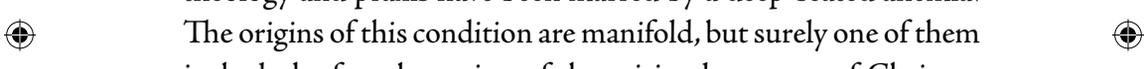




Baptists have often been accused of downplaying or even ignoring the Lord's Supper as an important part of the Christian life, and there has sadly been much evidence that such an accusation has merit. Thus, it is good to be able to recommend this book in which Baptist pastor and theologian, Richard Barcellos, reclaims the Lord's Supper as a means of grace and argues for its significance in the life of the local congregation. It is to be hoped that this book will have a significant influence in encouraging us all to think more carefully about the role of the Supper in the life of our churches.

Carl R. Trueman,
Paul Woolley Professor of Church History,
Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



Ever since the mid-nineteenth century, evangelical eucharistic theology and praxis have been marred by a deep-seated anemia. The origins of this condition are manifold, but surely one of them is the lack of a robust view of the spiritual presence of Christ at his table. In this regard, Richard Barcellos is to be commended heartily for detailing the biblical and theological foundations of what our forefathers in the faith knew well, namely, that, the Lord's table is, in the words of the Calvinistic Baptist William Kiffin, a vehicle of "spiritual nourishment."

Michael A. G. Haykin,
Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality,
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

There are at least three qualities that combine for the making of good "stewards of the mysteries of God": skill in the interpretation of Scripture, familiarity with the history of Christian thought (for perspective, insight and the detection of error), and acquaintance with the human heart for the due application ("rightly dividing") of scriptural truth. In his newest book Richard Barcellos brings out

these qualities for the task of helping his fellow stewards appreciate and dispense the rich fare of the Lord's Supper.

The book provides a greatly needed exegetically demonstrated answer to the question, "What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper?" For many, it is a mere memorial. A memorial does not need to be thought of as "mere". In fact, memorials of God's redemptive acts, may, as such, be a powerful means of grace if used correctly, but for many, even as such its value is lost. The greatest strength of Dr. Barcellos' book is his exegetical demonstration that the Supper is so much more than a memorial; it is a God-given way for the actual experience of, a participation in, a true, real, spiritual "eating" of the glorified Christ, with the result of a true increase of spiritual joy, strength, and growth in the likeness of the Lord. Along with this, he corrects several serious doctrinal and practical errors which have come into the church and which have kept the children of God from rightly and fully receiving the blood-bought benefits of the sacred meal. Here is the old Reformed doctrine of the Supper, a truth for which Protestants were martyred, the doctrine set forth in all Reformed Confessions, set forth afresh and convincingly to twenty-first century readers, soundly proven and extensively explained from the Holy Scriptures. Written with students in mind, it should be on the required reading list of all who are preparing to be ministers of the Word.

Richard W. Daniels,
Author of *The Christology of John Owen*

The Lord's Supper is more than a memory. Modern Baptists have often fallen into the "dead memorial" category. Others have emphasized self-examination to the point of morbidity. Our Particular Baptist forefathers taught the "spiritual presence of Christ" in the supper, and an understanding of this is vital to our spiritual vitality. This new book by Dr. Barcellos will be a great help for men in the ministry, and those studying for the ministry.



May God use this book as a catalyst in bringing about continuing reform in our churches.

Steve Marquedant,
Pastor, Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, Ontario, California

None of us have fully appreciated the stupendous blessing which the Lord's Supper is to Christ's church, but Dr. Barcellos' excellent treatment of this subject can strengthen our grasp upon the exalted reality. With capable exegesis of key Scripture passages, demonstrable consistency with the best systematic theology, and informed interaction with historic Christian thought, this important work will, with God's blessing, assist modern pastors to realize better the true nature of this second ordinance of Christ as a capacious channel of sanctifying grace. With unqualified recommendation I urge a careful reading of this book, especially if your theologically formative influences were similar to mine, committed to the memorial view of the Supper, not unusual among Baptists of the last century or so.

