

THESIS ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: JOHN CALVIN'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER: A HISTRO-ANALYTICAL STUDY

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The Lord's Supper acts significantly in Christendom. It is one of the two ordinances established by Jesus Christ to be observed by the Christian Church. The Lord's Supper is frequently conducted to fortify believers' continuous relationship with Jesus Christ. Numerous attempts have been made to provide a reason for the purpose, institution, and exercise of the Lord's Supper, resulting in several theological works.

The purpose of the study was to evaluate John Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper. This affirmed the essence of the Christian practice of the Lord's Supper and the necessity of the foot-washing, which must precede the Lord's Supper.

The study employed a historical-grammatical method to find out John Calvin's understanding of the nature of the service, the type of wine and bread used, and the relevance of the ritual of foot-washing for the Lord's Supper.

The study concluded that John Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper being a sign appears accurate. However, the study reported some inconsistencies in John Calvin's work concerning the nature of the bread used in the Lord's Supper in reference to Scripture. More so, the study concluded that the wine used for the Lord's Supper was not fermented since Jesus described it as "fruit of the vine," which refers to fresh grape juice and not fermented wine. Furthermore, findings from the study concluded that in the moment of the Lord's Supper service, Jesus is not with humanity physically. However, through His Holy Spirit, He manifests His real presence as He feeds Christians spiritually during the Lord's Supper to sustain them through the services. Finally, Jesus set aside the practice of foot washing to denote washing anew and to reveal the voluntary service to other people in Christ-like humility with unity of love in the heart. Foot washing service preceding bread breaking and taking of wine makes the Lord's Supper to be complete.

The study findings showed insufficient work on the benefits of foot-washing. Therefore, the researcher would like to recommend that more work be conducted on the benefit of the foot-washing to believers' spiritual life since it was commanded and instituted by Jesus Christ.

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A thesis

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

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by

Clifford Asomaning Marfo

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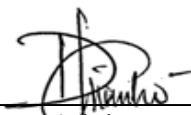
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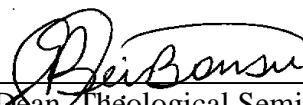
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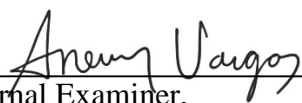
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This work is dedicated to my dear wife, Janet Asomaning Marfo,
my children namely Maame Serwaa Marfo, Kingsford
Asomaning Marfo, Edith Afriyie Marfo, and Isaac
Obeng Marfo and all my loved ones.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The Lord's Supper holds an immense significance in the Christian Church.¹ It is one of the "two ordinances instituted by Jesus to be observed by the Church,"² and the other being baptism. The Lord's Supper is referred to as Communion Service,³ or Eucharist.⁴ It is done periodically to ensure continuing and renewing fellowship among believers and with Christ Jesus.⁵ The Church practice of the Lord's Supper with different understandings of the meaning, purpose, and results of its observation,⁶ has been a source of division in it rather than unity.⁷

¹H. J. Selderhuis, *The Calvin Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 51.

²Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity, 2012), 988.

³The word "communion" comes from King James Bible translation of the Greek word *koinônia* in 1 Corinthians, which means "sharing." Paul uses the phrase in describing the sharing of bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ. The Latin root is *com-mun'-is*, meaning participation by all. See, William Morris, Ed., *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), 268-270.

⁴The term Eucharist is from the Old French word *eucariste*, from the Late Latin word *eucharistia*, and Greek word *eukharistia* meaning "thanksgiving, gratitude." Essentially, the word "Eucharist" means "giving thanks" to God. Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them (Luke 22:18-19).

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 635.

⁷Donald G. Bloesch, *The Church: Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 147.

There had been various efforts to explain the meaning and practice of the Lord's Supper, which have led to several theological works.⁸ The best-known theological works included: Transubstantiation,⁹ Impanation,¹⁰ Consubstantiation,¹¹ Receptionism,¹² and Memorialism.¹³ However, there is another explanation on Lord's

⁸Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 635-638. See also, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Lutherans, and Adventists in Conversation, Report and Papers Presented 1994-1998* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000), 190-194.

⁹Transubstantiation believes that the bread and wine at Mass are changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The Roman Catholic Church posits that the Eucharistic elements converts into the real body and blood of Christ at the consecration, only the appearances of bread and wine remaining. See, G.C. Berkouswer, *The Lord's Supper in the Reformed tradition : an essay on the mystical true presence* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), 229. Wingard stresses that the body and blood of Christ are present in heaven as well as physically in the bread and wine. It is believed that the totality of Christ's presence in the form of body, blood, soul, and divinity is present at the Lord's Supper. Charlie Wingard, "John Calvin on the Lord's Supper," *Westminster Confession of Faith* 29 no. 6: 277.

¹⁰Impanation is a doctrine that the body and blood of Christ are present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist after consecration. But without replacement or change in the substance of the bread and wine. This doctrine apparently patterned after Christ's Incarnation asserts that "God is made bread" in the Eucharist. The eucharistic bread shares Christ's divine attributes through His body. Although this view may seem similar it is not identical to the doctrine of consubstantiation. It is deemed a heresy by the Roman Catholic Church and is also repudiated by classical Lutheranism. See, William. A. Neilson, *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language*, 2nd ed. (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Co.1936), 1247. See also, Charles P. Krauth, *The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1875), 771.

¹¹Consubstantiation is a doctrine, especially in Lutheran belief, that the substance of the bread and wine co-exists with the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. The prefix "con" means "with," which implies that the bread does not change into the body of Jesus but co-exists with it. Thus, the bread is both a piece of bread and the body of Jesus and the same can be said of the wine. It does not necessarily become the blood of Jesus but co-exists with the blood of Jesus. Thus, the wine is both wine and the blood of Jesus. See, F. L. Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 340.

¹²Receptionism is another form of Anglican eucharistic theology that teaches that the bread and wine's eucharistic elements are unchanged during the prayer of consecration. However, when believers receive the bread and wine, they are receiving the body and blood of Christ through faith. It was a prevailing belief among Anglicans in the 16th and 17th centuries. Notable theologians who supported this doctrine were Thomas Cranmer and Richard Hooker. It was the prevailing eucharistic theology in the Reformation era. See, David J. Kennedy, *Eucharistic Sacramentality in an Ecumenical Context: The Anglican Epiclesis New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2016), 243.

¹³Memorialism is the belief that the elements of bread and wine in the Eucharist are symbolic in nature representing the body and blood of Jesus Christ. It sees the Lord's Supper as a remembrance of what Christ did on the cross. To the memorialist, the elements of the Lord's Supper are symbolic. The bread represents Jesus' body, and the cup represents His blood. In memorialism, the elements of communion have no literal or mystical connection to Jesus' body. Swiss Reformer Huldrych Zwingli formally articulated Memorialism, and his teaching went against the Catholic view and Martin Luther's. Memorialism emerges from Luke's Gospel. Luke 22:19: "Do this in remembrance of me," and the view

Supper from John Calvin. Calvin opines that “the bread and wine is a sign of the body of Christ.”¹⁴ Calvin recognizes the sacraments as signs. He rejects the idea that the sacramental signs are merely symbols. Calvin believes that Christ's usage of the words, “this is my body,” applied to the bread as the physical body does not necessarily have to descend in order for believers to partake genuinely. He distinguishes a once-for-all sacrifice from a continual one.¹⁵

John Calvin also had a different opinion regarding the Lord’s Supper. He postulates that the Lord’s Supper is made up of union with Christ being spiritually present in the sacrament.¹⁶ He stressed that the vital role of the Holy Spirit in the observance of the Lord’s Supper is Christ's representative at the table. He basically depended on the gospel, according to John, for his theology of the Sacrament.¹⁷ This subject has created some theological challenges.¹⁸ However, this paper intends to evaluate Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper biblically to ascertain how faithful he was to Scripture so far as this Sacrament is concerned.

that the Lord's Supper's main objective is to help the member recognize Jesus and his sacrifice on the Cross. See, John Riggs, *The Lord's Supper in the Reformed Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2015), 56.

¹⁴John T. McNeill, ed., *Calvin: Institute of the Christian Religion, Vol. 1* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 827; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2000), 995.

¹⁵John Calvin, “Short Treatise on the Holy Supper of Our Lord Jesus Christ,” In this way, Calvin says that a continual sacrifice must even be termed “devilish” and must be stopped entirely. Date accessed June 21, 2018, <https://rscottclark.org/2016/05/calvin-short-treatise-on-the-lords-supper-1541>.

¹⁶Robert Letham, *The Lord's Supper: Eternal Word in Broken Bread* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Company, 2001), 32.

¹⁷Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*, 653.

¹⁸Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrinal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2000), 988.

Statement of the Problem

Calvin's Understanding of the Lord's Supper seems distinct concerning the real presence of Christ.¹⁹ He posits that in the Lord's Supper, Christ's presence should be comprehended as spiritual presence because the bread and the wine are sacramental signs of this spiritual presence.²⁰ He rejects the idea that the sacramental signs are merely symbols.²¹ Calvin postulates that the bread and wine stood for union with Christ through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.²² Calvin opines that when Christ uses the words, "this is my body," it applied to the bread. Christ's human body does not have to descend in order for believers to indeed partake. Calvin distinguishes a once-for-all sacrifice from a continual one.²³ He perceived that the feeding of the soul with the blood and body of Christ occurs only in heaven.²⁴

John Calvin further suggests that it is unnecessary to use unleavened bread at Lord's Supper, which does not align with biblical practices. Calvin further argues that if Jesus wanted Christians only to use unleavened bread during Lord's Supper, would He not have inspired these particular texts to describe 'unleavened bread' rather than merely 'bread'? Calvin opines that "regarding the external form of

¹⁹Ibid, 654.

²⁰General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Lutherans and Adventists in Conversation," *Reports and Papers Presented 1994-1998* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and Lutherans, 2000), 194.

²¹Ibid, 194.

²²Hebert Kiesler, "The ordinances: Baptism, Foot Washing, and Lord's Supper," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing, 2000), 602.

²³John Calvin, *Short Treatise on the Holy Supper of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1540), 14.

²⁴Nelson Kilpp, "Baptism and the Lord's Supper in Lutheran Tradition and in Present Dialogue" in *General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists & Lutherans & Adventists in Conversation: Report and Papers Presented 1994-1998*, edited by B.B. Beach & Sven G. Oppegaard (Silver Spring, MD: Pacific Press, 2000), 190.

the ordinance, whether the wine to be red or white is of no consequence. These things are indifferent and left free to the Church...”²⁵

John Calvin rejects the idea that the sacramental signs are merely symbols. His assertion of unnecessarily using unleavened bread or the wine to be red or white at Lord's Supper, which does not align with biblical practices, seems problematic. No matter Calvin's research into this issue, there are still some questions remaining. The questions are: What were his views on the Lord's Supper? Is there a spiritual or religious presence of Christ within the bread and wine? Are the bread and wine the invisible food from the body and blood of Christ? Did Calvin recognize the usefulness of foot washing as a prelude to the Lord's Supper? Was John Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper in line with the Bible? Although there exists literature on John Calvin and his teachings, a biblical evaluation of his understanding of the Lord's Supper is lacking, and this current work seeks to address it.

Purpose of the Study

Considering the problem identified above, the purpose of this study is two-fold. First, it seeks to assess the views of John Calvin on the Lord's Supper. Second, it seeks to evaluate the views of John Calvin on the nature, the type of wine and bread, and Foot washing for the Lord's Supper in the light of biblical teachings about the Lord's Supper and its proper Christian practices.

²⁵Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 43

Scope of the Study

As a Christian ordinance, the Lord's Supper was established in the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ.²⁶ The remark "do this in remembrance of Me" (Matt26:26-29, being a command given by Jesus, enjoining Christians to observe the Lord's Supper repeated.²⁷ The Christian practice of the Lord's Supper attracted much attention during the Reformation era. Though many theologians have written on the subject, this work is limited to John Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper. This work does not seek to compare John Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper to other theologians. Also, many other things could be looked at when it comes to John Calvin's views on the Lord's Supper. However, this work seeks to present John Calvin's views on the Lord's Supper and evaluate them in light of the Bible.

Significance of the Study

The Lord's Supper, established by Jesus Christ, is an essential practice among Christians. Thus, many theologians have been compelled to express their opinions on it—notably, John Calvin, who subscribed to the Lord's Supper's importance in the Christian journey. Significantly, the study will ascertain John Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper, whether it agrees with Jesus' instruction in the New Testament. Besides, the research may resolve difficulties regarding the proper practice of the Lord's Supper and contribute towards reshaping current perceptions and teachings on the Lord's Supper. Again, the study will contribute to the existing knowledge of the Lord's Supper.

²⁶Kevin J. Conner, *The Church in the New Testament* (Portland, OR: City Bible Publishing, 1982), 289.

²⁷Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 988.

Research Methodology

As a qualitative study, this work employed the historical, evaluative, and analytical methodology to scrutinize the views of John Calvin on the Lord's Supper concerning the Bible. A bibliographical search was done as the researcher used relevant books and journals pertinent to the study. Also, primary documents such as the English translations of the works of John Calvin were consulted.

Organization of the study

The paper is structured into five chapters. They are as follows: The first chapter introduces the study. It gives the background of the study, the problem statement, the purpose, scope, and significance of the study, methodology, and design of the paper.

Chapter two deals with the literature review. This chapter discusses related and relevant materials to the study. It examines the biblical perspective of the Lord Supper as taught in both the Old and New Testaments.

The third chapter presents the views of John Calvin on the Lord's Supper. It also considers the background of John Calvin, his theology, and his method.

The fourth chapter evaluates John Calvin's views on the Lord's Supper in the light of the Bible.

The fifth chapter will summarize and conclude the study. It will further make some recommendations and suggestions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE LORD'S SUPPER AND JOHN CALVIN

Introduction

This chapter examines some works on the Lord's Supper and John Calvin to ascertain gaps this study seeks to fill. The researcher employs books, journals, or academic papers from the internet and other libraries in approaching the literature review. It must also be clearly stated that the researcher reviews the study's literature using the book-by-book approach.¹

Understanding What the Lord's Supper Is

The Lord's Supper as an ordinance is one of Christianity's universal features known to have received various names and different meanings² within Christendom: The Lord's Supper, the table of the Lord, the breaking of bread, the Eucharist.³ Despite multiple names ascribed to the Lord's Supper, Hans Lietzmann had traced its source to "two main primitive types," namely the Liturgy of St. Hippolytus and the ancient Egyptian Liturgy. Irrespective of the source, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper was instituted with the Passover meal on the eve of Jesus' crucifixion.⁴

¹With the book-by-book approach, the researcher reviews a book or an article related to the topic under study and then finds out the gap that exists, which the current study seeks to fill.

²Kwabena Donkor, *Growing in Christ: The Way. The Truth. The Life* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2012), 66.

³Matthew Henry, *The Communicant's Companion: Instructions for the Right receiving of The Lord's Supper* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1843), 31.

⁴*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary (SDABD)* (1979), s. v, "Lord's Supper."

Lietzmann ascribed to ‘the blissful meal of the Egyptian liturgy’ as absolutely one of a kind from Pauline's expertise of the Lord’s Supper. However, it became installed about the Passover.⁵ Kwabena Donkor alludes to Matthew 26's vivid and graphic description of the Lord’s Supper, drawing parallels between the Lord's Supper and the Passover.⁶

In his book, *What is the Lord’s Supper*, C. R. Sproul posits that the Lord’s Supper's celebration was vital in the early Christians' life and worship.⁷ According to Sproul, the Lord’s Supper's fundamental objective is to gather Christ’s believers together to express their gratitude for what He has done on their behalf through His death.⁸ While the Lord’s Supper has its root in the Upper Room experience, it also reaches back into the Old Testament celebration of the Passover.⁹ Sproul argues that “the immediate context in which Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper was the celebration of the Passover feast with His disciples.”¹⁰ In his letter to the Church at Corinthian, Paul used a similar language to support this argument.¹¹ There is a relationship between the death of Jesus Christ and the Old Testament Passover celebration for the Apostolic Church.¹² The Lord’s Supper focuses on both the past and the future. For Sproul, because the Lord’s Supper is a memorial, it, therefore, has

⁵Ibid, 6.

⁶Donkor, 66.

⁷C. R. Sproul, *What the Lord’s Supper Is?* (Ligonier Court, Sanford: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2013), 1.

⁸ Ibid, 1.

⁹ Ibid, 2.

¹⁰Ibid, 1.

¹¹ Ibid, 1.

¹² Ibid, 3.

the past in view.¹³Not only that, with the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, Jesus called attention to the future when He will dine with His children in heaven.

