

## Approaching a Variorum Edition of *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*

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The volume published by The Charles Wesley Society in October 1995 was not a critical edition of *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* of 1745, but a simple reprint of the first edition, incorporating all its original text, including errors and infelicities of capitalization, spelling, and punctuation. A "variorum edition" of a work may include annotations by various commentators. Here it implies instead the consideration of all the substantive variant readings of all the nine editions printed during the Wesleys' lifetime. This entails printing all the 3579 lines comprising the 166 hymns of the first edition, and comparing all these with the corresponding lines in all the eight subsequent editions, a minimal total of over 32,000 operations quite apart from the inevitable checking and rechecking.

This minute collating of the nine editions, however, does not include the abridgement of Dr. Daniel Brevint's original treatise, upon whose themes the hymns themselves were based. Of this 1745 abridged preface four separate editions were also printed, each with its own variants. Both the complete editions of preface and hymns and the separate editions of the preface are summarized in tabular form in the Stemma below.

This is wearying work, and its presentation in full would undoubtedly prove wearisome. When I had concluded my digest of it, my wife Nellie, who is a reliable critic, but not enamored of bibliographical techniques—no more, I believe, than most of my audience—said that she found it boring, but good. I trust that you will have a similar charitable reaction. This technical *approach* (I use the word advisedly, for this is all that I can offer), is necessary, but certainly not enthralling. This is not intended, moreover, to be a definitive analysis of the Wesleys at their laborious editorial work on one of their most important publications.

### The Framework for the Hymns

John Wesley owed much of his sacramental perspective to the major devotional work of Dr. Daniel Brevint (1616–1695), Dean of Lincoln, who from his intimate experience of Roman Catholicism during his training in France had developed a hatred of its teaching on transubstantiation, on which in 1672 he published *Missale Romanum, or The Depth and Mystery of the Roman Mass*. A year later, for the pious Protestant wife of the Vicomte de Turenne, Brevint prepared *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice; by way of Discourse, Meditation, and Prayer, upon the Nature, Parts, and Blessings of the Holy Communion*. Of this volume John Wesley purchased a copy for four shillings in August 1732. Wesley

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seems soon to have "collected" this work (made an extract), noting in his diary for July 18, 1734, "began Brevint on the Sacrament," spending an hour in the morning and another in the evening, finishing the reading (or possibly "collecting") during the sessions on July 20. This volume (or the extract) he took with him to Georgia, and put it into good use on board the *Simmonds*, on December 3, 1735, beginning to "read Brevint" to two of his Christmas Day communicants.

It seems almost certain that John was responsible for the eventual prefatory extract to the 1745 *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, which he reduced to about one-third of Brevint's original. This resulted in what was to form a devotional prelude to his brother's hymns. John retained all Brevint's eight sections, but abridged their titles somewhat:

- I. The Importance of well understanding the Nature of this Sacrament.
- II. Concerning the Sacrament, as it is a Memorial of the Suffering and Death of Christ.
- III. Concerning the Sacrament, as it is a Sign of Present Graces.
- IV. Concerning the Sacrament, as it is a Means of Grace.
- V. Concerning the Sacrament, as it is a Pledge of Future Glory.
- VI. Concerning the Sacrament, as it is a Sacrifice. And first, of the Commemorative Sacrifice.
- VII. Concerning the Sacrifice of Ourselves.
- VIII. Concerning the Sacrifice of our Goods.

Surely Charles also read Brevint, and clearly echoes in his hymns many specific passages of the 1673 text; he also agreed with John's rewriting of Brevint wherever imprecise expressions might support the intrinsic efficacy of the elements, and had quite possibly read John's abridgement before it was mentioned at the Conference in June 1774. Nevertheless he made no attempt to write a verse paraphrase of Brevint, or even of John's abridgement. Instead he seems to have worked largely on his own in continuing to prepare this volume of sacramental hymns.

Perhaps it should be made clear that for many months there was very little close contact between the two brothers. No letter between them is known from March 6, 1744 to April 1745. They were both traveling widely between Bristol, London, and Newcastle, meeting each other rarely. They were clearly together at the first Methodist Conference in London, June 1744. One of the items of business on the last day, June 29, was: "What books may an Assistant read?" To this one manuscript copy (only) of the Minutes was added at the end, "Brevint." This surely hints (but does not prove) that John Wesley already had his abridgement in hand, and that he and Charles had already discussed their joint venture.

