

Tracing The Thought And Exercise Of The Lord's Supper In Baptist Life From Zwingli And Calvin

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There was a time when the Lord's Supper was very special in Baptist churches. For the most part, the wonder and blessing of this observance has been severely diminished, and we need to reclaim it. In my own life I can remember, as a boy, watching the dimming of the lights, the solemn ceremony, and the passing of the bread and "wine." I held the service in a sense of awe and could not wait until the day when I was baptized and could receive the Lord's Supper with my parents. The years went by, and the day came when I was converted and baptized. I still remember the excitement of receiving my first Lord's Supper. It was one of the most memorable services of my childhood. As the years passed, the excitement wore off until the Lord's Supper became just another service. I think my experience is true, not only for most Baptist people, but for our Baptist heritage as well. It seems that through the passing of years and the continual if "passing of the elements," we have lost our excitement with the communion supper. The purpose of this paper is to trace this process and to state that we need to go back to our roots on this issue in order that the Eucharist might once again be a special blessing to us as believers in the Baptist tradition.

It has not always been true in Baptist churches that the only time we are really sure that Christ is really not present in any meaningful way is the Lord's Supper. One Baptist theologian calls this "the real absence of Christ in the Sacrament."¹ In the beginning the people who helped hammer out the Baptist confessions used words that were geared toward a sacramental view, although it seems the word "sacrament" itself was avoided. If our view of sacrament is the classical one of something which aids or becomes a medium of grace, then the words of the Second London Confession, "... shewing forth the sacrifice of His death confirmation of the faith of believers in all benefits thereof, their spiritual nourishment, and growth in Him ...,"² sound pretty close to this definition. The reason this confession is worded

this way is because of its ties to the thought of Huldrych Zwingli and John Calvin.

There is a wide agreement, even among modern Baptists, that our views of the Lord's Supper are in large part from Zwingli and to a lesser degree from Calvin. The problem is this lip service is no longer genuinely held. What I mean by this is manifested in several ways. First of all, there are very few Baptist pastors and laypeople who know the teachings of Zwingli (especially later Zwingli) and Calvin. Secondly, we, as Baptists, are largely out of touch with our historic confessions. Thirdly, in our reactionary modes to avoid the "magical presence" of Christ, we have gone to this extreme of the Lord's Supper as memorial only.³ The result is not only the loss of meaning but also the accompanying loss of great spiritual blessing. Such things ought not to be so.

So, what needs to be done? We need to go back to the fountainhead of our confession (Zwingli and Calvin) and explore their theology of the Lord's Supper. We need to examine this in the light of Scripture to see if our early confessions (which are obviously influenced by the views of these reformers) are in accordance with Scripture. The final step will then be to trace this over the last 300-350 years of Baptist history to see how this understanding has been applied, where it has been diluted, and why. And so we begin by considering the views of the Reformers on the Lord's Supper.

We begin with the Zurich Reformer, Zwingli, because he comes first in chronology and also because of the primacy given to him in the Baptist theology of the Eucharist. There is a progression in Zwingli's thought that is influenced by several dynamics. Of course, the first factor is his break with Roman Catholicism and subsequent early development. In his lectures to the class on *The Theology of the Reformers*, Dr. Timothy George gives the medieval background of the Lord's Supper which caused Zwingli and the other Reformers to reject the Roman Catholic abuses of the Supper. Those background issues were:

The Lord's Supper had become clericalized by the priests being the recipients of the Supper and not the community.

The Lord's Supper was commercialized by the "votive" masses by priests. By this abuse the priests would take money from the members of the community and then supposedly receive the Lord's Supper on behalf of those people or the person they desired to benefit from the Supper.

The Lord's Supper had become scholastized by the doctrine of Transubstantiation. According to this doctrine, the elements of the Supper became the actual body and blood of Christ upon the prayer of the priest.

Both of the two early magisterial Reformers, Luther and Zwingli, opposed these medieval practices- For these men the Lord's Supper was for the people of the church and not primarily for the priests to observe as God's people watched. These two men wanted the Word of God to be central in the service, they wanted congregational participation, and they rejected the idea of the mass as an ongoing sacrifice.⁴ But, at this point, they part ways; and it is important to understand that Baptists, too, part with Luther at this same point. We will study their differences in the second stage of Zwingli's development.

