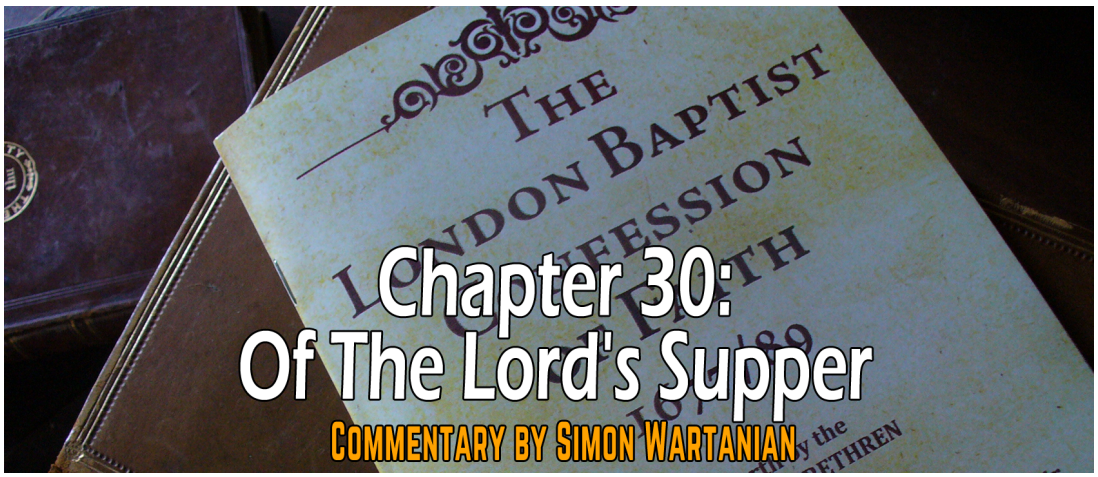
1689 Baptist Confession Chapter 30: Of the Lord's Supper - Commentary

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Chapter 30: Of the Lord's Supper

What is the Lord's Supper? Are we obliged to observe it? What does it signify? What is the Roman Catholic view? What is the Reformed view? Why should the Roman Catholic view of Transubstantiation be rejected? Doesn't Christ saying 'this is my body' mean that the bread and wine are Christ's literal body and blood? How is the Lord's Supper a means of grace? Who may partake of the Lord's Supper?

This is, I believe, the most anti-Roman Catholic chapter in the Confession. This chapter provides a positive presentation of the Reformed view on the Lord's Supper and rejects the repugnant doctrine of Transubstantiation. It is important for us to understand the different views on the Lord's Supper. The most important of those different views is the Roman Catholic view of Transubstantiation. In this case, I will try to let Roman Catholics themselves explain to us their doctrine and then provide a biblical case of what the Lord's Supper is and what it is not.

§1 The Supper Of The Lord Jesus

1. The supper of the Lord Jesus was **instituted by him** the same night wherein he was betrayed, **1 to be observed in his churches**, **2** unto the end of the world, **3** for the **perpetual remembrance**, and **shewing forth the sacrifice of himself in his death, 4 confirmation of the faith** of believers in all the benefits thereof, **5** their **spiritual nourishment**, and **growth in him, 6** their further engagement in, and to all duties which they owe to him; **7** and to be a bond and pledge of their **communion with him,** and **with each other. 8**
    1. 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Matt. 26:20-29; Mark 14:17-25; Luke 22:14-23[1]
    2. Acts 2:41-42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17-22, 33-34
    3. Mark 14:24-25; Luke 22:17-22; 1 Cor. 11:24-26
    4. 1 Cor. 11:24-26; Matt. 26:27-28; Luke 22:19-20
    5. Rom. 4:11
    6. John 6:29, 35, 47-58
    7. 1 Cor. 11:25
    8. 1 Cor. 10:16-17

The supper of the Lord is a "positive and sovereign institution" (**chapter 28:1**) by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He commanded it **to be observed in His churches, unto the end of the world** (1 Cor. 11:26). Why did He command it to be observed? ...**for the perpetual remembrance, and shewing forth the sacrifice of Himself in His death** (1 Cor.

11:24-26). The Lord Supper signifies and shows forth the Lord's suffering on our behalf, His body being broken for us and His blood being shed for our forgiveness. It is also given for the **confirmation of the faith of believers** to remind them of the sacrifice of Christ which is their only ground of hope and peace with God. It is for **their spiritual nourishment, and growth in Him** because the Lord comes very close to us as we partake of His supper and sit at His table. It reminds us also of all the **duties which** we **owe to Him** thanks to His sacrifice on our behalf. But it is also a **bond and pledge of** our **communion with Him, and with each other**. Since we are all in union with Christ and as we partake of His blood and body, we also partake and are united with each other as believers. Christ unites all believers together and this is also signified by the Lord's Supper and it is a **pledge** of it (i.e., a solemn promise or undertaking to keep this communion).

Institution And Command Of Observation

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance that is directly commanded by Christ. It's not a deduction from multiple passages, but a direct and positive command of the Sovereign Christ. It is meant to cause us to look back to the perfect sacrifice of Christ of Himself by Himself for the perfection of all the elect of God. We are to look *back* to the sacrifice and look *forward* to the *Parousia* when He will fulfill and bring to pass all the benefits of His sacrifice. We read of the institution of this blessed ordinance in Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:17-25; Luke 22:14-23 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. I will use Paul's text as the basis (which was taken from Luke's Gospel) to discuss the institution of the Lord's Supper.

> 1 Cor. 11:23-26 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "**This is my body which is for you**. **Do this in remembrance of me.**" 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "**This cup is the new covenant in my blood**. Do this, as often as you drink it, **in remembrance of me.**" 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, **you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes**.

Before being betrayed by Judas, the Lord Jesus instituted a New Covenant meal in which His disciples would always have a way to remember and celebrate His work of redemption on their behalf. They were celebrating the Jewish Passover as the New Covenant Mediator instituted the New Covenant meal. The Passover was the remembrance of God's great deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt. The Lord's Supper is a token and a sign of even a greater deliverance, i.e., the deliverance from the bondage of sin through the blood of Christ. This ordinance, Christ institutes simply based upon His authority as the New Covenant High Priest and Mediator, for His people to observe. He did not give this ordinance based on other authorities, but He gave it based on His authority and this is the way that we should receive this ordinance. Christ was pleased to institute this New Covenant meal as a means of remembering Him and His work by His people. Christ's words are not "Do this, if you like to, in remembrance of me," but as the Sovereign Lord that He is, His word is solemn and demands obedience: "Do this in remembrance of me." All churches who name the name of Christ must of necessity, because of His clear command, celebrate this New Covenant meal. Virtually all churches from all backgrounds, as far as I know, celebrate the Lord's Supper. A church, which does not celebrate the Lord's Supper, cannot claim Christ as its Lord because it does not follow His commands.

That the celebration and observation of this solemn ordinance were not limited to a particular time is seen from v. 26, where Paul says that we proclaim the Lord's death "until he comes." Since Christ has not come back yet, we must celebrate the Lord's Supper and thus look forward to the time of perfect communion with our Lord (without the ordinance of the Lord's Supper). We look forward to the Lord's Day on which we partake of the Lord's Supper with the Lord's people. It is important to note that the Lord's Supper also has a *future aspect.* As we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are anticipating the Marriage Supper of the Lamb which is to come (Rev. 19:6-9). We will have perfect and face-to-face communion with our Lord. Therefore, as we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we at the same time anticipate the greater supper that is still yet to come (see also Matt. 26:29).

The elements of this ordinance are bread and wine. The bread was undoubtedly the unleavened bread of the Passover meal and the wine was simply alcoholic grape wine. Jesus mentions that this wine is "the fruit of the vine" (Matt. 26:29). There is nothing special in the elements of the Lord's Supper, but the sacredness is in what they signify and Christ's institution. We deny that any change, at all, happens to the bread and wine when the minister prays for God's blessing on the elements. The substance of the bread and wine remain unchanged and as they are.

