DRAFT UNFINISHED PhD THESIS

I don’t think the gift of dyslexia always helped me here

Legible Sacraments & Edible Words:

A Reformed Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture and The Lord’s Supper

with particular reference to The Church of England

Marc Lloyd

(56, 399 word; 69, 087 words with footnotes; 277 pages)

© Marc Lloyd 2026

Contents

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: *God's Words on God's Words* – A sketch of a standard Reformed Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture with developments from the philosophy of language and literary theory

Chapter 3: *God's Words on The Supper* – A sketch of a standard Reformed Evangelical doctrine of The Lord's Supper with particular reference to The Church of England

Chapter 4: *Edible Words* - The Supper in the light of the Scriptures

Chapter 5: *Legible Sacrament?* - The doctrine of Scripture in the light of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper

Chapter 6: General and Special Words and Sacraments

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Acknowledgements

Those who have assisted with this work are too many to name, especially as it has occupied me off and on for around a decade. In addition to those mentioned in the footnotes and bibliography, it may not be too invidious to mention some of the following.

I am grateful to my supervisors, Revd Dr Michael J. Ovey and Professor Anthony S. Lane.

Thanks are due to:

Revd John Cheeseman and the people of Holy Trinity, Eastbourne and of the parishes of Warbleton, Bodle Street Green and Dallington for allowing me to neglect my parochial duties to work on this project.

Bishops Wallace Benn, John Hind and Martin Warner and various other staff of the Diocese of Chichester including Revd Rebbeca Swyer and Revd Tim Watson.

The staff and students of Oak Hill Theological College for constant refreshment and stimulation. Especially to Revd Professor David Peterson, the former principle, for supporting the project and Revd Dr David Field, the post-graduate course leader.

The Oak Hill Post Graduate Seminar, The Latimer Trust, Holy Trinity, Islington and Brighton Mission for the opportunity to present part of the substance of this dissertation.

For financial assistance with this work: The Research Degrees Council of the Church of England, The Diocese of Chichester and my parents.

For copies of their unpublished works: Dr Rosalind Clark and Revd Andrew Martin.

Professor Susan Melrose of Middlesex University, especially for her input on Semiotics and Revd Dr Timothy Ward for generously giving of his time to discuss the doctrine of Scripture.

Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch, for his comments on North End Communion.

Dr Rosalind Clark and Revd Matthew Mason also pointed out articles of interest.

The staff of the following libraries: The Bodleian and The British Library above all, Wendy Bell, the Librarian of Oak Hill Theological College as well as the member of the ABTL group.

And finally, my wife, Yvonne, for too much.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Here we briefly consider some relevant preliminary and methodological issues.

The Appropriateness Of Theological Models

This essay raises the issues of the appropriateness of theological models. It will be suggested that to some degree and in some sense, the doctrine of scripture provides a theological model, or at least the very a useful sounding-board, for doctrine of the Lord's Supper and *vice versa*.

Models: approximations and perspectives?

It is common for theologians to speak of "models" in trying to describe particular doctrines. For instance, in his Tyndale Lecture of 1973, J. I. Packer commented that analysis of the functioning of language (which he said was "currently in full swing") had "produced one firm result of major importance – the recognition that the verbal units of Christian speech are 'models', comparable to the thought-models of modern physics."[1] Thus for example,

[1] Packer, J. I., *What Did The Cross Achieve? The Logic Of Penal Substitution* (The Tyndale Biblical Theology Lecture, 1973)
p11

exemplarist, satisfaction, *Christus Victor* and other "Models of the Atonement" are well established in doctrinal discussion. Similarly, John Goldingay has suggested a number of Biblical "Models of Scripture"[2], in his book of that title.

The language of models may well be derived from the idea of mathematical or scientific modelling[3]. *** In such usages it would seem to imply an approximation. A theoretical model is constructed to approximate as closely as possible to real data and perhaps to predict results that could not otherwise be known. The model serves to provide a framework for understanding that seeks to accommodate, or be revised in the light of, the hard data.

The theological endeavour obviously has important difference from mathematical and scientific study, and indeed all other branches of enquiry. Evangelical theology depends in special ways on God's revelation. That clear and sufficient revelation provides divinely-given controls on doctrinal study, which are more developed than in other branches of knowledge. Arguably, at least, theology should not include guess-work or speculation to the extent or in the manner that, for example, astrophysics might. We briefly consider the relationship between the Bible's revelation and theological models below. Perhaps talk of 'models' is increasingly appropriate as (1) we stray from the clear teaching of scripture towards theological invention, (2) in seeking to describe doctrines that seem particularly

[2] c.f. John Goldingay, *Models of Scripture* (Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 1987). Goldingay's models (which make up the parts of his book) are (1) witnessing tradition (2) authoritative canon (3) inspired word (4) experienced revelation

[3] *** E.g. – OED ?

difficult or complex where a single statement does not seem to suffice and / or (3) for didactic purposes as means of illustration or clarification.

It is also common, especially perhaps in our Postmodern times, to speak of a multiplicity of models. These may then serve as different perspectives on the same event, such as the saving work of Christ.

When more than one model is used a potential weaknesses is the failure to attempt to say how the models are related. If it is argued that the models are not at all related (even by some larger account which we cannot discover) then the description is logically incoherent and requires "double-think", the holding of mutually exclusive accounts. As Packer comments, we do well to seek "criteria for relating models to each other and developing from them a coherent belief-system", showing how models may be linked or qualify one another, though this is sometimes neglected[4]. For example, it is difficult to see how Christ's saving death can be said to be particularly exemplary unless another model is also used: in what sense would Jesus' death have been programmatic if it were only a futile and meaningless injustice? Using penal substitution as a central or controlling model for the atonement has explanatory power helping to show how Jesus' death amounted to a saving victory over the forces hostile to humankind. In this instance, the controlling model does not exclude the others but puts them in their proper connection and hence enhances their meaningfulness. Jesus' death was a great example of innocent suffering for righteousness' sake, in obedience to the saving purposes of God. Thus it is seen that where possible, if

[4] Packer, *What Did The Cross Achieve?*, Op. Cit. pp14-15

more than one model is used, an account should be given of how these models are related. Sometimes this relationship may be beyond our current understanding or God may have chosen not to fully reveal it to us. Where God has not spoken, we must, of course, be willing to live by and with what he has said and tolerate any irresolvable difficulties this may cause us.

MYSTERY? – Wienandy, *Does God Suffer?* Ch. 2: Theology – Problems and Mysteries – may have some relevant stuff to add?

"Models" Used In The Bible Are "Truths" or Controlling Models

Since some of the so-called theological models that are used, such as penal substitution or the inspiration of Scripture, derive fairly directly from the words of Scripture (as in the case, for example, of θεόπνευστος (God-breathed / inspired) from 2 Timothy 3:16) then it might be better to refer to these "Models of…" as "Truths about…" particular doctrines. As Packer puts it: "the didactic thought-models given in the Bible… in truth are instruction from God."[5]. Thus, for example, God's written words really were (or are) breathed-out by God, even though it might be argued there is some kind of metaphorical or analogical element to

[5] Packer, *What Did The Cross Achieve?*, Op. Cit., p13

that statement since God has no corporeal mouth or lungs[6]. Indeed, Packer says that "all theological models… have an analogical character…"[7].

These affirmations of Scripture, then, are much more than merely helpful models or illustrations. They have the status of truths or "controlling models"[8].

Models Derived From The Bible Are Also True

Such explicit truths of Scripture can be distinguished from theological statements that do not derive so *directly* from the pages of Scripture. It is not a valid objection to a theological description that a particular word (e.g. "Trinity", "Sacramental") does not appear in the Bible[9]. Truths rightly derived from Scripture, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, are Scriptural truths enjoying the authority of the Word of God. As the Westminster Confession

[6] It is probably better to say that God has true or ultimate "mouth-ness" and "lung-ness" etc., though he does not have them physically. Thus (as is more proper) the creator provides the model for the created, rather than vice versa. We may compare Ephesians 3:15 where, at least on some translations, all Fatherhood is said to derive from God the Father. This is more than a human analogy or metaphor accommodated to our understanding. God has so patterned the universe that it models eternal realities to us. God is the ultimate norm (for fatherhood, rather than just happening to be like a supremely good human father in certain ways).

[7] Packer, What Did The Cross Achieve?, Op. Cit., p11.

[8] Packer also distinguishes: (1) control models given in Scripture (2) dogmatic models crystallised by the church (3) interpretive models of particular theologians or theologies, Ibid., (p12).

[9] Conversely, of course, as Goldingay rightly points out: "The use of scriptural terminology [by someone other than the Bible writer in that text] does not guarantee that one's thinking is in accordance with scripture, as the Arians famously showed.", Models of Scripture, Op. Cit., p4. He goes on to cite the oft used example of the use of the word "Trinity" as mentioned above in the main text. Goldingay sees his project in that book as redeploying theological terms that are used in Scripture itself (but, he argues, not by the Bible of the Bible) to give models of the Bible. This, with its distinction between the Word of God and the written Word of God, may strictly be true but is perhaps questionable as the Scriptures were then, in any case and by necessity, a work in progress. It is difficult to know how Bible writers could refer to the Bible as a whole in a way that would avoid all ambiguity. Certainly, however, the referent(s) of "the Word of God" and similar phrases such as the Scriptures (*graphe_*) is a valid and sometimes important question, as, for example, in the interpretation of 2 Timothy 3:16.

of Faith has it, that which "by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture" belongs to "the whole counsel of God"[10].

Nevertheless, (controlling) models that are stated in Scripture and models that are properly derived from Scripture might not be treated in exactly the same way. Similarly, thus, for example, the Nicene Creed (even if it is thought to be entirely Biblical) will not be treated identically to, say, John's Gospel. The derived model or account, if properly derived from Scripture, will be equally true and properly authoritative as the direct statements of Scripture, but if there is some uncertainty over whether or not it is correctly derived from Scripture, then it will be held in a more provisional way than the plain statements of the Bible. Some on-going element of doubt seems unavoidable here as we can never give ultimate authority to our own exegesis, hermeneutics and systemisations due to our knowledge of our own fallenness and frailty. Received "truths" other than the words of Scripture will always in principle be open to reformation by the Scriptures.

Models Derived From (Other) Theological Concepts

It is also possible to find instances of theological models that derive from (other) theological concepts being used. For example, it is not unusual to compare the divine and human natures of Christ with the divine and human authorship of the Bible when arguing that the

[10] WCF, chapter 1.6

humanity of Scripture need not invalidate its claims to "divinity" or at least divine origin[11]. Indeed, Packer makes the strong statement that "the true analogy for inspiration is incarnation"[12].

There is a spectrum in the matter of theological models. Exactly how the model is being used needs to be carefully analysed. Some models can dominate a theologian's thinking. At the other end of the scale, some "models" may not truly deserve the name. They may be little more than comparisons ("sounding-boards" to provide contrasts) or illustrations, which assist in clarifying or communicating doctrines.

The dangers of creating theological models

There are dangers in using non- or extra-biblical models. It is often argued, for example that Greek body-soul dualism distorted the early Christian doctrine of creation and devalued the more Biblical Hebrew anthropology of man as a psycho-somatic unity *** [13]. Similarly, Anselm's satisfaction theory of the atonement is often (though probably not entirely fairly) criticised for owing more to the medieval society in which he operated than the Scriptures *** [14]. Packer certainly thinks that the Reformed scholastic defenders of penal substitution sometimes conceded too much to the assumptions of the Socinian model of the atonement

[11] E.g. c.f. Lane, Anthony N. S., 'B. B. Warfield on the Humanity of Scripture', *Vox Evangelica* 16, 1986, pp77-94 in which Lane argues that B.B. Warfield risks overemphasizing the "divinity" (God-givenness) of Scripture to the exclusion of its "humanity" (human authorship).
[12] Packer, What Did The Cross Achieve?, Op. Cit., p13.
[13] E.g. ***
[14] E.g. ***

which argued a priori about God as if he were a man, thinking that "every aspect of God's work of reconciliation will be exhaustively explicable in terms of a natural theology of divine government, drawn from the world of contemporary legal and political thought."[15]

It may be useful to consider in a little more detail an example in which a model from outside the Bible has been argued to have distorted the Bible's model: Goldingay thinks that the prominence of the notion of the "authority" of Scripture in writings later than the Bible itself is influenced by the later church coming to function more as an institution than at first and by thinking under-girded by notions of Roman law and government[16]. There may be some truth in this, but as Goldingay himself admits, the notion of authority and indeed of the authority of the Bible is certainly present in the Bible. John Frame's *Theology of Lordship*[17] series successfully shows that the notion of authority is theologically pervasive, central and intrinsic to the Lord's covenant. It seems likely, then, that Goldingay's statement is a little hasty. Simply being able to show an extra-biblical parallel is not sufficient to show that the extra-biblical idea has had a controlling or corrupting affect on biblical systematic theology. Indeed, it is quite possible that something outside the Bible could awaken believers to something they had wrongly been overlooking in the Bible. Frame's theological grasp of the Bible's grand themes (in this case the Lordship of God) helps him to hold an appropriate model of the authority of the Bible (by which the Lord exercises his rule over his covenant

[15] Packer, What Did The Cross Achieve?, Op. Cit., p5.
[16] See Goldingay, Models Of Scripture, Op. Cit., p6..
[17] Frame, John M., *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God: A Theology of Lordship volume 1* (Phillipsburg, Presbyterian & Reformed, 1987) and Frame, John M., *The Doctrine of God: A Theology of Lordship volume 2* (Phillipsburg, Presbyterian & Reformed, 2002).

people[18]). Indeed, we might say that a biblical model (the Lordship of God) comes to the rescue as we consider the Bible's model for its own authority.

Even when using truly Biblical or theological models, caution must be exercised. Not every doctrine straightforwardly models every other doctrine. Doctrines must be related in the way in which God (as he speaks in his Word) would have us relate them. They ought not to be confused or confounded with any one doctrine exercising unwarranted control over another. Bible doctrines must be given biblical uses and related in biblical ways.

The helpfulness of theological models in this study

We will suggest in this essay that the Bible can helpfully be compared to the Lord's Supper and vice versa. It is hoped that this will aid theological precision (for example by uncovering distinctions between the scriptures and the Supper), clarifying both doctrines. It should also show fresh ways in which doctrines can be communicated, without their substance being corrupted.

Further, it hoped that this study might stimulate a sense of theological harmony and congruity between the theological loci. Rather as God has created animals in various groups of related species and subspecies, so all points of doctrine are ultimately related in particular ways. Thus, for example, the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture will have a

[18] C.f. Kline, Meredith G., *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, revised edition (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1975).

bearing on how the work of the Holy Spirit is understood. All doctrines have a basic unity as they all derive from the unconfused and simple[19] and perfectly ordered mind of God. All truth is God's truth and is ultimately related and interconnected. It is honouring to God that, as far as we are able, we should perceive that unity and order (c.f. Proverbs 25:2).

Models That Are Underlying Paradigms

Yet beyond merely pointing out resemblances or relationships, some theological models may provide underlying paradigms. For example, Frame has an interest in (theological) triads, which he sometimes seems to think might reflect the Trinitarian nature of reality[20].

Similarly, as mentioned above, it sometimes seems useful to relate the structure of Biblical Christology concerning the human and divine nature of Jesus existing together in union without confusion or separation to other doctrines. Thus, for example, the Word of God is not the Spirit of God but they are always in harmony and where the Spirit's words (the Bible) are, there is the Spirit. Often the analogy is imperfect: it is after all an analogy. This sort of distinction / unity patterning is used where this essay speaks of the relationship between the Scriptures and the Sacraments. It is difficult to assess how much this has to do with the accepted Christological formularies or whether similar structures would be apparent in comparing any two related things.

[19] In the theological sense that God is not complex, not made up of parts.
[20] See Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, Op. Cit., Appendix A and p15 n31, where Frame comments that he sometimes thinks these triads are terribly significant, though he is sometimes not so sure.

That such paradigms exist seems to cohere with the doctrine of God and the nature of reality. God is a God of order, not of confusion (1 Corinthians 13:33). The Trinity is functionally hierarchical as is creation (God - man – woman – beasts). As man is in the image of God, there is a clear precedent for seeing the divine mirrored in the created order. As a craftsman's works reflect his being, so the world God has made contains patterns that tell us about him (c.f. Psalm 19:1ff; Roman 1)[21].

It would not be surprising if the doctrine of scripture occupied a similarly underlying paradigmatic position in God's economy as say the Trinity or Christology might since God has sovereignly ordained it as the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct and the primary means by which he speaks to his people. A person's words are closely related to that person. The scriptures are therefore not arbitrary but flow from who God is, which we might call the ultimate reality. It is appropriate that God's (written) words should be foundational, since it is by God's Word that the universe exists (Gen 1; Jn 1; "sustaining all things by his powerful word").

It would be fitting, then, if doctrines and principles related to scripture were also found to apply other doctrines, including to the sacraments. This does indeed seem to be the case as when, for example, both are effectual means of grace when received by faith. God may have ordained "habitual" means of acting, just as he has embedded patterns in the created order.

[21] See further Jordan, James B., *Through New Eyes: Developing A Biblical View of the World* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, Oregon, 1999).

Too much should not be made of this. There is a sense in which both the words and sacraments of God point beyond themselves (like sign-posts) to Christ and must yield ultimacy and primacy to him. Indeed, as we shall see, this is an aspect of their unity. We know from Jesus himself (John 5:39f) that it is tragically possible to have the words of God and yet fail to have the Christ to whom they call us to come.

We must not seek to be wiser than the all-wise God. As God's ways are infinitely higher than ours, we should not expect to be able know everything that we might wish to know about God. Indeed, a God whom we could completely grasp would have to be a truncated god, an idol, not the God of the Bible. As Packer has commented, the faith-knowledge of the Christian is "a unique kind of knowledge which, though real, is not full; it is knowledge of what is discernible within a circle of light against the background of a larger darkness; it is, in short, knowledge of a *mystery*, the mystery of the living God at work."[22] (c.f. Jn 9:25; 1 Cor 13:12). It is worth quoting Packer at length: "Mystery in this sense (traditional in theology) means a reality distinct from us which in our very apprehending of it remains unfathomable to us: a reality which we acknowledge as actual without knowing how it is possible, and which we therefore describe as *incomprehensible*.(c.f. Eph 3:19; Rm 11:33ff) … the God of Jesus remains the God of Job, and the highest wisdom of the theological theorist… is to recognise that he is, as it were, gazing into the sun, whose very brightness makes it impossible for him fully to see it; so that at the end of the day he has to admit that God has much more to him than theories can ever contain, and to humble himself in adoration

[22] Packer, What Did The Cross Achieve?, Op. Cit., p6

before the one whom he can never fully analyse… Every aspect of God's reality and work, without exception, is mystery."[23]. Therefore we should distrust human analogies that seek to dispel the dimension of mystery. "True theories in theology… will suspect themselves of being inadequate to their object throughout."[24].

We should be cautious, then, about theological speculation that goes beyond what is written (1 Corinthians 4:6) since while the revealed things belong to us, the secret things belong to God (Deuteronomy 29:29). We should remember that God has revealed himself plainly, sufficiently and truly in his word. The primary task of theology is to understand and apply God's revelation, not so much to look behind it for some hidden connections or paradigms; far less to make things up. We may compare Karl Rahnar's statement[25] that the economic trinity is the immanent trinity to the Evangelical conviction that God really is as has revealed himself. His revelation is clear and sufficient. Nevertheless "It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search them out." (Proverbs 25:2). Perhaps we are sometimes too quick to use the mystery and incomprehensibility of God as excuses to fail to reflect on God's revelation and not to make the effort to understand its full import. It is to both God's and our glory, and our maturing, that the task of knowing God and his ways requires us to think hard: an exhaustive systematic and practical theology is not spoon-fed to us by divine revelation.

[23] Ibid., pp6-7
[24] Ibid., pp7-8
[25] in ***

As we have already hinted, it is, of course, not helpful to see theological connections where they do not really exist (in the mind of God) and the Scriptures must be our control in this (as they truly, but only in part, express the mind of God for us). For example, consider how the creation of men and women in the image of God and the institution of marriage may be connected to other categories of doctrine. It is tempting to see the relationship between man and woman as reflecting the relationship between God the Father and God the Son, whose image bearers they are. Indeed, the relationship of husband and wife might be one way in which they image their creator. Here (in marriage as in the Trinity) is an ordered community of equal but different related beings complementing one another. The Bible suggests that the man is the head of the woman as the Father is the head of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3) but it is tempting to go further: the woman might be thought to be "begotten" or generated from the man (being taken from his rib, Genesis 2:21f) as the Son is begotten of the Father and children may be thought to proceed from the father and the mother as the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son[26]. We may compare Jack Dominian's comments on sexual intercourse in marriage, which he believes "reflects the inner world of the Trinity in that the Trinity expresses the relationship of the love of persons…. The Father loves the Son, and the fruit of this love is the Spirit."[27]. Interesting as this might be, and as potentially fruitful as it might seem, it must be admitted that such models are not plain on the face of the Biblical text and, crucially, cannot be shown to have been in the human or Divine authors' minds. Rather, God has told us that marriages are to be modelled on the relationship between Christ and his church (Ephesians 5). To think of

[26] at least according to the Western theological tradition.
[27] in Let Us Make Love (2001), p79f, quoted by Christopher Ash in Marriage: sex in the service of God (Leicester, IVP, 2003), p109. Ash comments that Dominian "appears to stray over the line into … a mystical view" of sex here.

marriage as a model of relationships within the Trinity as outlined above is potentially a distraction from this Biblical model and, more significantly, risks distorting the shape of Biblical theology by making faulty connections. (*** quote from Christopher Ash). Clearly we must sometimes restrain what might be thought of as theological creativity and avoid parallelomania! We will need to seek Biblical proportions in our theological systems so as not to create a monster.

Inevitable? We make models and model on our models anyway

Even if we were not fully persuaded of the usefulness of this approach of comparing different theological topics as models, it might be suggested that the process cannot fully be avoided. It is worth noting that none of us is able to fully analyse and account for what we believe and why. It seems inevitable that what we believe in one area and our patterns of thought will have a bearing on what we believe in other areas, even if only unconsciously. It can only be helpful that we should explicitly attempt to examine this cross-fertilisation. It is perhaps especially inevitable that our thinking on the scriptures and the Lord's Supper should interact given the prominent and connected roles they play in our public worship and Christian spirituality.

Chapter 2:

God's Words on God's Words

An outline and sketch of

a standard Reformed Evangelical Doctrine of scripture

with developments from the philosophy of language and literary theory

I. Introduction

This chapter gives an outline and sketch of a standard Reformed Evangelical[28] doctrine of scripture and suggests some developments of it in the light of two recent movements in the philosophy of language and literary theory.

Rationale: The contribution of this chapter to the overall thesis

The aim of this chapter in the context of the overall thesis is two-fold.

[28] See chapter 1 for a description of the understanding of "Reformed Evangelical" used in this dissertation.

First, this chapter provides the necessary groundwork and starting point for what it is hoped will be a fresh development of the doctrine of scripture, for which the resource of the doctrine of the Lord's supper will be employed in chapter five.

Second, this chapter provides theological resources, in the shape of the doctrine of scripture, which will be used later as a resource in the hope of developing the doctrine of the Lord's Supper in chapter four.

The chapter therefore provides some of the necessary tools and background for considering the supper in the light of the scriptures and the scriptures in the light of the supper and exploring their relationships with one another, the project of the dissertation as a whole.

A selective sketch

An exhaustive account of the doctrine of scripture is impossible, since virtually every published Christian has explicitly or implicitly represented a doctrine of scripture, which has often been thought of as in some sense scripture's own doctrine[29]. The subject has frequently been treated very directly and has been the occasion of much scholarly work and

[29] Balmer and Woodbridge point out: "To review the intricacies of Reformed thought concerning biblical authority in brief compass is a perilous if not impossible task.", p254. "The problem of selecting representative spokesmen emerges when one treats so broad an expression as "Reformed thought" or the "Reformed tradition."", note 25, p397. Randall H. Balmer & John D. Woodbridge, 'The Princetonians and Biblical Authority: An Assessment of the Ernest Sandeen Proposal' p251ff in Carson, D. A. and Woodbridge, John D. (ed.s), *Scripture and Truth* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1983) 1992 edition

reflection, especially where there have been "battles for the bible", as in twentieth century debates surrounding liberalism and fundamentalism. This chapter is therefore necessarily selective. The chapter aims to be comprehensive, not exhaustive. The hope has been to show the overall shape of a standard Reformed Evangelical doctrine of scripture with a clear outline and sufficient detail within the overall picture. Some parts of the picture have been sketched in more fully where they are of particular importance or interest to the project as a whole. Like the overall thesis, the focus here is primarily on the Reformed Evangelical tradition and Anglicanism and traditions that speak particularly well to those streams of thought.

II. B. B. Warfield's Doctrine of Scripture

A strong case can be made for beginning an examination of a Reformed Evangelical doctrine of scripture with B. B. Warfield as he is often acknowledged as the leading defender of a conservative evangelical view of the bible.

For John Gerstner, a defender of inerrancy, Warfield's "may well be the greatest contribution to the theme [of the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible] ever made by any Christian scholar…"[30].

[30] Gerstner, John H., 'Warfield's Case For Biblical Inerrancy' pp115-142 in Montgomery, John Warwick (ed), *God's Inerrant Word: An International Symposium On The Trustworthiness Of Scripture* (Minneapolis, Bethany Fellowship, 1974), p115

With his extensive historical and theological studies of Augustine, Calvin and the Westminster Standards, for many Reformed Evangelicals, Warfield is a mediator and defender of the tradition.

Warfield, and the Old Princeton school, of which he is perhaps the most able spokesman, have also been massively influential for Reformed Evangelical doctrines of scripture. Though critical of Warfield's understanding of inspiration, Kern Robert Trembath also highlights Warfield's impact:

The significance of the role played by Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield (1851-1921) in the development of inspiration theory among evangelicals cannot be overestimated: "There is little doubt but that Warfield did more to shape recent Evangelical thinking on inspiration than any other theologian."[31]

In particular, the approach of The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy is unmistakably Warfieldian[32]. Warfield's mark is evident in numerous works, not least in the writings of James I. Packer[33], perhaps the most well-known Reformed Evangelical scholar of our day.

[31] Trembath, Kern Robert, *Evangelical Theories of Biblical Inspiration: A Review and Proposal* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1987) p20 quoting Abraham, *The Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture* (Oxford, OUP, 1981), p15
[32] See for example the ICBI book: Geisler, Norman L. (ed) *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1979)
[33] See for example Packer, J. I., 'Fundamentalism' and the Word of God: Some Evangelical Principles (London, Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1958), pp77, 83n, 86-88, 179

Warfield's writing was usually occasional and polemical or apologetic. His writing on the doctrine of scripture concentrates on a defence of the inspiration of the bible and its consequent inerrancy. A more broadly articulated doctrine of scripture is to be found in Warfield's exposition of the Westminster Standards, to which he was a strict adherent.

As Warfield's did not produce a single standard systematic treatment of the doctrine of scripture, much of this chapter is given to exposition of his view.

Warfield's Basic Thesis: What the bible says, God says

Warfield's doctrine of scripture may be summarised as "What Scripture says, God says"[34]. The canon of Scripture is "the Word of God written."[35] The following is a typical summary:

What this church-doctrine [of inspiration] is, it is scarcely necessary minutely to describe. It will suffice to remind ourselves that it looks upon the Bible as an oracular book, - as the Word of God in such a sense that whatever it says God says, - not a book, then, in which one may, by searching, find some word of God, but a book which may be frankly appealed to at any point with the assurance that whatever it may be found to say, that is the Word of God.[36]

[34] Works 1, p92
[35] Works 1, p33
[36] Works 1, p52

The traditional doctrine

Pace Ernst Sandeen, whose case is discussed further below, Warfield legitimately casts himself as a defender of the traditional "church-doctrine of inspiration"[37], rather than as a theological innovator. He argues that: "… this attitude of entire trust in every word of the Scriptures has been characteristic of the people of God from the very foundation of the church"[38] and gives instances of such teaching from Origen, Irenaeus, Polycarp, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Rutherford, Baxter, Charles Hodge, Henry B. Smith, as well as various confessions[39].

Inspiration: The Bible is God-Breathed Words of God

For Warfield the written word of God is the product of inspiration. Warfieled defines the Reformed doctrine of inspiration thus:

Inspiration is that extraordinary, supernatural influence (or, passively, the result of it,) exerted by the Holy Ghost on the writers of our Sacred Books, by which their words were rendered also the words of God, and, therefore, perfectly infallible.[40]

[37] Works 1, p52
[38] Works 1, p53
[39] Works 1, pp54-55
[40] Works 1, p396, emphasis original. Warfield is willing to speak of inspiration more broadly as taking in the whole process of inscripturation or in a stricter more specialized sense as applying to the supernatural influence of the Spirit in guaranteeing that the human words of the bible are also fully the errorless words of God.

Henry Karrendam points out that "Warfield does not construe a difference between infallibility and inerrancy."[41] As well as calling the bible infallible, Warfield equally say that the influence of the Spirit and the divine co-authorship of the bible preserves it:

from everything inconsistent with a divine authorship – thus securing, among other things, that entire truthfulness which is everywhere presupposed in and asserted for Scripture by the Biblical writers (inerrancy).[42]

Fundamental to this understanding of inspiration is 2 Timothy 3:16. Warfield clarifies:

… the Greek word in this passage – *theopneustos* – very distinctly does not mean "inspired of God."… The Greek term has… nothing to say of inspiring or inspiration: it speaks only of "spiring" or "spiration." What it says of Scripture is, not that it is "breathed into by God" or is the product of the Divine "inbreathing" into human authors, but that it is breathed out by God, "God-breathed," the product of the creative breath of God. In a word, what is declared by this fundamental passage is simply that the Scriptures are a Divine product, without any indication of how God has operated in producing them. No term could have been chosen, however, which would have more emphatically asserted the Divine production of Scripture than that which is here employed.[43]

[41] p428
[42] Works 1, p173
[43] Works 1, p79. Though Warfield's cites a great many texts in support of inspiration, 2 Peter 1:19-21 is also especially significant for him. See for example, Works 1, p23, 27, 81-84.

Warfield thus holds that the bible is the word, or more exactly, the words of God put into writing to be permanently authoritative for the church. The bible does not merely contain a general message or word of God nor are only some of its words to be identified with God's words. Rather, Warfield's defence of inspiration is both extensive and intensive. First, it extends to all parts of scripture in whatever it affirms. Second, inspiration applies not only to the general message or thoughts of scripture but the actual words. He says: "…the Spirit's superintendence extends to the choice of the words of the human authors (verbal inspiration)"[44]. According to Warfield "the church-doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Bible" is "the doctrine that the Bible is inspired not in part but fully, in all its elements alike, -…matters of history and science as well as of faith and practice, words as well as thoughts."[45]

The Logic of Inspiration

Inspiration is thus central to Warfield's doctrine of Scripture because it secures his basic thesis that the bible is God's words written in such a way that what the bible says, God says. Warfield's doctrine of God is therefore the underlying presumption of his doctrine of words of God. For Warfield the attributes of God include "unchangeableness, … infinite knowledge and wisdom, infinite … power, infinite truth, righteousness, holiness and goodness"[46]. The words of God reflect the character of their speaker. It is because God is the sovereign, all-

[44] Works, 1 p173
[45] Works 1, p59
[46] Works 9, p111

powerful, omniscient truth-telling God that his word is effective, authoritative and infallible. We may observe this logic at work in the passages already quoted above. Inspiration constitutes the bible the words of God "and, therefore, perfectly infallible."[47] It is implicit that because God does not err nor lie that his words are inerrant. Similarly, God's words lack "everything inconsistent with divine authorship", being entirely trustworthy and inerrant[48].

The Mode of Inspiration

Warfield is more concerned with the results of inspiration than in describing the process. He says:

> The Reformed Churches admit that this [the mode of inspiration] is inscrutable. They content themselves with defining carefully and holding fast [*sic*] the effects of the divine influence, leaving the mode of divine action by which it is brought about draped in mystery.[49]

Warfield's dominant understanding of the authorship of scripture is by "concursive operation"[50]. He understands the bible to be a completely human and completely divine work, thus:

[47] Works 1, p396
[48] Works 1, p173
[49] Works 1, p397
[50] Works 1, p15

According to this mode of conception [*concursus*] the whole of Scripture is the product of divine activities, which enter it, however, not by superseding the activities of the human authors, but confluently with them; so that the Scriptures are the joint product of divine and human activities, both of which penetrate them at every point, working harmoniously together to the production of a writing which is not divine here and human there, but at once divine and human in every part, every word, and every particular.[51]

The human writers and the Holy Spirit are co-authors.

Warfield account of inspiration is not simplistic or naive. He recognises that:

…of course, these books were not produced suddenly by some miraculous act – handed down complete out of heaven, as the phrase goes; but, like all other products of time, are the ultimate effect of many processes cooperating through long periods.[52]

This includes God's sovereign providential preparation of the human authors so that:

[51] Selected Shorter Writings, 2, p629
[52] Works 1, p100f

If God wished to give His people a series of letters like Paul's, He prepared a Paul to write them, and the Paul He brought to the task was a Paul who spontaneously would write just such letters.[53]

Warfield repeatedly distances himself from mechanical dictation theories[54]. For example, he says:

At one time there arose in the Church, under the impulse of zeal to assert and safeguard the divinity of Scripture, a tendency toward so emphasizing the divine element as to exclude the human. The human writers of Scripture were conceived as mere implements in the hands of the Holy Ghost, by which (rather than through whom) he wrote the Scriptures. Men were not content to call the human authors of Scripture merely the penmen, the amanuenses of the Holy Spirit, but represented them as simply his pens. Inspiration, in this view, was conceived as a simple act of dictation; and it was denied that the human writers contributed any quality to the product, unless, indeed, it might be their hand-writing. This properly so-called, mechanical theory of inspiration was taught by a number of seventeenth century divines, in all Protestant communions alike – by Quenstedt, Calov, Hollaz, among the Lutherans; by Heidegger and Buxtorf, among the Reformed; by Richard Hooker, among the Anglicans; and by John White among the Puritans.[55]

[53] Works 1, p101
[54] Works 1, p98f; 6, p262
[55] Selected Shorter Writings, p543. Lane (p79) seeks to chart the development of Warfield's thinking about dictation theories of the bible. Warfield cites Charles Hodge in support of the contention that "the Reformed churches have never held such a [mechanical] theory [of inspiration]." (IAB, p421). Whereas A. A. Hodge in 'Inspiration' says that many former advocates of verbal inspiration had maintained "extremely mechanical conceptions of Inspiration" (p233) Thereafter Warfield acknowledges that some 17th century theologians had taught a mechanical view, as the passage cited above shows. See also SSW pp628-30. Lane concludes that

Although James Barr, William Abraham and Clark Pinnock cannot see it, Lane is right to suggest that Warfield's account of *concursus* shows that a conservative view of inerrancy does not require a mechanical dictation theory of inspiration[56].

The Humanity of the Bible

In contrast to dictation theories of inspiration, Warfield repeatedly insists on the humanity of the bible, although in his polemical context he is primarily concerned to defend its inspiration and inerrancy as the written words of God.

Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim's contention that with its doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration: "… the Princeton position as brought to its most refined form by Warfield, allowed no practical manifestation of the human element in the Scripture"[57] is demonstrably false.

"while Warfield seems to have changed his mind to some extent about the existence or otherwise of such theories in the past, he was consistent in rejecting them himself." (p80)

[56] Lane (p81) cites Barr, James, *Fundamentalism* (London, 1981) pp290-293. Barr sees divine and human elements in conflict so to allow total divine authorship of the bible is to smuggle in dictation and for inerrantists to allow human elements is inconsistent. Abraham, W. J., *Divine Inspiration* (p34) similarly argues that it is inconsistent of conservatives to hold inerrancy while rejecting dictation. For Pinnock: "Materially they [conservatives] believe in it [dictation], but not formally…. It is quibbling over words to deny it so vigorously." Pinnock, Clark, *The Scripture Principle* (San Francisco, 1984) p101. Lane (p91f) points out that E. R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* (Chicago & London, 1970), p124f clears Warfield of the dictation charge but "inconsistently proceeds to claim that God's control of the words used by the writers [i.e. verbal inspiration] implies dictation."

[57] Rogers, Jack B. and McKim, Donald K., *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (San Francisco, Harper Row, 1979), p345

It is true that Warfield would disliked the talk of "a human element in Scripture" if it is thought to suggest a paradigm in which the bible is seen as partly human and partly divine, such that it might be divided up, or with the two elements in competition. Rather, Warfield insisted on "a human side or aspect" to all scripture[58].

It can be shown that Warfield recognised this human aspect of scripture, even if he did not always develop in detail what it meant. He says that the case for verbal inspiration of the bible insists that: "The book is throughout the work of human writers and is filled with the signs of their handiwork."[59] He explains further that: "No finding of traces of human influence in the style, wording or forms of statement or argumentation" undermines the view that the bible is the word of God. We should expect to find the Holy Ghost using human speech "as He found it", with its human idioms and phrases. Thus the bible can speak "of the sun setting, or call the Roman world "the whole world.""[60] The "intentions and professions of the [human] writers"[61] must be considered in interpretation. For example: "If the author does not profess to be quoting the Old Testament *verbatim*… then no objection arises against his verbal inspiration from the fact that he does not give the exact words"[62]. Warfield sees "obvious marks of human authorship in the Biblical books" in "for example, differences in vocabulary, style, and the like"[63]. It is even possible to see "the marks of fervid impetuosity of a Paul – the tender saintliness of a John – the practical genius of a James, in the writings which through them the Holy Ghost has given for our guidance."[64] Warfield also

[58] Works 1, p96
[59] Works 1, p419
[60] Works 1, p419
[61] Works 1, p420
[62] Works 1, p420
[63] Selected Shorter Writings, p543f
[64] Works 1, p398

claims that Calvin was not insensible to the "human charm" of Scripture and paid attention to the art of the human authors and distinguished pleasant and harsh styles of the writers[65].

The Prophetic Mode of Inspiration

However, despite his emphasis on concursive operation, Warfield does sometimes distinguish modes of inspiration in contrast to it and recognises, "the exception of the comparatively small portion [of scripture] which came by direct revelation."[66] In particular, Warfield speaks of prophetic revelation as especially characterized by internal suggestion of the words of God to the prophet and insists strongly that the words are not the prophet's own. "It is a process of nothing other than "dictation" which is thus described (2 S. xiv. 3.19)." Yet even here Warfield is cautious and adds: "though, of course, the question may remain open of the exact processes by which this dictation is accomplished."[67] Warfield argues that the "the universal mode of revelation to them [the prophets] was one which was in some sense a vision"[68] though:

> It is an exaggeration… to insist that … all the Divine communications made to the prophets must have come to them in external appearances and objective speech, addressed to and received by means of the bodily eye and ear…. It is also an exaggeration to insist that … the prophetic state must be conceived as that of strict ecstasy, involving the complete abeyance

[65] Selected Shorter Writings 1, p398f
[66] Selected Shorter Writings 2, p631
[67] Works 1, p19
[68] Works 1, p20

of all mental life on the part of the prophet (amentia)…. It is quite clear from the records which the prophets themselves give us of their revelations that their intelligence was alert in all stages of their reception of them.[69]

According to Warfield "the intelligence of the prophets is alert throughout the whole process of the reception and delivery of the revelation made through them" but not in the composition of their oracles or even their choice of words. In the prophetic visions:

… the movements of the mind are determined by something extraneous to the subject's will, or rather, since we are speaking of supernaturally given dreams and visions, extraneous to the totality of the subject's own psychoses. A power not himself takes possession of his consciousness and determines it according to his will…. This [divine] control is represented as complete and compelling, so that under it, the prophet becomes not the "mover," but the "moved" in the formation of his message…. What the prophets are solicitous that their readers shall understand is that they are in no sense co-authors with God of their messages. Their messages are given them, given them entire, and given them precisely as they are given out by them. [70]

[69] Works 1, p21
[70] Works 1, pp22-23

Warfield discusses the objection that this has God "dealing mechanically" with the prophets "pouring His revelations into their souls to be simply received as in so many buckets"[71]. Warfield's response is that:

there is no just ground for asserting that God is incapable of employing the intelligent beings He has himself created and formed to His will, to proclaim His messages purely as He gives them to them; or of making truly the possession of rational minds conceptions which they themselves had no part in creating.[72]

Warfield argues that we can account for the differences of style and vocabulary between prophets' oracles not as a result of each different prophet's compositions but as "the accommodation of the revealing God to the several prophetic individualities". He cautions that we should avoid thinking of the process as external or mechanical and that it is not "as if the revealing Spirit artificially phrased the message which He gives through each prophet to the individuality of each, so as to create the illusion that the message comes out of the heart of the prophet himself." Rather, the process of inspiration:

includes, on the one hand, the "accommodation" of the prophet, through his total preparation, to the speech in which the revelation to be given through him is to be clothed;

[71] Works 1, p24
[72] Works 1, pp24-25

and on the other involves little more than the consistent carrying into detail of the broad principle that God uses the instruments He employs in accordance with their natures.[73]

Warfield argues that some degree of accommodation is necessary if God is to communicate in human language at all. The differences between Isaiah's and Jeremiah's oracles are not because Isaiah composed the ones he transmits and Jeremiah his but because in speaking to and then through these particular individuals, God chose to use language they would have naturally used had they been composing the oracles they pass on.

