

'Seasonal Communion' throughout Holy Scripture

'Seasonal Communion' three or four times a year best harmonizes with the totality of Biblical teaching. Indeed, on the very first page of the Holy Bible, Gen. 1:14's "seasons" or *moo'a:diym* are not just climatic -- but also liturgical (as further seen in Lev. 23:4-37 *etc.*).

This is further evident, also because Gen. 1:14 -- just like Lev. 23:4-37 too -- was infallibly inscripturated by God and through Moses. Mk. 10:3-9 *cf.* Ex. 23:14f. This was done for the benefit of regulating the worship of the true covenant people -- and, indeed, for all time. Dt. 12:32; Est. 9:22; Rom. 15:2-4; I Cor. 11:23-29; Heb. 8:1-5.

God ordained the festive seasons or *moo'a:diym* -- Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter -- not only in Gen. 1:14 (*cf.* Lev. 23:4-27). For even Gen. 4:3-4's 'offering' at the 'end of days' or *miqqeets yaamiym* -- again seems to indicate a harvest festival alias a 'seasonal' celebration.

Too, even after Noah's Great Flood -- at Gen. 8:20-22, we find the celebration of a regular seasonal thank offering. This was apparently to be re-celebrated quarterly "while the Earth remaineth." That means: as long as this great straight planet Earth continues: in the Spring and the Fall (alias at "Seedtime and Harvest"), and again during "Cold and Heat" (alias in Summer and Winter).

Nor was this a peculiarly 'Jewish' ordinance. For, as a Noachic Law, it was apparently instituted 'Pre-Judaically' -- for all people, and for all time. The Apostles reminded the pagans of this, when the latter brought them their seasonal offerings.

The First General Assembly of the Presbyterian New Testament Church, meeting in Jerusalem around 49 A.D., implicitly yet clearly decreed that these Noachic ordinances were to continue among the Gentile Christians. Indeed, even in the New Testament Church of the 'Heavenly Jerusalem' -- the Noachic rainbow continues to remind all men everywhere of the Creator God's undeserved yet faithful seasonal blessings. Gen. 8:20-22; 9:1-17; Ps. 100:1-5; Acts 14:15-18; 15:18-21; Rev. 4:3-11.

Too, a quarterly 'season' elapsed -- between the institution of the Passover in Egypt, and the festive re-promulgation of the Law on Sinai's altar. Ex. 12:1-6; 19:1-2; 20:18-26; 24:1-18. Indeed, at Ex. 23:14-17, God yet again insists: "Three times thou shalt keep a Feast unto Me in the year" -- *viz.*, "the Feast of Unleavened Bread"; and "the Feast of Harvest"; and "the Feast of Ingathering." Compare too at Ex. 34:23, at Lev. 23:4-37, and at Dt. 16:16.

Add to this the later Winter "Feast of the Dedication" at *Chanukah* alias 'Christmas time' (John 10:22f & I Macc. 4:52-59 *cf.* Est. 9:17-19) -- and one sees 'Seasonal Communion' four times annually. In fact, these 'Seasonal Feasts' were widely known throughout the ancient world -- and implicitly upheld by the First General Assembly of the Christian Church in the middle of the first century A.D. See: Acts 14:15-18 & 15:18-21 *cf.* 18:21.

Passages like Gen. 1:14 & 8:20f and Ex. 23:13f & 34:23, then, seem to be the germs of 'Seasonal Communion' each quarter. Compare the remarks on the former pair of these passages -- made by the mature Calvin in his 1563f *Commentary on Genesis*.

"The sun," he explains, "by its nearer approach, warms our earth...; introduces the vernal seasons [each Spring]...; and is the cause of Summer and Autumn." Indeed, the 'recession' of the sun preludes the advent of Winter. "The word *Moadim* [in Gen. 1:14]...signifies both time and place, and also the assemblies of persons.

"The Rabbis commonly explain the passage as referring to their festivals [*cf.* Ex. 23:14-17].... I extend it further, to mean...the opportunities of time...called...'Seasons'.... This passage teaches us that Sacrifices were instituted from the beginning [Gen. 1:26 - 8:20f].... When the Holy Fathers [alias the Pre-Abrahamic Patriarchs] formerly professed their piety towards God by Sacrifices -- the use of them was by no means superfluous."

No 'Daily Communion' in Acts 2:42-46

To the above, it might be objected that although the Passover (together with the other two or three Old Testament 'Seasonal Feasts') was observed annually -- nevertheless the Lord's Supper was commemorated probably daily, or at least weekly. *Cf.*: Lk. 2:41; Acts 2:46; 20:7.

Now certainly, even the Passover itself was previously sometimes observed more frequently than but once a year.^[11] Too, the Holy Communion indeed replaced the Annual Passover -- and also the two or three other Old Testament Feasts.^[12] Indeed, the Lord's Supper was probably held at least twice in the first half of the year in which Jesus died. Mk. 14:22f & Acts 2:42-46.

However, there is absolutely no Biblical evidence whatsoever for the ritualistic and episcopalian practice of 'Weekly Communion' *etc.* Even less is there Scripture for the 'Daily Communion' yet practised in certain Eastern 'Greek Orthodox' Churches. Still less is there any ground at all for Romanism's several 'Masses' every day. For texts like Lk. 24:30f, 24:42f, John 21:9, Acts 2:46 & 27:35 are not referring to Sacramental Communion -- but only to the frequent sharing of ordinary food.

Indeed, every single New Testament reference to the Lord's Supper -- is geared exclusively to the annual Passover Feast at Easter-time and/or to the annual Feast of Pentecost fifty days later. Lk. 2:41; 22:1f; Acts 1:3; 2:1,42f; 12:3-4; 20:6-16; I Cor. 11:20f (*cf.* 5:6-8 & 16:8).

Early Patristic passages like Did. 14:1f and Plin. (*ad Traj.* 10:96) & Just. Mart. (*1st Apol.* 65f -- should therefore be interpreted in the light of prior and canonical Holy Writ, and **not** instead in the darkness of later and non-canonical unholy ritualism. For the sake of convenience, however, the following is briefly stated right now.

