

The Lord's Supper among the Early Philadelphia and Charleston Association Baptists

James Cheesman¹

Baptists today are in agreement with historical Baptists that the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance. Yet the extent to which the theology and practice of modern Baptist churches in America agree with that of earlier churches is less clear. For example, although the Zwinglian memorial view of the Lord's Supper is now favored over that of Calvin's understanding of spiritual presence, Baptists historically have held both Zwinglian and Calvinistic positions.² Also, the Lord's Supper possesses both individual and communal significance, yet today's churches focus on the individual, sometimes to the neglect of the communal. Additionally, some modern Baptist churches observe the Lord's Supper irregularly and infrequently, diminishing its priority and importance. Finally, practices including examination, confession, and church discipline have been utilized by Baptists to elevate the importance of the Lord's Supper, yet currently these practices are rarely observed. Analysis of the views of the earliest Particular Baptists in America will help to evaluate current practice among Baptists today.

Particular Baptists with a Calvinistic heritage came to America from England, Scotland, and Wales in the late seventeenth century. They retained beliefs similar to the English Particular Baptists through the influence of their first leader, Elias Keach, son of famous London pastor Benjamin Keach. Keach helped establish the Pennepek Baptist Church near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. That church joined four other Particular Baptist congregations in Pennsylvania and New Jersey in 1707 to form the Philadelphia Baptist Association, the first Baptist association in America.³ This group adopted the *Second London Confession* as the basis for its confession in 1742 and was also influenced by Benjamin and Elias Keach's Catechism and Covenant.

The London Particular Baptists exerted a significant influence upon the Philadelphia Baptist Association (hereafter referred to as the PBA or Philadelphia Association), which in turn influenced such later American groups as the Charleston Association, organized in

¹ James Cheesman is a graduate student in the School of Church Music at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX.

² Donald F. Durnbaugh, "Believer's Church Perspectives on the Lord's Supper," in *The Lord's Supper: Believer's Church Perspectives*, ed. Dale R. Stoffer (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1997), 65.

³ William D. Thompson, *Philadelphia's First Baptists: A Brief History of The First Baptist Church of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: First Baptist Church of the City of Philadelphia, 1989), 11.

1751 largely due to the efforts of Oliver Hart,⁴ a former member of First Baptist Church of Philadelphia. From the eighteenth century through the early nineteenth century, these two associations held similar views and many common practices in regard to the Lord's Supper.

As will be seen, the early Baptists of the Philadelphia Baptist Association and Charleston Association viewed the Lord's Supper in terms of the spiritual presence of Christ and emphasized sanctification and the communal significance of the ordinance. To prove these points, I will first discuss Elias Keach and his influence upon the beliefs and practices of the PBA. I will then examine what the *Second London Confession*, Keach's Covenant, Keach's Catechism, and other catechisms teach about the Lord's Supper. Finally, I will analyze the communion practices of both associations as presented by relevant primary sources.

Elias Keach

Elias Keach was one of the pioneer pastors in the Philadelphia area and the primary person to disseminate the views of the London Particular Baptists to the Pennsylvania and New Jersey Baptist churches. He came to America as early as 1686,⁵ between the age of 19 and 21. Although the son of the pastor Benjamin Keach, when young Elias left London to sail for the New World he did not yet have a saving faith in Jesus Christ. He came to the colony of Pennsylvania and the town of Philadelphia, where he was converted. His conversion story has been recounted many times because his experience was strange and unique. To make some money, Keach decided to pose as a preacher by imitating his father. Soon people heard about the arrival of the young minister from England, and a small gathering of believers near Philadelphia invited him to speak. As he was speaking to the congregation at Pennepek that Sunday morning, he fell under conviction by his own words. He confessed in fear and trembling that he was an impostor and needed to be saved. He sought out Thomas Dungan, a Baptist minister at Cold Spring. Dungan baptized Keach and after a few months ordained him into the gospel ministry.⁶

Keach continued to preach regularly at Pennepek as well as throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey. In late 1687 or early 1688, he advised the Pennepek church to form into an official body. The church accepted Keach as their pastor upon fasting, praying, and

⁴ Robert A. Baker and Paul J. Craven Jr., *History of the First Baptist Church of Charleston, South Carolina 1682–2007* (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2007), 149.

