

The minister takes the loaf and breaks it in full view of the people, saying:

**When we break the bread,
is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?**

Pouring of the Cup

Having filled the cup, the minister lifts it in the view of the people, saying:

**When we give thanks over the cup,
is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ?**

*Then holding both the bread and the cup to the people,
the minister says:*

**The gifts of God
for the people of God.**

Great Thanksgiving

(With the Words of Institution)

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

**It is indeed right, our duty and highest joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks to you, O holy Lord,
Father almighty, everlasting God**

**You created the heavens and the earth
and all that is in them.**

**You made us in your own image;
and in countless ways you show us your mercy.**

**Therefore with angels and archangels
and the whole company of heaven,
we worship and adore your glorious name,
praising you forevermore:**

The people sing:

Holy, holy, holy Lord! God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest

The minister continues:

**All glory and blessing are yours, O holy God,
for in your great mercy**

You gave your only Son, Jesus Christ.

He took our human nature,

and suffered death on the cross for our redemption.

There he made a perfect sacrifice
for the sins of the whole world.

We praise you that before he suffered and died,
Our Savior gave us this holy sacrament
And commanded us to continue it
As a lasting memorial of his death and sacrifice.

We give you thanks that the Lord Jesus,
on the night before he died,
took bread
and after giving thanks to you,
he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take, eat.

This is my body, given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.

The bread is lifted.

In the same way he took the cup, saying:
This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,
shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.

The cup is lifted

Therefore, remembering his incarnation and holy life,
his death and glorious resurrection,
his ascension and continual intercession for us,
and awaiting his coming again in power and great glory,
we claim his eternal sacrifice
and celebrate with these holy gifts
the memorial your Son commanded us to make.
Great is the mystery of faith:

The people sing:

Christ has died,
Christ is risen,
Christ will come again.

The minister continues:

Merciful God,
by your Holy Spirit bless and make holy both us
and these your gifts of bread and wine,
that the bread we break may be for us communion
in the body of Christ,
and the cup we bless may be for us communion in the blood of Christ.

Here we offer ourselves to be a living sacrifice,
holy and acceptable to you.

In your mercy, accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving,
as, in communion with all the faithful in heaven and on earth,
we ask you to fulfill in us and in all creation,
the purpose of your redeeming love.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor are yours, almighty God,
now and forever.

The people sing:

Amen, Amen, Amen.

Remember us in your Kingdom and teach us to pray: Our Father...
The Lord's Prayer

Breaking of the Bread

Because there is one loaf,
we, many though we are, are one body;
for it is one loaf of which we all partake.

did not have that preparation. Good-by, then, to him with his false principle!

19. At length he calls upon Trismegistus⁶⁰ and the sibyls⁶¹ to witness that holy washings befit only adults. See how honorably he thinks of the baptism of Christ, which he conforms to the profane rites of the heathen, that it may be administered only at the pleasure of Trismegistus! But we esteem more highly the authority of God, who was pleased to consecrate infants to himself, and to admit them by the holy symbol whose effect they were not yet old enough to understand. And we do not deem it lawful to borrow from the expiations of the heathen anything that may change in our baptism the eternal and inviolable law of God which he has established on circumcision.

20. In the final place, he reasons that if infants, without understanding, can be baptized, baptism can be administered by children at play as a farce and a mockery. Let him quarrel with God over this matter, according to whose precept circumcision was common to infants before they attained understanding. Was it therefore something for children to play with and fool over, so that they could overturn God's holy institution? But it is no wonder that those reprobate spirits, as if agitated by a frenzy, drag in the crassest absurdities in defense of their errors. For God justly avenges their pride and obstinacy by such irrationality. I trust I have made plain how weakly Servetus has supported his little Anabaptist brothers.

32. *Gratitude due for God's care of our children**

^aNow I think no sober person will be in doubt how rashly they stir up Christ's church with their altercations and contentions over infant baptism. But it behooves us to note what Satan is attempting with this great subtlety of his. He is trying to take away from us the singular fruit of assurance and spiritual joy

⁶⁰Hermes Trismegistus (thrice greatest Hermes) was the name given by the Greeks to Thoth, the Egyptian god of letters and wisdom. The forty-two Hermetic books (mentioned by Clement of Alexandria) were ascribed to him. These writings perished, but some Neoplatonic imitations of them were circulated in the Middle Ages. The reference here is to the mention by Servetus, *Restitutio*, p. 587. Servetus did not live to see the printed, medieval fragment of this literature, *On the Power and Wisdom of God*, that was published in Paris in 1554. See articles on Hermes Trismegistus in Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, and in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

⁶¹The sibyls were prophesying women at Cumae and elsewhere in ancient Italy and Greece, much consulted for their predictions and advice. Books based on their prophecies were circulated in Rome and Italy at the beginning of the Christian era.

which is to be gathered from it, and also to diminish somewhat the glory of the divine goodness. For how sweet is it to godly minds to be assured, not only by word, but by sight, that they obtain so much favor with the Heavenly Father that their offspring are within his care? For here we can see how he takes on toward us the role of a most provident Father, who even after our death maintains his care for us, providing for and looking after our children. Should we not, following David's example, rejoice with all our heart in thanksgiving, that his name may be hallowed by such an example of his goodness [Ps. 48:10]? It is precisely this which Satan is attempting in assailing infant baptism with such an army: that, once this testimony of God's grace is taken away from us, the promise which, through it, is put before our eyes may eventually vanish little by little. From this would grow up not only an impious ungratefulness toward God's mercy but a certain negligence about instructing our children in piety. For when we consider that immediately from birth God takes and acknowledges them as his children, we feel a strong stimulus to instruct them in an earnest fear of God and observance of the law. Accordingly, unless we wish spitefully to obscure God's goodness, let us offer our infants to him, for he gives them a place among those of his family and household, that is, the members of the church.

