

Lesson 33: 2LCF Chapter 30: Of the Lord's Supper

26 Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." 27 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Matthew 26:26-29

In our previous lesson, I noted that perhaps few practices are as manifestly experiential in the church as the ordinances, and yet few themes are more misunderstood by professing Christians in our day. If this is true of baptism, it is doubly true of the Lord's Supper.

In the history of the church, especially as Roman Catholicism began to take shape, this misunderstanding led to the development of the Mass, and the so-called "sacrifice of the Mass." After the Reformation, this took the form of competing perspectives on the Lord's Supper (Luther's consubstantiation view, Calvin's spiritual presence view, and Zwingli's memorial/symbolic view). In subsequent generations, conflicts about the Lord's Supper led to further confusion and tragic divisions. A clear example of this is seen in the practice of Solomon Stoddard, the grandfather of Jonathan Edwards. Stoddard saw the Lord's Supper as a "converting ordinance" that could be received by morally upright unbelievers. He reasoned that they might be spiritually awakened when partaking in the meal; he also promoted an idea known as the "half-way covenant" that allowed baptized but unconverted church members to retain certain privileges in the life of the church. Jonathan Edwards would later reject this view and be dismissed from the pastorate in the First Church of Northampton.

This predilection towards misunderstanding the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is also seen in the world. We observe this in a famous exchange between two men, Caecilius the Pagan and Octavius the Christian, at the Roman Port of Ostia in the late second century. While at the port, Caecilius stopped at a pagan shrine to pay his respects. As he did this, Octavius the Christian objected, leading to a lively debate before many onlookers. During the debate, Caecilius the Pagan made the following accusation: "You Christians are the worst breed ever to affect the world. You deserve every punishment you can get! Nobody likes you. It would be better if you and your Jesus had never been born. We hear that you are all cannibals--you eat the flesh of your children in your sacred meetings."³⁸³

Without exaggeration, few practices in the church today are more misunderstood than the Lord's Supper. And yet, few practices are more precious than this meal that Christ ordained on the final eve of earthly ministry. Sam Waldron rightly states:

Without ascribing any magical significance to it, the Lord's Supper is yet so important a part of the Christian religion that there can be few things more essential to understand than the Lord's Supper. In spite of this, many Christians do not understand it thoroughly enough.³⁸⁴

³⁸³ *Why Early Christians Were Despised*, Retrieved from: <https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/why-early-christians-were-despised-11629610.html>.

³⁸⁴ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 427.

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Paragraph 1.

The supper of the Lord Jesus was instituted by him the same night wherein he was betrayed, to be observed in his churches, unto the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance, and showing to all the world the sacrifice of himself in his death, confirmation of the faith of believers in all the benefits thereof, their spiritual nourishment, and growth in him, their further engagement in, and to all duties which they owe to him; and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other.

1 Cor. 11:23-26; 1 Cor. 10:16,17,21

Paragraph 2.

In this ordinance Christ is not offered up to his Father, nor any real sacrifice made at all for remission of sin of the quick or dead, but only a memorial of that one offering up of himself by himself upon the cross, once for all; and a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto God for the same. So that the popish sacrifice of the mass, as they call it, is most abominable, injurious to Christ's own sacrifice the alone propitiation for all the sins of the elect.

Heb. 9:25,26,28; 1 Cor. 11:24; Matt. 26:26,27

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 425-27.

Exposition

Paragraphs one and two of the Confession's statement on the Lord's Supper are perhaps the most important paragraph in the entire chapter. In these paragraph, we learn of the institution of the Lord's Supper, in addition to its observation, multiple purposes, and nature.

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

Firstly, the Confession demonstrates that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the church, as it was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ on the night of His betrayal. The Word of God further prescribes that the Lord's Supper be observed until the second advent of Christ.

Accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper can be found in the synoptic gospels (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20) and Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Matthew 26:26-29

26 Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." 27 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Mark 14:22-25

22 And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." 23 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. 24 And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Luke 22:14-20

14 And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. 15 And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." 17 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. 18 For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." 19 And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 20 And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

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

The Multiple Purposes of its Institution

In his exposition of chapter 30 of the Confession, Dave Chanski provides a neatly ordered summary of the purposes of the Lord's Supper (Remembrance of "the Sacrifice of Himself;" Showing Forth the

Sacrifice of Himself; Confirmation, Nourishment, and Growth; Further Engagement in Duties; Bond and Pledge).³⁸⁶

1. Remembrance of “the Sacrifice of Himself”

At the institution of the Supper, the Lord directed his disciples to do this “in remembrance of me.” However, begs the question, “Why must we partake in order to remember Christ?” The reality is, human beings are naturally forgetful. We forget our keys, we forget our passwords, and if not for this ordinance, we may even be inclined to forget about our Saviour. If this were not so, why would Paul instruct Timothy: “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel” (2 Timothy 2:8).

On this theme of remembrance, Chanski writes:

[The Lord’s Supper reminds] us of the fact that He laid down His true humanity in a once-for-all sacrifice to deliver us from our sins. We are to remember historical facts, historical realities—a God-man who walked the face of this earth in Palestine; events that occurred in His life, culminating on a Roman cross at Golgotha. The gospel message, pictured so simply in the Lord’s Supper, is rooted in things that truly happened, particularly the incarnation and the suffering of the sinless Son of God. We are to remember Him, in His death.

Although we may think of remembering as primarily an activity of the mind, our process of remembering is not to be a mere academic or intellectual exercise. It is indeed that, but it is to be far more than that. It is to be a remembering that grips our souls... We are to remember Him in a way that stirs us in the inner man to love our Savior more and moves us to serve Him more wholeheartedly...

Furthermore, our remembering is an exercise of faith. When prompted by the symbolism of the bread and the cup, we look upon our Lord in His death, it is an act of faith—an affirmation of all we believe about Christ’s death and an appropriation of all that is in Christ. This assumes that we are intellectually and spiritually engaged.³⁸⁷

2. Showing Forth the Sacrifice of Himself

In 1 Corinthians 11:26, the Apostle Paul wrote: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” In this way, every time believers partake in the Lord’s Supper, they show forth Christ’s sacrifice.

Chanski notes that Christ’s sacrifice is shown forth to three different parties.

- i) We proclaim Christ’s death non-verbally to God as an act of worship.
- ii) We proclaim Christ’s death to fellow believers. This is why we must partake corporately.
- iii) We proclaim Christ’s death to unbelievers who are present.³⁸⁸

The Lord’s Supper serves the same function as the Old Covenant Passover meal that proclaimed the death of the Pascal Lamb for those dwelling safely in their homes during the plagues in Egypt. R.C. Sproul comments on this scene:

³⁸⁶ Dave Chanski, “Of the Lord’s Supper,” in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 500-04.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 500-01.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 502.

The Lord's Supper is a drama that has its roots not only in that Upper Room experience, but the roots reach back into the Old Testament celebration of Passover... In essence, Jesus was saying, "I am the Passover; I am the Pascal Lamb; I am the one who will be sacrificed for you. It is by My blood being marked over the door of your life that you will escape the wrath of God." So He said: "From now on, this is My blood, which is shed for you for the remission of your sins. This is the blood of a new covenant." This new covenant that He instituted that very night fulfills the old covenant, giving it its fullest and most meaningful expression.³⁸⁹

One Puritan commentary offers the following insights on this important act of showing forth Christ's sacrifice:

Shew ye, or, declare. The death of the Lord must be shewed or made known in the Lord's Supper, both by the Ministers of the Word, who in the ministration thereof must instruct the people, that the bread broke, and the wine poured out, are the signs of the bitter death of Christ on the crosse, and seales of the benefits thereby purchased to ourselves: as also by the communicants, who ought to consider in their hearts, to declare and to professe with thankfulness, that the Lord Jesus died for them, to redeeme them from eternal death, and to make them blessed and happy forever.³⁹⁰

This is why the Lord's Supper came to be called the "Eucharist"—from the Greek verb "eucharisto," which means "to thank." Sproul notes: "One facet of the Lord's Supper has been the gathering of the people of God to express their gratitude for what Christ accomplished in their behalf in His death."³⁹¹

3. Confirmation, Nourishment, and Growth

In same way that food and drink nourish our physical bodies, the bread and wine of the Lord's table are intended to nourish the souls of those who partake in the Supper. Or, to put it another way, participation in the Lord's Supper yields very real blessings for God's people, including confirmation, spiritual nourishment, and growth. Dave Chanksi writes:

To the believer who partakes of the Lord's Supper in faith in Jesus Christ and in obedience to His command, God assures him that it is right to receive this bread and this cup, since he is a disciple of Christ and a child of God. Our faith is confirmed, or assured!... One effect of the Lord's Supper is the encouragement and assurance that the partaker is truly in communion with Jesus Christ and that he is a legitimate partaker of every blessing for which Christ died (1 Cor. 10:16)...

