

Reflections, Summary, and Recommendation

Reflections

We are in this process by my spiritual leadership and authority under Christ's headship toward the goal of the vote of the church. I do not think that I am forsaking my role by guiding the church through this study in hope of forming a consensus. I purpose to move forward only on that consensus. If this recommendation is not adopted by a majority, then I think it is my duty to submit to the will of the church with the long term idea of returning to this subject in the future as circumstances warrant it.

Would it have been better to simply implement the things of this recommendation without this process? Perhaps, but due to how I perceived my past neglect, as possibly an indication of an incorrect starting point in the past, it seemed good to me to test my understanding prayerfully in the context of teaching and dialogue with you so that I may grow and that you may grow in knowledge and obedience regarding this subject. Where you have engaged, I am sure you have profited. For my part, this has been a beneficial and forward moving evaluation of the membership requirement for communion that exists in most churches (& often neglected). It has deepened my sense of the importance and value of communion, baptism, and the covenant of membership. I think I have a better understanding of Scripture regarding the means of grace emphasized by the reformers in which sovereign grace has very practical application.

Summary of the argument for a membership commitment as a requirement for communion

The five lines of argument: the path from membership to the Table in Acts 2, church authority, the identification of church members, a high standard, the unity of the sacraments.

The whole pie: if we take the five lines of argument as five slices of a pie, what kind of pie has these ingredients (what title can we give to identify the unity of the arguments)? How do they fit together and interrelate as parts of the same whole? What ingredients are not confined to one slice but are found in other parts or throughout the pie? For answers, see the rough and ready graph on the next page.

Recommendation

We believe that Scripture teaches communion with a membership requirement for partaking. We believe that a public commitment to be a disciple of Christ under pastoral care and one anothering love in a local church is required for partaking of communion. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the eldership of the church to gently inform those present that only baptized believers who are members in good standing of a gospel preaching local church are invited to partake. Regarding members in transition, it is the responsibility of the eldership to communicate with them privately to discern how they are fulfilling the spirit of membership and to inform them that according to their faithfulness they are welcome to partake with us.