

**“The Lord’s Supper”  
(WCF 29:4-8)**

**WCF 29.4 Private masses, or receiving this sacrament by a priest, or any other, alone, as likewise, the denial of the cup to the people, worshipping the elements, the lifting them up, or carrying them about, for adoration, and the reserving them for any pretended religious use; are all contrary to the nature of this sacrament, and to the institution of Christ.**

**IV. What are some of the ways the Table is abused?**

**A. When the Supper is celebrated privately.**

1. Our communion is not only with Christ, but with one another as the members of His body. Private communion is a contradiction.
2. “In opposition to the manifold abuses of this ordinance which prevail among the Romanists, our Standards, in common with the general judgment of the Reformed Churches, teach that the Lord’s Supper is essentially a communion, in which the fellowship of the believer with Christ and with his fellow-Christians is set forth by eating and drinking of the bread and the same cup. It follows that it should not be sent to persons not present at the administration, nor administered by the officiating priest to himself alone” (Hodge).
3. There is an exception, however, “In particular cases, however, it may be administered in private houses, for the benefit of Christians long confined by sickness provided that the officers and a sufficient number of the members of the Church be present to preserve the true character of the ordinance as a communion” (Hodge).

**B. When the cup is withheld from the congregation.**

1. The church acknowledged, both at the Council of Constance (1414-1418), and the Council of Trent (1545-1563), that Christ instituted both bread and wine to represent His body and blood in the Lord’s Supper and gave both to His disciples. But they contradicted this when they declared that recipients could receive the benefits of both through the one element of the bread.
2. “After the establishment of the doctrine of transubstantiation there arose the natural fear lest some of the august person of the Lord should be spoiled or lost from the crumbling of the bread or the spilling of the wine. Hence the bread is prepared in little wafers which cannot crumble, and the cup is denied to the laity and confined to the priests. To comfort the laity, they teach that as the blood is in the flesh, and as the soul is in the body, and as the divinity is in the soul of Christ, the whole person—body, blood, soul and divinity—of Christ is equally in every particle of the bread; so that he who receives the bread receives all. (Counc. Trent, sess. 21., cans. 1–3.)” (Hodge).

**C. When the elements are worshiped.**

1. Why does Rome worship the bread and wine?
2. “Since the Papists hold that the entire substance of the bread and wine is permanently changed into the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ, they consequently maintain that the principal intention of the ordinance is accomplished when the words of consecration are pronounced and the change effected. Hence they preserve the host carefully shut up in the pyx, elevate and adore and carry it about in their processions” (Hodge).

**WCF 29.5** 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.

**V. What is the relationship between the signs and the reality behind them?**

**A. Once the word of institution is read and a blessing is asked, the bread and wine become sacramentally related to Christ's body and blood.**

1. We considered this under section 3.
2. Once they have been blessed, they are no longer to be viewed as ordinary bread and wine, but as symbols of His body and blood.
  - a. Prior to their consecration, they are ordinary.
  - b. But once they have been set apart through the Word and prayer, they are holy, at least until the service of the Table is over.

**B. However, they never become His body and blood but always remain bread and wine.**

1. The elements are not transformed – they are merely consecrated and set apart to represent Christ and His benefits.
2. “While they were eating, Jesus took *some* bread, and after a blessing, He broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins’” (Matt. 26:26-28).

**WCF 29.6** 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.

**VI. What should we think of Rome's teaching of transubstantiation?**

**A. What is transubstantiation?**

1. The belief that the substance of the bread and wine are miraculously transformed into the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ.
  - a. Trent declared: “And because that Christ, our Redeemer, declared that which He offered under the species of bread to be truly His own body, therefore has it ever been a firm belief in the Church of God, and this holy Synod doth now declare it anew, that, by the consecration of the bread and of the wine, a conversion is made of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood; which conversion is, by the holy Catholic Church, suitably and properly called Transubstantiation” (Trent, Chapter iv, “On Transubstantiation”).
  - b. “If any one denieth, that, in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist, are contained truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the whole Christ; but saith that He is only therein as in a sign, or in figure, or virtue; let him be anathema” (Canon I).
  - c. “If any one saith, that, in the sacred and holy sacrament of the Eucharist, the substance of the bread and wine remains conjointly with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and denieth that wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the Body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the Blood-the species Only of