Both brothers, however, were immersed in many problems. Britain was already at war with France and Spain, and threatened with invasion by the Young Pretender. John Wesley had sent a loyal address to King George II, and on September 16, 1744, reported in his *Journal*, "The war against the Methodists, so called, [was] everywhere carried on with far more vigor than that against the



Spaniards." John was in something of a turmoil over other matters. He had just dedicated to the Countess of Huntingdon his *Collection of Moral and Sacred Poems* in three volumes (and was being sued by Robert Dodsley for breach of copyright). He was also preparing a printed reply to an attack on his *Journal* by a serious London clergyman, Rev. Thomas Church. It can really cause no surprise if Charles Wesley felt that he was being left on his own to prepare their proposed joint hymn-book. Nevertheless, in spite of a disturbing six weeks' gap in John's *Journal*, Charles's journal does record baptizing a child of their printer, Felix Farley, in Bristol, on Sunday, September 23, 1744, and then his being in London for a few days with John. He even notes that on the following Sunday, September 30, 1744, Charles assisted his brother in giving the Sacrament to "the whole Society" in London. Meantime Charles had been accosted by a "serious brother who desired my answer to them many horrid scandals [about lewdness] T. W[illiams]. has raised against me"—and which continued to pursue him even though the Bishop of London had declared him innocent.

Charles continued on a preaching itinerary to the north, especially in Newcastle, and then returned through Epworth, Birstall, and Leeds to London by the end of 1744. Apparently he managed to work tirelessly on the hymns without any note of a major consultation with John well into 1745. Nor during six or seven months is there any reference in the extant journals or letters of either brother about those sacramental hymns. Charles seems to have had no predetermined order or size in mind, simply following the general movement of Brevint's tractate in five sections. He omitted Brevint's opening section, "The importance of well understanding the nature of this Sacrament," which had been retained by John. Charles Wesley's own revised structure (after the drop-title, "Hymns on the Lord's Supper" ran thus:

- I. As it is a Memorial of the Sufferings and Death of Christ. (27 hymns)
  - II. As it is a Sign and Means of Grace. (65 hymns)
  - III. The Sacrament a Pledge of Heaven. (23 hymns) [John had retained "as it is a Pledge of Future Glory".]
  - IV. The Holy Eucharist as it implies a Sacrifice. (12 hymns)
  - V. Concerning the Sacrifice of Our Persons. (30 hymns)
- After the Sacrament. (9 hymns) [The section number "VI." was added from B, 1747, onwards.]

There is a huge discrepancy between the size of the different sections, whether tallied by the number of hymns or by the number of lines. Dr. J. E. Rattenbury noted that Section III might be termed "the Methodist Section"<sup>1</sup> because it emphasized experimental religion rather than the Eucharist. Even more is this true of Section II. Approximately one-third of the whole collection (both in

<sup>1</sup>J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1948), 17.



hymns and lines) is here focused on the devotional means of grace rather than on sacramental symbolism. We have one clue to illustrate this in the reactions of Howell Harris when he attended Holy Communion conducted by Charles Wesley at West Street Chapel in London on August 28, 1743, long before the sacramental hymn-book was available: "In his singing the hymns between every company of communicants I was much humbled." Such massive and lengthy gatherings were obvious vehicles for more general devotion rather than for specific sacramental themes, and may well have led to what seemed at times the almost indiscriminate positioning of the hymns.

### The Relevancy of the Hymns to the Sections

There is strong evidence that this volume was not carefully coordinated by either brother, but rushed into print too hurriedly. One indication is both the content and the delayed numbering of Section VI. Another—much more important—is the lack of an index, which was also added in 1747. Still another is the printing confusion in the first edition, which apparently arose from Farley's dividing the work between two presses, so that one numbered the hymn pages 1–52, 65–141, the other 1–64, 77–141, though the actual content of the hymns remained approximately the same in both issues. Nor was there any change in their arrangement in any later edition. In general (as Professor Wainwright points out in his introduction to the reprint), the ordering follows that of Brevint's sections, but by no means slavishly so. Again as he implies, the hand of John is clearly present in the two reproductions from John's adaptations of George Herbert's poems, Nos. 9 and 160, and in 85, a translation from Zinzendorf, almost certainly made by John, and all three borrowed from the brothers' *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of 1739.

