

IN
REMEMBRANCE
OF HIM

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IN
REMEMBRANCE
OF HIM

PROFITING FROM THE LORD'S SUPPER

Guilelmus Saldenus
& Wilhelmus à Brakel



Translated by Bartel Elshout
Edited by James A. DeJong



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can one be converted to God and be enabled to believe in Christ,
with the manner in which such spiritual life manifests itself
in such an individual.*

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Introduction



The Lord's Supper and Essays for Self-Examination

The two seventeenth-century essays translated and offered in this book were originally designed to help people of the Dutch Further Reformation derive the greatest benefit from celebrating the Lord's Supper. They aimed at preparing these devout Reformed Christians for the sacrament. They were intended to foster understanding of what to expect or not expect in the supper itself. And they instructed them in how to follow up the meal in a spiritually beneficial manner. As such, these two contributions are but two examples of a much larger genre of edifying Lord's Supper literature that developed in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century.

Why was this significant, sustained attention to the sacrament produced? One only needs to recall that throughout the Middle Ages an awesome fear of the sacrament developed. By the late centuries of that era, the doctrine of transubstantiation was entrenched in Vatican thought. The great mystery of the physical elements being miraculously changed into the real body and blood of Christ was accentuated ritually and approached with liturgical solemnity. The clergy prepared carefully for officiating at this event. People had

to make honest, full confession beforehand and had to complete prescribed penance lest they suffer eternal consequences. Neglect of this sure means of conveying saving grace as well as cavalier participation in the sacrament were equally risky. No wonder the altar rail was approached with trepidation. Barring the laity from celebrating with both elements only underscored the danger of profaning this culmination of Christian worship.

The sixteenth-century Reformers devoted vast attention biblically to correcting the theology of the Lord's Supper and to re-educating believers in its meaning and observance. No wonder a disproportionate amount of attention is paid the supper in Reformation confessions, commentaries, doctrinal works, conversations and colloquies, polemics, and liturgical practice. The Lord's Supper was at the core of the differences between Rome and the Reformation. But correcting a misguided understanding and practice of this sacrament did not lessen the gravity of the event; it only accentuated it. Christians needed to come to absolute clarity on what coming to the table meant. They had to be disabused of the spiritually destructive errors ingrained in them. But they also had to approach so important an event in a thoroughly chastened spirit. Doing any less meant "eating and drinking judgment unto themselves," in the words of Paul, which became the governing passage for fencing the table. The essays presented in this volume reflect that emphasis. It is an emphasis that defined Protestant, including Dutch Reformed and Puritan, sacramental thought and practice into the recent modern era.

The Guilelmus Saldenus essay concentrates on two themes: joy or comfort in celebrating the sacrament and the holiness or sanctified living that it ought to generate. The theme of joy is remarkable, since it shatters the image or caricature of Further Reformation folk as dour legalists. But the joy is not a superficial or frivolous emotion; it is a deep, inner elation and assurance of well-being based on the finished work of the cross. Solemnity is no enemy of such overwhelming comfort; it is rather the respectful atmosphere in which it should be experienced and appreciated. What is quite remarkable in Saldenus's explanation is that comfort and joy should not be misunderstood as the subjective moods or dispositions with which one approaches or leaves the table. These may vary due to immediate circumstances, but the deeper sense of well-being signified and sealed in the Lord's Supper will endure and must be the celebrant's focus. In fact, the author repeatedly warns against staying away from the table based on fluctuating human emotions. One ought to come seeking fortified

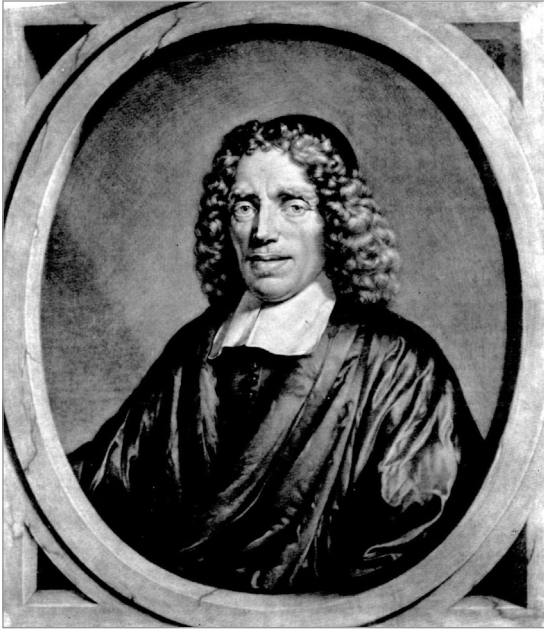
faith that rests on divine promises. Passages in Chapter 5 that deal with the believer's participation in the sufferings of Christ via a properly prepared celebration of the sacrament are some of the most vivid and moving expositions of communing with the Lord one can find in devotional literature anywhere. Saldenus obviously reflected deeply and perceptively on the subject.