The *Didache* speaks of careful Communion Services held on Lord's Days [annually on Easter Sundays, or quarterly on Easter Sundays and Pentecost Sundays *etc.*?]. It does not at all speak about Communion Services each week.

The pagan Pliny speaks simply of Christians in Bythinia publically partaking of 'good food.' That was at a time other than when they assembled for worship 'on a certain fixed day.'

Also Justin, when pertinently referring to Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday, also refers to post-catechetical Eucharist Services specifically on Sundays. He does not discuss their frequency (whether annually or quarterly *etc.*).

For a copious demonstration of this, see the revised version of my D.Ed. dissertation -- (Rev. Prof. Dr.) Francis Nigel Lee *Catechism Before Communion!* It is subtitled: *Why baptized children need catechizing, before first communing at teenage.*^[3]

Gunn versus Calvin on Acts 2:42f

Now even the 'Weekly Communionist' Rev. Grover Gunn^[4] all but capitulates to the very same 'Classic Calvinist Thesis' (on the frequency of Holy Communion) which he himself seeks to revise. For Gunn too rightly concedes: that "there is no Scripture passage which directly instructs the Elders to serve Communion to the covenant people every Lord's Day"; that "there are no direct statements on the issue" favouring 'Weekly Communion'; and that "the 'breaking of bread' can refer to a common meal (Acts 27:35)."

On the other hand, in his citations of "Acts 2:42" and "Acts 2:46-47a" -- Gunn quite wrongly concludes^[5] that "Acts chapter two gives evidence for not only 'Weekly [Communion]' but 'Daily Communion.'" That conclusion, however, is quite incorrect.

Indeed, Gunn further alleges that "in Acts 2:42 the 'breaking of bread'...refers to the sacramental meal." He also alleges that whereas "in Acts 2:46...the 'breaking of bread' is associated with a common partaking of nourishment" -- therefore, "the best explanation...is that the Early Church combined the sacramental meal with a fellowship meal or love feast."

Here, Gunn contradicts himself. Furthermore, he rejects Dr. Calvin's interpretation of these passages (and of I Cor. 11:20-22). See paragraphs below.

More importantly, Grover Gunn here also adds his own misinterpretation (of Acts 2:42-46) -- to Holy Scripture itself. It is a misinterpretation. For *cf.* I Cor. 10:16-22; 11:20-24; II Pet. 2:1,12-16; Jude 12; Rev. 2:14,20; 19:9 (& Ign. *Ep. ad Phila.* 4). Indeed, his misinterpretation amounts to adding to Scripture. And that is a very serious error. Prov. 30:6 *cf.* Rev. 22:18f.

Dr. John Calvin's *Commentary on Acts* clearly comes down against such a sacramentalistic and frequentative misinterpretation of Acts 2:42-46. Explains Calvin:^[6] "Some think that 'breaking of bread' [at Acts 2:42-46] means the Lord's Supper; others that it refers to alms; others again that the faithful had their meals together...."

Some think that '*koinoonia*' [here] is the celebration of the Holy Supper.... Some think that in this passage 'the breaking of bread' means the Holy Supper.... This seems to me far removed from Luke's meaning. He indicates to us [by the words 'breaking bread at home' (in Acts 2:46)] that they used to eat together [*cf.* I Cor. 11:20abc & 11:22ab] -- and to do so frugally [*cf.* I Cor. 11:21abc & 11:22cdef]."

To Calvin, then -- versus Gunn -- the early church no way combined daily fellowship meals with the less frequent sacramental meal. See too in later paragraphs below.

No 'Weekly Communion' in Acts 20:6f

Nor does Acts 20:6f teach 'Weekly Communion' -- alias manducation of the Holy Sacrament once every seven days. It is true that I Cor. 1:2 & 16:1-2 imply that the Corinthian Church and the Churches of Galatia -- and indeed the Christian Church in every place -- apparently took up collections "on every first day of the week" or *kata mian sabbatou hekastos*. Yet Acts 20:6-7 does not. Instead, it simply states that the disciples came together to break bread upon the first day of the week right after the Easter "days of unleavened bread" -- *meta tas heemeras toon azumoon...en de tee; mia; toon sabbatoon suneegmenoon heemoon klasai arton*. Compare too "the days of the unleavened bread" at "Easter" -- in Acts 12:3-5.

Thus, during a year subsequent to the one mentioned in Acts 12:3f, the 'infrequently-observed' Sacrament of the Lord's Supper had (in the Acts 20:6f year) been scheduled to be re-commemorated specifically at that same particular time of the year (namely right after Easter). For, among the Christians, it had replaced the 'annual' Sacrament of the Passover previously held by God's true people at that very time -- yet even then (and now) still being held by the Jews precisely at that season of the year, and fifty days before the subsequent annual Feast of Pentecost (Acts 20:16).

Very strained indeed is the explanation proposed by the 'Weekly Communionist' Grover Gunn: [\[7\]](#) "The passage [Acts 20:7-12] says that the disciples came together for the purpose of partaking of the Lord's Supper, and that Paul was their preacher that Lord's Day. Was this use of both the preached word and the sacramental word their normal weekly practice -- or was Paul there [on] one of the few Sundays each year on which this was done? Probability alone would point to the former."

Grover Gunn continues: "This conclusion is even more evident, when we consider that the Holy Spirit gave us this unique account of a Lord's Day worship service.... The burden of proof is on those who argue that the worship service described in Acts 20 was exceptional -- and not the normal weekly practice of the church at Troas...."

"The early church," Gunn assures us, "combined the sacramental meal with a fellowship meal or love feast. Both the fellowship meal and the sacramental meal are mentioned in Luke's account of the Lord's Day service at Troas -- where we learn that the church both broke bread and ate (Acts 20:7).... Corporate worship was no longer a daily experience, but a weekly experience on the Lord's Day (I Cor. 16:2 cf. Acts 20:7). Here we find additional evidence that the early church normally partook of the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day."

Gunn's garbling of Acts 20:6f

There are quite a few inadequacies in Gunn's above exegesis. Let us now look more closely at several of them.

First, Gunn omits Acts 20:6 and 20:16. For he wrongly limits the context only to "Acts 20:7-12" -- while the full context of the Bible passage referred to is actually Acts 20:6-16. There, verse 6 clearly refers to the annual "days of the unleavened bread" alias the Passover Feast. Indeed, verse 16 equally clearly refers to the annual festive "day of Pentecost." Significantly, Gunn here totally ignores both of these annual Feasts.

