

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH
Part III: The Reformation and Modern Church

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I. INTRODUCTION.

This final lesson on the doctrine of ecclesiology focuses upon the church in light of the change brought about by the Reformation. The ecclesiastical legacy of the twentieth century finds its roots in the Reformation era, in the theological reconstruction after the break from the hierarchical, sacramental church at Rome. In that reconstruction, the nature and meaning of the church was subjected to scrutiny. As to church government for Protestants four alternatives emerged:

1. To retain the episcopal hierarchy, without the papacy, or to create a new one in its place (The English Church, Anglican Church, or Church of England).
2. To substitute a parity of ministers and a superintendence by civil magistrates without episcopal apostolic succession (Luther, Puritan Congregationalism).
3. To organize a Presbyterian polity on the basis of parity of ministers, congregational lay-leaders, and deacons with a representative synodical government (Calvin, Peter Cartwright of England).
4. To advance a congregational independency, the organization of self-governing congregations of true believers in free association with each other.

The purpose of this lesson shall be to delineate these options as they developed in the Reformation, as well as to note the Reformer's conception of the sacraments.

II. THE NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH.

A. In Martin Luther and Lutheranism.

Luther maintained both the invisible and visible, the latter being constituted of wheat and tares. The Augsburg Confession states (*Articles 7, 8*):

“Also they teach that one holy Church is to continue forever. But the Church is the congregation of saints [the assembly of all believers], in which the Gospel is rightly taught [purely preached] and the Sacraments rightly administered [according to the Gospel].

“And unto the true unity of the Church, it is sufficient to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by men should be alike everywhere, as St. Paul saith: ‘There is one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.’

“Though the Church be properly the congregation of saints and true believers, yet seeing that in this life many hypocrites and evil persons are mingled with it, it is lawful to use the Sacraments administered by evil men, according to the voice of Christ (Matthew 23:2): ‘The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat,’ and the words following. And the Sacraments and the Word are effectual, by reason of the institution and commandment of Christ, though they be delivered by evil men.”

The marks of the church are primarily two: accurate doctrinal preaching and the observance of the sacraments.

The ecclesiastical organization of the churches was essentially congregational with the equality of all ministers (no episcopacy). However, a hierarchy of sorts did prevail as Luther substituted a lay-civil magistrate episcopate for a clerical one. Supreme ecclesiastical power rested in the hand of civil magistrates who appointed ministers and superintendents.

B. In John Calvin and Calvinism.

1. John Calvin

“Almost any analysis of the theological foundations of Calvin’s ecclesiology will show that for Calvin, as much as for Luther, Christology and eschatology provide the context within which the understanding of the church emerges. It is therefore no cause for surprise that almost all of

Book IV of the *Institutes* is a close description of the nature and character of the institutional church, its structure, offices and powers. The church is that sphere where God's work of reordering His creation, begun in Christ, is extended until the time when Christ will come again to establish His kingdom, the state of perfect order. The visible church is described as the 'external means' by which God accommodates himself to human weakness."

- a) The Definition of the church. Calvin is not unique with his concept of the church as invisible and visible (*Institutes*. 4, 1, 2): "When in the Creed we profess to believe the Church, reference is made not only to the visible Church of which we are now treating, but also to all the elect of God, including in the number even those who have departed this life. And, accordingly, the word used is 'believe,' because often times no difference can be observed between the children of God and the profane, between his proper flock and the untamed herd. The particle *in* is often interpolated, but without any probable ground. I confess, indeed, that it is the more usual form, and is not unsupported by antiquity, since the Nicene Creed, as quoted in Ecclesiastical History, adds the preposition. At the same time, we may perceive from early writers, that the expression received without controversy in ancient times was to believe 'the Church,' and not 'in the Church.' This is not only the expression used by Augustine, and that ancient writer, whoever he may have been, whose treatise *De Symboli Expositione*, is extant under the name of Cyprian, but they distinctly remark that the addition of the preposition would make the expression improper, and they give good grounds for so thinking. We declare that we believe in God, both because our mind reclines upon him as true, and our confidence is fully satisfied in him. This cannot be said of the Church, just as it cannot be said of the forgiveness of sins, or the resurrection of the body. Wherefore, although I am unwilling to dispute about words, yet I would rather keep to the proper form, as better fitted to express the thing that is meant, than affect terms by which the meaning is causelessly obscured. The object of the expression is to teach us, that though the devil leaves no stone unturned in order to destroy the grace of Christ, and the enemies of God rush with insane violence in the same direction, it cannot be extinguished—the blood of Christ cannot be rendered barren, and prevented from producing fruit. Hence, regard must be had both to the secret election and to the internal calling of God, because he alone 'knoweth them that are His' (2 Tim. 2:19); and as Paul expresses it, holds them as it were enclosed under His seal, although, at the same time, they wear His insignia, and are thus distinguished from the reprobate. But as they are a small and

