

# Honoring the Lord and His Supper: An Exegetical Refutation of the Reformed Doctrine of the Lord's Supper

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## Introduction

R.C. Sproul, a well-known Reformed Bible scholar, wrote in the preface of a book detailing John Calvin's teaching on the Lord's Supper:

Since the sixteenth century there has been a gradual but steady erosion of the Reformed view of the sacrament so that in the present era the doctrine of the real presence is decidedly a minority report.

From the earliest times of Christian history there has been a close link between the church's understanding of the nature of the sacrament and her attention to it. Its use tends to follow its perceived significance. When the sacrament is reduced to the level of a "naked sign" or "nude symbol," its importance and its practice all but disappear from the life of the church. (Mathison, p. x)

We will later disagree with Sproul's definition of "the real presence" but agree with his main point. The Reformed church has been debating the Lord's Supper for hundreds of years. In many cases these churches have downgraded the importance of the Lord's Supper. In this presentation we hope to:

1. Grow in our appreciation for the Lord's Supper so that we continue to treasure this meaningful and personal expression of God's grace.
2. Grow in our understanding of what God's Word tells us about the Lord's Supper so that we can better teach others.
3. Grow in our understanding of the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper so that we can guard ourselves and our flocks against its dangers.

### **Part One: The Reformed Doctrine of the Lord's Supper**

Discussion Question: What difficulties do we encounter when we try to study the Reformed stance on any doctrine?

How would you summarize the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper?

Write down a specific question that you have about the Reformed teaching about the Lord's Supper ... or a question about the words of institution?

In the first part of the paper we get an overview of the Reformed teaching on the Lord's Supper by focusing on:

1. Ulrich Zwingli
2. John Calvin
3. Heinrich Bullinger
4. The Dispute between Charles Hodge and John Nevin
5. Current Reformed Dogmaticians
6. The Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue on the Lord's Supper

### 1. Ulrich Zwingli

**Biography:** Born on January 1, 1484 (seven weeks after the birth of Luther)  
 Educated in Vienna and Basel; later he became a priest  
 Zwingli was a Thomist at heart. As such he believed that God's Word and human reason were in agreement.

#### *Zwingli on the Sacraments*

Zwingli wrote:

A sacrament is the sign of a holy thing. When I say: The sacrament of the Lord's body, I am simply referring to that bread which is the symbol of the body of Christ who was put to death for our sakes.... Now the sign and the thing signified cannot be one and the same. Therefore the sacrament of the body of Christ cannot be the body itself (Bromiley, p. 188)

Right away Zwingli sets the stage for his teaching on the Lord's Supper. The sacraments are symbols that point us toward something else. These symbols are separate from what they signify.

#### *Summary of his thoughts on the Lord's Supper:*

In many ways Zwingli's teaching on the Lord's Supper was negative. He spent a lot of time focusing on what the Lord's Supper was not. Zwingli argued that there were a number of clear flaws in the argument that Jesus' body and blood are truly present in the Lord's Supper:

1. "... when Christ says: "I am the vine" (John 15:5), we have to consider that he is using figurative speech in the first place.... Now if you object against this interpretation of Christ's saying "I am the vine," and argue that therefore he must be a physical vine, you end up by making Christ into a piece of vine wood. In the same way, when you come to the words: "This is my body," you must first make sure that he intended to give his flesh and blood in physical form."
2. "...if he is literally and essentially present in the flesh, then he is actually torn apart by the teeth and tangibly masticated in human mouths."
3. "If we take 'is' in a substantive way, that is literally, then it is an obvious mistake to say that the bread remains bread and to deny transubstantiation."<sup>1</sup>

Zwingli believed that the Lord's Supper was a memorial meal meant to call to mind the suffering and death of Jesus. He said that it was impossible for the body and blood of Jesus to be present in a real way

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<sup>1</sup> Quotations taken from *The Christian Theology Reader* by Alistair McGrath, p. 546. He quotes from Zwingli's *A Clear Instruction Concerning the Supper of Christ*.

because Jesus had ascended into heaven. There were two driving forces in Zwingli's teaching of the Lord's Supper. The first was that Jesus' body could not be in two places at the same time. He wrote:

For in this matter they are confronted by the articles of our Christian Creed: "He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead." Therefore they must either abandon the false doctrine of the essential body of Christ in this sacrament, or else they must at once renounce these three articles, which God forbid that anyone should ever dream of doing (Bromiley, p. 186).

Again and again Zwingli would come back to this point. Jesus couldn't truly (in body and blood) be present in the Lord's Supper because He was in heaven. Zwingli did not recognize the *genus majesticum* (the human nature of Christ shares the properties of the divine nature). For Zwingli, passages that seemed to support the *genus majesticum* contained an *alloeosis* (a figure of speech in which we attribute to one nature the qualities of another). Zwingli would not object to saying that Mary was the "mother of God" but would say that this is only a figure of speech (Mary was only the mother of his human nature in his opinion).

The other driving force in Zwingli's eucharistic teaching (the first being that Jesus was in heaven and couldn't be present in the Lord's Supper) was that the doctrines of transubstantiation and the real presence hurt people's faith by taking attention away from God's gift of salvation. Zwingli worried that people treated the Lord's Supper as a good work they did to merit salvation (thinking "If I receive the body and blood of Jesus then I'll be OK spiritually.") This is why Zwingli repeatedly went back to John 6:63: *The flesh counts for nothing; the Spirit gives life*. He agreed with Luther that John 6:63 didn't directly refer to the Lord's Supper yet he steadfastly said that the point of the passage did apply to the Lord's Supper. Zwingli said that Jesus' point in John 6 was that fleshly matters (things we can touch and see) don't benefit us spiritually. Spiritual growth took place through the invisible and untouchable work of the Holy Spirit. Zwingli genuinely wanted people to focus on Jesus' suffering and death instead of His presence in the Lord's Supper.

Zwingli began with the presupposition that Jesus could not have meant the words of institution literally. There had to be another way to read them. Zwingli wrote:

Our next task is to see whether Christ's words in Matthew 26: "This is my body," can also be taken metaphorically or *tropice*. It has already become clear enough that in this context the word "is" cannot be taken literally.<sup>2</sup> Hence it follows that it must be taken metaphorically or figuratively. In the words: "This is my body," the word "this" means the bread, and the word "body" the body which is put to death for us. Therefore the word "is" cannot be taken literally, for the bread is not the body and cannot be, as we have seen already. Necessarily, then, it must be taken figuratively or metaphorically; "This is my body," means, "The bread signifies my body," or "is a figure of my body" (Bromiley, p. 225).

Zwingli interpreted the words of institution figuratively. Jesus meant to say "This represents my body" and "This represents my blood." He maintained that the word "is" should be interpreted as it is in Jesus "I am" statements, Matthew 11:14 (John is Elijah), Genesis 40:12 ("The three branches are three days"), etc.

### Conclusion

G.W. Bromiley has an interesting opinion on Zwingli's contribution to the Lord's Supper debate:

A valuable feature of Zwingli's teaching is that by his sharp repudiation of all forms of belief in a literal presence of Christ in the Supper he prepared the ground for a far more satisfying doctrine

<sup>2</sup> Notice that Zwingli was assuming his conclusion rather than arriving at the conclusion based on exegetical grounds.

of the sacramental presence and efficacy. His contribution in this respect was largely negative: his denials were more prominent than his assertions (p. 39).

Zwingli tended to destroy rather than build up. Scholars argue whether Zwingli really taught the “stripped down” symbolic memorial meal that we ascribe to him. Some maintain that he taught the same thing Calvin did. One scholar goes so far as to say that there are five views of the Lord’s Supper and that Zwingli taught each one during his life!<sup>3</sup> At the very least Zwingli set the stage for the teaching in most of today’s ecumenical megachurches: the Lord’s Supper is a nice thing that we celebrate to help us remember what Jesus did for us. Whether Zwingli intended to reduce the Lord’s Supper to this level is a matter of opinion.

## 2. John Calvin

Biography: Born on July 10, 1509 in Noyon, France.  
 Studied in Paris, became a “Doctor of Laws” in 1533.  
 From 1541 until his death in 1564 he lived (and practically ruled) in Geneva  
 Published his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1535 (5 more editions)

*Calvin’s definition of a sacrament:*

...an external sign, by which the Lord seals on our consciences his promises of a good-will toward us, in order to sustain the weaknesses of our faith, and we in our turn testify our piety towards him, both before himself, and before angels as well as men. (*Institutes*, 4.14.1)

*Summary of his thoughts on the Lord’s Supper:*

Calvin sought to find a mediating view between Luther and Zwingli.<sup>4</sup> At heart Calvin thought that he was much closer to the Lutheran view than the Zwinglian view. In fact, in 1541 Calvin signed the Augsburg Confession. He later said that he agreed with the UAC because he knew what its author (Melancthon) intended.

Calvin believed that we truly received Jesus’ body and blood in the Lord’s Supper. He would go so far as to say that there was a “real presence” of Jesus’ body and blood. At the same time he taught that Jesus’ body was locally present in heaven (he shared Zwingli’s Christology).<sup>5</sup> How can we then receive Jesus’ body and blood in the Lord’s Supper? People receive the Lord’s Supper “Spiritually” ...not in the sense that Zwingli meant (by thinking about what Jesus did for us) but through the power of the Holy Spirit. Calvin taught that the Spirit takes us to heaven to partake of Jesus’ body and blood. In other words Jesus doesn’t come down to us in the Lord’s Supper; we go up to Him by the Spirit’s power. He once wrote, “When I teach that the body of Christ is given us for food by the secret energy of the Spirit, do I thereby deny that the Supper is a communion

<sup>3</sup> Stephens, p. 256. The five views: transubstantiation, consubstantiation, a mystical view, a purely symbolic view, and faith-presence (i.e. “the emphasis lies on the object and not the subject of faith”).

<sup>4</sup> Francis Pieper disagrees with this assessment: “That Calvin ‘deepened’ Zwingli’s view of the Lord’s Supper and held a middle position between Zwingli and Luther is a favorite contention of modern histories of dogma, but a thoroughly incorrect opinion” (p. 295). Yet Calvin himself said that he viewed his doctrine as a middle ground: “Moreover, two faults are here to be avoided. We must neither, by setting too little value on the signs (as Zwingli did), dissever them from their meanings to which they are in some degree annexed, nor by immoderately extolling them, seem somewhat to obscure the mysteries themselves (as Luther did).” (*On the Lord’s Supper, and the Benefits Conferred By It*). In *A Short Treatise on the Lord’s Supper* Calvin wrote, “We thus see wherein Luther failed on his side, and Zwingli and Oecolampadius on theirs.” (Paragraph 58)

<sup>5</sup> Calvin wrote: “I employ the trite dictum of the schools, that Christ is whole everywhere, but not wholly, in other words, in his entire person of Mediator he fills heaven and earth, though in his flesh he is in heaven, which he has chosen as the abode of his human nature, until he appear to judgement.” (*Clear Explanation of Sound Doctrine*)

of the body?” (*Clear Explanation of Sound Doctrine*). Lutherans would answer “yes” to his rhetorical question!

Calvin taught that the Lord’s Supper was given to us as a seal of the promise that believers truly partake of the body and blood of Christ. This promise was made in John 6. In his *Institutes* he wrote:

It is not, therefore, the chief function of the Sacrament simply and without higher consideration to extend to us the body of Christ. Rather it is to seal and confirm that promise by which he testifies that his flesh is food indeed and his blood is drink [John 6:56], which feed us until eternal life [John 6:55]. (4.17.4)

Calvin’s ideas about our union with Christ had a huge impact on his doctrine of the Lord’s Supper. Calvin wrote that Jesus assumed our flesh “to communicate to us by right of adoption that which he possessed by nature, namely to make us sons of God” (*Consensus Tigurinus*, 3). Calvin wrote:

...that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts—in short, that mystical union—are accorded by us the highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed. We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body—in short, because he deigns to make us one with him.” (*Institutes*, 3.11.10)

I maintain that Calvin had a mystical bent to his theology...which impacted his view of the Lord’s Supper. Michael Pahls comments: “Calvin reckons that the nature of the believer’s saving union with Christ is such that there is no longer a subject-object relationship between the believer and the Savior. Christ has rather engrafted the believer into his body and experiences a genuine oneness.” (See online paper by Pahls listed in the bibliography). It’s ironic that Calvin thinks that Christ can communicate so much to the believer...but so little of His divine nature is communicated to His human nature.

