one body, of which he makes us all partakers, it is necessary that all of us also be made one body by such participation. The bread shown in the Sacrament represents this unity. As it is made of many grains so mixed together that one cannot be distinguished from another, so it is fitting that in the same way we should be joined and bound together by such great agreement of minds that no sort of disagreement or division may intrude.⁶⁹

Thus, the Church becomes one body by participating in the sacrament of Holy Communion. Knox further develops this ecclesiological dimension when he says that the Lord's Supper establishes a bond of mutual and fraternal love among believers (*Works*, 3.74). Once again, we see the influence of Calvin on Knox's eucharistic

69. *Institutes* 4.17.38; cf. Calvin, *Tracts*, 2.177. See also Capito's chapter on the eucharist in *The Tetrapolitan Confession* (Dennison, 159); cf. Zwingli's interpretation of 1 Corinthians 10 in Bromiley, *Zwingli and Bullinger*, 237; and Jacques Courvoisier, *Zwingli: A Reformed Theologian* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1963).

theology, for Calvin—following the lead of Augustine—refers to the Lord’s Supper as “the bond of love.”

Accordingly, Augustine with good reason frequently calls this Sacrament “the bond of love.” For what sharper goad could there be to arouse mutual love among us than when Christ, giving himself to us, not only invites us by his own example to pledge and give ourselves to one another, but inasmuch as he makes himself common to all, also makes all of us one in himself (*Institutes*, 4.17.38; cf. Calvin, *Tracts*, 2.177).

Thus, through the Lord’s Supper, Christ incites us to live in peace, unity and love with one another.

The ecclesiological dimension of Knox’s eucharistic theology has received much attention in the last fifty years—primarily due to the Croall Lectures of James McEwen at New College, Edinburgh in 1960. Prior to McEwen’s lectures, the publication of Lord Eustace Percy’s biography of Knox in 1937 brought this to the attention of scholars. Percy argued that the true legacy of Knox was not that he was “the thunderous preacher” of Scotland but rather “the restorer of the Sacrament” (Percy, 65).

This is the one thing that he achieved. His pulpit words have faded, as he intended they should; his *blasts of the trumpet* against established governments have been drowned by the fanfares of more convinced revolutionaries. But his conception of the central act of Christian worship set a lasting seal upon the Church of Scotland, differentiating it from all other Protestant communions and making it, in the strict sense of the term, a Eucharistic Church. His political vehemencies, systematised by others to conclusions which his hot-headedness had never drawn, were to torture the body of Scotland for

70. *Idem.*; cf. Reid, 51; and McEwen. Although we do not entirely agree with Percy’s portrait of John Knox, we do agree with the idea that the rich Communion piety of Scottish Presbyterian history is a legacy of Knox’s eucharistic faith and practice. See Old, *Communion*, 227–96; Old, *Worship*, 136–40; and Burnett, 1–63; cf. Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scotland and the Making of American Revivalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001).

71. Greaves, 104. These Communion services are recorded by Knox in his *History*; see Guthrie, 111–6; Dickinson, 118–22; cf. McEwen, 56; Percy, 230–1; and McCrie, 90–2. One such private meeting in which Knox administered the Lord’s Supper took place at Calder House in West Lothian (Guthrie, 116). The portrait of Knox administering Communion on the cover of this journal is from Sir David Wilkie’s depiction of this Communion service at Calder House; it bears the caption, “The first Sacrament of the Supper given in Scotland after the Reformation was given in this Hall.” Evidence to support the caption’s claim, however, may be lacking; see McMillan, 28; and Baird, *Eutaxia*, 115–8.

a century; but his vision of this one central truth was to save her soul.⁷⁰

Furthermore, Percy asserts that Knox went well beyond Calvin in lifting up the Lord’s Supper, for he simply “could not take Calvin’s colder view about the sacraments” (Percy, 230). In a similar fashion, McEwen insists that Knox departed significantly from Calvin in his sacramental theology (McEwen, 47). For this reason, says McEwen, it will not do to say that in matters sacramental “Scotland followed Calvin.” In fact, this is precisely “the point at which Scotland diverged” (McEwen, 47). McEwen claims that Knox—unlike Calvin—consistently maintained the unity of Word and sacrament and regarded them as co-central in the life of the Church (McEwen, 53). He supports his claim by appealing primarily to the fact that Knox was willing to serve Communion to any group of believers gathered for worship, without waiting for the establishment of an organized Church. During his travels throughout Scotland in 1555–56 and his visit to Kyle in 1562, Knox held services at numerous private residences in which he administered the Lord’s Supper.⁷¹ McEwen writes,

During both missions, his practice was at every possible opportunity to gather the faithful into the drawing room of some gentleman’s house, or some other convenient place, and there to administer the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. There was no question of waiting for the establishment of an organized Church. Wherever two or three could be gathered together, there Knox administered Communion, carefully noting the date and place of celebration as important and significant events (McEwen, 56).