Start Here

CHAPTER XVII

THE SACRED SUPPER OF CHRIST, AND WHAT IT BRINGS TO US¹

(*The Lord's Supper, with the signs of bread and wine, provides spiritual food, 1-3*)

1. *Sign and thing*

^aGod has received us, once for all, into his family, to hold us not only as servants but as sons. Thereafter, to fulfill the duties of a most excellent Father concerned for his offspring, he under-

¹ Most sections of this chapter are composed of materials that originated in the various earlier editions of the *Institutes*, skillfully woven into a continuous argument. In structure and order, the chapter is wholly independent of the *Short Treatise on the Holy Supper of the Lord* (French, 1541, in OS I, 503-530; tr. Calvin, *Tracts II*, 168-198; Latin, 1546), but in actual teaching is in accord with that work. The intervening controversy (1556-1563) with Joachim Westphal and Tilemann Heshus (Heshusius) called forth much detailed argument, which is in part reflected here in secs. 30-34. Cf. Smits I, 87-95. Among many studies of Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper the following may be called to the reader's attention here: A. Barclay, *The Protestant Doctrine of the Lord's Supper*, pp. 107-293; J. Beckmann, *Vom Sacrament bei Calvin*; J. Cadier, *La Doctrine Calviniste de la Sainte Cène*;

takes also to nourish us throughout the course of our life.² And not content with this alone, he has willed, by giving his pledge, to assure us of this continuing liberality.³ To this end, therefore, he has, through the hand of his only-begotten Son, given to his church another sacrament, that is, a spiritual banquet, wherein Christ attests himself to be the life-giving bread, upon which our souls feed unto true and blessed immortality [John 6:51].

The knowledge of this high mystery is very necessary, and in view of its very greatness it demands a careful explanation. Furthermore, Satan, to deprive the church of this inestimable treasure, has long since spread clouds, and afterward, to obscure this light, has raised quarrels and conflicts to estrange the minds of simple folk from a taste for this sacred food, and also has tried the same trick in our own day.⁴ For these reasons, after summarizing the matter in a way intelligible to the unlearned, I shall resolve those difficulties with which Satan has tried to ensnare the world.

First, the signs are bread and wine, which represent for us the invisible food that we receive from the flesh and blood of Christ. For as in baptism, God, regenerating us, engrafs us into the society of his church and makes us his own by adoption, so we have said, that he discharges the function of a provident householder in continually supplying to us the food to sustain and preserve us in that life into which he has begotten us by his Word.

Now Christ is the only food of our soul, and therefore our Heavenly Father invites us to Christ, that, refreshed by partaking

H. Grass, *Die Abendmahllehre bei Luther und Calvin* (Beiträge zur Förderung Christlicher Theologie 2 ser. XLVII; 2d edition); A. M. Hunter, *The Teaching of Calvin*, pp. 178-190; A. J. Macdonald (ed.), *The Evangelical Doctrine of Holy Communion*, ch. v; G. MacGregor, *Görhus Christi*, ch. x; J.-D. Benoit, *Calvin, directeur d'âmes*, pp. 204-211; W. Niesel, *Calvins Lehre vom Abendmahl*. Pannier has an extended footnote on the background of the similar chapter (xii) in VG 1541: *Institution IV*. 7, note a, on pp. 299 ff. For general approach, see W. Köhler, *Zwingli und Luther: Ihr Streit über das Abendmahl*, 2 vols.; R. Will, *Le Culte, étude d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*, 8 vols.; D. Stone, *A History of the Doctrine of the Eucharist*, 2 vols. (extracts from Calvin, II. 50-56). Significant twentieth-century liturgical developments in the Reformed churches are interpreted by J.-D. Benoit in his conference lecture *Liturgical Renewal: Studies in Catholic and Protestant Developments on the Continent*, pp. 29-56.

² Resuming the thought of IV. xvi. 9, 32.

³ The reference is to the strife within the Reformation over this Sacrament during more than three decades before 1559.

of him,⁴ we may repeatedly gather strength until we shall have reached heavenly immortality.

Since, however, this mystery of Christ's secret union with the devout is by nature incomprehensible,⁵ he shows its figure and image in visible signs best adapted to our small capacity. Indeed, by giving guarantees and tokens⁶ he makes it as certain for us as if we had seen it with our own eyes. For this very familiar comparison penetrates into even the duller minds: just as bread and wine sustain physical life, so are souls fed by Christ. We now understand the purpose of this mystical blessing,⁷ namely, to confirm for us the fact that the Lord's body was once for all so sacrificed for us that we may now feed upon it, and by feeding feel in ourselves the working of that unique sacrifice; and that his blood was once so shed for us in order to be our perpetual drink. And so speak the words of the promise added there: "Take, this is my body which is given for you" [I Cor. 11:24; cf. Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19]. We are therefore bidden to take and eat the body which was once for all offered for our salvation, in order that when we see ourselves made partakers in it, we may assuredly conclude that the power of his life-giving death will be efficacious in us. Hence, he also calls the cup "the covenant in his blood" [Luke 22:20; I Cor. 11:25]. For he in some measure renews, or rather continues, the covenant which he once for all ratified with his blood (as far as it pertains to the strengthening of our faith) whenever he proffers that sacred blood for us to taste.

