

Introduction

At the very foundation of the Regulative Principle of Worship must be an understanding that we come to the worship of the Lord knowing nothing about worship nor how to worship the Lord. So that when we read Scripture, His Word alone directs us in how to worship Him since it is His worship, not ours. As we have studied in the past, we have come to the Lord's table by remaining in our individual seats as well as partaking of pre-broken pieces of bread. In the same way, we have partaken of the cup via individual and separate cups filled with grape juice and, most recently, wine. If we come to His table and His Worship by considering His Word alone, we will be led to worship Him according to His truth and not according to the traditions of man or man-made inventions, lest we become weak, sick, or die in Christ (1 Cor. 11:30; Lev. 10:1-2). Our ultimate desire must be to worship the Lord faithfully and purely for His glory and the blessing of our souls. To do this, we must worship Him according to His Word alone.

The Common Cup: Why This Topic?

To study such a topic, isn't it being nitpicky, even Pharisaical? Is this going just a bit too far to an extreme to do in worship exactly according to the words of the text? Aren't there bigger issues to consider? Jeremiah Burroughs answers,

"Such things as seem to be very small and little to us, yet God stands much upon them in the matter of Worship. For there is nothing wherein the Prerogative of God doth more appear than in Worship... Now God stands much upon little things, though men would think it a little matter whether this fire, or that fire, and will not this burn as well as that? But God stands upon it: And so for the Ark, when Uzza did but touch the Ark, when it was ready to fall, we would think it no great matter, but one touch of the Ark cost him his life. There is not any one minnim [small thing] in the Worship of God, but God stands mightily upon it: In the matter of the Sabbath, that's His Worship, for a poor man to gather a few sticks, what great matter is it? But God stands upon it. And so when the men of Beth-Shemesh did but look into the Ark, it cost the lives of fifty thousand threescore and ten men. If it be a matter of a holy thing that concerns his worship, he would not have it abused in any thing. Let us learn to make conscience of little things in the Worship of God, and not to think, O how nice [nitpicky] such are, and how precise and nice in such small things! Thou doest not understand the nature of Divine worship if so be thou art not nice about it; God is nice and stands upon little things in the matter of his Worship."

Scripture and the Cup of the Lord's Supper

There are only two places in the New Testament where multiple cups are mentioned or referred to as being used. Both are found in Mark 7 in a rebuke of the Pharisees. Mark 7:4, "And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables." and verse 7-8, "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the

commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.” There the Lord Jesus is describing the practice of the Pharisees and many Jews in cleaning their bowls, cups, etc. because they had been made “unclean” by the Gentiles at the market. Therefore, they would wash them. This was something that had been added to God’s law by the Pharisees concerning their ceremonial cleansings. All other references to cups in the New Testament come in the singular, namely, “cup” (see “Summary of Scripture References of a/the Cup” below). There are references to “cups” in the Old Testament, however those all refer either to household items or those cups used at the temple as in Jeremiah 52:19, which were taken away by Nebuzaradan, “And the basons, and the firepans, and the bowls, and the caldrons, and the candlesticks, and the spoons, and the cups; that which was of gold in gold, and that which was of silver in silver, took the captain of the guard away.”

The rest of all other references to cup(s) are found in the singular throughout Scripture, which amounts to some 49 plus times. The predominant amount of those refers to “the cup”. When the Lord makes reference to the Lord’s supper whether by shadow or directly the phrase used always refers to “the cup.” There are no references in Scripture concerning the doctrine of the Lord’s supper that refers to multiple cups, not even when we consider the many allusions to the Lord’s supper.