The **bread** symbolizes the body of our Lord which was broken for our sake. Isaiah the Prophet, around 700 years before Christ, wrote, "Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand" (Isa. 53:10). Through His death, an atonement is provided for our sins. It was God the Father who sent the Son to die in our place and it was He who crushed Him. The pain that Christ felt was not because of the Roman soldiers or because of the Jews, they were merely

instruments in God's hand (Acts 4:27-28). The pain and loneliness that Christ felt was because of God's holy wrath.

The **blood** symbolizes Christ's life given for us, the forgiveness of sins, and the institution of the New Covenant. The New Covenant was instituted by the blood of its Mediator and its Sacrifice (Heb. 12:24; 13:20). The Bible teaches that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Heb. 9:22), but also that there was no efficacy in the blood of animals (e.g. Heb. 10:4). Therefore, Christ says that His blood is the means of forgiveness. In Matthew's account, He gives the following explanation of the wine: "for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28). This is the blood that institutes the New Covenant, but it is also the blood that brings about the forgiveness of sins by its sacrifice. Therefore, when believers celebrate the Lord's Supper, they celebrate the Lord's death in all of its benefits. The life of Christ which lead to His vicarious sufferings on our behalf, His perfect atonement on behalf of His New Covenant people on the cross, the institution of the Covenant of Grace in time and in His blood, i.e., the New Covenant, in all of its blessings, and His peoples' participation in these blessings bought for us by His blood and given by grace.

Names

The regular name of the ordinance among Protestants is *the Lord's Supper*, but there are also other names that are used for this ordinance.

The Lord's Supper

This name comes from 1 Corinthians 11:20. There, the apostle calls this ordinance the **Lord's Supper**. This indicates that this is a special supper, set aside from regular ones because the Lord Christ claims it as His own and as is usual in the ancient world, a supper with someone was not a parallel to eating something with a stranger at McDonald's. But dining with someone included communion with that person, therefore, the Lord's Supper is a supper of close communion with the Lord Who redeemed us and invites us to His table.

The Table Of The Lord

Instead of going to the pagan tables of the false gods and offering their sacrifices there, the Christians are invited to the **Lord's Table** (1 Cor. 10:21). Eating at this table indicates close communion with Christ. Paul says, if you're going to the table of false gods, you are participating and communing with demons. Therefore, when one goes to the table of the true and only Lord, they are communing and participating with the true God. This table is holy because the Lord claims it as His own for His communion with His people. In this connection, we may call the Lord's Supper, **Communion,** because in partaking of it, the faithful have a real and spiritual communion with their Savior as He administers grace to them.

The Breaking Of Bread

This is the first designation of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament. It is used in Luke 24:35; Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17. The early Christians were continually celebrating the Lord's Supper in the manner which their Lord did. As Christ took bread and broke it, so the Christians called this ordinance the breaking of bread, which reminded them of Christ's body given for them. Notice that in Acts 20:7, the purpose of the church gathering on the Lord's Day, is to break bread. They were gathered on the Christian Sabbath, as a church, to celebrate the Lord's Supper.

Eucharist

Eucharist means thanksgiving and refers to the words of Christ in Luke 22:19 before breaking and distributing the bread to His disciples. The Greek verb for giving thanks is εὐχαριστήσας (*eucharistēsas*). There is no doubt that thanksgiving should play a fundamental part as we celebrate the Lord's Supper, thinking of the work of Christ and receiving the benefits thereof anew in a spiritual and close communion with our Savior. But unfortunately, this name is closely associated with the abominable sacrifice of the Mass, therefore, it is not used by Protestants.

Significance

There are several things that are signified by the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is not a dead ritual, but a sign and a token, which signifies and grants grace to those who already believe (see **Means of Grace** below). Here are the things which the Lord's Supper signifies.

The Lord's Death

The most obvious thing that the Lord's Supper signifies is the Lord's sacrificial death on behalf of His people. His body was broken and His blood was shed for His people so as to redeemed them from sin. The Lord's Supper reminds the Christian of

the pivotal event of history when our Lord died on that cross to take away our sin and bear in Himself the punishment thereof. Therefore, whenever we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are reminded of the work of Christ on behalf of His people in His vicarious death on the cross. As we are reminded of that work we are also receiving new graces and appreciation of that glorious work of redemption. This is especially true when the Lord's Supper is preceded by a confession of sin. As we think of Christ's atonement, we are reminded that all our sins have been washed away and we have been given the perfect righteousness of Christ instead of our filthy rags. In this ordinance, we have signified for us that Christ shed His blood and His body was broken for our sake, so as to forgive us of every sin. Both the ones we did before our regeneration and after our regeneration, even the ones which we confessed before participating in the Lord's Supper.

Communion With Christ

In rejection of the Roman Catholic and Lutheran understanding of Christ's presence in the Supper, the Reformed understand Christ's presence to be spiritual. Roman Catholics are fond of expressing Christ's presence in words like "real" and "literal." In contrast, we affirm that there is a real *spiritual presence* of Christ. The bread and wine, remain as they are, and there's not a single change in them. But these elements *symbolize* Christ's body and blood. The presence of Christ is not in the bread and wine but in the faith of believers. Christ is especially present among His gathered people in the Lord's Supper. He ministers to us graces anew and reminds us of His accomplished work on our behalf. In that way, we are communing deeply with Him as we think of His sacrifice. We affirm that Christ is present at the administration of the Lord's Supper, but He is not present in, around, under (Consubstantiation: Lutheran), or that the elements become His body (Transubstantiation: Roman Catholic. Rather, the presence of Christ is to and in the faith of believers. He is especially present when His people partake of the Lord's Supper and He administers to them anew the benefits of His work which He accomplished for them. Paul says that we participate in the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16). This means that we have communion in that which His blood symbolizes, even His vicarious work for His people. We are reminded of His work and we have the benefits of His work applied to us by Him anew. See **Table of the Lord** above. Coming to the table of the Lord, according to Paul necessitates communion with the Lord.

Union With Believers

Paul says, "The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16). The body of Christ either refers to (1) the body of Christ broken for our sakes and communion with His work of atonement for us, or it refers to (2) the church as the body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12, 27). A double meaning may be the intention of the apostle. The breaking of bread symbolizes Christ's body figuratively broken for us on the cross as He bore our sin upon Himself, and thus we receive the benefits of His work. This is similar to what was said in the first part of the verse about communion in Christ's blood. This is, in fact, how Christ Himself explains the bread as a symbol of His body (Matt. 26:26). But the breaking of Christ's body was the basis, which created His mystical body, the church. The church is composed of born-again believers who make up the universal church of Christ. As we partake of the Lord's Supper in the gathering of God's people, we are united not only to Christ but also to each other, as a family of believers, meditating upon the work of Christ and receiving the benefits of that work from Him. We are drawn together by that singular sacrifice which made us the family of God. John Dagg observes that our "communion or joint participation in the benefits of Christ's death, is signified by the joint partaking of the outward elements...Believers meet around the table of the Lord, in one faith on the same atonement, in one hope of the same inheritance, and with one heart filled with love to the same Lord."[2]

Benjamin Coxe, the father of Nehemiah Coxe, one of the framers of the Confession, observed the four following things on 1 Corinthians 10:16-17:

> 1. True believers rightly receiving this Holy Sacrament, are thereby assured of their partaking of the benefits of Christ's death.
>
> 2. All they who do outwardly receive this Sacrament do therein make an outward profession of receiving Christ crucified, and partaking of the benefits of Christ's death.
>
> 3. This Sacrament does teach and assure all true believing communicants, that they being many persons, are yet one mystical body, because they are all partakers of one and the same Jesus Christ, of whose body the bread is an ordained token and pledge in this Sacrament.
>
> 4. They who join together in outward receiving of this Sacrament do both join together in the profession of the same faith in Christ, and also do profess themselves to be (in the judgment of charity, which they now mutually profess concerning each other) fellow members of the same mystical body, as being all fed with the same spiritual food.[3]

That it is a sign of union with the brethren is also shown from the context wherein it is celebrated. The Lord's institution said, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). But it does not specify either place, frequency, or context. Place we can discard quickly as there is no special holiness to a specific place. Frequency is not under discussion here. What we are left with is the *context*. By this, I mean the setting wherein it is celebrated. In the New Testament, it is clear that it was

celebrated with the believers among their gathers. For example, we read of the 3000 converts from Pentecost joining the church in devoting "themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). A few verses later, it is said, "And day by day, attending the temple together and **breaking bread in their homes**, they received their food with glad and generous hearts" (Acts 2:46). Notice that the Lord's Supper is here celebrated at home, which is no problem at all because homes were the buildings where Christians met. But the context is not merely a family meal, but a covenantal meal with the people of God. It was not a private Mass or communion. If we look further in Acts, we see the church at Troas was "**gathered together to break bread**" on the Lord's Day as if that was the purpose why they gathered (Acts 20:7). To another church, Paul says, "Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?" (1 Cor. 10:22). Therefore, this was not merely a normal meal. When the apostle Paul writes to the church at Corinth, he makes clear that the Lord's Supper was being celebrated in the context of the gathered church.