According to Calvin the two sacraments are related to our union with Christ. Baptism is connected with our initiation into our mystical union with Christ. The Lord’s Supper is connected with the nurturing of that union. It is with those thoughts in mind that Calvin reads Jesus’ words that He is the bread of life and that His flesh is truly food and that His blood is truly drink (John 6:55). “According to Calvin, the flesh of Christ functions as something of a ‘channel’ or ‘conduit’ through which the divine life is poured into those who are in union with him” (Mathison, p. 21). Calvin almost seems to say that grace is infused into us through Christ’s body in some sort of mystical way:

...by the incomprehensible agency of the Spirit, spiritual life is infused into us from the substance of the flesh of Christ. I also constantly admit that we are substantially fed on the flesh and blood of Christ, though I discard the gross fiction of a local intermingling. (*Clear Explanation of Sound Doctrine*)

Calvin taught that the bread and wine were signs of something that was present. Zwingli taught that they were signs of something that was absent. Calvin said that “This is my body” should be taken figuratively. He said this to reject a literal interpretation (i.e. Lutheran) view. At the same time he also rejected Zwingli’s ideas of the bread and wine representing Jesus’ body and blood. For Calvin the bread and wine were only signs of something that was present by the power of the Spirit (who transported us to heaven to partake of Jesus’ body and blood...in the manner of Jesus’ words in John 6).<sup>6</sup> Calvin’s teaching is inconsistent here. He

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<sup>6</sup> Calvin’s mystical tendencies come through in his ideas about a transportation to heaven to partake of Jesus’ body and blood. B.A. Gerrish states in the final paragraph of his book on Calvin’s eucharistic theology: “It is not at all surprising that stalwart Reformed divines have sometimes been not merely puzzled but offended by Calvin’s talk about the communication of Christ’s life-giving flesh.

steadfastly maintained that Jesus could not be two places at the same time (i.e. in heaven and here on earth in the Lord's Supper); yet he taught that we are in two places (i.e. here on earth and in heaven receiving Jesus' body and blood). Others taught that eating and drinking Jesus' body and blood in the Lord's Supper simply meant to believe (vs. any sort of true reception of Jesus' body and blood). Calvin rejected that. He said that eating and drinking Jesus' body and blood did truly happen (through the Holy Spirit's power); for him eating and drinking Jesus' body and blood follows from faith. Indeed, Calvin wrote:

In his Sacred Supper he bids me take, eat, and drink his body and blood under the symbols of bread and wine. I do not doubt that he himself truly presents them, and that I receive them. (*Institutes*, 4.17.32).

In one scholar's view:

The whole conflict upon this point can be shortly summed up thus: Union between the Christ and the Eucharistic elements meant, according to the Lutherans, that there was real contact between the body and the blood on the one hand, and the bread and the wine on the other: according to Calvin, it meant only that the believer received the body of Christ when he consumed the consecrated bread. Westphal and the Lutherans therefore maintained that there was a direct relation between the Christ and the elements; Calvin, on the contrary, put the Christ and the elements separately into direct contact with the believer. (Wendel, 344)

Calvin stated that unbelievers did not receive the body and blood of Jesus...even though it was offered to them. He writes in his *Institutes*:

The flesh and blood of Christ are not less truly given to the unworthy than to God's elect believers. At the same time, it is true, however, that just as rain falling upon a hard rock flows off because no entrance opens into the stone, the wicked by their hardness so repel God's grace that it does not reach them. (4.17.33).<sup>7</sup>

One scholar summarized the main points of Calvin's teaching in these six points:

1. The Lord's Supper is a divine gift. It is not merely the reminder of a gift.
2. The gift that is given is Christ himself. In addition, it is the whole of Christ that is given.
3. The gift is given through signs, which are intimately connected with the reality that is signified and which guarantee the presence of the reality that is signified.
4. The gift is given by the Holy Spirit. When Calvin says that Christ is "spiritually present," he means that the body and blood of Christ are made present by the mysterious power of the Holy Spirit.
5. The gift is given to all who communicate, but those who receive the Supper without faith receive it to their condemnation.

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They may choose to reject it as a perilous intrusion into Reformed theology and insist that Christ's body is life-giving only because it was crucified. But in so doing they should note that Calvin's view of the Lord's Supper was bound up with a total conception of what it means to be saved and of how the historical deed of Christ reaches out to the present. It is impossible to read Calvin's ideas on Baptism and the Eucharist in their own historical context and not to notice that they were developed in part as a warning against what he took to be another peril: a mentality that reduces sacred signs to mere reminders, communion with Christ to beliefs about Christ and the living body of the church to an association of like-minded individuals. (p. 190)

<sup>7</sup> Calvin goes farther than this. He says that Jesus has not died for the unregenerate: "I should like to know how the wicked can eat the flesh of Christ which was not crucified for them? And how they can drink the blood which was not shed to expiate their sins?" (*Clear Explanation of Sound Doctrine*)

6. The gift evokes gratitude, and this is the eucharistic sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise. (Mathison, 47)

### 3. Heinrich Bullinger

Biography: 1504-1575  
 Attended the University of Cologne; became interested in theology  
 Read Luther and the New Testament  
 Met Zwingli in 1523 and acted as his clerk at some of his disputations  
 Replaced his own father as the pastor of the church in Bremgarten in 1529  
 Replaced Zwingli as the head pastor in Zurich upon Zwingli's death in 1531.

#### *Summary of his thoughts on the Lord's Supper:*

Whereas Zwingli saw the believing congregation as the active subject in the Lord's Supper Bullinger taught that the Lord's Supper is not only a commemoration but also is true communion with Christ. Christ gives Himself in the Supper to his people.

Bullinger denied that the sacraments were God's instruments of grace but said that they were testimonies. Calvin charged that Bullinger was left with empty sacraments.

Bullinger said that Christ's presence is "Platonic"; Christ and his benefits are present to the mind (Mathison, p 68)

#### *Agreement with Calvin:*

Calvin wanted to see unity within the Reformed church. He knew that to achieve that there needed to be agreement regarding the Lord's Supper. He wrote to and met with Bullinger many times to accomplish that goal. After much work it came down to this:

Either Calvin would refrain from speaking of God as working through the sacraments, and of the sacraments as God's instruments or implements of grace, or else Bullinger would change his position and openly agree that the sacraments were not only testimonies, analogies, and parallels to grace, but God's very instruments for conferring grace. (Rorem, p. 365)

When Calvin and Bullinger wrote the *Consensus Tigurinus* both compromised. We do not find Calvin's usual words about the sacrament actually presenting and exhibiting what is signified. On the other hand Bullinger said that the Lord's Supper was an "implement" (not "instrument") of God.<sup>8</sup>

One Reformed scholar wrote:

Does a given Reformed statement of faith consider the Lord's Supper as a testimony, an analogy, a parallel, even a simultaneous parallel to the internal workings of God's grace in granting communion with Christ? If so, the actual ancestor may be Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli's successor at Zurich. Or does it explicitly identify the Supper as the very instrument or means through which God offers and confers the grace of full communion with Christ's body? The lineage would then go back to John Calvin (and to Martin Bucer). (Rorem...as quoted by Matathias, p. 68)

This debate continues in the Reformed church today.

<sup>8</sup> For a treatment of the debate between Calvin and Bullinger see Paul Rorem's article listed in the bibliography.

#### 4. The Dispute Between Charles Hodge (1797-1878) and John Nevin

Charles Hodge was one of the most influential Reformed theologians in the nineteenth century. His three volume *Systematic Theology* became a classic in Reformed circles.

Hodge has a view of the Lord's Supper near Bullinger...or even Zwingli. He writes:

By presence is meant not local nearness, but intellectual cognition and apprehension, believing appropriation, and spiritual operation. The body and blood are present to us when they fill our thoughts, are apprehended by faith as broken and shed for our salvation, and exert upon us their proper effect. (as quoted by Mathison, p. 134-135)

Hodge admits that this kind of presence is not peculiar to this sacrament. Along with Bullinger, Hodge maintains that eating is equivalent to believing.

John Nevin was born in 1803. He studied under Hodge and even taught for him at Princeton while Hodge was studying in Europe.

At this point in American religious history there were a number of influences that were changing the landscape of religious thought.

1. A shift from covenantal to constitutional language in Reformed theology.<sup>9</sup>
2. The spread of common sense theology
3. The revival movement
4. The social reform movement.

Nevin was part of the Mercersburg movement. This movement had Christ's incarnation as its centerpiece. Nevin argued that forensic justification is not enough; there needs to be "true" union with Christ. This union happens as the Holy Spirit infuses us with "mystical union" with Christ. We have seen traces of these thoughts in Calvin's theology. Obviously Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper was important to Nevin; the Lord's Supper was one way in which this infusion takes place.<sup>10</sup>

Nevin maintained that Calvin's high view of the Lord's Supper had been abandoned for Zwingli's symbolic view of the Lord's Supper. He further argued that the change in the teaching of the Lord's Supper was a symptom of bigger changes in Reformed theology. He wanted to pull the Reformed churches back to the "original" teachings of the Reformed church.

He outlined five changes in the teaching of the Lord's Supper:

1. The modern view rejects the older view that unique grace is offered in the Supper that is not offered elsewhere.
2. The modern view rejects the older idea that the Supper is a mystery. According to Nevin, the modern view is as mysterious as a common Fourth of July celebration.
3. The modern view rejects the older idea that there is an objective force in the sacrament of the Supper. In the new view, everything is subjective.
4. The modern view rejects the older idea that in the supper believers really participate in Christ's person, the very life of Christ himself.

<sup>9</sup> "The doctrine of the covenant had emphasized the corporate nature of the church, with its emphasis on the communal blessings and curses for obedience or disobedience. The newer governmental doctrine...focused on individual rights and responsibilities, utilizing the languages of constitutional republicanism and the New Divinity. Such a shift de-emphasized the corporate, communal nature of the church, preferring a more legal and individualistic model." (Wallace, *Mid-American Journal*, p. 171-172)

<sup>10</sup> For a summary of the Mercersburg Movement see the online article by Mark Horne listed in the bibliography.



5. The modern view rejects the older idea that believers commune with Christ especially as the Word made flesh. (Mathison, p. 144-145)

Hodge responded to the charges laid out by Nevin. He made the following points among others:

1. It's nearly impossible to determine the "authorized" Reformed view of the Lord's Supper
2. The presence of the body and blood are only "to the mind".
3. He dismissed as irrelevant Calvin's distinction between eating as faith and eating as a consequence of faith.
4. He argues that Nevin's (and Calvin's) doctrine of union with Christ would result in justification being based on a righteousness that is in us rather than a righteousness that is for us.
5. He argues that Nevin's view was somewhere between the Lutheran and Catholic views (!)<sup>11</sup>

Hodge charged that Nevin taught that people receive "a mysterious supernatural efficacy flowing from the glorified body of Christ in heaven" (Horne) The same charge could be made against Calvin.

Nevin published a thorough rebuttal to Hodge...but nothing more was heard from Princeton. Hodge's views continue to influence the current teaching of most Reformed theologians.

## 5. "Current" Reformed Dogmaticians<sup>12</sup>

### 1. Herman Bavinck (1854-1921)

Leading theologian in the Dutch Reformed church

Exclusive focus on the sacraments as signs of grace already received. He was Zwinglian.

### 2. B.B. Warfield (1851-1921)

Conservative systematic theologian at Princeton.

Emphasized that the Lord's Supper is a sacrificial meal. He writes:

All who partake of this bread and wine, the appointed symbols of his body and blood, therefore, are symbolically partaking of the victim offered on the altar of the cross, and are by this act professing themselves offerers of the sacrifice and seeking to become beneficiaries of it. (as quoted by Mathison on pages 336-337)

### 3. Louis Berkhof (1873-1957)

Taught at Calvin Theological Seminary from 1906-1944. He wrote his own Systematic Theology which

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<sup>11</sup> In the main we would agree with Hodge's critique of Nevin...especially points three and four above.

<sup>12</sup> It's becoming increasingly difficult to find detailed confessions of faith from today's Evangelical/Reformed churches. Indeed, it's nearly impossible to define just what a Reformed church is. As opposed to the blanket term "Reformed" our seminary talks about "ABC Evangelicalism" (Arminian, Baptist, Calvinistic) and makes the appropriate distinctions. Even those distinctions break down when we talk about individual church bodies and more so with individual churches. "Pick-your-own theology" has become the rage. In this paper I have focused on individual theologians instead of on church bodies. These theologians tend to cut across denominational lines; one man's systematic theology textbook could be used in a Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian seminary. Our seminary frequently quotes Wayne Grudem and Millard Erickson as representing Reformed theology. William Barkley's theological works seem to be very popular today as well.

was published in 1938.<sup>13</sup> It has been widely used around the world. Berkhof writes:

Dabney (who wrote another systematic theology book) positively rejects the representation of Calvin as if the communicant partakes of the very body and blood of Christ in the sacrament. This is undoubtedly an obscure point in Calvin's representation. Sometimes he seems to place too much emphasis on the literal flesh and blood. Perhaps, however, his words are to be understood sacramentally, that is, in a figurative sense. This view of Calvin is that found in our confessional standards. A very common interpretation of the dubious point in Calvin's doctrine, is that the body and blood of Christ are present only virtually, that is, in the words of Dr. Hodge, that "the virtues and effects of the sacrifice of the body of the Redeemer on the cross are made present and are actually conveyed in the sacrament to the worthy receiver by the power of the Holy Ghost, who uses the sacrament as His instrument according to His sovereign will". (p. 654)

Berkhof seems to be a Zwinglian.

#### 4. Wayne Grudem

Wayne Grudem begins the preface of his 1200 page *Systematic Theology*<sup>14</sup> this way:

I have not written this book for other teachers of theology (though I hope many of them will read it). I have written it for students—and not only for students, but also for every Christian who has a hunger to know the central doctrines of the Bible in greater depth.... This is why I have called the book "An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine."

Grudem's treatment of the Lord's Supper is indeed an introduction rather than an in-depth treatment of the sacrament. He devotes a mere fourteen pages to this sacrament. His treatment of "church government" receives three times as many pages!

After summarizing the Lutheran position of "in, with, and under" Grudem offers this critique:

However, in order to affirm this doctrine, Luther had to answer an important question: How can Christ's physical body, or more generally Christ's human nature, be everywhere present? Is it not true that Jesus in his human nature ascended into heaven and remains there until his return? Did he not say that he was leaving the earth and would not longer be in the world but was going to the Father (John 16:28; 17:11)? In answer to this problem Luther taught the *ubiquity* of Christ's human nature after his ascension—that is, that Christ's human nature was present everywhere ("ubiquitous"). But theologians ever since Luther's time have suspected that he taught the ubiquity of Christ's human nature, not because it is found anywhere in Scripture, but because he needed it to explain how his view of consubstantiation could be true.

