

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 27.-Of the Sacraments.

II. There is in every Sacrament a spiritual relation, or Sacramental union, between the Sign and the Thing signified: whence it comes to pass, that the Names, and effects of the one, are attributed to the other¹.

Question 1.—*Is there in every sacrament a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified?*

Answer.—Yes. Gen. 17:10; Matt. 26:27, 28; Tit. 3:5. There is a relationship between the sign and the matter signified. These elements are not to be considered as merely water, bread, and wine, but as referring to something else: Christ's body and blood, broken and shed to make satisfaction, Matt. 26:26, 27. The elements are entirely and purely representative in nature, so that by way of representation the sign is united to the matter, 1 Cor. 11:24. This is not a *physical* union such as exists between substance (or matter) and form, and soul and body. It is not a *local* union, as when two bodies are joined together, so that the body and blood of Christ would be physically united to the water, bread, and wine. It is also not a *spiritual* union, as if the efficacy of the matter signified were infused and would in actuality bring about the forgiveness of sins and regeneration in the communicant. It is rather a *representative* relationship, only consisting in applying the sign to the matter signified and the matter signified to the sign with the mind and faith—and then as determined by God in His Word, and not by way of mere contemplation or imagination, *cf.* Col. 2:11.

This representative relationship does not exist in the nature of the element nor in the exercise of faith and the believing use of the element. It is also not established as a result of the minister's pronouncement of the institutional formula and promise. Instead, this relationship exists by reason of divine institution, and the communicant accordingly uses the signs (given by the minister) by faith. By faith in Christ's institution and promise, the communicant thus, in a sealing manner, makes application of Christ's suffering and its efficacy unto the forgiveness of sins, Christ being truly present, albeit not bodily, 1 Cor. 11:29. This union is so moral and relative as to be in its own sense *real* in the legitimate use; not by a contiguity of the sign and thing signified, but with respect to the communicant, who is made partaker of both at the same time, Rom. 6:4, 5; Gal. 3:27; John 6:53.

Thus do the Papists and Lutherans err, who are not satisfied with such a representative relationship, but seek to maintain a local and physical representation in the Lord's supper (though not in baptism). When we insist that the relationship is representative, it is their opinion that we do not truly unite the sign with the matter signified, but that we only imagine something which does not exist. They are confuted by this consideration: There are other real relationships besides those which are purely physical in nature. A spiritual relationship is as genuine as a physical relationship. Does not Christ dwell in believers, Gal. 2:20? Does not Christ dwell in their hearts by faith, Eph.

¹ Gen. 17:10; Matt. 26:27, 28; Tit. 3:5.

3:17? Do not believers have fellowship with each other, the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, 1 John 1:3, or is all this also only imagination with them?

Furthermore, this spiritual relationship has as its basis the institutional formula and promise; this relationship is therefore not imaginary but true and certain.

The relationship between the water in holy baptism and the blood of Christ—signified by the water—is that they cleanse and purify. As water removes the pollution of the body, the blood of Christ likewise washes and purifies from the spiritual pollutions of sin, Rev. 1:5.

The relationship between bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, and the body and blood signified by this bread and wine, consists in that they nourish, strengthen, and yield refreshment. As bread nourishes and strengthens the body, the crucified body of Christ—that is, His meritorious suffering and death—likewise nourishes the soul. Wine rejoices the heart of man; this is likewise true for the blood of Christ when partaken of by faith, John 6:35, 54–56.

Question 2.—*From this sacramental union, does it come to pass, that the names, and effects of the one, are attributed to the other?*

Answer.—Yes. Gen. 17:10; Matt. 26:27, 28. This representative relationship and resemblance between the sign and the matter signified have engendered a variety of expressions relative to the sacraments. *First*, it occurs that the sign bears the name of the matter signified. Circumcision is called the covenant, Gen. 17:10, 11; the Lamb is the Passover, Ex. 12:11; the bread is Christ's body, Matt. 26:26, 1 Cor. 10:16; the wine is the New Testament, 1 Cor. 11:25; and the water is "the washing of regeneration," Tit. 3:5. *Secondly*, the matter signified bears the name of the sign. Christ is called the Passover, 1 Cor. 5:7. He is also called the Lamb, John 1:36; the manna, John 6:51; also the Rock, 1 Cor. 10:4. *Thirdly*, the efficacy of the matter signified is attributed to the sign, the removal of sin, Num. 5:8; Acts 22:16. *Fourthly*, the matter signified is attributed to the ceremony associated with the sign. It is said that Christ's blood is sprinkled, which in fact was true for the sign, Heb. 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:2.