If this seems hard to accept, it is important to note that Warfield is driven to this account of prophetic inspiration by his attention to the phenomena of Scripture, whereas concursus is his default view. As Lane says:

… it would not be fair to accuse him of being dogmatic at this point, for Warfield's use of the dictation category is precisely the victory of biblical data as he sees it (the prophets' self-understanding) over dogma (concursus).[74]

Lane concludes:

[73] Works 1, p25
[74] Lane, A. N. S., 'B. B. Warfield on the Humanity of Scripture' *Vox Evangelica* 16 (1986) pp 77-94, p87

To summarize, Warfield, through his conception of concursus does manage to hold together the divine and the human authorship of scripture. His assertion that the Bible is truly the words of men is not just a formal rhetorical statement designed to evade the dreaded charge of dictation. It represents a real creative role that Warfield gives to the human authors. That he was not over-scared of being tarred with the dictation brush is seen by his acceptance of the term to describe the process of prophecy – because this is how he feels that the prophets themselves force him to describe it. It is only at this point that Warfield can fairly be charged with weakening the humanity of scripture. Many will of course feel that he was right to do so in this particular instance.[75]

The Case for Inspiration

Warfield's case for the inspiration of the bible[76] is largely exegetical. It would be misleading to charge that his view of scripture is simply the triumph of a preconceived theory or dogmatic presupposition over the phenomena of scripture. Warfield maintains that it is by interacting with the raw data of the bible itself that one is driven to a commitment to inerrancy. He says:

[75] Lane, A. N. S., 'B. B. Warfield on the Humanity of Scripture' *Vox Evangelica* 16 (1986) pp 77-94, p88. Similarly, Henry Krabbendam asks: "Did he [Warfield] emphasize the divine element to the point that Scripture is deified and its humanity is relegated to obscurity, or even excluded?" And concludes: "The answer to this question must be decidedly in the negative.", Krabbendam, Henry, 'B. B. Warfield Versus G. C. Berkouwer on Scripture' (pp413-446) in Geisler, Norman L. (ed) *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1979) p426.

[76] See also Gerstner, John H., 'Warfield's Case For Biblical Inerrancy' pp115-142 in Montgomery, John Warwick (ed), *God's Inerrant Word: An International Symposium On The Trustworthiness Of Scripture* (Minneapolis, Bethany Fellowship, 1974)

It [the doctrine of verbal inspiration] is based wholly upon an exegetical fact. It is based on the exegetical fact that our Lord and His apostles held this doctrine of Scripture, and everywhere deal with the Scriptures of the Old Testament in accordance with it, as the very Word of God, even in their narrative parts. This is a commonplace of exegetical science, the common possession of the critical schools of the left and of the right, a prominent and unmistakable deliverance of Biblical Theology.[77]

Whilst the church has given an impressively united and enduring testimony to the authority of scripture, the case for inspiration does not depend on the traditional witness of the church. Rather, the church down the centuries has rightly read the doctrine of inspiration out of the bible itself.

… this [church-doctrine of the verbal inspiration of scripture] is the doctrine of inspiration which was held by the writers of the New Testament and by Jesus as reported in the Gospels. It is this simple fact that has commended it to the church of all ages as the true doctrine; and in it we may surely recognize an even more impressive fact than that of the existence of a stable, abiding church-doctrine standing over against the many theories of the day, - the fact, namely, that the church-doctrine of inspiration was the Bible doctrine before it was the church-doctrine, and is the church-doctrine only because it is the Bible doctrine.[78]

[77] Works 1, p180
[78] Works 1, p60

Warfield rejects the notion that his defence of inerrancy involves a vicious circle: he claims he is not presupposing and using the infallibility of the bible to demonstrate the infallibility of the bible.

Warfield says:

It is obvious that the primary source of evidence for inspiration… is the declarations of Scripture itself. (1) This is not reasoning in a circle: the question of inspiration does not come into discussion until the general trustworthiness of the Scriptures as sources for Christian doctrine has already been established; and the establishment of this belongs to the general "evidences of Christianity," and not to the specific evidence for inspiration….[79]

Rather, he attempts a disinterested historical study of the bible to establish the attitude of Jesus to the Old Testament, which Warfield finds him to endorse[80], and the New Testament, which Warfield finds him to commission and authorize. If the apostles are thought to be trustworthy teachers of doctrine, Warfield argues that they must be believed when they make claims for their own authority[81].

Sandeen argues that the Princeton theologians departed from the Reformed tradition by de-emphasising the witness of the Holy Spirit to the authority of the bible in favour of a

[79] Selected Shorter Writings 2, p632
[80] E.g. Works 1, pp84-90
[81] Works 1, p212f

complete dependence on reason emphasising the objective external evidence for the inspiration of Scripture[82]. Balmer and Woodbridge concede that "Sandeen points out correctly that B. B. Warfield did tend to emphasize the external evidences for the Bible's authority" but they argue that: "On the other hand Warfield did not neglect the importance of the Holy Spirit as Sandeen and others have proposed."[83], citing the following passage from Warfield in support of their contention:

It lies more fundamentally still in the postulate that these Scriptures are accredited to us as the revelation of God solely by the testimony of the Holy Spirit – that without this testimony they lie before us inert and without effect on our hearts and minds, while with it they become not merely the power of God unto salvation, but also the vitalizing source of our knowledge of God.[84]

Some Reformed Evangelical commentators, especially those influenced by influenced by Van Til's presuppositionalist epistemology[85], have thought that Warfield's apologetic for the inerrancy of the bible is excessively evidentialist and rationalistic, underestimating the noetic effects of the fall and assuming that it is possible to demonstrate the truth of Christianity and the inspiration of the bible to the satisfaction of a "neutral" disinterested enquirer.

[82] Sandeen, Ernest R., 'The Princeton Theology: One Source of Biblical Literalism in American Protestantism' *Church History* 31 S 1962 pp307-321 especially pp310-12.
[83] Randall H. Balmer & John D. Woodbridge, 'The Princetonians and Biblical Authority: An Assessment of the Ernest Sandeen Proposal' p251ff in Carson, D. A. and Woodbridge, John D. (ed.s), *Scripture and Truth* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1983) 1992 edition, p271
[84] Works 5, p115
[85] See e.g. Bahnsen, Greg L., *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Philipsburg, P&R Publishing, 1998), pp46-48, 117, 551, 596-612

The Westminster Confession Doctrine of Scripture

Warfield calls the Westminster Confession:

the richest and fullest formulation of Reformed thought… the most complete, the most admirable, the most perfect statement of the essential Christian doctrine of Holy Scripture which has ever been formed by man. Here the vital faith of the church is brought to full expression;[86]

Similarly, he says:

"There is certainly in the whole mass of confessional literature no more nobly conceived or ably wrought-out statement of doctrine than the chapter "Of the Holy Scripture," which the Westminster Divines placed at the head of their Confession and laid at the foundation of their system of doctrine.[87]

He argues that the Confession represents the mature consensus of Reformed theology[88]:

"… the Westminster doctrine of Holy Scripture is the general teaching of the Reformed

[86] Works 1, p57
[87] Works 6, p155
[88] Works 6, p159. Similarly Selected Shorter Writings v2, p561

theology…"[89] and "… no single assertion is made in the first chapter of the Confession which is not the common faith of the whole Reformed theology…"[90]. It is largely on Warfield's approving exposition of the Westminster Confession that we depend for his account of a doctrine of scripture which goes beyond the defence of inspiration and inerrancy that has been considered above.

Necessity of Scripture

Warfield rejects the view that "special redemptive revelation, has been communicated in deeds, not in words"[91]. Revelation aims to produce knowledge and understanding for the sake of salvation so "the series of redemptive acts of God has not been left to explain itself, but the explanatory word has been added to it."[92] Further, revelation is in fact itself a redemptive act of God[93]. The Bible is a revelation rather than just a record of or witness to revelation.

The necessity of special revelation follows from the insufficiency of natural revelation for salvation and the cessation of supernatural revelation[94]:

[89] Works 6, p161
[90] Works 6, p169
[91] Works 1, p11
[92] Works 1, p12
[93] Works 1, pp12-13
[94] Works 6, p193-5, citing WCF ch 1, section 1; ch 10, sect 4, WLC Q60

… it pleased the Lord… for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment of the Church…to commit the same [the declarations of his will] wholly unto writing: which maketh the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now ceased.[95]

For Warfield the necessity of the scriptures rests on the fact that:

they are the permanent embodiment and sole divinely safeguarded and, indeed, only trustworthy, extant form in which the revelation of God and of His will which is necessary to salvation exists…. they are necessary, since this alone saving revelation is extant now only in their pages.[96]

Clarity of Scripture

Warfield defends the Westminster Standards' understanding of the perspicuity or clarity of scripture, arguing that it sufficiently clearly teaches "those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and obeyed for salvation… in some place or other"[97] that both the learned and the unlearned may understand it adequately for its purposes, with "the due use of ordinary means" including "the inward illumination of the Spirit of God."[98]

[95] WCF ch 1, sect 1, quoted in Works 6, p194f
[96] Works 6, p196
[97] Works 6, p232
[98] Works 6, p233

He is careful to say that:

It is, of course, not absurdly intended that every Biblical doctrine is taught in the Scriptures with equal clearness, with equal explicitness, with equal frequency.[99]

Warfield recognizes scripture's "frequent obscurities, its difficulties, its problems and its profound depths darkening to all human gaze."[100]

The Sufficiency of Scripture

Warfield affirms the completeness, finality and sufficiency of scripture for the purposes for which they are given[101]. Warfield carefully notes that the sufficiency of scripture is a circumscribed doctrine:

It is not affirmed that the Scriptures contain all truth, or even all religious truth; or that no other truth, or even religious truth, is attainable or verifiable by men through other sources of knowledge.[102]

[99] Works 1, p208
[100] Works 6, p233
[101] Works 6, p224, citing WCF ch 1, sect 6.
[102] Works 6, p224

The scriptures are thus in need of no

supplement… to instruct us "what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man." It [the Westminster Confession] does affirm the absolute objective completeness of Scripture as a guide to the service of God, to faith, and to life.[103]

Preservation, Transmission and Translation of Scripture

Warfield summarises that: "the Confession affirms the providential preservation of the inspired Scriptures in purity in the originals, and the adequate purity of the Word of God in translations."[104]

For Warfield as for the Westminster divines it was the original autographs of Scripture that were inspired[105] and the original texts that is "authentical" and authoritative in the highest sense[106].

Ernest Sandeen argues that this emphasis on the original autographs as infallibly inspired is a theological innovation and a clear departure from the Reformed tradition: "And once again Princeton is caught propagating a dogma which is flatly contradicted by the Westminster Confession" on the singular care and providence of God which has kept the

[103] Works 6, p225
[104] Works 6, p237
[105] Works 6, p238
[106] Works 6, p237

text pure and authentical in all ages[107]. Sandeen contends that under the attack of modernism and in a context where the doctrine of scripture was relatively under developed, Warfield and others invented the notion of infallible autographs. These autographs being lost, they were immune to the attacks of higher criticism and so it would be impossible to prove any error in the bible as originally given, since every alleged mistake could be blamed on a later copyist.

> … the Princeton professors' insistence that they were doing nothing new, while creating a unique apologetic which flew in the face of the standards they were claiming to protect, cannot be judged as an historically honest or laudable program.[108]

However, contra Sandeen, Balmer and Woodridge have shown that "A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield did not view themselves as special innovators when they crafted their 1881 article on inspiration. They understood that their predecessors at Princeton held the doctrine of biblical infallibility in the original autographs as did Christians from other communions and other centuries."[109] They demonstrate that Sandeen's account seriously misrepresents the doctrine of Warfield and the other Princetonians:

[107] Sandeen, Ernest R., 'The Princeton Theology: One Source of Biblical Literalism in American Protestantism' *Church History* 31 S 1962 pp307-321, p317
[108] Sandeen, Ernest R., 'The Princeton Theology: One Source of Biblical Literalism in American Protestantism' *Church History* 31 S 1962 pp307-321, p318
[109] Randall H. Balmer & John D. Woodbridge, 'The Princetonians and Biblical Authority: An Assessment of the Ernest Sandeen Proposal' p251ff in Carson, D. A. and Woodbridge, John D. (ed.s), *Scripture and Truth* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1983) 1992 edition, p268

Professor Sandeen's presentation of the Princetonians generally portrays them as innovators, theologically quite removed from "the Reformed tradition" and from other Christian communions. …in reality their commitment to biblical infallibility echoed the teachings of various Christians, from St. Augustine to Calvin to William Whitaker to William Ames. Moreover their emphasis on the infallibility of the original autographs was shared by other Evangelicals in the nineteenth century. These Evangelicals, like earlier Christian humanists, assumed that the textual critic should attempt to recover the originals to whatever extent it is possible to do so, and that the Bible's claims about its own inspiration applied only to the original writings.[110]

Warfield argues that the Confession sees the original language copies of the autographs as preserved in their purity by the providential care of God, but not infallibly so. He allows for errors in the copies but argues that: "What mistake is in one copy is corrected in another"[111] so that "the genuine text has been kept safe in the multitude of copies, so as never to be out of the reach of the Church of God in the use of ordinary means."[112]

Christ & Bible

[110] Randall H. Balmer & John D. Woodbridge, 'The Princetonians and Biblical Authority: An Assessment of the Ernest Sandeen Proposal' p251ff in Carson, D. A. and Woodbridge, John D. (eds), *Scripture and Truth* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1983) 1992 edition, p271
[111] Works 6, p238
[112] Works 6, p239

Critics of the Reformed doctrine of scripture have sometimes feared that it places the bible in the place that properly belongs only to Christ[113].

For example, J. F. Peter criticises Warfield for "failure to give a proper place to the fact of Jesus Christ"[114]. On Peter's view it is a very serious failing in Warfield that he does not adequately appreciate the unique fact of the person of Jesus Christ as the revelation of God. Peter claims that: "It is a pity that he [Warfield] did not make Christ the norm by which other modes of revelation are to be assessed." However, this criticism of Warfield cannot be sustained. Warfield clearly makes the appeal he does to scripture as the authoritative written words of God largely because he is persuaded that this was Jesus' view of the bible. Peter follows T. F. Torrance's criticism of Warfield. In a review of *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, Torrance said:

The basic error that lurks in the scholastic idea of verbal inspiration is that it amounts to an incarnation of the Holy Spirit. It is only strictly christological theology which can obviate that heresy, but Dr. Warfield's theory of inspiration neglects the christological basis of the

[113] For example, see the discussion in Barton, John *People of the Book? The authority of the Bible in Christianity*, Louisville, Westminster / John Knox, 1988 and the conservative evangelical response in Ward, Timothy, 'The Incarnation and Scripture' in Peterson, *The Word Became Flesh* (pp152-184). Barton argues that: "it is not primarily the Bible that is the Word of God, but Jesus Christ. I do not think one could find a single Christian who would dissent from this proposition, for to do so would plainly be to commit what is sometimes called bibliolatry: the elevation of the Bible above Christ himself… Christians are not those who believe in the Bible, but those who believe in Christ.", pp81, 83. Ward explains: "Barton is arguing that the classical doctrine of Scripture leads inevitably to the Bible taking some of the ground that only Christ should occupy in the lives of Christian believers.", p155.

[114] Peter, J. F., 'Warfield on the Scriptures' *The Reformed Theological Review* Vol XVI No 3, October 1957 pp76-84, p77

doctrine of Scripture, and fails therefore to take the measure both of the mystery of revelation and the depth of sin in the human mind.[115]

Warfield is alive to such concerns and is careful to state the supremacy of Christ over the bible. In his view the bible mediates the authority of Christ:

Christianity is often called a book-religion. It would be more exact to say that it is a religion which has a book. Its foundations are laid by apostles and prophets… but Jesus Christ alone is the chief corner-stone. He is its only basis; he, its only head; and he alone has authority in his Church. But he has chosen to found his Church not directly by his own hands, speaking the word of God, say for instance, in thunder-tones from heaven; but through the instrumentality of a body of apostles, chosen and trained by himself, endowed with gifts and graces from the Holy Ghost, and sent forth into the world as his authoritative agents for proclaiming a gospel which he placed within their lips and which is none the less his authoritative word, that it is through them that he speaks.[116]

Warfield thus warns against pitting Christ against the apostles and their teaching as it is preserved authoritatively in the New Testament: "… we have no Christ except the one whom the apostles have given us."[117] A high view of the Bible does not threaten the place

[115] Torrance, T. F., review of Warfield, B. B., *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol 7, no 1, March 1954, pp104-108, p107
[116] SSW, p537
[117] Works 1, p187

and authority of Christ since the scriptures are the instrument through which we know Christ and by which he governs his church:

… the cry, "Back to Christ!" away from the teaching of His apostles, whose teaching He Himself represents as His own, only delivered by His Spirit through their mouths, is an invitation to desert Christ Himself. It is an invitation to draw back from the Christ of the Bible to some Christ of our own fancy, from the only real to some imaginary Christ.[118]

Committed to the uniqueness of Christ, Warfield is willing to make only limited and cautious use of an analogy between the incarnation of the Word and the inscripturation of the divine words:

There is no hypostatic union between the Divine and the human in Scripture; we cannot parallel the "inscripturation" of the Holy Spirit and the incarnation of the Son of God. The Scriptures are merely the product of Divine and human forces working together to produce a product in the production of which the human forces work under the initiation and prevalent direction of the Divine: the person of Our Lord unites in itself Divine and human natures, each of which retains its distinctness while operating only in relation to the other. Between such diverse things there can exist only a remote analogy; and, in point of fact, the analogy in the present instance amounts to no more than that in both cases Divine and human factors are involved, though very differently. In the one they unite to constitute a

[118] Works 1, p189

Divine-human person, in the other they cooperate to perform a Divine-human work. Even so distant an analogy may enable us, however, to recognize that as, in the case of Our Lord's person, the human nature remains truly human while yet it can never fall into sin or error because it can never act out of relation with the Divine nature into conjunction with which it has been brought; so in the case of the production of Scripture by the conjoint actions of human and Divine factors, the human factors have acted as human factors, and have left their mark on the product as such, and yet cannot have fallen into that error which we say it is human to fall into, because they have not acted apart from the Divine factors, by themselves, but only under their unerring guidance.[119]

Instead of emphasizing the incarnation analogy for scripture, Warfield prefers to speak of the concurrent operation of the human and the divine in the authorship of the bible against the background of God's sovereign providence and in the light of God's immanence and transcendence. He sees the work of inspiration as analogous to God's work in governing the universe and individual salvation where the reality of the divine work and rule and the human effort and responsibility are preserved[120].

The Purpose of Scripture

[119] Works 1, pp108-9
[120] SSW 2, p546f

Warfield certainly emphasises the factual and propositional truthfulness of Scripture and insists that revelation is intended to produce knowledge[121]. However, he also has a keen sense of the bible as the living words of God which the Spirit speaks to believers. For example, when the apostle Paul calls the bible "the oracles of God" in Roman 3:2, Warfield says that: "From the point of view of this designation, Scripture is thought of as the living voice of God speaking in all its parts directly to the reader"[122]. Warfield states that: "whenever and wherever Scripture speaks, that is the Holy Ghost speaking"[123] so that: "The words of Scripture… are not dead words, but are instinct with life."[124] Warfield speaks of the duty to use the bible "to the nourishing of the Christian life and hope."[125]

Warfield is devotional in his approach to the bible as well as polemical in his defence of it:

We know how, as Christian men, we approach this Holy Book, - how unquestioningly we receive its statements of fact, bow before its enunciations of duty, tremble before its threatenings, and rest upon its promises.[126]

Warfield pictures a Christian finding the bible a "support in every trial", to be trusted as "our guide throughout life". The Christian can have confidence in the bible's every word for

[121] Works 1, p12
[122] Works 1, p94
[123] Works 6, p255
[124] Works 6, p256
[125] Works 6, p240
[126] Works 1, p53

comfort and strength. Warfield commends "the vital faith of the people of God in the surety and trustworthiness of the Word of God."[127]

III. Development of the Reformed Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture since Warfield

For better or for worse, the Reformed Evangelical doctrine of scripture has not always remained unchanged since Warfield's day, though many, especially conservative / Reformed Evangelicals, including a growing number in the Church of England[128], continue to adhere to it without any essential alteration[129].

From a conservative perspective, perhaps the most significant denigrations from Warfield's doctrine of scripture amongst Evangelicals are notions of limited infallibility, which deny strict inerrancy[130], and what might be termed Barthian shifts of focus to reception of the bible rather than inspiration as the decisive moment of its becoming the Word of God[131]. It is surprising how strikingly Warfield anticipates and suggests lines of response to some of these approaches, which have increased in prominence since his day. Limited infallibility and Barthian doctrines of scripture are addressed further in chapter 4 where it is discussed

[127] Works 1, p53
[128] Present day controversies such as the ordination / consecration of women or same sex unions are often seen (particularly by Anglican Evangelicals) to map back to issues regarding the authority and interpretation of the Bible. *** Evidence for this.
[129] See above p3
[130] See e.g. Marshall, I. Howard, *Biblical Inspiration* (Eerdmans, 1982), Pinnock, Clark, *The Scripture Principle* (San Francisco, 1984), Dunn, James D. G, 'The Authority of Scripture According to Scripture' *Churchman* 96 1982 pp104-22 and 201-25
[131] See e.g. G. C. Berkouwer, 'The Authority of Scripture (A Responsible Confession)' (p197ff) in Geehan, E. R. (ed), *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til* (Philipsburg, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1980) and the discussion in Krabbendam, Henry, 'B. B. Warfield Versus G. C. Berkouwer on Scripture' pp413-446 in Geisler, Norman L. (ed) *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1979)

whether and how sacramental accounts of scripture might support or counter such developments.

Developments in the Philosophy of Language and Literary Theory since Warfield

This chapter now considers the development of two broad approaches to the philosophy of language and literary theory that have gained prominence since Warfield's day: namely, semiotics and then speech act theory.

Since both of these theories are concerned with words, language and communication and since the bible may fairly be described as a "literary" book made up of genuinely human words, there is a strong *prima facie* case for the use of semiotics and speech act theory in the understanding of the bible and the doctrine of scripture. This chapter describes and evaluates the contribution that bible scholars and theologians have found in these approaches.

As with the doctrine of scripture set out above[132], a selective sketch oriented to the overall concerns of the thesis is given.

[132] See the discussion on p2

Developing the traditional understandings of the Lord's Supper as a visible word and a sign, chapter 4 discusses the potential for application of the theories of words and signs set out here to the doctrine of the supper.

I. Semiotics: An Introduction and Summary

Semiotics is the study of signs. In Daniel Chandler's description it is concerned with "everything which 'stands for' something else" and studies "how meaning is made and how reality is represented."[133]

Thistleton comments on the importance of semiotics:

… the conceptual tools given us by Saussure and developed in more recent semiotic theory remain indispensable for questions concerning meaning, code, and text.[134]

The relationship between signs and the things they signify has long been an important theme in Western Philosophy, having been discussed by Plato, Aristotle and Augustine. Indeed, Noth points out that:

[133] Chandler, Daniel, *Semiotics: The Basics* (London, Routledge, 2002)
[134] Thiselton, New Horizons, p124

Many agree with Coseriu, who evaluates Augustine as "the greatest semiotician of antiquity and the real founder of semiotics".[135]

In addition, Thiselton also identifies a "pre-history of semiotics" in Hippocrates, Hobbes and Locke[136].

As practiced today the discipline of semiotics owes much to the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), the father of modern linguistics', *Course in General Linguistics*[137], which was published posthumously on the basis of his lectures. Semiotics also draws on the independent work of the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914)[138], the founder of American pragmatism or "pragmaticism".

Words as signs: all is arbitrary!

---

[135] Noth, Winfried, *Handbook of Semiotics* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1990), p17 citing Coseriu, (1970:123).

[136] Thiselton, New Horizons, pp82-83

[137] *Cours de linguistique generale* was published in 1916 edited by C. Bally and A. Sechehay based on notes from the lectures delivered at the university of Geneva between 1907 and 1911. English translations are by W. Baskin (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1996) and Roy Harris (London, Duckworth, 1983). Rudolf Engler began publishing the students' notes on which the text of the Course is based in 1967. In 1996 a manuscript by Saussure was discovered which is now published in English in Saussure, Ferdinand, *Writings in General Linguistics*, edited by Simon Bouquet and Rudolf Engler; translated by Carol Sanders and Matthew Pires (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006).

[138] Peirce writings are available in *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, 8 vols. Edited by Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss, and Arthur Burks (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1931-1958). Material relevant to semiotics is scattered but volume 2 is perhaps the most relevant. Peirce's published works run to about 12,000 printed pages and his known unpublished manuscripts run to about 80,000 handwritten pages. See also *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: a Chronological Edition* Volume I 1857-1866, Volume II 1867-1871, Volume III 1872-1878, Volume IV 1879-1884, Volume V 1884-1886, edited by the Peirce Edition Project (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1989, 1993). Useful selections are also available in *The Essential Peirce*, 2 vols., edited by Nathan Houser, Christian Kloesel, and the Peirce Edition Project (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 1992, 1998).

Saussure argued that words function as largely arbitrary signifiers, with an arbitrary relationship to arbitrary signifieds.

Arbitrariness and the signifier: Natural and Conventional Signs

Words are generally seen as largely conventional rather than natural signs. In a natural sign the signified would have some extra-linguistic connection with the signifier. Onomatopoeic language may be to some extent a natural sign, but differences between languages in rendering animal sounds into words, for example, show that even in these cases there are strong conventions established.

However, Saussure allows for more or less arbitrary signs:

The fundamental principle of the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign does not prevent us from distinguishing in any language between what is intrinsically arbitrary – that is, unmotivated – and what is only relatively arbitrary. Not all signs are absolutely arbitrary. In some cases, there are factors which allow us to recognize different degrees of arbitrariness, although never to discard the notion entirely. The sign may be motivated to a certain extent.[139]

[139] Saussure, Course, 1983 p130

Some composite words such as “typewriter” show a “secondary motivation” with arbitrary signifiers being connected because of the function of the object being described.

Although semiotic analysis recognises a degree of motivation in signifiers, its focus in characteristically on the sign as it now exists, rather than on the historical process that brought it about.

Types of signifier-referent relationships

Peirce provides a greater degree of analysis of the relationship between signifiers and the signified[140]:

(1) In the case of the symbol there is no resemblance between the signifier and the signified. Arbitrary tokens are used conventionally.

(2) Icons, such as portraits, show some resemblance between the signifier and the signified.

(3) In an index the signified is not arbitrary but directly connected in some way to the signifier, physically or causally as in natural signs such as medical symptoms or in the use of

[140] See the summary in Chandler, pp36-37

measuring instruments, signals (a knock on a door, or a phone ringing), pointers, recordings, handwriting, catchphrases, and indexical words (that, this, here, there).

Chandler notes that these modes are "not necessarily mutually exclusive: a sign can be an icon, a symbol and an index, or any combination."[141]

Arbitrariness about the signified

Saussure argued that we should not think of language as a nomenclature in which signifier words (however arbitrary) are applied to pre-existing signifieds or concepts. Differences between languages and the development of languages over time show that different cultures have different ways of conceptualising the world. There is at least some arbitrariness about signifieds as well as signifiers.

On a strict Saussurian model, the thing signified is not a concrete physical reality existing in the world apart from its signifier, but a concept, an abstraction. As Saussure put it: "The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound image"[142].

It might be said that the signified is itself a signifier rather than a "thing". Signifiers always put us in touch with our perceptions and interpretations of reality rather than with reality

[141] Chandler, p43
[142] Saussure, Course, 1959 p66

itself in some unmediated way. There is thus no escape from signs and signification and Postmodern semioticians such as Derrida revel in this endless play and deferral of meaning. Reality, or rather, people's necessarily partial and selective perception of reality, is, at least in part socially, linguistically and culturally constructed.

This is not to say that social, linguistic and cultural factors are all that determine human perception of the world. It would be misleading to think that perception of reality is entirely socially constructed. Adequate translation and communication between cultures imply that languages and cultures can be transcended to some extent. Thiselton points to B. Berlin and P. Kay's research on colour-terms which suggests bio-physical or neuro-physical elements in genetic code which also shape the structures of perception[143].

The connection between signifier and signified is also arbitrary and may change over time, as when the meaning of a word shifts so that a signifier becomes attached to a different signified[144].

Langue and Parole

[143] B. Berlin and P. Kay *Basic Color Terms* (Berkley, University of California Press, 1969) cited in Thiselton, New Horizons, p103.
[144] See the discussion in Culler, *Saussure*, pp12-15

Semiotics distinguishes the system of a language (*langue*) that makes signification possible, from specific instances of signification in language use (*parole*)[145].

Culler argues that:

The distinction between langue and parole has important consequences for other disciplines besides linguistics: for it is essentially a distinction between institution and event, between the underlying system which makes possible various types of behaviour and actual instances of such behaviour.[146]

Syntagmatic and paradigmatic analysis

In a semiotic scheme, meaning arises from relationship and differences between signifiers. A semiotic analysis can therefore consider:

(1) syntagmatics, what might be called a horizontal view, concerning the positioning and combinations or signifiers, and

(2) paradigmatics, what might be called a vertical view, concerning substitution between signifiers, why one has been selected instead of other possible alternatives, forming contrasts and differentiation between signifiers.

[145] Thiselton argues that Saussure's distinction between langue and parole parallels Roman Jacobson's distinction between code and message and Peirce's distinction between type and token. New Horizons (p86)
[146] Culler, Saussure, p27

The Linguistic Model and non-verbal signs

Whilst semiotics is now used to study a variety of non-verbal sign systems, such as fashion, music, body language and art, the linguistic model is fundamental to the original approach and remains influential. Claude Levi-Strauss called language "the semiotic system par excellence"[147]. A linguistic model is particularly pertinent to this study which is oriented towards the doctrine of scripture, since the bible is made up of words, and to the Lord's Supper considered as a visible word or sign, yet Susane Langer cautions that one should not seek to impose linguistic models upon other media since the laws that govern their articulation "are altogether different from the laws of syntax that govern language". Treating them in linguistic terms leads one to "misconceive" them: they resist "translation".[148]

Media, Channels and Message

Hjelmslev asserted that "in practice, language is a semiotic into which all other semiotics may be translated"[149] Yet Marshall McLuhan slogan that: "the media is the message"[150] is also prominent in semiotic thinking. As Chandler comments, contra Hjelmslev: "The differences between media lead Emile Beveniste to argue that the 'first principle' of semiotic systems is that they are not 'synonymous': 'we are not able to say "the same

[147] Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (Penguin Books, 1972), p48.
[148] Susane Langer (1951, 86-9) cited in Chandler, p11
[149] Quoted in Chandler, p3
[150] Quoted in Chandler, p4

thing"' in systems based on different units"[151]. The difference that a 'translation' from one media to another makes needs to be considered in a semiotic analysis. Different media may appeal to different channels such as the visual, auditory or tactile.[152]

A Semiotic Universe

Peirce argued that: "the entire universe is perfused with signs if it is not composed entirely of signs."[153] Roland Barthes speaks of the world as a text: a system of signs that humans read as meaningful.

Noth describes a Medieval Christian pansemiotic view of the universe:

In the pansemiotic theological exegesis, the natural signs of the universe are either symbols or icons. These types of signs are implied in two topoi of medieval universal symbolism, namely, those of the world as a book and as a mirror of God. The book metaphor … of the world as a codex vivus written by God is based on an arbitrary system of symbols, which could be deciphered only by an exegetical code. The mirror metaphor implies iconicity in a world which was considered to be an image or even an imitation of God ….[154]

[151] Chandler, p3
[152] These issues are obviously relevant to a semiotic analysis of the Lord's Supper. There has been much debate, for example, about exactly what is communicated in the Lord's Supper, especially in contrast to what is communicated by a sermon. Attention to the different media and channels involved is important to these discussions.
[153] Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 8 vols, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1931-58), vol V, p448
[154] Noth, Handbook of Semiotics, p382

II. The Application of Semiotics to Scripture

Aspects of semiotic analysis may be fruitfully employed in the interpretation and application of scripture. As with any other text, the interpreter will want to ask questions about the syntagmatic and paradigmatic use of words: why these words are used in these combinations. Numerous studies have employed insights from semiotics in the understanding of the biblical text[155].

The Medium and Channels of scripture

Semiotic considerations suggest that the medium and channels used by scripture will be significant. Distinctions can be made between scripture experienced as a book that is read and as speech that is heard. The social setting of bible reading may also affect the way it is

[155] These include Boers, Hendrikus, *Neither on This Mountain Nor in Jerusalem: A Study of John 4* Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 35 (Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1988), Calloud, Jean, *Structural Analysis of Narrative: Temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness* trans. Patte, D., Semeia Supplements (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1976), Crossan, John Dominic, "It is Written: A Structuralist Analysis of John 6" *Semeia* 26 (1983) pp3-21,Davidsen, Ole, *The Narrative Jesus: A Semiotic Reading of Mark's Gospel* (Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 1993), Jobling, David, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Three Structural Analyses in the Old Testament* (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1978), Jobling, David, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative II: Structural Analyses in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1986) Laato, Antti, *History and Ideology in the Old Testament Prophetic Literature: A Semiotic Approach to Reconstruction of the Proclamation of the Historical Prophets* Coniectanea Biblica Old Testament Series 41 (Stockholm, Almqwist & Wiksell International, 1996), Leach, Edmund, *Genesis as Myth and Other Essays* (London, Cape, 1969), Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers, "'No Need to Have Any One Write'? A Structural Exegesis of 1 Thessalonians" *Semeia* 26 (1983) pp57-83. Miles, Johnny E., *Wise King – Royal Fool: Semiotics, Satire and Proverbs 1-9* Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series (London / New York, T&T Clark, 2004), Patte, Daniel, *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1987), Patte, Daniel, *Paul's Faith and the Power of the Gospel: A Structural Introduction to the Pauline Letters* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1983), Patte, Daniel (ed.), *Semiology and Parables: An Exploration of the Possibilities Offered by Structuralism for Exegesis* Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series Number 9 (Pittsburgh, Pickwick Press, 1976), Prewitt, Terry J., *The Elusive Covenant: A Structural-Semiotic Reading of Genesis* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990)

understood and received, with the public reading of scripture in the liturgy of the Lord's Day service as especially determinative for the church.

Intertextuality, Canon and the bible

Semiotics argues that texts have their meaning as they are used in relation and opposition to one another to form a system.

As Jonathan Culler puts it:

A major point on which there would be agreement… is that literary works are to be considered not as autonomous entities, 'organic wholes,' but as intertextual constructs: sequences which have meaning in relation to other texts which they take up, cite, parody, refute and generally transform. A text can be read only in relation to other texts, and is made possible by the codes which animate the discursive space of a culture.[156]

The words of the bible are certainly words which have their meaning as part of a larger system of language. Study of extra-biblical material can be useful in seeking to work out the meaning of a word or phrase for its original author and recipients. In addition to this basic point about the meaning of words, it has also been argued that some parts of scripture are deliberately written with other extra-biblical texts in mind. For example, Gordon Wenham

[156] Culler, Jonathan, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p38.

argues that Genesis 1-11 is at least to some extent polemical against Ancient Near-Eastern creation myths such as the Epic of Gilgamesh[157]. Meredith Kline has suggested that covenantal texts in Deuteronomy are modelled on Ancient Near Eastern treaty forms and presented as God's royal treaty covenant with his people.

However, the canon of Scripture must be seen as the primary context for the interpretation of any individual scripture. In Aichele's words:

The canon defines a metatext, comprised of all the texts on the authorized list, and the interplay between these texts enables this larger metatext in effect to comment on itself.[158]

The principle of the analogy of faith suggests that every scripture should be read in the light of every other scripture. An evangelical doctrine of scripture involves a strong view of the unity of scripture, with God as the single divine author. Evangelicals therefore believe that there is a coherent biblical world view. In part this would have been conscious on the part of the human authors: they write as conscious members of a covenant community and in continuity with the already existing scriptures. Whilst paying attention to the usage of the particular human authors, evangelicals, believing in plenary verbal inspiration, might even be inclined to see God's words in the bible having bible meanings which are illuminated by all God's other uses of the same words or ideas.

[157] Wenham, Gordon J., Genesis 1-15 Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Word Books, 1987) pp.xlvi-l.
[158] Aichele, Sign, Text, Scripture, p128

Evangelicals will thus want to pursue a kind of canon criticism that seeks to understand each individual text of scripture as normative for the church today in relation to all the others and in its salvation historical context.

Creation and Biblical Symbolism

James Jordan[159]'s approach to the Bible, sometimes tagged "interpretive maximalism", seeks to pay attention to the symbolic components of a Biblical worldview. Jordan considers the patterns established in creation and argues, for example, for the significance of the sun, moon, stars, rocks, gold, gems, trees, thorns, birds, beasts and angels in the Bible. This is congruent with the doctrine of creation and the idea that the world reflects the glory of the maker. The whole world is seen as significant and speaks of its maker (c.f. Psalm 19:1). The Bible may be seen as interpreting creation to fallen creatures. Such a view challenges a complete distinction between natural and merely conventional signification of some semiotic theories by suggesting that created things have meanings which God has established, but which fallen creatures depend on Scripture to discern accurately.

Langue and Parole in Scripture

[159] See Jordan, James B., *Through New Eyes: Developing A Biblical View of the World* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, Oregon, 1999)

Consideration of the langue and parole distinction may clarify (or at least express afresh) the traditional Evangelical doctrine of inspiration. Evangelicals are committed to the full humanity of scripture. The language system (langue) used in the bible is that of the human authors and their communities. Though all human languages are ultimately products of God's creation and, like everything else, are governed by his providence and subject to his sovereignty, no special claims are made for the *langue* behind the Bible. Evangelicals would thus repudiate what Aichele describes as:

the … claim that the Greek and especially the Hebrew languages as used in the biblical texts are somehow extraordinary, a special variety of language that appears nowhere else.[160]

The claim to inspiration applies to the specific *parole* of scripture, that is, these words in these uses, not to the words in some abstracted way. The words themselves are not transformed from something human into something divine by being used as God's words. They are not magical words that can be separated from their context and use. No change occurs in the words themselves. Yet evangelicals also want to extend the process of inspiration (broadly conceived) to God's providential shaping of the writers of scripture and it seems that God's superintendence of langue should be included in this process so that the writers can select suitable words for expressing the messages and achieving the purposes which God has in mind for the parole of scripture.

[160] Aichele, George, The Control of Biblical Meaning: Canon as Semiotic Mechanism (Harrisburg, Trinity Press, 2001), p6

Systematic Theology as Langue

George Lindbeck argued in his influential book, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, that doctrine should be understood in linguistic terms as the church's grammar, its rule for speaking about God. The categories of *parole* and *langue* could be employed here.

To shift the use of the terminology slightly[161], it might be said, however, that the canonical Scriptures properly come to constitute or effect a kind of *langue*, a normative, finite and bounded system which serves as a controlling doctrinal framework and presents an authoritative world-view which makes other theological speaking possible. The inspired scriptures are canonical *parole*, particular utterances authoritatively put to use by their first speakers and subsequently normative in all right reading and preaching of the bible. Every possible legitimate use of the bible, taken together, would amount to the abstracted *langue* which stands behind scripture and is implied by it, the sum of its interpretation and application, its systematic theology and world view[162]. Just as a language system (*langue*) is not entirely accessible to the speakers of a language but is a conceptual matrix that shapes their speaking, so bible readers are unable to state fully all that the bible means and implies. A perfect and comprehensive systematic theology could never be written. The *langue* that

[161] In justifying this flexibility of usage, it may be noted that Saussure himself described the langue / parole dichotomy in a number of not entirely compatible ways.
[162] See Smith, Jonathan Z., *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1982: 49-51 and Faur, Jose, *Golden Doves With Silver Dots*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986:109, cited in Aichele, George, *Sign, Text, Scripture: Semiotics and the Bible* (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1997)

stands behind scripture exists in the infinite mind of God and makes each individual *parole* of scripture possible, meaningful and coherent.

Thiselton notes that "Culler compares the double axes of *langue* and *parole* with the endless process of interaction between understanding and pre-understanding in the hermeneutical circle."[163] In the relationship between *langue* and *parole* there is paradox which is suggestive of the hermeneutical circle or spiral in the formation of doctrine. *Langue* is made up of *parole*, determined by it, and does not exist in the world apart from particular utterances. But *langue* also pre-exists uses of it and makes *parole* possible. This is somewhat analogous to the relationship between the biblical text and systematic theology. The human interpreter of scripture inevitably brings to each *parole* of the bible his doctrinal system, his pre-understanding which seeks to approximate the *langue* of scripture, but this is also to be re-shaped by the *parole* of scripture, which alone are ultimately authoritative.

The Narrative Structure of Scripture

Though the bible is not exclusively made up of narrative, the canon has a narrative frame and narrative is dominant. The bible is shaped by and is fundamentally about the gospel story, which it presents as the true story of the whole of creation and beyond. At the macro level, the bible is amenable to a narrative analysis.

[163] Thiselton, New Horizons p537

Individual pericope can also be understood using the tools of narrative analysis.

Speech Act Theory: An Introduction and Summary

This section provides an introduction and summary to some of the key ideas of speech act theory together with indications of ways in which speech act theory may be useful in understanding utterances.

Although he did not create it complete and *ex nihilo*[164], the Oxford philosopher J. L. Austin is usually correctly credited with founding Speech Act theory with his 1955 William James Lectures, *How To Do Things With Words* delivered at Harvard University and posthumously published in 1962[165]. Speech Act theory was further developed and systematized by John Searle[166] and others and is now a well-established species of ordinary language philosophy[167] which can be seen as a branch of pragmatics[168].

[164] Briggs, Words in Action, pp2-3, 32, 35-36 suggests that antecedents might be seen in Brentano, Hussrel, Anton Marty, Adolf Reinach, the later Wittgenstein.
[165] Austin, J. L., How To Do Things With Words: the William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1962) ed. Urmoson, J. O.
[166] In such works as Searle, John R., *The Construction of Social Reality* (London, Penguin, 1995), *Expression and meaning: studies in the theory of speech acts* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979), *Speech acts: an essay in the philosophy of language* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1969) and the volume he edited: *The Philosophy of Language* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1971). Vanhoozer comments "If Austin is the Luther of speech act philosophy, John Searle may be considered its Melanchton – its systematic theologian.", *Is There A Meaning?* p209
[167] See e.g. Hanfling, Oswald, *Philosophy and Ordinary Language: The Bent and Genius of Our Tongue,* (Routledge, 2003); Graham, Keith, *J. L. Austin: A Critique of Ordinary Language Philosophy* (Harvester Press, Hassocks, 1977)
[168] See Yule, George, *Pragmatics* Oxford Introductions to Language Study (Oxford, OUP, 1996), Leech, Geoffrey, *Principles of Pragmatics* (Longman, 1983)

Vanhoozer calls the speech-act "the great discovery of twentieth-century philosophy of language."[169]

Whereas semiotics is characteristically focused on words (as signs), often in the abstract without much of a specific context, speech act theory deals much more at the level of sentences, or better, meaningful utterances, as they are used by speakers for particular purposes in certain situations.