In response to the Lutheran view, it can be said that it too fails to realize that Jesus is speaking of a *spiritual* reality but using *physical* objects to teach us when he says, "This is my body." We should take this no more literally than we take the corresponding sentence, "*This cup*

<sup>13</sup> After working with Berkhof's dogmatics book I have renewed appreciation for Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics*. Not only does Pieper go back to the word of God far more often than Berkhof, he is also much more definitive. There are places where it's difficult to pin down exactly what Berkhof believes.

<sup>14</sup> Grudem's *Systematic Theology* is a good introduction to Reformed Theology. At times the volume seems to be more a book of comparative theology than a systematic theology. Grudem has thoughtful questions for personal application after each of his fifty-seven doctrinal sections. He also has generous bibliographic material after each section. The glossary is valuable as well.

which is poured out for you *is the new covenant* in my blood” (Luke 22:20). (p. 994).

Grudem quotes Calvin favorably as he lays out what the “rest of protestantism” teaches: “A Symbolic and Spiritual Presence of Christ.” Yet there is no mention of Calvin’s real presence or “Spiritual” trip to Jesus’ human nature in heaven. His summary of Reformed doctrine sounds remarkably Zwinglian:

Today most Protestants would say, in addition to the fact that the bread and wine symbolize the body and blood of Christ, that Christ is also *spiritually present* in a special way as we partake of the bread and wine. Indeed, Jesus promised to be present whenever believers worship: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). And if he is especially present when Christians gather to worship, then we would expect that he will be present in a special way in the Lord’s Supper. We meet him at *his* table, to which he comes to give himself to us. As we receive the elements of bread and wine in the presence of Christ, so we partake of him and all his benefits. We “feed upon him in our hearts” with thanksgiving.... Yet we must not say that Christ is present apart from our personal faith, but only meets and blesses us there in accordance with our faith in him.

In what way is Christ present then? Certainly there is a symbolic presence of Christ, but it is also a genuine spiritual presence and there is genuine spiritual blessing in this ceremony. (p. 995-996).

## 5. Millard Erickson

Erickson’s treatment of the Lord’s Supper is more extensive than Grudem’s. After laying out the four positions on the Lord’s Supper (Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed-Calvinistic, and Zwinglian) he writes:

We must now come to grips with the issues posed earlier in this chapter and seek to arrive at some resolution. The first issue is the question of Christ’s presence in the sacrament. Are the body and blood of Christ somehow specially present, and if so, in what sense? The most natural and straightforward way to render Jesus’ words, “This is my body” and “This is my blood,” is to interpret them literally. Since it is our general practice to interpret Scripture literally where that is natural, we must be prepared to offer justification if we interpret these words in any other way. In this case, however, certain considerations do in fact argue against literal interpretation.

First, if we take “This is my body” and “This is my blood” literally, an absurdity results. If Jesus meant that the bread and wine were at that moment in the upper room actually his body and his blood, he was asserting that his flesh and blood were in two places simultaneously, since his corporeal form was right there beside the elements. To believe that Jesus was in two places at once is something of a denial of the incarnation, which limited his physical human nature to one location.

Second, there are conceptual difficulties for those who declare that Christ has been bodily present in the subsequent occurrences of the Lord’s Supper. While the preceding paragraph introduced the problem of how Christ’s flesh and blood could have been in two places simultaneously, here we face the problem of how two substances (e.g., flesh and bread) can be in the same place simultaneously (the Lutheran conception) or of how a particular substance (e.g., blood) can exist without any of its customary characteristics (the Catholic view). Those who hold to a physical presence offer explanations of their view that assume a type of metaphysic which seems very strange to twentieth-century minds, and indeed appears to us untenable. (p. 1129)

And how are we to understand Jesus' presence in the Lord's Supper?

As Jesus spoke the words inaugurating the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, he focused attention on the relationship between individual believers and their Lord. On many of the other occasions when he addressed this topic, he used metaphors to characterize himself: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life"; "I am the vine, you are the branches"; "I am the good shepherd"; "I am the bread of life." At the Last Supper he used similar metaphors, reversing the subject and the predicate noun: "This [bread] is my body"; "This [wine] is my blood." In keeping with the figurative language, we might render Jesus' statements, "This represents [or signifies] my body," and "This represents [or signifies] my blood." This approach spares us from the type of difficulties incurred by the view that Christ is physically present in the elements....

We need to be particularly careful to avoid the negativism that has sometimes characterized this view that the Lord's Supper is essentially a memorial. Out of zeal to avoid the conception that Jesus is present in some sort of magical way, some have sometimes gone to such extremes as to give the impression that the one place where Jesus most assuredly is not to be found is the Lord's Supper. This is what one Baptist leader termed "the doctrine of the real absence" of Jesus Christ. (p. 1130)

Erickson is a Zwinglian!

## 6. William Barclay

William Barclay (1907-1978) was a Scottish interpreter of the New Testament. He was Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism at Glasgow University. He authored *The Daily Study Bible* series as well as more than fifty other books.

Barclay wrote a little volume entitled *The Lord's Supper*. The book quickly studies the words of institution as well as the theological history of the Lord's Supper. In the final chapter Barclay lays out his ideas of what this sacrament is all about. He writes,

We believe that Moffatt was completely right when he translated this: 'This means my body.' We believe that it still means this, and that the long discussions of wherein the identity of the bread and the body of Christ lies, and the whole paraphernalia of conversion and consecration are completely irrelevant. Something essentially simple and pictorial and crystal clear to the simplest mind has been turned into something obscure and in the end for simple people unintelligible and even magic. (p. 119-120)

The last few pages of Barclay's book catch the meaning of the Lord's Supper for the Reformed church today. I believe that many other church bodies believe much the same thing. Permit a longer quotation:

There remain two things to say, and they are the most important of all. This sacrament is the sacrament of memory. It is a simple fact that in the New Testament the only definite instruction regarding the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is: 'Do this in remembrance of me.' Here is the centre of the whole matter. First and foremost, we do this in order that we may remember Jesus Christ. It will be said by some at once that this is an inadequate view of this sacrament. But is it? Do we really realize what memory means? It is almost impossible to remember *simpliciter*. We always remember for some purpose or to some effect. Memory never operates in a vacuum. What then is the purpose and the effect of this sacramental memory? And why is it wrong to speak of a 'mere memorial'?

1. We remember to realize again what our blessed Lord has done and suffered for us. It is easy to forget. It is easy to lose the cutting-edge of emotion and realization. It is easy to forget that Jesus Christ suffered and died for us, and even when we remember, it is easy to remain unmoved. But in the sacrament, with its vivid picture, realization of what Jesus Christ did and suffered for us is rekindled and reborn.
2. This is to say that first we remember what Jesus Christ has done for us. The second step follows naturally. We remember in order once again to appropriate the benefits of Jesus Christ. We remember once again to receive. ‘This is my body *for you*.’ We need to receive again and again, for we sin again and again. In the sacrament we are confronted with the love of God in Jesus Christ, that we may take it to ourselves. There is the famous and oft-repeated tale of Rabbi Duncan, the famous Scots scholar and preacher. As he noticed a woman hesitating to take the cup, he said gently, ‘Take it woman. It was meant for sinners. It was meant for you.’ In this act of memory we are not remembering either an heroic deed or a tragedy, and no more. We are remembering something done for us in order that we may appropriate it once again.
3. But there is something still more to be said. We have been speaking of remembering. But we are not remembering someone who is dead and gone, someone who lives and who died and who left a memory. We are not remembering someone whose place was in the past and who lives only in the pages of a history book. We are remembering someone who was crucified, died and buried—and *who rose again*. We are remembering someone who is gloriously alive. And therefore we remember Jesus Christ in the sacrament in order to encounter Jesus Christ.

Here, O my Lord, I see thee face to face.

The memory turns into an experience and an encounter.

It is in this way that I would think of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the sacrament. The Risen Lord is universally present. He is not present in the sacrament any more than he is present anywhere else. As Brother Lawrence said, he felt as near to his Lord when he was washing the greasy dishes in the monastery kitchen as ever he did at the blessed sacrament. But what happens is that at the sacrament everything is done and designed *to make us aware* of that presence. He is not specially present, but we are made specially aware of his presence.

...Mere memory is a very misleading phrase. Memory always has a purpose, and, even if it has no purpose, it certainly has an effect. To remember, to realize, to appropriate, to encounter—this is what the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper means to me.

4. All this must end in still another act on our part. It must end in renewed dedication. Here is where the other meaning of the word *sacramentum* must come in. It means a soldier’s oath of loyalty to his Emperor, and that the sacrament must be for us too. As Arthur said of his knights:

I made them lay their hands in mine.  
And swear to reverence the king.

No experience such as we have described can end in anything other than a renewed pledge to the one whom we have encountered or experienced. It must surely be impossible to leave the sacramental table without a deeper devotion to the Blessed Lord whom we meet there.

(p. 125-127)<sup>15</sup>

Barclay is a Zwinglian.

## 5. The Latest Reformed books

Keddie's *The Lord's Supper Is a Celebration of Grace: What the Bible Teaches About Communion* (© 2000):

The bread and wine are only the symbols of the body that was broken and the blood that was shed. (as quoted by Mathison on page 175)

Letham's *Lord's Supper* (© 2001). Letham supports Calvin's doctrine and criticizes the symbolic memorialism of many Reformed theologians today.

Mathison's *Given for You* (© 2002). Mathison strongly supports Calvin's doctrine of the "real presence." His book comes close to being an apology for Calvin's teaching. Mathison argues that in neglecting Calvin's teaching of the Lord's Supper the Reformed church has neglected the Lord's Supper itself. He sees a reawakening in Calvin's teaching as part of an overall renewal in the Reformed church. He admits that a Zwinglian understanding of the Lord's Supper has become standard fare in the vast majority of Reformed congregations.

*Summary:*

There is still considerable debate on the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper. The early Reformed church seemed to side with Calvin. In the years that followed the views of Bullinger (and Zwingli) took center stage. It seems that Calvin's views are making a modest comeback.

We also need to realize that for all the differences between Zwingli and Calvin, Calvin and Bullinger, Hodge and Nevin, and Keddie and Letham the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper is consistent in many ways. Pieper lists the similarities for us:

In the main points one can easily prove a great unanimity among the Reformed. All agree that Christ's body and blood are not present in the Lord's Supper, but as far removed from it as is heaven from earth. There is general agreement also in their ultimate proof for the absence of Christ's body, namely, that Christ's body can at all times possess only a local and visible presence, that is, a presence not extending beyond the stature of man (*mensuram corporis, dimensionem corporis*). All therefore agree in this, too, that the words of institution cannot be taken literally, but must be understood figuratively. (p. 302-303)

Someone once said that the most important modern theological debate is whether or not we will have any more theological debates! In our Postmodern world of defining truth (and reality itself) by means of our community the eucharistic debates of the Reformation have nearly become a thing of the past. Few seem to even pose the questions that so excited Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli. No doubt there are ten times more books written about building small group Bible studies and being current in one's musical style than there are serious books on the Lord's Supper (by Lutheran or Reformed theologians). William Barclay might be as "theological" as the public discussion gets anymore.

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<sup>15</sup> We can characterize Barclay as a Zwinglian with a modern twist. He clearly follows Zwingli's "representationalism"...but is thoroughly modern in his stress on the individual. The Lord's Supper, according to Barclay, is all about *us remembering, experiencing and encountering* Jesus.

## 6. The Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue on the Lord's Supper

For the past forty years many Reformed and Lutheran church bodies have sought unity on the doctrinal issues that have divided them for hundreds of years. The first series of these official meetings took place from 1962 to 1966. Series two took place in 1972 to 1974. In the early 1980's representatives of several church bodies met to continue their discussion of doctrine, practice and unity (Series 3). Their final report was issued under the title: "The Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue Series III, 1981-1983: An Invitation to Action. A Study of Ministry, Sacraments, and Recognition."

Today many church bodies achieve union in one of two ways. The old stand-by was to find wording that both groups could agree with. The new favorite is to basically agree to disagree. The final report of the series 3 dialogue didn't have to choose between the two; they did both!

4. We affirm that the Lutheran and Reformed families of churches have a fundamental consensus in the gospel and sacraments, which not only allows but also demands common participation in the Lord's Supper.

4.1 In the past Christians of the Reformed and Lutheran traditions have been deeply divided by controversy over the understanding of the Lord's Supper although both have strongly affirmed the real presence of Christ in the Sacrament. Today we cherish a high regard for our ancestors in the faith who stalwartly proclaimed the gospel according to their respective convictions. At the same time, through long and careful discussion, responsible commissions of Lutheran and Reformed representatives have concluded that our two communions do fundamentally agree on the gospel and on the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. We reaffirm these agreements, in particular the conclusions reached in *Marburg Revisited* in America (1966) and the Leutenberg Agreement in Europe (1973). We do not imagine that all differences in eucharistic doctrine between (and within) our two communions have thereby disappeared or become negligible, but we maintain that the remaining differences should be recognized as acceptable diversities within one Christian faith. (p. 16).