Therefore, for Sproul, “any time the Lord’s Supper is celebrated in this world, a reflection of Christ’s past accomplishments, and the future feast that is yet to be fulfilled is considered.”¹⁴In effect, the Lord’s Supper expresses both the past and the future.¹⁵

In his work, “An Exegetical and Theological Study of the Institution of the Lord’s Supper: Luke 22:7-23 (NKJV),” Godfred Nsiah explores the institution of the Lord’s Supper as recorded in the Gospel of Luke to ascertain what Jesus intended to communicate to the disciples and how they understood it.¹⁶ He then “contextualizes the study within the Ghanaian church.”¹⁷ He established that the Lord’s Supper was instituted mainly for the Disciples of Christ, and with faith, one can claim the blessings associated with it. Again, the study makes clear that the Supper symbolically represented the death of Christ.¹⁸ The study also outlines that “some of these unique lessons revealed through the Supper to the disciples are not strange to the ‘traditional Ghanaian culture, and so for the Ghanaian Christian, the Supper is a ritual

¹³Ibid, 8.

¹⁴Ibid, 15.

¹⁵Ibid, 15.

¹⁶Godfred Nsiah, “An Exegetical and Theological Study of the Institution of the Lord's Supper: Luke 22:7-23,” (M.A. Thesis, University of Ghana, 2013), 7.

¹⁷Ibid, 7.

¹⁸Ibid, 7.

that attempts to reform the believer.”¹⁹ Thus, the Lord’s Supper's celebration's core drive is to ensure the believer's transformation.²⁰

Mbamalu, in his article, “Worship and the Lord’s Supper in Assemblies of God, and other selected Pentecostal churches in Nigeria,” interprets how liturgy functions in Assemblies of God and other selected Pentecostal churches in Nigeria.²¹

He observes that

Many Pentecostal Churches consider the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion) as an integral part of their religious experience as one of their ordinances. The time for celebrating the Lord's Supper differs from one Pentecostal Church to another. Some churches commemorate the Lord's Supper every Sunday evening. . Ordinarily, some Pentecostal believers in Nigeria have obscure laws about the recurrence of observing and partaking the Lord's Supper. Bishop Oyedepo's Living Faith Church, (also known as Winner's Chapel) teaches that the Holy Communion should be taken as often as possible.²²

He continues that the Lord's Supper practice openly proclaims Christ's sacrificial death. Again, the Supper encourages cooperate worship of believers and ensures a renewed relationship with Jesus Christ. Thus, it unites believers to one another and God.²³

Works on the Lord’s Supper Reviewed

The doctrine of the Lord's Supper has received varied opinions from scholars. This section reviews some of the works to ascertain the gaps this present work seeks to fill.

¹⁹Ibid, 7.

²⁰Ibid, 114.

²¹Williams O. Mbamalu, “Worship and the Lord’s Supper in Assemblies of God, and other selected Pentecostal churches in Nigeria,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 71, no 1.

²²Ibid, 6.

²³Ibid, 7.

In the article, “The Lord’s Supper in the Early Church: Covenant Extension or Eucharistic Presence?”²⁴ Silvia showed how the Lord’s Supper missed its relational and historical covenant focus and instead became fixed on Plato’s assumptions, which displaces the eschatological hope of Christ’s physical return with His real presence in the Eucharist. She made clear that Plato’s assumptions were influenced by the Hellenistic interpretation of reality in general. The first part of the article explored God’s nature and the Old Testament covenant and its continuity in the New Testament through the Lord’s Supper. In the second part, she looked at the Lord’s Supper from a Jewish-Christian perspective in the *Didache*. She contrasted it with the Hellenistic-Christian stance of Justin Martyr and Ignatius of Antioch. She observed that “the former held a symbolic (biblical) view of the Lord’s Supper, while the latter began to introduce the Greek philosophical view of Christ’s real presence in the Eucharist.”²⁵ At the same time, Silvia’s work gives some momentum to the present study. It limits itself to the Lord’s Supper in the Early Church. This study seeks to evaluate John Calvin’s on the Lord’s Supper in the light of the Bible, which seems to be lacking in the literature.

In his article, “The Power of the Table Revising the Theology, Form, and Place of the Lord’s Supper in the Worship of the Christian Church,”²⁶ Budiselić revised leading theological understandings of the Lord’s Supper present in the Christian churches today, which posits that in some way, Jesus is present in the

²⁴Silvia Canale Bacchiocchi, “The Lord’s Supper in the Early Church: Covenant Extension or Eucharistic Presence?” *Andrews University Seminary Student Journal* 2, no. 2 (2016): 35-55.

²⁵*Ibid*, 35.

²⁶Ervin Budiselić, “The Power of the Table Revising the Theology, Form, and Place of the Lord’s Supper in the Worship of the Christian Church,” *KAIROS - Evangelical Journal of Theology* 6, no. 2 (2012): 135-161.

elements of the bread and wine.²⁷ In this work, he presented an overview of the four major theological views of the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Supper's role and place in the church history, the issue of God's presence in the Lord's Supper. He then gave a revision of the form and place of the Lord's Supper in church worship.²⁸ He argued that God is present among the believers during the Lord's Supper. Nonetheless, he critiqued Zwingli's view that shapes the Lord's Supper's celebration in free churches. While the work of Budiselić serves as an eye-opener, the present study focuses on John Calvin's perspective on the Lord's Supper and its biblical evaluation.

Biblical Perspective of the Lord's Supper

F. Pieper once observed that in a circumstance where an article of faith becomes the bone of contention or subject of debate, it should be scrutinized primarily from a Scriptural perspective without depending heavily on any person's interpretation.²⁹ This axiom is buttressed on the Scripture's basic principle regarding itself, usually called (*Sola scriptura*).³⁰ The above statement assumes that the Lord's Supper as a Christian doctrine should be based on Scripture and nothing else hence its Biblical meaning. Therefore, this section examines the O.T. and N.T. understanding of the Lord's Supper.

²⁷Ibid, 135.

²⁸Ibid, 150.

²⁹F. Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatic* (St. Louis, CO: Concordia, 1924), 426.

³⁰Richard M. Davidson, "Biblical Interpretation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Heralds Publishing Association, 2000), 62.

Old Testament Understanding of the Lord's Supper

Though the Lord's Supper first appears in the New Testament, a glimpse of it can be ascertained from the Old Testament. This is because one cannot even casually glance through the New Testament without being aware of the tremendous number of Old Testament information quoted therein.³¹ Jesus Himself quoted extensively from the Old Testament as He started His ministry until its closure.³² The Old Testament concept of the Passover meal appears to reference the ordinance of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament (Matt 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24;).³³

Jesus' statement in Matthew 26 provides an informative and enlightening description of parallelism between the Lord's Supper and the Passover, as found in Exodus 12:11-14. The informative and enlightening statement, "The Passover," affirms the meal's significance.³⁴ The assertion by Kwabena Donkor that Matthew 26 gives an instructive description of parallelism between the Lord's Supper and the Passover³⁵ offers a glimpse of Old Testament understanding of the subject under consideration. By this assertion, he indicates that the "Children of Israel ate the original Passover meal in anticipation of the Salvation that the movement from Egypt provided."³⁶ John C. Collins is noted to have consented and buttressed that the only

³¹H. L. Willmington, *Willmington's Guide to the Bible* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1984), 987.

³²Ibid.

³³Hans L. Rasmussen, *Till He Comes* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1974), 16-18.

³⁴Francis D. Nichol, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1(Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1978), 552.

³⁵Donkor, 66.

³⁶Ibid, 66.

link of the Lord Supper is the Passover in the Old Testament. This assertion supports the understanding of the subject matter under discussion.³⁷

The English word ‘Passover’ comes from the Hebrew ‘*Pesach*,’ which indicates an event that depicts Israel's deliverance from the Egyptian bondage.³⁸ It is a meal or feast that the Israelites observed annually in commemoration of God’s great deliverance extended to them in Egyptian bondage.³⁹ The tenth plague resulted in the presence of an angel of death, which killed every firstborn male in Egypt except homes whose doorposts were smeared with lamb’s blood (Exod 11:4-5). The angel seeing the blood, “passed over” that specific residence, leaving the firstborn male untouched and consequently unhurt.

B. Witherington III perceived the Passover as a ‘seminal and constitutive event’ in the formation of Israel’s identity as a nation (Exod 12: 1–13; Deuteronomy 16:1–8)⁴⁰. Rasmussen reiterates that the Passover meal directed back to the redemption of Israel as God’s people from the house of slavery in Egypt. As a navigator, the Passover directed forward to the best sacrifice when the Lamb of God should be crucified.⁴¹

In his dissertation on the Lord's Supper, Kory Capps affirms that all three gospel accounts that speak on the institution of the Lord's Supper agree with one

³⁷John C. Collins, "The Eucharist as a sacrifice: How Patristic Authors Can Help Us read the Bible," *Westminster Theological Journal* 66 (2004), 11.

³⁸Herbert Kiesler, “The ordinances: Baptism, Foot Washing, and Lord’s Supper,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 606.

³⁹Kory Capps and Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventists Bible Dictionary* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1979), 842.

⁴⁰For a helpful discussion of the origins of the Passover as narrated in Exodus 12, see B. Witherington III, *Making a Meal of It: Rethinking the Theology of the Lord’s Supper* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 2–10.

⁴¹Hans L. Rasmussen, *Till He Comes* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1974), 23.

another because it was celebrated in the context of the Passover meal.⁴² Jeremias also cited Howard Marshall when he seconds Kory's conception on the Lord's Supper.⁴³ He elucidates further that Jesus observed the customary rituals of the Passover.

Craig L. Blomberg also alludes that the Passover, which is usually done alongside a meal and a covenant, symbolizes a typical cordiality of a family, including friends and neighbors with a host (Exod 12, 13; Gen 14: 18; 18:1-8; 27:19; Num 7:2; Deut 16:1; Ezra 6:19).⁴⁴ Due to the above statements, Hughes Old asserts that the act of partaking the covenant meals indicates the idea of entering into a covenant with the Lord (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; Heb 9:20)⁴⁵ In linking the concept to which the Lord Supper derived its root from the Passover, Robert H. Stein unfolds six unique aspects of the Passover to augment his position:

1. **The Passover Lamb**- This sacrifice reechoes to Israel's children of God's angel of death passing over them due to the unique identifying mark being the sprinkling blood of the lamb on the doorpost. Benjamin. B Warfield augments that the unique fundamental characteristic of the Passover meal is the lamb slaughtered. He argues that the lamb was responsible for the atoning sacrifice of the celebrants.⁴⁶ To Warfield, the lamb killed signifies Jesus Christ, who died for men's sins (John 1:29).⁴⁷

⁴²Ibid, 23.

⁴³Howard Marshall, *The Last Supper and the Lord's Supper* (Vancouver, Canada: Regent College Publishing, 1980), 57-106.

⁴⁴Craig L. Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness: Jesus' Meal with Sinners* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 165. See also *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament*, (2004), s.v "Passover." 1063.

⁴⁵Hughes Old, *Worship: That is Reformed According to Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 114.

⁴⁶Benjamin B. Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield* (Pittsburgh, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), 77.

⁴⁷Ibid, 77.

2. **The Unleavened Bread** - This brings the Children of Israel's attention to the fleetness of how God delivered them and their inability to make bread because of time that necessitates their hasty and swift departure from Egypt.

3. **The Bowl of Salt Water** - This is a reminder of the tears of Israel shed while in slavery and the Red Sea crossing.

4. **The Bitter Herbs**- This also reminds the children of Israel of the bitterness of being in slavery.

5. **The Charoseth**- A type of fruit reminding them of the clay they used to mold bricks in Egypt's captivity.

6. **The Four Cups of Wine**- These reminded them of the promises of Exodus 6:6-7. The third cup was known as the cup of blessing, and the fourth cup was followed by singing.⁴⁸ Considering the above assertions of Robert H. Stein, Robin Routledge indicates that at the Lord's Supper, Jesus broke the bread and gave it to his disciples about the unleavened bread. He further explains that the cup Jesus gave to his disciples to drink echoes the third cup of blessing in Exodus 6:6-7.⁴⁹

It is significant that during the Passover meal, the young children usually had the privilege to ask the head of the family some questions about the gathering to ascertain for them the rationale behind such practice. For example, why is this night different from other nights? In response to the question, the family head would categorically interpret every bit of the meal before them and emphasize God's deliverance of his people out of Egypt.⁵⁰ "The whole Passover meal was symbolic,

⁴⁸Robert H. Stein, *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament* (2004), s.v. "The Third and Fourth Cups."

⁴⁹Robin Routledge, "Passover and Last Supper," *Tyndale Bulletin* 53, no. 2 (2002): 220

⁵⁰Rasmussen, *Till He Comes*, 22.

commemorative, joyous, and true thanksgiving meal."⁵¹This is done to inculcate into the children's minds the sovereignty of God, His special love, and care for the Israelites.

Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everette F. Harrison appear to propose that since Jesus was the hub of the Passover meal, which was typified in the Lord's Supper, it helped him gain control over the activities as the head to address his disciples. Jesus was the leader at the Lord's Supper, while the disciples were the recipients. According to them, Jesus did not reinterpret the Exodus event. Instead, he explained to his disciples the symbols of redemption to which the shadow of the Passover was typified.⁵² In other words, Jesus explained to them the liberating experience or freedom as enveloped in the Passover.

In an attempt to explain further the link existing between the Passover and the Lord's Supper, Robert Stein again enumerates the following parallelism:

Table 1. The Similarity between Passover and the Lord's Supper

The Passover	The Lord's Supper
God remembers his covenant	God enacts a new covenant
Slavery in Egypt	Slavery to sin
Blood of Passover Lamb	Blood of Christ, the Passover Lamb
Interpretation of Elements	Interpretation of Elements
Call for Continual Celebration	Call for Continual Celebration. ⁵³

Ferris Roger seems to agree with Stein's parallelism and tries to posit that the Passover alludes to the liberation of the Children of Israel from Egyptian bondage and

⁵¹Ibid

⁵²Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everette F. Harrison, eds. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1962), 1064.

⁵³Stein, "The Similarity between Passover and the Lord's Supper," *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament*, 671.

was also ideal, pointing to Christ, the Lamb, slain for the salvation of humanity from the foundation of this world (Rev13:8). He states that the blood sprinkled upon the doorposts of the Israelites seems to prefigure the atoning blood of Christ and the continual dependence of sinful man upon the merits of that blood to save humanity from the power of Satan. Christ took the Passover Supper with His disciples just before his crucifixion, and the same night established the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, to be done in remembrance of his death (Luke 22:19).⁵⁴ It appears and connotes that the type had met with the antitype when Christ the Lamb without blemish was crucified on the cross to leave commemorative events for the future generation.⁵⁵

Divergent views among scholars also argue that Jesus did not establish the Lord's Supper on the foundation of the Passover.⁵⁶ According to S. McKnight, one of the arguments is hinged on the assumption that the actual historical meal of the Passover did not occur during the night of Jesus' Lord's Supper.⁵⁷ He argues that had a lamb been used as a meal in the Upper Room, it would have made more theological logic for Jesus to indicate something like "this lamb is my body" rather than "this bread is my body."⁵⁸

Further, Jeremias also concurs that the early Christian Church celebrated the Lord's Supper, "the breaking of bread" daily (Acts 2:42), while the Passover was

⁵⁴Ferris Roger, "The Ordinances of Foot Washing and the Lord's Supper in the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination," *Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary* (Washington D. C., 1957), 606.

⁵⁵Ibid, 606.

⁵⁶S. McKnight, *Jesus, and His Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 259-273.

⁵⁷Ibid, 259.

⁵⁸Ibid, 259.

celebrated annually.⁵⁹ The above statement appears to pose how faithful Jews, who were taught from early years to celebrate the Passover annually, could legitimately do so daily and not annually? It appears that the rate of occurrence in which both the Passover and the Lord's Supper were observed looks contradictory. Therefore, Passover may not be the concept to build the foundation of the Lord's Supper.

Benjamin Wisner Bacon also has a different opinion regarding the subject matter. He opines that what the Lord's Supper ritual observance emerged from was not the Passover, rather, the *Kiddush*,⁶⁰ a familiar Jewish ritual on the eve of every Sabbath and every feast day.⁶¹ Its word *Kiddush*, thus, sanctifications suggest that the day for the Passover was made holy. He explains that in this ritual sanctification, the items used are just a cup of wine and a loaf of leavened bread, and the ministrant is the leader of the family. In his estimation, Jesus, according to the Lucan account, uses this ritual of sanctification. There is no link between the ceremony to Jesus' death, as argued by other scholars.⁶²

From the Latin, *Mandatum, Muandy, or Medicare*, foot washing is a religious rite performed in most ancient Near Eastern civilizations.⁶³ This practice often happens in the Old Testament as a generous act by the host who, on humanitarian grounds, depicts a warm reception and respect to his guests.⁶⁴

⁵⁹Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R. Crawford, *The Lord's Supper and Proclaiming Christ Until He Comes* (Nashville, Tennessee: B& H Publishing Group, 2010), 23.

