

Confessional Resources for the Lord's Supper

The following sections from the Book of Confessions were taken from the 2016 PC(USA) Book of Confessions which can be ordered or downloaded in its entirety from:

<https://www.pcusa.org/resource/book-confessions/>.

These sections are meant to help inform congregations in their understanding and practice of the Lord's Supper in regard to the Office of the General Assembly's advisory opinion on virtual communion:

The opinion states that the session may authorize the Lord's Supper during a virtual service after thorough exploration of the theology of the Lord's Supper using Scripture, the Confessions and the Book of Order and with a clear understanding of why the session is making the decision and how those who will participate in the Lord's Supper at home will receive the sacrament as a means of God's grace.

These sections provide a resource for exploring the Lord's Supper using the Confessions.

Prior to exploring these selections from the Book of Confessions, sessions are encouraged to review the preface to the Book of Confessions (pgs iii and iv) and the Confessional Nature of the Church Report pgs. V-XXV, added to the BoC by action of the General Assembly in 1997) which provide some helpful context for reading the confessions and understanding their reformed heritage and current usage in the church. These are only highlights and sessions are encouraged to read and discuss these in their entirety as they are the confessions.

From the Preface

The 197th General Assembly (1985) adopted "Definitions and Guidelines on Inclusive Language." This document, reaffirmed by the 212th General Assembly (2000), states that "Effort should be made at every level of the church to use inclusive language with respect to the people of God." Some of the church's confessional documents, written before the church committed itself to inclusive language for the people of God, use male language to refer to men and women. Although the original language is retained in the Book of Confessions, readers are reminded of the church's policy and the commitment the policy expresses. Specific statements in 16th and 17th century confessions and catechisms in the Book of Confessions contain condemnations or derogatory characterizations of the Roman Catholic Church: Chapters XVIII and XXII of the Scots Confession; Questions and Answer 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism; and Chapters II, III, XVII, and XX, of the Second Helvetic Confession. (Chapters XXII, XXV, and XXIX of the Westminster Confession of Faith have been amended to remove anachronous and offensive language. Chapter XXVIII of the French Confession does not have constitutional standing.) While these statements emerged from substantial doctrinal disputes, they reflect 16th and 17th century polemics. Their condemnations and characterizations of the Catholic Church are not the position of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and are not applicable to current relationships between the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Catholic Church.

From the Report:

The Advisory Council on Discipleship and Worship appointed a task force in 1982 to prepare a report on the confessional nature of the church... The task force sought first to discover how the confessions are actually used by questioning the presbyteries and seminaries of the church, persons attending the 195th General Assembly (1983), and readers of *Monday Morning*. These surveys substantiated the need for a careful study that would clarify and encourage proper use of the church's confessions.

In light of the results of these surveys the task force concentrated its study on ten questions: (1) Are creeds different from confessions? (2) Why are confessions written? (3) How do confessions relate to Scripture? (4) How do confessions relate to their historic context? (5) Why do we have more than one confession? (6) How do the confessions in the *Book of Confessions* relate to each other? (7) How do Reformed confessions relate to other confessions? (8) How can confessions be used in the teaching ministry? (9) How can confessions be used in other parts of congregational life and mission? (10) How do confessions relate to ordination?

I. The Nature and Purpose of Confessions

A distinction must be made between confession as an act of Christian faith and a confession as a document of Christian faith.

On the one hand, all Christians are by definition people who confess their faith—people who make their own the earliest Christian confession: “Jesus Christ is Lord.” The Christian church, called and held together by Jesus Christ himself, lives only through the continual renewal of this fundamental confession of faith that all Christians and Christian bodies make together.

On the other hand, a confession of faith is an officially adopted statement that spells out a church’s understanding of the meaning and implications of the one basic confession of the lordship of Christ. Such statements have not always been called confessions. They have also been called creeds, symbols, formulas, definitions, declarations of faith, statements of belief, articles of faith, and other similar names. All these are different ways of talking about the same thing, though “creed” has ordinarily been used for short affirmations of faith, while other names have been used for longer ones.