A footnote states:

Insistence on the importance of affirming the real presence and sacramental union is prominent in both Lutheran and Reformed traditions.... Both traditions were trying to protect and preserve the dynamic of authentic sacramental union between Christ, the believer, and the other faithful over against the opposing extremes of mere symbolic recollection and the magic of transubstantiation. Each tradition suspected that the other veered too far toward one of the unacceptable extremes. (p. 18-19)

In the document *Marburg Revisited* we read:

The assurance of his (Christ's) presence is given in the self-witness of Christ in the instituting rite: This is my body, this is my blood. The realization of his presence in the sacrament is effected by the Holy Spirit through the word. (p. 42)

None of the hard questions were answered...or even asked...in this compromise document. The Leutenberg Agreement goes even farther. Not only aren't any hard questions asked, we are told that to ask them would obscure the meaning of the Lord's Supper!

1. *The Lord's Supper*

(18) In the Lord's Supper the risen Jesus Christ imparts himself in his body and blood, given up for all, through his word of promise with bread and wine. He thus gives himself unreservedly to all who receive the bread and wine; faith receives the Lord's Supper for salvation, unfaith for judgement.

(19) We cannot separate communion with Jesus Christ in his body and blood from the act of eating and drinking. To be concerned about the manner of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper in abstraction from this act is to run the risk of obscuring the meaning of the Lord's Supper.

(20) Where such a consensus exists between the churches, the condemnations pronounced by the Reformation confessions are inapplicable to the doctrinal positions of these churches. (p. 69)

The conclusion of the Series 3 of the Reformed-Lutheran Dialogue?

7. We agree that there are no substantive matters concerning the Lord's Supper which should divide us. We urge Lutheran and Reformed churches to affirm and encourage the practice of eucharistic fellowship with one another. (p. 17)

**Part Two: An Exegesis of Passages on the Lord's Supper**

Before we begin the exegetical portion of our presentation write down two things that struck you in our review of the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

Did your specific question about the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper get answered?

Write down one specific question you would like answered as we study the words of institution and other pertinent passages dealing with the Lord's Supper.



**Matthew 26:26-28**

Ἐσθιόντων δὲ αὐτῶν λαβὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἄρτον καὶ εὐλογήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ δούς τοῖς μαθηταῖς εἶπεν, Λάβετε φάγετε, τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου. καὶ λαβὼν ποτήριον καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων, Πίετε ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες, τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον εἰς ἄφεςιν ἁμαρτιῶν.

**Mark 14:22-24**

Καὶ ἐσθιόντων αὐτῶν λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐλογήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς καὶ εἶπεν, Λάβετε, τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου. καὶ λαβὼν ποτήριον εὐχαριστήσας ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἔπιον ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες. καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν.

**Luke 22:19-20**

καὶ λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων, Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διδόμενον· τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν. καὶ τὸ ποτήριον ὡσαύτως μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι, λέγων, Τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἢ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματι μου τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐκχυννόμενον.

**1 Cor. 11:23-25**

Ἐγὼ γὰρ παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου, ὃ καὶ παρέδωκα ὑμῖν, ὅτι ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ἣ παρεδίδοτο ἔλαβεν ἄρτον καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ εἶπεν, Τοῦτό μου ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν· τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν. ὡσαύτως καὶ τὸ ποτήριον μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι λέγων, Τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἢ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἵματι· τοῦτο ποιεῖτε, ὡσάκις ἐὰν πίνητε, εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν.

**Matthew 26:26-28**

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

27 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

**Mark 14:22-24**

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."

23 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.

24 "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them.

**Luke 22:19-20**

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

**1 Cor. 11:23-25**

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night 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, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." (NIV)

## Exegetical Notes on the Words of Institution

The place to start (and often end) when we study the Lord's Supper is Jesus' institution of His Supper. We will begin with Matthew's account and then progress to the other three noting differences as we go.

### Matthew 26:26-28

- Verse 26 Ἐσθιόντων δὲ αὐτῶν λαβῶν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἄρτον καὶ εὐλογήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ δούς τοῖς μαθηταῖς εἶπεν, Λάβετε φάγετε, τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου. **27** καὶ λαβῶν ποτήριον καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων, Πίετε ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες, **28** τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν.
- Ἐσθιόντων Genitive Absolute. The present tense stresses ongoing action: “While they were eating...” The Lord's Supper was instituted near the end of the last Passover meal. The Passover meal was a regimented affair. A change in the routine would be quickly noticed by the disciples as important.
- Λαβῶν Aorist participle stresses that the action really happened. This is a circumstantial participle with a preliminary idea. A preliminary participle indicates what took place before the main verb. Jesus took the bread before broke it.
- ἄρτον Masculine singular. “bread.” The Passover meal used unleavened bread.
- εὐλογήσας Aorist Participle. Circumstantial temporal (preliminary) – “after blessing...” This word can mean to thank/praise someone for the gift at hand or it can mean to call down God's power on something. Both meanings would fit here (although with the latter we would need to supply an object from the context) but perhaps the former is better because Luke and Paul use the word εὐχαριστήσας at this point in their accounts.
- ἔκλασεν Aorist indicative (stresses that it really happened). “to break” This probably would have been necessary because the unleavened bread came in large pieces (Lenski).
- λάβετε Aorist Imperative. “The basic idea of the aorist imperative is a command in which the action is viewed as a whole, without regard for the internal make-up of the action” (Daniel Wallace, p. 719). In other words, Jesus simply wanted them to take the bread.

In exegetical work of the *verba* (a short way of referring to the words of institution) the words “Take and eat” are sometimes given scant attention. These words are incredibly important because they tell us that we are actually taking and eating Jesus' body and blood. It's difficult to eat a symbol. Pieper comments:

With the words “Take, eat” Christ calls upon us to eat with the mouth, and asserts that what He puts into our mouth and we receive orally is His body and blood. The contention of the Reformed that Christ's body and blood are present not for the mouth, but only for our faith, robs the verb's eat and drink of the thing Christ connected with them (p. 297).

φάγετε Aorist Imperative

τοῦτό

Neuter. Obviously this does not agree with ἄρτον above. This difficulty has caused some debate. Here are some suggestions.

1. It is common for a demonstrative particle to agree in gender with the substantive that follows.
2. BAG states, “refers to something here and now, directing attention to it” (p. 596)
3. The neuter is used when the antecedent is the whole idea or concept that precedes (rather than just a single word in the preceding).

This third point has much merit. We might paraphrase, “This that I am giving you...” Along those lines Professor Hoenecke maintained that “This” referred to the bread and body together in the sacramental union. He wrote:

It is certain that “this” refers to bread and wine, because the Lord says, “Take and eat; this is my body.” “This” is what they are to take and eat, the bread. But “this” does not refer merely to bread and wine. We see that from the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:16. He does not use τοῦτό, “this,” as the subject. He makes bread and wine the subjects. But now he does not say, “The bread is the body.” He says, “Is not the bread that we break the communion of the body of Christ?” From this we see that it makes a big difference whether it says “this is” or “this bread is.” In the former case, it goes on to say “my body,” and in the latter, “the communion of my body.” Thus Paul teaches us that the bread *is* not the body. It *bears* the body and has it *bound* to itself in such a way that whoever partakes of the bread also partakes of the body, or has partaking communion with the body.

Thus when the Lord says, “This is my body,” “this” is bread and body together in sacramental union. But why does the Lord himself not say, “This *bread*? Answer: the disciples see that it is bread. It was a Passover ordinance that the Lord distribute it to them. The new feature instituted by Christ is that he, at the same time, imparts his body in a mysterious way. This imparting of the body is what really matters to the Lord, the high and important part of the whole action. Therefore he does not mention everything included under “this,” both the less important and the supremely important. He doesn’t say, “This is bread and my body,” but bases his expression on the higher things that he gives and says, “This [which I give to you] is my body.”....

A corresponding comparison would be a bottle of medicine. I say, “This is belladonna<sup>16</sup>,” although it is only a few drops of belladonna diluted with water. Strictly speaking I would have to say, “This is water and belladonna.” In any case, we may not say, “This *water* is belladonna,” but “In and under the water is belladonna” or “This water contains belladonna.” Christ’s manner of speaking is therefore perfectly normal. (p. 117-118)

Professor Hoenecke’s point is intriguing.<sup>17</sup> One could argue that the disciples wouldn’t

<sup>16</sup> A medicinal extract (as atropine) from the belladonna plant.

<sup>17</sup> Another example of what Hoenecke is talking about would be the τοῦτο in Ephesians 2:8-9. τοῦτο is neuter and does not refer to the preceding noun (“faith” which is feminine). It refers to the entire matter of salvation.

have been able to understand what Jesus meant (Hoenecke's pregnant use of "This"). Yet much of what Jesus said did not become clear to the disciples until after Pentecost. In many cases understanding came rather late to the disciples.

Carlstadt argued that Christ pointed to Himself when He said, "This is my body." His argument quietly and quickly passed from the scene.

ἔστιν

Present Indicative. "is" Obviously this simple word became a point of contention between Luther and Zwingli. Zwingli argued that Jesus meant "represents." He offered any number of passages in support of his position. They fall into three categories. The first category contains metaphorical expressions. Zwingli failed to see that the figure of speech is in the predicate, not in the copula. For example, when Jesus said "I am the door" (John 10:9). He was not saying that He *represented* a door; He *is* the door to heaven. Jesus actually is the door (way) to heaven. The second group contains parables. Our seminary Dogmatics Notes state: "A parable does not say that some earthly process signifies the kingdom of God, but that the kingdom of God 'is like' or in some phases corresponds to an earthly process" (p. 84, Senior Dogmatics Notes). The third group is Exodus 12:11: *This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover.* To what does "it" (*It is the Lord's Passover*) refer? It refers to the whole occasion, not just the Passover lamb. Even if it did refer to the Passover lamb "is" still does not mean "signifies." Zwingli received a Master of Arts degree before he became a priest. He was a Thomist who was schooled in the *via antiqua*. His professors taught him that revelation never contradicted reason. Zwingli was also influenced by Erasmus and his idealistic separation of matter and mind. These influences undoubtedly led him to his "spiritualistic" understanding of the Lord's Supper. The contrast between Zwingli and Luther is easy to make. Luther put his trust in the revealed Word of God—even when it seemed to contradict "dame reason."

Robertson's comment is noteworthy: "In a word, then, when the article occurs with subject (or the subject is a personal pronoun or proper name) and predicate, both are definite, treated as identical, one and the same, and interchangeable. The usage applies to substantives, adjectives, and participles indifferently." (p. 768). See his article for a long list of references. The word "is" equates the subject and predicate.

Yet Louw and Nida list this as a definition: "to correspond to something else in certain significant features—to correspond to, to stand for, to be a figure of, to represent." (L&N, 58.68). This seems to call into question language itself. Pieper quotes Walther to make this point:

In Holy Writ certain things or persons are frequently given names which in their original meaning do not fit them. To people who are ignorant of the rules of language it seems at first sight, therefore, that the little word *is* very often is used for signifies. And sad to say, since the days of Zwingli even many scholars who know the rules of language well have deceitfully taken advantage of the ignorance of people and as proof for a figurative meaning of *is* have adduced such passages as: I am the Vine, I am the Door, the Rock was Christ, John is Elias, etc. They have said: Everyone knows, of course, that Christ is not really a vine, not really a door, not really a rock, and that John the Baptist was not really the old prophet Elias; they were this only figuratively; therefore in all these, and similar, passages is must stand for signifies. But this deduction is a paralogism.<sup>18</sup> The words vine,

<sup>18</sup> Paralogism: "A reasoning which is false in point of form; that is, in which a conclusion is drawn from premises which do not logically warrant it."

door, rock, Elias, and such, have two meanings, namely, their literal meaning and a figurative or tropical meaning. (p 310)

Some argue that if “is” can mean “signifies” then we would have an impossible time making sense of the Bible or of any other written material.<sup>19</sup>

Everything written above about ἐστίν falls in line with the traditional Lutheran position. Perhaps we spend too much time arguing that “is always means is.” The argument is useful but is not our most powerful argument for the real presence. In fact, others might be able to challenge us that “is” does not **always** mean “is.” Someone could say, “In the context of a parable or verbal picture (waving a pencil in the air and saying “This is an airplane”) the word “is” has much the same meaning as “represents.” If I point at a map and say, “This is Milwaukee” or “This represents Milwaukee,” I am saying the same thing. In response we would say, “Those are parables and pictures. It’s clear that there is a figure of speech involved. The words (airplane, Milwaukee) are used in a different way; it’s clear to everyone that the pencil is not a literal airplane.” We might even draw a diagram to illustrate our point.

This pencil is an

If we are using parabolic or picture language it’s like we are drawing a box around the words. Inside the box the word “is” still means “is.” If we are “outside the box” looking in we might say in popular English that the pencil represents an airplane. To say that inside the picture (inside the box) the word “is” means “represents” makes little sense.

This pencil represents an

Then when we are “outside the box” we have to say, “This pencil represents a representative airplane.” We are doubling up on the picture. Language doesn’t seem to allow us to do that. That, I believe, is the main point of Luther, Chemnitz and Pieper when they argue that “is always means is.” We are quick to say, “Show me an example where “is” means “represents.”

This argument is valuable to our understanding of how language works but it might be an argument drawn more from linguistics and philology rather than from the Bible. Putting all our boxes, diagrams and explanations aside there doesn’t seem to be any difference between saying “This pencil is an airplane” and “This pencil represents an airplane.” Could the former simply be a shorter way of saying the latter? If so, what is stopping someone from saying that Jesus was using the shorter version of the sentence “This bread represents my body”? Who is to say that Greek (and a host of other languages) can’t use the word “is” in this way (after all, the word “is” becomes a workhorse in most languages). Someone could argue that Jesus Himself used “is” in this way in Matthew 13:38. In explaining the parable of the weeds Jesus says, *The field is (ἐστίν) the world, and the good seed stands for (ἐστίν) the son of the kingdom.* Note that Jesus is explaining the parable at this point. He is speaking outside the box of the parable. What is stopping us from saying that the field represents the world? Indeed, it does represent the world. Jesus is explaining the parabolic language He had just used.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Pieper quotes Krauth: “This characteristic use of ‘is’ is essential to the very morality of language, and language itself would commit suicide if it could tolerate the idea that the substantive verb shall express not substance, but symbol.” (p. 312).