- the bread and wine remaining-which conversion indeed the Catholic Church most aptly calls Transubstantiation; let him be anathema” (Canon II).
- d. “If any one denieth, that, in the venerable sacrament of the Eucharist, the whole Christ is contained under each species, and under every part of each species, when separated; let him be anathema” (Canon III).
  - e. “If any one saith, that, after the consecration is completed, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are not in the admirable sacrament of the Eucharist, but (are there) only during the use, whilst it is being taken, and not either before or after; and that, in the hosts, or consecrated particles, which are reserved or which remain after communion, the true Body of the Lord remaineth not; let him be anathema” (Canon IV).
  - f. “If any one saith, either that the principal fruit of the most holy Eucharist is the remission of sins, or, that other effects do not result therefrom; let him be anathema” (Canon V).
  - g. “If any one saith, that, in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, is not to be adored with the worship, even external of latria; and is, consequently, neither to be venerated with a special festive solemnity, nor to be solemnly borne about in processions, according to the laudable and universal rite and custom of holy church; or, is not to be proposed publicly to the people to be adored, and that the adorers thereof are idolators; let him be anathema” (Canon VI).
  - h. “If any one saith, that it is not lawful for the sacred Eucharist to be reserved in the sacrarium, but that, immediately after consecration, it must necessarily be distributed amongst those present; or, that it is not lawful that it be carried with honour to the sick; let him be anathema” (Canon VII).
  - i. “If any one saith, that Christ, given in the Eucharist, is eaten spiritually only, and not also sacramentally and really; let him be anathema” (Canon VIII).
  - j. “If any one denieth, that all and each of Christ's faithful of both sexes are bound, when they have attained to years of discretion, to communicate every year, at least at Easter, in accordance with the precept of holy Mother Church; let him be anathema” (Canon IX).
  - k. “If any one saith, that it is not lawful for the celebrating priest to communicate himself; let him be anathema” (Canon X).
  - l. “If any one saith, that faith alone is a sufficient preparation for receiving the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist; let him be anathema. And for fear lest so great a sacrament may be received unworthily, and so unto death and condemnation, this holy Synod ordains and declares, that sacramental confession, when a confessor may be had, is of necessity to be made beforehand, by those whose conscience is burthened with mortal sin, how contrite even soever they may think themselves. But if any one shall presume to teach, preach, or obstinately to assert, or even in public disputation to defend the contrary, he shall be thereupon excommunicated” (Canon XI).
2. Lutherans hold a similar view to transubstantiation called consubstantiation:
    - a. “The Lutherans hold that while the bread and the wine remain, nevertheless at the words of consecration the real body and blood of Christ, though invisible, are really present *in, with and under* the bread and wine” (Hodge).
    - b. In Luther's view, the substance of the bread and wine aren't changed; the substance of Christ's body and blood are added.
  3. Why do either believe this?
    - a. Hodge writes, “The only ground of this doctrine is the word of our Lord, ‘This is my body.’ They hold the word ‘*is*’ is literal: all the Reformed Churches hold it must mean ‘represents,’ ‘symbolizes.’ This is a frequent usage of the word in Scripture. ‘The seven

good kine *are* seven years; and the seven good ears *are* seven years.’ (Gen. 41:26,27; Ezek. 37:11; Dan. 7:24; Luke 12:1; Rev. 1:20.) Besides, when our Lord said this, and gave them the bread to eat, he was sitting by them in his sound, undivided flesh, eating and drinking with them.”

- b. And, “Their doctrine of transubstantiation, or conversion of substance. The Council of Trent teaches (sees. 13. cans. 1–4) that the whole substance of the bread is changed into the literal body, and the whole substance of the wine is changed into the literal blood, of Christ; so that only the appearance or sensible properties of the bread and wine remain, and the only substances present are the true body and blood, soul and divinity, of our Lord. And thus he is objectively presented to, and is eaten and drunk by, every recipient, believer and unbeliever indifferently; and thus he remains before and after the communion, his very body and blood, Godhead and manhood, shut up in A vessel, carried about, elevated, worshipped, etc.”
- c. Why do the elements continue to look and smell the way they did before? Because the substance is changed, but not the accidents, that is, the characteristics of the bread and wine, the way they appear to our senses.

