

# Laying Hold of the Unseen: The Lord's Supper as Spiritual Meal

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Few, when considering the Lord's Supper, would draw an immediate connection with the dark spiritual realms, but that is the topic presently before us. True, the demonic is the particular area of scholarship of this author, and thus when engaged in a more academic work, emphasis will be placed upon how an understanding of the darkness further contrasts and brings to light the truth. Thus, we consider the New Testament's language of "participating in the table of demons" versus participating in the Table of the Lord, and how an understanding of said "table of demons" grants by contrast clearer insight into the Apostle Paul's teaching on what we are engaging in during the Supper of the Lord.

## Introduction

When taking up the topic of the Lord's Supper, it is a bit of an oddity to consider "reaching into the spiritual realms" from the vantage point of paganism. So, what is the purpose of contrasting a Christian understanding of the Lord's supper with occult methods of pursuing the spiritual? Is the present contemplation a mere flight of fancy or idiosyncrasy of the present author?

While of course there could be some truth to the previous rhetorical question, such a contrast is not absent from the Scriptures, and certainly not absent from the Apostle Paul's writings on the Lord's Table in 1 Corinthians 10. After all, he draws a direct, though opposite, parallel between pursuing the table of demons in pagan activities and pursuing the Lord in the Supper He instituted.

As a student of a reformed understanding of the demonic, it is natural to want to unpack these parallels. Contrasting the way in which occult practitioners and everyday idolators seek to lay hold of and manipulate the spiritual realm, which we are *forbidden* to do so, with the way in which we are called and commanded to pursue spiritual benefit from our Lord, is essential.

Hence, we will consider in the present article how we reach into the unseen realm, and how it is that we *lawfully* lay hold of true spiritual blessing for our growth in grace and spiritual betterment. An unlawful reaching into the spiritual realms will be compared to lawfully laying ahold of the good spiritual realms.

## A Pagan Engagement with the Spiritual Realms

The scriptures are replete with passages condemning or forbidding occult practices. Just a small sampling will suffice our present purposes:

<sup>9</sup> When you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. <sup>10</sup> There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer <sup>11</sup> or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, <sup>12</sup> for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord. And because of these abominations the Lord your God is driving them out before you. <sup>13</sup> You shall be blameless before the Lord your God, <sup>14</sup> for these nations, which you are about to dispossess, listen to fortune-tellers and to diviners. But as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do this (Deut. 18:9-14, ESV).

There are several observations to note in this passage. First, this text does not present this list of occult practices as though they were mere trifles, as though they were cheap parlor tricks and displays of lies and falsehood. Rather, it speaks of them as genuine religious practices, and as though the practitioners are genuinely reaching into the spiritual realms: they practice divination, tell fortunes, interpret omens, and inquire of the dead. At this point, this is not to advance the argument of the sincerity or genuineness of these practices, but the way in which the Holy Text speaks of them. The occultists are sincerely and genuinely seeking that which is beyond the natural order of things—beyond the seen realm into the unseen realm.

The second observation is that such manipulations (or desired manipulations) of the spiritual realms are entirely forbidden. As the Israelites entered into the land and observed their proverbial Canaanite neighbors engaging in the dark arts, even if what they observed appeared to be effective and useful, it was strictly *verboten*. God has not allowed it. God has not commanded it. In fact, He provides the strictest condemnation of it, and attaches to it the severest of punishments.

To cite a New Testament example demonstrating the same level of concern and prohibition, in Galatians 5:19-21, Paul is listing out the obvious works of the flesh, when he says:

<sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup> **idolatry, sorcery**, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, orgies, **and things like these**. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (emphasis added).

Once again, this scriptural list is not presenting the artificial or the fanciful, but genuine activities that are condemned.

To allow another citation to make this point, the final consequences, though spoken of in the Galatians passage as well, are more completely revealed in Revelation 21:8: “But as for the ... sorcerers [and] idolaters, ... their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

The present point is not merely that such activities are under the ban and condemned by God—they are—but that the activity is a genuine reaching into the dark spiritual realms. This activity has dire consequences. And not to be alarmist or sensational, but when one reaches into the unseen, the testimony of the Scriptures is that there are entities which are sincerely reaching back.