<sup>20</sup> “If ‘is’ means something other than ‘is’, the text itself has to tell us that somehow; otherwise we do eisegesis instead of exegesis.

Much the same thing could be said about Galatians 4:24-25: *These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent (εἰσιν) two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for (ἐστὶν) Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to (συστοιχεῖ) the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children.* Paul seems to use ἐστὶν and συστοιχεῖ interchangeably.

Perhaps someone could challenge the last few statements. Maybe the explanation to a parable is still speaking inside the “parabolic box”. Maybe “is” always means “is” ... but maybe it doesn’t. The whole argument is taking us into linguistic waters rather than Biblical waters. Our footing is far less certain when we are arguing about linguistics.

The ironic thing is that the whole “is always means is” argument does us very little good anyway. If it is true that “is always means is” we still need to deal with the Reformed church’s argument that the figure of speech is in the predicate nominative. We respond by saying that there is no figure of speech. Jesus is speaking literally in the words of institution. We point to the fact that the natural use of language must hold sway unless there is a clear picture involved. The Reformed have to look for a picture because their faulty Christology doesn’t allow them to read the words of institution in the natural way. We point to the fact that Jesus said that the body was given for us; a symbol was not given for us. We point to 1 Corinthians 10:16 (there is a fellowship, a sharing, between the bread and body, the wine and the blood); that passage absolutely prohibits saying that “is” means “represents” in this case or that there is a symbol in the predicate. If someone argues that here in the words of institution the word “is” means “represents” we should make the same powerful arguments (natural understanding of the words holds sway; no picture involved; body—not a symbol—given for us; 1 Corinthians 10:16 telling us how to understand “is”). To say “Is always means is” simply involves us in a linguistic debate where we are on unsure footing. In fact, the more we depend on the argument “is always means is” the weaker our position can become. If people can poke holes in that linguistic argument (which I believe they can) it can throw the Biblical doctrine of the real presence into question (unnecessarily so because we have far stronger Biblical arguments).

Whether “is” always means “is” is immaterial. That “is” could mean something else in another context contributes nothing to the discussion of what it means in the words of institution. The text itself needs to answer that question. (Quoted by permission from personal correspondence with Prof. Daniel Deutschlander) (3-16-03)

After all this...what does ἐστὶν mean? In the *verba*, for the many reasons stated above, ἐστὶν absolutely must mean “is.” The Bible leaves us no other options.

τὸ σῶμά μου σῶμά is definite because of μου. This word simply means Jesus’ body. See Mk 15:43, Mt 27:43, Lk 23:55, 24:3, Jn 19:31 for examples.

Our dogmatics notes say: “Calvin takes my body to mean symbol of my body or represents my body.” We need to ask if this is an accurate portrayal of Calvin’s actual teaching. Calvin taught that the body and blood of Christ are truly received in the Lord’s Supper. Yet he didn’t teach that the body and blood of Christ are present in the Lord’s Supper. According to Calvin the body and blood of Christ are locally present in heaven. What is Calvin left with here on earth? Mere symbols! Indeed, our dogmatics notes quote Calvin saying just that:

If with our eyes and souls we are carried to heaven, that we might seek Christ

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That’s the point of the rule *Scriptura ex Scripturae explicandi est.*” Quoted by permission from personal correspondence with Prof. Daniel Deutschlander. (3-26-03)

there in the glory of His kingdom, just as the symbols invite us [to come] to Him in His entirety, so under the symbol of bread we are nourished with His body and under the symbol of wine we are clearly made to drink of His blood (given His blood to drink), so that at last we may enjoy Him wholly. (*Institutes*, IV, 17,18-19 as quoted by WLS dogmatics notes).

Calvin is still driven to paraphrase Jesus this way: “This is [the symbol] of my body.” Three things must be said about Calvin’s understanding. First of all, in Luke and 1 Corinthians we see that Jesus said, “body given for you.” A symbol of Jesus was not given for us; Jesus was given for us. Second, we recall Robertson’s rule about the subject and predicate being interchangeable. For the sake of argument we could say, “This bread is a symbol of my body.” To say “This symbol of my body is this bread” borders on nonsense. Third, 1 Corinthians 10:16 makes it clear that the bread shares in Christ’s body. To impose on this passage a Spirit-led metaphysical trip to heaven does violence to the simple meaning of the passage.

Verse 27	καὶ λαβὼν ποτήριον καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων, Πίετε ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες,
λαβὼν	Aorist participle. Jesus took the cup. More will be said about the cup below but now we might mention the fact that the Reformed would have attacked the Lutheran position here no matter what word came next. If Jesus would have used “wine” they might have said, “See, there is a figure of speech! Jesus couldn’t have grabbed the wine (can’t grab a liquid); He took the cup in His hand.
ποτήριον	This word has sparked much debate. Many say, “The Lutherans allow a figure of speech at this point in the <i>verba</i> ; why not elsewhere?” ποτήριον has in its vocable meaning not only vessel but also the contents of that vessel. In that sense it really is not a figure of speech at all. If we really wanted to, we could say that this is metonymy—the cup stands for what it contains. Then we would also be quick to add that Jesus Himself demands that we employ this figure of speech when He tells the disciples to drink; it is difficult to drink a cup. (See also Luke 22:20)
πάντες	Obviously Jesus intended that people drink the wine as well as eat the bread.
Verse 28	τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν.
τὸ αἷμά	Jesus says that this is His blood. That this is not symbolism is proved by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Jesus said, “This <b>is</b> my blood.”</li> <li>2. This blood brings about the new <b>covenant</b>. A mere symbol could not do that.</li> <li>3. This blood was <b>shed for us</b>. Jesus shed real blood, not a symbol.</li> </ol>
διαθήκης	Much has been written about this word. BAG states that διαθήκης means the declaration of one person’s will. This gives us the idea of a declaration of God’s will. The New Testament speaks of two covenants or declarations (Galatians 4:24). The covenant Jesus is talking about takes us back to Jeremiah 31:31-33 (“ <i>The time is coming,</i> ” declares the LORD, “ <i>when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,</i> ” declares the LORD. “ <i>This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,</i> ” declares the LORD. “ <i>I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.</i> ”) The

new covenant is the forgiveness of sins.

διαθήκης is a genitive. The idea is “the blood that brings about the covenant.” This is an objective genitive. Jesus’ blood produced the covenant. Ephesians 1:7 states: *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.* It could also be a descriptive genitive: “This is my covenant-blood.” Jesus blood is not ordinary blood; it’s a blood that sets up a covenant.

Also note that the old covenant was sealed in blood (Hebrews 9:18ff). We can enter the Most Holy Place only by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19). Hebrews 9:22 states, *In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*

- περὶ πολλῶν This blood was shed *for the benefit of many*. Jesus didn’t die for the few but for the many, for everyone. Luke has the word ὑπέρ here.
- ἐκυννόμενον Present passive participle. The present tense denotes ongoing action; Jesus was in the process of shedding His blood; Holy Week had started; He knew He was about to be handed over to His enemies. The participle is an attributive adjectival use. The word modifies “blood” (both neuter, nominative, singular). The participle is passive—Jesus was the agent. He was pouring out/shedding His blood.  
The vocable meaning of the word is “to pour.” BAG says that when the word is used with blood it means “shed,” “murder” and “poured out” (in a cultic sense). The Old Testament abounds with this usage.
- εἰς ἄφεσιν εἰς has the idea of purpose. Jesus’ blood was shed for the purpose of forgiving our sins. ἄφεσιν has the idea of sending something away; the lack of an article stresses the vocable meaning of the word. Here we see the blessings of the Lord’s Supper. In the Supper we are receiving that which was given to forgive our sins. In the Lord’s Supper we receive the forgiveness of sins in a very real way!

### Mark 14:22-24

Mark’s account is virtually the same as Matthew’s. Two differences in wording are:

1. In verse 23 Mark used the aorist indicative of πίνω instead of Matthew’s imperative. Mark tells us what they did; Matthew tells us what Jesus told them to do.
2. In verse 24 Mark says that the blood of the covenant was shed ὑπέρ many instead of περὶ many. ὑπέρ obviously has the idea of “on behalf of.”

### Luke 22:19-20

- Verse 19 καὶ λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων, Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διδόμενον· τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν.
- διδόμενον Luke adds that Jesus’ body was given for us.
- τοῦτό (b) Luke and Paul add Jesus’ command to continue to celebrate His Supper. We note the familiar τοῦτό. It means “that which is at hand,” namely, receiving in the bread Jesus’ body which was given for us.



ποιεῖτε Present tense imperative. Jesus told His disciples to continue to celebrate the Lord’s Supper.

εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν

ἀνάμνησις is an “active” word. It means to refresh the memory. The Lord’s Supper refreshes our memory of Jesus and what He has done for us. It strengthens our faith. Those who see a spiritual eating in this phrase are exactly right; receiving the Lord’s Supper strengthens our faith because it reminds us of what Jesus has done for us. Yet that does not say that the body and blood of Jesus are not really there. In fact, how better to remember our Lord than to receive His body and blood that were given and shed for us.

Matthew and Mark did not add the command to continue to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. When they wrote their books Christians were already celebrating the Lord’s Supper.

Previously we quoted Reformed theologians as saying that the Lord’s Supper is full of “remembering.” Of course that’s true. They fail to see that it’s so much more as well. What we receive is the reason for our remembering.

Verse 20 καὶ τὸ ποτήριον ὡσαύτως μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι, λέγων, Τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἢ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματί μου τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐκχυννόμενον.

Luke and Paul record the same thoughts as Matthew and Mark with different words.

τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον This phrase sounds much more like a figure of speech (metonymy) than the words of Matthew and Mark. Yet the meaning stays exactly the same.

ἐν τῷ αἵματί This phrasing is much different than Matthew and Mark—yet again the meaning is the same. The new covenant is brought about “in the sphere of” Jesus’ blood shed for us.

Chemnitz stated that Matthew and Mark described the covenant itself while Luke and Paul described its effect. He wrote:

And this blood is called the blood of the covenant for two reasons: 1. Because by its shedding the treaty is ratified with God in order to acquire the covenant blessings; 2. Because by the imparting of the same in Holy Communion the treaty is also ratified and sealed with us, in order to confer and seal the covenant blessings. (p. 115)

### I Corinthians 11:23-25

Paul’s account matches up almost perfectly with Luke’s. In verse 25 Paul records Jesus as saying, “Do this **as often as you drink** in remembrance of me.

## Other Pertinent Passages

### 1 Corinthians 10:16

Verse 16 τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας ὃ εὐλογοῦμεν, οὐχὶ κοινωνία ἐστὶν τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ; τὸν ἄρτον ὃν κλῶμεν, οὐχὶ κοινωνία τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐστίν;

Context: 1 Corinthians 10 begins with a warning against falling into the sins we see in Israelite history. Paul draws the section to a close with this famous verse:

*No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. (v. 13)*

In the next section he narrows his focus to one temptation the Corinthian Christians are struggling with: participating in pagan sacrifices. Paul tells the Corinthians that to participate in pagan sacrifices is to participate with demons!

τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας “The cup of blessing was a technical Jewish term used for the cup of wine drunk at the end of a meal. The most honored guest at the table took the cup, lifted it up and said the benediction.” (Rienecker/Rogers, p 420)

κοινωνία Obviously this is the key word in the sentence. It does not have an article because the vocable meaning is stressed. The fourth definition listed in BAG3 is: “participation, sharing τινος in something” (electronic edition). BAG3 later states: “But perhaps here (1 Corinthians 10:16) κοινωνία w. genitive means *the common possession or enjoyment of something* (electronic edition). 1 Corinthians 10:16 is listed under this section as are others. Three of them are:

Philemon 6 I pray that you may be active in **sharing** your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.

Philippians 3:10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of **sharing** in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death

2 Corinthians 13:13-14 All the saints send their greetings. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the **fellowship** of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Kittel says that the basic meaning of the word group is “common” (p. 789). There are a whole host of meanings associated with the word group as well as our particular word (κοινωνία). Kittel’s comments on how Paul uses the word in 1 Corinthians 10 are worth reading. Glance at the footnotes; they are comments on Kittel’s definition.