despised number, concealed in an immense crowd, like a few grains of wheat buried among a heap of chaff, to God alone must be left the knowledge of His Church, of which His secret election forms the thought and intention merely. By the unity of the Church we must understand a unity into which we feel persuaded that we are truly ingrafted. For unless we are united with all the other members under Christ our head, no hope of the future inheritance awaits us. Hence the Church is called Catholic or Universal (August. Ep. 48), for two or three cannot be invented without dividing Christ; and this is impossible. All the elect of God are so joined together in Christ, that as they depend on one head, so they are as it were compacted into one body, being knit together line its different members; made truly one by living together under the same Spirit of God in one faith, hope, and charity, called not only to the same inheritance of eternal life, but to participate in one God and Christ. For although the sad devastation which everywhere meets our view may proclaim that no Church remains, let us know that the death of Christ produced fruit, and that God wondrously preserves His Church, while placing it as it were in concealment. Thus it was said to Elijah, ‘Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel’ (1 Kings 19:18.)”

b) The formation of the church

(1) According to Calvin, ‘the whole order of nature’ was perverted by the rebellion of Adam; man has disrupted the orderly pattern established by God. In order to avoid contradiction, God moved to bring salvation (orderliness) through the church. The church is to Calvin a restoration order.

(2) In time Genesis 12, God established a covenant with Abraham and the church was formed to begin the restoration. He commented on Genesis 17:7:

““In the beginning, antecedently to this covenant, the condition of the whole world was one and the same. But as soon as it was said “I will be God to you, and to your seed after you,” the church was separated from other nations Then the people of Israel was received, as the flock of God, into their own fold.””

(3) While Calvin indicates that the church was initiated in the Abrahamic Covenant, he also says that it was formed as a

body in the exodus from Egypt with the giving of the law. He states of Isaiah 43:19:

“The redemption from Egypt may be regarded as having been the first birth of the church; because the people were gathered into a body, and the church was established, of which formerly there was not a semblance; but that deliverance is not limited to the time when the people went out of Egypt, but is continued down to the possession of the land of Canaan.”

“The Law was a ‘monument’ to, and a ‘renewal’ of the covenant; the law is an expression of the covenantal word of God.”

- (4) In the advent of Christ, the covenantal promise of God to Abraham was fulfilled, but between the ‘first birth’ of the church and that coming stands the Exile, which Calvin thinks of as an ‘interruption’ of the covenant. The coming of Christ, therefore, not only constitutes the completion of the covenant, but also a ‘second redemption,’ a ‘second birth of the church—the New Covenant fundamentally different from the first is established. Calvin does not see two covenants, per se, but one covenant that has been renewed.

- (5) “Of salvation which Calvin describes as ‘obedience,’ ‘the plain doctrine of good life,’ he wrote (*Institutes*. 2, 8, 57),

“To be Christians under the law of grace (*sub lege gratiae*), is not to wander unrestrainedly without the law, but is to be ingrafted in Christ, by whose grace they are liberated from the curse of the law, and by whose Spirit they have the law written upon the heart”.

c) The Marks of the church

“After the resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh—and because of that—the inclusion of the Gentiles in the church commences (ingrafted into Abraham’s stock). God now makes His covenant with all nations, not merely with one of them. Calvin concluded by stating ‘the Lord has designated for us what we should know about it (the church) by certain marks or symbols’ (*Institutes*. 4, 1, 8). Further, he said (*Institutes*. 4, 1, 9),

“Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists”.

