

Systematic Theology 5.2.3

The Lord's Supper

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*Part Five: The Doctrine of the Church and of the Means of Grace — Section 5.2.3:
The Lord's Supper*

Editorial note

The text has been updated to UK English; gloss boxes have been added to explain technical terms; summaries have been included; and questions for further study have been added. We have also included a master outline with the part represented in this volume shown in bold.

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Berkhof's Systematic Theology: Master Outline

This six-part guide is designed for use at the beginning of each volume. The part represented in this volume is shown in bold.

Part One: The Doctrine of God

- The Being of God
- The existence of God
- The knowability of God
- Being and attributes
- The names of God
- Attributes in general
- Incommunicable attributes
- Communicable attributes
- The Holy Trinity
- The Works of God**
- Divine decrees
- Predestination
- Creation in general
- The spiritual world
- The world
- Providence

Part Two: The Doctrine of Man in Relation to God

- Man in His Original State
- Origin of man
- Constitutional nature
- Image of God
- Covenant of works
- Man in the Covenant of Grace**
- Origin of sin
- Character of sin
- Transmission of sin
- Sin in the human race
- Punishment of sin
- Man in the Covenant of Grace**
- Name and concept
- Covenant of redemption

Nature of the covenant of grace
Its dual aspect
Its dispensations

Part Three: The Doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ

The Person of Christ
History of the doctrine
Names and natures
The unipersonality of Christ
The States of Christ
Humiliation
Exaltation
The Offices of Christ
Prophetic office
Priestly office
Necessity of the atonement
Nature of the atonement
Theories of the atonement
Purpose and extent of the atonement
Intercession
Kingly office

Part Four: The Doctrine of the Application of the Work of Redemption

Soteriology
Soteriology in general
The Holy Spirit's operations
Common grace
Mystical union
External calling
Regeneration and effectual calling
Conversion
Faith
Justification
Sanctification
Perseverance of the saints

Part Five: The Doctrine of the Church and of the Means of Grace

The Church

Names and history
Nature of the Church
Government
Power

The Means of Grace

Means of grace in general
The Word
Sacraments in general
Christian baptism

The Lord's Supper

Part Six: The Doctrine of the Last Things

Individual Eschatology

Physical death

Immortality of the soul

Intermediate state

General Eschatology

Second coming of Christ

Millennial views

Resurrection of the dead

Final judgement

Final state

The Lord's Supper

V. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is Christ's covenant meal, in which believers remember His sacrifice, feed on Him by faith, and receive spiritual strengthening. It proclaims His death, confirms communion with Him and His people, and points forward to His return.

A. ANALOGIES OF THE LORD'S SUPPER AMONG ISRAEL.

GLOSS Passover: Israel's covenant meal of deliverance, fulfilled in Christ, the true Lamb of God.

Just as there were analogies to Christian baptism among Israel, there were also analogies of the Lord's Supper. Not only among the Gentiles, but also among Israel, the sacrifices that were brought were often accompanied with sacrificial meals. This was particularly a characteristic feature of the peace-offerings. Of these sacrifices only the fat adhering to the inwards was consumed on the altar; the wave-breast was given to the priesthood, and the heave-shoulder to the officiating priest, Lev. 7:28-34, while the rest constituted a sacrificial meal for the offerer and his friends, provided they were levitically clean, Lev. 7:19-21; Deut. 12:7,12. These meals taught in a symbolic way that "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." They were expressive of the fact that, on the basis of the offered and accepted sacrifice, God receives His people as guests in His house and unites with them in joyful communion, the communal life of the covenant. Israel was forbidden to take part in the sacrificial meals of the Gentiles exactly because it would express their allegiance to other gods, Ex. 34:15; Num. 25:3,5; Ps. 106:28.

The sacrificial meals, which testified to the union of Jehovah with His people, were seasons of joy and gladness, and as such were sometimes abused and gave occasion for revelry and drunkenness, I Sam. 1:13; Prov. 7:14; Isa. 28:8. The sacrifice of the Passover was also accompanied with such a sacrificial meal. Over against the Roman Catholics, Protestants sometimes sought to defend the position that this meal constituted the whole of the Passover, but this is an untenable position. The Passover was first of all a sacrifice of atonement, Ex. 12:27; 34:25. Not only is it called a sacrifice, but in the Mosaic period it was also connected with the sanctuary, Deut. 16:2. The lamb was slain by the Levites, and the blood was manipulated by the priests, II Chron. 30:16; 35:11; Ezra 6:19. But though it is first of all a sacrifice, that is not all; it is also a meal, in which the roasted lamb is eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, Ex. 12:8-10. The sacrifice passed right into a meal, which in later times became far more elaborate than it originally was. The New Testament ascribes to the Passover a typical significance, I Cor. 5:7, and thus saw in it not only a reminder of the deliverance from Egypt, but also a sign and seal of the deliverance from the bondage of sin and of communion with God in the promised Messiah. It was in connection with the paschal meal that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. By using the elements present in the former He effected a very natural transition to the latter. Of late some critics sought to cast doubt on the institution of the Lord's Supper by Jesus, but there is no good reason to doubt the testimony of the Gospels, nor the independent testimony of the apostle Paul in I Cor. 11:23-26.

