

**CALVIN'S CONVINCING ANTIPAEDOCOMMUNIONISM – by Rev. Prof. Dr. F.N. Lee**

The history of Holy Communion can be traced from Apostolic and Early-Patristic Antipaedocommunionism, down through the Middle Ages from Ritualist Deformation to Catechetical Reformation. The Old and the New Testament and the Ante-Nicene Church prohibited Paedocommunion. However, after the demise of Chrysostom and Augustine around 430 A.D., Neo-Paganism increasingly invaded the Church and anti-catechetically effected her degeneration into mediaeval magic and sacramentalistic Paedocommunionism. The latter pagan rite was entrenched after 431 A.D., and especially in the 'Eastern Orthodox' Churches (by Paulinus, Pseudo-Dionysius, John Moschus, and Evagrius).

The Mediaeval Western Church rightly rejected 'Infant Communion.' Even after most of it romanized -- also the 1544<sup>f</sup> Council of Trent wisely insisted (however inadequately) on some kind of catechizing before admission to manducation at the Eucharist. Yet, before the Protestant Reformation, even the Western Church fluctuated between post-catechetical 'Child Communion' on the one hand and the Biblical practice of post-catechetical 'Adolescent Communion' on the other hand. Sadly, Rome's movement toward and final adoption of the blasphemous doctrine of transubstantiation in 1215 -- first warped and then finally overshadowed but did not dispense with her correct and prior practice of catechization before eucharizing.

Notwithstanding the above, the Western Church's Pre-Reformation's Proto-Protestants -- the Piedmontese Waldensians, Wycliffe's Lollards, and Huss's Bohemian Brethren -- all required prior catechizing before one's first admission to the Lord's Supper not before around puberty. So too -- especially against the post-infantile Paedocommunionism of Servetus and his Anabaptists -- did all the great men of the Early Protestant Reformation: Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Bucer, Hyperius, Bullinger, á Lasco, Beza, and especially Calvin.

In this essay, we shall here see that Calvin entertained no Communion for uncatechized Pre-Adolescents. He had strong exegetical objections to Paedocommunion all the way from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation, and demonstrated that the Ante-Nicene Church catechized its youth before admitting them to Communion. Indeed, he alleged that her Overseers even laid hands on her catechized youth before first eucharizing them at teenage

To Calvin, Paedocommunion was a Post-Nicene and indeed an Early-Mediaeval ecclesiastical error. In the West, it went hand in hand with the Papist perversion of pseudoconfirmation. That was a species of mediaeval sacramentalism which mauled the manumission or laying on of hands of earlier and healthier centuries.

Calvin addressed the Anabaptist Servetus' pseudopaedocommunionistic speciousness, and crushed the latter's pseudo-paedocommunionism. Realizing that the Apostolic Age's laying on of hands (for one's first admission to the eucharist) needed restoring in the Church -- he let covenant children first catechize, from a minimum age of 10 till a minimum age of 13.

Wherever carnalizing, Calvin urged Communion Services be postponed. In his *Geneva Catechism*, he insisted on thorough preparation for Communion Catechumens. Indeed, he did the same in his *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* -- with their emphasis also on 'Seasonal

Communion.'

Calvin wrote several Anti-Romish tracts in favour of what might be called 'True Confirmation.' He opposed the compromising *German Interim*, in favour of the Biblical and Early-Patristic practice of 'Teenage Confirmation.' Against Lutheranism, he claimed that catechizing is necessary in order to see consubstantiation's error. And against all possibilities of loose communion, he approved of the French Huguenots' Communion Tokens

Calvin also wrote to the ten-year-old Basque Prince Henry of Navarre regarding the age of religious understanding (and its antipaedocommunionistic implications). And finally, he wrote to the Lord Protector of the young King Edward VI of England that the Church simply cannot thrive – nay more, cannot long survive -- without Catechism.

### **539. Calvin: no Communion for uncatechized Pre-Adolescents**

Rev. Professor Dr. John Calvin of Geneva -- the greatest Protestant Reformer of all time -- was baptized in infancy in the Romish Church. He was -- as a matter of Protestant principle -- never subsequently re-baptized after becoming a Protestant. Precisely for Biblical reasons, he strongly opposed all re-baptizing -- by Protestants -- of converts from Rome. Consistently, he also rejected all notions that Presbyterians should ever re-baptize any previously-immersed Anabaptist who might later become a Paedobaptist Protestant.<sup>1698</sup>

Calvin also opposed all Anabaptistic postponement of the baptizing of covenant children till after their infancy.<sup>1699</sup> Indeed, he further opposed all giving of Holy Communion to infantly-baptized though uncatechized children of professing Christians. For he believed they needed first to be catechized and then to be admitted to the Table, and no earlier than at adolescence.

Here, we restrict ourselves to a discussion of Calvin's views only of Catechism and Confirmation prior to Communion. Indeed, we shall see he believed in giving the Lord's Supper only to (infantly-baptized or adultly-baptized) adolescents and adults --solely after they have made their own personal 'Profession of Faith.'

Calvin warmly upheld first the catechizing and then the (Biblical) admission to the table of the infantly-baptized children of the covenant -- before their first manducation at Holy Communion. He also belaboured the need of giving Baptism to adult converts from Judaism, Islam, and Paganism -- before first admitting them to the Lord's Supper. Indeed, he insisted that both of these good practices were faithfully continued in the Early Church -- before they slowly degenerated into later sacramentalistic aberrations. Such aberrations were: uncatechetical 'Child Communionism' on the one hand; and ritualistic 'Chismic Confirmationism' on the other.

The *Geneva Confession* of 1536, article 16 reads: "The Supper of our Lord is a sign by which under bread and wine, He represents the true spiritual communion which we have in His body and blood. And we acknowledge that according to His ordinance it ought to be distributed in the company of the faith-ful, in order that all those who wish to have Jesus in their life be partakers of it." Clearly, the ability to express any such wish, excludes all infant manducation.

Calvin wrote his catechisms in the national language of his fellow-countrymen -- French. His *First Catechism*, intended for adults, was taken from his *Institutes* of 1536, and appeared in 1537. Before 1630, it had gone through 77 editions and been translated into almost every European language.

His *Second Catechism*, intended for children, appeared in 1541 -- and also went through multiple translations. It was divided into lessons for such children, to be given them on every Sunday afternoon throughout the year.

Here, Calvin indicated the way in which covenant children were to be admitted to Holy Communion. Apparently, they were to be enrolled as Catechumens when ten, and to 'graduate' to the Lord's Table at the threshold of their teens -- after being 'admitted' by the 'laying on of hands' (Bucer).<sup>1701</sup>

Both of his catechisms -- viz. That for adults as well as that for children -- were used in Geneva. There, the Lord's Supper was restricted to Communicants -- who had previously **professed** their Christian faith during public worship.

In Calvin's *First Catechism*, the heads of teaching are: the Decalogue; the Lord's Prayer; the Word of God; and the Sacraments. His *Second Catechism*, in questions and answers, is traced upon the Apostles' Creed and the Law of God, with a few prayers. It was long used in France and Scotland, and it was soon translated also into Italian, English, Spanish, German, Dutch, Hungarian, Greek and Hebrew.

From Switzerland, Calvin's catechetical influence soon permeated France, Holland, Germany, England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. The Reformed Micron relates that in London even Calvin's *Larger Catechism* was in use. Every Sunday afternoon, "it was, in an orderly fashion, required of the bigger children. There, the Minister (in the presence of the whole Congregation) expounded it from his chair -- with Biblical proofs."<sup>1702</sup>

The Presbyterian Church of Scotland's 1560 *First Book of Discipline* gratefully endorsed Calvin's *Geneva Catechism*. States the former:<sup>1703</sup> "The *Order of Geneva*, which is now used in some of our churches, is sufficient to instruct the diligent reader how both these Sacraments [of Baptism and the Supper] may be rightly ministered.... The Sunday must straitly be kept both before and after noon in all towns. Before noon, must the Word be preached and Sacraments ministered.... After noon, must young children be publickly examined in their *Catechism* in the audience of the people, [in doing] whereof the Minister must take great diligence -- as well to cause the people [to] understand the questions proponed, as [the] answers and the doctrine that may be collected thereof.

"The order [to be kept in teaching the *Catechism*], and how much [of it] is appointed for every Sunday, is already distinguished in [the *Catechism* printed with] the *Book of our Common Order* -- which [*Geneva*] *Catechism* is the most perfect that ever yet was used by the kirk.... Four times in the year we think sufficient to the administration of the Lord's Table!"

Comments Rev. Professor Dr. J.K. Cameron:<sup>1704</sup> "A translation of the *Catechism* composed by Calvin for use in Geneva, appeared with the [Scottish] *Forme of Prayers* (1556), and 'with practically every edition of the *Book of Common Order* up to 1611.'" Calvin's *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of 1541 determined that the Lord's Supper be held "**four times in**

**the year.** This decision was repeated in the 1561 revision of the *Ordonnances*, and reflects the practice during Knox's residence [in Francophone Geneva]. Of the 'reformed cities' of Switzerland, only Basel provided for a weekly celebration. In other German-speaking areas, **three times a year** was normal."

Such relative infrequency of Communion Services, made it easy to arrange for Communion Preparation Services on the Sabbath before Communion Sundays. Cf. Exodus 12:16; Leviticus 23:3-8; Numbers 28:16f; Deuteronomy 16:1-4; Second Chronicles 29:17f & 30:2f & 35:6f; Ezra 6:19-22; Ezekiel 45:21; Matthew 26:2-19; Mark 14:1-16; Luke 22:1-15; John 2:13-23; 6:4; 11:55f; 12:1; 13:1; 19:14; 20:1,19,26; Acts 20:5-7; First Corinthians 5:7-13. It also made it much easier to ensure that all would-be Communicants were first thoroughly catechized -- thus yet further guarding against Paedocommunionism.

#### **540. Calvin's exegetical objections to Paedocommunion in Genesis and Exodus**

The Lord God created Adam as a **mature** man, when He **catechized** and **invited him to manducate** at the tree of life. Genesis 2:7,15-16,18,22. In Calvin's various *Commentaries* on most of the several books of the Bible, the above anti-paedocommunionistic position is reflected in his understanding of the totality of Holy Scripture itself.

Thus, on Genesis 4:2, Calvin presupposed that Cain and Abel were **already mature** -- before they **offered sacrifices** to Jehovah and themselves partook thereof.<sup>1705</sup> Even at that very time, observed Calvin -- it was "probable that Cain was married" already and thus, like his co-offering younger brother Cain, no longer a pre-adolescent.

Also the Passover was a **sacrifice**. "It is the **sacrifice** of the **Lord's Passover**." Exodus 12:27. Calvin comments<sup>1706</sup> on the first Passover (at Exodus 12:24f). There, the Reformer states that the Lord -- through Moses -- "again repeats the precept as to its annual celebration.... When they [the Israelites] have come into the land, the recollection of their deliverance is yearly to be revived by this rite....