> 1 Cor. 11:17-18, 20 But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when **you come together** it is not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, in the first place, when you **come together as a church**...20 When you **come together**, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat.
>
> 1 Cor. 11:33 So then, my brothers, when you **come together to eat**, wait for one another—

They were so misusing the Lord's Supper that their celebration could not be called "the Lord's supper." But notice the context wherein it was celebrated—the gathered church. Because it is not only a sign of union with Christ, but also with the body of Christ. Thomas Schreiner explains:

> The Lord's Supper is not merely a meal where I celebrate what Jesus did for me. It is a communal meal where the people of God, the church of Jesus Christ, give thanks for what Jesus did for us. A new family has been forged through the sweat and blood of the Savior.[4]

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§2 Only A Memorial Of That One Offering Up Of Himself By Himself

2. In this ordinance **Christ is not offered up to his Father, nor any real sacrifice made** at all for remission of sin of the quick or dead, but **only a memorial of that one offering up of himself by himself** upon the cross, once for all; **1** and a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto God for the same. **2** So that the **popish sacrifice of the mass,** as they call it, **is most abominable**, injurious to **Christ's own sacrifice the alone propitiation for all the sins of the elect.**
    1. John 19:30; Heb. 9:25-28; 10:10-14; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24-25
    2. Matt. 26:26-27, 30 with Heb 13:10-16

This paragraph begins by first saying what the Lord's Supper is *not* and then moves to define what it *is*. In the Lord's Supper, **Christ is not offered up to His Father, nor any real sacrifice** is **made** for the **remission of** the **sin of the quick or dead**. Holy Scripture does not speak in this way about the Lord's Supper. All these are additions and contrary to the heart of the gospel. But this is the doctrine of **the popish sacrifice of the mass**, which **is most abominable** because it is **injurious to Christ's own** sufficient and once-for-all **propitiation for all the sins of the elect**. Christ's sacrifice is the only ground for the remission of our sins. Nothing is to be added next to it, certainly not the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass.

What what *is* the Lord's Supper then positively described? The Lord's Supper is **only a memorial of that one offering up of Himself by Himself upon the cross, once for all**. The Lord's Supper brings to mind the sacrifice of Christ and the benefits which we enjoy through it. It does not present an unbloody sacrifice of Christ taking place now, but it points back to the **once for all** sacrifice 2000 years ago on that **cross** of Calvary. The Lord Supper is also a **spiritual oblation**, i.e., an offering, **of all possible praise unto God for** the once for all sacrifice of Christ. In the Lord's Supper, we thank and praise the Lord for what Jesus did for us on the cross.

The Roman Catholic View

The Mass is the heart of the Roman Catholic religion and liturgy, by their admission. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains the following designation for the Lord's Supper:

> The *Holy and Divine Liturgy*, because the Church's whole liturgy finds its center and most intense expression in the celebration of this sacrament; in the same sense we also call its celebration the *Sacred Mysteries*. We speak of the *Most Blessed Sacrament* because it is the Sacrament of sacraments; the Eucharistic species reserved in the tabernacle are designated by this same name.[5]

Therefore, if their doctrine of the Mass and the Eucharist (as they most often call it) is proven wrong, their whole religion and worship are proven wrong. The Eucharist is the center of Roman Catholic worship, therefore, if someone wants to refute Roman Catholicism, it is necessary for them to deal with this sacrament as Roman Catholics understand it. Roman Catholics understand that the Eucharist is not only a memorial, but it is actually an *unbloody sacrifice*. They believe that the bread and wine become Christ's body and blood when the priest speaks the words "this is my body" (Latin: *Hoc est corpus meum*). Although the bread still tastes like bread and the wine tastes like wine, yet in actuality, there is a change in the substance of the bread and wine. Thus, the doctrine of Transubstantiation (see paragraph 6 below), which means the change of the substance from one to another. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says:

> By the consecration the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is brought about. Under the consecrated species of bread and wine Christ himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real, and substantial manner: his Body and his Blood, with his soul and his divinity (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1640; 1651).[6]
>
> At the heart of the Eucharistic celebration are the bread and wine that, by the words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, become Christ's Body and Blood. Faithful to the Lord's command the Church continues to do, in his memory and until his glorious return, what he did on the eve of his Passion: "He took bread...." "He took the cup filled with wine...." the signs of bread and wine become, in a way surpassing understanding, the Body and Blood of Christ; they continue also to signify the goodness of creation. Thus in the Offertory we give thanks to the Creator for bread and wine, fruit of the "work of human hands," but above all as "fruit of the earth" and "of the vine" - gifts of the Creator. the Church sees in the gesture of the king-priest Melchizedek, who "brought out bread and wine," a prefiguring of her own offering.[7]

Thus, as the bread and wine change into the substance of Christ's body, the priest offers the sacrifice of Christ anew, although in an unbloody manner, through which the people receive remission of sins. In other words, this sacrifice of the Mass is propitiatory and is repeated. So, instead of the Lord's Supper being merely a memorial of that once for all sacrifice, it is actually a propitiatory sacrifice of Christ in an unbloody manner again and again. What is even worse, this propitiatory sacrifice is not only offered on behalf of those living and partaking of the Eucharist but also on behalf of the dead in Purgatory. The *Catechism* again:

> As sacrifice, the Eucharist is also offered in reparation for the sins of the living and the dead and to obtain spiritual or temporal benefits from God.[8]
>
> The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*: "The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different." "And since in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner. . . this sacrifice is truly propitiatory."[9]

This view is against everything that the Bible says on the Lord's Supper and is not a view derived from Holy Writ, but the traditions of men. What makes this view abominable is in its assertion that Christ is repeatedly offered every time the Roman Catholic church partakes of the Eucharist. Wayne Grudem quotes the Catholic Ludwig Ott who explains this abomination:

> In the Sacrifice of the Mass and in the Sacrifice of the Cross the Sacrificial Gift and the Primary Sacrificing Priest are identical; only the nature and mode of the offering are different. . . . The Sacrificial Gift is the Body and Blood of Christ. . . . The Primary Sacrificing Priest is Jesus Christ, who utilizes the human priest as His servant and representative and fulfills the consecration through him. According to the Thomistic view, *in every Mass Christ also performs an actual immediate sacrificial activity* which, however, must not be conceived as a totality of many successive acts but as one single uninterrupted sacrificial act of the Transfigured Christ.
>
> The purpose of the Sacrifice is the same in the Sacrifice of the Mass as in the Sacrifice of the Cross; primarily the glorification of God, secondarily atonement, thanksgiving and appeal. ([Ludwig Ott, Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma,] p. 408)[10]

The Bible never speaks of the Lord's Supper as a propitiatory sacrifice which brings about the remission of sins. Holy Writ knows of no sacrifice of atonement on behalf of those who are dead, much less of the living in any other manner than the actual sacrifice of Christ on the cross for His elect.