⁵ Morgan Edwards, *Materials towards a History of the American Baptists* (Philadelphia: Joseph Cruikshank and Isaac Collins, 1770; facsimile reprint, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1984), 9.

⁶ Wade Burleson, "Elias Keach (1665–1699)," in *A Noble Company: Essays on Notable Particular-Regular Baptists in America*, ed. Terry Wolever (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2006), 1:268–69.

deciding to constitute into an organized church.⁷ After serving for four years as pastor in Pennepek and in several surrounding communities, Keach returned to England in 1692.⁸

In England, Keach pastored two churches and preached to hundreds on a weekly basis.⁹ During this time he produced some highly significant writings, including a volume on justification (1694) and a book of hymns (1696). Then Keach and his church published *The Glory and Ornament of a True, Gospel-Constituted Church, being a brief display of the discipline of the church at Tallow-Chandlers Hall* (1697), generally known as Keach's Covenant. During the same year, Elias and his father, Benjamin, published *A Short Confession of Faith*, which was a condensed version of the 1689 *Second London Confession*.¹⁰

Both the Keach Confession and Keach's Covenant were very influential documents for the early American Baptists. Charles Deweese observed that the Keach covenant "became widespread in England, and later became the most extensively used covenant among Baptists in the Middle Colonies of America."¹¹ This was due in large part to Elias Keach having formed several congregations there. In particular, his connection with the Pennepek church, a prominent congregation and one of the first churches of the PBA, caused his influence to spread. His works were reprinted in America and served as the basis for many later confessions, covenants, and catechisms, as will be discussed.

The Second London Confession and Its Influence

Another important influence among early American Baptists was the *Second London Confession* of 1689 (hereafter SLC), which shaped almost every Baptist confession in America, starting with *The Philadelphia Confession* of 1742. The similarities between this document and the earlier Westminster *Directory for the Publick Worship of God* of 1645 are significant, as will be discussed. Concerning the Lord's Supper, the SLC essentially describes the ordinance in terms of spiritual presence and discusses the sanctifying effect and the communal nature of communion. In this regard, the SLC influenced the Philadelphia and Charleston associations.

The Second London Confession on the Lord's Supper

The SLC discusses the Lord's Supper in chapters 27, 28, and 30. Chapter 30 specifically deals with the Lord's Supper. There it states:

⁷ Robert T. Tumbelston, *A Brief History of Pennepack [sic] Baptist Church*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: n.p., 1962), 4.

⁸ Burleson, "Elias Keach," 273.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid, 274–75.

¹¹ Charles W. Deweese, *Baptist Church Covenants* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990), 42.

The Lord's Supper among the Early
Philadelphia and Charleston Association Baptists

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 [*sic*] forth the sacrifice in his death confirmation of the faith of believers in all the benefits thereof, their spiritual nourishment, and growth in him, their further ingagement [*sic*] in, and to, all duties which they owe unto him; and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other.¹²

This opening paragraph introduces all the noteworthy emphases of the document's doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The London Baptists clearly understood the supper as both a remembrance and a spiritually impactful practice. They understood the ordinance to be nourishing, or sanctifying, and they also believed it was a vital "bond and pledge of their communion" with God and their fellow church members.

The memorial view is explained further in the second section of the chapter: "In this ordinance Christ is not offered up to his Father, nor any real sacrifice made at all . . . but only a memorial of that one offering up of himself . . . once for all."¹³ However, the confession later conveys the meaning of the Lord's Supper in more than mere memorial terminology. Section three instructs the ministers to "pray, and bless the Elements of Bread and Wine, and thereby to set them apart from a common to an holy use."¹⁴ Furthermore, section seven distinctly asserts:

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.¹⁵ [emphasis original]

Thus, clearly the London Particular Baptists in the late seventeenth century believed that Christ was spiritually present in the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

With regard to sanctification, chapter 27 of the confession posits that "holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God" are for "mutual edification."¹⁶ The text quoted previously from section one of chapter 30 states that the Lord's Supper is for "spiritual nourishment and growth in him."