"They should also **teach their children**.... For '**Doctrine**' may justly be called the 'life' of Sacraments.... Moses...indicates the age when they are capable of being taught.... He indirectly exhorts the children to teachableness, when their age admits of their understanding what the Passover signifies.... **The Paschal Lamb corresponds with the Holy Supper**. We may gather from hence that **none** can be duly **admitted** to receive it, **but those who are capable of being taught**."

In Exodus 12:26, we read that at annual Passover Services, whenever a post-infantile son would there ask his father and the other would-be celebrants: "What do **you** mean by this Service?" -- each father was to answer his non-manducating yet questioning son: "It is the **sacrifice** of the Lord's Passover" *etc.* Indeed, at the time of the first Passover, 600 000 Israelitic **adult male footsoldiers** were **counted** in that **number** (cf. Exodus 12:3-4) -- "**beside**" their womenfolk and their small "children" alias their toddlers or *o*"f still clinging to their mothers.

"**None** but the **matriculated** (*emmatriculez*) were **admitted**.... **Only** the **faithful** should be received **after** they have **professed** themselves to be followers of Christ.... God includes under the terms 'males' **only** those who were comprised in the **census**."<sup>1707</sup> Compare

Exodus 12:26f & 12:43f to 23:14-17f.

Applying this to the Lord's Table in Newer Testament times, Calvin also declared:<sup>1708</sup> "**The Supper is intended** for those of **riper years** who, having passed the tender period of infancy, are fit to bear solid food.... He does not admit all to partake of the Supper, but confines it to those who are fit to discern the body and blood of the Lord.... Examination therefore must precede; and this it were vain to expect from infants.... 'He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.' If they cannot partake worthily without being able duly to discern the sanctity of the Lord's body, why should we stretch out **poison** to our young children instead of vivifying food? ... The **Passover**, for which the Supper is substituted, did not admit all kinds of guests promiscuously, but was duly eaten **only** by those who were of an **age** sufficient to **ask the meaning** of it (**Exodus 12:26**).

At Exodus 12:43f, Calvin went on to comment<sup>1709</sup> that "the Passover was the sacred bond whereby God would hold the elect people in obligation to Himself. He forbids all strangers from partaking of it; because a promiscuous permission to eat of it, would have been an unworthy profanation.... **None but the initiated** [past tense] **were admitted** [thereafter] **to their sacred rites** -- '*ceux qui y estroyent solennellement introduits, et comme emmatriculez*' --'those who had been solemnly introduced to them and as it were matriculated'....

"From the analogy between the Holy Supper and the Passover, this law remains in force now -- viz., that no polluted or impure person should intrude himself at the Lord's Table, but that **only** the **faithful** should be received **after** they have **professed** themselves to be followers of Christ. *Fait protestation de leu foy et Chrestienté.*"

Exodus 23:14-17 (cf. Deuteronomy 16:16) reads: "Three times you shall keep a Feast to Me, in the year. You shall keep **the Feast of Unleavened Bread** [cf. too Leviticus 23:5-6].... Three times in the year, all your males shall appear before the Lord God!"

Here too, Calvin comments<sup>1710</sup> that God "prescribed only three necessary convocations -- lest the fathers of families and their children should be wearied by the expense and trouble of them." At the same time, **it was "only required of the 'males'"** -- that they should leave their houses and celebrate the sacred convocations.... It is also **certain** that the **[young] boys and [very] young men were excepted**.... The fathers of families presented themselves there in the names of their wives and children" below the age of thirteen. Indeed, speculates Calvin, it is even possible that **"young men were excepted under the age of twenty"** -- since God includes under the terms 'males' only those who were comprised in the census." Numbers 1:2-3 & Exodus 30:14 -- cf. 23:14-17 & 34:23-25.

#### **541. Calvin's exegetical objections to Paedocommunion in Deuteronomy and Lamentations**

Calvin's comments on Deuteronomy 6:6-25 and 20:13-14, are appropriate. There, "God...commands" -- explained the Reformer -- "the study of His Law.... He enjoins [parents] that constant conversation should be held about it, with their children.... It was not lawful [for the Israelites] to kill...either women or children" among their pagan opponents.<sup>1711</sup>

More relevant still are Calvin's remarks on the statements in Deuteronomy 16:1-8 and 16:16.

The latter enjoins: 'Keep the Passover to the Lord.... Three times in a year, all your males shall appear before the Lord!'

For, at those annual Passovers -- explained Calvin<sup>1712</sup> -- God's people "were also forbidden to admit any heathen man to it, unless he were circumcised.... If a man should nowadays admit as many to the Lord's Supper as would offer to come to it -- were it not a defiling of the Sacrament?...

"The Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ is to us at this day the same that the Pascal Lamb was to the people of the Jews..... It ought not to be set forth peradventure to all comers.... He [God] would not have the Pascal Lamb eaten by unholy and unbelieving folk.... A man cannot be partaker of the Pascal Lamb..., unless he be like a wayfarer and...stay not in this world.... We must rid ourselves of all malice and guile....

"To keep the Passover aright at this day...we must make confession of our faith.... Let us use the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper so that we may ask one another what is meant by it.... In the twelfth of Exodus [12:26], our Lord shows us full well that we must profit in His School, in order to be partakers of the Pascal Lamb....

"We must inquire diligently to know the benefits which our Lord Jesus Christ has brought us.... Truly, the use of the Lord's Supper ought to put us in mind that our coming there ought not to be without instruction.... It be not lawful to admit young children to the Lord's Supper until they know what is meant by that Sacrament and why it was ordained."

In Lamentations 2:11-12, a dramatic description is given by the eye-witness Jeremiah of the dire distress then suffered especially by small children during the Babylonians' destruction of Jerusalem. The Prophet says that "the children swoon in the streets of the city. They say to their mothers, 'Where is corn and wine?'" This occurred when those still-unweaned children "swooned like the wounded in the streets of the city -- when their soul was poured out into their mothers' bosom."

Significantly, Calvin commented<sup>1713</sup> here that "the use of wine is not allowed to infants." Clearly, this implies that such unweaned children old enough to speak to their mothers -- those about three-to-four years old -- therefore did not receive wine, even at Passover-time.

Compare too at Lamentations 4:4*f*. There, Jeremiah says of the starving infants during the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem: "The tongue of the sucking child cleaves to the roof of his mouth for thirst; the young children ask bread, but nobody breaks it for them!" On this, Calvin commented<sup>1714</sup> that Jeremiah "speaks not in the latter instance of sucklings, but of children three or four years old" and older. Here again, Calvin's views are irreconcilable with eucharizing uncatechized children.

#### **542. Calvin's exegetical objections to Paedocommunion in the Gospels**

In Luke 2:40*f*, we read that "the child [Jesus] grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem -- according to the custom of the Feast. And when they had fulfilled the days..., the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem."

Here, according to Calvin's translation,<sup>1715</sup> Jesus had "arrived at twelve years." Calvin says of Jesus and his fellow-travellers on their way to the Passover that "they went up to Jerusalem" -- '*Luy donc estant venu en l'aage de douze ans*' -- 'He then being come to the age of twelve years.'"

Commented Calvin:<sup>1716</sup> "It is mentioned in commendation of the piety of Mary and Joseph, that they gave diligent attendance to the outward worship of God. It was not of their own accord but by a divine command, that they undertook this annual journey."

That particular year, Jesus accompanied His parents to the Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem. For "the Law enjoined the 'males' only" -- that is, those just turning 'men' toward age thirteen and above -- "to 'appear before the Lord' (Exodus 23:17)." Thus Calvin -- most antipaedocommunionly!.

In John 6:41-53, during His sermon to the murmuring and strife-filled Jews who were acquainted with His earthly parents, Jesus made a very significant statement. He said: "Truly, I tell you -- unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life within yourselves!"

Paedocommunionists sacramentalistically think that this passage requires their own position.. Post-Nicene and indeed Post-Chrysostomian Eastern-Orthodox Paedocommunionists, as well as their modern maverick Western Quasi-Neocalvinist imitators, cite especially this to support their views.

Here, however, Calvin comments:<sup>1717</sup> "This sermon [of Christ] does not refer to the Lord's Supper, but to the continual communication which we have -- apart from the reception of the Lord's Supper.... As far as young children are concerned, Christ's ordinance forbids them to participate in the Lord's Supper -- because they cannot yet try themselves or celebrate the remembrance of the death of Christ (*quia nondum se ipsos probare nondum colere memoriam mortis Christi possunt*).... It is wrong to expound this whole passage, as applying to the Lord's Supper!"

In Luke 22:1-11f (cf. Matthew 26:14f & Mark 14:10f), we read that "the Feast of Unleavened Bread which is called the Passover drew nigh" -- and that Jesus then asked: "Where shall I eat the Passover with my disciples?" For it was for such disciples alias instructed adult Christians, and not with their uninstructed children, that He then instituted the Lord's Supper.

Thus Calvin commented:<sup>1718</sup> "Since therefore the day of killing and eating the Passover was at hand, the disciples ask Christ where He wishes them to eat the Passover.... I have no doubt therefore that Christ, according to the ancient custom, tasted 'the cup' in the Holy Feast -- which otherwise could not have been observed correctly.... Thus when the Supper was ended, they tasted the sacred bread and wine.... Christ instituted a Supper, where the disciples partake -- in company with each other.... Whoever will not distinguish the body of Christ from the bread and the blood from the wine -- will never understand what is meant by the Lord's Supper or for what purpose believers use these symbols."

Clearly, uncatechized children cannot so "distinguish" or "understand." Indeed, at Christ's institution of His Supper -- they were not even present.

### **543. Calvin's exegetical objections to Paedocommunion in Acts**

In Acts 10:47-48, Paul baptizes both the believing adults and their infants -- in the household of Cornelius. Here Calvin commented:<sup>1719</sup> "I admit that those who are outside the Church must be instructed before the symbol of adoption [Baptism] is conferred on them. But I maintain that believer's children, who are born within the Church, are members of the family of the Kingdom of God from the womb.... God has adopted the children of believers before they are born.... This testimony...powerfully refutes the superstition of the Papists, who bind the grace of the Spirit to the signs...."

"When Luke narrates that men who had not yet been initiated in Baptism, were already endowed with the Holy Spirit [Acts 10:2f] -- he is showing that the Spirit is not shut up in Baptism [v. 48a].... When Luke says finally that Peter was asked by Cornelius and his relatives to stay for a few days [v. 48b], he is commending the desire they had to make progress. They were certainly endowed with the Holy Spirit; but they had not reached such a peak that 'Confirmation' [alias subsequent instruction followed by Admission to the Lord's Supper] would be of no further use to them. Following their example, let us make diligent use of the opportunity to make progress!"

In Acts 19:1-7, notice that Paul first catechized such adults and then got them publically to profess their faith, before so confirming them. Here, he 'confirmed' -- by the laying on of hands -- those already baptized. 'They were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus; and when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them.'

Thus, 'Confirmation' in the Christian faith -- before 'Admission' to the Lord's Table -- is an Apostolic Ordinance. Hence, Calvin commented here:<sup>1720</sup> "I do not condemn the use of the laying on of hands by 'the men of old' -- to confirm adults[!] in the 'Profession of the Faith.'"

