

# John Calvin and the ‘accursed idolatry’ of the papal mass

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This article comprises a comparison of article 16 of the Genevan Confession (1536), certain extracts of ‘A small tract on Holy Communion (1541)’ and a letter to Madame the Duchess of Ferrara (1541), with question 80<sup>1</sup> of the Heidelberg Catechism (HC80).

**Johannes Calvin en die ‘vervloekte afgodery’ van die pouslike mis.** Die artikel fokus op die Gereformeerde teoloog Johannes Calvin se besware teen die Rooms Katolieke mis soos verwoord in artikel 16 van die Geneefse Belydenis (1536), sekere uittreksels van sy ‘Klein traktaat oor die heilige nagmaal’ (1541), en ‘n brief deur hom aan Renée die Hertogin van Ferrara (1541). Sy besware word verder vergelyk met vraag en antwoord 80 van die Heidelbergse Kategismus. Hierdeur poog die artikel om die huidige ignorering van die verskille tussen die nagmaal van die Here en die Rooms Katolieke mis wat die onlangse debatte daar rondom kenmerk, te deurbreek.

## Introduction

Protestants who believed that the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) marked the beginning of a new epoch of benevolence and openness between Roman Catholics and Protestants were reminded by a pronouncement of Pope Benedict XVI<sup>2</sup> on Monday, 03 October 2005 that the Council of Trent was still authoritative for what Rome believes and does.<sup>3</sup> Referring specifically to the Roman Catholic mass, Benedict declared the following on St. Peter’s square:

The Catholic doctrine on the Eucharist ... authoritatively defined by the Council of Trent, must be absorbed, experienced and transmitted by the ecclesial community in ways that are ever new and adapted to the times ... (Vatican Information Service 2005)

One of the ‘ways that are new and adapted to the times’ in which the Tridentine doctrine of the Eucharist has been transmitted in our own day, is the idea of the ‘re-presentation’<sup>4</sup> or ‘making present’<sup>5</sup> of the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ during mass.<sup>6</sup> According to this theory, nothing is thus added to the sacrifice of Christ in the mass, because His real, objective sacrifice – yes, Christ himself in the act of dying on the cross in history – is made *present* in the eucharist. This concept of the ‘re-presentation’ of Christ’s sacrifice draws heavily on works such as *Die Liturgie als Mysterienfeier* (Casel 1922) by the Benedictine monk Dom Odo Casel (1886–1948), who in turn gleaned many of his ideas from the pagan Greco-Roman mystery cults.

But in comparing, for instance, the following two canons with Casel’s ‘protestant friendly’ re-presentation theory, the irreconcilability of what the Council of Trent authoritatively defined

1.The questions of this Catechism were initially not numbered, and question 80 was designated this number only from the first Latin edition of the catechism (Bakhuizen van den Brink 1976:32).

2.Josef Aloisius Ratzinger was pope from 2005–2013.

3.The Council of Trent pronounced approximately 135 curses (*anathema sit*) against those who would differ from Rome’s opinion of things.

4.*Repraesentatio* in Latin, or *vergegenwärtigen* in German.

5.Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church – Statement 1366 states: ‘The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice because it re-presents (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross, because it is its *memorial* and because it *applies* its fruit’ (Catholic Church 1994:380).

6.One protestant writer who buys into one of these ‘ways that are new and adapted to the times’ in Rome’s presentation of the eucharist or mass is Keith A. Mathison. This is evident when he writes: ‘Numerous Protestants have argued that the Roman Catholic Mass is a ‘repetition’ of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. This does not appear to be the intent of the Council of Trent. The idea, which is expressed much more clearly in the 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, is that ‘the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*’ (par. 1367). In other words, Rome doesn’t teach that the Mass is a repetition of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Rather, Rome teaches that the Mass is the *same* sacrifice as that which Christ offered on the cross (see Mathison 2002:251).

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concerning the doctrine of the Eucharist and Casel's views becomes evident. Canon VI of Session XIII of the council, held during 1551, states:

If anyone says that in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is not to be adored with the worship of latria,<sup>7</sup> also outwardly manifested, and is consequently neither to be venerated with a special festive solemnity, nor to be solemnly borne about in procession according to the laudable and universal rite and custom of holy Church, or is not to be set publicly before the people to be adored and that the adorers thereof are idolaters, let him be accursed. (Schaff [1889] 1919)<sup>8</sup>

Canon III of Session XXII of the Council of Trent, held during 1562, states:

If anyone says that the sacrifice of the mass is one only of praise and thanksgiving; or that it is a mere commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross but not a propitiatory one; or that it profits him only who receives, and ought not to be offered for the living and the dead, for sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities, let him be accursed. (Schaff [1889] 1919)<sup>9</sup>

On 07 July 2007 Pope Benedict XVI published a letter entitled "*motu proprio data*" *Summorum Pontificum* on the use of the Roman liturgy prior to the reform of 1970' (Vatican 2007). With this letter Benedict re-established the Tridentine mass in its legal right, and thereby made it more accessible to those who prefer the Latin mass to the mass that came into use from 1970. Criticism from traditionalists against the post-Vatican II *Novus Ordo* mass had especially to do with its toning down of the *sacrificial* aspect of the mass.<sup>10</sup>

With the election of the first-ever Jesuit<sup>11</sup> pope, Francis I,<sup>12</sup> who on Saturday, 05 October 2013 appointed his special envoy<sup>13</sup> to the 450th anniversary of the conclusion of the Council of Trent in Trento, Italy (Vatican Information Service 2013),<sup>14</sup> it seems imperative to re-evaluate and reaffirm the commitment of the Reformed churches of the world to what the Word of God teaches about the Lord's Supper and also about the papal mass.

7.Cf. Concilium Tridentini. Sessio XIII, celebrata die XI. Octobris 1551. *Decretum de sanctissimo eucharistiae sacramento. Caput V. De cultu, et veneratione huic sanctissimo sacramento exhibenda. ... Nullus itaque dubitandi locus relinquatur, quin omnes Christi fideles pro more in Catholica Ecclesia semper recepto latriae cultum, qui vero Deo debetur, huic sanctissimo sacramento in veneratione exhibeant ...* (see Schaff [1889]1919:126).