Paul then makes highly significant use of κοινωνία for the fellowship which arises in the Lord’s Supper (→ 730ff.). Participation in Christ,<sup>21</sup> which is known

<sup>21</sup> Kittel begins by talking about participation between Jesus and Christians when he refers to 1 Corinthians 10:16. He is missing the point (or confusing the issue). This verse is all about the sharing/participation between the bread and Jesus’ body as well as the wine and the blood of Christ. This is Paul’s point!

basically and perfectly in faith, is achieved and experienced in enhanced form, with no dogmatic implication, in the sacrament, 1 C. 10:16 ff. In the first instance Paul classifies the Lord's Supper with Jewish and pagan festivals. In terms of the common belief of antiquity it is self-evident for him that those who partake of the cultic meal become companions of the god.... It is equally self-evident for him that those who partake of pagan feasts become *κοινωνοὶ τῶν δαιμονίων* (v. 20). By analogy, those who partake of the Lord's Supper are Christ's companions. The real fellowship which arises here entails for Christians the very natural religious conclusion that they should avoid the cultic meals of alien deities (v. 21). Thus the nature of the Lord's Supper is expounded by Paul in terms of fellowship with the person of Christ, namely, *κοινωνία* with His body and blood (v. 16, constr. 798).<sup>22</sup> For Paul the bread and wine are vehicles of the presence of Christ, just as the Jewish altar is a pledge of the presence of God. Partaking of bread and wine is union (sharing) with the heavenly Christ.<sup>23</sup> To Paul the exalted Christ is identical with the earthly and historical Christ who had body and blood. *κοινωνία* is here expressive of an inner union. This is for Paul the important thing in the celebration. It is self-evident that for Paul real union with the exalted Lord should include the blessing of forgiveness which He won by His death. How this union takes place in the cultic meal Paul does not tell us either in respect of demonic or of Christian fellowship. The point that matters for Paul is the fact, not the nature, of this close communion. In the interjected statement in v. 17 Paul declares that at the Lord's Supper, as at sacrificial feasts, there is also fellowship between the participants. This is not apart from Christ. It arises out of common union with Him, as Christ is represented by the one loaf. (p. 805)

Again, the main point is that the basic meaning is to have things in common. Reformed theologians say that the word *κοινωνία* has many different meanings and can support a figurative meaning of the words of institution. They are right that the word can have different meanings but miss the basic meaning of the word. Paul's whole point is that the bread and wine have something in common with, share something with, the body and blood of Christ. Martin Chemnitz makes the same point:

Further, with no reasoning can it be established that when Paul speaks of the "communion" (*κοινωνία*) of the body of Christ he has in mind that in the words of the Supper the word "body" should be understood not as referring to the very substance of the body but only to its communication [or communion]. For the word *κοινωνία* never excludes or removes the substance itself from that action in which the communion (*κοινωνία*) takes place. For when Paul in Rom. 8:9 and 1 Cor. 6:19 says: "The Holy Spirit dwells in you," he is saying the same thing that he says in 2 Cor. 13:14, where he speaks of the "communication of the Spirit." Are we going to say with the fanatics that the Holy Spirit does not dwell in the believers with His essence, that His essence is far removed from us, and that in His place only something drawn from the substance of the Spirit, namely, His gifts and powers, is present in us? The gifts of charity which were collected for the poor saints and sent to them are called a *κοινωνία* in Rom. 15:26 and 2 Cor. 8:4. Does this mean that not the substance of these gifts but only something

<sup>22</sup> Notice the imprecise language. Kittel does not emphasize the basic meaning of the passage.

<sup>23</sup> We wonder why Kittel uses the word "heavenly" ("heavenly Christ").

abstract was given and sent to the poor? The word *κοινωνία* means a communication—sometimes actively, that is, a distribution; sometimes passively, that is, a participation; and sometimes the thing itself which is offered and received, as we can demonstrate by individual examples. But in no way does it follow that Paul by the use of the term “the communion of the body” is suggesting that therefore the words of the institution are not to be understood as referring to the distribution and reception of the very substance of the body of Christ (p. 138).

### 1 Corinthians 11:27-29

**Context:** In the previous verses Paul had written the words of institution as part of his general remarks about the Lord’s Supper. The Corinthians were in danger of making a mockery of the Lord’s Supper with their divisions, their drunkenness, and their general disregard for what was happening in the Lord’s Supper. Paul’s point in relating the words of institution was to remind them that they were receiving Jesus’ very body and blood. Verse 26 immediately follows the words of institution: *For (γάρ) whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.*

**Verse 27** Ὡστε ὃς ἂν ἐσθίῃ τὸν ἄρτον ἢ πίνη τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ κυρίου ἀναξίως, ἔνοχος ἔσται τοῦ σώματος καὶ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ κυρίου.

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. (NIV)

**Ὡστε** BAG3 defines the word: “introducing independent clauses **for this reason, therefore, so**” (electronic edition). The word could refer back to verse 26 (when we eat the bread and wine we proclaim the Lord’s death) or to the previous number of verses (which include the words of institution stressing Jesus’ presence in the Lord’s Supper). Chemnitz puts a lot of weight on this particle in his exegesis of this verse. He argues that Paul is referring back to the *verba* with the particle and the definite articles before bread (τὸν ἄρτον) and wine/cup (τὸ ποτήριον). He writes:

Therefore the whole force of this Pauline statement lies in this subordinate particle, which brings out the meaning and causes it to depend on the words of institution, from which the meaning of this statement is clear, namely, that those who eat unworthily in the Lord’s Supper become guilty of that thing which they have violated by eating unworthily (p. 130).

Note that Chemnitz did not use the argument:

Major premise:	The object you sin against must be present
Minor premise:	The object sinned against in the Lord’s Supper is Jesus body and blood.
Ergo:	Jesus’ body and blood must be present.

The major premise of the syllogism is false. It is possible to sin against something if it’s not there. When someone violates the seal of a royal official they are violating the royal official even if he or she isn’t physically present. The Greek word translated “guilty of” (ἔνοχος) simply means: “to denote the person (or thing) against whom the sin has been committed” (BAG3,

electronic edition). There is no connotation of the person or thing needing to be present. Yet the passage does powerfully speak to the real presence. Lenski argues:

The vital point in Paul's own words is omitted by those who seek to remove the presence from the Sacrament, especially in the case of those who commune unworthily. Like all other true defenders of the presence, Quenstedt writes: "But whoever in the Lord's Supper *eats this bread*, which is the *κοινωνία* (communion) of the blood of Christ, unworthily, *eo ipso, by this very unworthy eating and drinking*, becomes guilty of the body itself and of the blood itself of Christ." *Theologia Didactico-Polemica*, IV, 251, etc. Luther emphasizes the same vital point: "St. Paul here joins together the bread and the body of Christ.... How is it that the sin against the body of Christ is connected with the *eating* if that body is not to be present in *the eating or bread*? He would have had to say: 'Whoever eats this bread unworthily sins against the Lord's Supper, or against God, or against the command, or against the Lord's order.' Now the nature and the manner of the words compel the conclusion that he *who eats* unworthily is guilty in regard to *what he eats*.... For the text mightily compels that the sin occurs *in the eating and the drinking*...and yet it says that the sin is committed against the body and the blood of the Lord." (Walch, XX, 321, Erlangen, 29, 250, etc.)

The sin of which Paul speaks is not some derogatory treatment of the bread and the wine as symbols (*diploma, sigilla*) of Christ's body and blood. This sin could be committed in various ways, for instance, by just *thinking* slightly of the symbols. The sin named by Paul is committed only in one way, by unworthy eating and drinking. Paul is wholly true to his own report of Christ's words: "*This is my body*" which the Lord gives us to *eat*. (p. 478-479)

- ἔνοχος BAG3 defines the word this way: "to denote the person (or thing) against whom the sin has been committed" (electronic edition). Louw and Nida add: "In some languages the equivalent of 'being guilty' is expressed in terms of the justification for an accusation. Accordingly, this expression in 1 Cor 11.27 may be rendered as 'he can rightly be accused of sinning against the Lord's body and blood.'" (88.312)
- Verse 28 δοκιμαζέτω δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἑαυτὸν καὶ οὕτως ἐκ τοῦ ἄρτου ἐσθιέτω καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ποτηρίου πινέτω·  
A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. (NIV)
- Verse 29 ὁ γὰρ ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων κρίμα ἑαυτῷ ἐσθίει καὶ πίνει μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα.  
For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. (NIV)
- διακρίνων This is a present active participle. The present tense describes ongoing action. The participle is circumstantial and modifies the main verbs. The NIV seems to take the participle as an attributive participle modifying ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων. This catches the meaning of the sentence but doesn't answer the question of why διακρίνων is at the very end of the sentence. The participle could be conditional in sense (if he does not discern the body). Lenski argues that it is conditional...answering the question "why the judgement for eating and drinking?" (because he

does not discern ...). The various opinions don't change the meaning of the sentence at all. The main question to tackle is the meaning of the word.

Before we define the word it's important to note that Paul uses the word again just two verses later. He writes: That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we **judged** ourselves, we would not come under judgment (v. 30-31). We will keep that parallel usage in mind.

BAG3 states: "(3) to evaluate by paying careful attention to, evaluate, judge (a) judge correctly (Job 12:11; 23:10) the appearance of the sky Mt 16:3; evaluate oneself 1 Cor 11:31; recognize τὸ σῶμα vs. 29" (electronic edition). Louw and Nida: "to make a judgment on the basis of careful and detailed information—"to judge carefully, to evaluate carefully" (30.109)

The basic idea of the verb is to discern. Paul uses the term often in 1 Corinthians:

- 1 Corinthians 4:7 For who **makes you different (what distinguishes you)** from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?
- 1 Corinthian 6:5 I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to **judge a dispute (to discern)** between believers?
- 1 Corinthians 14:29 Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should **weigh carefully (discern)** what is said.

The basic meaning of "discern" fits our two passages well. In verse 29 we can translate: "if he does not discern the body". In verse 31 we can translate: "if we discern ourselves" (to perceive ourselves as partakers of the body and blood of Jesus). Lenski adds:

Luther's idea in using *unterscheiden* to translate the participle is the following: "not distinguishing the body," i.e., treating it like ordinary food. He has some justification for this conception since in all probability this was the fault that existed in Corinth. Yet what Luther seeks to conserve is taken care of by the translation "discern." Whoever discerns the Lord's body in the Sacrament will, as a matter of course, "distinguish" this heavenly food from ordinary earthly food." (p. 482)

This still leaves us with an important question: what does it mean to discern the body? Paul's point is that we need to discern (realize) that Jesus' body truly is present in the Lord's Supper. A Reformed theologian might respond, "We need to discern (realize) that this special bread represents Christ's body...which is now in heaven." Martin Chemnitz comments:

I am aware that this passage about the discerning of the body of Christ is interpreted by many people after taking it out of its context and then considering it, so that it can be treated in various ways. But if it is connected with the words which precede it and with the words of institution, so that it flows out of them, it will be perfectly clear that there is one simple and precise meaning for this passage. For all the words are connected by little hooks, as it were, and must be referred to the institution itself, from which they are also derived. (p. 134)

**Colossians 2:9; Matthew 28:18-20; 18:20; Ephesians 1:23.**

The title of this presentation is “An Exegetical Refutation of the Reformed Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper.” It would be good to treat the passages listed above exegetically as well. Calvin said over and over again that the body and blood of Jesus are locally present in heaven and therefore cannot be present in the Lord’s Supper. Many Reformed theologians accuse the Lutherans of inventing the *genus majesticum* to fit with our understanding of the Lord’s Supper. Nothing could be further from the truth. To maintain that Jesus is not present everywhere is to rob these and other passages of their meaning. To use passages that say that Jesus returned to heaven to argue that Jesus cannot be present according to His human nature is to add to those passages...and to fall into Christological errors.<sup>24</sup>

### Part Three: Theological Issues

The last part of this paper deals with five issues that will help us summarize and apply the material we have covered. Each issue is structured as a question and an answer.

#### Issue One: What does “is” means?

Mathison writes,

Normally, the Passover liturgy would include the following words: “This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate when they came from the land of Egypt.” Of course, the Jews did not believe that they were actually eating the very same pieces of bread that their ancestors ate on the night of the first Passover. The main point of contact is not between “this bread” and “that bread.” Instead, these words point, by means of a figure of speech, to a real participation by the Jews in the act of redemption that their ancestors experienced firsthand.... The words of the Passover liturgy communicated to each generation of Jews that they were partakers of the act of redemption that God had accomplished when he brought their ancestors out of Egypt. The passage of time did not alter the oneness of the covenant people of God. (p. 211-212)

It would seem that we should interpret Jesus’ words in the same way the Jews interpreted the words to be said in the Passover meal. Aren’t both clear figures of speech?

Later he attacks Luther’s understanding of the words of institution:

Martin Luther argued that Jesus’ words, “This is my body,” must be taken literally. He believed that if these words could not be taken literally, nothing could be taken literally and denials of other central doctrines would soon follow. Luther’s insistence on the literal interpretation of these words at the Colloquy of Marburg in 1529 is well known. However, Luther’s doctrine of the Eucharist is not based on a literal interpretation of Christ’s words. Luther did not teach that the bread *is* Christ’s body. He insists that the bread remains bread and that Christ’s body is present simultaneously *with* the bread. In other words, Luther’s doctrine interprets Christ’s words to mean “This accompanies my body.” Lutherans do not interpret the word “is” any more literally than the Reformed. Both interpret “is” in a way that does not entail absolute identity. (p. 259)

We have questions about “is” when we hear statements like this: “What do we mean when we point to a street on a city map and say, “This is Main Street?””. There is no concrete or yellow lines...yet we say that little line on the map is “Main Street.” Are there different definitions of the word “is”?

These are powerful arguments to be sure. We will take them in order.

<sup>24</sup> For an excellent treatment of these matters see Schaller’s *Biblical Christology* (pp. 110ff.) and especially Chemnitz’s *The Two Natures of Christ* (pp. 423ff.).

In the Passover celebration the Jews were to say: “This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate when they came from the land of Egypt.” On the surface this argument is especially powerful. The similarities are striking. We can imagine the father of the family holding up a loaf of bread and saying the words quoted above. Everyone would have recognized the figure of speech immediately. The family was being transported back to the miserable, desperate days in Egypt. The Israelites ate the bread of affliction and pleaded with God for deliverance. Why not interpret Jesus’ words the same way? When we receive the Lord’s Supper we could be transported back to the redemption Jesus won for us by giving His life (His body) for us on the cross. Is this the figure of speech Jesus was intending in the context of the Passover feast?