B. The Time for Confession

Throughout the history of the Christian movement churches have written confessions of faith because they feel that they must do so, not just because they think it would be a good idea. Confessions of faith may result from a sense of urgent need to correct some distortion of the truth and claim of the gospel that threatens the integrity of the church’s faith and life from within the church. They may result from some political or cultural movement outside the church that openly attacks or subtly seeks to compromise its commitment to the gospel. Sometimes the urgency to confess comes from the church’s conviction that it has a great new insight into the promises and demands of the gospel that is desperately needed by both church and world.

E. The Historical Limitations of Confessions

Confessions address the issues, problems, dangers, and opportunities of a given historical situation. But confessions are related to their historical situation also in another way. Even when their writers have believed they were formulating Christian truth valid for all time and places, their work has been directed not only to but limited by their particular time and place. Throughout the history of the church—and also in our time—confessions have been deliberately or unconsciously expressed in the language and thought forms that were commonly accepted when they were written. God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ has sometimes been clarified but also distorted by the language and presuppositions of this or that ancient or current philosophy. The great classical confessions were written before the discoveries of modern science and reflect an outdated understanding of the structure of the world and its natural processes (just as our “modern” confessions will one day seem outdated and “primitive” to a later world). The theology and ethics of confessions of every age are shaped by what seem to be the normative or preferable sexual, familial, social, economic, cultural, and political patterns of a particular period of history.

Even those confessions that have sought to be grounded exclusively in biblical revelation have often confused the revelation itself with various historically conditioned thought forms and cultural patterns in which it was received and preserved by people who lived in the ancient Near East. Modern

scholarship has shown how extensively earlier confessions of faith saw in Scripture only the confirmation of what they thought they already knew about God, the world and human life in it (just as future scholarship will reveal how we have done the same thing in our time).

II. Confessions of Faith in the Reformed Tradition

C. The Authority of Confessions in the Reformed Tradition

The Reformed tradition is unique in its understanding of the authority of its confessions. The most revealing clue to this unique understanding is the great number of confessions it has produced... This multiplicity of confessions, written by many people in many places over such a great span of time, obviously means that the Reformed tradition has never been content to recognize any one confession or collection of confessions as an absolute, infallible statement of the faith of Reformed Christians for all time.

Reformed Christians are put in a difficult position with their self-limiting, self-relativising confessions. On the one hand they are bound: so long as they are faithful members of a Reformed church they are not free to interpret Christian faith and life (or even Scripture itself) however seems best to them personally, but are committed to submit themselves to the authority and guidance of the confessional standards of their church. On the other hand they are free: the very confessions to which they are bound allow—require—them to remember the human limitations and fallibility of their church's confessional standards, to be open to hear a new and perhaps different word from the living Lord the standards confess, and to examine critically the church's teachings in the light of further study of Scripture.

III. The Presbyterian Book of Confessions

C. The Relation of the Confessions in the Book to Each Other

3. Dealing with the Differences

Presbyterians who expect one right answer to every theological and ethical question are especially confused and deeply disturbed by these differences. (“What then does our church believe?”) But the differences also puzzle others who understand that there is room for variety within the fundamental unity of the church. It is therefore important that agreement be reached on some guidelines for dealing with divergences among the confessions. Following are some suggestions based on the theology of the confessions themselves:

- a. Differences should not be exaggerated but should be understood and evaluated in light of the Christological and Trinitarian faith shared in common by all the confessions.
- b. Differences should be judged central or peripheral, critical or relatively unimportant, in light of the confessions' common Christological and Trinitarian faith, and in consideration of the most pressing problems and needs that confront the church in our time.
- c. Where there are conflicts, decision in favor of one or another alternative— or in favor of a totally new alternative—should be sought by subjection of all confessional statements to possible correction in light of fresh reading of Scripture.
- g. So long as the church as a whole has not taken a stand on differences among the confessions, its ministers and officers should have the freedom to choose the confessional interpretation that they believe best reflects the witness of Scripture.

