

## Worship in Eighteenth-Century Anglicanism and Methodism

### PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CHARLES WESLEY SOCIETY

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UK: Mr. E. Alan Rose  
26 Roe Cross Green  
Mottram, Hyde  
Cheshire SK14 6LP  
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Books for review may be submitted to:

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# “Our Elder Brethren Join”

## The Wesleys’ *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* and the Patristic Revival in England

Geoffrey Wainwright\*

### I. Scripture, Tradition, and Renewal

The classical Protestant Reformers appealed to Scripture alone, but they did not read the Scriptures in isolation. They read them through the patristic lenses of the early creeds, councils, and ecclesiastical writers. In the English case, the Reformers believed that “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation,” but the “sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures” thus affirmed by Article VI of the Anglican Articles of Religion certainly allowed for the reception of the ancient creeds, whose contents might indeed “be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture” (Article VIII). In matters of doctrine, the ancient creeds in their turn supplied, as we should now say, a hermeneutical grid for the reading of Scripture. As “a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ” (and so forbidden “to ordain any thing contrary to God’s Word written” or “besides the same to enforce any thing”), the Church has “power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith” (Article XX); and although “general councils,” and particular churches, “may err” and “have erred” (Articles XIXb and XXI), the Church at any given time, under the norm of Scripture, draws on its earlier Scripture-informed Tradition in order to settle matters in substantial dispute and to regulate the liturgical and related practices by which “the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly administered according to Christ’s ordinance” (Article XIXa).

Not only for the English but also for the Continental Europeans, the Scriptures themselves supplied both the material content of worship (large portions of the sacred text were typically read in *lectio continua*) and its basic forms (preaching, prayer, psalms and scriptural canticles, and the Lord’s Supper); but the preachers were aided by patristic exegesis of the Scriptures, and Protestant orders of service were shaped according to the best available knowledge of worship in the early centuries.<sup>1</sup> It was, however, in the Anglican Church, as it sought an Elizabethan middle way between Romanism and Puritanism or sectarianism, that the reference to the Early Church lasted longest and had its most profound effect.<sup>2</sup>

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\*Robert Earl Cushman Professor of Christian Theology, The Divinity School, Duke University, Durham, NC, USA.

<sup>1</sup>See, generally, Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1947, revised 1960), and, with very precise focus, Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1975).

<sup>2</sup>For what immediately follows, see Ted A. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press/Kingswood Books, 1991), Chapter 2, “The Revival of Antiquity”.



Already Bishop John Jewell of Salisbury looked on “the Fathers” as “interpreters of the Word of God,” and his pupil Richard Hooker regarded the “consensus” among them as authoritative in doctrine and practice. According to Bishop Lancelot Andrewes of Winchester, “one canon, two testaments, three creeds, four general councils, five centuries, and the series of Fathers in that period determine our faith.” Among Anglicans, there were in fact some differences regarding the extent of the favored period and the degree of its purity, although few thinkers in the Established Church readily entertained the notion of a Constantinian fall. Interest in the liturgical life of the Early Church was characteristically strong, since it was in matters of public worship that many of the tensions within the English Church came to focal expression.

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when the English Church was again—or still—struggling with the question of its own character and comprehensiveness (following the restoration of the Stuarts, the revolution of 1688–89, and the introduction of the Hanoverians), there occurred a scholarly “revival of ancient Christian liturgy and discipline” (to use Ted Campbell’s phrase), which was put in the service not only of doctrine and polity (where early history was invoked by speculative and practical latitudinarians as well as by the doctrinally orthodox and the episcopally conservative) but also of programmatic spiritual and moral renewal. It is in this context that we shall come, at last, to the Wesleys and to their *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*. For that collection of 1745 was intended to support the sacramental revival that for the Wesley brothers was integral to the growth and spread of real religion or vital Christianity; and our present investigation is directed towards the patristic stamp on their eucharistic hymnography.

## II. The Wesleys’ Knowledge of the Fathers

We need to know, first, what the Wesleys read for their knowledge of the doctrine and practice of the Early Church concerning the Lord’s Supper.<sup>3</sup> In his early Oxford years, John Wesley worked on Justin Martyr’s *Apology*, where in chapter 67 he will have found a description of the Sunday worship of the Church in Rome around the middle of the second century.<sup>4</sup> Wesley’s *Diary* for September 1731 shows him using the work of a family friend, Robert Nelson’s patristically oriented *Companion to the Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England, with*

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<sup>3</sup>See Frederick Hunter, “The Manchester Non-Jurors and Wesley’s High Churchism,” *London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 177 (1947), 56–61, and *John Wesley and the Coming Comprehensive Church* (London: Epworth Press, 1968), 9–52; and, again, Ted A. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, 26–40.

<sup>4</sup>In John Wesley’s manuscript *Diaries* we find for 15–16 November 1726 the annotation “translated Justin;” and then between 20 August and 7 October 1730 there are twenty-five further references to Justin, including two specific mentions of the *Apology* (28 August and 2 September 1730). I owe the verification of these and subsequent references to the early, as yet unpublished, *Diaries* to my colleague Richard P. Heitzenrater.