⁶⁰Benjamin Wisner Bacon, "The Lukan Tradition of the Lord Supper," *The Harvard Theological Review* 5. no.3 (1912): 322-348.

⁶¹Ibid, 323.

⁶²Ibid, 323.

⁶³Peter C. Bower, *The Companion to the Book of Common Worship* (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2003), 134.

⁶⁴Ibid, 136.

As part of the Jewish custom, this service was often extended to any traveler, including foreigners, to open one's home to them and suggest, especially when considering New Testament practice that does not provide this service, regarded as quite abnormal practice.⁶⁵ Hebert Kiesler is noted to have indicated that, "of the eight Old Testament references to foot washing, six of them point to this customary act (Gen 18: 4; 19:2; 24:32; 43:24; Judg 19:21; 1 Sam 25:41); one refers to humiliation (Ps 58: 10), and it appears to be just a matter of cleanliness (Cant. 5:3)."⁶⁶

It seems that the Old Testament references depict that it was a tradition of that period that serves as respect and hospitality to provide visitors with water for washing their feet. Foot washing did not indicate any spiritual usefulness. It was a generous act of service which shows humility and courtesy. In Exodus's book, notwithstanding, the priests ought to have their hands and feet cleansed as an act of purification before ministering in the tabernacle (Exod 30:19, 21; 40:31). By this practice, the concept of cleanliness and sanctification is exhibited, which permits the spiritual leader to serve his people before God. It was also in the line of the practice where God's people usually get themselves pure before appearing in the presence of God (Exod 19:10, 11; 14:15).

Eckhardt Mueller opines that this type of cleanliness appears to supersede ordinarily bodily cleanliness.⁶⁷ The foot-washing typified a higher purification or

⁶⁵Warren Baker, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003), 18.

⁶⁶Herbert Kiesler, "The Ordinances: Baptism, Foot Washing, and Lord's Supper," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 592.

⁶⁷Eckhardt Mueller, "Seventh-day Adventists and the Lord's Supper," [https://cdn.ministrymagazine.org/issues/ April, 2004/issues/MIN2004-04.pdf](https://cdn.ministrymagazine.org/issues/April_2004/issues/MIN2004-04.pdf) accessed February 23, 2016.

cleansing.⁶⁸ Sanctified people needed to come before an awesome God. It is no wonder that God usually demands sanctification and consecration from His people (Israelites) before meeting them on Mount Sinai (Exod 19:10).

With few exceptions, people in the Old Testament era happened to do their feet washing when getting some water (Gen 18:4; 2 Sam 11:8). Often slaves did the cleansing. Abigail (Nabal's wife), in first Samuel 25:41 voluntarily, courteously, and humbly pleaded to cleanse the feet of David's men when meeting them to save a situation. Despite the traditional understanding of the foot washing, Jesus provided a new meaning and adopted an original method that may characterize the import of the Lord's Supper.⁶⁹

Summing up the Old Testament understanding of the Lord's Supper by the above scholars, it appears that the Passover provided the foundation on which the New Testament teaching of the Lord's Supper was built, even though some theologians and scholars do not accept the said presupposition. The understanding should also be made clear that Jesus is the Master Teacher taught from known to the unknown, from simple to complicated, and concrete to abstract did not originate any new element. Still, He just used the Old Testament symbols that the people were conversant with to explain the meaning of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament. It does not imply that the Lord's Supper replaces or serves as a continuation of the Passover, but its only link suggests that it came at the same time that Jesus established it.

⁶⁸General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrine* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 227.

⁶⁹Ibid, 227.

New Testament's Understanding of the Lord's Supper

Irrespective of its relationship to the Passover, the Lord Supper is acknowledged to be new and significant in the New Testament, which emerged as an indispensable ritual in Christendom over several decades.

The Practice of the Lord's Supper is seen in four distinctive accounts in the New Testament, appearing once in each of the synoptic gospels (Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20) and the other in the Pauline Epistle to the Corinthians (1Cor 11: 23-29) ⁷⁰ Louis Berkhof affirms that John refers to the eating of the Passover (John 6: 53) but does not indicate the establishment of the new sacrament.⁷¹ Kiesler shares thought with Berkhof and suggest that John's Gospel highlights significantly foot washing.⁷² These New Testament statements complement one another to formulate relevant Christian teachings and principles that enhance the Lord's Supper's understanding as a doctrine.⁷³

All the synoptic gospels, namely Matthew, Mark, and Luke,⁷⁴ stated that Christ instituted the Lord's Supper Himself on the eve of His crucifixion (Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14: 22-25; Luke 22:14-20). The evidence includes the fact that the three synoptic Gospels allude to the words of Jesus that inaugurate the practice. ⁷⁵ This initiative, recorded by all the synoptic gospels, indicates two elements, notably, the unleavened bread and the cup of wine (the fruit of the vine) coupled with

⁷⁰Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 68-71.

⁷¹Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburg, TX: Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 647.

⁷²Kiesler, 595.

⁷³Ibid, 595.

⁷⁴Rasmussen, 16.

⁷⁵Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 1035.

thanksgiving and a covenant that foreshadows common practice in every Jewish home during the Passover meal.

The Gospel accounts of the Lord's Supper start with the scout or search for a venue and the Lamb.⁷⁶ Paschal Lamb and Passover Lamb may mean different things. *páscha* is a transcription of the Aramaic. In the New Testament, *páscha* can depict the seven-day Passover feast, the Passover meal, the Passover lamb, or the Lord's Supper (cf. Luke 22:15-16).⁷⁷ *Pascho* is Greek, meaning "to suffer," whereas *Pesach* means "to Pass over." Although, lambs were also part of Jewish practice for atonement for sin. However, it seems that the synoptic gospel writers were more used to the bread usage and therefore make reference to it instead of the lamb. Because Christ, as affirmed by Paul, is "our Passover Lamb that was sacrificed for us" (1 Cor 5:7). The New Testament often represents Jesus with the Passover lamb (cf. 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pet 1:19; Jn. 1:29), and Jesus' statements at the Last Supper probably affirm the equation (Mark 14:22ff.). In Luke 22:16, the messianic banquet is a fulfillment of the Passover, in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8.⁷⁸

The Jewish tradition of taking away all leaven from every house before Passover celebration (Exod 12:15, 19; 13:7) presupposes that the bread used by the Synoptic writers was also the unleavened bread of the Passover.

The Gospel accounts state that Jesus took bread, blessed it (Matt 26:26; Mark 14:22), or gave thanks as Luke puts it (Luke 22:19), broke it, and offered it to the disciples. In another sense, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks, and bade the disciples

⁷⁶Ibid, 1036.

⁷⁷Gerhard Kittel, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 716.

⁷⁸Ibid, 716.

drink from it (Matt 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:20). The cup's content is qualified as the fruit “of the vine” (Matt 26:29, Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18).⁷⁹

Matthew, Mark and first Corinthians narrations mention the sharing of bread first, followed by the cup of wine. Meanwhile, in Luke's account, the cup is distributed first before the bread.⁸⁰ However, Scholars like Helmut Lehmann also believes that Jesus distributed the bread to the disciples before the cup. He also suggests that Jesus expatiated the usefulness of both the bread and the cup of wine.⁸¹ According to his explanation, the bread signifies Christ's body and the cup of wine, His blood. Samuel Bacchiocchi also expatiates that Paul compares leaven with sin (1Cor 5:7, 8), of which the text vividly states that not a single sin was found in Christ (Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22).⁸² He clearly describes the cup of wine (fruit of the vine) of Lord's Supper in the synoptic as the authentic replication of Christ's blood.

According to Bacchiocchi, the word “wine” non-applicable since alcohol is a product of fermented wine and death, and therefore does not fit the symbolism of redemption or salvation. The assertions mentioned above of Bacchiocchi seem to suggest that the use of fermented juice or alcoholic beverages is not allowed in the Lord's Supper since it diminishes or downgrades the dignity and the essence of Christ's death. Thus, the gift of Salvation is shared for all humanity.⁸³

⁷⁹Kiesler, 596.

⁸⁰Ibid, 597.

⁸¹Helmut T. Lehmann., ed. *Meaning and Practice of the Lord Supper* (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), 23.

⁸²Walter Martin, Jill M. Rische and Kurt Van Gordon, *The Kingdom of the Lord Supper Occult* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 234.

⁸³Samuel Bacchiocchi, *Wine in the Bible: A Biblical Study on the Use of Alcoholic Beverages* (Berrien Springs, MI.: Biblical Perspectives, 1989), 48.

Howard Marshall agrees that the reception of the bread and the cup of wine indicates the reception of the death of Christ on our behalf for the forgiveness of sins.⁸⁴ Benjamin Witherington describes that the cup of wine the disciples deserved to drink was the cup of wrath, but the cup they drank was the cup of salvation (Ps 116:13).⁸⁵ Here, it seems that in all the three synoptic gospels' accounts, the garden of Gethsemane follows the closing part of the Last Supper (Mark 14:32-42, Matt 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46).⁸⁶

Another aspect that the gospel writers overwhelmingly concurred with is the new covenant perspective (Matt 26: 28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20), which appears to be eschatological is significant to the study of the Lord's Supper in the Synoptic gospels. Howard Marshall again alludes that sharing the bread and cup, which are the symbols of participating in the new covenant, points to the action necessary to inaugurate that covenant. The broken body and the shed blood of Christ are the substance of the symbols and, therefore, establish the eschatological covenant.

With His statement of promise not to drink of the "fruit of the vine" again until He drinks it with them in the kingdom, Jesus gave the assurance that there would be unification with His disciples (Matt 26:29; Mark 14:25) in the future. This promise suggests that Jesus will participate with the disciples in the Messianic banquet (Isa 25:6-8) in the kingdom of God (Matt 22:1-10; Luke 14:15-24) on the final day of consummation (Rev 21:3-5). It inspires hope among the disciples.

⁸⁴Marshall, *The Last Supper, and The Lord's Supper*, 84-85.

⁸⁵Ben Witherington, "The Lord's Supper," in *The Lord's Supper :Believers Church Perspectives*, ed. Dale R. Stoffer (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1997), 109.

⁸⁶Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 230.

Palmer Robertson provides three unique suggestions to the meaning of the covenant. According to him, the new covenant promises that God will forever own His people and be their God. Further, it is an assurance that all His faithful people in the world will know him intimately. Finally, He alludes that the new covenant is a pledge that God will forgive iniquity and forever forget sin.⁸⁷

Herbert Kiesler expatiates on the meaning of the covenant. He seems to suggest that the celebration of the Lord's Supper was not meant for only a backward look or a reflection on the redemptive action of God through the death of Christ. But, instead, it projects into the future to have a glimpse of the moment of His glorious return (John 14:1-3).⁸⁸

The above assertions by scholars allude that Christ employs the emblems of the Lord's Supper to represent His own spotless and dignified sacrifice in the synoptic gospels. Secondly, its covenantal aspect in the synoptic gospels indicates that there will be a reunion with His disciples and faithful Christians at His glorious return when all will gather together surrounding God's table in His kingdom. Finally, each time a believer participates in the Lord's Supper, theologically, it depicts a unique linkage of Salvation. Thus, God gives (bread and cup), and man just receives by faith. This fortifies the relationship between believers and their object of worship (Jesus Christ) being the Redeemer.

⁸⁷Robertson O. Palmer. *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1980). See also William J. Dumbrell. *The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21-22 and the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1985). Michael D. Williams. "A New and More Glorious Covenant," *Presbyterian* 28, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 77-103.

⁸⁸Kiesler, 598.

CHAPTER 3

JOHN CALVIN'S VIEWS ON THE LORD SUPPER

Introduction

This section of the study focuses on John Calvin's view on the Lord's Supper. Before then, it put forth the background of John Calvin, his interpretation of Scripture, and theology.

Background of John Calvin

Among the reformers, Calvin had been described by Archer E. Anderson as the one who provided absolutely “‘biblical theology’ and credited as the ‘torch bearers of humanity.’”¹ His contribution is so immersed that people prefer to know his background, and this section intends to provide brief information on John Calvin's birth and education as well as his conversion and marriage life.

John Calvin's Birth and Education

John Calvin, known in French as Jean Cauvin, was born in Noyon, Picardie, France, on July 10, 1509, and died in Geneva, Switzerland, on May 27, 1564. As a second-born son to Gerard Chauvin and Jeanne Lefranc, John Calvin had a senior brother called Charles and two other sisters who made up the family. His junior brother, who came directly after him, died in his infancy.²

¹Archer F. Anderson, “John Calvin, A Prophet of God,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 91 no;364 (October 1934): 474.

²William Wileman, *John Calvin: His Life, His Teaching & His Influence* ((Louisville, KY: Gih Publishing, 2019), 10.

Unquestionably, sociology suggests that environmental and parental factors have a significant impact on people's upbringing. Calvin was no exception. Noyon, France, in Western Europe, had been a notable landmark of the Roman Catholic Church.³ The Church influenced, to some extent, the socio-economic lifestyle of the people over there. Gerard, Calvin's father, though severe, had his life much influenced by the Roman Catholic Church to the extent that he became secretary to the bishop.

Calvin's life and upbringing were somehow knitted to the Church principle and his father's ideology shaped by the Church principles with little or no doubt.⁴ Gerard intended to get Calvin an excellent education and to ensure he progresses in church activities. Calvin preferred to be alone privately to achieve his intended goals, but God capitalized on his behavioral pattern to equip him for public attention.⁵ He was known to have genuine reverence for God even from his infancy and consecrated himself to the worship of God. At age twelve (May 21, 1521), Calvin received an appointment as a Chaplain of La Gesine by the Bishop of Noyon when the office became vacant and worked there for two years until the outbreak of "Black Pestilence like COVID 19 of today, which has resulted in untold hardship.

Gerard, Calvin's father, sought permission from Church leadership for Calvin to leave with his entitlement intact, granted in August 1523. Provision was made for him to further his education in Paris.⁶ No wonder he secured College de Montaigu, the

³Robert D. Linder, *The Reformation era* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2008), 139.

⁴Ibid, 11.

⁵Wileman, 10.

⁶Ibid, 11.

best university education for Calvin at fourteen. Calvin came in contact with Renaissance ideas at the university, which had a considerable impact on his reasoning capabilities at such a tender age.⁷

Calvin's studies in Theology at the University of Paris earned him an interest in Humanistic teachings, which emanated from Renaissance that consistently conflicted with the Roman Catholic Church's old scholastic teachings in the era. Calvin knitted himself so closely with Jacques Lefevre d'Etaples' association (1455-1536) that he sought to transform the Roman Catholic Church. The prominence of Luther's publications and thinking at the period also impacted Calvin's ideas.⁸

Conversion of John Calvin and His Marital Life

John Calvin's interest in academic activities influenced him to study Greek and other classical learnings. His exit to Paris to acquaint himself with Renaissance studies unfolded vivid biblical truths, propelling him into conversion. Somewhere between 1532 and 1533, Calvin was converted.⁹ He spent some time traveling around other parts of France, Italy, and Switzerland. In 1534 he returned to his birth place, Noyon, and resigned from all the ecclesiastical positions that he held, which provided him with a living. From that moment on, Calvin disassociated himself entirely from the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁰

⁷The New Encyclopaedia Britannica (2007). s.v. "John Calvin." See also in William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait and others* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁸Ibid.

⁹*The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology* (2006), s.v. "Calvinism, Calvin."

¹⁰Timothy George, "Glory unto God: John Calvin," in *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville, Y.N.: Broadman, 1988), 72.

In 1536 French reformers William Farel and John Calvin introduced reformed principles to the city, which affected both its religious and civic life. Calvin ‘traveled to Strasbourg so that he could have an intellectual life.’¹¹ God’s curse was invoked upon him if he ignored the invitation to stay and assist the work over there by Farel, which made him “accept the invitation.”¹² Calvin got married to Idelette de Bure, a widow in 1540, and had James as his only son, who died at infancy in 1541. His wife, Idelette, also died in 1549. He was purported to have written this regarding the demise of his wife. “Truly, mine is no common grief. I have been bereaved of the best friend of my life.”¹³ Calvin died in Geneva, Switzerland, on May 27, 1564, and requested to be buried in an unmarked grave somewhere in the city.¹⁴

Calvin’s Interpretation of Scripture

Calvin used a historical-grammatical approach to Scripture.¹⁵ His approach was inspired by the epistles and the Bible students of the New Testament. He was concerned with how, after the death and resurrection of Christ, the apostles related the Old Testament to their history.¹⁶

¹¹James I. Parker, “John Calvin and Reformed Europe,” in *Great Leadership of the Christian Church*, ed. John D. Woodbridge (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1988), 211.