The *Wilhelmus à Brakel* essay consists of three discourses in catechetical form, which was typical of instructional or edifying literature of the era. As the title indicates, they deal with preparation for the celebration, the celebration itself, and the post-communion response to having been at the table. This three-step pattern was also captured in the typical Dutch Reformed practice of preaching a preparatory sermon the week before communion Sunday, preaching a communion sermon at the communion service, and preaching a post-communion or applicatory sermon at the evening service on communion Sunday. À Brakel's discourses may well have been intended to be read and reflected upon in conjunction with these services. This material was presented for publication, along with a 1702 meditation, by his grandson in 1751, years after à Brakel had died.

While the Lord's Supper is commonly celebrated with much more frequency today than four times a year, which was the prevailing practice in the Dutch Reformed tradition well into the modern era, it is also usually observed without the kind of deep reflection presented in these essays. By making them available for the first time in English, we hope and pray that they will contribute to a richer celebration of the sacrament for the reader.

Guilelmus Antonius Saldenus

Guilelmus Saldenus lived from 1627 to 1694. After his theological training in Utrecht, he was a lifelong pastor: Renswoude (1649), Kockengen (1652), Enkhuizen (1655), Delft (1664), and The Hague (1677). At Utrecht, he studied under Gisbertus Voetius and Johannes Hoornbeeck, two other authors featured in the series of titles on spiritual formation in which the present volume appears. While he never became a theological professor, he did stay theologically engaged during his pastorates. The various titles he produced are marked by insight and balance, as is the material on the Lord's Supper presented here. The faculty at Utrecht respected him so highly that it accorded him an honorary doctorate, a tribute only very rarely granted in the seventeenth century. His material is largely edifying and devotional in nature. It was reprinted and read with appreciation by many into the



Guiljelmus Saldenus (1627–1694)

nineteenth century, when it contributed to the revival of confessional Reformed spirituality.

The tone of Saldenus's piety was individualistic and oriented toward the hereafter, according to Wilhelm Goeters, who has given this author's works particularly close scrutiny. A frequently reprinted and read Saldenus title dealt with the road or way of life. It was subtitled "a short [650 pages!], simple introduction to the nature and characteristics of the true power of salvation." Another title dealt with "spiritual honey" in a collection of sermons. Another was called a "touchstone for Christian discernment" and dealt with spiritual self-assessment and the ability to discern the spirituality of others. "The way of comfort revealed for penitent believers" was yet another title in the Saldenus oeuvre. "The saints' lamentations on the bitterness of Zion's misery" dealt with the sorry state of the church in the Netherlands. Nor did Saldenus ignore children; he produced material for their instruction in the Christian faith. He was an effective preacher who emphasized the need for conversion, a holy walk with the Lord, and great anticipation of the blessedness

awaiting God's children in the life to come. As already noted in connection with his work on the Lord's Supper, he stressed that the believer's conviction and assurance do not rest on religious feelings or subjective dispositions, however powerful these may sometimes be, but on the objective promises and saving work of God in Christ. Saldenus was appreciated for his spiritual and theological balance as well as for flashes of unusual spiritual perceptivity.

Wilhelmus à Brakel

Only slightly younger than Saldenus, Wilhelmus à Brakel lived from 1635 until 1711. The son of a prominent minister in the Further Reformation tradition, he was trained for ministry at Franeker and Utrecht, where he was deeply influenced by Voetius. He served congregations in Exmorra (1662), Stavoren (1665), Harlingen (1670), Leeuwarden (1673), and Rotterdam (1683). He was a gifted and much appreciated preacher. Initially inclined toward the mystical features of Labadism, he in time came to understand and to warn in print against the separatism of that movement. He advocated conventicles as effective instruments for cultivating deeper, more reflective spirituality, inspiration, instruction in the faith, supportive fellowship, and fervent prayer life. These were private, weekday services that were controversial because consistories and civil authorities often perceived them to be an indictment on the official public worship and church life of the Dutch Reformed Church. "Father à Brakel's" public opposition to the role of Dutch civil officials in both approving ministers called to serve in congregations and at times dismissing them from service made him controversial. The role of civil authorities in Dutch church life had been a long-standing thorn in the side of Reformed leaders, however, but à Brakel's popularity and measured restraint protected him from removal.

