

## **D. Sacraments (in general)**

- I. Sacraments are rites instituted by God that employ an “earthly, visible element” in connection with the word and that convey and certify grace to the recipient.**

**1. Scripture does not use the term “sacrament.”**

- a) It uses the Greek word *μυστήριον* (27 times) to refer to something that needs to be revealed, but does not use it to denote the sacraments.**

**1) *μυστήριον* may refer to the gospel, in whole or in part.**

1 Corinthians 2:7 We speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.

1 Corinthians 4:1 Men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God.

Ephesians 6:19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel.

Colossians 1:26,27 [The word of God in its fullness], the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. <sup>27</sup> To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians 2:2 My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ.

Colossians 4:3 Pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

**2) *μυστήριον* is also used with reference to the working of Antichrist, to things that require and receive revelation and clarification in order to be understood (such as the meaning of parables), and to things that remain secrets.**

2 Thessalonians 2:7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.

Matthew 13:11 He replied, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.”

Revelation 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Revelation 17:5,7 This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. <sup>7</sup> Then the angel said to me: “Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns.”

1 Corinthians 13:2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

1 Corinthians 14:2 For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit.

*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*: In sum, μυστήριον is a rare expression in the NT which betrays no relation to the mystery cults. Where there seem to be connections (e.g., in sacramental passages), the term is not used; where it is used, there are no such connections. In spite of certain analogies, there are thus serious objections against bringing Jesus or Paul under the category of the mystagogue (at μυστήριον).

**b) A factor in the church’s eventual use of the term was the Vulgate’s use of *sacramentum* as its usual translation for μυστήριον in the following passages.**

Ephesians 5:32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

Ephesians 1:9 He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ.

Ephesians 3:3,9 . . . the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. . . <sup>9</sup> to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

1 Timothy 3:16 Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.

Colossians 1:27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

**c) The New Testament speaks of various customs and ceremonies.**

**1) Examples of these would be the imposition of hands and the bestowing of holy kisses.**

**The laying on of hands:**

Acts 8:18 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money.

Acts 13:3 After they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

1 Timothy 4:14 Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

1 Timothy 5:22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others.

2 Timothy 1:6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

Mark 5:23 [Jairus] pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." Compare with verse 41: He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!")

Acts 9:17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Compare with 10:44: While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.

**The use of a holy kiss:**

Romans 16:16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.

1 Corinthians 16:20 All the brothers here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

2 Corinthians 13:12 Greet one another with a holy kiss.

1 Thessalonians 5:26 Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.

1 Peter 5:14 Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

**2) Two rites, however, stand out from the rest, forming a class by themselves because of divine commands and promises attached to them.**

**-a) One of these is baptism.**

Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Mark 16:16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

**-b) The second is the Lord's Supper.**

Matthew 26:26-28 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."<sup>27</sup> Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you."<sup>28</sup> This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (See also Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19,20; and 1 Corinthians 11:23-25).

**-c) Yet Scripture nowhere designates these two rites by a common name.**

**d) On the ecclesiastical use of the word *sacramentum*, consider the following.**

Quenstedt: The word "sacrament" is understood 1) in the most general way for anything incomprehensible, or hidden, or secret ... (1 Tm 3:16; Eph 5:32; Col 1:26; Eph 3:3. Thus the fathers also called any mystery or any sacred doctrine that was not clear on the surface a sacrament, as the sacrament of the Trinity, of the incarnation, of faith. 2) "Sacrament" in a more restricted sense is used for any external symbol of a sacred or heavenly thing. Thus the seed, the grain, the pearl, etc. are "sacraments" or symbols of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 13:23,31,46). [Augustine in this sense calls the sign of the cross a sacrament.] 3) "Sacrament" is used in a very restricted sense, for a sacred, hidden, symbolic thing, which not only signifies but also at the same time confers the thing which it signifies, in which through an external and visible sign invisible benefits are graciously offered, conferred and guaranteed (cp. AC, XIII). (TDP, part IV, chap. III, sect. I, thesis III, p 73).

*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (at μυστήριον): Since *sacramentum* is a technical term for the soldier's oath, the question arises how it could become a translation of μυστήριον. The possibility is created by both the Latin and the Greek terms. Taking an oath has originally the character of an initiation, a *devotio* to beings under the earth. It is an *occultum sacrum*, in which there is no place for the unworthy, like the state-persecuted followers of the Bacchus mysteries. The mystery rites also help inasmuch as initiation often entailed an oath, and the view that the ministry of initiates was a *sancta militia* must have been fairly widespread. Originally, then, *sacramentum* is an initiatory act and means much the same as μυστήριον. The terms first become

full equivalents only in Christian texts, since the Romans conscripted *sacramentum* for military use. Tertullian and some later writers applied the military use to the Christian concept of the *sacramentum*. The content in this case is the rule of faith to which the Christian is engaged at baptism. By this application of *sacramentum* to the contents of faith Tertullian is able to differentiate once again between *μυστήριον* and *sacramentum*, and to ascribe to the pagan *mysteria idolorum* only the *res sacramentorum*, i.e., not in this case the true character of a sacrament. This distinction on the basis of the military image is found again only in Cyprian, Arnobius and occasionally Ambrose, and it fades out completely after the 4th century.

Vatican II, which applies the term “sacrament” to the church: By her relationship with Christ, the Church is a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind (*Doc.*, p 15). The church is “the universal sacrament of salvation” (*Doc.*, p 79). The church is sacramental because of “continuously joining together the visible and the invisible. That is why the Church is also called the ‘primordial sacrament’” (Josef Jungmann, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. I, p.12).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church: The Church's mission is not an addition to that of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but is its Sacrament: in her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity. . . The Holy Spirit, whom Christ the head pours out on his members, builds, animates, and sanctifies the Church. She is the Sacrament of the Holy Trinity's communion with men (Par. 738, 747).

## **2. Only two rites, baptism and the Lord's Supper, possess the same combination of three traits.**

### **a) The three distinguishing marks are here listed.**

#### **1) Christ's institution of the rite**

Apology, Art. XIII (VII), p 308, 3: If we call sacraments *rites which have the command of God, and to which the promise of grace has been added*, it is easy to decide what are properly sacraments. For rites instituted by men will not in this way be sacraments properly so called. For it does not belong to human authority to promise grace. Therefore signs instituted without God's command are not sure signs of grace, even though they perhaps instruct the rude children or the uncultivated, or admonish as to something as a painted cross.

#### **2) A visible element prescribed by Christ to be used with his word**

Apology, Art. XXIV (XII), p 408, 69: The sacraments are signs of God's will toward us, and not merely signs of men among each other; and they are right in defining that Sacraments in the New Testament are signs of grace. And because in a sacrament there are two things, a sign and the Word, the Word, in the New Testament, is the promise of grace added. The promise of the New Testament is the promise of the remission of sins, as the text, Luke 22, 19, says: This is my body, which is given for

you. This cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

**3) The attached promise of forgiveness of sins through divine grace**

Apology, Art. XII (V), p 260, 42: Meanwhile this faith is nourished in a manifold way in temptations, through the declarations of the gospel, the hearing of sermons, reading, and the use of the sacraments. For these are seals and signs of the covenant and grace in the New Testament, *i.e.*, signs of propitiation and the remission of sins. They offer, therefore, the remission of sins, as the words of the Lord's Supper clearly testify, Matt. 26, 26. 28: This is my body, which is given for you. This is the cup of the New Testament, etc. Thus faith is conceived and strengthened through absolution, through the hearing of the gospel, through the use of the sacraments, so that it may not succumb while it struggles with the terrors of sin and death.

**b) Our Lutheran forefathers have provided more elaborate statements on the distinguishing marks of these two sacraments.**

Baier: In general a sacrament can be defined as an action divinely instituted by the grace of God on account of the merit of Christ which uses an external element perceivable by the senses, through which, when the word of institution is added, the grace of the gospel concerning the forgiveness of sins for eternal life is conferred and sealed (guaranteed) to men (*Compend.*, Part III, Cap. VIII, Art. XI, p 509).

Gerhard: A sacrament is a sacred and solemn act instituted by God, by which God by means of the ministry of man under a visible and external element through a specific word dispenses heavenly blessings in order to offer the gospel's own promise concerning the free remission of sins to individuals who use the sacrament and to give and seal this promise to those who believe (*Loci*, tom. VIII, loc. XIX, cap. II, art. XI).

Chemnitz: Therefore, for anything truly and properly to be a New Testament sacrament, just as baptism and the Lord's Supper are, requires that:

- 1) It should have some external material or physical and *visible element or sign*, which is dealt with, shown, and used in a definite external ritual.
- 2) The element or sign and its definite ritual should have an *express divine command*, or a divine institution.
- 3) The institution and *command should be in the New Testament*.
- 4) It should *not* be instituted *for a time*, but "*until the end of the world*" as it is written concerning baptism Mt 28:20), and until the Son of God comes again for judgment, as St. Paul says concerning the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:26).

And these things are required in regard to the element or sign of a sacrament in the New Testament.

- 5) For a sacrament a *divine promise concerning the grace*, the effect or the benefit of the sacrament is required.

- 6) That promise must not simply, barely, and by itself alone have a testimony in the Word of God, but it must by divine ordination be joined to the sign of the sacrament, and, as it were, be clothed in it.
- 7) The promise must not be concerning any gifts of God, whether bodily or spiritual, but it must be the promise of grace or justification, that is, of free reconciliation, of the forgiveness of sins and, in summary, concerning the total benefit of redemption.
- 8) And that promise in the sacrament is not only signified or announced in a general way, but by the power of God it is also offered shown, applied and sealed to the individuals who use the sacraments in faith.

These things are true, manifest and certain (*Examen*, part II, topic I, sect. I, art. II, de sacramentorum numero, para. 23, p 8).

Gerhard: We say therefore that for a sacrament properly so called two things are especially required, namely, the Word and the element, according to that common saying of Augustine: “The Word comes to the element and it becomes a sacrament.” By the “Word” is understood, first, the command and divine institution, by which the element, because it has received the call of God, as Irenaeus says (*lib. IV, Cap. 34*), is set apart from common use and appointed for sacramental use; then the word of promise, namely, that promise which is peculiar to the gospel, to be applied and sealed by the sacrament (*Loci*, vol. VIII, loc. XIX de sacramentis, chap. II, para. XI, p 207).

### **3. A definition of sacrament with fewer criteria and a greater number of instances would not necessarily conflict with Scripture (see above, pages 52,53).**

#### **a) Our confessions assume the possibility of different definitions.**

##### **1) They speak of two sacraments using a definition that requires three distinguishing marks.**

Smalcald Articles, Part III, Art. V, p 490: Baptism is nothing else than the Word of God in the water, commanded by his institution, or, as Paul says, “a washing in the Word”; as also Augustine says: Let the Word come to the element, and it becomes a sacrament.

Art VI, p 492: Of the Sacrament of the Altar we hold that bread and wine in the Supper are the true body and blood of Christ, and are given and received not only by the godly, but also by wicked Christians.

Large Catechism, p 578, 20: Now, when these three parts are apprehended, it behooves a person also to know what to say concerning our sacraments, which Christ himself instituted, baptism and the holy body and blood of Christ, namely, the text which Matthew 28, 19ff and Mark 16, 15f record at the close of their gospels when Christ said farewell to his disciples and sent them forth.

Large Catechism, p 732, 1: We have now finished the three chief parts of the common Christian doctrine. Besides these we have yet to speak of our two sacraments instituted by Christ, of which also every Christian ought to have at least an ordinary, brief instruction, because without

them there can be no Christian; although, alas! Till now no instruction concerning them has been given.

Large Catechism, p 736, 18: Hence also it derives its essence as a sacrament, as St. Augustine also taught: *Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum*. That is, when the Word is joined to the element or natural substance, it becomes a Sacrament, that is, a holy and divine matter and sign.

**2) They also allow a definition that omits one of the specific marks.**

Apology, Art. XIII (VII), p 308, 4.11.12.16.17: Therefore *Baptism*, the *Lord's Supper*, and *Absolution*, which is the Sacrament of Repentance, are truly sacraments. For these rites have God's command and the promise of grace, which is peculiar to the New Testament. For when we are baptized, when we eat the Lord's body, when we are absolved, our hearts must be firmly assured that God truly forgives us. . . . But if ordination is understood as applying to the ministry of the Word, we are not unwilling to call ordination a sacrament. For the ministry of the Word has God's command and glorious promises. . . . If ordination is understood in this way, neither will we refuse to call the imposition of hands a sacrament. For the church has the command to appoint ministers, which should be most pleasing to us, because we know that God approves this ministry, and is present in the ministry, and God will preach and work through men and those who have been chosen by men. Lastly, if among the sacraments all things ought to be numbered which have God's command, and to which promises have been added, why do we not add prayer, which most truly can be called a sacrament? For it has both God's command and very many promises; and if placed among the sacraments, as though in a more eminent place, it would invite men to pray. Alms could also be reckoned here, and likewise afflictions, which are, even themselves signs, to which God has added promises. But let us omit these things. For no prudent man will strive greatly concerning the number or the term, if only those objects still be retained which have God's command and promises.

Apology, Art. XII (V), p 260, 41: And absolution, that blessed word of comfort, properly can be called a sacrament of repentance, as also the more learned scholastic theologians speak.

---

Large Catechism, p 750, 74-79: And here you see that baptism, both in its power and signification, comprehends also the third sacrament, which has been called repentance, as it is really nothing else than baptism. For what else is repentance but an earnest attack upon the old man that his lusts be restrained and entering upon a new life? Therefore, if you live in repentance, you walk in baptism, which not only signifies such a new life, but also produces, begins, and exercises it. For therein are given grace, the Spirit, and power to suppress the old man, so that the new man may come forth and become strong. Therefore our baptism remains forever; and even though some one should fall from it and sin, nevertheless we always have access to it, that we may again subdue the



old man. But we need not again be sprinkled with water; for though we were put under the water a hundred times, it would nevertheless be only one baptism, although the operation and signification continue and remain. Repentance, therefore, is nothing else than a return and approach to baptism, that we repeat and practice what we began before, but abandoned.

Luther: Nevertheless, it has seemed proper to restrict the name of sacrament to those promises which have signs attached to them. The remainder, not being bound to signs, are bare promises. Hence there are, strictly speaking, but two sacraments in the church of God—baptism and the bread. For only in these two do we find both the divinely instituted sign and the promise of forgiveness of sins. The sacrament of penance, which I added to these two, lacks the divinely instituted visible sign, and is, as I have said, nothing but a way and a return to baptism (*LW* 36, p 124).

Chemnitz: Our theologians have often testified that they would not argue but gladly agree that absolution, because it applies the general promise to the individuals who use this service, could be counted among the sacraments. But nevertheless this is certain that absolution does not have, by divine institution, a certain external element, sign, or ritual, divinely commanded. And even if either the laying on of hands or some other external ritual is used, nevertheless it lacks a sure, specific, and express command of God. Nor is there a promise that God through any such external ritual wishes to be efficacious for the application of the promise of the gospel. We indeed have the promise that through the Word he wants to be efficacious in believers, but for something to be a sacrament, not only the naked promise in the Word is required, but it is required that it should by divine appointment or institution be clothed in some external sign or in a ritual divinely commanded. But the announcement or recitation of the promise of the gospel is not such a sign, for in this way the general preaching of the gospel would be a sacrament.... Absolution is therefore not really and properly a sacrament in the same way as baptism and the Lord's Supper; but if, when this explanation and difference is added, anyone wishes to call it a sacrament on account of the individual application of the promise, the Apology of the AC says that it does not want to argue about this (*Examination*, II, p 14).

**b) On the best procedure for arriving at a correct definition of sacrament, we offer these words.**

Chemnitz: We will not quarrel about the definitions of this or that man, either ancient or more modern, but we take the position which is beyond dispute and confessed by all. For according to the confession of all, Baptism and the Eucharist are truly and properly sacraments (*Examination*, II, p 14).

Baier: Thus, therefore, from the common concepts of those acts which are undoubtedly sacraments, in which these agree, it is recognized that those things that perhaps are called sacraments but do not have those common requisites, are not sacraments of the same kind or reality as those which are

properly so called, but they are called sacraments in an equivocal way (*Compend.*, p 641).

**c) The Roman Catholic Church insists on seven sacraments.**

- 1) They place human tradition on the same level with divine institution when they declare several of these rites sacred.**
- 2) Only by citing tradition rather than Scripture are they able to identify a special grace to be derived from each of their sacraments. As catalogued by Bonaventura (Franciscan, d. 1274) the grace received is negative. As classified by Thomas Aquinas (Dominican, d. 1274) the grace received is positive.**

<u>Sacrament</u>	<u>Bonaventura</u>	<u>Thomas</u>
Baptism	vs. original sin	regeneration.
Confirmation	vs. weakness	strengthening.
Eucharist	vs. willful sins	nourishment.
Penance	vs. mortal sins	spiritual healing.
Unction	vs. venial sins	spiritual and bodily healing.
Order	vs. ignorance	spiritual building of the church.
Matrimony	vs. lust	physical building of the church.

Schleiermacher (d. 1834): The poor laity have no sacrament against ignorance, and the poor priests have none against lust (cited in Hoenecke, IV, p 47).

- 3) They demand recognition of their definitions and anathematize those who deny them.**

Council of Trent, Sess. VII, Can. 1: If any one says that the sacraments of the New Law were not all instituted by Jesus Christ, our Lord, or, that they are more, or less, than seven, namely, Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Order, and Matrimony; or even that any of these seven is not truly and properly a sacrament, let him be anathema (damned).

**d) The Eastern Orthodox Church also recognizes seven (or more) sacraments.**

Bishop Kallistos (Timothy) Ware: We must realize, however, that the Orthodox never limited the Sacraments to seven. The number seven is rather symbolic and is used to indicate the perfection of grace. . . To place a limitation on the number of sacraments is to view them from a very narrow perspective. If a sacrament happens whenever God's grace is mediated to man through matter, then there is no limit to the number of Sacraments. Indeed the whole creation becomes a sacrament. Fr. Thomas Hopko states: "Traditionally the Orthodox understand everything in the church to be sacramental. All of life becomes a sacrament in Christ who fills life itself with the Spirit of God" (*The Orthodox Way*, p 124).

## **II. The sacraments are powerful means of grace.**

### **1. The sacraments convey divine grace with its saving power to regenerate and renew sinners.**

#### **a) They offer, give, and certify the forgiveness of sins.**

##### **1) Holy Baptism has clear promises attached to it:**

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 22:16 What are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.

##### **2) The Lord’s Supper has clear gospel attached it:**

Matthew 26:28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Mark 14:24 “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them.

Luke 22:19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

1 Corinthians 11:25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

Romans 11:27 This is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.

#### **b) The sacraments create and strengthen saving faith.**

John 3:5 Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.”

Romans 6:3,4 Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

---

Luke 22:19 He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

1 Corinthians 11:24,25,26 When he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”<sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”<sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Augsburg Confession, Art. XIII, 1.2, p 48: Of the use of the sacraments they teach that the sacraments were ordained, not only to be marks of profession among men, but rather to be signs and testimonies of the will of God toward us, instituted to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them. Wherefore we must so use the sacraments that faith be added to believe the promises which are offered and set forth through the sacraments.

Augsburg Confession, Art. XXIV, 30, p 66: But Christ commands us, Luke 22, 19: This do in remembrance of me; therefore the mass was instituted that the faith of those who use the Sacrament should remember what benefits it receives through Christ, and cheer and comfort the anxious conscience. For to remember Christ is to remember his benefits.

Apology, Art. XII (V), p 260, 42: Meanwhile this faith is nourished in a manifold way in temptations, through the declarations of the gospel the hearing of sermons, reading and the use of the Sacraments. For these are seals and signs of the covenant and grace in the New Testament, i.e., signs of propitiation and the remission of sins. They offer, therefore, the remission of sins, as the words of the Lord’s Supper clearly testify.

Apology, Art. XXIV (XII), p 400, 49: But if the use of the sacrament would be the daily sacrifice, nevertheless we would retain it rather than the adversaries, because with them priests hired for pay use the sacrament. With us there is a more frequent and more conscientious use. For the people use it, but after having first been instructed and examined. For men are taught concerning the true use of the sacrament that it was instituted for the purpose of being a seal and testimony of the free remission of sins, and that, accordingly, it ought to admonish alarmed consciences to be truly confident and believe that their sins are freely remitted. Since, therefore, we retain both the preaching of the gospel and the lawful use of the sacrament, the daily sacrifice remains with us.

## **2. The sacraments have this power by virtue of their divine institution.**

### **a) This power they have in common with the Word.**

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

1 Corinthians 1:21 Since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

### **b) The sacraments differ from the Word only in form.**

- 1) **The Word conveys grace through hearing; the sacraments through the divinely instituted rite that appeals to other senses as well as the ear.**
- 2) **The sacraments are thus also called “visible Word” (Augustine).**

Apology, Art. XIII (VII), p 308, 5: And God, at the same time, by the Word and by the rite, moves hearts to believe and conceive faith, just as Paul says, Rom. 10:17: “Faith cometh by hearing.” But just as the Word enters the ear in order to strike our heart, so the rite itself strikes the eye, in order to move the heart. The effect of the Word and of the rite is the same, as it has been well said by Augustine that a sacrament is a visible word, because the rite is received by the eyes, and is, as it were, a picture of the Word, signifying the same thing as the Word. Therefore the effect of both is the same.

Quenstedt: To the word of the gospel God added, as another means bestowing salvation, the sacraments, which are the visible Word (IV, 73).

Chemnitz: Because in those things which pertain to our salvation, God wants to deal with us through certain means, therefore he himself appointed and instituted for this purpose the Word of the gospel promise, which sometimes is set before us just by itself or naked, but at other times clothed or made visible in certain rites or sacraments instituted by God (*Exam.*, II, 35).

### **3. Sacraments are not empty signs or mere symbols of an immediate grace.**

- a) **The Zwinglian, Arminian, and Calvinist errors empty the means of grace, particularly the sacraments, of their God-given virtue.**

Zwingli: I believe, yes, I know that the sacraments are so far from conferring grace that they do not even bring or dispense it (*Fidei Ratio* to Emperor Charles V, 1530).

Wayne Grudem: Since water baptism is an outward symbol of inward spiritual baptism by the Holy Spirit, we may expect that the Holy Spirit will ordinarily work alongside the baptism, giving to believers an increasing realization of the benefits of the spiritual baptism to which it points. . . . As with baptism, therefore, we should expect that the Lord would give spiritual blessing as we participate in the Lord’s Supper in faith and in obedience to the direction laid down in Scripture, and in this way it is a “means of grace” which the Holy Spirit uses to convey blessing to us (*ST*, p 953, 954).

J. Rodman Williams: It is significant to observe, however, that in relation to regeneration, water and the Spirit are not of equal importance...Both regeneration and renewal are *by* the Holy Spirit. Baptism in all of these cases points symbolically to the inward cleansing and renewal of the Holy Spirit (*Renewal Theology*, II, p 38).

- b) If sacraments are mere signs, any efficacy or validity of the sacraments would ultimately depend on the faith of the recipient. This is the Evangelical conception of the sacraments.**

Consensus Tigurinus (1549) The signs are administered to the reprobate just as they are to the elect; however, the truth of the signs comes only to the latter (Pt 17).

Westminster Larger Catechism (defining a sacrament): an holy ordinance instituted by Christ in his church, to signify, seal, and exhibit unto those that are within the covenant of grace, the benefits of his mediation . . . and to distinguish them from those that are without (Question 162; cited in Reymond, *NST*, p 919).

Heinrich Heppe (d. 1879): The efficacy of the sacrament does not depend on the power of the sign (in which no specific power of grace inheres), but only on the efficacy of the Holy Spirit, who is active in the outward sacramental action in such a way that a distinction must be made between it and the invisible action of the Holy Spirit. The eyes of faith must therefore not be fixed on the outward side of the sacrament; but rather the sacrament, which as a sign and witness does not testify about itself but about the crucified and risen Christ, wants to direct our faith to the death and merit of Christ and to the gifts of grace mediated by the Holy Spirit. The sacrament also does not want to be a cause of justification, but only sure sign of the righteousness which is granted to faith. Therefore the sacraments are also intended only for a believer as one who has a share in the covenant of grace. For unbelievers they are totally meaningless, because the unbeliever has no connection whatever with the covenant of grace. God, of course, offers also to unbelievers the grace which is promised in the sacrament, but these close their hearts against it and reject it (*Dogmatik der evang.- ref. Kirche*, p 428f).

---

Contrast the Large Catechism, p 756, 15-19: Hence it is easy to reply to all manner of questions about which men are troubled at the present time, such as this one: Whether even a wicked priest can minister at and dispense the sacrament , and whatever other questions like this there may be. For here we conclude and say: Even though a knave takes or distributes the sacrament, he receives the true sacrament , that is, the true body and blood of Christ, just as truly as he who receives or administers it in the most worthy manner. For it is not founded upon the holiness of men, but upon the Word of God. And as no saint upon earth, yes, no angel in heaven, can make bread and wine to be the body and blood of Christ, so also can no one change or alter it, even though it is misused. For the Word by which it became a sacrament and was instituted does not become false because of the person or his unbelief. For he does not say: If you believe or are worthy, you receive my body and blood, but: Take, eat and drink; this is my body and blood. Likewise: Do this (namely, what I now do, institute, give, and bid you take). That is as much as to say, No matter whether you are worthy or unworthy, you have here his body and blood by virtue of these words which are added to the bread and wine. Only note and remember this well; for upon these words rest all our foundation, protection, and defense against all errors and deception that have ever come or may yet come.

Large Catechism, p 744, 52-53: Further, we say that we are not so much concerned to know whether the person baptized believes or not; for on that account baptism does not become invalid; but everything depends upon the word and command of God. This now is perhaps somewhat acute, but it rests entirely upon what I have said, that baptism is nothing else than water and the word of God in and with each other, that is, when the word is added to the water, baptism is valid, even though faith be wanting. For my faith does not make baptism, but receives it. Now, baptism does not become invalid even though it be wrongly received or employed; since it is not bound, as stated, to our faith, but to the word.

**4. The sacraments do not receive their efficacy from the intention of the person administering them.**

**a) This is the Roman Catholic error.**

Council of Trent, Sess. VII, Can. 10,11: If anyone says that all Christians have the power to administer the Word and all the sacraments, let him be damned. If anyone says that when ministers celebrate and give the sacraments they do not need to have at least the intention of doing what the church does, let him be damned.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify. They are efficacious because in them Christ himself is at work; it is he who baptizes, he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies. The Father always hears the prayer of his Son's Church which, in the epiclesis of each sacrament, expresses her faith in the power of the Spirit. As fire transforms into itself everything it touches, so the Holy Spirit transforms into the divine life whatever is subjected to his power (Par. 1127).

Catechism of the Catholic Church: This is the meaning of the Church's affirmation that the sacraments act *ex opere operato* [literally: "by the very fact of the action's being performed"], i.e., by virtue of the saving work of Christ, accomplished once for all. It follows that "the sacrament is not wrought by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the recipient, but by the power of God." From the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister (Para. 1128, quoting Thomas Aquinas, *STh*, III, 68, 8).

---

Contrast Augsburg Confession. VIII, p 46: Although the Church properly is the congregation of saints and true believers, nevertheless, since in this life many hypocrites and evil persons are mingled therewith, it is lawful (*licet*) to use sacraments administered by evil men, according to the saying of Christ: "The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat," etc. Matt. 23, 2. Both the sacraments and word are effectual by reason of the institution and commandment of Christ, notwithstanding they be administered by evil men. They condemn the Donatists, and such like, who denied it to be lawful to use the ministry of evil men in the church, and who thought the ministry of evil men to be unprofitable and of none effect.

Apology, Art. VII & VIII (IV), p 226, 3: For this reason we have added the Eighth Article, lest any one might think that we separate the wicked and hypocrites from the outward fellowship of the church, or that we deny efficacy to sacraments administered by hypocrites or wicked men. Therefore there is no need here of a long defense against this slander. The Eighth Article is sufficient to exculpate us. For we grant that in this life hypocrites and wicked men have been mingled with the church, and that they are members of the church according to the outward fellowship of the signs of the church, i.e., of Word, profession, and sacraments, especially if they have not been excommunicated.

**b) Officiating ministers are merely “stewards” or executors of the sacraments.**

1 Corinthians 4:1 Men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with (*οἰκονόμοι*) the secret things of God.

1 Corinthians 3:5,7 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task.<sup>7</sup> So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.

Philippians 1:15-18 It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill.<sup>16</sup> The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.<sup>17</sup> The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.<sup>18</sup> But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice.

Quenstedt: The sacraments do not belong to the man who dispenses them but to God in whose name they are dispensed, and therefore the gracious power and working of the sacrament comes from and depends on God alone (1 Cor 3:5), and not from the character of the minister. The question about the intention of the minister is more involved. It is seemly that he who brings the sacrament to the altar should offer the good intention of doing what God instituted and that the mind should not be wandering but alert. It is necessary to carry out the intention of Christ in the outward act. I say, in the outward act, for the intention of the minister to do what the church does is never necessary (IV, 74).

Quenstedt: The worthiness or unworthiness of the minister adds nothing to and takes nothing away from the sacraments, nor is his intention required for the integrity of the sacraments nor does he do anything to make them efficacious (*TDP*, part IV, sect. II, qu. I, thesis, p 78).

**c) When a person or group retains the outward form of the words of institution but at the same time empties the words of their real meaning, only the outward form of the sacraments remains. The necessary word of God is not mere sounds and syllables, but the divine truth conveyed to us in the form of human speech (See above, pp. 66ff.).**



Luther: The enthusiasts make mere bread and wine of the sacrament, peel out the kernel and give them the husks (*LW* 38, p 110).