Additionally, the Lord's Supper is a means of the believers' "spiritual nourishment, and growth in Him." This reflects the reality that God uses this sacrament, or ordinance, in a similar way to how He uses His Word, to build us up in our faith and to grant us spiritual growth (Jude 20; 2 Pet. 3:18). This is spiritual nourishment because in the Lord's Supper we "really and indeed... spiritually receive, and feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of His death" (cf. John 6:55). This is genuine spiritual nourishment, which results in genuine spiritual growth.³⁹²

³⁸⁹ R. C. Sproul, *What Is the Lord's Supper?*, First edition, The Crucial Questions Series (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2013), 2, 11.

³⁹⁰ *English Annotations, sigla CC2*, comment on 1 Corinthians 11:26.

³⁹¹ R. C. Sproul, *What Is the Lord's Supper?*, 2.

³⁹² Dave Chanski, "Of the Lord's Supper," 503.

Similarly, Louis Berkhof notes in his *Systematic Theology*: ““The ministry of the sacraments must of course, go hand-in-hand with the ministry of the word. It is merely the symbolic presentation of the gospel, addressed to the eye rather than to the ear.”³⁹³

This is why the Lord's Supper may be rightly called a means of God's grace for the believer. It does not impart grace in a salvific sense. It does not add to the believers standing before God. But, Christ has instituted this ordinance to increase the blessings experienced by his people. Wayne Grudem offers helpful insight when he writes:

When a person participates in faith, renewing and strengthening his or her own trust in Christ for salvation, and believing that the Holy Spirit will bring spiritual blessing through such participation, then certain a additional blessing may be expected. We must be careful here, as with baptism, to avoid the mistake of overreacting to Roman Catholic teaching and maintaining that the Lord's Supper is merely symbolic and not a means of grace. Paul says "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation (Gk. koinonia, "sharing," "fellowship") in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation [koinonia] in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16). Because there is such a sharing in the body and blood of Christ (apparently meaning a sharing in the benefits of Christ's body and blood given for us...)³⁹⁴

4. Further Engagement in Duties

Chanski is helpful on this point when he states the following:

If the Lord's Supper is a sign of our being in fellowship with Christ, testifying that we are His disciples, then it imparts encouragement to us because it reminds us of our Savior's dying and continuing love for us. That remembrance should also stimulate us to love and good works (Ps. 116:12-14; Heb. 10:19-25). We are debtors to Christ, and the regular contemplation of His sacrifice for us in the Lord's Supper should serve as a reminder and motivator in our service to Him (Rom. 8:12; 12:1). Jesus said that the cup of the Lord's Supper is "the new covenant in His blood" (Luke 22:20; Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24). When we partake of this Supper, is there not a sense in which we ought to be "renewing" our covenant vows to serve our Lord with all our heart (cf. 2 Chron. 34:30-31)?

The fact that the Lord's Supper is a means of grace tells us it is something that God has ordained and graciously extends to us for our benefit. But the means of grace also have implications for believers. We are to receive them with humility, gratitude, and faith, and it is our responsibility to "engage" ourselves in wholehearted obedience to our Lord as a response.³⁹⁵

5. Bond and Pledge

When examined closely, Lord's Supper is repeatedly seen to be a churchly ordinance that is meant to convey and further strengthen the unity of the church.

1 Corinthians 10:15-17

15 I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. 16 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a

³⁹³ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, expanded ed. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2023), 622.

³⁹⁴ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 955.

³⁹⁵ Dave Chanski, "Of the Lord's Supper," 503-04.

participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is **one bread**, we who are many are **one body**, for we all partake of the **one bread**.

When speaking about the church's "participation" in the ordinances, Paul chose the Greek term "koinonia"—often translated "communion" or "fellowship." The Louw-Nida Lexicon defines this as "an association involving close mutual relations and involvement—'close association, fellowship.'³⁹⁶ No doubt, this is why Paul is careful to repeat the phrase "when you come together" during his instructions on the Lord's table in 1 Corinthians 11 (Vv. 11-34).