Like that of Voetius, his mentor, his preaching and writing were an appealing blend of confessional Reformed orthodoxy and explicitly concrete spiritual practice. In fact, his followers, an unusually extensive group, were known as Brakelian Voetians. His publications were widely read and frequently reprinted deep into the nineteenth century.

À Brakel's most important and extensive work is his *Reasonable Christianity* (*Redelijke Godsdienst*). The first two of its three parts were first translated into English as *The Christian's Reasonable Service* (4 vols.) in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Two-thirds of part three consists of a commentary on the book of Revelation. The subtitle of this material identifies it as "a work in which the divine truths of



Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635–1711)

the covenant of grace are explained.” The first edition of *Reasonable Christianity* appeared in 1700, near the end of his long career. By the next year it had to be reprinted. Then it was expanded for its third appearance shortly thereafter. It enjoyed some twenty reprints in the eighteenth century alone. It was one of the most frequently cited works of “the old authors,” as Further Reformation writers were called by Dutch-speaking American religious writers in the nineteenth century. Far from being academic theology, the work might well be called “applied devotional theology” for its blend of doctrine and Christian living. Part one is a readable, popular-level explanation and application of forty-two main doctrinal topics (*loci*) of the Christian faith; it comes to just over a thousand pages. Part two is entirely on living the sanctified life as understood by explaining the Ten Commandments, the main spiritual affections, the Lord’s Prayer, classic Christian virtues, spiritual struggles, perseverance, and the doctrine of the last things; it comes to almost seven hundred pages. Part three is a survey of redemptive history from creation through the

New Testament church and culminates with the lengthy commentary on the book of Revelation; it comes to three hundred and fifty pages, two hundred of them devoted to the commentary. It was probably the most widely read and consulted work of its kind in Dutch Reformed circles through the nineteenth century.

Another popular title by the same author is *The True Christian or Upright Believer*, a collection of ten sermons. *Hallelujah! Or, Praising the Lord* deals with the administration of the covenant of grace in both the Old and New Testaments. *The Lord Jesus Christ, the Only and Sovereign Lord of the Church* appeared in 1688. His first wife, Sarah Nevius, was a popular Christian writer in her own right. Her book *An Attentive Student of the Lord Jesus* enjoyed wide circulation and was frequently reprinted. All of these titles represent the devotional and edifying literature of the Dutch Further Reformation and solidified à Brakel's reputation as one of the pre-eminent leaders of that movement.

Technical Points

A few technical points deserve brief comment. The two essays are replete with biblical quotations. These do not always clearly connect with the point the author is making. Rather than delete them, we have left them in the text since, often with a little more reflection, the modern reader can discover what was on the writer's mind. We have changed verse numbers to accord with English-language numbering where it varies from Dutch numbering. Where the authors give an erroneous reference or omit a reference, we have corrected the error or included the reference in a footnote. Both the translator and the editor have carefully reviewed the biblical references. The English translations of Scripture are our own.

We have not included laudatory poems or ecclesiastical endorsements, both of which typically appeared in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century religious literature of the type presented here. We have left in the text occasional Latin phrases or terms. In the case of the Saldenus material, we have worked from a late-seventeenth-century printing. In the case of the à Brakel material, we have relied on a 1985 Dutch reprint by the publisher Den Hertog in Houten, the Netherlands, and edited by Rev. C. J. Meeuwse. Finally, where the author has mixed the singular and the plural grammatically, we have left his choices uncorrected; this captures his attempt to personalize the material for the reader. As editor, I commend Rev. Bartel Elshout for capturing the tone and spirit of the material. His

thorough familiarity with the Dutch devotional literature of the period is obvious in his excellent work. The reader is referred to his website noted in the bibliography. Here he presents a longer review of à Brakel's life than I have provided in this introduction. The site also includes our colleague Dr. Joel's Beeke's balanced, comprehensive essay on the Further Reformation. Both of these pieces are from the English translation of à Brakel's work noted below. The site also contains a brief video clip of Elshout commending the work.

James A. De Jong

EFFICACY OF THE
LORD'S SUPPER

TO THE COMFORT AND SANCTIFICATION
OF GOD'S CHILDREN



Briefly Addressed by

Guilelmus Saldenus

Minister of the Gospel in Delft

Published according to
Article 55 of the Church Order

Dedication to Mr. Frederick Budens

Formerly a Magistrate of Bergen op Zoom



Your Honor,

This present treatise, as you can observe, deals with the Lord's Supper and how the godly must thereby be comforted and sanctified. It is certainly a subject that has been addressed by so many in a variety of ways—and rightfully so. Each author, in his own way, has done his best to present this delightful meal in the most glorious and delectable terms. In this I have always been able to detect a special token of God's love, however much one may deem this to be *actum agere*, that is, repetitive. The desires and inclinations of man vary, and everyone does not enjoy the same dish in identical fashion. What matters is whether the food is good; that is, holy and yielding spiritual blessing. What else is it but a proof of God's lovingkindness that everyone can find his delight in this meal?

