

3. How often should we celebrate the Lord's Supper?

Biblical Christianity does not have a lot of outward symbols. Thus, Protestant Christians have historically had simple church buildings, without outward decorations. Under the New Covenant, we cannot find any encouragements for pretty displays in church gatherings in the Bible, and they may distract us from focussing on God's revealed truth. As we read the Bible, we find that in our worship there are to be two, and only two, “rituals” (or “ordinances”) with outward signs that the Lord has given us. These two are baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is given to believers to be a holy and joyful time. Around the Lord's table, we remember Christ crucified, the heart of our faith. The Lord's Supper is the gospel given in symbols. We see the signs of the broken body and the shed blood. It is a time of great encouragement – Jesus comes to us and says, “You are a sinner – but I freely offered myself for sinners, and now you should come and feed, by faith, upon me”. The communion meal looks back to Calvary and the perfect, accomplished work of the Saviour. It teaches us to look in, knowing that we are sinners, but also outwards, knowing that Jesus died and rose for us and offers himself to us today. It makes us look around, seeing that we are all brothers, who share “of one loaf” (1 Corinthians 10:17). It reminds us to watch, because such a holy time must be approached with awe and humility (1 Corinthians 11:28-31). It leads us to long for the future, when we shall sit down and feast with Jesus in the consummated kingdom of God – when we will no longer remember “until he comes”, but enjoy his glorious presence itself (1 Corinthians 11:26).

I realise that some readers will already be thinking “Is this a first subject to address? Is this a major issue in Kenya, or is this a hobby horse?” I ask you to bear with me. Things should become clearer; if not now, then as further papers unfold some more of the challenges in Kenya. The position I now hold was not one I came to Kenya with. But now I see it as a major factor in a complex of issues of church, culture and community.

In the Baptist churches I have been a member of, both in the UK and in Kenya, the Lord's Supper takes place once every month, on the first Sunday of the month. The 1689 Second London Baptist confession contains a chapter on the Lord's Supper (chapter 30), but does not say anything about how often to take it. The Constitutions of the two churches I have been a member of in Kenya say “it shall be observed frequently, at least once each month”.

Practices of other churches have varied through history, all the way from daily (for those who come to the services) up to annual (or in the case of some cults, effectively never). I do not think that the Bible gives us a law to tell us how often to keep the Lord's Supper. There is no God-given calendar. That would not be consistent with the tenor of the New Covenant. Instead, it is a matter of wisdom and judgment. That is to say, I do not think that there is a clear commandment that gives us a schedule for keeping the Lord's Supper.

Not an extra

Without contradicting myself, I now want to say this: I think that the Lord's Supper should be part of the Lord's Day worship of believers every week. I think that Biblical wisdom and judgment lead us to that conclusion. I think that the Lord's Supper should not seem to be an “extra” that is added occasionally to worship, but is at the heart of the weekly gatherings of believers. I think that the whole structure of the weekly meeting should be changed so that a meaningful sharing – a “Communion” of believers takes place. (The word “communion” (1 Corinthians 10:16) means “fellowship”). Therefore, I think that Biblical reformation in my adopted country includes restoring the “Communion” meal to the heart of our regular worship meetings. It should take its place there alongside preaching, reading, prayer and singing as a normal and ever-present element when believers gather on God's day. I believe that our services need to be reformed to give this holy celebration its rightful place once again.

A weekly celebration

What reasons are there for believing that the Lord's Supper should be celebrated by the church every Lord's Day? The best form of defence is often attack, and so here comes the opposing question. What reasons are there for restricting the Lord's Supper to a monthly observance only? What is it about it that leads us to keep it infrequently, compared to the other components of Biblical worship? Every week we come together to read the Scriptures, to sing hymns of praise, to bring our prayers and to hear the gospel preached. What is it about the Supper that tells us it should be done significantly less often than any of these things? I think that the default assumption should be for observance that is at least as regular as the other parts of group worship. We ought to agree first that the idea that needs to be proved is that the Lord's Supper should be relatively occasional. The idea that it should be part of the default routine is the one that needs to be proved wrong, rather than the reverse.

The nature of the Lord's Supper

What is the Lord's Supper? It may be defined as the one and only outward memorial given to us by which to remember the death of Jesus Christ for our sins, which he commanded us to observe.