Second, Acts 20:6-7 neither states nor implies (with Gunn) that the Church at Troas came together every Sunday for the purpose of celebrating the Lord's Supper. It clearly teaches that when the Troas Disciples came together in order to break bread on the first

of the sabbaths after the days of the unleavened bread, Paul spoke to them. Says the holy writer: *Meta tas heemeras toon azumoon...en de tee; miai toon sabbatoon suneegmenoon heemoon klasai arton, ho Paulos dielegeto autois.*

Indeed, in that particular year: the itinerant Paul spoke at the special seasonal scheduled Communion Service (Acts 20: 7-11) which followed right after the annual Hebrew Passover at Easter (Acts 20: 6-7 *cf.* 12: 3-4). That annual Eastertime Communion Service itself would then be followed by the annual Feast of Pentecost, just fifty days later (Acts 20: 16).

Third -- and for the first and second reasons already given above -- Acts 20:7 does not (with Gunn) imply that "corporate worship" (and therefore the Lord's Supper too?) "was no longer a daily experience" as in Acts 2: 42-46. Neither does it imply, by way of dispensationalistic differentiation, the celebration of the Lord's Supper as "a weekly experience on the Lord's Day" once every seven days.

Fourth, Acts 20:7 does not teach (as Gunn claims) that "the church both broke bread and ate" in "Acts 20:7." To the contrary, there is no mention of eating (or even of tasting) at Acts 20: 7, but only at Acts 20: 11.

Finally, even at Acts 20: 11, the Bible does not (with Gunn) say that "the church both broke bread and ate" even at a love feast. Instead, it teaches that Paul (as the officiating Minister of the Word and Sacraments) then "broke and tasted the bread" or *klasas ton arton kai geusamenos*.

Consequently, Scripture here makes no mention of both "the fellowship meal or love feast...and the sacramental meal" (thus Gunn) -- but only of 'breaking and tasting bread' alias the sacramental Lord's Supper (see below). The passage states that this bread got broken and tasted only belatedly -- very early on Monday morning, soon after the unforeseeable accident involving Eutychus. Acts 20: 9-11. Troy's Communion Service was thus scheduled to be held specifically on the first Sunday after Easter. Acts 20: 5-13.

Calvin versus Gunn on Acts 20:6f

Calvin too sees this passage Acts 20: 6-11 quite differently to Gunn. Here, the Genius of Geneva comments. ^[8] "that Paul stayed at Philippi during the days of Unleavened Bread.... He had to take care that the ignorant might not think him a despiser of God -- by disregarding the Feast Day" alias Easter-time during that year.

Geneva's genius then goes on to discuss the immediately subsequent Christian Sunday Sabbath. So he next renders Acts 20: 7's Greek (*en de tee; miai toon Sabbatoon*): 'on one day of the Sabbaths.'

Here, explains Calvin, the Spirit-inspired writer Luke infallibly means: "the 'First Day' of the week...or one particular 'Sabbath.'" Indeed, "according to custom," he concludes, "that day was most suitable for holding a meeting."

Luke further states that they then gathered there: 'to break bread.' Argues Calvin: "Although the 'breaking of bread' sometimes [elsewhere] means a domestic feast, in Hebrew -- yet, two reasons prompt me to take it in this verse as referring [only] to the Holy Supper...."

Paul [here] took bread not at supper-time, but after midnight.... He took the food not for the sake of filling himself, but only to taste it." For in Acts 20:11, the Greek word *geusamenos* -- and the Latin word *degustasset*, in Calvin's translation thereof -- means: tasted.

"Therefore," decides Dr. John Calvin, "I come to the conclusion that a solemn day...was appointed...for celebrating the Holy Supper of the Lord." That day was "the 'first of the Sabbaths' alias the first Christian Sunday after Easter."

This was no weekly 'love feast' or church conviviality. To Calvin, it was precisely the "solemn[!] and seasonal Sacrament of the Lord's Supper -- where Paul at Troas "took the food" but "only to taste it...for celebrating the Holy[!] Supper of the Lord."

Calvin on Communion in I Cor. 11:20f

We have seen that the Trojan Church celebrated the Lord's Supper at Acts 20:7-11 -- between Acts 20:6's "days of Unleavened Bread" at Easter, and Acts 20:16's "day of Pentecost" fifty days thereafter. Compare Acts 1:3 - 2:1, and Acts 12:3-4. We also find precisely the same in I Cor. 11:20f -- between I Cor. 5:6-8's Easter Passover, and I Cor. 16:8's Pentecost (fifty days later).

There, Paul rebukes the careless Corinthian Christians for their abuse of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. He reprimands them for commingling it with the 'love feast' (in the very way the 'Weekly Communionist' Gunn himself does, in his own misunderstanding of Acts 20:7-11).

For, in First Corinthians (11:20,21,22,34) Paul specifically distinguishes the Christians' communal conviviality -- from the Holy Sacrament of the vastly different Lord's Supper. Sadly, the 'carnal Christians' in Corinth had been confusing and commingling their own communal convivialities or 'love feasts' -- with Christ's solemn Sacrament of Holy Communion. I Cor. 3:1-3 & 11:20,29 -- *cf.* II Pet. 2:13 & Jude 12.

Further, I Cor. 11:25-26's phrases "as oft as ye drink it" and "as often as ye eat" -- mean: "whenever you really do partake of the Lord's Supper" itself. They do not mean: "as frequently as possible" *etc.*

For the total context (I Cor. 11:20-29) makes it quite clear that the celebration of the Lord's Supper at Corinth -- over the years -- should have been occurring much less frequently than was actually then happening there. Indeed, the wider context of I Cor. 5:6-8 and I Cor. 16:8 -- with I Cor. 11:20-29 right in the middle of that wider context -- seems to indicate that the Lord's Supper should have been celebrated precisely after Passover (and before the following Pentecost), apparently each year. Acts 12:3-4 *cf.* 18:21 & 20:6-16.