(1) The Preaching of God’s Word

This is of vital import to Calvin for as the church is founded on Christ, the church is founded on Christ by the preaching of doctrine. It is by preaching that ‘God begets and multiplies His church.’ Order is restored out of chaos. On Hebrews 13:22, he wrote:

“The Scripture has not been committed to us in order to silence the voice of pastors, and . . . we ought not be fastidious when the same exhortations often sound in our ears; for the Holy Spirit has so regulated the writings which he has dictated to the prophets and apostles that he detracts nothing from the order instituted by himself; and the order is, that constant exhortation should be heard in the church from the mouth of pastors.”

(2) The Observance of the Sacraments

The sacraments to Calvin were simply symbols, natural elements which have been consecrated by God to a different and higher purpose, as an attestation of the grace of God, and, therefore, as a confirmation of faith. On Genesis 15:4 he stated:

“The faith of Abraham was increased by the sight of the stars. For the Lord, in order to more deeply affect his people, and more efficaciously penetrate into their minds, after he has reached their ears by his word, also excites their eyes by external symbols, that ears and eyes may consent together.’

And, again, (*Institutes*. 4, 14, 1),

“An external symbol (*externum symbolum*) by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of his good will toward us, in order to sustain the feebleness of our faith; and we in turn attest our piety toward him in the presence of the Lord and of his Angels and before men”.

d) The Ordering of the Church

According to the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* (1541) the churches, Geneva had three—St. Peter's, La Medeleine, and St. Gervais, were to have four classes of office-bearers.

(1) Pastors

Pastors, while they might be qualified to teach, discipline, and care for the needy, function to preach the Bible and administer the sacraments. Potential pastors were selected by the existing pastors and were confirmed in office by the city council promising allegiance to the Lord, the Ordinances, and the laws of the city.

N.B. The pastors, normally eight, met weekly for Bible study, and quarterly for mutual criticism of faults.

(2) Teachers (doctors)

They functioned to instruct believers in sound doctrine and to repel error. Two were appointed to teach theology (one in each testament) and others to teach the languages (to both girls and boys).

(3) Elders

They were laymen and were responsible for the machinery of discipline (twelve in all). They were appointed by the Little Council with the consultation of the pastors from each part of the city.

N.B. The elders and ministers, the 'Consistory,' a church court designed to administer discipline, not civil in authority, although it functioned in that fashion at times.

(4) Deacons

They were made up of two types—administrative and executive. They functioned to provide for the needs of the poor and indigent.

2. **In Calvinism.** The embryonic "Presbyterial" (Consistory) form of government evidence in Calvin's theology was adopted and promulgated

wherever Calvin's teachings would give birth to national churches. The Reformed Church of France has quite an explicit statement on ecclesiology (*Gallican Confession*, 1559):

“Article XXIX—As to the true Church, we believe that it should be governed according to the order established by our Lord Jesus Christ. That there should be pastors, overseers, and deacons, so that true doctrine may have its course, that errors may be corrected and suppressed, and the poor and all who are in affliction may be helped in their necessities; and that assemblies may be held in the name of God, so that great and small may be edified.”

Article XXX—We believe that all true pastors, wherever they may be, have the same authority and equal power under one head, one only sovereign and universal bishop, Jesus Christ; and that consequently no Church shall claim any authority or dominion over any other.”

Article XXXI—We believe that no person should undertake to govern the Church upon his own authority, but that this should be derived from election, as far as it is possible, and as God will permit. And we make this exception especially, because sometimes, and even in our own days, when the state of the Church has been interrupted, it has been necessary for God to raise men in an extraordinary manner to restore the Church which was in ruin and desolation. But, notwithstanding, we believe that this rule must always be binding; that all pastors, overseers, and deacons should have evidence of being called to their office.”