An especially delightful surprise awaits the reader at the end, where Dr. Barcellos cogently links the profound spiritual realities he has proven from Scripture with the most practical implications for the manner of Lord's Supper observance in our churches. The connection of doctrine and practice in this area may not have been obvious at first, but having seen it in print, I find it inescapable. May the Lord reform his churches and strengthen our unity by the standard of his Word and through the sound teaching of this incisive analysis.

D. Scott Meadows,
Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church (Reformed), Exeter, New Hampshire

I warmly recommend this modern presentation of the Reformed or Calvinistic doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The contents of the book demonstrate the aptness of its title. It is founded on



a thorough exposition of Scripture, with particular attention to the teaching of the apostle Paul and it is consistent with the great Reformation confessions of faith. Some treatments of this position have tended to be abstruse: this is not. It demands careful attention as all scriptural doctrines do, but the careful reader will find it warm and practical. Many Christians have adopted a memorialist view in reaction to the false sacramentalism promoted in some quarters. Richard Barcellos calls us back to the biblical position of our fathers. Such a return can only enrich the worship of our churches and that of individual members. Thoroughly practical it deserves a wide sale and careful study.

Robert W. Oliver,
Bradford on Avon, UK
Visiting Professor of Church History,
Puritan Reformed Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan,
Author of *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists 1771-1892*





The Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace







The Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace

More than a memory

Richard C. Barcellos

MENTOR



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Foreword

It is a curious fact that the most difficult issue under debate during the era of the Reformation was not Justification by Faith alone or even the place of the Papacy in the church. It was rather the theology and practice of the Lord's Supper. Lives were lost, much blood was shed and potential alliances failed because of differences over eucharistic observance. Romanists, Lutherans, the Swiss and the English reformers all debated the question at length. While they did not always agree, the very fact that this question was central in the minds of reformation-era theologians ought to cause us to reflect on its importance. We should learn at least one thing from this: the Lord's Supper was no small matter in the eyes of these theologians and pastors, and for that reason (among many others), it ought to be equally important to their heirs.

Can this be said of the twenty-first century church? Hardly. While the practice of baptism still divides Christians into two camps, the theology and practice of the Table of the Lord seldom creates even a stir. It has been pushed into the background by a host of influences.



Very few consider its purpose in the divine plan, its usefulness in the church, or its place in the life of the believer. One wonders, 'why do churches observe the Supper?' In some, it is nothing more than a tradition—something passed from generation to generation as a venerated religious custom. Others recognize that it has an evident importance, but only at times of perceived necessity, observing it on special occasions, usually at lengthy intervals. In certain cases, it is ignored or rejected as an antiquated rite. I once visited a mega-church where the elements were placed on three or four tables scattered around the auditorium, with a notice in the bulletin that if anyone felt the need of observing the Supper, they were free to do so on a self-serve basis! Sadly, we might fairly characterize most churches and Christians today as indifferent to the Supper.

Who is right? While we may not wish to return to the days of debate and division, we must say that our Reformation fathers had a far better understanding of the place and importance of this observance than do most ministers and believers today. They recognized that it was a divinely instituted practice, given to the church for great benefit. As such, it deserved careful, close examination and definition. For this reason, we also need to give thoughtful consideration to both the theology and practice of the Supper. Dr. Barcellos has given that to us in the book you are holding.

This work combines close exegesis, sound biblical-theological conclusions, key insights from Systematic Theology and respect for the work of the Spirit of Christ in the history of the church in order to reach its conclusions. All of these deserve a part in our thinking, and each makes significant contributions to our conclusions. Careful examination of the Word of God is the proper place to begin. Our primary standard governs all that we do and say, and calls us to re-order our doctrine and practice to conform to its dictates. Biblical theology teaches us about the redeeming purposes of God in Christ, and about our relationship to those things accomplished by our Lord.

How does He now, in this age between His advents, dispense grace to His people? Systematic theology brings together various strands of truth, describing God's purpose in giving the sacraments, and historical theology teaches us how others have understood the same texts of Scripture, and ensures that we do not pursue novelties. Each of these comes together in this book, showing us how a sovereign God fulfills his covenant promises in an orderly and ordinary way.