Besides, it rarely happens that everyone writes the identical thing about a common subject. The concepts addressed generally vary considerably. Due to the sovereign ministry of the Holy Spirit, the one sees and finds something in God's Word that others have not perceived in the same fashion.

Therefore, following many who are preeminent among the people, I have also composed something regarding this heavenly subject, having no other objective than by way of a few propositions and instructions to set before the common people as clearly as possible the nature and

proper observance of the Lord's Supper. I readily admit that I am not presenting something new. I would, however, rather walk upon the established, and thus the safest, path. *Via trita via tuta*. Though the method I use regarding this subject matter is perhaps not the most original, and on occasion could easily suggest another approach or insight that has not been brought forward by others, it may yet not be entirely unsuitable, particularly for concerned Christians.

Section one has already been published over a period of four years under the title *A Spiritual Supper*, however, without any reference to the author's name. To this I now add section two, so that a Christian in these few pages may be furnished with all that is important and essential to achieve the most important objectives of the Lord's Supper: comfort and sanctification.

In this treatise, my focus is primarily on comfort and secondarily on sanctification, not because comfort should be preferred before sanctification, but rather because I already had begun to follow this order. It also occurs to me that comfort is as much a fruit of the Lord's Supper as is sanctification, though these two influence each other. I am generally short and simple in my approach, leaving all extensive and soul-stirring exposition to others. I do this in recognition of the fact one can hardly find a better and more notable exposition than the writings of W. Teellinck, Hildersham, Derlincourt, Moulin, Jeremiah Dijke, D. Simonides, etc. It is also not so much my objective to move people as it is to instruct, and thus to provide small portions of that which could be enlarged upon considerably.

As a remedy for all the doubts of a child of God regarding either his state in general or that which is the result of inner strife, I do not wish to recommend anything other than the excellent, concise, and very scriptural treatise of my highly esteemed and honorable fellow laborer, Rev. Hermannus Tegularius, entitled *Scriptural Marks of a True Christian*. I especially recommend the second edition, which has been expanded considerably, and do not doubt but that everyone will be able to find instruction in this that suits him personally.

My sole objective is to resolve concerns in regard to the Lord's Supper—those matters that would inhibit the comfort and sanctification of God's children.

Having said this, your honor, I want to address you in particular. For a number of reasons, I consider it to be my obligation to dedicate these humble meditations respectfully to your honor. First, I am deeply obliged to you for the numerous and gracious favors and

courtesies my family and I have so frequently enjoyed in your home. I have never had a suitable opportunity to express my gratitude for this.

Another reason is that I know your honor to be a lover of God's church and the doctrine of salvation. Considering your godly disposition, I am therefore hopeful that your honor will not only be pleased with this little treatise, but that it may also in some small measure be profitable to your soul.

Finally, I pray that the God of all grace will strengthen your honor in that regard by His Spirit, and that, after having often partaken of this external supper with a sanctified heart, you may once be seated in the heavens at His eternal supper with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

I hereby conclude, and as a friend and servant of your honor, I remain,

G. Saldenus

Delft, August 25, 1664

Part I:
On Comfort



CHAPTER

1



All religious duties have two objectives, the primary being God's honor and the secondary being the spiritual profit of man. Therefore, in all that he does, a Christian must have these two objectives in view, though there must be a distinction between them. Without having these two in view, he will be incapable of doing any good. He must either deny his obligatory love toward God or his love for himself, and it is entirely fitting and essential that the first objective have the preeminence. Thus, when contrasted, this second objective should yield and be subordinate to the first. Yes, if one of the two would have to be the lesser, that is, if the choice would be between God's honor and man's spiritual well-being, man should rather yield and minimize that which is his rather than having God not receive His worthy due. This does not mean, however, that he should either ignore or neglect his own interest. Rather, in all humility he should do his utmost not only to strive for God's honor in all that he does, but also seek to attain the greatest joy and benefit for himself. He may do so not only when prayerfully reading, hearing, and meditating upon God's Word, but especially when partaking of the Holy Supper of the Lord.

This Christian duty, more so than is true for all other duties, has been ordained and instituted by God for man's spiritual joy and strengthening. Therefore, we believe it to be most appropriate to posit that though the honor of God must always have the preeminence, we must also seek to secure that which is to our benefit and

to lay out before you the sure and spiritual way in which we may obtain it. We are prompted to do this since many are accustomed to lament the lack of fruit in connection with the Lord's Supper.