8.Concilium Tridentini. Sessio XIII, 1551, *Decretum de sanctissimo eucharistiae sacramento*, Canon VI. – *Si quis dixerit, in sancto Eucharistiae sacramento Christum, unigenitum Dei Filium, non esse cultu latriae etiam externo adorandum, atque ideo non festiva peculiari celebritate venerandum, neque in processionibus secundum laudabilem et universalem Ecclesiae sanctae ritum et consuetudinem solemniter circumgestandum, vel non publice, ut adoretur, populo proponendum, et ejus adoratores esse idololatrias: anathema sit* (see Schaff [1889] 1919:137).

9.Concilium Tridentini. Sessio XXII, 1562. *Doctrina de sacrificio Missae*. Canon III. – *Si quis dixerit, missae sacrificium tantum esse laudis et gratiarum actionis, aut nudam commemorationem sacrificii in cruce peracti, non autem propitiatorium; vel soli commedens sumenti; neque pro vivis et defunctis pro peccatis, poenis, satisfactionibus et aliis necessitatibus offerri debere: anathema sit.* (see Schaff [1889] 1919:185).

10.In this regard, the incorporating of Dom Odo Casel's theory about the re-presentation or making present of Christ's sacrifice in the mass can be regarded as of singular importance.

11.The Jesuits have always been known as staunch defenders of the Council of Trent.

12.His real name being Jorge Mario Bergoglio.

13.Cardinal Walter Brandmüller.

14.During the writing of this article this event was to be held on 01 December 2013.

## John Calvin and the papal mass

Question and answer 80 (henceforth referred to as HC80) of the famous Heidelberg Catechism<sup>15</sup> describes the papal mass as '*... nichts anders, denn ein verleugnung des einigen opffers und leidens Jesu Christi, und ein vermaledeite Abgole]ttery'*, that is, nothing other than a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry (cf. Hebrews 7:27; 9:12; 9:25–28; 10:10, 12–14; John 19:30). This article seeks to highlight John Calvin's views on the papal mass by examining certain extracts of his writings. At the same time it seeks to trace the congruence of his views, especially those directed against the mass, with that of question and answer 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

The reformer Martin Luther was vehement in his opposition to the 'sacrifice of the mass'. He described it in his Schmalcaldic Articles as '*der größte und schrecklichste Gräuél*' (Müller 1890:301),<sup>16</sup> that is, the greatest and most shocking abomination. He also described it, among other things, as a '*Drachenschwanz*' (Müller 1890:302),<sup>17</sup> that is, a dragontail. Luther employed these ways of describing the sacrifice of the mass especially when he opposed it as a work that has merit in itself to effect the forgiveness of the sins, of the living and the dead. Not only did Luther reject the 'sacrifice of the mass', but he also rejected transubstantiation.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, his 'biggest blows' he reserved for attacking the mass as a meritorious sacrifice for sins.<sup>19</sup> John Calvin also rejected the sacrifice of the mass as a meritorious work, but also added to his rejection of it the importance of stressing the unrepeatable of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross of Calvary.<sup>20</sup> He was, furthermore, unrelenting in his attacks and in his condemnation of the doctrine of transubstantiation which teaches that by the Roman priest's words of consecration<sup>21</sup> the bread and wine are changed into Christ's body and blood. To be more precise, the theory of transubstantiation teaches that the *substance* of the bread and wine is changed into the *substance* of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and that only the *accidents* – that is, the form which includes the smell,

15.The year 2013 marks the 450th anniversary of this Catechism.

16.Cf. Articuli Smalcaldici, 1537. Der II. Artikel. Von der Messe.

17.Cf. Articuli Smalcaldici, 1537. Pars II. Art. II. De Missa.

18.Articuli Smalcaldici, 1537. Pars III. Art. VI. *De Sacramento Altaris*. '*Von der Transsubstantiation achten wir der spitzfindigen Sophisterei gar nichts, da sie lehren, daß Brot und Wein ihr natürliches Wesen verlassen oder verlieren und allein Gestalt und Farbe des Brotes bleibe und nicht richtiges Brot; denn es reimt sich mit der Schrift aufs beste, daß Brot da sei und bleibe, wie es S. Paulus selbst nennt (1 Kor 10, 16): 'Das Brot, das wir brechen', und (1 Kor 11, 28): 'Iso eße er von dem Brot.'*' (Müller 1890:320).

19.To assess this difference, it has to be kept in mind that Luther held to the eating of the real body, and the drinking of the real blood of Christ during the Lord's Supper. This conviction emanates from his understanding of the sacramental union that takes place during the celebration of the sacrament, whereas justification by faith alone he proclaimed to be the principal article of faith.

20.Cf. what the Jesuit scholar E.J. Kilmartin (1998) has to say about the idea of Christ being crucified again in the mass: 'At the same time the tendency of the Western theology of eucharistic sacrifice toward postulating a complete disjunction between the historical sacrifice of the cross and the eucharistic sacrifice received additional support from Pope Gregory the Great's saying that (Christ) in the mystery of the holy sacrifice is offered for us again (*iterum*)'. This text is one of the earliest that refers to Christ being 'newly' offered. Supported by the authority of Gregory, it became an important proof text for the noting that the sacrifice of Christ is repeated in each Mass in an 'unbloody way' (Kilmartin 1998:22).

21.Cf. The Latin words: *Hoc est enim corpus meum* – For this is my body.

taste, colour of the bread and wine – remain. The concept that something consists of *substance* and *accidents* is usually attributed to the Greek philosopher Aristotle (cf. Aristotle 1961). Aristotle's ideas were in turn synthesised with the rubrics of medieval theology by scholastic theologians such as Thomas Aquinas.<sup>22</sup> Believing transubstantiation to be true, Roman Catholics would actually worship the elements.<sup>23</sup> Calvin resisted this practice as the utmost idolatry and denounced it in the strongest of terms, as will be seen in the subsequent discussion.