### **544. Calvin's exegetical objections to Paedocommunion in First Corinthians**

At First Corinthians 3:2, Paul declares: 'I have fed you with milk, and not with meat. For hitherto you were not able to bear it. Neither are you yet now able.' Here, Calvin meaningfully commented:<sup>1721</sup> "Christ is milk for babes, and solid food for adults."

In First Corinthians 11:27-30, concerning manducation at the Lord's Supper, Paul solemnly declares: "Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let [an *anthr* & *epos* alias] a man ['test' or] examine himself (*dokimazet* & *heauton*), and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup! For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment over himself, not discerning [or *m* & *diakrin* & *n*] the Lord's body. For this reason, many are weak and sickly among you, and many 'sleep' [*koim* & *ntai*] -- alias, have died!

Recognizing the inapplicability of the above passage to children, Calvin here commented:<sup>1722</sup> "Now if a man has not a vestige of a living faith or of repentance..., how can he receive Christ Himself?" Calvin warns against "putting a barrier" not between unconfirmed pre-teenagers and confirmed Post-Catechumens -- but rather "between every single man and woman" at "the Supper." Cf. First Corinthians 11:11f.



In this way, Calvin presupposes the maturity of the participants even as to their age (regardless of their gender). Indeed, Paul here "declares that this food -- which is otherwise beneficial -- will be turned into **poison**, and cause the destruction of those who eat unworthily." For "if in Paul's time an abuse of the Supper...could stir up the wrath of God against the Corinthians, so that He punished them so severely -- what are we to think about the situation in our own day?"

Calvin again discussed the above passage, in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. There, he wrote:<sup>1723</sup> "It is not now difficult to infer what view on the whole ought to be taken of **vows**. There is one vow common to all Believers, which, taken in Baptism, we confirm and as it were sanction by our Catechism -- in making 'Profession of our Faith' (*en faisant 'Protestation de notre Foy'*) -- and partaking of the **Lord's Supper**."

Later, he went on to explain that unlike Infant Baptism, the Post-Confirmatory (Lord's) "Supper is intended for those of **riper years** who, having passed the tender period of infancy, are fit to bear **solid food**."

"This distinction is very clearly pointed out in Scripture.... **The Lord...does not admit all to partake of the Supper**, but **confines** it to those who are fit to **discern** the body and blood of the Lord, to **examine** their own conscience, to show forth the Lord's death, and **understand**.... First Corinthians 11:28."

Calvin then elaborated further. "Can we wish anything clearer than what the Apostle says, when he exhorts: 'Let a man[!] examine[!] himself -- and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup?' First Corinthians 11:28. **Examination**, therefore, must precede [manducating at Communion] -- and this it were vain to expect from infants! Again: 'He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself -- not discerning the Lord's body!'" First Corinthians 11:29.

Next, speaking specifically of **infants and children**, Calvin observes that they "**cannot partake worthily** without being able duly to discern the sanctity of the Lord's body." Consequently, seeing that the swallowing of the bread and wine by the unworthy is 'poison' to them at Holy Communion -- "Why should we stretch out 'poison' to our young children -- instead of vivifying food?!"

Dr. John Calvin continued: "Then, what is our Lord's injunction? 'Do this in **remembrance** of Me!'.... How, pray, can we require infants to commemorate any event -- of which they have **no understanding**? How [can we] require them 'to show forth the Lord's death' -- of the nature and benefit of which they have no idea?... The Passover, for which the **Supper is substituted**, did not admit all kinds of guests promiscuously --but was duly eaten only by those who were of an age sufficient to ask the meaning of it. Exodus 12:26."

#### **545. Calvin's exegetical objections to Paedocommunion in Hebrews**

Hebrews 5:12 to 6:5 states: "By this time, when you should be teachers, you need somebody to teach you 'the first principles' again.... You have become like such who need milk but not strong meat. For everyone who uses milk, is unskilful in the Word of righteousness. For he is a baby. But **strong meat** belongs to those who are of full age -- to those who by reason of use, have their senses exercised **to discern** both good and evil. Therefore, moving on from the first things of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on...from. the...laying on of hands...

having **tasted** the good Word of God."

Here, the Holy Writer argues that infants consume milk and not "strong meat." The sacred bread and wine are "**strong meat**" indeed, and such symbols of the Lord's Supper are not for babes but only for those who are old enough "**to be teachers**" of others. "Strong meat belongs to them that are of **full age**" alias mature -- even to "those who by **reason of use** have their sense **exercised to discern both good and evil**" only after "**the laying on of hands**" at their first admission to the Lord's Supper where they first thus "**tasted** the good Word of God."

Here Calvin commented<sup>1724</sup> that "those who are of such tender years that they cannot receive the more **advanced teaching**, are called children.... The true **purpose of teaching**, is to fit us together -- so that we grow up to a perfect man; to the measure of **full maturity**; so that we are **not children** tossed to and fro....

"We must, of course, show indulgence to those who...are incapable of taking solid food. But anyone who ought to grow with time, is inexcusable --if he remains for ever a child....

"Certainly the teaching of Christ provides milk for children, just as it provides solid food for adults. But an infant is nourished on the milk of its nurse -- not that it may always depend on the breast, but that it may gradually [= step-by-step!] be weaned onto stronger food." For -- adds the Holy Writer (*cf.* Hebrews 5:14) -- 'solid food is for full-grown men,' *etc.* Here, comments Calvin, "he calls adults 'full-grown' -- setting them in opposition to babes!"

Calvin elaborated on this further, at Hebrews 6:1. There, Holy Scripture urges us to "cease speaking [only] about the 'first principles' of Christ" -- the "first things" of Christian Doctrine, *etc.* Instead, we are to "press on unto perfection" -- by "not laying again a foundation" (such as by unrepeatable once-and-for-all matters such as "the teaching of baptisms" or by "laying on of hands" or by "faith toward God") *etc.*

Calvin commented<sup>1725</sup> that this Scripture is here giving an "exhortation to leave [by moving on from] the first principles, and [to] advance to the goal.... **The Catechumen was admitted to...make 'Confession' of his faith.** There were certain cardinal matters about which the Pastor questioned the Catechumens, as clearly appears from the various evidences of the Fathers [in the Early Church].

"**This examination** was concerned particularly with what is known as the *Apostles' Creed*.... The Apostle [at Hebrew 6:1f] is referring to the practice whereby there was a short space of time given to Catechumens.... They were initiated into the doctrine of their religion -- just as a teacher **instructs** his pupils in the alphabet, so that he may take them on at once to something more advanced....

"The word 'Faith' [in Hebrews 6:1] means the short summary of religious teaching which is commonly called the 'Articles of Faith'.... The Apostle refers to the common form of putting the question.... This was right and proper for children, and on one occasion [viz. at the very end of their childhood when catechizing]. To go back to them again [after they had become Communicant Members, generally at the onset of teenage], simply means to fall away."

In Hebrews 6:2, Holy Scripture speaks specifically of the "**laying on of hands**." This, done apparently by the Pastor, certainly seems to be referring to the way the Church 'confirms' her

Catechumens. This is her final approval of the Catechumens' completion of the Catechism Course -- right before their 'Admission' to the Lord's Supper for the first time immediately after their public 'Profession of Faith.'

Here, Calvin commented:<sup>1726</sup> "The children of believers were baptized as infants since they were adopted from the womb and belonged to the body of the Church by right of the promise. Then, after their infancy was over and they had been instructed in the Faith, they offered themselves for a Catechumenate.... Another sign was then added [after they had been catechized at the end of their infancy and childhood] -- in the 'laying on of hands' [at their Admission to manducation at the Lord's Supper]....

This single passage [Hebrews 5:12 to 6:2] is abundant evidence that the origin of this rite [of post-catechetical 'Confirmation' by the laying on of hands and 'Admission to the Supper'] came from the Apostles.... We should know that it was instituted by its first authors to be a solemn ceremony of prayer, as indeed Augustine declares. They [its apostolic first authors] intended by this sign...to confirm the 'Profession of Faith' which adolescents make when they pass from their childhood.... We must retain the institution in its purity!"

Calvin further declared that "Augustine distinctly affirms" -- around 400 A.D. -- that "the laying on of hands...is nothing but prayer (*De Bapt. Cont. Donat.* III:16)."<sup>1727</sup> Dr. Calvin added elsewhere:<sup>1728</sup> "I do not condemn the use of the laying on of hands by 'the men of old' -- to confirm adults in the 'Profession of Faith.'" Notice too that Paul first catechized such adults and then got them publically to profess their faith, before so confirming them. Acts 19:1-2-7.

In Hebrews 13:10, clearly soon before 70 A.D., the Bible says of the adult Hebrew Christians as opposed to the adult Judaistic priests: "We have an Altar -- from which they who keep on serving the Tabernacle, have no right to eat." This is speaking specifically of 'full age' Christians who had been consuming 'strong meat' -- after they had made their "Profession of Faith" and had then been 'confirmed' as Communicant Church Members, by the "laying on of hands" (Hebrews 5:12 to 6:5) For 13:10's Non-Christian Judaistic priests had never yet publically professed any faith in Christ.

Observed Calvin:<sup>1729</sup> "David prayed: 'Let my prayer ascend forth before You like incense!' Psalm 141:2. And Hosea gives the name of 'calves of the lips' (Hosea 14:3) to thanksgivings which David elsewhere calls 'sacrifices of praise.' The Apostle, imitating him, speaks of offering 'the sacrifice of praise' -- which he explains to mean 'the fruit' of our lips, giving thanks to His Name (Hebrews 13:15). This kind of sacrifice is indispensable in the Lord's Supper."

#### 546. Calvin's exegetical objections to Paedocommunion in the Epistles of Peter and Jude

Even where Peter enjoins adult Christians to grow further -- he implicitly presupposes that Holy Communion is only for the mature! "Like newborn babes, keep on desiring the sincere 'milk of the Word' -- so that you can keep on growing!" First Peter 2:2.

Here Calvin comments:<sup>1730</sup> "Paul reproves the Corinthians, because they are like children and therefore they cannot take strong food but are to be fed with milk (First Corinthians 3:1). Almost the same words are found in Hebrews 5:12.... In these passages, those who are

compared to children: remain always novices and ignorant scholars in the doctrine of religion; stick at the 'first elements' [Baptism but not the Lord's Supper]; and never penetrate into the higher knowledge of God [cf. the 'Mystery' of the Second Sacrament].... Yet here..., Peter recommends milk.... For he wishes those nourished by it, **to grow!**"

Again, in Second Peter 1:8, Calvin comments<sup>1731</sup> that Christ's purpose is not only to **build up** the faithful... He also demands **continual progress and improvement** to be made.... We ought, therefore, to be **always going on** -- so that the gifts of God increase in us."

Compare too the **adult-erous 'Feasts'** in Second Peter 2:13-14. There, Calvin attacks such **'Indiscriminate Communion'** -- and finds it reprehensible that those who "took delight in errors..., feasted together with the faithful."