Once Zwingli parted with the Roman Catholics, it was necessary for him to develop a theology of the Eucharist. It seems that Zwingli's early development was slow in development as well as in implementation. Zwingli's hesitancy was understandable considering his political concerns; however, as Dr. George points out in his lectures (*Theology of the Reformers*), some of his followers to that point (in particular, Conrad Grebel and Felix Mantz) parted ways with him, due to his slow implementation of reform and also because of the extent of his reform (which they believed was too limited). These men became the seed of the "Radical Reform" and their views would affect Baptists later on down the road, as we shall see.

Nevertheless, Zwingli did implement change. To begin with, this change was based upon an outright rejection of the sacrifice of the mass. Zwingli insisted that Christ had died and paid for the sins of His people once and for all on the cross; therefore, there is no need to add further sacrifices to Christ's unique sacrifice.⁵ As a student of the Renaissance, Zwingli had a great admiration for Erasmus. So it is evident Zwingli borrowed from Erasmus some of his ideas concerning the nature of the Lord's Supper. No doubt the most important contribution gleaned from Erasmus was the idea that the flesh cannot be the bearer of spiritual salvation.⁶ An important text for Zwingli was John 6:63 which led him to the key to his thought, "the flesh is of no avail and eating is believing."⁷ Another insight which influenced Zwingli's early thought was the idea that the word "is" (Luke 22:19) should not be taken literally but should be read to mean it "signify." This interpretation was taken from the works of a Dutch humanist -- Cornelius Hoehn.⁸

By 1524 we can see these early thoughts have taken shape. He cautiously introduces these ideas, and we see their triumph in the Abolition of the Mass on Easter Day, 1525.⁹ In Gäbler's book (already referenced in this paper) on Zwingli's life and theology, he gives a good summation of Zwingli's early thought.¹⁰ It will be helpful to look at these as a good summation of Zwingli's conviction to this point:

The word "is" (*This is my body*) is not to be taken literally as the idea of "invisible corporeality" is nonsense.

According to John 6:63, the flesh cannot be the bearer of the spiritual salvation of Christ. Therefore, we must understand Jesus' words in the supper which refer to His body and blood as metaphors from which we understand symbolic meanings.

The two natures of Christ are sharply divided. In the Lord's Supper, Christ is spiritually present. Believers are to be stimulated by gratitude for the suffering and death of Christ. This was parallel to the Jewish passover which was not focused on the presence of a physical lamb, but upon God's deliverance of His people.

The congregation was to confess their faith and loyalty to Christ in the Lord's Supper.

The next stage of Zwingli's thought is best presented in the light of his debate with Martin Luther on the issue of the Lord's Supper. Zwingli realized that there were significant differences between he and Luther with regards to the Lord's Supper as early as 1523.¹¹ This was still the early period in Zwingli's thought on the Lord's Supper, however. As he continued to develop the doctrine, the more accentuated his differences with Luther became and the more they also became known. Zwingli's views on the Eucharist were put forth definitely in his work, *The Lord's Supper*. These views placed him in contrast with two men who he admired, Luther and Erasmus, and with the Roman Catholic Church.¹²

During this stage Zwingli's argument, in his debate with Joachim am Grüt, can be described in three sections:

The wine used at the original supper could not have been Christ's blood as He had not yet died.

The body of Christ is used in three separate aspects in the New Testament -- His natural/physical body; His risen body; and His mystical body, which is the Church. The bread could not have been any of these.