We also live in an era in which there is a great clamor for the influence of the Holy Spirit, and this is usually defined in terms of the visible, sensible and audible. The largest 'churches' in most cities around the world are those that claim to perform miracles, signs and wonders; preachers tout experiences of various kinds—frequently of the ecstatic variety; and even many evangelicals have abandoned a dependence on the Spirit's voice in the written Word of God for dubious claims of continuing revelation. Richard Barcellos shows us here that the Holy Spirit of God brings grace to His people through the channels He has established. These are churchly channels. In this case, the focus is on the Supper (and prayer in its relationship with the Supper) but there are clear references as well to the importance of the preached word and baptism. The crying need of the hour is a return to these unspectacular but divinely appointed instruments in the hands of the divine redeemer.

But the observance of the Lord's Supper has pastoral and practical applications as well. In the final chapter of this book, Dr. Barcellos provides some very encouraging advice for churches. He has not simply repeated traditional evangelical exhortations, but has suggested some very helpful and necessary correctives to those traditions, based in careful readings of the text of Scripture.

This book will make you think. For too long Christians have been content with an accepted practice that reflects, not so much Scripture (though there are echoes of God's revelation in it), but more an individualistic piety devoid of the Spirit's influence. They practice an outward form of godliness but deny its power. The true work of the

Holy Spirit now is neither in the miraculous gifts nor in some form of continuing revelation. It is in the means of grace, conforming us more and more into the image of our blessed Savior.

Perhaps the words of two esteemed godly ministers from the past may summarize the matter for us. Thomas Goodwin said:

The whole edification of every saint, by the means of grace, which are the ordinances and other means whatsoever, all flow from the benign influences of this Spirit accompanying them, and bedewing men's hearts by them. And for the proof of this in general, you have that passage, Acts ix. 31, 'Then had the churches rest, and *were edified*, walking in the fear of the Lord.' And so it is said of churches walking in all the order and ordinances of Christ; as of the Colossian church it is spoken (chap. ii.) that they did so; 'in the comfort of the Holy Ghost,' as the author of that edification and comfort by those ordinances. (*The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, 6:36-37)

And the greatest English speaking theologian, John Owen, wrote this:

Such is the nature of the unalterable decree of God in this matter, that no person living can ever attain the end of glory and happiness without the means of grace and holiness; the same eternal purpose respecteth both. (*The Works of John Owen*, 3:592-93)

Read this book, and then enjoy the blessings of the Lords Supper with your church, to the glory of God.

James M. Renihan, Ph.D.
Dean, Professor of Historical Theology
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At Westminster Seminary California
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Preface

This book has come as a result of two primary contributing factors. First, I was asked to address the issue of the Lord's Supper as a means of grace at the General Assembly of the Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America in the spring of 2011. That request came to me at a time in my life when I could devote extra thought to this worthy subject. Some of my more refined conclusions have come as a result of this. The other and more important contributing factor is that I am a pastor and have been since 1990 (except for a brief period in the mid-2000s). Over the years I had given sporadic thought to the Lord's Supper as a means of grace but never nailed down some important specifics – namely, not only that, but *how*, the Lord's Supper is a means of grace. The material that follows is a pastor's attempt at showing how the Supper is a means of grace. It comprises some of the major exegetical and theological issues I had to work through to understand better the Bible's teaching as well as understanding the confessional and catechetical formulation of the Reformed

tradition. Though it involves answering questions I had on this subject, I have found that others often have these same questions.

The book is not an exhaustive treatment of the Lord's Supper. It has a primary focus that can be stated in question format. *How is the Lord's Supper a means of grace?* I do not deal with many important issues related to the Supper, nor do I interact with all the secondary historical-theological issues and sources. My aim is very specific – to provide exegetical and theological grounds upon which the Supper is seen as a means of grace. I will also examine some of the Reformed tradition's confessions and catechisms. That part of the study seeks to illustrate how the exegetical and theological data has been formulated into doctrinal statements and to confirm that my thesis is not novel.