In his excellently researched and argued book, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry*, G. K. Beale establishes two primary themes throughout his work. He traces the Scripture’s clear teaching that idolatry results in a de-evolution of sorts and a de-sanctification.

As the Psalmist says in Psalm 115:8 and 135:18, the idolator becomes like the deaf and dumb idol whom he worships: “Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.” Continuing his argument, Beale cites Hosea 4:7-11, highlighting that the idolator becomes perpetually more deceived, lacking in spiritual understanding, while at the same time believing that they are becoming more evolved, knowledgeable, and enlightened (c.f. verse 12, which states that they consult their wooden idol, and that their diviner’s wand “informs them”).

The reason that this de-sanctification takes place is because, as the prophet says, a “spirit has made them err.”<sup>1</sup> Drawing on Leviticus 17:7, Deuteronomy 32:17, Psalm 106:37, and Revelation 9:20, Beale conclusively demonstrates his second main theme of the book, that the breadth of Scripture’s testimony is that there are literal spirits at work in this unholy de-sanctification process of idolatry. To be explicit, actual demons are involved in idolatrous worship—even as 1 Corinthians 10 makes manifest.

But we must not simply take G.K. Beale’s word for it, though he is establishing these points from the testimony of Scripture. It is also of value to hear from the mouth of avowed occultists themselves. Manly Hall, a Canadian mystic, scholar, lecturer, and occultist by his own admission, writing in the previous century, wrote in his book, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*, in his chapter on “Ceremonial Magic and Sorcery”,

Ceremonial magic is the ancient art of invoking and controlling spirits by a scientific application of certain formulæ. A magician, enveloped in sanctified vestments and carrying a wand inscribed with hieroglyphic figures, could by the power vested in certain words and symbols control the invisible inhabitants ... of the astral world. While the elaborate ceremonial magic of antiquity was not necessarily evil, there arose from its perversion several false schools of sorcery, or *black magic*.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, the implication is that Hall is not engaging in such “perversions” of ancient magic. No, of course not. Instead, we are made to believe that what he advocates is “good” or acceptable paganism. That is, until no more than a dozen pages later he reveals to whom his true loyalties lie:

I hereby promise the Great Spirit Lucifuge, Prince of Demons, that each year I will bring unto him a human soul to do with as it may please him, and in return Lucifuge promises to bestow upon me the treasures of the earth and fulfill my every desire for the length of my natural life...

Lest we believe this is but an older school of thought and representative of but one twentieth-century occultist, we turn to a contemporary example. Modern occultist Steven Bancarz, who more recently converted to evangelical Christianity, gives an account of his time as an occultist. And though reformed believers would take pause with some of his theological conclusions (despite being an evangelical), at this point in his writings he is simply speaking of his experience with the dark spiritual realms. He says, in seeking that spiritual plane,

[It] serves as leverage for demonic beings ... to infuse participants with a false sense of godhood and spiritual power.... Everyone around them in the community sees

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<sup>1</sup> G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: Nottingham, England: IVP Academic, 2008), 108.

<sup>2</sup> Manly P. Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*, (A & D Publishing, 2007), 276.

their new ability as evidence of their spiritual development. But they are actually being groomed to take deeper steps into the occult world.<sup>3</sup>

Can one not hear G. K. Beale's concept of de-evolution, or de-sanctification, in what Bancarz is describing? The pagan believes they are gaining greater knowledge and ability, when, in fact, they are being deceived and drawn further into evil spiritual involvement.

As already mentioned, when reaching into the other realm, there are entities reaching back. While offering and promising power, their objective is far from benevolent. Nor is the experience ultimately beneficial to the human persons involved.