I will not address here the comfort of the soul and its sanctification in general, but only the Lord's Supper's efficacy in stimulating and increasing such comfort and sanctification of man as issue forth from and flourish as a fruit of the Lord's Supper.

Regarding both matters, we will proceed as follows:

- I. We will present several general propositions regarding these spiritual fruits, and then expose each error made in that regard.
- II. We will prescribe directions and means, so that such spiritual fruits may be derived from the Lord's Supper.
- III. We will respond to several objections regarding this.

Proposition #1: It is a special fruit and consequence of the lawful partaking of the Lord's Supper that it generates comfort and joy in the hearts of God's children (Rom. 4:11; 1 Cor. 10:16–17; 1 Cor. 5:7; Song 5:1; etc.).

This brings to the fore:

1. the misunderstanding of those who partake of the Lord's Supper for no other reason than that they see others do likewise; or because they wish to pursue some temporary advantage, honor, and/or position; or because they wish to quiet their consciences, who perhaps are convinced that they no longer can be at peace in neglecting the same; or because of some other carnal motives, without there being anything memorable or delightful in it for them. Such people are generally satisfied if they have merely engaged in the outward act, even though they have never desired or perceived the least stirring of the soul. We will demonstrate, however, that this ought to be the special fruit of the Lord's Supper. How wretched are those who are of such a disposition! Concerning such we fear that since they do not seek any spiritual joy in and by means of the Lord's Supper (and if they do not change in that regard), this will be a certain indication of their

ultimate end and eternal sorrow. Paul says concerning them that they eat and drink judgment to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body (1 Cor. 11:29).

2. that there are those who, though they are godly, fail to partake of the Lord's Supper with the objective of stirring up in themselves, as they ought to, this spiritual joy; and if they persist in this, they will always remain mired (I know not due to what sort of grievous misunderstanding) in a despondent questioning, languishing, muddling, etc. I am not speaking of those who do their utmost in wrestling to overcome this, but rather, who, sad to say, frequently give in to such negative thought patterns. This is lamented in these words, "And there is none that...stirs up himself to take hold of you" (Isa. 64:7)—as if God would be well served by petulant and disagreeable guests who are always sighing! We would rather not admonish such troubled and despondent souls. However, since they frequently give in too much to this despondency, we can therefore not refrain from addressing these errors, for thereby they greatly and grievously shortchange the kindness of God and the grace within them, causing their own heart as well as their spiritual vitality to dwindle and languish (Ps. 77:10).

Proposition #2: This comforting joy of the Lord's Supper must not be considered as something external or physical, but rather, as something internal and spiritual (Ps. 4:8; Luke 1:47; Ps. 22:27).

This joy essentially consists of these three components:

1. It consists of a clearer and more distinct apprehension of the magnitude and preciousness of the suffering of Jesus Christ. This is set before us in the Lord's Supper not merely as is done and taught through the Word, nor is this embraced as being true by faith only. Rather, it is set before us as something that is seen, tasted, and felt through the administration of tangible and visible signs, and thus by taking, breaking, giving, pouring, eating, and drinking, etc., of the bread and wine.

2. It consists in a greater and more certain peace of heart proceeding from and by way of an assured fellowship with the all-sufficient

merits of Jesus Christ. In the Lord's Supper, by way of various ceremonial actions, all of this is displayed much more visibly and clearly, and it is bound upon the soul in a very personal way.

3. It consists of a fuller peace and inner satisfaction and of a determination to obey in return this perfectly obedient Christ, and if necessary to die, be broken, etc., for Him who died such a death, was broken, and whom one has eaten by faith (2 Cor. 5:15).¹

All of these matters are to be found in a spiritual Christian prior to his partaking of the Lord's Supper. However, in the Lord's Supper he experiences this in a more lively and experiential manner. It is the latter that constitutes his spiritual joy.

This, in turn, exposes the lamentable error:

1. of those who always imagine something carnal and physical, and who even appear to be of the opinion that a good Lord's Supper consists of a good meal and that this would be the true joy with which one would respond to this holy activity. Or, if they are not that foolish, they will at least enjoy a carnal security (assuming that the record of their sins is thereby abolished) and sit quietly at the Lord's Table without any serious concern for the means of grace. Truly, such are carnal and natural men who do not have the Spirit (Jude 19). And since they neither have spiritual eyes nor spiritual hearts, they would like to conform everything, and especially this spiritual meal, to their own state; they would thus turn it into an entirely carnal event. How poor is such a soul who subjects this heavenly work to shame and ignominy, and leads herself to perdition!

A true partaker of the Lord's Supper does not seek external joy. He neither feels nor displays it, except inasmuch as perhaps it would be to the edification and inspiration of others. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17).