Though I am a Reformed Baptist subscribing to the Second London Confession of 1677/89, it is hoped that my thesis will help others in various ecclesiastical traditions. I assume that most (if not all) of my readers have either read Calvin's *Institutes*¹ on this subject or are aware of the Reformed view of the Supper as a means of grace as formulated, for example, by the Westminster Assembly. This means I am assuming some knowledge of the exegetical, theological, and historical issues involved with advocating the Supper as a means of grace. This also means that my work is aimed at pastors, theological students, and others who are able (and willing) to follow somewhat detailed exegetical and theological argumentation which results in doctrinal formulation.

As you work your way through the biblical section of the book (primarily chapters 3–5), you will notice that the words of the apostle Paul function as the predominant influence informing my thinking. Here is my justification for such influence. The

1. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), IV.viii–xviii.

apostle Paul is, by common consent, *the* theologian of the writers of the New Testament. Geerhardus Vos claimed that Paul's was 'the greatest constructive mind ever at work on the data of Christianity'.² Thomas D. Bernard calls Paul 'the great doctor of the Church'.³ Bernard sees this distinction between the writings of the other apostles and Paul's:

If the others were the Apostles of the manifestation of Christ, [Paul] was the Apostle of its *results*; and, in the fact of passing under *his* teaching, we have sufficient warning that we are advancing from the lessons which the life, and the character, and the words of Jesus gave, into the distinct exposition of the redemption, the reconciliation, the salvation which result from his appearing. In this way it was provided that the two correlative kinds of teaching, which the Church received at the first, should be left to the Church forever in the distinctness of their respective developments; for this distinctness of development in the second kind of teaching is both announced and secured by its being confided to St. Paul.⁴

Paul's writings bring Christian doctrine to its fullness and maturity. He was given the ability, like no other human author of Scripture, to apply the redemptive-historical accomplishments of Christ to the conditions and circumstances of first-century Christianity. Paul's epistles have a unique vocabulary. It is the vocabulary of the application of accomplished redemption. It is 'in Christ' theology brought to the contingencies Paul's converts faced. What Edward M. Blaiklock says of the entire corpus of the New Testament epistles applies in a unique way to Paul's:

2. Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1930, Reprinted 1991), 149.
3. Thomas Dehany Bernard, *The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament* (New York: American Tract Society, n.d.), 155.
4. Bernard, *Progress of Doctrine*, 155.

The letters of the NT form the corpus of Christianity's theology, its Christology, its evangel, the nature of the church, the state of man, the plan of salvation, the integration of the Testaments, and Christian eschatology.⁵

The Gospels contain the facts of redemption accomplished – the life, death, and resurrection of Christ (i.e., his sufferings and glory); the epistles, and especially Paul's, contain the implications, consequences, and applications of redemption accomplished. Paul is the greatest expounder of the Christian gospel of justification by faith alone and of the wonderfully glorious Christ-centered, resurrection-dependent eschatological hope. This hope is dependent upon Christ's resurrection as the first fruits of a great resurrection-harvest to come. The Holy Spirit is the pledge and down-payment that assures believers that what God did for the Messiah in his resurrection, he will do for all those in Jesus when he comes in glory. What God began to do in the life-history of every believer, he will complete when Jesus comes. It is in Paul's epistles that these glorious redemptive realities are expounded and Christianity comes to revelational-theological maturity.

There are three other reasons for concentrating upon Paul: he wrote about the nature of the Lord's Supper as communion (1 Cor. 10:16); he articulates a rich theology of the Spirit in relation to the redemptive benefits of Christ that come to elect sinners on earth (Eph. 1:3); and he ties that theology to the use of means (Eph. 3:14ff.).

Some may conclude that my work is actually an attempt at a Pauline view of the Supper as a means of grace (as if that were necessarily a bad thing). It is important to remind ourselves that

5. Edward M. Blaiklock, "The Epistolary Literature" in Frank E. Gaebelin, Editor, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume I* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 552.