B. THE DOCTRINE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER IN HISTORY.

GLOSS Transubstantiation: the Roman Catholic doctrine that bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ.

1. BEFORE THE REFORMATION. Even in the apostolic age the celebration of the Lord's Supper was accompanied with agapae or love-feasts, for which the people brought the necessary ingredients, and which sometimes led to sad abuses, I Cor. 11:20-22. In course of time the gifts so brought were called oblations and sacrifices, and were blessed by the priest with a prayer of thanksgiving. Gradually these names were applied to the elements in the Lord's Supper, so that these assumed the character of a sacrifice brought by the priest, and thanksgiving came to be regarded as a consecration of those elements. While some of the early Church Fathers (Origen, Basil, Gregory of Nazianze) retained the symbolical or spiritual conception of the sacrament, others (Cyril, Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom) held that the flesh and blood of Christ were in some way combined with the bread and wine in the sacrament. Augustine retarded the realistic development of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper for a long time. While he did speak of the bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ, he distinguished between the sign and the thing signified, and did not believe in a change of substance. He denied that the wicked, though receiving the elements, also received the body, and stressed the commemorative aspect of the Lord's Supper. During the Middle Ages the Augustinian view was gradually transplanted by the doctrine of transubstantiation. As early as 818 A.D. Paschasius Radbertus already formally proposed this doctrine, but met with strong opposition on the part of Rabanus Maurus and Ratramnus. In the eleventh century a furious controversy again broke out on the subject between Berenger of Tours and Lanfranc. The latter made the crass statement that "the very body of Christ was truly held in the priest's hand, broken and chewed by the teeth of the faithful." This view was finally defined by Hildebert of Tours (1134), and designated as the doctrine of transubstantiation. It was formally adopted by the fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Many questions connected with this doctrine were debated by the Scholastics, such as those respecting the duration of the change of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, the manner of Christ's presence in both elements, the relation of substance and accidents, the adoration of the

host, and so on. The final formulation of the doctrine was given by the Council of Trent, and is recorded in Sessio XIII of its Decrees and Canons. Eight Chapters and eleven Canons are devoted to it. We can only mention the most essential points here. Jesus Christ is truly, really, and substantially present in the holy sacrament. The fact that He is seated at the right hand of God does not exclude the possibility of His substantial and sacramental presence in several places simultaneously. By the words of consecration the substance of bread and wine is changed into the body and blood of Christ. The entire Christ is present under each species and under each particle of either species. Each one who receives a particle of the host receives the whole Christ. He is present in the elements even before the communicant receives them. In view of this presence, the adoration of the host is but natural. The sacrament effects an “increase of sanctifying grace, special actual graces, remission of venial sins, preservation from grievous (mortal) sin, and the confident hope of eternal salvation.”

2. DURING AND AFTER THE REFORMATION. The Reformers, one and all, rejected the sacrificial theory of the Lord’s Supper, and the mediaeval doctrine of transubstantiation. They differed, however, in their positive construction of the Scriptural doctrine of the Lord’s Supper. In opposition to Zwingli, Luther insisted on the literal interpretation of the words of the institution and on the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper. However, he substituted for the doctrine of transubstantiation that of consubstantiation, which has been defended at length by Occam in his *De Sacramento Altaris*, and according to which Christ is “in, with, and under” the elements. Zwingli denied absolutely the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper, and gave a figurative interpretation to the words of the institution. He saw in the sacrament primarily an act of commemoration, though he did not deny that in it Christ is spiritually present to the faith of believers. Calvin maintained an intermediate position. Like Zwingli, he denied the bodily presence of the Lord in the sacrament, but in distinction from the former, he insisted on the real, though spiritual, presence of the Lord in the Supper, the presence of Him as a fountain

of spiritual virtue and efficacy. Moreover, instead of stressing the Lord's Supper as an act of man (either of commemoration or of profession), he emphasized the fact that it is the expression first of all of a gracious gift of God to man, and only secondarily a commemorative meal and an act of profession. For him, as well as for Luther, it was primarily a divinely appointed means for the strengthening of faith. The Socinians, Arminians, and Mennonites saw in the Lord's Supper only a memorial, an act of profession, and a means for moral improvement. Under the influence of Rationalism this became the popular view. Schleiermacher stressed the fact that the Lord's Supper is the means by which the communion of life with Christ is preserved in a particularly energetic manner in the bosom of the Church. Many of the Mediating theologians, while belonging to the Lutheran Church, rejected the doctrine of consubstantiation, and approached the Calvinistic view of the spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper.