2. Union with Christ as the special fruit of the Lord's Supper
 Godly souls can gather great assurance and delight from this

⁴ "Eius communicatio refect"; VG: "rebus de se substance," i.e., "nourris de sa force vivante" (Cadier's note). But cf. the phrases used in 1936, not in later editions, quoted in sec. 8, note 24, below. "Communicatio" is often used by Calvin in preference to *communio*. On the corresponding French forms Cadier notes that *communiquer* and *communication* have the advantage over *communier* and *communion* in that they call attention to the spiritual reality in conjunction with the act and ceremony: *Institution IV*, §49, note 4; cf. Cadier, *La Doctrine Calviniste de la Sainte Cène*, pp. 16 f.; J.-C. McLelland, *The Visible Words of God: An Exposition of the Sacramental Theology of Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ch. vi: "The Sacrament of Communion."

⁵ "Mysterium hoc arcanae Christi cum his unionis natura incomprehensibile est." The "mystery" is not treated by Calvin as an intellectual puzzle. It is indeed inexplicable, but the emphasis is on the effectual transformation of the believer, through union with Christ. Cf. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, pp. 218 ff.; Barclay, *The Protestant Doctrine of the Lord's Supper*, pp. 112, 203, 264.

⁶ "Arctis ac tesseri": cf. IV. xiv. 1, note 2.

⁷ "Mystica haec benedictio."

Sacrament; in it they have a witness of our growth into one body with Christ such that whatever is his may be called ours. As a consequence, we may dare assure ourselves that eternal life, of which he is the heir, is ours; and that the Kingdom of Heaven, into which he has already entered, can no more be cut off from us than from him; again, that we cannot be condemned for our sins, from whose guilt he has absolved us, since he willed to take them upon himself as if they were his own. This is the wonderful exchange⁸ which, out of his measureless benevolence, he has made with us; that, becoming Son of man with us, he has made us sons of God with him; that, by his descent to earth, he has prepared an ascent to heaven for us; that, by taking on our mortality, he has conferred his immortality upon us; that, accepting our weakness, he has strengthened us by his power; that, receiving our poverty unto himself, he has transferred his wealth to us; that, taking the weight of our iniquity upon himself (which oppressed us), he has clothed us with his righteousness.

3. *The spiritual presence of Christ*

⁸ In this Sacrament we have such full witness of all these things that we must certainly consider them as if Christ here present were himself set before our eyes and touched by our hands.⁹ For his word cannot lie or deceive us: "Take, eat, drink: this is my body, which is given for you; this is my blood, which is shed for forgiveness of sins" [Matt. 26:26-28, conflated with I Cor. 11:24; cf. Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20]. By bidding us take, he indicates that it is ours; by bidding us eat, that it is made one substance with us; ¹⁰ by declaring that his body is given for us and his blood shed for us, he teaches that both are not so much his as ours. For he took up and laid down ¹¹ both, not for his own advantage but for our ¹² salvation.

⁹ And, indeed, we must carefully observe that the very powerful and almost entire force of the Sacrament lies in these words: "which is given for you," "which is shed for you." The present distribution of the body and blood of the Lord would not greatly benefit us unless they had once for all been given for our redemption and salvation.¹⁰ They are therefore represented under bread

⁸ "*Mistica communitio*." The description of the soul's transformation that follows is reminiscent of Luther's description of the effects of faith, *Treatise on Christian Liberty* (1520) (*Werke* WA VII. 54 f.; tr. *Works of Martin Luther* II. 318 ff.); cf. Luther, *Sermon on the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and on the Brotherhoods* (*Werke* WA II. 743 ff.; tr. *Works of Martin Luther* II. 11-14).

⁹ Cf. *Instruction in Faith* 29 (OS I. 418; tr. Fuhrmann, p. 70).

¹⁰ Luther, *Little Catechism* (1529) (*Werke* WA XXX. 316; tr. J. Lenker,

and wine so that we may learn not only that they are ours but that they have been destined as food for our spiritual life.

And so as we previously stated, from the physical things set forth in the Sacrament we are led by a sort of analogy to spiritual things.¹¹ Thus, when bread is given as a symbol of Christ's body, we must at once grasp this comparison: as bread nourishes, sustains, and keeps the life of our body, so Christ's body is the only food to invigorate and enliven our soul. When we see wine set forth as a symbol of blood, we must reflect on the benefits which wine imparts to the body, and so realize that the same are spiritually imparted to us by Christ's blood. These benefits are to nourish, refresh, strengthen, and gladden.¹² For if we sufficiently consider what value we have received from the giving of that most holy body and the shedding of that blood, we shall clearly perceive that those qualities of bread and wine are, according to such an analogy, excellently adapted to express those things when they are communicated to us.