On 03 April 1563 Casper Olevianus, one of John Calvin's earlier students at the academy of Geneva, wrote him a letter about the recently drafted Catechism for the Palatine where Olevianus laboured in the Word:

... in the first German edition<sup>24</sup> ... the question about the difference between the Lord's Supper and the papal mass was left out. But after encouragement from me, the Elector decided to include<sup>25</sup> it in the second German and the first Latin edition. (CO 19:684)<sup>26</sup>

This question that Olevianus refers to in his letter to Calvin, which is the well-known question 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism, reads as follows in its final form:

What difference is there between the Lord's Supper and the papal Mass? The Lord's Supper testifies to us that we have full forgiveness of all our sins through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which He Himself once accomplished on the cross. And that by the Holy Spirit we are engrafted into Christ, who, with His true body is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father, and wants there to be worshipped. But the Mass teaches that the living and the dead do not have forgiveness of sins through the suffering of Christ, unless Christ is still daily offered for them by the priests. And that Christ is bodily under the form of bread and wine, and is therefore to be worshipped in them. And thus the Mass at bottom is nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry. (Neuser 2009:195)<sup>27</sup>

22.Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas (1917), *Summa Theologiae*, 3a. 75, 1. *de conversione panis et vini in corpus et sanguinem Christi*; 3a. 77, 1. *de accidentibus remanentibus in hoc sacramento*.

23.Cf. Concilium Tridentini. Sessio XIII, celebrata die XI. Octobris 1551. *Decretum de sanctissimo eucharistiae sacramento. Caput V. De cultu, et veneratione huic sanctissimo sacramento exhibenda*. In this session of the Council of Trent, Roman Catholics are openly encouraged to bring the worship of *latria* which is due only to God, also to the wafer (Schaff [1889] 1919:131).

24.The first (19 January 1563), second and third editions of the Heidelberg Catechism were in German. The first Latin edition of the Heidelberg Catechism (printed 04 April 1563) was translated only from the third German edition of the Catechism.

25.In the early editions of the Heidelberg Catechism, additions were also made to question and answer 36, concerning the holy conception and birth of Christ (Neuser 2009:169).

26.CO 19:684: '... in prima editione germanica...omissa erat quaestio de discrimine coena et missae pontificiae. Admonitis a me Princeps voluit in secunda editione germanica et prima editione latina addi...'

27.[80.] *Frag. Was ist fu[e]r ein unterscheid zwischen dem Abendmal des HERRN, und der Bäpstlichen Meß? Antwort. Das Abendmal bezeuget uns, daß wir vollkommene vergebung aller unser su[e]nden haben, durch das einige offer Jesu Christo, so er selbst einmal am creutz volbracht hat [Heb. 7(, 26) 9(, 12 25–28) et 10(, 10.12–14) loh. 19(, 30) Matt.26(, 28) Luc. 22(, 19–20)]. Und daß wir durch den H[eiligen] Geist Christo werden eingeleibt [1. Cor. 6(, 17) et 10(, 16–17)], d[er] jetzund mit seinem waren leib im himmel zur Rechten des Vaters ist [Heb. 1(, 3) et 8(, 1–2)], und daselbst will angebetet werden [loh. 4(, 21–24) et 20(, 17) Luc. 24(, 52–53) Act. 7(, 55–56) Coloss. 3(, 1) Phil. 3(, 20–21) 1. Thess. 1(, 9–10)]. Die Meß aber lehret, daß die lebendigen und die [ ] Toten nicht durch das leiden Christi vergebung der sünden, haben es sey denn daß Christus noch täglich fu[e]r sie von den Meßpriestern geopffert werde. Und dz Christus leiblich und[er] der gestalt brods und weins sey, und derhalben darin sol angebetet werden [In Can[one] de Missa[ae] Item. De coesec[ratione] distinct[i]o 2.] Und ist also die Meß im grund nichts anders, denn ein verleugnung des einigen offers und leidens Jesu Christi, und ein vermaledeite Abgo[e]ttery' (Neuser 2009:195).*

Already in the question of HC80 it is evident that the words 'the Lord's Supper', stand in contrast to the words 'papal mass'. The Lord's Supper testifies to those who communicate at the table that we have complete forgiveness of all our sins because of the sacrifice that Jesus Christ brought when He died for us on the cross. We are also by the power of the Holy Spirit grafted into the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is furthermore with his true body in heaven at the right hand of the Father and is to be worshipped *there*.<sup>28</sup>

The antithetical part of the answer indicated by the conjunction '*aber*', that is, but, states that the living and the dead do not have forgiveness of sins through the suffering of Christ, *unless* Christ is still daily offered for them by the priests. In contrast to the first part of HC80's answer in which Christ is the subject accomplishing his people's salvation by his death on the cross, the accusation here brought against the papal mass is that the priests are the subjects in it, because they are offering Christ daily. They therefore detract from what Christ already accomplished; with their actions they furthermore consider his sacrifice as insufficient; and in doing so they have made Christ the object. HC80 continues to describe the papal mass as teaching that Christ is bodily under the form of bread and wine. Without using the specific word, it is the dogma of transubstantiation that the answer here refers to. The fact that the word *gestalt* – that is, form or shape – is used seems further to point to the Thomistic/Aristotelian metaphysics underlying the theory of transubstantiation. HC80 states that because the papal mass teaches that Christ is bodily under the form of the bread and wine, it consequently teaches that he is also to be worshipped in it. Up to this point HC80 *described* the difference between the Lord's Supper and the papal mass. It now proceeds to proclaim its 'anathema' against it, by stating that the papal mass is in its essence – literally, in its *ground* or *foundation* – nothing but a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ. The worshipping of the bread and wine – for HC80 denies that Christ is transubstantiated in it – is condemned as *ein vermaledeite Abgo[e]ttery*, that is, an accursed idolatry. Note that the papal *mass* is condemned by the Catechism so as to warn believers against it.<sup>29</sup>

This question and answer of the Heidelberg Catechism has become very unpopular in Protestant circles today,<sup>30</sup> unpopular in the sense that fewer and fewer churches that confess Scripture by the words of the Heidelberg Catechism still expect of their members to confess this question and answer in its definitive form. As examples of this, the

28.The point of this part of HC80's answer is that Christ's *body* is in heaven and that He is to be worshipped *there*, although He is as God also present everywhere else through His *Spirit*. Cf. Heidelberg Catechism questions 47 and 48.

29.Compare this with the more than 100 curses pronounced against *people* by the Council of Trent.

30.Of course it has always been deemed unpopular by those who would be reconciled with Rome. But Rome itself *also* opposed it throughout the ages: in relation to Roman Catholicism it has always been unpopular. For example, it was placed by Pope Clement VII (1596); Pope Alexander VII (1667) and by Pope Innocentius XI (1726) on the Index, the papal list of forbidden books. After conquering the Palatine, Elector Karl Philipp officially banned the Catechism on 24 April 1719 because of question and answer 80 (Beyer 1965:31).