In his comments on I Cor. 11:20-22 and 11:33, Calvin observes:^[9] "Paul now turns to condemn the abuse which had crept into the Corinthians' observance of the Lord's Supper -- *viz.*, that they were mixing up ordinary banquets with the Feast that is Holy and Spiritual.... Paul condemns the inclusion of common things which have no relation to the Lord's Supper." Now "the 'love-feasts'" were indeed "very ancient.... The origin...lay in the sacrificial rites common to both Jews and Gentiles."

However, the Lord's Supper is different. "Paul does not want this Spirit-ual Feast to be mixed up with ordinary feasts in any way.... How thoroughly dissatisfied the Apostle was with this custom of theirs, of feasting -- even if there had never been that abuse which has just been mentioned.... It seems quite acceptable for the whole Church to eat the Lord's Supper at one Common Table.

Yet, on the other hand, it is definitely wrong to turn the gathering for worship into other practices that are quite foreign to its nature.... Each person has a home of his own which is intended for him to eat in and drink in. It is therefore improper to do these things, in the gathering for worship.... In the Lord's Supper..., each person may not celebrate his supper on his own.... This Sacrament should not be mixed up with ordinary feasts."

Gunn versus Scripture on Holy Communion

Grover Gunn (see paragraphs above) not only 'anti-Calvin-istically' combines the common 'love-feast' with the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. He also disregards both the Biblical context of I Cor. 11 as well as Calvin's commentary thereon. Instead, Gunn not ex-egetically but only "eis-egetically" elaborates on his own fetish of 'Weekly Communion.'

Writes Gunn: ^[10] "Paul reminded the Corinthians that every time they partook of the Lord's Supper, they were proclaiming the Lord's death until He returns (11:26). Should we not be proclaiming the Lord's death every Lord's Day? ... I do not doubt...but that Communion also was a part of the weekly Lord's Day worship in the early church" -- *viz.*, during the Apostolic Age.

Gunn's consummating castigation is extremely judgmental, and also quite Anti-Biblical. For Gunn challengingly concludes: ^[11] "What will we say when our Lord asks us why we deliberately neglected a primary means of grace in most Lord's Day worship services? Do we really believe He will be impressed with our 'special because infrequent' rationalization?"

We ourselves, however, must here respond to Gunn that Holy Scripture itself tells us what impresses our Lord at Communion Services. Compare: Ex. 12:43-48; Num. 9:2-13; Lk. 2:40-47; I Cor. 5:6-8 & 10:16-22 & 11:20-32. Especially the latter passage, reveals Almighty God's dire displeasure at our participation in His Holy Supper whenever coupled with the simultaneous eating also of the jolly 'love feast' so pleasing to Grover Gunn.

'All Scripture': versus fragmentative dispensationalism

Paltry indeed are the portions of passages like Acts 2:42-46 & 20:6-7 & I Cor. 11:25f, that are therefore here improperly appealed to by Grover Gunn. Indeed, they have, against conservative Classic Calvinism, been cited for countless centuries especially by the sacramentalists -- by Romanists, Anglicans, Plymouth Brethrenists, Church of Christ Campbellites and even Crypto-Episcopalian Presbyterians -- all as authority for their own erroneous positions.

Are such 'magicians' Gunn's ultimate mentors? Yet all such texts -- once examined in their proper context -- do not in any way authorize either two-monthly or six-weekly or monthly or bi-monthly or weekly or multi-daily or daily or hourly Communion Services.

The daily breaking of bread from house to house in Acts 2:46 after Pentecost Sunday (Acts 2:1f), is therefore not talking about the Lord's Supper just instituted the previous Easter when it replaced the annual Passover (1:3 cf. 12:3f). Instead, it is discussing the frequent showing of Christian hospitality to other Christians (in the form of mutual meals or refreshments enjoyed together).

Yet the later breaking and tasting of the bread during a subsequent year -- on the first Christian Sabbath after Easter at Troas in Acts 20:6-11 -- is referring only to the special Communion Service. Indeed, it is describing the 'seasonal' Sacrament right after the Passover (Acts 20:6) and before the next Pentecost fifty days later (Acts 20:16). It has no reference whatsoever to the fictions of 'Daily Communion' and 'Weekly Communion' - and still less to 'love feasts' (whether frequent or infrequent).

Indeed, in a still later year, we find the precisely the conclusive I Cor. 11:20f] -- wedged solidly between the annual Easter Passover at I Cor. 5:6-8 and the annual Feast of Pentecost at I Cor. 16:8. Self-evidently, this reprimands the confused Corinthians even for their cavalier 'communing' at that very time.

The 230 A.D. Hippolytus on the frequency of Communion

The Primitive Church celebrated the Eucharist seasonally or quarterly. This was the case prior to the rise of ritualism -- and the resultant ever-increasing frequency of the 'Mass' in the Later Church (from the 250 A.D. time of Cyprian onward).

Thus, the 230 A.D. Early Church Father Hippolytus accurately recorded the 'seasonal' frequency of Holy Communion -- in the untarnished Primitive Patristic Period. Hippolytus not only wrote a "treatise on *The Lord's Supper*." In his *Homily on the Paschal Supper*, he again dealt with Christ and His cup. Indeed, in his still more famous book *Against All Heresies*, he also wrote that because "Christ kept the Supper..., it is needful that I too should keep it in the same manner as the Lord did." [\[121\]](#)

Now Hippolytus, in his famous *Discourse on Elkanah and Hannah* (I Sam. 1-2), anti-dispensationalistically recognized the clear connection between the Old Testament Feasts of Israel and the New Testament Christian Eucharist. There, he explains: "Three seasons of the year prefigured the Savior Himself -- so that He should fulfill the mysteries prophesied about Him."

In the Feast of Tabernacles, Christ's incarnation was prefigured. This foreshadowed the Season of His Advent (at 'Christ-mas'). Lev. 23:37-43 cf. John 1:1-14 & 8:12 & 10:22. Then again, there was also "the Passover Season.... As the Apostle says: 'Even Christ...our Passover was sacrificed for us.'" I Cor. 5:7 cf. Lev. 23:1-8. "And at Pentecost -- so as to presignify the Kingdom of Heaven -- He, having first ascended to Heaven, brought man as a gift to God." John 3:13 & Acts 2:34 cf. Lev. 23:9-22.