Luther: Sooner than have mere wine with the fanatics, I would agree with the pope that there is only blood (*LW* 37, p 317).

Formula of Concord, *TD*, Art. VII, p 982, 32: After this protestation, Doctor Luther, of blessed memory, presents, among other articles, this also: In the same manner I also speak and confess (he says) concerning the Sacrament of the Altar, that there the body and blood of Christ are in truth orally eaten and drunk in the bread and wine, even though the priests who administer the Lord's Supper or those who receive it should not believe or otherwise misuse it. For it does not depend upon the faith or unbelief of men, but upon God's Word and ordinance, unless they first change God's Word and ordinance and interpret it otherwise, as the enemies of the Sacrament do at the present day, who, of course, have nothing but bread and wine; for they also do not have the words and appointed ordinance of God, but have perverted and changed them according to their own false notion.

### **III. For spiritual blessings and a profitable use of the sacraments faith is required on the part of the recipient.**

#### **1. The reality of the sacrament does not depend on the faith of the recipient.**

##### **a) The Savior's word of institution guarantees the capacity to produce God's desired result.**

Romans 3:3,4 What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness? <sup>4</sup> Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge."

Matthaeus Hafenreffer (d.1619): One must carefully distinguish between the essence of baptism and its benefits. For a hypocritical man, if he is baptized, receives indeed a true baptism, so far as its essence is concerned. This essence consists in the legitimate administration of the sacrament according to the words of institution and in the divine promise of grace. But as long as he remains in his hypocrisy and unbelief he lacks its saving benefit and effect, which comes only to those who believe. God therefore seriously offers his grace and the forgiveness of sins to the man who is baptized. On his part he wants to keep that covenant firm and unbroken perpetually and without any change in such a way that in the covenant the promised grace is never unavailable to him who has been baptized, and just as soon as a man again comes to repentance, he can enjoy it; but as long as he remains a hypocrite and impenitent, he does not possess it. (*Loci*, 499)

Large Catechism, p 744, 52: Further, we say that we are not so much concerned to know whether the person baptized believes or not; for on that account baptism does not become invalid; but everything depends upon the Word and command of God.

**b) Sacraments have an impact also on unbelievers or on those who may participate in an unworthy manner.**

1 Corinthians 11:29 Anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

2 Corinthians 2:14-16 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.<sup>15</sup> For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.<sup>16</sup> To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?

**2. Faith is the organ for receiving the blessing of the sacraments.**

**a) Faith is required for a beneficial reception of the sacraments.**

**1) This truth is consistently mentioned in connection with the sacraments.**

Mark 16:16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

1 Corinthians 11:24-26 When he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."<sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."<sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

**2) Justification, offered in the sacraments, is appropriated by faith.**

Matthew 26:28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

---

Romans 1:17 In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Romans 4:3 What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Romans 10:10 It is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

**3) Sacraments, as seals or certifications of a promise, require faith as the proper response.**

Romans 4:16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

Galatians 3:22 The Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

**4) Our Lutheran confessions and church fathers repeatedly make this point about faith.**

Augsburg Confession, Art. XIII, p 48, 1-2: Of the use of the sacraments they teach that the sacraments were ordained, not only to be marks of profession among men, but rather to be signs and testimonies of the will of God toward us, instituted to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them. Wherefore we must so use the sacraments that faith be added to believe the promises which are offered and set forth through the sacraments.

Augsburg Confession, Art. XXIV, p 66, 28.29.3: Scripture also teaches that we are justified before God through faith in Christ, when we believe that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. Now if the mass takes away the sins of the living and the dead by the outward act justification comes of the work of masses, and not of faith, which Scripture does not allow. Therefore the mass is to be used to this end, that there the Sacrament may be administered to them that have need of consolation; as Ambrose says: Because I always sin, I am always bound to take the medicine. Therefore this sacrament requires faith, and is used in vain without faith.

Apology, Art. XIII (VII), p 312, 19.20: And yet this impious and pernicious opinion is taught with great authority throughout the entire realm of the Pope. Paul contradicts this and denies, Rom. 4:9, that Abraham was justified by circumcision, but asserts that circumcision was a sign presented for exercising faith. Thus we teach that in the use of the sacraments *faith* ought to be added, which should believe these promises and receive the promised things, there offered in the sacrament. And the reason is plain and thoroughly grounded. This is a certain and true use of the Holy Sacrament, on which Christian hearts and consciences may risk to rely. The promise is useless unless it is received by faith. But the sacraments are the signs and seals of the promises. Therefore, in the use of the sacraments faith ought to be added, so that, if anyone uses the Lord's Supper, he should use it thus.

Apology, Art. XXIV (XII), p 408, 70-71: The word offers the remission of sins. And a ceremony is, as it were, a picture or seal, as Paul, Rom. 4: 11, calls it, of the word, making known the promise. Therefore, just as the promise is useless unless it is received by faith, so a ceremony is useless unless such faith is added as is truly confident that the remission of sins is here offered. And this faith encourages contrite minds. And just as the word has been given in order to excite this faith, so the

sacrament has been instituted in order that the outward appearance meeting the eyes might move the heart to believe and strengthen faith. For through these, namely, through word and sacrament, the Holy Spirit works. And such use of the sacrament, in which faith quickens terrified hearts, is a service of the New Testament, because the New Testament requires spiritual dispositions, mortification and quickening. For according to the New Testament the highest service of God is rendered inwardly in the heart. And for this use Christ instituted it, since he commanded them thus to do in remembrance of Him.

Luther: When have you ever heard from us that we eat Christ's Supper, or teach that it should be eaten, in such a way that there is only an outward, physical eating of the body of Christ? Have we not taught in many books that in the Supper two things are to be kept in mind? One, which is the supreme and most necessary point, consisting of the words, "Take, eat, this is my body," etc.; the other is the sacrament or physical eating of the body of Christ. Now, of course no one can drive these words through the throat into the stomach, but he must take them to heart through the ears. But what does he take to heart through these words? Nothing else than what they say, viz., "the body which was given for us," which is the spiritual eating. We have said, further, that if anyone physically eats the sacrament without these words or without this spiritual eating, it is not only of no avail to him, but even harmful, as Paul says (1 Cor 11:27), "Whoever eats the bread in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body of the Lord" (*LW* 37, p 86).

Gerhard: Meanwhile, nevertheless, we add that a salutary use of the sacraments on our part requires faith or a believing heart, which is the receiving instrument by which the grace offered in the sacraments is to be made our own and accepted. From this arises the axiom: The sacraments do not profit those who use them without faith (*Loci*, vol. VIII, loc. XIX de sacramentis, para. LXXVIII, p 287).

- b) It is important that we understand that this faith which receives the blessings of the sacraments (1) is not merely a general belief in God and his providence; (2) nor merely a belief in the real presence in the sacrament (as the Roman Catholic Church has taught); but (3) is trust in the justification offered through the sacrament. This faith that receives sacramental blessings is saving faith.**

Small Catechism, Baptism, p 550, 9-10 How can water do such great things? Answer. It is not the water indeed that does them, but the word of God which is in and with the water, and faith, which trusts such word of God in the water. For without the word of God the water is simple water and no baptism. But with the word of God it is a baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says, Titus, chapter three: By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying.

Small Catechism, Sacrament of the Altar, p 556, 7-8 How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things? Answer. It is not the eating and drinking, indeed, that does them, but the words which stand here, namely: Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins. These words are, beside the bodily eating and drinking, the chief thing in the sacrament; and he that believes these words has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins.

**3. For spiritual blessings and a profitable use of the sacraments for the recipients, correct protocol or administration is not sufficient.**

**a) God always looks at and judges the heart of a person in addition to his outward conduct.**

1 Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

Romans 2:28-29 A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. <sup>29</sup> No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man’s praise is not from men, but from God.

2 Timothy 3:5 [Godless people in these last days will be] having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

**b) To be satisfied with external correctness would lead to the Roman error of *opus operatum*, a kind of formalism or ritualism.**

**1) The Roman Catholic Church offers statements supporting this view.**

Council of Trent, Sess. VII, Can. 6: If anyone says that the sacraments of the new law [the New Testament] do not contain the grace which they signify, or that they do not give this grace to those who do not place a hindrance in the way, let him be damned.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify. They are efficacious because in them Christ himself is at work: it is he who baptizes, he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies. The Father always hears the prayer of his Son's Church which, in the epiclesis of each sacrament, expresses her faith in the power of the Spirit. As fire transforms into itself everything it touches, so the Holy Spirit transforms into the divine life whatever is subjected to his power (Par. 1127; the paragraph cross references the “Council of Trent (1547): DS 1605; DS 1606”).

**2) Scripture vigorously opposes empty formalism.**

Jeremiah 7:1-8 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: <sup>2</sup>“Stand at the gate of the LORD’s house and there proclaim this

message: 'Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the LORD. <sup>3</sup>This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. <sup>4</sup>Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!" <sup>5</sup>If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, <sup>6</sup>if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, <sup>7</sup>then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever. <sup>8</sup>But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless.'"

Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Apology, Art. III, p 176, 86: The people in the Law [the Israelites] imitated sacrifices with the opinion that by means of these works they would appease God, so to say, *ex opere operato*. We see here how earnestly the prophets rebuke the people: Ps. 50:8: I will not reprove you for your sacrifices, and Jer. 7:22: I spoke not unto your fathers concerning burnt offerings. Such passages condemn not works, which God certainly had commanded as outward exercises in this government, but they condemn the godless opinion according to which they thought that by these works they appeased the wrath of God.

Apology, Art. XIII (VII), p 312, 18: It is still more needful to understand how the sacraments are to be used. Here we condemn the whole crowd of scholastic doctors, who teach that the sacraments confer grace *ex opere operato*, without a good disposition on the part of the one using them, provided he does not place a hindrance in the way.

Apology, Art. XXIV (XII), p 386, 11.12: For in our Confession we have shown that we hold that the Lord's Supper does not confer grace *ex opere operato*, and that, when applied on behalf of others, alive or dead, it does not merit for them *ex opere operato* the remission of sins, of guilt or of punishment. And of this position a clear and firm proof exists in that it is impossible to obtain the remission of our sins on account of our own work *ex opere operato* even when there is not a good thought in the heart, but the terrors of sin and death must be overcome by faith when we comfort our hearts with the knowledge of Christ, and believe that for Christ's sake we are forgiven, and that the merits and righteousness of Christ are granted us, Rom. 5<sup>1</sup>: "Being justified by faith, we have peace." These things are so sure and so firm that they can stand against all the gates of hell.

Apology, Art. XXIV (XII), p 392, 27: In short, the worship of the New Testament is spiritual, i.e., it is the righteousness of faith in the heart and the fruits of faith. It accordingly abolishes the Levitical services.

Chemnitz: The sacraments are certainly not to be made equal to the Holy Spirit so that they are believed to confer grace in an equal and

exactly the same way as the Holy Spirit himself. But should on that account then nothing be ascribed to the sacraments? Certainly that which the statements of Scripture attribute to the sacraments has a little earlier been pointed out in the very words of Scripture. But we must with care and concern be on our guard when we dispute about the power and efficacy of the sacraments lest we take away from God the things which properly belong to the grace of the Father, the working of the Spirit, and the merit of the Son of God and transfer them to the sacraments. For this would be the crime of idolatry.... So also power or efficacy are ascribed to the sacraments not because saving grace is to be sought in the sacraments apart from or beside the merit of Christ, the mercy of the Father, the working of the Holy Spirit. But the sacraments are instrumental causes in such a way that through these means or instruments the Father wants to show forth, give, and bestow his grace, the Son wants to communicate his merit to the believers, and the Holy Spirit wants to exercise His power for salvation to every one who believes.... And in the use of the sacraments faith does not seek or look for any essential power or efficacy which inheres in the external elements themselves, but it seeks, lays hold of, and accepts the grace of the Father, the merit of the Son, and the working of the Spirit in the promise which is attached to the sacrament (*Examen*, Part II, topic I, sect. V, de efficacia et usu sacramentorum, para. 7,8, p 19).

Chemnitz: In this doctrine the instrumental cause is a double one: one is, as it were, the hand of God, by which he, through word and sacraments, in the word offers, sets forth, applies, and seals to believers the benefits of redemption. The second is, as it were, our hand, because by faith, of course, we seek, lay hold of, and accept those things which God offers and sets before us through the word and the sacraments. For the efficacy of the sacraments is never of such a kind, as if God through them infuses and impresses grace and salvation also on unbelievers or those who do not accept them by faith (*Examen*, II, 36).

### **3) In this connection we note the Roman Catholic distinction between the operation of the Old Testament and the New Testament sacraments.**

Gabriel Biel (d. 1495): But the Old Testament sacraments are said to confer grace *ex opere operante* in proportion to merit, namely, that the sacrament, when it has been set forth publicly, does not suffice to confer grace, but in addition to it a good attitude or interior devotion is required in the recipient. Grace is conferred in exact proportion to the recipient's intention as by condign or congruous merit. There is no greater reward on account of the use of the sacrament. A New Testament sacrament is said to confer grace *ex opere operato* in such a way that by the very fact that this work, namely, the sacrament, is set forth, grace is conferred on those who use the sacrament, unless an obstacle of mortal sin hinders it. Thus a good attitude on the part of the recipient is not required in addition to the setting forth of the sign, publicly set forth (*Sententiae*, bk. IV, dist. I, qu. III).

Mensinger: Because the saints in the Old Testament by faith received grace in their use of the sacraments, therefore the sacraments of the New Testament must have greater efficacy, so that they may confer grace *ex opere operato*, even if the active work of the recipient, that is, faith or interior devotion is not present (quoted by Chemnitz, *Examination II*, p 84).

Albert the Great (d. 1280): An *opus operans* (a working work) is a work produced by virtue; an *opus operatum* (a work performed) is the perfection of the outward work without interior activity (i.e., faith) (cited by Chemnitz, *ibid.*).

Bellarmino (commenting on Augustine's definition of a sacrament as a *signum rei sacrae*): It should be noted, however, that this definition can be understood in three ways. First, that the word "sign" may be understood to denote a sign consisting in an action; the "sacred thing" may be understood to denote justifying grace. In this sense the definition properly fits only the sacraments of the new law. It fits the Old Testament sacraments, however, only relatively and by way of analogy, namely, because they were signs dealing with ceremonial cleanness, which only typifies justifying grace (is only a type of justifying grace) as the image of a man is called a man. . . . There is one question therefore about the Old Testament sacraments, with the exception of circumcision, namely whether they justified at least *ex opere operantis*. There are, however, two opinions about this. The first is that of the Master [Peter Lombard] in 4, *Dist. I*, who denies this; for he says that those sacraments did not justify, even if they were received with faith and love, because they were given to be burdens, not to justify. The second opinion is the common one of the theologians, that all those sacraments justified *ex opere operantis*, that is, because of the faith and devotion of the recipient; and this opinion is the truest one. For the statement of the apostle in Romans 2:13, "the doers of the law shall be justified," is generally true. Although this justification is not properly sacramental justification, nevertheless it is the justification which all good works done in love have in common. It is not indeed first, but second, justification. . . . Circumcision is not properly a Mosaic sacrament but a matter of natural law (he refers to Jn 7:22) (*Disputationes*, book I, chap. XII, 14, p 17, and op. cit., chap. XIII, 4, p 85).

---

Contrast Gerhard: That there is some agreement between the sacraments of both testaments no one has easily denied, since they not only agree 1) in name: both are called "sacraments" but also 2) in their broad classification: both are "sacred acts," 3) in the principal efficient cause: both are instituted by God, 4) in the same kind of final cause, i.e. purpose, namely the offer, application, and seal of grace' 5) in the same kind of matter and essence: a visible element used in a prescribed way, that is, insofar as every sacrament properly so-called is a sacred and solemn act, divinely instituted, which deals with a definite object fixed by a special word of institution and promise, 6) in use, for faith is required for both to be salutary (*Loci, vol. IX, loc. XX, de circumcissione et agno paschali*, para. I, p 1).



**4) Calvinists deny the efficacy of the Old Testament sacraments just as they do those of the New Testament.**

Calvin: The old sacraments had the same goal in view at which our sacraments now aim, namely, that they might direct us to Christ ... or rather that they might represent him as images (*Institutes*, Bk. IV, chap. XIV, par. 20-23).

**IV. The sacraments are not absolutely necessary for the spiritual life of a Christian.**

**1. They are, indeed, not superfluous. They have been established and provided by God for our spiritual well-being. In speaking of their necessity, we observe the following truths.**

**a) God could have provided adequate substitutes or alternate instruments for our use. He also could have chosen to work without sacraments, immediately.**

Matthew 3:9 Do not think you can say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father.” I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.

**b) But in his wisdom God saw fit to institute these sacraments. Therefore, willful neglect of them will rob a person of assurances for his faith that God has provided.**

1 Corinthians 1:21 Since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

Luke 7:29,30 All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus’ words, acknowledged that God’s way was right, because they had been baptized by John.<sup>30</sup> But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God’s purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.

**c) Nevertheless, the necessity of the sacraments is not absolute. We remain aware that the Word also produces and strengthens the same faith. And we know that children, among others, are without the Sacrament of the Altar. Further, we recall that the Old Testament fathers lived in faith without the New Testament sacraments. We therefore conclude that the necessity of the sacraments is not absolute.**

Mark 10:13-16 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them.<sup>14</sup> When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”<sup>15</sup> I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”<sup>16</sup> And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

Consider Hebrews 11:1-40 By faith many Old Testament saints lived without the New Testament sacraments.

**2. Errors concerning the necessity of the sacraments include the following:**

**a) Calvinists, naturally, admit only a certain kind of necessity.**

- 1) They will speak of a necessity on account of human weakness. They also speak of using the sacraments as matters of duty and obedience, ordinances that we are to perform.**

Gallic Confession (1559): We believe that the sacraments have been joined to the Word for the sake of greater certainty, undoubtedly as signs and tokens of the grace of God, by which our weak and imperfect faith is helped (Pt 34).

Calvin: What is a sacrament? ...It is an external symbol by which we, on our part, give testimony of our piety toward the Lord, both before him and the angels as well as among our fellowmen (*Institutes*, Bk. IV, chap.14).

Note: It would be destroying the character of the sacraments as means of grace if anyone performs them with the idea of thereby doing God service.

- 2) But they will not refer to the sacraments as being necessary as means of grace, as instruments that really convey and give faith and the forgiveness of sins.**

Leonhard Riissen (d. 1700): Sacraments are necessary, but not as means (with the necessity of means). For although they are means of salvation instituted by God, they are not on that account necessary as means without which salvation could not be obtained. They are therefore necessary by the necessity of a precept from a command of God (*Turretini compendium theologiae auctum*, XVII, 10).

Heppe: Whoever therefore is so strong in faith that he can be sure that he is in the state of grace without using the sacraments can do without the sacrament (*Dogmatik der evang.-ref. Kirche*, p 442). Note: This is the “*contemptus religionis*” of which Augustine speaks below!

**b) Roman Catholics wrongly claim an absolute necessity for the sacraments.**

- 1) For statements to this effect consider the following.**

Council of Trent, Session VII, Can. IV: If anyone says that the sacraments of the New Testament are not necessary for salvation but superfluous, and that men obtain justifying grace from God by faith alone without the sacraments or without the desire for them, even if not all of them are necessary for each individual, let him be damned.

Council of Trent, Session VII, Canon IV: The Council wishes to teach that for it justification the sacraments are necessarily required, so that, if a man has faith, no matter how great it may be, nevertheless this faith will not justify him unless a sacrament also is present, either in reality or in desire, yes, indeed, the sacrament is more necessary than faith.

**2) In response, Lutherans offer these statements.**

Quenstedt: Adjuncts of the sacraments are 1) not only the necessity of command but also the necessity of external means; they are necessary not only because God has commanded them but also because they are needed as the external means through which God gives us his grace; nevertheless this necessity is not absolute but conditional; 2) the necessity of circumstance. These circumstances vary according to the difference in the sacraments (*TDP*, part IV, chap. III, sect. I, thesis XVII, p 77).

Gerhard: For we deny that baptism is unconditionally and absolutely necessary for salvation, namely, in a case of necessity in which the performance of the sacrament is omitted not because of contempt of religion but because it is impossible to perform it, as Augustine says in “Against the Donatists,” Book IV, chapter 22: “For not the lack of the sacrament but contempt for it damns,” as Bernhard teaches in “Epistle LXXVII”. We therefore distinguish between those things which are unconditionally and absolutely necessary for justification and salvation, and those which ordinarily and conditionally are necessary. The former, we say, are the grace of God, the merit of Christ, and faith. We say that without these no one in his natural fallen state is ever justified and saved. The latter, we say, are the Word and the sacraments (*Loci*, vol. VIII, loc. XIX de sacramentis, para. LIII, p 242).

**V. The administration of the sacraments is ordinarily entrusted to persons who have been appointed (called) to do this on behalf of other believers.**

**1. The authority to administer the sacraments is vested in the church, i.e., in the individual Christians.**

Matthew 18:15-18 If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. <sup>16</sup> But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that “every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.” <sup>17</sup> If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. <sup>18</sup> I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Matthew 28:19,20 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

1 Corinthians 11:20-22, 33-34 When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat,<sup>21</sup> for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk.<sup>22</sup> Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!<sup>33</sup> So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other.<sup>34</sup> If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions.

1 Peter 2:9 You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Hollaz: God has entrusted the right to dispense the sacraments to the church. For the sake of order and decency, the church in turn grants the administration and the exercise of this right to the called and ordained ministers of the divine Word. However, in cases of extreme necessity, in which the sacrament is necessary and can not be omitted without endangering someone's salvation, any Christian human being can validly perform the sacrament of initiation (i.e., baptism) (*Examen*, part III, sect. II, chap. III, qu. VI, p 522).

Luther: The third function is to consecrate or to administer the sacred bread and wine, Here those in the order of the shorn vaunt themselves and set themselves up as rulers of a power given neither to angels nor the virgin mother. Unmoved by their senselessness we hold that this function, too, like the priesthood, belongs to all, and this we assert, not on our own authority, but that of Christ who at the Last Supper said, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24). This is the word by means of which the shorn papists claim they can make priests and give them the authority to consecrate. But Christ spoke this word to all those then present and to those who in the future would be at the table, to eat this bread and drink this cup. So it follows that what is given here is given to all. Those who oppose this have no foundation on which to stand, except the fathers, the councils, tradition, and that strongest article of their faith, namely, "We are many and thus we hold: therefore it is true." A further witness is the word of Paul in I Cor. 11 :23, "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you," etc. Here Paul addresses all the Corinthians, making each of them, as he himself was, consecrators (LW 40, p 24).

**2. In accordance with God's will and for the sake of order, the church administers the sacraments through specially appointed (called) persons.**

1 Corinthians 4:1-5 So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God.<sup>2</sup> Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.<sup>3</sup> I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself.<sup>4</sup> My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.<sup>5</sup> Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

1 Corinthians 14:40 But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

3. **This public (representative) ministry, carried out on behalf of the church, does not replace or set aside the original ownership of the sacraments as held by the church. Rather, it serves to emphasize it.**

1 Corinthians 3:21-23 So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, <sup>22</sup>whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, <sup>23</sup>and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

1 Peter 5:3 [Be shepherds of God's flock] not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

2 Corinthians 4:5 We do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

4. **When there is a case of urgency, therefore, and no question of order is involved, a Christian may and will administer the sacrament of baptism. In doing this he is exercising his original stewardship and must not be considered as a temporary substitute for the regular public minister.**

Hollaz: Ordinarily, the ministers of the church, who have been legitimately called and ordained, who are orthodox and blameless in their lives, administer baptism. But extraordinarily in cases of necessity any pious Christian, familiar with the sacred rites, whether male or female, can perform a baptism (*Examen*, 1081).

Gerhard: Here, again, are apparent points of contention: Some claim that the administration of baptism properly belongs to the office of preaching; and because the proclamation of the divine Word is to be done in the common assembly, therefore Holy Baptism also should not be performed anywhere else. Response: 1) Obviously preaching and baptism are to be thus regarded according to the general ordinances. 2) However, in case of an emergency one may indeed deviate from this ordinance, since thereby nothing is done in opposition to any express command of God. 3) Accordingly, just as one speaks comfort from God's Word to the ill also in a home and imparts to them absolution and the Holy Supper, so also one may and should, in case of any emergency, administer Holy Baptism in a private home, so that – inasmuch as it depends on us – the little children do not lose out on the ordained means for rebirth (*A Comprehensive Explanation of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper*, I, p 223).

- 5) **Concerning the administration of the Lord's Supper, we also maintain that when the necessary conditions of good order (1 Co 14:40) and brotherly love (1 Co 16:14) have been observed, a non-ordained Christian layman (e.g., an elder, vicar, student of theology, male teacher or staff minister) who has been properly designated and trained to perform this function may serve.**

Augsburg Confession, Art. XIV, p 48: Of Ecclesiastical Order, they teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the sacraments unless he be regularly called.

Consider Irwin Habeck, "Who May Officiate at the Lord's Supper," *WLQ*, July, 1968.

## **E. Baptism**

### **I. Baptism is a ceremonial and sacramental washing with water.**

#### **1. A brief word study will remind us that the Bible uses the term baptism with more than one meaning.**

##### **a) The word baptism is used in Scripture for various ceremonial washings (βαπτίζω, βαπτισμός).**

Mark 7:4 When [the Pharisees and all the Jews] come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.

Luke 11:38 The Pharisee, noticing that Jesus did not first wash before the meal, was surprised.

Hebrews 9:10,13 [Various Old Testament stipulations] are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.<sup>13</sup> The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled (ῥαντίζουσα) on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. [See Nu 19 regarding the ashes of a red heifer and the “water of cleansing,” מִי נִדְּחָה.]

##### **b) The word baptism is also used metaphorically in Scripture for persecutions and martyrdom (βαπτίζω, βάπτισμα).**

Mark 10:38,39 “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”<sup>39</sup> “We can,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with.”

Luke 12:50 I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!

##### **c) The word baptism is also used for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit (βαπτίζω).**

Matthew 3:11 I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Acts 1:5 John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 11:15,16 As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning.<sup>16</sup> Then I remembered what the Lord had said: “John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

**d) The word baptism is also used in synecdoche for the ministry of John the Baptist (βάπτισμα).**

Matthew 21:25 “John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?” They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’”

Acts 10:37 You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached.

Compare with the question put to John in John 1:25, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”

**e) The word baptism is also used for the sacrament of baptism (βαπτίζω, βάπτισμα – βαπτισμός).**

Matthew 3:6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

Romans 6:4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

---

Hebrews 6:2 [Let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ:] instruction about baptisms (βαπτισμῶν, plural—Christ’s and John’s? Jewish ceremonial washings?), the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

**2. Scripture uses other words to designate the sacrament of baptism. “Water” and “washing” are terms used to denote or allude to baptism.**

John 3:5 Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.”

1 John 5:6,8 This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.<sup>8</sup> the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

Hebrews 10:22 Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

---

Ephesians 5:26 [Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her] to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word (τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν ῥήματι)

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing (διὰ λουτροῦ) of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

**3. Baptism was prefigured in the Old Testament by a number of rituals and events.**

**a) Baptism was anticipated by circumcision.**

Colossians 2:11,12 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ,<sup>12</sup> having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

Genesis 17:14 Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.  
Compare Exodus 19:5,6 “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine,<sup>6</sup> you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.

Romans 3:1,2 What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision?<sup>2</sup> Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.

---

Deuteronomy 30:6 The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.

Jeremiah 4:4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, circumcise your hearts, you men of Judah and people of Jerusalem, or my wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done— burn with no one to quench it.

Romans 2:29 No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

**b) Various ceremonial purifications also prefigured baptism: washings dealing with skin diseases, mildew, and body discharges.**

Leviticus 13:6,34,54,55 On the seventh day the priest is to examine him again, and if the sore has faded and has not spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only a rash. The man must wash his clothes, and he will be clean.<sup>34</sup> On the seventh day the priest is to examine the itch, and if it has not spread in the skin and appears to be no more than skin deep, the priest shall pronounce him clean. He must wash his clothes, and he will be clean.<sup>54</sup> He shall order that the contaminated article be washed. Then he is to isolate it for another seven days.<sup>55</sup> After the affected article has been washed, the priest is to examine it, and if the mildew has not changed its appearance, even though it has not spread, it is unclean.

Leviticus 14:8,47 The person to be cleansed must wash his clothes, shave off all his hair and bathe with water; then he will be ceremonially clean. After this



he may come into the camp, but he must stay outside his tent for seven days.<sup>47</sup> Anyone who sleeps or eats in the house must wash his clothes.

Leviticus 15:5-13 Anyone who touches his bed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.<sup>6</sup> Whoever sits on anything that the man with a discharge sat on must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.<sup>7</sup> Whoever touches the man who has a discharge must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.<sup>8</sup> If the man with the discharge spits on someone who is clean, that person must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.<sup>9</sup> Everything the man sits on when riding will be unclean,<sup>10</sup> and whoever touches any of the things that were under him will be unclean till evening; whoever picks up those things must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.<sup>11</sup> Anyone the man with a discharge touches without rinsing his hands with water must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.<sup>12</sup> A clay pot that the man touches must be broken, and any wooden article is to be rinsed with water.<sup>13</sup> When a man is cleansed from his discharge, he is to count off seven days for his ceremonial cleansing; he must wash his clothes and bathe himself with fresh water, and he will be clean.

**c) The figurative use of washing and cleansing terms was common in the Old Testament as well as the New.**

Ezekiel 36:25-27 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.<sup>26</sup> I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.<sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Isaiah 4:4 The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; he will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire.

Zechariah 13:1 On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.