Austin's fundamental insight was that speakers "do things" with their words. He begins by contrasting making statements ("constating") with other things that speakers do with words (other than merely speaking), rejecting the "descriptive fallacy" that speakers simply seek to make true propositions about the world[170].

Austin thus makes what he calls a "preliminary isolation of the performative" by examining utterances which are not nonsense, and have the grammatical form of statements but which satisfy the following conditions:

they do not 'describe' or 'report' or constate anything at all, are not 'true or false'; and

[169] Vanhoozer, Drama, p63
[170] Austin, HTDTWW, pp2-3

the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of the action, which would not *normally* be described as saying something.[171]

Austin gives the following phrases as examples of performatives that do something in being said: the "I do", in a marriage ceremony; "I name this ship…", "I give & bequeath…", "I bet you…"[172]. Austin rejects the common feeling that such utterances are "(merely) the outward and visible sign, for convenience or other record or for information, of an inward and spiritual act"[173]. Rather, in these performative utterances, "the issuing of the utterance is the performance of the action."[174]

It is worth noting at this early stage that *How To Do Things With Words* is a series of lectures that has the character of an unfolding argument and a developing approach. Austin is trying out accounts of language use, as Briggs puts it: "essentially proposing a series of distinctions and then abandoning and / or replacing them by others"[175]. For example, the contrast between describing and doing just mentioned is not absolute: Austin later recognises that describing the world by stating true propositions is itself something that we do with words[176]. Indeed, Searle argues that:

[171] Austin, HTDTWW, p5. See also p20 where he speaks of "the *performative* utterance, which was 'defined' (if we may call it so much) mainly by contrast to the supposedly familiar 'statement'."
[172] Austin, HTDTWW, pp5-6
[173] Austin, HTDTWW, p9
[174] Austin, HTDTWW, p6
[175] Briggs, Words in Action, p38.
[176] Austin, HTDTWW, pp132-146

The main theme of Austin's mature work, *How To Do Things With Words*, is that this distinction [between utterances that are "sayings", such as making statements, and utterances which are "doings", such as promising] collapses. Just as saying certain things constitutes getting married (a "performative") and saying certain things constitutes making a promise (another "performative"), so saying certain things constitutes making a statement (supposedly a "constative"). As Austin saw but as many philosophers still fail to see, the parallel is exact.[177]

Making a statement is just as much performing an action as other more obviously performative actions, such as marrying, promising or betting.

Even where Austin's work has been challenged, rejected or revised, *How To Do Things With Words* continues to attract attention and has remained foundational and programmatic for speech act approaches to language use.

Austin's analysis of an utterance

Austin eventually analyses utterances into:

[177] Searle, Expression and Meaning, p17f

(1) Locution: the saying of an utterance (making noises conforming to certain vocabulary and grammar) that has a meaning (a particular sense and reference)[178]

(2) Illocution: the force of an utterance such as informing, warning or undertaking etc.

(3) Perlocution: the effect of an utterance, the action performed by speaking.[179]

Ted Cohen's approximate summary of these distinctions is widely accepted:

a locution is an act *of* saying something, an illocution is an act done *in* saying something, a perlocution is an act done *by* saying something.[180]

The locution / illocution distinction

Austin distinguished locution and illocution by pointing out that the same locution (e.g., "I am coming back"[181]) could be used to perform a number of different illocutions (e.g. stating, predicting, promising, encouraging, warning, questioning). When the form of an utterance coincides the force the speaker intends to convey, this is termed a direct speech act. Indirect speech acts have an illocutionary force which is not directly apparent from the form

[178] Austin further divided the locutionary acts into phonetic acts, uttering certain noises, phatic acts, uttering certain vocables or words conforming to a certain grammar, and rhetic acts, using these vocables with a certain more-or-less definite sense and reference. HTDTWW, p95

[179] Austin, HTDTWW, pp100-101. See also pp108, 120

[180] "Illocutions and Perlocutions", *Foundations of Language* 9 (1973) Cohen points out that this is inadequate because the "'in'/'by' distinction… will not underwrite the illocution/perlocution distinction… for it does not unfailingly mark a distinction between what is conventional and what is not." (p493). Cited in Robson, James, *Word and Spirit in Ezekiel* (London, T& T Clark, 2006) Library of Hebrew Bible / Old Testament Studies 447, p12

[181] These example is mine, not Austin's (or below, Searle's).

of the locution, for example, as when the statement, "it's cold in here" is used as a request that the window might be closed or the heating turned up. Such indirect or multi-purpose speech acts are particularly interesting cases of interpretation since a greater degree of construal is required.

Searle rejected Austin's division between locution and illocution[182], rightly seeing that the meaning of an utterance is usually inextricably bound up with its force[183]. For example, we might say that "please shut the door" means "I would like you to shut the door and request that you do so". On this understanding the meaning contains the force of the request.

Searle suggested replacing Austin's locution / illocution distinction with the alternative distinction of:

(1) utterance acts, in which the speaker utters words

(2) propositional acts, in which the speaker refers and predicates and

(3) illocutionary acts, which have a particular force[184].

[182] Searle, Speech Acts, p23

[183] Thus also Briggs, Words in Action, p45. According to Vanhoozer, First Theology, p173, in *Illocutionary Acts and Sentence Meaning*, William P. "Alston has produced what is probably the single most complete apology for viewing meaning in terms of illocutionary acts. To be precise, he defines sentence meaning in terms of illocutionary *potential*. A sentence having a certain meaning consists in its being useable to play a certain role (to do certain things) in communication."

[184] Searle, Speech Acts, p24

For Searle, an illocutionary act is a function both of its propositional content and its illocutionary force and can be expressed using the notation F(p), where F is the force and p is the propositional content of reference (R) and sense (S), p=RS.

Briggs comments that:

… Austin's definitions of locution and illocution do not match up either to the examples he gives or his subsequent discussion. Without a doubt, Searle's work in this area has superseded Austin's exploratory discussion…[185]

Performatives

Discussion of speech acts has sometimes focused on performative verbs that explicitly name the illocution being performed[186]. The form of such explicit performatives is:

I (hereby) *performative verb*[187] you (that)…

[185] Briggs, Words in Action, p42
[186] See e.g. Wierzbicka, Anna, *English Speech Act Verbs: A semantic dictionary* (Marrickville, Academic Press Australia, 1987). She argues that English has about 300 speech act verbs that she places in 37 categories.
[187] Most of the examples in Searle's taxonomy below on p6 are or could be easily transformed into performative verbs.

Vanderveken lists 270 performative verbs according to their illocutionary point, though he notes that many speech act verbs can have several different uses, for example, one may "swear" that a proposition is true or that one will perform a future action[188].

A speech act analysis of a discourse may involve making the illocutions explicit, perhaps even rewriting them in this form. However, as has been demonstrated above, all illocutions are performative in the sense that they do something by being said.

As Briggs puts it: "… all speech acts are performative, but some are more performative than others."[189] He suggests that:

it is helpful to consider illocutionary acts (or forces) in a spectrum ranging from strong to weak. In the weak sense we may say that almost any utterance is an illocutionary act. However, we shall want to reserve most of our attention for 'strong' acts, where the illocutionary force plays a significant role in the utterance.[190]

For Briggs this category is similar to Austin's preliminary performative discussed above and is characterised by a reliance on a non-linguistic convention that certain words under certain circumstances can perform a certain function. Weak illocutions depend only or largely on the (conventional) linguistic meaning of the utterance such as "the lamp is on the table",

[188] Vanderveken, Meaning and Speech Acts, volume 1, p168 discussed in Briggs, Words, p99
[189] Briggs, Getting Involved, p28
[190] Briggs, Words in Action, p63

which made explicitly performative is, "I (herby) state (or inform you) that the lamp is on the table"[191].

Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts

Briggs argues that "Searle's work on classifying illocutionary acts… is a significant advance on" Austin's and "has become the standard theory"[192].

In contrast to Wittgenstein, who imagined an infinite number of language uses, Searle argued that there are a limited number of types of thing that we can do with words[193] and that the illocutionary point or purpose of an utterance will allow it to be classified.

Searle introduced to speech act theory the analysis of the differences in direction of fit between words and the world in different utterances. This distinction considers whether a speaker attempts to conform his words to the world (a word to world fit, as in statements, descriptions, assertions or explanations) or the world to his words (a world to word fit, as in requests, commands, vows and promises)[194]. Though this is a useful distinction, it should be noted that every utterance affects the world by itself becoming a new fact in the world.

[191] Briggs, Words in Action, pp64f
[192] Briggs, Words in Action, p50
[193] Searle, Expression and Meaning, p29, referring to Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, section 23
[194] Searle, Expression and Meaning, p4

Even if only the speaker hears his own word to world statement, he is changed by having made it.

Searle also described the psychological state in the speaker or sincerity condition which is required for each type of illocutionary act, and the propositional content involved.

This yields the following taxonomy[195], though the categories are not intended to be mutually exclusive - one utterance may perform a number of illocutions:

(1) Assertives

illocutionary point: commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition

direction of fit: words to world

sincerity condition: the speaker believes the propositional content expressed

propositional content: the thing asserted

examples: statements, hypothesizing, boast, complain, conclude, deduce

(2) Directives

illocutionary point: attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something

direction of fit: world to words

[195] drawn from Searle, Meaning and Expression, pp12-20. See the tabulated summary in Briggs, Words in Action, p51.

sincerity condition: want (wish or desire)

propositional content: that the hearer does the future action specified

examples: ask, order, command, request, beg, plead, pray, entreat, invite, permit, advise, dare, defy, challenge

(3) Commissives

illocutionary point: commit the speaker to some future action

direction of fit: world to words

sincerity condition: intention

propositional content: that the speaker does some future action

examples: promise, vow, pledge, covenant, contract

(4) Expressives

illocutionary point: to express a psychological state

direction of fit: no direction of fit - presupposed

sincerity condition: the psychological state expressed

propositional content: the state of affairs / property specified related to speaker or hearer

examples: thank, congratulate, apologize, condole, deplore, welcome

(5) Declaratives

illocutionary point: to bring about the of affairs specified

direction of fit: words to world and world to words

sincerity condition: none

propositional content: the thing declared

examples: I resign, you're fired, I excommunicate you, I christen, I appoint you, War is hereby declared

(6) Assertive Declaratives

illocutionary point: to declare that a certain state of affairs is the case

direction of fit: assertive words to world and declarative world to words and words to world

sincerity condition: belief in the propositional content being asserted

propositional content: the thing being asserted and declared

examples: you are out, you are guilty

Within a class of speech acts there may be different degrees of force or intensity. For example, directives may hint, suggest, request, order, demand or insist. Determining the degree of intensity in a speech act can be significant for the interpretation of an utterance.

The illocution / perlocution discussion

Illocutions focus on what the speaker is intending to do by what he says. Perlocutions focus on what the speaker actually does, the effect of what is said on the hearers. The analysis of

utterances into illocution and perlocution can thus assist in making valuable distinctions between aims and results and clarify what is being intended and done. Often the illocution and the perlocution will be the same, at least in part (for example, someone may seek to convey an instruction and successfully do so) though the perlocution may be different from the illocution (if, for example, the intention is to convey an instruction but the hearer thinks that the speaker is joking the perlocution may be amusement rather than the receiving of the instruction and hence the performance of the action required). In other words, for an illocutionary act to be successful and achieve the perlocutionary effect the speaker desires, there must be illocutionary uptake: for example, Austin argues that it is normally necessary to be heard and understood by the promisee as promising if one is to effectively make a promise to someone[196]. This may be contrasted with the conventions that citizens are bound by the laws of a state even if they are unaware of certain statutes. Speech Act theorists have sought an analyse the conditions required for illocution and perlocution as follows.

Felicity conditions, misfires and abuses

Austin considers utterances which are not so much true or false but more or less successfully performed. He outlines the following felicity conditions for the happiness of a performative utterance:

(A1) convention that the words are performative;

(A2) the persons and circumstances are appropriate;

[196] Austin, HTDTWW, p22

(B1) there is a correctly and

(B2) completely executed procedure; and

(Γ1) thoughts, feelings, intentions or

(Γ2) subsequent actions may also be necessary.[197]

If A and B are not in place then the speech act "misfires": it is void and the purported action has not been achieved, though other things may have been done. If Γ is not the case then the speech act is an "abuse": it has been achieved but insincerely or hollowly[198].

If the conditions in A are not in place there is a "misinvocation" of a procedure, specifically in A2 a "misapplication" of a procedure. If the conditions in B are not fulfilled there is a "misexecution": "the purported act is vitiated by a flaw [B1] or hitch [B2] in the condition of the ceremony."[199]

Austin notes that:

> … infelicity is an ill to which *all* acts are heir which have the general character of ritual or ceremonial, all *conventional* acts: not indeed that every ritual is liable to every form of infelicity (but then nor is every performative utterance).[200]

[197] Austin, HTDTWW, pp14-15
[198] Austin, HTDTWW, p16
[199] Austin, HTDTWW, p17
[200] Austin, HTDTWW, pp18-19

Written Texts as Speech Acts

Those who are interested in employing speech act theory to help interpret the Bible will especially want to consider the theory's applicability to written texts[201].

Austin states, without argumentation, that written words can also be regarded as speech acts: as with spoken words, writing / "saying" them, under the correct conditions, can also make it so[202]. Searle also asserts that: "speaking or writing in a language consists in performing speech acts… called 'illocutionary acts'"[203], when considering the speech acts performed by fictional texts.

Paul Ricoeur speaks of texts as discourse fixed by writing and argues that: "to the extent that the illocutionary act can be exteriorised… it too can be inscribed."[204]

Thiselton also rejects the view that speech act theory should be restricted to oral discourse, arguing that: "Legal texts, for example, clearly embody commitments and set up transactions which potentially function as acts: acts of transferring property, acts of

[201] See Briggs' treatment of 'Speech Acts and Texts' chapter 3, pp73-103 in Words which especially treats the exchange between Derrida and Searle e.g. in Derrida, Limited Inc and Searle, 'Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida', *Glyph* 1 (1977) pp198-208. In common with other deconstructionists, Derrida is negative about written texts communicating authorial intent in the absence of the author.
[202] Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, p8.
[203] Searle, Expression and Meaning, p58
[204] Ricoeur, Paul, Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning (Fort Worth, Texas, Texas Christian University Press, 1976), p27.

authorization, and so forth."[205] Later he adds: legal wills, love letters, and written promises can also function as effective *acts* which change situations in the public domain."[206]

Mary Louise Pratt has defended the usefulness of apply speech act understandings to literature. Pratt's summary is worth quoting at length:

speech act theory provides a way of talking about utterances not only in terms of their surface grammatical properties but also in terms of the context in which they are made, the intentions, attitudes, and expectations of the participants, the relationships existing between the participants, and generally, the unspoken rules and conventions that are understood to be in play when an utterance is made and received.

There are enormous advantages in talking about literature in this way, too, for literary works, like all our communicative activities, are context dependent. Literature itself is a speech context. And as with all utterance, the way people produce and understand literary works depends enormously on unspoken, culturally-shared knowledge of the rules, conventions, and expectations [such as the idea of genre] that are in play when language is used in that context. Just as a definition of explaining, thanking, or persuading must include the unspoken conventional information on which the participants are relying, so must a definition of literature.[207]

[205] Thiselton, New Horizons, p2
[206] Thiselton, New Horizons, p17
[207] Pratt, Mary Louise, *Towards A Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (London, Indiana University Press, 1977), p86. See also Lanser, Susan Sniader, *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction* (Princeton,

Stanley Fish provides what Briggs calls "one of the clearest examples of how to use speech act theory in literary criticism"[208] in his 1976 article entitled 'How To Do Things With Austin and Searle'[209] which provides a "speech act 'reading'" of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. Fish's conclusions (which are similar Briggs') are that "while a speech-act analysis of such texts will always be possible, it will also be trivial (a mere list of the occurrences or distribution of kinds of acts)…"[210]. In Fish's view it is texts that are in some way about the conditions of intelligibility that will be the most fruitful for a speech act approach.

II. Speech Act Theory and Scripture: A Summary and Evaluation

Vanhoozer emphasizes the significance of speech act theory for theology:

The most fruitful recent development for the dialogue between philosophy and theology about language is undoubtedly the emphasis on language as a species of human action: speech acts.[211]

Princeton University Press, 1981), who argues that: "In speech act theory I found a philosophical basis for understanding literature as communicative act and text as message-in-context, as well as exciting new tools for analyzing discourse." (p7)

[208] Briggs, Words, p87

[209] in Fish, Is There A Text in This Class? Pp197-245

[210] Fish, Text?, p245

[211] Vanhoozer, First Theology, p161

If written and spoken words are speech-acts then the bible can be understood as speech acts. Indeed, Timothy Ward makes the bold claim that:

… a speech-act view of the Bible is the most appropriate overall description of the Bible's nature and function – especially so, if we want to encourage Bible-reading which seeks above all to encounter God through that reading.[212]

Vanhoozer argues from an analysis of biblical covenants for seeing greater continuity between oral and written discourse than is sometimes allowed in contemporary philosophy and literary theory. He argues that it is clear from the book of Deuteronomy, for example, that the written covenant continues to have "determinative content and binding force" for the covenant community, showing that: "Written texts preserve the same illocutionary act potential as oral discourse".[213]

A major attraction of speech act theory as a model for reading the bible for evangelicals, especially in the face of challenges from postmodernism and deconstruction, is that it tends to think of meaning at least partly in terms of authorial intention (what speakers seek to do with their words) rather than an open play determined entirely by reader response.

The usefulness of speech act theory in biblical hermeneutics

[212] Ward, The Bible, p33
[213] Vanhoozer, First Theology, p191 citing Dt 28:58; 27 and the responses to the book of the law in 2 Kings 22:11 and Nehemiah 8

Writing in 2005, Brevard Childs notes that:

Within the last decade there has been an explosion of interest in speech-act theory as a means of developing a new understanding of biblical hermeneutics.[214]

Speech Act theory may also be an asset in the interpretation and application of Scripture. Some of the general usefulness of the theory has already been suggested above.

Vanhoozer suggests that the diverse genres of Scripture may be seen as performing different illocutionary acts: they do different things by warning, greeting, stating, questioning etc[215].

Richard Briggs argues that:

… on reflection it is startling just how many highly significant speech acts there are [in the biblical narrative], and in fact how much of the biblical story turns on 'things done with words'.[216]

[214] Childs, Brevard S., 'Speech-act theory and biblical interpretation' *Scottish Journal of Theology* volume 58, no. 4, (2005) pp375-392
[215] Vanhoozer, God's Mighty Speech Acts, p173.
[216] Briggs, Richard S., 'Getting Involved: Speech Acts and Biblical Interpretation' (*Anvil* volume 20, No. 1, 2003), p32.

Similarly Thiselton writes:

In the case of the biblical writings, the persistence of the terms Old and New "Testament" serve to remind us of the covenantal context in which pledge and promise [for some, the paradigmatic speech act] feature prominently. The biblical writings abound in promises, invitations, verdicts, confessions, pronouncements of blessings, commands, namings, and declarations of love.[217]

Nevertheless, Briggs warns that "speech act theory cannot be a panacea for all one's hermeneutical problems"[218]. He insists that he is not calling for Speech Act Criticism as if this should be an exclusive or overarching approach. Briggs argues (like Fish) that while all texts should be susceptible to a speech act analysis, the results will not always be especially insightful or interesting. It is "in texts which concern themselves with particular speech acts, especially performative acts and strong illocutions… [that] we may expect to find worthwhile insights from a speech act perspective."[219] Briggs especially seeks to apply speech act theory to New Testament passages which involve confession of faith, forgiveness of sin and teaching[220].

[217] Thiselton, New Horizons, p32
[218] Briggs, Words in Action, p91. Likewise, Thiselton: "Nevertheless speech-act theory does not offer a comprehensive paradigm for all biblical texts, let alone all non-biblical texts." New Horizons, p32.
[219] Briggs, Words, p91
[220] Briggs, Words in Action, chapters 5-8

Speech act theory may be used to analyse what is being said and done by participants in a narrative, by the narrator and by the human author of the biblical texts. Texts may also be regarded as God's speech acts, both to their original recipients and to future generations of the church.

James Robson has recently drawn on speech act theory when employing the distinction between locution and illocution, what the bible says and what is done in saying it, when he examines "how the prophet Ezekiel's oracles uttered against Jerusalem can function in the book that bears his name after Jerusalem itself has fallen."[221]

Other examples of the application of speech act theory to the understanding of the Bible can be found in *Semeia* 41 (1988), 'Speech Act Theory and Biblical Criticism'; Botha, J. E., *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman* Novum Testamentum Supplements 45 (Brill, 1991); Berry, Donald K., *The Psalms and Their Readers: Interpretive Strategies for Psalm 18* JSOT Supp 153 (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1993); Neufeld, Dietmar, *Reconceiving Texts as Speech Acts: An Analysis of 1 John* (Leiden, Brill [Bib Int Ser 7], 1994); Reid, Stephen B., 'Psalm 50: Prophetic Speech and God's Performative Utterances' in Reid (ed.) *Prophets and Paradigms: Essays in Honour of Gene M. Tucker* JSOT Sup 229 (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) pp217-230 and a number of works by Thiselton[222]. Briggs provides a survey in Briggs, Richard S.,

[221] Robson, Word and Spirit in Ezekiel, p12

[222] Thiselton, A. C., 'Christology in Luke, Speech-Act Theory and the Problem of Dualism in Christology after Kant' in Green and Turner (ed.s) *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ* (Grand Rapids / Carlisle, Eerdmans / Paternoster, 1994) pp453-72; The Parables as Language-Event: Some Comments on Fuch's Hermeneutics in the Light of Linguistic Philosophy' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (1970) pp437-68; 'The Supposed Power of

"The Uses of Speech-Act Theory in Biblical Interpretation" *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 9 (2001) pp229-72.

An extra-biblical category or a biblical view of language?

On the opening page of *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic sketch*, John Webster criticizes Ward for depending too much on an extra-biblical "philosophical theory of communicative action" (speech acts) rather than properly dogmatic material[223].

Vanhoozer seems aware of this sort of danger. In his essay on speech acts and scripture acts, Vanhoozer wants to avoid speech act categories dominating and argues that:

> On the contrary, we will see that Christian convictions concerning, say, divine authorship, the canon and the covenant will lead us both to modify and intensify the typical speech act analysis. My goal is to let the "discourse of the covenant" (Scripture) inform and transform our understanding of the "covenant of discourse" (ordinary language and literature).[224]

Words in Biblical Writings', *Journal of Theological Studies* 25 (1974) pp283-99; Thiselton, Anthony C., *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* NIGTC (Cambridge / Carlisle, Eerdmans / Paternoster, 2000) especially pp41-52, 146, 455, 1188

[223] Webster, John, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Current Issues in Theology) (CUP, 2003), pp5-6. Brevard Childs also warns against Nicholas Wolterstorff's use of speech act theory in 'Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation' *Scottish Journal of Theology* vol 58, no 4, 2005, pp375-392, though he is more sympathetic to Thiselton's use of it.

[224] Vanhoozer, First Theology, p161

Rather than being an illegitimate alien element in theology, Vanhoozer claims that:

speech act philosophy commends itself as perhaps the most effective antidote to certain deconstructive toxins that threaten the very project of textual interpretation and hermeneutics.[225]

Ward guards against a charge of selling out to speech act theory:

It is important to note that the use of 'speech-act' as a controlling concept for the Bible does not represent the illicit importation of a non-theological category into theological description. Instead, it gives us the conceptual apparatus to discern more clearly the view of language to which the Bible regularly bears witness.[226]

As Vanhoozer says:

Of course the idea that humans do things in speaking was well known to the very earliest biblical authors, even without the analytic concepts of speech act philosophy.[227]

Ward argues that:

[225] Vanhoozer, First Theology, p164
[226] Ward, The Bible, note 32, p41.
[227] Vanhoozer, First Theology, p161

… a strong case can be made from exegesis of numerous biblical texts that the Bible itself holds a clear speech-act view of language in general and of God's speech in particular

citing Gen 1; Jer 1:9-10 (where it seems Jeremiah is commissioned to break down and build by the words of the LORD); Is 55:10-11 and Rm 8:28-30 (on the efficacious call of God) so that:

A speech-act model of language is not imposed on the Bible, but is discerned, from a particular interpretive standpoint, already to be there.[228]

In addition, when Isaac blesses Jacob in Genesis 27 it is clear that he has done something in or by speaking that cannot be undone. James 3 speaks of the power of the tongue. Acts demonstrates a dynamic view of the word of God growing (e.g. Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20). Hebrews 4:12 describes the word of God as living and active. Psalm 107:20 attributes the actions of healing and delivering to God's word (c.f. Acts 10:36).

The Genesis account of God's creating the world by his word (Genesis 1:3 etc.) is a particularly striking and foundational instance of a speech act. Man's capacity for language and verbal communication are often seen as components of what it means for man to be in

[228] Ward, Ward, Timothy, *Word and Supplement: Speech Acts, Biblical Texts, and the Sufficiency of Scripture* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002), p304f.

the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Beginning to exercise his vicegerency, man performs the speech act of effectively naming the animals ("And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.", Genesis 2:19).

In a sense the incarnation of the Word, his act of becoming flesh, (John 1:14) may be seen as a theological basis for speaking of revelation in terms of speech acts, at least to the extent that it is an act described in verbal categories. Jesus exercises the power of God by speaking when he commands the wind and the waves (Mark 4:39), casts out demons (Mark 1:25) and forgives sins and heals with a word (Mark 2:5-12).

Speech Act and Liturgy

Writing as an Evangelical, David Hilborn argues that:

… speech act theory has considerable potential for the analysis of liturgy. Its stress on language as a means to action; its sensitivity to performance, ritual and local 'rules' as components of linguistic meaning; its acceptance on these premises of 'empirically unverifiable' statements – these commend it for the study of religious discourse in general and sacral discourse in particular.[229]

[229] Hilborn, Performativity, p173

Some attempts have been made to apply speech act theory to the study of liturgy[230].

Ladriere sets out such a view:

It [liturgical language] is characterized in that it is a certain form of action; it puts something into practice: in short, it possesses an "operativity". It is not merely a verbal commentary on an action external to itself; in and of itself, it is action…. The enunciation of the sentence is a veritable action. In order, therefore, to express the operative (non-descriptive) nature of liturgical language, we may use the term "performativity", as proposed by Austin.[231]

A speech act analysis of liturgical texts (e.g. such as the absolution) may aid clear thinking about exactly who is doing what to whom in the speech acts of the service.

Ladriere argues that liturgical language not only expresses certain attitudes but also acts as an "existential inductor" affecting and bringing them about. Thus verbs such as "to ask", "to pray" and "to give thanks":

express illocutionary acts presupposing certain attitudes: trust, veneration, gratitude, submission, contrition, and so on. These attitudes come into effect at the very moment

[230] Arthur Brookes for example provides a "discourse analysis with an emphasis on speech act theory of the section in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* service of Evening Prayer beginning 'Dearly beloved brethren'" in Hodgson, T. R. Burnham, *Saying The Services* (Worthing, Churchman Publishing, 1989) (p62) See also e.g. Kelleher, M. M., 'Hermeneutics in the Study of Liturgical Performance', *Worship* 67.4: 292-318 (1993); Schaller, J. J., 'Performative Language Theory: An Exercise in the Analysis of Ritual', *Worship* 62 (1988), pp415-32; Ware, J. H., *Not with Words of Wisdom: Performative Language and Liturgy* (Washington, University Press of America, 1981)

[231] Ladriere, Jean, 'The Performativity of Liturgical Language', *Concilium*, vol 2, no 9 (1973), 50-62, pp51-52

when, by virtue of the enunciation of the sentence, the corresponding act takes place. The performative verb is not a description of the attitude which its enunciation presupposes; its function is not to indicate the existence of this attitude, but is, so to speak, the attitude itself: it makes it exist in an effective manner by virtue of the illocutionary act underlying its enunciation.[232]

Ladriere also argues that liturgical language performs the speech act function of "instituting" the church:

The participants meet in a kind of objective space determined by their speech acts. The community is initiated in this meeting. Here one may speak of an induction effect. Language is not the expression of a community constituted before it and apart from it and is not the description of what the community would be, but the locution in which and the instrument by means of which the community is constituted. In so far as it gives to all participants – as co-locutors – the chance to take on the same acts, it establishes between them that operative reciprocity which constitutes the reality of a community.[233]

Even if there may be overstatement here, and though the Reformed will want to insist that the church is constituted by faith[234] in Christ and that entry to the visible church is marked by baptism, there is truth in what Ladriere says: the Lord's Day liturgy may be seen as an

[232] Ladriere, Performativity, p57
[233] Ladriere, Performativity, p59
[234] Note that Ladriere says that "liturgical language receives from faith its characteristic performitivity", p62.

actualisation or manifestation of the local congregation. By their participation in the liturgy, the members of the church make their unity and fellowship apparent and strengthen them.

Similarly, Briggs comments that the New Testament confession that Jesus is Lord (Rm 10:9; Phil 2:11) and creeds in the church today are performative speech acts which creates (or recreate, sustain, or modify) "the world in which the speaker stands under the lordship of Christ."[235]

Some speech act accounts of liturgy have focused especially on the Lord's Supper[236] and these are discussed further in chapter 4 which considers the Lord's Supper in the light of the Scriptures, since speech act theory is primarily a linguistic approach.

The contribution of speech act theory to the doctrine of Scripture

Words and deeds of God

Some theologians have attempted to privilege God's saving acts over his word, relegating God's word to a witness to revelation rather than revelation itself. Since it maintains that

[235] Briggs, Getting Involved, p29
[236] See e.g. Crystal, David, 'Liturgical Language in Sociolinguistic Perspective' pp120-146 in Jasper, David and Jasper, R. C. D., (ed.s) *Language and the Worship of the Church* (London, Macmillan Press, 1990); Martinich, A. P., 'Sacraments and Speech Acts I' and II, *Heythrop Journal* 16.1:289-303; 16.2: 405-17 (1975)

words are deeds, speech act theory helps to relate more adequately the words and deeds of God.

As Briggs points out: "As long ago as 1932 Karl Barth wrote of "The Speech of God as the Act of God""[237].

In this vein, Kevin Vanhoozer has argued that viewing the Bible is God's mighty speech-act:

> allows us to transcend the debilitating dichotomy between revelation as 'God saying' and 'God doing'. For the category speech-act acknowledges that saying too is a doing, and that persons can do many things by 'saying'…. Scripture is neither simply the recital of the acts of God nor merely a book of inert propositions. Scripture is rather composed of divine-human speech-acts which, through what they say, accomplish several authoritative cognitive, spiritual and social functions…. I propose the model of communicative action for the Scriptures as the revelatory Word of God. The Bible… is a diverse collection of God's mighty speech-acts which communicate the saving Word of God. [238]

[237] Briggs, 'Speech Act Theory' in Dictionary for Theological Interpretation p765, citing Barth, Karl, *Church Dogmatics* volume 1, The Doctrine of the Word of God, part 1 (1932, reprint, T&T Clark, 1975) pp143-62

[238] Vanhoozer, Kevin, *God's Mighty Speech-Acts: The Doctrine of Scripture Today* Chapter 6, pp143-181 in Satterthwaite, Philip E. & Wright, David F. (ed.s), *A Pathway into the Holy Scripture* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1994), pp 147f. = First p130f. Vanhoozer points to this sort of dichotomy in the work of G. E. Wright, in the biblical theology movement which "attended to the "act of God" in salvation history behind the text" and in Wolfhart Pennenberg.

As Vanhoozer says: "An evangelical theology need not choose between God speaking and acting."[239] The Bible is not merely testimony to God's saving acts but rather is "*itself one of those redemptive acts*"[240]. Such an account of the Bible helpfully emphasises its salvation-oriented purposes.

Objective and Subjective Revelation

Vanhoozer suggests that speech act categories can be helpful in preserving the distinction between objective revelation in Scripture by the Spirit's inspiration and its subjective appropriation by the illumination of the Spirit. In contrast to a Barthian doctrine of Scripture, Vanhoozer argues that:

… given the distinction between illocutions and perlocutions, there is no reason why one could not speak of divine discourse *simpliciter* to refer to what God is doing in speaking (illocutions), whether or not it is received and understood (perlocutions).[241]

In contrast to a Barthian doctrine of scripture, Vanhoozer maintains that:

[239] Vanhoozer, Drama, p63
[240] Vanhoozer, First Theology, p158
[241] Vanhoozer, Drama, p66

the Bible *is* the Word of God (in the sense of its illocutionary acts) and to say that the Bible *becomes* the Word of God (in the sense of achieving its perlocutionary effects).[242]

The Bible is God's words whether or not there is illocutionary uptake on the part of the readers. Though the perlocutions will depend on whether or not God's word is received with faith, leading to salvation or rejected, leading to judgment, God's word will never be without effect.

The Propositional and the Personal

As Vanhoozer also notes, he notion of Scripture as God's speech-act helpfully preserves its propositional content, its effect and its personal nature[243]. Indeed, Vanhoozer suggests that: "Speech-acts are arguably the main currency of personal relationships."[244]

As Ward puts it: "In the Bible, God himself, his actions and his words are intimately related."[245]. God establishes relationships with people by speaking his Word to them and responding to the Word is responding to God himself. As Ward points out, Jesus' words and Jesus seem to be used interchangeably in John 15:1-12 as practical synonyms: "The words of both the Father and Jesus, then, are a kind of extension of themselves."[246]

[242] Vanhoozer, First Theology, p195
[243] Vanhoozer, Drama, p63
[244] Vanhoozer, Drama, p67
[245] Ward, The Bible, p35
[246] Ward, The Bible, p36

Paul Ricoeur suggested supplementing a standard speech act analysis by considering what he calls the "interlocutionary act" which focuses on the utterance as an act of communication addressed by someone to someone else[247]. Vanhoozer has taken up this category of interlocutionary acts to capture the fact that "communicative action is essentially an interpersonal affair". The interpersonal relationships that speech acts produce between speaker and hearers mean that "an interlocutor – either an agent or a recipient of communicative action – [can be called] a *communicant*."[248]

The Personal Presence of God by his word

Vanhoozer speaks of God as present with his people by his word:

The principal mode in which God is 'with' his people is through speech-acts. I find it difficult to conceive how one could discern God's presence, or know anything whatsoever about God, without a communication on God's part.[249]

Self-involvement and transformative reading

[247] Paul Ricoeur, Interpretation Theory, p14
[248] Vanhoozer, First Theology, p174. Similarly, Drama, p67.
[249] Vanhoozer, Ibid., p170-1.

Just as God is thus personally involved in his word, Thiselton[250] and Briggs[251] have developed Donald Evans'[252] argument that speech acts are also self-involving for readers. The biblical texts confront readers with claims that God is the creator and that Jesus is Lord in ways that are not merely descriptions of fact but which require dispositions, commitments and consequent actions on the part of readers to live in God's world in God's way with Jesus as ruler. Thiselton and Briggs call for a "a hermeneutic of self-involvement" in which "we invest ourselves in the text and in the process we are changed; acted upon by its speech acts"[253] such that Bible reading is transforming.

God's efficacious word

Secular speech act theorist Vanderveken and Susumu comment that: "Because of His supernatural powers, God can use performatively many more verbs than we can."[254]

Searle speaks of a special category of supernatural declarations: "When, e.g., God says "Let there be light" there is a declaration."[255] Unlike other declarations, this requires no extra-linguistic institution or convention to make it affective. Simply by saying, God is able to make it so.

[250] See Thiselton, New Horizons, especially Ch VIII: 'The Hermeneutics of Self Involvement: From Existentialist Models to Speech Act Theory' (pp272-312)
[251] Briggs, Words in Action, especially Ch 5: 'Exploring a Hermeneutic of Self-Involvement: The Work of Donald Evans' (pp147-182)
[252] Evans, Donald, The Logic of Self-Involvement. A Philosophical Study of Everyday Language with Special Reference to the Christian Use of Language about God as Creator (London, SCM, 1963)
[253] Briggs, Getting Involved, p30
[254] Vanderveken, Daniel and Kubo, Susumu, (ed.s) *Essays in Speech Act Theory* (John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam / Philadelphia, 2002), p8
[255] Searle, Expression and Meaning, p18

As Ward argues from Isaiah 55:11, it is particularly appropriate to speak of God's effectual word as speech acts:

God promises that his word will infallibly perform the purposes for which he sent it. This verse reveals something to which the whole Bible bears witness: God's words fundamentally perform actions.[256]

Similarly, Vanhoozer argues that God's divine speech acts are infallible in this sense: "Scripture's diverse illocutionary forces will inevitably achieve their respective purposes."[257]

The Bible as God's covenant promise

As Vanhoozer points out, Searle and Alston see the promise as the paradigmatic speech act and he concurs with Thiselton and Wolterstorff others in emphasizing its central importance in Christian theology[258].

[256] Ward, Timothy, 'The Bible, Its Truth and How It Works' (pp17-42) in Gardner, Paul, Wright, Chris & Green, Chris (ed.s), *Fanning The Flame: Bible, Cross & Mission – meeting the challenge in a changing world, NEAC 4 2003*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2003), p29. Ward comments that Searle "has rightly been taken to task for treating the massive complexities of interpersonal linguistic communication as too susceptible to analytic-philosophical analysis. However, speech-act theory can equally easily be developed in a direction more interested in the social and moral dimensions of speech." (e.g. by Wolterstorff & Vanhoozer) note 18, p40.
[257] Vanhoozer, Semantics, p94
[258] Vanhoozer, First Theology, pp 164, 173, 188 and Drama p64 citing Searle, Speech Acts. See also Austin, HTDTWW, pp9-11 for a discussion of promising

Austin identified making a covenant as an example of a speech act with commissive[259] illocutionary force.

Vanhoozer suggests that all language as communicative action between sender and receiver is inherently covenantal[260].

Whilst the polygeneric nature of the Bible must not be lost sight of, a speech act account of the Bible as covenantal promise may give an insight into Scripture as a whole. Vanhoozer comments:

> God appears to his people as an agent who performs promissory speech-acts which commit him to continuous activity…. According to speech-act philosophy, an agent signals an intention by invoking the appropriate linguistic and literary conventions…. The Bible is God's covenant "deed", in both senses of the term. It is an act and a testament: a performative promise wherein certain unilateral promises are spoken, and a written document that seals the promise. The canon is a collection of diverse speech-acts that together 'render' the covenantal God.[261]

A Trinitarian speech act account of revelation

[259] Austin describes commissives as promising, undertaking, committing, declarations or announcements of intent, espousals, the assuming of an obligation. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, Op. Cit., p150..
[260] Vanhoozer, First Theology, p167
[261] Vanhoozer, God's Mighty Speech Acts, p176.

Vanhoozer argues for a Trinitarian speech act account of revelation[262] in which "the Father's activity is locution"[263]. "The Logos corresponds to the speaker's act or illocution, to what one does in saying"[264], the content and intent of the revelation. The perlocution is the effect on recipients of the revelation.

Or again:

… the Father initiates communication; the Son is the content of the communication; the Spirit is the efficacy of the communication. [Footnote 29:] In what we may call "the analogy of speech-acts," the Father ("who spoke [*est locutus*] by the prophets") locutes; the Son is the illocution, the promise of God; the Spirit is the "perlocution," the effect achieved through (*per*) the speech-act.[265]

Vanhoozer argues that:

The great benefit of this analysis is that it enables us clearly to relate the Spirit's relation to the Word of God. First, the Spirit illumines the reader and so enables the reader to grasp the

[262] In the background of this discussion is Barth's scheme of God as revealer-revelation-revealedness (Church Dogmatics I/1) and the reflection that: "In terms of communication theory, the triune God is communicative agent (Father/author), communicative action (Son/Word) and communicative result (Spirit/power of reception.)", Vanhoozer, First Theology, pp162-163. See also Vanhoozer, Meaning, pp455-9.
[263] Vanhoozer, God's Mighty Speech Acts, p178
[264] Vanhoozer, God's Mighty Speech Acts, p178
[265] Vanhoozer, Drama, p65. Vanhoozer also uses Searle's taxonomy of speech acts from Expression and Meaning, to describe five different illocutions performed by the cross, Drama p65f.

illocutionary point, to recognise what the Scriptures may be doing. Second, the Spirit convicts the reader that the illocutionary point of the biblical text deserves the appropriate response.[266]

The Spirit's work of illumination may helpfully be described in speech act terms. The Spirit does not alter the words but: "The Spirit is nothing less than the effective presence of the illocutionary force."[267]

Thus:

When the Spirit speaks in Scripture today he is not speaking another word but ministering the written words: "[The Spirit] will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears" (John 16:13). The Spirit is active not in producing new illocutions but rather in ministering the illocutions that are already in the test, making them efficacious.[268]

Austin's model of speech acts is obviously triadic[269] but it is debatable how useful a Trinitarian version of it applied to revelation in general and / or scripture in particular is. Speaking of the nature of language and communication, Vanhoozer says that:

[266] Vanhoozer, God's Mighty Speech Acts, p177
[267] Vanhoozer, God's Mighty Speech Acts, p177
[268] Vanhoozer, Drama, p67
[269] Frame notes locution, illocution and perlocution as one of five language triads in The Doctrine of God, Appendix A: 'More Triads', p747

While I certainly do not think that everything in our world is a "vestige of the Trinity," I do think that in this case there is more than an interesting analogy. The doctrine of the Trinity… stands not as an analogy but as a paradigm for human communication.[270]

The limitations of Vanhoozer's account must also be recognised. Whilst the Father may be said to locute Scripture, it should not be maintained that the words of the Bible are not also the words of the Son and the Spirit. The point of Scripture (its illocutionary force) is certainly to render Christ as the object of saving faith, but Scripture also reveals the triune God (admittedly principally through Christ) and may be said to perform many allied purposes.