The deformation of Communion in the Mediaeval Church

Especially after the 250f A.D. time of Cyprian, however, the Lord's Supper degenerated from its apostolic simplicity. On the one hand, under the increasing influence of a resurgent paganism, it gradually became credited -- with assumed '**magical**' properties. This finally resulted, *via* the Mediaeval Mass especially from the 8th century onward, in the promulgation of the iniquitous doctrine of transubstantiation (at the Fourth Lateran Council, in 1215 A.D.).

On the other hand, and because of this 'magical' mirage, those Masses were celebrated more and more frequently. Finally, they were 'offered' every day -- and even several times daily. Ecclesiastical laws were also enacted, making it a 'mortal sin' for laymen not to 'go to Mass' -- at least once a year.

The Reformation, especially in Switzerland, acted strongly against the daily Masses of the Late Middle Ages. Especially Ulrich Zwingli not only repudiated transubstantiation. He also reverted to the Seasonal Communion of Holy Scripture.

The famous Swiss-American theologian Rev. Prof. Dr. Philip Schaff, in his famous *History of the Christian Church*, ^[13] thus describes the Pre-Calvinian Swiss "Reformed celebration of the Lord's Supper" by Ulrich Zwingli: "The first celebration of the Communion after the Reformed usage, was held in...April, 1525.... The Communion Service was to be held four times in the year -- at Easter, Whitsunday, Autumn, and Christmas."

This is the very view which the later Calvin himself finally embraced. First, however, he over-reacted against the infrequent eucharistic practice of most Romanists at that time. For then, they had very generally been attending Mass only annually -- even though it was regularly 'offered' several times every day!

The young Calvin (1536-1540) on the frequency of Communion

Opposing this, the young Calvin -- not yet thirty -- expressed the desire for more 'Frequent Communion.' This was chiefly in youthful protest against, if not in rash over-reaction to, Rome's false and ritualistic grounding of its own 'Communion Service' upon the annual day of atonement (Lev. 16).

Wrote the 27-year-old Calvin in his 1536 *Institutes*: ^[14] "Whether or not...the bread is to be leavened or unleavened, and the wine to be red or white, is of no consequence.... The Sacrament might be celebrated in the most becoming manner, if it were dispensed to the Church very frequently, at least once a week.

Calvin continues: "The Sacrament...was not instituted to be received once a year [only]..., as is now commonly the custom.... They say that Zephyrinus was the author of the decree.... This holy man...had appointed a day, that on it the whole of Christendom might give a 'Confession of their Faith' by partaking of the Lord's Supper. The ordinance of Zephyrinus, which was otherwise good[!] -- posterity perverted, when they made a fixed law of [but] one 'Communion in the year.'"

Worse yet. Some time after this has become customary, adds Calvin, it became a lifeless ritual. "Almost all, when they have once communicated, as if they were discharged as to all the rest of the year, sleep on secure.... They did not approach...at other times[!] of the year [too], even when prepared; but only at Easter, though unprepared."

At twenty-seven, Calvin was wrong about the frequency of the Passover Communion -- and also about the required redness of its wine (Gen. 49:11f & Num. 9:11 & Prov. 23:30-32). At that same young age, Calvin was wrong also -- about the desirable frequency of enjoying Passover Communion.

In his 1540 *Short Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, written when but thirty-one, Calvin further wrote: ^[15] "To prostrate ourselves before the bread of the Supper and worship

Jesus Christ as if He were contained in it -- is to make an idol of it rather than a Sacrament.... From the same source have proceeded other superstitious practices -- [such] as carrying the Sacrament in procession through the streets once a year....

"We have shown the origin of the calamity which befell the Popish Church. I mean that of abstaining from communicating in the Supper for the whole period of a year."

Calvin continues: "They regard the Supper as a sacrifice.... Instead of distributing the Sacrament of blood to the people, as our Lord's command bears -- they are made to believe that they ought to be contented with the other half [that is, the laymen are to receive the bread annually, and the wine never; while the clergy receive both, daily]. Thus, poor believers are defrauded of the gift which the Lord Jesus had given them. For if it is no small benefit to have 'Communion' in the blood of the Lord as our nourishment -- it is great cruelty to rob those of it, to whom it belongs."

Here, at age 31, Calvin still over-reacts to Romish idolatry. For here, he still ignores relevance of the infrequency of the Bible's own quarterly feasts such as the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles *etc.*

Calvin's views on Communion matured, from 1540 to 1560f

From 1540 onward, Calvin's mature views tend toward even more care and greater infrequency in manducating at Holy Communion. Thus, in a March 1540 letter to his friend Rev. Dr. Guillaume Farel, Calvin wrote: ^[16] "On Easter-day..., I gave out the intimation that we were to celebrate the Supper on next Lord's day [Acts 20:6-11 & I Cor. 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 his December letter to his fellow Minister Rev. Nicholas Parent, Calvin declared: ^[17] "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...I earnestly desire to be carefully attended to."

Delayable for a month, the Lord's Supper was specially scheduled -- and certainly not weekly (nor even monthly). *Cf.* Num. 9:4-14 and II Chr. 30:2-13.

Calvin was by then fast approaching the earlier Zwingli's Biblical ideal of celebrating the Lord's Supper quarterly. This is the ideal of 'Seasonal Communion' -- each Winter, Spring, Summer, and Autumn (or Fall). Compare: Gen. 1:14; 4:3-4; 8:20-22; Ex. 12:1-6 (*cf.* 18:12 & 19:1-2 & 24:1-18); 23:14-17; 34:22-26; Lev. 23:4-37; Dt. 16:16; Lk. 2:41; John 5:1; 10:22; 18:28,39; 19:14,31; Acts 14:15-18; 15:14-21; 18:21; 20:6-7; 20:16; I Cor. 5:6-8; 11:20-34; 16:8; Rev. 4:3-11; *etc.*

For in his 1541 *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, one finds him declaring: ^[18] "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 [Gen. 1:14; 8:20-22; Ex. 23:14-17; 34:22-26; Lev. 23:14-37; Dt. 16:16] -- namely at Christmas [in the Winter]; Easter [in Spring]; Whitsun [or Pentecost, in the Summer]; and on the first Sunday of September in Autumn [or the Fall]." Indeed, Calvin later re-affirmed this -- in 1546 and again in 1555.