The Biblical View

Nobody, having the Bible alone, would come to the same conclusion on the Lord's Supper as a Roman Catholic would. It is obvious that the Roman Catholic does not rely on Scripture alone, but Scripture plus tradition, which brings about this abominable practice. The biblical view is that Christ offered a bloody sacrifice once for all time, never to be repeated again. In fact, the primary critique of the book of Hebrews about Old Testament religion is in its repeated sacrifices (e.g. Heb. 10:11). But the Roman Catholic religion not only remembers that one sacrifice but repeats it in an unbloody manner again and again, through which forgiveness of sins is attained, i.e., it is propitious. But the Bible teaches that Christ made a propitious sacrifice once for all time.

I believe a simple reading of Hebrews refutes all the superstitions of the Catholic Church regarding the Mass and the supposed sacrifice of Christ therein. For example, we read in Hebrews 9:25-28 that Christ's sacrifice, in contrast to the Jewish ceremonial system, was not to be offered repeatedly. But rather, "he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (v. 26). His coming as the sacrifice was once for all time, never to be repeated, whether bloody or unbloody, and this is the sacrifice that propitiates God. Furthermore, it is also said that "Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time" (v. 28). This passage explicitly teaches that Christ's sacrifice was once for all time, never to be repeated. Hebrews 10:12-14 is likewise a total refutation of the sacrifice of the Mass. Roman Catholics may try various ways to evade the teaching of these passages. whether to speak vaguely about their abominable doctrine, or try to offer unsatisfactory interpretations of Hebrews. We've said this and we have not even touched upon the priesthood. The New Testament knows nothing of a sacramental priesthood, but rather acknowledges that all believers are priests (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:5; 5:10). Therefore, the whole priesthood thing and the priest, whom Roman Catholics believe possesses the power to bring about the change in the substance of the bread and wine, and offer the sacrifice, is totally absent from Holy Writ. There is only one High Priest whom the New Testament acknowledges who was the Offering and the Offerer at the same time of a perfect once for all propitiatory sacrifice.

Furthermore, neither Christ nor His apostles ever celebrated or commanded any practice which resembles the sacrifice of the Mass. Roman Catholics may claim all they want that this is Apostolic Tradition which the Church has practiced for 2000 years, but if it is not commanded in Holy Writ, it is forbidden. Every addition to His word is a lie, especially in the area of worship. This is the centerpiece of Roman Catholic worship and it is found nowhere in Holy Scripture. Not only that, but its claims are contradicted by Holy Scripture. What Christ actually commands is to "Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:24). The disciples were to partake of the bread and wine and thereby remember their Master. They would remember His Person, but most especially, His propitiatory sacrifice on their behalf, as He explained to them in the words "This is my body, which is given for you", and "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:19-20). The Lord's Supper was to be a remembrance of this once for all sacrifice, not a repetition thereof. We remember Christ's work on our behalf, we meditate upon His love and receive anew the benefits of His work as He communes with us through this ordinance.

The Lord's Supper is meant to be a memorial of His once for all time sacrifice, not a repetition, in any sense, of that perfect sacrifice. It is because the Roman Catholic false religion does not have a perfect and definite atonement that it makes and clings to such abominable and unbiblical doctrines. But thank God that the atonement of the Lord Christ is perfect and brings to salvation all who were its objects (Heb. 10:14), and the faithful are reminded of His work in this ordinance and the Savior communicates grace to them.

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§3 Prayer And Blessing Of The Bread And Wine

3. The Lord Jesus hath, in this ordinance, appointed his ministers 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. **1**
    1. 1 Cor. 11:23-26; 10:16; Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20

In this ordinance, those who are called to administer it are to **pray, and bless the elements of bread and wine** (1 Cor. 10:16) and by their prayer and blessing, they are **set...apart from a common to a holy use**. They are no longer normal bread or wine, but bread and wine for the Lord's Supper. Nothing changes as to their form or substance, but their significance changes alone. Finally, they are to partake **themselves**, also of giving **both** (Luke 22:19-20) the bread and wine **to the communicants** (i.e., those who want to partake of the Lord's Supper). Both elements are to be given to

everyone partaking. There is no withholding of the elements from believers or giving them only one (which is the first thing mentioned in the next paragraph).

The prayer, blessing, and thanksgiving for the elements are meant to be thanksgiving for what the elements signify. This is to be done after the example of Christ.

> Mark 14:22-23 And as they were eating, **he took bread, and after blessing** it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." 23 And he took a **cup, and when he had given thanks** he gave it to them, and they all drank of it.

The significance of the Lord's Supper was obviously enlarged after the disciples realized what their Lord had done in His sacrifice on the cross. Therefore, the thanksgiving and blessing is not merely for the bread and wine, but more importantly for the sacrifice that He offered on our behalf which is the cause of our communion with Him. Although there is no change in the substance of the bread and wine after the blessing, yet the bread and wine become holy because of what they symbolize. Therefore, those who abused the Lord's Supper and used it in an unworthy manner were judged by God (1 Cor. 11:27-32) and will be judged by God for their abuse. This bars unbelievers from coming to the Table of the Lord, as they are unclean and unworthy because they are unregenerate. Therefore, when they partake of the Lord's Supper, they bring condemnation and not blessing upon themselves, because they partake in that which they have no part in. They eat that which is holy, while they are unholy, are not the subjects of the ordinance, and are unrepentant.

Roman Catholics believe that with the consecration of the bread and wine, they become the Lord's body and blood, but "Protestants admit in a consecration of the elements, is the simple change of their use, from a common to a sacred and sacramental one."[11] Nothing changes as to the substance or form of the bread and wine. They are simply treated as holy because of what they now signify.

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§4 Things Contrary To The Nature Of This Ordinance

4. The **denial of the cup to the people,** **1** **worshipping the elements,** the lifting them up, or **carrying them about for adoration,** and reserving them for any pretended religious use, **2** are all **contrary to the nature of this ordinance,** and to the institution of Christ. **3**
    1. Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:23; 1 Cor. 11:25-28
    2. Exod. 20:4-5
    3. Matt. 15:9

For fear of spilling the wine, which in Roman Catholic theology, becomes the blood of Christ, **the cup** was denied **to the people** and they partook alone of the bread, which is unbiblical and **contrary to the nature of this ordinance, and to the institution of Christ**. So is also the **worshipping** of **the elements** of bread and wine when they are lifted **up** and carried **for adoration**. So also **reserving them for any pretended religious use**. All these things are **contrary to the nature of this ordinance** because Holy Scripture knows nothing of these practices, therefore, they are to be rejected.

Denial Of The Cup To The People

Roman Catholics, afraid that people would desecrate the sacrament, give the laity only the bread, while the priests only partook of both the bread and the wine. They assert that Christ is wholly present in both the wine and the bread, therefore, it does not matter if one partakes only of one element, they have the whole Christ. And so, in a sense, it is not necessary for them to partake of both. The *Catechism* says:

> Since Christ is sacramentally present under each of the species, communion under the species of bread alone makes it possible to receive all the fruit of Eucharistic grace. For pastoral reasons this manner of receiving communion has been legitimately established as the most common form in the Latin rite. But "the sign of communion is more complete when given under both kinds, since in that form the sign of the Eucharistic meal appears more clearly." This is the

usual form of receiving communion in the Eastern rites.[12]

In other words, the reason for the denial of the cup is not because it was commanded by Christ, but because the Catholic clergy thinks it appropriate, although the priests partake of both the bread and wine. Robert Dabney writes:

> And our Saviour, as though foreseeing the abuse, in Mark 14:23, and Matt 26:27, has emphatically declared that all who eat are also to drink. This innovation of Rome is comparatively modern; being not more against the Word of God, than against the voice and usage of Christian antiquity. It presents one of the strongest examples of her insolent arrogance both towards her people and God. The true motive, doubtless, is, to exalt the priesthood into a superior caste.[13]

This practice has not a hint in Scripture. Christ says of the bread, "Take, eat; this is my body" and of the cup, "Drink of it, all of you" (Matt. 26:26-27). Denial of the cup to the faithful, for whatever reason not found in Holy Writ, is disobedience to Christ's command.