Indeed it seems possible, perhaps probable, that the appendix, Charles's Section VI, was belatedly so numbered in 1747 because the bulk of these hymns was added in response to a letter (now missing) from John to Charles, suggesting these additions during the very late stages of publication, rather than because they were specially suited for the theme, "After the Sacrament." Nos. 9, "Come hither, all whose grov'ling taste," and 85, "O Thou, whom sinners love," may well have been included at an earlier stage. It is surely not accidental, however, that Nos. 160, "Welcome, delicious sacred cheer," 161, "Lord, and God of heavenly powers," 163, "Glory be to God on high," and 164, "Sons of God, triumphant rise," should all have been appended in a cluster from the 1739 volume unless they were in some sense afterthoughts. Two were based on the *Book of Common Prayer*, 161 the *Sanctus*, 163 the *Gloria*. Although No. 164 was entitled in 1739, "Hymn after the Sacrament," its companion therein, No. 9, was entitled "Prayer to Christ before the Sacrament." This simply emphasizes the fact that neither Charles nor John was strongly concerned about their sources or their order but—and even then in a very mild way—their *use* in the whole collection, of course,



rather than for any earthly sacrament, and may well have been Charles's planned culmination from the outset.

Because this hymn-book was intended predominantly for the Methodists, it was not advertised in local newspapers, nor do we yet know of any clear Methodist statement about its first publication. Its placing in John Wesley's later advertisements, however, implies that it originally appeared in March 1745, shortly after his *Answer to the Rev. Mr. Church's Remarks*, which was dated February 2, 1744/5, and was also printed by Felix Farley of Bristol. It is just possible that John took the beginnings of the manuscript (including his own major contribution, the preface) to Bristol in January 1745, whence he returned to London and on to the north for three months, leaving Charles to complete the remainder of the hymns and see the volume through Farley's press. John did make a flying visit to Bristol *en route* to Cornwall in June, but did not really return briefly until the end of July.

In Bristol, however, on Sunday, March 31, 1745, Charles noted: "Administered the Sacrament to all the Society; and the God, the Consolation of Israel, visited us. The whole congregation were moved to cry after Him, either through sorrow or through joy." We can be fairly certain that on Easter Day, April 14, the hymn-books were available. Charles recorded: "With the Word, the Spirit of him that raised Jesus from the dead came mightily upon us. For more than half an hour He cried in our hearts. At the Sacrament, also, which the whole Society partook of, we all found, more or less, the power of his resurrection. So again at our love-feast we rejoiced together, and felt that the Lord was raised indeed." He continued on Tuesday: "We kept the octave, communicating every day; and the Lord never sent us away without a blessing." This Easter festival was probably the first public use of the Wesley's *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*.

When later in 1745 John Wesley's advertisements began to appear, the letter-press title was not, as might have been expected, the same as the title-page, but instead—surely from the hand of John Wesley alone—"Hymns for the Sacrament, price 1s. 6d., bound," or simply "Sacramental Hymns." Though never allowed to go out of print, with 795 copies recorded as available in the 1791 inventory at the Methodist Book Room, it was still not known by its official title. One wonders whether John Wesley retained some mental block against *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*. The skeleton of the collection was indeed John's abridgement of Brevint, but the occasionally haphazard distribution of the hymns in the volume was surely that of Charles. As Dr. Rattenbury shrewdly observed, "The editorial pen of John . . . is likely to have been used, but the arrangement of the hymns shows little evidence of his careful and orderly mind."<sup>2</sup>

Apart from Brevint's outline, no major editing seems to have been undertaken by John Wesley before Charles copy-edited the material during the opening

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.



months of 1745, and very little afterwards. Because both brothers were involved in exhausting schedules, it is amazing what a mass of poetical material was in fact prepared, and of such generally outstanding quality, even though much was reproduced from 1739, and possibly from some earlier manuscripts. According to the remaining evidence, however, there is no manuscript draft of these hymns, either as individuals or as groups. There survive manuscripts of Charles of groups of poems on Courtship, Death, Epistles, Festivals, Friendship, Intercession, Ordinations, Patriotism, Travail, even Nursery, but so far as we know of no such grouping as Sacraments. This seems to confirm that Charles prepared this manuscript hymn-book for Felix Farley in some haste, very much *ad hoc* from his brother's abridgement of Brevint, and did not pause for any adjusting placement either by himself or with John's distant help, either before publication or afterwards—except for Section VI.