*Collects and Prayers for Each Solemnity* (1704), and he would later take it with him on his voyage to Georgia.<sup>5</sup> In June 1732, Wesley was reading William Cave's *Primitive Christianity*.<sup>6</sup> First published in 1672, Cave's work had appeared in numerous editions, and Wesley would in 1753 include an abridgment of it in volume 31 of his Christian Library. Cave's eleventh chapter gives an account of the eucharistic service in the early Church, taking the outline from St. Cyril of Jerusalem's fifth mystagogical catechesis.<sup>7</sup> By way of John Clayton of Brasenose College, Wesley came into touch with the Manchester Non-Jurors, and especially those whose affection for the older ways of the English Church rested on the First Prayer Book of 1549 and the practices of the early Church which could still be found there.<sup>8</sup> Along with a wider circle of Anglicans, they manifested a particular interest in the so-called *Apostolic Constitutions* and *Apostolic Canons*. These John Wesley read in company with Clayton.<sup>9</sup> In May 1733, Wesley visited Manchester and met the Non-Juror bishop Thomas Deacon, whose 1734 *Compleat Collection of Devotions* Wesley would use on his voyage to Georgia: it presented a version of the Book of Common Prayer much revised and augmented from the *Apostolic Constitutions*, with the so-called Clementine Liturgy from the eighth book being of particular importance for the eucharist.<sup>10</sup> In February and December 1734, Wesley spent time with William Whiston, author of *Primitive Christianity Reviv'd* (1711), the second volume of which gives the *Apostolic Constitutions* in Greek and English while the third argues for their authenticity.<sup>11</sup> During the voy-

<sup>5</sup>References to Nelson come both in the daily entries and in the monthly summary of John Wesley's *Diary* for September 1731. The *Diary* twice mentions him reading Nelson in Georgia, on 24 December 1735 and 4 February 1737; see *Works of John Wesley*, Volume 18, eds. W. R. Ward and R. P. Heitzenraater (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 333 ("Read Nelson to them") and 468 ("Nelson with boys").

<sup>6</sup>Cave is mentioned in Wesley's *Diary* between 19 and 27 June 1732, and again on 24 March 1734, and then in Georgia between 21 and 31 August 1736. As early as 1730, when he became associated with the Oxford Methodists, John Wesley himself seems to have acquired the nickname of "Primitive Christianity," reflecting no doubt his sharing in one of the intense interests of that group (see Campbell, pp. 26f).

<sup>7</sup>This source does not include the narrative of the institution in its report of the eucharistic prayer, and Cave is thereby misled into placing the "consecration," whose "form" he takes from the fourth book of St. Ambrose on the sacraments, *after* the close of the eucharistic prayer.

<sup>8</sup>For the Non-Jurors on liturgy and sacraments, see W. Jardine Grisbrooke, *Anglican Liturgies of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London: S.P.C.K., 1958), especially 71–135.

<sup>9</sup>*Diaries* for 11, 15, 18, and 25 August 1732, 13 June 1733, and 6 March 1734.

<sup>10</sup>A *Compleat Collection of Devotions, both Publick and Private, taken from the Apostolical Constitutions, the Ancient Liturgies, and the Common Prayer Book of the Church of England* (London: Printed for the Author, 1734). There are further references to Deacon and his *Devotions* in Wesley's *Diaries* for 7 September and 24 October 1734 and in a letter from John Clayton to Wesley of 2 August 1734 (for the letter, see *Works of John Wesley*, Volume 25, ed. F. Baker, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, pp. 391–93). Wesley's *Diaries* show that he used Deacon particularly during the early part of the voyage to Georgia; see *Works of John Wesley*, 18:312–16 (entries for 17–25, 27–28 October 1735).

<sup>11</sup>*Diary* entries for 14, 15, and 19 February and 23 December 1734. Whiston himself was an Arianizer. The allegedly Arian character of (parts of) the *Apostolic Constitutions* was debated in the

age to America (October 1735–February 1736), Wesley also read Jeremy Collier's *Reasons for Restoring Some Prayers* (1717),<sup>12</sup> John Johnson's *The Unbloody Sacrifice and Altar, Unvail'd and Supported* (1714–24),<sup>13</sup> and Daniel Brevint's *Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* (1672).<sup>14</sup> Brevint's work would turn out to be the principal literary source for the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* of 1745.

From the early to mid 1730s dates a mysterious manuscript of John Wesley (the so-called MS Y) that includes a number of resolutions. Among them is this: "to use water, oblation of elements, invocation, alms, a prothesis [= credence table], in the Eucharist."<sup>15</sup> All these ritual features are present or implied in the eucharistic liturgy of *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII, of the 1549 Book of Common Prayer, and of Thomas Deacon's *Compleat Collection of Devotions*. Three of them in particular are significant for the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* and the patristic roots of that collection: the water, the oblation, and the epiclesis.

First, the use of "water" refers to the addition of water to the chalice at the preparation of the eucharistic elements. The practice formed one of the accusations brought against John Wesley by Tailfer and others in *A True Narrative of the State of Georgia* (1741),<sup>16</sup> and Wesley continued to defend it in his *Letter to the Rev. Dr. Conyers Middleton* of 1749.<sup>17</sup> As Wesley well knew, the mixed chalice

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early eighteenth century and doubtless played its part in Wesley's eventual devaluation of the collection as a witness to primitive Christianity.

<sup>12</sup>Collier was a proponent of the four "usages" of a mixed chalice (water added to the wine), an oblation and an epiclesis in the eucharistic prayer, and prayer for the dead; see W. J. Grisbrooke, *Anglican Liturgies of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 90–95. According to his *Diary*, Wesley read Collier on 16–17 November 1735; see *Works of John Wesley*, 18:321f.

<sup>13</sup>Part One appeared in 1714, with a second edition in 1724; Part Two, in 1718. Johnson's lengthy subtitles indicate the content: "Part the First, In which the Nature of the Eucharist is explain'd according to the Sentiments of the Christian Church in the first four Centuries, proving That the Eucharist is a proper Material Sacrifice, That it is both Eucharistic, and Propitiatory, That it is to be offer'd by proper Officers, That the Oblation is made on a proper Altar, That it is properly consumed by Manducation, To which is Added, A Proof, That what our Saviour speaks concerning Eating his Flesh, and Drinking his Blood, in the VIth Chapter of St. John's Gospel, is principally meant of the Eucharist"; and "Part the Second, Shewing, The Agreement and Disagreement of the Eucharist with the Sacrifices of the Antients, and the Excellency of the former. The great Moment of the Eucharist both as a Feast, and Sacrifice. The Necessity of frequent Communion. The Unity of the Eucharist. The Nature of Excommunication. And the Primitive Method of Preparation. With Devotions for the Altar." Wesley's *Diary* records him reading in Johnson on 28–29 November 1735; see *Works of John Wesley* 18:325.