Upon further inspection we see several flaws in that reasoning. The first flaw has to do with the phrase “bread of affliction.” This is a clear figure of speech. The meaning of the phrase is “the bread eaten in a time of affliction.” The bread itself didn’t cause affliction (unless you got sick from moldy bread!). The picture is that in times of affliction everything is bitter; not even eating is enjoyable because of the overall situation and because the food is more basic when there is little time and money available. When the Jews ate the bread of the Passover they were to think back to the difficult days before God rescued them. When Jesus said “This is my body” there was no clear figure of speech.

The second flaw has to do with metaphoric language in general. One way that we know a phrase is to be taken metaphorically is if the literal meaning would be clearly impossible. For example, we know that Psalm 18:2<sup>25</sup> is to be taken figuratively because we know that God is not a rock (a hard substance we find in mountains).<sup>26</sup> The Bible tells us that God is a spirit. It’s clearly impossible that the bread held up by the father actually was the bread eaten by the Israelites at the time of Moses. Any leftover bread would have disappeared long ago. The father saying these words had no power to bring that bread back. How different when the all-powerful Son of God says, “This is my body.”

Someone still might say, “Jesus’ point is that we are supposed to think about His body being given for us on the cross when we eat the bread.” Yet the first commentary on the words of institution doesn’t allow us to take Jesus’ words that way. Paul wrote, *Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?* (1 Corinthians 10:16). Paul could not have written those words if Jesus was simply saying that we should think about His body and blood when we receive the Lord’s Supper. The bread and wine participate in the body and blood of Christ.

A final point on this matter. Someone could say, “The clear meaning of ‘This is the bread of affliction’ is ‘This (bread that I’m holding) *represents* the bread of affliction’.” It’s clear that there is a picture, a figure of speech involved. The phrase “bread of affliction” doesn’t mean the actual bread. It has taken on a new meaning (something that takes us back to a miserable situation). Again, the situation is 100% different in the Lord’s Supper. The all-powerful Son of God is instituting a sacrament with the clear words “This is my body...given for you”. After we struggle with these matters for a while we understand why Luther was so frustrated with Zwingli’s arguments and why he so completely relied on the words of institution.<sup>27</sup>

Mathison also made this point:

Luther did not teach that the bread is Christ’s body. He insists that the bread remains bread and that Christ’s body is present simultaneously with the bread. In other words, Luther’s doctrine

<sup>25</sup> *The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

<sup>26</sup> Note that we still would not say that God *represents* a rock. The figure of speech is in the predicate, not in the copula. God really and truly IS foundation of our life, the One we depend on for stability and safety. Picture yourself standing on a rock in the midst of rushing water.

<sup>27</sup> When Mathison quotes the sentence spoken in the Passover (“This is the bread of affliction...”) he makes a point of advocating a figurative reading of the words of institution. Mathison advocates Calvin’s idea of the bread and body of Jesus truly being received...through the Holy Spirit’s power as He transports us to heaven where Jesus is. He fails to realize that the same argument he makes against Lutherans could be made against Calvin.



interprets Christ's words to mean "This accompanies my body." Lutherans do not interpret the word "is" any more literally than the Reformed. Both interpret "is" in a way that does not entail absolute identity.

We recall what Professor Hoenecke wrote:

He [Jesus] doesn't say, "This is bread and my body," but bases his expression on the higher things that he gives and says, "This [which I give to you] is my body...."

A corresponding comparison would be a bottle of medicine. I say, "This is belladonna," although it is only a few drops of belladonna diluted with water. Strictly speaking I would have to say, "This is water and belladonna." In any case, we may not say, "This water is belladonna," but "In and under the water is belladonna" or "This water contains belladonna." Christ's manner of speaking is therefore perfectly normal." (p. 117-118)

We also return to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Paul wrote: *For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes* (11:26). It's clear that we are also eating bread and wine in the Lord's Supper.

And what about the person who points to the map and says, "This is Main Street"? The context plays a vital role in answering questions like this. Everyone understands that figurative language is in use when we are looking at a map. The word "is" equates two things. In the sentence "This is Main Street" the word "this" refers to the little line on the map. The words "Main Street" refer to a representation of the real (i.e. pavement and yellow lines) Main Street. The situation is vastly different than the situation in the upper room. Paul reinforces that fact when he says that the bread and wine are joined together with the body and blood of Christ. Reformed theologians are looking for a figure of speech because of their faulty Christology.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Especially see Erickson's comments that were previously quoted in this paper.

## Issue Two: How fair and accurate are we when we teach the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper?

How often have we taught in Catechism class that there are three teachings regarding the Lord's Supper? We say that the Catholic church teaches transubstantiation, the Lutheran church teaches the "Real Presence," and the Reformed church advocates the teaching of "Representationalism." Perhaps you have even written this diagram on the board:

	Catholic Church	Reformed Church	Lutheran Church
Bread and Wine	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Body and Blood	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>
	Transubstantiation	Representationalism	Real Presence

How accurate is this? Are we misrepresenting the Reformed church just like they misrepresent our teaching when they call it "consubstantiation"? How much should we tell our young people (and our members who aren't so young) about the details of the Reformed teaching of the Lord's Supper?

*Note: The word "consubstantiation" can be defined different ways. The most accurate definition is: "...the body and blood of Christ become substantially present together with the substance of the bread and wine, when the elements are consecrated." (Muller, p 80). In other words, consubstantiation suggests the impanation of the body and blood (that the body of Christ is inside the bread). This strict definition of consubstantiation does not understand the Lutheran/Biblical sacramental union between the body and blood and the bread and wine. Most Reformed scholars don't seem to define the term so strictly. They simply use it to refer to Luther's teaching of the real presence. Calvinists like to call their teaching of the Lord's Supper the "real presence".*

Professor Pieper might have agreed with our little chart. He didn't view Calvin and Zwingli's teaching as fundamentally different. He wrote: "That Calvin deepened Zwingli's view of the Lord's Supper and held a middle position between Zwingli and Luther is a favorite contention of modern histories of dogma, but a thoroughly incorrect opinion" (p. 295). Perhaps it doesn't matter very much if someone sees a figure of speech in the copula (Zwingli) or in the predicate (Calvin). In one way both are saying that the bread and wine represent something that isn't truly, physically present in the Lord's Supper. Both Zwingli and Calvin taught that Jesus' body and blood were in a place far, far away.

Yet there are significant differences between Calvin and Zwingli, differences that have caused serious discussions in the Reformed church to this day. In the interest of being accurate we should at least touch on these differences if we teach what other church bodies say about the Lord's Supper. It might even be helpful if our young people could compare and contrast what Calvin and Zwingli taught about the Lord's Supper.

There also is the whole question about whether or not we should expose our young people to these false teachings in the first place. There are so many Reformed churches in our country that it's almost inevitable that our young people will run into these teachings at some point in their lives. Catechism class provides a relatively safe environment for them to work through these false teachings with the help of their pastor. This early training is vital because the Reformed false teachings about the Lord's Supper are intellectually appealing...especially during the college years. Someone is sure to say to them, "You actually believe that your teeth are biting into Jesus' flesh? That's nonsense. When Jesus said 'This is my body' it's just like saying 'This is my picture.' Even Jesus spoke that way; He said 'I am the vine'." What makes the false teaching even harder to resist is that the person who speaks these words is also inviting our young person to a small group pizza party/Bible study or to a worship service with their catchy, modern music (not to take anything away from small group Bible studies or "contemporary" music!). It's so important that our confirmation classes and high

school students have the tools to critically evaluate these matters. It's so important that we have told them that these teachers basically believe that Jesus' body and blood are locked up in heaven (like a force field from Star Trek holding our Savior in jail). It's so important that they realize that "is" has to mean "is" in this context. We might want to think carefully before we tell them that "is always means is" for the reasons discussed previously. If someone can cause our young people to question that linguistic argument (and again, I think they can) then our young people might question the whole teaching of the real presence. Obviously some of this will be too deep for our Catechism students...although they are more thoughtful than we sometimes realize. Certainly our high school students can work through these issues with a well-prepared teacher.

Here are some sample discussion questions that could be used:

1. Jesus once said, "I am the door." Obviously Jesus wasn't saying that He was a wooden door. He was telling us that He is the only way into heaven (just like a door is the only way into a room). In this case the word "door" means the only way into heaven. Why didn't Jesus say, "I represent the door (the way into heaven)"?  
  
How does 1 Corinthians 10:16 tell us that "is" has to mean "is" in the words of institution?
2. The Reformed church teaches that Jesus' body is in heaven...and isn't here on earth. They teach that Jesus' body can't be in two places at the same time because our bodies can't be in two places at the same time. What are they forgetting about Jesus?
3. Some churches believe that we receive Jesus' body and blood in the Lord's Supper but that the Holy Spirit uses His power to spiritually take us to heaven so we can actually receive it (because Jesus' body and blood are in heaven). What does the Bible say about that teaching?
4. Jesus gave us the Lord's Supper to strengthen our faith. Why is it comforting to know that He comes to us in the Lord's Supper instead of us going to Him?

It might even be helpful for a teen Bible class to use one or two class periods to discuss some quotations from Calvin, Zwingli or Barclay in light of God's Word. We pastors wrestled with the insidiousness of Reformed teaching while we were at the Seminary. Our young people will wrestle with these same ideas but will do so without the benefit of Professors Lawrenz, Kuske, Brug, or Bivens.

### Issue Three: How does the Reformed teaching of the Lord's Supper rob the Supper of the comfort God intended it to offer?

There seems to be a movement in the Reformed church to heighten the place the Lord's Supper has in their churches. Some complain that there is a general disregard for the sacrament in many of their churches. At the beginning of this paper we quoted R.C. Sproul:

Since the sixteenth century there has been a gradual but steady erosion of the Reformed view of the sacrament so that in the present era the doctrine of the real presence is decidedly a minority report.

From the earliest times of Christian history there has been a close link between the church's understanding of the nature of the sacrament and her attention to it. Its use tends to follow its perceived significance. When the sacrament is reduced to the level of a "naked sign" or "nude symbol," its importance and its practice all but disappear from the life of the church. (Mathison, p. x)

How does the Reformed teaching of the Lord's Supper (even Calvin's modified "real presence") rob it of the comfort God intended it to offer?

Perhaps it's best to let Calvin himself answer the question. In his "Clear Explanation of Sound Doctrine" he writes:

We acknowledge then, that in the Supper we eat the same body which was crucified, although the expression in regard to the bread is metonymical, so that it may be truly said to be symbolically the real body of Christ, by the sacrifice of which we have been reconciled to God. And though there is some diversity in the expressions, The bread is a sign, or figure, or symbol of the body; and the bread signifies the body, or is a metaphorical, or metonymical, or synecdochical expression for it, they perfectly agree in substance...

St. Paul simply says that the bread is a coming together with the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16). Calvin says that the bread is a metaphorical, metonymical, or synecdochical expression. Without trying to be sarcastic we must ask the question: where in the world is the comfort in a metaphorical, metonymical, synecdochical expression?

The false teaching of the Reformed church makes us question the very essence of the Lord's Supper itself. Zwingli and his theological descendants would have us believe that the Lord's Supper is nothing more than a memorial meal. According to this argument there is potentially as much spiritual benefit to receiving the Lord's Supper as there is gazing at a painting of Jesus. Calvin's Lord's Supper is not much better. In fact, it's worse.

Calvin's Lord's Supper says that Christ is present in the Lord's Supper. Mathison suggests that we call Calvin's teaching suprasubstantiation. He explains: "The prefix *supra* means 'above,' 'beyond,' or 'transcending.' According to Calvin, Christ's body is present in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, but the mode of his presence is not specifically connected with the substance of the elements" (p. 279). In other words, Jesus is not physically present in the Lord's Supper. That begs the question: where is He? Calvin's answer: In heaven, of course. This is an attack on Biblical Christology and a number of Bible passages. Christology is beyond the scope of this paper but has a direct bearing on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. We immediately think of Matthew 28:20: *And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.* What does Calvin say about this comforting promise from our Savior?

This I prefer to explain in the words of Augustine rather than my own: Through death Christ was to go to the right hand of the Father, whence he is to come to judge the quick and the dead, and that in corporal presence, according to the sound doctrine and rule of faith. For, in spiritual presence, he was to be with them after his ascension, (August. Tract. in Joann. 109). In another passage he is more full and explicit: In regard to ineffable and invisible grace, is fulfilled what he said, Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world (Mt. 28:20); but in regard to the flesh which the Word assumed in regard to his being born of a Virgin, in regard to his being apprehended by the Jews, nailed to the tree, taken down from the cross, wrapt in linen clothes, laid in the sepulchre, and manifested on his resurrection, it may be said, Me ye have not always with you. Why? because, in bodily presence, he conversed with his disciples forty days, and leading them out where they saw, but followed not, he ascended into heaven, and is not here: for there he sits at the right hand of the Father: and yet he is here, for the presence of his Godhead was not withdrawn. Therefore, as regards his divine presence, we have Christ always: as regards his bodily presence, it was truly said to the disciples, Me ye have not always. For a few days the Church had him bodily present. Now, she apprehends him by faith, but sees him not by the eye, (August. Tract. 51). (*Institutes*, II, xvi, 14)

Calvin has split Jesus up! Apparently Jesus is with me with His divine presence...but not with His bodily presence. Not only does the Reformed teaching of the Lord's Supper steal the comfort from the Lord's Supper it threatens to steal the comfort from other parts of the Bible as well.