C. SCRIPTURAL NAMES FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER.

GLOSS Eucharist: thanksgiving: a biblical name for the Lord's Supper, recalling Christ's giving of thanks.

While there is but a single name for the initiatory sacrament of the New Testament, there are several for the sacrament now under consideration, all of which are derived from Scripture. They are the following: (1) *Deipnon kuriakon*, the Lord's Supper, which is derived from I Cor. 11:20. This is the most common name in Protestant circles. It seems that in the passage indicated the apostle wants to make a pointed distinction between the sacrament and the *agapae*, which the Corinthians connected with it and which they abused, thus making the two virtually incongruous. The special emphasis is on the fact that this Supper is the Lord's. It is not a supper in which the rich invite the poor as their guests and then treat them niggardly, but a feast in which the Lord provides for all in rich abundance. (2) *Trapeza kuriou*, the table

of the Lord, a name that is found in I Cor. 10:21. Corinthian Gentiles offered to idols and after their sacrifices sat down to sacrificial meals; and it seems that some of the Corinthian church thought it was permissible to join them, seeing that all flesh is alike. But Paul points out that sacrificing to idols is sacrificing to devils, and that joining in such sacrificial meals is equivalent to exercising communion with devils. This would be absolutely in conflict with sitting at the table of the Lord, confessing allegiance to Him and exercising communion with Him. (3) *Klasis tou artou*, the breaking of bread, a term that is used in Acts 2:42; cf. also Acts 20:7. While this is a term which, in all probability, does not refer exclusively to the Lord's Supper, but also to the love-feasts, it certainly also includes the Lord's Supper. The name may even find its explanation in the breaking of the bread as this was ordained by Jesus. (4) *Eucharistia*, thanksgiving, and *eulogia*, blessing, terms which are derived from I Cor. 10:16; 11:24. In Matt. 26:26,27 we read that the Lord took the bread and blessed it, and took the cup and gave thanks. In all probability the two words were used interchangeably and refer to a blessing and thanksgiving combined. The cup of thanksgiving and blessing is the consecrated cup.

D. INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

GLOSS *Sub utraque specie*: under both kinds: receiving both bread and cup in the Lord's Supper.

1. DIFFERENT ACCOUNTS OF THE INSTITUTION. There are four different accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper, one in each of the Synoptics, and one in I Cor. 11. John speaks of the eating of the passover, but does not mention the institution of a new sacrament. These accounts are independent of, and serve to complement, one another. Evidently, the Lord did not finish the passover meal before He instituted the Lord's Supper. The new sacrament was linked up with the central element in the paschal meal. The bread that was eaten with the lamb was consecrated to a new use. This is

evident from the fact that the third cup, generally called “the cup of blessing” was used for the second element in the new sacrament. Thus the sacrament of the Old Testament passed into that of the New in a most natural way.

2. THE SUBSTITUTION OF BREAD FOR THE LAMB. The paschal lamb had symbolical significance. Like all the bloody sacrifices of the Old Testament, it taught the people that the shedding of blood was necessary unto the remission of sins. In addition to that it had a typical meaning, pointing forward to the great sacrifice which would be brought in the fulness of time to take away the sin of the world. And, finally, it also had national significance as a memorial of Israel’s deliverance. It was but natural that, when the real Lamb of God made His appearance and was on the point of being slain, the symbol and type should disappear. The all-sufficient sacrifice of Jesus Christ rendered all further shedding of blood unnecessary; and therefore it was entirely fitting that the bloody element should make way for an unbloody one which, like it, had nourishing properties. Moreover, through the death of Christ the middle wall of partition was broken down, and the blessings of salvation were extended to all the world. And in view of this it was quite natural that the passover, a symbol with a national flavor, should be replaced by one that carried with it no implications of nationalism.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DIFFERENT ACTIONS AND TERMS.

a. Symbolic actions. All the accounts of the institution of the Lord’s Supper make mention of the breaking of the bread, and Jesus clearly indicates that this was intended to symbolize the breaking of His body for the redemption of sinners. Because Jesus broke the bread in the presence of His disciples, Protestant theology generally insists on it that this action should always take place in the sight of the people. This important transaction was intended to be a sign, and a sign must be visible. After distributing the bread, Jesus took the cup, blessed it, and gave it to His disciples. It does not appear that He poured the wine in their presence, and therefore this is not regarded as essential to the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Dr. Wielinga infers, however, from the fact

that the bread must be broken, that the wine must also be poured, in the sight of the communicants.[Ons Avondmaals Formulier, pp. 243 f.] Jesus naturally used unleavened bread, since it was the only kind at hand, and the ordinary wine which was largely used as a beverage in Palestine. But neither the one nor the other is stressed, and therefore it does not follow that it would not be permissible to use leavened bread and some other kind of wine. The disciples undoubtedly received the elements in a reclining position, but this does not mean that believers may not partake of them in a sitting, kneeling, or standing, position.