¹²The New Encyclopaedia Britannica (2007). S.v. “John Calvin.”

¹³Ibid, 16.

¹⁴William J. Bouwsma, “John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait and others,” (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989),

¹⁵Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 131.

¹⁶Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* translated by Henry Beveridge (Oxford, united Kingdom: John Wiley and Sons Ltd., 1993), 59.

Calvin believed that the Holy Scripture is the Word of God.¹⁷ Thus, it is through the Holy Scriptures that the work of God is revealed to humanity. He disclosed that the Holy Scripture is the mystery of God, and therefore it takes only faith to understand (Matt 13:11).¹⁸ Calvin asserts that through faith, one can discover the living Word of God in the dead letters.¹⁹ This is to say that it is the Holy Spirit who works within believers so that they may find and accept this word as coming from God. Also, the same spirit causes scriptural writings to be as significant as the Word of God. Therefore, God's Word must never be treated as merely pure human writings that contain dead letters.

In another vein, Calvin postulates that the Holy Scripture has its authority from the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21).²⁰ Thus, there is nothing in the Holy Scriptures that is not in line with the Holy Spirit. Calvin made it known that the Holy Scripture actively proves itself since the Holy Spirit inspired it. Hence, it must be noted that the real author of the Holy Scriptures is God Himself (2 Tim 3:16).²¹

In Calvin's view, since the Holy Spirit is the author of the Holy Scriptures, all books (both New Testament and Old Testament) of the Bible are thus at the same level.²² Thus, there is no distinction between the various books of the Holy Bible. He

¹⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Battles, PA: Westminster Press, 1960), 1:71-73.

¹⁸ In his commentary on Micah 4:2, Calvin said, "When God speaks, he does not only intend men to know [that] what is announced by him is true; he also requires their obedience. We shall be truly taught by God only if we *walk in his ways*." Calvin, *Commentaries*, ed. & translated by Joseph Haroutunian (London: SCM Press, 1958), 80.

¹⁹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 95.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 94

²¹ Calvin, *Commentaries*, 32.

²² François Wendel, *Calvin* (London: The Fontana Library, 1965), 158.

holds that one must bear in mind that the Word of God, as attested in the Holy Bible, is referred to as the standard of ultimate truth: God Himself.²³ Thus, believers should not allow themselves to be drifted and directed by their prejudice. He continues that in the interpretation of Scripture, the mind must always be engaged in the way of knowing following the ultimate truth of God. For Calvin, this way of acknowledgment is nothing but the act of referring back to the Truth of God as the source and ground (*analogia fidei*).²⁴

Calvin contends that the Roman Catholic Church had corrupted the gospel, which talks about the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. For him, to make the authority of Holy Scripture dependent on the papacy's authority was to make it depend on human decisions.²⁵ Calvin argues that every Christian has a right to interpret the Holy Bible for himself or herself.²⁶ This could be since every human being has been given an innate knowledge of God (Gen 1:26, 27). There is no reason to say that only some Christians have a right to interpret the Holy Bible. Calvin strongly opposed the belief that a particular office can only practice interpreting the Holy Bible.²⁷ He even claimed that every Christian must be prepared to accept the different interpretations of the Holy Bible. He said that each might use his judgment, provided no one tries to compel all others to obey his own rules.²⁸ To Calvin, in biblical interpretation, one must reach the scriptural writings' genuine sense at the end

²³Werner G. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics* (London: SCM Press, 1994), 34.

²⁴Ibid, 39.

²⁵T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin: An Introduction to His Thought* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995), 23.

²⁶Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 34.

²⁷Ibid, 34.

²⁸Ibid, 34.

of its findings. He continues to contend that the natural meaning of a statement is its essence.²⁹

According to Calvin, a passage's natural interpretation is the genuine way to do justice to the author's purpose. Therefore, he despised the allegorical method because Christians are tempted to twist the Holy Bible into a religious book of their preference.³⁰

Calvin's Views on the Lord's Supper

Many reformers have explained the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. This doctrine attracted debate within Protestantism during the sixteenth century. The significant contestants included Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin. Luther and his group opined that Christ is bodily present "in, under and with" the bread and wine,³¹ whereas Zwingli and his team postulated that Christ was remembered in His "absence" in the Lord's Supper, not in His presence.³² Carl Trueman acknowledged that Luther and Zwingli's rationale behind the two conflicting opinions stems from the concept of salvation and incarnation. In setting the records straight, Calvin came in with his idea on the Lord's Supper. This section seeks to delve into the views of John

²⁹Calvin, *Commentaries*, 28.

³⁰When Calvin protested against allegorizing, he was protesting not against the spiritual meaning of a passage but against finding one that was not there. Because the Word of God is, of course, spiritual. Calvin, *Commentaries*, 28.

³¹Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 994.

³²Huldrych Zwingli, *On the Lord's Supper*, in Zwingli and Bullinger ed. G. W. Bromily (PA: Westminster, 1963), 188-189. See also Robert Letham, *The Lord's Supper: Eternal Word in Broken Bread* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2001), 25-28; W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1986), 227-250.

Calvin on the Lord's Supper,³³ which came to be known as the doctrine of "spiritual presence."³⁴

Luther very much influenced Calvin's doctrine of the Lord Supper, but others were simply agents in carving his method to the subject. Augustine, Philip Melancthon, Martin Bucer, and Peter Martyr Vermigli impacted Calvin properly. He mimicked Augustine in explaining sacrament as "a visible sign of a sacred thing" or as a "visible word" of God.³⁵

Calvin perceived that the sacraments are closely linked to the Word. The sacraments seal the promises that those eating the bread and wine in faith indeed take the body and blood of Christ. Calvin highlights believer's spiritual relationship with Christ. The Lord's Supper fortifies the believer's growth union with Christ.³⁶

John Calvin's opinion on the Lord's Supper has been termed as a real spiritual presence. The Lord's Supper is regarded as a spiritual banquet in Calvin's view, and it is meant to nourish the souls of the believer.

The Lord's Supper as a Sign

Calvin recognizes the sacraments assigns. He rejects the idea that the sacramental signs are merely symbols. He posits that "the signs are bread and wine, which represent for us the invisible food that we receive from flesh and blood of Christ."³⁷ Calvin articulates that when Christ uses the expression, "This is my body,"

³³Carl Trueman, "The Incarnation and the Lord's Supper," in *The Word Became Flesh: Evangelicals and the Incarnation*, ed. David Peterson (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 2003), 187.

³⁴Ibid. 996.

³⁵Ibid. 24.

³⁶John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1960), 44-46.

³⁷Ibid.

it applied to the bread. Christ's human body needs not to come for believers to eat indeed. He separated a once-for-all sacrifice from a recurring one.³⁸ Paul's statement, "So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many" (Heb 9:28), can be considered as an affirmation to Calvin's position.

Michael Horton recounting Calvin's thought, indicates, "The law speaks about God's wrath and brings it. The gospel tells God's gift and delivers it."³⁹ The correlation then is that God gives what He also means to denote, and He does this in collaboration with His son.⁴⁰ John Calvin's perspective has been defined as a real spiritual presence, as Christ's death is viewed in the essence of what the elements represent.

John Calvin View on the Bread for the Lord's Supper

To John Calvin, using unleavened bread at communion is a matter of indifference.⁴¹ Calvin further argues that if Jesus wanted Christians to use only unleavened bread during communion, He would have inspired these particular texts to describe "unleavened bread" rather than simply "bread"? John Calvin asserts that the kind of bread used, be it leavened or unleavened, makes no difference.⁴² Calvin

³⁸John Calvin, *Short Treatise on the Holy Supper of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (ReformedLiterature.com, 1540), 14.

³⁹Michael S. Horton, "Union and Communion: Calvin's Theology of Word and Sacrament," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 2, no. 4 (2009): 404.

⁴⁰Melvin Tinker mentions the importance of "performatives," as termed by J.L. Austin. He says, "*Performatives, as the term implies, perform rather than inform.*" He uses the example of vows being performed at a wedding. They are not a description of marriage but *getting* married. See Melvin Tinker, "Language, Symbols, and Sacraments: Was Calvin's View of the Lord's Supper Right?," *Churchman* 112, no. 2 (1998): 6

⁴¹Robert Letham, *The Lord's Supper: Eternal Word in broken Bread* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2001), 54. See Robin A. Brace, *Should We Only Use Unleavened Bread for Communion?* Accessed May 12, 2017, <http://www.ukapologetics.net/08/communionbread.htm>.

⁴²Ibid, 54.

identifies that the elements to be used are bread and wine. He then cleverly points out various matters of indifference in practicing the Lord's Supper. One such indifference matters are the type or color of the wine, but the wine itself is not an issue of indifference.⁴³

John Calvin opines that “regarding the external form of the ordinance, whether the wine to be used is red or white is immaterial. These things are unnecessary and left to the choice of the people.”⁴⁴ John Calvin stressed those grace in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. We thereby understand that these same benefits are imparted to us in a spiritual context by Christ's blood. Such effects are to nourish, renew, reinforce, and restore the spirit.

According to Calvin, the signs are bread and wine that depict food from Christ's flesh and blood.⁴⁵ “Even so in the community those things considered as “... immaterial. These things are indifferent and left at the Church’s choice.”⁴⁶

The Bread and the Wine for the Lord’s Supper

Significant items used for the Lord’s Supper are bread and wine. Intriguingly, humanity was mandated to labor for bread after sin (Gen 3:19 NKJV). Abraham baked unleavened bread for two angels that were on the errand of destroying Sodom (Gen 19:3 NKJV). The people of Israel ate unleavened bread and bitter herbs the very night of their deliverance from Egypt (Exod 12:8NKJV). God miraculously provided

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid, 55.

⁴⁵John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, 4.17.43.

⁴⁶Ibid., 43.

special bread called ‘Manna’ for His people (Israelites) to feed them when they cried for food on their way from Egypt to Canaan (Exod 16:4; Deut 8:3 NKJV)

At the commencement day of the unleavened bread, Jesus took bread, blessed, and gave to His disciples with special instruction, “Take, eat; this is my body.” Matthew 26:17, 26NKJV) “He also took a cup, and after giving thanks, commanded them to drink of it . . . for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sin.” (Matt 26:17, 26 NKJV). This statement of Jesus has made Lord’s Supper a pivotal aspect of Christian practices. However, its understanding has attracted many debates among scholars in Christendom, of which John Calvin is no exception. This section intends to determine Calvin's view on the bread and wine used in the Lord’s Supper.

Uniquely, Calvin refuted transubstantiation (Roman Catholic position)⁴⁷ by indicating that the Lord's Supper's bread and wine did not transform into the body and blood of Christ when the consecration is done. He also kicked against Luther's consubstantiation concept by stating that the bread and the wine did not contain or exhibit Christ's body and blood.⁴⁸Carefully, Calvin also opposed Zwingli's stance that the Sacramental signs are just symbols. The bread and the wine only symbolized the body and the blood of Christ. The only visible sign did portray and buttress the point that Christ himself was indeed present.⁴⁹ Calvin posited that the expression, “This is

⁴⁷Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 995. Keith Mathison, “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper,” *Tabletalk Magazine*, November 1st, 2006, accessed August 31, 2020, <https://tabletalkmagazine.com/article/2006/11/calvins-doctrine-lords-supper/>

⁴⁸Kiesler, “The ordinances, 602.

⁴⁹Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 995.

my Body,” used by Jesus, the identity of the thing represented (‘body’), is applied to the symbol (the bread).⁵⁰

The bread is a sure pledge of the communion with the flesh and the blood of Christ, which it represents. According to Calvin, Communion is “invisible food by which the believer receives the body and blood of Christ.”⁵¹ Calvin's doctrine on the Lord's Supper is grounded in Scripture.⁵² He equates Scripture and sacrament. His concept of the Lord's Supper is purely linked to Christology, eschatology, soteriology, and ecclesiology.⁵³ John Calvin believed sacraments are supported for faith and grace that are already there. It is towards faith that already exists by sealing, sustaining, nourishing, confirming, and increasing Christians' faith.⁵⁴ According to Calvin, the Supper has an “upward purpose,” meant to enhance or strengthen weak human minds to appreciate the mystical union with Christ in terms of understanding, physical, but to go beyond that very sticking point. Calvin stipulates that the Lord's Supper becomes useful when Jesus' invitation is honored and followed towards the spiritual. He persists that the believer must look beyond the physical practice of eating and eating in this world with their mouth by searching for a deeper heavenly understanding of Jesus' coming, which is above just His human body. For this reason,

⁵⁰Mathison, “Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper.”

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²William B. Evans, “Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper and its Relevance,” *Foundations* 68 (Spring 2015): 45.

⁵³B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharist Theology of John Calvin* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 190.

⁵⁴Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

the Lord's Supper is an "invisible food by which Christians partake the body and blood of Christ."⁵⁵

Christ Spiritual Presence at the Supper

It is also accurate because, like Luther, if Christ is to be gracious, He must also be present⁵⁶ to provide believers with the needed natural nourishment. When they are hungry, they feed on the bread. When they are thirsty, they drink. The Supper is also spiritual because the sacraments merely confirm the faith and do not work *ex opere operato*, which differs from Rome's view. Calvin considered the Lord's Supper to be a divine gift given by Christ Himself to His people to nourish and strengthen their faith.⁵⁷

The unification with Christ under discussion in this context is not different from that experienced in faith. The Lord's Supper serves as tangible symbols to that unfathomable oneness (relationship) between the believer and Christ.⁵⁸ It is an aspect of the Lord's Supper's advantage as the participant experiences the signing and sealing function of the sacrament.⁵⁹ There is a close relationship that the Spirit fashions from the sign to what it is in reality. Calvin uses scriptural examples like 'the

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Matthew Mason, "A Spiritual Banquet: John Calvin on the Lord's Supper," *Churchman* 117, no. 4 (2003): 333.

⁵⁷Ibid, 44,46.

⁵⁸Marcus Peter Johnson, *Eating by Believing: Union with Christ in the Soteriology of John Calvin* (Ontario, Canada: Library and Archives Canada, 2008), 73.

⁵⁹Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R. Crawford, eds., *The Reformed View of the Lord's Supper* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group 2010), 259.

Law and the Gospel to demonstrate this.⁶⁰ Melancthon consented to Calvin's "figurative idea of real presence as a spiritual presence."⁶¹

Calvin affirmed that the Lord's Supper is taken in remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice offered once for humanity. It also highlights the fact that Jesus' bodily ministry and its communication to believers is authentic and valuable to the growth of Christian life.⁶²

The Foot-Washing for the Lord's Supper

Concerning *Foot-washing*, John Calvin alluded that John deliberately skipped several issues Matthew and others had done good works on. He decides to identify and fill as well as highlight the gaps left unattended. The basic one was the foot-washing account.⁶³ Calvin argues that Jesus' action in John 13:5, "*And began to wash the feet of his disciples,*" depicts the design of Christ rather than the outward act.⁶⁴

Calvin also expatiated on Jesus' expression '*What I do*' as found in John 13:7 when Peter questions His action of washing his feet. He believed that believers needed to conform to Christ's directives, even though they may not comprehend the rationale behind the instruction given. Using a decent and disciplined household as a case study where vertical authority is upheld properly, Calvin underlines the believers' essence to be subject to God's directives. As he rightly points out, "We should not be ill-advised to ignore those things that God wants to be hidden from us for a time; for

⁶⁰Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.2.7; 3.2.28-30.

⁶¹Wim Janse, "Calvin's Doctrine on the Lord's Supper," *Perichoresis* 10, no. 2 (2012): 137-163.

⁶²Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 4:2

⁶³John Calvin, *Commentary on John* vol. 2, trans. by Rev. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1956), 33-34.

⁶⁴Ibid, 33-34.

this kind of ignorance is more learned than any other kind of knowledge, when we allow God to be wise above us.”⁶⁵

Furthermore, commenting on Peter's resistance to Jesus washing his feet, Calvin indicates: “Genuine application of faith is to approve and accept with reverence anything that comes from God, applied decently and proper manner with the belief that whatever God does is done for an excellent reason.”⁶⁶ This counseling is necessary to make the carnal mind naturally stubborn to accord God the needed reverence due Him.⁶⁷ Calvin comments that true wisdom of faith encompasses whatever that proceeds from God as an affirmation of his belief in the Scripture being the word of God, which should be the basis of every doctrine. It attests to the fact that he follows Jesus' admonition “that Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Deut 8:3; Matt 4:4).