Though it is not captured by the speech act model he states, Vanhoozer himself speaks of the Spirit's work of inspiration as well as illumination[271]. The Spirit is active in the locution of Scripture as well as in its subsequent perlocution (its interpretation, application and affective power). Indeed, the illocutions of Scripture are the illocutions of the Spirit.

Conclusions

This chapter has provided a fresh synthesis and a convenient summary not available elsewhere of the Reformed Evangelical doctrine of Scripture as classically expounded by B. B. Warfield and briefly made the case for its continuing relevance.

[270] Vanhoozer, First Theology, p168
[271] Vanhoozer, Drama, p66, n31

This chapter has further shown that far from necessarily undermining the Reformed Evangelical doctrine of Scripture two post-Warfield developments in the philosophy of language and literary theory, speech act theory and semiotics, can enrich the Reformed Evangelical doctrine of scripture as passed on by Warfield. Though they might not say anything that Reformed Evangelicals ought not already to have known from reflection on God and the bible, they provide conceptual frameworks, analytical tools and technical vocabularies that can be fruitfully and judiciously employed by biblical scholars and systematic theologians, with no loss and with a number of potential gains.

With the end of this second chapter, the scene is now set for the examination of the Lord's supper in the light of the doctrine of scripture, using the resources of this chapter (in chapter 4) and subsequently (in chapter 5) for the development of the doctrine of scripture set out in this chapter using the doctrine of the supper to be expounded in the next chapter (chapter 3).

Chapter 3:

God's Words on The Supper

An outline and sketch of

a standard Reformed Evangelical doctrine of The Lord's Supper

with particular reference to The Church of England

I. Introduction

This chapter gives an outline and sketch of a standard Reformed Evangelical doctrine of the Lord's Supper. It is argued that the foundational and permanent doctrinal standards of the Church of England, *The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* and *The Book of Common Prayer*, are compatible with, indeed expressive of and complimentary to, this understanding.

Rationale: the contribution of this chapter to the overall thesis

As with chapter two above, the aim of this chapter in the context of the overall thesis is two-fold.

First, this chapter provides the necessary groundwork and starting point for what it is hoped will be a fresh development of or perspective on the doctrine of the Supper, for which the resource of the doctrine of Scripture (from chapter two) will be employed in chapter six.

Second, this chapter provides theological resources, in the shape of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, which will be used later in the hope of developing or expressing afresh the doctrine of the Scripture (from the basis set out in chapter two) in chapter five.

The chapter therefore provides some of the necessary tools and background for considering the Scriptures in the light of the Supper and the Supper in the light of the Scriptures and exploring their relationships with one another, the project of the dissertation as a whole.

Calvin's doctrine of the sacraments and the Lord's Supper

Introductory concerns

It is almost unnecessary to say anything in making the case for John Calvin's significance and influence. Alasdair Heron called Calvin "the Reformed theologian *par excellence* and, alongside Luther, the most influential single teacher of the entire Reformation."[272] Calvin

[272] Alasdair Heron, Table and Tradition: Towards an Ecumenical Understanding of the Eucharist (Edinburgh, The Hansdel Press, 1983)

has had an incalculable impact on evangelicalism and, even if it may be uncongenial to some and arguably misleading, to many the word "Reformed" means a follower of Calvin. In particular, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* continues to be widely read and studied. The five-hundredth anniversary of Calvin's birth in 2009 brought a renewed celebration of Calvin in the Reformed world, with a flurry of publications and conferences[273].

John Calvin has been chosen as providing a classic and influential doctrine of the Lord's Supper, about which he wrote a great deal.

It is interesting for evangelicals, who often look to the Reformation with great appreciation for their theological roots, to note that the Supper was so prominent in the writings of the Reformers when it is generally much less regarded in their constituency today. Carl Trueman has commented that: "There would seem to be little doubt that the neglect of the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist is one of the hallmarks of contemporary evangelicalism."[274] Similarly, Peter Leithart says that "the lack of practical and theological attention given to the Lord's Supper by contemporary evangelicals is little short of astounding."[275] Of course some of the prominence of the Eucharist in Reformation writings is due to the fact that it was such a centre of controversy between the Roman Church and the Reformation churches, and indeed between the Reformers themselves.

[273] For example, Bruce Gordon, Calvin (Yale University Press, 2009); Burks Parson (ed.), John Calvin: A Heart for Devotion, Doctrine and Doxology (Lake Mary, Reformation Trust, 2008)
[274] Carl Trueman, 'The Incarnation and the Lord's Supper' in Peterson (ed.), The Word Became Flesh pp185-208, p185
[275] Leithart, The Kingdom and The Power, p123

Some elements of Calvin's doctrine are somewhat distinctive and, of course, his writings on the Lord's Supper were often occasioned by particular dogmatic, ecclesiastical and polemic challenges in his day. Indeed, Calvin was much concerned to try to achieve an evangelical consensus and some of his statements on the Supper are shaped by what might be called an evangelical ecumenism which leaders him to want to agree with various conversation partners as much as possible[276]. It may be that at certain points forms of words with which Calvin was willing to agree may have to be distinguished from how he would ideally have liked to have expressed himself[277].

Calvin's doctrine of the Supper has sometimes been charged with incoherence or incomprehensibility. For example, G. S. M. Walker alleges that Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper "suffers from a number of obscurities and apparent contradictions". He continues: "one cannot help feeling that it is involved in paradox, and that it rightly preserves an essential element of mystery."[278] John R. Meyer claims that "Calvin is neither clear nor consistent in the totality of his eucharistic teaching"[279]. As shall be shown below, famously, Calvin himself recognised that the Supper is ultimately mysterious. Calvin could have said this in some sense of all theology, so it may be particularly significant that he felt the need

[276] See Joseph N. Tylenda, 'The Ecumenical Intention of Calvin's Early Eucharistic Teaching', Joseph N. Tylenda pp27-47 in B. A. Gerrish, (ed.) Reformatio Perennis: Essays on Calvin and the Reformation in Honour of Ford Lewis Battles (Pittsburgh, The Pickwick Press, 1981)
[277] For example, Davies claims that the Consensus Tigurinus "in, in fact, uncalvinistic in regard to several important elements of eucharistic meaning.", Clearest Promises, p21. Similarly, G. S. M. Walker says: "The Consensus Tigurinus should not be quoted in evidence of Calvin's own views, for it represents the extreme limit which he was prepared to concede in the cause of unity.", 'The Lord's Supper in the Theology and Practice of Calvin', G. S. M. Walker (pp131-148), p132 in G. E. Duffield, (ed.) John Calvin: Courtenay Studies in Reformation Theology (Appleford, Sutton Courtenay Press, 1966)
[278] G. S. M. Walker, The Lord's Supper, in Duffield, John Calvin, p141
[279] John R. Meyer, 'Mysterium Fidei and the Later Calvin' Scottish Journal of Theology vol. 25 1972 pp392-411, p392 see also p406-7

to say it in this connection. It is of course possible that there are tensions and unresolved problems in Calvin's doctrine of the Supper. Likely he would have admitted such himself. Nevertheless, he defended his doctrine against charges of absurdity as reasonable and coherent. Here, an attempt has been made to take Calvin's doctrine seriously and to read him with patience, seeking to understand him positively. The tendency has been to assume that what Calvin says about the Supper can be harmonised, rather than being inclined to latch on to possible contradictions.

The focus here is especially on Calvin's mature doctrine and legacy. It is quite likely that Calvin's thought on this, as on other subjects, developed over time. However, is seems Calvin would claim to have been basically consistent. Whatever changes of emphasis or presentation there may have been over time, Calvin nowhere flags that he repudiates what he has previously taught about the Lord's Supper.[280] The way Calvin revised the *Institutes* may be seen as indicative of a very substantial basic continuity of Calvin's thought throughout his ministry. The literary history of the *Institutes* in its various Latin and French editions is complicated, but in general, Calvin tended to add to the *Institutes* rather than striking out large amounts of material. Similarly, if Calvin's view of the Supper grows and new branches emerge, and so on, it does so from the same root cluster.

The range of Calvin's writings have been explored including *The Institutes*, the commentaries and the other polemical and other doctrinal writings. Some documents on

[280] For a study of the development of Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper see Thomas J. Davis, The Clearest Promises of God. The changes Davis sees are summarised on pp8, 212-3.

the practical organisation on church-life in Geneva and beyond have been studied, as to a lesser extent have Calvin's sermons and letters. A case could have been made for concentrating on *The Institutes* since it is Calvin's most systematic statement and is less occasional or polemical than at least some of his other works on the Eucharist and it is certainly the most widely read of Calvin's works. However, other parts of Calvin's oeuvre have been included where they seemed particularly illuminating, relevant or striking.

Calvin's doctrine is considered as it has influenced others in the Reformed Evangelical tradition.

It is debatable, of course, to what extent Calvin has been followed by his successors[281]. Arguably at least, many Evangelicals who are admirers of Calvin might tend to be more Zwinglian in their doctrine of the Lord's Supper[282] where they have reflected much on its theological significance at all. Some evangelicals may be clearer on what they think the Supper is not, than on what it is. Though Calvin is not without his champions. A number of writers have urged a recovery of Calvin's doctrine of the Supper as potentially able to refresh the Evangelical churches today[283]. Perhaps this chapter may make a little

[281] Keith A. Mathison, Given For You: Reclaiming Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper (P & R, 2002) charts Reformed attitudes to Calvin's doctrine of the Supper into the 20th Century, pp49-176. Perhaps the most significant controversy was that between Charles Hodge and John Williamson Nevin, on which see Jonathan G. Bonomo, Incarnation and Sacrament: The Eucharistic Controversy Between Charles Hodge and John Williamson Nevin (Eugene, Wimpf and Stock, 2010).

[282] Speaking of the Supper's power to call to mind the death of Christ and as communal oath, Carl Trueman says: "I suspect this aspect of Zwinglians is the default position of many evangelicals", 'The Incarnation and the Lord's Supper' in Peterson (ed.), The Word Became Flesh, p189.

[283] For example, Keith A. Mathison, Given For You and Matthew W. Mason, 'A Spiritual Banquet: John Calvin on the Lord's Supper' Churchman vol. 117 no 4 2003 pp 329-346

contribution towards undoing some of the neglect of Calvin's doctrine of the Supper and of the Supper in general.

Where the interpretation of Calvin's doctrine has been controversial this has been noted but it has only been explored in detail in so far as it might be significant for the thesis as a whole.

A particular attempt has been made to pay attention to what Calvin says or implies about the relationship between the Supper and the Word since this is close to the heart of the overall concerns of this project.

Sacraments

Calvin understands the Lord's Supper to be a sacrament. Like the word "Trinity", the term "sacrament" is, of course, not itself one used in the Bible yet as a theological category it is ancient.

In the *Institutes*, Calvin classifies the sacraments as among "the external means or aids by which God invites us into the society of Christ and holds is therein."[284] The other topics

[284] The title of Book 4

included in this fourth and final book of the *Institutes* are: the church (it's officers, government, power, jurisdiction, discipline etc.), vows and civil government.

Calvin describes the sacraments as "another aid to our faith related to the preaching of the gospel"[285].

Calvin attempts to define a sacrament thus:

It seems to me that a simple and proper definition [of what a sacrament is] would be to say that it is an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of his good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith; and we in turn attest our piety toward him in the presence of the Lord and of his angels and before men. Here is another briefer definition: one may call it a testimony of divine grace toward us, confirmed by an outward sign, with mutual attestation of our piety toward him. Whichever of these definitions you may choose, it does not differ in meaning from that of Augustine, who teaches that a sacrament is "a visible sign of a sacred thing," or "a visible form of an invisible grace," [Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus* xxvi.50, *Letters* cv.3.12; *Questions on the Heptateuch* III.84], but it better and more clearly explains the thing itself.[286]

[285] Institutes 4.14.1
[286] Institutes 4.14.1

A number of points may be noted from these definitions, some of which will be explored more fully below.

For Calvin, sacraments must thus include a God-given outward sign and a word of promise or testimony of grace.

Calvin distinguishes two related purposes to the sacraments: first, God attests his goodwill towards us and second, we attest our piety towards him. As will be shown more fully below, for Calvin, God alone establishes sacraments. His action in them is indispensable and primary. The human attestation is a response to God's attestation.

Calvin argues for a relationship between the sign and the thing signified in the sacraments that maintains union without confusion and distinction without separation[287]. As Wallace comments:

There is no doubt that Calvin sees an analogy which at least serves to regulate his thinking on this mystery of sacramental union, in the mystery of the union between God and man in Jesus Christ…. his views on it [the incarnation] serve largely to determine his thinking on the sacraments.[288]

[287] Citation?
[288] Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of Word and Sacrament, p167

This Chalcedonian-type formulation allows Calvin to present his own doctrine as a third way between opposite errors. On the one hand, the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation confuses sign and reality. On the other, the Zwinglians with their mere memorialism separate sign and reality[289].

Calvin sees the sacraments as related to the word of God: "… a sacrament is never without a preceding promise but is joined to it as a sort of appendix, with the purpose of confirming and sealing the promise itself, and of making it more evident to us and in a sense ratifying it."[290]

Peter Leithart has suggested that speaking of baptism and the Supper as appendixes to the Word might be unhelpful[291]. In a deliberately provocative book, he says:

Despite its venerable pedigree, this is not a useful way to approach the issue. We are able to understand the Word without the help of the appendix, as we can read many books with profit without reading the appendix. So long as baptism and the Supper are seen as

[289] In Comm. on 1 Cor 10:3, Calvin charges that papists confound the reality and the sign, and unbelievers separate them, urging: "let us preserve a middle position". Melvin Tinker also comments that: "there is little doubt that he saw his own position as a via media between the Roman view on the one hand and mere memorialism on the other.", 'Language, Symbols and Sacraments: Was Calvin's View of the Lord's Supper Right?' Churchman 112 no 2 1998 pp131-149, p131.

[290] Institutes 4.14.3

[291] Similarly, Gerrish comments that Calvin described the Lord's Supper "a little misleadingly as an "appendage" to the gospel" when in fact it "was for him a dramatic presentation of all that the gospel proclaims.", Grace and Gratitude, p158. John E. Colwell also comments Calvin calling a sacrament an appendix to a promise: "The language of appendage, however, would seem to be less than helpful, conveying the impression of a mere supplementary and extraneous addition rather than (as Calvin surely intends) the appointed means through which a promise is mediated." *Promise and Presence: An Exploration of Sacramental Theology* (Milton Keynes & Waynesboro, GA, Paternoster Authentic Media, 2005)

"appendixes," they will be seen as expendable. Characterising baptism and the Supper as "appendixes" to the Word, further, is part and parcel of the Protestant tendency towards the "primacy of the intellect." It is rationalism, in that it reduces baptism and the Supper to a means of communicating information. But that is not what rituals are *for*. Treating baptism and the Supper as disguised sermons reduces them so they can be encompassed and tamed.[292]

Of course Calvin would not want to create this impression that the sacraments are dispensable and gives the sacraments a kind of necessity. Whilst the sacraments are not strictly speaking absolutely necessary for salvation, they are necessary as ordinary means of grace, amongst others[293]. God has established the sacraments and he would not have added to his Word that which was superflous[294].

Calvin is careful to say that strictly speaking, sacraments are not needed to confirm God's word but to establish faith in us, since "God's truth is of itself firm and sure enough, and it cannot receive better confirmation from any other source than from itself."[295] The sacraments are thus an accommodation[296] to our weakness.

[292] Leithart, Against Christianity, p67f. Philip Seddon also speaks of the danger of evangelicals treating Communion as "a theological addendum, something tacked on at the end, after the 'real' ministry – the preaching of the gospel – has taken place." Seddon, Philip, *Gospel and Sacrament – reclaiming a holistic evangelical spirituality*, Grove Spirituality Series S89 (Cambridge, Grove Books, 2004) p7

[293] For a discussion of the necessity of the Supper in the Reformed Tradition along these lines, see Carl Trueman, 'The Incarnation and the Lord's Supper' in Petersen, The Word Became Flesh, pp199-200.

[294] Comm. on Isaiah 7:12

[295] Institutes 4.14.3

[296] On the subject of accommodation in Calvin's thought see: Jon Balserak, Divinity Compromised: A study of divine accommodation in the thought of John Calvin (Springer Netherlands, 2006)

In fact, Calvin holds that in God's revelation to man in general, God accommodates himself to man's capacity. Man cannot bear to see God perfectly as he is in himself[297], so, as Ronald Wallace puts it, there is always a "veiling and unveiling" in the very act of God revealing himself as he truly is[298]. The Word of God is accommodated to human need. As Calvin puts it: "when God descends to us, he, in a certain sense, abases himself, and stammers with us"[299]. From God's point of view, the Bible is like the speech of an adult to a baby. Calvin says that "God speaking to us… condescends to our ignorance; and, therefore, … God prattles to us in Scripture in a rough and popular style… on account of the love which he bears us."[300] However, as compared to the Word (which is itself accommodated), the sacraments might be said to be more fully accommodated to human need. Calvin says:

For seeing we are so foolish, that we cannot receive him with true confidence of heart, when he is presented by simple teaching and preaching, the Father, of his mercy, not at all disdaining to condescend in this matter to our infirmity, has desired to attach to his Word a visible sign, by which he represents the substance of his promises, to confirm and fortify us, and deliver us from all doubt and uncertainty.[301]

It might be asked whether, for Calvin, sacraments are an accommodation to creatureliness as such or to sin. Would sacraments have existed in Eden before or without the Fall, or

[297] Comm. on Ex 33:20
[298] Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of Word and Sacrament, p7
[299] Comm. on Gen 35:7. Similarly, "For we know how God accommodates himself to the ordinary' way of speaking, on account of our ignorance, and sometimes even, if I may be allowed the expression, stammers." Comm. on John 21:25
[300] Comm. on John 3:12
[301] Short Treaty on the Holy Supper, p145

would the Word then have been sufficient? Since Calvin describes the Tree of Life as a kind of sacrament, it seems that for him, sacraments could have a place without the infirmity that is due to sin. However, perhaps on occasion there is a feeling that the Word alone might have been somehow better or at least sufficient for sinless disembodied intelligences, though creatures need sacraments?

Sacraments: natural and miraculous, particular and ordinary

Broadly defined "the term "sacraments"… embraces generally all those signs which God has ever enjoined upon men to render them more certain and confident of the truth of his promises."[302] These signs may be divided into two categories: the natural and miraculous since "He [God] sometimes willed to present these [signs] in natural things, at other times set them forth in miracles."[303] Calvin gives as examples of natural things that become sacraments, the fruit of the tree of life [Gen 2:9; 3:22] and the rainbow as a witness to the covenant with Noah [Gen 9:13-16][304]. As examples of sacraments set forth by miracles, Calvin lists Abraham being shown a light in a smoking fire pot [Gen 15:17], Gideon's fleece [Judg 6:37-38] and Hezekiah's sundial [2 Kings 20:9-11][305].

Calvin distinguishes these, which perhaps might be called particular sacraments, from "those sacraments which the Lord willed to be ordinary in the church in order to nourish his

[302] Institutes 4.14.18
[303] Institutes 4.14.18
[304] Institutes 4.14.18
[305] Institutes 4.14.18

worshipers and servants in one faith and the confession of one faith"[306]. That is, these ordinary sacraments are common or normal for believers more generally rather than being for some individuals or groups at certain times or places.

Old Testament sacraments

The ordinary sacraments of the Old Testament were circumcision [Gen 17:10], purifications [Lev 11-15], sacrifices and other rites [Lev 1-10][307]. They included manna, water flowing from the rock, the brazen serpent and the like[308]. Calvin strikingly asserts that these "ancient sacraments looked to the same purpose to which ours now tend: to direct and almost lead men by the hand to Christ, or rather, as images, to represent him and show him forth to be known. We have already taught that they are seals by which God's promises are sealed, and, moreover, it is very clear that no promise has ever been offered to men except in Christ [2 Cor 1:20]. Consequently, to teach us any promise of God, they must show forth Christ."[309] It is possible Calvin thinks of "that heavenly pattern of the Tabernacle and of worship under the law, which was put before Moses on the mountain [Ex 25:9, 40; 26:30]"[310] as sacramental. Certainly it is said to show forth Christ, as do the sacraments. Calvin continues that the only difference between the sacraments of the Old and New

[306] Institutes 4.14.19
[307] Institutes 4.14.20
[308] Institutes 4.14.20
[309] Institutes 4.14.20
[310] Institutes 4.14.20

Testament is that "the former foreshadowed Christ promised while he was as yet awaited; the latter attest him as already given and revealed."[311]

New Testament sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper only

Calvin recognises baptism and the Lord's Supper as the only ordinary sacraments of the New Testament.

Calvin says: "I would not go against calling the laying on of hands, by which ministers of the church are instituted to their office, a sacrament, but I do not include it among the ordinary sacraments"[312] since it is not intended to be used by the whole church.

Calvin argues that the command and promise of God are required to make a sacrament[313]. It is not for the church to add to the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper: "Apart from these two, no other sacrament has been instituted by God, so the church of believers ought to recognize no other; for erecting and establishing new sacraments is not a matter of human choice."[314] Similarly, he says: "Let the Christian church be content with these two sacraments, therefore. And let the church not only refuse to admit and acknowledge any third one for the present but also not desire or expect any, even to the end of the age."[315]

[311] Institutes 4.12.20
[312] Institutes 4.14.20
[313] Institutes 4.19.1
[314] Institutes 4.18.19
[315] Institutes 4.18.20

Calvin argues that: “it is useful to keep some distinction between sacraments and other ceremonies…. The apostles prayed on bended knee; therefore, men will not kneel without a sacrament…. In the end, all the gestures of the saints would turn into sacraments.”[316]

Calvin asks:

… if they simply understand “sign” as what is adduced for a comparison… what end or measure will there be? There is nothing that by this reasoning will not be a sacrament. There will be as many sacraments as there are parables and similitudes in Scripture…. I admit that whenever we see a vine, it is a very good thing to recall that Christ said: “I am the vine, you are the branches”; “My Father is the vinedresser”. Whenever we meet a shepherd with his flock, it is good that this also come to mind: “I am the good shepherd”; “My sheep hear my voice”. But anyone who would classify such similitudes with the sacraments ought to be sent to a mental hospital.[317]

The Lord’s Supper

Not a propitiatory sacrifice

[316] Institutes 4.19.2
[317] Institutes 4.19.3. Similarly, True Method. Tracts vol 3, p300-1

Calvin calls “the belief that the Mass is a sacrifice and offering to obtain forgiveness of sins” “a most pestilential error”[318]. He says: “I am contending against the opinion… that the Mass is a work by which the priest who offers up Christ, and the others who participate in the oblation, merit God’s favour, or it is an expiatory victim, by which they reconcile God to themselves.”[319] The Lord’s Supper is not “… a kind of appeasement to make satisfaction to God for the expiation of the living and the dead.”[320] This is, of course, allied to the rejection of the system of purgatory[321].

Calvin argues that the Mass is blasphemous against Christ. Jesus is a priest for ever and “being immortal needs no vicar to replace him.”[322] To appoint substitute priests is to deprive Christ of his honour. “Christ, who is not prevented by death, is unique and needs no partners.”[323]

Calvin presents the Mass as a reversal of the Lord’s Supper:

the Supper itself is a gift of God, which ought to have been received with thanksgiving. The sacrifice of the Mass is represented as paying a price to God, which he would receive by way

[318] Institutes 4.18.1
[319] Institutes 4.18.1
[320] Institutes 4.18.1
[321] On this and its importance with respect to the Reformation and the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper, see further MacCulloch, Cranmer: A Life, p614, quoted below.
[322] Institutes 4.18.2
[323] Institutes 4.18.2

of satisfaction. There is as much difference between this sacrifice and the sacrament of the Supper as there is between giving and receiving.[324]

The disciples were commanded to take the Lord's body; Christ alone offered it[325].

Calvin claims that "the cross of Christ is overthrown as soon as the altar is set up"[326] – an altar (rather than a table) suggesting a sacrifice (rather than a meal). The effectiveness of Jesus' once for all sacrifice continues for ever and to require another sacrifice is to accuse Christ's sacrifice of imperfection and weakness[327].

Calvin distinguishes between sacrifices of praise, reverence and thanksgiving and sacrifices of propitiation or expiation which are intended to appease God's wrath[328]. Calvin speaks of a whole class of non-propitiatory Old Testament sacrifices to which he claims the Lord's Supper is analogous[329]. Calvin concludes that: "The Lord's Supper cannot be without a sacrifice of this kind, in which, while we proclaim his death and give thanks, we do nothing but offer a sacrifice of praise."[330] In a sense, then, the Lord's Supper is sacrificial. It is a sacrifice of praise, reverence and thanks. Calvin wants to insist most strongly, however, that it must never be thought of as some kind of meritorious or propitiatory sacrifice.

[324] Institutes 4.18.7
[325] Commentary on Matthew 26:26
[326] Institutes 4.18.3
[327] Institutes 4.18.3
[328] Institutes 4.18.13
[329] Institutes 4.18.13
[330] Institutes 4.18.17

More generally, Calvin is willing to see some kind of God-ward element in the Supper just as he sees it as an attestation of piety before angles and men. But as has already been noted, man's part must be kept in its place: what believers do in the Supper is very much a secondary response to what God has done in Christ and does in the Supper. To try to make this secondary response of man into the main thing in the Supper is actually to reverse, overthrow and abolish the Supper so that it is not the Lord's Supper at all.

Feeding by faith

Calvin required a profession of faith from those who wished to receive the Lord's Supper. "No one is to be received at the Supper unless he first have made confession of his faith. That is to say, he must declare before the Minister that he desires to live according to the reformation of the gospel, and that he knows the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Commandments of God."[331] No child was to receive the Supper "before it has made profession of its faith as proved by examination by the Catechism."[332]

Calvin rejects any idea that the benefit of the Supper to believers is magical or automatic. An *ex opere operato* view of the sacraments is excluded. Benefiting from the Supper depends at least in part on understanding what is signified by it. Hence the importance of "a recital of Christ's institution" and especially of the minister joining "with the sign the true

[331] Ordinances for the Supervision of Churches in the Country. Theological Treatises p79.
[332] Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances. Theological Treatises p67.

explanation of the mystery"[333]. This, of course, fits with the Reformed conception of faith. The Supper must be received with or by faith and faith includes understanding[334].

Calvin argues that feeding on Christ is not faith as such. Rather, feeding on Christ or true partaking of him is a consequence or effect of faith[335]. Calvin says that: "spiritually to eat the flesh of Christ is something greater and more excellent than to believe"[336].

Calvin maintains that "in receiving the sacrament in faith, according to the ordinance of the Lord, we are truly made partakers of the real substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ."[337] Calvin is very specific that the human body of Christ is offered to believers in the Supper since the one true Christ is eternally God and man. It is not just the divinity or benefits of Christ nor his power or virtue that are communicated but the whole Christ himself. Calvin believes that "… in the Supper our souls are nourished by the real body of Christ, which was crucified for us, and that indeed spiritual life is transferred into us from the substance of his body."[338]

Davis suggests that the term 'substantial fellowship', "probably gets at what Calvin means by true partaking better than does the eating language; the term "substantial fellowship" at

[333] Institutes 4.17.39
[334] See e.g. fides in Muller, Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms. Fides salvific or propria includes notitia and assensus p115.
[335] Institutes 4.17.5. Similarly Second Defence. Tracts vol. 2 p283
[336] Clear Explanation. Theological Treatises p307
[337] Short Treatise. Theological Treatises p166.
[338] Clear Explanation. Theological Treatises p263.

least presents the notion of true partaking as a type of union with Christ that Calvin seems to have at the heart of his theology (not just his eucharistic theology)."[339]

Christ is offered to all in the Supper, but only received by believers[340]. Unbelievers have only an outward partaking of the Lord's Supper[341] and "communicate only in a visible symbol"[342].

Much ink has been spilled on the question of what, for Calvin, is the special or unique contribution of the Lord's Supper over and above the Word of God or faith in the gospel. Calvin claims that both the Word and the Lord's Supper communicate the same Christ to the believer. Yet, there is something particular about the Supper since Christ is offered there in a special manner.

God gives no more by visible signs than by his Word, but gives them in a different manner, because our weakness stands in need of a variety of helps…. what is offered to us by the gospel outside the Supper is sealed to us by the Supper, and hence communion with Christ is no less truly conferred upon us by the gospel than by the Supper.[343]

Again:

[339] Davis, Clearest Promises, p207
[340] Institutes 4.17.33
[341] Institutes 4.17.33
[342] Institutes 4.17.34
[343] Clear Explanation. Theological Treatises p281.

… believers have outside the Supper the very thing they receive in the Supper…. It is true that to help our infirmity a visible testimony is added, the better to confirm the thing signified; and not only so, but to bestow in greater truth and fullness what we receive by the faith of the gospel even without any external action.[344]

It might be said that by making good use of the Supper, weak creatures may receive "more of" the same Christ who is offered in the gospel.

… the communion with Christ is conferred upon us in different degrees, not merely in the Supper but independently of it.[345]

In a category borrowed from the Word, the Lord's Supper itself is "a kind of exhortation for us, which can more forcefully than any other means quicken and inspire us both to purity and holiness of life, and to love, peace and concord."[346]

Over and above the Word, the Supper may thus make a special contribution to strengthening faith and to assurance[347]. As Thomas Davis argues, the Lord's Supper strengthens and confirms union with Christ in a distinctive way[348].

[344] Clear Explanation. Theological Treatises p291.
[345] Clear Explanation. Theological Treatises p292.
[346] Institutes 4.17.38
[347] See Carl Trueman, 'The Incarnation and the Lord's Supper' in Peterson, The Word Became Flesh pp185-208
[348] Thomas J. Davis, The Clearest Promises of God, p214

Calvin says that in the Supper, God "attests his good will and love toward us more expressly than by word"[349]. In the Supper, Christ "reveals himself in a special way"[350].

The adoration of the elements

Calvin rejects the adoration of the consecrated elements since Christ "bids us receive the Sacrament, not adore it."[351] Calvin asks: "For what is idolatry if not this: to worship the gifts in place of the Giver himself?"[352]

Communion in both kinds

Calvin argues that Christ commanded everyone to drink the wine[353]. By the words "drink you all of it" Jesus was deliberately guarding against the wicked novelty of with-holding the cup from the people[354]. Reception of the wine by laymen was maintained until a late date[355]: "It is notorious that this mode of Communicating, as delivered by the Lord, was practiced in the Church for more than seven hundred years."[356]

[349] Institutes 4.14.6
[350] Institutes 4.17.30
[351] Institutes 4.17.35
[352] Institutes 4.17.36
[353] Institutes 4.17.47
[354] Commentary on Matthew 26:27
[355] Institutes 4.17.49
[356] True Method. Tracts vol. 3 p283

The nature of the elements indifferent

Calvin thought "whether the bread is leavened or unleavened; the wine red or white – it makes no difference."[357]

Ministering the sacraments

As is suggested above, for Calvin, the minister who conducts the service of the Lord's Supper is not a priest offering a sacrifice. Lee Palmer Wandel points out that by the 1530s in Geneva a "dramatic alteration in the appearance of the pastor who administered the Eucharist" had become commonplace: "evangelical "ministers" dressed in the plain black robes of the scholar, not in the brocades, silks, and multiple layers of complex significance of the priest."[358] The Communion table was usually placed before the pulpit such that: "Within Reformed churches, the traditional spatial division of laity and clergy, secular and sacred, was erased completely."[359]

Calvin argues that the administration of the sacraments is "the proper function of those to whom the public office of teaching is entrusted. For the two things, feeding the Church with the doctrine of salvation and administering the sacraments, are joined to each other by a

[357] Institutes 4.17.43
[358] Lee Palmer Wandel, The Eucharist In The Reformation: Incarnation and Liturgy (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006) p167
[359] Wandel, Eucharist in the Reformation, p167

lasting tie."[360] For Calvin, the notion of lay-presidency would not have seemed ontologically impossible but inappropriate. It would have sounded more like the dangerous anarchic innovations of the Radical Anabaptists than the good order of the church God desires[361].

Frequency of communion

Calvin says: "the Supper could have been administered most becomingly if it were set before the church very often, and at least once a week."[362] Similarly, he says:

It would be well to require that the Communion of the Holy Supper of Jesus Christ be held every Sunday at least as a rule…. In fact, it is not instituted by Jesus for making a commemoration two or three times a year, but for a frequent exercise of our faith and charity, of which the congregation of Christians should make use as often as they be assembled[363]

Following Acts 2:42, Calvin says that: "Thus it became the unvarying rule that no meeting of the church should take place without the Word, prayers, partaking of the Supper, and almsgiving."[364] Although he was never able to implement weekly communion in Geneva, he urges that: "… the Lord's Table should have been spread at least once a week for the

[360] Catechism of the Church of Geneva. Theological Treatises p139.
[361] See Robert C Doyle, ''Lay Administration' and the Sixteenth Century' Churchman 113/4 1999
[362] Institutes 4.17.43
[363] Articles concerning the Organization of the Church and Worship of Geneva. Theological Treatises p49
[364] Institutes 4.17.44

assembly of Christians, and the promises declared in it should feed us spiritually…. All, like hungry men, should flock to such a bounteous repast."[365] Calvin's view of the great privilege, blessing and usefulness of the Supper influence his concern that believers should communicate very regularly. G. S. M. Walker calls it "a tragedy that for his spiritual descendants, no less than for himself, the scriptural ideal of weekly communion has not yet been adequately realised; the result has been an unnatural divorce between word and sacrament to which the whole theology of Calvin is opposed."[366]

The mode of Christ's presence in the sacrament

J. N. Tylenda points out that: "Calvin is one with the other Christian communities in teaching a presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper. To arrive at a conclusion other than this is to misread him, to misunderstand and misrepresent him. Certainly, the reformer cannot be numbered among the sacramentarians, as if he had taught that the partaking of Christ's flesh and drinking of his blood were nothing more than merely believing in Christ. The sacraments are signs, it is true, but they are not merely signs, they are signs of a present reality."[367] B. A. Gerrish has termed Calvin's view "symbolic instrumentalism" since believers receive Christ through receiving the signs by faith[368]. As was shown above, Calvin insisted

[365] Institutes 4.17.46
[366] Walker, The Lord's Supper in Duffield, John Calvin, p143
[367] J. N. Tylenda, 'Calvin and Christ's Presence in the Supper – True or Real' Scottish Journal of Theology 27 (1974) 65-75, p65.
[368] B. A. Gerrish, 'Sign and Reality: The Lord's Supper in the Reformed Confessions' in The Old Protestantism and the New (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1982) pp118-30 and 'John Calvin and the Reformed Doctrine of the Lord's Supper', McCormick Quarterly, XXII, 2 (Jan 1969)

that believers partake of the whole Christ, including his flesh and blood in the Supper, but how was controversial[369]. Calvin rejected the theories of transubstantiation and consubstantiation.

Transubstantiation

The theory of Transubstantiation depended on the Aristotelian distinction between substance and accidents. The substance of something is its inner essence, what it truly is, which makes it what it is, the thing that is common to all such things. The accidents of something are its incidental outer qualities which will vary from individual to individual. The Roman Church held[370] that in the Supper, at the words of consecration the substance of the bread and wine became the body and blood of Christ, physically and materially, whilst the accidents of the bread and wine, its outward appearance, remained.

Calvin rejected the theory of transubstantiation as unbiblical and absurd and as leading to all sorts of idolatry.

Consubstantiation

[369] See also J. N. Tylenda, 'Calvin and Westphal: Two Eucharistic Theologies in Conflict' pp9-21 in Calvin's Books: Festschrift for Peter De Klerk eds. Wilhelm H. Neuser, Herman J. Selderhuis, Wilem van 't Spijker (Uitgeverji J. J. Groen en Zoon, 1997)

[370] The doctrine of Transubstantiation was official promulgated by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. See also the thirteenth session of The Council of Trent of 1551.

Calvin also repudiated the Lutheran theory of consubstantiation. This rejected the Aristotelian distinction of substance and accidents on which the theory of consubstantiation depended. Yet, Luther had famously insisted, not least at the Council of Marburg in 1529, on a literal understanding of Jesus' words "this is my body" etc. In a mysterious way that is beyond human comprehension but which must be believed on the authority of Christ himself, Luther held that the physical body and blood of Christ are somehow in, with or under the bread.

Some of the objections to transubstantiation would apply similarly to consubstantiation. But Calvin also made a further case against it.

For Calvin the ascension of Christ demonstrates the absence of his physical body[371]. The ubiquity of Christ's body, for which Lutherans contended, would make the bodily ascension and return of Christ "a fallacious and empty show"[372]. Christ has ascended bodily to the Father's side in glory where he will remain until he comes again to judge the living and the dead.

Further, for Calvin the invisible ubiquity of Christ's body is contrary to nature[373]. He argues that: "from the Scriptures we plainly infer that the one person Christ so consists of two natures that each nevertheless retains unimpaired its own distinctive character."[374] Thus:

[371] Institutes 4.17.30
[372] Second Defence. Tracts vol. 2 p286
[373] Institutes 4.17.16
[374] Institutes 4.17.30

"one and the same Christ more than fills heaven and earth with the fullness of his divinity, and yet is not everywhere diffused in respect of his humanity."[375] This is a statement of the so-called Extra-Calvinisticum which is the view that after the incarnation, Jesus' divinity continues to be omnipresent whereas his humanity is not. The presence of God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, is not restricted to that of his human flesh. If this teaching of Calvin's is accepted, then it removes a Lutheran motive for thinking if Christ is to be present at all in the Eucharist, he must be present in a corporeal physical manner. E. David Willis argues that "The "extra-Calvinisticum," because of its widespread and ancient usage could just as well be called the "extra Catholicum;"[376]. The idea is far from original to Calvin. As Willis says: "There is a direct liaison from Calvin to Lombard and especially to St. Augustine. That he learned the doctrine from other portions of the tradition cannot be proved from his writings, but it was in fact almost universally confessed – from Origen and Theodore of Mopsuestia, to Athanasius and Cyril, to St. Thomas and Gabriel Biel."[377]

The doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ's body makes it into a "phantasm or apparition"[378] not a real body as we know them, since it is essential to human bodies that they occupy one space and not another. "Christ's body is limited by the general characteristics common to all human bodies, and is contained in heaven"[379].

[375] Reply to Sadolet. Theological Treatises p238.
[376] E. David Willis, Calvin's Catholic Christology: The Function of the So-Called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought volume 2 (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1966), p153. Willis also suggests the term "extra Patristicum", p60. Heiko A. Oberman, "The 'Extra' Dimension in the Theology of Calvin" The Journal of Ecclesiastical History, Vol. XXI, No.1, January 1970 says similarly: "… Calvin was in a position to establish that the so-called 'extra calvinisticum' was at least an 'extra scholasticum', and, after inquiry into the Greek and Latin fathers, even an 'extra Christianum'.", p59.
[377] Willis, Calvin's Catholic Christology, p60.
[378] Institutes 4.17.17
[379] Institutes 4.17.12

The resurrection appearances of Christ as recounted in the New Testament suggest that the glorified body of Christ is not ubiquitous but could be felt and seen[380].

The doctrine of the immensity of Christ's body overthrows the hope of the resurrection since Jesus will transform our bodies to be like his[381]. Calvin reasons: "Need we say how absurd it were to fill the whole world with the single body of each believer?"[382]

Rather than Christ's body being brought down from heaven, believers are lifted up to him by the Spirit. Calvin says that: "in order that pious souls may duly apprehend Christ in the Supper, they must be raised up to heaven."[383] Hence the importance of the ancient *Sursum Corda* in the Lord's Supper liturgy whereby believers are urged to lift up their hearts[384]. This is appropriate, since spiritually communion takes place with Christ in heaven. The Holy Spirit is able to bridge the gap between Christ and the believer.

When Calvin says that believers partake in Christ spiritually, the idea is that the participating is in the power of the Holy Spirit[385]. As has already been seen above, Calvin does not mean to imply that believers only participate in the Spirit, energy, power or virtue of Christ.

[380] Second Defence. Tracts vol. 2 p288-9
[381] Last Admonition. Tracts vol. 2 p391
[382] Exposition of the articles of agreement. Tracts vol. 2 p241
[383] Institutes 4.17.36
[384] Institutes 4.17.36
[385] Speaking of Calvin's comments on Jesus' bread of life discourse, Gerrish says: "The word (sermo) is called 'spiritual' because it summons us upwards to seek Christ in his heavenly glory, under the leading of the Spirit, by faith, not by carnal perception.", Grace and Gratitude, p131.

Believers participate in the true whole Christ, who is God and man, in both his human and divine natures. But they do so spiritually (in the Spirit) not physically, carnally or materially. Thus, believers do not press Christ with their teeth. The bread and the wine are received by the hands and mouth, and so on. Christ himself is received by the soul or spirit or in the heart. As B. A. Gerrish explains, spiritual presence or eating "should not be taken to mean that Christ is present only in spirit, or only in the believer's imagination… In Calvin's view, it is precisely the body and blood of Christ that are made present to the believer by the secret power of the Spirit."[386] Calvin writes: "When we say that it is spiritual, they roar out as if by this term we were making it not to be what they commonly call real. If they will use the term real for true and oppose it to fallacious and imaginary we will rather speak barbarously than afford material for strife… according to us the spiritual mode of communion is such that we enjoy Christ in reality"[387].

Tylenda has argued that Calvin would prefer to speak of the true presence of Christ in the sacrament, rather than the real presence, because he associates the latter with the idea that Christ is substantially, materially, locally present[388].