(*The promise sealed in the Supper as we are made partakers of Christ's flesh—a mystery felt rather than explained, 4-7*)

4. *The meaning of the promise of the Lord's Supper*

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 unto eternal life. [John 6:55]. By this he declares himself to be the bread of life, of which he who eats will live forever [John 6:48, 50]. And to do this, the Sacrament sends us to the cross of Christ, where that promise was indeed performed and in all respects fulfilled. For we do not eat Christ duly and unto salvation unless he is crucified, when in living experience we grasp the efficacy of his death. In calling himself "the bread of life," he did not borrow that name from the Sacrament, as some wrongly interpret.¹⁴ Rather, he had been given as such

Luther's *Catechetical Writings*, p. 93; *Sermon on Confession and the Eucharist* (*Werke* WA XV. 494 f.).

¹¹ Middle of sec. 1, above.

¹² "*In symbolum . . . datur*." In 1536 and 1539 Calvin used *signum* here. Cf.

IV. xvi. 2, note 3.

¹³ Luther, *Sermon on Confession and the Eucharist* (*Werke* WA. XV. 495 f.). Cf. D. Stone, *op. cit.*, I, 389, quoting Biel in a similar passage (*Sacrae canonice missae expositio*, lect. lxxxv AB).

¹⁴ Cf. De Castro, *Adversus haereses* VI (1543 ed., fo. 90 H, 91 D). Calvin, as Gädter notes, holds that the passage in question, on "the bread of life" (John 6:35-48), is to be interpreted with reference "not to the institution of the

Take
Eat
Christ
present
by the spirit
different
from what
we want by
material
presence

to us by the Father and showed himself as such when, being made a sharer in our human mortality, he made us partakers in his divine immortality; when, offering himself as a sacrifice, he bore our curse in himself to imbue us with his blessing; when, by his death, he swallowed up and annihilated death. [cf. I Peter 3:22, Vg., and I Cor. 15:54]; and when, in his resurrection, he raised up this corruptible flesh of ours, which he had put on, to glory and incorruption [cf. I Cor. 15:53-54].

5. *How we are partakers by faith*¹⁵

It remains for all this to be applied to us. That is done through the gospel but more clearly through the Sacred Supper, where he offers himself with all his benefits to us, and we receive him by faith. ¹⁶Therefore, the Sacrament does not cause Christ to begin to be the bread of life; but when it reminds us that he was made the bread of life, which we continually eat, and which gives us a relish and savor of that bread, it causes us to feel the power of that bread. For it assures us that all that Christ did or suffered was done to quicken us; and again, that this quickening is eternal, we being ceaselessly nourished, sustained, and preserved throughout life by it. For, as Christ would not have been the bread of life for us if he had not been born and had not died for us, and if he had not arisen for us, so this would not now be the case at all if the effectiveness and result of his birth, death, and resurrection were not something eternal and immortal. ¹⁷Christ beautifully expresses the whole matter in these words: "The bread which I shall give you is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." [John 6:51; cf. ch. 6:52, Vg.] By these words he doubtless means that his body will to us be as bread for the spiritual life of the soul, for it was to be made subject to death for our salvation; ¹⁸moreover, that it is offered to us to eat, when it makes us sharers in him by faith. ¹⁹Once for all, therefore, he gave his body to be made bread when he yielded himself to be crucified for the redemption of the world; daily he gives it when by the word of the gospel he offers it for us to partake, inasmuch as it was crucified, when he seals such giving of himself by the sacred mystery of the Supper, and when he inwardly fulfills what he outwardly designates.

²⁰Now here we ought to guard against two faults. First, we should not, by too little regard for the signs, divorce them from their mysteries, to which they are so to speak attached. Secondly,

Lord's Supper alone, but in the perspective of the whole work of Christ, and of his Person" (Cadtler, *Institution* IV, 351, note 5).

¹⁵ Cf. J. C. McLelland, *The Visible Words of God*, p. 146.

we should not, by extolling them immoderately,¹⁶ seem to obscure somewhat the mysteries themselves.

None but the utterly irreligious deny that Christ is the bread of life by which believers are nourished into eternal life. But there is no unanimity as to the mode of partaking of him. For there are some who define the eating of Christ's flesh and the drinking of his blood as, in one word, nothing but to believe in Christ. But it seems to me that Christ meant to teach something more definite, and more elevated, in that noble discourse in which he commends to us the eating of his flesh [John 6:26 ff.]. It is that we are quickened by the true partaking of him; and he has therefore designated this partaking by the words "eating" and "drinking," in order that no one should think that the life that we receive from him is received by mere knowledge. As it is not the seeing but the eating of bread that suffices to feed the body, so the soul must truly and deeply become partaker of Christ that it may be quickened to spiritual life by his power.

We admit indeed, meanwhile, that this is no other eating than that of faith, as no other can be imagined. But here is the difference between my words and theirs: for them to eat is only to believe; I say that we eat Christ's flesh in believing,¹⁷ because it is made ours by faith, and that this eating is the result and effect of faith. Or if you want it said more clearly, for them eating is faith; for me it seems rather to follow from faith. This is a small difference indeed in words, but no slight one in the matter itself. For even though the apostle teaches that "Christ dwells in our hearts through faith" [Eph. 3:17, cf. Vg.], no one will interpret this indwelling to be faith, but all feel that he is there expressing a remarkable effect of faith, for through this believers gain Christ abiding in them. In this way the Lord intended, by calling himself the "bread of life" [John 6:51], to teach not only that salvation for us rests on faith in his death and resurrection, but also that, by true partaking of him, his life passes into us and is made ours—just as bread when taken as food imparts vigor to the body.