To summarize everything that has been said in this section, let us turn to that great puritan author and demonologist, Richard Gilpin, who wrote a multi-volume tome on the devices of Satan, wherein he says,

Satan sometimes ... deals by fair promises of riches, advancement, pleasure, and such other baits, to allure men to his professed service. Thus are witches drawn to a compact with him.... Witches give frequent accounts of Satan's ... promises; he tells them of feasts, of gold, of riches.<sup>4</sup>

Gilpin, goes on to provocatively ask what the value of a single human soul must be if Satan would be willing, for a time, to serve the fancies of men. This is no small trifle; we are dealing with genuine pagan activities.

### **Participation in the Forbidden (1 Corinthians 10)**

In light of this practice of reaching into the dark realms in order to receive benefit and power, and to manipulate the spirits in order to bring about the pagan's own whims, consider what the Apostle Paul has to say about participation in this forbidden pagan activity. Looking at 1 Corinthians 10:14-22, isolating the negative points will contrast with the positive admonition he is advancing.

<sup>14</sup> Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. <sup>15</sup> I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say.... <sup>18</sup> Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? <sup>19</sup> What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? <sup>20</sup> No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. <sup>21</sup> You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. <sup>22</sup> Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

Several observations are noteworthy. First, Paul says that an idol is nothing. There are no false gods, no pantheon of gods, nor can we tolerate henotheism—that our God is but one God among a family of gods.<sup>5</sup> No—idols are nothing.

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<sup>3</sup> Steven Bancarz, *The Second Coming of the New Age: The Hidden Dangers of Alternative Spirituality in Contemporary America and Its Churches* (Defender Publishing, 2018), 43.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Gilpin, *Satan's Temptations* (Soli Deo Gloria, 2000), 902-905.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Heiser advances a functional henotheism in his preeminently popular volume on the demonic, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Lexham Press, 2019). Such a position cannot be biblically, confessionally, or historically tolerated.

But that does not mean, in the Apostle's theology, that there is nothing *behind* the idols. For in fact, he says "when pagans sacrifice to idols, they are actually sacrificing to demons!" (a paraphrase of verse 20). And when he speaks of "tables of demons" he means the literal tables used at pagan meals—tables used in making sacrifices to idols and eating food that has been sacrificed to idols as part of a pagan feast.

Harold Mare, New Testament professor at Covenant Theological Seminary, helps us to understand the meaning of "tables of demons" when he shares an ancient inscription:

Converts from paganism would readily associate with "tables" used for pagan idol meals. In [an ancient] Papyrus there is a revealing sentence that says, "Chairemon invites you to a meal at the table of the lord Serapis in [his temple], tomorrow the fifteenth..." So Paul is teaching that a Christian cannot at the same time participate in the meal at the table of the pagan god and the table of the Lord.<sup>6</sup>

Mare is speaking here of the Greco-Egyptian god *Serapis*—and a pagan meal in one of *Serapis'* temples in honor of the false god. It is just such a meal that the Apostle Paul says is a participation with demons, and there cannot be simultaneous participation with the table of the Lord, as well as fraternization with demonic worship.

This is the contrast being established in 1 Corinthians. Participation in pagan feasts and meals is a true communion with demons—a genuine spiritual reality. As Paul says in verse 20, "I do not want you to have fellowship with demons." Idolatry is not "nothing" to Paul, even though idols themselves are nothing. It is fellowship with—*communion* with—evil spirits. And that image—that *reality*—is what he is using to impress upon his pagan converts in Corinth the significance of the Lord's Table. It is in *that* light that the Apostle makes his positive admonition:

<sup>16</sup> The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? <sup>17</sup> Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

Hear again verses 21 and 22 in this light:

<sup>21</sup> You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. <sup>22</sup> Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy?

In the same way in which idolators are communing with true spiritual entities in the spiritual realms, so too Christians, who are eating at the Lord's Table, are genuinely communing with a true spiritual being—and not only that, but a resurrected "life-giving [S]pirit" as Paul says elsewhere in this epistle (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:45). There is real fellowship in the Lord's Table with the heavenlies. Christ dines with us, and we have, as Paul says, "participation with Christ's blood" and "participation with Christ's body".