Dave Chanski adds:

Participating in the Lord's Supper represents the bond believers have with their Savior and should also serve to "cement" that bond, so to speak. Similarly, it is a pledge to our Lord and to His people. In baptism, believers publicly testify of their union with Christ and of their allegiance to Him; the same is true of the Lord's Supper. Notice that the Confession speaks of the union and communion we have with Christ and of the union and communion we have with our fellow believers. Both aspects of communion are true, and both are expressed in Scripture in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17. We testify that we are all together in union and communion with our Savior as well as with one another. As we have seen, the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance, which emphasizes our union and communion as a body, with Christ's body.³⁹⁷

Paragraph 3.

The Lord Jesus hath, in this ordinance, appointed his ministers to pray, and bless the elements of bread and wine, and thereby to set them apart from a common to a holy use, and to take and break the bread; to take the cup, and, they communicating also themselves, to give both to the communicants.

1 Cor. 11:23-26

Paragraph 4.

The denial of the cup to the people, worshipping the elements, the lifting them up, or carrying them about for adoration, and reserving them for any pretended religious use, are all contrary to the nature of this ordinance, and to the institution of Christ.

Matt. 26:26-28, 15:9, Exod. 20:4,5

Paragraph 5.

The outward elements in this ordinance, duly set apart to the use ordained by Christ, have such relation to him crucified, as that truly, although in terms used figuratively, they are sometimes called by the names of the things they represent, in other words, the body and blood of Christ, albeit, in substance and nature, they still remain truly and only bread and wine, as they were before.

1 Cor. 11:27; 1 Cor. 11:26-28

³⁹⁶ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 445.

³⁹⁷ Dave Chanski, "Of the Lord's Supper," 504.

Paragraph 6.

That doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of bread and wine, into the substance of Christ's body and blood, commonly called transubstantiation, by consecration of a priest, or by any other way, is repugnant not to Scripture alone, but even to common sense and reason, overthrows the nature of the ordinance, and has been, and is, the cause of manifold superstitions, yea, of gross idolatries.

Acts 3:21; Luke 14:6,39; 1 Cor. 11:24,25

Exposition

In paragraphs three and four, the Confession deals with the proper celebration of the ordinances (paragraph 3), followed by the perverse celebration of the ordinances (paragraph 4). Subsequently, paragraphs five and six deal with true and false teachings on the Lord's Supper.

Paragraph three reflects the language of the Confession in 2LCF 28:2 where we read "These holy appointments are to be administered by those only who are qualified and thereunto called, according to the commission of Christ." One can also hear echoes of 1 Corinthians 10:16 "The cup of blessing that we bless..."

Meanwhile paragraph 4 addresses the excesses of the Romish church that resulted from their doctrine of transubstantiation. According to this doctrine, the the substance of the bread and wine (substance: the essence or reality) becomes the body and blood of Christ, while the accidents (accidents: observable qualities) remain unchanged.

In his volume, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, Ludwig Ott taught the following:

Christ becomes present in the Sacrament of the Altar by the transformation of the whole substance of the bread into His Body and of the whole substance of the wine into His Blood.... This transformation is called Transubstantiation.

The power of consecration resides in a validly consecrated priest only.

The Worship of Adoration (Latria) must be given to Christ present in the Eucharist.... It follows from the wholeness and permanence of the Real Presence that the absolute worship of adoration (Cultus Latria) is due to Christ present in the Eucharist.³⁹⁸

For this reason, the observance of the Eucharist among Roman Catholics was strictly limited. In some cases, the Eucharist was observed only once per year. In addition, Rome began withholding the chalice from Catholic laity for fear that Christ's blood would be spilled on the ground and profaned. Only the clergy could be trusted to partake of the cup.³⁹⁹ This continued in some places from the thirteenth century to the twentieth century (Second Vatican Council (1962-65). Furthermore, because of their belief in the presence of Christ in the bread, Catholic adherents would often refuse to eat the bread, instead opting to retain and venerate the bread. It is this perverse attitude that the Confession seeks to address.

Paragraph five addresses the true doctrine of the Lord's Supper. When believers partake in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, these elements never cease to be bread and wine, regardless of

³⁹⁸ Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 379, 397, 387.