<sup>14</sup>In his *Diary* for 23 December 1735 we find Wesley reading Brevint to his fellow passengers Reed and Mrs. Lawley; see *Works of John Wesley* 18:333.

<sup>15</sup>See R. Denny Urlin, *The Churchman's Life of Wesley* (London: S.P.C.K., 1880), 66f; John C. Bowmer, *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism* (London: Dacre/Black, 1951), 233–37; Frederick Hunter, *John Wesley and the Coming Comprehensive Church*, 33–38, 52f; Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (London: Epworth Press, and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 40f, 350–53.

<sup>16</sup>*The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. N. Curnock, Volume 8 (London: Epworth Press, 1916), 305.

<sup>17</sup>*The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, Volume 10 (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872), 8f, 47f.

is mentioned by Justin Martyr (*First Apology*, 65:3 and 67:5), by St. Irenaeus (*Against the Heresies* V.1.2), and by St. Cyprian (*Epistle* 63 [to Caecilius], 13). St. Cyprian interprets the addition of water to the wine as the association of the faithful and their sins with the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and this interpretation was taken up by Brevint; the Wesleyan *Hymns* do not use the aquatic symbolism in that way, but they speak strongly in several other images (especially in hymns 116–157) of the joining of self-offering by the faithful to Christ's redemptive self-offering. Another patristic interpretation of the wine and the water, found in St. Ambrose (*On the Sacraments* V.1.4), recalls the blood and water which flowed from the wounded side of Christ (John 19:35). While the Wesleyan *Hymns* most frequently mention the flowing blood alone (especially in hymns 1–27), hymn 31 uses the Mosaic typology of the stricken Rock to bring in the water with the blood:

And keep us, Saviour, in thy side;  
By water and by blood redeem,  
And wash us in the mingled stream.

The sin-atoning blood apply,  
And let the water sanctify,  
Pardon and holiness impart,  
Sprinkle and purify our heart,  
Wash out the last remains of sin,  
And make our inmost nature clean.

The double stream in pardons rolls,  
And brings thy love into our souls. . . .

Similar imagery occurs in hymns 37 ("blended blood and water," "two effluxes"), 74 ("the mingled current"), and 75 ("the double grace"), with the characteristic Wesleyan application (found already in Brevint) of blood to justification and water to sanctification.

Second in the ritual features from manuscript Y is the "oblation of elements." This may refer to an action or prayer at the time when the priest, after receiving the alms for the poor, places also bread and wine upon the holy table. But it is more likely to refer to manual acts on the part of the priest in connection with the institution narrative and the immediately ensuing anamnesis-oblation, which reads thus in Deacon's *Compleat Devotions* as translated from *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII.12.38: "Therefore in commemoration of his passion, death, and resurrection from the dead, his ascension into heaven, and second coming with glory and great power to judge the quick and the dead, and to render to every man according to his works, *we offer to Thee* our King and our God, according to his institution, *this bread and this cup*, giving thanks to thee through him, that thou hast vouchsafed us the honour to stand before thee, and to sacrifice unto

thee.”<sup>18</sup> We now know that such an anamnesis-oblation dates back at least to the so-called Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus (“*Memores igitur mortis et resurrectionis eius offerimus tibi panem et calicem, gratias tibi agentes quia nos dignos habuisti adstare coram te et tibi ministrare*”)<sup>19</sup> and to the early Alexandrian liturgy of St. Basil (“We therefore, remembering his holy sufferings, and his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven, and his session at the right hand of the Father, and his glorious and fearful coming to us again, have set forth before you your own from your own gifts, this bread and this cup”).<sup>20</sup> The Wesleyan *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* contain in no. 118 (“Live, our Eternal Priest”) an exact equivalent of the ancient anamnesis-oblation:

. . . we beneath  
Present our Saviour’s death,  
Do as Jesus bids us do,  
Signify his flesh and blood,  
Him in a memorial show,  
Offer up the Lamb to God.

In fact, the hymns frequently speak of the “memorial” of Christ’s “grand oblation,” which the Church now “shows” to the Father (see especially hymns 116, 121, 123, 124, 125, 126).

The third ritual feature from Wesley’s resolutions is the invocation or epiclesis. This is the technical term for a variously formulated prayer asking that the Holy Spirit may come upon the eucharistic elements and community, in order that the recipients may benefit from communion in the body and blood of Christ. In the 1549 Prayer Book, such a prayer occurs before the institution narrative, and we shall note its form later. In Deacon’s *Compleat Devotions*, it occurs in the place more customary in the East, namely after the institution narrative and the anamnesis-oblation, and in a form translated from *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII.12.39 which again we shall note subsequently. Hymn 72 among the Wesleyan texts reads:

Come, Holy Ghost, thine influence shed,  
And realize the sign;  
Thy life infuse into the bread,  
Thy power into the wine.

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<sup>18</sup>Deacon, *A Compleat Collection of Devotions* (1734), 92; cf. Grisbrooke, *Anglican Liturgies*, 310f.

<sup>19</sup>B. Botte, *La Tradition apostolique de saint Hippolyte* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1963), 16f. English in R. C. D. Jasper and G. J. Cuming, *Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed*, 3rd edition (New York: Pueblo, 1987), 35.