Nevertheless, John may have belatedly attempted to share some of the chores of authorship. In his London library (eventually in Richmond College, Surrey, and now in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, England), there exists a copy of the third edition of *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, printed in 1751 by Henry Cock of London (C). This John certainly corrected, and possibly used to suggest one specific alteration to Charles, that of altering the somewhat elaborate description of the credentials of the joint authors to the simple, "John and Charles Wesley, Presbyters of the Church of England." (This remained through the fourth and fifth editions, then reverted to the more elaborate titles of 1745 and 1747 for the final four editions.) John also made some corrections in both Brevint and the hymns of this third edition. One was on page 69, the beginning of Section III, which John wished to return to his own original choice of "Concerning the Sacrament, as it is a Pledge of Future Glory." Charles had altered this to "The Sacrament a Pledge of Heaven," however, and thus it remained. John's editorial pen caused no alteration to the hymns in future editions, no more than it did to future printings of *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* in its thirteen editions, except that in his *Works*, Pine, 1773.

### Variant Readings

Revision of *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* took place at various stages throughout the history of the text, from the second to the ninth edition, and almost all have a few unique readings, though the variants are for the most part unimportant. This is true of the volume as a whole. The first edition of the preface (in A) was not reprinted except by Pasham of London in 1754, based on Cock's 1751 edition (Preface in B). Grabham of Bristol prepared another based on Farley's of 1747, and this formed the basis for reprint in Wesley's *Works* (Preface in C), 1773, which underwent considerable further abridgement and revision by John Wesley. Another based on the Preface in B was prepared in 1790 at the New Chapel in London. This is not our concern here, however, but the variants in the hymns.



Minor alterations in spelling and punctuation, like errors, are ignored. The few major substantive variants are discussed briefly in groups, or tabulated under the numbers of the hymns, verses, and lines, followed by the original reading (in A), the variant, and the letters designating the editions where the variants occur. The general assumption has been that the variants were initiated by Charles, in default of any evidence to suggest that John may have been responsible.

Let us now turn to the hymns originally published jointly by John and Charles in the *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of 1739, namely Nos. 9, 85, 160, 161, 163, and 164. For No. 9, John Wesley's version of Herbert's "The Invitation," there are two major changes: "True love" replaces "True joy" in 2:10, and in 3:6, "And tasting once no more can die" is replaced by the much more forceful line (surely from Charles), "And dying once no more can die." In No. 85 several changes are made in 1739, especially in stanza 3, where somewhat strangely the original "Daily we drink with trembling awe / Thy flesh our daily food," John's translation of Zinzendorf,<sup>3</sup> is altered to, "Now let us drink with trembling awe; / Thy flesh be now our food." No. 160 is from Herbert's "The Banquet." John (or possibly Charles) makes several changes from John's original.<sup>4</sup> 1:6, "Not angel tongues can taste or tell" is softened to "can fully tell"; 4:6, "To find me grov'ling on the ground" becomes more specific and positive, "To wash, and lift me from the ground"; 6:6, "Him, who has done so much for me," is transformed (by Charles, I believe) to the terse apothegm, "And live with him who died for me." (Charles then avoids an anticlimax by omitting John's closing stanza from 1739.) Nos. 161, "Therefore with Angels and Archangels," etc. and 163, the *Gloria*, show no changes from 1739; No. 164 (a genuine "Hymn after the Sacrament") a few: 3:2 "th'accepted son" becomes "th'atoning son," in 4:4 the italics are added, "for me he died," and in 8:1, "Him we only taste below" becomes "him by faith we taste below." The closing couplet, 8:3-4, "Him when fully ours we prove, / Ours the heav'n of perfect love!" is strengthened to, "When his utmost grace we prove, / Rise to heaven by perfect love." (The foregoing, we emphasize, are textual variants *before* publication, rather than after.)

*Hymns on the Great Festivals and other Occasions* (1746), furnishes an unusual category of variants. For this volume Charles Wesley selected three hymns from the 1745 collection, Nos. 20, 23, and 80. In No. 20, "Lamb of God, whose bleeding love," he introduced two changes; 1:2 ("We thus" became "We now") and 4:6 ("Till perfected in holiness" became "Till all renewed in holiness"—apparently to alter the accentual stress for the musician, Lampe). In 80, "With pity, Lord, a sinner see," he entered three changes; 1:3 ("fond despair" became "rash despair"), 4:6 ("Thy dear expiring love" became "Thy balmy bleeding love"), and 5:6 ("And see thy face, and die" became "To taste thy love,

<sup>3</sup>*Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), 190.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 126-28.



and die.") These revisions for *Hymns on the Great Festivals*, however, were not taken over by Charles Wesley into any of the later editions of *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*.