D. The Book of Confessions and Ordination

The church does not require acceptance of the church's confessions for church membership. All who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are welcome to join and participate in fellowship. But to ensure that those who lead the church do so in faithfulness to its doctrine and form of government, the church does require ordained ministers, elders, and deacons to declare their adherence to the

confessions of the church. In order to understand what they commit themselves to when they do this, it is important to note the sequence of questions asked at ordination and the precise wording of the third question.

c. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?

d. Will you fulfill your office in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?

1. *Freedom and Variety in the Church*

b. Ordained persons are required to be “instructed and led” and “continually guided” by the church’s confessions. These words demand study of the confessions. They also provide freedom from a demand for unqualified assent to everything the confessions ask us to think, say, and do and freedom from a legalistic interpretation of the confessions.

The ordination question that asks for commitment to the “essential tenets” of the confessions brings freedom in the church at several levels. Ordained persons are free to be “instructed,” “led,” and “continually guided” by the confessions without being forced to subscribe to any precisely worded articles of faith drawn up either by the General Assembly or by a presbytery. (Presbyteries, too, are bound to the constitutional language that excludes demand for adherence to any specifically worded interpretations of a few selected doctrines. In a presbytery the decision for ordination is always determined by the concrete encounter between the presbytery and the candidate.) Presbyteries (in the case of ministers) and church sessions (in the case of elders and deacons) are free to decide for themselves what acceptable loyalty to the confessions means in their particular situation without being bound to any “check list” prescribed by higher governing bodies of the church.

2. *The Authority and Unity of the Church*

a. To be an ordained Presbyterian is not only to acknowledge the superior authority of God in Christ as proclaimed by Scripture but also to recognize the church’s confessions as “authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do.”

While confessional standards are subordinate to the Scriptures, they are, nevertheless, standards. They are not lightly drawn up or subscribed to, nor may they be ignored or dismissed. The church is prepared to counsel with or even discipline one ordained who seriously rejects the faith expressed in the confessions (*Book of Order*, G-2.0200 [F-2.02 in the current *Book of Order*]).

b. To be an ordained Presbyterian is to promise to be “instructed,” “led,” and “continually guided” by the confessions of the church—not just by one’s personal theological and ethical preferences or even by one’s own personal understanding of God or Jesus Christ or Scripture. The church should not “bind the conscience” of those who disagree with its confessions and interpretation of their meaning. When an individual or group of individuals disagree with the consensus of the church, the church must first examine itself to see whether it needs to reform its confessional stance. Nevertheless, in the Presbyterian Church the consensus of the church concerning the meaning of faith and life takes precedence over the opinions and preferences of individuals and groups in the church, and may lead to the refusal of ordination to those who disagree with the church.