Worshipping The Elements

> *Worship of the Eucharist*. In the liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord. "The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession."[14]

The above statement from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, our Confession denies. Since Roman Catholics believe that the host becomes the very body of Christ, they think it proper to render the worship of adoration to it, since they think that the bread becomes Christ's body. But for those, going with Scripture Alone, and free of this superstitious sacramentalism, rendering any kind of worship or reverence to the bread and wine, is idolatry. What Rome does in their worship is idolatry because it is not in accordance with what Scripture teaches, but is built up by the wisdom of men. Christ is not present in the host itself, but is present to the faith of believers. Moreover, this is in direct contradiction and disobedience to the **Second Commandment** of our God. Oh wait, there is a reason which the Roman Catholic Church has added commandments one (Ex. 20:3) and two (Ex. 20:4-6) together, and split the tenth commandment (Ex. 20:17) in two, to have the number ten. If they would have the second commandment plainly, and follow it, they would stop with their idolatry in worshipping the host, their images, and statues in their churches. But they do not care about the Law of God, rather, they go on with their idolatrous and will-worship. Therefore, the procession of the bread, and laying it at home as a blessing, and other kinds of superstitious acts are contrary to the mind of Christ in giving us this ordinance. It is meant to be an ordinance that is celebrated in the company of the faithful.

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§5 No Change In Substance And Nature

5. The **outward elements** in this ordinance, duly set apart to the use ordained by Christ, have such relation to him crucified, as that truly, although in terms used figuratively, they are sometimes called by the names of the things they represent, to wit, the body and blood of Christ, **1** albeit, in **substance and nature, they still remain truly and only bread and wine**, as they were before. **2**
    1. 1 Cor. 11:27; Matt. 26:26-28
    2. 1 Cor. 11:26-28; Matt. 26:29

The outward elements of bread and wine are sometimes called the **body and blood of Christ**, but this is only because these **terms** are **used figuratively**. But **in substance and nature**, there is no change in the bread and wine contrary to what the Roman Catholic Church teaches. They **still remain truly and only bread and wine, as they were before**.

The bread and wine remain as they are, actual bread and wine, what is changed is their significance in how they are

regarded. They are regarded as the Lord's body and blood because that is what they symbolize, not because that is what they are. In fact, the Bible always calls the elements, even after "consecration," bread and wine (1 Cor. 11:26-28). If the Roman Catholic theory were right, Paul would have called the elements only the Lord's body and blood, but as it is, they remain unchanged, though they symbolize His body given for us and His blood shed for us. Roman Catholics abuse certain passages of Scripture and demand a literal interpretation of spiritual things, plus church tradition, and they come up with their doctrine of Transubstantiation. It is obvious, from reading the passages on the Lord's Supper, that Transubstantiation is not the teaching of the Bible when properly interpreted. The Bible does not teach that the substance of the bread and wine change when they are consecrated. Rather, they remain ever the same, but they symbolize the body and blood of our Savior. In the next paragraph, we will take up the passages which Roman Catholics use to argue for Transubstantiation.

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§6 Transubstantiation Is Repugnant

6. That doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of bread and wine, into the substance of Christ's body and blood, commonly called **transubstantiation**, by consecration of a priest, or by any other way, **is repugnant not to Scripture alone,** but even to **common sense and reason**, overthroweth the nature of the ordinance, and hath been, and is, the **cause of manifold superstitions, yea, of gross idolatries. 1**
    1. Matt. 26:26-29; Luke 24:36-43, 50-51; John 1:14; 20:26-29; Acts 1:9-11; 3:21; 1 Cor. 11:24-26; Luke 12:1; Rev. 1:20; Gen. 17:10-11; Ezek. 37:11; Gen. 41:26-27

Transubstantiation, which is **that doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of bread and wine…is repugnant not to Scripture alone, but even to common sense and reason**. The Roman Catholic Church believes that when **a priest** consecrates the bread and wine, it becomes in **substance…Christ's body and blood**. But this doctrine is not only contrary to the testimony of **Scripture**, but **even to common sense**. It even **overthroweth the nature of the ordinance** in that it no longer is a sign and a memorial of the once for all sacrifice on the cross, but a continual sacrifice of Christ. Furthermore, it causes **manifold superstitions** and **gross idolatries** when people do not think biblically about this ordinance and its elements when they go on to worship and adore the elements because they think that they have become Christ's body and blood.

Transubstantiation

Transubstantiation is the teaching of the Roman Catholic church which asserts that the bread becomes the body of our Lord and the wine His blood when the priest speaks the words "this is my body" (Latin: *Hoc est corpus meun).* The form of the bread remains the same, but the nature changes. In their words:

> At the heart of the Eucharistic celebration are the bread and wine that, by the words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, become Christ's Body and Blood. Faithful to the Lord's command the Church continues to do, in his memory and until his glorious return, what he did on the eve of his Passion: "He took bread…." "He took the cup filled with wine…." the signs of bread and wine become, in a way surpassing understanding, the Body and Blood of Christ; they continue also to signify the goodness of creation. Thus in the Offertory we give thanks to the Creator for bread and wine, fruit of the "work of human hands," but above all as "fruit of the earth" and "of the vine" - gifts of the Creator. the Church sees in the gesture of the king-priest Melchizedek, who "brought out bread and wine," a prefiguring of her own offering.[15]

Also:

> The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as "the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend." In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.*" "This presence is called 'real' - by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be 'real' too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a *substantial* presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present."[16]

The bread and wine do not only become Christ's body and blood, but each part of them contains the whole of Christ. The

Catechism writes:

> The Eucharistic presence of Christ begins at the moment of the consecration and endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsist. Christ is present whole and entire in each of the species and whole and entire in each of their parts, in such a way that the breaking of the bread does not divide Christ.[17]

The presentation of the Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation by the Confession is fair, accurate, and is in accordance with their own words.

Repugnant To Scripture

It is repugnant, i.e., inconsistent, distasteful, and contradictory to Scripture because it does not interpret Scripture faithfully. The Roman Catholic claim is that when Christ said "this is my body," He meant that the bread really changed in substance to His body. The same goes for the wine. But we must ask ourselves, how would the disciples have understood His words? There are two accounts that Roman Catholics bring up to prove their doctrine: 1) the institution of the ordinance, and 2) John 6. Our discussion of either will touch upon both because the issue here is of literalist interpretation.

The disciples simply could not have possibly understood Him to be speaking about the bread becoming His actual body. As Dabney observed, "It is impossible that they should have understood the bread as truly the body: because they saw the body handling the bread!"[18] The same goes for the blood. According to this interpretation, there remains no significance in the sacrament. In fact, as some observe, the literalist interpretation destroys any significance for this ordinance. For as we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we anticipate the day when we will celebrate it with Him in body and spirit (Matt 26:29), yet the Roman Catholic doctrine claims that Christ is there in spirit and body, divine and human. Yet, Scripture claims that Christ's human nature is in heaven and will stay in heaven until the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21). Therefore, to say that Christ's human nature is present in the bread and wine is to contradict that Scripture. The words of Christ, rather, are figurative. The bread which He had in His hand and which He broke, symbolized His body which was given up for our sins. And the wine symbolized His blood which was shed for the forgiveness of our sins. This is the natural way of understanding these words and not in a literalist manner that contradicts Scripture. Christ saying "this is my body" and "this is my blood" should not be interpreted literally as His similar statement, like, "I am the door" (John 10:9) and "I am the true vine" (John 15:1) would be interpreted literally. Rather, the meaning is that the bread and wine *symbolize* and are signs of His body and blood. John Dagg observes:

> When he said, "This is my body," the plain meaning is, "This represents my body." So we point to a picture, and say, "This is Christ on the cross." The eucharist is a picture, so to speak, in which the bread represents the body of Christ suffering for our sins. Faith discerns what the picture represents. It discerns the Lord's body in the commemorative representation of it, and derives spiritual nourishment from the atoning sacrifice made by his broken body and shed blood.[19]

The next place which Roman Catholics appeal to is John 6. There, they claim, the Lord taught upon the Eucharist and His presence therein. We must repeat the words of Dabney here:

> For though we strenuously dispute, against Rome, that the language of this passage [John 6:50-55] is descriptive of the Lord's Supper, it is manifest that the Supper was afterwards devised upon the analogy which furnished the metaphor of the passage. And the didactic and promissory language, "This is My body,!" "This is My blood," sacramentally understood, obviously convey the idea of nutrition offered to the soul.[20]

In other words, this passage is not directly speaking about the Lord's Supper, for this passage records a discussion that happened prior to the establishment of the Lord's Supper. But this passage speaks about what the Lord's Supper symbolizes. Roman Catholics stress the following phrases:

> John 6:51 **I am the living bread** that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is **my flesh**."
>
> John 6:53-56 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you **eat the flesh of the Son of Man** and **drink his blood**, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever **feeds on my flesh** and **drinks my blood** has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For **my flesh is true food**, and **my blood is true drink.** 56 Whoever **feeds on my flesh** and **drinks my blood** abides in me, and I in him.