b. Words of command. Jesus accompanied His action with words of command. When He gave the bread to His disciples, He said, “Take, eat.” And in issuing this command He undoubtedly had in mind, not merely a physical eating, but a spiritual appropriation of the body of Christ by faith. It is a command which, though it came first of all to the apostles, was intended for the Church of all ages. According to Luke 22:19 (comp. I Cor. 11:24) the Lord added the words: “This do in remembrance of me.” Some infer from these words that the Supper instituted by Jesus was nothing more than a memorial meal. It is quite evident, however, especially from John 6:32,33, 50,51; I Cor. 11:26-30, that it was intended to be far more than that; and in so far as it had memorial significance, it was intended as a memorial of the sacrificial work of Christ rather than of His person. There was another word of command in connection with the cup. After distributing the bread the Lord also took the cup, gave thanks, and said, “Drink ye all of it,” or (according to Luke), “Take this and divide it among yourselves.” It is quite clear that the cup here stands for what it contains, for the cup could not be divided. From these words it is perfectly evident that the Lord intended the Sacrament to be used in both kinds (*sub utraque specie*), and that Rome is wrong in withholding the cup from the laity. The use of both elements enabled Christ to give a vivid representation of the idea that His body was broken, that flesh and blood were separated, and that the sacrament both nourishes and quickens the soul.

c. Words of explanation. The word of command in connection with the bread is immediately followed by a word of explanation, which has given rise to sharp disputes, namely, “This is my body.” These words have been interpreted in various ways.

(1) The Church of Rome makes the copula “is” emphatic. Jesus meant to say that what He held in His hand was really His body, though it looked and tasted like bread. But this is a thoroughly untenable position. In all probability Jesus spoke Aramaic and used no copula at all. And while He stood before the disciples in the body, He could not very well say to His disciples in all seriousness that He held His body in His hand. Moreover, even on the Roman Catholic view, He could not truthfully say, “This is my body,” but could only say, “This is now becoming my body.”

(2) Carlstadt held the novel view that Jesus, when He spoke these words, pointed to His body. He argued that the neuter *touto* could not refer to *artos*, which is masculine. But bread can very well be conceived of as a thing and thus referred to as neuter. Moreover, such a statement would have been rather inane under the circumstances.

(3) Luther and the Lutherans also stress the word “is,” though they admit that Jesus was speaking figuratively. According to them the figure was not a metaphor, but a synecdoche. The Lord simply meant to say to His disciples: Where you have the bread, you have my body in, under, and along with it, though the substance of both remains distinct. This view is burdened with the impossible doctrine of the omnipresence of the Lord’s physical body.

(4) Calvin and the Reformed Churches understand the words of Jesus metaphorically: “This is (that is, signifies) my body.” Such a statement would be just as intelligible to the disciples as other similar statements, such as, “I am the bread of life,” John 6:35, and, “I am the true vine,” John 15:1. At the same time they reject the view, generally ascribed to Zwingli, that the bread merely signifies the body of Christ, and stress the fact that it also serves to seal the

covenant mercies of God and to convey spiritual nourishment. To these words Jesus adds the further statement, “which is given for you.” These words in all probability express the idea that the body of Jesus is given for the benefit, or in the interest, of the disciples. It is given by the Lord to secure their redemption. Naturally, it is a sacrifice not only for the immediate disciples of the Lord, but also for all those who believe.

There is also a word of explanation in connection with the cup. The Lord makes the significant statement: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you.” Luke 22:20. These words convey an implied contrast between the blood of the Saviour, as the blood of the new covenant, and the blood of the old covenant mentioned in Ex. 24:8. The latter was only a shadowy representation of the New Testament reality. The words “for you” have no wider application than they do in the statement made in connection with the bread, “which is given for you.” They are not to be understood in the unrestricted sense of “for all men indiscriminately,” but rather in the limited sense of “for you and for all who are really my disciples.” The concluding words in I Cor. 11:26, “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord’s death till He come,” point to the perennial significance of the Lord’s Supper as a memorial of the sacrificial death of Christ; and clearly intimate that it should be celebrated regularly until the Lord’s return.

E. THE THINGS SIGNIFIED AND SEALED IN THE LORD’S SUPPER.

GLOSS **Sign and seal:** a visible sign of Christ’s promise and God’s covenant confirmation to believers.