*Reformierte Bund*<sup>31</sup> in Germany as well as the *Christian Reformed Church in North America*<sup>32</sup> (the CRCNA) can be cited. In South Africa, the Dutch Reformed Church is currently engaged in discussions with Rome about HC80.<sup>33</sup> The Genevan Confession of Faith is now going to be looked at.

## The Genevan Confession of Faith, 1536 – Article XVI: The holy supper

The Genevan Confession of Faith that was drafted by Calvin was preceded by a catechism that he wrote in order to instruct the citizens of Geneva in the evangelical faith. This Catechism was not subdivided into the customary question-and-answer format. The Genevan Confession of Faith that consisted of 21 articles was developed from this catechism. After its composition, it was immediately elevated to the status of religious constitution of Geneva. Both these documents were approved by the Great Council of Geneva on 10 November 1536, and according to a decision of 27 April 1537 it was printed in French. Just as in Bern, the citizens of Geneva swore allegiance to this Genevan Confession in groups of ten (Müller [1903] 1987:XXVII). In this discussion, article 16 of the Genevan Confession of Faith that deals with the Lord's Supper is analysed:

The Supper of our Lord is a sign by which under the bread and the wine he represents the true spiritual communion which we have in his body and his blood. And we acknowledge that according to his ordinance it ought to be distributed in the company of the faithful, in order that all those who wish to have Jesus for their life be partakers of it. In as much as the mass of the pope was an accursed and diabolical ordinance by subverting the mystery of the Holy Supper, we declare that it is execrable to us, an idolatry condemned by God; because it is regarded as a sacrifice for the redemption of souls and because the bread is in it taken and adored as God. Besides there are other execrable blasphemies and superstitions implied here, and the abuse of the

31.Cf. Plasger & Freudenberg (2005:173): *Das Moderamen des Reformierten Bundes hat hierzu 1977 erklärt: 'Diese Verwerfung wurde vor 400 Jahren formuliert; sie lässt sich nach Inhalt und Sprache in dieser Form nicht aufrechterhalten: Die Polemik gegen die Wiederholung des einmaligen Opfers Christi am Kreuz und die Anbetung der Elemente (Brot und Wein) wird dem nicht gerecht, was im ökumenischen Gespräch inzwischen an Verständigung erreicht werden konnte. Der bleibende Lehrunterschied besteht darin, dass die Eucharistie in der römisch-katholischen Kirche als "Opfer", das Abendmahl im evangelischen Gottesdienst als "Mahlfeier" begriffen wird; doch sollte sich dieser Unterschied nicht kirchentrennend auswirken.* [The Moderamen of the Reformed Union declared in 1977: This rejection was formulated 400 years ago; it is according to content and style not to be maintained: The polemic against the repetition of the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross and the worshipping of the elements (bread and wine) does not do justice to what the ecumenical discussion was able to attain in understanding in the meantime. The remaining doctrinal difference consists in this, that the Eucharist is understood in the Roman Catholic church as a "sacrifice", and the Lord's Supper as a "meal banquet" in the evangelical divine service; nevertheless, these differences should not have a church-rending outcome.] (My own translation, JFKM).

32.Cf. the footnote under question and answer 80 by the 'Christian Reformed Church in North America' or CRCNA (1987), which states, amongst other things: 'In response to a mandate from Synod 1998, the Christian Reformed Church's Interchurch Relations Committee conducted a study of Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Mass. Based on this study, Synod 2004 declared that 'Q. and A. 80 can no longer be held in its current form as part of our confession'. Synod 2006 directed that Q. and A. Eighty remain in the CRC's text of the Heidelberg Catechism but that the last three paragraphs be placed in brackets to indicate that they do not accurately reflect the official teaching and practice of today's Roman Catholic Church and are no longer confessionally binding on members of the CRC (see Christian Reformed Church 2011).

33. *Die Algemene Sinode neem kennis van die feit dat die Rooms Katolieke Kerk die Roomse Mis anders verstaan as die verduideliking wat die Heidelbergse Kategismus, Vraag en Antwoord 80 gegee is [sic] en besluit om die gesprek hieroor met die Rooms Katolieke Kerk voort te sit.* [The General Synod takes notice of the fact that the Roman Catholic Church understands the Roman Mass differently than the explanation that the Heidelberg Catechism, Question and Answer 80 is given [sic] and decides to continue the discussion about it with the Roman Catholic Church.] (My own translation, JFKM) (NG Kerk 2011).

Word of God which is taken in vain without profit or edification. (Müller [1903] 1987:114)<sup>34</sup>

In article 16 of the Genevan Confession of Faith a number of pertinent issues can be pointed out:

- The spiritual communion with Christ at the Holy Supper.
- Rejection of the mass as a sacrifice for the redemption of souls.
- Rejection of the idea that the bread becomes God and should be worshipped.
- Rejection of other superstitions, as well as the misuse of the Word of God.

## The spiritual communion with Christ at the Holy Supper

The words 'The Supper of our Lord is a sign' immediately want to hint at the fact that there should be no absolute connection made between the Lord's Supper and that which it represents. It is therefore called a sign. But the words 'under the bread and the wine' – which are reminiscent of Lutheran phraseology – indicate that that which the Lord's Supper represents should neither be untied or severed from the elements of bread and wine. The words 'he represents' avoid the words 'he gives', again in order not to connect the Lord's Supper in a too absolute way to what it represents. But then: What does the believer enjoy and receive in the Lord's Supper? The answer: 'The true spiritual communion which we have in his body and his blood.' It is therefore important to realise that the elements are not 'empty signs', but that through faith they connect the believer with the body and blood of Christ that they represent. HC80 agrees with this article in that it states that we are by the working of the Spirit grafted into Christ, which is here described in terms of the spiritual communion we have with him.