¹⁶ Alluding respectively to Zwingli and the Lutheran theologians.

¹⁷ "*Credendo manducari*"; Vg: "*en croyant nous mangions*." Cf. McLelland, *op. cit.*, p. 146, stressing the agreement of Calvin and Peter Martyr, and his Appendix C, pp. 379 f. The preceding sentences evidently have reference to Zwingli and the letter of Cornelius Hendrix Hoen (Houius), which Zwingli received and edited (1525) (CR Zwingli IV, 512-518); cf. Zwingli's letter to M. Alberus, November 16, 1524; *Commentary on True and False Religion* (1525); (CR Zwingli III, 339, 818). These passages interpret John 6:52-57.

To ~~MAN~~ eat in or by faith means that we believe this food is in fact what Christ says it is - his body and blood and that by eating it we are united to him and manifested in faith by him

6. *Augustine and Chrysostom on this**

^bAnd Augustine (whom they appeal to as their patron) did not write that we eat by believing in any other sense than to show that this eating is of faith, not of the mouth. I too do not deny this. At the same time, however, I add that by faith we embrace Christ not as appearing from afar but as joining himself to us that he may be our head, we his members. Yet I do not utterly disallow that expression, but only deny that it is the full interpretation, if they mean to define what it is to eat Christ's flesh. Elsewhere, I see that Augustine has often used this expression. For example, he says in Book 3, *On Christian Doctrine*: "The phrase, 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man' [John 6:54-55; ch. 6:53, EV], is a figure, teaching us that we must partake of the Lord's Passion, and sweetly and profitably store up in memory the fact that his flesh was crucified and wounded for us." Again, when he says that those three thousand men who were converted by Peter's preaching [Acts 2:41] by believing drank Christ's blood, which in cruel rage they had shed. But in very many other passages he highly commends that benefit of faith, for through it our souls are as much refreshed by partaking of Christ's flesh as bodies are by the bread they eat.¹⁸ And Chrysostom writes the same thing in another passage: "Christ makes us his body not by faith only but by the very thing itself."¹⁹ For he means that such good is not obtained from any other source than faith; but he only wishes to exclude the possibility that anyone, when he hears faith mentioned, should conceive of it as mere imagining. *The sacrament strikes again!*

^cI now pass over those who would have the Supper only a mark of outward profession; for it seems to me that I have refuted their error sufficiently when I dealt with the sacraments in general.²⁰ Let my readers only observe that when the cup is called the covenant "in . . . blood" [Luke 22:20], a promise is expressed which serves to strengthen faith. From this it follows that unless we look to God and embrace what he offers, we do not rightly use the Sacred Supper.

7. *Thought and words inadequate**

^bMoreover, I am not satisfied with those persons who, recognizing, *On Christian Doctrine* III. xvi. 24 (MPL 34. 74 f.; tr. NPNF II. 566); *John's Gospel* xxxi. 9; xl. 2 (MPL 35. 1640, 1686; tr. NPNF VII. 191, 225); *Sermons* cxxxi. 1; lvii. 7 (MPL 38. 729, 389; tr. LF *Sermons* II. 586 f., 84 f.).

¹⁸ Chrysostom, *Opera* (Basel, 1530) IV. 581.

²⁰ IV. xiii, xiv. Cf. also Comm. Harmony of the Evangelists, Matt. 26:21-30; Mark 14:18-26; Luke 22:15-20.

ing that we have some communion with Christ, when they would show what it is, make us partakers of the Spirit only, omitting mention of flesh and blood.²¹ As though all these things were said in vain: that his flesh is truly food, that his blood is truly drink [John 6:55]; that none have life except those who eat his flesh and drink his blood [John 6:53]; and other passages pertaining to the same thing! Therefore, if it is certain that an integral communion of Christ reaches beyond their too narrow description of it, I shall proceed to deal with it briefly, in so far as it is clear and manifest, before I discuss the contrary fault of excess. For I shall have a longer disputation with the extravagant doctors, who, while in the grossness of their minds they devise an absurd fashion of eating and drinking, also transfigure Christ, stripped of his own flesh, into a phantasm²²; if one may reduce to words so great a mystery, which I see that I do not even sufficiently comprehend with my mind. I therefore freely admit that no man should measure its sublimity by the little measure of my childishness.²³ Rather, I urge my readers not to confine their mental interest within these too narrow limits, but to strive to rise much higher than I can lead them. For, whenever this matter is discussed, when I have tried to say all, I feel that I have as yet said little in proportion to its worth. And although my mind can think beyond what my tongue can utter, yet even my mind is conquered and overwhelmed by the greatness of the thing. Therefore, nothing remains but to break forth in wonder at this mystery, which plainly neither the mind is able to conceive nor the tongue to express: Nevertheless, I shall in one way or another

²¹ This opinion was espoused by Carlstadt; Barth and Niesel, however, think it unlikely that Calvin learned it from him, but suppose rather that it is directed against the reproaches of Lutherans (OS V. 348, note 6). They also cite the explicit affirmations of the "Confession of Faith Concerning the Eucharist" put forth by the Synod of Bern (1537) (CR IX. 711 f.; OS I. 435 f.), and of the *Short Treatise on the Holy Supper* (1541) (OS I. 508; CR V. 438 f.; tr. Calvin, *Tracts* II. 170 f.).

