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“HIS SOUL-REFRESHING PRESENCE”:  
THE LORD’S SUPPER IN BAPTIST THOUGHT & EXPERIENCE IN THE “LONG” EIGHTEENTH CENTURY,  
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO ANNE DUTTON & JOHN SUTCLIFF

*Introduction: Views about the presence of Christ at the Lord’s Supper at the Reformation*

I. “*This Soul-reviving Cordial*”<sup>1</sup>

- *The Second London Confession of Faith* 30.7:

“Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible Elements in this Ordinance, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally, and corporally, but spiritually receive, and feed upon Christ crucified & 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, in that Ordinance, as the Elements themselves are to their outward senses.”<sup>2</sup>

- *The Second London Confession* 30.1:

The “Supper of the Lord Jesus, was instituted by him, the same night wherein he was betrayed, to be observed in his Churches unto the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance, and shewing forth the sacrifice in his death, confirmation of the faith of believers in all the benefits thereof, their spiritual nourishment, and growth in him; and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other.”<sup>3</sup>

- The Supper serves as a vivid reminder of and witness to the sacrificial death of Christ.
- Then, participation in the Lord’s Supper enables believers to more firmly grasp all that Christ has done for them through his death on the cross.
- In this way the Lord’s Supper is a means of spiritual nourishment and growth.
- Fourth, the Lord’s Supper serves as a time when believers can re-commit themselves to Christ.
- Finally, the Lord’s Supper affirms the indissoluble union that exists, on the one hand, between Christ and believers, and, on the other, between individual believers.

II. “*Sweet repast*”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Keach, *Tropologia: A Key to open Scripture Metaphors* (Repr. London: William Otridge, 1778), p.621.

<sup>2</sup> *Second London Confession* 30.7 [W.J. McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1911), p.272].

<sup>3</sup> McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions*, p.270.

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Beddome, *Hymns adapted to Public Worship, or Family Devotion* (London, 1818), Hymn no. 669.

- The diary of Isaac Staveley
- Joseph Stennett I (1663-1713) *Hymns In Commemoration Of the Sufferings Of Our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, Compos'd For the Celebration of his Holy Supper*

“Thy Flesh is Meat indeed,  
Thy Blood the richest wine;  
How blest are they who often feed  
On this Repast of thine!”<sup>5</sup>

And he can urge his fellow believers:

“Sing *Hallelujah* to our King,  
Who nobly entertains  
His Friends with Bread of Life, and Wine  
That flow'd from all his Veins.

His Body pierc'd with numerous Wounds,  
Did as a Victim bleed;  
That we might drink his sacred Blood,  
And on his Flesh might feed.”<sup>6</sup>

- Two hymns of Benjamin Beddome (1717-1795):

“Oh for a glimmering sight  
Of my expiring Lord!  
Sure pledge of what yon worlds of light  
Will to the saints afford.

. . . May I behold him in the wine,  
And see him in the bread.”<sup>7</sup>

In another, the invitation is given:

“Come then, my soul, partake,  
The banquet is divine:  
His body is the choicest food,  
His blood the richest wine.

Ye hungry starving poor  
Join in the sweet repast;  
View Jesus in these symbols given,  
And his salvation taste.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Hymns In Commemoration Of the Sufferings Of Our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, Compos'd For the Celebration of his Holy Supper* (London: N. Cliff and D. Jackson, 1713), p.35.

<sup>6</sup> *Hymns In Commemoration*, p.23.

<sup>7</sup> *Hymns adapted to Public Worship, or Family Devotion* (London, 1818), Hymn no. 672.

<sup>8</sup> *Hymns*, Hymn no. 669.

### III. “His Soul-refreshing presence”<sup>9</sup>

- Anne Dutton (1692-1765), *Thoughts on the Lord’s Supper, Relating to the Nature, Subjects, and right Partaking of this Solemn Ordinance* (1748)
- Witness by Robert Robinson (1735-1790) about her final days:

“You have (no doubt) heard of Dear M<sup>rs</sup> Dutton’s departure.—I saw her a few weeks before she died. She apprehended her death near then. She could not get into the meeting[-house] at the sermon... O how ravishingly she talked. She was up, and sat by the fire. Her countenance—I won’t say serene and composed, but blithe[,] gay, full of a Serenity, or rather full of *Immortality*—My mind was full of that Scripture which I thought I then saw exemplified in Mrs. Dutton. Psal. 92.12 etc. *The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree*, which it seems grows fastest under burdens. ...*They shall still bring forth fruit in old age*.—A woman of seventy four laden with the fruits of the spirit. *Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness temperance*. Gal. 5.22... Not shriveled, wrinkled, nor spotted with doubts, fears, deadness, &c., but like fine ripe fruits, at once charming the eye, refreshing the smell, & gratifying the tast[e]. The sight answered the end mentioned by the Psalmist. ...I had heard, that precious in the sight of the Lord was the *Death* of his saints, and now I saw he [i.e. God] was true to his word, for he was present by his Spirit in the sickness and death of Mrs. Dutton. Her Illness was a sore throat, and one of her Expressions was, ‘My dear Sir, I am rejoiced to think that there is but a hair’s breadth betwixt me and my father’s house. ‘Tis but for God to stop my breath and I am with him. And so shall I be ever with the Lord.’ She then talked for half an hour on the six last verses of the fourth chapter of the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, which also she chose for her funeral sermon, and which was preached Last Thursday...at her interment by Mr. Keymer, pastor of the church at Gransden, of which church she was a member.”<sup>10</sup>