## Rejection of the mass as a sacrifice for the redemption of souls

The 'mass of the pope' is described as 'an accursed (French: *mauldicte*) and diabolical ordinance', because it subverts 'the mystery of the Holy Supper'. It is worth noting that the French word '*mauldicte*' (accursed) used by Calvin here is synonymous with the German word '*vermaledeite*' (accursed) that is used in HC80 to describe the papal mass.<sup>35</sup> Calvin continues to speak about the papal mass: 'we declare that it is execrable to us, an idolatry condemned by God; because it

34. *Confession de la Foy laquelle tous bourgeois et habitants de Genève et subjectz du pays doyvent jurer de garder et tenir, extraicte de l'Instruction dont on use en l'Eglise de la dicte ville*<sup>34</sup> – Art. XVI. La Sainte Cene: 'La Cene de nostre Seigneur est un signe par lequel souz le pain et le vin, il nous represente la vraye communication spirituelle que nous avons en son corps et son sang. Et reconnoissons que, selon son ordonnance, elle doit estre distribuee en la compangnie des fideles, affin que tous ceulx qui veullent avoir Jesus pour leur vie en soyent participans. Or, d'autant que la messe du pape a este une ordonnance mauldicte et diabolique, pour renverser le mistere de sainte cene, nous declairons qu'elle nous est en execration, comme une idolatrie condamnee de Dieu; tant en ce qu'elle est estimee un sacrifice pour la redemption des ames, que pource que le pain est en icelle tenu et adore comme Dieu. Oultre les aultres blasphemies et superstitions execrables, qui y sont continues, et l'abuz de la Parolle de Dieu, qui y est prinse en vain sans aucun fruit, ne edification' (Müller [1903] 1987:114).

35. Both these words can be traced back in their origin to the Latin word '*maledicere*' which also means to curse.

is regarded as a sacrifice for the redemption of souls'. If one compares the second edition of the Heidelberg Catechism in which the papal mass is described as 'an idolatrous denial of the unique sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ'<sup>36</sup> with this phrase here, it is noteworthy that the idolatry of the mass is here in the Genevan Confession of Faith also connected to the *denial of the unique sacrifice* and suffering of Christ. In the third and definitive version of the Heidelberg Catechism, the idolatry of the mass is especially connected with the *worshipping of the bread and wine*.

### Rejection of the idea that the bread becomes God and should be worshipped

The papal mass is described as 'an accursed and diabolical ordinance ... because the bread is in it taken and adored as God'. Here the idolatrous nature of the mass is further inveighed against. Inasmuch as the bread is equated with God, it is also described as 'accursed' and 'diabolical'. HC80 agrees with this description in that it calls the papal mass an 'accursed idolatry'.

### Rejection of other superstitions, as well as the misuse of the Word of God

Apart from the sacrifice of the mass for the redemption of souls and the worshipping of the bread as God, 'other execrable blasphemies and superstitions' that are connected with the mass are also rejected here. The 'abuse of the Word of God' in connection with the mass is also condemned. HC80 is also in agreement with this rejection of the worshipping of the bread as God, when it calls this action an 'accursed idolatry'.

The way in which the papal mass is described in this article of the Genevan Confession agrees remarkably with the way in which it is described in HC80. The reasons that are adduced in the Genevan Confession for condemning the papal mass also agree in a remarkable way with the reasons for rejecting it in HC80, that is, that it is a *sacrifice* for the redemption of souls, and that the bread is worshipped. The order in which these two issues are rejected also agrees with the order in which they are rejected in the Heidelberg Catechism. The mass as sacrifice is first rejected, and after that the worshipping of the bread. In this respect it is also important to notice that both the confession and the Catechism distinguish between and they also separate the two issues, that is, the mass as sacrifice and the teaching of transubstantiation.<sup>37</sup> The possibility can therefore not be excluded that Calvin's Genevan Confession exercised some kind of influence on HC80 that was to be formulated 27 years after this confession. The letter that Olevianus wrote to Calvin – alluded to earlier – may also point in this direction.<sup>38</sup> 'The Little Tract on the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ' is now looked at.

36.'... ein abgo[e]ttische verleugnunß deß einigen opffers und leidens Jesu Christi' (Henss 1983:21).

37.This point is important because the Council of Trent, also separated its formulation of transubstantiation (October 1551) and the mass as sacrifice (September 1562). The medieval mass liturgy also separated the action of transubstantiation from the offering of 'Christ in it' to the Father.

38.Cf. CO 19:684: '... in prima editione germanica...omissa erat quaestio de discriminata coena et missae pontificiae. Admonitis a me Princeps voluit in secunda editione germanica et prima editione latina addi ...'

## 'The Little Tract on the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ'<sup>39</sup>

The 'Little Tract on the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ' was written by John Calvin in the city of Strassburg during his time of expulsion from Geneva. In it he presents his own understanding of the Lord's Supper, and also attempts to clarify the reasons for the sacramentarian dispute between Huldreich Zwingli and Martin Luther. It was published in 1541. Calvin defended it in various publications, and it was accepted by the Reformed Churches.<sup>40</sup> In this tract three aspects are now focussed on:

- the mass as sacrifice
- the mass as application of the sacrifice of Christ
- transubstantiation.

Firstly, since the Lord gave us the Supper in order for it to be distributed amongst us in order to testify towards us that by communicating of his body, we have a part in his sacrifice that he offered on the cross to God his father for the expiation and satisfaction of our sins; people have invented in their heads the opposite, that it is a sacrifice by which we acquire the remission of our sins before God. This is a sacrilege that cannot be maintained at all ... Thus, because this opinion held concerning the Supper, that it is a sacrifice for acquiring the remission of sins, detracts from it, it should be condemned as diabolical.<sup>41</sup>

Calvin here states that the Lord's Supper testifies to us that by eating the bread that we have a part in the sacrifice that Christ offered for our sins. The point here is that we *receive* from the Lord, and that what Christ did for us on the cross was to pay fully for our sins. The first part of HC80 agrees beautifully with this formulation when it speaks of the complete forgiveness we have through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Calvin contrasts this with what the Lord's Supper has become in his own day, that is, a *sacrifice* that people bring in order to acquire or merit the forgiveness of sins. Calvin openly calls this latter conception a sacrilege. He furthermore states that this opinion detracts from the sacrifice of Christ and should therefore be condemned as devilish. HC80's formulation of the papal mass also agrees with Calvin's description here, in that it is a *sacrifice* brought to bring forgiveness of sins:

... And the meaning of the command that Jesus Christ left us is not to sacrifice or to immolate, but that we should take and eat that which was sacrificed. (cf. CO 5:449)<sup>42</sup>

39.CO 5:429 'PETIT TRACTÉ DE LA SAINCTE CENE DE NOSTRE SEIGNEUR IESUS CHRIST. PAR M. IEAN CALVIN. M.D.XLI.'