²² Cf. sec. 17, note 58, below, and the characterization of the Lutheran doctrine of ubiquity, sec. 29 ("*ubique locorum . . . absque forma*") and sec. 30. In his *Short Treatise on the Holy Supper* I, Calvin criticizes the doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ's body as implying "nothing but a phantasm" (OS I. 521; tr. Calvin, *Tracts* II. 187).

²³ "*Infantiae meae modico*." Cf. the note of mystery and mystical elevation in IV. xiv. 6; IV. xvi. 2. Calvin bows humbly before the mystery of the Eucharist: where he fails, he challenges others to rise higher (*multo altius assurgere*) if they are able. In his answer to Westphal he refers to the "mystery surpassing human search [*mysterium humanae curiositati impervestigabile*] that Christ in heaven feeds us with his flesh on earth" (CR IX. 81; tr. Calvin, *Tracts* II. 291). Cf. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, p. 221; MacGregor, *Corpus Christi*, pp. 87, 198 ff.

sum up my views; for, as I do not doubt them to be true, I am confident they will be approved in godly hearts.

(This life-giving communion is brought about by the Holy Spirit. 8-10)

8. *Christ makes his abode in our flesh**

First of all,²⁴ we are taught from the Scriptures that Christ was from the beginning that life-giving Word of the Father [John 1:1], the spring and source of life, from which all things have always received their capacity to live. Therefore, John sometimes calls him "the Word of life" [I John 1:1], sometimes writes that "in him was life" [John 1:4], meaning that he, flowing even into all creatures, instilled in them the power to breathe and live.

The same John afterward adds that life was manifested only when, having taken our flesh, the Son of God gave himself for our eyes to see and our hands to touch. [I John 1:2]. For even though he previously poured out his power upon the creatures, still, because man (estranged from God through sin and having lost participation in life) saw death threatening from every side, he had to be received into communion of the Word in order to receive hope of immortality. For how little assurance would you grasp, if you heard that the Word of God (from which you are far removed) contains in itself fullness of life, but in and round about yourself nothing but death meets you and moves before your eyes? But when the Source of life begins to abide in our flesh, he no longer lies hidden far from us, but shows us that we are to partake of him. But he also quickens our very flesh in which he abides, that by partaking of him we may be fed unto immortality. "I am," he says, "the bread of life come down from heaven. And the bread which I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." [John 6:48, 51; cf. ch. 6:51-52; Vg.] By these words he teaches not only that he is life since he is the eternal Word of God, who came down from heaven to us, but also that by coming down he poured that power upon the flesh which he took in order that from it participation in life might flow unto us.

From this also these things follow: that his flesh is truly food, and his blood truly drink [John 6:55; cf. ch. 6:56, Vg.], and by these foods believers are nourished unto eternal life. It is there-

²⁴ Sections 8-10 expounded principles stated with great compression in a passage in the 1596 edition (OS I. 142), in which Calvin explains how Christ's body is "shown" in the Eucharist--"not the very substance of his body or the true and natural body of Christ, . . . but all the benefits which Christ in his body provided for us." Cf. Pamier, *Institution* IV. 21, note 2, pp. 304 f.

fore a special comfort for the godly, that they now find life in their own flesh. For thus not only do they reach it by an easy approach, but they have it spontaneously presented and laid out before them. Let them but open the bosom of their heart to embrace its presence, and they will obtain it.

9. *Sense in which Christ's body is life-giving**

But the flesh of Christ does not of itself have a power so great as to quicken us, for in its first condition it was subject to mortality, and now, endowed with immortality, it does not live through itself. Nevertheless, since it is pervaded with fullness of life to be transmitted to us, it is rightly called "life-giving." In this sense I interpret with Cyril that saying of Christ's: "As the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself" [John 5:26, cf. Vg.]. For there he is properly speaking not of those gifts which he had in the Father's presence from the beginning, but of those with which he was adorned in that very flesh wherein he appeared. Accordingly, he shows that in his humanity there also dwells fullness of life, so that whoever has partaken of his flesh and blood may at the same time enjoy participation in life.²⁵

We can explain the nature of this by a familiar example. Water is sometimes drunk from a spring, sometimes drawn, sometimes led by channels to water the fields, yet it does not flow forth from itself for so many uses, but from the very source, which by unceasing flow supplies and serves it. In like manner, the flesh of Christ is like a rich and inexhaustible fountain that pours into us the life springing forth from the Godhead into itself. Now who does not see that communion of Christ's flesh and blood is necessary for all who aspire to heavenly life?