I think we would be able to say “case closed” here, if it were not that the tradition of observing the Lord's Supper only monthly is so long-standing. Consider that definition, and rejoice that God gave us such a gift. Do you not think it should be at the heart of our worship regularly and not only monthly? But old habits are hard to shake. Once we have done something for a long time, we begin to accept it as normal. It becomes part of the furniture, and we stop noticing it. A visitor to our home, though, might find our furniture very strange.

The gospels and 1 Corinthians 11 are the main portions of Biblical teaching about the Lord's Supper. They give us the main purpose of the Supper – Jesus said, “do this to remember me” (Luke 22:19, 1 Corinthians 11:24). In particular, we are to remember the death he was about to die – the great gospel Passover by which he offered himself as the perfect spotless lamb for the sins of the world, for the redemption of the new Israel out of every tribe and nation (John 1:29, 1 Corinthians 5:7). The Supper is the only repeated outward sign of this gospel. We are baptised once, as a sign of our union with Jesus in his death and resurrection (Romans 6:4). Our baptism cannot be repeated, because once we have died and risen with Christ, we are saved forever: it is a never-to-be-repeated event (Romans 6:10). Sorrow for sin, repentance, remembering the saving work of Christ and feeding upon him by faith, however, are events that are the very essence of the Christian life. We cannot forget them without forgetting to breathe, spiritually speaking. Therefore Jesus gave us the bread and the wine to take repeatedly and often. The whole gospel is contained in the Lord's Supper. Redemption comes only through the once-for-all offering of Christ. Salvation comes to us only by feeding (by faith) upon him. It is offered freely to us, with mercies that are new every time we need them. Through this gospel, we come to belong to Christ – he is in us, and we are in him. It tells us that now we have fellowship with God, and can sit down and eat at his table, together with all our brothers and sisters. It contains no hint that salvation comes from our works or is improved by us – only received and enjoyed as a free gift.

So, here are two things. Firstly, the Lord's Supper outwardly represents the whole, glorious gospel to us. Secondly, the Lord's Supper is the *only* repeated observance that does this. If we keep the Supper once a month, there is no other such representation that can take its place the other weeks. When the church comes together, it can either remember Jesus using the outward signs he gave, or we can leave it out (and try to remember him without their aid). Why good reasons are there to do that? Why not use the help we have been given? Why neglect God's gift of means?

Acts and the epistles

Now it is time to look at the Biblical mentions of the Lord's Supper in Acts and in the letters. There

is no proof that the early church kept the Supper every week. What we can say, though, is that it is presented to us as a normal part of the worship alongside each other part (praying, singing, reading Scripture, preaching). I have said above that those who think that the Lord's Supper should be less frequent than the other parts of worship should prove their case. I think that the Biblical data supports this position, as set out below.

Looking at the Biblical data

The first mention of the Communion meal in the early church is in Acts 2:42-46, where we read that *“They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ... Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.”* At least the first time, and probably on both occasions, the reference to the breaking of bread means the Lord's Supper. It was something to which the believers devoted themselves. It was an activity that Luke, writing by the Holy Spirit, thought should be noted. It was part of their life as believers in the church alongside preaching and fellowship and prayers. This all happened in believers' homes. The early church had no buildings, and fellowship meetings were held in ordinary homes, kindly opened by their believing owners (e.g. Romans 16:5, 1 Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 4:15, Philemon 2). The Christians went to the temple courts to receive teaching, because that was a large place where the apostles could instruct lots of people at once. Closer fellowship happened in homes. The above verses do not prove anything about how often the Lord's Supper actually happened. They do tell us it was a regular part of the worship alongside the other parts, with no hint that it was an infrequent partner.

Moving to Acts 20:7, we read, *“On the first day of the week we came together to break bread”* (NIV), or *“upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread...”* (KJV). The difference (“we” or “the disciples”) is in the existing Greek manuscripts. Either way, we see a group of believers coming together on a Sunday to celebrate the Lord's Supper. This again shows us that the meal was part of their regular worship. It does go a little further than that, in telling us that the “breaking of bread” was the heart of the meeting. Paul preached, and surely they prayed too, but the coming together was “to break bread”. This is a small detail, but one worth noticing in seeing the importance of the meal to the early believers. In the churches I know, we tend to say something like *“the services today will include the Lord's Supper after the main service”*. We would not tend to speak in terms of coming together for that particular purpose as if it was central to our meeting. Is it actually central in our thinking when it does happen, or is it just *“today we will also have Communion?”* Would our practice lead us to use such a phrase as in Acts 20:7?