<sup>20</sup>J. Doresse and E. Lanne, *Un témoin archaïque de la liturgie copte de S. Basile*, Bibliothèque du Muséon 47 (Louvain: Publications Universitaires / Institut orientaliste, 1960), 18–21. English translation in Jasper and Cuming, 71.

Effectual let the tokens prove,  
And made, by heavenly art,  
Fit channels to convey thy love  
To every faithful heart.

Hymn 16 ("Come, thou everlasting Spirit") is clearly inspired by the epiclesis in *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII.12.39, and discussion of it is reserved until later.

Through the Oxford and Georgia years, the contact between John and Charles was very close, and we may therefore reasonably assume that Charles became familiar with the patristic and Anglican texts at least by way of John, even if evidence is lacking to show that he did so directly. Frederick Hunter notes that Charles Wesley's *Journal* in March 1736 records his "offering up the Christian Sacrifice," which was Deacon's subtitle for the "Holy Liturgy," and both the verb "to offer (up)" and the noun "sacrifice" would figure prominently in the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*; and that on 10 April 1736, Charles Wesley's *Journal* uses the expression "consecrate the sacrament" in reference to the epiclesis or invocation.<sup>21</sup>

By the Georgia period, the principal literary and ritual pieces were already in place for the writing of the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, although the collection of 166 items was not published, under the joint names of the Wesley brothers, until 1745. The Wesleys' lifelong familiarity with the primary Scriptures had been joined by their attention to the liturgical embodiment of the scriptural story in the ancient eucharistic rite of *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII and to the doctrinal interpretation of the eucharist by Daniel Brevint in his *Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*. We do not know how long the composition and compilation of the Wesleyan collection took. Six of the texts had already appeared in *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of 1739, namely numbers 9, 85, 160, 161, 163, and 164 of the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*. To satisfy our chronological curiosity, it would be helpful if other literary or ritual sources for particular hymns were to be discovered and the dates of the Wesleys' contacts with them determined.

Now, however, we come at last directly to the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* of 1745 as we have them.<sup>22</sup> The title of this study—"Our elder brethren join"—is borrowed from hymn 98, where the phrase pictures the present generation of the eucharistic community gathering with its predecessors around "the well-known sign." We have taken the phrase as a motto under which to display the continuity between the eucharistic understanding and practice reflected in the Wesleyan hymns and the understanding and practice of the earlier Tradition, particularly

<sup>21</sup>F. Hunter, *John Wesley and the Coming Comprehensive Church*, 34.

<sup>22</sup>The *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, by John and Charles Wesley, Presbyters of the Church of England, first appeared at Bristol, printed by Felix Farley, in 1745. The collection underwent nine editions in the lifetime of the brothers. The text can be found in *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, ed. G. Osborn, volume 3 (London: Wesleyan-Methodist Conference Office, 1869), 181–342; in J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1948); and in a facsimile edition by The Charles Wesley Society (1995).

that of the first few centuries, as knowledge of them had been recovered in the English patristic revival of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I shall now offer what may anachronistically be called, first, a systematic-theological reading of the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, based on their orderly following of Daniel Brevint's treatise, *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*, which itself—according to the commendation of Daniel Waterland (1683–1740)—“stood upon the ancient ground”;<sup>23</sup> and then a ritual-theological reading of the *Hymns*, highlighting their thematic correspondences to the eucharistic liturgy of *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII, whose textual sequence they admittedly do not mimic.

### III. A Systematic Theological Reading of the Wesleyan Hymns

The structure of the Wesleyan collection of *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* derived from a treatise by Daniel Brevint (1616–1695), Dean of Lincoln under the restoration of King Charles II, entitled *On the Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* (1672). The first part of Brevint's book treated the eucharist “as a sacrament” under five chapters:

- I. The importance of well understanding the nature of this sacrament.
- II. Concerning the sacrament, as it is a memorial of the sufferings and death of Christ.
- III. Of the blessed sacrament, as it stands for a sign of present graces.
- IV. Concerning the communion, as it is not a representation only, but a means of grace.
- V. Of the blessed sacrament, as being a pledge of the happiness and glory to come.

Then the second part treated the eucharist “as a sacrifice”:

- VI. Of the holy eucharist, as it implies a sacrifice; and first, of the commemorative sacrifice;
- VII. Concerning the sacrifice of our own persons;
- VIII. Concerning the oblation of our goods and alms; or the sacrifice of justice.

As was his way with other writings he admired, John Wesley “extracted” this treatise, abbreviating and, where necessary, adapting it to suit his own theological accents. This “extract” Wesley then prefixed to his and his brother's collection of *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*. The Wesleyan hymns compressed Brevint's structure into five sections and added a sixth. The Lord's Supper was presented by the Wesleys under these aspects:

1. As it is a memorial of the sufferings and death of Christ.

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<sup>23</sup>For Brevint I have used the Oxford 1847 edition (“printed for J. Vincent”), which cited Waterland's encomium on pp. viii–ix.

2. As it is a sign and means of grace.
3. The sacrament a pledge of heaven.
4. The Holy Eucharist as it implies a sacrifice.
5. Concerning the sacrifice of our persons.
6. After the sacrament.