Calvin clarifies the terminology ‘*feet*,’ metaphorically referring to all the passions and cares through which humanity has an association with the world. To him, the only remedy for humankind from the world's pollutions is the power of the Holy Spirit to tabernacle the entire human body.⁶⁸ He opines that as carnal beings, humanity uses the feet to creep on the polluted soil. Hence humanity is the unclean nature of which Jesus Christ needs to wash humanity. He asserts that unclean acts described here are not the ‘forgiveness of sins,’ rather a transformation that Christ

⁶⁵Ibid, 30.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Calvin, *Commentary on John*, vol. 2:32.

systematically and continuously redeems believers entirely from the shackles of sinful propensities of the flesh.⁶⁹

Calvin, commenting on John 13:12-17, said that Jesus purposely instituted the practice of foot washing to “inculcate modesty.” Jesus left a practical “pattern to be copied by all the godly that none might grudge to descend to do a service to his brethren and equals, however, mean and low that service might be... for there is no brotherly love where there is not a voluntary subjection in assisting a neighbor.”⁷⁰ Calvin posits that “a praiseworthy modesty,” “were it not that with God, obedience is better than worship?”⁷¹

Calvin also alludes that Christ used the visible sign of foot-washing to demonstrate His firm and lasting love with which He embraced them. This shows that irrespective of the fact that they would miss His presence, they would still be assured that death itself would not overcome His love for them—this significant understanding needed to be fastened firmly in the hearts of the disciples.⁷² For this reason, Jesus demonstrated it to the disciples as an example to be imitated as He, being the Teacher and Lord, had done it for them. In His own words,

You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet, for I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them (John 13:12-17).

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid, 33-34.

⁷¹*The Pulpit Commentary John Chapter 13* (Rio, WI: AGES Software Version 1.0 © 2001), 7; 1 Samuel 15:22-23.

⁷²Calvin, *Commentary on John*, 2: 29.

Calvin tried to interpret the word 'wash' as the 'free pardon of sins, and to newness of life.' To him, the washing of Christ involves and leads to the removal of guilt through sins by his atoning sacrifice. Calvin expatiates his understanding of washing that people who are washed 'may not come into judgment before God and that, such washing through Jesus Spirit, removes all wicked and sinful desires of the flesh.'⁷³

⁷³Ibid., 37.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF JOHN CALVIN'S VIEWS ON THE LORD'S SUPPER IN THE LIGHT OF THE BIBLE

Introduction

The chapter is concerned with the analysis of Calvin's interpretation of the Lord's Supper. This evaluative analysis is organized into five main sections. The first section analyzes varied views on the Lord's Supper as a sign. The second section evaluates the type of bread for the Lord's Supper. The third section considers the kind of wine for the Lord's Supper. The fourth section examines the view on the spiritual presence at the Lord's Supper. The final section analyzes the perspective on the foot-washing at the Lord's Supper. The study analyses these views to determine how they conform to the total unity of the biblical teachings.

Analysis of John Calvin's Views on the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper as a Sign

This section evaluates Calvin's theology and practices on the Lord's Supper, whether the Lord's Supper is a sign or not. Calvin argues that Christ's statement, "this is my body," applied to the bread. Christ's human body does not have to descend in order for believers to indeed partake. He distinguishes a once-for-all sacrifice from a continual one.⁷⁴ It seems Calvin's assertion that the Lord's Supper is a sign that

⁷⁴John Calvin, *Short Treatise on the Holy Supper of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (ReformedLiterature.com, 1540), 14.

appears to be accurate. The Bible says, “Take, eat; this is My body (Matt. 26:26).” It implies that the bread symbolizes the body. Eating the bread does not signify eating the Lord's flesh but is done as a memorial of what Christ has done for humanity. It is a token that reminds us of His suffering. Theologically, Calvin views the Supper as a memorial of Christ's death. The center of Calvin's eucharistic theology is the belief in faith-union. As believers feed on the bread and wine physically, they feed spiritually on Christ, a view supported by 1 Corinthians 10:16. As a covenant meal, the Supper comes annexed with covenant blessings for those who eat with faith and covenant curses for unbelievers who partake. Calvin's view of the Supper as a sign is biblically faithful and theologically satisfying, and the contemporary Church would profit from its recovery.

Similarly, the drinking of the wine is not to drink the Lord's blood. Christ did not shed His literal blood when He instituted the Holy Lord's Supper. Jesus did not change the wine into real blood when He blessed the cup before giving it to the disciples. However, Christ identifies the cup of wine as actual wine. Jesus opines that “assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” (Mark 14:25; NKJV). The wine of the Lord's Supper is an offering that honors the blood spilled for the sins of humanity. Again, the wine at the Lord's Supper is a symbol that reminds believers of His blood, which is the price paid for the redemption of humanity. The wine at the Lord's Supper is drunk in remembrance of Christ.

Nevertheless, Calvin refuted the concept that the sacramental signs are simply symbols.⁷⁵ Calvin's assertion that the Holy Communion is not just a symbol seems

⁷⁵Ibid, 14.

confusing. The term signs and symbols appear to be synonymous. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a sign is defined as a symbol, while a symbol is a sign. Jesus postulated, “I am the true vine” (John 15:1). Can the symbol “vine” in this context be understood as more than a mere symbol? Precisely no, when Jesus says He was the true vine, He really and truly gives what is emblematically represented by a vine, nothing more than a symbol. So, with the declaration, “This is my body” Christ did not design to teach His disciples that He was breaking something more than a symbol of His own body.

Similarly, He is referred to as the “Lamb of God” (John 1:29), a symbol. The Lamb as a symbol for Christ means that God had provided Jesus as a sacrificial offering for the world's sin. The symbol of the “Lamb of God” is a mere symbol and nothing else. A lamb is an emblem of patience, meekness, gentleness. As the symbol of the Lamb, Christ is represented as a sin-offerings (Lev 4:32) and sacrifice for the cleansing of a leper (Lev 14:10). As the symbol of the Lamb, Jesus is represented as the victim of the morning and evening sacrifice for sin (Exod 29:38; Luke 23:44-46). He represented the Passover lamb (1Cor 5:7). He was innocent (1Pet 2:23-25). Likewise, when Jesus picked the bread and said, “This is my body,” Christ was referring to the bread as a mere symbol of His own body.

Again, the Bible says that “He is the Rock, His work is perfect” (Deut 32:4). Here, God is referred to as “the Rock.” God is not a rock per se, but the rock symbolizes firmness. Rock depicts the stability of His nature and the invincibility of His power, fixedness, and immutability in His counsel. Rock depicts His nature of durability, unchanging perfection, and the safety of trusting in Him as well as repositing on Him our hopes for eternity. The rock, which is used to represent God, is a mere symbol. Thus, when Jesus says, “This is my body,” Christ did not intend to

instruct His disciples that they were eating something which is not a mere symbol of His own body.

Also, Jesus is referred to Himself as “the door” (John 10:7, 9). This door is a symbol of God's way of salvation. It is through Jesus alone that humanity can be saved. This symbol of “the door” is a mere symbol but nothing else. Thus, the Lord’s Supper uses bread as a symbol for Jesus’ body. The bread being symbol stands for the body of Jesus sacrificed for humanity.

Similarly, the Lord’s Supper uses wine as a symbol for Jesus’ blood. The wine as a symbol represents the blood of Jesus sprinkled out for people for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt 26:27–28). It seems that the bread and wine are a mere symbol but nothing else.

The Lord's Supper is a new and unique institution in the New Testament. Lord's Supper grew out of Passover and therefore was initially associated with it. The Passover and Lord's Supper share some essential elements. When the Passover lamb was slain in Egypt, its blood was sprinkled on the lintels and doorposts of the Jews' homes depicting faith in a Saviour from Egypt's plagues. Blood symbolized the blood of Jesus Christ. The meat of the lamb was consummated without blood. Similarly, the Lord’s Supper bread symbolizes the body of Christ, and the Lord’s Supper wine symbolizes the blood of Christ.

The Bread for the Lord’s Supper

This section evaluates the theological argument raised by John Calvin, whether the bread for the Lord’s Supper is leavened or unleavened. John Calvin suggests that it is unnecessary to use unleavened bread at Lord’s Supper, which does not align with biblical practices. Thus, Calvin further argues that if Jesus wanted Christians to use only unleavened bread at Lord's Supper, He would have inspired

these particular texts to describe 'unleavened bread' rather than mere 'bread'? The assertion of John Calvin seems to be problematic. The issue is: what type of bread is used in the Lord's Supper? Therefore, in this view of Calvin's, it is not consistent with scripture.

Two words are used for bread in In the New Testament: regular bread and the other for unleavened bread⁷⁶. The first Greek word used for regular bread is ἄρτος which means "bread" or the "loaf" is used for the bread of any kind.⁷⁷ This Greek word ἄρτος is used in several areas of the New Testament. The Greek word ἄρτος is used in the biblical passages such as Jesus' temptation (Matt 4:3,4; Luke 4:3,4); the Lord's prayer (Matt 6:11; Luke 11:3); asking, seeking, and knocking (Matt 7:9; Luke 11:11); traditions and commandments of men (Matt 15:2; Mark 7:2,5); the faith of the Canaanite woman (Matt 15:26; Mark 7:27); Jesus feeding the multitude (Matt 15:33, Mark 6:36,37; 8:4; John 6:5,7,23); Bread of life (John 6:31-58); the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt 16:5,7,8,11,12; Mark 8:14, 16, 17); and sending the twelves' (Mark 6). All these passages use ἄρτος. In this case, ἄρτος would simply refer to bread in general.

Also, the bread used in the temple is called shewbread. Amazingly, the shewbread, which is unleavened bread, is also denoted as ἄρτος (Matt 12:4; Mark 2:26; Luke 6:4; Heb 9:2). The shewbread comprises twelve loaves of unleavened bread prepared and presented hot on the golden table, which stood in the holy place (Exod 25:30). Josephus asserts that the cakes being unleavened were prepared on Friday before Sabbath because the biblical injunction prohibited work of such nature

⁷⁶*Concise Bible Dictionary* (Eschenburg, Germany: GBV-Dillenburg, 2002), 138

⁷⁷Vine, *Expository Dictionary*, 204.

in Sabbath hours.⁷⁸ If the Greek word ἄρτος is used for shewbread, which is unleavened in the New Testament, then bread served at the Lord's Supper, which is unleavened, can never be the issues of the indifferent matter. Therefore, John Calvin asserts that the type of bread used, whether the bread is leavened or unleavened, makes no difference is problematic.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew noun לֶחֶם means "bread" and comes from the verbal root לחם, which means "to fight."⁷⁹ In a Jewish context, the shewbread refers to an unleavened bread is also denoted as לֶחֶם פְּנִים.⁸⁰ It is the bread of faces; so-called, either because they were placed upon a table that stood in the sanctuary and the seven-branched candlestick and incense altar.⁸¹ The Lord said, "And you shall set the showbread on the table before 'Me' always (Exod 25:30; NKJV). Since the Bible wants the shewbread to be constantly in God's presence (Exod 25:30), the shewbread can be referred to as "Presence-bread" because it is always present on a dedicated table as an offering to God. In 2 Chron 2:4, it is spoken of as the "continual showbread" because it was continuously before Yahweh.

Surprisingly, the Hebrew word לֶחֶם פְּנִים, which means shewbread, is also denoted as ἄρτος in the Septuagint (LXX)⁸². This bread consisted of Twelve cakes of unleavened bread, offered with salt and frankincense (Lev 2:13; 24:5-9). The old

⁷⁸Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, volume 3, 10:7

⁷⁹Jeff A. Benner, "Biblical Hebrew Picture Dictionary," accessed 12 July 2019, <https://www.ancient-hebrew.org/dict-lex/biblical-hebrew-picture-dictionary.htm>

⁸⁰ Shirley Christian, *Types and Shadows: Prophetic Pictures of the Wholeness of Christ* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2006), 216.; (Exod 25:30; 35:13; 39:36; Num 4:7; 1Sam 21:6; 1Kgs 7:48; 1Chron 9:32; 23:29; 28:16; 2Chron 2:4; 4:19; 13:11; 29:18; Neh 10:33)

⁸¹C. G. Barth, *The Bible manual: An Expository and Practical Commentary on the Books of Scripture, Arranged in Chronological order* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1865), 138.

⁸²SDAB (1960), S.v. "Septuagint."

loaves of bread were removed every Sabbath and were to be eaten only by the priests in the sanctuary (Exod 25:30; Lev 24:8; 1Sam 21:1-6; Matt 12:4). They were flat and thin and placed in two rows of six on a table in the holy place before the Lord, which was changed every Sabbath (Lev 24:5-9), and the priests ate those that were changed weekly only in the holy place (1 Sam 21:3-6; Matt 12:3, 4). Thus, Calvin’s assertion that the type of bread used to be regarded as an indifferent matter: “Whether the bread is leavened or unleavened makes no difference is problematic.”

The second Greek word ἄζυμος denotes unleavened bread. In the New Testament, the Greek word ἄζυμος is used in connection with the Feast of the Unleavened Bread (Matt 26:17; Mark 14:1; Luke 22:1), or day of Unleavened Bread (Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7), or the Days of Unleavened Bread (Acts 12:3; Acts 20:6). The Greek word ἄζυμος is found in 1 Corinthians 5:7-9, where Paul refers to “the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” Vine points out that when “bread” uses the article, it refers to the unleavened bread of the Passover meal.⁸³ The Hebrew word for “unleavened bread” is אֲפֵקָה, which means “bread or cake without leaven.”⁸⁴ This bread was made without yeast and consisted of “unleavened bread in the form of flat cakes, אֲפֵקָה.”⁸⁵

In the Old Testament, the unleavened bread placed on the table of shewbread in the tabernacle symbolized Jesus as the Bread of Life (John 6:48; KJV). Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life.” He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he

⁸³William D. Mounce, *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 589, (Matt 26:17; Mark 14:1, 12; Luke 22:1, 7; Acts 12:3; 20:6).

⁸⁴Management of Editor and Contributors from Patriotic Jewish Believers, *The Hebrew Christian Witness: An Anglo-Judeo Christian Magazine* (Oxford Arms Passage, London: Chaloner & Cooke, 1873), 264.

⁸⁵Johannes P. Schade, *Encyclopedia of World Religions* (Zurich, Switzerland: Concord Publishing, 2006), 19.

who believes in Me shall never thirst (John 6:35; NKJV). Jesus used bread ἄρτος to represent His body at the Lord's Supper, but here Jesus gives Himself in place of the loaves they had come to seek (John 6:24,26). He said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eats of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh." Then He added, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man...ye have no life in you" (John 6:51-53). Jesus is holy before God, which unleavened symbolizes.

Furthermore, the Hebrew word for leaven is פֶּשֶׁאֵר or חֶמֶץ, which simply signifies "to ferment." Jewish commentators convey the exact meaning of פֶּשֶׁאֵר or חֶמֶץ, throughout the ages. In rabbinic literature, leaven usually refers metaphorically to the evil inclination.⁸⁶ Philo of Alexandria, the Jewish philosopher (20 BCE-50 CE), inferred the prohibition of leaven to the idea of returning to a more natural state of living since leavening is a product of human exploitation of the natural world. Propp opines that the word פֶּשֶׁאֵר or חֶמֶץ, signifies the unwanted: calamity, evil intentions, and ceremonial impurity.⁸⁷ To purge is to make a fresh start, to experience catharsis.

Also, Propp explains that leaven conveys the idea of endless. However, the Jews' assumption that time is not incessant and needs to be suspended occasionally is conveyed in their understanding of the Hebrew word *chamets' historical context*. According to the laws of unleavened bread, the bread people believe in does not transcend time. Hence on one occasion, within a year, all leaven must be destroyed. In the month of the New Grain, the Jews destroyed all leaven, which signifies

⁸⁶Berakhot 17a.