Last, there are the **"Feasts of Charity"** (or *Agapais*) mentioned in Jude 12. There, Calvin comments against indiscriminate 'Admission' to the Church's Ordinances: "I wish there were more judgment in some good men who, by seeking to be extremely kind to wicked men -- bring great damage to the whole church!"<sup>1732</sup> See too, at First Corinthians 11:20-29, on the "Lord's Supper."

Sadly, Calvin did not live long enough to write a *Commentary* on the Book of Revelation. Yet Revelation 2:14 & 2:20 warn Christians against eating with idolators things being sacrificed to idols; 2:17 promises Christ shall give Christians to eat of the hidden manna; 19:9 says they shall all be at the [adult] Marriage Supper of the Lamb; and 21:2 & 21:14 imply they will all partake of the fruit of the tree of life. **Adults alone** could partake of the fruit of that tree, before the fall. And **adults alone** shall partake thereof in glory -- because all Christians shall be resurrected **precisely as adults** (First John 3:2).

Clearly, this is what any *Commentary on the Book of Revelation* which Calvin might have written -- would have implied. For his views on 'eucharistic' passages in Revelation such as 2:14-20, are clear enough from his expressed comments on parallel 'eucharistic' passages in Second Peter and Jude.<sup>1733</sup>

#### **547. Calvin: Early-Patristic Church catechized youth before Communion**

We now turn to Calvin's understanding of first Catechism and then Confirmation before Admission to Communion -- as practised by the Early Patristic Church. By the latter, we mean especially the **Ante-Nicene Church**, which was still following the example of the Apostles (in Acts 19:2-7 and Second Timothy 1:6 and Hebrews 6:2 *etc.*).

In Early-Patristic times, said Calvin, "**a boy of ten years of age** would present himself to the Church"<sup>1734</sup> (at the **beginning of his years'-long catechetical period** -- as in many Reformed Churches even today).<sup>1735</sup> This self-presentation was undertaken -- **in order "to make a 'Profession of Faith'"** at the end of that years-long period. Thus, such infantly-baptized covenant children were, "**toward the end of their boyhood or on adolescence** brought forward by their parents and were **examined by the Overseer in terms of the Catechism** which was then in common use.... The ceremony of **laying on of hands** was also used. Thus the boy **on his faith being approved**, was dismissed with a solemn blessing. **Ancient writers often make mention of this custom.**"<sup>1736</sup>

Thus, the adolescent "would be questioned on each head -- and give answers to each [cf. Luke 2:42-47]. If he was ignorant of any point, or did not well understand it -- he would be taught. Thus, while the whole Church looked on and witnessed, he would profess the one true sincere faith."<sup>1737</sup>

As previously stated,<sup>1738</sup> Calvin took the Early Patristic view of Hebrew 6:2's "laying on of hands" -- unto admission to the "strong meat" of the Lord's Supper when "of full age" (Hebrews 5:12-14 & 6:1-5). Thus, he also remarked<sup>1739</sup> that the 250 A.D. "Cyprian somewhere says that not the Overseer laid hands but also the whole Clergy [probably meaning the Minister and his entire Session of Elders]. For thus he speaks: 'They come to communion, and receive the right of communion by the laying on of the hands of the Overseer and Clergy.'<sup>1740</sup> Indeed, as both Dabney<sup>1741</sup> and Macpherson<sup>1742</sup> later stated, Ruling Elders are Clergy and not 'Laymen.'

#### **548. Calvin: Early-Patristic 'Confirmation' before first eucharizing at teenage**

"In the Early Church, indeed, the Lord's Supper was frequently given to infants -- as appears from Cyprian and Augustine.... But the practice justly became obsolete." Thus Calvin.<sup>1743</sup>

Now Cyprian indeed mentioned a few instances of re-pagan-izing parents and/or pagan magistrates paedocommunionistically force-feeding at least one of the communion elements to small children. Yet Cyprian himself clearly disapproving of that practice.

It is, however, true -- that the later Augustine did not oppose the fourth-century ecclesiastic innovation of Communion for Pre-adolescents. Yet Augustine nevertheless clearly insisted on all would-be Communicants being priorly catechized -- and rejected the communing of uncatechizable speechless infants as distinct from catechizable children.

Clearly referring to Ante-Nicene ecclesiastical practice, Calvin continued:<sup>1744</sup> "It was anciently customary for the [infantly-baptized] children of Christians, after they had grown up, to appear before the Overseer -- to fulfil that duty which was required of such [unbaptized] adults as presented themselves for Baptism [*viz.*, to prepare to receive their first Holy Communion]. These [infantly-baptized covenant children] sat among the [unbaptized] Catechumens -- until they [all] were duly instructed in the 'Mysteries' of the faith, and could make a 'Confession' of it before Overseer and people.

"The infants therefore, who had been initiated by [Infant] Baptism -- not then having given a 'Confession' of [their own] faith to the Church -- were...toward the end of their boyhood or on adolescence -- brought forward by their parents and were examined by the Overseer in terms of the *Catechism* which was then in common use. In order that this act...might have more reverence and dignity, the ceremony of laying on of hands was also used. Thus the boy, on his faith being approved, was dismissed [or then sent forth after his 'Admission' to the Lord's Supper] with a solemn blessing. Ancient writers often make mention of this custom....

"Leo says (*Epistle 39*): 'If anyone returns from Heretics -- let him not be baptized again, but let that which was there wanting to him (*viz.* the vir-tue of the Spirit) be conferred by the laying on of the hands of the Overseer.'" The 'vir-tue' seems to include 'man-hood' (cf. Latin

'vir' = 'mature man').

Leo elsewhere explained what he means by these words (*Epistle 77*): 'Let not him who was baptized by Heretics be rebaptized -- but be confirmed by the laying on of hands with the invocation of the Holy Spirit.' To that, Calvin himself then added his own observation. He said: "This laying on of hands, which is done simply by way of benediction, I commend -- and would like to see restored to its pure use in the present day...."

"I wish we could retain the custom which, as I have observed, existed in the Early Church.... A boy of ten years of age would present himself to the Church [at the beginning of his three-years-long catechetical period, in order] to make a 'Profession of Faith'.... [He would then] be questioned on each head -- and give answers to each [Luke 2:40-47 cf. Prov. 22:6]." Thus Calvin.<sup>1745</sup>

#### **549. Calvin on the Early-Mediaeval error of Paedocommunion**

Sadly, the 'golden' Patristic Age -- aggressively assaulted first by neo-paganism and finally by accommodationistic syncretism -- gradually decayed into the Post-Patristic Deformation. As regards that Post-Patristic Deformation, explained Calvin,<sup>1746</sup> "the Lord's Supper was frequently given to infants, as appears from Cyprian and Augustine (*August. ad Bonif. Lib. I*); but the practice justly became obsolete" -- at least in the Late-Patristic and Early-Mediaeval Church of the West.

However, continued Calvin:<sup>1747</sup> "A later [Post-Augustinian] age having almost obliterated the reality, [it] introduced a kind of fictitious 'Confirmation' as a divine 'Sacrament'.... Let them [the Greek-Orthodox and Romanist Mediaevalists] not here yelp out one of their vile distinctions -- that the laying on of hands to which Augustine referred (*De Bapt. Cont. Donat. III:16*) was not the confirmatory but the curative or reconciliatory! His book is extant.... Augustine himself wrote it...."

"He is speaking of those who returned from schism to the unity of the Church. He says that they have no need of a repetition of Baptism -- for the laying on of hands is sufficient.... 'What,' he asks, 'is the laying on of hands --but prayer over the man?!'"

With the rise of magical ritualism in the Early Middle Ages, there was predictably also a corresponding dramatic increase in Paedocommunion. In John 6:41-53, in His sermon to the murmuring and strife-filled Jews who were acquainted with His earthly parents, Jesus had said: "Truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life within yourselves!"

Here, however, in 1536 A.D., Calvin rightly commented:<sup>1748</sup> "The ancients [especially from about 450 A.D. onward] made a bad mistake in supposing [here] that little children were deprived of eternal life if they were not given the Eucharist." Particularly the Greek Church, from the Late-Patristic and Early Middle Ages onward, had erred in this regard. In this note Calvin's antipaedocommunionistic opposition to the A.D. 675-750 pro-paedocommunionistic Eastern-Orthodox Theologian John of Damascus.<sup>1749</sup>

#### **550. Calvin: the Papist perversion of pseudo-confirmation**

However, not only the Greek and other Eastern-Orthodox Churches erred ecclesiastically -- as regards their 'magical' mediaeval elevation of the apostolic practice of 'Confirmation' to the status of a 'Sacrament' *etc.* So too did but also the Roman Catholic Church.

Calvin stated:<sup>1750</sup> "We must pay attention to this! Because, when the Papists wish to extol their fictitious 'Confirmation' -- they do not hesitate to burst out into this sacrilegious assertion: that those who have not yet had 'the laying on of hands' are Half-Christians!

"This is not to be tolerated.... I omit their addition of oil to the laying on of hands.... Indeed, a detestable blasphemy has been added.... They said that only sins are forgiven by Baptism -- and that the Spirit of regeneration is bestowed by means of that rotten oil [at 'Confirmation'], which they have dared to introduce without the Word of God.... Those sacrilegious robbers have transferred the spoils taken from Baptism -- to the misleading masquerade of their own 'Sacrament'" of Pseudo-Confirmation!

In spite of the magical mediaeval corruption of 'Confirmation' -- Calvin refused to throw away the 'baby' of the Apostolic Ordinance of Admission to the Lord's Table itself! Instead, he jettisoned only the mediaeval 'dirty water' -- which later surrounded that 'baby' of the Apostolic Ordinance in its only subsequently polluted pool.

Thus, Calvin kept the 'original baby' -- while throwing away only the 'mediaeval bath water.' Indeed, it was especially Calvin himself who then thoroughly 'rinsed off' the neglected 'original baby' of Admission-as-such to the Holy Table -- as it were.

Wrote the Reformer:<sup>1751</sup> "I admit that this laying on of hands" was an Apostolic Ordinance. Yet "Baptism and the Supper are different matters altogether.... Accordingly, we must carefully and wisely distinguish perpetual Sacraments --from...worthless and ludicrous counterfeits" such as the mediaeval corruption of Confirmation.

Such corrupt counterfeits [or '*larvae*'] -- "may not find a place among the Sacraments!... The Papists do not deserve to be pardoned. For, not being content with the ancient rite, they have dared to obtrude disgusting 'anointing' [with their 'rotten oil']!"

In this way, concluded Calvin, the Papists esteem their disgusting and rotten 'anointing' "to be not only a 'Confirmation' of Baptism, but also a 'Sacrament' of greater[!] worth." Indeed, thereby "they imagine [that] believers, who were previously only half-complete, are made perfect.... They [the Papists] have not hesitated to spew out these detestable blasphemies."

### **551. Calvin: mediaeval sacramentalism mauls manumission**

Elsewhere, Calvin further explained<sup>1752</sup> the Biblical 'Confirmation' of fully-instructed "Catechumens" by manumission -- alias by "the laying on of hands." He insists that "this rite came from the Apostles.

