



Let's Read *The Institutes* of the Christian Religion, Class 15

Book 4: The External Means Or Aids By Which God Invites Us Into The Society Of Christ And Holds Us Therein.

Chapters 14-16



Calvin's Argument Against Popery, Sections 5-11

- The ancient form of government utterly corrupted by the tyranny of the papacy.
- Of the primacy of the Romish see.
- Of the beginning and rise of the Romish papacy till it attained a height by which the liberty of the church was destroyed, and all true rule overthrown.
- Of the power of the church in articles of faith.
The unbridled license of the papal church in destroying purity of doctrine.
- Of councils and their authority.
- Of the power of making laws. The cruelty of the pope and his adherents, in this respect, in tyrannically oppressing and destroying souls.
- Of the jurisdiction of the church and the abuses of it, as exemplified in the papacy.

Calvin's Argument , Sections 12-13

- Of the discipline of the Church,
and its principal use in censures and excommunication.
- Of vows. The miserable entanglements caused by vowing rashly.

Section Headings – 14-16

- Of the sacraments.
- Of Baptism.
- Paedobaptism.
Its accordance with the institution of Christ,
and the nature of the sign.

The Sacraments



Σακραμ̃ν̃τ̃υμ̃

- Oath or vow
- Oath of allegiance taken by Roman soldiers
- Oath taken prior to baptism into the Christian faith and community



Μυστεριον

- Gk.: mystery, something revealed
- Inaccurate translation of μυστεριον by the Latin word *sacramentum*
- By the 5th c., *sacramentum* denoted sacred forms of worship
- "Ordinance" – an instruction or command (rf. Mt. 28:19; Lk. 22:19; etc.)



Calvin on *Sacramentum*

"The reason why the ancients used the term in this sense is not obscure. The old interpreter, whenever he wished to render the Greek term "*musterion*" into Latin, especially when it was used with reference to divine things, used the word *sacramentum*. ...

Hence it is that the term was applied to those signs which gave an august representation of things spiritual and sublime."

Westminster Confession of Faith

Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ, and his benefits; and to confirm our interest in him: as also, to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the church, and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to his Word. (WCF 27.1)

WLC Q. 162. What is a sacrament?

A. A sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ in his church, to signify, seal, and exhibit unto those that are within the covenant of grace, the benefits of his mediation; ...

There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel; ... (WCF 27.4)

Calvin's Definition of "Sacrament"

"An outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of His good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith and we in turn attest our piety toward Him in the presence of the Lord and of His angels and before men." (4.14.1)

- Why an outward sign? – His accommodation to the weakness of our faith (&, for that reason, must never stand alone apart from the Word of God).
- Seal of the promise – The sacraments are supplemental; they illustrate/dramatize the Word. But, at the same time, they are not unimportant: they accompany faith and the Holy Spirit.
- We attest our piety – Submitting to the sacraments is our badge, profession, and testimony of faith.

Baptism

- Calvin rejects baptismal regeneration (RC)
- But neither is the Christian allowed to ignore the ordinance.
(We are bound but God is not.)
- It is a true means of receiving God's grace
 - The believer may recall his baptism to be assured and confident of the forgiveness of his sins.
 - Penance (added by the RCs by which to recover such confidence) is a fiction.
- Baptism is to be administered to by a minister only but is not dependent on that minister's personal integrity for validation.
- Calvin was willing to accept a RC baptism (being in the name of the tri-une God).
- Regarding the mode of baptism
 - Calvin is persuaded that the ancient church practiced immersion,
 - but he is also persuaded that the amount of water is irrelevant and all are equally valid.

Infant Baptism

- Infant baptism (a child of believing parents) is not inconsequential.
 - The unity of the Bible's message (Christ) and covenant is critical and needs to be honored.
 - Calvin opposed the Anabaptists who rejected the OT.
 - Calvin stressed the link between circumcision and baptism, stressing the similarities outweigh the differences. ("Calvin could not conceive the new covenant would be less inclusive than the old.")
 - Lack of specific NT references to infant baptism are not so much a problem; if it were to be prohibited in the NT, he would expect such straightforward language.)
 - The child is thus introduced into the covenant community and receives baptism into future repentance and faith. ("The blessings of the sacrament are not always tied to the moment of the sacrament." (Calhoun))