⁸⁷William H. Propp, (Exodus 1-18), *The Anchor Bible Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 434

unholiness, and assumed a holier, more ascetic status for their fugitive and later national lives.⁸⁸

The leavened bread seems to be a sign of their oppression and bitter servitude. Leaven was prohibited in the Hebrew environment during the seven days of the Passover celebration in memory of their forefathers when they went out of Egypt. They were then mandated to carry unleavened meal with them and to make bread in a hurry, the Egyptians forcing them to leave (Exod 12:15, 19). Nevertheless, this indeed was not the only intended meaning of the ban. Leaven is a corrupt species, being made by fermentation, which tends to putrefaction in similar cases. In his commentary on Leviticus, Milgrom explained that fermentation suggests decay and degradation, and thus, should be rejected on the altar.⁸⁹

Leaven is a symbol of both death and life. Because it smells like death and yet produces the growth of the bread or the beer or the wine. While it is acceptable for people to eat leaven during regular times, it is prohibited on the altar to offer God because God is life itself, and death cannot be in God's sanctuary. Thus, leaven is not fit for sacrifice. The leaven is banned in the Tabernacle or the Temple at all times. The application of leaven was wholly prohibited in all sacrifices offered to God by fire (Lev 2:11; 7:12; 8:2; Num 6:15).

During Passover's week, every Israelite home and the entire Land of Israel itself became one great altar to God, all without leaven. As a spiritual practice, abstaining from leaven for one week allows us, in this symbolic system, to attain a ritually higher state of connection to God. The day before the Feast of Passover,

⁸⁸Ibid, 434.

⁸⁹Dov Linzer, "The Prohibition of Leaven on the Altar – Primary Sources," accessed 24/5/2019, <https://dailydaf.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/sources-leaven-on-the-altar.pdf>.

Jewish tradition calls for diligent check in the complete house with the idea of getting rid of all leaven. Every cupboard, drawer, nook, and cranny is searched, and some families have even used a feather to clean out every single crumb.

In the New Testament, the Greek word for “leaven” is ζύμη. It is metaphorically understood as something that has the power of corruption. Also, it seems to symbolize sin. It is a sign of corruptness and perverseness of heart and life (Matt 16:6, 11; Mark 8:15). However, Christ uses the word “ζύμη” in a parable in Matthew 13:33 and Luke 13:21 to teach that the Gospel is the leavening influence of the world. Just as leaven is the property to change the nature of flour, so the property of the grace of Christ is to change the whole soul into God’s likeness. This exceptional usage of the word “ζύμη” does not render leaven’s general meaning as a figure of corruptness and sin invalid. For instance, Apostle Peter describes the devil as a lion (1 Pet 5:8). In Revelation, Jesus is referred to as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Rev 5:5). Here, the devil is “like” a lion, but Christ “is” the Lion. Similarly, the kingdom of heaven is “like” a leaven but not a leaven.

The word “leaven” is a substance that is all-permeating and powerful. The nature of the leaven is silent and hidden but influences the whole mass of flour. Christ uses the word “leaven” as a figure of corruption about the Pharisee (Matt 13:33; 16:6, 11, 12; Mark 8:15). The teaching and influence of the Pharisee spread in the soul as leaven does in flour. The Pharisee concealed the natural tendency of their doctrines, they instilled them secretly into the mind, and they pervaded all the faculties, like leaven. The Pride, hypocrisy, and worldly-mindedness, which constituted the Pharisees and Sadducees’ leaven, ruin a significant part of the world.

Besides, Apostle Paul uses the word “leaven” as a metaphor to explain the need for spiritual and moral exclusion (1 Cor 5:6-8). He uses this word about his

understanding of ancient Jewish interpretation. The Jewish Preparation for Passover is not only about removing the physical leaven from our homes but also about the Spirit of the Law. The cleaning of homes should also be a cleansing of our spirits, a renewal to the meaning of our Exodus experience and the new Creation that is spring. The Apostle Paul indicates, “Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Cor 5:6; NKJV)? He also opines that “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (Gal 5:9; NKJV). A small amount of leaven will permeate the whole mass of flour and diffuse itself through it all. A single sin permitted in the Church will spread and corrupt the whole Church.

Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:7 referred to the Passover as a type of Christ. He opines that “purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new luminance you truly are unleavened. For indeed, Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us” (1 Cor 5:7). The figure is derived from the Jews’ custom of inputting away leaven at the celebration of the Passover. The Jews’ custom to purge their houses from all leaven before the Passover; so, the Apostle exhorts Christians to purge themselves from all sin. Thus, leaven, which symbolizes sin corruption, needs not be part of the Lord’s Supper’s bread, which represents the body of Christ.

When Christ was instituting the Lord’s Supper, it was the period of the Passover. Traditionally, the Jews were to eliminate anything that has leaven.⁹⁰ On the evening of the 13th day of Nisan, all family leaders carefully searched for leaven in all hidden areas and burned it through the light of a candle. Alternatively, break it into small pieces, scatter it in the wind, or throw it into the sea before midday on the 14th.⁹¹

⁹⁰Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 41.

⁹¹“Passover: Laws and Customs,” accessed on July 2, 2019, https://everythingisrael.com/passover-laws-and-customs/#.XRvUS_IKjIU

For the next seven days, unleavened bread was to be eaten. The Jews were forbidden to make leavened bread from the fourteenth to the twenty-first of the month Nisan. Like during the Passover, all leaven was to be removed from their environment or homes. It continued throughout the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Christ instituted the Lord's Supper on the first day of the feast of unleavened bread on the 14th of Nisan (Matt 26:17). Jesus sent two disciples to prepare the feast for that evening with the background that no bread produced from yeast or leaven was permitted to be consumed during the eight days. That means that neither consumption nor seeing of leaven was tolerated in Jewish homes (Exod 12:15). Furthermore, as they were eating, he took bread, and when he had blessed it, broke it and presented it to them, saying, Take ye: this is my body. Since only unleavened bread was eaten during Passover, it could be deduced that the kind of bread Jesus used appears to be unleavened bread.

According to John's account, the last meal Jesus partook was not the Passover (John 13). Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper during a celebration of the Jewish Passover, which required unleavened bread. Thus, the bread that Jesus used was the bread of the Passover, the available bread. Therefore, the assertion of John Calvin that "whether the bread is to be leavened or unleavened is of no consequence,"⁹² is controversial. Theologically, it is commonly agreed that the bread Jesus broke symbolized the body of Christ, which was without blemish. Jesus is designated as a lamb without blemish and spot (1 Pet 1:19). Thus, the bread Jesus broke and gave His disciples on the night He was betrayed was unleavened. It is

⁹²Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 43

because leaven symbolizes sin, so bread without yeast, which is unleavened, symbolizes holiness.⁹³

The Wine for the Lord's Supper

This section evaluates the theological argument highlighted by John Calvin, whether the wine for the Lord's Supper is fermented or unfermented. Calvin opines that "regarding the external form of the ordinance, whether the wine to be red or white is of no consequence. These things are indifferent and left free to the Church..."⁹⁴The assertion of Calvin seems to be problematic. The type of wine used needs to be known in order for it to represent the blood of Jesus right and thus, cannot be an issue of indifference. On the night of His betrayal, Jesus, after giving the disciples the unleavened bread, took the cup and blessed. Then He said, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Nevertheless, I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt 26:26-29; 1Cor11: 25).

⁹³Don Liver, "The Prohibition of Leaven on the Altar," *Primary Sources*, accessed 24/5/2019, <https://dailydaf.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/sources-leaven-on-the-altar.pdf>. No meal-offering that is presented to the Lord shall be prepared with leaven, for you shall burn it. Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, III: 46 (Friedlander translation). On the other hand, all the breeds the idolators offered contained leaven and sweetened with honey, excluding salting in all their sacrifices. Jewish sacrificial laws forbade offering leaven or honey but included salt: "With all, thine offerings thou shalt offer salt" (Lev. ii. 13). Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, Anchor Bible Commentary 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1974), 188-190 ... Fermentation is the same as decay and corruption and, that was why it was forbidden on the altar. The objection may be posed: how is it, then, that wine, the quintessence of fermentation, is offered upon the altar? The ancients share this view: "Leaven itself comes from corruption and corrupts the dough with which it is mixed . . . and in general, fermentation seems to be a kind of putrefaction" (Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.* 109). Plutarch further states that the Roman high priest (Flamen Dialis) was prohibited from touching anything leaven (ibid.). The above citations stem from late antiquity (Christian, rabbinic, and Hellenistic sources). However, they undoubtedly reflect older and universal regard of leaven as the arch symbol of fermentation, deterioration, and death and, hence, the taboo on the altar of blessing and life. Honey. ... The Prohibition of Leaven on the Altar – Primary Sources. Rabbi Dov Linzer 2 association of leaven with fermentation, decay, and death remains the most plausible cause for the prohibition.

⁹⁴Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 43

The Bible mentions the “fruit of the vine.” What kind of wine is the fruit of the vine? The word “wine” in the Bible refers to both unfermented wine and fermented alcoholic wine. In the Old Testament Hebrew, writers used different expressions to differentiate between fermented and unfermented wine. The New Testament applies only one Greek word to explain both, but it is easy to determine which is meant by understanding the context. However, today, the word “wine” has taken the sole meaning of fermented grape juice. Thus, the Bible’s modern translations did not indicate whether the text deals with fermented or unfermented grape juice. It is misleading many modern readers to understand the word “wine” in the Bible as fermented wine.

In the Old Testament, the word “wine” can refer to “fruit of the vine” or “grape juice” in Hebrew or Greek. The Hebrew word תִּירוֹשׁ is employed for new unfermented wine. The Hebrew יַיִן and the Greek οἶνος in the Septuagint are generally used for fermented wine and unfermented wine. However, both the Hebrew words תִּירוֹשׁ and יַיִן and the Greek word οἶνος in the Septuagint all translated as “wine” are grape juice and non-alcoholic beverages. There are varied instances in the Old Testament: “Wine” usually refers to grape juice)⁹⁵, “red wine” came from the vineyard (Isa 27:2), “wine” that is in the grape (Isa 65:8), “wine” is the blood of the grape (Gen 49:11–12; Deuteronomy 32:14); and “wine” is the grape juice from the wine-press.⁹⁶

It appears that in the Bible, people who were set apart from the world and dedicated to God are encouraged and commanded to abstain from wine. Aaron and his sons, the priests, were strictly barred from taking either wine when entering the

⁹⁵(Deut 11:14; 2 Chron 31:5; Jer 40:10, 12).

⁹⁶(Prov 3:10; Isa16:10; Jer 48:33)

Sanctuary to minister before the Lord (Lev 10:9). Nazarites were prohibited from using wine while under the vow (Num 6:3, 20, cf. Judg 13:4–7).⁹⁷ Believers in the new covenant are “a royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2:9, Rev 5:10). All believers are separated from the world and are dedicated and consecrated to the Lord. If the priest could not take wine while ministering to the Lord, it also implies ministers of the Gospel cannot drink intense wine at the Lord’s Supper, and therefore fermented wine cannot be used at the Lord’s Supper.

The New Testament applies only one Greek word to describe both fermented and fresh grape juice: **οἶνος**. In his dissertation, several Greek papyri, discussed by Robert Teachout, indicate that **οἶνος** could refer to unfermented grape juice.⁹⁸ A relatively straight forward example is a papyrus from AD 137, which contains this statement: “They paid to the one who had earned his wages pure, fresh wine [**οἶνος**] from the vat.”⁹⁹ Thus, unless the passage indicates old or new wine (Luke 5:37-39), the context should guide us in determining the type of wine described. Aristotle refers to a sweet grape beverage (glukus), which “though called wine [**οἶνος**], it has not the effect of wine, for it does taste like wine and does not intoxicate like ordinary wine.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (1960), s.v. “Nazarite.”

⁹⁸Robert P. Teachout, “The Use of ‘Wine’ in the Old Testament” (Ph.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1979), 369.

⁹⁹P. Oxy IV. 72919; *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁰⁰Richard Teachout, *Grape Juice in the Bible: God’s Blessing for His People* (Chateau-Richer, Canada: Etude Biblique Pour Aujourd’hui, 2011), 16-19. See also Aristotle, *Metereologica* 388. b. 9-13. See also *Metereologica* 388. a. 34, which says: “*There is more than one kind of liquid called wine [oinos] and different kinds behave differently. For new wine contains more earth than old, and so thickens most under the influence of heat, but solidifies less under the influence of cold.*” The reference to the thickening of new wine under the influence of heat implies that new wine was preserved unfermented by boiling it down. This practice, as we shall see in Chapter 4, was common among the Romans.

When he established the Lord's Supper, He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to the disciples. Referring to the "wine," Jesus opines: "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins (Matt 26:28-29). He uses the "wine" as a symbol of the new covenant with His people. The "wine" used at the Lord's Supper, which symbolizes the blood of Jesus Christ, cannot be unsacred. The animal's blood was sacred and an essential part of the sacrifices offered to God (Heb 9:22). It was mainly sprinkled upon the altar and the mercy seat to atone for the sinner's life (Lev 17:1-16). Since animal blood used for sacrifices in the OT was seen as sacred, the Lamb of God's blood is most sacred. Thus, a robust wine, mocker, and raging (Prov 20:1) cannot symbolize the most sacred blood of Jesus Christ.

The Jewish Passover's celebration required a lamb without blemish (Exod 12:5; NKJV) and unleavened. The lamb signifies Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). When it was slain, the people of Israel were to smear the blood of the lamb at the lintel and doorposts of their house, which pointed to Christ our Passover lamb (1 Cor 5:7; NIV). If the lamb sacrificed was without blemish, then it is true that its blood was not contaminated. Jesus was perfect and in the fullness of His strength when He became the lamb of our Passover. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Pet 1:19 KJV). In Him, redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Eph 1:7 NKJV). The wine thus used must be the pure, unfermented juice of the grape.

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper during a celebration of the Jewish Passover. It was celebrated in commemoration of the Lord's passing over the Israelites (Exod 12:13). The Passover was to be celebrated on the fourteenth day of the first month; the

feast of unleavened bread continues from the fifteenth and lasted seven days. The Bible says, “seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD” (Exod 12: 15-20; 13:7). They were to kill the paschal lamb or a kid in each family. However, if a family was not big enough to consume a lamb, they could join another small family for the meal. The lamb was to be roasted entirely and consumed that very night, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs; no bone of the animal was to be broken, and all that was not eaten was to be consumed by fire (Exod 12:1-51).

At the Passover feast, those who were to partake, having performed the required purification, gathered at the table. The head of the family took a cup of unfermented wine and blessed God for the vine's fruit, of which all of them drank. It was followed by washing hands. It was followed by the paschal lamb with a cake of unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and a sauce or fruit paste. The head of the family then blessed God for the fruits of the earth and read Exodus 12:26, 27. The passage was an explanation of the ceremony. After drinking the second cup, they had the second-hand washing service, followed by breaking an unleavened cake distributed. A blessing was, and a blessing was declared upon God the Giver of Bread. After everyone had eaten enough of the food, the third cup of thanksgiving, for liberation from Egypt and the provision of the Law, was pronounced and drunk (Matt 26:27; 1Cor 10:16). It was referred to as “the cup of blessing.” The service usually ended with a fourth cup and psalms of praise (Ps 136:1-26; 145:10; Matt 26:30).

During the Passover, no leavened bread was eaten or even kept in the household (Exod 12:15). They were obliged to carry unleavened meal with them (Exod 13:7-10). The Jews were most careful to free their houses from leaven. During this feast, all leavening and anything made with leavening is removed from the house.

“Seven days, you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day, you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel” (Exod 12:15). Just as the bread was expected to be free from leaven, we could assume that the wine, a symbol of Jesus’ blood used at the Last Supper, was also unfermented.

Leavened bread goes through a fermentation process that demands time. It is the decaying of living organisms when yeast and bacteria inside the dough change the wheat’s natural carbohydrates to carbon dioxide. It results in gas bubbles forming, which mixes up with air and causes the bread to rise. This fermentation procedure is very likened to solid wine. In Exodus 13:7, it was rendered, “Unfermented things shall be consumed during the seven days; and there shall not be seen with the fermented things (זֶמֶן), and there shall not be seen with thee leavened mass (חֶמֶץ) in all thy borders.” The chemical definition of ferment or yeast is “a substance in a state of putrefaction, the atoms of which are in continual motion.” Fermentation is the exact process of leavening. Alcoholic wine is made by yeast (leavening) being left in or added to grape juice and ferment. Fermented juice (wine) would not be allowed in the keeping of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The original Greek recorded as Jesus’ words is “*gennemaampelos*,” which means “fruit of the vine.” It can be taken to mean either fermented or unfermented grape juice. Thus, since leaven or fermentation was forbidden during the Passover, it can be concluded that the “fruit of the vine” drunk by Jesus and the disciples during the Last Supper was unfermented. It was possible to produce unfermented grape juice throughout the year by squeezing grapes into a cup. A practice confirmed both in

rabbinical and Christian writings.¹⁰¹ Thomas Aquinas mostly referred to as the “Angelic Doctor” of the Catholic Church, explains that “grape juice” can be used for the Eucharist because it already “has the specific quality of the wine.”¹⁰²

Also, Paul instructed Timothy to use ‘wine’ instead of “only water” to make his stomach better (1 Tim 5:23) as a tonic since grape juice serves that purpose perfectly. There is historical evidence that unfermented grape juice was used for stomach disorders. Paul had to urge or encourage Timothy to use a bit of alcoholic wine as medicine.¹⁰³ Timothy avoided all forms of alcoholic beverages until this moment or point, which, if such, were included in the Lord’s Supper, would involve or consist of that as well. However, being a Christian, Timothy obviously would have partaken in the Lord’s Supper, which implies that Christians were using non-alcoholic juice to keep the feast.