Zwingli accuses his detractors of holding "fleshly" views on the biblical passages dealing with the Lord's Supper. He insists the "sign" and the thing being signified cannot be the same thing.¹³

Zwingli used another biblical text other than the ones in Luke and John to show the impossibility of the elements in communion being the actual body of Christ. This passage was I Corinthians 10:14-22. In this text is the phrase, "We who are many are one bread and one body." Zwingli asserts from this passage the bread is clearly the body of Christ -- the Church. Therefore, he concludes the New Testament gives overwhelming evidence refuting the narrow interpretation of, "This is my body," by the Roman Catholics and Lutherans. For Zwingli the proverbial "bottom line" of the matter was in the Lord's Supper we are to understand Christ's pledge of

salvation with all the spiritual benefits that observance would bring. According to this view, to believe the elements of the supper were Christ's body in a corporeal sense is idolatry.¹⁴

It should certainly be no surprise to us today that two men who were as dynamic as Luther and Zwingli would come to rhetorical blows over this subject. They began cranking out the treatises, putting one view against the other. It does seem that Zwingli was less antagonistic in the personal sense than was Luther; however, there was still a bite in his pen that he must have known would not be well received by Luther. One example of this, given by Dr. George in his book, *Theology of the Reformers*, is quoted from Zwingli's, *A Friendly Exegesis ... Addressed to Martin Luther*. In this quote, Zwingli wishes that Luther had not commented on the subject that "we should not have been forced to swallow your loathsome stuff."¹⁵ As they say in the southern United States, "them's fightin' words!" It would have been bad enough if this fight could have been between two men, but it was not. It was a fight that polarized the two major factions of the Protestant movement which was in its infancy. It would have been bad enough if the fight had been over any other doctrine, but it was not. It was a fight over the very observance which was supposed to create unity in the Church. A further tragedy and great irony is that the two major theologians could not see (although one could certainly make the case that Zwingli was more aware than Luther) what their lieutenants and the politicians could see -- the Reformation which they started would be weakened and maybe even lost if the two men could not reach a compromise on this issue. Because of this insight held by men such as Oecolampadius, Bucer, Luther's own prince, John of Saxony, and others, the two principals sat down to try to reach a compromise at the Marburg Colloquy in 1529. The crunch came down to the emphasis on two words: Luther stressed the words, "This is," while Zwingli stressed the words, "Do this."¹⁶ The difference in the men's personalities, as well as the difference in their views, was very distinct. During the meeting Luther was curt and intransigent, while Zwingli went to great effort to explain his own position and seemed willing to work with the "Wittenbergers." It was obvious from this encounter there would be no resolution on this issue.

There were deeper issues involved in this debate than can be seen on the surface. We need to understand them at this point because similar factors have influenced the development of Baptist thought concerning the supper in the course of its development. For Luther and Zwingli, the undercurrents of their divergent views were Ecclesiological and Christological. For Baptists the undercurrents have been soteriological and theological in nature. The latter undercurrents will be a concern in the final section of this paper; but, at this point, we will briefly consider the differences between Luther and

Zwingli. The first subsurface difference in these two men was ecclesiological in nature. Luther's difference with the Church of Rome was primarily concerned with the rules the Church imposed which were unbiblical and manipulative -- his "hot button" was legalism.¹⁷ The rituals and icons were not an issue for the Wittenberg reformer. Zwingli, on the other hand, was adamant against a ritual which identified the creation (which in the Roman Catholic Church were the elements of the Mass) with the Creator. Zwingli found that Luther had not gone far enough in his reform, an ironic twist in that the radical reformers accused Zwingli of the same thing. His "hot button" was idolatry, and he was determined to rid the Church of its "idols."¹⁸ The next difference was, perhaps, the more profound as it was over the very nature of Jesus Christ. For Luther there was not a sharp distinction between the two natures of Christ. Therefore, in his doctrine of consubstantiation, the physical presence of Christ's body with the elements is possible because it is everywhere Christ is. For Zwingli there is a sharp distinction between the two natures of Christ to the point that Christ's physical body is not ubiquitous.¹⁹ On this point Zwingli refutes Luther with several arguments. First of all, for Zwingli to allow for Luther's beliefs of consubstantiation and his exegetical method, then he (Zwingli) would have to believe that Jesus was a literal vine according to John 15. Secondly, Zwingli points to the Apostle's Creed which states that the body of Christ is in heaven at the Father's right hand.²⁰ Thirdly, if the body of Christ was present on Earth, then Paul would not have said, "until He comes."²¹ Finally, Zwingli attacks Luther on the basis of the object of faith as defined in Hebrews 11, which is in the "invisible" and not the visible.²² Dr. George sums up Zwingli's position on Christ's nature in these words, "In all of this Zwingli sought to safeguard the integrity of Christ's humanity."²³

Truly it is sad that these two sincere men of tremendous influence could not only not agree, but could not be allies with so many other major points in common. We must appreciate their strength of conviction if not their suspicions of each other.