Paul's writings, along with the other canonical books, are Holy Scripture and have the same divine author (2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 3:15-16). So in effect, what Paul says about the Supper (and upon any other subject) is what God says. The reader will also notice that the discussion focusing on Paul interprets him in the context of the entirety of Scripture. This is important because all doctrines of Scripture are, at various levels, inter-related and mutually dependent.

A word on Chapter 6 may be appropriate. It comprises a survey of some of the Reformed tradition's confessions and catechisms on the Supper as a means of grace. My purpose for this chapter is twofold – to show that my exegetical work and theological formulation are not novel and to help readers understand what the confessions and catechisms mean.

A final word on the Greek exegetical work contained in this book may help some. I included as much Greek as I thought necessary for the goal of this work and its intended audience. There are times when I transliterate and other times I include an English translation (most times the NASB and sometimes my own). Anyone with two years of Greek should be able to follow the discussion and some with little or no Greek may be able to as well. I included what I did for the purpose of showing my work and helping readers see the process I took in order to get to the conclusions to which I have come. The reader will notice that understanding Paul often involves difficult syntactical questions. I have tried to face those questions head-on and explain why I take the views that I do. The reader will also notice that my views on thorny syntactical issues are not novel, idiosyncratic, or exclusively held by confessional Reformed commentators.

I am grateful to several friends who read various editions of this work along its way to completion. Most of them are faithful pastors of relatively unknown churches. When all the dust is clear

on the last day, men like this from all ages of the church will see their mostly unseen and unknown work redound to the praise of the Lamb. This book is dedicated to these men and many others like them.

Introduction

The subject matter of this book is vitally important for confessional Reformed churches¹ and all other local churches. I am convinced from the word of God that the Lord's Supper is a vital part of local church life because it was ordained by the Lord Jesus to be a means of grace and more than a memory. I hope you will agree with me once I am finished.

At the outset of our discussion, it may be helpful to get the theology of the Lord's Supper I will be arguing for in our minds. It is my conviction that the doctrinal formulation of the Lord's Supper in the Second London Confession of 1677/89 (2nd LCF)

1. By 'confessional Reformed churches' I intend those local churches that subscribe to one of the Reformation/post-Reformation Reformed symbolic documents – The Three Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism) and the various documents related to the work of the Westminster Assembly (its confession and catechisms, the Savoy Declaration, and the Second London Confession of 1677/89). The last named document is an English Particular Baptist product. It will be argued that the English Particular Baptists of that day stood in substantial continuity with other Reformed theologians on the issue of the Lord's Supper as a means of grace. If the reader has scruples about Baptists claiming to be Reformed, simply substitute the word 'Covenantal' or 'Confessional' or 'Particular' for 'Reformed'. My point is more theological than historical.

accurately reflects the complex² teaching of Scripture on this important issue. The 2nd LCF stands in substantial theological continuity with the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) and other Reformation and post-Reformation credal statements on this and many other issues. Here are two paragraphs from the 2nd LCF on the Lord's Supper that capture the theology of the Lord's Supper advocated in this book.

The supper of the Lord Jesus was instituted by Him the same night wherein He was betrayed, to be observed in His churches, unto the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance, and shewing forth the sacrifice of Himself in His death, *confirmation of the faith of believers in all the benefits thereof, their spiritual nourishment, and growth in Him, their further engagement in, and to all duties which they owe to Him; and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with Him, and with each other.* (30:1; emphases added)³

Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this ordinance, do then also *inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually receive, and feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of His death;* the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally, *but spiritually present to the faith of believers* in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses. (30:7; emphases added)

If you read the sections of the confession quoted above, you can see why the sub-title of this book is 'More than a Memory'. Though there is a memorial aspect to the Lord's Supper, it is more than that. I hope to show you what that means in the pages that follow.

2. By 'complex' I do not mean difficult or obscure. I mean multi-faceted.

3. All quotations of the 2nd LCF come from *The Baptist Confession of Faith & The Baptist Catechism* (Vestavia Hills, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books and Carlisle, PA: Reformed Baptist Publications, 2010).

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE TITLE

I have entitled this book *The Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace: More than a Memory*. The title seeks to encapsulate both *positive instruction* and *needed correction*.