40.Martin Luther is reported to have spoken highly of this tract of Calvin's when he got hold of a Latin copy *De Coena Domini* in 1545, a year before his death (see Christian Classics Ethereal Library 2005).

41.CO 5:448 'Pour le premier, comme ainsi soit que le Seigneur nous ayt donne sa Cene a fin qu'elle feust distribuee entre nous pour nous tester que en communicquant a son corps, nous avons part au Sacrifice qu'il a offert en la croix a Dieu son Pere pour l'expiation et satisfaction de noz pechez : les hommes, de leur teste, ont invente au contraire que c'est un Sacrifice par lequel nous acquerons la remission de noz pechez devant Dieu. Cela est un sacrilege qui ne se peut nullement porter ... Puis donq que ceste opinion qu'on a tenue de la Cene, que c'estoit un Sacrifice pour acquerir remission des pechez, derogue a cela, il la fault condamner comme diabolique.'

42.Cf. CO 5:449 '... Et ainsi porte l'ordre que Iesus Christ nous a l'aissee, non pas que nous offrions ou immolons, mais que nous prenions et mangeons ce qui a este offert et immole. ...'

Calvin refers his readers to the original words of institution of the Lord Jesus Christ from which it is evident that Christ never commanded his disciples to sacrifice or to immolate, but that we are to take and eat that which *was* sacrificed. The point is that there is no new sacrifice to be made for the forgiveness of sins. We are to eat and to receive that which is unrepeatable. But there were other strategies by which Papists attempted to accommodate Protestant sensibilities. Calvin writes:

I wish not to keep back the explanations which the enemies of the truth here offer. They say that the mass is not a new sacrifice, but only an application of the sacrifice of which we have spoken.<sup>43</sup> Although they colour their abomination somewhat by saying so, still it is a mere quibble. For it is not merely said that the sacrifice of Christ is one, but that it is not to be repeated, because its efficacy endures forever. It is not said that Christ once offered himself to the Father, in order that others might afterwards make the same oblation, and so apply to us the virtue of his intercession. (CO 5:449)<sup>44</sup>

Calvin then explains a certain strategy or play with words which 'the enemies of the truth' adduce. They say, Calvin says, that the mass is not a new sacrifice, but that it is only an application of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.<sup>45</sup> Calvin dismisses this attempt as a mere playing with words, by stating that it is said in Scripture that Christ's sacrifice is not to be repeated, precisely because its power and efficacy endures forever. He furthermore denies that people are to make the 'same oblation' as Christ's, after Christ 'offered himself up to his Father', and thereby apply the virtue of what Christ did for us.

But how is the merit of Christ's death then applied to us, if not through the sacrifice of the mass?:

As to applying to us the merit of his death, that we may perceive the benefit of it, that is done not in the way in which the Popish Church has supposed, but when we receive the message of the gospel, according as it is testified to us by the ministers whom God has appointed as his ambassadors, and is sealed by the sacraments. (Calvin [1532–1564] 1863–1900)<sup>46</sup>

Yes, the merit of Christ's death is applied to us when we *receive* the message of the Gospel as it is preached to us by

43.Cf. Concilium Tridentini. Sessio XXII, *celebrata die XVII. Sept. 1562. 'Doctrina de sacrificio Missae. Caput I. De institutione sacrosancti missae sacrificii.'* (see Schaff 1919)

44.CO 5:449 '*... le ne veul pas dissimuler les solutions qu'alleguent en cest endroit les ennemis de verite. C'est que la Messe n'est pas un sacrifice nouveau, mais seulement [pag. 45] une application du sacrifice unique dont nous avons parle. Combien qu'ilz colorent un petit leur abomination en parlant ainsi, toutesfois ce n'est que une pure cavillation. Car il n'est pas dict seulement que le Sacrifice de Christ est unique, mais qu'il ne doit iamais estre reitere, entant que l'efficace en demeure a tousiours. Il n'est pas dict que Christ s'est une fois offert au Pere, a fin que d'autres apres feissent la mesme oblation pour nous appliquer la vertu de son intercession. Mais qu'il est entre au Sanctuaire celeste, et que la il apparoit pour nous rendre le Pere propice par son intercession.'*

45.Cf. Concilium Tridentini. Sessio XXII, *celebrata die XVII. Sept. 1562. Doctrina de sacrificio Missae. Caput I. 'De institutione sacrosancti missae sacrificii. ... atque illius salutaris virtus in remissionem eorum, quae a nobis quotidie committuntur, peccatorum applicaretur ... and its salutary effects applied to the remission of those sins which we daily commit'* (Schaff [1889] 1919:176).

46.'*Quant est de nous appliquer le merite de sa mort, a fin que nous en sentions le fruit, cela se fait non pas en la maniere qu'on a estime en l'Esglise papalle, mais quand nous recevons le message de l'Evangile, ainsi qu'il nous est testifie par la predication des ministres, lesquelz Dieu a constituez comme ses Ambassadeurs, et seelle par les Sacremens. ...'*

God's ministers. This message is furthermore sealed to us by the sacraments. But there is another error that was introduced by the mass:

The second error that the devil sowed to destroy this holy mystery, was by forging and imagining, that after the words are pronounced – with the intention of consecrating, the bread is transubstantiated in the body of Christ and the wine in his blood. Firstly, this lie has no foundation in the Scripture, neither any testimony from the ancient Church: and what is more is it cannot be harmonized with the Word of God at all. (CO 5:450)<sup>47</sup>

Calvin now states that apart from making the Lord's Supper a sacrifice for sins, there is also a second error that the devil introduced in order to destroy it. That is by deceiving people into believing that after the words of consecration by the priest, 'the bread is transubstantiated in the body of Christ and the wine in his blood.' Calvin refutes this by stating that 'this lie' does not have any foundation in the Word of God. He also denies that there is any testimony to be found in the early Church to the effect of transubstantiation. HC80 also agrees with this description that Calvin gives of the mass in that it describes Christ's body and blood as being in the bread and wine. Lastly, he states that it cannot be harmonised with the Bible. But why, then, should the bread remain? – 'All I am saying is that the nature of the sacrament requires it, that the physical bread remains as a visible sign of the body'.<sup>48</sup>

