

BELGIC CONFESSION - ARTICLE 35

The Holy Supper of Our Lord Jesus Christ

We believe and confess that our Savior Jesus Christ did ordain and institute the sacrament of the Holy Supper to nourish and support those whom He has already regenerated and incorporated into His family, which is His Church.

Now those who are regenerated have in them a twofold life: the one corporal and temporal, which they have from the first birth and is common to all men; the other is spiritual and heavenly, which is given to them in their second birth,¹ which is effected by the word of the gospel in the communion of the body of Christ; and this life is not common, but is specific to God's elect.² In like manner, to support the physical and earthly life, God has prescribed for us an appropriate earthly and material bread, which is as common to all people as life itself. But for the support of the spiritual and heavenly life which believers have, He has sent a living bread which descended from heaven, namely, Jesus Christ,³ who nourishes and strengthens the spiritual life of believers when they eat Him, that is to say, when they apply and receive Him by faith in the Spirit.⁴

That He might represent to us this spiritual and heavenly bread, Christ has instituted an earthly and visible bread as a sacrament of His body, and wine as a sacrament of His blood, that by them He might testify to us that as certainly as we receive and hold this sacrament in our hands, and eat and drink the same with our mouths, by which our life is afterwards nourished, we also do certainly receive by faith (which is the hand and mouth of our soul) the true body and blood of Christ our only Savior in our souls, for the support of our spiritual life.⁵

Now it is certain that Jesus Christ has not enjoined to us the use of His sacraments in vain, since He works in us all that He represents to us by these holy signs, though the manner surpasses our understanding and cannot be comprehended by us, as the operations of the Holy Ghost are hidden and incomprehensible. Yet we are not in error when we say that what is eaten and drunk by us is the natural body and the proper blood of Christ. But the manner of our partaking in these is not by the mouth, but by the Spirit through faith. Thus, though Christ always sits at the right hand of His Father in the heavens, He does not cease to make us partakers of Himself by faith. This feast is a spiritual table at which Christ communicates Himself with all His benefits to us, and makes us to enjoy both Himself and the merits of His sufferings and death,⁶ nourishing, strengthening, and comforting our poor comfortless souls by the eating of His flesh, quickening and refreshing them by the drinking of His blood.

Further, though the sacraments are connected with the thing signified, nevertheless both are not received by all men; the ungodly indeed receives the sacrament to his condemnation,⁷ but he does not receive the truth of the sacrament. Judas and Simon the sorcerer both indeed received the sacrament, but they did not receive Christ who was signified by it, of whom believers only are made partakers.

Lastly, we receive this holy sacrament in the assembly of the people of God with humility and reverence,⁸ keeping among us a holy remembrance of the death of Christ our Savior with thanksgiving, making a confession of our faith and of the Christian religion. Therefore no one ought to come to this table without having previously examined himself rightly; lest by eating of this bread and drinking of this cup he eat and drink judgment to himself.⁹ In a word, we are moved by the use of this holy sacrament to a fervent love towards God and our neighbor.

Therefore we reject all mixtures and damnable inventions which men have added unto and blended with the sacraments which desecrate them, and we affirm that we ought to rest satisfied with the ordinance which Christ and His apostles have taught us, and that we must speak of them in the same manner as they have spoken.

Verses for Consideration

1. John 3:5–6
2. 1 John 5:12
3. John 6:32–33
4. John 6:63
5. 1 Corinthians 10:16–17
6. Matthew 26:26–28
7. 1 Corinthians 11:29
8. Acts 2:42
9. 1 Corinthians 11:27–28

Questions for Consideration

1. What does the bread and wine signify?
2. What are we remembering when we take communion? How does this memory nourish our souls?
3. Should all people within the four walls of the church partake in the Lord's Supper?