The positive instruction comes in the first part of the title: *The Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace*. The 2nd LCF asserts that the Lord's Supper confirms the faith of believers in the benefits of Christ's death, that it nourishes their souls, that it causes growth in Christ, that it is a bond and pledge of believers' communion with Christ, that worthy receivers spiritually receive and feed upon Christ crucified and all the benefits of his death by faith, and that Christ is spiritually present at the Supper. This is the language of means of grace. My primary goal in this book is to concentrate on *how* the Lord's Supper is spiritually nourishing to the souls of believers, how it effects or produces spiritual growth in worthy partakers, or how it is a means of grace. But what are 'means of grace'?

I define means of grace as the delivery systems God has instituted to bring grace – that is, spiritual power, spiritual change, spiritual help, spiritual fortitude, spiritual blessings – to needy souls on the earth. Grace comes from our Father, through the Son, by the Spirit ordinarily in conjunction with the ordained means. The means of grace are those conduits through which Christ alters, modifies, adjusts, changes, transforms, and develops souls on the earth. Herman Bavinck says, 'Christ is and remains the acquirer as well as the distributor of grace.'⁴ That is, Christ acquired grace *for* us and distributes grace *to* or *in* us. In order to get acquired grace *to* or *in* us, God has ordained means through which it is distributed. The means of grace, then, are God's delivery systems through which that which was acquired *for* us

4. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*, IV, translated by John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 448.

gets distributed or delivered *to* or *in* us. I will be working with the assumption that the Word of God, prayer, and the church sacraments or ordinances⁵ of baptism and the Lord's Supper are the primary or ordinary means through which grace from heaven comes to souls on the earth.⁶

It will be argued that the Bible teaches that one of the means instituted by Christ to bring grace from heaven to elect and gospel-believing souls on the earth is the Lord's Supper. The Lord's

-
5. I use the terms 'sacrament' and 'ordinance' interchangeably. Though the 2nd LCF uses the term 'ordinance,' English Particular Baptists in the seventeenth century also used the term 'sacrament' to refer to both baptism and the Lord's Supper (Cf. *An Orthodox Catechism*, Hercules Collins, 'Of the Sacraments,' where the terms are used interchangeably. Collins was a signatory of the 2nd LCF. His catechism was first published in 1680. It can be found in James M. Renihan, Editor, *True Confessions: Baptist Documents in the Reformed Family* (Owensboro, KY: RBAP, 2004), 254ff. See also William Kiffin, *A Sober Discourse of Right to Church-Communion* (London: Geo. Larkin, 1681), 23 [I will quote this work in the last chapter.]). Kiffin was a leading English Particular Baptist and also a signatory of the 2nd LCF. It seems that 'ordinance' refers to dominical origin – ordained (by the Lord Christ) – and 'sacrament' refers to function – a sign and means of grace (Cf. Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985, Second printing, September 1986], 267-68 under the entry 'sacramentum' for a discussion of the Protestant Scholastic use of this term 'sacrament'). Steve Weaver's unpublished, *Christ Spiritually Present and Believers Spiritually Nourished: The Lord's Supper in Seventeenth-Century Particular Baptist Life* has ample primary source documentation of further proof that the seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists used 'sacrament' and 'ordinance' interchangeably. The reason for using 'ordinance' in the 2nd LCF was not to deny the concept of 'sacrament' but probably to stress dominical institution (Cf. Michael A. G. Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach: Rediscovering our English Baptist heritage* [Leeds, England: Reformation Today Trust, 1996], 78 and James M. Renihan, *Edification and Beauty: The Practical Ecclesiology of the English Particular Baptists, 1675-1705* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2008], 143, n.119). For eighteenth-century evidence that English Particular Baptists continued to use 'sacrament' and 'ordinance' interchangeably, see Benjamin Beddome, *A Scriptural Exposition of the Baptist Catechism* (Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2006), 156-57. It is of interest to note that the WCF uses the term 'sacrament' in chapters XIV and XXVII-XXIX in various places and also uses the word 'ordinance' to refer to baptism (XXVIII.5-6) and the Lord's Supper (XXIX.3).
6. This is the view of the 2nd LCF, 14:1 and the WCF, XIV.1. For a helpful recent discussion on the means of grace as 'God's Media,' see Daniel R. Hyde, *In Living Color: Images of Christ and the Means of Grace* (Grandville, MI: Reformed Fellowship, Inc., 2009), 89-160.