Suprasubstantiation

[386] B. A. Gerrish, Grace and Gratitude, p136
[387] 1st answer to Westphal, 239-40; 9.32
[388] J. Tylenda, 'Calvin and Christ's Presence in the Supper – True or Real' Scottish Journal of Theology 27 (1974) 65-75

Keith Mathison suggests that Calvin's view might be termed *suprasubstantiation*. He explains: "The prefix *supra* means "above," "beyond," or "transcending." According to Calvin, Christ's body is present in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, but the mode of his presence is not specifically connected with the substance of the elements."[389] Further: "The term … communicates the idea that there is a real participation in the substance of Christ's body and blood, as Calvin taught, but that this participation occurs on a plane that transcends and parallels the plane on which the physical sign exists."[390]

"This is my body"

On Calvin's view, then, the words of institution are to be understood figuratively as an instance of metonym in which the name of the thing signified is transferred to the sign so that the bread, the sign of Christ's body, is called his body[391]. Taking "this is my body" literally would require Christ to somehow have two physical bodies since at the institution of the Lord's Supper, when those words were first spoken with reference to the bread, his actual body was there before the disciples. He was there speaking to them! Thus: "when he [Christ] held forth the bread, his body was visibly before his disciples, and therefore it must, according to this view, be bicorporal. But it is absurd and repugnant to the principles of faith to give Christ a double body."[392] A strictly literal understanding of Jesus' words "*this cup is*

[389] Mathison, Given For You, p279
[390] Mathison, Given For You, p280
[391] Institutes 4.17.21
[392] Final Admonition. Tracts vol. 2 p442

the new testament in my blood" would require that "not only the *wine,* but also the materials of which *the cup* is composed, must be transubstantiated into *blood*."[393]

Figurative language is common in the Scriptures. If the words "this is my body" must be taken literally, why not passages such as those that speak of God's eyes?[394]

Calvin's view of the Supper concentrates on the believer participating in the Supper rather than on the elements themselves. He says: "those promises by which consecration is accomplished are directed not to the elements themselves but to those who receive them."[395] The elements are set apart for a special purpose, but they have this role in the context of the service and in the act of Communion. The bread and wine remain such: they are not physically transformed, although their meaning and use change.

The Word and the Sacrament

Calvin's insistence on the necessity of the word for the sacrament is partly polemical against the Roman Catholic custom of his day of the priest mumbling the words of consecration in Latin, the congregation probably being largely unable either to hear or understand. Calvin says:

[393] Commentary on Matthew 26:26
[394] Second Defence. Tracts vol. 2 p299
[395] Institutes 4.17.39

nothing more preposterous could happen in the Supper than for it to be turned into a silent action, as has happened under the pope's tyranny…. those promises by which consecration is accomplished are directed not to the elements themselves but to those who receive them…. Here we should not imagine some magic incantation, supposing it enough to have mumbled the words, as if they were to be heard by the elements; but let us understand that these words are living preaching which edifies its hearers, penetrates into their very minds, impresses itself upon their hearts and settles there, and reveals its effectiveness in the fulfilment of what it promises.[396]

He insists that: "we ought to understand the word not as one whispered without meaning and without faith, a mere noise, like a magic incantation, which has the force to consecrate the element"[397]. The word "should, when preached, make us understand what the visible word means."[398] Without the doctrine inseparably linked to the sign "our senses would have been stunned in looking at the bare sign."[399] As Walker comments: "With a vernacular service followed at every point by the people, Calvin had restored the primitive pattern of corporate, congregational communion."[400] For Calvin, "the sacraments take their virtue from the Word, when it is preached intelligibly"[401]. Although as a dominical sacrament of the gospel the Supper depends on Christ's original institution and on his words of promise and command, it also depends on words of explanation spoken by the minister in the service of the Lord's Supper and as the quotations above show, especially on the preached

[396] Institutes 4.17.39
[397] Institutes 4.14.4
[398] Institutes 4.14.4
[399] Institutes 4.14.4
[400] G. S. M. Walker, The Lord's Supper, in Duffield, John Calvin, p143.
[401] Short Treatise. Theological Treatises p161.

Word. Calvin would not approve of the celebration of the Lord's Supper without a sermon, though as has been shown above, he did not want services without the Supper either. The Supper without a sermon, however, would be a far graver error, indeed, grossly defective, perhaps Calvin would even say impossible, since the sacrament depends on the preached word for its benefit and effect.

Sacraments as visible words

For Calvin, the sacraments themselves are visible words. B. A. Gerrish says: "The key to a Calvinistic interpretation of the sacraments is, in short, to construe them as essentially word, promise or proclamation."[402] He explain that: "The difference between word and sacrament is simply that the sacraments picture what the word declares: namely, the content of the promises in Jesus Christ, or simply Christ himself, who is the matter or substance of the sacraments"[403]. Gerrish also comments that: "The sacraments are efficacious precisely as a form, though not the only form, of a word."[404]

Mystery

[402] Gerrish, Grace and Gratitude, p108
[403] Gerrish, Grace and Gratitude, p107 citing Institutes, 4.14.15-7 and Comm. on Gal 3:1 – preaching too depicts Christ.
[404] Gerrish, Grace and Gratitude, p163

As was noted above, Calvin admits that the Supper is ultimately a mystery. Exposition, analysis and polemic must give way to adoration:

… - if one may reduce to words so great a mystery, which I see that I do not even sufficiently comprehend with my mind. I therefore freely admit that no man should measure its sublimity by the little of my childishness. Rather, I urge my readers not to confine their mental interest within too narrow limits, but to strive to rise much higher than I can lead them. For, whenever this matter is discussed, when I have tried to say all, I feel that I have as yet said little in proportion to its worth. And although my mind can think beyond what my tongue can utter, yet even my mind is conquered and overwhelmed by the greatness of the thing. Therefore, nothing remains but to break forth in wonder at this mystery, which plainly neither the mind is able to conceive nor the tongue to express. Nevertheless, I shall in one way or another sum up my views; for, as I do not doubt them to be true, I am confident they will be approved in godly hearts.[405]

At last the Supper is not to be talked about but to be eaten, to be received, participated in and enjoyed with thankful faith.

For the purpose of this thesis, it is worth noting that Calvin affirms here that he knows he has not given the last word on the Supper. He deliberately urged his students to further

[405] Institutes 4.14.7

reflection on the Supper. His readers are “not to confine their mental interest within too narrow limits, but to strive to rise much higher than I can lead them”.

An Anglican Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper

This chapter now argues that the above Reformed doctrine of the Lord’s Supper is compatible with the official doctrine of the Church of England. Despite very significant liturgical reforms, principally today *Common Worship*, and numerous reports and studies, the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* and *The Book of Common Prayer*[406] continue to provide uniquely authoritative doctrinal standards for the Church of England under the Word of God. Thus, for example, the Canons of the Church of England, it’s laws, state:

A 2 Of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion

The Thirty-nine Articles are agreeable to the Word of God and may be assented unto with a good conscience by all members of the Church of England.

A 3 Of *The Book of Common Prayer*

[406] Hereafter these are referred to as The Thirty-Nine Articles or The Articles and The BCP or The Prayer Book without any difference of meaning.

1. The doctrine contained in *The Book of Common Prayer* and Administration of the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church according to the Use of the Church of England is agreeable to the Word of God.

2. The form of God's worship contained in the said Book, forasmuch as it is not repugnant to the Word of God, may be used by all members of the Church of England with a good conscience.

A 5 Of the doctrine of the Church of England

The doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures.

In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, *The Book of Common Prayer*, and the Ordinal.

Similarly, every ordained minister makes the following declaration of assent:

I, *A B*, do so affirm, and accordingly declare my belief in the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of

the Church of England bear witness; and in public prayer and administration of the sacraments, I will use only the forms of service which are authorized or allowed by Canon.

The Preface to the declaration defines the historic formularies as "the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons".

As the Preface to *Common Worship* itself says:

The forms of worship authorized in the Church of England express our faith and help to create our identity…. *The Book of Common Prayer* remains the permanently authorized provision for public worship in the Church of England, whereas newer liturgies are authorized until further resolutions of the General Synod.[407]

Even if it might not be the most commonly used form of service, *The Book of Common Prayer* also provides, at least in theory, a kind of default to which the minister should revert if there is a dispute about which order of service is to be used.

The Church of England is thus unusual in stressing the liturgical definition of doctrine, something that will be of significance for this thesis which will (cautiously) suggest that the Lord's Supper, like the Bible, serves as a kind of theological norm.

[407] Common Worship (ix)

The Reformation Theology of the Lord's Supper

Diarmaid MacCulloch's authoritative account of the English Reformation suggests that the Lord's Supper in *The Book of Common Prayer* and *The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* is at the heart of Reformation theology, not least because the Reformation can be seen as issuing from a crisis of assurance. The priestly sacrifice of the Mass had been a meritorious propitiatory work offered to God on which people depended without confidence to lessen the purgatorial pains of themselves and their dead loved-ones[408]. The authors of *The Prayer Book* and *The Articles* came to see that justification is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Their theology of the Lord's Supper expresses this since it is as believers trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and feed on him in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving that they are assured that they are put right with God and will be welcomed as his friends to the King's Table at the Heavenly Feast.

This thesis principally seeks to interpret the texts of *The BCP* and *The Articles* according to the original intended meaning of the authors in their historical context[409]. Some attention

[408] For popular pre-Reformation and later views of the Mass see Eamon Duffy, The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580 (Yale, Yale University Press, 1992), esp. chapter 3. For the official reassertion of Roman Catholic dogma against Reformed views see The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent.

[409] The Royal Declaration attached to the Articles commands that: "no man… shall… draw the Article aside any way, but shall submit to it in the plain and full meaning… in the literal and grammatical sense… [and] shall [not] affix any new sense to any Article.", BCP, p610.

will also be given to the thorny question of what (other) readings of their words might be "legitimate"[410].

Roger Beckwith notes that "the Prayer Book is a product of the English Reformation, and its main author, Thomas Cranmer, was the guiding figure in the English Reformation. The Prayer Book took more than a hundred years to reach the 1662 form with which we are familiar, but it was still recognisably the same book that had left Cranmer's hands all that time earlier."[411] Beckwith adds: "the Thirty-nine Articles… were largely drafted by the same Thomas Cranmer who drafted the Prayer Book itself. They are his fullest expression of the doctrine which underlay his liturgy."[412]

This section examines the theology of *The Prayer Book* and *The Articles* to see who is thought to be doing what to whom in the Lord's Supper.

Who?

[410] Broadly speaking, the meaning of a text may be said to arise from the author, the text and / or the recipient. It is not possible to treat the methodological, literary, historical, liturgical and ethical issues raised by these approaches here. Some directions might be suggested by Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Is There A Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the reader and the morality of literary knowledge (Leicester, Apollos, 1998).

[411] Roger T. Beckwith, 'The Doctrinal Approach of the Reformers' Faith & Worship Numbers 65-66 Easter 2010 p16. See Roger T. Beckwith, and T. W. Drury, How We Got Our Prayer Book Latimer Studies 22 (Oxford, 1986). Peter Brooks, Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of the Eucharist (London, 1965), which argues that Cranmer's view of the Supper was akin to Calvin's.

[412] Beckwith, Doctrinal Approach, p17. For Cranmer's doctrine of the Supper, see also his 'A Defence of the True and Catholic Doctrine of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ'. For a studies of Cranmer's doctrine of the Lord's Supper see D. A. Scales, 'Thomas Cranmer's 'True and Catholick Doctrine of the Sacrament'' Churchman 104/2 1990, Colin Buchanan, 'What Did Cranmer Think He Was Doing?' Grove Liturgical Study No. 7 (Nottingham, Grove Books, 1976 Second Edition 1982) and Peter Brooks, Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of the Eucharist (London, 1965), which argue that Cranmer's view of the Supper was akin to Calvin's.

God

The Book of Common Prayer and *The Thirty-Nine Articles*, following Calvin, Luther and others, recapture and emphasise that the Lord's Supper is primarily God's action towards his people not their action towards God. Thus, God feeds "us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood" of Jesus "and dost assure us thereby of… [his] favour and goodness towards us."[413]

People & Presbyter

Yet people and priest are involved in the service and not merely passive. The English word priest is, in fact, properly the equivalent of presbyter or elder and does not suggest a sacrificial priest as in the Bible or in Roman Catholic theology[414]. The great change in *The Prayer Book* is that the Lord's Supper is not something the priest does which the people perhaps watch and hear in part. The very fact that the service is required to be in the language "understood of the people"[415] and that *The BCP* directs people to come up for

[413] BCP, Holy Communion, prayer after Communion, p258.
[414] See, for example, Christopher Cocksworth and Rosalind Brown, Being A Priest Today: Exploring priestly identity (Norwich, Canterbury Press, 2002), chapter 1 and R. T. Beckwith, Elders in Every City: The Origin and Role of the Ordained Ministry (Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 2003), chapter 2 for the authentic historical understanding that Anglican "priests" are presbyters / elders.
[415] According to Article 24: "It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the Primitive Church, to have publick Prayer in the Church, or to minister the Sacraments in a tongue not understood of the people.", BCP, p621. This fits with a Reformed emphasis on receiving the Lord's Supper with faith and understanding.

Communion much earlier[416] and sets up the architecture and drama of the liturgy so that people can see what is going on, demonstrates that the people are now included in a new way.

The Prayer Book rubric directs that the priest should be at the north side of the Communion table to conduct the service[417]. Extraordinarily, the Church of England is the only church to practice North Side Communion and no contemporary explanation of this unique custom survives. Leading evangelicals Alec Motyer, Alan Stibbs and John Stott attempted a theological defence[418]. They regard it, among other things, as a discreet self-effacement on the part of the minister. It portrays Christ as the High Priest at his own table with the minister as a servant and a grateful recipient alongside the congregation, a representative of the priesthood of all believers. However, historically, visibility seems to be the purpose of north side communion. MacCulloch explains:

Motyer and co. have clearly misunderstood what happened at the Reformation. The English reformers wanted to move their communion table away from the site of the altar, so they were faced with the problem of where to put it. One place would be at the top of the nave, and that seems to have been one common experimental place in Edward VI's reign, but particularly in Elizabeth's reign they seem to have decided to use the chancel, mostly because Elizabeth didn't want chancel (rood) screens demolished, and so you had to do something with the separate chancel space beyond the screen. They had the long narrow

[416] "Draw near with faith" before the general Confession, BCP, Holy Communion, p251.
[417] BCP, Holy Communion, introductory rubric, p237
[418] In Motyer, Stibbs and Stott, Why I Value the North Side Position, CPAS Fellowship Paper 238 (1963)

chancels of English medieval parish churches with a lot of space in the middle, so the obvious solution was to put the table there, but naturally it was best placed on the long axis of the chancel. So where to stand then? On the north side, obviously, for maximum visibility of the manual actions, with the sunlight pouring in from south or east, so that there could be no counterfeiting popish trumpery. This position then got frozen once the altarwise position of the table became the norm again, and became a shibboleth in evangelical circles in the nineteenth century in reaction to Anglo-Catholic realignments. It's as simple as that.[419]

According to the Prayer Book, there are to be no private masses or even semi-private public masses[420] where priest mumble the *hocus-pocus*[421], a parody of the virtually magical words of consecration, *hoc est corpus meum*, 'this is my body' (Matthew 26:26)[422]. As Article 30 requires, communion in both kinds, which had been denied to the laity since the thirteenth century as it was thought they could not be trusted with the blood of Christ[423], was restored to the people, thus suggesting a different non-material theological understanding of the eucharistic presence.

[419] Personal communication by email 18/4/05.
[420] The notes at the end of the BCP Lord's Supper say: "And there shall be no Celebration of the Lord's Supper, except there be a convenient number to communicate with the Priest, according to his discretion." At the least three people should communicate with the Priest, p261.
[421] "Hocus pocus" in Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable Millennium Edition revised by Adrian Room (London, Cassell & Co, 1959-2001) p577. For magical associations with the Mass see Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic: studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England (London, Penguin, 1971) esp. pp36-40, 60f, 303, 319, 326.
[422] See Alistair McGrath, Reformation Thought: An Introduction second edition 1993 (Oxford, Blackwell, 1988), p169.
[423] See McGrath, Reformation Thought, p167.

The people, then, participate in the Lord's Supper to a striking new degree with the introduction of the Reformation services.

Article 23 "Of Ministering in the Congregation" instructs that only those lawfully called to minister the Sacrament should do so[424]. Though the reasons are not spelled out in detail, it seems likely that this is because ministering the sacrament is related both to the ministry of the Word and to church government and discipline. This coheres with the instruction for the Curate to read out any excommunications in the Communion service[425].

Does what?

The Lord's Supper not the Sacrifice of the Mass

With the Reformation, the Supper has become again a meal at a "table" not a propitiatory sacrifice at an altar. The meal is "the banquet of that most heavenly food"[426] where the believers feed on Christ in their hearts by faith to our comfort and growth in grace.

[424] BCP, Articles, p620
[425] BCP, "notices"! etc. after the creed, p241.
[426] BCP, Holy Communion, Exhortation (2) … in case the people [be] negligent to come to the holy Communion, p247ff.

The BCP Prayer of Consecration[427] and *The Articles* clearly reject the view that the sacrament is a propitiatory sacrifice or in any way deals with sin in similar terms:

The Offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is no other satisfaction for sin, but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifices of Masses, in which it was commonly said, that the Priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits.[428]

In fact, further, Gregory Dix called the Prayer Book Communion service "the only effective attempt ever made to give liturgical expression to the doctrine of justification by faith alone."[429]

The Presence of Christ

Above all, God offers believers the true and spiritual presence of the whole Christ in the Supper to be received by faith. Cranmer's service and doctrinal basis reject the idea of the corporeal presence of Christ in the elements (by trans- or con-substantiation), at one

[427] BCP, Holy Communion, Prayer of Consecration, "Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of thy tender mercy didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption; who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world…", p255.
[428] BCP, Articles, p624.
[429] Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy (1945), p672

extreme, and mere memorialism at the other. Believers genuinely spiritually receive the whole Christ by faith.

The BCP rubric clearly states that by kneeling:

no Adoration is intended, or ought to be done, either unto the Sacramental Bread or Wine there bodily received, or unto any Corporal Presence of Christ's natural Flesh and Blood. For the Sacramental Bread and Wine remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored; (for that were Idolatry, to be abhorred of all faithful Christians;) and the natural Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ are in Heaven, and not here; it being against the truth of Christ's natural Body to be at one time in more places than one.[430]

This is a rejection of the Lutheran doctrine of the physical ubiquity of Christ's glorified humanity. *The BCP* is closer to Calvin's view that believers spiritually feed on Christ in heaven. *The Articles* likewise reject views of the corporeal presence of Christ in the sacrament:

Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and Wine) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by holy Writ; but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

[430] BCP, Holy Communion, p262.

Devotion to the elements is banned: “The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was not by Christ’s ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.”[431] It would seem Jesuitical to suggest that this article intends only to point out that Jesus did not command such (allowable) practices: the clear implication is that they are being condemned.

Offer?

In the Communion service, the Priest begins the Offertory at the Table and the “Alms for the Poor, and other devotions of the people” are collected and those assisting “reverently bring it to the Priest, who shall humbly present and place it upon the holy Table. [And] … the Priest shall then place upon the table so much Bread and Wine as he shall think sufficient.” Some have taken this to suggest that the unconsecrated bread and wine are being offered to God (to be set apart for a holy purpose). It would seem liturgically clumsy to place the bread and wine on the table with the offertory at this point if this notion is deliberately being avoided. In the prayer: “We humbly beseech thee most mercifully [*to accept our alms and oblations, and] to receive these our prayers, which we offer to thy Divine majesty;”[432] it is possible that the “oblations” (a term which is used twice of the death of Jesus in the Lord’s Supper service) are, or include, the unconsecrated bread and wine. Beckwith and Drury think it more likely that the oblations are the other financial gifts of the people which are not alms for the poor, such as money given to support the ministry, but

[431] BCP, AR 28, p623.
[432] BCP, Holy Communion, p244.

they conclude: "We need not, however, condemn those who include the bread and wine among the 'other devotions'."[433] As with Calvin's doctrine of the Supper, it is not necessary to think that all God-ward action is excluded, although it is carefully circumscribed and, if it is allowed, is most definitely a secondary and subordinate response to God's prior and primary action. It is important to underline the difference between offering the unconsecrated elements to God for his use and the Roman Catholic notion of offering the consecrated elements as a means of (re-)offering the sacrifice of Christ to the Father.

The communicants are to *receive* (rather than offer) the consecrated bread and the wine "with thanksgiving"[434] (Eucharist) and it is after the Communion that they ask the Father "mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of thanks and praise."[435] Again, as with Calvin, this is a non-propitiatory sacrifice. It might be debated whether or not the Supper itself, or the elements in it, are included at all in this sacrifice. The statement could refer only to the prayer which now expresses praise or to the whole service, or to something in between. If, properly considered, all of life is a sacrifice of thanks and praise to God (Romans 12:1), it would be bizarre to think that the Lord's Supper alone is excluded. Whether or not it is in any sense a special sacrifice of thanks and praise is another question. Perhaps it might be seen as a focal point for offering all of life to God in grateful thanks for all that has been received from him. The believer would be giving back to God what God has given. *The Prayer Book* and *Articles* do not decisively adjudicate on such questions.

[433] Beckwith and Drury, How We Got Our Prayer Book, p47. Likewise, R. T. Beckwith, Praying With Understanding: explanations of the words and passages in the Book of Common Prayer Latimer Briefings 2 (Oxford, 1992): "Here the reference is to our own gifts, conceivably meaning the unconsecrated bread and wine, but more probably those parts of the collection [of money] which are not 'alms' (i.e. not for the poor).", p17.
[434] BCP, Holy Communion, words of administration, p256.
[435] BCP, Holy Communion, p257.

The dead

MacCulloch eloquently describes the relationship between the Mass and / or Lord's Supper and the dead, which is so transformed by *The BCP* and *Articles*:

For the late medieval Church, the mass had become as much something for the dead as for the living…. Behind the crowds of the faithful in the medieval parish church… jostled invisible … crowds of the dead. … because the church maintained a model of the afterlife in which the mass could speed the souls of the faithful departed though purgatory. A gigantic consumer demand of the dead fuelled the services of the Church…. It was to change all this that the reformers struggled. Insisting that the just shall live by faith alone, they believed that the medieval Church, with the papacy as its evil genius, had played a gigantic confidence trick on the living by claiming to aid the dead in this way. They sought to banish the dead, and to banish the theology which had summoned them into the circle of the living faithful gathered around the Lord's table.[436]

However, this is not entirely accurate when applied to the 1662 *BCP*: the dead are not wholly banished. Beckwith and Drurry point out that the "thankful Commemoration of the Faithful Dead" without which "our Eucharist would hardly be complete"[437] was restored in 1662. This is appropriate to the Communion of the Saints and the doctrine of fellowship

[436] MacCulloch, Cranmer: A Life, op. cit., p614.
[437] Beckwith and Drurry, How We Got Our Prayer Book, p46

with the universal church down the centuries (living and dead) and around the world, but it must be emphasised that in the Reformed service believers pray for their final rest with (like) the dead, not that of the dead[438].

To whom?

For believers

The Lord's Supper is only for those who "do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins" who "draw near with faith."[439]

Since the spiritual feeding in the Supper is by faith, in heaven, "The Wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth (as Saint Augustine saith) the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ: but rather, to their condemnation, do they eat and drink the sign or Sacrament of so great a thing."[440]

Conclusion

[438] Notice that we pray for "the whole state of Christ's Church militant here on earth", BCP, p244, though Beckwith, points out that "… printed Prayer-Books … prove that there was a desire on the part of some to omit the words 'militant here in earth' They are first erased and then restored in handwriting.", Praying, p46.
[439] BCP, Holy Communion, p251.
[440] BCP, Article 29, p624

The abiding doctrinal standards of the Church of England, The Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty-Nine Articles, whilst not reflecting Calvin's doctrine and practice exactly or in every detail are compatible with, indeed, expressive of and complimentary to a Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper, such as Calvin's. The understanding of the mode of Christ's presence in the Supper given in the Prayer Book and Articles is best described as Calvinistic.

The doctrine of the Lord's Supper set out in this chapter will be used in chapter four to reconsider the doctrine of Scripture, drawing on chapter two where that doctrine was expounded. In the next chapter, the doctrine of the Lord's Supper described here will be unfolded further using the doctrine of Scripture outlined in chapter two.

Chapter 4: *Edible Words*

The Supper in the light of the Scriptures

INTRODUCTION

This chapter re-examines the traditional idea, which has played a particularly prominent part in the Evangelical and Reformed traditions, that the Supper is a (visible) word.

The resources of chapters 2 and 3 are deployed and the subjects treated there are developed further here. The earlier discussions are presumed and recalled[441].

The starting point for this chapter is the premise, which was briefly discussed in chapter 3, especially from Calvin, that the Supper may be understood (at least in part or in a sense) as a word. The chapter aims to describe and clarify what this might mean and to some extent to test such an understanding and to offer a critique of it. The basic approach of the chapter is to attempt to ask how the Reformed Evangelical understanding of the Scriptures as a word, in particular, as the written Word(s) of God, as set out in chapter 2, might inform

[441] Much of the structure and many of the headings of this chapter reflect those of chapter 2 and it may be helpful, although hopefully not strictly necessary, to refer back to the corresponding sections there. Relevant citations of Warfield and Calvin and speech act theorists will often be found in chapters 2 and 3.

Reformed Evangelical understandings of the Supper as a word and in particular as another related a word of God.

As representatives of the Reformed Evangelical tradition, Warfield and Calvin will continue to be significant conversation partners for the reasons set out in chapters 2 and 3. An attempt will be made to consider what they or their theological successors in the Reformed Evangelical tradition[442] might make of some of the arguments advanced here. *The Book of Common Prayer*, which was discussed in chapter 3, will provide a primary reference point. The Prayer Book is especially useful in giving a particular way of understanding and celebrating the Supper with which to interact, when there is so much diversity and variety, in Christian approaches to it today. The Church of England's other official liturgy, *Common Worship,* provides what is in some ways a less convenient conversation partner since different options abound and the rubrics are less prescriptive. It is hard to know from the text of *Common Worship* how in particular the Communion is actually celebrated in practice and field research would be required to make firm conclusions about current practice. As was shown in chapter 2, *The Book of Common Prayer* remains the abiding liturgical doctrinal standard for the Church of England[443] whereas *Common Worship* is authorised only until further legislative change. Study of *The Book of Common Prayer* should therefore have more permanent value for the Church of England. If this dialogue with *The Book of Common*

[442] Of course, there may be all sorts of issues and debates here about who might claim to be following Calvin and Warfield, or who would be happy to be thought of as doing so, and how close the resemblance actually is. As mentioned previously, the influence of Calvin and Warfield is often a mediated one, for example, through the likes of J. I. Packer (who is, of course, a British Anglican).

[443] see Canon A5 of The Canons of the Church of England

Prayer is thought to be valuable then it could be extended to *Common Worship*[444] but this would be a larger and more complex undertaking.

The basic approach of this chapter could certainly be extended beyond the Reformed Evangelical tradition of the likes of Warfield and Calvin and/or beyond The Prayer Book (and Common Worship) to other theological traditions and/or other forms of service.

So this chapter will attempt a treatment of the Supper as a word or Word. It will consider issues such as: who is saying what to whom in, or through, or by, or about the Supper? When, why and how?

If these questions are taken at their broadest and partly figuratively (allowing for a certain amount of latitude about may be thought of as "said" and how "speaking" is done, and so on), they could only be answered with a comprehensive study of the Lord's Supper. Of course the Christian tradition has contained many different understandings of the Supper, some of them mutually exclusive, and it is beyond the bounds of this thesis to attempt to examine them all in detail. It will be necessary to focus primarily on a particular theological tradition (in this case, the Reformed Evangelical one with reference to The Church of England) and on certain questions (here, those most relevant to the approach and themes

[444] For an Evangelical Anglican assessment of the Communion services in Common Worship see David Peterson, 'Holy Communion in Common Worship' (2005) at http://www.theologian.org.uk/church/communion.html

of this thesis, ideas of the Supper as a word and considered in relation to the Scriptures). Chapters 2 and 3 have helped to define this field to some extent.

Some preliminary consideration is given to introductory and methodological matters and to the idea of words. Clearly it is necessary to consider what words are, and how they work if the Supper is to be understood as a word. Thereafter, the structure of chapter 2 is followed. The Supper is considered as a word by comparison with the Bible, understood as the written Word[445] of God. The Supper is then studied using a modern strategy for understanding words, which has, as chapter 2 outlined, to some extent been applied by certain theologians to understanding the Word of God, namely Speech Act theory. Again, this approach could potentially be extended to include any ways of understanding words[446]. The consideration of speech act theory in this chapter may act as something of a test case as to whether or not applications of other approaches to words to the Supper are likely to yield useful results.

Whilst the basic category of this chapter (the Supper as a word) is demonstrably an ancient and venerable one, and its approaches (comparison with another related doctrinal topic and the appropriation of relevant "secular" tools) could also claim eminent precedents, these ideas have not often been explored in this way before. There appears to be very little directly pertinent academic literature with which to interact. This would not seem to be because this approach has been considered and found wanting but because it has not usually been prosecuted. This chapter is therefore relatively discursive, exploratory or

[445] Different senses of the word "word" (or "Word") will be noted.
[446] An obvious candidate for further study would be semiotics since it treats words (and other things) as signs and there is a well-established Christian tradition of understanding the Supper as a sign.

experimental when compared to chapters 2 and 3. The aim has been to include those ideas which are thrown up by this approach even if they cannot be followed through fully here. It is likely that this chapter and the following one will represent the most original parts of this thesis, for which chapters 2 and 3 were the necessary groundwork.

If Reformed Evangelicals wish to affirm that the Scriptures and the Supper are words (of God) then reflection such as that contained in this chapter seems desirable. Further, if the Supper is a word then it is worth asking how other understandings of words might explicate it or be informed by study of it. Even if, for example, this chapter were to suggest that there is little that can be learnt from speech act theory for understanding the Supper this would be a useful and interesting conclusion. Indeed, if the Supper is a speech act and / or contains speech acts, then it would be very surprising if speech act theory were to say nothing of value about it, and it would be worth asking why this were the case. Perhaps speech act theory is defective or underdeveloped? Or somehow or, for some reason, incompatible with Reformed theology? Or perhaps the Supper is not really a speech act? Or is a unique speech act in such a way that a normal speech act theory does not seem to account for it well? Indeed, it would not be surprising if God's speech acts in the Supper were both like and unlike human speech acts of other sorts. It is likely that there will be ways in which God's speech acts are unique and special and it would not be surprising if the Supper contains peculiar speech acts.

The chapter offers fresh ways of building on a well-established traditional understanding of the Supper (as a word) and it is hoped that new insights will be found here. Methodological

issues abound[447]. As with the discussion of speech act theory in chapter 2, it may be debatable to what extent it makes a genuinely new and useful contribution here. Even if it is concluded that speech act theory only serves to express old truths in different ways, that is not necessarily without value. Such fresh expressions[448] could be useful in academic, interdisciplinary, evangelistic, apologetic or ecumenical dialogue. They may have a heuristic or pedagogical value. They may serve to highlight fresh questions or bring to the fore matters which might otherwise be neglected, even if they cannot be said to be entirely new. A speech act account of the Supper may tell the Christian things that he ought already to have known from the Bible or the Supper itself in other ways.

Similarly, chapter 2 followed Timothy Ward and Kevin Vanhoozer in arguing that (without using the technical vocabulary of later theorists) the Bible itself suggests what might be termed a speech act view of language and of Biblical language or, rather, God's use of language, in particular. It might be argued that the Supper suggests some kind of understanding of itself which is akin to speech act theory.

Again, it will need to be asked whether any potential genuinely new insights are compatible with the Reformed Evangelical tradition or not, and, if they are not, whether it is these supposed insights or the tradition that stand in need of correction[449].

[447] It may well be that some consideration of some of the topics raised here might belong better in a different place in the completed thesis, perhaps earlier in chapter 2 or in the introduction etc.
[448] To echo a phrase much used in the Church of England today! http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/
[449] Given its slogan of *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda est*, 'the reformed Church is always being reformed', the Reformed tradition should be particularly open to correction, aalthough, of course, the primary source and supreme for Reformed Evangelical doctrine is the Scriptures, not speech act theory! Tradition and reason play a part in Reformed Evangelical theology.

Using the "secular" categories of speech act theory need not be a capitulation to secularism nor to values, attitudes, judgements or doctrines alien to the Christian faith[450]. Rather this approach may be seen as what might be called "plundering the Egyptians"[451]. For the Christian all truth wherever it is to be found properly belongs to Christ the Creator[452] and maybe put to his service. Some Christians might see the insights of secular theories such as speech act theory as examples of Common Grace or as the results of General Revelation. Whenever the non-Christian theorist made use of a truth, whether he knew it or not, it was really borrowed capital from the Christian, who follows Christ The Truth[453]. All true speaking depends on God's creative, ruling and sustaining Word, all logic on Christ the *logos*[454]. The ability to understand and name the world may be seen as part of or a result of the image of God in humankind[455], which, although marred by The Fall[456], is not totally abolished, even in the unbeliever. This chapter therefore suggests a redeemed, sanctified or baptised speech act theory. More modestly, and to strain a metaphor, it is suggested that it might at least be

[450] These kind of objections are made for example by John Webster in "Theological Theology." in *Confessing God: Essays in Christian Dogmatics II* and especially as was noted in chapter 2 against Timothy Ward's use of speech act theory in articulating a doctrine of Scripture in John Webster *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Granted that this is a danger and that caution must be exercised, it is still not necessarily so. One might perhaps say with Jesus, "by their fruits you will know them" (Matthew 7:16, 20). In other words, non-Christian systems, models and tools might be judged, in part, by their results, by whether they produce fruitful, wholesome understandings compatible with Christian theology and capable of nurturing Christian thought and practice. Of course, the Christian will not want to devote so much time and energy to listening to speech act theory or any other extra-biblical approach that he fails to attend to the Scriptures or the tradition. For the Reformed, the Bible, not contemporary theory must remain the court of appeal.

[451] As the fleeing Israelites did according to Exodus 12:36. In other words, taking secular or non-Christian things and putting them to Christian use (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:5). To extend the metaphor, the gold of the Egyptians may need a certain amount of melting down or re-working, especially if it had been made into idols!

[452] John 1:1-4, 9; Colossians 1:16

[453] These ideas depend to some extent on the presuppositionalism of Cornelius Van Til and his followers. Although Van Til's disciples debate what he actually thought and his legacy is disputed, a useful scholarly introduction can be found in John Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* (P & R Publishing, 1995)

[454] John 1:1, 14; Hebrews 1:3

[455] Genesis 2:26-27

[456] Genesis 3

susceptible to conversion and might potentially be discipled for the service of Christ, even if there are some things of which it might need to repent.

The Christian theologian is likely to want to claim a (methodological) priority for the Supper over speech act theory[457]. It may be that consideration of the Supper as a speech act might help to develop what might be called a Christian speech act theory which would teach the believer how to understand other speech acts[458]. Learning from the Supper in this way would be appropriate since Christians have often considered the Supper to be a paradigmatic microcosm and they see the Eucharist as training and equipping them to be sent out for life in the world[459], though it remains an open question how much Christian speech act theory might differ from speech act as normally practiced by unbelieving academics. As the believer takes, handles, changes[460], interprets and uses created elements in the Supper[461] so he might learn how to take, interpret and "use" the created world more generally. The Sunday service may then be seen as (in part) a school for life in the world. No

[457] The Christian might claim all sorts of priority for the Supper over speech act theory. After all, a Christian might claim that the Supper came directly from Jesus in his earthly ministry; speech act theory did not. The believer is therefore likely to see that Supper as much more authoritative and important than the latest theories of communication.

[458] Similar claims could be made for reading and reflecting on the Bible and all other literature. There will be a reciprocal relationship between the believer's understanding of the Bible and other books, with one informing the other, though the Christian would claim that reading the Bible ought to teach us how to read in general and how to "read" the world. For exploration of such themes see Peter Leithart, Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture (Baylor University Press , 2009)

[459] The notion that the Eucharist equips believers for life in the world may be reflected in the prayer in the Common Worship Communion service, "Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory" and "May we who share Christ's body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others;" and the dismissal "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord." The missionary dimension of the Supper, God's people being sent out into the world, is an ancient idea as the term "Mass" itself testifies.

[460] The nature of the change in the bread and the wine has been highly controversial in theology. Most would accept that the service involves some kind of consecration, setting apart the elements for a special use. Normally the bread is broken, which is undoubtedly a change of sorts. The (Calvinistic) Reformed have generally strongly resisted the idea that there is any ontological change in the substance of the elements.

[461] James Jordan suggests that a pattern like this is built into the Eucharist and all human action in *Through New Eyes* (Brentwood, Wolgemuth & Hyatt Publishers, 1988), 125-126.

doubt, in fact, there will be a reciprocal relationship between life in the world and Christian worship: both should inform one another. The Christian theologian may learn something from speech act of how to understand the Supper, and from the Supper something of how to understand speech acts more generally, just as the believer may learn from the world or creation something of how to worship and from his worship how to live in the world and deal with creation. The Catholic tradition would be more comfortable than some Evangelicals might be with the idea that in the Eucharist the created elements of bread and wine are offered up to God for his use. On such a view, the elements may be seen as representative of all human life and work which is symbolically brought to the special worship of the Lord's Day service, perhaps even brought forward by representatives of the people from the body of the church and placed on the "altar". Such ideas need not necessarily be repugnant to a Reformed Evangelical theology provided that it is remembered that human works could never be meritorious or propitiatory. God graciously accepts weak human things (like bread and wine or indeed all human works), transforms them and uses them for his purposes. Believers themselves come to the Lord's Day service as they are, to be "broken", changed and re-dedicated to God's purposes to go out again transformed, into the world to serve him.

When it comes to comparing the Scriptures and the Supper it is important to remember that an analogy in itself does not necessarily constitute an argument as such. X is a bit like Y (in some way), or even more weakly, X might make someone think of Y, may prove little or nothing. Nevertheless relevant analogies can be illuminating and suggestive. This thesis is open to discovering both similarities and contrasts between the Scriptures and the Supper:

there is no agenda here to wish to squeeze the Supper and the Scriptures artificially into similar molds. Indeed, it is important to think about the unique contribution of each. Even if the same or similar things might be said of the Supper and the Scriptures it is possible that they might be said in different degrees, or ways, or senses, or for different purposes, or from different causes, and so on. Parallelomania must, of course, be avoided but, ambitiously, it is even possible that an emerging pattern of parallels might suggest a deeper underlying structure such as, for example, a basic framework derived from the doctrines of creation and redemption, or the incarnation, which applies both to the Supper and the Scriptures. If a genuine family likeness is discernible, it is worth asking why this might be. It would hardly be surprising to find commonalities between the Scriptures and the Supper since they are both traditionally understood as means of grace[462]. They could well be adjacent topics in a Systematic Theology[463]. If God works through the Scriptures and the Supper in the lives of believers it would not be surprising if he does so in similar ways and for congruent purposes.

Although, in this chapter, the category of word is found to be fruitful and suggestive for understanding the Supper, it will be shown that it has some potential weaknesses and limits. It should not be totalized. This chapter should not be taken to imply that the framework of

[462] Although this categorisation would generally be accepted, questions lurk even here. Do they mediate the same grace? In the same way? Etc. These questions are addressed to some extent in chapter 3 when Calvin's attempt to differentiate Word and Supper is discussed.

[463] And indeed often are. The classic Evangelical Systematic Theology of Lous Berkhof (The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1958) is a good example of this: the section on the means of grace contains: II. The Word as a Means of Grace and III. The Sacraments. The positioning of topics in a systematic theology is debatable and may of course be governed by all sorts of considerations, including those which are more didactic than determined by the subject matter itself. It is common, and to some extent justifiable, to place the subject of the Scriptures first amongst the prolegomena, since they provide a formal principle, authority and methodology for theology. One of the questions that this thesis raises is whether the Supper too might play some kind of normative role in theology.

"word" is the only, or even the most fundamental, way of understanding the Supper. For example, it might be argued that the Supper is first of all a meal or a ritual action of worship, though a significant one that "speaks". Other ways of thinking the Supper may say things that the model of word misses entirely or tends to neglect. It may be asked to what extent the various models of understanding the Supper are compatible and how they are related: is one model more fundamental than others and / or capable of replacing, including or explaining them?

It is argued here that, like the Bible, in Reformed Evangelical theology, the Supper is primarily a Word of God, rather than a human word, though it is given in ordinary human words and through created things (bread and wine) and contains human words (in the sense of people saying things to God and to one another). It is asked to what extent concepts and categories used to understand to the written Word of God (discussed in chapter 2) can be applied to the Supper. Whilst, of course, the Supper must not be confused with the Bible, and important distinctions must be made, this chapter aims to show that the Supper may, to some extent, be fruitfully thought of as an edible, participatory or tangible word. Again, this is not to suggest, of course, that words are the only or primary category for understanding the Supper.

This exercise may also serve to clarify the doctrine of Scripture since it may help to establish which characteristic of Scripture are common to all "words" of God (including, for example, the Supper considered as a word, the incarnate Word, God's other words and works) and which are particular to the written Word.

THE SUPPER AS A WORD

The Supper and Words

Obviously the Supper is not a written word as such, or even, only, an audible word, although words are (invariably?) involved. The Supper is an event, a service of the church, a sacramental action, a meal which includes words. Usually (today) there will be both written and audible words in a service of the Lord's Supper. It is difficult to imagine a wordless celebration of the Lord's Supper, though in recent Christianity many unimaginably odd and eccentric things have been attempted! Indeed, silence is so celebrated and there is such a suspicion of words in some theological circles today that it would not be entirely surprising if a silent Supper had been attempted, or even if it had not been tried, that it might be thought desirable in some ways[464]. It would be interesting to consider celebrations of the Supper for the deaf, blind and mute[465]. However, even if a wordless Supper were attempted, in a sense it would be impossible for it to be strictly entirely wordless since any individual celebration of the Supper is related to the first Lord's Supper (which included Jesus' words) and to subsequent celebrations of it, which have included words. Normally it would be impossible for participants in the Supper, who would be used to the words of the

[464] Wordless prayer and prayer beyond words are often championed and since the Eucharist if often thought of as the great prayer of the church it would seem a short step to wonder whether a wordless Eucharist might not be best.

