

Means of Grace, Lesson #10 - The Lord's Supper
Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 29.5-8, "Of the Lord's Supper"

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5. *The outward elements in this sacrament, duly set apart to the uses ordained by Christ, have such relation to him crucified, as that, truly, yet sacramentally only, they are sometimes called by the name of the things they represent, to wit, the body and blood of Christ; albeit, in substance and nature, they still remain truly and only bread and wine, as they were before.*

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

Transubstantiation - View of the Roman Catholic Church which teaches the substance of bread and wine is changed by priestly consecration into the substance of Christ's body and blood.

Consubstantiation - View of the Lutheran church which teaches that Christ, in his human body and blood, becomes present in, under, and through the bread and wine. There is not a change to the elements, but an addition to them.

"The outward elements in this sacrament....are sometimes called by the name of the things they represent,"

- Christ's words of institution state: "This is my body; this is my blood..." Rome and Luther understood these words to be interpreted literally.
- Christ speaks in metaphorical or representative sense, therefore "this is my body" is interpreted as "this represents my body."

Problems with transubstantiation and consubstantiation:

"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)...is repugnant, not to Scripture alone, but even to common sense, and reason"

1. repugnant (disgusting, repulsive) to Scripture
 - In words of institution of 1 Cor 11, after the blessing of the elements, the Apostle Paul still refers to the elements as "this bread" and "this cup".
 - If the elements miraculously changed here into the physical body and blood of Christ, would not Paul have noted such?
2. repugnant to common sense
 - What do you partake of when you partake of the Lord's Supper? Bread and wine.
3. repugnant to reason
 - If the physical body of Christ is in heaven, how can it also be present wherever on earth the sacrament is being observed and all at the same time?
 - Dual nature of Christ: Christ is truly man and truly God. He is one person with two natures, a divine nature and a human nature. Two natures are united, but not confused or mixed.
 - Doctrines of transubstantiation and consubstantiation give divine attributes to the human nature of Christ. In order for Christ's body and blood to be physically present whenever and wherever the Lord's Supper is celebrated, his physical body must be omnipresent.

Last part of section 6 says doctrine of transubstantiation *“hath been, and is, the cause of manifold superstitions; yea, of gross idolatries.”*

- If the bread is now the actual physical body of Christ, the people must worship it. None of the elements can be dropped or thrown away.
- The doctrine of transubstantiation short-circuits the need for faith on the part of those who receive the sacrament. If partakers consumed the physical body and blood of Christ, they would receive grace automatically. There would be no need for faith and no need for self-examination.

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

- Christ is not present just in our thinking or in our imagination, but really in a spiritual way.
- He is truly present in His divine nature so that we really feed upon the risen Christ.
- We receive not only the benefits of Christ, nor the graces that flow out of Christ, but Christ Himself.

“When we meet him (Christ in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper), we meet the One who still perfectly unites the human and divine natures. Through his divine nature, we commune with the whole Christ. We meet the whole person of Jesus at the Lord’s Table, not because his human nature can be physically present here and all over the world, but because the divine nature that is perfectly united to the human nature does come to visit us. When he comes, he does not come without the whole person.” - R.C. Sproul

Understanding the reformed view of the Lord’s Supper:

- We receive Christ by faith and by the work of the Holy Spirit

“And while the worthy receivers outwardly partake of the visible elements in this sacrament, they inwardly, by faith, receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and the benefits of his death.” - Robert Shaw

RP Testimony

4. Previous preparation, by self-examination, repentance of sin, meditation upon God’s grace, and resolution of new obedience is required of those who make this profession of their union with Christ and love to Him.

Q. 171. How are they that receive the sacrament of the Lord’s supper to prepare themselves before they come unto it? They that receive the sacrament of the Lord’s supper are, before they come, to prepare themselves thereunto, by examining themselves of their being in Christ, of their sins and wants; of the truth and measure of their knowledge, faith, repentance; love to God and the brethren, charity to all men, forgiving those that have done them wrong; of their desires after Christ, and of their new obedience; and by renewing the exercise of these graces, by serious meditation, and fervent prayer.

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8. Although ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements in this sacrament; yet, they receive not the thing signified thereby; but, by their unworthy coming thereunto, are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, to their own damnation. Wherefore, all ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, so are they unworthy

of the Lord's table; and cannot, without great sin against Christ, while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto.

RP Testimony

5. The Lord's Supper is to be administered only to those who are accepted by the session dispensing the sacrament.

6. We deny that the individual is sole judge of his fitness to partake of the sacrament.

7. We reject the practice of offering the sacrament of Communion to any one who is not a member of the visible church.

- Scripture calls those receiving the Lord's Supper to examine themselves.

1 Cor 11:28-29 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.²⁹ For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

- Two groups who would eat unworthily: the ignorant and the ungodly
- Those outside of Christ are unfit for communion with Christ and therefore unfit to come to the table of the Lord's Supper.
- The table of the Lord's Supper is to be fenced, not to be exclusive or arrogant, but to protect people from the consequences and dangers of improperly participating in the celebration of the Lord's Supper.