Thus Calvin -- theonomically -- now went back to the Older Testament of the Bible to establish also the frequency of the Lord's Supper. Indeed, both the Older and the Newer Testaments of God's Most Holy Word disclose religious feasts at: Christmas-Winter (Est. 9:17-19 *cf.* John 10:22f); Easter-Spring (Lev. 23:4-8; Lk. 2:42-47; 22:1-20f; Acts 1:3; 20:6-11; I Cor. 5:6-9); Pentecost-Summer (Lev. 23:9-21); Acts 2:1f; 20:16; I Cor. 16:8); and Autumn-Fall (Lev. 23:22-36; Acts 18:21; 27:9).

Again, also in 1555, Calvin wrote to the Ministers of Berne. It is true that Calvin there [\[19\]](#) then goes on to advocate "a more frequent use" of Holy Communion. But once again, he did this in over-reaction to the Romish practice at that time -- when her adherents usually partook of her idolatrous Mass "but once or twice a year."

Yet even then in 1555, Calvin's consistent conclusion is again clear: "We celebrate the Lord's Supper four times a year." This once again very clearly underscores the principle of quarterly or 'Seasonal Communion' -- as indeed first presupposed at: Gen. 1:14; 4:3-4; 8:20-22; Ex. 23:14-17; Dt. 16:16; Lk. 2:41; John 5:1; 10:22f (*cf.* I Macc. 4:52f); Acts 14:15-18; 15:18-21; 18:21; 20:6-16; I Cor. 5:6-8; 11:20-33; 16:8; *etc.*

Calvin's 1560 Second Edition [\[20\]](#) of his *Commentary on Acts*, clearly comes down against a sacramentalistic and a frequentative misinterpretation of Acts 2:42-46 and 20:6-16. Significantly, and personally with his own full endorsement -- it was the 'Seasonal Communion' practice of Calvin's *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* that was taken over by Knox and others in their own 1560 *First Book of Discipline* -- just four years before Calvin's own death in 1564.

Rev. Prof. Dr. J.K. Cameron, in his great work *The First Book of Discipline* [of the 1560f Presbyterian Church in Scotland], states the true position exactly. He explains: "Of the 'reformed cities' of Switzerland, only Basel provided for a weekly celebration. In other German-speaking areas, three times a year was normal." [\[21\]](#)

Calvin, in the last twenty or so years of his life, more and more accepted this position as correct. His mature views on this matter were taken over not just by the Scottish Presbyterians, but also by all of the mainstream Calvinists of Holland and Germany. For they followed the predominant pattern already established in both French- and German-speaking Protestant Switzerland itself.

Indeed, it was in the very year of his death that Calvin's definitive statement appeared -- in his 1564 *Commentary on Genesis* (1:14 and 8:20f). There, he implicitly opted for 'Seasonal Communion' each Quarter, four times a year -- apparently even as a 'creation ordinance' itself.

Calvin's student Knox continues 'Quarterly Communion'

So in May 1560, following his mature mentor Calvin, the latter's student John Knox decreed [\[22\]](#) for the Church of Scotland: "Four times in the year we think sufficient to the administration of the Lord's Table. This we desire to be distincted, [so] that the superstition of the times may be avoided so far as may be."

Thus the great Presbyterian John Knox. Such was his high view of the great holiness of the Lord's Supper. To him, quarterly alias 'Seasonal Communion' was thus therefore altogether adequate.

So too the 1978 *Reformed Book of Church Order* of the National Church Association of the Church of Scotland. Thus it too rightly remarks: ^[23] "The Reformers in Scotland stated in the *First Book of Discipline* (1560): 'Four times in the year we think sufficient to the administration of the Lord's Table.'"

Two years later [in 1562], the General Assembly decided that four times a year in the towns and twice a year in the country were sufficient. As Knox's contemporary colleague the historian John Row then declared, the Scots "took not their pattern from any kirk in the world; no, not from Geneva itself; but, laying **God's Word** before them, made Reformation according thereunto -- both in doctrine first, and then in discipline."

Westminster Assembly's Gillespie on frequency of Communion

At the Westminster Assembly in 1643, George Gillespie, one of the most famous of the representatives from Scotland, objected to the proposal that there should always be at least four ministrations of the Lord's Supper per year. For, said he, **Scripture itself laid down no such rule**. Ex. 23:14f *cf.* 34:23; Lev. 23:4-37 & Dt. 16:16.

Hence, Reformational Scottish opinion was unfavourable to more frequent observance of the Lord's Supper than quarterly. As Scotland's Rev. Dr. J.D. Douglas of Fife states in his 1974 *New Bible Dictionary* ^[24] -- even in the Church of Scotland today, "the Lord's Supper [is] generally celebrated quarterly" -- alias precisely at each season.

Even from 'the light of nature' itself, such "seasons" can easily be determined. Indeed, we maintain that the Lord's Supper each season -- every Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter -- is one of those several "circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the 'light of nature' and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed." *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1:6.

Those "general rules of the Word" agree also as regards the desirable (quarterly) frequency of going to the Lord's Table. Gen. 1:14; 8:20-22; Ex. 23:14-17; 34:22-26; Lev. 23:4-44; Dt. 16:16; Est. 9:17-19; Lk. 2:42-47; 22:1-20f; John 10:22f; Acts 1:3; 2:1f; 12:3-4; 14:15-18; 15:18-21; 18:21; 20:6-16; 27:9; I Cor. 5:6-9; 11:20-34; 16:8.

We affirm, then, the teaching on 'Holy Communion' of the thoroughly Biblical 1645-48 *Westminster Standards*. Though "differently administered in the time of the Law and in the time of the Gospel," and though "the Lord's Supper" is to be "administered with more simplicity" yet "in more fulness" than "the Paschal Lamb" which it replaced -- nevertheless, "there are not therefore two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations."

Indeed, "the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself." Accordingly, it is "so limited by His own revealed will -- that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men...or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture."

So there is to be "the due administration and worthy receiving of the Sacraments instituted by Christ..., thanksgivings upon special occasions which are in their several times and seasons[!] to be used in a holy and religious manner." *Confession* 7:5-6 &

21:1-5. Without doubt, Lord's Suppers are foremost among such "thanksgivings -- as is evident from their very name (*eucharistias*).