---

Hebrews 9:10,14 [Various Old Testament ordinances] are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.<sup>14</sup> How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Hebrews 10:22 Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

1 Corinthians 6:11 You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

**The same terminology is applied to baptism.**

Acts 22:16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.

**d) The great flood also foreshadowed God's work through baptism.**

1 Peter 3:20,21 In [Noah's ark] only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water<sup>21</sup> and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge (ἐπερώτημα, legal claim) of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

**e) The passing of Israel through the Red Sea prefigured baptism.**

1 Corinthians 10:1,2 I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea.<sup>2</sup> They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

**4. The manner of washing or applying water is not specified in Scripture and is therefore immaterial.**

**a) One legitimate mode of washing is by immersion.**

**1) This mode of washing is beautifully significant.**

Small Catechism, Baptism, p 550, 11.12 What does such baptizing (Latin: *immersio*) with water signify? Answer: It signifies that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned (Latin: *submergi*) and die with all sins and evil lusts, and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise; who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Large Catechism, Baptism, p 748, 64-65 Lastly, we must also know what baptism signifies, and why God has ordained just such external sign and ceremony for the sacrament by which we are first received into the Christian Church. But the act or ceremony is this, that we are sunk under the water, which passes over us, and afterwards are drawn out again. These two parts, to be sunk under the water and drawn out again, signify the power and operation of baptism, which is nothing else than putting to death the old Adam, and after that the resurrection of the new man, both of which must take place in us all our lives, so that a truly Christian life is nothing else than a daily baptism, once begun and ever to be continued. For this must be practiced without ceasing, that we ever keep purging away whatever is of the old Adam, and that that which belongs to the new man come forth.

**2) Still, immersion is not the only permissible manner of applying water.**

**-a) Immersion is not the only meaning of the Greek terms used for baptism.**

Mark 7:3-4 The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing (νίπτειν), holding to the tradition of the elders. <sup>4</sup> When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash (βαπτίζω; variant reading uses the verb ῥαντίζω, to spray or sprinkle). And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles (variant reading adds: “and dining couches”).

Luke 11:38 But the Pharisee, noticing that Jesus did not first wash (ἐβαπτίσθη) before the meal, was surprised.

Acts 1:5 John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized (βαπτίζω) with the Holy Spirit.  
Compare with Acts 2:18: Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out (ἐκχέω) my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

Contrast J. Rodman Williams: Since the word *baptism* is simply a transliteration of *baptisma*, meaning “immersion,” it follows that immersion is the normal mode of baptism (*Renewal Theology*, p 225).

**-b) It is doubtful that all New Testament sacramental baptisms were performed by immersion.**

Acts 2:41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Acts 10:47,48 “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” <sup>48</sup> So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Acts 16:33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.

Contrast Grudem (without adequate Bible evidence): The practice of baptism in the New Testament was carried out in one way: the person being baptized was *immersed* or put completely under the water and then brought back up again. Baptism by *immersion* is therefore the “mode” of baptism or the way in which baptism was carried out in the New Testament (*ST*, p 967).

Compare Reymond: The fact is that *there is not a single recorded instance of a baptism in the entire New Testament where immersion followed by emersion is the mode of baptism*. The Baptist practice of baptism by immersion is simply based on faulty exegesis of Scripture (*NST*, p 935).

**-c) Nowhere in Scripture is the amount of water used said to be important for spiritual cleansing.**

Compare John 13:3-11 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup> After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. <sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" <sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." <sup>8</sup> "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

<sup>9</sup> "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." <sup>11</sup> For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

**b) Sprinkling or pouring is another legitimate manner of washing.**

**1) This mode of applying water also has a significant meaning.**

Ezekiel 36:25 I will sprinkle (זָרַק) clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.

Exodus 24:8 Moses then took the blood, sprinkled (זָרַק) it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

Numbers 8:7 To purify them, do this: Sprinkle (זָרַק) the water of cleansing on them; then have them shave their whole bodies and wash their clothes, and so purify themselves.

Hebrews 12:24 [You have come] to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

**2) Generally the water is applied to the head, but Scripture is silent on this subject.**

**c) The Didache (ca. 120–150 AD) assumes that immersion is the regular but not the only possible manner of baptism.**

The Didache, VII, 1–3: But about baptism—baptize in this way: When all these things have been said, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in running water. But if you do not have access to running water, then baptize with other water. If you can not do it with cold, do it with warm. If you have neither, pour water on the head three times in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Compare Reymond: With the exception of those in the baptistic tradition who regard immersion followed by emersion as the only proper mode of baptism, the catholic (universal) position and practice of the Western church regarding the question of the proper mode of baptism is that “dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but baptism is rightly administered by pouring, or sprinkling water upon the person” [Westminster Confession of Faith, XXVIII/iii] (*NST*, p 930).

**5. The visible or earthly element of baptism is water.**

**a) Baptisms were regularly performed with water. The implication and assumption throughout is that only water was used.**

Matthew 3:6,11,16 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. <sup>11</sup> I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. <sup>16</sup> As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.

Acts 8:36,38 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?” <sup>38</sup> And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

**b) No other element is even remotely suggested in Scripture. The use of any other element would signal a departure from Christ’s command and invalidate the sacrament.**

Recall the instructions of *The Didache*, VII, 1–3 (above).

**6. The classic definition of baptism provided in Luther's Small Catechism and echoed by Lutheran fathers is excellent and unsurpassed.**

Small Catechism, Baptism, p 550, 1,2 What is baptism? Answer: Baptism is not simple water only, but it is the water comprehended in God’s command and connected with God’s Word.

Large Catechism, Baptism, p 732, 6,14 In these words you must note, in the first place, that here stand God’s commandment and institution, lest we doubt that baptism is divine, not devised nor invented by men. For as truly as I can say, No man has spun the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer out of his head, but they are revealed and given by God himself, so also I can boast that baptism is no human trifle, but instituted by God himself, moreover, that it is most solemnly and strictly commanded that we must be baptized or we cannot be saved, lest any one regard it as a trifling matter, like putting on a new red coat. From this now learn a proper understanding of the subject, and how to answer the question what baptism is, namely thus, that it is not mere ordinary water, but water comprehended in God’s Word and command, and sanctified thereby, so that it is nothing else than a divine water; not that the water in itself is nobler than other water, but that God’s Word and command are added.

Gerhard: The essence of baptism consists in an action, namely, dipping the person who is to be baptized into water, or pouring water on the person, which is doing the same thing, and then reciting the words of institution, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Thus, in general, three essential parts of baptism must be prescribed, which cannot be omitted or changed, namely, water, word, and action. The action includes the dipping of the man into water, or the sprinkling of water, and the recitation of the words, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” That the essence of baptism consists in an action is clear from the general principle demonstrated above, that the essence of the sacraments consists in something done. It is not enough to speak the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit over the water of baptism, but it is also required that the man be dipped in water or sprinkled with water. Likewise it is not enough to dip the man in water or to sprinkle him with water, but it is required that this be done in the name of the Father, Son, and *Holy Spirit* (*Loci*, vol. IX, loc. XXI de sacro baptismo, para. LXXXVIII, p 137).

**7. There is no special spiritual, heavenly element in baptism that corresponds to the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. Although various elements have been suggested, no clear Scripture testimony can be adduced.**

**a) Things that have been suggested include the Trinity, the blood of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the word of God.**

Matthew 28:19 Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.”

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5:26 [Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her] to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.

**b) If the desire to find a spiritual element in baptism stems from seeking a parallel to a purely spiritual presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper, this desire is wrongly motivated and out of order. (Recall Beza at the Colloquy of Montbeliard with Andreae, 1586.)**

**II. Baptism was instituted by Christ to be performed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**

**1. Christ instituted Baptism as a means of grace, as an instrument that proclaims the saving work of Christ and creates and strengthens faith.**

**a) The exalted Christ, who had been verified as the Savior of the world, instituted the sacrament with authority.**

Matthew 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

Philippians 2:9,10 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

Isaiah 53:10 It was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

**b) Christ placed baptism on a level with teaching, with both serving the purpose of uniting people to him in faith, of “making disciples” of them.**

Matthew 28:19-20 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.<sup>19</sup> πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, <sup>20</sup> διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν.

**c) The apostles consistently used baptism as a means of grace. It was never used as an afterthought, an optional rite, or as a mere ceremony.**

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 10:48 He ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Acts 16:33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.

**2. Being baptized in or into God’s name involves being united with God through Jesus, the mediator between the Triune God and mankind.**

**a) Baptism makes promises to the recipient concerning the reestablished union between the sinner and the Triune God accomplished by Christ.**

Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Numbers 6:22-27 The LORD said to Moses, <sup>23</sup> “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: <sup>24</sup> The LORD bless you and keep you; <sup>25</sup> the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; <sup>26</sup> the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.’ <sup>27</sup> So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”

**b) This significance and value of baptism should be clearly expressed when administering baptism.**

**1) The Bible clearly testifies to the importance of being united with God as his children and heirs.**

Galatians 3:26,27 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, <sup>27</sup> for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

John 1:12 To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Romans 8:16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.

**2) The words Christ used in instituting baptism are well suited to offer the recipient this promise and assurance.**

Matthew 28:19 Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Adolf Hoenecke (citing Gerhard, critically): According to Gerhard, the formula of baptism means: 1) That baptism is from God, and that the pastor does not act on his own authority, but by the commission of God and in God’s place; 2) That the triune God himself is present through his name with his grace, so that the formula “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” says, “I testify that you are received into the covenant of God through this sacrament of grace, that God washes your sins away, and that he makes you his child and heir”; 3) That the one who is baptized is obligated by baptism to honor the triune God according to his Word, and to fight under Christ’s flag against the devil, sin, and his flesh. This explanation remains a bit too external in Point 2. And as far as the sacrament is concerned, Point 3 does not belong here at all (*ELD, IV*, p 89,90).

Compare also the Apostles Creed and other ancient *regulae fidei* (rules of faith).

Compare Reymond: When we take our departure from the formula that Jesus used in his institution, namely, “baptizing into the name,” . . . it becomes apparent that the formula expresses a relationship to the person



into whom or in whose name the person is baptized. Baptism then basically denotes the fact of a relationship. What kind of relationship? When such passages as Romans 6:3-6, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:27-28, and Colossians 2:11-12 are taken into account, it becomes plain that the nature of the relationship is one of union with Christ. . . . Of this basic union baptism is the sacramental sign and seal (*NST*, p 925).

- c) **Since it is only through the mediating work of Christ that we are brought into God's family as children and heirs, the sacrament may be briefly called a baptism in the name of Christ Jesus.**

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in (ἐν) the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 8:16 The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into (εἰς) the name of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 10:48 He ordered that they be baptized in (ἐν) the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Romans 6:3 Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into (εἰς) Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

Galatians 3:27 All of you who were baptized into (εἰς) Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Didache, VII, 1,3: Baptize in (εἰς) the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . . Pour water on the head three times in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Compare IX, 5: Let no one eat or drink from your Eucharist except those who have been baptized in (εἰς) the name of the Lord. For concerning this the Lord also said, "Do not give that which is holy to dogs."

Compare Reymond: One interesting thing to note about the baptisms in Acts is that they are administered "upon," "into," or "in" the name of Jesus and not in the name of the Triune God as specified in the Matthew 28 formula. While some critics believe this proves that Matthew 28:19 is a "later Matthean redaction of a more primitive apostolic commissioning," I would suggest that Luke is simply giving an abbreviated form of the words actually used in the baptismal ceremony, highlighting by his use of Jesus' name alone both the fact that it is through Jesus' mediation that one enters into union with the triune God and the fact that these persons were being admitted into the *Christian* church (*NST*, p 926-927).

**3. Baptisms performed by religious groups that wrongly use the baptismal formula and the name of God may be invalid.**

- a) **The baptism of churches that retain the essentials (application of water and confession of the Triune God) must be allowed as legitimate.**

Council of Arles (314 AD): Concerning the churches of Africa, because they follow a peculiar custom of rebaptizing, it was resolved that if anyone comes to the church from a heretical group, he should be asked for a confession of faith. And if it becomes evident that he was baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a hand should only be laid on him that he may receive the Holy Spirit. But if, when he is asked for his confession, he does not answer “this Trinity” (i.e., if he does not give a Trinitarian confession), let him be baptized.

- b) The baptisms of any who deny the Triune God are not Christian baptisms. Though these people use the sounds and syllables of God’s Word, they have emptied it of its meaning and thus do not have the Word.**
- c) Many baptisms “in Jesus name” are non-Trinitarian baptisms of Oneness Sabellian Pentecostals.**

### **III. Baptism, the sacrament of initiation, promises and confirms to the recipient adoption as God's child.**

#### **1. Baptism brings the recipient into union with the Triune God.**

- a) This union is indicated by the preposition εἰς (= ἐν plus dative).**

Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 6:3 Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

1 Corinthians 1:13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?

Galatians 3:27 All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

- b) This union is compared to the status enjoyed by an heir who has attained the full legal age.**

John 1:12 To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Galatians 4:1-7 What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate.<sup>2</sup> He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.<sup>3</sup> So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world.<sup>4</sup> But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law,<sup>5</sup> to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.<sup>6</sup> Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”<sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

Ephesians 1:5 He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.

1 John 3:1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

**c) Baptism links the recipient to the name of the Triune God.**

Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Numbers 6:22-27 The LORD said to Moses, <sup>23</sup> “Tell Aaron and his sons, This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: <sup>24</sup> The LORD bless you and keep you; <sup>25</sup> the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; <sup>26</sup> the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. <sup>27</sup> So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”

Romans 8:14-17 Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. <sup>17</sup> Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Revelation 3:12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.

Revelation 14:1 Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads.

Large Catechism, Baptism, p 706, 37b: God’s name was given us when we became Christians and were baptized, so that we are called children of God and have the sacraments, by which He so incorporates us in himself that everything which is God’s must serve for our use.

**2. The blessings of baptism are designated in Scripture with a variety of terms.**

**a) The following Bible terms clearly identify blessings received through baptism.**

**1) Salvation, the application of redemption, is a blessing of baptism.**

Mark 16:16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Acts 16:30-33 He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”<sup>31</sup> They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”<sup>32</sup> Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.<sup>33</sup> At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.

1 Peter 3:21 This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God.

Small Catechism, Baptism, p 550, 5,6: What does baptism give or profit? Answer: It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

Large Catechism, Baptism, p 736, 23-25: Since we know now what baptism is, and how it is to be regarded, we must also learn why and for what purpose it is instituted, that is, what it profits, gives, and works. And this also we cannot discern better than from the words of Christ above quoted: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. Therefore state it most simply thus, that the power, work, profit, fruit, and end of baptism is this, namely, to save. For no one is baptized in order that he may become a prince, but, as the words declare, that he be saved. But to be saved, we know, is nothing else than to be delivered from sin, death, and the devil, and to enter into the kingdom of Christ, and to live with him forever.

## **2) Repentance (change of heart and mind) is a blessing of baptism.**

Mark 1:4 So John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Luke 3:3 He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Acts 19:4 Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.”

## **3) Regeneration or rebirth is a blessing of baptism. What is said to be true of the Word of God is true of this sacrament.**

John 3:5 Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.”

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 1:23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

Matthaeus Hafenreffer, answering an objector who says: “You say that we are regenerated by baptism, but Peter attributes this to the Word” (1 Pe 1:23). Both are true, for we are born again both by the Word and by baptism. But baptism is at the same time a visible seal of regeneration. “But what about this? If someone has been regenerated by the Word, does he still need to be baptized? And can it be said that for him baptism is a washing of regeneration?” The answer to both questions is yes. For also believers ought to be baptized, unless it cannot be done, unless baptism is made impossible by the circumstances. And when they are baptized, baptism is truly for them a washing of regeneration both because it adds a marvelous increase to the regeneration by the Word [Caution! Regeneration is instantaneous; what is increased is faith.] and because the sacramental action puts a seal on the regeneration to make faith more certain (*Loci*, Book III, stat. IV, loc. VI, p 613).

**4) The remission or forgiveness of sins is a blessing of baptism.**

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 22:16 What are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.

Ephesians 5:26 [Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her] to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.

**5) A clean conscience is a blessing of baptism.**

1 Peter 3:21 This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge (*ἐπερώτημα*) of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**6) Membership in the communion of saints, the Christian church, is a blessing of baptism.**

1 Corinthians 12:13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Large Catechism, Baptism, p 732, 2a: In the first place, we take up baptism, by which we are first received into the Christian Church.

Large Catechism, Baptism, p 748, 64: Lastly, we must also know what baptism signifies, and why God has ordained just such an external sign and ceremony for the sacrament by which we are first received into the Christian Church.

Large Catechism, Baptism, p 690, 51-53: I believe that there is upon earth a little holy group and congregation of pure saints, under one head, even Christ, called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, one mind, and understanding, with manifold gifts, yet agreeing in love, without sects or schisms. I am also a part and member of the same, a sharer and joint owner of all the goods it possesses, brought to it and incorporated into it by the Holy Spirit by having heard and continuing to hear the Word of God, which is the beginning of entering it.

**7) Being clothed with Christ is a blessing of baptism.**

Galatians 3:27 All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ (χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε).

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. II, p 906, 67: Therefore there is a great difference between baptized and unbaptized men. For since, according to the doctrine of St. Paul, Gal. 3:27, all who have been baptized have put on Christ, and thus are truly regenerate, they have now *arbitrium liberatum* (a liberated will), that is, as Christ says, they have been made free again, John 8:36; whence they are able not only to hear the Word, but also to assent to it and accept it, although in great weakness.

**8) The gift of the Holy Spirit is a blessing of baptism.**

Titus 3:5,6 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Apology, Art II (I), p 112, 35b: [Luther] also added in reference to the material that the Holy Spirit, given through baptism, begins to mortify the concupiscence, and creates new movements, a new light, a new sense and spirit, in man.

Large Catechism, Baptism, p 742, 41 Every Christian has enough in baptism to learn and to practice all his life; for he has always enough to do to believe firmly what it promises and brings: victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, the grace of God, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with His gifts.

**9) For a summary statement on the benefits channeled through baptism, consider the following:**

Hafenreffer: What are the benefits and effects produced by baptism? Regeneration and the remission of sins (Jn 3:5; Tt 3:5; Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3; Ac 2:38; 22:16; Eph 5:26), salvation and participation in all the benefits that come from Christ, to whom we are joined in baptism (Tt 3:5; 1 Pe

3:21; Ro 6:3; Ga 3:27; 1 Co 12:13), a good conscience toward God or certainty of faith regarding the forgiveness of sins (1 Pe 3:21; 2 Co 1:21), and newness of life (Ro 6:3; Col 2:11) (*Loci*, Bk III, Stat IV, p 609).

**b) Various churches err in their descriptions of baptismal blessing.**

**1) The Roman Catholic Church wrongly teaches that through baptism original or inherited sin is totally removed.**

Council of Trent, Session V, 5: The question is whether concupiscence, left after baptism and repentance in the regenerate, is truly and properly sin. Answer: This concupiscence, which the apostle sometimes calls sin, the holy synod declares that the Catholic Church has never understood to be sin. . . . If anyone thinks differently, let him be damned. In baptism the essence of original sin is removed; therefore the remnants after baptism, namely, concupiscence, are not really sin; for when the essence is taken away, the thing itself is removed.

Contrast Hollaz: Through baptism the guilt and dominion of sin is taken away, but not the root of and inclination to sin (*Examen*, 1096).

Contrast Gerhard: When it is accordingly asked what sort of wholesome means and medicine baptism is against sin, that is to be answered: 1) Sin is forgiven in holy baptism so that it is no longer imputed. 2) The sinful flesh or old Adam is put to death that it no longer rules. But this killing is not constituted in such a way that henceforth the evil lusts are totally obliterated or no longer are considered sinful in and of themselves; rather, they no longer rule (*Comprehensive Explanation*, Vol. I, p 113).

Apology, Art. II (I), p 112, 35-37: Here our adversaries inveigh against Luther also because he wrote that "Original sin remains after baptism." They add that this article was justly condemned by Leo X. But His Imperial Majesty will find on this point a manifest slander. For our adversaries know in what sense Luther intended this remark that original sin remains after baptism. He always wrote thus, namely, that baptism removes the guilt of original sin, although the material, as they call it, of the sin, i.e., concupiscence, remains. He also added in reference to the material that the Holy Spirit, given through baptism, begins to mortify the concupiscence, and creates new movements, a new light, a new sense and spirit in man. In the same manner, Augustine also speaks, who says: Sin is remitted in baptism, not in such a manner that it no longer exists, but so that it is not imputed. Here he confesses openly that sin exists, i.e., that it remains, although it is not imputed. And this judgment was so agreeable to those who succeeded him that it was recited also in the decrees. Also against Julian, Augustine says: The law, which is in the members, has been annulled by spiritual regeneration, and remains in the mortal flesh. It has been annulled because the guilt has been remitted in the sacrament, by which believers are born again; but it remains, because it produces desires, against which believers contend. Our adversaries know that Luther believes and teaches thus, and while they cannot reject the matter they nevertheless pervert his words, in order by this artifice to crush an innocent man.

**2) Those who insist on only the immediate working of the Holy Spirit, deny that baptism actually offers and gives spiritual blessing.**

Reymond: In what way does baptism become an effectual means of salvation? In what way does baptism contribute to the salvation of the elect? The answer is plain and simple. . . . Baptism becomes effectual for salvation in its character as a sign and seal of the spiritual verities of the new covenant. As a sign and seal it is a means of grace (1) to signify and (2) to confirm grace through faith apart from the rite of baptism (*NST*, p 952).

**3) The Pentecostals and Charismatics wrongly downplay water baptism as they teach a “Baptism in the Spirit” as a gift actively to be sought by all Christians.**

J. Rodman Williams: Baptism, for all its importance, cannot function as a precondition or prerequisite for the reception of the Holy Spirit. . . . Even less is water baptism portrayed as conferring the gift of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes from the exalted Lord who himself confers the gift and surely does not relegate such to a rite conducted by man (*Renewal Theology*, p 282).

The Assemblies of God, *The Promise of the Father*: All believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the normal experience of all in the early Christian Church. With it comes the endowment of power for life and service, the bestowment of the gifts and their uses in the work of the ministry. Lk 24:49; Ac 1:4,8; 1 Cor 12:1-3. This wonderful experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth. Ac 10:44-46; 11:14-16; 15:7-9 (Quoted in F. Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, p 61).

Assemblies of God: *The Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Ghost*: The baptism of believers in the Holy Ghost is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance. Ac 2:4. The speaking in tongues in this instance is the same in essence as the gift of tongues (1 Cor 12:4–10,28), but different in purpose and use (Quoted in F. Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, p 61).

Larry Christenson (Lutheran charismatic): Beyond conversion, beyond the assurance of salvation, beyond having the Holy Spirit, there is baptism with the Holy Spirit (*Speaking in Tongues*, p 38).

**3. God alone graciously gives the blessings through baptism.**

**a) Baptism is not a human work. It is not a work of the law.**

Apology, Art. XXIV (XII), p 388, 17-18: Theologians are rightly accustomed to distinguish between a sacrament and a sacrifice. Therefore let the genus comprehending both of these be either a ceremony or a sacred work. A



sacrament is a ceremony or work in which God presents to us that which the promise joined to the ceremony offers; as, baptism is a work, not which we offer to God, but in which God baptizes us (i.e., a minister in the place of God); and God here offers and presents the remission of sins, etc., according to the promise, Mark 16:16: “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” A sacrifice, on the contrary, is a ceremony or work which we render God in order to afford him honor.

Smalcald Articles, Part III, Art. IV, p 490: We will now return to the gospel, which not merely in one way gives us counsel and aid against sin; for God is superabundantly rich and liberal in His grace and goodness. First, through the spoken word by which the forgiveness of sins is preached in the whole world; which is the peculiar office of the gospel. Secondly, through baptism. Thirdly, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar. Fourthly, through the power of the keys, and also through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren, Matt. 18: 20, “Where two or three are gathered together,” etc.

Large Catechism, Baptism, p 740, 35-37: But if they say, as they are accustomed: “Still baptism is itself a work, and you say works are of no avail for salvation, what, then, becomes of faith?” Answer: Yes, our works, indeed, avail nothing for salvation; baptism, however, is not our work, but God’s (for, as was stated, you must put Christ-baptism far away from a bath-keeper’s baptism). God’s works, however, are saving and necessary for salvation, and do not exclude, but demand, faith; for without faith they could not be apprehended. For by allowing the water to be poured upon you, you have not yet received baptism in such a manner that it benefits you anything; but it becomes beneficial to you if you have yourself baptized with the thought that this is according to God’s command and ordinance, and besides in God’s name, in order that you may receive in the water the promised salvation. Now, this the fist cannot do, nor the body; but the heart must believe it. Thus you see plainly that there is here no work done by us, but a treasure which he gives us, and which faith apprehends, just as the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross is not a work, but a treasure comprehended in the word, and offered to us and received by faith. Therefore they do us violence by exclaiming against us as though we preach against faith, while we alone insist upon it as being of such necessity that without it nothing can be received nor enjoyed.

**b) The power of Baptism does not rest on the water, the amount of water used, or on the manner of applying the water, but on the word of divine institution.**

Small Catechism, Baptism, p 550, 9,10: How can water do such great things? Answer: It is not the water indeed that does them, but the word of God which is in and with the water, and faith, which trusts such word of God in the water. For without the word of God the water is simple water and no baptism. But with the word of God it is a baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says, Titus, chapter three: By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying.

Large Catechism, Baptism, p 736, 22: Therefore I exhort again that these two, the water and the Word, by no means be separated from one another and parted. For if the Word is separated from it, the water is the same as that with which the servant cooks and may indeed be called a bath-keeper's baptism. But when it is added, as God has ordained, it is a sacrament, and is called Christ-baptism. Let this be the first part, regarding the essence and dignity of the holy sacrament.

Smalcald Articles, Part III, Art. V, p 490, V, 1-3: Baptism is nothing else than the Word of God in the water, commanded by his institution, or, as Paul says, a washing in the word; as also Augustine says: Let the Word come to the element, and it becomes a sacrament. And for this reason we do not hold with Thomas and the monastic preachers or Dominicans who forget the word, God's institution, and say that God has imparted to the water a spiritual power, which through the water washes away sin. Nor do we agree with Scotus and the Barefooted monks, the Minorites or Franciscan monks, who teach that, by the assistance of the divine will, baptism washes away sins, and that this ablution occurs only through the will of God, and by no means through the word or water.

**c) In emphasizing that the power in baptism comes from the divine word rather than by human work, Lutherans are not embracing or endorsing the *opus operatum* idea, as some Reformed falsely claim.**

John Henry Heidegger (d. 1698): Baptism does not in a bare way represent these outstanding blessings of the gospel, but when it is properly used, it seals and shows to those who are baptized those things belonging to them by the implications of the promises given in the covenant of grace. But baptism does not produce these blessings by some inhering or assisting cause, but as a seal, a pledge and token which makes faith most certain about those things that have been received or will be received. . . . This error [namely, the error of the *opus operatum*, with which Heidegger charges the Lutherans] turns earthly elements and creatures into causes of grace and changes the sacraments into idols and some sort of magical charms. O that the Augustans [i.e., the Lutherans] would give up this doctrine completely by which they make the sacraments *οχήματα* of grace, vehicles, or, as it were, a kind of hand, by which God gives His grace. (*Corpus theologiae christianae*, XXV, 42, quoted by Heppe, *Dogmatik der evang.-ref. Kirche*, pp. 444f.). [From our Lutheran perspective this is either a horrible misunderstanding resulting from ignorance, or a shameful slander perpetrated against better knowledge]

Contrast Quenstedt: Also to all hypocrites baptism offers spiritual gifts, such as regeneration and the things that it includes, the gift of faith, forgiveness of sins ... but some adults by active impenitence, hypocrisy, and the obstacle of stubbornness rob themselves of the salutary efficacy of baptism, and therefore, even though these gifts are offered to them, they are not actually conferred on them. Nevertheless baptism meanwhile is and remains a saving instrument and means of regeneration in them, since from the absence of the second act [i.e., the receiving of grace and forgiveness through faith], caused by some fault in the subject, the absence of the first act [i.e., the power of baptism or the serious offer of grace and forgiveness] does not follow (IV, 117).

**d) The Calvinist inability to understand baptismal power flows from their erring emphasis on immediate grace.**

Heppe: The significance and efficacy of baptism must not be viewed as being derived from some power of the Holy Spirit which is essentially inherent in baptism or the baptismal water and which works in a magical way. This is true because grace is not in essence bound to baptism. The significance and efficacy of baptism is to be derived only from the promise which God has attached to the act of baptism. According to that promise baptism is to be a seal and pledge of the grace bestowed in the new covenant. This promise Christ fulfills in this way in the outward baptismal action [Notice he does not say “through” but “in”]. He is through the Holy Spirit active internally and bestows the grace of baptism without means on those who believe. Baptism is not a means or source of salvation, but only a certification of it (*Dogmatik der evang.-ref. Kirche*, p 444f.).

Reymond: There is nothing in the sacraments *per se* that saves and . . . the piety of their administrator contributes nothing to the sacraments as means of salvation. Rather, the sacraments become effectual means of salvation for the elect only as Christ blesses them and as his Spirit works in them who by faith receive them (*NST*, p 950).