"Afterwards, [however,] it was turned into a superstition [by the Orient as well as by Rome].... They [the Late-Patristic and especially the Post-Patristic ritualists (in the Eastern 'Orthodox' Church as well as in the Western Romish Church)] have invented the fiction that it is a 'Sacrament' by which the spirit of regeneration is conferred! By this invention, they have mutilated Baptism! What was proper to the latter -- they have transferred to 'the

imposition of hands' [at 'Confirmation'],... Today, we must retain the institution [of 'Admission to the Lord's Supper'] in its [Apostolic] purity -- but we must correct the superstition" of the Middle Ages!

In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*,<sup>1753</sup> Calvin called these sacramentalistic mediaeval pseudo-confirmationists -- mere "stage-players" vainly trying to "imitate the Apostles.... They conclude that this 'Sacred Unction' is to be held in greater veneration than Baptism -- because the former is specially administered by the higher order of Priests [or Presbyters; viz., the so-called 'Bishops' or Overseers] -- whereas the latter is dispensed in common by all 'Priests' [alias Presbyters] whatever.... They are plainly mad in thus pluming themselves on their own inventions --while, in comparison with these, they carelessly contemn [the Sacraments as] the Sacred Ordinances of God!"

Calvin continued: "How frivolous, inept and stolid the other reason -- that their 'Confirmation' is worthier than the Baptism of God: because in 'Confirmation' it is the forehead that is besmeared with oil, and in Baptism the cranium! As if Baptism were performed with oil ['their rotten oil!'], and not with water [as apostolically ordained!].... We maintain against them, that in Baptism, also the forehead is sprinkled with water -- in comparison with which we do not value your oil one straw --whether in Baptism or in Confirmation!...

"I wish we could retain the custom [of Biblical Confirmation alias Admission to the Lord's Supper by way of laying on of hands]. This, as I have observed, existed in the Early Church before this abortive mask of a 'Sacrament' [of pseudo-confirmation] appeared.

"It would not be such a 'confirmation' as they [the Romanists] pretend -- one which cannot even be named without injury to Baptism." For "there is one vow common to all believers which, taken in Baptism, we 'confirm' -- and as it were sanction by our Catechism and [by our] partaking of the Lord's Supper."

#### **552. Calvin addresses the Anabaptist Servetus' pseudopaedocommunionistic speciousness**

We now come to the views of Calvin's arch-opponent -- the anti-trinitarian immersionist Servetus. He was, without question, in fact -- a pseudo-paedocommunionist! For, following the sacramentalistic reasonings of the Late-Patristic and Mediaeval Greek Church in particular -- Servetus thereby sought to undermine the paedobaptist (yet anti-paedocommunionist) views of Bible-believing Protestants in general and Calvinists in particular.

However, in his *Institutes*,<sup>1754</sup> Calvin refuted the objections of the Anabaptists in general and of "Servetus [as] one of their 'Masters'" in particular. For, wrongly, "they object that there is not greater reason for **admitting infants** to Baptism than **to the Lord's Supper** -- **to which, however, they are never admitted**. As if Scripture did not in every way draw a wide distinction between them!" It is thus **an Anabaptistic heresy** -- **not to make such "a wide distinction"** between the initiatory Sacrament of Baptism, and the 'confirmatory' Sacrament of Communion.

Calvin also refuted<sup>1755</sup> "the series of conceits which Servetus" himself propounded -- the propositions which Servetus "deemed...to be specious arguments" used by paedobaptist yet antipaedocommunionistic Protestants. This "Servetus," explained Calvin, was "not the least



among the Anabaptists." Indeed, he was not only an anti-trinitarian heretic -- but also an 'adults-only' immersionist.

Nevertheless, Servetus had arrogantly argued that the paedobaptist Protestants were inconsistent. To become consistent, they should, he suggested, immediately admit their own baptized infants -- while still babies -- to the Lord's Supper. Alternatively, they should instead (and rather!) follow Servetus himself -- and repudiate, together with the 'Infant Communion' they rightly opposed, also the Infant Baptism they wrongly upheld. Thus Servetus.

### **553. Calvin crushes the Anabaptist Servetus's pseudo-paedocommunionism**

To these specious suggestions of Servetus, Calvin responded:<sup>1756</sup> "I answer, that what he coined out of his own brain -- does not need refutation. Nay -- that which he transfers to Baptism [viz. conscious prior self-examination], properly belongs to the **Supper**. As appears from Paul's words, 'Let a man examine himself!' -- words similar to which are nowhere used with reference to Baptism!

Whence we infer, that those who from nonage are incapable of '[self-]examination' --are duly baptized! ... By Baptism, they are admitted into the fold of Christ -- and the symbol of adoption is sufficient for them, until they grow up and become fit to bear solid food. We must, therefore, wait for the time of 'examination' -- which God distinctly demands in the sacred Supper."

"His [Servetus's] next objection, is that Christ invites **all** His people to the sacred Supper. But [Calvin himself responded,] as it is plain that He admits those only who are prepared to celebrate the commemoration of His death -- it follows that **infants**, whom He honoured with His embrace, remain in a distinct and peculiar position until they grow up."

Nevertheless, those infants, "yet, are not aliens. When he [Servetus] objects that it is strange why the infant does not partake of the Supper -- I answer that souls are fed by other food than the external eating of the Supper; and that accordingly Christ is the food of **infants**, though they partake not of the symbol" (viz. the Holy Communion).

"His eleventh argument," says Calvin of Servetus, "is that in the Primitive Church, 'Christians' and 'Disciples' were the same. But we have already seen that he argues unskilfully.... The name of '**Disciples**' [*Math ~~ot~~as*] is given to men of full age who had already been taught.... Still, none could rightly infer from this that infants, whom the Lord declared to be of His household -- were strangers! Moreover, he alleges that all Christians are Brethren, and that infants cannot belong to this class -- so long as we exclude them from the Supper. But I return to my position...that temporary abstinence from the Supper does not prevent them from belonging to the body of the Church."

### **554. Calvin: Apostolic 'Admission to the Lord's Supper' needs restoring**

Held Calvin:<sup>1757</sup> "This rite [of 'Admission to the Lord's Supper'] came from the Apostles.... We should know that it was instituted...to be a solemn ceremony of prayer.... They intended by this sign to confirm the 'Profession of Faith' which **adolescents**[!] make, when they pass

from[!] their childhood.... Today, we must retain the institution in its purity!"

Calvin also pleaded:<sup>1758</sup> "I wish we could retain the custom which, as I have observed, existed in the Early Church before this abortive mask of a 'Sacrament' [of Mediaeval 'Confirmation'] appeared! It would not be such a 'Confirmation' as they [the Mediaevalists] pretend -- one which cannot even be named without injury to Baptism.... But [instead, it would be a] catechizing by which those in boyhood or immediately **beyond** it would give an account of their faith....

"A boy of ten years of age would present himself to the Church [at the beginning of a three-years' long Catechetical Course] -- to make a 'Profession of Faith'.... [He] would be questioned on each head, and give answers to each. If he was ignorant of any point or did not well understand it, he would be taught. Thus, while the whole Church looked on and witnessed, he would profess the one true sincere faith [Luke 2:40-47 *cf.* First Timothy 6:12].... Were this discipline in force in the present day -- it would undoubtedly whet the sluggishness of certain parents who carelessly neglect the instruction of their children!"

### **555. Calvin: let covenant children catechize from 10 till 13!**

Calvin thus much appreciated and indeed endeavored to restore "the custom" of the Pre-Romish Ancient Church -- namely, to enrol ten-year-old covenant children in a Catechism Class and train them there for three years. Thus: *Aboth* 5:21; Luke 2:41-53; Clement of Alexandria; and the *Apostolic Constitutions*.<sup>1759</sup> Those ten-year-olds should, felt Calvin,<sup>1760</sup> stay in their Catechism Class until they could be admitted to Holy Communion. The latter could first occur only at their attainment of religious majority (*cf.* Luke 2:40-47) -- and even then, only after they further also made their own 'Profession of Faith.' Compare: First Timothy 6:12-21. As Rev. Professor Dr. Abraham Kuyper Sr. later pointed out<sup>1761</sup> -- a provision such as First Corinthians 11:29 requires the attainment of a competent age or "*aetas competens*...., which was of old fixed at approximately in the fourteenth year (thus Calvin too)."

It should be noted here that Calvin's "ten years" was not the 'finishing date' -- alias the *terminus ad quem* of a covenant child's catechizing. To the contrary, it was the 'date of enrolment' alias the *terminus a quo* -- from which the Church enrolled him in the (three-years'-long!) Communion Class. Thus Calvin,<sup>1762</sup> Kuyper,<sup>1763</sup> and Dijk.<sup>1764</sup> Indeed, this 'Communion Class Catechizing' (from ages ten through thirteen) was quite distinct from, and in addition to, the child learning the Catechism during daily family worship at home -- both before and after age ten.

Calvin was saying, then, that the Ancient-Hebrew age of thirteen, if not yet better his own recommendation of age **fifteen**, was the minimum optimal age of admission to the Lord's Supper.

As M.J. Du P. Beukes has remarked in his book *Worship*: "Most expositors judge that Calvin meant that the catechizing would take place when ten, and the Profession of Faith when **fifteen**, as mentioned in the *Swiss Catechism*."<sup>1765</sup> For Calvin himself stated elsewhere:<sup>1766</sup> "No godparent shall be accepted as sponsor for a child -- unless...at least fifteen years old; of the same confession with us; and has been duly instructed."

In returning to the Pre-Romish practice of the Early Church, felt Calvin, 'Confirmation' would

correctly lose its deformed (Romish) and 'chrism-ic' or sacramentalistic (alias pseudo-sacramental) character -- and regain its primitive nature of Admission to the Lord's Supper by way of the post-catechetical laying on of hands. Thus, it would again become what it was for "Augustine" of old -- not "curative" but "confirmatory."<sup>1767</sup> Toward that end, Calvin's own Catechism Classes helped prepare infantly-baptized covenant children who were beginning to approach teen-age -- for their later admission to the Lord's Table after reaching puberty.<sup>1768</sup>

### **556. Calvin: where carnal, let Communion Services be postponed!**

Well known is Calvin's refusal, on several occasions, to administer the scheduled Communion Services in circumstances of gross congregational sin. Especially from 1540 onward, Calvin's increasingly mature views tended toward even more care -- while manducating at Communion.

Thus, in a March 1540 letter to his friend Rev. Dr. Guillaume Farel, he wrote:<sup>1769</sup> "On Easter-day, when I gave out the intimation that we were to celebrate the Supper on next Lord's day [cf. Acts 20:6-11 and. First Corinthians 5:6-8 & 11:20-32], I announced at the same time that **no one** would be admitted to the Table of the Lord by me, who had not **beforehand** presented himself for examination!"