Note here that the "Sacraments" and "thanksgivings" (*cf.* 'eucharists') are "to be used" on "special occasions." Those occasions are then stated to be precisely at "their several times and seasons" (from year to year).

Continues Westminster: "The Sacraments of the Old Testament, in regard of the spiritual things thereby signified and exhibited, were for substance the same with those of the New.... The Lord Jesus hath...appointed His Ministers to...bless the elements of bread and wine and thereby to set them apart from a common" use [including the communal 'love feast'] -- and instead to dedicate them "to a holy use" [such as at the 'Holy Communion'].

Thus Christ's Ministers are "to take and break the bread, to take the cup, and...to give both to the communicants [alone], but to none" other.... All ignorant...persons, as they are unfit to enjoy Communion with Him..., are...unworthy of the Lord's Table and cannot, without great sin against Christ, while they remain such, partake of these 'Holy Mysteries' or be admitted thereunto."

Indeed, all censured Communicant Members are to be given "suspension from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season." See the *Westminster Confession* 27:5; 29:3-8; 30:1-4. Carefully note that the *Confession* here refers specifically to the "**season**"(!) of "the Lord's Supper" *etc.*

The Westminster Standards: Communion not to be weekly

The *Larger Catechism* 108-113 & 171-177 clearly declares: "The duties required in the Second Commandment are...the administration and receiving of the Sacraments...; the disapproving, detesting [and] opposing all false worship; and, according to each one's place and calling, removing it and all monuments of idolatry... The sins forbidden in the Second Commandment are all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and any wise approving -- any religious worship not instituted by God Himself...; all superstitious devices, corrupting the worship of God, adding to it [also as regards its frequency] or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves or received by tradition from others -- though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretence whatsoever....

"The reasons annexed to the Second Commandment the more to enforce it...are, besides God's sovereignty over us and propriety in us, His fervent zeal for His own worship, and His revengeful indignation against all false worship as being a spiritual whoredom, accounting the breakers of this Commandment such as hate Him, and threatening to punish them unto divers generations."

"The Third Commandment requires that the...Sacraments...be holily and reverently used in thought, meditation, word and writing -- by an holy profession and answerable conversation, to the glory of God.... The sins forbidden in the Third Commandment are...irreverent, profane, superstitious or wicked...using [of] His...ordinances.... They that receive [seasonally] the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper are -- before they come -- to prepare themselves thereunto by examining themselves of their being in Christ, of their...measure of their knowledge, faith, [and] repentance....

"Such as are found to be ignorant..., may and ought to be kept from that Sacrament by the power which Christ hath left in His Church, until they receive instruction and manifest their reformation... The Lord's Supper is to be administered...only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves."

The *Directory for the Publick Worship of God* declares that "the Communion or Supper of the Lord is frequently to be celebrated. But how often, may be considered and determined by the Ministers and other Church-Governors of each Congregation, as they shall find most convenient for the comfort and edification of the people committed to their charge.... The ignorant and the scandalous are not fit to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper....

"It is requisite that public warning be given the sabbath-day before the administration thereof." That public warning is to set forth "how great the danger to eat and drink unworthily..., [and thus] to warn all such as are ignorant...not to come to that Holy Table."

This suggests partaking of the Eucharist far less frequently than every week.' For the "public warning" given on "the sabbath-day before the administration thereof" -- clearly militates against 'Weekly Communion.' It proves the Westminster divines obviously opposed Communion Services on the Sunday before the specially-appointed Communion Sunday. It also proves they ordained that public warnings be given "on the sabbath-day before" -- against unworthy manducation on the following Lord's Day alias 'Communion Sunday' itself.

Furthermore, in the 1647 *Act* adopting the *Westminster Directory for Family Worship*, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland resolved to "appoint Ministers and Ruling Elders in each Congregation..., to make diligent search and enquiry in the Congregations...whether there be among them any...families which...neglect this necessary duty. And if any such family be found, the head of the family[!] is to be first admonished privately to amend his fault....

"In case of his continuing therein, he is to be gravely and sadly reprov'd by the Session. After which reproof, if he be found still to neglect Family-worship -- let him be, for his obstinacy in such an offence, suspended and debarred from the Lord's Supper, as being justly esteemed unworthy to communicate therein till he amend." Cf. too the *Confession* 30:4.

Dutch Reformed 'Quarterly Communion' in Colonial America

Also the great Dutch Reformed Church denominations have followed the quarterly or 'Seasonal' Communion of Calvin's *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*. Indeed, it should be remembered that precisely the French and Dutch Reformed Churches are the oldest ecclesiastical institutions in North America (1562f) -- both in St. Augustine (Florida) and New Amsterdam (New York), as well as further north in 'Canada' (Nova Scotia and Quebec).

Wrote the great seventeenth-century theologian Rev. Prof. Dr. Herman Witsius: "Our Lord only recommended 'frequent' Communion -- not just once and for all, as in Baptism.... By that word 'as oft' (I Cor. 11:25-26), a certain medium [usage]...should

seem to be observed; lest...by the too frequent use..., thus sacred food should be disesteemed, or we should slight...that august Table of the Lord! [\[25\]](#)

Writes the noted American Historian Dr. Winthrop Hudson: [\[26\]](#) "Peter Minuit, the first Director of New Netherlands, had been a Ruling Elder of the French Reformed Church at Wezel." Thus he had been a Presbyterian even before he came to what is now New York.

"In 1628, the first Minister -- Jonas Michaelius -- arrived" in New York. There, he "immediately organized a church. Michaelius reported that there were 'fifty Communicants -- Walloons and Dutch' -- at the first administration of the Lord's Supper." Indeed, observes Dr. Hudson: "Every four months...he did administer the Lord's Supper 'in the French language and according to the French mode.'"

It is precisely this 'French mode' (of Calvin) which, via Holland, got exported to North America -- and also to South Africa. Furthermore, *via* Knox, it also took root in the Presbyterian Churches first of Scotland and then later world-wide.