1. THE THINGS SIGNIFIED IN THE SACRAMENT. It is one of the characteristics of a sacrament that it represents one or more spiritual truths by

means of sensible and outward signs. The outward sign in the case of the Lord's Supper includes not only the visible elements employed, but also the breaking of the bread and the pouring of the wine, the appropriation of bread and wine by eating and drinking, and the partaking of them in communion with others. The following points should be mentioned here:

a. It is a symbolical representation of the Lord's death, I Cor. 11:26. The central fact of redemption, prefigured in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, is clearly set forth by means of the significant symbols of the New Testament sacrament. The words of the institution, "broken for you" and "shed for many", point to the fact that the death of Christ is a sacrificial one, for the benefit, and even in the place, of His people.

b. It also symbolizes the believer's participation in the crucified Christ. In the celebration of the Lord's Supper the participants not merely look at the symbols, but receive them and feed upon them. Figuratively speaking, they "eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood," John 6:53, that is, they symbolically appropriate the benefits secured by the sacrificial death of Christ.

c. It represents, not only the death of Christ as the object of faith, and the act of faith which unites the believer to Christ, but also the effect of this act as giving life, strength, and joy, to the soul. This is implied in the emblems used. Just as bread and wine nourish and invigorate the bodily life of man, so Christ sustains and quickens the life of the soul. Believers are regularly represented in Scripture as having their life, and strength, and happiness, in Christ.

d. Finally, the sacrament also symbolizes the union of believers with one another. As members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ, constituting a spiritual unity, they eat of the same bread and drink of the same wine, I Cor. 10:17; 12:13. Receiving the elements, the one from the other, they exercise intimate communion with one another.

2. THE THINGS SEALED IN THE LORD'S SUPPER. The Lord's Supper is not only a sign but also a seal. This is lost sight of by a good many in our day,

who have a very superficial view of this sacrament, and regard it merely as a memorial of Christ and as a badge of Christian profession. These two aspects of the sacrament, namely, as a sign and as a seal, are not independent of each other. The sacrament as a sign, or — to put it differently — the sacrament with all that it signifies, constitutes a seal. The seal is attached to the things signified, and is a pledge of the covenanted grace of God revealed in the sacrament. The Heidelberg Catechism says that Christ intends “by these visible signs and pledges to assure us that we are as really partakers of His true body and blood, through the working of the Holy Spirit, as we receive by the mouth of the body these holy tokens in remembrance of Him; and that all His sufferings and obedience are as certainly ours as if we ourselves had in our own persons suffered and made satisfaction to God for our sins.”[Lord’s Day XXIX, Q. 79.] The following points come into consideration here:

a. It seals to the participant the great love of Christ, revealed in the fact that He surrendered Himself to a shameful and bitter death for them. This does not merely mean that it testifies to the reality of that sacrificial self-surrender, but that it assures the believing participant of the Lord’s Supper that he personally was the object of that incomparable love.

b. Moreover, it pledges the believing partaker of the sacrament, not only the love and grace of Christ in now offering Himself to them as their Redeemer in all the fulness of His redemptive work; but gives him the personal assurance that all the promises of the covenant and all the riches of the gospel offer are his by a divine donation, so that he has a personal claim on them.

c. Again, it not only ratifies to the believing participant the rich promises of the gospel, but it assures him that the blessings of salvation are his in actual possession. As surely as the body is nourished and refreshed by bread and wine, so surely is the soul that receives Christ’s body and blood through faith even now in possession of eternal life, and so surely will he receive it ever more abundantly.

d. Finally, the Lord's Supper is a reciprocal seal. It is a badge of profession on the part of those who partake of the sacrament. Whenever they eat the bread and drink the wine, they profess their faith in Christ as their Saviour and their allegiance to Him as their King, and they solemnly pledge a life of obedience to His divine commandments.

F. THE SACRAMENTAL UNION OR THE QUESTION OF THE REAL PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE LORD'S SUPPER.

GLOSS **Spiritual presence:** Christ truly gives Himself to believers by the Holy Spirit, without a bodily presence in the elements.

With this question we are entering upon what has long been, and still is, the occasion for considerable difference of opinion in the Church of Jesus Christ. There is by no means a unanimous opinion as to the relation of the sign to the thing signified, that is to say, as to the nature of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. There are especially four views that come into consideration here.

1. THE VIEW OF ROME. The Church of Rome conceives of the sacramental union in a physical sense. It is hardly justified, however, in speaking of any sacramental union at all, for according to its representation there is no union in the proper sense of the word. The sign is not joined to the thing signified, but makes way for it, since the former passes into the latter. When the priest utters the formula, "hoc est corpus meum", bread and wine change into the body and blood of Christ. It is admitted that even after the change the elements look and taste like bread and wine. While the substance of both is changed, their properties remain the same. In the form of bread and wine the physical body and blood of Christ are present. The supposed Scriptural ground