But notice in the context of speaking of the Lord’s supper, the passages mention a single cup with specificity using the definite article “the” (i.e. “the cup”):

“And he took **the cup**, and gave thanks, and gave **it** to them, saying, Drink ye all of **it**.” (Matthew 26:27)

“And he took **the cup**, and when he had given thanks, he gave **it** to them: and they all drank of **it**.” (Mark 14:23)

“And he took **the cup**, and gave thanks, and said, Take **this**, and divide **it** among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.” (Luke 22:17)

“Likewise also **the cup** after supper, saying, **This cup** is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.” (Luke 22:20)

“**The cup** of blessing which we bless, is **it** not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16)

“Ye cannot drink **the cup** of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils.” (1 Corinthians 10:21)

“After the same manner also he took **the cup**, when he had supped, saying, **This cup** is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink **it** in remembrance of me.” (1 Corinthians 11:25)

“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink **this cup**, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.” (1 Corinthians 11:26)

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink **this cup** of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 11:27)

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of **that cup**.” (1 Corinthians 11:28)

By quoting these texts, we find that in every case the singular definite article (i.e. “the”) is used when referencing the cup. That is, except in the last four cases in 1 Corinthians 11:25-28, in which each refers back to the first phrase in verse 25, namely, “the cup.” This gives emphasis to our Lord's cup that He provides us since it is not a random cup, it is not simply “a” cup or multiple cups, but a very specific cup, namely, “the cup”. All the translations show this since the same is found in the original Greek. Never do we find the Greek using the plural noun or the plural article in reference to the cup of the Lord's Supper. By doing this, the Holy Spirit has made it very clear how He expects the element of wine to be distributed. The emphasis is on one cup (singular), not personal cups (plural), and upon “the cup” that all would partake of “it”. The command given by Christ is simple, and its conclusion is unavoidable. “Take **this**, and divide **it** among yourselves” is the command of Luke 22:17. Furthermore, Matthew 26:27 says, “Drink ye all of **it**.” From this, it appears that Jesus commanded His apostles to drink all of the wine from within the cup. But what was literally commanded by Christ was, “Drink ye all out of it” (or in other words, “All of you drink from it”, “All of you drink from this one common cup”). This can be seen with more clarity from Mark's account, “And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.”

After Christ had taken the common cup, Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 refers to what the Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to do, namely, to do as Jesus had done. In other words, Jesus did not merely command His disciples to say what He had said in regard to the one common cup, but also, specifically, *do* what He did to imply a permanent imitation of Christ's example in administering the sacrament. And so 1 Corinthians 11:25, “After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: *this do ye*, as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me.” George Gillespie said, “[W]e hold, that not only we ought to obey the particular precepts of the word of God, but that also we are bound to imitate Christ, and the commendable example of His Apostles, in all things wherein it is not evident they had special reasons moving them thereto, which do not concern us.”¹ At the beginning of 1 Corinthians 11, Paul says, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” as he also does in Ephesians 5:1, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.”

¹ Gillespie, George. *Dispute Against the English Popish Ceremonies*. Pg. 388.

If individual cups are not found anywhere in Scripture (first and foremost), and if they are nowhere found in the historic confessions (secondarily), then we know without any doubt that this practice of using individual cups has crept in by “the rudiments” of this world (Colossians 2:8, 23). An invention of man that appears [in the late 19th century](#), similar to the use of grape juice. To say that they are not forbidden and thus allowed is to apply the normative principle instead of the regulative principle of worship. We have already shown that it is clear that a common cup is found and commanded in Scripture, and secondarily it is also what we find used in the Church throughout most of Church history. We remember that our God commands in Deuteronomy 12:32, “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.” Now while there is sufficient warrant from Scripture by express command and so too by good and necessary consequence, this is further solidified by a great warning against disregarding His commands concerning this sacrament lest we come under His severe displeasure. 1 Corinthians 11:30 gives us a testimony as to how jealously the Lord desires both our outward and inward conformity to His Word when we come to the Lord’s supper, “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” On this issue, all ministers and elders will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, knowing that all which is unfaithful in our ministry and service will be consumed as fire destroys wood, hay, and stubble. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, “Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