For long stretches the Wesleyan hymns follow the sequence of ideas in Brevint's text, although there are occasional erratic displacements (as when paragraph 11 of Brevint's section IV on "the communion, as it is not a representation only, but a means of grace" is made to wait until the Wesleys' section on "the holy eucharist as it implies a sacrifice" before being versified as hymn 116, "Victim divine, thy grace we claim"). Many of the hymns are directly inspired by Brevint's text, down to their precise wording. Passages particularly favored by the Wesleys are the prayers by which Brevint closes each of his sections. It must, however, also be recognized that there are substantial blocks of hymns in the Wesleyan collection which owe little very directly to Brevint (especially 7–26, 30–43 [though not 32 and 40], 69–92, 104–115 [though not 112], 153–166 [though not 157]); and one must therefore wonder whether some other recent sources were being massively exploited, apart from (as we shall see) well-known elements from traditional liturgies.<sup>24</sup>

From a dogmatic point of view, there are two particularly interesting features in Brevint's treatise and in the Wesleys' application of it, both of which have roots in patristic and later classical writers. The first concerns the relation between God's and man's part in the eucharist—and in the redemption, of which the eucharist is a sacrament. The second concerns sacramental signification, and particularly the location of the eucharist in the past, present, and future dimensions of the history of salvation.

### 1. *Sacrament and Sacrifice*

The structure of Brevint's treatise, and his insistent argument, places sacrament before sacrifice. That is a soundly Protestant thought. Luther inveighed against the medieval Western Church for having turned the Mass from a divine "beneficium" into a human "sacrificium." The Lord's sacramental bequest should rather be taken as a gift from God, before it may occasion a faithful self-offering on the part of the grateful recipients. According to Luther, the whole Christian liturgy or "divine service" (*Gottesdienst*) was primarily God's service of us (*an uns*) and only then, and responsively, our service of God (*vor Gott*).<sup>25</sup> Protestant orders of worship were designed to express that. That is why, for instance, even

<sup>24</sup>Hymns 9 and 160 are adapted from George Herbert's poems "The Invitation" and "The Banquet" respectively, and 85 from Zinzendorf's "Verliebter in die Sünderschaft."

<sup>25</sup>See Vilmos Vajta, *Die Theologie des Gottesdienstes bei Luther* (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2nd edition 1954). Abbreviated English translation, *Luther on Worship* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1958).



the carefully worded oblation of the 1549 English Prayer Book ("accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving," "and here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our self, our souls and bodies") was in 1552 transferred from the eucharistic prayer to a place after communion, and the "Gloria in Excelsis" moved from the opening of the service to its close. Here the Reformers rejoin the profound intention, if not the ritual structure, of the early Fathers: the divine gift comes first, and if we make an offering, it is in order that we "may not be ungrateful" (Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* IV.17.5); our thank offering "adds nothing to God but brings us closer to him" (John Chrysostom, *Homily 25 on Matthew*, 3).<sup>26</sup>

The Wesleyan hymns maintain the priority of sacrament over sacrifice, even while being somewhat bolder in their view of the relation between Christ's sacrifice and the sacrifice of Christians than is implied by even the 1549 Prayer Book and its retention of a somewhat patristically constructed anamnesis-oblation in the eucharistic prayer: "Wherefore, O Lord and heavenly Father, according to the institution of thy dearly beloved Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, we thy humble servants do celebrate, and make here before thy divine Majesty, with these thy holy gifts, the memorial which thy Son hath willed us to make, having in remembrance his blessed passion, mighty resurrection, and glorious ascension, rendering unto thee most hearty thanks, for the innumerable benefits procured unto us by the same, entirely desiring thy fatherly goodness, mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. . . ." The Wesleyan hymns, especially in the section on "the holy eucharist as it implies a sacrifice" (116–127), repeatedly "show" Christ's sacrifice to the Father and ask him to "behold." Thus hymn 121, verse 2:

The cross on Calvary he bore,  
He suffered once to die no more,  
But left a sacred pledge behind:  
See here!—It on thy altar lies,  
Memorial of the sacrifice  
He offer'd once for all mankind.

Father, the grand oblation see,  
The death as present now with thee  
As when he gasped on earth—Forgive;  
Answer, and show the curse removed,  
Accept us in the Well-beloved,  
And bid the world of rebels live.

Or again, hymn 125, verse 2:

With solemn faith we offer up,  
And spread before thy glorious eyes

---

<sup>26</sup>Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 57:331.

That only ground of all our hope,  
That precious bleeding sacrifice,  
Which brings thy grace on sinners down,  
And perfects all our souls in one.<sup>27</sup>

In the section on "the sacrifice of our persons" (128–157), the all-sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice continues to be affirmed (unsurpassably in hymn 128, verses 1–2); and Christ carries his believing people with him into the presence of God (129, verse 1):

See where our great High-Priest  
Before the Lord appears,  
And on his loving breast  
The tribes of Israel bears,  
Never without his people seen,  
The Head of all believing men.

If believers offer themselves to God, it is by "casting" themselves on Christ and his sacrifice (the verb "to cast" occurs six times in this section). That is how "the two oblations join" (hymn 147). Like Brevint (explicitly in VIII.2), the Wesleys in this connection invoke the Augustinian notion of Christ's Body, head and members (hymn 129, verse 3):

The motions of our Head  
The members all pursue.

To express that "Christ and his church are one" (*ibid.*, verse 2), the Wesleys with Brevint also use other biblical images that have precedents in patristic usage in this connection: "With him, the corner-stone / The living stones conjoin" (*ibid.*); "one vine" (*ibid.*); "First-born of many sons" (hymn 132, verse 3); "If the first-fruits be sanctified / The lump is holy too," "The sheaf and harvest is but one / Accepted sacrifice" (134, verses 1 and 3); "Mixed with the sacred smoke we rise / The smoke of his burnt sacrifice" (137, verse 7; cf. 141, verse 8: "mingled in a common flame").

## 2. Efficacious Signs

Brevint follows Augustine in his account of the nature and operation of signs. To be fit for their sacramental office, signs must have some kind of natural resemblance to what they represent (III.4, citing Augustine's Epistle 23, to Boniface<sup>28</sup>): thus bread is produced by "the grinding mill and the burning fire" and it serves the "maintenance and improvement of life," being thus suited to "represent

<sup>27</sup>"The idea that the blood still flows is a way of saying that the death is still efficacious": so A. Raymond George, "The Lord's Supper," in *The Doctrine of the Church*, ed. Dow Kirkpatrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), 140–160, in particular 154.