Indeed, in Calvin's December 1540 letter to Rev. Nicholas Parent, Calvin declared:<sup>1770</sup> "I am well pleased that you have delayed the Holy Supper for another month. For at the present time, you could not administer it -- without neglecting that order which, for very sufficient reasons, I earnestly desire to be carefully attended to!"

In Calvin's 1540 *Short Treatise on the Supper of Our Lord*, he insisted:<sup>1771</sup> "Whoever approaches the Sacrament with contempt or indifference, not caring much about following when the Lord calls him..., pollutes it.... To pollute..., is intolerable blasphemy....

"St. Paul denounces such heavy condemnation -- on all who take it unworthily (First Corinthians 11:29). For if there is nothing in heaven nor on earth of greater price and dignity than the body and blood of the Lord -- it is no slight fault to take it inconsiderately and without being well prepared.... If we would worthily communicate in the Lord's Supper -- we must, with firm heart-felt reliance, regard the Lord Jesus as our only righteousness!"

"What mockery would it be to go in search of food -- when we have no appetite! Now, to have a good appetite, it is not enough that the stomach be empty. It must also be in good order, and capable of receiving its food. Hence, it follows that our souls must be pressed with famine and have a desire and ardent longing to be fed -- in order to find their proper nourishment in the Lord's Supper.... To fancy Jesus Christ enclosed under bread and wine, or so to conjoin Him with it as to amuse our understanding there, without looking up to Heaven -- is a diabolical reverie!"

"When Luther began to teach, he took a view of the subject which seemed to imply that in regard to the corporal presence in the Supper..., he said that the bread was the body of Christ --inasmuch as it was united with Him.... On the other hand, Zwingli and Oecolampadius arose -- who...applied all their talents to bring it into discredit.... Meantime,

while engrossed with this point, they forgot to show what presence of Jesus Christ ought to be believed in the Supper -- and what 'Communion' of His body and blood is there perceived.... We thus see wherein Luther failed on his side -- and Zwingli and Oecolampius on theirs." However, there is no way any infant, or even any child, can -- without prior catechizing -- "see" these important things which Calvin sees, and thus truly "discern" the Lord's body (*cf.* First Corinthians 11:29)!

### **557. Calvin's Geneva Catechism for Communion Catechumens**

In Calvin's 1541 *Geneva Catechism* -- "being a form of instruction for children in the doctrine of Christ" -- he writes<sup>1772</sup> that "it were to be wished...that one Catechism were common to all the churches... The agreement which our churches had in Doctrine, cannot be seen with clearer evidence than from Catechisms. For therein will appear not only what one man or other once taught -- but with what rudiments learned and unlearned alike amongst us, were constantly imbued from childhood -- all the faithful holding them as their formal symbol of Christian Communion. This was indeed my principal reason for publishing this Catechism."

"It has **ever** been the practice of the Church...to see that **children** should be duly **instructed** in the Christian religion. That this might be done..., **in old[en] times** it was a received **public custom and practice to question children in the churches**.... To secure this being done in order, there was written out a Formula which was called a **Catechism**.. In this way, **the administration...of the Supper...is confined**.... The Minister ought to take heed **not to give it to anyone** who is clearly **unworthy of receiving it**."

However, "**thereafter**, the devil -- miserably rending the Church of God, and bringing upon it fearful ruin (of which the marks are still too visible in the greater part of the world) -- overthrew this sacred policy, and left nothing behind but certain trifles which only beget superstition without any fruit of edification. Of this description is **that** 'confirmation' --as **they** [the Romanists] call it -- full of gesticulations which, worse than ridiculous, are fitted only for apes, and have no foundation to rest upon. What **we** now bring forward, therefore, is nothing else than the use of things which **from ancient times** were observed by Christians and the true worshippers of God, and which never were laid aside -- **until** the Church was wholly corrupted."

Calvin then soon goes on to deny that either all should administer or that all should receive the Sacraments. "Does the administration both of Baptism and of the Supper belong indiscriminately to all? By no means! It [the administration of the Sacraments] is confined to those to whom the Office of Teaching has been committed.... Christ gave special commandment to the Apostles.... In the celebration of the Supper, He ordered us to follow His example. And the Evangelists relate that He Himself, in dispensing it, performed the Office of a Public Minister (Matthew 28:19 & Luke 22:19). Ought Pastors, to whom the dispensing of it has been committed, to admit all indiscriminately, without selection?" No!

For: "In the Supper, the Minister **ought to take heed not to give it to anyone** who is clearly **unworthy of receiving it**... It cannot be done without insulting and profaning the Sacrament.... There should be a certain order of government established in churches.... The method is for **Elders to be chosen to preside as censors** of manners [or morals], to guard watchfully against offences -- and **exclude from Communion** all whom they recognize to be

unfit for it, and who could not be admitted without profaning the Sacrament." Cf. Exodus 12:21-28,37,43-48.

### **558. Calvin's Ecclesiastical Ordinances: 'Seasonal Communion'**

In Calvin's 1541 *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*,<sup>1773</sup> he advocated 'Seasonal Communion.' For in those '*Ordinances*' of his, we read: "The Supper was instituted by our Lord for our frequent use.... We have decided and ordered that it should be administered four times a year -- namely, at: Christmas [in the Winter]; Easter [in the Spring]; Whitsun [or Pentecost in the Summer]; and on the first Sunday...in the Autumn [or the Fall]....

Calvin then continued: "On the Sunday before its celebration, an announcement shall be made that no child is to come to it -- before having made '**Profession of Faith**' in accordance with what is taught in the *Catechism*. And all strangers and newcomers are also to be exhorted to present themselves first in church [cf. Exodus 12:21,43-48] -- so that they may be instructed, if that should be necessary, and thus that none should approach to his own condemnation."

Calvin then went on: "When a child has been **sufficiently instructed to pass on from the *Catechism*** -- he shall **solemnly recite** the sum of what is contained in it, and he shall do this as a **profession of his Christianity in presence of the Church**. **Before this has been done, no child is to be admitted as a Communicant to the Supper**....

"Parents are cautioned not to bring them before this time. For it is **very perilous** both for the **children** and for their fathers to present them **without good and sufficient instruction**, which is the purpose of prescribing this order.... Those who contravene this order, shall be called before the Company of Elders or 'Delegates'.... For the purpose of observing who are performing their duty and who not, the above-mentioned Delegates shall keep a watchful eye." Cf. Exodus 12:21-28.

It also seems likely that nobody was admitted to the Lord's Table in Calvin's Geneva, before at the very least eleven or twelve years of age. Certainly, the then-contemporary 'Reformed Refugee Church' in London -- which was in constant correspondence with Geneva -- as in the case of the Talmud's *Aboth* 5:1-21 cf. Luke 2:41-53, stipulated the **minimum age of admission at thirteen**.<sup>1774</sup>

### **559. Calvin's Anti-Romish tracts on 'True Confirmation'**

In Calvin's 1542 *Antidote to the Romish Articles of the Theological Faculty of Paris*, the Romanists<sup>1775</sup> had said that "'Confirmation' and 'Extreme Unction' are two Sacraments instituted by Christ" -- and "that no man can be a complete Christian, who has not been 'chrism'-ed by Episcopal consecration" at such 'Confirmation.' For "Pope Melchiades...says that this 'Sacrament' [of 'Confirmation' by a 'chrism-ing' Romish Bishop] is to be revered and held in greater veneration than that of Baptism.... Nought is done in the Church with greater pomp and solemnity, than the consecration of the holy chrism,"

In his reply to this, Calvin conceded that "the Apostles, by the laying on of hands, conferred visible influences of the Spirit (Acts 19:6).... This was a temporary gift," however, conferred by the Apostles alone. "Their 'successors' retained the ceremony of laying on of hands, when the young [viz. when their youths] made a 'Confession of their Faith.' But this

was not done in order that it might be regarded as a 'Sacrament' instituted by Christ. For Augustine affirms that it is nothing else than prayer."

Indeed, in the 1546 *Register of the Company of Pastors in Geneva* -- an ecclesiastical guide for the Elders of that 'city of Calvin' -- we read:<sup>1776</sup> "**No one shall be admitted to the Supper**, unless he has first made 'Confession of his Faith'; that is to say, **has declared** before the **Minister** that he wishes to live according to the reformation of the Gospel -- **and knows** the **Creed**, the **Lord's Prayer**, and the **Commandments of God**." Cf. Exodus 12:21-26 & 12:43-48 with Luke 4:41-53. Clearly, compliance herewith by a Pre-adolescent is all but impossible.

#### **560. Calvin on the German Interim re 'Teenage Confirmation'**

The 1548 *Adultero-German Interim* of King Charles V of Germany, syncretistically sought to promote a compromise between Catholics and Protestants in his own German Empire. It promulgated:<sup>1777</sup> "As most of those who are baptized are infants who do not by themselves give forth a 'Profession of Faith' [in infancy], it will be proper that **when as adults** now **sufficiently instructed** in the Christian religion they come to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation -- they with their own mouths also 'profess faith' in Christ and obedience to the Church."

However, in his response -- called *The True Method of Reforming the Church* -- Calvin said about such Confirmation:<sup>1778</sup> "**We also** should **like** to see that rite everywhere restored -- by which the **young** [in their **youth**] are presented to God **after** giving forth a 'Confession of their Faith.' This would be a not unbecoming approval of their Catechism."

Calvin here agreed with his Romish contemporaries and with the (Lutherano-Catholic) Syncretists that Confirmation was and is only for "adults" and should not be given to those who had not yet reached their youth. However, in all conscience, he also had to rebuke the sacramentalistic Romish and Lutherano-Catholic alias Syncretistic perversion of Confirmation. Hence, he also added: "But however pious and useful some 'ordinances of men' may be -- they must sink **far beneath** the honour of 'Sacraments'....

"Those who have read [the **A.D. 675-750** paedocommunionistic **Eastern-Orthodox Theologian John] Damascenus**, if they have one ounce of sound judgment, will not defer much to his authority! Who knows not that ancient Christians were wont **to give the Eucharist to infants** at the breast? And they no doubt [wrongly] thought that the practice was founded on 'Apostolic Tradition'....

"But that the practice was **perverse and alien to the institution of Christ**, is testified by Paul -- when he says 'Let a man [or *anthr &apos* alias 'mature human being'] examine himself, and so eat of that bread or drink of that cup!' First Corinthians 11:28. In short, a posterior age [of the Late-Patristic Western Church], not without good reason, corrected it" (*viz.* Post-Nicene 'Child Communion'). "Led away 'in old time' by...error, they [John of Damascus and his Eastern-Orthodox Churches] gave the bread and cup of the Eucharist to infants!"

#### **561. Calvin: Catechism necessary in order to see consubstantiation's error**

In (Calvin's and others') 1549 *Articles Concerning the Sacraments (between the Reformed Churches of Geneva and Berne)*, we read that "God sometimes regenerates in childhood or adolescence those who have been baptized in earliest infancy" *etc.* We also read there, that "the fiction of the papists concerning transubstantiation" is to be reprehended and "refuted.... For we consider it no less absurd to locate Christ under the form of bread -- or to conjoin Him with the bread [as in Lutheranistic consubstantiation] -- than for the bread to be transubstantiated into His body"<sup>1779</sup>

Perhaps a child (or even a suckling) could 'grasp' and believe the theory of 'transubstantiation.' However, only a catechized youth could ever recognize the fallacy also of 'consubstantiation' -- while yet also seeing the 'real presence' of Christ at His Table in a spiritual way.