Scots Confession: CHAPTER XXI

The Sacraments 3.21

As the fathers under the Law, besides the reality of the sacrifices, had two chief sacraments, that is, circumcision and the passover, and those who rejected these were not reckoned among God's people; so do we acknowledge and confess that now in the time of the gospel we have two chief sacraments, which alone were instituted by the Lord Jesus and commanded to be used by all who will be counted members of his body, that is, Baptism and the Supper or Table of the Lord Jesus, also called the Communion of His Body and Blood. These sacraments, both of the Old Testament and of the New, were instituted by God not only to make a visible distinction between his people and those who were without the Covenant, but also to exercise the faith of his children and, by participation of these sacraments, to seal in their hearts the assurance of his promise, and of that most blessed conjunction, union, and society, which the chosen have with their Head, Christ Jesus. And so we utterly condemn the vanity of those who affirm the sacraments to be nothing else than naked and bare signs. No, we assuredly believe that by Baptism we are engrafted into Christ Jesus, to be made partakers of his righteousness, by which our sins are covered and remitted, and also that in the Supper rightly used, Christ Jesus is so joined with us that he becomes the very nourishment and food of our souls. Not that we imagine any transubstantiation of bread into Christ's body, and of wine into his natural blood, as the Romanists have perniciously taught and wrongly believed; but this union and conjunction which we have with the body and blood of Christ Jesus in the right use of the sacraments is wrought by means of the Holy Ghost, who by true faith carries us above all things that are visible, carnal, and earthly, and makes us feed upon the body and blood of Christ Jesus, once broken and shed for us but now in heaven, and appearing for us in the presence of his Father. Notwithstanding the distance between his glorified body in heaven and mortal men on earth, yet we must assuredly believe that the bread which we break is the communion of Christ's body and the cup which we bless the communion of his blood. Thus we confess and believe without doubt that the faithful, in the right use of the Lord's Table, do so eat the body and drink the blood of the Lord Jesus that he remains in them and they in him; they are so made flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone that as the eternal Godhood has given to the flesh of Christ Jesus, which by nature was corruptible and mortal, life and immortality, so the eating and drinking of the flesh and blood of Christ Jesus does the like for us. We grant that this is neither given to us merely at the time nor by the power and virtue of the sacrament alone, but we affirm that the faithful, in the right use of the Lord's Table, have such union with Christ Jesus as the natural man cannot apprehend. Further we affirm that although the faithful, hindered by negligence and human weakness, do not profit as much as they ought in the actual moment of the Supper, yet afterwards it shall bring forth fruit, being living seed sown in good ground; for the Holy Spirit, who can never be separated from the right institution of the Lord Jesus, will not deprive the faithful of the fruit of that mystical action. Yet all this, we say again, comes of that true faith which apprehends Christ Jesus, who alone makes the sacrament effective in us. Therefore, if anyone slanders us by saying that we affirm or believe the sacraments to be symbols and nothing more, they are libelous and speak against the plain facts. On the other hand we readily admit that we make a distinction between Christ Jesus in his eternal substance and the elements of the sacramental signs. So we neither worship the elements, in place of that which they signify, nor yet do we despise them or undervalue them, but we use them with great reverence, examining ourselves diligently before we participate, since we are assured by the mouth of the apostle that "whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

The Right Administration of the Sacraments 3.22

Two things are necessary for the right administration of the sacraments. The first is that they should be ministered by lawful ministers, and we declare that these are men appointed to preach the Word, unto whom God has given the power to preach the gospel, and who are lawfully called by some Kirk. The second is that they should be ministered in the elements and manner which God has appointed. Otherwise they cease to be the sacraments of Christ Jesus. This is why we abandon the teaching of the Roman Church and withdraw from its sacraments; firstly, because their ministers are not true ministers of Christ Jesus (indeed they even allow women, whom the Holy Ghost will not permit to preach in the congregation to baptize) and, secondly, because they have so adulterated both the sacraments with their own additions that no part of Christ's original act remains in its original simplicity. The addition of oil, salt, spittle, and such like in baptism, are merely human additions. To adore or venerate the sacrament, to carry it through streets and towns in procession, or to reserve it in a special case, is not the proper use of Christ's sacrament but an abuse of it. Christ Jesus said, "Take ye, eat ye," and "Do this in remembrance of Me." By these words and commands he sanctified bread and wine to be the sacrament of his holy body and blood, so that the one should be eaten and that all should drink of the other, and not that they should be reserved for worship or honored as God, as the Romanists do. Further, in withdrawing one part of the sacrament—the blessed cup—from the people, they have committed sacrilege. Moreover, if the sacraments are to be rightly used it is essential that the end and purpose of their institution should be understood, not only by the minister but by the recipients. For if the recipient does not understand what is being done, the sacrament is not being rightly used, as is seen in the case of the Old Testament sacrifices. Similarly, if the teacher teaches false doctrine which is hateful to God, even though the sacraments are his own ordinance, they are not rightly used, since wicked men have used them for another end than what God commanded. We affirm this has been done to the sacraments in the Roman Church, for there the whole action of the Lord Jesus is adulterated in form, purpose, and meaning. What Christ Jesus did, and commanded to be done, is evident from the Gospels and from St. Paul; what the priest does at the altar we do not need to tell. The end and purpose of Christ's institution, for which it should be used, is set forth in the words, "Do this in remembrance of Me," and "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show"—that is, extol, preach, magnify, and praise—"the Lord's death, till He come." But let the words of the mass, and their own doctors and teachings witness, what is the purpose and meaning of the mass; it is that, as mediators between Christ and his Kirk, they should offer to God the Father, a sacrifice in propitiation for the sins of the living and of the dead. This doctrine is blasphemous to Christ Jesus and would deprive his unique sacrifice, once offered on the cross for the cleansing of all who are to be sanctified, of its sufficiency; so we detest and renounce it.