The Lord's Supper is therefore described with communal language, and two features in the confession further contribute to the idea of the Lord's Supper as communion with God and each other. First, the chapter immediately preceding chapter 28, "Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper," is called "On the Communion of Saints." The ordinances are thus con-

¹² William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 291.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 291-292.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 293.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 290

nected intimately to the fellowship of the body of believers. Secondly, in this document the word "communion" is used in such a way that it can refer to either fellowship or the observance of the Lord's Supper in worship, particularly in chapters 26 and 27.

Comparison with the Westminster Directory for Public Worship

The Directory for the Publick Worship of God of 1645, commonly known as the *Westminster Directory*, was one of five documents produced from 1643 through 1647 by the English and Scottish Presbyterians of the Westminster Assembly. Noting the similarities between the SLC and the *Westminster Directory* is important because it displays how much the early Particular Baptists were influenced by the Calvinistic views of the Scottish and English Presbyterians. Although the *Westminster Directory* refers to communion as a sacrament and the SLC refers to it as an ordinance, there are many commonalities between the documents.

First, Westminster asserts that "the ignorant and scandalous are not fit to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper."¹⁷ Similarly, the SLC states, "All ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with Christ; so are they unworthy of the Lord's Table."¹⁸ Both documents also warn each person to examine himself, according to 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, before partaking of the elements. Second, both documents state that the elements should be "set apart" from a "common" to "an holy use." The elements are consecrated because they affect our sanctification, which occurs because Christ is spiritually present. The writers of the SLC must have admired the language of the *Westminster Directory*, because they imitated and adapted it, particularly in the way it describes feeding upon Christ and his spiritual presence. The *Directory* instructs that the "blessing of the bread and wine [should] be to this effect":

Earnestly to pray to God, the Father of all mercies, and God of all consolation, to vouchsafe his *gracious presence*, and the effectual working of his Spirit in us; and so to sanctify these elements both of bread and wine, and to bless his own ordinance, that we may *receive by faith* the body and blood of Jesus Christ, crucified for us, and so to *feed upon him*, that he may be one with us, and we one with him; that he may live in us, and we in him, and to him who hath loved us, and given himself for us.¹⁹ [emphasis original]

The SLC states:

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 *spir-*

¹⁷ *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, in the Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics Historic Church Documents database, http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_standards/index.html (accessed December 1, 2014).

¹⁸ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, 293.

¹⁹ *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*.

*itually 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.*²⁰ [emphasis original]

Influence on the Philadelphia and Charleston Associations

Benjamin Keach was one of the original signees of the SLC in 1677. He also worked to reissue the confession in 1689 and again in 1697. Benjamin worked with his son Elias on the 1697 version, in which they added a chapter on the laying on of hands and psalm singing. They retained all the other chapters, including those regarding the Lord's Supper. The 1697 confession, which they both used in their congregations in England, was eventually known as "Keach's Confession." It came to America "through Elias Keach's influence, and became the body of the Philadelphia Confession, the dominant early Calvinistic Baptist Confession in the New World."²¹

Some of the churches in the PBA adhered to Keach's Confession early in the eighteenth century. The Baptist church in Middletown, New Jersey, where Elias Keach had ministered during the year 1690, came to subscribe to Keach's Confession of Faith in 1712.²² Abel Morgan, pastor of the Pennepek and Philadelphia congregations, translated the confession into Welsh and added his own article about laying on of hands, singing psalms, and church covenants. The members of the Welsh Tract Baptist Church then signed the confession in 1716.

As early as 1724, the PBA looked to the SLC for answers regarding doctrine. Then the PBA officially adopted the SLC in 1742 and ordered a printing of a new edition, carried out by Benjamin Franklin in 1743.²³ This confession became known as the Philadelphia Confession of Faith, and during "this period it was, next to the Bible, a very important doctrinal statement among the Baptists in most sections of the country."²⁴ The members of the PBA "believed that they had the pure doctrine of God and therefore thought it should be accepted and propagated by every person in its membership."²⁵

Many associations throughout America adopted the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. Most notably, the Charleston Association, founded in 1751, adopted the Confession in

²⁰ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, 293.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 240.

²² A. D. Gillete, ed., *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, 1707–1807*, Philadelphia Association Series (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2002), 13–14.

²³ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, 349.