In the same year, Calvin started drawing up the *Consensus Tigurinus* alias the *Zurich Agreement* -- which he and Bullinger finalized in 1551 A.D.<sup>1780</sup> There, they both warned: against those (the Zwinglians) who deny that the Sacraments are indeed "called seals...to nourish, confirm and promote faith"; against those (the Hypercalvinists) who deny that "only the elect...receive what the Sacraments offer"; and against those (the Romanists) who deny that "nothing is received in the Sacraments except by faith" *etc.* For Calvin and Bullinger here insisted that "in the Supper, Christ communicates Himself to us -- and yet [also] imparted Himself to us before" such manducation. They accordingly urged that "each one is commanded to examine himself" -- precisely because "faith is required of each before he comes to the Sacrament."

It is by this latter requirement of prior "faith" already present in the intending Communicant, insisted Calvin and Bullinger, that "not only the invention of the papists about transubstantiation is refuted -- but also all the gross fictions and futile subtleties which are either derogatory to His divine glory [thus the Zwinglians], or inconsistent with the verity of His human nature" [thus the Lutherans]. For Calvin and Bullinger asserted that "Christ is not to be worshipped in the bread." Consequently, "they therefore who bend their minds upon it to worship Christ -- make it an idol." Well may it then be asked -- just how many infant idolators are to be found especially within the paedocommunicistic Greek 'Orthodox' Church?!

## **562. Calvin versus Westphal (and also the Anabaptists) on Communion**

In Calvin's 1554 *Second Defence of the Faith Concerning the Sacraments in Answer to the Calumnies of Joachim Westphal* the Ultra-Lutheran -- Calvin admitted<sup>1781</sup> that "Anabaptists...all profess the dogma of Zwingli." Calvin also acknowledged that "Oecolampadius and Zwingli..., from being too intent on refuting superstition, did not speak of the Sacraments in sufficiently honourable terms."

On the other hand, continued Calvin: "Luther wrote that all who refuse to believe that the true and natural body of Christ is in the sacred Supper, are ranked by him in the same place" -- *viz.*: as heretics. Calvin concluded: "Luther was too imperious in this.... I did not speak rashly in saying that Luther, inflamed by false informers, pleaded this matter too vehemently." Worse yet, the Ultra-Lutheran "Westphal certainly pays little honour to Luther!"

Explained Calvin on behalf of himself and his closest associates: "We assert that in the sacred Supper, we are truly made partakers of Christ -- so that by the sacred agency of the Spirit, He instils life into our souls from His flesh. Thus the bread is not the empty picture of an absent thing, but a true and faithful pledge of our union with Christ...."

"I attempted a 'fallacious'[!] reconciliation between Luther and Zwingli.... Their views were repugnant.... Though I confess that our souls are truly fed -- by the substance of Christ's flesh -- I certainly do...repudiate the substantial presence [of the Lutherans].... Nor will I ever hesitate to acknowledge [against the Zwinglians] that, by the secret virtue of the Holy Spirit, life is infused into us from the substance of His flesh, which not without reason is called heavenly food.

"In constantly affirming this, my simplicity was always too great." However, the views of Calvin about Holy Communion -- correct as they undoubtedly are -- do not have enough simplicity to be embraced by those who are still only small children. Accordingly -- no Communion ere completing catechization only at Teenage!

### **563. Calvin's *Catechism* refuted consubstantiationism**

Continued Calvin:<sup>1782</sup> "That Luther disagreed with us ['Calvin-ists'] in regard to substantial eating, and...uttered several things from which I dissent, it was never my intention to deny.... I publicly stated wherein I was dissatisfied with the pleadings of both parties [the Lutherans and the Zwinglians].... On this article, Luther engaged in a quarrel with [Zwingli and Oecolampadius:] excellent men and right-hearted teachers."

Consubstantiationistically, "he [Luther] charges Zwingli with blasphemy -- for having called the substantial union of the bread and the flesh, a fiction. He [Zwingli] might have more correctly and not less truly have called it [Lutheran-istic 'consubstantiation'] a dream...."

"In our *Catechism*...., our **children** -- **trained** in such rudiments -- have much sounder views!" For Calvin's *Catechism* -- and the similar Catechisms of other Calvin-ists -- teach Calvin-istic Catechumens to refute the Communion errors of Rome and Luther and Zwingli -- before themselves first communicating!

The Ultra-Lutheran Westphal, explains Calvin, correctly objects "that the Lord's Supper is not given to the sick [among the Calvin-ists].... Nothing is [indeed] less accordant with the doctrine of our heavenly Master, than that the bread should be carried about in procession like cakes in a fair -- and then that one individual should receive in private, and eat apart...."

"Pious and learned men were, from the very first, much averse to private dispensations of the Supper.... The Supper received in the public assembly, according to the ordinance of Christ, supports them with present consolation -- not less effectually than if they were to enjoy it privately without 'Communion'!...."

"**The rule** is, that the young do not come forward to the Sacred Table **till** they have given an **account of their faith**.... It is most false to say that we [Calvinists] knowingly and willingly offer the Supper indiscriminately to strangers and persons not approved.... Westphal is **wrong** too in inferring that...we admit to the Supper without previous examination."<sup>1784</sup>



#### **564. Calvin vs. Heshusius on 'Catechism Before Communion'**

In 1561, Calvin wrote his essay *The True Partaking of the Flesh and Blood of Christ in the Holy Supper*. There, he implies<sup>1783</sup> that he had stated that "the 'communion' of Christ is conferred upon us in different degrees -- not merely in the Supper, but [also] independently of it." Calvin then states that the Ultra-Lutheran Heshusius "asks '**Calvinists**' with what faith they can approach the Supper?" Calvin replies: "Even **our children, by the Form [or Catechism]** which is in common use, **are fully instructed** to refute this silly calumny!..."

"I teach in the *Catechism*...the use of the Supper.... Let him [Heshusius] then accuse Paul of blasphemy -- for saying that Christ is formed in us, like the foetus in the womb! His well-known words to the Galatians [4:19], are -- 'My little children, for whom I again travail as in birth, until Christ Jesus be formed in you!' This is not unlike what he says in another place -- 'until you **grow up**' into a **man!**'" Ephesian 4:13f, cf. First Corinthians 14:20.

"The objection of Heshusius is: 'What then is to become of an infant which, immediately after being baptized, dies without having received the Supper?'" Heshusius asks this silly question, declared Calvin, "as if I were imposing a law on God -- or denying His power of working when He pleases, without the aid of the Supper! For I hold with Augustine, that there may be invisible sanctification -- without the visible sign.... John the Baptist was never admitted to the Supper. And yet, surely, this did not prevent him from possessing Christ! All I teach, is that we attain to 'communion' with Christ grad-u-ally" or step-by-step. "Thus, it was not without cause, [that] He [Christ] added the Supper to the Gospel and to Baptism." Note this order!

Calvin continued: "Hence, though God calls suddenly away from the World many who are children -- not in age merely, but [also] in faith -- yet one spark from the Spirit is sufficient to give them a life.... But in the eyes of Heshusius, Paul [in Galatians 4:19] seems to be but a mean authority.... There is no ground, therefore, for his [Heshusius'] attack upon me for saying that the 'communion' of **Christ is conferred upon us indifferent degrees -- not merely in the Supper, but independently** of it...."

"Oecolampadius...clearly showed that the figment of a local presence was unknown to the early Church. He was succeeded by Bullinger, who performed the task with equal felicity. The whole was crowned by Peter Martyr, who has left nothing to be desired.... Sound and modest readers will find more learning and piety in a single *Commentary on Matthew* [cf. 26:17-27], than in all the 'theology' of **Damascenus**" -- who **wrongly** advocated the '**Infant Communion**' practices of the Early-Mediaeval 'Greek Orthodox Church' in the East.

#### **565. Calvin's 1561 approved of the French Huguenots' Communion Tokens**

During the same year as he rebuked the Gnesio- or Hyper-Lutheran Heshusius, Calvin also defended the French Huguenots' s (*inter alia* also antipaedocommunionistic) use of Communion Tokens. The *mereau* (plural *mereaux*) was a circular token which the Huguenots used in France from the 1550's to the mid-19th century.

During Holy Communion an Elder would, before the service, give a *mereau* to each parishioner who **qualified** to receive the Sacrament. The others, who did not attend catechism regularly or had been admonished by the Consistory, would not receive a *mereau*. During the Communion Service, each individual would hand his *mereau* to an Elder standing

next to the Communion Table before receiving bread and wine.

In approximately 1561 Calvin wrote a "letter to the faithful in France" in which he strongly urged them to use the *mereaux*. The use of such an attendance token consequently became common practice. For more than 200 years it served as a token of adherence to the persecuted religion and its rites, as well as a secret symbol of the solidarity of the faithful.<sup>1784</sup>

Consequently, Communion Tokens used to admit people to the Lord's Table were not used solely by the Scottish Reformed Church. They were, in fact, taken over by the Scots from the French Huguenots after Calvin himself approved the practice in 1531.

#### **566. Calvin to Prince Henry of Navarre on the age of religious understanding**

Calvin had remarked in his *Commentary on Second Thessalonians* that even a ten-year-old boy can discern that the papacy is the man of sin. In the light of Calvin's further statements also in his *Institutes* that neither the Passover nor the Holy Supper were and are for children, but that (the triennial) catechizing toward later admission to the Lord's Table should commence precisely when ten – his *Epistle Dedicatory to the Most Illustrious Prince Henry Duke of Vendome Heir to the Kingdom of Navarre*, takes on added significance. It is to be found at the beginning of his mature (1563-64) *Commentaries on the Book of Genesis*.

The young Prince of Navarre had been born in 1553. The *Epistle Dedicatory* was written in 1563, and thus when the Prince was precisely ten years old.<sup>1785</sup> Significantly, as regards the Commentary itself, Calvin advised young Prince Henry:

"Many things contained in this book are beyond the capacity of your age [**10**], yet I am not acting unreasonably in offering it to your perusal and even to your attentive and diligent study. For since the knowledge of ancient things is pleasant to the young, you will soon arrive at those years [=**13+** ?!] in which the History of the Creation of the World as well as that of the most Ancient Church will engage your thoughts with equal profit and delight.....