for this is found in the words of the institution, “this is my body”, and in John 6:50 ff. But the former passage is clearly tropical, like those in John 14:6; 15:1; 10:9, and others; and the latter, literally understood, would teach more than the Roman Catholic himself would be ready to grant, namely, that every one who eats the Lord’s Supper goes to heaven, while no one who fails to eat it will obtain eternal life (cf. verses 53,54). Moreover, verse 63 clearly points to a spiritual interpretation. Furthermore, it is quite impossible to conceive of the bread which Jesus broke as being the body which was handling it; and it should be noted that Scripture calls it bread even after it is supposed to have been trans-substantiated, I Cor. 10:17; 11:26,27,28. This view of Rome also violates the human senses, where it asks us to believe that what tastes and looks like bread and wine, is really flesh and blood; and human reason, where it requires belief in the separation of a substance and its properties and in the presence of a material body in several places at the same time, both of which are contrary to reason. Consequently, the elevation and adoration of the host is also without any proper foundation.

2. THE LUTHERAN VIEW. Luther rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation and substituted for it the related doctrine of consubstantiation. According to him bread and wine remain what they are, but there is in the Lord’s Supper nevertheless a mysterious and miraculous real presence of the whole person of Christ, body and blood, in, under, and along with, the elements. He and his followers maintain the local presence of the physical body and blood of Christ in the sacrament. Lutherans sometimes deny that they teach the local presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper, but then they ascribe to the word ‘local’ a meaning not intended by those who ascribe this teaching to them. When it is said that they teach the local presence of the physical nature of Christ, this does not imply that all other bodies are excluded from the same portion of space, nor that the human nature of Christ is nowhere else, as, for instance, in heaven; but it does mean that the physical nature of Christ is locally present in the Lord’s Supper, as magnetism is locally present in the magnet, and as the soul is locally present in the body.

Consequently, they also teach the so-called *manducatio oralis*, which means that those who partake of the elements in the Lord's Supper eat and drink the Lord's body and blood "with the bodily mouth", and not merely that they appropriate these by faith. Unworthy communicants also receive them, but to their condemnation. This view is no great improvement on the Roman Catholic conception, though it does not involve the oft-repeated miracle of a change of substance minus a change of attributes. It really makes the words of Jesus mean, 'this accompanies my body', an interpretation that is more unlikely than either of the others. Moreover, it is burdened with the impossible doctrine of the ubiquity of the Lord's glorified human nature, which several Lutherans would gladly discard.

3. THE ZWINGLIAN VIEW. There is a very general impression, not altogether without foundation, that Zwingli's view of the Lord's Supper was very defective. He is usually alleged to have taught that it is a bare sign or symbol, figuratively representing or signifying spiritual truths or blessings; and that its reception is a mere commemoration of what Christ did for sinners, and above all a badge of the Christian's profession. This hardly does justice to the Swiss Reformer, however. Some of his statements undoubtedly convey the idea that to him the sacrament was merely a commemorative rite and a sign and symbol of what the believer pledges in it. But his writings also contain statements that point to a deeper significance of the Lord's Supper and contemplate it as a seal or pledge of what God is doing for the believer in the sacrament. In fact, he seems to have changed his view somewhat in the course of time. It is very hard to determine exactly what he did believe in this matter. He evidently wanted to exclude from the doctrine of the Lord's Supper all unintelligible mysticism, and showed an excessive leaning to the side of plainness and simplicity in its exposition. He occasionally expresses himself to the intent that it is a mere sign or symbol, a commemoration of the Lord's death. And though he speaks of it in passing also as a seal or pledge, he certainly does not do justice to this idea. Moreover, for him the emphasis falls on what the believer, rather than on what God, pledges in the sacrament. He

identified the eating of the body of Christ with faith in Him and a trustful reliance on His death. He denied the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, but did not deny that Christ is present there in a spiritual manner to the faith of the believer. Christ is present only in His divine nature and in the apprehension of the believing communicant.

4. THE REFORMED VIEW. Calvin objects to Zwingli's doctrine of the Lord's Supper, (a) that it allows the idea of what the believer does in the sacrament to eclipse the gift of God in it; and (b) that it sees in the eating of the body of Christ nothing more nor higher than faith in His name and reliance on His death. According to him the sacrament is connected not merely with the past work of Christ, with the Christ who died (as Zwingli seems to think), but also with the present spiritual work of Christ, with the Christ that is alive in glory. He believes that Christ, though not bodily and locally present in the Supper, is yet present and enjoyed in His entire person, both body and blood. He emphasizes the mystical communion of believers with the entire person of the Redeemer. His representation is not entirely clear, but he seems to mean that the body and blood of Christ, though absent and locally present only in heaven, communicate a life-giving influence to the believer when he is in the act of receiving the elements. That influence, though real, is not physical but spiritual and mystical, is mediated by the Holy Spirit, and is conditioned on the act of faith by which the communicant symbolically receives the body and blood of Christ. As to the way in which this communion with Christ is effected, there is a twofold representation. Sometimes it is represented as if by faith the communicant lifts his heart to heaven, where Christ is; sometimes, as if the Holy Spirit brings the influence of the body and blood of Christ down to the communicant. Dabney positively rejects the representation of Calvin as if the communicant partakes of the very body and blood of Christ in the sacrament. This is undoubtedly an obscure point in Calvin's representation. Sometimes he seems to place too much emphasis on the literal flesh and blood. Perhaps, however, his words are to be understood sacramentally, that is, in a figurative sense. This view of Calvin is that found in