This is the purport of the apostle's statements: "The church . . . is the body of Christ, and the fullness of him" [Eph. 1:23]; but he is "the head" [Eph. 4:15] "from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by . . . joints . . . makes bodily growth" [Eph. 4:16]; "our bodies are members of Christ" [I Cor. 6:15]. We understand that all these things could not be brought about otherwise than by his cleaving to us wholly in spirit and body. But Paul graced with a still more glorious title that intimate fellowship in which we are joined with his flesh, when he said, "We are members of his body, of his bones and of his flesh" [Eph. 5:30]. Finally, to witness to this thing greater than all words, he ends his discourse with an exclamation: "This," he

²⁵ Cyril of Alexandria, *Exposition of John's Gospel* II. viii (MPG 73. 381 f.).

says, "is a great mystery"²⁶ [Eph. 5:32]. It would be extreme madness to recognize no communion of believers with the flesh and blood of the Lord, which the apostle declares to be so great that he prefers to marvel at it rather than to explain it.

10. *The presence of Christ's body in the Lord's Supper*

To summarize: our souls are fed by the flesh and blood of Christ in the same way that bread and wine keep and sustain physical life. For the analogy of the sign applies only if souls find their nourishment in Christ—which cannot happen unless Christ truly grows into one with us, and refreshes us by the eating of his flesh and the drinking of his blood.

Even though it seems unbelievable that Christ's flesh, separated from us by such great distance, penetrates to us, so that it becomes our food, let us remember how far the secret power of the Holy Spirit towers above all our senses, and how foolish it is to wish to measure his immeasurableness by our measure. What, then, our mind does not comprehend, let faith conceive: that the Spirit truly unites things separated in space.²⁷

Now, that sacred partaking of his flesh and blood, by which Christ pours his life into us, as if it penetrated into our bones and marrow, he also testifies and seals in the Supper—not by presenting a vain and empty sign, but by manifesting there the effectiveness of his Spirit to fulfill what he promises. And truly he offers and shows the reality there signified to all who sit at that spiritual banquet, although it is received with benefit by believers alone, who accept such great generosity with true faith and gratefulness of heart.

In this manner the apostle said, "The bread which we break is a participation in the body of Christ; the cup which we consecrate to this by word and prayers is a participation in his blood" [I Cor. 10:16 p., order changed]. There is no reason for anyone to object that this is a figurative expression by which the

²⁶ "Arcanum."

²⁷ The above sentences express Calvin's sense of the mystery of the sacramental participation in Christ's body through the activity of the Holy Spirit, despite distance (*locorum distantia*) and separation (*locis distincta*)—a thing incredible until we realize the transcendent hidden power (*arcana virtus*) of the Holy Spirit. Cf. sec. 7, note 23, above; IV. xvii. 11. For his habitual assertion of the mysterious power (*virtus*) operating in the sacraments, Calvin's doctrine has been called "virtualism."

²⁸ "Accumbunt"; the word does not always imply the ancient Roman recumbent posture at a feast. Calvin's contemporaries, such as John Brenz, used the same word in discussing the Eucharist (as quoted by W. Elert, *Morologie des Lutherismus* I. 266). Cf. sec. 35, note 20, below.

name of the thing signified is given to the sign,²⁹ we indeed admit that the breaking of bread is a symbol: it is not the thing itself. But, having admitted this, we shall nevertheless duly infer that by the showing of the symbol the thing itself is also shown.³⁰ For unless a man means to call God a deceiver, he would never dare assert that an empty symbol is set forth by him. Therefore, if the Lord truly represents the participation in his body through the breaking of bread, there ought not to be the least doubt that he truly presents and shows his body. And the godly ought by all means to keep this rule: whenever they see symbols appointed by the Lord, to think and be persuaded that the truth of the thing signified is surely present there. For why should the Lord put in your hand the symbol of his body, except to assure you of a true participation in it? But if it is true that a visible sign is given us to seal the gift of a thing invisible, when we have received the symbol of the body, let us no less surely trust that the body itself is also given to us.

(Relation of the outward sign and invisible reality variously misstated by the Schoolmen, and in the doctrine of transubstantiation, II-15)

11. *Signification, matter, and effect of the Sacrament*³¹

Therefore say (what has always been accepted in the church and is today taught by all of sound opinion) that the sacred mystery of the Supper consists in two things: physical signs, which, thrust before our eyes, represent to us, according to our feeble capacity, things invisible; and spiritual truth, which is at the same time represented and displayed through the symbols themselves.³²

When I wish to show the nature of this truth in familiar terms, I usually set down three things: the signification, the matter that depends upon it, and the power or effect that follows from both.

²⁹ "Rei nomen signo deferatur." In the subsequent sentences we find *symbolum* instead of *signum*, as also in sec. 11, but VG has "signe" in each instance, adding once *exteriore* and again *visibile*.

³⁰ Cf. Hoer's letter in CR Zwingli IV. 513; sec. 5, note 17, above; Augustine, *Sermons* cclxxii (MPL 38. 1247); Bucer, *Metaphrasen et enarrationes in epistolam ad Romanos* (1536), p. 152: "regna, quibus aeterna vita tum significanda exhibetur, tum exhibendo significatur"; A. Lang, *Der Evangelienkommentar Martin Butlers und die Grundzüge seiner Theologie*, pp. 259-265; Barth and Niesel have indicated, with the aid of Herminjard, *Correspondance* VI. 130-136, that in this section and in some later passages Calvin has introduced fragments originally written for his Commentary on Romans but omitted from it on Melancthon's advice (OS V. 352, note k; 354, note h [sec. 11]; 357-358, notes a-h [sec. 13]; 365, notes c-g; 366, note a [sec. 19]; 399, note i [sec. 32]).