Contrary to the practice of Knox in Scotland, Calvin “discouraged the persecuted Huguenots of France from seeking to institute the celebration of the sacraments: for the celebration of these could very well wait until such time as they had opportunity to organize their Church in an orderly manner” (McEwen, 53). From this, McEwen draws the conclusion that “the Sacrament had an importance and a vital quality to Knox that it apparently did not have to Calvin” (*ibid.*, 56). Moreover, the key to understanding this difference in practice between Calvin and Knox, says McEwen, is found in Knox’s *Summary*, particularly, in his statement that “the Lord Jesus gathers us unto one visible body, so that we become members one of another, and make altogether one body, whereof Jesus Christ is the only head” (*Works*, 3.73).

I know nothing quite like this anywhere else in Reformed teaching. This is not a dispensable sacrament that Knox is describing; not one that may be postponed without serious harm until the visible body of the Church has been organized. This sacrament, as Knox describes it, is the very foundation of the visible body of the Church: by it, Christ brings that visible body into being. The Church is founded on the Word—yes: but on the Word completed and fulfilled by the action of Christ in the Sacrament. Now, here is the reason why Knox, unlike Calvin, will not wait to celebrate the sacraments till the Church be formed; for it is the sacraments that form the Church. This is why Knox, in his missions to Scotland, gathers his two or three where he can, for the Lord's Supper. It is in these sacramental gatherings that they cease to be scattered believers, and begin to form "the face of a Kirk." Here they are made members one of another; here they are gathered by Christ Himself into one visible body, with Himself as Head. By Word and Sacrament the Church is created. On Word and Sacrament the Church is founded. But by Word alone, without Sacrament, the Church cannot be. To Knox, the Sacrament is creative, and basic, for the life of the Church, in a way it is not for Calvin—or anywhere else in the Reformed world. . . . None in the Reformed world made the Sacrament basic for the Church itself, as Knox did (McEwen, 57).

While McEwen's argument is interesting, it is, nevertheless, unconvincing. As we have demonstrated above, the ecclesiological dimension of Knox's eucharistic theology is not a point at which he and Calvin diverged. Quite the contrary, the doctrines of Calvin and Knox on this subject are virtually indistinguishable. The only substantive argument that McEwen offers in support of his claim is the difference in practice between Calvin and Knox concerning the lawful administration of the sacraments. We do not deny that there is a difference in practice between the Reformers, but we deny the inference that McEwen draws from it. Does this minor difference in sacramental practice *necessarily* indicate a substantive difference in sacramental theology?⁷² We do not believe that it does. One could just as easily argue that Calvin and Knox had different ideas concerning ecclesiology or Church discipline. Richard Greaves suggests this when he writes,

When Knox administered the sacraments during his travels in 1555–56, he *was* administering them to visible kirks. His congregations were, at least for the most part, believers, and he was proclaiming the Word and

administering the sacraments. Only ecclesiastical discipline was lacking. . . . Where the Word was preached and the sacraments were rightly administered, there the visible church existed. . . . Knox certainly did not underestimate the value of an organized kirk. Neither did he equate that value with the underlying reality of the church as a body of believers gathered to hear the Word and receive the sacraments. In essence, Knox did not absolutely equate the visible church with the organized church. The latter was obviously visible, but there was also a visible church which could totally lack the elements of ecclesiasticism. It was not until Knox's visible kirks of 1555–56 became organized kirks that he added the element of discipline as a necessary mark. The significance of Knox's position . . . was that visible churches could exist where ecclesiasticism was absent (Greaves, 105).

While there may be some weaknesses in Greave's thesis, it is, nevertheless, more convincing than McEwen's. However one explains this divergence in practice between Knox and Calvin, in our opinion, it would be a mistake to infer a significant theological disagreement between them from this minor variation in practice.

THE SACRAMENTAL DIMENSION

From their study of the Church Fathers, the Reformers discovered the original meaning of the Latin word *sacramentum* and the reason why it came to be used for baptism and the Lord's Supper. According to Mohrmann,

the basic meaning of the word *sacramentum* is a religious commitment. . . . In a derived sense it can, therefore, mean an initiation to a religious community, an oath of allegiance, a religious vow, or a legal or religious contract. Tertullian, in his *De corona*, contrasts the sacrament of the Christian with the sacrament of the soldier. By this he means that just as the soldier has made an oath of allegiance to his commander, so the Christian in his baptism has made an oath of allegiance to

72. Perhaps one could argue that there is an inconsistency between theology and practice in one of the Reformers. McEwen writes, "Calvin's whole treatment of the sacraments exhibits a vacillation between a 'high' doctrine and a merely 'obsignatorial' one. There is clear inconsistency between his description of the Eucharist as a great mystery—a communion in the Body and Blood of Christ, and his description of it as a mere seal, a useful but not essential stimulus to faith" (McEwen, 53). If McEwen is willing to admit that such an inconsistency may exist within someone's theology, why does he not consider the possibility of inconsistency between the faith and practice of Calvin (or Knox)?