Symbolism

All parts of the Lord’s supper have a purposeful symbolism of that reality to be communicated to the hearts and lives of all communicants. The common cup is no different. It has sacred and significant symbols authorized by Christ in order to exhibit our communion and fellowship in the one body. Some may agree that the common cup is the command given, but this can still be seen in many individual cups. Yet there is no symbolism in many individual cups for the Lord’s supper instituted by Christ. Moreover, some believe the cup itself or the vessel(s) used in the administration and distribution of the element of the wine possess no sacramental or symbolic significance. They would say that it is the contents of the cup (i.e. wine) that alone possess the sacramental and symbolic significance. The same argument could be used of the altar since it wasn’t the sacrifice. You could build the altar any way, or burn the sacrifice on the ground, for the altar possessed no significance. Who, with the Scriptures, would make such an argument? They could not since the altar clearly has Scriptural ordained meaning and purpose (i.e. Hebrews 13:10, the altar is Christ). Putting individual cups, where Christ gave the common cup, is coming dangerously near like throwing down the *one altar* of the Lord and each one setting up an altar for himself. The altar is not the blood of the sacrifice, but it was a part of the divinely-appointed order, and so is the common cup in the New Testament. If we continue with individual cups we would be disregarding the example and words of Christ—“after the same manner also He took the cup”—and substituting them saying we have each one set up our own little cups for ourselves.

The cup, specifically, symbolizes the Testament. But what does the Scripture say of the cup's symbolism? Luke 22:20, similar to 1 Corinthians 11:25, teaches us, "Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, *This cup is the new testament* in my blood, which is shed for you." The cup doesn't symbolize the blood, which is within the cup. The blood is that which was shed for the Christian. As Matthew 26:28 says, the blood is shed for many for the remission of sins, "For this is my blood *of the new testament*, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." This is what the wine symbolizes, in part.²

The "cup *is the new testament*." And it is the Testament itself, which holds forth all the bounties of salvation purchased by Christ. The cup offered to the bride of Christ is the cup of blessing as 1 Corinthians 10:16 says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" How does the cup of blessing come but through securing the Testament promises, through Jesus knowing and enduring at the cross the cup of bitterness and wrath/cursing? There in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus knew He had to endure a different cup so we would be blessed. Luke 22:42 says, "Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." (cf. Mt. 26:39; Mk. 14:36). And what is that cup that Christ drank but what was promised in Psalm 69:21, "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." So at the cross Jesus received the cup of bitterness and wrath to drink, for that is the cup deserved by the wicked, and Jesus was standing in their place to save them. So Psalm 11:6, "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup" and Revelation 14:10, "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." Who receives the wrath of God? A multitude of the wicked, and yet it is one cup of wrath and indignation! At the cross John 19:29-30, "Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." Therefore, through His drinking of the cup of bitterness and wrath, securing the Testament promises by His death, the cup, shows forth all the bounties of salvation purchased by Christ. When the cup is held before the communicants, since Jesus drank of the cup of bitterness and wrath we are privileged together to drink from His cup of blessing. Thus concerning "Testament," Hebrews 7:22 says, "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." And so too, especially, Hebrews 9:15-28,

15And for this cause he is the mediator of the new *testament*, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. 16For where a *testament* is, there must also of necessity be the death of the *testator*. 17For a *testament* is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the

² There are many symbols of wine throughout Scripture generally and specifically regarding the Lord's supper. This we have studied previously being things like blessing, joy, sustenance, healing/peace, love, and judgment.

testator liveth. 18Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. 19For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, 20Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. 21Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. 22And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. 23It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: 25Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; 26For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Therefore, what is offered to communicants are the many blessings and benefits communicated in the cup of salvation: in Christ the Testator. In 1 Corinthians 10, what is offered to us is the cup of blessing. Psalm 116:12-13 says, "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation..." That is the cup that Jesus is offering to all communicants—"Drink ye all of it."

The cup represents the oneness all believers have in Christ and therefore with one another. There is a major theme in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians of the unity of the body (Church) so that in 1 Corinthians 1:10 says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that there be no divisions among you*; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." No divisions in the body but the body of Christ should be one. We see this in 1 Corinthians 12:12 says, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." Galatians 3:28 also, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." We have already learned that partaking of the one bread signifies the oneness and unity that we have in Christ as the one collective body by pointing to 1 Corinthians 10:17, "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." Yet that comes in the context of the one cup in verse 16, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" The common cup represents the oneness, the unity that we have in Christ's blood. So that the communicant, by drinking from the same cup of wine, signifies that he is participating in the same sacrificed blood of Christ as all the other communicants. Individual cups and pre-poured individual cups confuse the Christ-ordained symbolism we need to receive with our senses that we are all one in our union (unity) with Christ. Using one and the same vessel (the