**IV. Baptism, by assuring the recipient of his adoption by the Triune God, also furnishes the impulse and the ability to lead a new life.**

**1. Baptism signifies a new life.**

**a) This is particularly true regarding immersion as a mode of applying the water.**

Small Catechism, Baptism, p 550, 11,12: What does such baptizing with water signify? Answer: It signifies that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts, and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise; who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Large Catechism, Baptism, p 748, 64-66: Lastly, we must also know what baptism signifies, and why God has ordained just such external sign and ceremony for the sacrament by which we are first received into the Christian Church. But the act or ceremony is this, that we are sunk under the water, which passes over us, and afterwards are drawn out again. These two parts, to be sunk under the water and drawn out again, signify the power and operation of baptism, which is nothing else than putting to death the old Adam, and after that the resurrection of the new man, both of which must take place in us all our lives, so that a truly Christian life is nothing else than a daily baptism, once begun and ever to be continued. For this must be practiced without ceasing, that we ever keep purging away whatever is of the old Adam, and that that which belongs to the new man come forth.

**b) The flood, a figure of baptism, destroyed all achievements of the former civilization and forced Noah to begin anew.**

1 Peter 3:20,21 In [the ark] only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,<sup>21</sup> and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Genesis 9:20 Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard.

## **2. Baptism also produces the sanctification that it symbolizes.**

Matthew 3:8 Produce fruit (καρπὸς) in keeping with (ἄξιος) repentance.

Luke 3:8 Produce fruit (καρπὸς) in keeping with (ἄξιος) repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father.” For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.

Romans 6:1-11 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?<sup>2</sup> By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?<sup>3</sup> Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?<sup>4</sup> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.<sup>5</sup> If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.<sup>6</sup> For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—<sup>7</sup> because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.<sup>8</sup> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.<sup>9</sup> For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.<sup>10</sup> The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.<sup>11</sup> In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Large Catechism, Baptism, p 750, 75.76 [Repentance] is really nothing else than baptism. For what else is repentance but an earnest attack upon the old man that his lusts be restrained and entering upon a new life? Therefore, if you live in repentance, you walk in baptism, which not only signifies such a new life, but also produces, begins, and exercises it. For therein are given grace, the Spirit, and power to suppress the old man, so that the new man may come forth and become strong.

Compare Gerhard [To be read critically, since Gerhard fails to recognize that in Titus 3:5 “regeneration” and “renewal” are synonyms arranged chiastically; Romans 6:3 and Colossians 2:11 would be better used here]: Regeneration: It includes the bestowal of faith, forgiveness of sins, reception into the covenant of grace, adoption as children of God, being clothed with Christ, deliverance from the power of the devil, and the possession of eternal salvation. Renewal: The Holy Spirit is given to him (i.e., the regenerated man) and he begins to renew the intellect, the will, and all the powers of the soul, so that the lost image of God begins to be restored in him, the inner man is renewed, the old man is put off and the new man put on, the spirit fights against the flesh and rules over it, in order that sin may not gain control in the body. Baptism is a divine and saving means and instrument through which the entire most holy Trinity efficaciously works for man's salvation. However, although the effects of baptism are varied and numerous, yet, following the apostle in Titus 3:5, we will include them all under these two

headings, because baptism is according to Paul the washing of regeneration and renewal (*Loci*, Vol. IX, loc. XXI, de sacro baptismo, para. C, p 148).

**3. The various purposes and values of baptism may be summarized in this way:**

Koenig: The purpose of baptism is either final or intermediate. The final purpose is either absolutely such, namely, the glorification of God's wisdom and goodness, or relatively such, namely, the salvation of souls. The intermediate purpose is either primary or secondary. In infants, the primary purpose is the bestowal of faith and covenant grace. In adult believers it is the confirmation of faith and sealing of grace. As far as all candidates for baptism as a whole are concerned, the primary purpose is to bestow faith and grace, together with all the spiritual gifts that grace brings along with itself. The secondary purpose is 1) to distinguish Christians from the heathen crowd; 2) to warn against natural impurity; 3) to remind us of the love of Christ; 4) to urge us on to newness of life (*Theologia Positiva, de Baptismo*, para. 795-799, p 232-233).

**V. Children, including infants, are not to be excluded from baptism.**

**1. Christ's command is broad enough to include children.**

**a) His instructions were that all nations be baptized.**

Matthew 28:19 Go and make disciples of all nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη), baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Mark 16:15,16 He said to them, "Go into all the world (εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἅπαντα) and preach the good news to all creation (πάσῃ τῇ κτίσει).<sup>16</sup>Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

**b) He did not qualify his words to exclude certain persons, as the New Testament does with the Lord's Supper.**

1 Corinthians 11:28 A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.

**c) The instructions of Jesus to his disciples were final, leaving room for no possible amendments.**

Acts 1:4-9 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about."<sup>5</sup> For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."<sup>6</sup> So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"<sup>7</sup> He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority."<sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."<sup>9</sup> After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

- d) **The burden of proof, then, is clearly with those who would exclude children.**

## **2. Other Bible statements support the practice of infant baptism.**

- a) **Christ had little children brought to him and spoke of them as members of his kingdom.**

Mark 10:13-16 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup>When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. <sup>15</sup>I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." <sup>16</sup>And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

Luke 18:15-17 People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. <sup>16</sup>But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. <sup>17</sup>I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

Matthew 18:1-6,10 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" <sup>2</sup>He called a little child and had him stand among them. <sup>3</sup>And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup>Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>5</sup>And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. <sup>6</sup>But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. <sup>10</sup>See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven."

Matthew 21:15,16 But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. <sup>16</sup>"Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, "'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'?"

Psalms 8:2 From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

- b) **Circumcision was performed on the eighth day.**

### **1) Circumcision was the Old Testament sacrament of initiation.**

Colossians 2:11,12 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, <sup>12</sup>having been buried with

him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

Genesis 17:10-14 This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. <sup>11</sup> You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. <sup>12</sup> For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. <sup>13</sup> Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. <sup>14</sup> Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.

Exodus 12:48 An alien living among you who wants to celebrate the LORD's Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat of it.

**2) Circumcision was restricted to male children. There is no parallel restriction with regard to baptism.**

Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Acts 16:15 When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

**c) The New Testament emphasizes that God desires children to enter the kingdom of heaven, but mentions no way for them to enter it other than baptism.**

Matthew 18:14 Your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."

Mark 10:14 Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

Baier: That infants are to be baptized is correctly concluded from John 3:5 and Mark 10:14, taken together. That is done in the following way: Those concerning whom it is the will of Christ that they should come to salvation, but who cannot come to life in the ordinary way except by means of baptism, ought to have baptism, as the ordinary way conferred on them. It surely should not be denied to them. But Christ wants infants to be saved. But they cannot come to eternal life in any other ordinary way than by means of baptism [by

virtue of the universal dictum found in John 3:5] (*Compendium*, Part III, Cap. X, Art. VII, p 540).

**d) There is no explicit mention of infant baptism in the New Testament. The concept of excluding them as recipients of baptism, however, is foreign to the New Testament.**

Acts 2:38,39 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>39</sup> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

Acts 11:14 with 10:48 He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.<sup>48</sup> So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Acts 16:15,33 When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us.<sup>33</sup> At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.

1 Corinthians 1:16 I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don’t remember if I baptized anyone else.

**3. There are various objections to infant baptism, none of which have scriptural support.**

**a) Some who object to infant baptism maintain that children have no need of baptismal grace.**

**1) This denies that children have guilt in the eyes of God.**

Tertullian (d. ca. 220) According to circumstance and disposition and even age of the individual person, it may be better to delay baptism; and especially so in the case of little children. . . . Let them come, then, while they grow up, while they learn, while they are taught to whom to come; let them become Christians when they will have been able to know Christ! Why does the innocent age hasten to the remission of sins? (*Treatise on Baptism*, 18, 4).

Mennonites: The scriptural order was clear and none of it could possibly apply to infants.... Infants cannot understand teaching about salvation, nor can they believe it, repent, and promise to live lives of obedience. Anabaptists rejected the idea that water could become a sacrament that conveyed grace. They maintained that "the water is just water." Primary was the inner baptism of the Spirit (*Who Are the Mennonites*, [www.thirdway.com](http://www.thirdway.com)).

Erickson: While the status of infants and those who never reach moral competence is a difficult question, it appears that our Lord did not regard them as under condemnation. . . . There are several indications in



Scripture that persons are not morally responsible before a certain point, which we sometimes call “the age of accountability” (*Christian Theology*, p 654).

**2) Scripture, however, ascribes sinfulness and guilt to infants.**

Psalm 51:5 Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Genesis 8:21 The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: “Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.”

Job 14:4 Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!

Job 15:14 What is man, that he could be pure, or one born of woman, that he could be righteous?

John 3:6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

Romans 7:18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

Formula of Concord, Ep., Art. XII, p 838, 6: [Anabaptist articles that cannot be tolerated in the church include] that children who are not baptized are not sinners before God, but righteous and innocent, who in their innocence, because they have not yet attained the use of reason, are saved without baptism (which, according to their assertion, they do not need). Therefore they reject the entire doctrine concerning original sin and what belongs to it.

Gerhard: We turn the argument around: infants do not have faith, namely, in view of their corrupted nature, because they are flesh on account of their fleshly descent from their parents. Therefore they should be baptized in order to come to faith and salvation (*Comprehensive Explanation*, Vol. I, Ch. 20, Art. 8, p 160).

**b) Others who object to infant baptism say that children cannot have saving faith.**

**1) Many have denied that infants and children can believe in Christ.**

Racovian Catechism: We might ask whether infants are suitable for baptism, ... since we have in the Scriptures no command nor example concerning this question, nor are they ... yet able to have ... faith in Christ (1739 Latin Edition, p 555, 556).

Seventh Day Adventism: Infant baptism is not valid. Infants cannot possess the essential conditions for baptism, namely, repentance and faith (Alva G. Huffer, *Systematic Theology*, p 359).

Grudem: In the new covenant it is appropriate that infants *not* be baptized, and that baptism only be given to those who give evidence of genuine saving faith, because membership in the church is based on an internal spiritual reality, not on physical descent (*ST*, p 977).

**2) In response, we offer the following truths.**

- a) Children are full human beings with a human soul in which God can work faith. They are not unreasoning animals.**

Quenstedt: Faith requires as its subject (the person who believes) a soul that can think or reason. For that reason faith cannot be kindled in animals. Nevertheless faith does not depend on the working and the use of it [the soul that can think or reason] (*TDP*, IV, 153).

- b) Faith is best described primarily as a matter of inner trust rather than one of mental activity or conscious deliberation.**

Romans 10:10 It is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

**Consider a child's implicit faith in its mother.**

**Consider the question: Where is faith in adults during sleep or in a state of unconsciousness?**

- c) Scripture testifies expressly to the faith of infants and small children.**

Matthew 18:6 But if anyone causes one of these little ones (ἐνὰ τῶν μικρῶν) who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

Mark 10:15 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child (παιδίον) will never enter it.

Luke 18:15-16 People were also bringing babies (τὰ βρέφη) to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. <sup>16</sup> But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children (τὰ παιδία) come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

Luke 1:15 He will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth (ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ).

Psalm 71:5,6 For you have been my hope, O Sovereign LORD,  
my confidence since my youth (מִנְעוּרִי). <sup>6</sup> From birth (מִבְטֶן) I have  
relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother's womb. I  
will ever praise you.

- c) **Some Reformed practice infant baptism but place it on an unscriptural basis by assuming that children of Christian parents by their natural birth have become members of the church and are therefore entitled to baptism.**

Calvin: From this it follows that the children of believing parents are not baptized for this reason that they, who before this were strangers to the church, might first then become children of God, but rather by this solemn sign they are received into the church because by virtue of the covenant promise they already before baptism belonged to the body of Christ (*Institutes*, Bk. IV, Ch. XVI, para. 24).

Reymond: Children of covenant parents are expressly represented as possessing status in the covenant community. Reformed paedobaptists therefore believe that the baptism of their infants and young children today is a justifiable deduction (*NST*, p 944).

Contrast Chemnitz: By no means is it to be conceded that infants who are baptized are without faith or that they are baptized in the faith of another person. The faith of others, indeed, either that of the parents or those who bring them, leads little children to Christ in baptism (Mk 10:13) and prays that they may be given a faith of their own. But there is no doubt that through the washing of water by the Word Christ by His Spirit is active and efficacious in infants who are baptized in order that they receive the kingdom of God. We grant that we do not understand how this happens. For baptism is the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. He is poured into those who have been baptized, that being justified they might be heirs of eternal life (Tt 3:5; Mk 10:15). And this is called "the faith of infants" (*Loci*, Part III, de baptismo, sect. II, p 160).

#### 4. **History establishes the fact that infant baptism was practiced in the early church.**

- a) **Note the following witnesses.**

1) Justin Martyr (d. ca.165) as cited in the Apology, I, 15, 6, spoke of Christians who were disciples from childhood on (μαθητεύεσθαι ἐκ παιδῶν). In view of Matthew 28:19 this terminology is most satisfactorily understood of baptism, particularly in view of the fact that he regards baptism as the New Testament counterpart of Old Testament circumcision.

2) Irenaeus (d. ca. 200; a disciple of Polycarp who was a disciple of John): [Christ] came to save all men by himself, all, I say, who through him are reborn into God, infants, little children, boys, young men and old men (*Against Heresies*, 2:22:4).

3) Tertullian (d. ca. 220) opposed infant baptism, but did so in a way that shows it was then an established custom. “Why does the innocent age hasten to the remission of sins?” (*Treatise on Baptism*, 18, 4).

4) Origen (d. ca. 254): Every soul that is born into flesh is soiled by the filth of wickedness and sin. . . . In the church, baptism is given for the remission of sins, and, according to the usage of the church, baptism is given even to infants. If there were nothing in infants which required the remission of sins and nothing in them pertinent to forgiveness, the grace of baptism would seem superfluous (*Homilies on Leviticus* 8:3).

Origen: The church received from the apostles the tradition of giving baptism even to infants. The apostles, to whom were committed the secrets of the divine sacraments, knew there are in everyone innate strains of original sin, which must be washed away through water and the Spirit (*Commentaries on Romans* 5:9).

5) Cyprian, reporting the decision of the Synod of Carthage (ca. 253): As to what pertains to the case of infants: You [Fidus] said that they ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, that the old law of circumcision must be taken into consideration, and that you did not think that one should be baptized and sanctified within the eighth day after his birth. In our council it seemed to us far otherwise. No one agreed to the course which you thought should be taken. Rather, we all judge that the mercy and grace of God ought to be denied to no man born (*Letters*, 64:2).

Cyprian: If, in the case of the worst sinners and those who formerly sinned much against God, when afterwards they believe, the remission of their sins is granted and no one is held back from baptism and grace, how much more, then, should an infant not be held back, who, having but recently been born, has done no sin, except that, born of the flesh according to Adam, he has contracted the contagion of that old death from his first being born. For this very reason does an infant approach more easily to receive the remission of sins: because the sins forgiven him are not his own but those of another (*Letters*, 64:5).

6) Augustine (d. 430): Cyprian was not issuing a new decree but was keeping to the most solid belief of the Church in order to correct some who thought that infants ought not be baptized before the eighth day after their birth. . . . He agreed with certain of his fellow bishops that a child is able to be duly baptized as soon as he is born (*Letters*, 166:8:23).

Augustine: What the universal church holds, not as instituted by councils but as something always held, is most correctly believed to have been handed down by apostolic authority. Since others respond for children, so that the celebration of the sacrament may be complete for them, it is certainly availing to them for their consecration, because they themselves are not able to respond (*On Baptism, Against the Donatists*, 4:24:31).

Augustine: The custom of Mother Church in baptizing infants is certainly not to be scorned, nor is it to be regarded in any way as superfluous, nor is it

to be believed that its tradition is anything except apostolic (*The Literal Interpretation of Genesis* 10:23:39).

**b) Martin Luther provided a practical discourse on infant baptism.**

Large Catechism, Infant Baptism, p 742, 47-63: That the baptism of infants is pleasing to Christ is sufficiently proved from his own work, namely, that God sanctifies many of them who have been thus baptized and has given them the Holy Spirit; and that there are yet many even to-day in whom we perceive that they have the Holy Spirit both because of their doctrine and life; as it is also given to us by the grace of God that we can explain the Scriptures and come to the knowledge of Christ, which is impossible without the Holy Spirit. But if God did not accept the baptism of infants, he would not give the Holy Spirit nor any of his gifts to any of them; in short, during this long time unto this day no man upon earth could have been a Christian. Now, since God confirms baptism by the gifts of His Holy Spirit, as is plainly perceptible in some of the church fathers, as St. Bernard, Gerson, John Hus, and others, who were baptized in infancy, and since the holy Christian Church cannot perish until the end of the world, they must acknowledge that such infant baptism is pleasing to God. For he can never be opposed to himself, or support falsehood and wickedness, or for its promotion impart his grace and Spirit. This is indeed the best and strongest proof for the simple-minded and unlearned.

**5. Having sponsors or godparents for children who are baptized is a church custom, not a command of Scripture. Not having them does not invalidate the sacrament.**

- a) Sponsors may serve as baptismal assistants to carry the child. They may serve as witnesses, to provide appropriate assurances to the child or the church that a valid baptism was performed. They may also be asked to pray and care for the child spiritually along with or in place of the parents if needed.**
- b) Any respectable person may serve as witness, but to pray and care for the child spiritually the person should be a Christian whose confession agrees with that of the parents.**
- c) The use of witnesses has many precedents in Scripture, but it is not absolutely necessary for baptism.**

Numbers 35:30 Anyone who kills a person is to be put to death as a murderer only on the testimony of witnesses. But no one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.

Jeremiah 32:10,12,25 I signed and sealed the deed, had it witnessed, and weighed out the silver on the scales. <sup>12</sup> and I gave this deed to Baruch son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hanamel and of the witnesses who had signed the deed and of all the Jews sitting in the courtyard of the guard. <sup>25</sup> And though the city will be handed over to the Babylonians, you, O Sovereign LORD, say to me, “Buy the field with silver and have the transaction witnessed.”

Matthew 18:16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

John 19:35 The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe.

Hebrews 6:16 Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument.

Recall the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40), at which there were no witnesses other than Philip and the Ethiopian.

**6. The Order of Baptism may include a number of features that are appropriate but not necessary or essential for a valid baptism.**

- a) **There may be the mention of original sin, redemption by Jesus, and the Lord's institution of baptism. The use of the sign of the cross, prayer and the Lord's Prayer, the recitation of Mark 10:13–16, the imposition of hands, admonitions to parents, sponsors, and the church, the renunciation of the devil and his works (exorcism), a confession of faith, and the speaking of a benediction are fitting elements in a baptismal ceremony.**

Consider sample words of exorcism: I adjure you, O unclean spirit, that you come out of this servant of Jesus Christ in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Chemnitz says that whoever omits the exorcism or rejects it with this idea and for this reason, (as the Anabaptists and Sacramentarians do), that they think that infants either do not have sins and therefore are not by nature children of wrath and under the power of the devil, or, even though they are born in sin, yet because of their physical birth from believing parents, they are even before baptism and without baptism not outside the kingdom of heaven nor under the power of darkness these men deserve to be criticized and condemned (Loc. c. Th., III, 161).

Note: We no longer commonly use words of exorcism in baptismal rites today, at least in part because they can be misunderstood as assuming demonic possession in the case of the baptismal candidate.

- b) **As long as there is the application of water with the Word, these features are not necessary.**

Gerhard: It should not be maintained that such rites belong to the integrity and essence of baptism or are necessary, but they should be considered to be adiaphora (*Loci, de baptismo*, Art. 254).

Gerhard: Justly uprooted are such practices as exorcising the baptismal water with special exorcism, blowing under the baby's eyes, putting salt in the mouth, putting spittle in the nose and ears and saying: Ephatha, be opened, anointing the breast and shoulders with oil, smearing the forehead with

chrism, imparting milk and honey into the mouth, etc., and ascribing to each and all these things a special efficacy. All these things are in part superstition, in part foolish, and totally irrelevant for edification – especially the exorcism of the baptismal water (*Comprehensive Explanation*, Vol. I, p 227).

Gerhard: The essence of baptism consists in an action, naming, dipping the person who is to be baptized into water, or pouring water, which is doing the same thing, and then reciting the words of institution, “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Thus, in general, three essential parts of baptism must be affirmed, which cannot be omitted or changed: water, word, and action. The action includes the dipping of the person into water, or the sprinkling of water, and the recitation of the words (*Loci*, Vol. IX, loc. XXI de sacro baptismo, para. LXXXVIII, p 137).

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. X, p 1054, 8.9: But as regards genuine adiaphora, or matters of indifference (as explained before), we believe, teach, and confess that such ceremonies, in and of themselves, are no worship of God, nor any part of it, but must be properly distinguished from such as are, as it is written: In vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, Matt. 15:9. Therefore we believe, teach, and confess that the congregation of God of every place and every time has, according to its circumstances, the good right, power, and authority, in matters truly adiaphora, to change, to diminish, and to increase them, without thoughtlessness and offense, in an orderly and becoming way, as at any time it may be regarded most profitable, most beneficial, and best for preserving good order, maintaining Christian discipline and for εὐταξία worthy of the profession of the Gospel, and the edification of the Church. Moreover, how we can yield and give way with a good conscience to the weak in faith in such external adiaphora, Paul teaches Rom. 14, and proves it by his example, Acts 16: 3; 21:26; 1 Cor. 9:19.

## **VI. Although baptism is not to be repeated, it is to the Christian throughout his life a constant source of spiritual comfort and strength.**

### **1. Baptism is not to be repeated.**

#### **a) Baptism is the sacrament of initiation.**

Matthew 28:19 Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.”

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

Quenstedt: A baptism that is correctly administered is not to be repeated or done again, 1) because it is the sacrament of initiation; for just as we are born only once, so also we are reborn only once; 2) because no command calling for this repetition, no promise attached to such repetition, no example of such

repetition is found in the sacred Scriptures; and 3) because the benefit of baptism lasts forever and the unbelief of man does not make the faithfulness of God without effect (IV, 117).

**b) The apostles speak of baptism as something applied only once.**

Romans 6:3 Don't you know that all of us who were baptized (ἐβαπτίσθημεν) into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

1 Corinthians 1:13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized (ἐβαπτίσθητε) into the name of Paul?

Colossians 2:12 [In him you were also circumcised,] having been buried with him in baptism (συνταφέντες αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ βαπτισμῷ) and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

**c) In this respect baptism is like circumcision.**

Colossians 2:11-12 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ,<sup>12</sup> having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

**2. Baptism remains a potent power throughout a Christian's life.**

**a) Baptism continuously assures us of great and comforting truths.**

**1) Baptism assures us that our adoption is a fact that will not be undone.**

Galatians 3:26,27 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,<sup>27</sup> for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Isaiah 55:3 Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David.

**2) Baptism assures us that we have a “claim” on God's grace.**

1 Peter 3:21 This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge (ἐπερώτημα) of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**b) Baptism is therefore a constant source of strength for a Christian's life. It assures us of our life with Christ. When troubled by our daily shortcomings we need only through repentance to return to our baptism for comfort and strength.**



Romans 6:3-14 Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. <sup>5</sup> If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. <sup>6</sup> For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— <sup>7</sup> because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. <sup>10</sup> The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. <sup>11</sup> In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. <sup>12</sup> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. <sup>13</sup> Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. <sup>14</sup> For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Large Catechism, Baptism, p 750, 74-84: And here you see that baptism, both in its power and signification, comprehends also the third sacrament, which has been called repentance, as it is really nothing else than baptism. For what else is repentance but an earnest attack upon the old man that his lusts be restrained and entering upon a new life? Therefore, if you live in repentance, you walk in baptism, which not only signifies such a new life, but also produces, begins, and exercises it. For therein are given grace, the Spirit, and power to suppress the old man, so that the new man may come forth and become strong. Therefore our baptism abides forever; and even though some one should fall from it and sin, nevertheless we always have access thereto, that we may again subdue the old man. But we need not again be sprinkled with water; for though we were put under the water a hundred times, it would nevertheless be only one baptism, although the operation and signification continue and remain.

Hafenreffer: But do we again often sin after baptism? But this continued sinning does not call for a repetition of baptism. For God, who established his covenant of grace with us in baptism, is unchangeable in his will and in his promises, and he, on his part, seriously and earnestly desires to keep his covenant, once established, inviolate, valid, and unbroken. Only let us return by repentance to him who in baptism has promised us grace and the forgiveness of sins (*Loci*, 497).

**c) The Roman Catholic Church errs in a double way when speaking of the benefits of baptism.**

**1) They falsely claim that baptism imprints an indelible “character” on the soul.**

Council of Trent, Sess. VII, Can. 9: If anyone says that in three sacraments, namely, baptism, confirmation and holy orders, a characteristic is not impressed on the soul, that is, a spiritual and indelible sign, so that they cannot be repeated, let him be damned.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: Incorporated into Christ by baptism, the person baptized is configured to Christ. Baptism seals the Christian with the indelible spiritual mark (character) of his belonging to Christ. No sin can erase this mark, even if sin prevents baptism from bearing the fruits of salvation (Para. 1272).

Catechism of the Catholic Church: Baptism imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual sign, the character, which consecrates the baptized person for Christian worship (Para. 1280).

**2) They also err in denying the lasting power of baptism to assure the sinner of forgiveness.**

Council of Trent, Sess. VII, Can. 10: If anyone says that all the sins which are committed after baptism are either forgiven or made forgivable only by remembering and believing in the baptism that has been received, let him be damned.

**VII. The baptism of John was essentially the same as Christian baptism.**

**1. The baptism of John and Christian baptism have many points in common.**

**a) Both baptisms were instituted by God.**

Luke 3:2,3 During the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.<sup>3</sup> He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Matthew 21:24-26 Jesus replied, “I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things.<sup>25</sup> John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?” They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’<sup>26</sup> But if we say, ‘From men’—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.”

Matthew 28:19 Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**b) In both baptisms water is applied in a ceremonial way.**

Matthew 3:6,11 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.<sup>11</sup> I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

John 1:26 “I baptize with water,” John replied, “but among you stands one you do not know.

John 3:23 Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized.

Acts 8:36, 38 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?”<sup>38</sup> And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

**c) Both baptisms promise and give spiritual blessings.**

**1) They both give the forgiveness of sins.**

Mark 1:4 And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Luke 3:3 He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

**2) They both produce regeneration.**

John 3:5 Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.”

Luke 3:8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father.” For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.

**3) They both focus on the saving work of Christ and the union with God brought about through him.**

Matthew 3:11 I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

John 1:7,26,27,29-31,34 [John] came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe.<sup>26</sup> “I baptize with water,” John replied, “but among you stands one you do not know.”<sup>27</sup> He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.”<sup>29</sup> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”<sup>30</sup> This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’<sup>31</sup> I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.<sup>34</sup> I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.”

Acts 19:4 Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.”

**2. There were differences between John’s baptism and Christian baptism.**

**a) During the time of John’s baptism Christ’s work was still future.**

- b) **We cannot ascertain the baptismal formula used by John and do not know if he baptized “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”**

**3. John's work and his baptism were of a transient nature.**

- a) **John's mission was to prepare God's people for the proper reception of the long-expected Messiah.**

Luke 1:76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him.

John 3:27-30 To this John replied, “A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. <sup>28</sup> You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.’ <sup>29</sup> The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. <sup>30</sup> He must become greater; I must become less.”

- b) **The work of Jesus before the culmination of his suffering and death was of a similar nature.**

Matthew 3:2 and 4:17 [John was saying] “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” <sup>17</sup> From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

John 3:22-23 After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. <sup>23</sup> Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized.

John 4:1-3 The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, <sup>2</sup> although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. <sup>3</sup> When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

- c) **Therefore the question concerning the nature of John's baptism is only of theoretical importance today.**

- 1) **At one time there were situations that called for a practical dealing with the question. We cannot envision that happening anymore.**

Acts 19:1-6 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples <sup>2</sup> and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

<sup>3</sup> So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?” “John's baptism,” they replied. <sup>4</sup> Paul said, “John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” <sup>5</sup> On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord

Jesus. <sup>6</sup>When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

Compare Acts 18:24-26 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. <sup>25</sup> He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. <sup>26</sup> He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

**2) Without Bible support, the Roman Catholic Church denies the essential sameness of both baptisms.**

Council of Trent, Sess. VII, Can. 1: If anyone says that the baptism of John had the same power as the baptism of Christ, let him be damned.

## **F. The Lord's Supper**

**I. The Lord's Supper is a sacramental meal established by Christ.**

**1. This character of the sacramental meal is reflected in its names in Scripture.**

**a) The meal is called the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Table, and (at times) the breaking of bread.**

1 Corinthians 11:20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper (κυριακὸν δεῖπνον) you eat.

1 Corinthians 10:21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table (τράπεζα κυρίου) and the table of demons.

1 Corinthians 10:16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 20:7 On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.

**b) There are additional names for the sacramental meal that have been used in the church.**

**1) The sacramental meal is called the Eucharist (reflecting the biblical use of εὐχαριστεῖν and εὐλογεῖν)**

Matthew 26:26,27 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks (εὐλογήσας) and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.”<sup>27</sup> Then he took the cup, gave thanks (εὐχαριστήσας) and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you.”

Mark 14:22,23 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks (εὐλογήσας) and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; this is my body.”<sup>23</sup> Then he took the cup, gave thanks (εὐχαριστήσας) and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.

Luke 22:19 And he took bread, gave thanks (εὐχαριστήσας) and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

1 Corinthians 11:24 And when he had given thanks (εὐχαριστήσας), he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

Apology, Art. XXIV (XII), p 406, 66: We are not ignorant that the mass is called by the Fathers a sacrifice; but they do not mean that the mass confers grace ex opere operato, and that, when applied on behalf of others, it merits for them the remission of sins, of guilt and punishment. Where are such monstrous stories to be found in the Fathers? But they openly testify that they are speaking of thanksgiving. Accordingly they call it a eucharist.