[465] Even here, presumably, the principle of right reception would mean that the aim would be to ensure that participant could eat with faith, which includes a measure of understanding, by using whatever means of communication might be most helpful.

service, to think of the bread and wine entirely without those familiar words or the understandings they have suggested.

At least it can be said that Jesus' Last Supper, which may be thought of as the first celebration of the Lord's Supper, certainly involved words and that has been the overwhelming and perhaps universal norm throughout the history of the church.

This might raise the question of what words are necessary each time the Supper is celebrated and exactly what bearing words recalled from earlier celebrations might have. For example, is it sufficient for priest and / or participants to know (and recall?) that Jesus said "this is my body" etc., or must those words be said each time? Even if a repetition of those words is desirable, is it strictly necessary, such that without them it is not the Lord's Supper that is celebrated? Christian theologians have thought with a remarkable degree of unanimity that they must be said on each occasion, though a Roman Catholic understanding of the Supper is more likely to require precisely those words and know why. Roman Catholic doctrine requires the words of consecration to affect transubstantiation[466]. The Reformed are more likely to think in terms of right reception and it is not obvious that repetition of any single particular form of words is absolutely necessary to that. Likely various possible options would be thought more or less helpful. Indeed, some would argue that different forms would be helpful to bring out different aspects of the Supper. Reformed churches would allow different degrees of flexibility to the minister[467]. Free churches would allow

[466] The Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 1352-3, 1376-7, 1413.
[467] The Westminster Directory of Public Worship chapter "of the celebration of the Communion, or the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper" provides classic instruction.

considerable freedom. The Church of England is one of the more prescriptive denominations in this regard, requiring set authorised forms of service and Eucharistic prayers[468].

What words?

The most significant words of the Supper in the history of interpretation have been Jesus' commandment to do this in memory of him and his statement that the bread and wine are his body and blood. These have given rise respectively to so-called the narrative of institution and the words of consecration[469], which have formed such a prominent part of services of the Lord's Supper historically. In some branches of the church, especially in the East, and increasingly in recent times, partly because Eastern Christianity has been to some extent "re-discovered" in the West, words of epiclesis, invoking the work of the Spirit and calling upon him to come, have also been thought to be important, sometimes central or essential, though they are not obviously found in the New Testament accounts of the administration of the Supper nor in The Book of Common Prayer. It is disputed whether any epiclesis should refer to the elements, the congregation or (possibly) both. Common Worship appears to contain this range of options[470], sometimes being ambiguous. Reformed Evangelicals have tended to think that an epiclesis is unnecessary and especially that any suggestion that the Spirit is to work on the bread and wine is undesirable. The Reformed

[468] As set out in The Book of Common Prayer and in Common Worship.
[469] Cf. 1 Cor 11:23-25; Mt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20; the Prayer of Consecration in The Book of Common Prayer Communion service and the Eucharistic prayers in Common Worship
[470] For a discussion of the epiclesis in the Eucharistic Prayers of Common Worship from an Evangelical perspective see David Peterson, *Holy Communion*

reject the idea that the Spirit needs to change the substance of the bread. Some Reformed Evangelicals might also be uncomfortable with the notion of consecration since it could be thought to derive from the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation and to imply a change in the substance of the bread and wine. However, the idea that the bread and wine are specially set apart for a holy purpose (consecrated) in the service of the Lord's Supper is not incompatible with a Reformed Evangelical understanding of the Supper and would seem unobjectionable. It is undeniable that the bread and wine, although they remain ordinary, are put to a special use in the service. A question may then arise over the status of any remaining consecrated elements after the service is over. In The Prayer Book it is directed that the Curate shall have any unused unconsecrated bread and wine "to his own use" but that any consecrated elements should be consumed[471]. Evangelicals sometimes say that this is for the avoidance of the superstitious use of them. The reservation of the sacrament would seem to be incompatible with The Articles[472] and with Reformed theology although it is widely practised in the Church of England. It is interesting in this regard that in the more Protestant Edwardian Prayer Book of 1552 the curate (minister) was allowed to take home any remaining elements, including any which had been consecrated, for his own use[473]. As Diarmaid McCulloch has remarked, this is theologically significant and shows that the writers of that Prayer Book had decisively rejected any ideas of trans- or con-substantiation since one would be unlikely to take God home and have him for tea[474]!

[471] The final rubrics of the BCP Communion service
[472] Article 28 states: "The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped." It is hardly likely that this is intended to be a merely historical point. It seems clear that the reservation of the sacrament is being forbidden.
[473] Final rubrics. The text is available at: http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1552/Communion_1552.htm
[474] in lectures on the English Reformation given at Oxford University in 1999.

It is common for Evangelicals to pray before and after the reading and / or preaching of God's Word. Often the help of the Spirit might be invoked. It is interesting to compare these prayers with prayers of consecration and with the epiclesis. As with the Reformed understanding of the Supper, no change in the words of the Bible is countenanced. Rather the prayer is that the Spirit would take and use those words in the lives of believers. The words of the Bible and of the sermon are, on one level, ordinary words, but they are also special words that are set apart and used by God. Evangelicals would be more comfortable with a kind of epiclesis that asks the Spirit to work in the hearts of believers as they receive a word (or indeed the sacrament), rather than in the Word (or the elements of the Supper).

Reformed Evangelicals would tend to think that a prayer of consecration is unnecessary with respect to the Bible since, though the words are "ordinary" human words, it is already in any case a special book, or at least it's words or message are special. It is the Word of God: it does not become the Word of God by an act of consecration. Although Anglo-Catholics would often reverence the physical object of the Bible, or more especially The Gospel (for example, with incense, processions, candles and standing, turning and bowing), this would be much less common in Evangelical circles and would tend to take less flamboyant ritualised forms when it does occur[475]. More extreme contemporary Evangelicals have sometimes been heard to say that they would happily played Ping-Pong on the Lord's Table but it is difficult to imagine Calvin saying such a thing. Normally, the Table is treated with a degree of reverence or respect. The Canons of the Church of England speak of "the holy

[475] On the whole it is likely to go no further than having a smart looking black leather Bible with gold-edged pages that one takes good care of. Churches may have special lectern or pulpit Bibles. Evangelicals may or may not feel uncomfortable about using a Bible as a door stop etc.

table" being "kept in a sufficient and seemly manner" "as becomes the table of the Lord"[476]. In Evangelical circles it would be unlikely that the table would be reverenced (bowed to) as some Anglo-Catholics would bow to the altar or even genuflect to the reserved sacrament. Again, when it is theologically informed, Evangelical regard for the Table is not because there is anything necessarily special about the Table itself but because it has been set apart for a special use or is at least associated with the Supper that takes place there[477].

Christian ways of treating the physical object of the Bible may be compared with the way in which Muslims generally treat copies of the Quran. Muslims afford much more reference to the physical object of the Quran than the average Christian would to his copy of the Bible. Indeed, even Anglo-Catholics reverence for the Bible would be seen largely in the ritual context of worship and to a much lesser extent in daily life, where as a Muslim would treat his Quran in a special way in the home too (e.g. by placing it on the highest shelf, above all other books).

Evangelicals would claim a very high regard for the Bible but by this they would mean the content of the Bible, not the physical object of the book, nor the ink marks on the page. It is interesting to ask to what extent it is helpful to distinguish or separate these or to hold them together. Does reverence for the physical object of the Bible tend to heighten reference for its content and its author or does it tend to confusion and risk idolatry or superstition?

[476] Canon F2.
[477] Similar points may be made about church buildings which are increasingly used for multiple purposes. Some Evangelicals would be happy to call a church building "The House of God" others would think of them as little more than rain shelters and sometimes rather inconvenient ones!

A further comparison between Islam and Christianity might be useful. Even though conservative Evangelicals of a Warfieldian type, believe in the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture (the very words not just the message is inspired by God, as considered in chapter 2), as most Muslims do of the Quran, they tend to have a very different attitude to the words of their sacred books. For example, it is common for Muslims to object to the translation of the Quran whereas Bible translation is widely accepted amongst Christians, even if final authority is attached only to the texts as originally given (indeed, to the autographs). Further Muslims would often memorise the Quran, or parts of it, in Arabic without actually learning to understand the language. While some Christians would learn the original languages of the Scriptures, it would be unheard of for a Christian to seek to memorise parts of the Bible in Hebrew or Greek without attempting to learn to understand those languages. These differences presumably grow out of very different doctrines of scripture and of revelation. In particular, Muslims traditionally hold that the Quran was given by dictation from the angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad whereas even the most conservative Christians have on the whole tended to reject such dictation theories for the Bible. Whilst the most conservative Christians emphasise the importance of the very words of the Bible, and recognise that it is difficult to disentangle content from form, the message of the Bible is certainly thought to be more important than the words which convey it[478].

[478] As it will be argued in chapter 5, excessive reverence for the physical object of the Bible or for the ink marks on the page, or a belief that the words are magical, may be thought to be analogous to the doctrine of transubstantiation which pays excessive regard to the physical objects of bread and wine used in the Supper. A distinction between form and content analogous to the substance / accidents distinction will be discussed.

The Reformed have particularly emphasised that the words used by the minister in the service of the Lord's Supper should be audible and understood by the people, that is, in a vernacular language when necessary, rather than in Latin, as they were at the time of the Reformation. The change from some medieval services at that time was dramatic since it would not be uncommon for a priest to mumble his way badly through the Latin service, which perhaps he himself might not understand very well, and which the people might be unable to hear or understand. All this is congruent with Reformed emphasise on the importance of edification and the right reception of the sacrament and the vital role of proper understanding (as a constituent of faith) on the part of the communicants if this is to take place. Further, the Reformation services also introduced a much greater degree of congregational participation. In mediaeval Catholicism it was often only the priests who actually partook of the Eucharistic elements. The Cup was in any case reserved to the clergy[479]. Reformed services such as The Book of Common Prayer also have believers joining in and saying prayers with or after the Minister. If Reformed services tended to emphasise God's Word to man in the Supper, or the Supper as a Word of God to man, they also allowed ordinary members of the congregation to speak directly to God in prayer, whereas in mediaeval Catholicism this would be done by the priest on the people's behalf. Reformed services have a much more strongly developed horizontal element aiming for mutual edification as well as focusing on hearing and addressing God.

[479] The Council of Trent (1545-1563) session 21 chapter 2 describes and defends this practice which had been common for some centuries. The Council of Lambeth (1281) had directed that consecrated wine was to be received only by the priest.

It is worth asking which words, if any, are strictly necessary for a proper celebration of the Lord's Supper. Those mentioned above (the narrative of institution, the words of consecration, and to a lesser extent the words of administration and an epiclesis) are the most likely candidates for the status of essential. Although the Church of England has tightly defined and legally controlled authorised forms which all its ministers promise to use without unnecessary deviation[480], it seems best to think of these as for the sake of unity, commonality, good order, doctrinal accuracy and agreement rather than because a certain number of form of words is required for the service to "work". This latter view would be in danger of suggesting a particular magical formula is required, say, for the consecration of the elements, which would seem superstitious and sub-Christian. Eucharistic prayers[481] are not incantations and on a Reformed understanding they do not work in an *ex opere operato*[482] manner.

When it is considered what words are or ought to be contained in services the Lord's Supper it is worth noting that such services have almost always included Bible reading(s) and prayer(s). Indeed, Eucharistic prayers are normal and the Eucharist itself is traditionally considered to be the great prayer of the church[483]. Authorised Church of England services also require certain other elements to be present in services of the Lord's Supper such as

[480] See the declaration of assent (made at ordinations, licensing and inductions) and the other notes and rules set out in Common Worship and in the Canons.
[481] Such as those contained in Common Worship.
[482] Literally 'from the work being done'. In other words, here, a Protestant insistence that the grace of the sacraments is not automatic or mechanical but depends on worthy reception.
[483] Although it has been celebrated with vastly differing degrees of frequency in the history of the church it has normally been thought of as the principal or most important service. Canon B13 and 14 require Holy Communion to be celebrated in every cathedral and parish church at least every Sunday, on all principal Feast Days, and on Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday.

authorised confessions of sin, creeds and a sermon[484]. Inclusion of a sermon is particularly important to the Reformed. When Calvin speaks of the Supper depending on the Word it often seems that it is the preached Word that is particularly in view. Again, this is consistent with his emphasis on faithful reception with understanding as crucial to benefiting from the Supper.

It is also important to note in this connection that for Calvin the preached Word is the Word of God[485]. He is happy to assert this much more strongly and without qualification than many evangelicals would be willing to today. Yet in fact Calvin would agree with evangelicals today that, more accurately, the preaching of the (written) Word of God is the Word of God insofar as it is faithful to the written word. Nevertheless it is arguable that contemporary evangelicals are much more likely to think of the sermon as human words about God's word than their Reformed forefathers were[486]. The sense of preaching as above all God addressing his people may need to be recaptured. Both Calvin and evangelicals today would reject the idea that the Minister is a (certain sort of) priest acting on God's behalf yet it seems likely that Calvin, who after all belonged to a much more hierarchical age, would have a much stronger sense of the Minister as God's spokesman speaking his word. Given the relative neglect of this understanding of preaching as the Word of God it is perhaps more

[484] See the notes in Common Worship. Page 332 calls the sermon "an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word." adding, "A sermon should normally be preached at all celebrations on Sundays and Principal Holy Days."
[485] For example, he says: "For God wanted His Word to be always received from the mouth of men no less than as if He had Himself openly appeared from heaven." Comm. on 1 John 4:1. The 2nd Helvetic Confession of 1566, which comes from Bullinger, also states that: "The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God".

[486] Thus also *J. Mark Beach,* 'The Real Presence Of Christ In The Preaching of the Gospel: Luther and Calvin on the Nature of Preaching' Mid-America Journal of Theology http://www.midamerica.edu/resources/journal/10/beach.pdf

difficult for evangelicals today to think that preaching is essential to the Supper or more particularly that the preached Word of God creates or makes possible the sacrament.

Nevertheless, despite the discussion above, the focus here is not only or mainly on the words involved in the Supper, although of course this is highly relevant, but on the Supper as a whole considered as a "word", an expression, a message or communication. Whilst thinking about similarities and parallels between words and the Supper as a word it will also be necessary to make distinctions and to be attentive to asymmetries.

The Supper as a Visible Word

The Reformed often think of the sacraments as Visible Words. The term "visible words" goes back at least to Augustine[487].

James Jordan rejects describing the sacraments as "visible words", in the context of addressing Evangelical and Reformed people, who perhaps may share some of his concerns[488], who might be tempted to look to the Roman Catholic, Orthodox or Anglo-Catholic churches. He argues that whilst a desire for roots and history are understandable,

[487] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Book 2, Chapter 3

[488] In *The Liturgy Trap: The Bible Versus Mere Tradition in Worship* (Athanasius Press, Monroe, 1994) 3rd edition 2008 originally published in the Biblical Horizons Rite Reasons essay-letters. Jordan's concerns have played a significant part in shaping the so-called Federal Vision and are reflected especially in CERC churches.

especially when there are troubles in the Reformed world[489], and there might be much to learn from these churches, any move to join them would be deplorable since they mix truths with such serious error and heresy. Jordan argues that human beings alone are made in God's image. They are therefore the only true "visible words" of God.

Jordan's point is part of a larger case against the veneration of created things, such as icons, or the practice of bowing to the cross. He also excludes bowing to the bread and the wine in the Eucharist. In contrast, however, bowing to human beings is permitted, and indeed Jordan encourages it (including in a liturgical context) since man is God's appointed image bearer. It is therefore possible to honour God by honouring men in this way, whereas it is not possible to honour the Creator by bowing to the other created things, since God has placed man over the rest of creation. For a human being to bow to a created thing is to reverse the God-given order. Further, bowing to created things is explicitly forbidden by God, not least in the Second Commandment. The commandment refers not only to the attitudes of the heart but also to the back muscles, even if they are less important than the heart. The Bible makes it clear that it is illegitimate to claim that one is worshipping God rather than the created thing by so doing since this invalid argument also seems to have been a means of justifying idolatry in ancient Israel[490].

[489] Including in Jordan's view confusion about what it means to be Reformed and a neglect of the diversity and richness of the Reformed heritage. Jordan is similarly critical of (American) Evangelicalism which he sees as largely sold out to the spirit of the age.
[490] For example, in Exodus 32.

Jordan's rejection of the term "visible words" for the sacrament is rather sweeping, although he makes valid and interesting points. Perhaps it is worth recalling not only Jordan's main agenda at this point (as set out above) but also that the work in question began as an essay-letter to subscribers. Writing mainly for friends and interested others is obviously different from writing an academic tome.

Peter Leithart has usefully developed some of Jordan's suggestion and is more careful at this point to appreciate something of the venerable history of the term "visible words" for the sacraments.

Noting that there are issues or potential issues with speaking of the sacraments as "visible words" need not mean that it is totally illegitimate or useless. There may be other terms, perhaps even better terms, but this need not mean that the term "visible word" must be excluded.

Leithart suggests a potential pitfall in thinking of the sacraments as visible words. He says: "Too often, the accent is on the first half of the phrase ["visible words"], on the "visibility" of the sacraments"[491] although, as Leithart himself would recognize, this does not seem to have been the intention of Augustine or some of those such as Calvin who have made much of his description. Leithart continues: "This [stress on the visibility of the word] has a subtle and highly unfortunate tendency to move our attention away from receiving the baptismal

[491] Peter J. Leithart, *Visible Words*, Credenda / Agenda Volume 15, Issue 4: Liturgia.

bath and participating in the sacramental meal toward viewing the bath and the meal."[492] The term *visible* word might suggest that what believers are meant to do with the Supper is to look at it (and presumably reflect upon it, maybe for doctrinal content or devotional up-lift). Leithart sees this emphasis on visibility as more characteristic of medieval abuses in worship where the people were often spectators, "straining to glimpse… the bread-made Jesus" by the priest at the altar (perhaps behind a roodscreen) than of a Biblical view of the sacraments. Preoccupation with the visibility of the sacraments might often tend to an unhelpful distancing of the believer from what is being done. He may think of himself as an onlooker or spectator, whereas the Supper naturally tends to emphasise the participation and involvement of believers who are called to come and eat.

It is worth noting that not only the vision is engaged in the sacraments: taste (which, interestingly, was singled out by Augustine[493]), touch and even, perhaps, though to a lesser extent, smell are involved too in the act of participating in the Supper. James Jordan has suggested that the Supper is more appropriately called an "edible word"[494]. Such a title distinguishes it well from the Bible[495] and baptism, which of course, like the Supper, can both also be seen, and might potentially be called "visible words" too. For Leithart: "The Westminster Larger Catechism's phrase "sensible signs" [question 163] is far better [than "Visible Words"], since it highlights the physical reality of the sacraments without calling

[492] Peter J. Leithart, *Visible Words*, Credenda / Agenda Volume 15, Issue 4: Liturgia.
[493] Strikingly, when Augustine speaks of visible words, he also says that: "in the sacrament of His body and blood He [Our Lord] signified his will through the sense of taste". Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Book 2, Chapter 3
[494] Quoted in Peter J. Leithart, *Blessed Are The Hungry: Meditations On The Lord's Supper* (Canon Press, Moscow, 2000), p69.
[495] although it will be argued elsewhere in this thesis that the Bible and the Christian tradition often makes use of the metaphor of the Bible as food or bread to be eaten.

attention particularly to their visibility." A description like edible, tangible, sensible or participatory word or sign might be better than visible word[496].

The relationship between Word and Sacrament

Importantly, the Reformed have stressed that the Word (of God) creates the sacraments.

However, the term Word of God is ambiguous in Christian theology.

Senses of the Word of God

For Christians the "word of God" can have at least the following senses:

(1) a word or message from God, such as a prophetic oracle. The words of Jesus during his earthly ministry might also be included here (as a special case) since Jesus is God.

(2) the Gospel or good news of salvation, the message of the Christian faith

[496] Some of these titles might also be more or less suitable for baptism and the Bible.

(3) the written Word of God, the Bible

(4) incarnate Word of God, Jesus[497]

(5) the preached word of God, the sermon

(6) in a sense all created things might be said to be words of God since they may be said to speak of him[498]

Some usages of the phrase "Word of God" may deliberately include more than one of these senses and some may be ambiguous. This thesis particularly compares the visible sacramental word of the Supper, with the written word of God, the Scriptures, but if these other things listed above are also words of God they too might be compared.

When Calvin speaks of the relationship between the word and sacrament it seems that it is preaching that he primarily has in view when he uses the term "the word".

The Reformed are clear that there is undoubtedly a priority of the Word over the sacraments. The Word can exist without the sacrament, but the sacraments cannot exist without the Word. Having said that, it is worth noting that Calvin thought that there should

[497] John 1 would be the most important biblical text here.
[498] See for example Psalm 19.

not be the preaching of the Word without the celebration of the Sacraments - a view that perhaps few evangelicals would share today.

The Lord's Supper clearly depends on Jesus, the incarnate Word, and on his words of instruction concerning it, his initial words of institution and his commandment to continue the Supper in his memory.

The Supper may be said to communicate the Word of God, the essential message of the Bible, the Gospel.

The main premise of this section is that the Supper is also a Word of God in the sense that it is, in part, a message or communication from him. God “speaks” by it. Even if the Supper is more than that, it is not less. The case for this view is strengthened when it is recalled that words do more than state propositions or convey information.

The Scriptures form the principal source of knowledge of the Lord's Supper. This may indicate a kind of priority of the Bible over the Supper. It is because of the biblical commandment of Jesus to do this in his memory that the Lord's Supper is continued, although of course it would be possible to argue that without the Scriptures this commandment might have been passed on by an oral tradition and thereby continued in the life of the church. Historians would agree that the Supper was commonly celebrated from the earliest days after the first Easter before the Scriptures began to be written.

Nevertheless, in practice today and normatively in church history it is the Bible that teaches the church about the Supper. For Reformed Evangelicals at least it does so with a unique authority which tradition could never enjoy. The supreme authority of Scripture for Protestants means that the Bible must always be allowed to shape and challenge the church's practice of the Supper and thinking about it.

The Lord's Supper also has a temporal priority over the completion of the canon of Scripture. The Supper is part of the narrative on which the Scriptures depend. The institution of the Lord's Supper and its subsequent practice are among the events of that the written Word narrates. As such, the Supper is part of the saving work of the historical Jesus, as are all his other actions. And yet the same could be said of all Christ's words, his preaching and so on: Jesus' words are part of his work. His words also interpret his other works. In fact, it is difficult to know what could be made of Jesus' works without his own preaching about them to explain their significance. This demonstrates that there is close connection between the words and works of God such that they should not be played off against one another. As the speech act analysis of Scripture in chapter 2 suggested, God's words are not only an essential witness to his saving works, they are themselves works of God by which he acts in the world in judgement and salvation. God works by his Word. His speech acts are acts. God's words are actions in the world. The Supper and the Scriptures, then, stand in a complex and nuanced relationship to one another.

The Lord's Supper may also have played an important part historically in shaping the Scriptures and their content according to the tag *lex orandi, lex credenda*, the law of prayer

is the law of belief. It is generally thought that the church's worship and liturgy have to some extent sometimes driven her theological reflection and her doctrinal statements. Arguably, theory has sometimes had to catch up with practice. Thus, for example, it is at least plausible that the church prayed and sang hymns to Jesus as God from the very earliest days after the resurrection, before her Christological and Trinitarian formulations had been worked out to any significant degree. Part of the task of Christian theology was then to work out precisely how to speak about the Jesus whom Christians knew to be the worthy object of worship and as the one to whom they prayed. To some degree, the Bible is part of the Church's reflection on her practice, as well as being the Word of God.

As the supreme prayer of the church, the Supper may be seen as a driver of belief. Possible doctrinal contributions that the regular celebration of the Lord's Supper and reflection on it might have made, would include the centrality of the sacrificial death of Christ on his people's behalf and the vital necessity of faith union with him, participating in him, benefiting personally from his death. Believer's feeding in the Supper suggests that individuals need to appropriate Christ for themselves, that he is the source of their life and health. Arguably, at least, the Apostle Paul also reasons from the specific ritual practice of the Lord's Supper (the use of one loaf) to the unity of the church[499]. Clearly for Paul it is possible that reflection on the Lord's Supper, and even perhaps on details of how it is celebrated, will suggest theological truths. The direction of travel may be in both directions: from Bible truth to understanding the Supper and from the reflection on the Supper to

[499] 1 Corinthians 10:17 – "Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf." Similarly he makes many doctrinally and theological arguments from the fact and nature of baptism.

better understanding Bible truth. In this way the Lord's Supper, like the Bible, might act as some kind of theological norm.

The Bible says that whenever believers eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord's Supper they "proclaim (καταγγέλλετε) the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). It seems likely that this means more than that there are words used or sermons preached in the service which proclaim the Lord's death. It would seem that the Apostle Paul regards the very acts of eating and drinking bread and wine in the context of the service of the Lord's Supper as in themselves proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes[500]. "Proclaiming" is clearly a verbal category: it is a common way of speaking of the preaching of the Word in the New Testament and subsequently. The Bible says, then, that the Lord's Supper preaches Christ's death ("until he comes", that is, perhaps, with an eschatological orientation and expectation). It is therefore worth asking what the similarities and differences are between the Lord's Supper (considered as word that preaches) and the preaching of God's written Word in the sermon. If the Supper is a "sermon" what does it say? What are its main points and applications? The Bible and the Supper both proclaim Christ. Some would argue that the death of Christ is also this supreme subject of God's written word and that therefore the Supper and the Scriptures have the same central content, Christ crucified[501].

Human and divine words in the Supper and the Scriptures

[500] Even if it is objected that this is simply a vivid metaphor this would not destroy the case being made since it is admittedly a metaphor to call the Supper a "word". Obviously it is not literally a word like other words, though it contains words.
[501] Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2

Certainly the celebration of the sacraments involves human words. The presiding minister speaks in ordinary human language, sometimes in words that are not taken directly from the Scriptures. The service of the Lord's Supper is not made up entirely of God's scriptural words. Perhaps the recipients also respond with words in various places during the service[502]. More than likely they also say and sing a fair amount during the service, some of it to the Minister, some of it to one another or perhaps even to themselves, and some of it to God. The actions of minister and people may also "speak". Services may also be thought to speak to the watching world, both unbelievers who may be present[503] and those who are not there who have some awareness of what goes on, and, from a Christian perspective, also to the supernatural spiritual powers[504]. In a metaphorical sense the elements of bread and wine may also be called human "words" since they are "the work of human hands"[505], made by people. Although, obviously, the Christian must say that, like all of creation, the constituent parts of the bread and wine are God-given ("what do you have that you did not receive?[506]") they may be thought to speak of (secondary, derivative, dependent) human creativity and of God's willingness to use human works. Obviously this could be understood in a Pelagian manner which is incompatible with Reformed theology as if human works somehow contributed meritoriously to salvation or as if human beings were required to co-operate with God to earn salvation. Yet the thought could also be taken up into a framework which is insistent on the sovereignty of grace and on justification by faith alone.

[502] Indeed, in the Book of Common prayer they are directed to and great attention is given to telling them how they must respond spiritually, for example, in the Third Exhortation.
[503] Cf. 1 Corinthians 14:24
[504] Cf. perhaps Ephesians 3:10
[505] A phrase from the Roman Catholic Mass also included in Common Worship, Holy Communion, prayers at the preparation of the Table number 4
[506] 1 Corinthians 4:7

God graciously takes and uses man's utterly dependent and hell-deserving non-meritorious works for his purposes, not weighing their merits and pardoning their offences, to echo the words of The Book of Common Prayer Communion service[507]. As God is willing to use ordinary bread and wine in extraordinary ways for his supernatural purposes, so he also uses people and other created means within his economy of salvation. The Supper may be seen as part of God's gracious and undeserved "yes" to creation and man's derivative creaturely response as the image bearer of the Creator God.

By instituting and commanding his people to continue the celebration of the Lord's Supper, Jesus provided them with God-given words, both literal and metaphorical, if bread and wine may be thought of as (visible) words. The Reformed tradition would emphasise that the Supper is primarily God's word to man: in the Supper, it is as if God preaches afresh the gospel of his free grace in Christ to be received empty-handedly by the hungry and needy. For the Reformed, the main thing in the Supper is what Christ has done and that God feeds them, not what they do. Yet man is also given words to say.

In the Anglican celebration of the Lord's Supper, most of the words spoken are in the form of prayers: the service is full of man's words to God. As a whole, the Eucharist, literally as a "thanksgiving", has traditionally been thought of as spoken to God. It is the great prayer of the church. And yet the idea of "thanksgiving" suggests that the Supper is essentially responsive: believers are saying thank you for what God has done.

[507] Prayer after Communion, similarly, Common Worship, Eucharistic Prayer C

If it is accepted that the Supper is Jesus' "memorial"[508], as Max Thurian[509], Joachim Jeremias[510] and others[511] have argued, then believers participating in the service are also asking God the Father to remember the death of the Lord Jesus in their place and be faithful to his covenant. The Supper is a reminder to the Father, not just a memory aid for the believer. Of course, this could only be so in a way that is consistent with the Bible's language of remembrance[512]. It does not imply that God could somehow have forgotten the work of the cross and need his memory jogging. Rather, God is asked to deliberately call to mind the death of his son and to act on the basis of it relating to his people. In language with which some Evangelicals may be more comfortable, they are "pleading the blood" of Jesus and crying to God for his mercy on that basis.

So, then, if the Supper is both a word of God and the words of men, parallels with the Evangelical doctrine of Scripture discussed in chapter 2 will be obvious. Believers might say, that the sacraments are words of God in human words that he calls us to take on our lips, rather as would be done in Bible reading or preaching. As the elements are created and the "work of human hands", there is an analogy here to the accommodation of God speaking in human words in Scripture. As ordinary human words are used by God in the Bible, so he

[508] With Jesus' commandment "do this in memory of me" (ἀνάμνησιν) best translated as "do this as my memorial" and akin to other memorials in the Bible such as the rainbow of Genesis 9.
[509] Max Thurian, *The Eucharistic Memorial*, trans. J.G. Davies, 2 vols. (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1960-1961)
[510] Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. Norman Perrin (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966)
[511] E.g. Jeffrey Meyers, The Lord's Service, pp218-222 and Peter Leithart in 'Old and New in Sacramental Theology' at http://www.leithart.com/archives/000813.php and Priesthood of the Plebs pp20-21
[512] E.g. Psalm 25:7

uses ordinary bread and wine in the Supper. As the Eucharist may be thought of as a prayer, the Church singing or praying the Psalms or other passages of Scripture may be thought of as a close parallel to the Lord's Supper as God-given human words are spoken to one another and to God. Again, as with the doctrine of Scripture, it is not necessary to see the human and divine in conflict with one another so that one excludes the other. Since God is the all-powerful, all-knowing sovereign creator all things belong to him and he is able to use them for his purposes. Human or creaturely words and bread and wine can be put to divine uses without violating or changing their nature.

If it is asked what the Lord's Supper says, it might be argued that, as well as communicating many other things, it also conveys a deeper or more basic message as God's "yes" to creation. Even if this is not the primary intention, both the existence of the Scriptures and the sacraments may be seen as, to some extent, a (somewhat implicit) affirmation of the created order. "Spiritual" things (such as hearing God's word or communion with Christ) are not necessarily divorced from material things (such as books or bread and wine). Believers receive Jesus as they read or hear or take and eat with faith. On reflection it is apparent that in fact, even the seemingly more "spiritual" Word of Scripture or preaching is mediated by physical means. Usually (today at least) books and notes would be used, but even if there are no books or notes, someone who recites words of Scripture from memory or preaches a sermon without any notes is nevertheless a physical being communicating by the physical means of sound waves produced by vocal chords and hitting the ear drums of another physical being. God is using a created instrument (or agent) here just as much as he is in the Supper. Perhaps the dichotomy between physical and spiritual needs to be rethought. In

other words, maybe the whole of reality may be seen as in some sense sacramental[513] such that the physical happily mediates the spiritual. To provide a physical analysis of preaching and hearing preaching (for example, by mapping the sound waves or using brain scans) need not exhaust the meaning or explain away the "spiritual" event. The service of the Lord's Supper may provide a paradigmatic microcosm which helps us to think of the whole world as sacramental, that is, as physical and yet capable of mediating the spiritual.

THE WRITTEN WORD AS A MODEL FOR THE SACRAMENTAL WORD

If the Supper is a (visible) word of God, how does it compare to God's written word? May affirmations which are made of the Scriptures by Evangelicals (which were presented in chapter 2), such as its authority, trustworthiness, truthfulness, necessity, perspicuity and so on, be made in some way of the Supper?

The Supper as God's Words and Human Words

Both the Supper and Scriptures may be thought of as God-given. Although they are primarily words from God they also use ordinary human words and elements and are created things.

The inerrancy and infallibility of the Supper

[513] It will be one of the tasks of chapter 5 to clarify exactly what might be meant by the term "sacramental". One of the challenges of this thesis is that the term is polyvalent in contemporary theological discourse.

Although it might be an unfamiliar way of speaking, perhaps the Supper may be said to be in inerrant in the sense that as originally given it contains no errors or lies, and it is true in all that it affirms. Such an affirmation would be consonant with Calvin's insistence that God does not deceive his people in the Supper. What the Supper signifies, or perhaps better, what God intends the Supper to signify is certainly true. It should not mislead. In other words, if the Supper is a word of God, it can be expected to be inerrant since God cannot lie. The same claim could be made without recourse to the language of speech: since both the Scriptures and the Supper originate in God they are true. Of course, questions remain as to what this would mean. Indeed, the whole of creation originates in God, in a sense, so the same logic would apply to it, though people clearly lie. Evangelicals will want to make a special claim about the Scriptures and the Supper as God's intentional communications which speak truthfully.

Of course, both Scripture and the Supper can be misinterpreted or used in illegitimate ways contrary to their speaker's intention. Such misunderstandings and corruptions need not undermine the authority, truthfulness or clarity of the Scriptures or Supper.

The mode of Christ's presence

Just as Warfield was more concerned with the result rather than the mode of inspiration, Calvin similarly stressed that the Supper communicates Christ, rather than seeking to

explain quite how this could be so. The facts of inspiration and the presence of Christ are more important than the means.

As Warfield was at pains to avoid mechanical accounts of inspiration, similarly Calvin was concerned to avoid crudely physical understandings of Christ's presence in, with or under the bread and wine.

Evangelicals might do well to reflect on how Christ is present when the Scriptures are read and preached[514]. Although Christ as God is omnipresent, is he present in a special way through his Written Word? Theological controversies over the Supper mean that Christ's presence in it has been debated at much greater length than the question of how he is present through his Word. Discussions of the Eucharistic presence of Christ may shed light on what might be called the Scriptural presence of Christ.

In or through both the Bible and the Supper, Christ may be said to be present, not physically but spiritually, that is, through the power of the Spirit. Physically, Christ is in heaven. As discussed above, the spiritual presence of Christ may be said to be mediated or affected through physical means but not *in* those means. Just as Christ's presence through the Bible is not *in* ink and paper, so Christ's presence is not located physically in bread and wine at the

[514] J. Mark Beach argues for the Real Presence of Christ when the Bible is faithfully preached, calling preaching a sacramental word. 'The Real Presence Of Christ In The Preaching of the Gospel: Luther and Calvin on the Nature of Preaching' Mid-America Journal of Theology http://www.midamerica.edu/resources/journal/10/beach.pdf

Supper. In both cases it is these physical things in their proper use by believers that God uses to deal with his people in a special way. In the case of the Bible, it is the words that matter, not the physical book, nor the paper and ink, which may or may not be involved in each instance of their use. If the words of the Bible were remembered without the use of the book, Christ would just as much be present, although it should be maintained that the writing and preservation of God's word, its inscripturation, is an important part of God's plan. God has voluntarily tied himself to the physical means of bread and wine and the Bible as a book so that when rightly used by believers the Spirit always uses them to effect the presence of Christ, yet God is not somehow captive to them. Indeed, he can work without them. Further, since right reception of the Bible and the Supper is always as a result of the Spirit's work of illumination, the Spirit working out his purposes and choosing to use his earlier work of the inspiration of Scripture to mediate the presence of Christ today. This stresses God's freedom and sovereignty rather than limiting them.

In the case of both the Bible and the bread and wine God may also work by the imperfect remembrance or thought of them. That is not to say that the Bible or the very words of the Bible or the physical elements of bread and wine are unessential or dispensable but those things to which they refer (principally the saving work of God in Christ) take priority and can be appropriated apart from them. For example, in the case of a shipwreck on a desert island where there are no Bibles and no possibility of bread or wine, a Christian community could still exist and be sustained, however imperfectly, by someone recalling something of that to which the Scriptures and the Holy Communion testify. Of course such a community would

suffer real deprivation but it could still trust God to provide for it apart from these ordinary means of his grace.

Yet perhaps there is also an asymmetry here. Supposing one could perfectly remember all the words of the Bible that would be sufficient for some sort of private use of it. No book or paper or ink would be necessary. Further, and more significantly, no reader or preacher (with their associated vocal chords and sound waves) would be strictly necessary[515]. Even here, though, recalling the words of Scripture remains a physical act performed in the brain which is observable to some degree with the use of modern technology, that is, reactions in the brain could be monitored and depicted. This might highlight what is arguably one of the most important differences between the Bible and the Lord's Supper: that is, that the Bible is intended to be used in private personal devotions, in family prayers, and all sorts of other conversations and setting whereas the Lord's Supper is essentially and necessarily a corporate act of the church. Some contemporary Christian practice would seem to call this latter assertion into question, for example if a priest conducts the sacrifice of the mass alone, though even in this case it is likely that he would argue that he is doing so as a member and representative of the universal church and in fellowship with it. It seems best to think that the Lord's Supper rightly belongs to the Lord's Day service of covenant renewal, even if groups of Christians might also celebrate it in other contexts. Calvin of course favoured at least weekly communion but thought that daily communion would be a good thing. Nevertheless he would always have envisaged these communions as corporate events

[515] Though, of course, Bible teachers are needed. Cf. Acts 8:30-31. Generally one could only best understand the Bible in fellowship with God's people around the world and down the centuries. Other "teachers" would be helpful, including in written form and Ephesians 4 is one of a number of passages which speaks of God giving gifts of word ministries to certain individuals in the church for the health of the body.

involving the Minister and at least some of the people. Certainly the rubrics of The Book of Common Prayer require there to be a congregation to participate in the Supper with the priest and direct that without such a congregation the service should not go ahead. The Prayer Book then clearly sees the Supper as a necessarily corporate event.

There is a difference between the Bible and the Supper, then, in that the Bible is also for private use, whereas the Supper is always (or ought to be) a corporate event.

Whilst it is likely that no one would want to deny the desirability and usefulness of personal Bible reading and biblical meditation, indeed, the Bible encourages them, it is possible that some Evangelical and Reformed people today have overemphasised the so-called personal "Quiet Time" and private Bible reading in general, when compared to corporate expressions of spirituality. Indeed, in particular some forms of evangelicalism might be argued to have neglected the Sabbath and its worship services which are reduced to meetings for edification, normally without the sacraments. It seems best to think that both the reading and preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Lord's Supper have their quintessential and paradigmatic place in the liturgy of the Lord's Day service[516]. Indeed 1 Timothy 4:13 suggests the importance of the public reading of the Scriptures. Other uses of the Scriptures may be seen as secondary. Comparison of the Bible and the Supper might helpfully highlight this fact afresh.

[516] This is part of Jeffrey Meyers' argument in The Lord's Service

Concursive operation in the Supper

The notion of concursive operation could be applied to the Supper. As God worked in and through the human authors of Scripture, similarly it could be argued that the minister acts as God's instrument and agent in the Supper.

Alternatively or additionally, the elements of bread and wine may be thought of as God instruments in the Supper. They would be analogous to the Bible considered as the book which God uses in speaking the Scriptures.

The minister might both read and preach God's Word and administer the Supper.

The idea of concursive operation is significant here since it is allied to the concept of accommodation, discussed below, because it suggests that agents, instruments or means are used according to their capacities and natural qualities. God does not have to obliterate or override something to use it for his purposes. Just as God is capable of creating and shaping the human authors of Scripture whom he wishes to use, so he can form the presiding minister or bread and wine for his purposes. Just as the forming of Paul properly considered requires God sovereign government of all things, so it is with the creation of bread and wine as appropriate elements in the Supper. This suggests God's wider sovereignty over such things as meteorology, agriculture, cookery, and domestic habits, in other words, creation and culture. All this is required if God is to create a Bible or the

Supper concersively and non-coercively and they are to be exactly fitted to his purposes. This is another way of restating the traditional Reformed understanding of human free will (that is, freedom of spontaneity rather than liberty of indifference) as compatible with divine sovereignty.

Accommodation

Both the Scriptures and the Supper involve divine accommodation to human capacities. As Warfield argued that God has accommodated himself by speaking in human language, so Calvin argued that God has accommodated himself to man by speaking through the created elements of the Supper. In particular, in the Supper God accommodates himself especially obviously to humankind's embodied nature[517]. This is particularly obvious since the Supper is received using the senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste and to a lesser extent smell, whereas the Scriptures might be read or heard. Therefore it might be argued that the Supper is more adapted to make an impression upon us as embodied creatures since it uses all of these pathways. The whole person is more obviously engaged in these different ways. Receiving the Supper is a more obviously physical embodied experience than receiving the written word, which might be thought of as more mental, cerebral or "spiritual"[518]. However as has already been observed, the Bible uses the senses, normally sight and, to a lesser

[517] It was argued above that the Word is physical and comes to man as embodied too, but this is perhaps less striking in the case of the Scriptures than in that of the Supper.
[518] Though, again, note the discussion above. "Spiritual" in the questionable sense of pertaining to the spirit or soul rather than the body, that is in contrast to physical. As discussed above, Calvin prefers to think of the Lord's Supper as spiritual in the sense that it occurred in the power of the Holy Spirit.

extent, touch in private reading (and even smell might not be entirely excluded!) and principally hearing although often also sight (and smell) in public worship[519].