Article XXXII—We believe, also, that it is desirable and useful that those elected to be superintendents devise among themselves what means should be adopted for the government of the whole body, and yet that they should never depart from that which was ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ. Which does not prevent there being some special ordinances in each place, as convenience may require”.

The most explicit statement of Presbyterian ecclesiology is found in the Westminster Confession, 1647, in England where Presbyterianism nearly became the state religion. It reads in parts: *Of Synods and Councils*.

“I. For the better government and further edification of the Church, there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called synods or councils.

- II. As magistrates may lawfully call a synod of ministers and other fit persons to consult and advise with about matters of religion; so, if magistrates be open enemies to the Church, the ministers of Christ, of themselves, by virtue of their office, or they, with other fit persons, upon delegation from their churches, may meet together in such assemblies.
- III. [II.] It belongeth to synods and councils, ministerially, to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of his Church, to receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same: which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in his Word”.

C. **In the Anabaptist Tradition.**

The Anabaptist Tradition differed in its teaching from the major reformers by insisting upon regenerate church membership, believer’s baptism and congregational independency. The adoption of this form can be argued to have come about from circumstantial necessity the only tradition with no political assistance. The marks of the church include regeneration, baptism (believers), communion, and holiness. The Schleithem Confession says of pastors:

“Fifth. We are agreed as follows on pastors in the church of God; The pastor in the church of God shall, as Paul has prescribed, be one who out-and-out has a good report of those who are outside the faith. This office shall be to read, to admonish and teach, to warn, to discipline, to ban in the church, to lead out in prayer for the advancement of all the brethren and sisters, to lift up the bread when it is to be broken, and in all things to see to the care of the body of Christ, in order that it may be built up and developed, and the mouth of the slandered be stopped.

This one moreover shall be supported of the church which has chosen him, wherein he may be in need, so that he who serves the Gospel may live of the Gospel as the Lord has ordained. But if a pastor should do something requiring discipline, he shall not be dealt with except [on the testimony of] two or three witnesses. And when they sin they shall be disciplined before all in order that the others may fear.

But should it happen that through the cross this pastor should be banished or led to the Lord [through martyrdom] another shall be ordained in his place in the same hour so that God's little flock and people may not be destroyed".

Each church is independent with a strong aversion to any outside control whether it be state or an ecclesiastical court! For this reason, they were strenuously opposed by Rome, the various governments, and the Reformers.

N.B. This, obviously, is the birth of the Free Church Tradition!

III. THE NATURE AND MEANING OF THE SACRAMENTS.

A. In Martin Luther and Lutheranism.

Of Luther's general conception of the Sacraments the Augsburg Confession states (*Article XIII*):

"Concerning the use of the Sacraments, they teach they were ordained, not only to be marks of profession among men, but rather that they should be signs and testimonies of the will of God towards us, set forth unto us to stir up and confirm faith in such as use them. Therefore men must see Sacraments so as to join faith with them, which believes the promises that are offered and declared unto us by the Sacraments.

"Wherefore they condemn those that teach that the Sacraments do justify by the work done, and do not teach that faith which believes the remission of sins is requisite in the use of Sacraments".

1. **The Sacrament of Baptism.** As the sacraments are outward signs of inward realities, Luther conceives them as conveying of the outward symbol of grace, true grace is conferred only by means of the Word of God. Grace is conveyed in the outward symbol only as the outward symbol declares the truth of the Scriptures. Luther is quite self-explanatory in Part IV of his *Small Catechism*:

"What is Baptism? Answer:

Baptism is not simply common water, but it is the water comprehended in God's command, and connected with God's Word.

What does Baptism give, or of what use is it? Answer:

It worketh forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe, as the Word and promise of God declare.

How can water do such great things? Answer:

It is not water, indeed, that does it, but the Word of God which is with and in the water, and faith, which trusts in the Word of God in the water. For without the Word of God the water is nothing but water, and no baptism; but with the Word of God it is a baptism—that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul says, Titus, third chapter (3:5-7):

What does such baptizing with water signify? Answer:

It signifies that the old Adam in us is to be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance, and perish with all sins and evil lusts; and that the new man should daily come forth again and rise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever”.