cup) where Jews and Gentiles in the world are utterly divided, in Christ by His sacrifice His people can see and know they are one together in Him. The same in our own society today, in application, if there be racial division or socio-economic division in the world, those for whom Christ died come together around the table, and partaking of the one cup all that division is eliminated in Christ. Christ has reconciled all of us together unto God and we are united as one together in Christ partaking of the same cup at His table. That out in the world, you would have never so intimately communed with such a person, but at Christ's table we have that intimacy together in Him. All the dividing walls of separation are torn down. To use a picture of a half a century ago, the different water fountains used for blacks and whites. At the Table and partaking of the Supper division is done away with in Christ, and we so intimately partake of one and the same cup (at His command), showing forth the oneness and unity we have in Christ. So that when we partake at the King's table of the one bread and the one cup, there is no greater unity that can be shown, and all that by Christ's design. Revelation 5:9-10 says, "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

In the same way, the common bread represents the oneness, the unity that we have in Christ's body. Listen to Calvin who speaks of the figure of speech that Paul employs here in verse 17,

"For we are one bread. I have already stated above, that it was not Paul's particular design here to exhort us to love, but he mentions this by the way, that the Corinthians may understand that we must, even by external profession, maintain that unity which subsists between us and Christ, inasmuch as we all assemble together to receive the symbol of that sacred unity. In this second part of the statement, he makes mention only of the one part of the Sacrament, and it is the manner of Scripture to describe by Synecdoche the entire Supper by the breaking of bread. It is necessary to warn my readers, in passing, as to this, lest any less experienced person should be put off his guard by the foolish cavil that is brought forward by certain sycophants — as if Paul, by mentioning merely the bread, had it in view to deprive the people of the one half of the Sacrament." [Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part is put for the whole.]³

Calvin is here warning of today's stricter Roman Catholics who withhold part of the sacrament (namely, the cup) because they take Paul literally instead of seeing his figure of speech to speak of the whole. Therefore, what Paul is saying concerning the one common bread logically leads to the one common cup. George Gillespie makes the case well,

"...[T]he Apostle having mentioned our partaking of one bread, 1Cor. 10:17, addeth verse 21 our partaking of one Table, which is the Lord's Table. When Communicants come not to the Table, but abide in their Pews, some here some there, this is indeed a dividing of the congregation *in varias partes partiumque particulas* [in various parts,

³ Calvin, John. Commentary on 1 Corinthians. Chapter 10:17.

and pieces of parts]. Neither can they be said to divide the cup amongst themselves, (which by the institution they ought to do in testimony of their communion) when they are not within reach yea oftentimes not within sight of one another. There is nothing like a dividing it amongst themselves, where they come not to the Table, and there give the cup to each other.”⁴

The Larger Catechism shows forth in part the symbolism of the cup,

Question 162: What is a sacrament?

Answer: A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ in his church, to signify, seal, and exhibit unto those that are within the covenant of grace, the benefits of his mediation; to strengthen and increase their faith, and all other graces; to oblige them to obedience; *to testify and cherish their love and communion one with another*, and to distinguish them from those that are without.

Question 168: What is the Lord's supper?

Answer: The Lord's supper is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to the appointment of Jesus Christ, his death is showed forth; and they that worthily communicate feed upon his body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace; *have their union and communion with him confirmed*; testify and renew their thankfulness, and engagement to God, *and their mutual love and fellowship each with other, as members of the same mystical body*.

Passing of Germs and the Risk of Infectious Disease Transmission in the Common Cup

With the common cup being used for 2000 years, are the dangers of illness any more pressing today than they were in Christ's day? We are today in a more clean and healthy society overall comparatively. But it is not as though the Lord does not know about the risk of contracting diseases, and yet with such potential Christ commanded the common cup. There are two main facts that we know when we come to this question. First, certain metals used as the common cup or chalice have antiseptic properties, which means that they kill or prevent the growth of microorganisms. This is why a common cup is usually made of silver. Those antiseptic properties reduce the spread of infection and the possibility of getting sick. Second, the wine containing alcohol has the same properties. Both together, therefore, reduce the spread of infection and the possibility of getting sick. It is also proven that in the use of a common cup in the churches, that infection is reduced up to 90% by wiping the cup with a cloth after each participant partakes of the cup on top of the cup's metal and alcohol in the wine. Other more effective options might be the use of alcoholic wipes, or more natural antiseptics—witch hazel, thyme, calendula, tea tree oil, eucalyptus, lavender, and grapefruit seed extract. In the late 19th Century into the 20th Century, there was a huge push to eliminate alcohol in the churches. This we have previously studied. Grape juice was used to replace wine in the cup. The elimination of wine in favor of grape juice lessened the antiseptic properties of the common cup, and this