Christ. For Tertullian, it was this understanding of the word *sacramentum* which led to his application of it to baptism or the Lord's Supper.⁷³

For this reason, Zwingli teaches that the sacraments "fill the office of an oath of allegiance." The Latin writers, says Zwingli, used *sacramentum* in place of "oath" because "those who use one and the same oath, become one and the same race and sacred alliance, united into one body and one people" (Dennison, 196). Likewise, Calvin has this understanding of *sacramentum* in mind when he writes,

All believers have one common vow which, made in baptism, we confirm and, so to speak, sanction by catechism and receiving the Lord's Supper. For the sacraments are like contracts by which the Lord gives us his mercy and from it eternal life; and we in turn promise him obedience.⁷⁴

Thus, *sacramentum* originally signified "the solemn oath that the soldier took to the commander when he entered military service" (*Institutes*, 4.14.13). It is appropriate, therefore, to use the term for baptism and the Lord's Supper, for by these rites, we profess Christ to be "our commander, and testify that we serve under his" banner just as soldiers "bind their fealty to their commander" by a military oath "and make profession of military service" (4.14.13). This is the primary meaning of *sacramentum* in secular writings, but when it is applied to baptism and the Lord's Supper, the emphasis is not on the believer's act of vowing himself to his commander but "the commander's act of receiving soldiers into the ranks. For by the sacraments the Lord promises that 'he will be our God and we shall be his people'" (4.14.13). While this is the primary meaning of *sacramentum* in its Christian use, it also has a secondary meaning, namely, the believer's oath of allegiance (4.14.13). In the Lord's Supper, therefore, we pledge our

73. Old, *Patristic Roots*, 286–7; cf. Old, *Communion*, 68; John F. D'Amico, "Beatus Rhenanus, Tertullian, and the Reformation," *Archive for Reformation History* 71 (1980): 37–63; Christine Mohrmann, "Sacramentum dans les plus anciens textes chrétiens," *Etudes sur le latin des chrétiens*, 3 vols. (Rome, 1958–1965) 1.233–44; and Tertullian, *The Chaplet, or De corona*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, edited by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903) 93–103.

74. *Institutes*, 4.13.6. It is worth noting here that in the same section of the *Institutes*, Calvin uses Tertullian's definition of the baptismal vow as a renunciation of Satan (see *idem.*). In baptism, says Tertullian, "we are called upon to make a vow renouncing the devil, his pomp and his angels" (cf. Old, *Patristic Roots*, 303).

allegiance to Christ by publicly professing our faith, and we declare and witness before the world that he is our God, and we are his people. Knox highlights this sacramental dimension of the Lord's Supper when he writes,

[W]e believe that it is a Confession, wherein we show what kind of doctrine we profess; and what Congregation we join ourselves unto; and likewise, that it is a bond of mutual love among us. And, finally, we believe that all the comers unto this holy Supper must bring with them their conversion unto the Lord, by unfeigned repentance in Faith; and in this Sacrament receive the seals and confirmation of their faith; and yet must in no wise think, that for this work's sake their sins are forgiven (*Works*, 3.74).

Thus, the sacrament seals and confirms—not only God's promises to us—but our faith by which we receive them. Furthermore, the sacrament is a confession of our faith. When I eat and drink at the Lord's Table, says Knox,

I openly confess the fruit and virtue of Christ's body, of his blood and passion, to appertain to myself; and that I am a member of his mystical body; and that God the Father is appeased with me, notwithstanding my first corruption and present infirmities (*Works*, 3.67–8; cf. 4.120).

By coming to the Lord's Table, we solemnly witness before the world that we are of "the household of God our Father" and are received into his family by his covenant of mercy (*Works*, 4.124). By partaking of the Lord's Supper, we declare to the world that because we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ,

he admits us to his table, and expressly in his word sets before us the bread of life which descended from heaven, to assure our consciences that . . . with joy does he receive us as the father did his unthankful and prodigal son, returning to him from his wretched condition and miserable poverty (*Works*, 4.124).

Thus, when we come to the Lord's Table, our heavenly Father prepares for us a spiritual feast and feeds us with the bread of life from heaven. At the Lord's Table, we rejoice and celebrate that we who were dead are now alive—that we who were lost are now found. And in joy and thankfulness, we pledge our allegiance to Christ and vow our obedience to him: "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient" (Exodus 24:7).