N.B. The outward symbol is not grace conveying, but grace is conveyed through the Word, the inward reality, when coupled with faith!

PARENTHESIS: Baptism and Infants

Luther argues for the validity of baptism through faith only. Why and how does he argue that infants should be baptized since he also recognizes that they cannot believe? He argues not that they have faith, but that is both scriptural and the will of God. How does faith come into existence in children? Luther wrote (*Works*, 17, 82-83): “God works through the intercession of the sponsors who bring the child to be baptized in the faith of the Christian church. This is the power of someone else’s faith. Such faith cannot save the child but through its intercession and help the child may receive his own faith from God; and this faith will save him. Children are not baptized because of the faith of sponsors or of the church; rather the faith of sponsors and of the church gains their own faith for them and it is in this faith that they are baptized and believe for themselves”.

Althaus wrote of Luther’s ideas (*Theology of Martin Luther*, 369): “Luther now says that it is not decisive for baptism whether the baptized person believes or does not believe; that does not make baptism invalid but everything depends on God’s word and commandment. ‘When the word accompanies the water, baptism is valid, even though faith be lacking. For my faith does not constitute baptism but receives it.’ Baptism must be grasped in faith. Whoever does not believe misuses it. But that does not change the fact that baptism itself ‘always remains proper and essentially perfect.’ It is not baptism that needs to be changed but we ourselves. ‘If you have not believed, believe now.’ Baptism summons me to faith, and its reality and validity does not depend on my faith.

This is true also of adult baptism. Those who come to baptism in faith cannot rest on the fact that they believe ‘but I rest on the fact that it is your word and commandment.’ The same is true also of infant baptism. ‘We bring the child to be baptized because we think and hope that it will believe, and we pray that God will give it faith; we do not baptize it because of this, however, but only because God has commanded it’.

2. **The Sacrament of the Eucharist.** Luther argued in the tradition of Irenaeus for a realistic, non-transubstantial, view of the Lord’s Table as a sacrifice of praise and a means of Christian grace. The effect of the Lord’s Supper, like that of the sacraments generally, is that faith or its equivalent, the new life, is strengthened and increased constantly. Faith needs this “re-creation” and “strengthening,” because in this life, it is constantly attacked and endangered by the devil and the world. He wrote (*Small Catechism*, V):

“What is the Sacrament of the Altar? Answer:

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, given unto us Christians to eat and to drink, as it was instituted by Christ himself.

What is the use, then, of such eating and drinking? Answer?

It is pointed out to us in the words: ‘Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins.’ Namely, through these words, the remission of sins, life and salvation are given us in the Sacrament: for where there is remission of sins, there are also life and salvation.

How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things? Answer:

Eating and drinking, indeed, do not do them, but the words which stand here: ‘Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins.’ Which words, besides the bodily eating and drinking, are the main point in the sacrament; and he who believes these words has that which they declare and mean, namely, forgiveness of sins.

Who, then, receives this Sacrament worthily? answer:

Fasting and bodily preparation are, indeed, a good external discipline, but he is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: ‘Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins.’ But he who does not believe these words, or who doubts, is unworthy and unfit, for the words ‘for you’ require truly believing hearts”.

B. In John Calvin and Calvinism.

Calvin, as indicated above, places the sacraments within the discussion of the “Marks of the Church,” natural elements which have been consecrated by God to a different and higher purpose. He wrote (*Institutes*. 4, 14, 1): “AKIN to the preaching of the gospel, we have no other help to our faith in the sacraments, in regard to which, it greatly concerns us that some sure doctrine should be delivered, informing us both of the end for which they were instituted, and of their present use. First, we must attend to what a sacrament is. It seems to me, then, a simple and appropriate definition to say, that it is an external sign, by which the Lord seals on our consciences his promises of good-will toward us, in order to sustain the weakness of our faith, and we in our turn testify our piety towards him, both before himself, and before angels as well as men. We may also define more briefly by calling it a testimony of the divine favour toward us, confirmed by an external sign, with a corresponding attestation of our faith towards Him. You may make your choice of these definitions, which in meaning differ not from that of Augustine, which defines a sacrament to be a visible sign of a sacred thing, or a visible form of an invisible grace, but does not contain a better or surer explanation. As its brevity makes it somewhat obscure, and thereby misleads the more illiterate, I wished to remove all doubt, and make the definition fuller by stating it at great length”.