²⁴ James L. Clark, ". . . To Set Them in Order": *Some Influences of the Philadelphia Baptist Association upon Baptists of America to 1814*, Philadelphia Association Series (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2001), 61–62.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

1767. The Confession influenced many churches in the coastal regions of South Carolina to turn from Arminianism to Calvinistic beliefs. It probably also influenced the practice and view of the Lord's Supper. In 1813, the Charleston Association printed a second edition of the Confession and added a *Summary of Church Discipline* and Keach's Catechism.²⁶

Church Covenants and Catechisms

Confessions were not the only documents that expressed the beliefs concerning the Lord's Supper of the early Philadelphia and Charleston Association Baptists. Several church covenants and catechisms also taught certain principles these Baptists held. The Covenant of Benjamin and Elias Keach "was one of the most frequently reprinted and influential documents of its kind."²⁷ Church members were asked to subscribe to eight promises dealing with doctrinal fidelity, accountability to each other, and responsibility for fellowship with one another. These were common themes in later covenants as well.

The wording of Keach's covenant connected the observance of the ordinances to individual holiness and right fellowship among the members of the congregation. The covenant states: "And we do also . . . give up ourselves to the Lord . . . to conform to all His holy laws and ordinances for our growth, establishment, and consolation."²⁸ Here the ordinances, which clearly include baptism and the Lord's Supper, are linked with spiritual growth. The document continues:

Being fully satisfied in the way of church communion . . . we do solemnly join ourselves together in a holy union and fellowship, humbly submitting to the discipline of the gospel . . . We do promise and engage to walk in all holiness, godliness, humility, and brotherly love, as much as in us lieth to render our communion delightful to God . . .²⁹

Here, the word "communion" probably refers to the fellowship and unity of the church, but is used with the connotation of observing the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is thus connected with spiritual growth, fellowship with one another, and pursuing holiness through examination and submitting to church discipline.

Although the Covenant of Benjamin and Elias Keach undoubtedly influenced the Philadelphia and Charleston Baptists' view of the Lord's Supper, the catechism written by Benjamin Keach was probably even more influential. Benjamin Keach wrote *The Baptist Catechism* with the assistance of Williams Collins in the early 1690s. "It soon became the most widely used catechism among Baptists in both England and America," and retained its

²⁶ Ibid., 352.

²⁷ John A. Broadus, *Baptist Confessions, Covenants, and Catechisms*, Baptist Classics, ed. Timothy George and Denise George (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 15.

²⁸ Ibid., 177.

²⁹ Ibid., 178.

prominence through the time of Charles Spurgeon, who published an abridged version.³⁰ The catechism was printed with the title *The Baptist Catechism*, but has often been reprinted as "The Baptist Catechism: Commonly Called Keach's Catechism."³¹

The Baptist Catechism teaches the same views of the Lord's Supper as the SLC and Philadelphia Confession. Question 107 asks, "What is the Lord's Supper?" The answer given is:

The Lord's Supper is a holy ordinance, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth, and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporeal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace.

Question 108 asks, "What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper?" The answer to the question is:

It is required of them that would worthily (that is, suitably) partake of the Lord's Supper, that they examine themselves, of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body; of their faith to feed upon him; of their repentance, love, and new obedience: lest, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves.³²

The Baptist Catechism, unlike the confessions, does not emphasize the communal importance of the Lord's Supper. However, it does teach spiritual presence and spiritual growth.

Elias Keach had his hand in bringing his father's catechism to the colonies in the year 1700.³³ The PBA churches used the catechism throughout the eighteenth century and considered it a vital part of Christian education. In 1738, the messengers to the PBA were concerned that all the copies of the catechism had been expended and the youth were "thereby not likely to be instructed in the fundamentals of saving knowledge."³⁴ Thus Jenkin Jones and John Holmes were charged with printing several new copies that year and again in 1747.

As late as 1794, the Association still advocated the use of the catechism and ordered another printing. Some revisions were made, but the questions regarding the Lord's Supper remained the same. However, one question was added that reflected an important aspect of their theology of the Lord's Supper. The inserted question was "Who are the proper sub-

³⁰ Ibid., 17.

³¹ See Paul King Jewett's reprinted edition of the catechism's title in Broadus' collection, *Baptist Confessions, Covenants, and Catechisms*.