Scriptural 'Quarterly Communion' versus paidocommunion

Calvin's own and therefore the traditional Presbyterian practice of quarterly Communion Services -- the Lord's Supper served annually each Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter -- corresponds to the four God-created seasons. It also corresponds to the Pre-Mosaic, the Mosaic, the Exilic, the Post-Exilic, and the New Testament sacramental cycle for the Seasonal Feasts. It further corresponds to the mature views of both the mature Calvin and the mature Knox -- thus becoming the standard Presbyterian practice ever since. It is therefore difficult, if not impossible -- from Scripture -- to justify a more frequent administration of Holy Communion for the local Congregation.

Already in the Introduction to our D.Ed. dissertation, we noted the bond between 'Weekly Communionism' and 'Child Communionism' on the one hand -- and Episcopalianism on the other. Indeed, we there [\[27\]](#) saw how 'Weekly Communionism' and 'Child Communionism' in 1988 finally 'transubstantiated' the Tyler (Texas) 'Westminster Presbyterian Church' of 'The Association of Reformation Churches' in the U.S.A., into the 'Good Shepherd Episcopal Church' in the Anglican Diocese of the Southwest within the American Episcopal Church.

As the good old proverb says: familiarity breeds contempt. And 'Frequent Communion' inevitably leads to a relaxation of discipline. Next, it lapses into a 'free for all' feed. And finally, it ends up by degenerating into magical and repetitious Romish and Greek-Oriental 'Masses' -- if not ultimately also becoming the 'Infant Communion' for which especially the moribund 'Ancient Oriental Churches' and the Eastern-'Orthodox' are still notorious.

Summary: Quarterly Communion at Biblical Seasons annually

The author's own earlier practice of daily manducation at 'Holy Communion' -- commenced when he was but a seven-year-old Roman Catholic child. The memory of it still haunts him, from time to time. He is fully convinced today, as a Bible-believing Protestant, that the traditional Presbyterian practice of quarterly sacramental manducation -- alias 'Seasonal Communion' -- is a far more blessed procedure.

Proper Sacramental Communion involves the most careful preparation. ^[28] It is to be administered strictly according to the infallible Word of God. ^[29] Accordingly, it should ideally be received -- no more frequently than at the four seasons of the year.

"Three times you shall keep a Feast for Me in the year" -- "the Feast of the Unleavened Bread" (in the first quarter); and "the Feast of the Harvest" alias Pentecost (in the second quarter); and "the Feast of the Ingathering" (in the third quarter); and the later Winter "Feast of the Dedication" at 'Christmas time' (in the fourth quarter of the year). Gen. 1:14; 4:3-4; 8:20-22; Ex. 12:1-6 (*cf.* 19:1f & 24:1-18); 23:14-17; 34:22-26; Lev. 23:4-37; Dt. 16:16; Lk. 2:41; John 5:1; 10:22f; 18:28,39; 19:14,31; Acts 14:15-18; 15:18-21; 18:21; 20:6-7; 20:16; I Cor. 5:6-8; 11:20-34; 16:8; Rev. 4:3-11. **Thus saith the Lord!**

ENDNOTES

[1] See P. Cooper's *Should Children be Allowed to Partake of the Lord's Supper?* (Oct. 1986); and J. Davies's *Are My Children Christians?* (Mar.1987) -- both in *Australian Presbyterian Life* (Sydney: PCA Pub.).

[2] Waterland, D.: *Enquiry Concerning Infant Communion*, in *Works* (Oxford), 1853, II, pp. 41-72.

[3] Whitefield Theological Seminary, Lakeland, Fla., U.S.A., 1989. Copies obtainable from Rev. Dr. Joseph C. Morecraft, Chalcedon Presbyterian Church, Cumming, Ga. E-mail address: jcmiii2@juno.com

[4] See his articles *Weekly Communion*, I-II, in *The Counsel of Chalcedon* (Marietta Ga.), Dec. 1986 & Jan. 1987.

[5] *Weekly Communion*, I, in *The Counsel of Chalcedon*, Dec. 1986, pp. 8.

[6] *Comm. on Acts*, 2nd (1560) ed., I, pp. v & 1 & 85f.

[7] See n. 5.

[8] *Ib.*, II, pp. 168f.

[9] *Comm. in I Cor.* 11:20,22,34.

[10] See n. 5.

[11] *Weekly Communion*, II, in *The Counsel of Chalcedon*, Jan. 1987, p. 20.

[12] *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (1971 Eerdmans ed.), V pp 238-40.

[13] Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969 ed., VIII, pp. 60f.

[14] *Inst.* V1:17:43-46.

[15] In *Tracts & Treatises*, II, pp. 163 & 188.

[16] See *Selected Works*, 1983, IV, p. 175f.

[17] *Ib.*, p. 222 & n. 1.

[18] Dankbaar, W.F.: *Calvin -- His Way and Work* (Nijkerk: Callenbach), 1957, p. 85f.

[19] *Selected Works*, 1983, VI, p. 162.

[20] Cf. at n.22.

[21] Edinburgh, St. Andrews University Press, 1972, at n. 14 discussing the *First Book of Discipline* XI:9(1):5).

[22] Cf. the 1560 *First Book of Discipline* (of John Knox and the other five of the 'Six Johns') XI:5. In M. Bradshaw: *Basic Documents of Presbyterian Polity*, Sydney: PCA Christain Education Pubs., 1984, pp. 36f.

[23] Edinburgh: Brunswick, 1978, pp.iiiif,1,5,27. Cf. too D.H. Fleming's *The Scottish Reformation*, Edinburgh: Scottish Reformation Society, 1960, p. 103.

[24] Douglas, 1974, pp. 891 & viii.

[25] *Op. cit.*, pp. 456-8.

[26] *Op. cit.*, pp. 49f.

[27] *Op. cit.* Reference is to Introd. of my D.Ed. at its paragraphs 36-38.

[28] Ex. 12:1-42; 13:6-10; Lev. 23:5-8; II Chr. 29:17-34; 30:13-19; Lk.2:40-52; I Cor. 11:28-32; the *Westminster Larger Catechism*, and all the relevant Bible texts there quoted.

[29] I Cor. 11:23f cf. Mt. 28:19f; *Westminster Confession of Faith* 27:3 & 29:3, and all Bible texts there quoted.