Leaven is symbolic of sin, and for that reason, only unleavened- unfermented bread and wine could be used at Communion.¹⁰⁴ The blood of the sinless Lamb of God would not be symbolized by corrupted, fermented wine. Furthermore, Jesus

¹⁰¹For example, the Halakat Gedalat, an earlier abridgment of the Talmud, posits: “One may press out a cluster of grapes and pronounce the *Kiddush* [blessing pronounced at the consecration of the Sabbath or a festival] over the juice since the juice of the grape is considered wine in connection with the law of the Nazarite.” Cited by Louis Ginzberg, “A Response to the Question Whether Unfermented Wine May Be Used in Jewish Ceremonies,” *American Jewish Yearbook* (1923), p. 409. The apocryphal Acts and Martyrdom of Matthew, which were circulated during in the second and third centuries AD, confirm the use of freshly squeezed grapes juice in the celebration of the Lord's Supper: “Bring us an offering the holy bread; and, having pressed three clusters from the vine into a cup, communicate with me, as the Lord Jesus showed us how to offer up when he rose from the dead on the third day.” *Acts and Martyrdom of St. Matthew the Apostle, The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 8:532-533 (translated by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson).

¹⁰²Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1980), 2443.

¹⁰³Merton Sandler and Roger Pinder, *Wine: A Scientific Exploration* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), 7.

¹⁰⁴General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Church, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2016), 124.

called it “fruit of the vine,” which refers to fresh grape juice and not fermented wine. Jesus rejected and refused to drink fermented wine even when He was hanging on the cross and cried: “I thirst!” They gave Him “wine mingled with myrrh,” but when He tasted it, He refused to drink it (Matt 27:34, Mark 15:22).

The Spiritual Presence at the Lord’s Supper

This section examines the theological argument of whether there is a spiritual presence at the Lord’s Supper or not. John Calvin’s opinion has been termed a real spiritual presence because Christ’s sacrifice is considered the reality of what the elements signify. He distanced himself from Catholic understanding that the bread becomes Christ’s actual body by the mere offering of prayer (Transubstantiation).¹⁰⁵ Calvin perceived that the feeding of the soul with the blood and body of Christ occurs only in heaven.¹⁰⁶ This understanding suggests spiritual presence since Christians are not yet inhabitants of heaven. Feeding the soul with the blood and body of Christ that occurs ‘only in heaven’ as posited by Calvin seems to indicate or convey the idea that whatever is done on the earth is sanctioned only in heaven.

Keddie added his voice to the issue of Christ’s presence, which had been battling for a long time. He highlighted a scriptural stand that talks about Christ’s presence with believers in totality. Keddie elaborates on Christ’s physical resurrection from the death (Matt 28:6), and his onward physical body ascended to heaven, His Father’s house, as given by Luke in Acts 1:9-11. However, through His Spirit, whom

¹⁰⁵Herbert Kiesler, “The Ordinances: Baptism, Foot Washing, and Lord’s Supper,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 602.

¹⁰⁶Nelson Kilpp, “Baptism and the Lord’s Supper in Lutheran Tradition and Present Dialogue” in *General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists & Lutherans & Adventists in Conversation: Report and Papers Presented 1994-1998*, ed. B. B. Beach & Sven G. Oppegaard (Silver Spring, MD: Pacific Press, 2000), 190.

tabernacles among and in believers, Jesus is spiritually present with them. With this understanding, Jesus would not be expected to be physically present at the Lord's Supper, but He would dwell with His people in a spiritual manner (Matt 28:20). He is present at the Table, not in the bread as a host. Instead, He serves as the Host inviting believers for dinner. Thus, Keddie admonishes believers to ignore any notion of Jesus' spatial presence in the elements (transubstantiation) or consubstantiation.¹⁰⁷ Keddie's insight affirms Calvin's concept of the spiritual presence of Christ whenever the Lord's Supper is observed.

God's accommodation is one of Calvin's distinctive doctrines. The nature of humanity depicts frailty, dullness, and ignorance. However, in His abundant compassion, love, and mercy, God came down to humanity's level to have its concerns solved in a way that humanity could appreciate and be embraced. Jesus came down from heaven to direct humanity to Himself through worldly materials like bread and wine by placing a miniature of spiritual blessings before humanity.¹⁰⁸

The admonition given by Jesus to His disciples regarding the Lord's Supper is that "they should do it in remembrance of Him" (Luke 22:19). The remembrance can be done by imitating His examples of love and devotion. Jesus Christ is biblically understood as being ascended to heaven performing His intercessory role on humanity's behalf at the right hand of God (Luke 22:69; 24:51; Rom 8:34; Heb 7:24-25). Due to the place that Jesus finds Himself, it is technically impossible for Him to

¹⁰⁷Gordon J. Keddie, *The Lord's Supper Is a Celebration of Grace: What the Bible Teaches about Communion* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2000), 96.

¹⁰⁸John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4:14.3, LCC. 2:1278.

be physically present in the Lord's Supper¹⁰⁹ elements and this understanding affirms the spiritual presence as asserted by Calvin.

In Calvin theology, union with Christ is the embodiment of a union with the Spirit and body, which constitutes Christian life's relevance. He intended the Spirit is to be raised to heaven.¹¹⁰ Though He is not with humanity physically, through His Holy Spirit, He manifests His real presence. He feeds Christians spiritually during the Lord's Supper to sustain them through the sacraments. There is, therefore, an affirmation of the fact that Christ's body was once given or offered (Heb 9:28) as a sacrificial lamb for all believers to feed on as an everlasting bread and drink. John Calvin attested that "Christ Himself is spiritually present in the Lord's Supper. He also indicated that the tokens of the bread and wine are surely symbols."¹¹¹ To substantiate his stand properly, Calvin underscores the fact that it is not "a vain and empty sign that is presented, rather God manifests there the effectiveness of His spirit to fulfill His promise."¹¹²

Concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, Christ and the Holy Spirit share the same attributes – loving, holy, and righteous. When Calvin says that Christ is "spiritually present," he meant that the body and blood of Christ are transformed by the mysterious power of the Holy Spirit.¹¹³ Therefore, for Calvin to say that the body

¹⁰⁹Carol E. Rasmussen, *Living the Christian Life in Today's World A Conversation between Mennonite World Conference and the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Silver Spring, MD: June 28-July 1, 2011), 84.

¹¹⁰Thomas J. Davis, *This is My Body: The Presence of Christ in Reformation Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 88.

¹¹¹*Ibid*, 88.

¹¹²*Ibid*, 89.

¹¹³B. A. Gerrish, "John Calvin and the Reformed Doctrine of the Last Supper," in *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism*, vol. 10, Calvin's Ecclesiology: Sacraments and Deacons, ed. Gamble, 232 as quoted in Keith A. Mathisen, 47.

of Christ is present in the Lord's Supper is to say that Christ extends His realm of authority to His people through Holy Spirit. Since Christ is morally the same as the Holy Spirit, it is 'as if Christ is present in the Lord's Supper through the Holy Spirit's power. Suppose this assumption appears to be correctly understood. How then was Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper lost in the sixteenth century and later in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries? Janse summarizes Calvin's view of the Lord's Supper as he describes it as a communal, commemorative, and confessional meal.¹¹⁴

He did not mean that the bread was His body, for in His body, He was sitting at the table, and He could not have two bodies. Nobody could misunderstand these words of Jesus unless they wish to do so or were too devoid of reason to comprehend anything. Jesus referred to the bread as signifying His body and should be to them in the future the sign that He was incarnate.

Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body" (Matt 26:26,27). The statement did not imply that the bread was His real body because His body was reclining by the table.

The disciples had been reminded of their debt to sin, but the Savior assures them of His forgiveness of sin according to Mark's record of his words, "This cup is the New Testament in my blood, shed for you" (Luke 22:20).

Accordingly, Calvin's stands are insufficient in describing the true nature or essence of the Lord's Supper.¹¹⁵ Christians do not merely remember Christ in the Supper; instead, they also feed on Him. The Supper 'is not a bare figure' but His

¹¹⁴Wim Janse, *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhius (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 45.

¹¹⁵Jeffrey A. Manning, *Absence, Substance and Reception: A Semantical Issue in Calvin's view of the Lord's Supper*, (2013), 4.

presence in it. Calvin denies the physical presence of Christ, which would necessarily involve Christological heresy.¹¹⁶

Calvin's view of being lifted to heaven to feed on Christ probably sounds strange in the theological arena. Again, Calvin's explanation that believers have some mystical participation in the 'broken body' of Christ is also problematic by eating the bread. Christ is no more present in communion than He is in the Word. Therefore, agreeing that Christ is now in heaven, the Lord's Supper is nothing more than a symbol, a memorial of Christ's achievement for the believer. Concerning the Supper's reception, who can partake of it, and the consequences for those who cannot? Calvin differed from Luther on this point. Luther held that since the body of Christ was locally present, then both the believer and unbeliever, in partaking, could receive the body of Christ. Calvin had the perception that the elements only signified an actual reality. For this reason, unbelievers could take the Supper but cannot receive 'his liberality' because they have not first received the Gospel in faith.¹¹⁷ Calvin maintains that neither the believer nor the unbeliever can receive Christ by mouth.¹¹⁸

Also, Matthew does not say that Jesus took his body and broke it, and said, Take, eat: but he took bread, and broke it: and it was bread. Therefore, the expression, "*This is my body*," means it represents His body. The literal meaning of the Bible's words is not always the correct meaning but by what it represents. Christ, for instance, said, "Ye must be born again," John 3:7. Being born again does not imply a man entering the mother's womb twice to be born. Instead, he must experience a total

¹¹⁶Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1995), 137.

¹¹⁷John Calvin, *Best Method for Obtaining Concord*, ed. J.K.S. Reid, Calvin: Theological Treatises (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox, 1954), 579.

¹¹⁸*Ibid*, 579.

transformation in his moral and religious character, referred to as passing from death unto life (John 5:24). So, when Jesus indicated that “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you” (John 6:53), it was misunderstood by the Jews in their ignorance, so they asked: “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?” (John 6:52).

It means that the Jews took Jesus’ words to be literal. Therefore, Jesus made them aware that He was not referring to the literal eating of His flesh but the complete acceptance of Him as the life-giver since no one could attain eternal life without Him (John 6:53-58). In other words, Jesus’ response to the Jews was designed to convey a knowledge of spiritual truths, the proper understanding, and due reception of Him as the Savior of the world, which is the hope of humanity. Taking Jesus’ words of this nature has led to many theological misconceptions.

The Foot-Washing for the Lord’s Supper

This section intends to examine John Calvin’s perception of foot-washing as a religious practice with little or no prominence in Christendom. Calvin initially underscores the relevance of foot-washing as a practice of similar value to the Lord’s Supper itself.¹¹⁹ John Calvin attested to the unique work done by the author of the fourth Gospel,¹²⁰ John, as he bridged a vital gap that was skipped by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. By this statement, Calvin affirms that the fourth Gospel’s work adds

¹¹⁹Sungguk Park, “*The Historical Practice of Foot-washing as a Sacramental and a Consideration of Foot-washing in Contemporary Christian Contexts*” (MA thesis, Boston University School of Theology, 2018), 2.

¹²⁰Francis J. Moloney, “The Structure and Message of John 13:1-38,” 1, accessed June 3, 2018, <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/20587733/the-structure-and-message-of-john-131-38-fellowship-for-biblical->.

another impetus to the ministry of Jesus Christ. His teaching and exemplary life of humility are concerned.

Calvin's interpretation of Jesus' action in John 13:5," *And began to wash the feet of his disciples*" to exhibit the 'design of Christ, rather than the outward act' requires further understanding. Christ's explanation, according to Calvin, concerning His action and intention of washing the disciples' feet being spiritual, was a kind of digression from His real connotation of 'design.'¹²¹ Foot-washing is a physical act that is ceremonial.

Regarding the solution to sin and its entanglement, Calvin is right because it is only through the Holy Spirit's role in the lives of humanity through sanctification that salvation can be accomplished.¹²² However, the cause of the uncleanness, Calvin seems to be unfair in his statement because it is not the mere feet walking on this polluted earth that leads to it. By this analogy, one tends to underrate Christ's work of foot-washing ordinance. The actual cause of sin is humanity's separation from the source of life being Jesus. Humanity's malady is systemic, of which it is described as "leprosy, deep-rooted, deadly, and impossible to be cleaned by human capabilities."¹²³

With this prominent and unique commentary given by Calvin, one seems to be at a loss to see Calvin's description of 'foot-washing as ridiculing those who follow the explicit instruction of Jesus regarding foot-washing as farce. "This display of buffoonery, therefore, is nothing else than a shameful mockery of Christ. At all

¹²¹John Calvin, *Commentary on John*, vol. 2, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1956), 33-34.

¹²²Roy Adams, *The nature of Christ* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994), 95.

¹²³Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 266.

events, Christ does not here enjoin an annual ceremony but bids us be ready, throughout our whole life, to wash the feet of our brethren and neighbors.”¹²⁴

The renowned Reformer vehemently kicks against and criticizes Christians who think that Christ’s instructions about the washing of each person’s feet ought to be “obeyed literalistically or aping.”¹²⁵ Calvin provides the basis of describing mimicking foot-washing as a “display of buffoonery.”¹²⁶ The first is “similar to our present-day WWJD fad of imitating every action of Christ. Even those he did fulfill the Law (his baptism by John) or part of the Jewish culture (Gen 18:4; Luke 7:44). Alternatively, as part of His redemptive mission (crucifixion, ascension) as if those actions norm the church today.”¹²⁷

Calvin spoke against foot-washing by comparing it to indulgence, relic, or penance, for he sees its participation as a ‘useless and meaningless ceremony.’ Also, he describes the annual foot-washing ceremony as a “shameful mockery” of Christ. Calvin believed that imitating Christ in foot-washing is like going back to the Law to be righteous with God, thus neglecting the imputed righteousness of Christ obtained by faith alone in Christ as a result of justification.¹²⁸

An evaluation of Calvin’s fundamentals in kicking against the foot-washing suggests that it is not every action or instruction of Jesus that needs to be imitated and followed. On that score, one begins to question the necessary criteria to be used in

¹²⁴Ibid, cf. *The Pulpit Commentary John Chapter 13*, 7.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶Nollie Malabuyu, “Calvin: Footwashing- a “Display of Buffoonery,”” 1, accessed July 5, 2018, <https://www.twoagespilgrims.com/doctrine/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/calvin-on-footwashing.pdf>.

¹²⁷Ibid, 1.

¹²⁸Ibid, 2.

identifying the action of Jesus that should be followed and the one that should be neglected. Again, the comparison made by John Calvin in likening the foot-washing to indulgence and relic and penance, thus resuming its practice as useless and unimportant ceremony, appears to be beyond ordinary comprehension. It originates from the fact that nothing is sold in the foot-washing ceremony to get money or any material benefits.

Also, participants do not believe that mere washing of their feet guarantees them of any forgiveness from the practice except what Christ had done for them and commanded them to imitate, hence their obedience to Christ injunction, “Do this in remembrance of Me.”¹²⁹ They do not subscribe to the belief that there is any magical power in the practice of foot-washing that result in forgiveness of sin. They only follow the injunction done and commanded by Jesus as evidence that depicts their master and Lord’s respect.¹³⁰ Just as Jesus performed the task of washing the disciples’ feet to exhibit His humility to them,¹³¹ the believers also go through a foot-washing ceremony to exhibit the humility that Jesus revealed to them.

Calvin’s view that foot-washing was “just a display of buffoonery” suggests the irrelevance of foot-washing as a sacrament. Just as Peter did not recognize the importance of it initially and therefore resisted Jesus by his statement in John 13:8, “You shall never wash my feet.” Calvin could not appreciate the connotation and the collaboration of the spiritual significance and the physical act expressed by Jesus: “If I do not wash you, you do not have part with me.”