⁴ Gillespie, George. A Treatise of Miscellany Questions. Chapter 18.

led to a push for using individual cups. Yet no study was ever done until the late 20th Century after the CDC was asked many times to do a study. A 1998 article, [*Risk of Infectious Disease Transmission from a Common Communion Cup*](#), shows that in two decades of study by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the CDC found that “the risk for infectious disease transmission by a common communion cup is very low...” [Another medical article](#) shows that “No episode of disease attributable to the shared communion cup has ever been reported.” Logistically, anyone who is sick with a cold or similar and who comes to the table can sit at the table and be the last to partake. In more extreme cases, if this isn’t feasible, the sick communicant should not come to the table. This is no different than when we are sick and we remain at home. The reality, however, is that we are more likely to transmit infectious disease by shaking someone’s hand, grabbing a door handle to open a door, or by airborne transmission than we are by drinking from the common cup. As well, those who are more ‘germ conscious’ can be the first to partake, the next person could use an alcoholic wipe if necessary and also turn the cup to partake in a different place.

Moreover, the Scriptures have something to teach us concerning this topic too. That is, that we must remember that virology, biology, and epidemiology is not the queen of the sciences, there is one that stands above the rest, namely, theology. All of science, at the end of the day, must be brought to the bar and standard of God’s Word to see if it will stand or fall. So we remember the sixth commandment, “Thou shalt not murder.” The Westminster Larger Catechism on this commandment teaches the following:

Question 135: What are the duties required in the sixth commandment? Answer: The duties required in the sixth commandment are, all careful studies, and lawful endeavors, to preserve the life of ourselves and others by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away the life of any; by just defense thereof against violence, patient bearing of the hand of God, quietness of mind, cheerfulness of spirit; a sober use of meat, drink, physic, sleep, labor, and recreations; by charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, kindness; peaceable, mild and courteous speeches and behavior; forbearance, readiness to be reconciled, patient bearing and forgiving of injuries, and requiting good for evil; comforting and succoring the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent.

Question 136: What are the sins forbidden in the sixth commandment? Answer: The sins forbidden in the sixth commandment are, all taking away the life of ourselves, or of others, except in case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary defense; the neglecting or withdrawing the lawful and necessary means of preservation of life; sinful anger, hatred, envy, desire of revenge; all excessive passions, distracting cares; immoderate use of meat, drink, labor, and recreations; provoking words, oppression, quarreling, striking, wounding, and: Whatsoever else tends to the destruction of the life of any.

If we consider the command for the Lord's supper concerning the cup, as we have found above, the clear and obligatory command based on the biblical evidence is that a common cup is to be used as opposed to individual cups. It is impossible for our Mediatorial King Jesus Christ to command us to do something that would lead to breaking the sixth commandment, in which one partaking from a common cup would become sick, weak, or even possibly die. Not only would we be breaking the sixth commandment, but Jesus, Himself, would have broken His own commandment by instituting it. However, Jesus didn't break the sixth commandment by instituting the common cup. Therefore, it is impossible that one would become sick, if rightly coming having examined one's self, by participating in the Lord's supper with the common cup. Such sickness might come from other reasons—sin, affliction in God's providence, shaking someone's hand at church, or grabbing a doorknob—but not by the way Christ has ordained His supper to be partaken (at a Table with common bread and common cup). 1 Corinthians 11:28-30 says, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." The opposite is inferred from this, that if we come having examined ourselves and finding that we are only worthy in Christ alone and come to His table, then following our partaking we won't be found weak, sick, or dead in body. We will be found strengthened in our hearts, and that to the strength of our bodies too. Knowing that orthodoxy always precedes and determines orthopraxy (i.e. right doctrine always precedes and determines right practice), when we examine germs and the common cup, we must conclude that germs certainly bring about legitimate concerns for our orthopraxy. However, these concerns cannot overturn our orthodoxy, especially when we know that when we worship according to the regulative principle (orthodoxy) we have that preciousness and freedom in Christ to worship as He commands. We have found that the Scriptural command in this question is that when we drink of the cup in the Lord's supper, Christ requires the use of the common cup. Christ's institution is perfect for His Church and filled with blessing, therefore we must bow to His ordinance when we partake at His table.