The Role of The Spirit

It has been suggested that the Supper and the Scriptures may both be described as ways in which Christ is present in a non-material or physical way, although using physical means. The Spirit acts to bring about salvation and blessing or judgement and cursing. In both cases without the work of the Spirit the event would be dead and lifeless and ineffective in conveying genuine spiritual benefit.

The necessity of the Supper

As was discussed above, in chapter 3, Calvin argued that the Supper has a kind of necessity. It was ordained by Christ and Christ does not establish ordinances unnecessarily. However, the necessity of the Supper is a necessity in the economy of salvation, a general necessary. It is not strictly necessary to the salvation of an individual believer. It is necessary for believers

[519] Many Christians would take Bibles with them to church and many churches would provide them. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that it is increasingly common in Reformed Evangelical Anglican churches for Bibles to be provided and for people to be encouraged to use them during the reading and the sermon. This is no doubt a significant development and deserves theological attention. It could be argued to diminish the authority of the reader and preacher and exalt the authority of the written Word relative to them, since the hearers are encouraged to check what is being said against the written Word (cf. Acts 17:11). Whether or not this is a distraction or whether it aids concentration is debatable. It may be helpful to preacher and hearer to provide Bibles so that at least everyone tends to have the same translation.

to receive the sacraments but it is also possible to go to heaven without having ever received them, as the thief on the cross did (Luke 23:40-43).

The Bible might seem more necessary than the Supper. Indeed one of Evangelicalism's difficulties with the Supper has been understanding why it is really needed when the Bible is sufficient. Part of the answer to this will be more carefully defining the sense in which the Bible is sufficient, that is, what it is and is not sufficient for. It should not be thought that evangelicals are claiming that the Bible is all that is needed for the Christian life. For example, prayer and the church and other believers and indeed the sacraments are all necessary means of grace. Indeed, the Bible directs believers to these things as necessary.

On reflection it would seem that the Bible has a similar kind of necessity to that of the Supper. It is generally or usually necessary. It is ordinarily necessary to good spiritual health and growth. This is necessary for the church within the economy of salvation. It is not strictly or absolutely necessary for the salvation of each individual believer. Again, imagining the shipwrecked believers mentioned above might be helpful here. They certainly need some Bible truths, and indeed (ideally) they need a Bible, but they can survive without one. Historical and international perspectives are also illuminating. For a number of reasons, including illiteracy, poverty, lack of technology and government interference, many believers at other times and in other places have been without access to a Bible. Sometimes their access to the reading and preaching of the Bible has also been severely limited and yet they have survived as Christians. Occasionally the persecuted church might even be said to have flourished under these difficult conditions, although no doubt, other things being

equal, they would have been healthier with ready access to the Bible and, for that matter, to the public administration of the sacraments.

The clarity of the Supper

It might well be thought that the Supper is unclear and needs the Bible to interpret it. However, this depends to some extent on what is meant by the Supper, and indeed by the Scriptures. Presumably Jesus' first institution of the Supper was not entirely unclear to the disciples, despite their lack of the New Testament Scriptures, although no doubt the Old Testament Scriptures helped the church to interpret it (e.g. as a fulfilled Passover meal). Jesus' words of institution, which were later preserved in the Scriptures, gave some explanation of what was being done. In particular the first disciples would have grown in their knowledge of the Supper in the light of the Easter events to which it referred.

To ask whether or not the Supper is clear without the Bible is something of an odd and difficult question since services of the Supper itself properly include the reading and preaching of the Word and the biblical explanation of what is going on in the sacrament. No doubt these words are essential. It is when the Word is present that the sacrament comes into being. Without the Word there is no sacrament.

However it is hard to imagine a service of the Lord's Supper that would be entirely lacking in the Word. Perhaps the nearest approximation in church history is exactly what sometimes

took place during the mediaeval period, and to which the reformers were objecting, that is, the priest mumbling a Latin service, which perhaps he barely understood, and which the vast majority of the people could neither understand nor hear[520].

Certainly it is true that to someone entirely ignorant of the Christian tradition the symbolism attached to bread and wine in Supper would be more or less totally lost. The extent to which such a person might make some proper sense of the Supper would depend on such complex issues as the nature of general revelation and of the noetic effects of the Fall and to what extent if at all the symbolism of the Supper is natural. Perhaps more sense could be made even of a wordless Eucharist, if such a thing were imagined, because of the actions of the participants, but it remains likely that wildly differing and inaccurate interpretations would be possible.

Some post-modern theorists may wish to dispute the extent to which words are capable of clarifying or limiting the meaning of the Supper but, despite many theological disputes about the Supper, it would seem that there would be at least some kind of Christian consensus about its meaning based on the Word.

Services of the Supper without preaching however are certainly imaginable and no doubt take place. It seems that Calvin would have regarded these as seriously defective, if not

[520] Partly there is a different theology of the Supper here. Medieval thought stressed the Supper as an epiphany rather than a memorial. Indeed, if the moment of consecration marks a point where God appears on earth, the Supper might be regarded as some kind of revelation, but of course the accidents of the bread remain so the epiphany is visible only, as it were, to the eyes of faith.

entirely invalid. Again, this would seem to be because of his emphasis on edification and believing reception for which understanding was thought to be essential.

However the idea that the Word needs to be added to create the sacrament is an ancient one, going back to Augustine, and not simply a reaction to mediaeval abuses. Certainly it is common to say that Jesus' word of command was required to make a dominical sacrament of the gospel. It would be interesting to investigate further if possible what words Augustine might or might not have required to be involved in the service of the Lord's Supper.

Strikingly Calvin calls the sacraments the "clearest promises" of God, and says: "and they have this characteristic over and above the word because they represent them for us as painted in a picture from life."[521] Calvin says that in the sacraments God "attests his good will and love towards us *more expressly* than by the word."[522]

Thomas J. Davis comments, Calvin believes:

that the true celebration of the Eucharist brings to the believer knowledge of the power of union with Christ, that is "for you." Calvin thinks the Eucharist exhibits God's love in its most personal, most intense, most experienced form. Thus, Calvin has set the Eucharist up not as just a "bare knowledge" of union with Christ, as simply information. Rather, Calvin views the

[521] Institutes 4.14.5
[522] Institutes 4.14.6 (emphasis added)

Eucharist as a type of knowledge that works alongside Christ's union with the believer to mold the believer's life.[523]

Clearly for Calvin there is a sense in which the Lord's Supper makes a stronger and clearer impression on the Christian than the Bible does. It would seem best to think that Calvin has in mind here not that the Supper speaks more precisely and fully than the Word but that it speaks more vividly or strikingly and personally. The Supper is an especially emphatic or pointed expression of God's promises applied to the individual. This could also be related to the ideas of accommodation and embodied creatureliness discussed above. The Supper is clearer to us not because of some defects in the written Word, since the Word itself is clear, but because the Supper appealing more strongly to our various senses is more adapted to our need[524].

The sufficiency of the Supper

Again a similar kind of sufficiency to that of the Bible might be attributed to the Supper. Such a formulation may help to more fully alert the Christian theologian to the circumscribed nature of the claim to sufficiency which is being made by Warfield and his successors for the Scriptures. Like the Scriptures, properly used the Supper is sufficient for the purposes for which God has given it. It is meant amongst other things to display and

[523] Thomas J. Davis, The Clearest Promises of God, p213

[524] Some writers have argued that there is some ambiguity in Calvin over whether the sacraments are necessary only because of human creatureliness or also because of human sin. This second view might risk denigrating the sacraments and making them seem less than ideal.

foster the unity of God's people, to proclaim the death of Christ until he comes again, to nourish and equip God's people for works of service and for a missionary life in the world and to aid assurance. It is sufficient for these God-given purposes, alongside the other means of grace God gives.

Translations of the Supper

Warfield argued that translations of the Scriptures were possible in the sense that they were suitable to be used by Christians indeed, that God would use them: they effectively communicate the Word of God even though they are not exactly, strictly speaking God's Word as originally given.

At a very basic level it is necessary for Christians to believe that the Lord's Supper is fundamentally "translatable" since no believers today are able to be present at the original Last Supper physically as such, however much some may maintain that celebrations of the Eucharist today somehow participate in that first Eucharist or the sacrifice of Christ which it signifies. Similarly, of course, it is not possible to use the same elements of bread and wine that Christ used in the Upper Room, nor is it possible to use bread and wine precisely like those which Christ used. It is not possible to be certain quite what sort of bread and wine Jesus used. Presumably Christ used unleavened bread since the meal which he and his disciples shared was more than likely a Passover meal, yet Christians have differed over whether leavened or unleavened bread should be used and whether or not it even

matters[525]. Calvin thought that "whether the bread is leavened or unleavened; the wine red or white – it makes no difference."[526]

Sometimes it has been impossible or nearly impossible for Christians to obtain bread and wine for the Supper. Herman Witsius said that of necessity, for example, in America other food and drink may be used[527].

Since Warfield's time, a considerable literature has grown around the theory and practice of Bible translation. Understanding of translation in general and of Bible translation in particular has no doubt developed significantly. In particular, in Christian circles the extent to which a dynamic or functional equivalence (seeking to convey the sense) or a literal translation (aiming for a consistent word for word approach) of the Bible is possible and desirable is much discussed.

Missiologists also sometimes discuss whether the elements of bread and wine used in the Supper ought to be "translated" when the Supper is celebrated in other cultures. For example, what sense can be made of bread and wine in a culture in which they are largely unfamiliar? Would rice and tea be more suitable Eucharistic elements in parts of South East Asia?

---

[525] See the brief discussion in Robert Letham, *The Lord's Supper: Eternal Word In Broken Bread* (Phillipsburg, P & R Publishing, 2001), p53-55

[526] Institutes 4.17.43. Herman Witsius argues in *The Economy of the Covenants:* "And it seems we should not altogether overlook the similitude there is between the blood of the grape, by which name red wine is chiefly intended, and the blood of Christ." p448.

[527] *The Economy of the Covenants* p450.

As with Bible translation, the issues involved here are complex. Again, it matters to what extent the signification in the Supper is natural or conventional. Debates concerning Christ and culture are pertinent here[528]. A fundamental question is whether the Christian gospel and biblical worldview require a particular culture or, are they culturally neutral, capable of being embodied in a number of equally valid different ways in different cultures? It may seem simple and without theological consequence to substitute one foodstuff for another but rice, for example, will have rather a different meaning from bread when understood against the background of the whole Bible, where wheat and bread and much that is associated with them occurs frequently, whereas rice does not. Do those who wish to substitute rice for bread in the Eucharist wish to revise the Scriptures to reflect this change? Indeed, rice presents another difficulty as a Eucharistic element when compared to bread in that it cannot easily be broken as the bread is in representation of Jesus' broken body. Similarly the Bible specifically makes the point that believers participate in one loaf representing their unity (1 Corinthians 10:17). Believers cannot all realistically participate in one grain of rice and perhaps eating from one rice bowl does not quite have the same force?

If what might be called a dynamic equivalence translation approach is followed[529], one would need to make decisions about why Jesus chose bread and wine in the first place in

[528] See H. Richard Niebhur, Christ and Culture and D. A. Carson, Christ and Culture Revisited

[529] Chan, Liturgical Theology, p 188 n63 notes that: "Calls have been made to find local "dynamic equivalents," for example, to bread and wine in the eucharistic celebration and cites Anscar J. Chupungco, "Inculturation," in *The SCM Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw (London, SCM Press, 2002), pp244-51.See also Phillip Tovey, Inculturation of Christian Worship: Exploring the Eucharist (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004), pp45- 47 pp137-138. Tovey writes: "At the Last Supper Jesus took bread, his followers use qurban, gonja

order to find suitable equivalents. For example, as mentioned above, did Jesus use red wine and did he choose this because it and blood are both red liquids? Should a red liquid be used? Is it important that the drink chosen was alcoholic? Is wine especially a celebratory drink or was it merely a common one? Just as words in different languages do not have exactly parallel semantic ranges, so foodstuffs do not correspond straightforwardly and come with all sorts of complex associations.

The Supper mediates Christ

As with the Bible, it is a travesty if the Supper is allowed to in any way rival or displace Christ. Rather, both the Bible and the Supper are intended to mediate Christ to the believer in the power of the Spirit, to be received by faith with thanksgiving, to the believers comfort and growth in grace. The Bible and the Supper therefore have the same ultimate aim. Both are needed if the believers to grow up into Christ.

SPEECH ACT THEORY APPLIED TO THE SUPPER

When considering the Supper as a Word, it is worth remembering that words do more than state propositions or communicate information. Following the analysis of speech-act theory outlined in chapter 2 and applied there to Scripture, words are means by which speakers

[banana], biscuits, bread, kyavati and wafers. Jesus took wine, his followers use the juice of steeped raisins, musibi [banana juice], wine, Tree Top, Ribena, coffee, Fanta, honey and water." (p47)

act: speakers have aims and produce effects. Words can promise or warn or (re-)create relationships. An attempt will be made to apply this sort of analysis to the Lord's Supper.

Interestingly, Austin, the pioneer of speech act theory, also speaks of christening (or baptism) and marriage vows (which are, of course, involved in the sacrament of marriage on a Roman Catholic account) as speech-acts[530]. Though he does not develop the point, marriage is clearly a case where speaking affects a real change: the service or ceremony causes the couple to be married whereas they were not before the necessary words were spoken. This changed status is then formally registered. What exactly changes in baptism would be highly controversial amongst Christians. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis, perhaps a speech act study of baptism would be rewarding. Perhaps Reformed Christians might agree that baptism makes one legally, visibly and publicly a member of the visible church on earth. If baptism officially brings one in to that covenant community, the Lord's Supper may be thought of as a renewal of the covenant vows made at baptism, which helps to maintain the believer in his Christian life and as a member of the church.

Speaking of Calvin's view that the sacraments are efficacious signs, B. A. Gerrish suggests that one may borrow a term from J. L. Austin and call them "performative" signs[531]. That is, they are signs that do things.

[530] Austin, How To Do Things With Words, pp11 and 6 respectively.
[531] Gerrish, Grace and Gratitude, fn 50, p140

Nicholas Wolterstorff has also argued that: “the best model for understanding how Calvin was thinking about the sacraments is the model of speaking proposed by speech-act theory”[532] pp110-111

Evangelical Anglican Melvin Tinker has argued that: “the Lord’s Supper (and the same would apply to baptism) can be conceived of in the same way as Austin’s and Searle’s speech acts, while recognizing that the Supper itself is also composed on individual speech acts.”[533]

It would be useful to analyse the speech acts of The Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion service. This could also be extended to other forms of service including Common Worship.

The Locution of the Lord’s Supper

For Tinker, “In the first place, as a whole, the Lord’s Supper is equivalent to Austin’s *locutionary* act, that is, it has a referential basis – the historic Cross-work of Christ and all the benefits that flow from that.”[534] Although a great deal might be included in that

[532] *Nicholas Wolterftorff, ‘Sacraments as Action, not Presence’ pp110-111 in David Brown and Ann Loades (ed.s), Christ: The Sacramental Word: Incarnation, Sacrament and Poetry (London, SPCK, 1996)*

[533] Tinker, Language, Symbols and Sacraments, p145.
[534] Tinker, Language, Symbols and Sacraments, p145.

statement, this risks being a little narrow if it is thought to exhaust what the Lord's supper might say. Exactly what the Lord's Supper might say would, of course, be a controversial topic. Nevertheless it is important to emphasise that the Lord's Supper says things. It has a propositional content, even if that content cannot be stated exhaustively with confidence and might be disputed. On an Evangelical Reformed view, the historical basis of the Lord's Supper and what it says are, the essential foundation of it. They are not the whole but they cannot be denied and must not be overlooked. The same could be said of the historical and propositional content of Scripture from an evangelical point of view: they are essential even if the Bible is more than a history book or a series of pieces of information.

Tinker points out, however, that the locution of the Lord's Supper does not exhaust its meaning. He says: "It is important, in relation to the Lord's Supper, to stress the functional view of language in order to guard against the common tendency to conceive of it as being solely referential, which would lead in two equal and opposite directions. The first would be to think of the elements as 'the body and blood of Christ' in terms of identity, the other would be to see the elements as simply referring to Christ's death on the Cross as a memorial. Words (and… symbols) can have a function which is more varied than referential, they can be vehicles whereby something is imparted to the hearer and certain states of affairs are established."[535] This points to the consideration of the illocutionary and performative aspects of the Supper.

[535] Tinker, Language, Symbols and Sacraments, p134.

The same problems might arise with Evangelical doctrines of Scripture. It might be possible either to neglect the words and propositions of Scripture and their historical basis or to become fixated on them and to neglect their significance.

The Illocutionary Force of the Lord's Supper

Tinker argues that: "Holy Communion in its entirety is also an *illocutionary* act, the Lord by his Spirit *does* things. In the *giving* of the bread and wine and through the accompanying words, the correlated aspects of divine love, forgiveness and eschatological hope (all of a deeply personal nature) are not merely attested but imparted."[536]

Wolterstorff similarly emphasises the action of God in the Supper and argues that the illocutionary effect of the Supper is to assure believers here and now that God will keep the promises made in Christ – that promise remains in effect[537]. (p112)

It would seem that this particular way of putting it would require more than a Zwinglian memorialist view of the Supper, although it would be possible to argue that a illocutionary acts take place in the service of the Lord's Supper without thinking that there is any special work of the Spirit. For example, a Zwinglian might argue that the minister speaks as God's

[536] Tinker, Language, Symbols and Sacraments, p145.
[537] Wolterstorff, Sacraments as Action, p112 in Brown and Loades, Christ

authorized representative in promising forgiveness of sins to the believer in the service and that in the Lord's Supper God undertakes to feed his people and to supply all their needs, bringing them safe to glory.

Wolterstorff, however, is emphatic that God acts in the Supper:

By the appointed minister of the Church uttering the words and performing the actions of the sacrament, God presents the promise made in Jesus Christ and assures us that the promise remains in effect. The minister does not do it; God does it. God is the agent. With hammering insistence the Reformed confessions assert that *God* is the one who signifies and seals the promises.[538]

For Tinker, part of the purpose of the sacramental act of the Lord's Supper is to heighten the illocutionary force of the meaning of the cross: "thus conveying through the bread and wine together with the interpretive words something more than merely saying the words 'Jesus loves you and died for you'."[539] Although Tinker's theology of the Supper is Calvinistic, again, a Zwinglian could say the same.

Tinker explains: "The symbolic gesture of the breaking of bread and subsequent distribution with the accompanying words are informative – conveying the truth of Christ's sacrificial

[538] Wolterstorff, Sacraments as Action, p114 in Brown and Loades, Christ
[539] Tinker, Language, Symbols and Sacraments, p146.

death; evocative – drawing believers to praise and gratitude; cohesive – promoting unity and communal solidarity as 'one body', as well as performative – constituting the illocutionary act of conveying the divine love with the consequent perlocutionary acts of thankfulness, including obedient Christian service."[540]

Tinker stresses especially what God says and does through the Supper. It is worth also considering further what the believing participants say and do.

The Performative Outcomes of the Lord's Supper

Employing John Searle's category of the "performative" uses of language, Leithart argues that: "Just as words are "performative," so the sacraments as visible words actually do things. They not only remind us and teach us about Christ's death, but confirm, sustain, and nourish our relationship with the Triune God. Through sacramental "words," we make promises, receive warnings, establish or renew covenants. Sacraments are indeed "words" from God, but not so much visible as performative words."[541] This analysis gives a very helpful model of the sacraments as effectual rather than "merely" symbolic.

On a Roman Catholic view, the words of consecration ("This is my body") would be seen as performative of transubstantiation. Even on a Reformed understanding, it is possible to

[540] Tinker, Language, Symbols and Sacraments, p136.
[541] Also in Leithart, Peter J., *Visible Words*, Credenda / Agenda Volume 15, Issue 4: Liturgia.

believe in an act of consecration which, while not affecting the substance of the bread and the wine, sets them apart for a special use in the context of the service of the Lord's Supper.

To speak of the performative outcomes of the Supper is another way of discussing its results. What might it do in believers and unbelievers and, more controversially, in God? Is it possible for a traditional Reformed theologian to speak of the Supper as affecting God without compromising his sovereignty or immutability or losing sight of the Supper as primarily God's gracious word to man, rather than man's attempt to appease or manipulate God? It would seem so. God has voluntarily tied himself to the Supper in the same way that he has to his Word. He is bound by what they say. Or, to put it another way, he speaks them and is faithful to what he says in them. God chooses to keep his promises. This surely highlights his power and freedom rather than limiting them. It would be no more problematical to say that God is affected by the Eucharist than it would be to say that he answers prayer. This does not compromise his sovereignty since he continues to act voluntarily and prayers and the Lord's Supper are all part of his plan.

Illocutionary Uptake

According to Tinker the perlocutionary act, what is achieved by the Lord's Supper, depends on apprehension of the locution and illocution: "For the promise to be grasped, assurance attained, unity achieved, loving obedience elicited, as Austin says, 'illocutionary uptake'

must be secured."[542] The force must be grasped: the sacrament must be received as promise, persuasion, assurance and unification. Tinker argues that illocutionary uptake is achieved by faith. "That is, there is the element of *assentus*, recognising things to be true regarding the person and Cross-work of Christ and the meaning of Holy Communion, as well as *fiducia*, that personal trusting in the one who conveys his promises and presence through the sacramental act."[543] Again, on this Reformed understanding of the Supper the importance of right reception and of understanding for it stressed. Exactly what one must understand and believe in order to receive the Supper and to benefit from it might be open to debate. A concept of the conditions necessary for illocutionary uptake is one way of denying an *ex opere operato* view of the Supper.

Felicitous conditions

Austin argued that if certain performative utterances are to be effective, then appropriate circumstances and conditions must be fulfilled. For example, to name a ship one must have the authority to do so. The felicitous conditions necessary for the performance of the Lord's Supper may be considered. These could include the saving work of Christ, which provides the essential basis for the Lord's Supper. His command constitutes it a rite to be repeated by the church. Bread and wine would also seem to be essential elements.

[542] Tinker, Language, Symbols and Sacraments, p146.
[543] Tinker, Language, Symbols and Sacraments, p147. The assensus / fiducia distinction is standard in Reformed thought. See for example, Muller, Dictionary of Theological Terms, p115-6.

At least since the Donatist controversy, it has been usual to think that the scandalous character of a celebrant would not lead to a "misfire", Austin's term for a void speech-act that does not result in the purported act. One might ask what might cause a celebration of the Supper to misfire and be void.

Speech act theory also allows for infelicities which do not void a speech act. There are all sorts of ways in which a celebration of the Lord's Supper might be defective whilst still being a true celebration of the Supper, though an imperfect one. For example, the minister might stumble over his words, the sermon may be poor, minds may wander during the prayers, but the Lord's Supper would still be received.

Some would argue that presidency at the Lord's Supper must be confined to a priest or a minister of the Word, lawfully ordained. For all his rejection of priestcraft, Calvin seems to have shared this latter view. Indeed, it would have been the Christian consensus for most of the history of the church and remains to majority position within Anglicanism. Whilst it might seem appropriate for the minister to preside because of the connections between word and sacrament and the role of the Supper in church discipline (excommunication being the ultimate sanction), it does not seem to be essential to the valid participation of the sacrament. On a Reformed evangelical view, a lay person *could* celebrate the Lord's Supper. Whether or not he (or indeed, she!) *should* it another question.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the Lord's Supper is not only, and perhaps even not primarily a "word", it is usefully thought of (within a Reformed Evangelical framework and with reference to the Church of England) as a visible word. However, the accent here should fall on the word, not in its visibility. The term "edible word" might be preferred.

The Supper is not literally or only a word and should not be treated as if it were. The service of the Lord's Supper contains a variety of "words" and stands in a complex relationship to them.

The Supper is primarily a word of God, although like the Bible, it is also a human word.

Although, of course, the Bible and the Supper should not be confused, the written Word of God is like the edible word (of God) in some important respects. Doctrinal affirmations that are made of the Scriptures may often be made of the Supper.

Both Bible and Supper show God's ability and willingness to use created things and to put the human to divine purposes.

Contemporary ways of understanding words, such as speech act theory, are of value for understanding the edible word and may highlight aspects of the Supper which have sometimes been neglected.

The chapter has argued that the category of word is a useful one for understanding the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The next chapter has a corresponding task: more controversially, it asks whether the category of sacrament might be applied to the Bible.

Chapter 5: *Verbal Sacrament?*

The doctrine of Scripture in the light of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper

Introduction

This chapter seeks to examine the Reformed Evangelical doctrine of Scripture in the light of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. It therefore builds on the doctrine of Scripture set out in chapter 2 and draws on the doctrine of the Supper set out in chapter 3. The chapter gives attention to similarities and differences between the Scriptures and the Supper. It is suggested that this comparison might usefully highlight some aspects of the Reformed Evangelical doctrine of Scripture and its use. In particular, this chapter asks whether the Bible might be said to be a sacrament or might be called sacramental, discussing more and less helpful constructions of what such a claim might mean.

May the Bible be called a sacrament?

Would the Bible fit Calvin's description of a sacrament?

As was mentioned in chapter 3, Calvin classifies the sacraments as among "the external means or aids by which God invites us into the society of Christ and holds is therein."[544] Calvin treats Scripture in Book 1 of *The Institutes* as essential to the knowledge of God the creator[545], but from a doctrinal point of view he might instead have treated it with the sacraments as one of the means of grace. To this extent the sacraments and the Scriptures have similar functions. The purposes of Bible and Supper are explored further below.

Sacraments joined to a promise as a seal

Part of Calvin's definition of a sacrament is as "an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of his good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith;"[546]. He sees the sacraments as always joined to a promise of God which they seal. Exactly what Calvin means here by the promises of God may be open to debate. Are Jesus' commands which establish the sacraments in view? Probably uppermost in Calvin's mind are the promises of God in the gospel which are contained in God's written word and conveyed in his preached word. Calvin also speaks of the sacraments as attached to the Word. Again, it could be asked what word of God Calvin particularly has in mind. For a moment, let it be presumed that Calvin is thinking of or at least including God's written word, the Bible. If this were the case, it might be problematic if the Bible is to be thought of as a sacrament since then Bible would be described with reference to itself. The claim would

[544] The title of Book 4 of The Institutes. Book 4 is largely concerned with the church. The final chapter considers civil government.
[545] Chapters 6-8
[546] Institutes 4.14.1, p1277

be that the Bible's function is to seal the promises of the Bible to believers. The Bible (considered as a sacrament) would be thought of as attached to itself (a word). Calvin's definition distinguishes between the promises of God and / or the Word of God and the sacraments which seal them. Calvin often stresses the unity of word and sacrament but he sometimes describes them by their relationship to one another and in distinction from one another. In this respect, then, on Calvin's conception of the relationship between word and sacrament, it might be confusing and perhaps even nonsensical to think of the Bible as a sacrament. Clearly the Bible is not the Supper and whatever unities and commonalities are explored, it is important to continue to distinguish them.

However, the Bible may also be said to depend on the promises of God. For example, the Apostolic writings of the New Testament may be seen as the result of Jesus' promises to the Apostles to teach them all things and remind them of everything that he has said to them (John 14:26). Conservative Evangelicals maintain that the Bible is the words of God. It is not only a record of revelation, it itself is revelation. However, the Bible may also be described as the authoritative record of those words of God which he intends to be preserved as normative for his church. Though it might be strange to think of the Bible as a seal added to the words of God (since it is itself the words of God), in practice the canon does serve to attest those words of God given in history which remain foundational for the church. Of course there are issues here about the formation of the canon and how books are recognises as carrying the authority of God. If the Scriptures are thought of as self-authenticating, they might be said to seal themselves. Alternatively, or in addition, the testimony of the Spirit may be thought of as a seal to the written Word. The testimony of

the church is helpful, but the Reformed will want to say that the Word of God forms the church rather than the church having a separate authority on which to determine which books belong to the Bible.

In short, if the Scriptures (the written Word of God) are distinguished from the Word of God in the sense of the gospel or the essential message of the Bible, then the Scriptures (like the sacraments) might be said to seal the Word of God.

An outward or visible sign & the physical object of the Bible

As has been shown, an outward or visible sign is an important part of Calvin's understanding of a sacrament. Again, as shown above, for Calvin the sacraments are "external" aids. Whilst the Bible is external to the believer, it might be thought to lack this outward or visible element. This is especially the case if one imagines a believer recalling the words of the Bible from memory without using any written document. In this case the use of the Bible seems to take place internally within the believer. Someone could be reflecting on the Scriptures fruitfully without any visible action, though even in this case, of course, physical processes would be taking place in the believer's brain. This brain activity could be displayed using a monitor, but this is to stretch the sense that the outward and visible are involved. Use of the words of Scripture could be inward and (ordinarily speaking) invisible. It would seem that an outward or visible element is not always essential to a right use of the Scriptures on every occasion of their appropriation. This is a difference between the Scriptures and the Supper,

since for the Reformed the right use of the Supper would normally necessarily involve the taking of the elements physically[547].

The use of the Supper, of course, also involves what might be called internal and invisible activity within the believer. The participant feeds on Christ in his heart by faith.

Usually, however, at least in the UK today, the use of the Bible involves some kind of physical object (a book or digital device) from which its words are read. The availability and use of physical copies of the Bible has, of course, varied throughout history and around the world. Some cultures have depended more on memory and orality and some more on books. The extent to which a physical object is involved in the use of the Bible and the effects this might have perhaps calls for further theological reflection. A comparison between the Supper and the Scripture might open up ways of thinking about how physical copies of the Bible are treated. It is worth thinking about how the physical object of the Bible and those pertaining to Communion (the bread and the wine, communion plate and linen, the holy table etc.) are treated. Anglo-Catholic services which involve veneration for the sacrament would often also involve veneration of the physical object of the Gospel book (there might be a procession with candles and acolytes and even incense).

[547] Although the parallel is not exact, it might be interesting to compare the concept of "Spiritual Communion" with individual meditation on the memorised words of Scripture. "Spiritual Communion" is a well-established practice in the Roman Catholic church. Under the heading "Spiritual Communion" Common Worship: Pastoral Services says: "Believers who cannot physically receive the sacrament are to be assured that they partake by faith of the body and blood of Christ and of the benefits he conveys to us by them." (p79) See also the final rubrics in The Book of Common Prayer Communion of the Sick.

Reformed Evangelicalism's high view of the Bible does not often translate into great reverence for the physical object of the Bible[548]. It is possible to speculate about reasons for this. Perhaps the Regulative Principle might play a role. There is probably a general sense that worship should be simple and straightforward and that distraction and ostentation should be avoided. There would probably also be a fear of idolatry. No doubt it is true that the important thing is to focus on the message of the Bible not the physical object which conveys the words.

Similar points could be made about the treatment of the bread and the wine in the Communion service.

It is interesting to note the *The Book of Common Prayer* directs that: "And to take away all occasion of dissension, and superstition, which any person hath or might have concerning the Bread and Wine, it shall suffice that the Bread be such as is usual to be eaten; but the best and purest Wheat Bread that conveniently may be gotten."[549]

Similarly ordinary paper and ink may be used for copies of the Bible. From a physical point of view, the Bible is an ordinary book. It would be unusual amongst Evangelicals to find particularly ornate or decorated Bibles.

[548] Christian attitudes to the physical object of the Bible could also be compared to Muslim attitudes to copies of the Quran.
[549] BCP Communion service, final rubrics

God's attestation and our response

Calvin defined the sacraments as including God's attestation of his good will towards his people and his people's response. Clearly the Bible attests God's good will towards his people. It is less obvious that it includes the people's response. Certainly it describes and calls for certain responses. Parts of Scripture might even be used as a response to Scripture. The Psalms, for example, might be said to include God's word and a divinely inspired human response which is also part of God's word. In traditional liturgy, Biblical canticles are used in response to the Bible readings. Comparison between the doctrine of Scripture and Calvin's doctrine of the Supper might remind the Reformed that God's word is intended to create a response from his people (James 1:22-25). In the Church of England the liturgical responses that accompany the readings may be said to form the people's answering attestation of piety. Interesting, the response is often "Thanks be to God", which might recall the Eucharist with its emphasis on grateful thanks[550].

Individual and / or communal, public and / or private use

A single believer may make use of the Bible on his own, whereas the Lord's Supper is a communal action of the church[551]. Even if a minister is taking communion to a sick person in

[550] BCP Communion service, 3rd Exhortation, shows a stress on thanksgiving in the Communion service: "And above all things ye must give most humble and hearty thanks to God…". Also in the Sursum Corda, the priest says, "Let us give thanks unto our Lord God…". The Communion may also be followed with a prayer of thanks: "Almighty and everlasting God, we most heartily thank thee…".

[551] The Book of Common Prayer Communion Service (final rubrics) directs that "there shall be no celebration of the Lord's Supper, except there be a convenient number to communicate with the Priest… three at the least." Wilhelm Niesel points out this difference between the Word and the Supper for Calvin: "Whereas the Word can

a home or hospital, they would participate together[552]. Where the elements are consecrated at a church service and taken to the housebound, there is a sense that they are joining in with the action of the wider fellowship, despite the physical distance involved[553].

Evangelicals have tended to emphasise personal Bible reading (often as part of a daily "Quiet Time"). There would not be a corresponding personal use of the Lord's Supper and daily Communion would be unusual amongst evangelicals.

Yet a comparison between the use of the Scriptures and the use of the Supper might be helpful here. Even though the Bible is fruitfully used in all sorts of other contexts, Evangelicals might recover a sense that the paradigmatic use of the Bible is in the public worship of his church. The Bible is God's words to his people and one of the defining characteristics of the church is that it gathers to hear the Word of God (cf. the people of Israel gathered to hear the law from Mount Sinai, Exodus 19-23). Jesus himself read the Scriptures publicly in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:14-21). Timothy is told to devote himself to the public reading of Scripture, as well as to preaching and to teaching (1 Timothy 4:14)[554]. It seems plausible to think that the New Testament letters to the churches would

and must be preached to individuals also, the celebration of the sacrament requires absolutely the presence and participation of the congregation." The Sacraments, p245 in McKim (ed), Readings in Calvin's Theology

[552] Common Worship: Pastoral Services, pp60 and 71.

[553] The Common Worship service for Distribution of Holy Communion at Home or in Hospital to the Sick and Housebound contains the Words of Introduction: "The Church of God, of which we are members, has taken bread and wine and given thanks over them according to our Lord's command" (Common Worship: Pastoral Services, p76). The notes direct that "Words of introduction linking the consecrated elements with the celebration at which they were consecrated must be used." (p78)

[554] It is interesting to ask how often a minister would read the Bible himself in public worship. Often in Church of England services a lay person would read the Epistle and a minister would read the Gospel. According to the Westminster Directory of Public Worship "READING of the word in the congregation, being part of the publick worship of God… is to be performed by the pastors and teachers. Howbeit, such as intend the ministry, may

have been read when they gathered for worship (cf. Colossians 4:16). Following on from Synagogue worship, it seems that public reading of Scripture was an important part of Christian worship from earliest times[555].

It may be that some Evangelical worship, with its emphasis on the sermon, or on the singing of worship songs, might in fact have neglected the public use of Scripture when compared to traditional liturgical worship which might include a Psalm, Old Testament or Epistle and Gospel reading, as well as biblical canticles[556].

Recovering a sense of the centrality of the public reading of Scripture might also help with the interpretation of Scripture since it would encourage believers to think of the Bible as addressed to God's people collectively rather than God's word to them directly as individuals, apart from the body of the church. Remembering the place of the Bible in the public worship of the church recalls God's people to the task of understanding and responding to God's word together. It might help to minimise eccentric interpretations.

The role of the minister

occasionally both read the word, and exercise their gift in preaching in the congregation, if allowed by the presbytery thereunto."

[555] See Hughes Oliphant Old, The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church volume 1: The Biblical Period

[556] See Common Worship for examples

One of the great desires of the Reformation was that all believers might be able to read the Bible for themselves in their own language[557]. Although, as chapter 3 showed, there was a similar democratisation in terms of lay participation in the Supper, amongst the magisterial Reformers, presiding at Communion remained firmly in the hands of the minister. In the free churches lay people might celebrate the Lord's Supper and Communion sometimes takes place in informal settings such as homegroups without the leadership of an ordained minister, but in Anglicanism there is a clerical monopoly on presiding at the Supper[558].

The Church of England also requires that those who preach should be officially authorised or have the permission of diocesan bishop to do so[559]. In the Book of Common Prayer ordination service, priests are given the "authority to preach the Word of God, and to minister the holy Sacraments in the Congregation".

Although Evangelicals are unlikely to be enthusiastic for a Magisterium, comparing the Supper and the Scriptures might recall ministers to their special duty to publicly teach and defend the faith once for all delivered to the saints (2 Timothy 1:13-14)[560].

[557] We may recall Tyndale's famous reply to a priest at Little Sodbury: "If God spare my life, before very long I shall cause a plough boy to know the scriptures better than you do!"
[558] See Canon B12.1, 3. The House of Bishops' Guidelines on Public Worship with Communion by Extension say: "The House of Bishops recognizes the value of an occasional celebration of Holy Communion in ... [home groups or other parish groups] when a priest must preside.", October 2000, http://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/texts/extension/extensionend.aspx. Lay Presidency is of course sometimes advocated.
[559] Canon B18.2
[560] Cf. BCP service for ordering of priests. Priests are called "to be Messengers, Watchmen, and Stewards of the Lord, to teach, and to permonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family;". The priest is to labour "to bring all such as are or shall be committed to [his] charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God… that there be no place left among you, either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life." The minister is "with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word."

May the Bible be thought of as being sacramental?

Even if it seems problematic on a Reformed Evangelical understanding to call the Bible a sacrament, may it be thought of as sacramental? What would such a claim mean? What does the Bible have in common with the sacraments, and in particular with the Lord's Supper?

A broader concept of what is sacramental

If the Bible is to be thought sacramental, this will require a broader conception of the sacramental which is not limited exclusively to the two undoubted sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Whilst Calvin argues that only Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinary sacraments of the New Testament it will be recalled that he also treats Old Testament sacraments and is willing to think of laying on of hands at ordination as a sacrament, though it is not an ordinary sacrament since it is not common to all Christians.

In addition to the seven sacraments recognised by the Roman Catholic church, some writers have suggested thinking of other things as sacraments or as sacramental.

For example, Barnabas Lindars calls Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet in John 13 certainly a sacramental act[561]. According to F. L. Anderson, Bernard of Clairvaux advocated making the washing of feet a sacrament[562].

Oliver O'Donovan has suggested a certain openness about what might be considered a sacrament:

There have, of course, been both few and many sacraments identified in the history of Christian thought. Neither the scholastic seven nor the Reformation two should limit our perspectives. Writers of our own time have rightly argued that sacramental action diversifies, on the one hand, into many acts, and concentrates, on the other, into the one act of encountering Christ. Around the central few are grouped, quite properly, acts of the church, some of them acts of natural religion like marrying and burying, which in the context of the Gospel fellowship take on a sacramental character as proclamations of Christ's presence in the church.[563]

O'Donovan identifies "four practices of worship, more or less universally maintained, which go back to apostolic use and formally place the Christ-event at the core of the community's identity" as sacraments but he calls the four heuristic and says that they are not to be thought hard and fast nor final[564]. Alongside baptism and the Lord's Supper, O'Donnovan

[561] Cited in Brown and Loades, Christ, p22 n17
[562] James Orr (ed.), International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, James Orr (ed.), (Eerdmans, 1939) article on "Washing of Feet", http://www.internationalstandardbible.com/W/washing-of-feet.html
[563] O'Donovan, Desire of the Nations, p173
[564] O'Donovan, Desire of the Nations, p173

includes the laying on of hands and the Lord's Day. As has been shown, the idea of laying on of hands as a sacrament is not alien to Calvin. Later O'Donnovan adds that:

The idea that the keeping of the Lord's Day could be listed among the sacramental signs of the church would seem less novel to patristic theologians than it does to us, who are weighed down by memories of the scholastic definition of the sacramental act. Augustine explicitly identifies the *keeping of Easter* as a sacramental observance (as distinct from keeping Christmas, which is a mere commemoration), because in observing Easter we re-enact the death and resurrection of Christ and represent our own delivery from death to life. And that is why Easter must always be kept on a Sunday (Ep. 55.2, 16-23), and why fasting on a Sunday gives such justified offence (Ep. 36.27-9).[565]

Douglas Wilson has also advocated a larger category of the "sacramental":

There are only two established sacraments in the Christian Church, which are baptism and the Lord's Supper. But the whole world is sacramental, teeming with metaphor… table fellowship with friends is not a sacrament, but it is sacramental. Sex is not a sacrament but it is sacramental – a great mystery…. motherhood is sacramental[566]

[565] O'Donnovan, Desire of the Nations, p186
[566] Wilson, Douglas, Mother Kirk: Essays and Forays in Practical Ecclesiology (Moscow, Canon Press, 2001) p94

Philip Seddon argues: "The world is a sacrament, people can communicate (something of) God to us through their faces, touch, smiles, tears, words, pain, which are all part of our sacramental and created interrelatedness not only *for* one another, but *in* one another."[567]

[The thesis may contain a chapter which asks whether the whole of creation may be said to be sacramental and how this might relate to the claim that the Bible is sacramental]

Christ as sacrament

Some writers argue that Christ himself is the supreme sacrament. Brown and Loades, for example, use this language[568]. Cocksworth argues that for Thomas Torrance Christ is the "all-inclusive Sacrament" since the Word has united himself to the world in Christ[569]. Eberhard Jungel speaks of Christ as a sacrament, and especially of his death as a sacrament because it is a meaningful sign which also effects the grace it signifies[570]. Simon Chan argues that as the incarnate Word "Christ could be called the "primordial Sacrament""[571]. Philip Seddon argues: "… the sacrament of the death of Christ is *both* the heart of the sacrament of creation *and* the heart of the sacrament of the Word. Christ *is* – not merely *was* – the Word made Flesh. Jesus Christ is the sacrament of God: the life-giving focus of our

[567] Philip Seddon, *Gospel and Sacrament – reclaiming a holistic evangelical spirituality*, Grove Spirituality Series S89 (Cambridge, Grove Books, 2004), p15
[568] Brown and Loades, p7
[569] Cocksworth, *Evangelical Eucharistic Thought In The Church of England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), p187 quoted in Stamps, 'The Sacrament of the Word made Flesh: Eucharistic theology of Thomas F. Torrance' (PhD thesis, Nottingham, 1986), p229
[570] Eberhard Jungel, Theological Essays II (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1995) p168. Jungel sees this approach as that of Luther.
[571] Chan, Liturgical Theology, p63. See also O. C. Quick, The Christian Sacraments (London, Nisbet, 2nd Ed., 1932) p105, Edward Schillebeeckx, Christ the Sacrament (London, Shed and Ward, 1963), p13ff and John Macquarrie, A Guide to the Sacraments (London, SCM Press, 1997), pp35-36

encounter."[572] The incarnation is sometimes seen as grounding a sacramental principle by which the created is able to mediate the divine[573].