³² Benjamin Keach, *The Baptist Catechism: Commonly Called Keach's Catechism*, rev. Paul King Jewett (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1952), 42.

³³ Thompson, *Philadelphia's First Baptists*, 7.

³⁴ Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 39.

jects of this ordinance?" The 1794 version answered, "They who have been baptized upon a personal profession of their faith in Jesus Christ, and repentance from dead works."³⁵ Perhaps this change represented the PBA's endorsement of close communion.³⁶

The Charleston Association also printed and distributed copies of *The Baptist Catechism*, often along with their confession. They recommended catechesis even into the nineteenth century. They included *The Baptist Catechism with A Confession of Faith*, second edition, in 1813. The latter is identical to the Philadelphia Catechism of 1794, including the added question about the proper subjects of the Lord's Supper.³⁷

The Practice of the Churches

With this background of the relevant documents that taught the theology of the Lord's Supper to the Philadelphia and Charleston Association Baptists, the actual practice of the churches in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century will now be examined. That both the Philadelphia and Charleston Associations esteemed the Lord's Supper is evident because they valued its communal significance and role in sanctification. Both churches also practiced church discipline in close connection with who could partake of the Lord's Supper. Although the churches in the PBA and Charleston Association did observe the ordinance regularly, they did so with a variety of frequencies. Finally, one difference between the two associations was that the PBA adhered to close communion amongst those of like faith and practice, whereas the Charleston Association left the question of open or close communion up to the discretion of the individual churches.³⁸

The Lord's Supper Practice of the Philadelphia Baptist Association

First, the Philadelphia Association Baptists appear to have considered observing the Lord's Supper to be a wonderful and honorable event. They celebrated the ordinance at important times during the lives of their churches. For example, after the Pennepek church was formed, the church accepted Elias Keach as pastor and "sat down in Communion at the Lord's Table."³⁹ Also, during the years while Pennepek Baptist Church had several branch-

³⁵Clark, "... To Set Them in Order," 343.

³⁶ In this paper I use the term "close communion" to mean limiting participation in the Table to baptized church members and believers baptized by immersion who are members of another church of like faith and practice, also known as "transient communion." It is different than "closed communion," which means participation is limited to members of the one specific local church.

³⁷ *The Baptist Catechism as Presented by The Charleston Association*, 1813, in the Reformed Reader database, <http://www.reformedreader.org/cc/bapcat.htm> (accessed December 4, 2014).

³⁸ Amy Lee Mears, "Worship in Selected Churches of the Charleston Baptist Association: 1682-1795" (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995), 171.

³⁹ Tumbelston, *Brief History of Pennepack of Pennepack Baptist Church*, 4.

es scattered across Pennsylvania and New Jersey, they met together twice a year for "General Meetings," and the "opportunity for Communion and fellowship."⁴⁰

Second, Elias Keach's customs were similar to those of his father. He first delivered the bread and the cup to the deacon, and the deacon delivered it to the communicants. Like his father did, he usually concluded communion by singing a hymn. Then he offered prayers committing the congregation to God.⁴¹ Considering the affinity of the English Particular Baptists toward some of the practices prescribed in the *Westminster Directory*, perhaps Elias Keach's closing prayers included supplications and a Eucharistic prayer.

Third, the churches in the PBA eventually practiced communion with great regularity. During the early days of Pennepek, the various branches could only come together bi-annually, but eventually most of the churches in the area held the Lord's Supper monthly or bimonthly.⁴² Beginning with John Watts in 1698, the pastor of the Pennepek Baptist Church also pastored the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia, until Jenkin Jones adjusted his role to only leading First Baptist in Philadelphia upon its formation as an autonomous church in 1746.⁴³ Due to the pastor's split duties, the church at Pennepek communed on the first Sunday of each month and the church at Philadelphia communed on the second Sunday. Philadelphia did not move its communion service to the first Sunday of the month until 1873. The congregation obviously desired to retain traditional practices. They used the same silver chalice in communion from 1762 until 1912, and in 1753 they began using two pewter communion plates that are still used today.⁴⁴

Finally, the Philadelphia Association practiced close communion and took church discipline quite seriously.⁴⁵ The Association thus asked Jenkin Jones and Benjamin Griffith to write a short treatise on church discipline that was to be annexed to the Philadelphia Confession of 1742. Jones was not able to fulfill the duty, so Griffith prepared the treatise on his own after consulting works by Elias Keach, Abel Morgan, John Owen, and Thomas Goodwin.⁴⁶ The 1743 treatise by Griffith instructed, "when the Church is informed that a Member hath acted amiss . . . it is expedient to suspend such a Person from Communion at

⁴⁰ Ibid., 7.