Conclusion

The weight of evidence, provided by these biblical arguments, is conclusive and demonstrates that a common cup of wine was used by Christ and the apostles in the Lord's Supper, was commanded by Christ to be divided among the communicants at the same table, and was authorized by Christ to symbolize our communion in truth and love as well as the Testament which holds forth all the bounties of salvation purchased by Christ. The common cup was instituted by Christ for the benefit of His church until He returns, and not individual cups. Therefore, it is necessary for all of God's people to come to the table and partake using a common cup, and forsake anything and everything that would hinder keeping this ordinance.

Objections

Objection: "The cup' is just a figure of speech that refers not to the vessel itself, but to the wine in the vessel. The cup itself doesn't matter." *Answer:* Is it possible that "the cup" is just a figure of speech? Sure. It could be a synecdoche in which "the cup" refers to many cups. Or it could

be a metonym [a thing/concept is called, not by its own name, but by something associated with that thing or concept] so that “the cup” refers to the wine inside the cup. But there are good reasons “the cup” is not a figure of speech at all. First, as we see from above, 1 Corinthians 10:17 clearly implies that the unity of “the cup” is symbolic of the unity of Christ’s blood just as the unity of the bread is symbolic of Christ’s body. So if the wine is divided in different vessels, this destroys Christ’s intended and ordained symbol. If “the cup” is a metonym for the wine, in what other way can the unity of the wine be represented than in a single vessel? The minister could say to the congregation, “Just think of it as the one wine (as a single unit) even though it is in multiple individual cups.” But doesn’t this undermine the purpose of the sacrament? Calvin in his *Institutes* says that the sacrament is to be a kind of “visible Word” that helps us overcome the weakness of our concepts. If the unity of “the cup” is symbolic of the unity of Christ’s blood, a synecdoche is also out of the question for the same reason. How is the unity of Christ’s blood or the unity of the body of believers illustrated visually, to be the visible Word, when the wine is in several individual cups?

Summary of Scripture References of a/the Cup

2 Samuel 12:3 - Partaking of another’s cup (at table)
Psalm 11:6 - The cup of the wicked
Psalm 16:5 - The Lord is the portion of my cup
Psalm 23:5 - My cup overflows
Psalm 75:8 - Pouring out of wrath from the Lord’s cup
Psalm 116:13 - The cup of salvation
Proverbs 23:31 - Wine’s color in the cup
Isaiah 51:17 - The Lord’s cup of wrath
Isaiah 51:22 - The Lord’s cup of wrath
Jeremiah 16:7 - The Cup of Consolation (vanity in judgment)
Jeremiah 25:15 - The Lord’s cup of wrath
Jeremiah 25:17 - The Lord’s cup of wrath
Jeremiah 25:28 - The Lord’s cup of wrath
Jeremiah 35:5 - Showing the faithfulness to the promise not to drink wine
Jeremiah 49:12 - The Lord’s cup of wrath
Jeremiah 51:7 - Babylon is the Lord’s cup of wrath
Lamentation 4:21 - The Lord’s cup of wrath
Ezekiel 23:31-33 - The Lord’s cup of wrath
Habakkuk 2:16 - The Lord’s cup of wrath
Matthew 10:42 - provision (water) - not applicable
Matthew 20:22-23 - Drinking the cup of Jesus
Matthew 23:25-26 - Pharisees cleansing of the cup → cleansing the body vs the heart
Matthew 26:27 - the cup of the Lord’s supper
Matthew 26:39 - this cup of wrath pass from Jesus
Matthew 26:42 - this cup of wrath pass from Jesus
Mark 9:41 - provision (water) - not applicable
Mark 10:38-39 - Drinking the cup of Jesus