In 1 Corinthians 11 we overhear Paul talking to the church at Corinth about how they kept the Supper. Verses 18-21 should be read carefully. In the NIV, it reads, *“In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk.”* The church had corrupted the Supper, through joining it to a general fellowship meal (which in the early church was called a “love feast”, Jude 12) in which all kinds of selfish things were happening with the food. Paul told them to not allow these selfish acts (v33-34).

I think we should look at the assumption contained in verses 18-20. Paul rebukes them for being divided when they come together to meet as a church; but the only division he speaks of is their practice at the Lord's Supper. (The words “now concerning” in 12:1 indicate that he is moving to a different subject – see also 7:1, 7:25, 8:1, 16:1). He speaks about their coming together, and his words assume that the Supper was what happened when they came together. In 14:27 he, having moved on to another topic, says, *“When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation.”* What leads us to think that such things as

teaching and singing happened every time the church “came together”, but that the Lord's Supper was only once every 4, 6 or 8 gatherings? Is that idea supported in the text anywhere? This is an argument from silence, but not all arguments from silence are worthless. The most likely situation in Corinth and the situation which Paul addressed is that the Lord's Supper was just as regular a part of the church's worship meetings, as singing and teaching were.

Again I repeat that this Biblical data does not prove that churches must keep the Lord's Supper every week. We have no direct statements like that. It is possible to read the above verses with the assumption that the Lord's Supper is only monthly, or quarterly, and interpret them in a way that finds nothing inconsistent with that. However, there are also no reasons we can find in the text for coming with that assumption: it is an ungrounded assumption.

We could also ask the question, “how often did Christian worship meetings include singing, or reading the Scriptures, or praying?” If we ask that question, our natural reaction is to find it rather absurd. Of course, we think, these things are essentials, that we will do every Lord's Day – they are the elements of worship! How, though, did we decide this? If we carry out the same search on the gospels, Acts and the letters, asking the question, “What is said about singing in the regular meetings of the church?”, we will find that there is no direct proof of this either.

Should we sing and pray?

So why do we sing, pray, read the Bible and preach every week? We do so because we read the Bible and find that 1) God commanded these activities, 2) that believers in the early church did these things and were taught how to do them better, 3) that these activities are very suitable and appropriate for believers, and ultimately that 4) they glorify God and build up the church together as a united body.

So for example, Acts 2:42 tells us that the church devoted itself to prayer. In 1 Timothy 2:1-8 Paul gives instructions about prayers. In the gospels, Jesus gives many precious promises and encouragements about prayer (e.g. Matthew 7:7-11, Mark 11:23-24). We are needy sinners, and God is a loving, generous Father. We have no other source of help but him, and so we realise that prayer must always be part of the fabric of our worship, and is appropriate whenever the church comes together. Prayer honours him as God – we humble ourselves, he graciously blesses. There is no command, though, saying that “every church meeting should have prayer” - because this is too obvious to need saying. Similarly, we read that Jesus sang (Matthew 26:30), that Paul told the Corinthians that their singing must build up the church (1 Corinthians 14:15), and that we are to sing to each other to teach and admonish each other (Colossians 3:16), and that the saints worshipping God in Revelation sang (Revelation 5:9). God is worthy of sung praise, and in the Old Testament he inspired the whole book of Psalms as a guide to what kind of praise honours him. So every week, we meet together and sing praise.

What makes the Lord's Supper different from this, so that it becomes a matter of local preference whether we like to have it every week, every month or every quarter? The Bible shows us it as a normal part of the church's worship, and shows us its immense value. It alone gives us a symbolic presentation of the gospel, and is given to us directly by Jesus. How did it become an “inessential” part of worship, such that we can miss it for a week and then the next week too, whilst the others have remained as “essential”? I think that if we look at the question this way, it becomes very difficult to argue for our present practice.