Another sad fact concerning Zwingli's view of the Lord's Supper is the lack of knowledge with Zwingli's more mature thoughts on this matter in the modern Church. One should appreciate the progress of his thought on this matter as it appears to us almost 500 years later. The Zwinglian course is something like that of a pendulum. When he parted from the Roman Catholic Church he traveled from one side of the pendulum arch to the reactionary position of the opposite side of the arch. However, through time he moderated somewhat until the pendulum approaches almost the midpoint of its swing. This latter progress is most probably the result of maturation and moderation.

What does the late-Zwinglian view of the Lord's Supper look like? It is now our task to describe this "third phase" of Zwingli's convictions concerning the Lord's Supper. The later Zwingli paid more attention to the inner man and to the *theatrum salutis* (theater of salvation); however, he never ceased to repudiate that the Lord's Supper was a faith inducing sacrament.²⁴ Perhaps the best characteristic of Zwingli's latter documents is the fact that they were presented as well-thought-out positive statements of faith rather than negative attacks against his opponents.²⁵

Concerning the presence of Christ in the Supper, Zwingli asserts that he indeed does believe in the spiritual presence of Christ, but not the physical. He gives this statement which provides us insight into his understanding, "Even as we are in heaven in contemplation, faith, hope, and love alone."²⁶ In *The Letter to the Princes of Germany* Zwingli states that he does not deny the presence of Christ's body in a "sacramental" and "mysterious" way. This presence is related to faith, and this faith is held by the community of believers.²⁷ In this regard, the body of Christ is present sacramentally, in that we do inwardly what we are representing outwardly. We trust that Christ has taken on humanity for our sake.²⁸

The modern understanding (at least by most) that Zwingli held a strict "memorial" view of the Lord's Supper cannot be taken seriously in the light of these comments. Far from a low view of the supper, the latter Zwingli held a deep understanding of the elements of the supper as putting before us in sign "Christ Himself."²⁹ Just as preaching from the Bible appeals to the hearing sense, in like manner the elements appeal to the senses of taste and touch. So, in the maturing Zwingli, we see a true depth in the Lord's Supper, one which could hold a special reverence for the presence of Christ and yet one which would not allow for any idolatry. The elements signify things they cannot begin to attain, no more than a ring of gold could be as valuable as the love behind it.³⁰

On October 11, 1531, the earthly work of Huldrych Zwingli was brought to an end at the battle of Kappel. The Catholic armies struck Zwingli down; and from a human perspective, we would say this was a great tragedy. Zwingli's thought was barely over a decade in development, and it is purely speculative to think what his latter views would have been. Yet there is no doubt he left a legacy with regard to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper which would have a major impact. Within the historical framework, it is important to remember his common beliefs with the great reformer, Martin Luther, as well as their important differences. Many times in the history of the Church (as in its present and future), it is the differences, between theologians and groups, through which God works to give us a developed theology. Without the dynamic between Luther and Zwingli, Baptists today might have a far

different view of the Lord's Supper.

At this point, we will transition from Zwingli's thought on the Lord's Supper to the thought of John Calvin. While Calvin has not had the impact upon the Baptist observance of the Lord's Supper Zwingli did, it is still helpful to study his thoughts on this matter. Calvin has had a role to play, especially in earlier Baptist thought; and his doctrine of the Lord's Supper is not very different from later Zwingli. In summing up the influence of these two reformers upon Baptists and the Lord's Supper, it is my intention to give a comparison of Zwingli's and Calvin's views. I totally agree with Dr. George that Calvin's views were much like those of Zwingli and that Calvin owed the Zurich reformer more than he knew or, at least, would admit to.³¹ It is very interesting to see the very human quirk in Calvin which caused him to write off Zwingli's views because Luther wrote disparaging things about the Zurich reformer. The extreme irony is Calvin's own understanding of the Lord's Supper would take him on a path far from Luther and very close to Zwingli.³²

Calvin had a great admiration for Martin Luther (as previously stated), but Calvin's theology would take him farther from the Roman Catholic Church and the regional confines than did Luther's theology. Calvin was the first of the second generation of reformers³³ who were more successful in achieving the expansion of the Reformation.