As Westminster Larger Catechism Question 170 states, this participation is "not after a corporal and carnal, but in a spiritual manner." Just as demons are spiritually present and active in pagan meals, how much more so is Jesus spiritually present in his appointed sacramental meal.

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<sup>6</sup> W. Harold Mare, "1 Corinthians," in Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Zondervan Academic, 2004), 636.

In making this point, however, there could be a temptation to believe that the parallels between the pagan rites and the Christian rites are being drawn a bit too closely. For are we to believe that we are to reach into the spiritual realms in the same manner as occultists seek to manipulate spirits in the unseen world? Is that what is presently being advocated? Is that what the Apostle Paul has in mind, that this meal is a means by which we *compel* grace?

It should be obvious from the rhetorical questions: “may it never be so.” In fact, just the opposite. Surely the Lord’s Supper is not a ceremony where our benevolent Spirit has bound Himself to be laid hold of and is thus coerced to give us grace. In other words, surely 1 Corinthians 10 does not lend credence to a pagan understanding of the spiritual realms in 1 Corinthians 11, but rather to a Christianized version instead.

Asked one final way, may believers impel God to do as we please, just so long as we use his prescribed means?

### **A Pagan Approach to God**

There are many places in the Old Testament where one could turn to demonstrate the Israelites falling victim to a concept that God could be treated like any other contemporaneous deity. Examples where the Israelites were tempted to think talismanically about *YHVH*—that so long as they used his prescribed means and understood him to be the one true God, then their God would be on their side and would do as they desire—can be found throughout Israel’s history.

Though many passages reveal such a mindset, perhaps one is clearer than all the rest. That is 1 Samuel 4, when the Ark of the Covenant is brought into the camp of war in an effort to defeat the Philistines. In this familiar story, the people of God believe they can “put their God in a box” so that He would surely do their bidding, especially when they have their prescribed means of His presence. Even in this language, the parallel allusions to the Lord’s Supper can be seen: the presence of the Lord in his prescribed means, and the notion that He *de facto* works through said means.

Let us presently consider 1 Samuel 4:1-11 *in toto*:

<sup>1</sup>Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines. They encamped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped at Aphek. <sup>2</sup>The Philistines drew up in line against Israel, and when the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the field of battle. <sup>3</sup>And when the people came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, “Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies.” <sup>4</sup>So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

<sup>5</sup>As soon as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the earth resounded. <sup>6</sup>And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, “What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean?” And when they learned that the ark of the Lord had come to the camp, <sup>7</sup>the Philistines were afraid, for they said, “A god has come into the camp.” And they said, “Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. <sup>8</sup>Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness. <sup>9</sup>Take courage,

and be men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you; be men and fight.”

The Philistines interpret the Israelites’ understanding of their use of the Lord’s means: the pagans clearly see the Israelites as interacting with their God in a paganistic way. Continuing with the narrative:

<sup>10</sup> So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home. And there was a very great slaughter, for thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell. <sup>11</sup> And the ark of God was captured, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

In this account, there is no self-examination on the Israelites’ part. They do not ask, “What have we done to provoke the Lord in such a way?” “Why has the Lord judged us in causing 4,000 men to die on the field of battle?”

Instead, to the Israelites, the problem is with the Lord. This mindset can be easily discerned as verse 3 asks, “Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines?” Their solution then is not to change themselves and their behavior. Rather, the solution is to try and effect change of the Lord! They continue on in verse 3: “Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord here from Shiloh.” Why would the Israelites do such a thing? Their motivation is revealed: “that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies.”

The people of God of old displayed that their hope was not even in the Lord, who does as He pleases and defends His people. Their question above betrays that their real hope rested in the box—the Ark. The notion was that God was in the box, and could be put in a box, and made to do their bidding. This is a pagan and occult approach to *YHVH*, the one true God. They treated Him as though He can be manipulated like the pagan deities. Their thinking went, “God gives us power, and God gives us mercy and grace, and God does what we desire, if only we will appease Him by acting in accord with His prescribed means” (in this case, namely, the use of His Ark).