1. Sometimes seventeenth-century biblical references seem oblique, as here. Saldenus sees a parallel here and in this verse between Christ's death and His followers' willingness to die to self. While many following biblical citations may be even more baffling to today's reader, a little deeper reflection will often disclose what the author probably had in mind.

2. of those who are not looking for something external but nevertheless remain greatly ensnared by their feelings, believing that there is no other source of joy in the Lord's Supper except that they feel and are aware of a sensible impression of such and such a matter. Or, to say it even more clearly, such a soul wants her affections to be touched, moved, stroked, and stimulated in a measure as she has seen at times and detected in herself or in others. It is true that the joy of which we are speaking can be so abundant that it often stirs up the affections. However, this should not be viewed as normative. Much less should it be concluded that where this is lacking there would also be no spiritual joy in the heart. The seat of this joy is not in the affections, etc., but rather, in the rational faculties of the soul, that is, in the intellect and the will. Such partakers will be filled with the greatest measure of joy even in the complete absence of all that is sensual. Peter speaks of this: "Though now you do not see him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8).

Proposition #3: None other than the truly converted can be partakers of this spiritual comfort and joy in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Chron. 31:18; 2 Cor. 6:14–15; 1 Cor. 10:19–20; Ps. 15:1–2; etc.).

This confirms the following:

1. What a grievous thing it is at times that many people are so rashly invited and admitted to the Lord's Table, and then so readily attend! Often there is not the least evidence of true contrition and faith. Except for some lofty words, they often do not conduct themselves any differently than purely carnal and worldly people. That which is holy ought not to be given unto the dogs, neither should these pearls be cast before swine (1 Cor. 11:28).

The Lord's Supper is not a means to bestow grace upon someone, but rather to strengthen existing grace, which is assumed to be present in those who lawfully partake of the Lord's Supper. To partake is indeed a duty incumbent upon all of Christianity, and believers are even commanded to do so. However, one can partake neither lawfully nor profitably unless conversion has truly

occurred. It is therefore all the more surprising that, generally speaking, such carnal and smooth-speaking individuals are even more boastful than others about their spiritual joy and ecstasy, although there is no portion in it for them but only for the truly converted. “Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart” (Ps. 97:11).

2. However much the true sheep may go astray, such as are truly contrite and broken because of their sins and who by a true faith, however weak that faith may be, are grafted into Christ often dare not number themselves among those who know of such joy; this is due to the perception of their unworthiness and deficiencies. They are of the opinion that this is not for them, but rather only for those who in all things conduct themselves better than they do. How sad this is, as it proceeds from a serious misunderstanding. The fact is that this joy is the lawful portion of all who have humbled themselves and have repented; yes, as we have just stated, it is for none other but those (2 Cor. 7:6).² As imperfect as their conversion may be, it cannot take away the fact that such are partakers of such joy. This is their portion, not because of the perfection of their conversion, but rather for the sake of Christ’s merits. We may and must conclude from their conversion that all these benefits are theirs. “If you believe with all your heart, you may” (Acts 8:37). If they would not view themselves as unworthy, they would neither be able to desire nor obtain this joy in the right way. In so doing, they would remain focused on themselves and not seek Christ, who nevertheless is the eternal fountain of this joy (Ps. 36:10).

Proposition #4: This spiritual joy derived from the Lord’s Supper will ordinarily only be experienced by those who have actively prepared themselves for it (2 Chron. 30:18–20; 1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 9:6; 2 Chron. 30:3).

2. See note 1 above. Paul is “lawfully” joyful because of Titus’s coming to him, just as the dubious but lawful celebrant of the Lord’s Supper ought to feel joyful at the table.

1. When saying that this joy “will ordinarily only be experienced by those, etc.” we imply that God can at times grant this in an extraordinary manner. Though we cannot limit Him in that regard, we are not to consider this as normative.

2. We also maintain that those who experience this joy must indeed be prepared (1 Cor. 11:28). Such habitual preparation is in essence no different from conversion itself, of which we have spoken earlier. To be prepared in very deed means that a believer, according to the measure of grace derived from Christ, has stirred up all these good virtues and dispositions such as knowledge, desire, faith, love, obedience, etc., that have been planted in him in conversion. He does so with immediate application and appropriation in regard to the special activity of the Lord’s Supper.