Supper is a soul-changing, soul-altering, spiritually nurturing ordinance as blessed by the Spirit of God to that end.

The needed correction mentioned above comes in the second part of the title: *More than a Memory*. If you are like me, you have probably been taught that the Lord's Supper is a memorial meal, instituted by Christ to function as a periodic reminder of his death on behalf of sinners. When churches partake of the Supper they are doing something together – remembering Christ's death. In this sense, communion is horizontal. We are sharing in the memory of a redemptive-historical fact of the past, we are remembering the fact that Christ died for us. But is the Lord's Supper only backward-looking, only retrospective? Is it only a memorial of a past event? Or is it more than a memory? Is it primarily something we do or is it something through which God acts? I will attempt to prove to you in the pages that follow that the Lord's Supper is more than a memory (though it is certainly that). If you are like me, this may be a needed correction in your thinking and practice.

THE DIFFICULTY OF THIS SUBJECT

This subject is a difficult one to consider and work through for at least three reasons. *First*, it is difficult because of the amount of ink spilled over this issue at the time of the Reformation. Part of the reason it is difficult is surely due to the various positions coming out of the Reformation period and the complexity of those historical-theological debates.⁷ More ink was spilled over the issue

7. For Reformed discussions on the Reformation debates concerning the Lord's Supper, see Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, IV:556-61; Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrim's on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 803-23; Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1988), 144-58; Robert Letham, *The Lord's Supper: Eternal Word in Broken Bread* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001), 19-29; Malcolm Maclean, *The Lord's Supper* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publication, Mentor Imprint, 2009), 43-68; Keith A. Mathison, *Given For You: Reclaiming Calvin's Doctrine of the*

of the sacrament of communion or the Lord's Supper at the time of the Reformation than over the issue of justification *sola fide*.⁸

The Lord's Supper is vitally important for the church (or at least it ought to be and it certainly used to be). It has been and continues to be fertile ground for disagreement among good men. I think it was when Luther finally concluded he could not agree with Zwingli on this issue that he said, 'Zwingli is of another spirit.' The Reformation debates on this issue, then, lead me to conclude that this is a difficult subject.

A *second* reason why this is a difficult subject is because of the diverse views among Christians in our own day. Some view the Supper as only a memorial. Others view it as a means of grace, highlighting the presence of Christ and the ministry of the Spirit who serves grace to the souls of believers. Lutherans hold that Christ's human nature is somehow present with the elements of wine and bread. Sorting through the various views can be perplexing, adding to the difficulty of this subject.

A *third* reason why this is a difficult subject is because of the tendency in everyone to allow wrong presuppositions to cloud judgment. Everyone brings preconceived notions into discussions which often shield us from understanding what someone else is arguing. I have found this to be the case with reference to the Lord's Supper in my own pilgrimage. I was raised Roman Catholic and converted to Christ through the ministry of a non-denominational, evangelical church. Both of these experiences tainted my mind in terms of what the Lord's Supper is and ought to be. My experience prejudiced me against certain aspects of the historical discussion concerning the Lord's Supper as a means of grace and more than a

Lord's Supper (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 239-68; and Jon D. Payne, *John Owen on the Lord's Supper* (Edinburgh, Scotland and Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2004), 18-50.

8. Mathison, *Given for You*, xv.

memory. This made it difficult for me to understand, for instance, what Calvin means on this issue (not that I necessarily agree with or even understand all that he says). In my own experience, I have found that I did not believe or, in some cases, understand what others were saying because I had already made up my mind. But, sadly, this was not because I had adequately studied the issue and listened humbly to the discussion of the great minds of the church. Though it is impossible to do presuppositionless study on any level, we need to make sure that we come to this (and every) issue with the proper working assumptions.