The signification is contained in the promises, which are, so to speak, implicit in the sign. I call Christ with his death and resurrection the matter, or substance. But by effect I understand redemption, righteousness, sanctification, and eternal life, and all the other benefits Christ gives to us.

Now, even though all these things have to do with faith, I leave no place for the sophistry that what I mean when I say Christ is received by faith is that he is received only by understanding and imagination.³¹ For the promises offer him, not for us to halt in the appearance and bare knowledge alone, but to enjoy true participation in him. And indeed, I do not see how anyone can trust that he has redemption and righteousness in the cross of Christ, and life in his death, unless he relies chiefly upon a true participation in Christ himself. For these benefits would not come to us unless Christ first made himself ours.

I say, therefore, that in the mystery of the Supper, Christ is truly shown to us through the symbols of bread and wine, his very body and blood, in which he has fulfilled all obedience to obtain righteousness for us. Why? First, that we may grow into one body with him; secondly, having been made partakers of his substance, that we may also feel his power in partaking of all his benefits.

12. Spatial presence of Christ's body?

³¹I now come down to the extravagant mixtures that superstition has brought in. For here Satan has disported himself with wonderful subtlety in order to draw men's minds from heaven and imbue them with a perverse error—imagining that Christ is attached to the element of bread!

³²And first we must not dream of such a presence of Christ in the Sacrament as the craftsmen of the Roman court have fashioned—as if the body of Christ, by a local presence, were put there to be touched by the hands, to be chewed by the teeth, and to be swallowed by the mouth. For Pope Nicholas dictated this form of recantation to Berengar as proof of his repentance, that is, with words so monstrous that the author of the Gloss exclaims there is danger, unless readers exercise wise caution, of their drawing from it a heresy worse than that of Berengar.³²

³¹ Zwingle, *Friendly Exegesis, That Is, Exposition of the Eucharist, to Martin Luther* (1527) (CR Zwingli V. 588 f.).

³² The document *Ego Berengarius* was that writer's act of repudiation of his previous teaching, exacted from him at Rome in 1059; the formulation is by Cardinal Humbert. Its language is extreme: "the true body and blood of Our Lord . . . sensibly and not only sacramentally but in truth handled and broken by the hands of the priests and crushed by the teeth of believers"

But Peter Lombard, even though he toils hard to explain away this absurdity, inclines rather more to a divergent opinion.³³

³⁴For as we do not doubt that Christ's body is limited by the general characteristics common to all human bodies, and is contained in heaven (where it was once for all received), and is con-
return in judgment [Acts 3:21], so we deem it utterly unlawful to draw it back under these corruptible elements or to imagine it to be present everywhere.³⁴

And there is no need of this for us to enjoy a participation in it, since the Lord bestows this benefit upon us through his Spirit so that we may be made one in body, spirit, and soul with him. The bond of this connection is therefore the Spirit of Christ, with whom we are joined in unity, and is like a channel through which all that Christ himself is and has is conveyed to us.³⁵ For if we see that the sun, shedding its beams upon the earth, casts its substance in some measure upon it in order to beget, nourish, and give growth to its offspring—why should the radiance of Christ's Spirit be less in order to impart to us the communion of his flesh and blood? On this account, Scripture, in speaking of our participation with Christ, relates its whole power to the Spirit. But one passage will suffice for many. For Paul, in the eighth chapter of Romans, states that Christ dwells in us only through his Spirit [Rom. 8:9]. Yet he does not take away that communion of his flesh and blood which we are now discussing [Rom. 8:9], but teaches that the Spirit alone causes us to possess Christ completely and have him dwelling in us.³⁶

13. Error of the Schoolmen: bread mistaken for God*

³⁶The Schoolmen, having a horror of such barbarous impiety, speak more modestly.³⁷ Yet they also do nothing but indulge in deceitful subtleties. They grant that Christ is not there contained in any circumscriptive or bodily fashion.³⁸ But they then

(Mibt, *Quellen*, 4th edition, p. 144). For another translation, and full discussion, see A. J. Macdonald, *Berengar and the Reform of Sacramental Doctrine*, p. 130. "Never," says Y. Brilioth, "has it the real presence been formulated more crudely" (*Eucharistic Faith and Practice; Evangelical and Catholic*, p. 86). Cf. Gratian, *Decretum* III. ii. 42 (MPL 187. 1750 f.; Friedberg I. 1238 f.).

³³ Lombard, *Sentences* IV. xii. 4, 5 (MPL 192. 865), does not approve the language of the *Ego Berengarius* on the breaking of the true body by the priest.

³⁴ Cf. sec. 7, note 22, above; sec. 30, below.

³⁵ *Sermo on the Holy Spirit in Chrysostom's Opera* (Basel, 1530) V. 379.

³⁶ Bucer, *Metaphrases . . . in epistolam ad Romanos* (1530), fo. 338; Lang, *op. cit.*, p. 444; "Sic Christum suo spiritu salvifico, iam intra nos habitare,"

³⁷ "More modestly," that is, than the *Ego Berengarius* statement.

³⁸ Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* III. lxxxvi. 5. 1.

The error of transubstantiation