Apology, Art. XXIV (XII), p 410, 76 Besides these, expressions are also found concerning thanksgiving, such as that most beautifully said by Cyprian concerning those communing in a godly way. Piety, says he, in thanking the Bestower of such abundant blessing, makes a distinction between what has been given and what has been forgiven, i.e., piety regards both what has been given and what has been forgiven, i.e., it compares the greatness of God’s blessings and the greatness of our evils, sin and death, with each other, and gives thanks, etc. And hence the term eucharist arose in the church.

## **2) The sacramental meal is called Communion (reflecting the biblical use of κοινωνία).**

1 Corinthians 10:16,17 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation (κοινωνία) in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation (κοινωνία) in the body of Christ?<sup>17</sup> Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

Smalcald Articles, Part II, Art. II, p 464, 8: But if any one should advance the pretext that as an act of devotion he wishes to administer the Sacrament, or Communion, to himself, he is not in earnest. He would commit a great mistake and would not be speaking seriously and

sincerely. For if he wishes to commune in sincerity, the surest and best way for him is in the sacrament administered according to Christ's institution. But that one administer communion to himself is a human notion, uncertain, unnecessary, yea, even prohibited.

**3) Sacrament of the Altar is another term used for the sacramental meal.**

Hebrews 13:10 We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.

Small Catechism, p 554, 1.2 What is the Sacrament of the Altar?  
Answer: It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ himself.

**4) The sacramental meal has also been called the Mass.**

The source of the term is not certain. One possibility is the expression: *Ite, missa est* (namely, *contio catechumenorum*).

Augsburg Confession, Art. XXIV, 1-5, p 64: Falsely are our churches accused of abolishing the mass; for the mass is retained among us and celebrated with the highest reverence. Nearly all the usual ceremonies are also preserved, except that the parts sung in Latin are interspersed here and there with German hymns, which have been added to teach the people. For ceremonies are needed to this end alone that the unlearned be taught what they need to know of Christ. And not only has Paul commanded to use in the church a language understood by the people (1 Cor. 14:2. 9), but it has also been so ordained by man's law. The people are accustomed to partake of the sacrament together, if any be fit for it, and this also increases the reverence and devotion of public worship.

Apology, Art. XXIV (XII), p 384, 6: The fact that we hold only public or common mass at which the people also commune, not private mass, is no offense against the church catholic. For in the Greek churches even today private masses are not held, but there is only a public mass, and that on the Lord's Day and festivals. In the monasteries daily mass is held, but this is only public. These are the traces of former customs. For nowhere do the ancient writers before Gregory make mention of private masses.

Apology, Art. XXIV (XII), p 412, 84-87: Ridiculous is their inference that, since mention is made in the Holy Scriptures of an altar, therefore the mass must be a sacrifice; for the figure of an altar is referred to by Paul only by way of comparison. And they fabricate that the mass has been so called from *מזבח*, an altar. What need is there of an etymology so far fetched, unless it be to show their knowledge of the Hebrew language?

**2. The Lord's Supper may be seen as prefigured, to a certain extent, in the Old Testament.**

a) **We can see a certain connection between the Passover meal and the Lord's Supper.**

1) **Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper in immediate connection with the Passover meal.**

Matthew 26:17-20, 26-28 On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"<sup>18</sup> He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.'"<sup>19</sup> So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.<sup>20</sup> When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve.<sup>26</sup> While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."<sup>27</sup> Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you."<sup>28</sup> This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

2) **It should be remembered, however, that the Passover celebration prefigured truths that go beyond the focus of the Lord's Supper, such as a commemoration of leaving Egypt and the cleansing of one's lifestyle from the yeast of sin.**

1 Corinthians 5:7 Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Exodus 12:24-28,43-51 "Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants."<sup>25</sup> When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony.<sup>26</sup> And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?'<sup>27</sup> then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.'" Then the people bowed down and worshiped.<sup>28</sup> The Israelites did just what the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron.<sup>43</sup> The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "These are the regulations for the Passover: 'No foreigner is to eat of it.'<sup>44</sup> Any slave you have bought may eat of it after you have circumcised him,<sup>45</sup> but a temporary resident and a hired worker may not eat of it.'<sup>46</sup> 'It must be eaten inside one house; take none of the meat outside the house. Do not break any of the bones.'<sup>47</sup> The whole community of Israel must celebrate it.<sup>48</sup> 'An alien living among you who wants to celebrate the LORD's Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat of it.'<sup>49</sup> The same law applies to the native-born and to the alien living among you."<sup>50</sup> All the Israelites did just what the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron.<sup>51</sup> And on that very day the LORD brought the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions.

Exodus 13:7,8-10 Eat unleavened bread during those seven days; nothing with yeast in it is to be seen among you, nor shall any yeast be



seen anywhere within your borders.<sup>8</sup> On that day tell your son, ‘I do this because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.’<sup>9</sup> This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the law of the LORD is to be on your lips. For the LORD brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand.<sup>10</sup> You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time year after year.

- b) We may also see a parallel between expressing fellowship while eating and drinking in the old covenant and the eating and drinking in the Lord’s Supper.**

Exodus 24:9-11 Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up<sup>10</sup> and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself.<sup>11</sup> But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.

- c) Theologians occasionally mention manna as something that prefigured the Lord’s Supper.**

- 1) At first glance we may perceive a connection of the eating of the manna with the eating of the bread in the sacrament.**

Exodus 16:11-15 The LORD said to Moses,<sup>12</sup> “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.’”<sup>13</sup> That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp.<sup>14</sup> When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor.<sup>15</sup> When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” [מָה זֶה] For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat.”

- 2) Speaking of manna in connection with the Supper, however, requires great caution lest we blur the distinction between regular physical eating, spiritual eating, and sacramental eating.**

John 6:31,35,48-51 Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”<sup>35</sup> Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.<sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life.<sup>49</sup> Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died.<sup>50</sup> But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die.<sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

- d) Roman Catholics refer to Melchizedek's meal in their attempt to establish the Lord’s Supper as a sacrificial meal. Only external similarities may be found here, however.**

Genesis 14:18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High.

**II. The doctrine of the Lord's Supper must be taken from the words of institution and other clear references to the sacramental meal, not from biblical texts that deal with other subjects.**

**1. There are essentially two proper sources for the doctrine of the Lord's Supper: the words of institution and other obvious references to the sacred meal.**

**a) The accounts of the institution of the sacrament are clearly sources of doctrine on this subject.**

Matthew 26:26-28 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."<sup>27</sup> Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you."<sup>28</sup> This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

Mark 14:22-24 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."<sup>23</sup> Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.<sup>24</sup> "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them.

Luke 22:19,20 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."<sup>20</sup> In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

1 Corinthians 11:23-25 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,<sup>24</sup> 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."<sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

**b) Other clear references to the sacramental meal also serve as sources of doctrine.**

1 Corinthians 10:16,17,21 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?<sup>17</sup> Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.<sup>21</sup> You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

1 Corinthians 11:20-22,26-34 When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat,<sup>21</sup> for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk.<sup>22</sup> Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate

those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not! <sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. <sup>27</sup> Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. <sup>30</sup> That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. <sup>31</sup> But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. <sup>32</sup> When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world. <sup>33</sup> So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. <sup>34</sup> If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions.

**c) Recognizing these sources of doctrine regarding the Lord's Supper is necessary. Rightly using them is also necessary to avoid error.**

Chemnitz: Just as any doctrines of the church and individual articles of faith have their proper "seat" in certain passages of Scripture in which they are directly treated and explained, in such a way that the true and genuine sense of the doctrines themselves is to be correctly looked for and established with certainty from those passages, so it is beyond controversy that the right belief about the Lord's Supper has its very own passage and its proper seat or basis in the words of institution.... For all the Sacramentarians, no matter how many they may be, take what they want to believe and think about the Lord's Supper not out of the words of institution, understood properly and simply, just as they sound, but they come with presuppositions drawn (*praesumunt*) from other passages of Scripture, most of which say nothing about the Lord's Supper. One chooses one set of passages, another a different set, according to his own analogy which each fashions for himself. And after they have determined from other passages of Scripture what they want to believe about the Lord's Supper, then finally they take up the words of institution. After that they work and labor to force a view that has been formed from other passages on the words of institution by some figurative interpretation that does violence to the text (*Coen. Dom.*, 9).

Luther: Therefore you must not allow anyone to take these words "This is my body," from you or to change them; not as though his body were signified by the bread, as they claim, but just as the words read. This bread is my body, present in its essence. It is not proper to twist the Scriptures in this way according to one's own opinions, but one would need to demonstrate a clear passage that the word "to be" is equivalent to "represent." And even if one could show that this is true in some sentences, that would not be enough. But one would also have to prove clearly that it should and must be understood in this way in this passage. That they will never be able to do. If that can not be done, one should simply surrender as a captive to God's words and understand them as they read (*St. L.*, XII, 406,20).

**2. John 6:22–66 is not a valid source for the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Though many people have attempted to formulate a doctrine of the Lord's Supper from this discourse, it is improper to do so.**

a) **The eating and drinking mentioned in John 6 does not refer to the sacramental eating and drinking in the Lord's Supper.**

1) **The words of John 6 were spoken before the sacramental meal had been instituted. There was no transitional or preparatory rite that would help the people understand sacramental eating. One may point to John's baptism as preparatory for Christian baptism, but there was nothing like this that preceded the Lord's Supper.**

2) **John 6 contains various statements that clearly show the Lord's Supper is not being spoken of.**

**-a) Eternal life is here guaranteed to the one who eats and drinks; that is not true for all who receive the sacrament.**

John 6:54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

1 Corinthians 11:27,29 Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

**-b) Eternal life is here said to be impossible without this eating and drinking, thus indicating that saving faith is meant. It is possible, however, to gain eternal life without the reception of the sacrament.**

John 6:53 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."

Mark 10:13-15 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup> When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. <sup>15</sup> I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

Matthew 18:2-3,6 He called a little child and had him stand among them. <sup>3</sup> And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>6</sup> But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

Consider Hebrews 11:1-40, with the reminder that many obtained eternal life without any participation in the Lord's Supper.

**-c) In John 6 Jesus always refers to his “flesh” rather than his “body” as he did when he instituted the sacramental meal.**

John 6:51,53-56 <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh (σάρξ), which I will give for the life of the world.” <sup>53</sup> Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh (σάρξ) of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup>Whoever eats my flesh (σάρξ) and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. <sup>55</sup> For my flesh (σάρξ) is real food and my blood is real drink. <sup>56</sup> Whoever eats my flesh (σάρξ) and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.

1 Corinthians 11:24,27,29 When he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body (σῶμα), which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” <sup>27</sup> Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body (σῶμα) and blood of the Lord. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body (σῶμα) of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. (Also see parallels in Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, and Luke 22:19, where σῶμα is used).

**b) The text and context of John 6, therefore, indicate that Jesus meant to impress on the hearts of his hearers that there is no salvation except by faith in him.**

**1) Jesus points to himself in his work as the bread of life. In giving himself up for us, he gives us his flesh.**

John 6:35,48-51 Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. <sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. <sup>50</sup> But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

**2) Thus the forceful “eating his flesh and drinking his blood” is a more emphatic synonymous phrase for “eating him”.**

John 6:50,51,57,58 Here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. <sup>57</sup> Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.

**3) Both phrases are metaphorical expressions for “believing”.**

John 6:35,40,47 Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”<sup>40</sup> For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.<sup>47</sup> I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.”

**4) The use of this figurative language fit the occasion perfectly.**

Consider John 6:4-13 and the feeding of the 5,000 that had taken place.

Then consider John 6:14-15,26,27,31,32 and the lesson Jesus was trying to teach the people.<sup>14</sup> After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.”<sup>15</sup> Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.”<sup>27</sup> Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.<sup>31</sup> Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”<sup>32</sup> Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.”

**5) At least many of the people, and the apostles, understood (and in part resented) the claim of Jesus.**

John 6:41,42,52,60,67,68 At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.”<sup>42</sup> They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven’?”<sup>52</sup> Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”<sup>60</sup> On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”<sup>67</sup> “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.<sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

**c) John 6, in other words, deals with a spiritual rather than a sacramental eating of Christ. Our Confessions offer this clarification:**

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 994, 61,62: There is, therefore, a two-fold eating of the flesh of Christ, one spiritual, of which Christ treats especially John 6:54, which occurs in no other way than with the Spirit and faith, in the preaching and meditation of the gospel, as well as in the Lord’s Supper, and by itself is useful and salutary, and necessary at all times for salvation to all Christians; without which spiritual participation also the sacramental or oral eating in the Supper is not only not salutary, but even injurious and damning. But this spiritual eating is nothing else than *faith*,

namely, to hear God's Word (in which Christ, true God and man, is presented to us, together with all benefits which he has purchased for us by his flesh given into death for us, and by His blood shed for us, namely, God's grace, the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and eternal life), to receive it with faith and appropriate it to ourselves, and in all troubles and temptations firmly to rely, with sure confidence and trust, and to abide in the consolation that we have a gracious God, and eternal salvation on account of the Lord Jesus Christ. He who hears these things related from the Word of God, and in faith receives and applies them to himself, and relies entirely upon this consolation (that we have God reconciled and life eternal on account of the Mediator, Jesus Christ),—he, I say, who with true confidence rests in the Word of the gospel in all troubles and temptations, spiritually eats the body of Christ and drinks His blood.

**3. In harmony with the gospel accounts, Paul points to the fact that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on the night in which he was betrayed.**

- a) The original setting of the institution of the sacrament is significant. The culmination of our Lord's redeeming work was imminent. What the Lord said was not a casual comment, but a solemn declaration.**

1 Corinthians 11:23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread. . . .

Matthew 26:2 As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.

Luke 22:14-15 When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. <sup>15</sup> And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

John 13:1 It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father.

- b) Recognizing the time and setting of the institution of the sacrament is important for a correct evaluation of the Supper.**

- 1) This night was a significant dividing point between the Old and the New Testament. The redemption of mankind was being carried out, and the Supper was an important part of the Savior's work.**

- a) With the eating of that Passover meal the time of shadows came to an end.**

Colossians 2:17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Hebrews 8:5 [Levitical priests] serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

Hebrews 10:1 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.

Matthew 27:51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split.

**-b) The Supper marks the beginning of the era of realities which will culminate in the marriage feast of the Lamb in heaven.**

Luke 22:15,16 He said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. <sup>16</sup> For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”

Matthew 8:11 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

Revelation 3:20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

Revelation 19:9 Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”

**2) When he instituted the sacrament Jesus knew that his death was at hand. His Supper may therefore be regarded as part of his last will and testament for his people.**

Matthew 26:20-25 When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. <sup>21</sup> And while they were eating, he said, “I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me.” <sup>22</sup> They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, “Surely not I, Lord?” <sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me.” <sup>24</sup> The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.” <sup>25</sup> Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, “Surely not I, Rabbi?” Jesus answered, “Yes, it is you.”

**-a) In that kind of setting it is customary that clear and unmistakable terms be used to avoid misunderstandings or misinterpretations that would frustrate the will of the testator.**

**-b) Also, once a testament has been properly confirmed, it is to be respected.**



Galatians 3:15 Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case.

**3) It is our conviction that these considerations teach us to treat our Lord's words of institution with sacred awe.**

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 986, 43-47: For since our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, concerning whom, as our only Teacher, this solemn command has been given from heaven to all men: *Hunc audite*, Hear him, who is not a mere man or angel, neither true, wise, and mighty only, but the eternal Truth and Wisdom itself and Almighty God, who knows very well what and how he is to speak, and who also can powerfully effect and execute everything that he speaks and promises, as he says Luke 21:33: Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away; also Matt. 28:18: All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth,—Since, now, this true, almighty Lord, our Creator and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, after the Last Supper, when he is just beginning his bitter suffering and death for our sins, in those sad last moments, with great consideration and solemnity, in the institution of this most venerable sacrament, which was to be used until the end of the world with great reverence and obedience and humility, and was to be an abiding memorial of his bitter suffering and death and all his benefits, a sealing and confirmation of the New Testament, a consolation of all distressed hearts, and a firm bond of union of Christians with Christ, their Head, and with one another, in the ordaining and institution of the Holy Supper spoke these words concerning the bread which he blessed and gave to His disciples: Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you, and concerning the cup, or wine: This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins;—Now, since this is so, We are certainly in duty bound not to interpret and explain these words of the eternal, true, and almighty Son of God, our Lord, Creator, and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, differently, as allegorical, figurative, tropical expressions, according as it seems agreeable to our reason, but with simple faith and due obedience to receive the words as they read, in their proper and plain sense, and allow ourselves to be diverted from this express testament of Christ by no objections or human contradictions spun from human reason, however charming they may appear to reason.

**III. The visible (earthly) elements of the Lord's Supper are bread and wine.**

**1. The first element is constantly and exclusively called bread (ἄρτος). No mention is made and no command is given regarding the kind of bread to be used.**

1 Corinthians 11:26,27,28 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.<sup>28</sup> A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.

1 Corinthians 10:16,17 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? <sup>17</sup> Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

**a) Jesus undoubtedly used unleavened bread at the Passover meal, and for that reason the church has often used unleavened bread. But the use of unleavened bread is not explicitly commanded in Scripture.**

Matthew 26:17 On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?”

Exodus 12:15 For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel.

Quenstedt: Unleavened or unfermented bread is chosen because of its purity, because of the authority of the example of Christ, and because of the practice and custom of the early church (*TDP*, Part IV, chap. VI, Sect. I, thesis VII, note I, p 178).

Compare the Roman Catechism (1563): The peculiar suitableness of the consecration of unleavened bread to express that integrity and purity of mind which the faithful should bring to this sacrament we learn from these words of the Apostle: Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new dough, as you are unleavened. For Christ our Passover is sacrificed. Therefore, let us feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. This quality of the bread, however, is not to be deemed so essential that, if it be wanting, the sacrament cannot exist; for both kinds are called by the one name and have the true and proper nature of bread. No one, however, is at liberty on his own private authority, or rather presumption, to transgress the laudable rite of his Church. And such departure is the less warrantable in priests of the Latin Church, expressly obliged as they are by the supreme Pontiffs, to consecrate the sacred mysteries with unleavened bread only (Constituent Parts of the Eucharist, para. 6,7, p 220f.).

**b) According to the research of Jacques Sirmond (d. 1651) the use of leavened bread prevailed in the early church.**

Philip Schaff, concerning the Eucharist observances of the ante-Nicene church: The elements were common or leavened bread (except among the Ebionites, who, like the later Roman Church from the seventh century, used unleavened bread) and wine mingled with water (*History of the Christian Church*, Vol. II, p 238).

**c) It is irrelevant of what cereal the bread is made.**

Walther: It is an adiaphoron whether the bread is leavened or unleavened; whether it is rye, wheat, barley, or oat bread, whether it has this or that shape; as long as it is baked from the flour of some grain and water (*Pastoral*

*Theology*, p 130). Parallel statements are found in John Fritz, *Pastoral Theology*, p 122, and Armin Schuetze and Irwin Habeck, *Shepherd Under Christ*, p 90.

Contrast the Roman Catechism (1563): The first element is wheat bread, of which we shall now speak. . . . There are various sorts of bread, either because they consist of different materials, such as wheat, barley, pulse, and other products of the earth, or because they possess different qualities, some being leavened, others altogether without leaven. It is to be observed that, with regard to the former kinds, the words of the Savior show that the bread should be wheat; for, according to common usage, when we simply say bread, we are sufficiently understood to mean wheat bread (Constituent Parts of the Eucharist, para. 2,3, p 220).

Contrast the Catechism of the Catholic Church: The essential signs of the Eucharistic sacrament are wheat bread and grape wine, on which the blessing of the Holy Spirit is invoked and the priest pronounces the words of consecration spoken by Jesus during the Last Supper (Para. 1412).

- d) Communion wafers not only have the essential characteristics of bread, but their use may also, under certain circumstances, become an act of confession.**

Recall some of the derogatory terms that Reformed theologians have used in regard to the wafer: *Schaumbrote* (foam- or scum-bread), *Kleisterleim* (paste, glue), *brotlose Pfaffenkuechlein* (breadless clergy-cake), *Papierkuechlein* (paper cake).

Formula of Concord, Ep., Art. X, p 828, 6.10 We believe, teach, and confess that in time of persecution, when a plain and steadfast confession is required of us, we should not yield to the enemies in regard to such adiaphora, as the apostle has written Gal. 5, 1: Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage.

**2. The second element is identified in Scripture as “the fruit of the vine” (γένημα τῆς ἀμπέλου).**

- a) This element is never mentioned directly by name in the words of institution. The word cup (ποτήριον) is used in metonymy for its contents and the contents are identified as “fruit of the vine.”**

1 Corinthians 10:16,21 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? <sup>21</sup> You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord’s table and the table of demons.

Matthew 26:27 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you.”

Mark 14:23 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.

1 Corinthians 11:26-28 Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.<sup>28</sup> A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.

---

Matthew 26:29 I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom.

Mark 14:25 I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God.

Luke 22:18 I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.

- b) **“Fruit of the vine” refers to fruit of the grape vine and may be understood as a term wide enough to include grape wine or unfermented grape juice. Other so-called wines or other juices should not be used.**
- 1) **We are quite confident that Jesus used grape wine when he instituted the sacramental meal, and it was likely that he used wine mixed with water. It is permissible but not necessary to dilute the wine with water when using it for the Lord's Supper.**

Contrast Bellarmine: Mixing water with the wine in the chalice is so necessary that it cannot be omitted without grievous sin (*Disputationes*, Vol. III, de sacramento eucharistiae, book IV, chap. X, 7, p 364).

Contrast the Roman Catechism (1563): With the wine, however, the Church of God has always mingled water. First, because Christ the Lord did so, as is proved by the authority of Councils and the testimony of St. Cyprian; next, because by this mixture is renewed the recollection of the blood and water that issued from his side. Waters, also, as we read in the Apocalypse, signify the people; and hence, water mixed with the wine signifies the union of the faithful with Christ their Head. This rite, derived as it is from Apostolic tradition, the Catholic Church has always observed. But although there are reasons so grave for mingling water with the wine that it cannot be omitted without incurring the guilt of mortal sin, yet its omission does not render the sacrament null. (Constituent Parts of the Eucharist, para. 11-13. p 222).

- 2) **The conclusion that the term “fruit of the vine” is broad enough to cover unfermented grape wine and grape juice is drawn from biblical use of the terminology, not from agreement with those who favor abstinence from the use of alcohol as a matter of conscience.**

Numbers 6:2-4 Speak to the Israelites and say to them: “If a man or woman wants to make a special vow, a vow of separation to the LORD

as a Nazirite, <sup>3</sup> he must abstain from wine and other fermented drink and must not drink vinegar made from wine or from other fermented drink. He must not drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins. <sup>4</sup> As long as he is a Nazirite, he must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, not even the seeds or skins.”

Judges 13:13,14 The angel of the LORD answered, “Your wife must do all that I have told her. <sup>14</sup> She must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, nor drink any wine or other fermented drink nor eat anything unclean. She must do everything I have commanded her.”

Compare Walther: It was an error . . . when the Gnostic Enkratites [“Abstainers”] in the second to fourth centuries completely forbade wine and used only water in its place, even in the holy Supper, in which they have recently been followed by certain temperance fanatics [Schwaermer] in America (*Pastoral Theology*, p 130).

Compare Armin Schuetze and Irwin Habeck: Since the term used for the contents of the cup is “fruit of the vine,” the use of unfermented grape juice in case of an emergency cannot be considered invalid. Nevertheless, the church will avoid all doubt on the part of its members by using fermented fruit of the vine and may at times do so also as a confessional action over against anyone who claims that the use of any alcoholic beverage is sin (*Shepherd Under Christ*, p 90). Parallel statement in John Fritz, *Pastoral Theology*, p 123.

#### **IV. The invisible (heavenly) elements of the Supper are the body and blood of Christ.**

##### **1. One invisible element in the sacramental meal is the body of Christ.**

- a) **With the plain and clear words, “Take, eat, this is my body” (λάβετε φάγετε, τοῦτο ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα μου) Christ promises to give his disciples his body to eat.**

Observe that all parallel accounts of the words of institution (in Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19, and 1 Corinthians 11:24) have the same words, τοῦτο ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα μου, with Paul using a slightly different word order, τοῦτο μού ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα.

- b) **Scripture also assures us that the bread remains in the sacramental meal along with the body of Christ. The bread serves as a vehicle of the body.**

- 1) **ἄρτος is masculine and grammatically the neuter τοῦτο does not agree with it. This may simply be a matter of the demonstrative agreeing in gender with the predicate that follows (σῶμα), giving it a greater emphasis than the antecedent. It may also refer to “something here and now, directing attention to it” (BAG, p 600).**

Compare Leonhard Riisen (d. 1700) who denies the presence of Christ's body: The subject appears here expressed by the demonstrative pronoun *hoc*, which must necessarily refer to the bread, because it is a demonstrative pronoun. A demonstrative pronoun points to something present. But nothing up to that point was present but the substance of bread, which he took, broke, and gave to his disciples (XVII, 51, 7; Heppe, p 639)

**2) Paul's words in particular make it clear that the bread remains in the sacramental meal along with the promised body of Christ.**

1 Corinthians 10:16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

1 Corinthians 11:27,28 Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.

**3) Since both the bread and his body are present in the sacramental meal, Christ might have said: "This bread is my body." The Lutheran Confessions use this expression to denote the sacramental union.**

Smalcald Articles, Part III, Art. VI, 1, p 492: Of the Sacrament of the Altar we hold that bread and wine in the Supper are the true body and blood of Christ and are given and received not only by the godly, but also by wicked Christians.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 976, 12-15, 17-19 They confess, according to the words of Irenaeus, that in this sacrament there are two things, a heavenly and an earthly. Accordingly, they hold and teach that with the bread and wine the body and blood of Christ are truly and essentially present, offered, and received. And although they believe in no transubstantiation, that is, an essential transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, nor hold that the body and blood of Christ are included in the bread *localiter*, that is, locally, or are otherwise permanently united therewith apart from the use of the sacrament, yet they concede that through the sacramental union the bread is the body of Christ, etc.

- c) **The mode of presence of Christ's body with the bread in the Lord's Supper is unique. In their attempts to maintain the revealed truth of the real presence our theologians have described the presence of the body as sacramental, real, true, substantial or essential, mystical, supernatural, incomprehensible, but not physical.**
- d) **The relation between bread and body is called a *κοινωνία*, a sharing or a "communion".**

**1) This communion affirms the existence of at least two objects and points to a relationship so close that you cannot do anything to the one without in the same act affecting the other.**

1 Corinthians 10:16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

1 Corinthians 11:27 Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.

Chrysostom on *koinonia*: Why did [Paul in 1 Co 10:16] not say “participation” (*metalepsis* or *metoche*)? Because he intended to express something more and to point out how close the union (*henosis*) was. We communicate not only by participating and partaking, but also by being united. For as that body is united with Christ, so we are also united with him by this bread” (*A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. XII, p 139. For a fuller discussion on this point, see Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries*, p 27,28, and also Hermann Sasse, *This Is My Body*, p 395).

**2) No other relation between bread and body may be assumed.**

Calov: We hold that the body and blood of Christ are not in the Supper by *μετουσίαν* or transubstantiation of substance, as the papists think, nor by *συνουσίαν*, or consubstantiation, as the Calvinists slanderously imagine that we say, nor by local inclusion, for example, by impanation, as meat is in a meat pie, or by invination, as they are accustomed to charge, nor by way of a descent from heaven and the right hand of God, which is then again followed by an ascension into heaven and to the right hand of the Father (*Systema*, Vol. IX, p 307).

**3) The meaning of the words of institution, which affirm the presence of Christ’s body in the sacramental meal, are discussed at length by the Lutheran Confessions.**

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 988, 48-50: Now, all the circumstances of the institution of the Holy Supper testify that these words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which in themselves are simple, plain, clear, firm, and indubitable, cannot and must not be understood otherwise than in their usual, proper, and common signification. For since Christ gives this command concerning eating his body, etc., at the table and at supper, there is indeed no doubt that he speaks of real, natural bread and of natural wine, also of oral eating and drinking, so that there can be no metaphor, that is, a change of meaning, in the word *bread*, as though the body of Christ were a spiritual bread or a spiritual food of souls. Likewise, also Christ himself takes care that there be no metonymy either, that is, that in the same manner there be no change of meaning in the word *body*, and that he does not speak concerning a sign of his body, or concerning an emblem, a symbol, or figurative body, or concerning the virtue of his body and the benefits

which he has earned by the sacrifice of his body for us, but of his true, essential body, which he delivered into death for us, and of his true, essential blood, which he shed for us on the tree of the cross for the remission of sins. Now, surely there is no interpreter of the words of Jesus Christ as faithful and sure as the Lord Christ himself, who understands best his words and his heart and opinion, and who is the wisest and most knowing for expounding them; and here, as in the making of his last will and testament and of his ever-abiding covenant and union, as elsewhere in presenting and confirming all articles of faith, and in the institution of all other signs of the covenant and of grace or sacraments, as for example, circumcision, the various offerings in the Old Testament and Holy Baptism, he uses not allegorical, but entirely proper, simple, indubitable, and clear words; and in order that no misunderstanding can occur, he explains them more clearly with the words: Given for you, shed for you.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 1004, 92-106 We neither will, nor can, nor should allow ourselves to be led away by thoughts of human wisdom, whatever outward appearance or authority they may have, from the simple, distinct, and clear sense of the Word and testament of Christ to a strange opinion, other than the words read, but that, in accordance with what is above stated, we understand and believe them simply, our reasons upon which we have rested in this matter ever since the controversy concerning this article arose, are those which Dr. Luther himself, in the very beginning, presented against the Sacramentarians in the following words (Dr. Luther in his *Large Confession concerning the Holy Supper*): My reasons upon which I rest in this matter are the following: 1) The first is this article of our faith: Jesus Christ is essential, natural, true, perfect God and man in one person, inseparable and undivided. 2) The second, that God's right hand is everywhere. 3) The third, that God's Word is not false, nor does it lie. 4) The fourth, that God has and knows of many modes of being in any place, and not only the single one concerning which the fanatics talk flippantly, and which philosophers call *localem*, or local. . . . Thus our faith in this article concerning the true presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper is based upon the *truth and omnipotence* of the true, almighty God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. These foundations are strong and firm enough to strengthen and establish our faith in all temptations concerning this article, and, on the contrary, to overthrow and refute all the counter-arguments and objections of the Sacramentarians, however agreeable and plausible they may be to our reason; and upon them a Christian heart also can securely and firmly rest and rely.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 990, 54-57 So also that repetition, confirmation, and explanation of the words of Christ which St. Paul makes 1 Cor. 10:16, where he writes as follows: The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? is to be considered with all diligence and seriousness, accurately, as an especially clear testimony of the true, essential presence and distribution of the body and blood of Christ in the Supper. From this we clearly learn that not only the cup which Christ blessed at the first Supper, and not



only the bread which Christ broke and distributed, but also that which we break and bless, is the communion of the body and blood of Christ, so that all who eat this bread and drink of this cup truly receive, and are partakers of, the true body and blood of Christ. For if the body of Christ were present and partaken of, not truly and essentially, but only according to its power and efficacy, the bread would have to be called, not a communion of the body, but of the Spirit, power, and benefits of Christ, as the *Apology* argues and concludes.