Early on, Calvin was influenced by St. Augustine's doctrine of the Lord's Supper. In 1536 Calvin broke with Luther on the ubiquity of the body of Christ.³⁴ From this point on, Calvin rejected the idea of Christ's physical body being present in the elements of the Eucharist. In another very Zwinglian view, Calvin understood the elements of the Supper to be the signs and seals of the covenant. The extent of the sign in Calvin's doctrine would take him beyond Zwingli (and Baptists) in that he (Calvin) believed the sign receives the name of the thing signified.³⁵ Although this understanding is a step beyond Zwingli, it is certainly in the same branch of biblical understanding. The exegetical method would be much closer between Geneva and Zurich than either would be to Wittenberg.

Some further nuances of Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper will reveal his differences and agreements with Zwingli's understanding. Although Calvin would not allow for the physical presence of Christ's body in the elements, he certainly uses physical imagery. Calvin used language such as, "feeding on the flesh of Christ."³⁶ He sounds sympathetic to the Lutherans and Catholics when we hear these terms, but then we hear him declaring the mode to be different. He speaks of Christ being present in the Lord's Supper in the "celestial mode,"³⁷ which almost strains to be as contradictory as Luther's language. As we read Zwingli, we can only believe he would have

rejected such language. We can hear in Calvin, on this subject, a desire to please the Lutherans, while, at the same time, rejecting their ideas. The agreements held by Calvin and Zwingli are numerous. Calvin believes the elements represent a visible representation of God's Word which helps confirm and fortify believers from doubt and uncertainty.³⁸ A very "Zwinglian" feature of Calvin's thought was his doctrine of the two natures of Christ. Calvin, too, believed the incarnational body of Christ is in heaven at the "right hand" of the Father. Therefore, he rejected the ubiquity of Christ's body (though not His Spirit which, again, was the same view as Zwingli), even charging that those who believed in the physical presence of Christ's body in the sacrament were idolators.³⁹

There are many interesting twists in the courses of Zwingli's thought with that of Calvin's. It seems that Calvin was unaware of Zwingli's writings on the Lord's Supper.⁴⁰ One can only speculate that Calvin's view of Zwingli would have been much more favorable if he had read those writings. Even though Calvin was not directly acquainted with these late works of Zwingli, we cannot conclude that they had no impact upon him. If you study Luther and Zwingli regarding their views, and then study Calvin, you will discover Calvin to be almost in the middle. This was no accident. The men who had tried to get Zwingli and Luther to reach a compromise at the Marburg Colloquy were correspondents with Calvin. I think one of the many flaws of the modern perception of Calvin is that he was a cold, intransigent man. This was not the case. One of Calvin's close friends was Melancthon, who was very devoted to ecumenicity, especially among the Protestants. Because Calvin was concerned about unity in the Church, he wrote letters to Zwingli's followers in Zurich. In these letters there is not the animus for Zwingli that some historians claim existed. Certainly there were differences with Zwingli held by Calvin, but not great and insurmountable differences. As a matter of fact, Calvin, in a letter to Zwingli's successors, extols Zwingli and Oecolampadius claiming they would have agreed with him (Calvin) on the Lord's Supper! One can hear the conciliatory attitude in Calvin's letters, not only in the text, but in the title itself (e.g. *In The Document Mutual Consent of the Churches of Zurich and Geneva As to The Sacraments*).⁴²

Dr. Timothy George gives a very succinct summation of Calvin's view as couched between Luther and Zwingli in his book, Theology of the Reformers.⁴³ Calvin finds in Zwingli the extreme of not placing enough emphasis on the outward signs, therefore rendering them as an "empty" outward sign. Again, had he studied Zwingli's later writings, we wonder if he would have leveled this charge. As for Luther, Calvin believed there was an overemphasis of the outward signs which placed too much emphasis upon the outward and not enough on their spiritual significance. The Lord's Supper, according to Calvin, was spiritual nourishment for the Church and

that in the supper, Christ draws believers spiritually to Himself.⁴⁴ This represents a beautiful idea in the spiritual aspect of the supper without the necessity of some kind of physical presence.