"Farewell, most Illustrious Prince! May God preserve you in safety under His protection! May He adorn you more and more with spiritual gifts, and enrich you with every kind of benediction!"<sup>1786</sup>

#### **567. Calvin: Church cannot thrive without Catechism**

Calvin believed that baptized Protestant infants -- or even infants baptized in the Romish Church, but desiring to embrace Communicant Membership in the Protestant Church -- should be given weekly catechizing, while being prepared over three years for admission to the Lord's Table.<sup>1787</sup>

Ideally, this would be from age ten to thirteen.<sup>1788</sup>

Consequently, Calvin wrote to the 'Calvin-istic' Duke of Somerset -- as the Regent of the young King of England (Edward VI) -- that "**the Church of God will never preserve itself without a Catechism**. For it is like seed which keeps the good grain from dying out, and causes it to multiply -- from age to age.... If you desire to build an edifice which shall be of long duration and which shall not soon fall into decay -- see to it that the children be educated

by the hand of a good *Catechism* which, in short, teaches them the meaning of true Christianity!"<sup>1789</sup>

When baptized infants, after later being catechized or 'taught' as grown children, professed their faith in Christ -- they were to be admitted to the Lord's Table. Said Calvin: "As soon as their age and ability to understand will allow, they yield themselves to Him as Disciples" alias 'taught ones.' Then, like the Ethiopian eunuch of old, they too are to declare quite publically: 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God!' For, explains Calvin, "everyone who does not already have this as an adult -- boasts in vain of his Baptism as an infant."<sup>1790</sup>

As Rev. Professor Dr. A.D. Pont has observed:<sup>1791</sup> "It is clear that for Calvin the purpose of catechizing is to teach children something so that they can go to the Lord's Table knowledgeably. In catechizing -- children are instructed so that they can accept the *Confession of Faith* just like and together with the Church as the Community of Faith."

### **568. Summary on Calvin's Antipaedocommunionism**

In this chapter, we have looked at Calvin's exegetical objections to Paedocommunion from Genesis to Revelation. We saw he showed that the Patristic Church catechized youth before Communion, and that he provided evidence of Patristic 'Confirmation' before first eucharizing at teenage.

Calvin therefore rejected the Early-Mediaeval error of Paedocommunion, as well as the Papist perversion of pseudo-confirmation. To him, mediaeval sacramentalism mauled manumission

He fully refuted the Anabaptist Servetus' pseudopaedocommunionistic speciousness, and crushed the Anabaptist Servetus's pseudo-paedocommunionism To Calvin, Apostolic 'Admission to the Supper' needed restoring -- after letting covenant children catechize from age 10 till at least age 13.

Wherever carnal, Calvin wanted Communion Services be postponed. He developed the *Geneva Catechism* for Communion Catechumens, and provided in his *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* that covenant children must first complete their catechization before being admitted to Communion.

Calvin wrote Anti-Romish tracts on 'True Confirmation.' He also advocated 'Teenage Confirmation' while refuting that syncretism between inconsistent Lutheranism and Romanism known as the *German Interim*.

To Calvin, catechization was necessary in order to understand and avoid the error of consubstantiation This was developed in his polemics against the Gnesio- or Hyper-Lutherans Westphal and Heshusius. It was also standardized in his own *Catechism*.

Predictably, Calvin approved of the French Huguenots' Communion Tokens as a good way of fencing and guarding the sanctity of the Lord's Supper. His letter to the young Prince Henry of Navarre stressed the importance of the ages between ten and teenage, and he insisted to the Lord Protector of the young King Edward VI of England that the Church cannot long thrive without Catechisms.

For, as Calvin himself commented (on Acts 8:37): "As soon as their age and ability to

**understand will allow**," Christ's covenant children are to "yield themselves to Him as **Disciples**" alias '**taught ones**.' Then, like the adult Ethiopian eunuch of old, **they too are to declare quite publically**: 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God!' For, explained the genius of Geneva, "everyone who does not already have this **as an adult** -- boasts in vain of his Baptism as an infant!"

#### ENDNOTES

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- 1718) J. Calvin: *Harm. Evang.*, III:194-209.
- 1719) J. Calvin: *Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 1965, I, pp. 318f.      1720) *Ib.*, p. 152.
- 1721) Calvin: *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 1968, I, p. 66.
- 1722) *Ib.*, pp. 251f.      1723) Calvin: *Inst.*, IV:13:6 & IV:16:30f (1957 Beveridge ed., II, pp. 477, 549f).
- 1724) Calvin: *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews, and on the First and Second Epistles of St. Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 1963, pp. 68f (on Heb. 5:12-14).    Though the title of the book is that as given above, Calvin himself therein denied that Paul wrote Hebrews.
- 1725) *Ib.*, pp. 71f (on Heb. 6:1).      1726) J. Calvin: *Commentary on Hebrews* [6:2].      1727) J. Calvin:

*Inst.*, IV:19:12.

1728) J. Calvin: *Commentary on Acts* [19:5-6]. 1729) J. Calvin: *Inst.* IV:18:17.

1730) J. Calvin: *Comm. Ep. Heb., and on the First and Second Epistles of St. Peter*, pp. 257f (on I Pet. 2:1-2).

1731) *Ib.*, pp. 332 & 353f. 1732) J. Calvin: *Comm.* on Jude 12. 1733) See at nn. 1731 & 1732 above.

1734) J. Calvin: *Inst.*, IV:19:13. 1735) De Villiers, 1957, p. 247. 1736) J. Calvin: *Inst.*, IV:19:4.

1737) J. Calvin: *Inst.*, IV:19:13. 1738) See at nn. 1724-28 & 1730 above. 1739) J. Calvin: *Inst.* 4:19:14.

1740) Cyprian: *Lib. 3, Ep.* 14.

1741) R.L. Dabney: *Theories of the Eldership*, in *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological*, Banner of Truth, London, 1967 ed., pp. 127 & 151: "Ruling...Elders...are in as proper a sense Clergy as Preachers are.... If we understand by Clergy what the Primitive Church meant by the word, Christ's portion or *klēros*, a class of servants set apart by divine command, by laying on of hands..., then Elders are as much Clergy as Preachers" are.

1742) J. Macpherson: *Presbyterianism*, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1949, pp. 28 & 27 & 48: "It is proper to notice that the original employment of the name 'clerical' does not in itself at all imply any notion of a priestly character.... And in perfect agreement with this use of the word, is I Pet. 5:4, where Presbyters are exhorted to tend the flock.... The Elder in the Ancient Church was, in the primitive application of the term, not a 'layman'.... Reformed theologians refuse to call the ruling Elder a 'layman.'"

1743) J. Calvin: *Inst.*, IV:19:4. 1744) J. Calvin: *Idem.*

1745) J. Calvin: *Inst.* (IV:16:30f & IV:19:4-13), *cf.* the A.D. 195f Clement of Alexandria (*cf.* De Villiers's *op. cit.* p. 97f) and the A.D. 325f *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII:4:32.

1746) J. Calvin: *Inst.*, IV:16:30. 1747) *Ib.*, IV:19:5,12. 1748) J. Calvin: *Comm.* on John 6:53f.

1749) See in Sections 560 & 564 below. 1750) J. Calvin: *Comm.* on Acts 8:16f. 1751) J. Calvin: *Ib.* on Acts 19:5f.

1752) J. Calvin: *Comm.* on Heb. 6:2. 1753) J. Calvin: *Inst.*, IV:19:6,10,13 & 13:4-6. 1754) J. Calvin: *Ib.*, IV:16:29f.

1755) J. Calvin: *Ib.*, IV:16:31. 1756) *Ib.* 1757) J. Calvin: *Comm.* on Heb. 6:2. 1758) J. Calvin: *Inst.*, IV:19:3.

1759) See sections 6-9 & 215-20 & 455-65 & 496-98 above. 1760) J. Calvin: *Inst.*, IV:19:12-13.

1761) A. Kuyper Sr.: *Locus on the Sacraments*, p. 194; in *Dogmatic Dictations* (Kampen: Kok), 2nd impr., 1910, IV.

1762) J. Calvin: *Inst.*, IV:19:12f. 1763) A. Kuyper Sr.: *Loc. Sac.*, p. 194; in *Dog. Dict.*, 1910, IV.

1764) Dijk, 1952, p. 122. 1765) M.J. Du P. Beukes: *Erediens II [Worship]*. Pretoria: Kital, 1994, p. 27.

1766) Compare Hughes: *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1966, pp. 53 & 55f.

1767) Calvin: *Inst.*, IV:19:12. 1768) Bijlsma, 1962, p. 89; De Villiers, 1957, p. 112.

1769) *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, ed. Bonnet (Grand Rapids: Baker), 1983, IV, pp. 175f.

1770) *Ib.*, p. 222 & n. 1. 1771) J. Calvin: *Tracts and Treatises*, II, pp. 174-96. 1772) *Ib.*, II:33-37 & 93f.

1773) J. Calvin's 1541 *Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, in P.E. Hughes's *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 1966, pp. 35,44f,47.

1774) Thus the *Study Committee Report* to the 1988 Synod of the *Reformed Churches of Australia*, III-12.

1775) J. Calvin: *Tracts & Treatises*, I, p. 91.

1776) *The Register of the Company of Pastors in Geneva* (1546), in Hughes: *op. cit.* p. 56.

1777) J. Calvin: *Tracts & Treatises*, III, p. 211. 1778) *Ib.*, pp. 288, 322f,353.

1779) P.E. Hughes, 1966, p. 104 (arts. 16-18).

1780) Hodge, A.A.: *Outlines of Theology* (London: Nelson), 1879, pp. 653-56. Hodge there gives the text of the *Tigurine Consensus* -- after stating that it was "written by Calvin, 1549." Douglas, 1974 -- s.v. 'Zurich Agreement' -- regards it as the result of an ongoing study finally agreed to in 1551 by both Bullinger and Calvin.

1781) J. Calvin: *Tracts & Treatises*, II, pp. 265 & 275f. 1782) *Ib.*, pp. 307f, & 320f. 1783) *Ib.*, II:526 & 534f.

1784) See <http://www.geocities.com/hugenotblad/mer-e.htm>

1785) J. Calvin: *Commentaries...Genesis*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1948 ed., I:xliv. 1786) *Ib.*, I:xlvii-xlviii & Iv.

1787) *Corpus Reformatorum* Xa:104 -- cited in Lee, F.N.: *Were Ye Baptized?* (Kosciusko, Miss.: Jesus Lives), 1977, p. 47. Cf. Bonnet's 1854 ed. of Calvin's *Letter*, I, p. 272, and cited in Bijlsma, 1962, pp. 67f.

1788) Thus: *Aboth* 5:21; Luke 2:41-53; Clement of Alexandria; and the *Apostolic Constitutions* (cf. at n 1786), and also at nn. 1734 & 1759 and 1761-66 above.

1789) J. Calvin: *Selected Works*, V, pp. 191f. See too the arts. *Edward VI* and *Somerset (Edward Seymour Duke of)*, in *New Illustrated Columbia Encyclopedia* (New York: Columbia University Press), 1979, Vol. 7 p. 2100 & Vol. 21 pp. 6333f.

1790) J. Calvin: *Comm.* on Acts 8:37.

1791) Pont, A.D.: *Kategese, kategismusse en die belydenis van geloof in Genève in die dae van Calvyn* [*Catechizing, Catechisms and Profession of Faith in Geneva in the Days of Calvin*]. In *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* [[*Reformed Theological Studies*], vol. 47 no. 2. South Africa, 1991, p. 440.