our confessional standards.[Cf. Conf. Belg., Art. XXXV; Heidelberg Catechism, Question 75,76, and also in the Form for the celebration of the Lord's Supper.] A very common interpretation of the dubious point in Calvin's doctrine, is that the body and blood of Christ are present only virtually, that is, in the words of Dr. Hodge, that "the virtues and effects of the sacrifice of the body of the Redeemer on the cross are made present and are actually conveyed in the sacrament to the worthy receiver by the power of the Holy Ghost, who uses the sacrament as His instrument according to His sovereign will." [Comm. on the Confession of Faith, p. 492.]

G. THE LORD'S SUPPER AS A MEANS OF GRACE, OR ITS EFFICACY.

GLOSS Means of grace: Christ's appointed ordinance by which the Holy Spirit strengthens faith in His saving work.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper, instituted by the Lord Himself as a sign and seal, is as such also a means of grace. Christ instituted it for the benefit of His disciples and of all believers. It was clearly the intention of the Saviour that His followers should profit by participation in it. This follows from the very fact that He instituted it as a sign and seal of the covenant of grace. It can also readily be inferred from the symbolical eating and drinking, which point to nourishment and quickening, and from such passages as John 6:48-58 (irrespective of the question, whether this refers directly to the Lord's Supper or not), and I Cor. 11:17.

1. THE GRACE RECEIVED IN THE LORD'S SUPPER. The Lord's Supper is intended for believers and for believers only, and therefore is not instrumental in originating the work of grace in the heart of the sinner. The presence of the grace of God is presupposed in the hearts of the participants. Jesus administered it to His professed followers only; according to Acts 2:42,46 they

who believed continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread; and in I Cor. 11:28,29 the necessity of self-examination before partaking of the Lord's Supper is stressed. The grace received in the sacrament does not differ in kind from that which believers receive through the instrumentality of the Word. The sacrament merely adds to the effectiveness of the Word, and therefore to the measure of the grace received. It is the grace of an ever closer fellowship with Christ, of spiritual nourishment and quickening, and of an ever increasing assurance of salvation. The Roman Catholic Church names specifically sanctifying grace, special actual graces, the remission of venial sins, preservation from mortal sin, and the assurance of salvation.

2. THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS GRACE IS WROUGHT. How does the sacrament function in this respect? Is the Lord's Supper in any way a meritorious cause of the grace conferred? Does it confer grace irrespective of the spiritual condition of the recipient, or does it not?

a. The Roman Catholic view. For the Roman Catholics the Lord's Supper is not merely a sacrament, but also a sacrifice; it is even first of all a sacrifice. It is "the unbloody renewal of the sacrifice of the cross." This does not mean that in the Lord's Supper Christ actually dies anew, but that He undergoes an external change, which is in some way equivalent to death. Did not the Lord speak of the bread as His body that was broken for the disciples, and of the wine as His blood that was poured out for them? Roman Catholic controversialists sometimes give the impression that this sacrifice has only a representative or commemorative character, but this is not the real doctrine of the Church. The sacrifice of Christ in the Lord's Supper is considered to be a real sacrifice, and is supposed to have propitiatory value. When the question is raised, what this sacrifice merits for the sinner, Roman Catholic authorities begin to hedge and to speak inconsistent language. The statement of Wilmers in his Handbook of the Christian Religion, which is used as a textbook in many Roman Catholic schools, may be given as an example. Says he on page 348: "By the fruits of the sacrifice of the Mass we understand the effects which it produces for us,

inasmuch as it is a sacrifice of atonement and impetration: (a) not only supernatural graces, but also natural favors; (b) remission of sins, and of the punishment due to them. What Christ merited for us by His death on the cross is applied to us in the sacrament of the Mass.” After the sacrifice of the Mass is called a sacrifice of atonement, the last sentence seems to say that it is after all only a sacrifice in which that which Christ merited on the cross is applied to the participants.