CHAPTER XXIII To Whom Sacraments Appertain 3.23

We hold that baptism applies as much to the children of the faithful as to those who are of age and discretion, and so we condemn the error of the Anabaptists, who deny that children should be baptized before they have faith and understanding. But we hold that the Supper of the Lord is only for those who are of the household of faith and can try and examine themselves both in their faith and their duty to their neighbors. Those who eat and drink at that holy table without faith, or without peace and goodwill to their brethren, eat unworthily. This is the reason why ministers in our Kirk make public and individual examination of those who are to be admitted to the table of the Lord Jesus.

Heidelberg Catechism

The Holy Sacraments LORD'S DAY 25

4.065 65 Q. It is through faith alone that we share in Christ and all his benefits: where then does that faith come from?

A. The Holy Spirit produces it in our hearts by the preaching of the holy gospel, and confirms it by the use of the holy sacraments.

(Biblical References: Eph. 2:8; John 3:5 2. Matt. 28:19–20; 1 Pet. 1:22–23)

4.066 66 Q. What are sacraments?

A. Sacraments are visible, holy signs and seals. They were instituted by God so that by our use of them he might make us understand more clearly the promise of the gospel, and seal that promise. And this is God's gospel promise: to grant us forgiveness of sins and eternal life by grace because of Christ's one sacrifice accomplished on the cross.

(Biblical References: Gen. 17:11; Rom. 4:11; Deut. 30:6; Lev. 6:25; Heb. 9:8–9, [11–] 24; Ezek. 20:12; 1 Sam. 17:36[–37]; Isa. 6:6–7)

The Holy Supper of Jesus Christ LORD'S DAY 28

4.075 75 Q. How does the holy supper remind and assure you that you share in Christ's one sacrifice on the cross and in all his benefits?

A. In this way: Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat this broken bread and to drink this cup in remembrance of him. With this command come these promises: First, as surely as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord broken for me and the cup shared with me, so surely his body was offered and broken for me and his blood poured out for me on the cross. Second, as surely as I receive from the hand of the one who serves, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, given me as sure signs of Christ's body and blood, so surely he nourishes and refreshes my soul for eternal life with his crucified body and poured-out blood.

4.076 76 Q. What does it mean to eat the crucified body of Christ and to drink his poured-out blood?

A. It means to accept with a believing heart the entire suffering and death of Christ and thereby to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

But it means more. Through the Holy Spirit, who lives both in Christ and in us, we are united more and more to Christ's blessed body. And so, although he is in heaven³ and we are on earth, we are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. And we forever live on and are governed by one Spirit, as the members of our body are by one soul.

(Biblical References: John 6:35, 40, 47–48, 50–54 2. John 6:55–56 3. Acts 1:9; 3:21; 1 Cor. 11:26 4. Eph. 3:17; 5:29–32; 1 Cor. 6:15, 17–19; 1 John 3:24; 4:13; John 14:23 John 6:56–58; 15:1–6; Eph. 4:15–16)

4.077 77 Q. Where does Christ promise to nourish and refresh believers with his body and blood as surely as they eat this broken bread and drink this cup?

A. In the institution of the Lord's Supper: "The Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is [broken]* for you.' In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in

my blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” This promise is repeated by Paul in these words: “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”

(Biblical References: 1 Cor. 11:23[–26]; Matt. 26:26[–29]; Mark 14:22[–25]; Luke 22:17[–20] 2. Exod. 24:8; Heb. 9:20 3. Exod. 13:9 4. 1 Cor. 10:16–17 *The word “broken” does not appear in the NRSV text, but it was present in the original German of the Heidelberg Catechism.)