They stress the statements of Jesus when He says that it is necessary for people to feed on His flesh (body) and drink His blood to have eternal life, hence they see Baptism and the Lord's Supper as necessary for salvation. But the only problem here is that these words do not speak of the Lord's Supper. Moreover, a literalist interpretation would put one in the shoes of those whom Christ is rebuking. The Jews understood Him to be speaking of literal flesh and blood. Roman Catholics believe that Jesus is literally present in His whole Person in the Eucharist. The fact that feeding on Christ's flesh and drinking His blood are metaphorical is seen in verse 35:

> John 6:35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; **whoever comes to me shall not hunger**, and whoever **believes in me shall never thirst**.

In this verse, we see that coming (believing) to Christ satisfies hunger, and believing in Him satisfies thirst. This is the pivotal verse for the proper interpretation of this passage. The Jews missed this and therefore they were offended and went into a literalist interpretation of our Lord's words. Therefore, if coming to Christ satisfies hunger, this means that feeding on His flesh means continually coming to Him. Likewise, since believing in Him satisfies thirst, this means that drinking His blood means believing in Him. A literalist interpretation puts us on the side of those who are opposing Christ. Not only this, but the words of Christ in v. 63 show that what He said was spiritual and thus has to be interpreted in a spiritual way, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." A literalist interpretation of the words concerning His flesh and His blood simply will not do. This passage, which is used by Roman Catholics for their abomination of the Mass, is actually about salvation by faith through grace in Christ. It is about sovereign grace raising wretched sinners to life with no work of their own (John 6:37-40). This passage is about the result of that which the Lord's Supper signifies (Christ's perfect atonement for His elect), not what it is!

Most importantly, this passage, if we side with the Roman Catholics that it is about the Eucharist, teaches more than they want. Dabney wrote, "If the chapter be forced into an application to the Supper, then Jn. 6:53, 54 explicitly teach that every one who eats the Supper goes to heaven, and that no one who fails to eat it does; neither of which Rome admits: And in verse Jn. 6:63, our Saviour fixes a figurative and spiritual interpretation of His words, beyond all question."[21] Roman Catholics don't believe that people may have an assurance of salvation and that they may participate in a thousand Masses, yet not be perfected in contrast to Christ's once for all atonement (Heb. 10:10-14). But these passages, if they speak about the Lord's Supper directly, teach that anyone who partakes of the elements will go to heaven, without any doubts. But the Roman Catholic Church does not teach that, therefore, they contradict their interpretation and pick and choose which parts of this passage they will believe or consistently interpret. The foundation, which the Roman Catholic claims for the doctrine of Transubstantiation, is flawed and based on erroneous interpretations of Scripture. Therefore, Transubstantiation is repugnant to Scripture.

A word may also be said generally about those who selectively use John 6 for the Lord's Supper. As we demonstrated in reference to Roman Catholics, certain descriptions are maximized while others are minimized. But it difficult to use this passage to argue the Lord's Supper from it. It was not given as an institution of the Lord's Supper neither does the eating or drinking here concerning anything physical. As we tried to point out, according to John 6:35, this eating and drinking is believing in Christ. From the institution of the Supper, Paul concludes, "as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). Paul uses less forceful language in reference to eating the bread and drinking the wine. John 6 speaks of the "flesh" of the Lord Jesus (John 6:51, 55) while the institution speaks of the "body" (Luke 22:19). John 6 speaks of *feeding* or chewing of Christ's flesh (John 6:54, 56, 57, 58). Christ's words in John 6 speak of spiritual fellowship with Christ by His Spirit, and not an ordinance that was not yet instituted. It can only be secondarily and by analogy be used to speak of the Supper, but it is not a direct word about it.

Repugnant To Common Sense And Reason

Interestingly, the Confession does not only appeal to the Bible against this doctrine, but also to common sense. This doctrine is contradictory to common sense and reason, because it claims a change in the substance of a thing, while nothing outward is changed. Moreover, they claim that the human nature of Christ, which Scripture teaches remains in heaven until the Parousia (Acts 3:21), is everywhere present when the Eucharistic sacrifice is taking place. Not only that, but Christ in His whole Person, divine and human, is present in every part of the host. For example, if a host, consecrated by a priest, is divided into a hundred pieces, each piece contains and is fully Christ's body. There is a difference between something that is unlikely and something that is logically impossible. There is a difference between restoring someone's sight, restoring someone's speech, and the doctrine of Transubstantiation. Calling it a miracle will not help, because miracles are not things which are impossible, but things which are unusual and require the direct intervention of God. But even God cannot do that which is logically impossible. The doctrine of Transubstantiation requires that Christ's *physical* body be everywhere at once, which is impossible. His divine nature is everywhere at once, but His physical, glorified body is located in Heaven. We close this paragraph with the words of Dabney:

In the second place, it is impossible to be true; because it violates our understanding. Our mental intuitions compel us to recognize substance by its sensible attributes. Those attributes inhere only in the substance, and can only be present by its presence. It is impossible to avoid this reference. An attribute or accident is relative to its substance; to attempt to conceive of it as separate destroys it. Again: it is impossible for us to abstract from matter, the attributes of locality, dimension, and divisibility. But transubstantiation requires us to conceive of Christ's body without all these. Again: it is impossible for matter to be ubiquitous [omnipresent]; but Christ's body must be so, if this doctrine be true. And it is vain to attempt an evasion of these two arguments from sense and reason, by pleading a great and mysterious miracle. For God's omnipotence does not work the impossible and the natural contradiction. And whatever miracle has ever taken place, has necessarily been just as dependent on human senses, for man's cognizance of its occurrence, as any common event. So that if the fundamental law of the senses is outraged, man is as incapable of knowing a miracle as any other thing.[22]

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§7 Spiritually Receive, and Feed Upon Christ Crucified

7. Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this ordinance, **1** do then also **inwardly by faith,** really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but **spiritually receive, and feed upon Christ crucified,** and **all the benefits of his death; 2** the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally, but **spiritually present to the faith of believers** in that ordinance, as the **elements themselves are to their outward senses. 3**
    1. 1 Cor. 11:28
    2. John 6:29, 35, 47-58
    3. 1 Cor. 10:16

Worthy and proper **receivers** of this sacred ordinance **do…inwardly by faith…spiritually receive, and feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of His death**. Just because the substance of the elements is not changed does not mean that we do not **really and indeed…feed upon Christ**. In the Lord's Supper, we are in spiritual communion with the Lord Jesus as we are invited to sit at His table and partake of His benefits and blessings. Although the **body and blood of Christ** are not **corporally or carnally** present as we partake of the Lord's Supper, nonetheless, He is **spiritually present to the faith of believers**. He is present with us by the Holy Spirit and He is present to and in our faith. By faith, we discern His presence and not by supposing that He is present with us by Transubstantiation. He is **spiritually present to the faith of believers** in the same way the **elements** of bread and wine **are** present to our **outward senses**. So intimate and close is our communion with the Lord when we partake of the Lord's Supper. Therefore, it should be our endeavor to never miss the celebration of the Lord's Supper and to partake of it in joy and in faith.