### Dividing Up the Holy Spirit

Throughout his multitudinous hymns, Charles Wesley found himself constantly in trouble with the Holy Spirit. The Third Person was very important to him, and one feels that Wesley would have introduced the Holy Spirit much more frequently had he been able innocuously to squeeze two syllables into one. As I have mentioned elsewhere, in the *Hymns on the Great Festivals* his normal solution was to use "Spir't."<sup>5</sup> This variorum edition of *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* may well be the place to mention that Wesley used other dodges to avoid this syllabic distress, as in this volume. In Hymn 54, 3:5, Farley prints (in both issues) "My body, soul, and spi'rit to join," with an apostrophe stuck in the middle of the word after the first "i". This is worse than useless, for it announces a problem (or an error), without offering a solution. In this instance the B edition follows A, but C, D, and E do offer a solution, with "sp'rit," the apostrophe replacing the first "i". Editions F to I simply spell out the word in full, and leave the leaders (or singers) to make the best they can of it. In No. 71, 3:3, Farley's two separate presses print the same imperfect solutions, "Faith only doth the Spi'rit convey," and C ignores the problem. Nor can we offer any better solution, except that in their verse the Wesleys normally pronounced "Spirit" as "Spir't," but sometimes used as an alternative, "Sp'rit," though not, as my wife puckishly suggested, "Sprite!"

With this I might probably close this address, except to note that John Wesley later added other variants to these sacramental hymns used in his *Select Hymns with Tunes Annexed* of 1761 and 1765, and in his *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists* of 1780. I should also add as footnotes a few examples of the more important of the many minor variants which have been assembled in my collations of these 166 hymns:

27:1:8	by thy dying live	by thy death to live	CDE
27:3:4	fainting sin-sick soul	fainting sinking soul	FGHI
43:2:5	I am a frail sinful man	I am a frail, sinful man	HI [a revision]
73:3:4	On me, the pardoned rebel me	... rebel me	B-I [a revision]
79:1:2	The groaning of thy prisoners here	... hear	GHI [a correction]
83:2:3-4	Still we are not new-created, Still we are not sanctified;	Still we are not new-created Are not wholly sanctified	B-I
84:2:6	Eat the now unleavened bread	Eat the new ...	B-I
116:2:6	And spread salvation	And speaks salvation	GHI [a revision]
126:5:3	Still bleeding	Its bleeding	CDE
128:2:1	Thy Self our utmost ...	Thyself our utmost ...	C-I [error?]
144:2:2	Let him wake on me his sword	Wave o'er me ...	F-I [revision?]
148,	Vv. 1, 2	Vv. 1, 2, 3, 4	B-I
166:3:2	They simply in his paths remained	They simple ...	F-I [revision?]

<sup>5</sup>Frank Baker, *Representative Verse of Charles Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1958), 62.



**Hymns on the Lord's Supper: the Stemma\***

edition	printer	date	pages	stemma
A	Bristol, Farley	1745	32, 141, [3]	A
B	2nd Bristol, Farley	1747	32, 129, vi	B
C	3rd London, Cock	1751	32, 129, x	C
PiA	London, Pasham	1754	[Pref. Xtn. S & S, 28]	PiA
D	4th London, np	1757	32, 129, vii	D
PiB	Bristol, Grabham	[1759-60]	[Pref. 27]	PiB
E	5th Bristol, Pine	1762	32, 129, vii	E
F	6th Bristol, Pine	1771	32, 129, VII	F
PiC Works	Bristol, Pine	1773	Vol. 23, [Pref. 141-76]	PiC
G	7th London, Hawes	1776	32, 129, vii	G
H	8th London, Hawes	1779	32, 129, vii	H
I	9th London, Paramore	1786	32, 129, vii	I
PiD	London, New Chapel	1790	[Pref. 28]	PiD

\*Abbreviations:

- Pi = Preface in  
 Pref. = Preface  
 Works = *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., Late Fellow of Lincoln-College, Oxford*  
 (Bristol: William Pine, 1773), Vol. 23, Preface 141-76.  
 Xtn. S & S = *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* (Brevint)