## **B. Does the Bible teach transubstantiation?**

1. Clearly not.
  - a. Jesus’ body and blood were intact when He instituted the Lord’s Supper.
  - b. When Peter said that heaven must receive Him until the fullness of time, he was referring to His human nature (Acts 3:20-21), which cannot be everywhere at once.
2. Common sense and reason also refute transubstantiation.
  - a. We see that there are no changes to the bread and wine.
  - b. Christ’s human nature cannot be present everywhere at once without His humanity being deified, something denied at the Council of Chalcedon (451).
3. What does the belief in transubstantiation lead to?
  - a. False worship/idolatry:
    - (i) “Wherefore, there is no room left for doubt, that all the faithful of Christ may, according to the custom ever received in the Catholic Church, render in veneration the worship of latria, which is due to the true God, to this most holy sacrament. For not therefore is it the less to be adored on this account, that it was instituted by Christ, the Lord, in order to be received: for we believe that same God to be present therein, of whom the eternal Father, when introducing him into the world, says; And let all the angels of God adore him; whom the Magi falling down, adored; who, in fine, as the Scripture testifies, was adored by the apostles in Galilee.”
    - (ii) “The holy Synod declares, moreover, that very piously and religiously was this custom introduced into the Church, that this sublime and venerable sacrament be, with special veneration and solemnity, celebrated, every year, on a certain day, and that a festival; and that it be borne reverently and with honour in processions through the streets, and public places. For it is most just that there be certain appointed holy days, whereon all Christians may, with a special and unusual demonstration, testify that their minds are grateful and thankful to their common Lord and Redeemer for so ineffable and truly divine a benefit, whereby the victory and triumph of His death are represented. And so indeed did it behoove victorious truth to celebrate a triumph over falsehood and heresy, that thus her adversaries, at the sight of so much splendour, and in the midst of so great joy of the universal Church, may either pine away weakened

and broken; or, touched with shame and confounded, at length repent” (Trent, Sess. 13, Chapter V, “On the Cult and Veneration to Be Shown to This Most Holy Sacrament”).

(iii) “But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men” (Matt. 15:9).

- b. Superstition: the belief in a miraculous transformation.
- c. The destruction of the sacrament, since it becomes the reality.
- d. God’s judgment:
  - (i) “Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved” (1 Cor. 10:6).
  - (ii) “Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly” (1 Cor. 11:27-29).
- e. Hodge writes, “This doctrine, then, is false—(a) Because it is not taught in Scripture. (b) Because it confounds the very idea of sacrament, *making the sign identical with the thing it signifies*. (c) It contradicts our senses, since we see, smell, taste, and feel bread and wine, and do never either see, or smell, or taste, or feel flesh and blood. (d) *It contradicts reason*; for reason teaches that qualities cannot exist except as they inhere in some substance, and that substance cannot be known and cannot act except by its qualities. But this doctrine supposes that the qualities of bread and wine remain without any substance, and that the substance of flesh and blood remains without any qualities. (e) It is absurd and *impossible*; because Christ’s glorified body is still material and therefore finite, and therefore not omnipresent in all places on earth, but absent at the right hand of God in heaven.”
  - (i) “Whom heaven must receive until *the* period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time” (Acts 3:21).
  - (ii) “He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee” (Luke 24:6).

**WCF 29.7 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.**

#### **VII. What do we receive when we participate in the Lord’s Supper by faith?**

##### **A. We receive bread and wine.**

1. Unleavened bread, since this is what Christ instituted at the Feast of the Passover.
2. Wine, fermented grape juice.

##### **B. But we also feed upon Christ.**

1. Not corporally or carnally: We do not feed upon literal body and blood.
2. But spiritually.
  - a. We feed on the grace or virtue of Christ’s mediatorial work.
  - b. We receive more of the work and influence of the Spirit.

- c. “Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10:16).

**WCF 29.8 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.**

**VIII. What do unbelievers receive when they partake of the Lord’s Supper?**

**A. Unbelievers receive the bread and wine, like the believer. But they do not receive the spiritual benefit.**

**B. Rather, because they come to the table without faith, they eat and drink condemnation to themselves.**

1. The Table represents the death of Christ, something the unbeliever denies. By coming to such a representation and by rejecting Him in their hearts, they sin and increase their judgment.
2. They also increase their condemnation by receiving something holy meant only for believers.
  - a. “Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly” (1 Cor. 11:27-29).
  - b. “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people’” (2 Cor. 6:14-16).
  - c. “Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler -- not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within *the church*? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves” (1 Cor. 5:6-13).
  - d. “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces” (Matt. 7:6).