## **2. The second invisible, heavenly element in the Lord's Supper is the blood of Christ.**

### **a) The real presence of Christ's blood is also made clear by his words. There are two versions of Jesus' words, which are in perfect agreement.**

#### **1) Matthew and Mark preserved one form of expression. This corresponds to the words used with reference to the bread (τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν τὸ αἷμα μου τῆς διαθήκης). The meaning is that the wine is the vehicle for the blood of Jesus.**

Matthew 26:28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Mark 14:24 "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them.

#### **2) Paul and Luke preserved the other way of expressing the truth. This reads: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you."**

Luke 22:20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματι μου)

1 Corinthians 11:25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." (τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἵματι)

#### **-a) The new covenant is essentially the forgiveness of sins.**

Jeremiah 31:31-34 "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah."<sup>32</sup> It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.<sup>33</sup> "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."<sup>34</sup> No longer

will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Romans 11:27 This is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.

Hebrews 10:16,17 "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." <sup>17</sup> Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."

**-b) "In my blood" means "by means of, on account of my blood."**

**-c) This cup "is" the new covenant, that is, this cup offers, conveys, and seals forgiveness of sins.**

John 6:63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."

**b) The real presence of Christ's blood, promised by Christ in his words of institution, is affirmed by the Lutheran Confessions.**

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 990, 52.53: For this reason, too, all three evangelists (Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19) and St. Paul, who received the same the institution of the Lord's Supper after the ascension of Christ from Christ himself (1 Cor. 11.;24) unanimously and with the same words and syllables repeat concerning the consecrated and distributed bread these distinct, clear, firm, and true words of Christ: "This is my body", altogether in one way, without any interpretation and change. Therefore there is no doubt that also concerning the other part of the Sacrament these words of Luke and Paul: "This cup is the new testament in my blood," can have no other meaning than that which St. Matthew and St. Mark give: This (namely, that which you orally drink out of the cup) is my blood of the new testament, whereby I establish, seal, and confirm with you men this my testament and new covenant, namely, the forgiveness of sins.

**3. The heavenly element in the sacramental meal is not to be identified with the whole person of Christ nor with the sacrificial virtue of his death.**

**a) Some have wrongly identified the whole person of Christ as the invisible element in the Lord's Supper.**

**1) Calvinists have assumed this synecdoche.**

Helvetic Confession (1536), I, 23 : [The Eucharist] is a mystic Supper in which the Lord truly offers his body and blood, that is, himself to those who are his in order that more and more he might live in them and they in him.

Calvin: The whole person of Christ is offered to us in the Sacrament (*Institutes*, IV, 17, 31).

**2) Roman Catholics have also spoken this way in the interest of their doctrine of concomitance, which was used to justify the withholding of the cup from the laity.**

Council of Trent, Sess. XIII, Can. 3: If anyone denies that in the venerable sacrament of the Eucharist the whole Christ is contained under each kind and under the individual and parts of each kind when a separation has been made; let him be damned.

Contrast the Smalcald Articles, Part III, Art. VI, p 492, 2-4: [We hold] that not only one form is to be given. For we do not need that high art of specious wisdom which is to teach us that under the one form there is as much as under both, as the sophists and the Council of Constance teach. For even if it were true that there is as much under one as under both, yet the one form only is not the entire ordinance and institution ordained and commanded by Christ.

**3) Christ is, indeed, personally present in communion, but what he offers as the object of eating and drinking is his body and blood.**

Matthew 28:20 And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Matthew 18:20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.

**b) Others have wrongly identified the sacrificial virtue or effects of the death of Christ as the invisible element in the Lord's Supper.**

**1) Reformed and Evangelical theologians have done so.**

Riissen (so also Wolleb): The internal element is Christ with his whole satisfaction and merit (Cited in Heppe, *Dogmatik de Ref.- Kirche*, p 466ff.).

Charles Hodge: To receive body and blood as offered in the Sacrament . . . is to receive and appropriate the sacrificial virtue or effects of the death of Christ (*ST*, III, p 646).

Grudem: Certainly Jesus is not speaking of a literal eating of his flesh and blood. But if he is not speaking of a literal eating and drinking, then he must have in mind a spiritual participation in the benefits of the redemption he earns (*ST*, p 990).

Kenneth Taylor, paraphrasing 1 Corinthians 10:16-17: When we ask the Lord's blessing on our drinking from the cup of wine at the Lord's Table, this means, doesn't it, that all who drink it are sharing together the blessing of Christ's blood? And when we break off pieces of the bread from the loaf to eat there together, this shows that we are sharing together in the benefits of his body (*The Living Bible*).

- 2) **In the light of Christ's words, this idea results in nonsense. The heavenly element is, according to Christ's statement, what he gave into death and poured out for us. Any attempt to substitute "virtue" for body and blood in the words of institution will show the absurdity.**

Theodore Beza (who called men like Westphal and Heshusius "Cannibals", "Cyclops", "Asses", "Sophists" etc.): Certainly it would be very absurd to interpret the words "body" and "blood" to denote the effect and efficacy of the Lord's death or to restrict these words only to the sacrament's spiritual intention. That this may be understood as clearly as possible let us substitute this interpretation for the words "body" and "blood" and say, "This is the efficacy of my death which is given for you", and "This is my spiritual intention which is poured out for you." What is more foolish than such talk? [In his writings Beza takes the copula in a figurative sense.] (*Epistle 5 ad Alemannum*, p 57, cited in Gerhard, *Loci, de sac. Coena*, Art. 76).

4. **The body and blood of Christ, which are promised and given in the Lord's Supper, may after Christ's resurrection be described as his glorified body and glorified blood. But even prior to being in his glorified state, the body and blood were the body and blood of the Son of God.**

- a) **The glorification of the body of Christ may serve to illustrate the truth of his unlimited ability to be present according to various modes of presence.**

Philippians 3:21 [The Lord Jesus Christ], by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Chemnitz: Christ, therefore, in the Supper offers us his body and His blood, which have been exalted above all miseries, in the glory of the Father in such a way that by these he unites himself with this miserable nature of ours (*Fundamenta*, chap. XI, *quinto*, p 73)

- b) **In reality, however, the glorified state of Christ's body and blood is irrelevant as far as the sacramental presence is concerned.**

- 1) **During the first Supper Jesus was still living in the state of humiliation or exinanition.**

Quenstedt: It is objected that the presence of the body of Christ is in conflict with the circumstances at the first Supper, because at the first Supper Christ was not hidden, concealed invisibly in, under, and with the bread, but he sat visibly at the table. Polanus, Keckermann, Ursinus argue in this way. Likewise, his blood had not yet been poured out of his veins. Zwingli and Beza argued thus (*TDP*, part IV, chap. VI, sect. II, qu. II, *obj. dial.* X, p 201).

Quenstedt: The visible, natural, local sitting of Christ's body at the table does not cancel out his invisible, mystical and sacramental presence. . . . Nor do different temporal circumstances, namely, of the future or the past, in the shedding of the blood, change the thing or substance itself (*TDP*, part IV, chap. VI, sect. II, qu. II, *obj. dial.* XII, p 201).

Walther: The presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper must not be based on the glorification of the body of Christ. The glorification endows the body only with spiritual, not with divine attributes. We believe that Christ's body is present in the Sacrament and received 1) because of the promise of Christ, 2) because Christ's body is the body of the Son of God. . . . It is a mistake to say: Christ can now give us his body in the Lord's Supper because it is glorified. This unsound argument contains the admission that Christ before his glorification could not give his body, a concession that would cancel the first celebration of the Supper (*Lectures*, 1874; cited in F. Pieper, *CD*, III, p 360).

**2) The only matter of importance is the promise of Jesus.**

Hutter, paraphrased by Hoenecke: Hutter makes the pertinent observation that in the question of the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, we must distinguish two questions: 1) Does Christ *want* to be present in body and blood? That he does is certain from Christ's words of institution. Therefore also Luther and his successors always cited these words above all else for the presence of the body and blood of Christ. 2) Is Christ *able* to be present in body and blood? On this point, says Hutter, it is certainly right to judge on the basis of the scriptural teaching concerning the person of Christ (*Loci*, p 716; in Hoenecke, *ELD*, Vol. IV, p 122).

**3) We may also refer to the hypostatic union, according to which the human nature of Christ fully shares his divine attributes.**

Quenstedt: The philosophical axiom, "A natural body cannot be in many places at one and the same time," is true of a body which is only human but it is not true of the body which is united with the  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  (*TDP*, part IV, chap. VI, sect. II, qu. II, *obj. dial.* VI, p 200).

Formula of Concord, Ep. Art. VII, p 810, 10-14: The grounds, however, on which we stand against the Sacramentarians in this matter are those which Dr. Luther has laid down in his Large Confession concerning the Lord's Supper. The first is this article of our Christian faith: Jesus Christ is true, essential, natural, perfect God and man in one person, undivided

and inseparable. The second: That God's right hand is everywhere; at which Christ is placed in deed and in truth according to His human nature, and therefore being present, rules, and has in his hands and beneath his feet everything that is in heaven and on earth as Scripture says, Eph. 1, 22, where no man else, nor angel, but only the Son of Mary is placed; hence he can do those things which we have said. The third: That God's Word is not false, and does not deceive. The fourth: That God has and knows of various modes of being in any place, and is not bound to the one which philosophers call *localis* (local) or circumscribed. (Also see Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 1004, 92-98,103)

**5. Those who receive the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner still receive the body and blood of Christ.**

**a) This truth is stated expressly by Paul.**

1 Corinthians 11:27-29 Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord (ἐνοχος ἔσται τοῦ σώματος καὶ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ κυρίου).<sup>28</sup> A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord (μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα) eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 977, 16: Therefore, as St. Paul says, even the unworthy partake of the Sacrament, they hold that also to the unworthy the body and blood of Christ are truly offered, and the unworthy receive them, if and where the institution and command of the Lord Christ are observed.

**b) The sacrament is what Christ declares it to be, the real presence of his body and blood.**

**1) Christ does not withdraw his promise merely because people do not believe the promise.**

Romans 3:3 What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness?

2 Timothy 2:13 If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

**2) Whenever Christ's institution is followed in word and action, though people may misuse the sacrament and forfeit blessing, they do not invalidate Christ's sacrament.**

Formula of Concord, Ep., Art. VII, p 812, 16,17: We believe, teach, and confess that not only the true believers in Christ and the worthy, but also the unworthy and unbelievers, receive the true body and blood of Christ; however, not for life and consolation, but for judgment and condemnation, if they are not converted and do not repent, 1 Cor. 11:27, 29. For although they thrust Christ from themselves as a Savior, yet they must admit him even against their will as a strict Judge, who is just as

present also to exercise and render judgment upon impenitent guests as he is present to work life and consolation in the hearts of the true believers and worthy guests.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VI, p 994, 66, 67 All the ancient Christian teachers expressly, and in full accord with the entire holy Christian Church, teach, according to these words of the institution of Christ and the explanation of St. Paul, that the body of Christ is not only received spiritually by faith, which occurs also outside of the use of the Sacrament, but also orally, not only by believing and godly, but also by unworthy, unbelieving, false, and wicked Christians.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 1012, 123: We reject also the teaching that unbelieving and impenitent, wicked Christians, who only bear the name of Christ, but do not have the right, true, living, and saving faith, receive in the Supper not the body and blood of Christ, but only bread and wine. And since there are only two kinds of guests found at this heavenly meal, the worthy and the unworthy, we reject also the distinction made among the unworthy, made by some who assert that the godless Epicureans and scoffers at God's Word, who are in the external fellowship of the Church, when using the Holy Supper, do not receive the body and blood of Christ for condemnation, but only bread and wine.

**V. The visible and the invisible elements are joined together in the sacrament in what is known as sacramental union.**

- 1. This term does not attempt to explain the nature of the union, but merely asserts that it is peculiar to the sacrament.**
  - a) This “sacramental union” should not be confused with the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ, nor with the mystic union of the Triune God with his believers, nor with omnipresence.**
  - b) This “sacramental union” must not be conceived as impanation or invination (local inclusion of the elements), nor as consubstantiation (implying a physical mixture of the elements). These are inadequate and inappropriate attempts to explain the “how” of the real presence.**
- 2. The union of the visible and invisible elements in the sacramental meal is taught by Scripture.**
  - a) An intimate union between the elements is clearly expressed by Paul.**

1 Corinthians 10:16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation (*κοινωνία*) in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation (*κοινωνία*) in the body of Christ?
  - b) The words of institution speak of one undivided act of eating and drinking the visible and invisible elements. Receiving the visible**

**elements unworthily makes one guilty of the body and blood of Christ.**

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup> 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." <sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." <sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11:27-29 Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Chemnitz: It is certain that not only bread is eaten in the Lord's Supper. For concerning that which is taken and eaten in that supper Christ said, "This is my body." And so in the Supper also the body of Christ is eaten, not, however, with only the mind and spirit by faith alone.... But concerning that which is taken with the mouth in that way the Son of God himself declared: "This is my body." However, it is impossible that one and the same word in the same sentence should have both a literal and figurative meaning at the same time. (*Coen. Dom.*, 19)

Hollaz: Sacramental eating and drinking is a single undivided action, in which we simultaneously in the same moment eat the eucharistic bread and the body of Christ sacramentally united with it. But this one eating and drinking is done in a double way. For although the earthly and heavenly element is taken with one and the same organ, yet this is not done in the same way. Bread and wine are received with the mouth directly (immediately) and in a natural way, the body and blood of Christ in a mediate (by means of bread and wine) and supernatural way (*Examen*, ca. 1130).

**c) There is value in reading statements given by our Lutheran fathers on the biblical teaching of the sacramental union.**

Formula of Concord, Ep., Art. VII, p 810, 7: We believe, teach, and confess that the words of the testament of Christ are not to be understood otherwise than as they read, according to the letter, so that the bread does not signify the absent body and the wine the absent blood of Christ, but that, on account of the sacramental union, the bread and wine are truly the body and blood of Christ.

Gerhard: After it has been demonstrated that the words of the Holy Supper should be understood *κατὰ τὸ ῥητόν*, according to their genuine, literal, and natural meaning, the view of our churches concerning the true, real, and substantial presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper cannot be doubtful or uncertain, because that view flows directly out of the words of institution understood as they read in a literal and proper sense.... This presence is called 1) *sacramental*, because the heavenly element is given and



offered to us in this sacrament by means of external sacramental symbols; 2) *true and real* to exclude the figment of a figurative, imaginary, and symbolic presence; 3) *substantial*, to keep the adversaries from taking refuge in a presence of only the efficacy of the body and blood of Christ in this sacrament; 4) *mystical, supernatural, and incomprehensible*, because the body and blood of Christ are present in this sacrament not in any earthly way but in a way that is mystical, supernatural, and incomprehensible. Some of our theologians call it a *bodily* presence, having in mind the object which is present but by no means the manner of the presence. They want to say this, that not only the power and efficacy but the very substance of the body and blood of Christ are present in the Holy Supper. For they use this word *bodily* in opposition to a spiritual presence as that term is defined by the adversaries. But they by no means intend to say that the body of Christ is present in a bodily or quantitative way, with physical dimensions (*Loci*, X, 165)

**d) The sacramental union is customarily expressed by the prepositions “in, with, and under”.**

Gerhard: With these and similar words [the body and blood of Christ are received “in, with, and under” the bread and wine in the sacrament] nothing else is meant than the sacramental union of the consecrated bread and the body of Christ and of the consecrated chalice and the blood of Christ. That is, in the Holy Supper, by means of the blessed bread the true body of Christ is received, and by means of the blessed wine the true blood of Christ is received. The bread and wine in their natural state and essence, not changed or removed according to their natural state; yet, in the sacramental use and reception, not just common bread and wine, but the body and blood of Christ are received by means of the very same elements. How, then, may one differently and more suitably express such sacramental benefit and better guard against all perversions than when one says, the body of Christ is received and eaten in, with and under the consecrated bread and the blood of Christ is received and drunk in, with, and under the consecrated wine? . . . These and similar statements . . . emanate from the sacramental union of the consecrated bread and body of Christ and the consecrated chalice and blood of Christ. Whoever believes this from the heart will have no second thoughts about employing such forms of expression (*Comprehensive Examination*, Vol. II, p 88,89).

**3. From the sacramental union it does not follow that eating and drinking must be understood in a “Capernaitic” or cannibalistic sense, as physical chewing and digesting. This faulty understanding of the sacramental eating and drinking rightly acknowledges that we receive Christ’s body and blood through the mouth, but fails to see this is done in a supernatural and incomprehensible rather than a natural, physical way.**

**a) Reformed theologians have denounced Lutherans as cannibals or have insinuated that we endorse such a concept.**

Recall the use of terms such as *Fleischfresser* and *Blutsaeufer* used in reference to Lutherans by people such as Theodore Beza.

Charles Hodge: Although the Lutherans reject the idea that the body of Christ in the Lord's Supper is eaten after the manner of ordinary food, yet the language of Luther on the subject, adopted or defended by his followers, can hardly be understood in any other sense (*ST*, III, p 669).

Formula of Concord, Ep., Art. VII, p 810, 15: We believe, teach, and confess that the body and blood of Christ are received with the bread and wine, not only spiritually by faith, but also orally; yet not in a Capernaitic, but in a supernatural, heavenly mode, because of the sacramental union.

Formula of Concord, Ep., Art. VII, p 816, 41,42: Likewise, we consign also to the just judgment of God all presumptuous, frivolous, blasphemous questions (which decency forbids to mention) and other expressions, which most blasphemously and with great offense to the Church are proposed by the Sacramentarians in a gross, carnal, Capernaitic way concerning the supernatural, heavenly mysteries of this sacrament. Hence we hereby utterly reject and condemn the Capernaitic eating of the body of Christ, as though we taught that his flesh were rent with the teeth, and digested like other food, which the Sacramentarians, against the testimony of their conscience, after all our frequent protests, willfully force upon us, and in this way make our doctrine odious to their hearers; and on the other hand, we maintain and believe, according to the simple words of the testament of Christ, the true, yet supernatural eating of the body of Christ, as also the drinking of his blood, which human senses and reason do not comprehend, but as in all other articles of faith our reason is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and this mystery is not apprehended otherwise than by faith alone, and revealed in the Word alone.

**b) The charge of cannibalism cannot rightly be made even against Roman Catholics despite their doctrine of transubstantiation.**

Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) in his hymn *Lauda, Sion, Salvatorem*:

Hear what Holy Church maintaineth,  
that the bread its substance changeth  
into flesh, the wine to blood.  
Does it pass thy comprehending?  
Faith, the law of sight transcending,  
leaps to things not understood.

Here beneath these signs are hidden  
priceless things, to sense forbidden;  
signs, not things, are all we see.  
Flesh from bread, and Blood from wine,  
yet is Christ in either sign,  
all entire confessed to be.

And whoe'er of him partakes,  
severs not, nor rends, nor breaks:  
all entire, their Lord receive.  
Whether one or thousand eat,  
all receive the selfsame meat,  
nor do less for others leave.

**4. The Reformed and Evangelicals, who deny the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament, sometimes still speak of a "sacramental union," though with a different meaning of the term.**

- a) They are not referring to a real or essential union, but to a symbolic union of an external symbol and the object that is signified by the sign. In doing this they act as though this were the union of which the Scripture speaks.**

Helvetic Confession (1536), I, 23: Not because the body and blood of the Lord are naturally united with bread and wine, or locally included in bread and wine, or set before us here in any fleshly way, but because bread and wine are symbols by which a true sharing of His body and blood is displayed.

Scottish Confession (1560), 21: Although the distance between His body now glorified in the heavens and us mortals on this earth, is great, yet none the less we firmly believe that the bread which we break is the communion of the body, etc.

- b) The Lutheran Confessions identify and reject this understanding of the sacramental union.**

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 1012, 117: [We reject and condemn the teaching] that in the Supper the power, efficacy, and merit of the far-absent body of Christ are distributed only to faith, and we thus become partakers of his absent body; and that, in this way just mentioned, *unio sacramentalis*, that is, the sacramental union, is to be understood *de analogia signi et signati* (with respect to the analogy of the sign and that which is signified), that is, as far as the bread and wine have a resemblance to the body and blood of Christ.

**VI. The text and context of the words of institution do not lend themselves to a figurative interpretation that would deny the sacramental union of the visible and invisible elements in the Lord's Supper.**

**1. A basic and necessary hermeneutic principle is that any figurative use of words must be clearly indicated by the author.**

- a) The following premises of interpretation should be kept in mind.**

- 1) Speech serves for the communication of thought.**
- 2) The author of a sentence is the only authoritative interpreter (in case the words themselves would allow more than one connotation or interpretation).**
- 3) The reader's only duty is to grasp the meaning of the sentence.**
- 4) Interpreting a sentence figuratively which was intended in the literal sense is a *quid pro quo*, the substitution of one thing for another.**

- 5) **That a figurative understanding makes good sense is not in itself sufficient reason to forsake the literal meaning.**
- 6) **That the literal meaning yields a sense that reason has difficulty grasping or involves difficulties that would be avoided by a figurative interpretation is not sufficient reason to forsake the literal meaning.**
- 7) **That the word or phrase in question is used in a figurative sense elsewhere in Scripture is not in itself sufficient reason to forsake the literal meaning.**
- 8) **The author must clearly show that he is speaking figuratively and wants to be so understood.**
- 9) **Or the literal sense must be clearly impossible or contrary to clear and unambiguous Bible statements.**

b) **Nothing in the words of institution demands or points to a figurative use.**

**2. The Roman Catholic Church abandons the literal sense of the words of institution when they substitute the dogma of transubstantiation for the sacramental union. We reject this church dogma.**

Council of Trent, Sess. XIII, ch. 4, can 2: Now once more this holy Synod declares that by consecration of the bread and wine a conversion or change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood takes place. This conversion or change is appropriately and properly called Transubstantiation by the Holy Catholic Church.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: In the epiclesis, the Church asks the Father to send his Holy Spirit (or the power of his blessing) on the bread and wine, so that by his power they may become the body and blood of Jesus Christ (Para.1353).

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 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) (Para. 1413).

---

Contrast the Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 1008, 107,108: With heart and mouth we reject and condemn as false, erroneous, and misleading all errors which are not in accordance with, but contrary and opposed to, the doctrine above mentioned and founded upon God's Word, such as 1) The papistic transubstantiation, when it is taught that the consecrated or blessed bread and wine in the Holy Supper lose entirely their substance and essence, and are changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ in such a way that only the mere form of bread and wine is left, or *accidentia sine subiecto* (the accidents without the object); under which form of the bread, which nevertheless is bread no longer, but

according to their assertion has lost its natural essence, the body of Christ is present even apart from the administration of the Holy Supper, when the bread is enclosed in the pyx or is carried about for display and adoration. For nothing can be a sacrament without God's command and the appointed use for which it is instituted in God's Word, as was shown above.

**3. The Reformed and Evangelicals abandon the literal sense, denying the real presence of the body and blood of Christ and thus the sacramental union between the visible and invisible elements.**

**a) While Reformed and Evangelical theologians may take differing paths and use different arguments, they uniformly deny the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament.**

Zurich Consensus (1549), 21, 25: Every idea of a local presence must be given up. For although the signs are here on earth, seen with the eyes, and touched by the hands, Christ, insofar as he is a human being, is nowhere else than in heaven. Nor is he to be sought in any way but with the mind and the understanding of faith. Therefore it is a perverse and godless superstition to include him under the elements of this world. Because ... the body of Christ, as the nature and mode of a human body demands, is finite and is contained in heaven as a place, therefore it is necessary that it should be distant from us by as great an interval of space as heaven is distant from earth.

Wayne Grudem: How can Christ's physical body, or more generally Christ's human nature, be everywhere present? Is it not true that Jesus in his human nature ascended into heaven and remains there until his return? (*ST*, p 994).

**b) Ulrich Zwingli and others took the word "is" in the words of institution to mean "signifies" and in that way ended up with a figurative interpretation.**

**1) In an attempt to show this was a valid approach to the text, they pointed to various Scripture passages that admittedly contain figurative expressions.**

**-a) They cite passages which contain metaphorical expressions.**

Matthew 5:13 You are the salt of the earth.

John 10:9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.

John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

1 Corinthians 10:4 [They all] drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.

Isaiah 40:6 A voice says, “Cry out.” And I said, “What shall I cry?” “All men are like grass (כָּל־הַבְּשָׂר חָצִיר), and all their glory is like the flowers of the field.”

**-b) They cite passages that are parables.**

Genesis 41:26 The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream.

Luke 8:11 This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God.

Matthew 13:38 The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one.

Galatians 4:24 These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar.

**-c) Additionally, one passage reportedly suggested to Zwingli by an unidentified advisor in a dream, was used to support the idea of the copula meaning something other than “is.”**

Exodus 12:11 This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD’s Passover.

**2) An examination of these passages shows that in none of them does the copula change its meaning. The copula simply connects terms. The nature of that connection is determined by the context. The validity of making the word “is” mean “signifies” is not established.**

**-a) The first group of passages cited does contain metaphorical expressions, but the figurative language is in the predicate noun, not in the copula. The predicate noun is a metaphor (a new word, with the same sound but different meaning).**

**-b) The second group of passages is from parables. Here the figure is provided by the whole parable. The copula still means “is.”**

**-c) The Exodus passage has sometimes been called Zwingli's “strongest proof” that the copula might mean something other than “is.” But again, a closer examination would show that it does not establish this point.**

- 1) In this passage “it” most likely refers, not to the Passover lamb, but to the occasion. (Compare: “Let’s decorate the tree, for it is Christmas.”)
- 2) Even if the reference were to the lamb, “is” could not mean “signifies”. The expression would be on a level with John 11:25 and others that indicate cause or source.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.

- c) John Calvin and others have taken “my body” to mean “symbol of my body” or “representation my body,” finding a figure of speech in the predicate noun of the words of institution.

- 1) This improper approach to the words of institution continues to be persuasive to many people and enjoy wide popularity.

The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia, II,1078: A simple illustration affords the clearest answer. Passing through a great gallery of art, some one points to a statue and says, That is Washington; or standing before a portrait he says, That is Lincoln. The language, according to all the ordinary usages of speech, would be perfectly accurate, and no one of intelligence could mistake its significance. The marble or bronze on the one hand, and the canvass and color on the other, represent the two great statesmen. In that upper chamber in Jerusalem, with His human body visible to their eyes and tangible to their hands, Christ takes a piece of bread and says, This is my body. What possible meaning could those words have had to the disciples, except this, that the bread broken represented His body so soon to be broken on the cross?

- 2) When this use of figurative language is applied to the words of institution, however, this “clearest answer” is exposed as a fallacy. Consider the following points:

- The death of Christ, that is, his body being given and blood being poured out for sinners, was still in the future. If the bread and wine were symbols of this, how would the disciples recognize the similarity?
- Was the breaking of the bread to be an alleged point of similarity that pointed to the body of Christ on the cross? We know that not a bone of Christ’s body was broken (John 19:31-37).
- In the illustration given, why does the “marble or bronze” represent Washington? Evidently only on account of the similarity of form. But there is no similarity of form between the bread and Christ’s body.

- Also in the illustration given, the statue is not a symbol of Washington, but is a marble Washington, a likeness of the historical Washington, a marble reproduction, or copy.
- What about the words, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood”? Are we to understand the words to mean, “This representation or symbol of my death causes the forgiveness of sins?”
- In the illustration there is an acknowledged absurdity or impossibility in taking the statue or portrait as identical with Washington or Lincoln. But when the words of institution are taken literally, in their simple and natural sense, no such absurdity or impossibility results. Again, basic principles of interpretation prohibit a departure from the words as spoken.

**d) The sum and substance of the Reformed and Evangelical doctrine, which is a denial of the real presence of Christ’s body and blood in the sacrament, may be summarized with two major points.**

**1) The Reformed and Evangelicals believe that while the communicant receives only bread and wine with his mouth, by the Holy Spirit his faith reaches into heaven to receive the body and blood of Christ, i.e., Christ himself and his blessings.**

Calvin: If with our eyes and souls we are carried to heaven, that we might seek Christ there in the glory of his kingdom, just as the symbols invite us to come to him in his entirety, so under the symbol of bread we are nourished with his body and under the symbol of wine we are clearly made to drink of his blood (given his blood to drink), so that at last we may enjoy him wholly (*Institutes* IV, 17, 18–19).