<sup>28</sup>In Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, the place is *Epistle* 98 (to Boniface), 9 (*PL* 33:363–64).

Christ's sufferings" and "the blessing and the benefit which we receive from those sufferings" (III.5–6). The instituted sacrament, "duly given and faithfully received, makes the thing which it represents as really present for our use, and as really powerful in order to our salvation" (II.3, again with appeal to St. Augustine<sup>29</sup>). Therefore the bread is properly called—by the fathers as taught by Christ himself—the Lord's body (IV.1, with a reference again to Augustine, Epistle 23<sup>30</sup>). The Wesleyan hymns stand entirely by this notion of the sacrament as "not a representation only, but a means of grace."

They also share Brevint's location of the sacrament in salvation history: "This great mystery shews three faces, looking directly towards three times, and offering to all worthy receivers three sorts of incomparable blessings,—that of *representing* the true *efficacy* of Christ's sufferings, which are past, whereof it is a *memorial*; that of *exhibiting* the first fruits of these sufferings in real and *present* *graces*, whereof it is a moral *conveyance* and *communication*; and that of *assuring* men of all other graces and glories to *come*, whereof it is an infallible *pledge*" (II.1). This corresponds very nicely with St. Thomas Aquinas' teaching on the sacrament as an efficaciously commemorative, demonstrative, and prognostic sign, liturgically expressed in the antiphon of the Magnificat on Corpus Christi: "O sacred banquet, in which Christ is received, the memory of his passion celebrated, the heart filled with grace, and the pledge of future glory given us."<sup>31</sup> Its deep rootage in the patristic liturgies is shown, for example, in the way in which, at the recalling of the institution of the eucharist, 1 Corinthians 11:26 is turned to read "You proclaim my death until I come" and the present remembrance is made to include Christ's past passion and his future advent.<sup>32</sup>

Profoundly patristic also is a related, though not identical, notion which is found in Brevint and followed in the Wesleyan hymns. It is the position expounded by St. Ambrose, that the events under the Law were the shadow, the sacraments of the Gospel are the image, while perfect truth belongs to heaven where Christ already is and where one day we shall be.<sup>33</sup> In several passages, Brevint rings the changes in terminology but comes closest to Ambrose in section V.2: the "shadows of the Law" have been overtaken "under the time of the Gospel" by the "sacred images of Christ" which are the sacraments, but finally "we shall see him face to face." In several of the Wesleyan texts, what hymn 123 calls the "types and shadows" of the Old Testament are seen to be fulfilled in Christ and the

<sup>29</sup>This time, Brevint gives no specific citation of place.

<sup>30</sup>In Migne, precisely *PL* 33:364.

<sup>31</sup>J. M. R. Tillard, "La triple dimension du signe sacramental (A propos de *Sum. Theol.* III.60.3)," in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 83 (1961) 225–54.

<sup>32</sup>See the instances cited in Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 60–64.

<sup>33</sup>Ambrose, *In Ps.* 38, 25, *PL* 14:1051–52; *de Off.* I.48, 238, *PL* 16:94. These extensive passages are translated in G. Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 210f. Other patristic passages displaying a similar pattern may also be found there, 46f.

gospel sacrament, while our ascent to what hymn 50 calls the "heavenly Canaan" is still awaited.<sup>34</sup>

#### IV. A Ritual Theological Reading of the Wesleyan Hymns

Whereas Samuel Wesley considered the text of the *Apostolic Constitutions* to be disfigured by Arian interpolations, his son John Wesley at first shared the lofty view of the *Apostolic Constitutions* which had been expressed by Thomas Deacon, namely "that the Liturgy in the Apostolical Constitutions is the most ancient Christian Liturgy extant; that it is perfectly pure and free from interpolation; and that the book itself called the Apostolical Constitutions contains at large the doctrines, laws, and settlements which the three first and purest ages of the gospel did with one consent believe, obey, and submit to, and that as derived to them from apostolical men."<sup>35</sup> Whether directly or by way of Thomas Deacon's *Compleat Devotions*, the Wesleys' *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* reflect a knowledge of the eucharistic liturgy of *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII. While many of the liturgical elements in the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* can still (or already) be found in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, and even more in the 1549 Prayer Book, my purpose of relating the Wesleyan collection to the contemporary patristic revival in England leads me now to follow the structure of the so-called Clementine Liturgy and give some examples of the ways in which its themes occur, in poetic form, in the Wesleyan *Hymns*, without, of course, implying that the Wesleys were victim to any heterodox views that may disfigure the so-called *Apostolic Constitutions*.<sup>36</sup> Where appropriate or interesting, I will also bring in parallels from other ancient liturgies and writers.

##### 1. The Liturgy of Word and Table

The fundamental ritual structure of the Clementine Liturgy comprises the proclamation of Holy Scripture and the celebration of the Holy Meal. The Divine Mystery unfolds by means of Word and Table. The Wesleyan hymn 29 takes up the story of the walk to Emmaus, whereon the risen Lord expounded the meaning of the Scriptures concerning himself and then made himself known to his companions in the Breaking of the Bread (Luke 24:13–35), thereby setting the pattern for the Sunday worship of the Church from the earliest times (clearly seen in St. Justin the Martyr, *First Apology*, chapter 67):

O Thou who this mysterious bread  
Didst in Emmaus break,

---

<sup>34</sup>See also, for example, hymns 4, 27, 35, 44, 46, 113, 118.

<sup>35</sup>From the Preface to Thomas Deacon's *Compleat Collection of Devotions* (1734), iii–iv.