Means Of Grace

What is a means of grace? Is it a thing that grants grace to whom it is administered? Does it matter if the person has faith or not? In Reformed understanding, the means of grace supply grace and sanctification to those who already have faith. In Catholic understanding, grace is administered by the work performed. The means of grace include:

1. The Word of God: (a) the reading, (b) teaching, and (c) preaching thereof.
2. The twofold ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
3. Church fellowship.
4. Prayer.
5. Worship.
6. Spiritual gifts.
7. Giving.
8. Church discipline.
9. Evangelism.

According to Wayne Grudem, "*The means of grace are any activities within the fellowship of the church that God uses to give more grace to Christians.*"[23] They are not meant to convey *regenerating grace*, but *sanctifying grace.* In other words, a person does not become a Christian by being baptized (Roman Catholic view), but they are baptized and strengthened in their faith because of their regeneration (Reformed view). The means of grace are intended for believers alone. There are

longer and shorter lists of the means of grace. Some point to Acts 2:42 as containing the elements of the means of Grace, which are: 1) the teaching and preaching of the Word of God, 2) church fellowship, 3) the Lord's Supper, and 4) prayer. These are the things mentioned in the passage, but undoubtedly, we may understand both ordinances to be included under "the means of grace." The reason why baptism is not mentioned is not because it is not a means of grace, or because it is not important. Rather, because baptism is the *initiatory* sign of the New Covenant, while the Lord's Supper is the *continuing* sign of the New Covenant. In other words, there are no means of grace if there is no visible church. The means of grace are intended, primarily, to be communicated to the community of believers. Baptism is the ordinance that *creates* a visible community of believers, while the Lord's Supper is the ordinance that *upholds* and *nourishes* this community of believers. We focus here upon the Lord's Supper as a means of grace.

In the Roman Catholic view, the sacraments (including baptism and the Lord's Supper), communicate grace regardless of the faith of the recipient. I'll let Louis Berkhof explain the Roman Catholic view:

> As far as the Lord's Supper as a sacrament is concerned, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that it works *ex opere operato*, which means, "in virtue of the sacramental act itself, and not in virtue of the acts or disposition of the recipient, or of the worthiness of the minister (*ex opere operantis*)." This means that every one who receives the elements, be he wicked or pious, also receives the grace signified, which is conceived of as a substance contained in the elements. The sacramental rite itself conveys grace unto the recipient. At the same time it also teaches, rather inconsistently, it would seem, that the effects of the sacrament may be completely or partially frustrated by the existence of some obstacle, by the absence of that disposition that makes the soul capable of receiving grace, or by the priest's want of intention to do what the Church does.[24]

In contrast and in rejection of that abominable practice, which does not distinguish between the sign and the thing(s) signified, the Reformed see that grace is only communicated in the Lord's Supper when it is met with the faith of believers. Therefore, we do not *knowingly* nor *willingly* give that which is holy to dogs, nor do we think that the means of grace will communicate grace to those who have not experienced regenerating grace. While unbelievers may receive the elements of bread and wine, they will not receive grace but condemnation. On the other hand, believers who are active in their faith and are anticipating close communion with their Lord will receive grace upon grace from Him. The believer is united to His Lord and comes to a close communion at the Table of the Lord, as a guest to whom the Lord of glory administers grace anew and sanctifies them. We do feed upon Christ's flesh and blood, but we do so spiritually and by faith (John 6:35, 54, 56), not literally nor in supposing that the substance of the bread and wine is somehow changed. If the ordinance is not received in faith, it brings condemnation, not grace, for by unworthily partaking of it we offend the Lord. We treat that which is holy as common and as nothing special.

How Often And Where?

This question is not touched upon in the Confession, but it is obviously an important question. The first time that I encountered this issue was when I started going to church in Holland, a Baptist church (non-Reformed). I noticed that they celebrated the Lord's Supper once a month on the first Sunday. I was shocked. In the Armenian Church where I grew up, the Eucharist (in a similar manner to Catholicism) is administered every Sunday. I did not understand the reasons why a church would celebrate this ordinance only once a month. When I heard of those Reformed churches who celebrate the Supper only three or four times a year, I was in shock! It seems especially wrong to me for Reformed churches, who understand the Supper to be a means of grace, to administer this glorious ordinance so occasionally.

I did not understand the reasons why some churches chose not to celebrate the Supper of the Lord weekly, but after a while I did. It makes you long for and look forward, in my case, for the first Sunday of the month. The Supper does not become something common, as it was, in my experience in the Armenian Church. It receives its rightful place as an important ordinance and sign. If we celebrate the Supper too often, we may start to treat the Supper as something common, and not holy. It becomes something regular and not an ordinance to look forward to. But if we neglect or administer the Supper only 3-4 times a year, we rob from the people of God a great means of grace which the Lord Jesus Himself instituted and commanded us to observe.

It seems that the early church practiced weekly (if not daily) communion (Acts 2:42, 46). In Acts 20:7, we are told that the church gathered on the Lord's day for the purpose of breaking bread. The Lord's Supper was a central part of the church's worship and therefore, it should not be neglected. The Lord's Supper was connected here with the Lord's Day. It is to be celebrated foremostly on the Lord's Day. I know of no command or prohibition that the Supper may not be celebrated outside of the church on the Lord's Day, yet private communion has no basis in the Bible (see above). The Lord's Supper is meant to be a sign to the gathered church that they are Christians and they are celebrating the Lord's ordinance, which is a sign of continuing the Christian life. It has no significance if done privately. It may be done in a community of believers outside of the church gathering on Sunday. But we must not ignore the fact that the Lord's Supper is meant to be an ordinance celebrated with the gathered church (1 Cor. 10:17-20). Such was the practice of the church in Acts 2:41-42; 20:7

and 1 Corinthians 11:20, 33. The location is not important, but with whom it is celebrated is important. It is to be celebrated with the church—the people of God. It not only shows our union with Christ, but our union with Christ *and* with the body of Christ. The Lord's Supper is discussed in 1 Corinthians 10-11 specifically in the context of unity. The ordinance of unity was used to sow *dis*unity.

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§8 Unworthy And Worthy

8. All **ignorant** and **ungodly** persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with Christ, so are they **unworthy of the Lord's table,** and cannot, without great sin against him, while they remain such, partake of these **holy mysteries,** or be admitted thereunto; **1** yea, whosoever shall receive unworthily, are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, **eating and drinking judgment to themselves. 2**
    1. Matt. 7:6; Eph. 4:17-24; 5:3-9; Exod. 20:7, 16; 1 Cor. 5:9-13; 2 John 10; Acts 2:41-42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17-22, 33-34
    2. 1 Cor. 11:20-22, 27-34

All those who are **ignorant and ungodly** are **unworthy of the Lord's table** and **are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord**. Therefore, if they partake they commit a **great sin against Him** and as such, are **eating and drinking judgment to themselves** (1 Cor. 11:27-34) because they regard as common that which is set apart as holy by prayer and blessing. Therefore, they who know themselves to be outside the Lord should tremble and not partake of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is only for those who are united with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not for those alone who have perfect faith, for in that case, no one would come to the table of the Lord. It is for all true believers alone as is baptism (see **chapter 29:2**).

Those Unworthy Of The Lord's Table

Those who are unworthy of the Lord's Table are those who are unbelievers and those who are living in sin. Benjamin Coxe wrote that those mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:11 and the like who are living in sin are not to be admitted to the Lord's Table:

> Now, howsoever in my Thesis and in I Corinthians 5:11, there is express mention made only of him who is a *fornicator*, or *covetous*, or an *idolater*, or a *railer*, or a *drunkard*, or an *extortioner*, yet what is there expressly said of these, is also to be understood of every other who is called a Brother, and *yet is known to live under the reign of any other like sin*. For the truth and soundness of this, see and consider these places, Gal. 5:19-21; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; and 2 Tim. 3:2-5.[3]

Those who have not made a profession of faith and shown by their lives that they belong to the faith, should not partake of the Lord's Supper. As with baptism, we do not have special glasses to see who the elect are, but we do have eyes and ears to hear their testimonies and see their walk of life. Those who live in open rebellion, are not baptized and have not made a profession of faith, should not partake of the Lord's Supper. To admit them to the Lord's Supper while knowing of these things is to sin and to defile that which is holy. We must guard the Lord's Table and not allow the unclean to approach it.