Professor Pieper picks up the thought:

Dominated by this obsession, Calvin mercilessly slaughters those Scripture passages that confound his notion, as we noted already in the doctrine of Christ's Person. Thus he claims that Christ (John 20) did not come to the disciples through closed doors, but through some opening (Inst. IV, 17, 29; Allen II, 559). Again, he claims that when Luke reports (24:31) that Christ vanished out of the sight of the disciples of Emmaus, this means: He assumed no new appearance in order to conceal Himself (*non factus est invisibilis*), but their eyes were holden, that they should not know Him (ibid.). At the same time Calvin in this connection makes short shrift of a number of Scripture doctrines. The right hand of God, to which Christ was exalted according to His humanity by His ascension, is interpreted as a circumscribed place, where Christ according to His humanity is shut off from His Church away, even unto the end of the world. That perverts the Scripture doctrines of the ascension of Christ and His session on the right hand of God into their very opposite. (p. 324)

Professor Pieper becomes sarcastic when he writes:

Also the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper demands a great amount of exegesis. Christ would have had to give approximately this commentary on His words: True, My words, Take, eat; this is My body, sound as if I were calling on you to eat with your mouth. But don't imagine that My body is here on earth in the Sacrament of the Altar and is intended to be eaten with the mouth (*oralis manducatio*). As distant as heaven is from the earth, so far is My body removed from this Supper and your mouth. What I really mean to say with the words Take, eat; this is My body is this: With the mouth of your faith you are to ascend into heaven and there by faith eat My body spiritually. Furthermore, when I say to you, Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you, this indeed sounds as though you were receiving that body which is given for you into death and not a symbol or image of My body. However, you must interpret My words according to the axiom that a body always can possess only a local and visible presence and does not

extend beyond the natural dimensions of a human body. Since, now, you cannot see My body in My Supper, nor take hold of it with the hands, you must, when you hear the term My body, think only of an image of My body. (p. 339)

All this leads Pieper to question whether or not the Reformed even have the Lord's Supper. He writes:

Because the Reformed publicly declare that they do not have the intention of celebrating the Supper with the Real Presence of Christ's body and blood, but pronounce such a Sacrament an abomination, they are in fact not celebrating the Supper Christ gave to His Church. The Reformed doctrine is an actual disavowal and renunciation of Christ's words of institution. Hence they have no word of God for their Supper; He did not institute a Supper in which bread and wine are distributed and received as symbols of the absent body and blood of Christ. (p. 371)

Perhaps it's best not to answer questions the Bible has not specifically answered...but Prof. Pieper's point is well taken. The Reformed church has ripped apart the very sacrament given to us for our comfort.

Contrast that with the great comfort God gives us in the Lord's Supper. At the communion table we partake of Jesus' body and blood, the body and blood given and shed for us on the cross. Our Savior comes to us in an objective way. We cannot logically understand how we receive the Lord's body and blood; we cannot see it with a microscope. Yet we know that we receive what was given and shed for our forgiveness because the Son of God tells us that we receive it. We taste our forgiveness in a very real way. Heiko Oberman comments:

It is not only modern man who can make little sense of infant baptism and the real presence of Christ. But they are meaningful to men in conflict, to man between God and the Devil, who does not ignore Luther's words: We are beggars, that is true." (p. 245).

#### **Issue Four: Were Luther and Calvin just talking past each other? What is the difference between the Lutheran *unio sacramentalis* and Calvin's "Spiritual" reception of the Lord's Supper (we receive Jesus' body and blood by the power of the Holy Spirit)?**

The Lutheran church speaks of a sacramental union (*unio sacramentalis*) in the Lord's Supper. Professor Arnold Koelpin gives us an excellent definition to work with:

To describe this kind of presence, the term "sacramental presence" is used. Descriptions of this presence are all inadequate. Walther comments, "Concerning the manner of the presence of Christ's body in the Holy Supper, the Lutheran church at all times has confessed that this is known to God alone, is inexpressible, mysterious and unsearchable, and therefore called sacramental, because such a presence, by virtue of which Christ's body and blood is present under certain outward signs in an incomprehensible and yet true manner, occurs only in the holy sacrament" (Walther, *Der Lutheraner*, 4, p. 28). So it is a real and true presence, an essential presence, a mystical, supernatural, incomprehensible presence. But at bottom we cannot describe it. At best we can ward off false impressions or accusations.<sup>29</sup>

The term sacramental union is not in the Bible but the teaching is eminently Biblical. God's Word tells us that Jesus' body and blood are truly present in the Lord's Supper. It doesn't tell us the exact mode of that

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<sup>29</sup> In the following pages of Prof. Koelpin's excellent article he wards off five specific objections to the teaching of the sacramental union. This article makes available resources from the Synodical conference theologians concerning the Lord's Supper. It's well worth reading.

presence. The Bible tells us that we truly eat and drink Jesus' body and blood; the words of institution don't speak of a spiritual eating and drinking for Jesus' body and blood and a physical eating of the bread and wine. Jesus simply says, "Take eat, take drink." And what of the charge that the Lutherans teach that we digest the body of Jesus in our stomachs? The words of institution speak of a reception of the body and blood of Jesus (take and eat); no mention is made of digestion and the like. The words of institution do not speak of heavenly food nourishing us physically (as regular food is broken down inside us to give us energy, etc.). The point is that we are receiving Jesus' body and blood.

Calvin also speaks about the mode of Christ's presence in the supper. At first he humbly says that he cannot understand the mode of presence (much the same as Luther said). Yet he then turns around and claims that any real, local presence in the sacrament is beneath Jesus' dignity!

Now, should any one ask me as to the mode, I will not be ashamed to confess that it is too high a mystery either for my mind to comprehend or my words to express; and to speak more plainly, I rather feel than understand it. The truth of God, therefore, in which I can safely rest, I here embrace without controversy. He declares that his flesh is the meat, his blood the drink, of my soul; I give my soul to him to be fed with such food. In his sacred Supper he bids me take, eat, and drink his body and blood under the symbols of bread and wine. I have no doubt that he will truly give and I receive. Only, I reject the absurdities which appear to be unworthy of the heavenly majesty of Christ, and are inconsistent with the reality of his human nature. Since they must also be repugnant to the word of God, which teaches both that Christ was received into the glory of the heavenly kingdom, so as to be exalted above all the circumstances of the world (Luke 24:26), and no less carefully ascribes to him the properties belonging to a true human nature. This ought not to seem incredible or contradictory to reason (Iren. Lib. 4 cap. 34); because, as the whole kingdom of Christ is spiritual, so whatever he does in his Church is not to be tested by the wisdom of this world (*Institutes*, 4.17.32)

The difference between the Lutheran sacramental union and Calvin's "Spiritual eating" is clear and simple. The sacramental union states that Jesus' body and blood are really and truly present; that we receive with the mouth Jesus' body and blood. In Calvin's "Spiritual eating" Jesus' body and blood are only symbolically present. The sacramental union is the confession of a mystery we cannot explain. The "Spiritual eating" is a disclaimer that we are to understand Jesus' words symbolically.

Professor Pieper sums up:

It should therefore be noted that when the Reformed use the term *unio sacramentalis*, they mean exactly the opposite of what Lutherans mean by that term. The Reformed by that term express the absence, the Lutherans the presence, of the substantial body of Christ. And this fact is not altered when many Reformed call the *unio sacramentalis an unio vera, realis, substantialis*, etc. Their meaning always remains: As on earth a picture of St. Peter represents to our mind the real Peter in heaven, so the bread in the Lords Supper symbolizes to us the true, substantial body of Christ in heaven. In spite of their talk of a substantial body of Christ and of a true, substantial union, the Reformed never get beyond a symbolic union, because they would by all means maintain that Christ's body is as far removed from the Lord's Supper as heaven is from the earth. (p. 362)

## Issue Five: How can we lead the congregations we serve to a greater appreciation of the Lord's Supper?

At the beginning of the paper we quoted a Reformed theologian's complaints about the neglect of the Lord's Supper. We can, at least in part, attribute this neglect in the Reformed church to false doctrine. If the Lord's Supper is only a memorial meal meant to remind us of Jesus' suffering and death then why should it be a big deal?

If we are honest with ourselves we would admit that the members of the congregations we serve (along with their pastors) do not always appreciate the Lord's Supper as He wants us to. Perhaps we can discern a gradual loss of appreciation over time. We have heard stories of people waiting in long lines on Saturday afternoon to announce their intention to come to the Lord's table the following day. Today it happens that people (and occasionally a pastor) don't realize that the Lord's Supper is being celebrated until they see the elements on the altar.

How can we lead the congregations we serve to a greater appreciation of the Lord's Supper?

In the final pages of this (long) paper please permit a "top ten" list.

### **The Top Ten Ways to Lead the Congregations We Serve to a Greater Appreciation of the Lord's Supper**

10. As part of your confirmation class have the young people design and make a banner about the Lord's Supper. They could present the banner to the congregation on Maundy Thursday with an explanation of the symbolism on the banner. Perhaps part of the worship service could be dedicated to this presentation. A sample set of instructions is included in this paper as "appendix one".
9. Preach a sermon series on the Lord's Supper. One outline for the series could be built around Luther's four parts of the explanation of the Lord's Supper in the Catechism. Another outline would follow these questions: who (instituted the Lord's Supper and for whom is the Lord's Supper), what (is happening in the Lord's Supper), why (we celebrate the Lord's Supper), when (how often should we receive the Lord's Supper), and how (are we sure of the blessings in the Lord's Supper).
8. Have a special Bible class focusing on the Lord's Supper. At this moment NPH does not have any Bible studies specifically about the Lord's Supper. There is a fine devotional book entitled "God's Gift to You" that might be adapted for a Bible class. I have written a Bible study on the Lord's Supper that is free for the asking ([pastor@ascensionrochester.org](mailto:pastor@ascensionrochester.org)). Keep in mind that you usually get what you pay for! Better yet, write your own Bible class and send it to me! The book of Acts tells us that the early Christians gathered to pray, to listen to the Word, to receive the Lord's Supper and to enjoy the fellowship of the believers. A congregation could accomplish all those things by having a weekend Bible study on the Lord's Supper (Friday night, Saturday morning, and the regular Sunday morning class time) culminating in the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the Sunday morning worship services.
7. Use Luther's four part explanation of the Lord's Supper in the Catechism as the confession of faith for the next four communion services (one part each week). Perhaps it would be good to comment on each part after the congregation has confessed it. This allows you to focus on the Lord's Supper without getting away from the church year.
6. Run a series of newsletter articles written by people in the congregation. The topic would be: "Why the



Lord's Supper means so much to me." These "testimonials" would be firmly rooted in the means of grace. Better yet would be a videotape of the person's answer!

5. Revisit the subject of communion registration. Perhaps the elders could be stationed in the back of church to register people the Sunday before the Lord's Supper is celebrated. This would allow a bit of interaction between the spiritual leaders of the congregation and the members of the congregation. The elders would try to see how things are going spiritually for those registering. Perhaps e-mail could somehow be used in communion registration. One of the goals would be to remind people of the importance of preparing for the Lord's Supper (self-examination, etc.).
4. Revisit the subject of how often the Lord's Supper is offered in the congregation...as well as how often a person will receive the Lord's Supper. Some maintain that the Lord's Supper should be celebrated in every worship service. That "rule" is not found in the Bible. Yet the discussion might be worthwhile as it would stimulate thought about the Lord's Supper.
3. Talk about the Lord's Supper more frequently in sermons and Bible classes. I find myself talking about the importance of Bible study more often than I talk about the importance of the sacraments. Obviously both are important...and need to be spoken of frequently. A related suggestion: Highlight baptism and its blessings as much as possible. A greater awareness of the blessings of one sacrament might foster a greater awareness of the other sacrament as well. The gospel comes to us in Word and sacrament. There not two gospels (i.e. one in the Word and another in the sacrament); make sure people know that the same gospel that is at work when we preach is also at work in the Lord's Supper.
2. Teach Christology clearly. The Reformed error in the Lord's Supper is closely related to their error in Christology. How will the members of the congregations we serve respond to this: "How can Jesus be truly present in the Lord's Supper since He's in heaven right now?" Do they take comfort from Jesus' words: *I am with you always*. It seems that these matters are clearly understood by most WELS members. Keep up the good teaching!
1. Pray that God will lead you and the congregation you serve to a deeper appreciation of the Lord's Supper. Ask the Holy Spirit to embolden us to defend this treasure from the Lord against all heresy. Encourage your elders and council members to pray about these matters as well.

## Appendix 1

### Lord's Supper Project

Scenario: Very soon you will be receiving the Lord's Supper. At first you won't take it for granted at all. As the years go by it's easy to forget all about communion until it's time for church. We forget what a miracle it is...and how much it blesses us.

Tasks:

1. Make a presentation to the congregation on Maundy Thursday highlighting the following: why we sometimes take the Lord's Supper for granted, the miracles that happen in the Lord's Supper, and how it blesses us. You might want to show people places in the hymnal that help with communion preparation. How could people prepare the night before? How do our communion cards help people prepare? Would it be good to announce to the pastor that you will be going to communion? (people used to do that all the time) Be creative with your presentation!
2. Design and make a banner to be given to the congregation on Maundy Thursday to go with your presentation. Study the symbols of the Lord's Supper...and maybe design your own. Perhaps some of the adults in the congregation could help you with the banners! Keep the banner simple...but meaningful.

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