¹²⁹Luke 22:19.

¹³⁰John 13:14, 15 “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you.”

¹³¹Marcus Dads, *The Gospel of St. John* (New York: Armstrong and Son, 1903), 2:76; and F. Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 2:247.

The “washing” is related to and implied “an association, relationship or having a part with Me.” The “washing” as used by Jesus relates to the reality of which the foot-washing was the symbol. Jesus, going beyond physical activity, began to unfold spiritual usefulness behind it.¹³² His foot-washing is symbolic of another cleansing that directs believers to His redemptive death.¹³³

Calvin did not recognize the relevance of the Foot-washing hence his description of it as buffoonery. However, Jesus’ demonstration and admonition regarding Foot-washing as chronicled by the Apostle John (John 13:1-17) suggests that it was a direct command or instruction from Jesus Christ Himself, which needs to be followed.

Furthermore, Calvin’s vehement description of and disagreement with the ‘literalistic aping of Jesus’ action of Foot-washing seems difficult to be comprehended. It is because Jesus, having demonstrated the said ordinance to the disciples intentionally, charged them to mimic by using the rhetoric statement, “You call Me Teacher and Lord, and say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet, for I have given you an example that you should do as I have done” (John 13: 13-15). By discouraging believers from imitating Jesus’ example through ridiculing, does Calvin imply that ‘obedience’ to Jesus’ statement is no more relevant? It appears to provide ample basis and evidence to question Calvin’s concept of foot-washing and hence his obedience to Jesus’ directives.

¹³²Allen Edgington, “Footwashing as an Ordinance,” *Grace Theological Journal* 6, no. 2 (1985): 425, accessed July 5, 2018, <https://www.galaxie.com/article/gtj06-2-25>.

¹³³Douglas D. Webster, *The God Who Kneels: A Forty-day meditation on John 13* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015), 64.

Among the practical piety that Jesus taught His disciples of which Christians of today have overlooked, is the practice of ‘foot washing’ as a prelude to the Lord’s Supper. It is intriguing to observe that among the entire synoptic gospel writers, none wrote about it. Only the Apostle John described the event of the foot washing.¹³⁴ The issue of underrating the foot-washing ritual has been taken for granted that if it were of any immense usefulness, at least a more significant percentage of Gospel writers would have written something on it.

Conspicuously missing is that most early Church fathers and renowned reformed Theologians did not provide any laudable and meaningful information about foot washing. It has provided a solid foundation and evidence for the neglect of the foot washing in relationship to the Lord’s Supper. Thus, this ordinance has not received the needed attention and consideration in many Christian denominations in this contemporary world.

However, the practice of foot-washing is by no means irrelevant to the observance of the Lord’s Supper because it augments or complements the celebration of the Lord’s Supper to discover its biblical meaning, its significance, and effect on Christian experience. It is true that renowned theologians like Martin Luther and John Calvin, by their theological presuppositions or nuances, turned to ignore foot washing as an essential rite to be observed. Nevertheless, few people like Roger Ferris also affirms that the ordinance of foot washing is essential preparation for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, as it was in the upper room.¹³⁵ The ordinance of foot washing is not and should not be ignored as a bit of ritual because some professed believers are

¹³⁴Rasmussen, *Till He Comes*, 28.

¹³⁵Kiesler, 592.

not cleansed from their sins, as Christ knew the heart of Judas, yet he washed his feet.¹³⁶

In evaluating the issue of foot-washing biblically, a survey of some Old Testament references will help furnish the background of foot washing to the New Testament, as Jesus provided an example intended and mandated.¹³⁷

The survey of foot-washing in history depicts that foot-washing was widely observed with different perceptions. Based upon this, logically, assuming that the Fourth Gospel's readers might be used to foot-washing of one kind or another through actual participation is in order.¹³⁸ Washing of feet is commonly found in the New Testament, and it serves as the sign of gracious hospitality from a host to a guest (Luke 7:44; 1 Tim 5:10). Divergent opinions emerge as to whether or not these passages refer to the ordinance of foot washing. S. Horn is of the view "that foot washing was observed in the early church as affirmed by Paul" (1 Tim 5:10). H. Kiesler appears to see it as "a gracious mark of hospitality" as stated in (Luke 7:44, 45).¹³⁹ He stresses the issue of foot washing of "saints," or God's people, which appears to make it more likely that 1 Timothy 5:10 and Luke 7:44 highlight participation in the ordinance of foot washing, thus, hospitality.

Hebert Kiesler has indicated that the only biblical reference regarding foot washing as an ordinance is John 13:1-20.¹⁴⁰ He seems to infer that Jesus gave a demonstrative display in this passage as a sign of humility and true servanthood as the

¹³⁶Ibid, 608.

¹³⁷Rasmussen, *Till He Comes*, 28.

¹³⁸John Christopher Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1991), 128.

¹³⁹Kiesler, 592.

¹⁴⁰Ibid, 592.

disciples' feet were washed.¹⁴¹ The Greek *opheilete*, in John 13:14; thus, you (plural) also ought to wash one another's feet is very significant. The verb *opheillo* has both a literal and a figurative meaning: in the first, it means "to owe," as having a debt: in the second, it means to have an obligation, with the idea of "ought, or must" and is followed by a second verb that depicts what one is expected to do, thus the servant's duty to his master.¹⁴²

Kiesler's above explanation seems to connote that this initiative is a moral obligation that mandates the disciples to mimic. It is also a continuous or repeated action rather than a one-time duty. Notably, the Biblical concept of this ritual can be ascertained logically in Jesus' statement as recorded in the Epistle of John, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you."

Eckhardt Mueller, in his article on foot washing, provides five points:

Firstly, in John 13: 1, Foot washing highlights the act of sacrificial love of Jesus. The principle of love envelops the passage containing the account of how Jesus instituted the foot washing.

Secondly, foot washing points to the act of service and humility (John 13:4, 5). The Old Testament references to foot washing did not provide a single case in which a superior washed the feet of an inferior. In the case of Abraham, it appears, he did not wash the Lord's feet but did at least provide water for His feet to be washed (Gen 18:4). However, in the case of Jesus, it was directly opposite. He performed the act Himself and demonstrated the act of service and humility to His disciples. Kiesler

¹⁴¹Ibid, 592.

¹⁴²Ibid, 592.

augments that the ordinance of foot washing is designed “to wash away all feelings of pride, selfishness, and self-aggrandizement.”¹⁴³

Thirdly, foot washing depicts all believers’ equality before God and fellowship with one another (John 13:13-16). Although Christianity does not eliminate all social distinctions which show the level of respect, before God, all differences of rank, status, race, gender, and age no longer count. Jesus bows down and washes the feet of His slave, who is, in fact, His brother in Christ. In this sense, foot washing is, in many ways, a critique of social injustice. It encourages intimate fellowship among all the members of the Church.¹⁴⁴

Fourthly, Foot washing portrays an act of cleansing (John 13:10). It is evident from the way Jesus spoke to His disciples about His act of washing their feet that symbolic cleansing is intended rather than a mere cleansing from the dust of the road. The end of verse 10 shows that Judas was not cleansed because he had decided to become the traitor. Thus, the concept of cleanliness deals with moral purity and moral defilement. Having been washed entirely at the beginning of our walk with the Lord through Baptism, further cleansing through the act of foot washing is necessary.

The figurative expression used in John 13:10 appears to refer to baptism and juxtapose it to foot washing.¹⁴⁵ Despite 1 Peter 3:20-21; John 3:5-6; Titus 3:5, the thought of the cleansing bath is more fundamental (1 Cor 6:11; Eph 5:26). The Greek word ‘*Louo*’ (“to bathe,” “to wash”), as used in Hebrews 10:22, furnishes a

¹⁴³Ibid, 592.

¹⁴⁴R. V. G. Tasker, “John,” *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1992), 155.

¹⁴⁵Kiesler, 593 and Tasker, 158.

description of Baptism.¹⁴⁶ Individual Christians commit sins even after having been baptized. These post-baptismal sins require forgiveness. It appears that Foot washing indicates that Jesus is willing to wash away these sins and cleanse all believers who humbly observe foot-washing hence, ensuring forgiveness to all observant (1 John 1:9; 2:1-2).¹⁴⁷

Fifthly, the foot washing depicts a sort of blessing to its participants (John 13:17). In this passage, it appears that Jesus pronounces those blessed, fortunate, and happy who willingly observed foot washing. It is not an ordinary ritual. Significantly, identification of new deep meaning and implications be made to gain a more incredible blessing by prayerfully and meditatively washing each other's feet.¹⁴⁸ This kind of cleansing is usually described as a higher spiritual life.¹⁴⁹

In summary, in the context of John's Epistle regarding foot washing, it seems that the act of foot-washing does not mean to replace baptism (washing the entire body from sin) and defilement. It appears that the purpose of the ordinance of foot-washing, as seen in the writings of Mueller and Kiesler and other scholars, suggests a cleansing to purify the believer from post-baptismal sin. Therefore, it is symbolic of a higher cleansing that washes away all feelings of pride, selfishness, and self-aggrandizement.¹⁵⁰

In effect, it is a unique, necessary, and unavoidable preparation towards the celebration of the Lord's Supper. It was a remarkable thing that Jesus performed. For

¹⁴⁶Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), 84.

¹⁴⁷Mueller, see also Kiesler in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 593.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹Ellen Gould White, *Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 651.

¹⁵⁰Ibid, 646.

His disciples and Christians alike in all yet unborn to mimic because being part of Jesus requires special cleansing from Him (John 13:7-8; 14-15).

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presented a concise overview of the various views and issues discovered and examined in the study. The chapter portrays a summary of significant findings concerning the Bible. It follows the conclusions of the analysis. Implications and recommendations are then made based on the findings and conclusions.

Summary

The study sought to analyze John Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper from a Biblical perspective. The Lord's Supper, a statute instituted by Jesus before Calvary. The Apostles, like Paul, affirmed its practice as found in 1 Corinthians 11:23-27. As commonly known by contemporary Christians and foot-washing as inducted by Lord Jesus Christ, Lord's Supper's practice has been a bone of contention in Christendom. Therefore, people who are seen to be practicing this activity are often labeled as legalistic.

The Lord's Supper's practice had been associated with the Passover (Exod 12:1-13) with the death of Christ Jesus during the Passover meal brought about by its institution. The ordinance of Lord's Supper symbolizes the death of Christ Jesus as described by the Apostle Paul (1 Cor 11:26). The broken bread depicts the body of Christ Jesus, and the wine represents His precious blood that was given to all humanity for the remission of sin. As an individual partakes in the service, it nourishes the spiritual life of such a person. That is, taking the bread and wine brings spiritual nourishment or freshness and prepares the soul ready for eternity.

Unity is achieved as believers gather to participate in the Lord's Supper. It drives away anything that results in disunity among believers (1 Cor 10:17). It was the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ when He had finished praying for Himself and all believers. He continued to ask for unity among believers even as they partake in the Lord's Supper (John 17:21). The study asserted that although Lord's Supper appeared in the New Testament; however, its glimpse could be ascertained from the Old Testament.

On the foot-washing associated with the Lord's Supper, it was noted that such an act appeared only once in the John's Gospel compared to other Gospel writers in the Bible (John 13:1-17), and a small percentage of believers considered the act as literal and binding. It is observed as an ordinance by some Protestants in the world today. It is customarily based on the expressed command and example of Jesus, who washed His disciple's feet during the Lord's Supper (John 13:1-17). The Apostle Paul, on the other hand, encouraged foot-washing by widows as their acceptance into the Church (1 Tim 5:9-10). Rarely has the Old Testament practiced foot-washing of visitors as an act of hospitality toward strangers (Gen 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; 43:24; Judg 19:21; 1 Sam 25:40, 41) been used to support the practice.

The practices and observation teach humility and equality. The rationale of Jesus Christ washing the feet of His disciples was without precedent in His culture. It was a duty performed only by a child, a wife, or a slave. It was such a powerful display of the new, radical nature of Christ's loving service that had to be preserved in the Church's ritual. The act of foot-washing was to be kept by His disciples that they might keep in mind His lessons of humility and service.

In analyzing Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper, the type of wine and bread used, and the essence of the Foot washing exercise, the study systematically employs the historical-analytical method. The results of the analysis are as follows:

The study suggests that bread and wine are a mere symbol of Jesus' own body and blood. The study further reveals that the bread for the Lord's Supper is unleavened. In the Old Testament, the unleavened bread placed on the table of the showbread in the tabernacle pointed to Jesus as the Bread of Life (John 6:48; KJV). During the week of Passover, every Israelite home was without leaven. Christ instituted the Lord's Supper on the week of Passover. The bread that Jesus used was the bread of the Passover, which was the available bread. Thus, the bread Jesus broke and gave His disciples on the night he was betrayed was unleavened.

Besides, the study reveals that the wine for the Lord's Supper is unfermented. Moreover, the presence of Jesus is appreciated through the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Jesus Christ is present spiritually at the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is not an invisible food, but the bread and wine are visible food used as symbols. Also, the study reveals that foot washing must proceed with the Lord's Supper. For example, the foot-washing affirms His motive for imitation because it has a similar foundation to baptism and Lord's Supper. It was established on the identical precept and example by Jesus.

Conclusion

Concerning the evaluation of the views of John Calvin on nature, the type of wine and bread, and Foot washing for the Lord's Supper in the light of biblical teachings about the Lord's Supper and its exemplary Christian practices, it is relevant to suggest the following conclusion:

The study concludes that John Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper as a sign appears to be accurate. It suggests that the bread symbolizes the body. The eating of the bread is done in remembrance of Jesus. As believers feed on the bread and wine physically, they feed spiritually on Christ, a view supported by 1 Corinthians 10:16. Also, the drinking of the wine is not to drink the Lord's blood. Jesus did not change the wine into real blood when He blessed the cup before giving it to the disciples.

The study reported some inconsistencies in John Calvin's work concerning the bread's nature for the Lord's Supper to scripture. John Calvin affirms the immateriality of using unleavened bread at the Lord's Supper. More so, the study concludes that the wine used for the Lord's Supper was unfermented described by Jesus as "fruit of the vine," or fresh grape juice.

Furthermore, during the Lord's Supper service, the study concludes that the Holy Spirit manifests Jesus' spiritual presence as He feeds Christians spiritually to sustain them. As a result of the place that Jesus finds Himself, it is technically impossible for Him to be physically present in the elements of the Lord's Supper.

Finally, the study concludes that Jesus established the observance of foot washing to signify renewed cleansing, show a willingness to serve one another in Christ-like humility, and unite our hearts in love. The ordinance of foot washing preceding the Lord's Supper makes the Lord's Supper to be complete. Thus, Christ instituted these ordinances to assist believers when they came to the table with Him. The study affirms that the practice of foot washing cannot be relegated to the background as little practice since Jesus intentionally commanded the disciples to do as He had done as their master.

Implication

The evaluation of Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper has the following implications. Since the benefits of the Lord's Supper flow from union with Christ, there are corresponding implications for those not joined to Him by faith.

Also, union with Christ has horizontal and vertical implications, as portrayed in Ephesians (Eph 2). Christians (believers) unite with Christ in the vertical dimension spiritually and also unite with fellow believers in the horizontal dimension physically. Thus, because the Lord's Supper has union with Christ at its heart, it has profound implications for Christian unity as it leads believers to mutual love.

Furthermore, John Calvin's view could be expressed as a spiritual and functional presence of the Lord rather than the Lord's presence being in the elements themselves but through the actions done with them.' As signs and signifiers belong together, the bread and the wine are visible signs representing believers' bodies and blood. However, this name and title of body and blood are given to them because they are instruments by which the Lord distributes them to believers. It is, therefore, essential to specify what Calvin means when he speaks of Christ's presence.

Theologically, there have been various opinions concerning the views of John Calvin on nature, the type of wine and bread, and Foot washing for the Lord's Supper. The various opinions concerning the views of John Calvin have enormous doctrinal implications and unbiblical beliefs in the light of biblical teachings about the foot-washing and unleavened bread.

Recommendations

The study recommends that proper education to Christians on the need to thoroughly examine the body (1 Cor 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20) should be done as they

prepare to have the new banquet with Jesus in Heaven so that 'all leaven' being a sin is eradicated from them.

Study findings showed preliminary work on the benefits of foot-washing. Therefore, the researcher would recommend that more work be conducted to benefit the foot-washing to believers' spiritual life since it was commanded and instituted by Jesus Christ.

The researcher would also suggest that further work should be done on the Lord's Supper's knowledge, practices, and benefits to believers' spiritual growth.

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