1. The Sacrament of Baptism. Calvin argues for three purposes in baptism: To attest to forgiveness, to teach our death to sin, and to reveal that we are partakers of God’s blessings (*Institutes*. 4, 15, 1).

“Baptism is the initiatory sign by which we are admitted to the fellowship for the Church, that being ingrafted into Christ we may be accounted children of God. Moreover, the end for which God has given it (this I have shown to be common to all mysteries) is, first, that it may be conducive to our faith in him; and, secondly, that it may be conducive to our faith in him; and, secondly, that it may serve the purpose of a confession among men. The nature of both institutions we shall explain in order. Baptism contributes to our faith three things, which require to be treated separately. The first object, therefore, for which it is appointed by the Lord, is to be a sign and evidence of our purification, or (better to explain my meaning) it is a kind of sealed instrument by which he assures us that all our sins are so deleted, covered, and effaced, that they will never come into his sight, never be mentioned, never imputed. for it is his will that all who have believed, be baptized for the remission of sins.

Hence those who have thought that baptism is nothing else than the badge and mark by which we profess our religion before men, in

the same way as soldiers attest their profession by bearing the insignia of their commander, having not attended to what was the principal thing in baptism; and this is, that we are to receive it in connection with the promise, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved' (Mark 16:16).

In this sense is to be understood the statement of Paul, that 'Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it.'

Another benefit of baptism is, that it shows us our mortification in Christ and new life in him. 'Know ye not,' says the apostle, 'that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death,' that we 'should walk in newness of life' (Romans 6:3, 4). By these words, he not only exhorts us to imitation of Christ, as if he had said, that we are admonished by baptism, in like manner as Christ died, to die to our lusts, and as he rose, to rise to righteousness; but he traces the matter much higher, that Christ by baptism has made us partakers of his death, ingrafting us into it. And the last advantage which our faith receives from baptism is its assuring us not only that we are ingrafted into the death and life of Christ, but so united to Christ himself as to be partakers of all his blessings. For he consecrated and sanctified baptism in his own body, that he might have it in common with us as the firmest bond of union and fellowship which he deigned to form with us; and hence Paul proves us to be the sons of God, from the fact that we put on Christ in baptism (Galatians 3:27)".

The Heidelberg Catechism (1563) states that baptism is an outward sign of an inward reality:

“Q. 69. How does holy Baptism remind and assure you that the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross avails for you?

A. In this way: Christ has instituted this external washing with water and by it has promised that I am as certainly washed with his blood and Spirit from the uncleanness of my soul and from all my sins, as I am washed externally with water which is used to remove the dirt from my body.

Q. 72. Does merely the outward washing with water itself wash away sins?

A. No; for only the blood of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit cleanse us from all sins.

Q. 73. Then why does the Holy Spirit call baptism the water of rebirth and the washing away of sins?

A. God does not speak in this way except for a strong reason. Not only does he teach us by Baptism that just as the dirt of the body is taken away by water, so our sins are removed by the blood and Spirit of Christ; but more important still, by the divine pledge and sign he wishes to assure us that we are just as truly washed from our sins spiritually as our bodies are washed with water”.

PARENTHESIS: Calvin and Infant Baptism

Infant baptism is justified as a replacement for the rite of circumcision.

Children are born members of the church by virtue of the nature of the covenant, its hereditary character, not the parent’s faith. Children come to possess the things signified in the sacrament ‘after a long time’ through training or illumination, rather than a momentary conversion. On Acts 8:37, he says,

“For to this end Christ admits infants to baptism, that as soon as the capacity of their age permit, they may become his disciples, and that being baptized with the Holy Spirit, they may comprehend, with the understanding of faith, the power which baptism figures”.