Mark 14:23 - the cup of the Lord's supper
Mark 14:36 - this cup of wrath pass from Jesus
Luke 11:39 - Pharisees cleansing of the cup → cleansing the body vs the heart
Luke 22:17, 20 - the cup of the Lord's supper
Luke 22:42 - this cup of wrath pass from Jesus
John 18:11 - The cup of wrath upon Jesus
1 Corinthians 10:16 - The cup of blessing
1 Corinthians 10:21 - Drink the cup of the Lord vs cup of devils
1 Corinthians 11:25-28 - The Cup of the Lord
Revelation 14:10 - The cup of the Lord's wrath
Revelation 16:19 - The cup of the Lord's wrath
Revelation 17:4 - False Cup to partake in
Revelation 18:6 - Cup of afflictions

Westminster Standards

"III. The Lord Jesus hath, in this ordinance, appointed his ministers to declare his word of institution to the people, to pray, and bless the elements of bread and wine, and thereby to set them apart from a common to a holy use; and to take and break the bread, to take *the cup*, and (they communicating also themselves) to give both to the communicants; but to none who are not then present in the congregation.

IV. Private masses, or receiving this sacrament by a priest, or any other, alone; as likewise the denial of *the cup* to the people; worshipping the elements, the lifting them up, or carrying them about for adoration, and the reserving them for any pretended religious use; are all contrary to the nature of this sacrament, and to the institution of Christ." - WCF 29.3-4

"17. The pastor shall lift the bread and the cup, and exhibit them to the communicants, using words such as these:

The Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread and also the cup. Following His example, and ministering in His name, I take this bread and this cup, and exhibit them to you as the sacramental symbols of the body and blood of the Lord.

Replacing the elements, he shall say,

After the Lord Jesus had taken the bread and the cup, He blessed them. Let us pray, as we give thanks, and consecrate these elements.

In this prayer, the pastor should praise God for His grace in bringing salvation; reaffirm the trust of God's people in God's grace and Christ's righteousness and mediation; and plead for the Lord to grant the gracious, effectual working of His Spirit through the sacrament. The elements are then set apart, using these or similar words:

Bless so much of these elements as shall be used on this occasion, which we hereby set apart from a common to a sacramental use, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church.

The pastor shall take the bread (or a portion of it), and break it, saying:

After the Lord Jesus had blessed the bread He broke it. Following His command and example, and ministering in His name, I break this bread (here the bread is broken) and give it to you His disciples, saying as He said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

The bread is then distributed to the communicants, including the elders, who receive it and partake of it. During the distribution, some appropriate Scriptures may be read or Psalms sung.

Next the pastor shall take the cup and offer it to the congregation, saying:

In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; this do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

The cup is then distributed to the communicants, including the elders, who receive it and partake of it. During the distribution, some appropriate Scriptures may be read or Psalms sung.

After all have partaken, a brief address may be given, emphasizing the grace of God in Jesus Christ as set forth in the sacrament, and "exhorting them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22).

The communion service is concluded by a prayer of thanksgiving, the singing of an appropriate Psalm, and the pronouncing of the benediction." - RPCNA Constitution (Directory of Worship 3 - The Lord's Supper) [Emphasis mine]

Historical Quotes

"...[W]hen He calls Wine pressed from the clusters of grapes and many small berries and gathered in one His Blood, He, likewise, signifies our flock joined by the mixture of a united multitude." - Cyprian

"Brothers and sisters, just remind yourselves what wine is made from; many grapes hang in the bunch, but the juice of the grapes is poured together in one vessel. That too is how the Lord Christ signified us, how he wished us to belong to him, how he consecrated the sacrament of our peace and unity on his table" - Augustine