Clearly careful analysis of what might be meant by "sacramental" is called for.

Words as sacramental

David Brown and Ann Loades have argued that words are sacramental in the sense that they enable participating in something beyond themselves[574]. They offer this brief working definition of the term "sacramental": "By the sacramental is commonly understood the physical or material mediating that which is beyond itself, the spiritual; in the familiar definition, 'the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace'."[575]

John Keble spoke of poetry's "wealth of symbols and similes" under the influence of religion partaking "(I might almost say) of the nature of sacraments"[576].

Brown and Loades cite the example George Steiner, who, in *Real Presences*, contra Derrida and Deconstructionism "maintains that literature gains its power precisely through the

[572] Seddon, *Gospel and Sacrament – reclaiming a holistic evangelical spirituality*, Grove Spirituality Series S89 (Cambridge, Grove Books, 2004) , p22
[573] Brown and Loades, Christ, p27
[574] David Brown and Ann Loades (ed.s), *Christ: The Sacramental Word: Incarnation, Sacrament and Poetry* (London, SPCK, 1996), p4. See also David Brown, *God and Mystery in Words: Experience through Metaphor and Drama* (Oxford University Press, 2008) where he argues that "language can sometimes be said to function sacramentally, in conveying experiences of divine presence."
[575] Brown and Loades, Christ, p4
[576] John Keble, Lectures on Poetry (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1912) vol II, 480, quoted in Brown and Loades, Christ, p14

sense of presence within it of something beyond itself, or, putting matters the other way around, through its ability to disclose a transcendence beyond itself."[577] They quote V. Cunningham: says: "The question of presence, of what is made really present or not, in writing and reading, is, as Eliot knew and George Steiner keeps insisting, of course theological and biblical… The issue is, in the end, sacramental; the table at which the literary parasite sits looks oddly akin to a eucharistic one."[578]

Brown and Loades want to engage the readers' interest in the way in which words (including Christ as the Word) function sacramentally, and thus break down what we see as the false contrast between material symbol and verbal image."[579]

Brown and Loades conclude:

Whether within the biblical text or beyond, words can and do thus function sacramentally, despite all their apparent clash and dissonance. For it is precisely through meditation upon such images that our participation in the Word made flesh is most effectively deepened. Chewing the eucharistic elements and chewing the words should thus not be seen as opposed activities. Words, no less than the Word himself, can be fully sacramental. The divine Poet whose Word shaped the language of creation also thereby made possible the words – the human poetry – that describe that creation, and it is these words that enable us to participate in the Word as their source and ours. If Dorothy Sayers is right, Dante combined the incarnate Christ with the books of the Bible in a single eucharistic procession:

[577] Brown and Loades, Christ, p16
[578] V. Cunningham, Reading Gaol (Oxford, Blackwell, 1994) p393 quoted in Brown and Loades, p17
[579] Brown and Loades, Christ, pix

Word, words and sacrament all as one. Whether a correct account or not, it was a wise intuition.[580]

Preaching as sacramental

Some writers have called preaching sacramental. Since the preaching of God's word is clearly closely related to God's written word, this claim is worth exploring in more detail. Considering what might be meant by describing preaching as sacramental may help to reveal in what sense the Bible might be said to be sacramental. Exponents of this view are quoted at some length so that it is possible to discern something of what they mean by calling preaching sacramental.

Donald Coggan's book on preaching is entitled "The Sacrament of the Word"[581]. Coggan does not give a detailed account of what he means by calling preaching the sacrament of the Word. Writing in the Foreword, John Austin Baker offers this explanation of the title:

The preacher stands at the intersection of the eternal and the temporal, to be sanctified by saving truth so that others may receive Him who is the Truth, and take Him into the complex problems and agonies of our world.

[580] Brown and Loades, Christ, pp19-20
[581] (Glasgow, Collins Fount Paperbacks, 1987)

That is why this book is called The Sacrament of the Word. It is about the imparting of Christ through our words [primarily in preaching], and so inevitably through ourselves.[582]

Coggan draws on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper thus:

The prime actor in the Sacraments of the Word is the Holy Spirit. The Sacrament of the Eucharist provides us with a helpful comparison…. [In preaching:] The "elements" are words, ordinary words, the words that we constantly use in the commerce of everyday life. But in preaching, the life-giving Spirit takes these words and makes them vehicles of his grace. He fashions words into the Word. Who can doubt that, when such preaching takes place, there is the Real Presence of Christ?[583]

Three points may be noted. First, Coggan argues that in the Supper and in preaching, the Holy Spirit is the prime actor. Coggan argues that the authors of The Prayer Book were right in "insisting that the two sacramental acts [of preaching and the Lord's Supper] should go together, both being dependent for their efficiency on the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. Through both, God reaches the hearts of his people and "graces" them."[584] Second, the ordinary human words of preaching may be likened to the ordinary elements of bread and wine which the Spirit uses as vehicles of grace in the Supper. Coggan also quotes C. E. B. Cranfield's argument that the Bible is as essential to preaching as bread and wine are to the

[582] Coggan, The Sacrament of the Word, p12
[583] Coggan, The Sacrament of the Word, p76
[584] Coggan, The Sacrament of the Word, p77

Supper: "To try to bypass the Bible in preaching is as perverse as attempting to celebrate the Holy Supper without bread or wine… it is, in fact, to show oneself ignorant of what preaching is all about."[585] Coggan adds: "Water, bread and wine are the stuff of baptism and eucharist. Words are the stuff of preaching."[586] He sees these uses of created things as instances of what he calls the "incarnational principle": "God's taking up of temporal things for the conveyance of eternal realities"[587]. Third, proper preaching (like the Supper) mediates the Real Presence of Christ.

For Coggan, whilst baptism and the Eucharist are God's *verbal visibilia*, sermons are his *verba audibilia,* appealing to the ear[588].

Similarly, P. T. Forsyth calls the preacher a sacrament[589] and describes him as sacramental:

The preacher's place in the Church is sacramental. It is not sacerdotal, but it is sacramental. He mediates the word to the Church from faith to faith, from his faith to theirs, from one stage of their common faith to another…. He is a living element in Christ's hands (broken, if need be) for the distribution and increment of Grace. He is laid on the altar of the Cross[590]

[585] Coggan, The Sacrament of the Word, p77, quoting The Bible and Christian Life, T. T. Clark, 1955, p12
[586] Coggan, The Sacrament of the Word, p77
[587] Coggan, The Sacrament of the Word, p77
[588] Coggan, The Sacrament of the Word, p77. The category of visible words was questioned above. Of course sermons are usually "seen" as well as heard.
[589] P.T. Forsyth, Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind: The Lyman Beecher Lecture on Preaching, Yale University, 1907 (Hodder and Stoughton, MCMVII), p79
[590] Forsyth, Positive Preaching, p80

Part of the preacher's role is to "feed" the people with the Word of God[591].

One of the points Forsyth wants to insist on with this sacramental language is that the sermon is not mere talk, it does something. Real preaching is effective spiritual action:

In true preaching, as in a true sacrament, more is done than said…. He [the preacher] is a man of action. He is among the men who do things. That is why I call him a sacramental man, not merely an expository, declaratory man. In a sacrament is there not something done, not merely shown, not merely recalled? It is no mere memorial…. in a sacrament there is something effected.[592]

Forsyth adds:

The preacher's word, when he preaches the gospel and not only delivers a sermon, is an effective deed, charged with blessing or with judgement. We eat and drink judgement to ourselves as we hear.[593]

[591] Forsyth, Positive Preaching, p80
[592] Forsyth, Positive Preaching, pp81-82
[593] Forsyth, Positive Preaching, p83

As for Coggan, for Forsyth, preaching involves the real presence of Christ.[594] Preaching mediates what Forsyth calls "the Great Act", the saving work of Christ and especially his cross[595]. The preacher is merely the sacramental element, the power is not his[596].

George Pattison writes:

if we no longer live in a golden age of Christian preaching, few Christians will not at some point have experienced something of the sacramental dimension of preaching- that preaching, no less than the sacraments more narrowly understood, is a way of God becoming present in time to the believing community. Preaching too can be a way of making-present the 'conversation in heaven' to which God is constantly drawing us. Seeing preaching as sacramental in this way goes against the widespread assumption by both preachers and congregations that preaching is primarily a form of teaching, the aim of which is simply to offer an explanation or application of the biblical text, or to demonstrate the logical, historical or psychological grounds for accepting Christian belief.[597]

For Simon Chan "proclamation is a sacramental event just as the sacrament is a proclamation. It is human action joined with the action of the Spirit. In the act of proclamation, human words are united with the divine Word."[598]

[594] Forsyth, Positive Preaching, pp 82 and 83
[595] Forsyth, Positive Preaching, p84
[596] Forsyth, Positive Preaching, pp84-85
[597] George Pattison, Short Course in Christian Doctrine, p108
[598] Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Dowers Grove, IVP, 2006), p p134

Preaching as sacramental in Calvin and the Reformed tradition

A number of scholars have argued that Calvin thought of preaching as sacramental. Since this thesis draws on Calvin's doctrine of the sacraments and of the Lord's Supper, it seems fitting to explore this suggestion in some detail. Particular attention is paid to what these scholars mean by calling Calvin's preaching sacramental and often their own words are quoted. It will then be asked whether these formulations could be applied to God's word written as well as God's word preached.

Although Calvin does not call preaching a sacrament, in some ways the Word of God serves a similar function to the Lord's Supper and the language Calvin uses of preaching and the Supper is sometimes strikingly similar. Calvin can make very strong statements about the unity of Word and Sacrament. For example, Wallace says: "To those men whose formal practice is daily to cry, "The Word of the Lord, the Word of the Lord" in their anxiety that the Scripture shall have first place of honour in the Church Calvin says, "They will find nothing applicable to the Word which we do not also give to the sacraments."[599]

Michael A. Farley argues that "for Reformed theologians … the preaching of the Word has effectively functioned as the central liturgical and sacramental event in Reformed worship."[600] Similarly Gerrish argues that for Calvin:

[599] Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of The Word and Sacrament, pp160-161, citing Corpus Reformatorum 9:20-21
[600] Michael A. Farley, "Reforming Reformed Worship: Theological Method and Liturgical Catholicity in American Presbyterianism, 1850–2005" (Ph.D. diss., Saint Louis University, 2007), p177, n156

The word is not simply information about God; it is the instrument through which union with Christ is effected and his grace is imparted. The word of God, in Calvin's thinking, assumes the function that medieval theology ascribed to the sacraments. In this sense, it is the sacramental word.[601]

Further, he says that Calvin ascribes "to the proclaimed word of God the power and efficacy that the medieval church credited to the seven sacraments."[602] For example, Calvin writes, God "has ordained his word as the instrument by which Jesus Christ, with all his graces, is dispensed to us."[603] Again, Gerrish says: "the Protestants at the time of the Reformation really did transfer to the proclamation of the gospel the salvific efficacy medieval scholasticism ascribed to a sacrament. But they did not substitute one for the other. They kept both and interpreted each in the light of the other."[604]

Similarly, Peter Adam says that for Calvin "God is present [when his word is preached] and his words preached are an effective means of grace."[605] He goes on to say that DeVries has shown that this idea was not common in the Roman Catholic church of Calvin's day[606]. Adams says "by medieval times the sacraments alone were [thought of as] the means [of grace], and the Word was merely educative."[607] He quote DeVries: "The Preached word itself, so far from conveying the healing medicine of divine grace [on the understanding of the Roman Catholic church of the time], was rather a prescription for the medicine which was available only in the sacraments."[608]

---

[601] Gerrish, Grace and Gratitude, p76
[602] Gerrish, Grace and Gratitude, p84
[603] Calvin, *Short Treatise on the Lord's Supper* (1541), quoted in Gerrish, Grace and Gratitude, p84
[604] Gerrish, Grace and Gratitude, p109
[605] Peter Adam, Preaching of a Lively Kind, p21 in Thompson (ed), Engaging With Calvin
[606] Peter Adam, Preaching of a Lively Kind, p21, citing DeVries, Jesus Christ in the Preaching of Calvin and Schleiermacher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), p14
[607] Peter Adam, Preaching of a Lively Kind,p22
[608] DeVries, Jesus Christ, p22 quotes in Adam, Preaching, in Thompson, Engaging

Clearly there is a risk of theological confusion in thinking of the Word as a Sacrament since for Calvin as for Augustine the Word of God added to the element makes a sacrament. If the Word itself is a sacrament then does the Word make itself a sacrament? What is the element to which the word is added in this case? Gerrish' discussion is worth quoting:

Calvin himself describes the word as verbum sacramentale, the "sacramental word". He means the word that constitutes, or makes, a sacrament. And his argument is that the word, in this sense, cannot be a magical incantation muttered by the priest over the earthly elements, while an uncomprehending people looks on.[609]

This word is the proclaimed word of faith, God's promise[610]. Gerrish contends:

Since Calvin elsewhere so plainly assigns the proclaimed word of promise the very functions that the medieval church looked for in the sacraments, we may fairly extend his use of the term *verbum sacramentale* to denote a proclamation that not only *makes* a sacrament but also, as an efficacious means of grace, *is* a sacrament.[611]

[609] Gerrish, Grace and Gratitude, p85
[610] Gerrish, Grace and Gratitude, p85. He cites Calvin, Institutes, 1559, 4.14.4 (2:1279-80)
[611] Gerrish, Grace and Gratitude, p85-85

John H. Leith argues that: "For Calvin, preaching is sacramental in the context of the order of salvation and as a means of grace, and not in the more general sense by which all creation may be sacramental."[612]

Describing Calvin's doctrine of preaching, Wolterstorff says: "The reading in the church of the anciently spoken word of God provides the basis for the here-and-now speech of God to God's people. The sermon is "sacramental" of the speech of God – not of the static presence of God but of God's *very speaking*."[613] He adds:

Often it is said that the churches of the Reformation have no sacramental consciousness. The truth is that the Calvinistic wing of the Reformed tradition, and the confessional documents of the tradition as a whole exhibit an intensely sacramental consciousness, more than is typical of such as the Roman and Anglican traditions. Part of this "more" pertains to the sermon. More than any other traditions in Christendom, the churches of the Reformation – Reformed, but Lutheran as well – have emphasized that by way of church proclamation, God acts graciously towards God's people.[614]

[612] Leith, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and Its Significance for Today in the Light of Recent Research," *Review and Expositor,*86 (Winter 1989): 31 p211 quoted in Gerrish, Grace and Gratitude, p76. Wallace comments that "… the nature of this [sacramental] union is as unique and unparalleled as the incarnation itself is a unique and unparalleled event; … there is no true analogy to this relationship under consideration, outside the events of the Bible and indeed outside of Jesus Christ. Calvin sees no "natural sacramental principle" running through the world of nature from the study of which we might begin our thinking about the sacraments." Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament, p165. However, Zachman, Randall C., *Image and Word in the Theology of John Calvin* (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2007) argues that a sacramental sense is pervasive in Calvin's approach to all of creation.
[613] Wolterstorff, The Reformed Liturgy, in McKim, Major Themes, p288
[614] Wolterstorff, The Reformed Liturgy, in McKim, Major Themes, p288

Wolterstorff also sees a parallel between the notion of sacramental efficiency and the efficiency of the sermon. Neither depends for their power on the minister:

Those who are hesitant to ascribe to the sermon so "sacramental" a status as did the Reformers will usually focus on the deficiencies of sermons and the shortcomings of preachers. The answer of the Reformers to this objection is structurally the same as that given by the medieval church to the suggestion that the efficousy of the sacrament depends on the holiness of the priest: God uses fallible human material to accomplish God's ends.[615]

Wolterstorff also suggests that the Reformed practice of praying for illumination before Scripture reading and sermon is an analogous to the epiclesis in the service of the Lord's Supper. In both cases the work of the Spirit is understood to be essential[616].

Wolterstorff sees in Calvin's understanding of Supper and sermon the same fundamental structure: " God acting and we receiving, rather than we acting and God receiving. And just as in the case of proclamation, God's action must be received in faith and applied by the Spirit."[617]

J. Mark Beach argues that like Luther, "Calvin … gives us a doctrine of Christ's real presence in gospel proclamation. His doctrine … has features and accents all its own— corresponding

[615] Wolterstorff, The Reformed Liturgy, in McKim, Major Themes, p289
[616] Wolterstorff, The Reformed Liturgy, in McKim, Major Themes, p290
[617] Wolterstorff, The Reformed Liturgy, in McKim, Major Themes, p290

in many respects to his distinct doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper."[618]

Beach explains his use of the word "sacramental" is "to express the reality of God's presence through human instrumentation or divine activity through human labor. God is agent; humans are instruments."[619] Beach is thinking of:

the *sacramental* character of the Word itself—that is to say, it [this way of speaking] refers to the presence of Christ in, with, and through the Word proclaimed. The sacramental character of the Word means that God's Word genuinely belongs to God, that it is *from* God and *of* God; it is *his* speech. Therefore *God*, through the Holy Spirit, is speaking and is the agent of grace. "Sacramental Word," therefore, has no sacerdotal connotations. God does not transfer his work to humans or cloth human beings (or a human institution) with his power to dispense grace *ex opere operato*.[620]

Beach argues that: "Christ is spiritually present in the preaching of the gospel through the operation of the Holy Spirit; hence preaching possesses a sacramental character—an outward vehicle for an inward grace."[621]

[618] J. Mark Beach 'The Real Presence of Christ in the Preaching of the Gospel: Luther and Calvin on the Nature of Preaching' *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 10 (1999) 77-134, p91
[619] Beach, Real Presence, p92, n38
[620] Beach, Real Presence, p92, n38
[621] Beach, Real Presences, p117

Similarly, discussing Calvin's doctrine, Leith says: "In preaching, the Holy Spirit uses the words of the preacher as an occasion for the presence of God in grace and in mercy. In this sense, the actual words of the sermon are comparable to the element in the Sacraments."[622]

Parker notes a similarity between Calvin's view of Supper and sermon as God's actions: "Just as Christ is present at the Supper spiritually, that is, by the working of the Spirit, so he is present in the preaching spiritually—by the working of the Spirit."[623]

According to Wallace, on Calvin's view: "Through the preaching of the Word by His ministers, Christ therefore gives His sacramental presence in the midst of His Church, imparts to men the grace which the Word promises, and establishes His kingdom over the hearts of His hearers." [624] And: "In the event of God's 'connecting Himself' thus with the preacher, to make his act of speaking the effective Word of the Lord, a relationship is set up between the human act of the preacher and the divine action of grace which we may call a sacramental union."[625]

Describing Calvin's doctrine Gerrish speaks of the ""sacramental" functions" of the Word of God "as a powerful instrument of the Spirit ."[626]

Chan suggests that evangelicals might think of a kind of transubstantiation taking place in preaching:

[622] Leith, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and Its Significance for Today in the Light of Recent Research," *Review and Expositor*,86 (Winter 1989): 31 quoted in Beach, Real Presence, p93
[623] Parker, *Calvin's Preaching,* 42
[624] Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 84
[625] Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament, 90-91
[626] Gerrish, Grace and Gratitude, p82

The Word proclaimed is truly the Word of God. As the Second Helvetic Confession puts it, "The preaching of the word of God is the word of God." This is the closest that Protestants get to a doctrine of transubstantiation. Human words do "become" God's Word in the event of preaching – (p134) in much the same way as Christ who was the Word "became" flesh without ceasing to be God. If this is so, why is it so difficult to believe that created things like bread and wine could "become" the body and blood of Christ in the event of the eucharistic celebration (without ceasing to be bread and wine)? Preaching and eucharistic celebration share the same logical function. In the Protestant doctrine of preaching a kind of transubstantiation occurs. Could not the traditional doctrine of transubstantiation be understood in a similar way? The fact is that God uses ordinary things to convey spiritual blessings, even if we have no adequate explanation of how it is done. If evangelicals are to return to the norm of Word and sacrament in their worship, their strong sacramental doctrine of preaching must be extended to include the Eucharist and baptism.[627]

It would seem that these points about preaching could have been made without recourse to the language of the sacraments. Indeed, in the view of the scholars quoted above, this was Calvin's view, although he did not call preaching sacramental directly. These categories appear to be a legitimate and illuminating way of speaking about preaching. The comparison between the Lord's Supper and preaching could be helpful in articulating something of what preaching involves, how it works and what it achieves.

The Bible as sacramental

[627] Chan, Liturgical Theology, pp134-5

W. C. Smith describes Bernard of Clairvaux's understanding of Scripture as sacramental[628].

Brown and Loades argue that Judaism and Islam are often thought of as anti-sacramental because of their hostility to visual imagery but their attitude to their sacred texts as able to convey the sense of the presence of God may be thought sacramental[629]. Brown and Loades speak of the "sense of Scripture as sacramental, as the vehicle of God's presence"[630].

Leland Ryken claims that the Puritans thought of the Bible as sacramental:

There can be no doubt that for these worshipers the Word became a verbal sacrament (even though they would not have used that term to describe it). A sacrament is a means of grace in which the individual believer encounters the real presence of God in a uniquely powerful way. In the public worship of the Puritans, "the Word is made flesh – not to sight, as in images; not to taste, as in the bread and wine; not to smell, as in the fumes of incense; but to the hearing, and dwells among us. Preaching is a sacrament."[631]

[628] W. C. Smith, *What is Scripture? A comparative approach* (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1993) especially chapter 2.
[629] Brown and Loades, Christ, p11
[630] Brown and Loades, Christ, p11
[631] Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1986) p125 quoting Maclure, Millar, *The Paul's Cross Sermons, 1534-1642* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1958), p165

Thomas Merton wrote that: "The Scriptures are one of the Church's greatest sacramentals"[632].

P. T. Forsyth argued that: "The Bible, properly used, becomes, by the Holy Spirit's action, the sacramental book."[633]

Discussing Barth's doctrine of Scripture, Vanhoozer speaks of "the Bible's quasi-sacramental mediation of Jesus' real presence"[634]. He adds that "many acknowledge "Scripture's life-giving, sacramental *power*"[635]. Vanhoozer also claims: "Blosech espouses a sacramental model which sees revelation as God in action and Scripture as the means for encountering God."[636] Vanhoozer himself believes that Scripture is not best seen as "a sacramental story that mysteriously renders Christ"[637].

John P. Burgess argues that: "… scripture is a "sacramental word" that points beyond itself."[638] He continues: "As sacramental word, scripture is not merely a witness to

[632] Quoted (presumably with at least some degree of approval) in Peter Adam, Hearing God's Word: Exploring Biblical Spirituality, NSBT series 16 (Apollos IVP, 2004). Merton was an American Cistercian monk (1915-1968).
[633] Quoted in Coggan, The Sacrament of the Word, p76, citing Church and Sacrament, p165
[634] Vanhoozer, Drama, p5
[635] Vanhoozer, Drama, p12
[636] Vanhoozer, 'God's Mighty Speech-Acts: The Doctrine of Scripture Today' pp143-181 in Satterthwaite, Philip E. and Wright, David F. (ed.s), *A Pathway into the Holy Scripture* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1994) p159 discussing Donald G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation* (Carlisle, Paternoster, 1994)
[637] Vanhoozer, 'God's Mighty Speech-Acts: The Doctrine of Scripture Today' pp143-181 in Satterthwaite, Philip E. and Wright, David F. (ed.s), *A Pathway into the Holy Scripture* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1994)
[638] John P. Burgess, "Scripture as Sacramental Word: Rediscovering Scripture's Compelling Power" *Interpretation* volume 52 (1998) pp380-391, p381. He also regards preaching as sacramental, p389.

revelation. It sets forth Christ. It draws us into his presence and invites us to be transformed into his image. It opens the possibility of relationship between the divine and the human."[639] He suggests that perhaps "we should think of the words of scripture as "an audible signal of an inaudible grace.""[640] For Burgess, "As a sacramental word, scripture is more like poetry than a textbook. It has the capacity to move us, inspire us, and claim us. It points beyond itself to ultimate meaning."[641] Burgess argues that "When the Christian tradition has understood scripture as a sacramental, poetic word, it has drawn at least three implications: scripture is meant to be read aloud; it is meant to be read in community; and it is meant to be memorized."[642] Burgess speaks of "the power of scripture to convey the very presence of God and God's people. Scripture sets forth Christ. It is sacramental."[643]

Stephen Wright on the Scriptures as Sacramental

Stephen Wright has suggested that we must think of "The Bible as Sacrament"[644], although in the same article he also uses the term "sacramental"[645], which perhaps makes his true position clearer. He has argued strongly for the appropriateness, even the theological "necessity" and urgency for our day, of understanding the Scriptures sacramentally. He makes bold claims: "I suggest, in summary, that to view Scripture as sacramental is perhaps the only way to save the Church from either fundamentalist misreading or effective

[639] Burgess, Scripture as Sacramental Word, p381
[640] Burgess, Scripture as Sacramental Word, p381. Of course Scripture is not only heard. It is also read, but thinking of its central use in the church, perhaps audible word is preferable to legible word.
[641] Brurgess, Scripture as Sacramental Word, p381-2
[642] Burgess, Scripture as Sacramental Word, p382
[643] Burgess, Scripture as Sacramental Word, p384
[644] Wright, Stephen, Guest Editorial: The Bible as Sacrament (Anvil, Volume 19 No. 2 2002)
[645] We have also seen above that such language was used of the Scriptures by Thomas Merton. Wright acknowledges that his discussion is not wholly original and particularly points to the influence of Donald Coggan's work on preaching in Coggan, Donald, *The Sacrament of the Word* (Glasgow, Collins Fount Paperbacks, 1987) and Wolterstorff, Nicholas, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical reflections on the claim that God speaks* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995) on his thinking.

marginalisation of Scripture. It may also be the only adequate theological ground on which we can continue to affirm our high view of Scripture in the light of our culture's questions, and mediate its riches to those who do not yet fully accept its unique authority."[646]

Wright's Evangelical Aim

Especially as Wright is seeking to defend and affirm what he calls "our high view of Scripture"[647] in an Evangelical Anglican journal, his article requires careful analysis, particularly perhaps by Evangelical Anglicans.

Helpful insights in Wright's article

Wright's article includes some helpful insights. For example, it opens up a discussion of the distinction of the physical object of the Bible from its message, a theme developed further below. Wright argues that the focus should be not on the object of the Bible in itself but its story; thus he sees the *Miracle Maker* video as helpful, though he argues that the words of the Bible cannot be dispensed with[648].

Problems in Wright's article

[646] Wright, The Bible as Sacrament, op cit, p87
[647] Ibid., p87
[648] see Ibid., p82

Yet, Wright's article is problematic for the traditional or conservative evangelical doctrine of Scripture. His arguments separate the Bible's purpose from its actual words and hence downgrade their effective authority. Distinguishing the Bible's purpose or message and its words is not always easy. The relationship between form and content in communication is a complex one. It is not straightforward to isolate the message of a text from the way in which it is conveyed. The form affects the communication. Perhaps evangelicals have tended to crunch the Bible down into doctrinal propositions or sermon points and thereby miss something of what God intends to communicate. For traditional evangelicals, the text of Scripture remains the primary authority and human interpretations of it have a derived, dependant authority.

The distinction between the Bible's message (which is given precisely and particularly in its words) and the physical object of the Bible (the pen and ink marks on the pages etc.), however, seems much clearer and could be usefully examined using this kind of approach.

A Reformed Sacramental theology applied to the Bible could be a way of affirming that the words of Scripture remain ordinary human words which God speaks, just as the bread and wine do not undergo any change in themselves in the Supper. It is the words and the bread and wine put to this use which are significant. The Bible is not given in a special kind of divine language. Its words are not magical.

Re-defining the Bible as The Word of The Lord *Sacramentally*

Wright's article calls for a redefinition of "Scripture as 'the word of the Lord', but in a *sacramental* sense which he hopes will be "fruitful" and by which "obstacles to its reception in our culture will be removed"[649]. His aims may seem laudable, though they are reminiscent of the Liberal project of adapting the Bible's message to the spirit of the age; his arguments and conclusions are flawed.

Wright offers no extended or detailed analysis in his brief article of ways in which the Bible is or is not sacramental and the sense in which he uses the term is not precisely defined but at the heart of the point for him seems to be the fact that the Bible mediates an encounter with God. He writes: "The encounter which Scripture mediates is not simply a vague experience of transcendence, valuable and genuine as such experiences may be when we read other texts. From earliest times, Christians have held and found that when we come to Scripture in receptive humility, we hear 'the word of the Lord'."[650] This is a valid and important point but Wright wants to say that the Bible is the Word of God only sacramentally. The implied contrast seems to be with saying that the Bible is literally, fully, directly or even perhaps "really", the words of God, which for Wright seems to smack of fundamentalism. His presentation is a way of rejecting the traditional view of plenary Biblical inspiration whilst retaining the religious and theological use of the Bible as a vehicle for our encounter with God.

[649] Ibid., p1.
[650] Ibid., p82.

Yet, compared to the traditional conservative Evangelical understanding of Scripture, Wright seems to have downgraded the sense in which the believer encounters God in or through the Scriptures. On the traditional account, it is obvious how Bible reading is encounter with God since the Bible is God's words to his church. It is God's speech, God addressing his people. For Wright, the Bible is the vehicle for encounter with God, in or through which he speaks, but quite how this is so is not spelled out.

In turn, Wright's understanding of "sacramentally" raises questions for a Reformed understanding of the sacraments. Indeed, the Reformed do not want to say that the bread is the literal physical or material Body of Christ (as Roman Catholic dogma does) but they do wish to say when believers receive the bread and the wine by faith they really and spiritually receive the body and blood of Christ. The faithful feed on the heavenly Christ in their hearts by the power of the Spirit. Christians actually receive the whole Christ in the Eucharist. This seems a more full or direct view than might be suggested by the mere language of "sacramental encounter". A better contrast with "sacramental" encounter with Christ would be physical reception of Christ's physical human body.

Distinction between words and message / purpose of scripture

As mentioned above, Wright argues that "we may most profitably understand… [the] tension between the words of Scripture and the truth to which they point in sacramental

terms."[651]. Clearly there is (at least to some extent) a valid distinction here. The truth(s) of the Bible could (at least to some extent) be expressed in words other than the words of Scripture itself, as the practice of Bible translation presumes. John 5:39 also indicates that it is possible to pay great attention to the words of the Bible but neglect their witness to Jesus, failing to come to him. The aim of the Bible is not merely that the reader would know about its words but that he would come to the Christ to whom they point. It is possible to imagine an excessive (perhaps academic) consideration of the syntax and grammar of the Bible while failing to be made wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ through what is being scrutinised (cf. 2 Timothy 3:15). Yet this would be an abuse and there is no necessary conflict between the words of Scripture and the truth to which they point, or indeed close study of the words of Scripture and their purpose being fulfilled in the life of the student. Properly words, their purpose and message belong together. Indeed, it is precisely *these words* that are the Words of God, which he speaks to his people today by his Spirit, thus personally encountering them. God has chosen to speak these particular words and not others for his wise purposes and they are his appointed means of communicating with his people. Rather than thinking of the words of Scripture as in tension with the truth they wish to convey or the encounter they wish to mediate, a conservative doctrine of Scripture may argue that they are specifically adapted for that purpose. God's words will not fail to achieve his purposes. It would seem, then, that close attention to the specific words of Scripture is naturally inclined to facilitate the believer's encounter with God rather than tend to hinder it. Further, it is by and in encountering the very words of Scripture used by God in this way that God himself is encountered for the words are God speaking.

[651] Ibid., p82.

Timothy Ward's response to Wright at this point is worth quoting at length:

It is impossible to attend overmuch to the words of a text – as long as the reader is attending to the words with the right interpretative goal in mind. A model of Scripture that focuses us profoundly on the words of Scripture (as the classical model of an inspired, infallible and inerrant Scripture does) does not necessarily hinder encounter with God, but in fact leads us into deeper encounter with the God who presents himself to us in those words.

A flat reading of Scripture is not one that attends to the words of Scripture too much; it is one that attends to them wrongly…. The corrective to these abuses of the Bible is not, though, to attend less to the words and more to the spiritual reality to which they point. To present the solution in these terms is to present a false dilemma, because the spiritual reality is none other than the God who presents himself to us in the speech-act performed in and through the words. The corrective, rather, is to attend to the words more carefully, in order to encounter God more truly.[652]

In harmony with some Postmodern literary criticism, Wright wrongly seems to think that it is the words themselves that are problematic, or at least potentially so, if too much attention is paid to them. For example, he says:

[652] Timothy Ward, 'The Bible, Its Truth and How It Works' (pp17-42), in Gardner, Paul, Wright, Chris and Green, Chris (ed.s), *Fanning The Flame: Bible, Cross & Mission – meeting the challenge in a changing world, NEAC 4 2003,* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2003), p37

In the paradigmatic sacraments of baptism and eucharist, ordinary, created things – water, bread, and wine – become, through God's promises received in faith, the vehicles of extraordinary, transcendental meeting. To speak of the elements themselves as extraordinary removes the sacramental mystery and paradox, and leads to error and superstition. So, surely, it is with Scripture. Words of ordinary human beings, many of them marvellous and memorable words, yet subject to all the vicissitudes of creaturely life, become for us, by grace through faith, the word of the living God. And as with baptism and eucharist, so also with the sacrament of the word: to speak of the words themselves as if they were somehow abstracted from the realm of ordinary human circumstances removes the paradox, and leads to error.[653]

Wright's distinction here between the ordinary and the extraordinary might be challenged, for all of creation is constantly sustained by God and the human elements of bread and wine are truly God-given gifts. Christians will want to avoid all views of the Supper or scripture which are semi-gnostic or creation denying. Words, bread and wine are created goods under God's sovereignty and capable of being used by him. Baptism and eucharist are not merely ordinary. As with the Bible, they involve ordinary created things put to an extraordinary use as a matter of special revelation by direct divine action.

It would certainly be unfair to say that the conservative Evangelical doctrine of Scripture is devoid of mystery when, for example, it claims that the words of the Bible are fully human words and fully the words of God. This might be seen as both a simpler but also a more

[653] Ibid., p82.

mysterious and profound account of the Bible as "The Word of the Lord" than Wright's. Though the parallel is not exact, the doctrine of Scripture as fully human and fully divine words is no more lacking in mystery and paradox than the doctrine that Jesus is fully God and fully man.

Conservative Evangelicals do not argue, as Wright seems to imply, that we should "speak of the words [of Scripture] themselves as if they were somehow abstracted from the realm of ordinary human circumstances" and at its best their use of the Bible does not do that. Wright gives no examples of what he is criticising. It seems he may be attacking a straw man.

In what sense "the Word of the Lord"?

Wright's article departs from the traditional evangelical doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, and he thinks that one of the great strengths of his sacramental approach to the Bible is that it shows a way of doing this while maintaining an important religious role for the Scriptures. Thus, for Wright, the sacramental understanding of the Bible is explicitly seen as an alternative to the traditional view that "whatever Scripture says, God says"[654]. Wright argues against a strict understanding of saying of the Scriptures that "this is the Word of the Lord", the liturgical response in Anglican services after Old Testament and non-

[654] Ibid., p83.

Gospel New Testament readings[655]. It seems he thinks of these words as analogous to the Words of Consecration or to Jesus' statement that "This is my body" etc. at the Eucharist, though this is not spelled out. He says: "Another way of speaking about the sacramental nature of the claim "This is the word of the Lord" is to recognise it as a *metaphorical* sentence."[656], by which he says he means not that the claim is unreal but that the words are not being used in their normal sense. Greater clarity here might have been helpful!

Wright argues that the Bible is "a means of access to God and his speech to us"[657] but that we need to transcend the "'words on the page' [by the use of the imagination] so that the word of the Lord may be *heard*."[658]. His view seems to be that the Lord speaks through the Bible, a manner of expression which conservative Evangelicals often use but which it appears from this discussion is insufficiently precise. For Wright the Bible mediates the Word of God but it is offensive to those well aware of the human historical conditioning of the text, its problematic content and the history of misuse of the text to say that the Bible is the Words of God written[659]. Even on Wright's view, it is hard to see how the subsequent *mis*use is a relevant objection here as presumably Wright would agree that even a perfect text could be abused by imperfect people.

[655] He suggests in a footnote that his arguments would apply also to Gospel readings and to the statement "This is the Gospel of Christ".
[656] Ibid., p85.
[657] Ibid., p83.
[658] Ibid., p87.
[659] Ibid., p83.

Wright wrongly argues that to say that the Bible is the Words of God requires recipients to undervalue its human character[660]. Even if this is an error into which Evangelicals have sometimes fallen, it is not necessary to the traditional view of Scripture, which holds to "concurrent" authorship. Indeed, the analogy of the Lord Jesus as both fully human and fully divine, to which Wright himself refers[661], points the way to seeing the Scriptures as genuinely and fully human words which are also fully the Words of God.

Wright seems unduly troubled by the view that "what the Bible says, God says" because he does not accept that the claim applies fully only to what the Bible affirms. Evangelicals who use this manner of speaking are clear, for example, that the advice of Job's comforters is not to be taken as the Words of God in the same way as the Ten Commandments. As the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy makes clear, it is perfectly in order for the Word of God to quote words from which it dissents[662].

* * *

Notes:

[660] Ibid., p83.
[661] Ibid., p87.
[662] The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy article XIII denies that inerrancy is negated by the reporting of falsehoods in the Bible. For example, it would be silly to say on the basis of Psalm 14:1 that the Bible teaches that "there is no God" since it is clear that the Psalmist is quoting rather than affirming that view.

Tim Ward's objections to the Bible as Sacramental (The Bible, Its Truth and How It Works, p70f) – are they fatal to any view of the Bible as sacramental?

The Supper and the Scriptures may be said to have a common purpose, namely, to lead believers to Christ.

The sign and the thing signified

Calvin thinks of the Sacraments as signs. He also said: "Words are nothing else but signs."[663]

Semiotics also studies words as signs.

Calvin argued for a relationship between the sign and the thing signified in the sacraments.

What is the relationship between the words of the Bible and the things they signify?

The liturgy of the Word and of the Sacrament – a similar structure

The physical object of the Bible

[663] Calvin, Institutes, 4:14:26

Frequency of use

The role of the minister

No autographs of Scripture – we do not have the bread and wine Jesus used at the Last Supper!

Both Scripture and the Supper are accommodated to our capacity.

Does calling Scripture sacramental tend to a Barthian understanding of the Bible becoming the Word of God[664]? That is, are the Scriptures objectively God's words or do they only become so when the Spirit speaks through them to believers in the moment of encounter?

Conservative evangelicals will want to say that the Bible is God's Words because he has spoken them (through the process of inspiration) and not merely because he uses them to speak to his people today, though he does. The Bible is the Words of God, it does not become God's Word only as the believer encounters it in the power of the Holy Spirit. To

[664] An example of this approach would be Donald G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation* volume 2 of Christian Foundations Series (Carlisle, Paternoster, 1994) who argues that "Scripture as the written Word of God becomes the living Word of God only through the illumination of the Spirit" (p12? Check reference)

use a sacramental analogy, the question here is, when is the moment of consecration? Granted that the Bible uses ordinary words, are the words of the Bible special because God speaks them or do they only become special when received by faith in the power of the Spirit?

Preaching might be more analogous to the Lord's Supper than Scripture here. If the words of the sermon are elements, then there is a limit to what elements can be used in preaching. Similarly in the Supper only bread and wine may (normally) be used. But any bread and any wine may be used. In Scripture God has used particular words in a particular way that are permanently authoritative. Scripture might be said to correspond to Christ's institution of the Lord's Supper. Subsequent preaching might be likened to each subsequent celebration of the Lord's Supper.

John Webster speaks of the creaturely text of Scripture as being "sanctified" rather than divinized[665]. For Webster the biblical texts are "creaturely realities" that have been "set apart by the triune God to serve his self-presence"[666]. Perhaps instead of the language of sanctification the Bible might be thought of as ordinary human words which God consecrated (sets apart) for his special use?

It might be said that the Words of the Bible used in this way are permanently consecrated, though not that they have been transubstantiated into magical words or changed into some

[665] Webster, Holy Scripture: A dogmatic sketch, p28
[666] Webster, Holy Scripture, p21

kind of divine language. They remain just ordinary human words. But God has chosen to use these words in this way and sets forth these writings for his permanent use. Scripture is a bit like a perpetually reserved sacrament.

* * *

In considering the parallels between the Lord's Supper and Scripture, it might be relevant to recall that the Bible is sometimes spoken of as food or drink. Describing Calvin's doctrine, Gerrish says: "Jesus Christ is the only food by which our souls are fed. But because this food is distributed to us by the word of the Lord, which he has appointed as the instrument for this purpose, the word too is called "bread" and "water."[667]

[667] Gerrish, Grace and Gratitude, p50

Chapter 6: General and Special Words and Sacraments

It has been argued that The Lord's Supper may, in part, be understood as a word and that the written Word of God may be thought of as sacramental. This chapter examines the possibility that all of creation may be said to be a word of God and considered sacramental. The chapter then attempts to connect and relate these claims. It is argued that just as theologians speak of general and special revelation, it may be valid to speak of general and special sacraments.

CREATION AS A WORD OF GOD

CREATION AS SACRAMENTAL

LANGUAGE AS SACRAMENTAL

GENERAL AND SPECIAL REVELATION

GENERAL AND SPECIAL SACRAMENTS

Chapter 7: Conclusions

Index

Scripture Index

Author Index

General Index