In regard to this, they deceive themselves

1. who partake of the Lord’s Supper unmoved and unfit, and thus without any premeditation as to what they are doing and how they are to conduct themselves. How grievously do such take hold of and trample upon that which is holy, doing so with unclean and unwashed hands and feet. Ought not many to be counted among such wretched souls, who, rather than receiving the Lord Jesus by way of the bread and wine, due to their willful lack of preparation, permit Satan with all his vile operations to penetrate the soul? Such may eat indeed, but they cannot be satisfied (Hos. 4:10). And though they speak of joy, as they often do, it is nothing more than a satanic lullaby. Theirs is the portion of one whose hunger is counterfeit, who is dreaming that he is eating and being satisfied. Once he awakens, he will find his soul to be empty after all (Isa. 29:8; John 13:27).

2. who are not as brazen as those whom we have just described, but who nevertheless engage in their preparation in a careless and carnal manner. They prepare themselves in a manner to which they are accustomed in the performance of all their religious duties, but their preparation lacks the dignity and solemnity that this special meal demands. Therefore, they ordinarily leave the table so void of fruit and joy.

God generally gives a measure of spiritual joy that is proportionate to the measure of our preparation, and if the latter is lacking, the first will ordinarily be withheld as well. He will spread His hands of blessing over us if we have examined our hearts extensively before Him regarding His work. However, that which is true for all other religious duties is applicable here as well: He at times will give nothing to one who has prepared himself most thoroughly so that one's preparation will not be viewed as the meriting cause of His lovingkindness. However, if He gives nothing to the one who has neglected to prepare himself, then he must generally consider his lack of preparation as the cause of such spiritual leanness (Ps. 81:11).

Proposition #5: This spiritual joy, derived from the Lord's Supper, will ordinarily not be experienced as generously by the person who finds himself in a troubled and confused state as by those whose condition is stable and tranquil (Eph. 1:10; Ps. 40:13).

It is therefore a fault

1. of some that exert themselves so little to foster and preserve a good spiritual disposition. How few pay attention to this matter! Are we not commonly very much engaged in having everything in our homes, yards, and bedrooms arranged in an orderly fashion, but not in regard to our soul? And thus, that which is most precious (our soul) we permit to be most neglected and unkept. This is frequently the cause why one does not derive as much joy or comfort from the Lord's Supper as he ought. It is true for all meals that when confusion and disorder prevail, joy and satisfaction will decrease proportionately. Such as pay little attention to this will rob themselves of a great advantage. They, so to speak, chase God completely from their souls. This is contrary to what is generally true, namely, something that the apostle at a special occasion says regarding Him: "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (1 Cor. 14:33).

2. of others whose souls for a long time have been assaulted and troubled, and who are wondering so much why they have attended the Lord's Supper so frequently, and yet always without any

enjoyment and delight. Often the cause is to be found in their disconcerted and troubled condition. As stated earlier, this spiritual joy consists primarily in a clear perception of the mystery of Christ's suffering and our personal interest in it. However, the spiritual eyes of those who are so greatly troubled are as it were closed, and therefore they lack the ability to grasp matters as they ought. Should it then be a surprise that they do not experience this joy? David says, "My iniquities have taken hold of me, so that I am not able to look up" (Ps. 40:12). It is not good that such are overly concerned about this. No, no! Let them take courage! And as soon as their condition has become more stable, this darkness will lift and their light will break forth as the sun. And indeed, the LORD did ultimately answer Job out of the whirlwind (Job 38:1).

Proposition #6: All Christians will not derive the same measure of this spiritual joy from the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 12:6; 1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 12:23).

From this it follows that they are very much in error who

1. frequently, due to a lesser measure of this spiritual joy, question the genuineness of such joy. "For," so they say, "the measure of my joy is not as others experience it, and therefore what I have must be discounted." To draw such a conclusion is like saying, "I do not have as much money as either Croesus or Solomon, and thus my money is worthless." Who in their right mind would draw such a conclusion? Such reasoning is like putting the cart before the horse. The Lord does not consider something good because of its measure, but because He values the smallest good thing as great when it is done in uprightness. Who would then despise the day of small things (Zech. 4:10)? God in His wisdom gives more to one than to another, in each case in a measure suitable to the person, and therefore we must leave that matter in His hands (1 Cor. 12:7).
2. make their satisfaction generally too dependent on a specific measure of this spiritual comfort. This often results in grumbling and complaining when their measure of joy is not what they desire it to be. Experience teaches that even healthy believers do not

learn all that much in this regard. However, in so doing they also are guilty of challenging God's absolute wisdom and of attempting in various ways to compel Him to conform to their wishes. God is a wise dispenser of His gifts, and He may therefore, as He once said, "do what I will with my own" (Matt. 20:15). When one seeks to limit Him, He will generally withdraw His hand from such people as would establish their own standards. If, however, He is yet pleased to grant some measure of joy, then their displeasure regarding the measure of joy they have received will result in the substance of it being either quenched or extinguished.