These are three reasons I think the subject under consideration puts me at the bottom of a hill that seems at times insurmountable. If great minds can't agree on this issue, who am I to think I can clear up the fog? With various views held by good and godly people, can we really come to a definitive conclusion? How can the reader be sure the writer's presuppositions are right? As will become obvious, I am not advocating anything new. The view of the Lord's Supper as a means of grace I am arguing for is not novel. It has many advocates – Baptists and Paedobaptists, both past and present. My consolation is in this fact: when the Lord's word is opened and explained accurately he makes things men have made obscure to be clear.

The difficulties involved with this subject should not stop us from taking a position. We can and must take a position on whether or not the Lord's Supper is a means of grace and more than a memory, even though it may be difficult to come by. Either it is a means of grace and more than a memory or it is not. But once we take a position, we must both be knowledgeable of what we believe and gracious toward those who might differ with us. Though this is an important issue, the possession of eternal life does not depend upon taking one view of the Lord's Supper or another.

THE SPECIFIC FOCUS OF THIS STUDY

The specific focus of this study is *not* primarily to prove to you that the Lord's Supper is a means of grace, though I hope to do that. The title of this book assumes that the Lord's Supper is a means of grace. I am a confessional Reformed Baptist and both the confessional and catechetical documents of Reformed Baptists *explicitly affirm* the Lord's Supper as a means of grace.⁹

My specific focus is to show you *how* the Lord's Supper is a means of grace. My answer is that the Lord's Supper is a means of grace because of what the Holy Spirit does in the souls of believers when local churches partake of it. The Spirit effects or enhances present communion between the exalted Redeemer and his pilgrim people on the earth. Or it can be stated this way: the Lord's Supper is a means of grace through which Christ is present by his divine nature and through which the Holy Spirit nourishes the souls of believers with the benefits wrought for us in Christ's human nature which is now glorified and in heaven at the right hand of the Father.

THE METHOD OF THIS STUDY

I have struggled with how to present this material. Should I give the historical-theological-confessional position first or what I see as the Bible's teaching? Or should I give the biblical arguments showing that and how the Lord's Supper is a means of grace and then move to the confessional formulation of the doctrine? This question of method is no small issue. As you will notice below, we will study the Bible and the symbolic documents of the Reformed tradition, and in that order.¹⁰ The Bible alone is

9. See Chapter 6 below.

10. This does not necessarily infer that reversing the order is a faulty method. The important thing is to allow the Bible its place as the only infallible source of authority for Christian doctrine and to allow ourselves to be taught by others, many of whom have gone before us.

our infallible source of authority on the Lord's Supper. However, the Bible has been studied by faithful believers for over 2,000 years. Its primary doctrines have been formulated into creedal statements. These creedal statements reflect the best corporate thinking on the Bible and its teachings. Consulting the mind of the church over the centuries as embodied in its creedal statements is a safe guide to insure we are not inventing new doctrines, nor imposing idiosyncratic nuances upon the Bible, nor reading the Bible anachronistically – importing contemporary forms of thought upon the ancient text and reading it through those lenses. As a student of the Bible, I use various sources to help me understand the text. When I go to the Bible with a question and begin to answer that question, I consult the Bible itself, lexicons, commentaries, articles, books, systematic theologies, sermons, and the creeds, confessions, and catechisms of the Christian church throughout the ages. These study-helps guide me in the conversation that has been and is taking place concerning what the Bible teaches. Studying the Bible along with competent teachers is a safe guide. It keeps us where the Spirit of God has been helping the church of God understand the word of God.

I have decided to present *some* of the biblical evidence concerning the nature of the Lord's Supper as a means of grace and then show you *where* and *how* the confessional and catechetical data reflects this teaching of the Bible. Our study will be pursued under the following four headings: first, 'The Terminology connected to the Lord's Supper in the New Testament' (Chapter 1); second, 'The Biblical Data which Advocate the Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace (Chapters 2-4); third, 'The Confessional and Catechetical Formulation of the Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace in the Reformed Creedal Tradition' (Chapter 5); and fourth, 'Final Thoughts' (Chapter 6).

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