LORD’S DAY 29

4.078 78 Q. Do the bread and wine become the real body and blood of Christ?

A. No. Just as the water of baptism is not changed into Christ’s blood and does not itself wash away sins but is simply a divine sign and assurance of these things, so too the holy bread of the Lord’s Supper does not become the actual body of Christ, even though it is called the body of Christ in keeping with the nature and language of sacraments.

Biblical References: Matt. 26:[28–]29; Mark 14:24 2. 1 Cor. 10:16–17; 11:26–28 3. Gen. 17:10, 14–19; Exod. 12:27, 43–48; 13:9; 24:8; 29:36; Acts 7:8; 22:16; Lev. 16:10; 17:11; Isa. 6:6–7; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21; 1 Cor. 10:1–4)

4.079 79 Q. Why then does Christ call the bread his body and the cup his blood, or the new covenant in his blood, and Paul use the words, a participation in Christ’s body and blood?

A. Christ has good reason for these words. He wants to teach us that just as bread and wine nourish the temporal life, so too his crucified body and poured-out blood are the true food and drink of our souls for eternal life. But more important, he wants to assure us, by this visible sign and pledge, that we, through the Holy Spirit’s work, share in his true body and blood as surely as our mouths receive these holy signs in his remembrance, and that all of his suffering and obedience are as definitely ours as if we personally had suffered and made satisfaction for our sins.

(Biblical References: John 6:51, 55 ; 1 Cor. 10:16–17)

LORD’S DAY 30

4.080 80* Q. How does the Lord’s Supper differ from the Roman Catholic Mass?

A. The Lord’s Supper declares to us that all our sins are completely forgiven through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which he himself accomplished on the cross once for all. It also declares to us that the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ, who with his true body is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father³ where he wants us to worship him.⁴ But the Mass teaches that the living and the dead do not have their sins forgiven through the suffering of Christ unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests. It also teaches that Christ is bodily present under the form of bread and wine where Christ is therefore to be worshiped. Thus the Mass is basically nothing but a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ and a condemnable idolatry.

(Biblical References: Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 26–28; 10:10, 12–14; John 19:30; Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:19–20 2. 1 Cor. 6:17; 10:16; 12:13 3. Heb. 1:3; 8:1 4. John 4:21–23; 20:17; Luke 24:52; Acts 7:55–56; Col. 3:1; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 1:10 *Question and Answer 80 reflects the polemical debates of the

Reformation and was added in the second German edition of 1563. The second and fourth sentences of the Answer, as well as the concluding phrase, were added in the third German edition of 1563. After the fourth sentence, the third German and Latin texts have a note to the section on consecration in the Canon of the Mass. As detailed in the preface to The Book of Confessions, these condemnations and characterizations of the Catholic Church are not the position of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and are not applicable to current relationships between the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Catholic Church.)

4.081 81 Q. Who should come to the Lord's table?

A. Those who are displeased with themselves because of their sins, but who nevertheless trust that their sins are pardoned and that their remaining weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to lead a better life. Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant, however, eat and drink judgment on themselves.

(Biblical References: 1 Cor. 10:21; 11:28[–29])

4.082 82 Q. Should those be admitted to the Lord's Supper who show by what they profess and how they live that they are unbelieving and ungodly?

A. No, that would dishonor God's covenant and bring down God's wrath upon the entire congregation. Therefore, according to the instruction of Christ and his apostles, the Christian church is duty-bound to exclude such people, by the official use of the keys of the kingdom, until they reform their lives.

(Biblical References: 1 Cor. 11:20, 34; Isa. 1:11; 66:3; Jer. 7:21[–26]; Ps. 50:16)

Westminster Confession

Of the Sacraments

6.149 1. Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and his benefits, and to confirm our interest in him: as also to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the church, and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to his Word.

6.150 2. There is in every sacrament a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified; whence it comes to pass that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other.

6.151 3. The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments, rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them; neither doth the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it, but upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution, which contains, together with a precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers.