⁴¹ William H. Brackney, ed., *Baptist Life and Thought, 1600–1980: A Source Book* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, in cooperation with the American Baptist Historical Society, 1983), 121.

⁴² Ibid., 119.

⁴³ Thompson, *Philadelphia's First Baptists*, 54.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁵ Donald F. Durnbaugh comments that both the Anabaptists and the Philadelphia Baptists had an elevated view of Christ in relation to the Lord's Supper, which influenced their church discipline. He states, "given this high Christology, a central focus of church discipline involved exclusion from the Lord's Supper if reconciliation and restoration could not be accomplished" ("Believer's Church Perspectives," 74).

⁴⁶ Clark, ". . . To Set Them in Order;" 125–26.

the Lord's Table."⁴⁷ Eventually the church's discipline would follow the pattern of Matthew 18 and dismiss offenders "out of the Communion of the Church."⁴⁸

The letters of the minutes of the PBA record numerous instances of the Association answering queries about church discipline and who may partake of the Lord's Supper. Regarding the practice of close communion, the Association answered that "no unbaptized persons are to be admitted into church communion."⁴⁹ However, the Association allowed transient communion, and considered closed communion detrimental.⁵⁰ Excommunication was fairly common,⁵¹ and the churches would even exclude persons from church membership if they declined communion.⁵² Obviously, the PBA considered the Lord's Supper an important symbol of fellowship that ought to be observed regularly by members in good standing and withheld from those who were not in right fellowship with God or the community.

The Lord's Supper Practice of the Charleston Association

Oliver Hart served as pastor of First Baptist Church of Charleston from 1750 until 1780. He had been trained under pastor Jenkin Jones of Philadelphia from 1741 until 1748,⁵³ and thus he influenced the Charleston Association to reflect the Philadelphia Association in many ways. Hart considered the Lord's Supper to be "of so much importance, that there cannot be an orderly gospel church without it."⁵⁴ Although the churches in the Charleston Association administered the Lord's Supper with a frequency ranging from bi-annually to quarterly to once every two months, "order was imperative," so churches fol-

⁴⁷ Ibid., 305.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 310.

⁴⁹ Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 43.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 54. "We answer, that churches ought to unite in faith and practice, and to have and maintain communion together, as it is expressed in our abstract of church discipline, in order to associate regularly . . . and we count that such a practice, for churches that cannot hold free communion together, to have their messengers, notwithstanding, admitted into the Association, to be inconsistent . . . because it opens a door to greater and more dangerous confusions, and is in itself subversive of the being and end of an Association." Thus limiting participation to only members of the specific church or "closed communion" was opposed.

⁵¹ Ibid., 111. The tables recording numbers for the year indicate the amount of excommunications. In 1769, ten people were excommunicated in the PBA.

⁵² Ibid., 228.

⁵³ Baker and Craven Jr., *History of the First Baptist Church of Charleston*, 127.

⁵⁴ Oliver Hart, *A Gospel Church Portrayed, and Her Orderly Service Pointed Out* (Trenton, NJ: Isaac Collins, 1791), 28.

lowed a fixed schedule of observance.⁵⁵ Hart also emphasized personal examination before the ordinance, and he fenced the Table from members not in good standing.⁵⁶ His views were also held by later leaders in the Charleston Association.