In elucidating further, Calvin states that if the physical bread does not remain, then there is no sacrament. Because what makes a sacrament a sacrament is partly that the *sensible* part of the sacrament should remain intact, without losing its proper nature. This is not the case in transubstantiation, and therefore the unwavering conclusion: 'We thus conclude, without a doubt, that this transubstantiation is an invention forged by the devil to destroy the truth of the Supper'.<sup>49</sup>

Calvin is unambiguous in his condemnation of transubstantiation when he describes it as forged by the devil in order to destroy the Lord's Supper. But transubstantiation also gave rise to other abuses that Calvin enumerates:

This perverse opinion, after it was once accepted, gave rise to many other superstitions. Firstly, it is that carnal adoration which is nothing else but idolatry. For in casting yourself before the bread of the Supper, and there to worship Jesus Christ as if He was contained in it (there), is to make an idol of it, instead of a sacrament. We do not have a command to worship, but to take and to eat. ... From the same source the other forms of superstition, like carrying the sacrament with pomp through the streets once a year, and to make a tabernacle for it on another day, and to keep it in a cupboard for a whole year long to amuse

47.CO 5:450 '*Le second erreur que le Diable a seme pour corrompre ce saint mystere, a este en forgeant et inventant, que apres les parolles prononcees avec intention [pag. 48] de consacrer, le pain est transubstantie au corps de Christ et le vin en son sang. Ce mensonge, premierement, n'a nul fondement de l'Escriture, et n'a aucun tesmoignage de l'Esglise ancienne: et, qui plus est, ne peut nullement convenir ne subsister avec la parole de Dieu. ...'*

48.CO 5:451 '*Seulement ie dys que la nature du Sacrement requiert cela, que le pain materiel demeure pour signe visible du corps.'*

49.CO 5:451 '*Pourtant nous concluons sans doute, que ceste transubstantiation est invention forgee du Diable, pour depraver la verite de la Cene.'*



the people with, as if it is God. Because all these things were not only conceived apart from the Word of God, but are also directly contrary to the institution of the Supper, it should be rejected by all Christians. (CO 5:452)<sup>50</sup>

Calvin now proceeds to enumerate the superstitions that transubstantiation gives rise to,<sup>51</sup> the first of which is the bodily worship of the host. This he terms ‘nothing else but idolatry’. This time not referring to sacrificing but to worshipping, he again urges Christ’s words of institution on the reader. His firm decidedness to have Scripture have the last say is evident in this. Christ did not order His disciples to worship, but to ‘take and eat’. Other forms of superstition like the carrying around of the consecrated host<sup>52</sup> and the making of a tabernacle for it and also keeping it in a cupboard for people to worship are further enumerated. All these things were conceived *apart* from God’s Word and they are also against what it teaches on the Lord’s Supper. All Christians should therefore reject them. Calvin’s letter to the Duchess of Ferrara is now looked at.

## Letter to Madame the Duchess of Ferrara – Geneva, October 1541<sup>53</sup>

Renée of France was the second daughter of King Louis XII of France and Anne of Brittany. In 1528 she was married to Ercole d’Este – the grandson of Pope Alexander XVI – who became duke of the Italian town of Ferrara in 1534. Renée was open to the ideas of the Reformation and was visited by John Calvin in 1536. Under Calvin’s influence she ceased to adhere to the superstitions of Roman Catholicism. Though faltering in her faith in 1554 when she was forced by the machinations of the Counter-Reformation to recant her Protestant convictions, she later became a very influential benefactress of the Reformed cause. She often granted refuge to fleeing Protestants, and offered shelter to certain Huguenots during the infamous St. Bartholomew massacre in Paris (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. 2013). She corresponded with numerous Protestant reformers of the time, including Calvin.

In this letter to the Duchess of Ferrara, Calvin attempts to warn her against a certain preacher who was preaching in her court. Calvin considered him to be dangerous, because although outwardly professing the evangelical faith, he harboured Roman Catholic convictions concerning the mass.

50.CO 5:452 ‘Or, ceste perverse opinion, apres avoir este une fois receue, a engendre beaucoup d’autres superstitions. Et premierement ceste adoration charnelle, laquelle n’est que pure ydolatrie. Car de se prosterner devant le pain de la Cene, [pag. 53] et la adorer Iesus Christ comme s’il y estoit contenu, c’est en faire un ydole, au lieu d’un Sacrement. Nous n’avons pas commandement d’adorer, mais de prendre et de manger. ... D’une mesme source sont procedees les autres facons superstitieuses, comme de porter en pompe le Sacrement par les rues une fois l’an, et luy faire l’autre iour un tabernacle, et tout au long de l’annee le garder en une armoire pour amuser la le peuple, comme si c’estoit Dieu. Pource que tout cela, [pag. 54] non seulement a este CO 5:453 controuve sans la parolle de Dieu, mais aussi est contraire directement a l’institution de la Cene, il doit estre reiette de tous Chrestiens.’

51.The superstitions not mentioned in the Genevan Confession are now enumerated.

52.Cf. CT, Sessio XIII (1551), *Decretum de sanctissimo eucharistiae sacramento*. Cap. VI. (Schaff [1889] 1919:137).

53.See Calvin’s ([1541] 2009) *Tracts and letters*.

He used ingenious arguments and cleverly chosen words to attempt to re-introduce the mass. Calvin answers one of his attempts to make the mass more ‘palatable’ for Reformed Christians:

I know well that these liars, to cover their abomination, say that they make the same sacrifice which Jesus has made; but from that statement there arise several blasphemies. For that sacrifice could be made by no one except by himself. And the Apostle says<sup>54</sup> that if he is now sacrificed, it follows, that he must suffer still. Therefore, you can see, that one of two things must here take place: either to acknowledge the horrible blasphemy of the mass, and to detest it; or, in approving it, to trample under foot the cross of Jesus. (CO 11:327)<sup>55</sup>

Calvin states that it is said that Papists make ‘the same sacrifice which Jesus has made’. It should be mentioned here that an example of this idea as printed in Rome’s own publications is the Tridentine Catechism that was promulgated later in 1566 by Pope Pius V.<sup>56</sup> Calvin warns that there are numerous blasphemies implied in this statement by those attempting to lead the duchess astray. Only Christ could make such a sacrifice and thus not other people. He then reminds her of the fact that the apostle says in Hebrews that if Christ is now sacrificed, then he must still suffer.