The Heidelberg Catechism tells us:

“Q. 74. Are infants also to be baptized?

A. Yes, because they, as well as their parents, are included in the covenant and belong to the people of God. Since both redemption from sin through the blood of Christ and the gift of faith from the Holy Spirit are promised to these children no less than to their parents, infants are also by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, to be incorporated into the Christian church and distinguished from the children of unbelievers. This was done in the Old Covenant by circumcision. In the New Covenant baptism has been instituted to take its place”.

2. The Sacraments of the Eucharist. In contradiction to Luther, Calvin rejected “realism” in the Lord’s Table for a spiritual presence view, a mystical “realism”. Christ is actually present, but not in any corporeal sense. In the observance, he understands that the worshipping saints are elevated to heaven, Christ is not brought down, and fellowship is there had. Again, it is a means of Christian strengthening grace. He wrote (*Institutes*. 4, 17, 10):

“The sum is, that the flesh and blood of Christ feed our souls just as bread and wine maintain and support our corporeal life. For there would be no aptitude in the sign, did not our souls find their nourishment in Christ. This could not be, did not Christ truly form one with us, and refresh us by the eating of His flesh, and the drinking of His blood. But though it seems an incredible thing that the flesh of Christ, while at such a distance from us in respect of place, should be food to us, let us remember how far the secret virtue of the Holy Spirit surpasses all our conceptions, and how foolish it is to wish to measure its immensity by our feeble capacity. Therefore, what our mind does not comprehend let faith conceive—viz. that the Spirit truly unites things separated by space. That sacred communion of flesh and blood by which Christ transfuses His life into us, just as if it penetrated our bones and marrow, He testifies and seals in the Supper, and that not by presenting a vain or empty sign, but by there exerting an efficacy of the Spirit by which He fulfills what He promises. And truly the thing there signified He exhibits and offers to all who sit down at that spiritual feast, although it is beneficially received by believers only who receive this great benefit with true faith and heartfelt gratitude. For this reason the apostle said, ‘The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?’ (1 Cor. 10:16.) There is no ground to object that the expression is figurative, and gives the sign the name of the thing signified. I admit, indeed, that the breaking of bread is a symbol, not the reality. But this being admitted, we duly infer from the exhibition of the symbol that the thing itself is exhibited. For unless we would charge God with deceit, we will never presume to say that He holds for an empty symbol. Therefore, if by the breaking of bread the Lord truly represents the partaking of His body, there ought to be no doubt whatever that He truly exhibits and performs it. The rule which the pious ought always to observe is, whenever they see the symbols instituted by the Lord, to think and feel surely persuaded that the truth of the thing signified is also present. For why does the Lord put the symbol of His body into your hands, but just to assure you that you truly partake of Him. If this is true let us feel as much assured that the visible sign is given us in seal of an invisible gift as that His body itself is given to us”.

The Heidelberg Catechism reads:

“Q. 76. What does it mean to eat the crucified body of Christ and to drink His shed blood?”

A. It is not only to embrace with a trusting heart the whole passion and death of Christ, and by it to receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. In addition, it is to be united more and more to His blessed body by the Holy Spirit dwelling both in Christ and in us that, although He is in heaven and we are on earth, we are nevertheless flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone, always living and being governed by one Spirit, as the members of our bodies are governed by one soul.

Q. 77. Where has Christ promised that He will feed and nourish believers with His body and blood just as surely as they eat of this broken bread and drink of this cup?

A. In the institution of the holy Supper which reads: The Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, ‘this is My body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying ‘this cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.

“This promise is also repeated by the apostle Paul: When we bless ‘the cup of blessing,’ is it not a means of sharing in the blood of Christ? When we break the bread, is it not a means of sharing the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we many as we are, are one body; for it is one loaf of which we all partake”.

C. **In the Anabaptist Tradition.**

The Anabaptist tradition is rooted in the Zwinglian tradition of the German-Swiss Reformation from which it emerged. The “Free Church” tradition differed radically from both Calvin and Luther in the area of the sacraments: In one instance they followed Zwingli, the other they did not.

