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In *Christ, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper* by Leonard J. Vander Zee, the author explores the history, the mystery, the healing power of worship through sacraments, and humanity's place within them. Although many Christians partake in Baptism and the Lord's Supper, do people know what they mean or grasp their significance and place in Christian worship (Back cover)? Vander Zee makes a compelling case that Christ and the sacraments all work together for the people's good. He does this by first connecting Christ to Baptism. When Jesus was baptized by John, and the heavens opened up, the dove hovered over, representing the Holy Spirit, and God said, "this is my Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:14). Since John The Baptist's mission was one of baptizing for repentance, Jesus' Baptism was to fulfill all righteousness, "it represented one aspect of His total participation in our broken and fallen humanity", states Vander Zee (Matthew 3:15; p. 80). The author then ties humanity's purpose in Baptism by showing that Christ's incarnation continues by anticipating His death and resurrection and becomes humanity's purpose through the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (p. 81). In His Baptism, Jesus is ordained and commissioned for His messianic work on the people's behalf. In the same way, the children of God are baptized, anointed, and authorized to go out into all the world, baptizing people in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that Jesus' commanded (Matthew 28:19-20).

The second sacrament which Vander Zee covers in his book, as previously mentioned, is the "Lord's Supper." The author explains the history, evangelical rift, and mystery surrounding this sacrament by exploring famous theologians' perspectives from Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, and Augustine of Hippo, who noted a twofold link between the

"visible" and the "invisible" (p. 166). It is with Augustine's theology that many other theologians would build upon and further connect Christ's presence, whether that would be figuratively or literally and physically as the blood and wine Himself. There has been a debate ever since the time that Jesus said,

"Take, eat; this is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me" and in the same way, "This is my covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24-26),

Although this will be debated until the end of time, sacraments present Christ to us. For example, "the content of the sacraments is the same as the content of the preached Word: both of them present to us the promise of our redemption in Jesus Christ," states the author (p. 190). Vander Zee goes on to say that we need the sacrament of the Lord's Supper alongside the Word of God "because the sacrament offers us something the Word alone cannot; deep assurance that is fitted by God to our human need and receptivity" (p. 193). In other words, Vander Zee not only sees the Lord's Supper as an assurance of grace, unity, and healing not just for the individual but also essential to the church as a whole as Christ's presence brings us together into one body; Christ and His church (p. 196 ).

The author's whole purpose in writing this book is not just for us to partake in these sacraments but to understand their worthiness and Christ-centered celebration of these sacraments as essential to the renewal of the church (Back cover). It is with this understanding that Vander Zee offers an "olive branch" to the evangelicals to reconsider the power (as well as healing power), the crucial importance and bond between the spiritual and physical, and the reality of what Christ's presence conveys (p. 188). He wants them to see that the sacraments are more than just a symbol; they represent our physical and spiritual bodies in a relationship with Christ.

One of the strong points of *Christ, Baptism, and The Lord's Supper*, is that he explains each one's (the sacraments) significance and how they all work together, sometimes in a mysterious way, to heal, to affirm, and to experience the presence of Christ amid these sacraments as well as our charge in Mark 16:15. Although he does a great job of looking at the whole of "creation" as a sacrament, unfortunately, the center of the book when dealing with Baptism, is lacking in its ability to explain what God has made a mystery. In addition, the constant reminder of the Protestant's perspective of the sacraments could seem more like an attack than trying to bestow wisdom upon them.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, *Christ, Baptism, and The Lord's Supper* are very well thought out and bring into our remembrance how and why sacraments are essential. It reminds us of the promises and our call to ministry and missions we first said we do to Christ. While recalling our purpose, the book provides a good mixture of historical, theological, and philosophical study. I recommend this book to anyone who wants a better understanding of the sacraments and Jesus' relationships to them, including seminary students, deacons and deaconesses, and pastors.