Now that we have a sketch of the Zwinglian and Calvinistic doctrines of the Lord's Supper, we will begin the task of applying them in the formulation and progression of the Baptist doctrine of the Lord's Supper. As we begin this, there are some important qualifications put forth:

Baptists are not a monolithic movement. There is an incredible diversity in the history of Baptists as well as in its modern context. Therefore, the scope of this paper will be primarily the English Baptist movement from the time of their historic confessions -- *The London Confession of 1644* and *The Second London Confession of 1677*. This certainly does not deny the earlier formulation of Baptists, but it does provide a clear starting point. We will focus specifically on the "particular" Baptist tradition which is anchored historically to these confessions; however it will be necessary to note the "General" Baptist influence as well.

The lines between Baptists, as we shall see, have a way of "fuzzing." The views of Zwingli and Calvin which we will be tracing are not to be synthesized. There is rarely a "blending of their views" in the history or present among Baptists. What we will see is a mixing of their views. The result is a pure eclecticism instead of a true synergism. There are periods and/or groups which may stress the memorial view of early Zwingli and others which may stress later Zwingli, along with some elements of Calvin. There have been few periods or groups which placed the emphasis on a strict Calvinistic view of the supper.

While we are focusing primarily on the contributions of Zwingli and Calvin in the development of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper in Baptist life, this is not to suggest that Baptists have not contemplated scriptural teaching concerning this issue on their own. This also does not deny the influences of other traditions upon Baptist thought. For example, Zwingli has not only had direct impact on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper in Baptist life but also indirect impact through the Radical reformers who were his early disciples. These former followers of Zwingli never moderated their views of the Lord's Supper but rather accentuated the purely "memorial" aspect of the supper.

We begin with the *Second London Confession of 1677* for two reasons. First, it is an expansion and clarification of the 1644 confession. Secondly, it sets forth in clear terms the earliest ideas of the Lord's Supper in the Baptist faith.

"The Supper of the Lord Jesus was instituted by Him... for the perpetual remembrance and shewing forth the sacrifice in His death confirmation of

the faith of believers in all benefits thereof, their spiritual nourishment and growth in Him, ... "45

In this opening section, it is obvious we are reading the very Zwinglian take on the ordinance. The framers of this document clearly intend to set the tone with the memorial aspect of the supper set forth immediately. Now, whatever else we read, we will have this as our anchor -- this supper was instituted by Christ as a memorial to signify what He did for believers. Now, with this concept firmly in place, the writers move on to the more subtle and wonderful truths of the Lord's Supper, many of which are representative of Zwingli's later thought. The ideas of faith being confirmed by this ceremony connects with Zwingli's idea that the sacraments help believers to touch and taste the Word, just as preaching enables them to experience the Word through the sense of hearing. The latter part of this first section reflects the idea of Christ's real presence in the supper in a spiritual sense which enhances the believer's spiritual growth. So, in the opening section we see pure Zwingli.

Sections 2-6 reflect upon the proper administration of the supper and the common reformed doctrines which reject Roman Catholic Mass and their doctrine of Transubstantiation. Section 8 deals with who may partake of the Lord's Supper, which certainly would be concerns of Zwingli and Calvin. Luther would probably have no problem with much of what is in the sections, although he would have been much less concerned with the participants than Section 8 is. Luther would have had a major problem with Section 1 (the Zwinglian section already covered) and with Section 7 (the Calvinistic section we are considering next).

"Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this ordinance, do then 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,..."46

In this section we detect some late Zwinglian thought, but we also hear Calvin's doctrine of Christ's special yet mysterious presence in the Eucharist. Considering the soteriological stance of these Baptists, it is no surprise that they would be greatly influenced by Calvin. Calvin's influence came not only directly through his writings for these Baptists, but also indirectly through his influence upon the Westminster Confession which obviously influenced the framers of *The Second London Confession*. It is also worth noting that these "particular" Baptists were eager to be distinguished from the Anabaptists.