Proposition #7: This joy proceeding from the Lord's Supper is not limited to the time when one either partakes or has partaken of this Supper. Rather, it can also be first felt or noticed long thereafter (John 10:41; 2 Sam. 10:1, 6, 9).

It can therefore be observed that it is a serious error

1. when many so readily conclude that there is no comfort for them in the Lord's Supper because, either when or after partaking, they were not aware or did not become aware of such joy. As if God the Lord is limited to any precise moment! It is true, however, that He most commonly works this contemporaneously with the use of the means in order thereby to recommend and validate their use all the more. Yet, He has not bound Himself to them in such an absolute sense as if He never could or would follow a different course (Matt. 16:10; Acts 16:14). Frequently, during the Lord's Supper—or when we are engaged in prayer, or during our reading and hearing of His Word, or when we are engaged in some other profitable exercises—He may act even to the contrary. Often the true fruit upon the use of these means is not enjoyed until long after their use (John 5:41). "They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles" (Isa. 40:31). Coming from the Lord's Table, you may say what you have not received, but not that you shall never receive. As someone has said, it is fitting that the giver rather than the receiver will determine the time when He is pleased to bestow His gifts.

2. when, not perceiving any immediate joy upon partaking of the Lord's Supper, some postpone any reflection upon the same and permit it to fade from memory, thereby permitting all their sacramental zeal and disposition to remain inside the church doors. This is a common error, proceeding from ignorance of what we have previously addressed. If only it were understood that the Lord can render the Lord's Supper fruitful to our soul after its administration, one would not be so inclined to forget about it so quickly. However, having begun this spiritual work during the time of preparation, and having continued therein even before being fully engaged, the soul by way of reflection should then be all the more active to extract a measure of joy from this spiritual work. If one medication does not immediately yield results, the physician often supplements it with another, and in the end the benefit is obtained. Often a spice will not immediately give forth its scent when we take it into our hands, but it will ultimately yield its refreshing aroma if we repeatedly touch it. We must do likewise in regard to the Lord's Supper, and although there are no immediate results, we are to persevere and trust God's promise that our labor will not always be in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

Proposition #8: It is possible that a true Christian can sometimes be completely bereft of any spiritual joy proceeding from the Lord's Supper, and yet he receives and enjoys this Supper with genuine fruit.

The reason for this is that this joy is neither an essential component of one's partaking of the Lord's Supper, nor is such joy promised in an absolute sense but rather as a conditional promise.

Another reason is that in addition to such joy, the Lord's Supper yields many other fruits. In many cases it can yield more rather than less fruit to the soul, fruits such as humility, love, zeal, and others. We will subsequently speak of these fruits.

It can therefore be concluded once more how grievous an error it is

1. that some judge all Lord's Supper celebrations in which they did not enjoy comfort or joy as being useless and fruitless. They did attend, they confess, entirely without profit, using the argument

that they attended as stocks and blocks, and were barren and dull as they partook; they also confess that they departed from the table in that condition. It can nevertheless be that a lawful partaking of the Lord's Supper was not accompanied with such joy, and yet the soul will greatly benefit from such partaking even though she feels herself deprived at that moment from such sensible enjoyment. Though it is indeed true that all other fruitful stirrings of the heart constitute a large measure of the soul's taste and sweetness of this joy during the Lord's Supper, it does not mean that it loses its efficacy entirely, although for a season this delight is not experienced.

2. considering that there are others who not only render a particular attendance at the Lord's Supper suspect but who occasionally view their entire spiritual state as being suspect. Such ones frequently view themselves as entirely void of grace, because they generally partake of the Lord's Supper with such a lack of feeling and joy; this is something that has already gone on for quite a length of time. This would suggest that comfort rather than sanctifying grace constitutes conversion and that the Lord's Supper yields no other fruitfulness than only this spiritual joy. We have, however, already proven and concluded the contrary. Though it is true that consistent barrenness regarding such powerful and lively exercises cannot be reconciled with the new birth, such a conclusion is sometimes made too quickly. The fact is that both can very well co-exist. This is especially true when such barrenness is particularly defined as an absence of comfort and delight in regard to the Lord's Supper (as can be observed here and there), and not as a general lack of all holy and sanctifying motions regarding all spiritual exercises. Yes, we would even dare to add, believing it to be truly founded upon God's Word, that one who is truly born again can for a considerable period of time not only use and observe the Lord's Supper without tasting or perceiving any delight and sweetness in the same, but this can also be true for all other spiritual exercises—all the while retaining a painful sense of one's insensibility (Isa. 63:17; 64:5, 7; Ps. 119:25; Song 5:3, 6).

This concludes the first portion of the matter we had proposed to consider.