Brandenburg Confession (1614): There are two things to be found there . . . . They are to be received in two different ways: The bread and wine with the mouth, the true body and the true blood of Christ with faith (Par. 647).

Palatine Confession (1577): Spatial distance in no way keeps me [Frederick III, elector of the Palatinate] and all believers from eating that body of Christ and drinking his blood, even though Christ himself in that natural body of his is no longer on earth (Par.152).

Millard Erickson: The Reformed view holds that Christ is present in the Lord’s Supper but not physically or bodily. Rather, his presence in the sacrament is spiritual or dynamic. . . . The notion that we actually eat Christ’s body and drink his blood is absurd. Rather, true communicants are spiritually nourished by partaking of the bread and the wine. The Holy Spirit brings them into closer connection with the person of Christ (*CT*, p 1127).

**2) In their view, then, since there is only a spiritual reception of Christ that is accomplished through faith, unbelieving**



**communicants do not partake of the body and blood of Christ at all. They merely receive bread and wine through the mouth.**

Brandenburg Confession (1614): And since faith is, as it were, the mouth by which the crucified body of the Lord Christ and his shed blood are received, His Electoral Grace [Johann Sigismund] steadfastly believes that this sacrament does not benefit impenitent unbelievers and that they do not share in the true body and blood of Christ.

Reymond: Although ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements in this sacrament, yet they receive not the thing signified thereby (*NST*, p 956).

**3) The Lutheran Confessions reject these false views that deny the real sacramental presence of the body and blood of the Lord.**

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 1012, 122,123: Likewise [we reject the error] that believers are not to seek, by reason of the words of Christ's institution, the body of Christ with the bread and wine of the Supper, but are directed with their faith away from the bread of the Supper to heaven, to the place where the Lord Christ is with his body, that they should become partakers of it there. We reject also the teaching that unbelieving and impenitent, wicked Christians, who only bear the name of Christ, but do not have the right, true, living, and saving faith, receive in the Supper not the body and blood of Christ, but only bread and wine.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 980, 27: The true presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper is established from God's Word; and this presence is understood not only of the believing and worthy, but also of the unbelieving and unworthy.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 976, 16: Secondly, they hold that the institution of this sacrament made by Christ is efficacious in Christendom (the Church), and that it does not depend upon the worthiness or unworthiness of the minister who offers the sacrament, or of the one who receives it. Therefore, as St. Paul says, that even the unworthy partake of the sacrament, they hold that also to the unworthy the body and blood of Christ are truly offered, and the unworthy truly receive them, if where the institution and command of the Lord Christ are observed. But such persons receive them to condemnation, as St. Paul says; for they misuse the holy sacrament, because they receive it without true repentance and without faith.

**4. The fundamental error underlying the Reformed and Evangelical doctrine is that certain principles of natural reason and logic are placed above God's Word.**

**a) Human reason fails to find the real presence sufficiently motivated.**

- 1) **From their perspective the important thing is the spiritual eating and drinking by faith. The sacramental presence and reception of Christ's body and blood are unnecessary.**

Wayne Grudem: Jesus is not speaking of a literal eating of his flesh [sic] and blood. But if he is not speaking of a literal eating and drinking, then he must have in mind a spiritual participation in the benefits of the redemption he earns. This spiritual nourishment, so necessary for our souls, is both symbolized and experienced in our participation in the Lord's Supper (*ST*, p 990).

Millard Erickson: If we get bogged down in the technical issues [e.g. the nature of Christ's presence in the sacrament], and do not move on to deal with the practical meaning, we will have missed the whole point of Christ's having established the Supper. Experience of the meaning of the Lord's supper, not just comprehension, is our goal (*CT*, p 1117).

Herzog Encyclopedia: There is absolutely no sufficient reason why we should accept a physical miracle. One can also not expect the Reformed, in the absence of any reason for a bodily presence, to take refuge in the words which Luther spoke at Marburg: If the Lord would lay inedible crab apples before me and tell me to take and eat, I would not dare to ask, "Why?" We, however, believe that we have a right to ask that question, yes, that we should ask it, since God does nothing superfluous (2nd Ed. I, 44).

- 2) **In response, we ask, "Who are we to declare any word of God superfluous?"**

- b) **Human reason also insists on a universal application of the axiom, "Every true body occupies a place" (*Omne corpus verum in loco est*).**

- 1) **From their perspective the human body of Christ is and must remain confined to a given location. If true concerning Christ's body, this would rule out its sacramental presence.**

Calvin: These two limitations, I say, we will never allow anyone to take from us ... lest something be said of [Christ's] body which is inconsistent with human nature. This happens whenever 1) his body is said to be infinite or 2) when it is located in many places at the same time (*Institutes*, IV, 17, 19).

Millard Erickson: The most natural and straightforward way to render Jesus' words, "This is my body" and "This is my blood" is to interpret them literally. Since it is our general practice to interpret Scripture literally where that is natural, we must be prepared to offer justification if we interpret these words in any other way. . . . If we take "This is my body" and "This is my blood" literally, an absurdity results. If Jesus meant that the bread and wine were at that moment in the upper room actually his body and blood, he was asserting that his flesh and blood were in two places simultaneously, since his corporeal form was right there beside the elements. To believe that Jesus was in two places at once

is something of a denial of the incarnation, which limited his physical human nature to one location (*CT*, p 1129).

- 2) **In response, we point to those Bible passages that speak of Christ's human nature sharing his divine attributes (the so-called *genus majesticum* or passages that speak of the majestic genus). What may be true of human bodies in general may not be assumed to be true of the body of the Son of God.**

Colossians 2:9 In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.

Matthew 28:20 And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Matthew 18:20 Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.

Ephesians 1:23 [The church] which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Compare Francis Pieper: The despot which the Reformed theologians use to tyrannize the Scriptures and themselves is their fixed notion that always only a visible and local presence may be ascribed to the human nature of Christ and that therefore the body of Christ cannot be present in the Lord's Supper invisibly and illocally. All objections of the Reformed to the presence of Christ's body and blood, as it is stated in the words of Christ, are in the last analysis based on this preconceived notion (*CD*, III, p 323).

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 1012, 119,120: Likewise [we reject and condemn] when it is taught that because of his ascension into heaven Christ is so enclosed and circumscribed with his body in a definite place in heaven that with his body he cannot or will not be truly present with us in the Supper, which is celebrated according to the institution of Christ upon earth, but that he is as far and remote from it as heaven and earth are from one another . . . [and] Christ must be received or be circumscribed and enclosed by heaven or in heaven, in such a manner that in his human nature he can or will in no way be with us upon earth. Likewise, that Christ has not promised the true, essential presence of his body and blood in his Supper, and that he neither can nor will afford it, because the nature and property of his assumed human nature could not suffer or admit of it.

- c) **For orthodox Lutheranism, human reason is subjected to the word of Scripture.**

- 1) **It is either ignorance of the truth or slander that says Lutherans construct our doctrine of the real presence to conform with our convictions regarding the person of Christ and the communication of attributes.**

Wayne Grudem: How can Christ's physical body, or more generally Christ's human nature, be everywhere present? Is it not true that Jesus in his human nature ascended into heaven and remains there until his return? . . . In answer to this problem Luther taught the *ubiquity* [sic] of Christ's human nature after his ascension – that is, that Christ's human nature was present everywhere (“ubiquitous”). But theologians ever since Luther's time have suspected that he taught the ubiquity of Christ's human nature, not because it is found anywhere in Scripture, but because he needed it to explain how his view of consubstantiation [sic] could be true. In response to the Lutheran view, it can be said that it fails to realize that Jesus is speaking of a *spiritual* reality using *physical* objects to teach us when he says, “This is my body” (*ST*, p 994).

**2) We draw the doctrines of Christology and of the Lord's Supper from their proper *sedes* in Scripture, and then discover that they are in perfect harmony.**

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 1008,106: Thus our faith in this article concerning the true presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper is based upon the truth and omnipotence of the true, almighty God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. These foundations are strong and firm enough to strengthen and establish our faith in all temptations concerning this article, and, on the contrary, to overthrow and refute all the counter-arguments and objections of the Sacramentarians, however agreeable and plausible they may be to our reason; and upon them a Christian heart also can securely and firmly rest and rely.

Leonhard Hutter (d. 1616): It must be kept in mind that in this controversy about the Lord's Supper not one but two different questions are being debated. One of these deals with the will and intention of Christ. Does he really in the Supper want to offer His body to be eaten and His blood to be drunk and thus want to be really present with His body and blood by means of the eucharistic bread and wine? Luther maintains, and we maintain with him, that the answer to this question is certainly to be sought nowhere else than in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper alone. The second question has to do with the power of Christ. Can he really be present with his body and blood in all the places where this sacrament is distributed? Where indeed will there be a stupid fellow who would maintain that the answer to these questions must be sought anywhere else than in the doctrine of the person of Christ (*Loci*, p 716).

**VII. In a full sacramental action (*actio* or *usus*) of the Lord's Supper there are three component acts, namely, consecration, distribution, and reception (eating and drinking).**

- 1. The consecration of the visible elements has always been a part of the sacramental meal.**
  - a) Jesus and the apostolic church solemnly set apart the bread and wine for special use and we continue to do the same.**

**1) In reporting the original institution of the sacramental meal the Bible uses the words εὐλογεῖν and εὐχαριστεῖν interchangeably.**

Matthew 26:26-28 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks (εὐλογεῖν) and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.”<sup>27</sup> Then he took the cup, gave thanks (εὐχαριστεῖν) and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you.”<sup>28</sup> This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

Mark 14:22-24 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks (εὐλογεῖν) and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; this is my body.”<sup>23</sup> Then he took the cup, gave thanks (εὐχαριστεῖν) and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.<sup>24</sup> “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them.

**2) In the apostolic age it was customary to consecrate the elements by pronouncing a blessing over them.**

1 Corinthians 10:16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks (εὐλογεῖν) a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

The Didache, IX, 2–4: First, in connection with the cup, “We give you thanks (εὐχαριστεῖν), our Father, for the holy vine of David your son, which you have made known to us through Jesus your Son. To you be glory forever.” And in connection with the breaking of bread, “We give you thanks (εὐχαριστεῖν), our Father, for the life and knowledge which you have revealed to us through Jesus your Son; to you be glory forever. As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountain tops and after being harvested was made one, so let your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom, for yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever.”

**3) Today we consecrate the elements in a liturgical service culminating in the recitation of the words of institution.**

Formula of Concord, Ep., Art. VII, p 810, 8,9: Now, as to the consecration, we believe, teach, and confess that no work of man or recitation of the minister of the church produces this presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper, but that this is to be ascribed only and alone to the almighty power of our Lord Jesus Christ. But at the same time we also believe, teach, and confess unanimously that in the use of the Holy Supper the words of the institution of Christ should in no way be omitted, but should be publicly recited, as it is written 1 Cor. 10, 16: The cup of blessing which we bless, etc. This blessing occurs through the recitation of the words of Christ.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 1012, 121: Likewise, [we reject] when it is taught that not only the Word and omnipotence of Christ, but

faith, renders the body of Christ present in the Supper; on this account the words of institution in the administration of the Supper are omitted by some. For although the papistic consecration is justly rebuked and rejected, in which the power to produce a sacrament is ascribed to the speaking as the work of the priest, yet the words of institution can or should in no way be omitted in the administration of the Supper, as is shown in the preceding declaration.

**b) There are a number of purposes involved in the consecration of the elements.**

- 1) We consecrate to recall the historical event and provide a narrative of the original institution of the sacrament.**
- 2) We consecrate to express our intention of repeating what Jesus commanded when he said, “This do.”**
- 3) We consecrate to confess our faith in the reality of the sacramental union and the benefits of the whole sacramental meal.**
- 4) We consecrate to set apart the visible elements for this special use and to pray for divine power and blessing as we proceed with the sacramental meal.**

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 1000, 79-82: In the administration of the Holy Supper the words of institution are to be publicly spoken or sung before the congregation distinctly and clearly, and should in no way be omitted, and this for very many and the most important reasons. First, in order that obedience may be rendered to the command of Christ: *This do* that therefore should not be omitted which Christ himself did in the Holy Supper, and secondly that the faith of the hearers concerning the nature and fruit of this sacrament (concerning the presence of the body and blood of Christ, concerning the forgiveness of sins, and all benefits which have been purchased by the death and shedding of the blood of Christ, and are bestowed upon us in Christ’s testament) may be excited, strengthened, and confirmed by Christ’s Word, and besides that the elements of bread and wine may be consecrated or blessed for this holy use, in order that the body and blood of Christ may therewith be administered to us to be eaten and to be drunk, as Paul declares in 1 Cor. 10:16: “The cup of blessing which we bless,” which indeed occurs in no other way than through the repetition and recitation of the words of institution.

**c) The effect of the words of institution used in the consecration is not magical.**

- 1) Nowhere in Scripture is a rigid formula prescribed. We do not know what words Jesus or the apostolic church used.**

Johann Cotta (d. 1763): After the example of the ancient church, the symbols should be designated for sacred use by prayers or the Lord’s

Prayer (since nothing is known for certain about the form of the prayer of Christ and the apostles). But by the words of institution, when the use is added, the body and blood of Christ are united with the wine. For this reason our theologians have been accustomed to distinguish between total (or unitive) and partial (or destinative) consecration. Partial and destinative consecration takes place through prayer and the words of institution, which should not be recited without internal prayers. But when the words of institution have been repeated and the very action of giving and receiving is added, the total or unitive consecration guarantees the union of the heavenly with the earthly element (*Loci*, Vol. X, loc. XXII *de sacra coena*, chap. XIII, para. CXLVIII, note, p 268).

**2) Jesus is present with his Spirit, working through the Word and bringing about what he declared at the original institution.**

Baier: The principal efficient cause of this sacrament is Christ who instituted this sacrament and commanded us to use it often. And still today he brings it about that the action which is carried out according to his command in connection with the external symbols has the nature and power of a sacrament. . . . Specifically, in any celebration of the sacrament, so far as the real presence of the body and blood of Christ is concerned, the *institution* of Christ itself serves as the principal impelling cause. The lesser principal impelling cause is the *consecration* of the elements, performed by the minister according to the institution of Christ. . . . Meanwhile it should be noted that the words of institution move the will of Christ, *not* by any power of their own, and as they are spoken by the minister, *but* by the power of the institution itself that comes from Christ (*Compendium*, Part III, chap. XI, para. II and III, and note e, p 546).

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 998, 75-78: The true and almighty words of Jesus Christ which he spoke at the first institution were efficacious not only at the first Supper, but they endure, are valid, operate, and are still efficacious (their force, power, and efficacy endure and avail even to the present), so that in all places where the Supper is celebrated according to the institution of Christ, and his words are used, the body and blood of Christ are truly present, distributed, and received, because of the power and efficacy of the words which Christ spoke at the first Supper. For where his institution is observed and His words are spoken over the bread and cup [wine], and the consecrated bread and cup [wine] are distributed, Christ himself, through the spoken words, is still efficacious by virtue of the first institution, through his word, which he wishes to be there repeated.

**2. The distribution of the consecrated elements is the second main component of the sacramental meal.**

- a) At the original institution of the meal Jesus broke the bread and gave it to his disciples. Likewise he gave them the cup to distribute among themselves.**

**b) The breaking of the bread is not an essential act of the sacramental meal even though some writers have made this claim.**

**1) The breaking of bread was not a sacramental act but a preparatory action done to allow for the distribution.**

Isaiah 58:7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry (פָּרִס לְרַעֲב לַחֲמֶדָּה) and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

Lamentations 4:4 Because of thirst the infant's tongue sticks to the roof of its mouth; the children beg for bread, but no one gives it to them (לָהֶם פֶּי־אֵין לֶחֶם).

Jeremiah 16:7 No one will offer food (וְלֹא-יִפְרֹסוּ לָהֶם) to comfort those who mourn for the dead—not even for a father or a mother—nor will anyone give them a drink to console them.

---

Matthew 14:19 He directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. (The same phrase is used in the parallel accounts in Mark 6:41, Luke 9:16, and John 6:11).

Matthew 15:36 Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. (The same phrase is used in the parallel account in Mark 8:6, 19).

Luke 24:30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.

Acts 27:35 After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat.

Luther: We must not interpret or use the word “break” according to our own fancies but according to scriptural usage. Now in Scripture the word “breaking,” especially where it is used in reference to bread or eating, is the equivalent of “dividing into pieces” or “distributing” (*LW* 37:332).

**2) Other similar incidental acts done at the original sacramental meal are not considered essential or copied.**

John 13:25-26 Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?”<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon.



John 21:20 Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”)

- 3) **The early church kept up the custom of breaking the bread, presumably because they used the same kind of loaf and this was the general custom of the day.**

1 Corinthians 10:16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

- 4) **Calvinist writers have emphasized the breaking of the bread in the interest of their symbolism.**

Johann Alting (d. 1644): The breaking of the bread is not an adiaphoron, but it is a necessary ceremony, and therefore it ought never to be left out. It is essential and sacramental and by all means belongs to the purpose and scope and therefore also to the essence of the Holy Supper (*Institutiones theologicae s. locorum communium christianae religionis analysis*, XLVIII, 32).

Riissen (d. 1700): [The Calvinists] do not think that the ceremony of breaking the bread is an adiaphoron but that, from the institution of Christ, it is just as necessary as the taking with the hand, the distribution and communing. Nevertheless they do not want to argue about this so rigidly that no fellowship can be practiced with those who omit it (*Francisci Turretini compendium theologiae*, XVII, 51; cited by Heppe, *Dogmatik der Evang.-Ref. Kirche*, p 465).

Smalz, demonstrating a misunderstanding of what Lutherans teach regarding the doctrine of the real presence: In this way [namely, by breaking the bread] this mask of superstition is taken off and all know that there is nothing hidden there that is like what the Lutherans, together with the papists, not without the great loss of many souls, insist is hidden there (Pareus, *Vom Brotbrechen*, p 198).

Charles Hodge: The use of the wafer was introduced, which is placed unbroken in the mouth of the communicant. This is clearly a departure from apostolic usage, and evinces a departure from apostolic doctrine (*ST*, III, p 619).

Contrast Armin Schuetze and Irwin Habeck: The communion wafers are convenient, and their use has continued partly against the Reformed to demonstrate the liberty the Lord has given in regard to the bread. In an emergency bread in any form may be used (*Shepherd Under Christ*, p 90).

- 5) **The distribution of the fruit of the vine with a common cup is also not an essential part of the sacrament. The use of individual cups for distribution purposes is as much an adiaphoron as is the use of wafers.**

Armin Schuetze and Irwin Habeck: Although the common cup can have symbolical significance and its use in the church has a long tradition behind it, there are no theological reasons for rejecting the use of individual glasses. Even as the bread is not broken at the altar but prepared in individual wafers, so the wine may be apportioned in advance in individual cups without effecting the validity of the sacrament (*Shepherd Under Christ*, p 94).

**c) To the degree that Roman Catholics still withhold the cup from the laity they have a defective distribution that reflects a defective theology.**

**1) The Roman Catholic teaching on this subject is clearly stated.**

Council of Trent: And so the holy synod itself declares and teaches that there is no divine command that obligates laymen or priests who are not officiating to partake of the sacrament of the Eucharist under both kinds. Nor can it in any way be doubted without harm to faith that for them communion in either kind is sufficient for salvation. . . . If anyone says that by God's command or by necessity for salvation all and each of the believers in Christ ought to receive both kinds of the most holy Eucharist, let him be damned. . . . If anyone says that the Holy Catholic Church has not been led for right causes and reasons to commune laymen and also non-officiating priests only under the form of the bread, or that it has erred in this, let him be damned (Sess. XXI, chap. 1, Canon I and II).

Vatican II: The dogmatic principles which were laid down by the Council of Trent remaining intact, communion under both kinds may be granted when the bishops think fit, not only to clerics and religious, but also to the laity, in cases to be determined by the Apostolic See, as, for instance, to the newly ordained in the Mass of their sacred ordination, to the newly professed in the mass of their religious profession, and to the newly baptized in a Mass following their Baptism (*Documents*, p 156).

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 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 (Par. 1390).

**2) As a justification for distributing only one of the visible elements, the Roman Catholic Church offers the idea of concomitance.**

Council of Trent, Sess. XXI, Can. 3: If anyone denies that the whole and undivided Christ, the fountain and author of all graces, is received under the one form of bread, because, as some falsely assert, it is not received

under both kinds according to the institution of Christ, let him be damned.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 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 (Par. 1390).

**3) The dogma of concomitance as well as the practice of withholding the cup from communicants has no basis in Scripture. Christ's words of institution are clearly against such a practice.**

Matthew 26:27 He took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.

Compare 1 Corinthians 11:26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Mark 14:23 He took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.

Smalcald Articles, Part III, Art. VI, 2-4, p 492: [We hold] that not only one form is to be given. For we do not need that high art (specious wisdom) which is to teach us that under the one form there is as much as under both, as the sophists and the Council of Constance teach. For even if it were true that there is as much under one as under both, yet the one form only is not the entire ordinance and institution ordained and commanded by Christ. And we especially condemn and in God's name execrate those who not only omit both forms but also quite autocratically (tyrannically) prohibit, condemn, and blaspheme them as heresy, and so exalt themselves against and above Christ, our Lord and God opposing and placing themselves ahead of Christ, etc.

Apology, Article XXII (X), p 356: It cannot be doubted that it is godly and in accordance with the institution of Christ and the words of Paul to use both parts in the Lord's Supper. For Christ instituted both parts, and instituted them not for a part of the Church, but for the entire Church.

**3. Reception (eating and drinking) is the third major and essential part of the sacramental meal.**

**a) Some Calvinist writers have insisted that the consecrated elements be received or taken with the hand.**

Bucanus: "To receive" or "to take" (*λαμβάνειν*) is properly understood of the hand. Therefore it is superstitious to forbid the communicants to receive the bread or the eucharistic cup with the hand (*Institutiones theol.*, XLVIII, 33; cited by Heppe, *Dogmatik der evang.-Ref. Kirche*, p 466).

Charles Hodge: It is contrary to the rule prescribed in Scripture when the communicant does not for himself receive with his own hand the elements of bread and wine (*ST*, III, 619).

- b) **The manner of taking or receiving, however, is not stipulated in Scripture. Scripture speaks of several ways of “receiving” things.**

John 19:29,30 A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.<sup>30</sup> When he had received (λαμβάνειν) the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

John 20:22 And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive (λαμβάνειν) the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 1:8 But you will receive (λαμβάνειν) power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

**4. Other customs and dogmas connected with the sacramental meal have developed in history.**

- a) **Aside from the consecration, distribution, and reception of the sacramental elements, no other acts were instituted by Christ.**
- b) **Roman Catholics pray before and venerate the consecrated wafer. The so-called adoration of the host and the Corpus Christi festival are prominent expressions of this.**

**1) The Roman Catholic Church clearly advocates this use of the consecrated element.**

Council of Trent, Sess. XIII, Can. 6: If anyone should say that in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, is not to be adored also with external worship of the highest kind, and that therefore he is not to be venerated with a special festal celebration [Corpus Christi, on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, since 1264], nor to be solemnly carried around in processions according to the praiseworthy and universal rite and custom of the Holy Church, or that he is not to be placed publicly before the people for their adoration, or that those who adore are idolaters, let him be damned.

**2) For the Passover such customs were nipped in the bud.**

Exodus 12:10 Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it.

2 Kings 18:4 [King Hezekiah] removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. (It was called Nehushtan.)

**3) The Lutheran Confessions comment on these practices.**

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 1002, 87: And apart from this use, when in the papistic mass the bread is not distributed, but offered up or

enclosed, borne about, and exhibited for adoration, it is to be regarded as no sacrament; just as the water of baptism, when used to consecrate bells or to cure leprosy, or otherwise exhibited for worship, is no sacrament or baptism. For against such papistic abuses this rule has been set up at the beginning of the reviving Gospel, and has been explained by Dr. Luther himself, Tom. IV, Jena.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 1008, 108: [We reject and condemn] 1) The papistic transubstantiation, when it is taught that the consecrated or blessed bread and wine in the Holy Supper lose entirely their substance and essence, and are changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ in such a way that only the mere form of bread and wine is left, or *accidentia sine subiecto* (the accidents without the object); under which form of the bread, which nevertheless is bread no longer, but according to their assertion has lost its natural essence, the body of Christ is present even apart from the administration of the Holy Supper, when the bread is enclosed in the pyx or is carried about for display and adoration. For nothing can be a sacrament without God's command and the appointed use for which it is instituted in God's Word.

Compare Luther: We say that one should not condemn people or accuse them of heresy if they do not adore the Sacrament, for there is no command to that effect and it is not for that purpose that Christ is present. Just as we read that the apostles did not adore the Sacrament since they were sitting and eating at the table. On the other hand, one should not condemn and accuse of heresy people who do adore the Sacrament. For although Christ has not commanded it, neither has he forbidden it, but often accepted it [?]. Free, free it must be, according as one is disposed in his heart and has opportunity (*LW* 36, p 295). ... Nevertheless, you can see that adoration of this sacrament is a dangerous procedure if the Word and faith are not inculcated; so much so that I really think it would be better to follow the example of the apostles and not worship, than to follow our custom and worship. Not that adoration is wrong, but simply because there is less danger in not adoring than in adoring; because human nature tends so easily to emphasize its own works and to neglect God's work, and the sacrament will not admit of that (p 297).

Compare/contrast Tom G. Hardt (d. 1998): Particularly in view of the fact that this adoration is attacked by those people who deny the miracle of the Presence, the free ceremony spontaneously becomes a necessity (*On the Sacrament of the Altar*, p 65).

**c) Attempts to determine the precise moment and duration of the sacramental union have led some to formulate dogma and advocate practices that go beyond the institution of the sacrament given in Scripture.**

- 1) Roman Catholics assume a permanent “change in essence” (transubstantiation) that is brought about through the priestly recitation of the words of institution.**

Council of Trent, Sess. XIII, Can. 4: If anyone should say that when the consecration has been performed in the sacrament of the admirable Eucharist it is not the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, but that it is only received in use, and that it is not there either before or after, and that the true body of Christ does not remain in the hosts or consecrated pieces, which are reserved after the communion or left over, let him be damned.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 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 (Par.1377).

**2) Some Lutherans have expressed similar ideas regarding the recitation of the words of institution and the permanency of the sacramental union.**

Hutter: There are even some among ourselves who dream that, when the words of institution have been recited, there results a permanent sacramental union of the bread with the body and the wine with the blood (Cited by Schmid, *Doctrinal Theology*, p 573).

Tom G. Hardt (d. 1998): According to the doctrine of the real presence, the body of Christ is at one and the same time present in its entirety in every single host on the altar as well as in every part of each host . . . The Word spoken over the created element conveys directly the uncreated eternal power of God (*On the Sacrament of the Altar*, p 32, 49).

Bjarne W. Teigen (d. 2004): Through the words of Christ, spoken by the officiant, the sacramental union has been achieved so that the body and blood of Christ are present on the altar before the distribution and consumption (*The Lord's Supper in the Theology of Martin Chemnitz*, p 98).

**3) Following the Lutheran Confessions, we refrain from attempting to determine the precise moment of the sacramental union, restricting ourselves to the fact that when the earthly elements are received the heavenly are also received.**

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 976, 14-15: They confess, according to the words of Irenaeus, that in this sacrament there are two things, a heavenly and an earthly. Accordingly, they hold and teach that with the bread and wine the body and blood of Christ are truly and essentially present, offered, and received. And although they believe in no transubstantiation, that is, an essential transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, nor hold that the body and blood of Christ are included in the bread *localiter*, that is, locally, or are otherwise permanently united therewith apart from the use of the sacrament, yet they concede that through the sacramental union the bread

is the body of Christ, etc. Apart from the use, when the bread is laid aside and preserved in the sacramental vessel (the pyx), or is carried about in the procession and exhibited, as is done in popery, they do not hold that the body of Christ is present.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 1001, 83-84: However, this blessing, or the recitation of the words of institution of Christ alone does not make a sacrament if the entire action of the Supper, as it was instituted by Christ, is not observed, as when the consecrated bread is not distributed, received, and partaken of, but is enclosed, sacrificed, or carried about, but the command of Christ, “This do” (which embraces the entire action or administration in this sacrament, that in an assembly of Christians bread and wine are taken, consecrated, distributed, received, eaten, drunk, and the Lord’s death is shown forth at the same time) must be observed unseparated and inviolate, as also St. Paul places before our eyes the entire action of the breaking of bread or of distribution and reception, 1 Cor. 10:16.

Augsburg Confession, Art. X, p 46: Of the Supper of the Lord they teach that the Body and Blood of Christ are truly present, and are distributed to those who eat the Supper of the Lord; and they reject those that teach otherwise.

This We Believe: We reject any attempt to set the precise moment within the celebration of the Lord’s Supper when the body and blood of Christ become present. We therefore reject the view that one must believe that Christ’s body and blood are present as soon as the words of consecration have been spoken and the view that one must believe that Christ’s body and blood become present only at the moment of eating and drinking (VI, 10).

### **VIII. The sacrament of the altar serves the purpose of assuring the recipient of the forgiveness of his sins.**

#### **1. This gospel purpose is clear from the words of institution.**

Recall the clear emphasis of Christ’s words: “This is my body, given for you . . . This is my blood, poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. . . . Do this in remembrance of me.”

Apology, Art. III, p 178, 89: Thus in the church the Lord’s Supper was instituted that by remembrance of the promises of Christ, of which we are admonished in this sign, faith might be strengthened in us, and we might publicly confess our faith, and proclaim the benefits of Christ, as Paul says, 1 Cor. 11: 26: “As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you show the Lord’s death.”