Before we trace the Baptist Lord's Supper doctrine through subsequent historical confessions and writings, it is important to mention two other Baptist confessions which were contemporaneous to the Second London Confession. The first is the *Dordrecht Confession* of 1632. This was an Anabaptist confession, and in Article X it sets forth the doctrine of the Lord's Supper.⁴⁷ This article presents the pure memorial aspect of the supper held by the radical reformers who broke away from Zwingli. The Second is *The Orthodox Creed* of 1678. This creed was put forth by the General Baptists in response to the Particular Baptists London Confessions.⁴⁸ Although this document copies much of the language of the London Confessions (often verbatim), it has significant differences due to the Arminian doctrine it intends to present. The significant departure with the wording of the Second London Confession by this creed is its omission of Section 7 (the Calvinistic portion) of the confession. These documents are important because, through time, they would creep into the Particular Baptist stream.

Another point which must be made before tracing our subject is the doctrinal undercurrents which influence a denomination's doctrine of the Lord's Supper and other practices as well. This is perhaps the most telling fact in the development of the Baptist doctrine of the Lord's Supper. W.P. Stephen's makes a profound statement concerning this, "a change in theology inevitably involves a change in practice, both in the Church's form of worship and the individual believer's form of piety."⁴⁹ Earlier in this paper, we discussed the fact that the differences between Luther and Zwingli over the Lord's Supper were due to their doctrines of Christology and ecclesiology. At that point, it was stated that the Baptist view of the Lord's Supper was connected to soteriology and theology. Now we will consider how this is true. It should be evident that the more Arminian a confession or people are, the less they tend to hold mature Zwinglian or Calvinistic views of the Lord's Supper. Both Anabaptists and General Baptists are Semi-Pelagian/Arminian in their soteriology. They believe that man, not God, ultimately decides the fate of his eternal soul. This affects their theology (specifically, here, I am referring to the characteristics of God) in several ways. First, it denies the sovereignty of God (although many Arminians deny this, the fact is they cannot because this is the imperative result of their system). It exalts man's moral ability; it dilutes the work of Christ on the cross by reducing it to a potential work, rather than a perfect work; it detracts from the blessing of being God's chosen people; it gives human beings room for pride and boasting. These underlying factors of the individual's doctrine of soteriology and theology, therefore, have great impact upon the observance of the Lord's Supper. Doctrine does impact practice! If a person sees themselves as contributing to and maintaining, in some sense, their very salvation, then the presence of Christ and the beauty of the elements will be diminished directly and proportionately. If a

doctrine focuses on man and not the glory of Christ and salvation by grace through faith alone, then naturally the Lord's Supper will focus more on the qualifications of the partakers rather than the provision of the Saviour. Nearly all of the Arminian Baptist confessions place the emphasis on the participants. Both Zwingli and Calvin believed in the sovereignty of God in salvation of sinners; therefore, their views of the Lord's Supper exalt Christ and the deep spiritual graces of the supper.

Let us now put this point to the test of history. As Baptists moved to the New World, they soon framed their own confession. The first great confession was the *Philadelphia Confession* of 1742. This confession was framed in a time and place where the Particular Baptists (Calvinistic) were dominant. This confession was practically identical to the *Second London Confession* in most every aspect, including its doctrine of the Lord's Supper.⁵⁰ It should be noted that the General Baptist movement in America was nearly nonexistent in America by the early 1800's. A resurgence of Arminian influence swept the country. The first confession that is influenced by this is the *New Hampshire Confession* of 1833 which was an attempt to "soften" the Calvinism of earlier Baptist confessions in response to the Arminian resurgence. The effect on their doctrine of the Lord's Supper was telling. The section itself, Section 12,⁵¹ was stark in its brevity (as the rest of the sections were) and language. The only things confirmed are the memorial aspect of the supper, the "sacred use" of the elements, and the warning to participants to examine themselves. In 1925 the Southern Baptist Convention adopted their *Baptist Faith and Message*, which was essentially a remake of the New Hampshire statement. At that time, the Southern Baptists were forsaking their Particular Baptist heritage; and the classic proof of this (and the reinforcement of the point of how Arminianism diminishes the Lord's Supper) is the 1963 *Baptist Faith And Message*.