Applying this concept back to 1 Corinthians 10: simply because Paul is drawing parallels between participation with demons in pagan rites, and the participation with Christ in the lawful Christian sacrament, does not permit us to have a pagan approach to the Table. Just as God’s people have always been forbidden and even opposed for treating *YHVH* as any other pagan deity, so too contemporary believers must not engage with God like the nations. In fact, just the opposite can be demonstrated in 1 Corinthians 11.

### **A Biblical Engagement with the Spiritual Realms**

In the words of institution heard so frequently as the church comes to the Lord’s Table, beginning in verse 23 the proper approach to the sacrament is given. Paul does not instruct as though the Lord’s Supper is a guaranteed dispensary of grace or a conveyance of grace to all who partake, but:

<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” <sup>25</sup> In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” <sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Notice the posture of the Lord's institution. *He* delivered it to Paul. *He* was betrayed. *He* took the bread. *He* broke it. *He* gave it. It is *His* body. It is *given* for us. It is in remembrance *of Him*. It is the New Covenant in *His blood*. And we proclaim *Him* until he comes. The emphasis is clear. The focus of the sacrament is not on us—our laying hold of Him—but on Him freely giving Himself to us.

This is an altogether different posture and direction from the pagan approach to the spiritual realms. The occultist seeks to manipulate spiritual beings in the unseen world. The Christian reaches into the unseen world—nay, we are invited to reach in—according to the lawful means Christ has appointed, and we simply receive what He freely gives.

One approach to the unseen is man-centered, seeking to wrest power and benefit from seemingly unwilling beings that must be coerced and compelled by ancient arts. The other is Christ-centered, seeking to humbly receive what is freely offered.

To help us appreciate this point further, William Perkins, often thought of as the father of Puritanism, or at least as the popularizer of Puritan theology, writing in the late 1500s, and speaking of the Supper, says, “God alone is the author of a sacrament, for the sign cannot confirm anything at all but by the consent and promise of him at whose hands the benefit promised must be received. Therefore, it is God alone who appoints signs of grace, & in whose power alone it is to bestow grace.” We are merely recipients—humble receivers of what God has promised to us in the meal.

What is more, the 1 Corinthians 11 passage goes on in verse 27 and following:

<sup>27</sup> Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. <sup>30</sup> That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. <sup>31</sup> But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

<sup>33</sup> So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— <sup>34</sup> if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment.

Just as the Israelites used God's Ark in an unworthy manner, and thereby brought judgment upon themselves, so too, the Corinthians were using the Lord's means in an unworthy manner, and thereby bringing judgment upon themselves. What ought the Israelites have done, and by extension, what ought the Corinthians have done? They ought to have examined themselves, instead of wrongly reaching into the spiritual realms.

Once again William Perkins helps us, by contrasting a wrongful gazing into the spiritual realms—seeking to examine what we should not examine—and calls us to examine, instead, ourselves. He

calls us to examine our ways, to consider our vices and vanities, and to gaze into the certainty, not of the future, but the certainty of our death.<sup>7</sup>

We do not pursue the forbidden and the unknowable, as the pagans and the occultists do. We pursue the revealed and the knowable. We do not examine the stars and prognostications, we do not consult with the dead or the demonic. Rather as the text calls us to do, we examine *ourselves* before the Table, and consult His Word, and then commune... not with the dead, but with the living and resurrected Christ.

These considerations bring the following conclusion.

### **The Lord's Supper as True Spiritual Meal**

Herein we briefly consider two pastoral implications of the above meditations.

First, recalling the fact that spirits are at work in the case of idolatry and are working de-sanctification or de-evolution in the life of the pagan, in the case of the Lord, we also become like the one we worship. We are being actively conformed to the image of the one with whom we fellowship, commune, and participate. If demons are genuinely conforming idolators, occultists, and pagans to their image, as the Scriptures teach, the opposite reality is of course gloriously true, as the Scriptures also teach. The believer knows that the Lord is sanctifying him.