"[The pastor says,] 'Jesus, on the night he was betrayed unto death, took bread.' (Here the pastor taketh unleavened bread in [his] hands.) Whensoever they had given thanks, [the pastor] breaketh and saith, 'Take, eat: This is my body which is handed over for you. Do this to my

commemoration.’ (Here the pastor simultaneously offers the bread to the ministers standing to the right and left, who accept it reverently, and they hold [it] out to those standing at the table. Similarly, after the supper be done, [the pastor] also taketh the cup, (Here the pastor takes the cup in [his] hands) hath said thanks and saith, ‘Drink out of this, everyone.’ (Simultaneously reaching the cup to the minister to the right, who also reacheth to those standing beside.) ‘This chalice is the new testament in my blood. As often as ye might do this, do ye to my commemoration.’” - Ludwig Lavater, his eyewitness testimony of the procedure followed in Zurich under Heinrich Bullinger (1559)

“And took the cup, and having given thanks, gave (it) to them; and they all drank of the same [cup]: [Namely, as Christ had commanded them, Matthew 26:27].” - Synod of Dort commission to write a commentary on whole Bible.

“Similarly, the sacred Supper—the sacred table of our Lord, the breaking of the bread from an act of grace—is a visible fellowship with the members of Jesus Christ. They who take and break one same bread, are one same body (that is, the body of Jesus Christ) and members of one another, inserted and planted in him. In this, they claim and promise to persevere until the end, and not to separate from the faith of the Gospel and from the union that all have in God through Jesus Christ. And just as all the members are nourished from one same food: so all the faithful visibly take of one same bread, and drink of one same chalice without any distinction, just as they invisibly ought to be nourished from one same spiritual bread of the sacred Word of Life, the Gospel of Salvation, all alive by the same spirit, through the same faith.” - Guillaume Farel, a close associate of Martin Bucer (1533)

“Not as under the ancient law the priest ate a part and the people a part, but one body and one cup is set before all. All the things which belong to the Eucharist are common to the priest and the people.” - Calvin quoting Chrysostom

“As for that I find in Cyprian, and from him in Austin [Augustine], and after both, in most Divines, That as one bread is made of many grains, and one cup of wine of many grapes; so the Church is one body of many members; whose communion and fellowship is here professed, testified and signified by their participation of one bread and of one cup: The allusion is proper, and not unlike that of the Apostle, I Cor. 10. 17. We being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.” - Richard Vines, a Westminster divine

“From that which hath been said of following Christ, and the commendable example of his apostles, in all things wherein it is not evident that they had some such special reason moving them to do that which they did, as doth not concern us, our first inference is this: That it is not indifferent for a minister to give the sacramental elements of bread and wine out of his own hand to every communicant; forasmuch as our Lord commanded his apostles to divide the cup among them, that is, to reach it one to another, Luke. xxii. 17... [W]e conclude that when Christ commanded the apostles to divide the cup among them, the meaning of the words can be no other than this, that they should give the cup one to another; which is so plain that a Jesuit also maketh it to follow upon this command, that Christ did reach the cup *non singulis sed uni, qui*

proximo, proximus sequenti, et deinceps daret [not to individuals, but to one, who being near, gave to the next nearest, and so on.]” - George Gillespie, a Westminster divine

“Question: Must the cup be given to the communicants, as it is true for the bread? ... Christ gave the cup to the apostles and not to others, and therefore the priests must have the cup, but not the common man. Answer: ... [T]he apostle proves that believers have communion with Christ and each other—urging them to exercise this—by the fact that they all share the cup and drink from it. ‘The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?’ (1Cor. 10:16); ‘For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body... [sic] and have been all made to drink into one Spirit’ (1Cor. 12:13). Therefore all who have fellowship with Christ must thus as well drink from the same cup as they eat from the same bread and are baptized with one baptism.” - Wilhelmus á Brakel

“Even if the world, as their enemy, hates, despises, persecutes, and oppresses them, there is yet no reason for concern; they can readily miss its love, for they have better company and they refresh themselves in a sweet manner in the exercise of mutual love. They confess this unity in the Lord’s Supper by eating of the same bread and by drinking of the same cup. ‘For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread’ (1 Cor. 10:17).” - Wilhelmus á Brakel

"The third action of the guests is, to drink the consecrated wine out of the cup. It is remarkable, that our Lord said concerning the cup, not only “take this, and divide it among yourselves,” Luke xxii. 17, but likewise added a mark of universality, “drink ye all of it” , Matt. xxvi. 27. And we are told how they complied with this command, Mark xiv. 24, “and they all drank of it” - Herman Witsius