"The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the Church, through participating of the bread and fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His Second Coming."⁵²

In this statement we have the total expulsion of Zwingli, except that the radical reformers take on his thought, and Calvin. Furthermore, there is a total removal of any mystery or sacredness in the elements, now referred to as bread and fruit, a removal of Christ's spiritual presence and the ascension of man. The language is exclusively about what we do. It is also fascinating that not only do we not affirm anything, but we also conversely do not deny anything (e.g. Transubstantiation, real sacrifice, etc.). Here is a vanilla statement which is ripe for heresy.

Other Baptist writings and preachers can shed further light on this

remarkable course of the Lord's Supper. I will cite two before going to my closing remarks. First of all, there was Charles Spurgeon, the great Baptist pastor who was profoundly shaped by Calvin and the Puritans. We would expect a richness in his doctrine of the Lord's Supper; and, for the most part, there is. Spurgeon, in the tradition of the reformers, warns against the abuses of Roman Catholicism.⁵³ He stresses the Biblical texts, such as the Lucan and Matthew texts, concerning the Lord's Supper, to stress the Zwinglian view of "Do this" and to deny an ongoing sacrifice for our salvation.⁵⁴ There are also Calvinistic and late Zwinglian thoughts in Spurgeon's preaching. Spurgeon stresses the spiritual benefits of the supper, and he coupled the supper to the covenant of grace (though he stopped short of Calvin's full blown doctrine here).⁵⁵ Another reformed aspect of Spurgeon's view was his openness of the Lord's Supper. You will not find in Spurgeon the long lists of qualifications the Arminians stress to be able to observe the communion. He invited the "sick" to come for the healing and renewal of communion.⁵⁶ The second source is a summary of British Baptist life in the 17th and 18th centuries. The central aspect of this book's treatment of the communion is fellowship with Christ and other believers.⁵⁷ The believers did not focus on the "Lord is it he" but rather the "Lord is it I" attitude of humility before Christ. The authors speak of the Zwinglian influence on Baptist and communion historically, especially later Zwinglian doctrine.⁵⁸ A direct quote from "...British Baptist Life" is as follows: "There have always been Baptists whose interpretations of the Lord's Supper is Calvinistic... today (early 20th century) there is a growing consciousness that this rite has not taken the place amongst us which belongs to it, and that it should be celebrated with greater reverence."⁵⁹ This awareness is certainly not true among American Baptists, with rare exception. A search of Baptist journals and periodicals will rarely yield serious discussion on this subject. Modern Baptist writers rarely venture from the views expressed in the 1963 SBC, "Faith and Message."

There is some encouragement from some notable Baptist theologians and their work in Modern Systematics. Both Wayne Grudem and Millard J. Erickson do good work on the origins and doctrines of the Lord's Supper. It is my position that by taking a thoughtful look at the Communion Table again that Baptists could regain some of the depth of their spirituality. It is not enough merely to comprehend the Lord's Supper in some passing way. We need to once again experience what it means.⁶⁰ We need to lose our fear of the word "sacramental" because all of us should agree there are some spiritual benefits in the supper.⁶¹ It does not seem probable that the Lord's Supper will be returned to the place it should have until we go back to our roots in Zwingli and Calvin. Baptists have not misapplied the Matthew, Luke, and 1 Corinthians text on the Lord's Supper, but we have fallen short of enjoying the richness of the passages because of the subtle invasion of

Arminian doctrine.

I look forward to the day when we once again exalt Christ in the supper. When we worship with awe and reverence around the elements in community. When we determine to worship Christ as Lord and the Finisher of our salvation. May the day return when we feast and grow spiritually upon the Body of Christ given for us. And, finally, in the future may we be drawn by the Lord's Supper into the Holy of Holies with Christ.

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