For they who partake of the Lord's Supper who are unbelieving and are in sin, eat and drink judgment upon themselves (1 Cor. 11:29). This is what the apostle teaches. Those who regard the Lord's Supper as common and partake of it while they're in sin, sin against the Savior and are made subjects of God's terrible judgment. The reason is that this is a solemn ordinance for the disciples of Christ alone. Moreover, the elements of bread and wine symbolize the Lord's body and blood, therefore, the one who partakes unworthily of the Supper, insults Christ Himself (1 Cor. 11:27). John Calvin comments on v. 27 that:

> To eat *unworthily*, then, is to pervert the pure and right *use* of it by our *abuse* of it. Hence there are various degrees of this *unworthiness*, so to speak; and some offend more grievously, others less so. *Some fornicator*, perhaps, or *perjurer*, or *drunkard*, or *cheat*, (1Co 5:11,) intrudes himself without repentance. As such downright contempt is a token of wanton insult against Christ, there can be no doubt that such a person, whoever he is, receives the Supper to his own destruction...As, then, there are various degrees of *unworthy participation*, so the Lord punishes some more slightly; on others he inflicts severer punishment.[25]

Matthew Poole comments on v. 27 in the words:

> **Shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord**; shall incur the guilt of the profanation of this sacred institution; for an abuse offered to a sign, reacheth to that of which it is a sign; as the abuse of a king's seal, or picture, is justly accounted an abuse of the king himself, whose seal and picture it is. Some carry it higher; he shall be punished, as if he had crucified Christ, the profanation of Christ's ordinance reflecting upon Christ himself.[26]

Philip Schaff writes, 'to eat and drink at the Lord's Table as at a common meal (for that is the case supposed) is certainly to put an affront upon the body and blood of Christ; and since, in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb 10:29), those who "sin wilfully after having received the knowledge of the truth," are said to "count the blood of the covenant a common thing" (i.e. nothing differing from other blood), the two expressions seem so entirely akin, in the general conception intended by them, that there seems no good reason for shrinking from this as the idea in view.'[27] They regard that which is holy as common and thus bring the judgment of God upon themselves. Therefore, those who are unbelievers and living in sin, should not be admitted to the Lord's Supper. The cup and bread should be withheld from them, lest the ordinance of the Lord be defiled, and lest they eat and drink destruction upon themselves.

Those Worthy Of The Lord's Table

Those who are worthy to come to the Lord's Table are exactly those who know themselves as unworthy sinners in need of grace. They do not have a pretense of righteousness that is their own but hope only in Christ. They are those who have experienced regenerating grace and know Christ the Lord. They are those who have an understanding of what this ordinance signifies. They are those who profess to be people for whom Christ died. They are those for whose sake Christ's body was broken and His blood shed. They are not perfect. They fall every day. They are not sinless, rather they struggle with their sin and want to win against their remaining corruption. They want to seek the aid of the Lord. They are the ones who are able to examine themselves before partaking of the Supper. They are those who have confessed their sins and asked for forgiveness, and in the Supper, they have the sign of forgiveness of sins. They are those who are repentant and really want to obey their Savior. They are those who know they can do nothing without Christ. They are those who know that the Lord is gracious to His children and that this ordinance is a sign of His love and grace. They are those who want to walk closely with the Lord and follow Him faithfully. They are those who know that Christ has sanctification and righteousness in store for them. They are those who desire to have a close communion with the true God Triune.

To close this chapter and this section, let us listen to the words of John Gill on 1 Corinthians 11:28:

> **But let a man examine himself**,.... Whether he has a true sense of sin, sorrow and repentance for it; otherwise he will see no need of a Saviour, nor will he look to Christ for salvation, or be thankful to him for redemption by him; all which are necessary in a due observance of this ordinance; also, whether he is in the faith, whether he is a partaker of the true grace of faith, which is attended with good works, and shows itself by love to Christ, and to the saints; whereby a man goes out of himself to Christ for spiritual food and strength, peace and comfort, righteousness, life, and salvation; and by which he receives all from Christ, and gives him all the glory: this is absolutely necessary to his right and comfortable partaking of the Lord's supper, since without faith he cannot discern the Lord's body, nor, in a spiritual sense, eat his flesh, and drink his blood, nor attend on the ordinance in a manner acceptable unto God. Let him also examine and try whether he is sound in the doctrine of faith; or let him prove himself to be so, or show that he is one that is approved thereby; to whom the word of faith has come with power, and who has received it in the love of it, and firmly believes it; since an heretic is to be rejected from the communion of the church, and to be debarred the ordinances of it: let him examine himself, whether Christ is in him, whether he is revealed to him, and in him, as God's way of salvation, and the hope of glory; whether he is formed in his soul, his Spirit put, and his grace implanted there; since if Christ is not within, it will be of no avail to partake of the outward symbols of his body and blood. But if a man, upon reflection, under the influence and testimony of the Spirit, can come to a satisfaction in these things, however mean and unworthy he may seem in his own sight, let him come to the table of the Lord, and welcome.[28]

This is my body which is for

you. Do this in remembrance of me...This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

(1 Corinthians 11:24-25)

Footnotes

1. ^ *Many Scriptural references have been supplied by Samuel Waldron's Modern Exposition of 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith which was apparently supplied by the Westminster Confession of Faith 1646.*
2. ^ *John L. Dagg. A Manual of Church Order. (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Pub. 2012, originally 1858). p. 211.*
3. a, b *Benjamin Coxe. A Thesis Or Position Concerning The Administering And Receiving Of The Lord's Supper Cleared And Confirmed. 1642.*
4. ^ *Thomas R. Schreiner, "The Lord's Supper in the Bible" in Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age. Ed. Mark Dever, Jonathan Leeman. (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group. 2015. Ebook). Chapter 6.*
5. ^ *Catechism of the Catholic Church: With Modifications From The Editio Typica. (Double Day; 2nd edition, 2003). p. 370, number 1330.*
6. ^ *Ibid., p. 395, number 1413.*
7. ^ *Ibid., p. 371, number 1333.*
8. ^ *Ibid., p. 395, number 1414.*
9. ^ *Ibid., p. 381, number 1367. The ellipsis is original.*
10. ^ *Wayne Grudem. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine. (Zondervan, 1994). pp. 992-993.*
11. ^ *Robert L. Dabney. Systematic Theology. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985). p. 802.*
12. ^ *Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 389, number 1390.*
13. ^ *Dabney, Systematic Theology. pp. 816-817. Roman numerals substituted.*
14. ^ *Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 385, number 1378.*
15. ^ *Ibid., p. 371, number 1333.*
16. ^ *Ibid., pp. 383-384, number 1374.*
17. ^ *Ibid., p. 385, number 1377.*
18. ^ *Dabney, Systematic Theology. p. 806.*
19. ^ *Dagg, Church Order. pp. 210-211.*
20. ^ *Dabney, Systematic Theology. p. 803.*
21. ^ *Ibid., p. 805.*
22. ^ *Ibid., pp. 806-807.*

23. ^ *Grudem, Systematic Theology. p. 950.*
24. ^ *Louis Berkhof. Systematic Theology. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Banner of Truth Trust. 1963). p. 655.*
25. ^ *John Calvin. Commentaries. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
26. ^ *Matthew Poole. English Annotations on the Holy Bible. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
27. ^ *Philip Schaff. A Popular Commentary on the New Testament. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
28. ^ *John Gill. Exposition of the Entire Bible. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*