Covenant renewal

The Lord's Supper was given to commemorate the giving of the New Covenant in the blood of Christ. The Covenant is a very precious teaching to all Reformed believers, both Baptist and paedobaptist. Every blessing we receive from God comes to us covenantally. The Covenant is about having God as our God – we are his people, joined to him by a bond sealed in blood (Matthew

26:28). All of our fellowship with God today comes to us through the New Covenant. But this fellowship is marred and spoilt by sin. The Lord's Supper is a service of "covenant renewal". In it, we are able to confess our sins, and symbolically receive God's forgiveness through the gospel. Many church services give no other opportunity for this renewal. When I was a student, before I had Baptist convictions, I went to a conservative evangelical Anglican church. Through the liturgy that was (irregularly) used, people had opportunity to confess their sins and confess their faith in Christ. Now as a Baptist, I only ever hear people confess their sins and speak of Christ when they are baptised. Otherwise I have to go outside of church meetings. Is this really how it should be? Every believer should have the opportunity to personally renew their covenant vows every week, and the church should have the opportunity to do it as a community. Of course, we can do this silently and individually as we respond to the preaching each week. But when Christ actually gave us a meal of remembrance that is exactly suited to this very purpose, why should we instead be left trying to remember to use those precious seconds after the sermon ends?

The teaching of the Second London Baptist confession

Chapter 30 of the 1689 confession, in the first paragraph, lists the purposes of the Supper. They are as follows: *"The Supper of the Lord Jesus was instituted by Him the same night on which He was betrayed to be observed in His churches until the end of the world for the perpetual remembrance and showing forth of the sacrifice of Himself in His death. It was also instituted by Christ to confirm believers in all the benefits of His death; - for their spiritual nourishment and growth in Him; - for their further engagement in and commitment to all the duties which they owe to Him; - and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with Him and with their fellow believers."* We find two closely connected purposes there: (1) To remind us of his sacrificial death; (2) To confirm believers in the benefits of that death. Explaining those benefits, 3 things are then given: (a) Spiritual nourishment and growth in Christ; (b) Strengthening of their commitment in their service to him; (c) To show and strengthen the ties between believers. We all agree that those are good and needed things. The Supper is given for them. So what are the positive reasons for maintaining a tradition which allows us to have them only once a month, and not every time the church fellowships on the Lord's Day?

The centrality of the word

If somebody suggested that we do not need to preach at our services each week, this suggestion would not get far! Preaching is God's chosen means to bring his truth to our hearts. Christ has gifted teachers to build up his church. We are well able to receive new teaching every week – it is easily within our capacities. If we only preached every two, four or eight weeks, then we would be starving the people of the spiritual food they need.

But do we really think that the Lord's Supper does *not* contain spiritual food that the people need? Or at least, that they do not need much of it compared to preaching? In a typical church in our movement, there may be one or two sermons every Sunday, a Bible study during the week, and perhaps two or more other fellowships during the month which always have teaching in them. The faithful believer may receive teaching at between 8 and 20 meetings every month. We insist, rightly, that he is unlikely to be getting too much teaching from this (as long as the teaching is given properly). But surely we do not think he is in danger of too much remembering of Christ's death, using the symbols he gave? Do we not want him to think about his achievement too much? Is it a mistake to repent of our sins or feel the goodness of God's forgiveness too regularly?

This leads me to a more controversial question. Is it that our "Reformed" doctrine of preaching has implicitly become distorted, and itself needs reforming?

Reforming the role of preaching

Biblical preaching is far more than explaining doctrine, even gospel doctrine. Biblical preaching aims to make a new community, a new family of love. It has a target it must hit. It aims to change lives, and bring together a new people who serve Jesus by making disciples. Especially in the church this means making disciples of one another as they minister to each other in love. No preacher can be satisfied when he has explained his text. He must see his teaching only as part of a process – a vital part, but still only a part. The thought “I have done my duty now, it is up to them” must be far from his mind after preaching. But do we have the idea that the Christian life mainly involves being attenders at meetings, and avoiding bad behaviour when we are elsewhere? Are we mostly happy if our people are keeping up that standard? If we are, then we will never see a gospel community forming, because we have not even realised that this is our aim.

The Lord's Supper and Community

The Lord's Supper, when carried out rightly, is an essential part of this community life. When carried out wrongly, it is simply one more ritual that the “minister” carries out, and others are mostly passive receivers, not actively involved. If this is what happens consistently, then Church becomes a spectator event, and believers will grow dull and lack initiative. One test for our own churches is this: do we count numbers on a Sunday, or do we look for each individual member? A true body is made up of individual parts, each one of which has its place. A false but dead body can be made just by throwing enough parts together in a pile. Are we grateful each Sunday for the different gifts of each member, or is the preacher's gift the only one that really seems to matter for running the church and its meetings? Do people in your congregation in fact seem to be dull, and lacking initiative?