It is alarming to think that in reaching into the dark spiritual realms, there are entities reaching back—and that should caution and forbid the believer from ever engaging with such practices. But when one lawfully reaches into the true spiritual realms, where light and truth reside, there is a gracious and benevolent Being reaching back. In fact, He is the one initiating. He is the one laying hold of *us*, enabling *us*, inviting *us*, beckoning *us*, summoning *us*, to lay hold of *him*—and, by extension, to lay hold of true spiritual benefit.

As believers reach into the spiritual realms, they need not fear that there are spiritual entities reaching back, de-sanctifying and conforming them to the image of idols. No, the believer is being conformed to the image of Christ, not by the work of a fallen spirit, but by the work of the Holy Spirit, as the saint engages with Christ's lawfully appointed means.

The Lord's Supper is a true spiritual meal, where the Christian is actively being conformed to the One with whom they commune. Thus, it must be acknowledged that is why the Apostle says the true child of God cannot commune with the table of demons *and* the Table of the Lord. A person will either be conformed to the one or to the other. Praise God that the regenerate communes with the resurrected Christ and is being actively conformed to Him. This notion of being conformed to the pattern of Christ by the Supper, is, after all, the Westminsterian position. The Westminster Larger Catechism Question 168 bolsters the present point:

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<sup>7</sup> In his *Resolution to the Country Man*, speaking to his interlocutor, "the countryman", Perkins says: "if you are a Christian man, you ought only to be content with knowing the times and ordinary seasons of the year, not regarding nor searching any secret and special predictions for which the Lord never gave any man warrant but in plain words has forbidden them. Nay, they who are ingrafted into Jesus Christ indeed are so far from searching what shall be hereafter that they lead a life which is a continual meditation of present death. The which the Lord, for Jesus 'sake, grant unto us that we may in some measure behold our own vanities." William Perkins, *The Works of William Perkins Volume 9*, ed. J. Stephen Yuille (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage, 2020), 418.

Q. 168. What is the Lord's supper?

A. The Lord's supper is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to the appointment of Jesus Christ, his death is showed forth; and **they that worthily communicate feed upon his body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace**; have their union and communion with him confirmed; testify and renew their thankfulness, and engagement to God, and their mutual love and fellowship each with other, as members of the same mystical body. (emphasis added)

Just as there is a genuine, spiritual participation in the table of demons in idolatrous and pagan worship, Westminster is saying that as the Christian participates in the Table of the Lord, they have true spiritual participation with Christ's body and blood. The believer is actively conformed to the resurrected Christ—as Westminster says, “to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.”

This brings the present consideration to the second and final pastoral implication. As one lawfully reaches into the spiritual realms, the person is not doing so by his own initiation, nor is he doing so according to his own designs. While the Christian practitioner is seeking to lay hold of genuine spiritual benefit, he does not do so in a paganistic way. The follower of Christ does not seek to coerce or control the spiritual. For no one partaking of the Lord's Supper can manipulate God and compel Him like the pagans do with their gods in a talismanic rite. Instead, we receive what Christ conveys:

Q. 170. How do they that worthily communicate in the Lord's supper feed upon the body and blood of Christ therein?

A. As the body and blood of Christ are not corporally or carnally present in, with, or under the bread and wine in the Lord's supper, and yet are spiritually present to the faith of the receiver, no less truly and really than the elements themselves are to their outward senses; so they that **worthily communicate in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, do therein feed upon the body and blood of Christ, not after a corporal and carnal, but in a spiritual manner; yet truly and really, while by faith they receive and apply unto themselves Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death.** (emphasis added)

The Supper is a true spiritual meal, wherein the benefits of Christ's body and blood are freely made available by faith, and Christ is pleased to have genuine fellowship and communion with his brothers and sisters in this true spiritual feast. The believer does not reach into the unseen and lay hold of Christ. On the contrary, Christ who dwells in the unseen, freely offers himself to the believer in the Supper.