

Review:

*Amidst Us Our Belovèd Stands: Recovering Sacrament in the Baptist Tradition*

Michael A.G. Haykin

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Like many contemporary Baptists, I was schooled in the memorialist understanding of the Lord's Table, that the bread and wine were merely symbols of the body and blood of Christ meant to remind us of the awful price he paid at Calvary.

Additionally, through 48 years of pastoral ministry among Baptists, I saw baptism slowly sidelined in importance. How else does one explain the rising number of professing Christians attending Baptist churches being welcomed to the Lord's Table despite never having publicly confessed their faith through baptism in keeping with New Testament pattern and practice? Indeed, Dr. Haykin successfully demonstrates that the 20th-century prevalence of the altar call "effectively usurps the roles assigned to baptism and the Table in classical Baptist ecclesiology" (xvii).

Seldom, if ever, would the Lord's Table or baptism be viewed as *sacraments* or be described as *means of grace*. Despite the noble goal of ensuring no one thought participation in the ordinances brought salvation, the unintended consequences included at thinning appreciation for the richly spiritual nature, and vital importance, of obeying Christ's command.

Informed by decades-long immersion in primary sources, Dr. Michael Haykin skillfully distills 17th- and 18th-century Particular Baptist understanding and practice of the Lord's Table and baptism. Describing these essays as an "exercise in historical *ressourcement*" (xvii), they constitute a clear call for present-day evangelical Baptists to draw from the teaching of their forebears in order to restore a previous sacramental understanding of the ordinances.

Readers will meet fascinating personalities who thought long and deeply about these matters, and while contrasting views were inevitable, this study convincingly demonstrates that the prevailing view of 18th-century Baptist leaders regarding the ordinances was sacramental.

For example, the late 19th-century Baptist, C.H. Spurgeon's communion hymn, *Jesu's Presence Delightful*. As Dr. Haykin notes, "This hymn's emphasis on the spiritual presence of Christ at the Table is quite remarkable for a late nineteenth-century Baptist author, for the vast majority of Baptist leaders in that era held that the Supper was a time of remembrance, nothing more" (xiv). But, as Dr. Haykin reminds us, Spurgeon's understanding of the Table was informed by 17th-century Puritans and 18th-century Baptists.

It is no surprise that a sacramental understanding of the Lord's Supper raised questions as to whether or not unbaptized believers should be welcome at the Table. Dr. Haykin outlines the main issues at stake in his recounting of the vigorous debate between William Kiffen (1616-1701) who held to closed communion, and John Bunyan (1628-1688) who advocated for open communion. Though the controversy severely strained friendships, pastors Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) and John Ryland Jr. (1753-1825) provide an emulation-worthy example of cordial friendship despite conflicting views in the matter. Present-day Baptists would do well to learn from these men.

Along with rigorous theological reasoning, you will encounter richly lyrical and spiritual hymnody, the likes of which is rarely experienced today.

The final essay presents six theses regarding Baptism and the Lord's Supper as understood in the Baptist tradition. They address contemporary issues within Baptist life and practice. Baptism and the Table must be returned to their rightful place at the center of Baptist ecclesiology and embraced as vital means of grace. The altar call has undermined our understanding of the vital place these ordinances are meant to have in the Church.

I wish a book like this had been available to me when I began pastoral ministry in 1970. It would have enriched my own spiritual journey, and aided me in leading the congregations I pastored to a deeper spiritual appreciation for what takes place when believers publicly confess faith in Christ in baptism and approach the Lord's Table in rich and meaningful worship.

We are deeply indebted to Dr. Michael A.G. Haykin for bringing the past to bear on our present through his rigorous research, accessible to any serious reader. This book is a model of godly scholarship in service to the Church.

David S. Daniels