6.152 4. There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the gospel, that is to say, baptism and the supper of the Lord: neither of which may be dispensed by any but by a minister of the Word, lawfully ordained.

6.153 5. The sacraments of the Old Testament, in regard of the spiritual things thereby signified and exhibited, were, for substance, the same with those of the New.

Of the Lord's Supper

6.161 1. Our Lord Jesus, in the night wherein he was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of his body and blood, called the Lord's Supper, to be observed in his Church unto the end of the world; for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of himself in his death, the sealing all benefits thereof unto true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto him; and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other, as members of his mystical body.

6.162 2. In this sacrament Christ is not offered up to his Father, nor any real sacrifice made at all for remission of sins of the quick or dead, but a commemoration of that one offering up of himself, by himself, upon the cross, once for all, and a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto God for the same; so that the so-called sacrifice of the mass is most contradictory to Christ's one sacrifice, the only propitiation for all the sins of the elect.

The two columns represent the Presbyterian Church in the United States (left) and the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of American (right)- preserving the confessional traditions of each body prior to reunification

6.163 3

The Lord Jesus hath, in this ordinance, appointed his ministers to declare his word of institution to the people, to pray, and bless the elements of bread and wine, and thereby to set them apart from a common to an holy use; and to take and break the bread, to take the cup, and (they communicating also themselves) to give both to the communicants.

The Lord hath, in this ordinance, appointed his ministers to declare his word of institution to the people, to pray, and bless the elements of bread and wine, and thereby to set them apart from a common to an holy use; and to take and break the bread, to take cup, and (they communicating also themselves) to give both to the communicants; but to none who are not then present in the congregation.

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

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

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

6.167 7. Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corcified, and all benefits of his death: the

body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.

6.168 8.

Although ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements in this sacrament, yet they receive not the thing signified thereby; but by their unworthy coming thereunto are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and bring judgement of themselves.

Although ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements in this sacrament, yet they receive not the thing signified thereby; but by their unworthy coming thereunto are guilty of body and blood of the Lord, and bring judgement on themselves. Wherefore all ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's Table, and cannot, without great sin against Christ, while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto. orally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death: the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.

6.168 8. Although ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements in this sacrament, yet they receive not the thing signified thereby; but by their unworthy coming thereunto are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and bring judgement of themselves. Although ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements in this sacrament, yet they receive not the thing signified thereby; but by their unworthy coming thereunto are guilty of body and blood of the Lord, and bring judgement on themselves. Wherefore all ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's Table, and cannot, without great sin against Christ, while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto.

Shorter Catechism

Q. 96. What is the Lord's Supper?

A. The Lord's Supper is a sacrament, wherein by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth;¹ and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

Q. 97. What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper?

A. It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper that they examine themselves, of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love,⁴ and new obedience; lest, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves.

Confession of 1967

4. THE LORD'S SUPPER

9.52 The Lord's Supper is a celebration of the reconciliation of men with God and with one another, in which they joyfully eat and drink together at the table of their Savior. Jesus Christ gave his church this remembrance of his dying for sinful men so that by participation in it they have communion with him and with all who shall be gathered to him. Partaking in him as they eat the bread and drink the wine in accordance with Christ's appointment, they receive from the risen and living Lord the benefits of his death and resurrection. They rejoice in the foretaste of the kingdom which he will bring to consummation at his promised coming, and go out from the Lord's Table with courage and hope for the service to which he has called them.

The Confession of Belhar

We believe in one holy, universal Christian church, the communion of saints called from the entire human family. We believe

-that this unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a variety of ways: in that we love one another; that we experience, practice and pursue community with one another; that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another; that we share one faith, have one calling, are of one soul and one mind; have one God and Father, are filled with one Spirit, are baptized with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink of one cup, confess one name, are obedient to one Lord, work for one cause, and share one hope; together come to know the height and the breadth and the depth of the love of Christ; together are built up to the stature of Christ, to the new humanity; together know and bear one another's burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ that we need one another and upbuild one another, admonishing and comforting one another; that we suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; pray together; together serve God in this world; and together fight against all which may threaten or hinder this unity;