Apology, Art. XII (V), p 260, 42: Meanwhile this faith is nourished in a manifold way in temptations, through the declarations of the gospel and the use of the sacraments. For these are seals and signs of the covenant and grace in the New Testament, i.e., signs of propitiation and the remission of sins. They offer, therefore, the remission of sins, as the words of the Lord’s Supper clearly testify, Matt. 26:26,28: “This is my body, which is given for you. This is the cup of the New

Testament”, etc. Thus faith is conceived and strengthened through absolution, through the hearing of the gospel, through the use of the sacraments, so that it may not succumb while it struggles with the terrors of sin and death.

Calov: The chief purpose of the Holy Eucharist on the part of God is the remission of sins and the sealing of grace, on our part it is the proclamation of the Lord's death (*Theologia positiva*, part III, sect. III, chap. VIII, thesis VIII, p 483).

Quenstedt: The purpose is either ultimate or subordinate; the ultimate is either absolutely such, namely, the praise of God's goodness and wisdom, or relatively such, namely, the salvation of man (*TDP*, Part IV, Chap VI, sect. I, thesis XVIII, p 184).

Gerhard: Through baptism we are regenerated. Through the Holy Supper we are fed and nourished for eternal life (Cited in Hoenecke, *ELD*, IV, p 142).

**2. To say the sacrament is a gospel proclamation that gives and assures the sinner of forgiveness is different from saying the sacrament itself is a propitiatory sacrifice that benefits the sinner.**

**a) The Roman Catholic Church claims that the Eucharist is sacrificial in nature, an unbloody repetition or re-presentation of the sacrifice of Jesus.**

**1) The Church of Rome has clearly declared this as dogma.**

Council of Trent, Sess. XXII, ch. 2: And since in this divine sacrifice, which is performed in the mass, that same Christ, who once offered up himself in a bloody way on the altar of the cross, is present and sacrificed in an unbloody way, the holy synod teaches that that sacrifice is truly propitiatory.

Council of Trent, Sess. XXII: If anyone says that in the mass a true and proper sacrifice is not offered to God, or that what is offered is nothing else than that Christ is given to us to eat, let him be damned. . . . If anyone should say that by those words, “This do in remembrance of me,” Christ did not make the apostles priests or that He did not ordain, that they themselves and other priests should offer the body and blood, let him be damned. . . . If anyone should say that the sacrifice of the mass is only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving or only a commemoration of the sacrifice brought on the cross, however, not propitiatory, or that it benefits only the one who partakes of it, and that it ought not to be offered for the living and the dead, for sins, punishments, satisfactions and other necessities, let him be damned . . . . If anyone should say that by the sacrifice of the mass blasphemy is spoken against the most holy sacrifice of Christ brought on the cross or that that sacrifice on the cross is dishonored by this one in the mass, let him be damned (Canon I, II, III, and IV).

Vatican II: As often as the sacrifice of the cross in which “Christ, our passover, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor 5:7) is celebrated on an altar, the work of our redemption is carried on. . . . Through the hands of priests



and in the name of the whole Church, the Lord's sacrifice is offered in the Eucharist in an unbloody and sacramental manner until he himself returns (*Documents*, p 16 and 535).

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 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 (Par. 1414).

Catechism of the Catholic Church: The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice because it re-presents (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross, because it is its memorial and because it applies its fruit: Christ, our Lord and God, was once and for all to offer himself to God the Father by his death on the altar of the cross, to accomplish there an everlasting redemption. But because his priesthood was not to end with his death, at the Last Supper "on the night when he was betrayed," he wanted to leave to his beloved spouse the Church a visible sacrifice (as the nature of man demands) by which the bloody sacrifice which he was to accomplish once for all on the cross would be re-presented, its memory perpetuated until the end of the world, and its salutary power be applied to the forgiveness of the sins we daily commit. . . . 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. 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 (Par. 1366, 1367).

**2) For a scriptural basis for the concept of the sacramental meal as a propitiatory sacrifice they have appealed to the certain Bible events and passages.**

**-a) Roman Catholics have pointed to Melchizedek's meal and declared it to be a sacrifice. But there is no evidence or suggestion of this in Scripture. Also, Scripture never links the two meals together.**

Genesis 14:18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High.

---

Compare Cajetan: Nothing is written here [i.e., in Gn 14:18] about sacrifice or offering, but it speaks of "bringing out" or "setting forth", which, Josephus writes, was done for the refreshment of the victors. What, however, is given in the Vulgate as a reason for the sacrifice, "For he was a priest," in the Hebrew text is not treated as a clause but as an independent part of the sentence (Cited by Quenstedt, *TDP*, Part IV, chap. VI, Sect. II, qu. IX, obj. Dial., I, p 240).

Quenstedt: Tirinus, in the *Jesuit Index of Controversies*, XXII, 5, argues that it is not appropriate for Christ to be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4; He 7:4, 11) except by way of

the eucharistic sacrifice, which he instituted in the Supper, and which he daily offers in the mass through the priests, his ministers. We answer: Although in many places the Epistle to the Hebrews draws comparisons between Christ and Melchizedek in regard to their priesthood, nevertheless nowhere does it mention this imaginary sacrifice, in which the essential part of the activity of Melchizedek has been placed according the erroneous opinion of the papists.... The epistle says absolutely nothing about the bread and wine brought out by Melchizedek because this was part of his royal bounty and therefore not a priestly function (*TDP*, Part IV, chap. VI, Sect. II, qu. IX, obj. Dial., II, p 240).

**-b) Roman Catholics have pointed to the Passover as a basis for the concept of the eucharistic sacrifice.**

**-1) They observe that the Passover is called a sacrifice.**

Exodus 12:27 “Then tell them, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice (זֶבַח-פֶּסַח) to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.’” Then the people bowed down and worshiped.

**-2) One should note, however, that the word זֶבַח, reflecting its etymology, is sometimes used simply to denote something slaughtered. It should also be noted that the Passover regulations differ from those required for propitiatory sacrifices in the Old Testament.**

**Consider these verses on the wider use of the word זֶבַח:**

Genesis 31:54 He offered a sacrifice there in the hill country and invited his relatives to a meal. After they had eaten, they spent the night there.

Proverbs 17:1 Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of *feasting*, with strife.

Ezekiel 39:17 Son of man, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Call out to every kind of bird and all the wild animals: “Assemble and come together from all around to the sacrifice I am preparing for you, the great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel. There you will eat flesh and drink blood.”

Deuteronomy 12:15 Nevertheless, you may *slaughter* your animals in any of your towns and eat as much of the meat as you want, as if it were gazelle or deer, according to the blessing the LORD your God gives you. Both the ceremonially unclean and the clean may eat it.

Deuteronomy 12:21 If the place where the LORD your God chooses to put his Name is too far away from you, you may slaughter animals from the herds and flocks the LORD has given you, as I have commanded you, and in your own towns you may eat as much of them as you want.

1 Kings 1:9,19 Adonijah then sacrificed sheep, cattle and fattened calves at the Stone of Zoheleth near En Rogel. He invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the men of Judah who were royal officials.<sup>19</sup> He has sacrificed great numbers of cattle, fattened calves, and sheep, and has invited all the king's sons, Abiathar the priest and Joab the commander of the army, but he has not invited Solomon your servant.

**Consider these verses on the requirements for propitiatory sacrifices:**

Leviticus 21:6 They must be holy to their God and must not profane the name of their God. Because they present the offerings made to the LORD by fire, the food of their God, they are to be holy.

Deuteronomy 12:5-6 But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; <sup>6</sup>there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks.

Leviticus 4:12,29 All the rest of the bull—he must take outside the camp to a place ceremonially clean, where the ashes are thrown, and burn it in a wood fire on the ash heap.<sup>29</sup> He is to lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and slaughter it at the place of the burnt offering.

**-c) Roman Catholics have appealed to the prophecy of Malachi as support for their teaching on the Eucharist as a sacrifice.**

**-1) Malachi does speak of universal offerings in the New Testament age.**

Malachi 1:11 “My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings (מִנְחָה) will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations,” says the LORD Almighty.

**-2) The context and vocabulary, however, indicate that Malachi is not speaking of propitiatory offerings.**

**מִנְחָה** has reference to gifts.

Apology, Art. XXIV (XII), p 394, 31-32: Of these sacrifices Malachi 1;11 speaks: "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name and a pure offering." The adversaries perversely apply this passage to the mass, and quote the authority of the Fathers. A reply, however, is easy, for even if it spoke most particularly of the mass, it would not follow that the mass justifies *ex opere operato*, or that, when applied to others, it merits the remission of sins, etc. ... Therefore "incense" and "a pure offering" signify not a ceremony *ex opere operato*, but all those sacrifices through which the name of the Lord becomes great, namely, faith, invocation, the preaching of the gospel, confession, etc.

Apology, Art. XXIV (XII), p 388, 19-25: The proximate species of sacrifice are two, and there are no more. One is the *propitiatory sacrifice*, i.e., a work which makes satisfaction for guilt and punishment, i.e., one that reconciles God, or appeases God's wrath, or which merits the remission of sins for others. The other species is the *eucharistic sacrifice*, which does not merit the remission of sins or reconciliation, but is rendered by those who have been reconciled, in order that we may give thanks or return gratitude for the remission of sins that has been received, or for other benefits received. . . . Therefore let this remain established in the case, namely, that the death of Christ alone is truly a propitiatory sacrifice. . . . Now the rest are eucharistic sacrifices, which are called sacrifices of praise, Lev. 3:1f.; 7:11f.; Ps. 56:12f., namely, the preaching of the gospel, faith, prayer, thanksgiving, confession, the afflictions of saints, yea, all good works of saints. These sacrifices are not satisfactions for those making them, or applicable on behalf of others, so as to merit for these, *ex opere operato*, the remission of sins or reconciliation. For they are made by those who have been reconciled.

**-d) Roman Catholics have pointed to Paul's comparison of the Lord's table to an altar to justify their concept of the sacramental meal as a sacrifice. The apostle's words, however, simply do not establish this point.**

1 Corinthians 10:18,21 Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? <sup>21</sup> You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

Quenstedt: What a conclusion! The table of the Lord is compared to an altar. Therefore it is an altar. The point of comparison here is not the sacrifice, but the participation, there with devils, here with the Lord (*TDP*, Part IV, chap. VI, Sect. II, qu. IX, obj. Dial., VIII, p 243).

**b) The concept of the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice conflicts with many clear Scripture statements. It is incompatible with the gospel.**

**1) The Bible declares that Christ offered himself up once for all.**

Hebrews 7:26,27 Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.<sup>27</sup> Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all (ἐφάπαξ) when he offered himself.

Hebrews 9:24-28 Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.<sup>25</sup> Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own.<sup>26</sup> Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all (ἅπαξ) at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.<sup>27</sup> Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,<sup>28</sup> so Christ was sacrificed once (ἅπαξ) to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

**2) There is only one priest and mediator for mankind, Christ.**

Hebrews 5:5,6 So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."<sup>6</sup> And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

Hebrews 7:23,24 Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office;<sup>24</sup> but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.

1 Timothy 2:5-6 There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,<sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.

**3) Christ's self-sacrifice was bloody.**

Hebrews 9:12,14,22 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.<sup>14</sup> How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to

death, so that we may serve the living God! <sup>22</sup> The law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

**4) Christ's sacrifice is sufficient for all times.**

John 19:30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished" (τετέλεσται). With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Hebrews 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins (καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος), he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Hebrews 5:9 And, once made perfect (τελειωθείς), he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

Hebrews 10:14 By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy (τετελείωκεν εἰς τὸ διηνεκές τοὺς ἁγιαζομένους).

**c) In spite of their sacrificial conception Catholics deny that the principal benefit of the Supper is forgiveness of sins.**

Council of Trent, Sess. XIII, Can. 5: If anyone should say that the chief benefit of the most holy Eucharist is the forgiveness of sins, or that no other effects proceed from it, let him be damned.

**3. Calvinists and Evangelicals, in keeping with their doctrine of immediate grace, deny that forgiveness of sins is conveyed and sealed through the Lord's Supper.**

**a) In their declarations they sometimes seem to consider the Supper as an actual means of grace.**

Belgic Confession (1562), 35: This Supper is a spiritual meal, in which Christ offers himself to us to be shared together with all his benefits. And he brings it about that in it [Note: not "through it"] we enjoy him as well as the merits of his suffering and death. For by the eating [oral? or spiritual?] of his flesh he himself nourishes, strengthens and comforts our miserable and afflicted soul which is destitute of all consolation. Likewise he sustains and refreshes it by the drinking of his blood.

Wayne Grudem: Just as ordinary food nourishes our physical bodies, so the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper give nourishment to us. . . . This spiritual nourishment, so necessary for our souls, is both symbolized and experienced in our participation in the Lord's Supper (ST, p 990).

Millard Erickson: All agree that the Lord's Supper is *sacramental*. It can be a means, or at least an occasion, of spiritual growth in the Lord . . . . Participation leads or contributes to salvation or growth therein (CT, p 1120).

- b) Yet their real meaning remains a denial that the sacrament is a true means of grace.**

Ulrich Zwingli: I believe, yes, I know, that all the sacraments are so far from bestowing grace, that they do not even bring it or dispense it (*Fidei Ratio*, 1530).

Geneva Catechism (1545): A sacrament is an external testimony of God's good will toward us, which by a visible sign portrays spiritual gifts of grace to put a seal on the promises of God for our hearts. By this the truth of these promises is made more sure. . . . I mean that we are not to cleave to the visible signs so as to seek salvation from them, or imagine that the power of conferring grace is either fixed or included in them, but rather that the sign is to be used as a help, by which, when seeking salvation and complete felicity, we are pointed directly to Christ.

Millard Erickson, allowing this as an adequate explanation of the value of the Lord's Supper: The Lord's Supper serves to bring the participants in contact with the living Christ. He is present spiritually, and we benefit from thus encountering him. It is the encounter, however, not the rite itself, which is the source of the benefit. The rite is merely an instrument to foster our relationship with him. It does not constitute the relationship nor convey the attendant blessing (*CT*, p 1121).

**4. Subordinate to the principal fruit of the sacrament, and flowing from this assurance of forgiveness, are other blessings.**

- a) Stated in a general way, progress in sanctification is a fruit of the sacrament. Sanctification always flows from justification.**

- b) Stated more specifically, we may identify particular blessings that are conveyed through the sacramental meal.**

- 1) Through the Lord's Supper God imparts a strengthening of the unity among Christians, a unity in faith, love, and peace, not only external oneness.**

1 Corinthians 10:17 Because (ἑστι) there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

1 Corinthians 12:13 We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Apology, Art. XXIV (XII), p 406, 68: Some clever men imagine that the Lord's Supper was instituted for two reasons. First, that it might be a mark and testimony of profession, just as a particular shape of hood is the sign of a particular profession. Then they think that such a mark was especially pleasing to Christ, namely, a feast to signify mutual union and friendship among Christians, because banquets are signs of covenant and friendship. But this is a secular view; neither does it show the chief use of the things delivered by God. It speaks only of the exercise of

love, which men, however profane and worldly, understand. It does not speak of faith, the nature of which few understand.

**2) Through the Lord's Supper the Lord allows a clear segregation and distinction between Christians and non-Christians to be highlighted.**

1 Corinthians 10:20,21 No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. <sup>21</sup> You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

**3) Through the Lord's Supper a public confession of Christ and his redemptive work is given.**

1 Corinthians 11:26 Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

**5. There is a "worthy manner" of receiving the sacrament, and there is an "unworthy manner" of receiving it. An unworthy manner of reception causes the participants to forfeit intended blessings.**

**a) The central ingredient of sharing in the Lord's Supper in a "worthy manner" is something God himself gives – faith in his promises.**

1 Corinthians 11:24,25 "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Apology, Art.XXIV (XII), p 408, 71-73: Such use of the sacrament, in which faith quickens terrified hearts, is a service of the New Testament, because the New Testament requires spiritual dispositions, mortification and quickening. For according to the New Testament the highest service of God is rendered inwardly in the heart. And for this use Christ instituted it, since he commanded them thus to do "in remembrance of him". For to remember Christ is not the idle celebration of a show, not something that is accomplished only by some gestures and actions, or one instituted for the sake of example, as the memory of Hercules or Ulysses is celebrated in tragedies, but it is to remember the benefits of Christ and receive them by faith, so as to be quickened by them. . . . And this is the principal use of the sacrament, in which it is apparent who are fit for the sacrament, namely, terrified consciences, and how they ought to use it.

Large Catechism, Sacrament of the Altar, p 760, 33-38: Thus we have the entire Sacrament, both as to what it is in itself and as to what it brings and profits. Now we must also see who is the person that receives this power and benefit. That is answered briefly, as we said above of baptism and often elsewhere: Whoever believes it has what the words declare and bring. For they are not spoken or proclaimed to stone and wood, but to those who hear them, to whom he says: "Take and eat," etc. And because he offers and promises forgiveness of sin, it cannot be received otherwise than by faith. This faith he



himself demands in the Word when he says: “Given and shed for you.” As if he said: For this reason I give it, and bid you eat and drink, that you may claim it as yours and enjoy it. Whoever now accepts these words, and believes that what they declare is true, has it. But whoever does not believe it has nothing, as he allows it to be offered to him in vain, and refuses to enjoy such a saving good.

**b) “Unworthy” reception of Christ’s body and blood in the sacrament makes a person guilty of sinning against Christ’s body and blood.**

**1) When an unworthy reception involves unbelief and impenitence, the intended spiritual blessings are turned into a curse.**

2 Corinthians 2:16 To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?

Formula of Concord, Ep., Art. VII, p 812, 16.17: We believe, teach, and confess that not only the true believers in Christ and the worthy, but also the unworthy and unbelievers, receive the true body and blood of Christ; however, not for life and consolation, but for judgment and condemnation, if they are not converted and do not repent, 1 Cor. 11, 27. 29. For although they thrust Christ from themselves as a Savior, yet they must admit Him even against their will as a strict Judge, who is just as present also to exercise and render judgment upon impenitent guests as he is present to work life and consolation in the hearts of the true believers and worthy guests.

**2) When an unworthy reception is still accompanied by faith, there is divine judgment and discipline as well as forfeited blessings.**

1 Corinthians 11:27,29 Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner (ἀναξίως) will be guilty of sinning (ἔνοχος) against the body and blood of the Lord.<sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing (μὴ διακρίνων) the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself (κρίμα ἑαυτοῦ).

1 Corinthians 11:30-34 That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.<sup>31</sup> But if we judged ourselves (ἑαυτοὺς διεκρίνομεν), we would not come under judgment (οὐκ ἂν ἐκρινόμεθα).<sup>32</sup> When we are judged (κρινόμενοι) by the Lord, we are being disciplined (παιδεύόμεθα) so that we will not be condemned (κατακριθῶμεν) with the world.<sup>33</sup> So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other.<sup>34</sup> If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment (κρίμα).

**c) There are wrong and inadequate views regarding worthy and unworthy reception of the Lord’s Supper that must be avoided.**

**1) Roman Catholicism greatly distorts the idea of worthiness.**

Council of Trent, Sess. XIII, Can. 11: If anyone says that faith alone is sufficient preparation for partaking of the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist, let him be damned. And lest so great a sacrament be taken unworthily and therefore for death and condemnation, the holy Synod itself orders and declares that for those whom conscience troubles because of a mortal sin, however much they may consider themselves to be contrite, if they have access to a confessor, it is necessary that sacramental confession must precede the Eucharist. If anyone, however, teaches, preaches, or stubbornly asserts the contrary, or even presumes publicly to defend his view in debate, he is by that very act excommunicated.

**2) Reformed and Evangelical theologians, in recognizing only a spiritual eating and drinking while denying the real presence, deny that the unworthy receive the body and blood of Christ at all.**

Brandenburg Confession (1614): Since faith is, as it were, the mouth by which the crucified body of the Lord Christ and his shed blood are received, His Electoral Grace [Johann Sigismund] steadfastly believes that this sacrament does not benefit impenitent unbelievers and that they do not share in the true body and blood of Christ.

Grudem: We must not say that Christ is present apart from our personal faith, but only meets and blesses us there in accordance with our faith in him (*ST*, p 996).

Contrast Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) in his hymn *Lauda, Sion, Salvatorem*:

Both the wicked and the good  
eat of this celestial Food:  
but with ends how opposite!  
With this most substantial Bread,  
unto life or death they're fed,  
in a difference infinite.

**3) Wrong ideas about worthy and unworthy reception of the sacrament may also be found among us. Patient instruction and the use of accurate terminology are important.**

Lutheran Outlook: Our people have been told so often that they must be worthy communicants that they may think of worthy in terms of deserving (January 1951, p 17).

John Schaller: One should pay attention above all that Paul does not say: One ought to examine himself to see whether he is worthy! . . . It is contrary to the spirit of the gospel to point a person to himself, when one instructs him how he can recognize that he stands in a right relationship with God and matters divine. . . . Paul is speaking in context not of people who are unworthy, but of the manner and practice that make one unworthy to enjoy the Lord's Supper. . . . He wants the believers, who by nature all lie in equal guilt and essentially are no more worthy than the

unbelievers, to use the Sacrament in a manner worthy of the sacrament. Therefore this admonition for self-examination does directly even to this point: He isn't saying: "Examine yourself to see whether you are worthy" – rather: "Examine yourself, whether you are approaching the sacrament in such a way as is in accord with the design of Jesus and the nature of this valuable means of grace ("Self-examination According to 1 Corinthians 11:28," *OGH*, II, 363f.).

Large Catechism, Sacrament of the Altar, p 766, 61-63: Therefore such people must learn that it is the highest art to know that our sacrament does not depend upon our worthiness. For we are not baptized because we are worthy and holy, nor do we go to confession because we are pure and without sin, but the contrary, because we are poor miserable men, and just because we are unworthy; unless it be some one who desires no grace and absolution nor intends to reform. But whoever would gladly obtain grace and consolation should impel himself, and allow no one to frighten him away, but say: I, indeed, would like to be worthy; but I come, not upon any worthiness, but upon your Word, because you have commanded it, as one who would gladly be your disciple, no matter what becomes of my worthiness. But this is difficult; for we always have this obstacle and hindrance to encounter, that we look more upon ourselves than upon the Word and lips of Christ. For nature desires so to act that it can stand and rest firmly on itself, otherwise it refuses to make the approach.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VII, p 996, 68-71: We must never regard the sacrament as something injurious from which we had better flee, but as a pure, wholesome, comforting remedy imparting salvation and comfort, which will cure you and give you life both in soul and body. For where the soul has recovered, the body also is relieved. Why, then, is it that we act as if it were a poison, the eating of which would bring death? To be sure, it is true that those who despise it and live in an unchristian manner receive it to their hurt and damnation; for nothing shall be good or wholesome to them, just as with a sick person who from caprice eats and drinks what is forbidden him by the physician. But those who are sensible of their weakness, desire to be rid of it and long for help, should regard and use it only as a precious antidote against the poison which they have in them. For here in the sacrament you are to receive from the lips of Christ forgiveness of sin, which contains and brings with it the grace of God and the Spirit with all his gifts, protection, shelter, and power against death and the devil and all misfortune. Thus you have, on the part of God, both the command and the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ. Besides this, on your part, your own distress which is about your neck, and because of which this command, invitation, and promise are given, ought to impel you. For he himself says: "They that be whole, need not a physician, but they that be sick;" that is, those who are weary and heavy-laden with their sins, with the fear of death, temptations of the flesh and of the devil.

**IX. Participation in the sacramental meal is limited by Scripture. Only Christians who have been baptized, are able to examine themselves, profess**

**the same faith with fellow communicants, and are penitent are to be admitted to Communion.**

**1. The Supper is the sacrament of confirmation, to strengthen the spiritual life of people who have previously been brought to faith in Christ.**

**a) There are various evidences that the Lord's Supper is for Christians.**

- 1) The eating and drinking are to be done "in remembrance" of Christ and his atoning death, so prior knowledge of it is assumed.**
- 2) Jesus instituted the sacrament in a private setting with his disciples. This is in contrast to his frequent public teaching.**

Luke 22:11,14 Say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' <sup>14</sup> When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table.

Matthew 26:18,20 Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, "The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house." <sup>20</sup> When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve.

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

1 Corinthians 10:17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

**3) The apostles directed converts to be baptized. Communion followed later.**

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 8:12,36 But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. <sup>36</sup> As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?"

Acts 16:33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.

**b) A profitable use of the Lord's Supper presupposes an intelligent use.**

- 1) Partakers are to examine themselves.**

1 Corinthians 11:28 A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.

**2) Therefore certain people are normally excluded from participation in the sacramental meal.**

- a) People who are asleep, unconscious, or unresponsive.**
- b) People with severe deterioration of intellectual faculties, such as memory, concentration, and judgment (e.g., insanity, Alzheimer's Disease, senile dementia), whose condition makes self-examination impossible.**
- c) Young children or people suffering from severe mental retardation, due to limitations in self-examination.**

**2. Sharing in Communion is a notable expression of the unity of faith.**

**a) What is true for Christians as they express fellowship in general is particularly significant in sharing the Lord's Supper.**

1 Corinthians 1:10 I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

1 Corinthians 10:17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

**b) For this reason we cannot commune together with certain people, even with some professing Christians.**

**1) We cannot share the sacramental meal with those who do not confess the same faith with us. We determine unity or lack of unity based on a person's public confession. We are also patient with the weak or partially ignorant believers whom we will instruct and serve.**

1 John 4:1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1 Corinthians 11:29 Anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

---

Romans 15:1,2 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. <sup>2</sup> Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.

Galatians 6:1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

**2) We cannot share the sacramental meal with those who are giving public offense by impenitence.**

**-a) Any offense, in conduct or in doctrine, interferes with Christian unity and endangers spiritual health.**

1 Corinthians 5:11 I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

Matthew 5:23-24 If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,<sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Compare with Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

**-b) The offense is removed (and unity restored) by renouncing the sin and asking forgiveness.**

James 5:16 Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Matthew 6:15 If you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Mark 11:25-26 When you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. (Some manuscripts: <sup>26</sup> But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your sins.)

**-c) By admitting an offender to Communion before he has removed the offense, we would be in error.**

**-1) We would become guilty of the same offense.**

1 Timothy 5:22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

**-2) We would neglect our duty toward the offender himself.**

Ezekiel 33:7-9 Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. <sup>8</sup> When I say to the wicked, "O wicked man, you will surely die," and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. <sup>9</sup> But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does

not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself.

- 3. For these reasons we insist on an “exploration” of those wishing to commune with us. This is the practice of “close” or “closed” Communion.**
- a) For those among us who seek to share in the sacrament for the first time, we require a period of instruction and a public confirmation to show that the catechumen has received the necessary instruction.**
  - b) For those who seek regular participation in the sacramental meal we have orderly ways of “announcement” or “registration” for Communion.**

Luther: It is quite true that wherever the preacher administers only bread and wine for the Sacrament, he is not very concerned about to whom he gives it, what they know or believe, or what they receive. . . . However, because we are concerned about nurturing Christians who will be here after we are gone, and because it is Christ’s body and blood that are given out in the Sacrament, we will not and cannot give such a sacrament to anyone unless he is first examined regarding what he has learned from the Catechism and whether he intends to forsake the sins which he has again committed. For we do not want to make Christ’s church into a pig pen, letting each one come unexamined to the Sacrament as a pig to its trough. Such a church we leave to the Enthusiasts! (Open Letter (1533), WA, 30/III:567.3-15).

Augsburg Confession, Art. XXV, 1, p 68: Confession in the churches is not abolished among us; for it is not usual to give the body of the Lord, except to them that have been previously examined and absolved.

Armin Schuetze and Irwin Habeck: The pastor should warn and admonish as the need arises and not wait until communion announcement. . . . But the custom of announcing does allow the pastor to know in advance who will appear before the altar for communion and gives him opportunity to intervene should a member who is under discipline plan to attend. . . . By announcing in the communion service, either verbally or in the service bulletin, that the congregation practices close communion, and by adding a brief explanation of the requirement for communion announcement, the pastor may deter strangers from approaching the Lord’s Table unannounced (*Shepherd Under Christ*, p 85).

Compare and Contrast: Catechism of the Catholic Church: The Eucharist and the unity of Christians. Before the greatness of this mystery St. Augustine exclaims, “O sacrament of devotion! O sign of unity! O bond of charity!” The more painful the experience of the divisions in the Church which break the common participation in the table of the Lord, the more urgent are our prayers to the Lord that the time of complete unity among all who believe in him may return. The Eastern churches that are not in full communion with the Catholic Church celebrate the Eucharist with great love. These Churches, although separated from us, yet possess true sacraments, above all - by apostolic succession - the priesthood and the Eucharist, whereby they are still joined to

us in closest intimacy. A certain communion *in sacris*, and so in the Eucharist, given suitable circumstances and the approval of Church authority, is not merely possible but is encouraged. Ecclesial communities derived from the Reformation and separated from the Catholic Church, have not preserved the proper reality of the Eucharistic mystery in its fullness, especially because of the absence of the sacrament of Holy Orders. It is for this reason that Eucharistic intercommunion with these communities is not possible for the Catholic Church. However these ecclesial communities, when they commemorate the Lord's death and resurrection in the Holy Supper . . . profess that it signifies life in communion with Christ and await his coming in glory. When, in the Ordinary's judgment, a grave necessity arises, Catholic ministers may give the sacraments of Eucharist, Penance, and Anointing of the Sick to other Christians not in full communion with the Catholic Church, who ask for them of their own will, provided they give evidence of holding the Catholic faith regarding these sacraments and possess the required dispositions (Par. 1398–1401).