³⁹⁹ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 992.

the Greek philosophizing of the Roman Catholic Church with their substance and accidents. Rather, the bread and wine signify/symbolize the body and blood of Christ.

This is perfectly in accord with Christ's usual way of teaching, where he often used imagery and symbolism to communicate truths about himself to his disciples. Chanski comments:

Jesus spoke in such ways about Himself on other occasions: in John 10:9, "I am the door"; in John 15:5, "I am the vine"; and in several places in John 6, "I am the bread." He used the same kind of speech in instituting the Lord's Supper, and in the same way, the use of the state of being verb ("is" or "am") is not intended to be taken literally, but symbolically. The bread represents or symbolizes His body; it does not become His body.⁴⁰⁰

This helps us to make sense of the various views that exist and identify the most biblically accurate position. Barry Cooper provides a helpful summary of the various views:

Transubstantiation: *Trans-* means "change" and *substantiation* means "substance." The idea is that when the bread and wine are blessed by the priest during the Mass, the bread and the wine are transformed into the actual physical body and blood of Jesus Christ... So, when a person eats and drinks the bread and wine, they are taking into themselves the actual body and blood of Christ, and thus—the teaching goes—the grace of God.

Consubstantiation: Luther argued that rather than changing completely, the substance of the bread and wine coexists *with* the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. Jesus Christ is present in, with, and under the bread and the wine whenever the Lord's Supper is celebrated. The analogy people sometimes use is a sponge full of water. The sponge isn't the water, the water isn't the sponge, but the two are there together with each other.

Memorial/Symbolic: Huldrych Zwingli, who was around at the time of Luther in the sixteenth century, taught the *memorial* view of the Lord's Supper. He said that Christ commanded us to "do this in remembrance of Him," and that is all it is: an act of remembrance. The bread and wine are merely symbols, reminding us that Christ's body was broken for us, and His blood was shed for us.

Spiritual Presence: John Calvin took strong issue with the Roman Catholic view, and he definitely didn't agree with Luther either. At the same time, he thought Zwingli's view didn't go far enough. The Lord's Supper is more than just a memorial, Calvin said. It is certainly symbolic, but the symbols do more than merely represent—they actually bring to us the presence of Jesus Christ and His benefits. Yes, Christ's human body is locally present in heaven, but—Calvin said—it doesn't have to descend in order for believers to truly partake of it. Why? Because the Holy Spirit makes true fellowship possible here and now. The Holy Spirit is Christ's Spirit. He lifts us to the heavenlies to feed on Christ. Those who eat the bread and drink the wine in faith are also, by the power of the Holy Spirit, actually being nourished by the body and blood of Christ.⁴⁰¹

The Second London Baptist Confession, and ultimately Scripture, affirms this final view. While the Lord's Supper is a memorial meal, it is also a participation in the blood and body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16). This is why we find the following statement in 2LCF 30:7—"Christ being then not corporally or carnally, but spiritually present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses."

⁴⁰⁰ Dave Chanski, "Of the Lord's Supper," 510.

⁴⁰¹ Barry Cooper, "Four Views of the Lord's Supper," *Simply Put*, Ligonier Ministries, May 28, 2024, accessed March 12, 2026, <https://learn.ligonier.org/podcasts/simply-put/four-views-of-the-lords-supper>

On this theme, Chanski writes:

When Christ's people partake of the Lord's Supper, the elements and actions represent the true presence of Christ as He communes with and nourishes His people with His own flesh (John 6:55-57). As Calvin says, "There is nothing more absurd than to call something a Sacrament which is empty and does not truly offer us the matter signified."⁴⁰²

Meanwhile, paragraph six rightly denounces the Roman Catholic view of transubstantiation. This heinousness of this view can be plainly seen in the words of one Roman Catholic priest and scholar, John O'Brien:

When the priest announces the tremendous words of consecration, he reaches up into the heavens, brings Christ down from His throne and places Him upon our altar to be offered up again as the victim for the sins of man. It is a power exercised by the priest greater than that of saints and angels, greater than that of seraphim and cherubim. Indeed, it is a power greater even than the power of the Virgin Mary. While the Blessed Virgin was the human agency by which Christ became incarnate a single time, the priest brings Christ down from heaven, and renders Him present on our altar as the eternal victim... The priest brings Christ down from heaven and renders Him present on our altar as the eternal victim for the sins of man, not once but a thousand times.⁴⁰³

Paragraph 7.

Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this ordinance, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually receive, and feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death; the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally, but spiritually present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.

1 Cor. 10:16, 11:23-26

Paragraph 8.

All ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with Christ, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table, and cannot, without great sin against him, while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto; yea, whosoever shall receive unworthily, are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, eating and drinking judgment to themselves.

2 Cor. 6:14,15; 1 Cor. 11:29; Matt. 7:6

Exposition

In paragraphs seven and eight deal with the reception of the Lord's Supper by worthy (paragraph 7) and unworthy participants (paragraph 8). When one understands the significance of the Supper, it's plain to see why such paragraphs are needed.

1 Corinthians 11:27-34

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body

⁴⁰² Ibid., 511.

⁴⁰³ John A. O'Brien, *The Faith of Millions: The Credentials of the Catholic Religion*, 270-71.

eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. 33 So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for² one another— 34 if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

This is observed in a particularly compelling scene from church history: On September 3, 1553, an unusually large crowd gathered in St. Pierre's Cathedral for what was to become a historic Sunday morning worship service in Geneva, Switzerland.

On that particular Lord's Day morning, the French Reformer John Calvin preached boldly from his pulpit as he normally did each week, declaring the glories of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ to a mixed multitude. But St. Pierre's Cathedral was not packed on this particular Sunday morning because of Calvin's expository genius. Nor was it filled with a sense of anticipation by those who were expecting a mighty work of God. But, this community of believers was joined on that particular Sunday by a hostile mob of local leaders, known as the Libertines, who intended to face-off with Calvin over the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Calvin and the local church there in Geneva had excommunicate a factious leader in the city, a man named Philibert Berthelier, for sowing division in the church. And, in doing so, they had barred this man from approaching the Lord's Table to partake in the Lord's Supper. As Calvin said directly from the pulpit, he would refuse to administer this ordinance to a "rebel" such as this man. But, at the same time that the church was holding firm on this issue, the Libertines, who had gained key political positions in the city, had met and sought to overrule the church. They were on the side of Berthelier and declared that he was no longer excommunicated, and they went as far as to issue a formal decree that Berthelier was to be allowed back at the Lord's Table. It was a classic case of politicians trying to dictate the church's worship—in this case dictating who could/could not take the Lord's Supper.



As the crowds flocked into St Pierre's Cathedral on that Sunday morning, the Libertines took their seats nearest to the Lord Table, where the elements were placed. As Calvin proceeded to preach God's Word, they sat there, grasping the hilts of their swords, ready to pounce if Berthelier was

denied the Lord's Supper. When Calvin had finished his sermon, he proceeded to the Lord's Table to begin to administer the Supper. And there he was faced with an important decision: He could compromise and give in to the threats of the Libertines and live, or he could maintain his resolve and risk his very life to defend the integrity of the Lord's Table.

The Libertines were certain that they had the upper-hand. But, as one historian writes, these local leaders underestimated Calvin's commitment to God's Word and the right administration of the ordinances. As Calvin fenced the table, explaining who could and could not partake, he made his position clear. Calvin stood at the table, he shielded the elements with his outstretched arms, he looked out at the men who clutched their daggers, and he cried out: "These hands you may crush; these arms you may lop off; my life you may take; my blood is yours, you may shed it; but you shall never force me to give holy things to the profane, and dishonor the table of my God." Theodore Beza recounts that Calvin exclaimed: "I will sooner die than... [give] the sacred things of the Lord to those who have been judged despisers."

The Libertines, with their sharpened swords, were no match for Calvin and his great esteem for the Lord's Supper. The frustrated men quietly whispered to Berthelier to refrain from approaching the table.

What followed was astounding. Beza tells us: "The sacrament was celebrated with extraordinary silence, not without some degree of trembling... [It was] as if the Deity [God himself] were actually present."

Following a scene like this, one might ask the question, who then is worthy to approach the table. Calvin provides a comforting and scriptural answer: "*This is the worthiness – the best and only kind we can bring to God – to offer our vileness and our unworthiness to him so that in his mercy we may be taken as worthy; to despair in ourselves so that we may be lifted up by him; to accuse ourselves so that we may be justified by him.*"⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.44. Cited by Phillips, *Supper*, 28.