<sup>36</sup>A convenient English translation of the eucharistic liturgy in *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII, the so-called Clementine Liturgy, is found in W. Jardine Grisbrooke, *The Liturgical Portions of the Apostolic Constitutions* (Bramcote, Nottingham: Grove Books, 1990).

Return, herewith our souls to feed,  
And to Thy followers speak.

Unseal the volume of Thy grace,  
Apply the Gospel-word,  
Open our eyes to see Thy face,  
Our hearts to know the Lord.

Of Thee we cômune still, and mourn  
Till thou the veil remove;  
Talk with us, and our hearts shall burn  
With flames of fervent love.

Enkindle now the heavenly zeal,  
And make Thy mercy known,  
And give our pardon'd souls to feel  
That God and love are one.

Thus the Wesleys invoke Christ, in the present, to do again, in the reading of the Scriptures and in the Supper of the Lord, what he did on the first Easter Day. When, after the American Revolution, John Wesley made provision for a Church in the independent United States, he "advise[d] the elders to administer the Supper of the Lord on every Lord's Day."<sup>37</sup> The Wesleyan hymns, like Brevint, speak of the eucharist as "daily," but there is little evidence, unless it be Acts 2:46, of a daily celebration in the early Church. Rather Sunday was the characteristically eucharistic day, as the day (recognized already by Justin) of creation and new creation.<sup>38</sup>

Now let us concentrate on the properly sacramental part of the liturgy, beginning at the anaphora or great eucharistic prayer.

## 2. *The Anaphora*

### a. The Bishop's Greeting

The bishop's greeting at the beginning of the eucharistic anaphora, based on 2 Corinthians 13:14, establishes the Trinitarian character of Christian worship: "The grace of God Almighty, and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (AC VIII.12.4). This Trinitarian character of Christian worship was definitively justified and expounded by St. Basil of Caesarea in his work *On the Holy Spirit*. The Wesleyan hymn 75 sets forth in this way the action of the Holy Trinity in the Lord's Supper:

<sup>37</sup>See *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. J. Telford, Volume 7 (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 239.

<sup>38</sup>Cf. Charles Wesley's later hymn "Come, let us with our Lord arise," and the treatment of it in my chapter "Der Sonntag zwischen Schöpfung, Erlösung und Vollendung," in *Der Sonntag: Anspruch, Wirklichkeit, Gestalt*, eds. A. M. Altermatt and T. A. Schnitker (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1986), 163–74.

Father, the grace we claim,  
 The double grace, bestow'd  
 On all who trust in Him that came  
 By water and by blood.

Jesu, the blood apply,  
 The righteousness bring in,  
 Us by Thy dying justify,  
 And wash out all our sin.

Spirit of faith, come down,  
 Thy seal with power set to,  
 The banquet by Thy presence crown,  
 And prove the record true:

Pardon and grace impart;  
 Come quickly from above,  
 And witness now in every heart  
 That God is perfect love.

b. Ascription of Praise

The "Lift up your minds/hearts" (AC VIII.12.5) invites the earthly Church to join in the heavenly worship that culminates in the "Holy, holy, holy" (AC VIII.12.27). Although it is not contained in the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, Charles Wesley based another hymn on the traditional Western eucharistic *prae-fatio* that praises the being, nature and works of the Holy Trinity:

Meet and right it is to sing,  
 In every time and place,  
 Glory to our heavenly King,  
 The God of truth and grace:  
 Join we then with sweet accord,  
 All in one thanksgiving join;  
 Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
 Eternal praise be Thine.

Thee the first-born sons of light,  
 In choral symphonies,  
 Praise by day, day without night,  
 And never, never cease;  
 Angels and archangels all  
 Praise the mystic Three in One,  
 Sing, and stop, and gaze, and fall  
 O'erwhelmed before Thy throne.

Vying with that happy choir,  
 Who chant Thy praise above,

We on eagles' wings aspire,  
 The wings of faith and love:  
 Thee they sing with glory crowned,  
 We extol the slaughtered Lamb;  
 Lower if our voices sound,  
 Our subject is the same.

Father, God, Thy love we praise,  
 Which gave Thy Son to die;  
 Jesus, full of truth and grace,  
 Alike we glorify;  
 Spirit, Comforter divine,  
 Praise by all to Thee be given;  
 Till we in full chorus join,  
 And earth is turned to heaven.<sup>39</sup>

c. Thanksgiving for Creation and the Old Covenant

The first part of the anaphora in AC VIII is distinguished by a fulsome celebration of God's work in creation and a lengthy commemoration of God's history with the world under the Old Covenant. Here the Wesley brothers remain prisoners of the Western tradition in paying little attention to these aspects. Of the patriarchs, Melchisedek and, above all, Aaron are mentioned in the Wesleyan hymns as "types" of Christ's priesthood. Thus in the third verse of 118 (cf. 46; 117):

His body torn and rent  
 He doth to God present,  
 In that dear memorial shows  
 Israel's chosen tribes impest;  
 All our names the Father knows,  
 Reads them on our Aaron's breast.

Much more prominent in the Wesleyan hymns, and more clearly understood than in AC VIII as sacramental "types" (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:1–4; John 6:1–59), are the Passover, the Exodus from Egypt, the Food and Drink in the Wilderness, and the Entry into the Promised Land. Thus hymn 44 (cf. 27; 30, 6–7; 50; 51; 61; 113):

Our Passover for us is slain,  
 The tokens of His death remain,  
 On these authentic signs impest:

---

<sup>39</sup>Taken from *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of 1749 into the 1780 *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists* (No. 212).

By Jesus out of Egypt led,  
Still on the Paschal Lamb we feed,  
And keep the sacramental feast.

