

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

HAVING SEEN WHAT THE SCRIPTURES PRINCIPALLY TEACH US CONCERNING GOD, IT
FOLLOWS TO CONSIDER WHAT THEY REQUIRE AS THE DUTY OF MAN

QUESTION # 163.

(*Larger Catechism*)

Q #163. *What are the parts of the sacrament?*

A. The parts of the sacrament are two; the one an outward and sensible sign, used according to Christ's own appointment; the other an inward and spiritual grace thereby signified.¹

Question 1—*How many parts constitute a sacrament?*

Answer—There are two parts which compose every sacrament—the *matter* and the *form*. The *matter* (ὁ λη) is that which is constitutive of the object and the *form* (σχημα) which, when superinduced, discriminates the object from every other object constituted of the same *matter* (ὁ λη). In objects of common use this is easily perceived. A sword is defined as composed of the *matter* of steel; yet, not everything of steel is a sword, but when superinduced with the shape and fashion of the weapon, the *form*, we have manifest the *idea* of the sword. With a sacrament, the matter is *complex*. Thus, Paul, speaking of the sacrament of circumcision, defines its *matter* of consisting of two things, Rom. 4:11: 1.) The sign and seal; and, 2.) The thing signified.

The *form* is the sacrament consisting in the analogy, or relation, of the sign to the thing signified, Gen. 17:10. By the *form*, it should be noted, is not meant the shape of the material thing, 1 Kings 18:44; or the formulary, Matt. 28:19; or the mode of outward observance, Heb. 9:13. It is rather that trait, which when superinduced on the transaction, distinguishes it as a sacrament, Matt. 26:26. It is the trait of human nature, to which the institution of sacraments is accommodated, to grasp more readily those suggestions prompted by a sensible object than those prompted merely by mental conceptions, 1 Cor. 11:24. In this *form*, we are brought to the *idea* by which the sign and the things signified are conjoined, Col. 2:11.

Question 2—*What is the first part of the matter of a sacrament?*

Answer—The first part of the *matter* of every sacrament consists in the sign, which is external and visible, that is not merely arbitrary but should bear some resemblance to the thing it signifies. Thus, under the Old Testament, *first*, there was a removal of the foreskin, as a token, or sacrament, of the covenant, Gen. 17:11. This very aptly and naturally represented the putting away of carnality and hardness of the heart, and resulted in a hidden, though indelible, mark graphically signifying the inward renewal of heart, Deut. 10:16. *Second*, in the Passover, the sprinkled blood represented the atonement, Lev. 17:11; and the eating of the sacrificed body of the lamb, represented faith's reception of the LORD's gracious redemption for the life of the soul, Ex. 12:27. Again, under the New Testament, in the *third* place, water, which is the detergent element of nature, signifies and seals the cleansing from guilt and carnality in baptism, Acts 8:36. *Fourth*, the

¹ Matt. 3:11; 1 Pet. 3:21; Rom. 2:28, 29.

bread and wine in Lord's supper, signifies and seals the shedding of the blood and the breaking of the body of Christ for the redemption of the soul, Mark 14:22-24.

Additionally, each sacrament carries with it a significant sacramental action whereby there is established a ritual usage distinguishing it from the common use. This is true with the rite of circumcision, Gen. 17:11-14. It is also true with the rite of the Passover, Ex. 12:6-11. The New Testament sacraments are also accompanied with significant actions. In baptism, there is the sprinkling of the water together with the use of the formulary, Acts 10:47, 48. In the Lord's supper, the pouring out of the wine and the breaking of the bread are sacramentally significant actions, Luke 22:19, 20.

Question 3—*What is the second part of the matter of a sacrament?*

Answer—The second part of the *matter* of every sacrament consists in the thing signified by the sacramental elements and actions. This thing is to be understood to be Christ himself with all that faith applies to itself for salvation. Faith applies to itself Christ with all the benefits which flow from his passion and death, as Paul declares, 1 Cor. 1:30. Therefore, it is Christ crucified which is signified, together with all the saving benefits which he has purchased for us by his death, which is signified, sealed and exhibited, to confirm both the truth and utility of his purchase, 1 Cor. 2:2; 11:26. As Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, Heb. 13:8; so, he has always declared the same grace to his church, Luke 24:44-47; and this is the grace which he has sealed to her by the sacraments. For this reason, speaking of the internal *matter*, Paul ascribes the sacraments of the New Testament to believers under the Old, 1 Cor. 10:1-3. Likewise, he turns to the sacraments of the Old to describe the internal matter which belongs to believers under the New, Col. 2:11; 1 Cor. 5:7.

The sign differs from the thing signified in three particular ways: 1.) The nature and properties of the sign are earthly and visible; for the thing signified, they are heavenly and invisible. 2.) The object intended by the sign is the body; for the thing signified, the soul. 3.) The mode of communication of the sign is bodily; of the thing signified, it is spiritual.

Question 4—*What is sacramental union?*

Answer—There is in every sacrament, a spiritual relation, or sacramental union—an analogy, or relation, which consists in the union of the sign with the thing signified, Matt. 3:11. This creates a phenomena whereby the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other, 1 Pet. 3:21. The grace, being named by the sign, the spiritual union is held forth sensibly to the body whilst being apprehended rightly by the soul, Rom. 2:28, 29.

This sacramental union is expressed in numerous places through Scripture: 1.) Circumcision is called the covenant, Gen. 17:10, 13. 2.) Baptism is called both regeneration, John 3:5; Tit. 3:5; as well as being called remission of sins, Acts 22:16. 3.) The lamb is called the Passover, Ex. 12:11. 4.) The bread and wine are called the body and blood of Christ, 1 Cor. 11:24, 25. Thus, the sign is sometimes predicated of the thing signified, 1 Cor. 5:7; and the thing signified is predicated of the sign, John 6:35, 56-58.

The right use of the sacraments is such that this spiritual union makes the believer come to partake of both the outward sign and the inward thing signified at the same time. Thus, for those who by faith believe the promises held forth, baptism is a planting or engrafting in Christ, Rom. 6:4, 5; and, it is also a putting on of Christ, Gal. 3:27. Likewise, the Lord's supper is an eating of Christ's body and drinking of his blood, John 6:53.