- Anne Dutton, *Thoughts on the Lord’s Supper, Relating to the Nature, Subjects, and right Partaking of this Solemn Ordinance*:
  - “Not a Dram of new Covenant-Favour”, she writes, “was to flow to the Heirs of Promise, but thro’ the Death of Jesus”.
  - “O what a wondrous Draught,” she declares near the beginning of the book, “what a Life-giving Draught, in his own most precious Blood, doth God our Saviour, the Lord our Lover, give to dying Sinners, to his beloved Ones in this glorious Ordinance.”
  - “As our Lord is spiritually present in his own ordinance,” she writes, “so he therein and thereby doth actually communicate, or give himself, his body broken, and his blood shed, with all the benefits of his death, to the worthy receivers.”<sup>11</sup>
  - In the Lord’s Supper “the King is pleas’d to sit with us, at his Table.”<sup>12</sup>
  - The celebration of the Lord’s Supper “admits” believers “into the nearest Approach to his glorious Self, that we can make in an Ordinance-Way on the Earth, on this Side the Presence of his Glory in Heaven.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Anne Dutton, *Thoughts on the Lord’s Supper, Relating to the Nature, Subjects, and right Partaking of this Solemn Ordinance* (London, 1748), p.33.

<sup>10</sup> Letter to John Robinson, November 30, 1766 [Timothy Whelan, “Six Letters of Robert Robinson from Dr Williams’s Library”, *The Baptist Quarterly*, 39, No.7 (July 202), 355-356].

<sup>11</sup> *Thoughts on the Lord’s Supper*, pp.3-4.

<sup>12</sup> *Thoughts on the Lord’s Supper*, p.21.

<sup>13</sup> *Thoughts on the Lord’s Supper*, p.25.

IV. *A “memorial of the absent Saviour”*<sup>14</sup>

- Abraham Booth (1734-1806): the Lord’s Supper was designed to be “a memorial of God’s love to us and of Immanuel’s death for us.”<sup>15</sup>
- John Fawcett (1740-1817), *Christ Precious to those that Believe* (1799):

“Lord’s Table...is wisely and graciously designed to revive in our minds the remembrance of him who gave his life a ransom for our souls. This institution is happily contrived to represent, in a lively and striking manner, the love, the sufferings, and the death of our blessed Redeemer, together with the benefits which we derive from them. When we unite in this solemnity, all the springs of pious affection should be let loose, while we contemplate the dying agonies of the Prince of Peace. We should feel the sweet meltings of godly sorrow, and the warmest exertions of gratitude, love and joy.”<sup>16</sup>

- John Sutcliff (1752-1814), *The Ordinance of the Lord’s Supper considered* (1803):
  - The Lord’s Supper “is a standing memorial of Christ. When you see the table spread and are about to partake of the bread and wine, think you hear Christ saying, ‘Remember me.’ Remember who he is... Again: Remember what he has done... Once more: Remember where he is, and what he is doing.”<sup>17</sup>
  - “To him who gave his life a ransom, it becomes you to devote your lives. Bought with a price, remember you are not your own. Resolve therefore in the strength of divine grace, to glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s. Each time you approach this sacred ordinance consecrate yourselves anew to the service, honour and glory of the blessed Jesus.”<sup>18</sup>

V. *Why the change?*

- A response a revival of English Roman Catholicism and the emergence of Tractarianism in the Church of England, a movement that was open to Roman Catholic theology and piety.<sup>19</sup>
- Eighteenth-century rationalism with its “suspicion of the mysterious and inexplicable” may have been a major factor in the advance of memorialist views among the Particular Baptists.<sup>20</sup>
- A major shift in British Baptist ecclesiology that was underway during the final decades of the eighteenth century.

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<sup>14</sup> John Sutcliff, *On obedience to Positive Institutions* (Circular Letter of the Northamptonshire Association, 1808), p.6.

<sup>15</sup> Cited Payne, *Fellowship of Believers*, p.65.

<sup>16</sup> *Christ Precious to Those that Believe* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.; repr. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers), pp.230-1.

<sup>17</sup> *The Ordinance of the Lord’s Supper considered* (Circular Letter of the Northamptonshire Association; Dunstable, 1803), pp.2, 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Ordinance of the Lord’s Supper*, p.7.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Walker, *Baptists at the Table. The Theology of the Lord’s Supper amongst English Baptists in the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot, Oxfordshire: Baptist Historical Society, 1992), pp.84-120.

<sup>20</sup> Ernest Payne, *The Fellowship of Believers. Baptist Thought and Practice Yesterday and Today* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1952), pp.64-5.