The Word of God is central in the church, as the only authoritative revelation of God's truth. But that truth is not meant to just pass through the air as a ritual each week. That would be a failure in the task that God gave us as preachers. The Word must bring the believers together, and that togetherness is then expressed climactically in the shared meal. During the preaching, the gospel is made known. At the Supper, believers then symbolically receive that gospel for themselves, each individually. The Word of God explains that the death of Christ is central to everything. The weekly celebration of the Supper confirms that testimony. During the preaching, the preacher seeks to call out a new people for the Lord. That new people is seen as they sit together in fellowship. The preacher says that all sin must be repented of. Sitting around the table, the people have an opportunity to confess to each other and openly ask for forgiveness¹. Through sermons, people are called to dedicate themselves afresh to God's cause. At the Supper, they have opportunity to remember that that call is personal, and to apply it to themselves as they individually take the bread and wine; as is corporate, as they come together as a body. The Lord's Supper confirms and applies what has been done in the sermon. We must not think that by (comparatively) neglecting the Supper we are honouring the Word. The Supper is the Word's twin brother. If we welcome one into the living room and seat the other in the attic (or in Kenya, the servant quarters), then in reality we have done harm to both.

Minister-centred Christianity

There are perhaps several reasons why the Lord's Supper does not happen weekly – and why, when it does, it seems more like a ritual that is carried out than a true coming together of the body in love. If I make general suggestions then they are, of course, general suggestions. One reason is likely that we have received this practice by received tradition, and perhaps not considered it that deeply. I want to suggest that another reason in the Kenyan Reformed Baptist movement, is that we could

¹ Following a comment from a proof-reader, I should make clear here that I am describing what I think *ought* to happen in Kenya at a reformed Lord's Supper observance, not what presently actually happens.

have an unbalanced approach to church life in general. We have a “minister-centred” view of the church. It is likely, historically, that some of this has been inherited from the early decades of the revival of Reformed Christianity in the UK, and the unbalanced exaltation of preaching above other parts of church life. It is likely that this mistake has combined with the African concept of the “bwana mkubwa” (big man) – the important leader whose people hang on his coat-tails.

There are other likely contributing factors too. Whatever the causes, I think that the phenomenon is real. Historically many Reformed teachers have taught that the marks of a true church are as follows: 1) The teaching of the Word 2) The proper administering of the sacraments 3) Biblical church discipline. What is missing from this list? What is missing, is anything that requires more than the elders to carry it out. A man can hire a room, teach, give the Lord's Supper and discipline, and nobody else is required. A true church, or so he may think. If he can then find a man in his congregation who can also learn the doctrines and teach them, then he sends him to another place to hire a second room, and now there are two true churches! This is of course a caricature – but does it not contain at least a grain of an uncomfortable truth?

What about love, the different members of the body edifying each other in love, learning to use their gifts together, mutual fellowship and shared lives? Are these not essential attributes of a true church? The Reformers certainly did not doubt that these things were essential. The “marks of a true church” was never intended as an all-sufficient list. Nobody would admit to intending that today, either. But is the idea not around that as long as we are running the services correctly, then we have done most of the job? Have we failed to realise that a church without vibrant, growing love is actually a disaster, under Christ's strong displeasure? (Revelation 2:4-5, 1 John 4:20).

Implicit symbols

The symbolism of our meetings is important. Every kind of society has its own unspoken symbols, which speak openly. Almost all meetings in “Reformed” churches in Kenya take place with the pastor at the front, standing and talking, and the rest of the people facing him, sitting quietly. Now, this is a very appropriate symbol for part of what happens in church. The pastor preaches the authoritative Word of God, and the people should listen and submit to it. The symbolism captures a vital truth. God speaks: we bow. But should this picture represent the *whole* truth of our shared life together, as forgiven sinners who all share exactly the same spiritual privileges?

The Lord's Supper is one of few times that is routinely different, with believers all sitting in a circle, around the table. The Lord's Supper is a rare occasion when we can visually see the New Covenant reality. We can see brethren on the same level, equals. Kenyan culture is hierarchical and class-based. The church must not be (Galatians 3:28). Is our neglect of the Lord's Supper related to wider issues? I have come to see that symbolism is a vastly more important matter Biblically than I formerly realised. Symbolism is both important in Scripture both for its own sake and as it reflects and forms outward communities. To ignore or deny this is to deny how God's material creation actually works. This restoration is a vital part of reforming the life of the body in our churches.