1. **The Anabaptists and Baptism.** At this point, the cardinal distinction between the Anabaptists and all the other Reformers has emerged. Anabaptists repudiated infant baptism as a necessary correlation to a stress on the “gathered church,” as opposition to the “folk church.” Baptism, thought mode was not uniform, was for believers only as a sign of the procession of faith. The Schleithem Confession reads: “First. Observe concerning baptism: Baptism shall be given to all those who have learned

repentance and amendment of life, and who believe truly that their sins are taken away by Christ, and to all those who walk in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and wish to be buried with Him in death, so that they may be resurrected with Him, and to all those who with this significance request it [baptism] of us and demand it for themselves. This excludes all infant baptism, the highest and chief abomination of the pope. In this you have the foundation and testimony of the apostles. Matthew 28, Mark 16, Acts 2, 8, 16, 19. This we wish to hold simply, yet firmly and with assurance”.

2. **The Anabaptists and the Eucharist.** At this point the Anabaptist tradition reflects its intimacy with Zwingli with a non-corporeal, non-real spiritual presence, but memorial conception of the Lord’s Table. Zwingli wrote in the famous Sixty-Seven Articles of 1523 (Article XVIII): “That Christ, having sacrificed Himself once, is to eternity a certain and valid sacrifice for the sins of all faithful, where from it follows that the mass is not a sacrifice, but is a remembrance of the sacrifice and assurance of the salvation which Christ has given us”.

Again, the Schleithem Confession reads:

“Third. In the breaking of bread we are of one mind and are agreed [as follows]: All those who wish to break one bread in remembrance of the broken body of Christ, and all who wish to drink of one drink as a remembrance of the shed blood of Christ, shall be united beforehand by baptism in one body of Christ which is the church of God and whose Head is Christ. For as Paul points out we cannot at the same time be partakers of the Lord’s table and the table of devils; we cannot at the same time drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of the devil. That is, all those who have fellowship with the dead works of darkness have no part in the light. Therefore all who follow the devil and the world have no part with those who are called unto God out of the world. All who lie in evil have no part in the good.

“Therefore it is and must be [thus]: Whoever has not been called by one God to one faith, to one baptism, to one Spirit, to one body, with all the children of God’s church, cannot be made [into] one bread with them, as indeed must be done if one is truly to break bread according to the command of Christ”.

IV. CONCLUSION.

The purpose of this lesson has been to briefly describe the re-orientation of ecclesiology following the break from Romanism as occasioned in the context of the Protestant

Reformation. The ecclesiological re-orientation took four forms—three within a state-church structure, one outside it.

1. Episcopal Hierarchy, but without the pope, was retained in England, except during the Cromwellian era, as has Anglican community throughout the world.
2. A modified congregationalism was developed by Lutheran Germany with parity of ministers and autonomous churches, but political control of church appointments (i.e., ministers and superintendents). This has been modified in non-state/church countries, such as the U.S.A., to rulership through ecclesiastical courts. The major Lutheran assemblies in this country are the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, smaller groups exist such as the Wisconsin Synod Lutherans.
3. A Presbyterian form was developed embryonically by Calvin of a parity of ministers, local church autonomy and synodical appointments that has become the ecclesiastical form for most churches in the Calvinistic Tradition (i.e., Presbyterian, Reformed, Christian Reformed, Associate Reformed, et. al.).
4. A fully congregational, non state-church structure was developed in the Anabaptist tradition with complete local church autonomy, which is dominate among Baptists and independents.

In the sacraments a chart is perhaps helpful:

1. Baptism

Luther, Calvin, and the Anglican community interpreted baptism as both symbolic and spiritual.

Anabaptists understood baptism to have a symbolic significance.

2. Lord's Table

Luther advocated a corporeal presence of Christ in the elements with symbolic and spiritual significance

Calvin saw the Eucharist as possessing a spiritual presence with symbolic and spiritual significance

Anabaptists understood the Lord's table having a past, symbolic significance