For example, Evan Pugh, a supply pastor at FBC Charleston and student of Oliver Hart,⁵⁷ recalled the prominence of "Preparation Sermons" at Saturday meetings preceding the observance of the Lord's Supper on Sunday. Pugh once denied himself communion during his early years of ministerial study because after examining himself, he did not find himself worthy to partake that day.⁵⁸ Basil Manly, pastor at Charleston from 1826 to 1837, also considered examination so important that he put in place "a committee to examine candidates for the communion service" in order to "guard the celebration of the Lord's Supper."⁵⁹ Richard Furman, in his funeral sermon for Oliver Hart, spoke of the connections among communion, examination, and sanctification. Furman remarked that a faithful disciple "dedicates himself to the service of the adorable Trinity, renouncing all his sins; and when at the Lord's table, or on other solemn occasions, he renews his engagements."⁶⁰

Examination as a key element in the Lord's Supper was also important to the Charleston Association Baptists because of their concern for church discipline. Oliver Hart and Frances Pelot wrote their *Summary of Church-Discipline* to be annexed to the Charleston Confession of Faith in 1767. Their *Summary* was based on the *Short Treatise of Church Discipline* adopted by the PBA in 1743.⁶¹ Charleston Association churches took the *Summary* very seriously. Members were expected to walk uprightly, "and the church assumed the responsibility to discipline those who did otherwise."⁶² If members did not heed the discipline and instruction of the church, excommunication would eventually occur.

Conclusion

This essay has sought to describe the view of the Lord's Supper among the early Philadelphia and Charleston Association Baptists. The various confessions to which these associations ascribed were all based on the *Second London Confession*. Elias Keach influenced the PBA at the outset to hold the beliefs about the Lord's Supper espoused in the SLC,

⁵⁵ Mears, "Worship in Selected Churches," 172-73.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Baker and Craven Jr., *History of the First Baptist Church of Charleston*, 182.

⁵⁸ Mears, "Worship in Selected Churches," 174-75.

⁵⁹ Baker and Craven Jr., *History of the First Baptist Church of Charleston*, 249.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 430-31.

⁶¹ Ibid., 152.

⁶² Ibid., 308.

his church covenant, and his father's catechism. It is evident from these documents' teachings as well as the practice of the churches that the early Philadelphia and Charleston Association Baptists believed in the spiritual presence of Christ during the Lord's Supper, and they emphasized sanctification and the communal significance of the ordinance.

That the SLC "reflected Zwingli's influence upon the Baptists"⁶³ in regard to the memorial character of the Lord's Supper is generally recognized. However, the language in the confession asserting the spiritual presence cannot be ignored. Notably, when this view fell out of favor, the New Hampshire Confession of Faith in 1833 greatly altered the language in its article about the Lord's Supper.⁶⁴ The article "Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper" is much shorter than those in the older confessions, and it states that in "the Lord's Supper . . . the members of the church, by the [sacred] use of bread and wine, are to commemorate together the dying love of Christ."⁶⁵ Thomas White describes modern Baptist thought when he states that Calvin's spiritual presence view "has not found favor among Baptists."⁶⁶ Yet it certainly found favor among the early Philadelphia and Charleston Baptists, perhaps because they also deeply valued how the spiritual presence of Christ could affect spiritual growth and sanctification. All of the confessions and catechisms surveyed spoke of the communicants "feeding upon Christ" and drawing "spiritual nourishment" from the Lord's Supper.

Church practice also displayed in a couple of ways how the understanding of these early American Baptists concerning the Lord's Supper included a strong emphasis on ecclesiology. The ecclesiological emphasis can first be seen by the way they alternately used the term "communion" to mean the Lord's Supper, the fellowship of believers, or church membership. Second, church discipline played a vital role as it was implemented through examination before communion as well as through excommunication.

This essay has sought to be more descriptive than prescriptive in its treatment of the practice of the Lord's Supper. However, by examining the beliefs and practices of the early Philadelphia and Charleston Association Baptists, it is clear that they intentionally sought to be a dedicated community of believers. Perhaps considering the ideas of spiritual presence, sanctification, and the communal significance of the Lord's Supper can help modern day Baptist achieve a similar sense of community and dedication.

⁶³ Mears, "Worship in Selected Churches," 171.

⁶⁴ Mikael Broadway, "Is It Not the Communion of the Body of Christ?" *Review and Expositor* 100 (Summer 2003): 410.

⁶⁵ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, 366.

⁶⁶ Thomas White, "A Baptist's Theology of the Lord's Supper," in *Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches*, ed. Thomas White, Jason G. Duesing, and Malcom B. Yarnell III (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2008), 148.