Restoring New Testament church life

The true, Biblical standard for church life is much higher than we imagine. The “breaking of bread” in Acts 2 was one normal component of deeply shared lives. It was not an added extra, added to the church's routine in the same way that a sign can be painted on a matatu² or a poster put on our wall at home. It is part of the building itself, not something added to it.

What I mean is this. I am not simply arguing that we should add an extra part to our church services each week, or change the seating arrangements. One extra ritual for the minister to perform and for which to congratulate himself would be a wrong move. I am actually arguing for the Lord's Supper

2 For foreign readers: a matatu is a 14-seater minibus used for public transport (holding up to 32 people!)

each week as the primary outward manifestation of a radically different view of church life. I am talking about church as a meaningful and loving community of brothers and sisters with a shared Lord, and meetings which are structured to allow those brothers and sisters to minister to each other. Reforming the Lord's Supper is part of a whole vision. I will explain this more fully in future papers. What I am saying now is that this is one part of a package deal, not the whole deal.

Answering questions

Now I want to answer some questions about keeping the Lord's Supper each week in this way. Some readers will perhaps say that this is a matter of indifference. The Lord gave us liberty, and each one should do as he thinks best: whether each week, fortnight, month or whatever.

There is a kernel of truth in this; there is no clear Biblical statement giving us a calendar for when to keep the Lord's Supper. Such things are not consistent with the freedom of the New Covenant (Galatians 4:9-10). Each church should order its own affairs as it is led by the Bible and wisdom, and answers to Christ alone.

If that is what "a matter of indifference" means, then this is fine. But if somebody means that they are indifferent as to whether we remember the Redeemer's death often or rarely, I disagree very much. If they mean that there is no point considering the points raised this far, or there is no particular benefit in using the means *which Jesus himself gave us on the night he was betrayed* more frequently rather than less frequently, I definitely object. If it means that they believe that we, fallen sons of Adam, can do equally as well by using it only one week out of several as each week, then I think they are very wrong. I say, let us try to only eat our physical food one day in the week; let us read our Bibles only once a fortnight, and let us hear sermons only once a month; then we will soon understand this point!

A closely related question is, "are there not more important matters that we could be paying attention to than this one?" Is not discussing the frequency of the Lord's Supper something of a luxury in the situation of Kenyan Christianity? I think not. I think that the Bible and history both show us that true reform, alongside all the other problems of churches, will always pay the closest attention to the reform of worship. Everything in life flows out from our worship. Worship is central, and mistakes in other parts of our life can be related closely to mistakes in worship. Other papers of this collection try to "join some of the dots" between different challenges and issues we are facing, and I would argue that this one issue is an important part of a larger whole.

Other believers might be worried about the issue of "sacramentalism". If we have the sacrament too often, then won't we be on the road to Rome, and in danger of neglecting the preached Word? I have already tried to answer this question by saying, "No". The preached Word and the visible Sign are not competing with each other. They complement, rely upon and strengthen each other. We should be aware of the abuses of other churches, and the dangers in them. But using the ordinance that Christ gave to symbolise the gospel is not, in itself, a danger to anyone. Roman Catholicism corrupted both the Word and the Supper by disbelieving the former and then changing the meaning of the latter. I am not arguing for doing either!

Sometimes it is said that if we have the Lord's Supper too often, then we will make it seem common. We will trivialise it, and people will become too familiar with it. They will treat it lightly, and be in danger of failing to "discern the body and blood of Christ", bringing judgment upon themselves and upon the church (1 Corinthians 11:27-31). By keeping it only monthly, we will keep it special.

In answering this, I ask if our solution is any better. By making the Supper an infrequent event which is implicitly of less usefulness to Christians as a church (compared to preaching, singing and praying), have we not diminished it? It is possible to trivialise anything. Because we are sinners, familiarity does breed contempt. The Biblical solution to this problem is not to prevent familiarity. It is to "watch" against contempt (1 Timothy 4:6, 2 Timothy 4:5). Nobody suggests that we should

cut down on preaching, in case it causes contempt. Rather we say there needs to be more preaching, with the prayer that God will bless it and use it. In the same way, I conclude that there needs to be more frequent and more prayerful use of the gift of the Supper.