Continued on Page 249.

generic transcendental arguments and modal transcendental argumentations. He advocates the latter while providing a new and clearer way to articulate it with the help of analytical philosophy and possible world semantics.

Lastly, Camden Bucey proves the second of two exegetical studies in this year's issue. This article, like Jeon's, is also an Old Testament study. However, unlike Jeon's piece, Bucey's focus is in the prophet Micah. Bucey's concern is to demonstrate the close relation between exegetical, biblical, and systematic theology. He uses Micah 3:1–4 as a test case to demonstrate that not only can the doctrine of the Trinity be found on the pages of the Old Testament, but also the finer details of the doctrine such as the perichoretic relations of the three persons of the Godhead.

In our book review section for this year, we have a number of notables. All the reviews and responses were quality reviews, but we were able to include some unusual things. Some of the most important books reviewed for this issue are Michael Horton's volume on systematic theology, Johannes Maccovius' book on distinctions (once a prime text in seminaries in the seventeenth century), Eric Johnson's massive compendium on counseling, and last but not least, a couple of books on John Knox reviewed by yours truly (we had to have *something* in the review section to match the theme of John Knox!). Three unusual features of this year's review section include two reviews and responses, one on the subject of infant baptism, with J.V. Fesko and Gary Crampton arguing for paedobaptism and credobaptism, respectively; and the other review and response on Kevin Vanhoozer's recent book *Remythologizing Theology*. We were fortunate to have Dr. Vanhoozer able and willing to respond to the review from James Dolezal, as well as having a further response from Dolezal. The third unusual feature is that we have an entry in Reformed philosophy, a first for The Confessional Presbyterian. Paul Helm's excellent volume entitled *Eternal God*, now in its second edition, is ably reviewed by a Reformed philosopher, Patrick Hall. Enjoy our selection for this year.

This year's recurring back of issue features offer Todd Rudell's rendition of Psalm 116 for *Psallo*, more information on James Durham manuscripts in *Antiquary*, and a translation of the preface to the Constance Hymnal for *In Translatiōne*. The latter is of note for having a defense of hymns to go along with the Psalms in public worship song, but also of interest as an early Reformed acknowledgment that some contended for the singing of the Psalms alone in the services of the church (which would be the practice of many Reformation churches such as the Church of Scotland). While the author was Reformed, and was writing for (and the hymnal was ecumenically intended for use by) Reformed, Lutheran and Anabaptist alike, some of the argument is strikingly Lutheran, rather than from the stand point of that regulative

principle of worship defended just some ten years later by John Calvin in his *Necessity of Reforming the Church* and later by John Knox in his writings.

We offer these articles and the numerous book reviews with humility and thanksgiving to our Triune God. It is our prayerful hope that God would be pleased to use this 2011 edition to bring much good to His Church, edify and challenge His servants, and bring all glory to His thrice holy Name. Amen.

Holy Communion in the Theology of John Knox. Continued from Page 24.

THE EUCHARISTIC LEGACY OF KNOX

As we approach the five hundredth anniversary of John Knox's birth, one wonders how our Reformer will be commemorated.⁷⁵ To be sure, Knox has many enemies in our day, who will try to vilify him in one way or another. Our concern here, however, is not with those who condemn him but with those who admire him as the leading Reformer of Scotland. The image of John Knox as a fiery preacher, the trumpeter of God, is certainly true to history, and it is right that we commemorate his legacy as a preacher of the Word. But Knox should also be commemorated as a restorer of the sacrament in Scotland. Indeed, the rich, eucharistic theology and piety of our Reformer left an indelible mark on Scottish Presbyterian history. It can be seen in the Communion sermons of Robert Bruce as well as those of Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, in the works of John Willison and Robert Walker, and, of course, in the Scottish Communion seasons of the eighteenth century. Along with Sir David Wilkie's portrait (see cover), these things bear eloquent testimony to the eucharistic legacy of John Knox, the restorer of the sacrament of Holy Communion in the realm of Scotland. ■

The Abrahamic Covenant and the Kingdom of God. Continued from Page 138.

CONCLUSION

We endeavored to prove that God promised the holy theocratic kingdom which includes the covenant people and the Promised Land in Canaan. Through the ceremony of covenant ratification by oath, God assured Abraham that all the promises would be realized and fulfilled. God's promise of the holy theocratic kingdom in Canaan was a type of the everlasting kingdom of heaven in Jesus Christ.

We found that the recent discoveries of the treaties in the ancient Near East do not contradict the classic covenant

75. Although the exact year of Knox's birth is uncertain, he was most likely born in 1514 (see Kyle-Johnson, 40).