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.

b. The prevailing Protestant view. The prevailing view in the Protestant Churches is, that the sacrament does not work *ex opere operato*. It is not itself a cause of grace, but merely an instrument in the hand of God. Its effective operation is dependent, not only on the presence, but on the activity, of faith in the recipient. Unbelievers may receive the external elements, but do not receive the thing signified thereby. Some Lutherans and the High Church Episcopalians, however, in their desire to maintain the objective character of the sacrament, clearly manifest a leaning toward the position of the Church of Rome. “We believe, teach, and confess”, says the Formula of Concord, “that not only true believers in Christ, and such as worthily approach the Supper of the Lord, but also the unworthy and unbelieving receive the true body and blood

of Christ; in such wise, nevertheless, that they derive thence neither consolation nor life, but rather so as that receiving turns to their judgment and condemnation, unless they be converted and repent (I Cor. 11:27,29).[VII. 7.]

H. THE PERSONS FOR WHOM THE LORD'S SUPPER IS INSTITUTED.

GLOSS Self-examination: the believer's prayerful testing of faith and repentance before coming to the Lord's table.

1. THE PROPER PARTICIPANTS OF THE SACRAMENT. In answer to the question, "For whom is the Lord's Supper instituted?" the Heidelberg Catechism says: "For those who are truly displeased with themselves for their sins and yet trust that these are forgiven them for the sake of Christ, and that their remaining infirmity is covered by His passion and death; who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and amend their life." From these words it appears that the Lord's Supper was not instituted for all men indiscriminately, nor even for all those who have a place in the visible Church of Christ, but only for those who earnestly repent of their sins, trust that these have been covered by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, and are desirous to increase their faith, and to grow in true holiness of life. The participants of the Lord's Supper must be repentant sinners, who are ready to admit that they are lost in themselves. They must have a living faith in Jesus Christ, so that they trust for their redemption in the atoning blood of the Saviour. Furthermore, they must have a proper understanding and appreciation of the Lord's Supper, must discern the difference between it and a common meal, and must be impressed with the fact that the bread and wine are the tokens of the body and blood of Christ. And, finally, they must have a holy desire for spiritual growth and for ever-increasing conformity to the image of Christ.

2. THOSE WHO MUST BE EXCLUDED FROM THE LORD’S SUPPER. Since the Lord’s Supper is a sacrament of and for the Church, it follows that they who are outside of the Church cannot partake of it. But it is necessary to make still further limitations. Not even every one that has a place in the Church can be admitted to the table of the Lord. The following exceptions should be noted:

a. Children, though they were allowed to eat the passover in the days of the Old Testament, cannot be permitted to partake of the table of the Lord, since they cannot meet the requirements for worthy participation. Paul insists on the necessity of self-examination previous to the celebration, when he says: “But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup”, I Cor. 11:28, and children are not able to examine themselves. Moreover, he points out that, in order to partake of the Supper in a worthy manner, it is necessary to discern the body, I Cor. 11:29, that is, to distinguish properly between the elements used in the Lord’s Supper and ordinary bread and wine, by recognizing those elements as symbols of the body and blood of Christ. And this, too, is beyond the capacity of children. It is only after they have come to years of discretion, that they can be permitted to join in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

b. Such unbelievers as may possibly be within the confines of the visible Church have no right to partake of the table of the Lord. The Church must require of all those who desire to celebrate the Lord’s Supper a credible profession of faith. Naturally, she cannot look into the heart and can only base her judgment respecting an applicant for admission on his confession of faith in Jesus Christ. It is possible that she occasionally admits hypocrites to the privileges of full communion, but such persons in partaking of the Lord’s Supper will only eat and drink judgment to themselves. And if their unbelief and ungodliness becomes evident, the Church will have to exclude them by the proper administration of Church discipline. The holiness of the Church and of the sacrament must be safeguarded.

c. Even true believers may not partake of the Lord's Supper under all conditions and in every frame of mind. The condition of their spiritual life, their conscious relation to God, and their attitude to their fellow-Christians may be such as to disqualify them to engage in such a spiritual exercise as the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This is clearly implied in what Paul says in I Cor. 11:28-32. There were practices among the Corinthians which really made their participation in the Lord's Supper a mockery. When a person is conscious of being estranged from the Lord or from his brethren, he has no proper place at a table which speaks of communion. It should be stated explicitly, however, that lack of the assurance of salvation need not deter anyone from coming to the table of the Lord, since the Lord's Supper was instituted for the very purpose of strengthening faith.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: Can it be proved that the Lord's Supper took the place of the Old Testament passover? How? Is it permissible to cut the bread in squares before the administration of the Lord's Supper, and to use the individual cup? What does the term "real presence" mean in connection with this sacrament? Does the Bible teach such a real presence? If it does, does it favor the idea that the human nature of Christ is present in the state of humiliation, or in that of glorification? What is meant by the Reformed doctrine of the spiritual presence? Does the discourse of Jesus in John 6 really refer to the Lord's Supper? How does Rome defend the celebration of the Lord's Supper under one species? How did the conception of the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice arise? What objections are there to this notion? Does "eating the body" simply amount to believing in Christ? Is open communion defensible?