After having thus far explained the issue at hand to the duchess, he sets two alternatives concerning the mass before her: the one is for her either to acknowledge the ‘horrible blasphemy’ of the mass, and with that to abhor and detest it; or the other is to approve the mass, but thereby to trample the cross of Jesus Christ underfoot in doing so.

The Heidelberg Catechism does not address the claim that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross is the same sacrifice as that of the mass specifically. But it does view the papal mass as a repetition of Christ’s sacrifice. Note the words: ‘that the living and the dead do not have forgiveness of sins through the suffering of Christ, unless Christ is still daily offered for them by the priests.’ In other words, Christ’s sacrifice is not described as a once-and-for-all sacrifice as stated earlier in HC80, but it says that the priests still have to sacrifice Christ *daily*. It is true that the Tridentine Catechism continues to explain why Christ’s sacrifice and the sacrifice of the mass is to be seen as only one sacrifice. It states: ‘for the victim is one and the same.’ In other words, Christ on the cross and Christ ‘in the host’ is the same victim, that is, the same one who

54.Cf. Hebrews 9:25, 26.

55.CO 11:327 ‘... le scay bien que ces menteurs dissent pour couvrir leur abomination quilz font le mesmes sacrifice que Iesus a fait, mais de cela sensuivent plusieurs blasphememes. Car il ne pouvoit estre fait sinon par luy mesmes. Et lapostre dict que sil est maintenant sacrifie, quil fault quil souffre encores. Partant vous pouvez voir quil fault lung des deux, ou reconnoistre l’horrible blasphememe de la messe et le detester, ou en l’aprouvant mettre soubz le pied la croix de Iesus ...’

56.Cf. *Catechismus ex decreto Concilii Tridentini*, Ad Editionem Romae A.D. MDLXVI., Quaestio LXXIV – ‘Idem sacrificium, quod in cruce fuit oblatum, in missa peragitur. Unum itaque et idem sacrificium esse, fatemur, et haberi debet, quod in missa peragitur, et quod in cruce oblatum est; quemadmodum una est et eadem hostia, Christus videlicet Dominus noster, qui se ipsum in ara crucis semel tantummodo cruentum immolavit.’ [Question 74 - The mass is the same sacrifice as that of the cross. We therefore confess that the Sacrifice of the Mass is and ought to be considered one and the same Sacrifice as that of the cross, for the victim is one and the same, namely, Christ our Lord, who offered himself, once only, a bloody Sacrifice on the altar of the cross.] (see Tridentinum 1851)

suffers. Therefore both sacrifices are one. Calvin's criticism against this view of the Tridentine Catechism still holds, for the mass is a sacrifice offered by the priest, but only Christ could bring such a sacrifice. And if he is sacrificed, He would still have to continue suffering – something that the writer to the Hebrews denies could happen.

## Conclusion

In looking in this study at the three texts by Calvin concerning the papal mass as sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead, it was seen that HC80 is in full accord with Calvin's view on this issue. Again and again it was seen in his forceful expressions concerning this matter that the sacrifice of the mass can and should rightfully be described as at bottom 'nothing other than a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ'. That is because Christ's sacrifice is sufficient for the forgiveness of all our sins and is therefore to be believed, *received*. Any attempt to add to this sacrifice of Christ by the actions of the priests who would offer Christ up daily for the forgiveness of sins should be rejected as blasphemous.

Concerning the papal mass as involving the transubstantiation of the elements of bread and wine in the body and blood of Christ and the consequent worshipping of them, HC80 can also be said to be fully in accord with Calvin's views on it. The nature of the bread and wine remains the same during the celebration of the Lord's Supper, because that is a necessary requirement of what a sacrament is. Imagining, therefore, that through the words of institution, uttered by the priest, that the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ is to destroy the sacrament. *Worshipping* the elements after the consecration is to make an idol of the sacrament, and should be described using terms such as devilish, and accursed. HC80's description of the papal mass on this account as an 'accursed idolatry' is also completely in accord with Calvin's views as examined in the three texts.

Lastly, it was also seen in describing the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the mass as one sacrifice, that this papistic defence was already being propagated in John Calvin's own time. He refuted this idea, though, by countering it with Scriptural arguments. The Jesuit scholar E.J. Kilmartin has described the Tridentine deliberations about the mass as sacrifice as follows:

After long discussions, the Last Supper was finally viewed by the Tridentine fathers as a sacrifice. But not in such a way that the thought of the representation of the sacrifice of the cross played a role. In other words, the council grounded the sacrificial character in the offering of the body and blood of Christ under the forms of bread and wine. Hence this approach was open to the understanding of the mystery of the sacrifice of the Mass as a kind of new offering of Christ through which the sacrifice of the cross is represented because it already bears the trait of a sacrifice. In short, the sacrificial character of the Mass is not seen as derived from its relation to the historical sacrifice of the cross, but is, in the last analysis, simply presupposed. Trent speaks about the sacrificial character of the Mass in the dimension of the visible cultic action ....' (Kilmartin 1998:176)

The current writer therefore does *not* share the optimism of J. Rahner when she writes:

The confessional explanation and meaning of the Lord's Supper [*that is, as stated by HC80 – JFKM*] have lost their church-rendering character ... Not the lay chalice nor the tabernacle, not the reason for transubstantiation nor the concept of the Lord's Supper as 'sacrifice' form the actual point of contention today, when the discussion is about the question of unity in the Supper, and about full communion between the churches.<sup>57</sup> (Rahner 2012:136)

Thank God for forebears who were given the courage and strength of will to warn their own and subsequent generations against the blasphemous idolatry of the papal mass. May this generation of Christians *not* be the ones to strangle this solemn warning, presented in the Heidelberg Catechism's question and answer 80, but may it continue to confess what God's Word teaches about the mass. With the current re-awakening and revival of the Tridentine mass around the world, may God open the eyes of Christians everywhere to see it for what it really is.

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57. 'Die konfessionelle Deutung und Bedeutung des Herrenmahls hat ihren kirchentrennenden Charakter verloren; ... Weder Laienkelch noch Tabernakel, weder die Rede von der Transsubstantiation noch das Verständnis des Herrenmahls als "Opfer" bilden heute den eigentlichen Streitpunkt, wenn es um die Frage der Mahl- und Kirchengemeinschaft geht.'



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