That arm that smote the parting sea  
Is still stretch'd out for us, for me;  
The Angel-God is still our Guide,  
And, lest we in the desert faint,  
We find our spirits' every want  
By constant miracle supplied.

Thy flesh for our support is given,  
Thou art the Bread sent down from heaven,  
That all mankind by Thee might live;  
O that we evermore may prove  
The manna of Thy quickening love,  
And all thy life of grace receive!

Nourish us to that awful day  
When types and veils shall pass away,  
And perfect grace in glory end;  
Us for the marriage feast prepare,  
Unfurl Thy banner in the air,  
And bid Thy saints to heaven ascend.

d. The Sanctus

Starting with a phrase that recalls the *Sursum Corda* ("Lift your eyes of faith, and see"), the Wesleyan hymn 105 pictures the heavenly worship expressed in the Sanctus that concludes and climaxes the first part of the anaphora:

Lift your eyes of faith, and see  
Saints and angels join'd in one,  
What a countless company  
Stands before yon dazzling throne!  
Each before his Saviour stands,  
All in milk-white robes arrayed;  
Palms they carry in their hands,  
Crowns of glory on their head.

Saints begin the endless song,  
Cry aloud in heavenly lays,  
Glory doth to God belong,  
God the glorious Saviour praise;  
All from Him salvation came,  
Him who reigns enthroned on high;  
Glory to the bleeding Lamb  
Let the morning stars reply.



Angel-powers the throne surround,  
 Next the saints in glory they;  
 Lull'd with the transporting sound,  
 They their silent homage pay;  
 Prostrate on their face before  
 God and His Messiah fall,  
 Then in hymns of praise adore,  
 Shout the Lamb that died for all.

Be it so! They all reply;  
 Him let all our orders praise,  
 Him that did for sinners die,  
 Saviour of the favour'd race;  
 Render we our God His right,  
 Glory, wisdom, thanks, and power,  
 Honour, majesty, and might;  
 Praise Him, praise Him evermore!

In describing and paraphrasing the worship offered by angels and saints, the Wesleys there draw quite widely from the scenes and hymns in the Apocalypse of St. John (Revelation 5:11–14; 7:9–12). In another hymn (161), they let the earthly Church join in the heavenly Sanctus (cf. Revelation 4:8; 1 Clement 34):

Thee to laud in songs divine  
 Angels and archangels join;  
 We with them our voices raise,  
 Echoing Thy eternal praise:  
 “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord,  
 Live by heaven and earth adored!”  
 Full of Thee, they ever cry,  
 “Glory be to God most High!”

e. Thanksgiving for the New Covenant

In the Clementine Liturgy, the thanksgiving for God's loving work of redemption focuses on two miraculous paradoxes: that the Creator should have become a creature, and that the Living God should have died. The miracle of the Incarnation does not come to the fore in the Wesleyan *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, but the Nativity hymns of Charles Wesley abound in the paradoxical expressions that characterize patristic language on the theme. Thus Wesley perfectly captures the teaching of the Council of Ephesus when he writes:

Being's Source begins to be,  
 And God himself is born.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup>From *Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord* (no. 4); see *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, ed. G. Osborn, Volume 4 (London: Wesleyan Methodist Conference Office, 1869), 108.

Or in another hymn that alludes to the *Theotokos*:

Who gave all things to be,  
What a wonder to see  
Him born of His creature and nursed on her knee.<sup>41</sup>

On the other hand, the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* richly portray the miracle of the "crucified God" (St. Gregory Nazianzen). Thus the second and third verses of "God of unexampled grace" (21):

Endless scenes of wonder rise  
With that mysterious tree,  
Crucified before our eyes  
Where we our Maker see:  
Jesus, Lord, what hast Thou done!  
Publish we the death divine,  
Stop, and gaze, and fall, and own  
Was never love like Thine!  
  
Never love nor sorrow was  
Like that my Jesus show'd;  
See Him stretch'd on yonder cross,  
And crush'd beneath our load!  
Now discern the deity,  
Now His heavenly birth declare;  
Faith cries out, 'Tis He, 'tis He,  
My God, that suffers there!

f. The Eucharistic Institution

The narrative of the institution from the Last Supper is recited by hymn 1:

In that sad memorable night,  
When Jesus was for us betray'd,  
He left His death-recording rite,  
He took, and bless'd, and brake the bread,  
And gave His own their last bequest,  
And this His love's intent exprest:  
  
Take, eat, this is My body, given  
To purchase life and peace for you,  
Pardon and holiness and heaven;  
Do this My dying love to show,  
Accept your precious legacy,  
And thus, My friends, remember Me.

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<sup>41</sup>From *Hymns for the Use of Families* (1767), in *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, ed. G. Osborn, Volume 7 (1870), 81.

He took into His hands the cup,  
 To crown the sacramental feast,  
 And full of kind concern look'd up,  
 And gave what He to them had blest;  
 And drink ye all of this, He said,  
 In solemn memory of the dead.

This is My blood which seals the new  
 Eternal cov'nant of My grace,  
 My blood so freely shed for you,  
 For you and all the sinful race;  
 My blood that speaks your sins forgiven,  
 And justifies your claim to heaven.

The grace which I to all bequeath  
 In this divine memorial take,  
 And, mindful of your Saviour's death,  
 Do this, My followers, for My sake,  
 Whose dying love hath left behind  
 Eternal life for all mankind.

In another Wesleyan hymn (81), the present Lord is addressed by those who gather for communion in obedience to his "disposition" (*diataxis*, AC VIII.12.35):

Jesu, we thus obey  
 Thy last and kindest word,  
 Here in Thine own appointed way  
 We come to meet our Lord:  
 The way Thou hast enjoin'd  
 Thou wilt therein appear;  
 We come with confidence to find  
 Thy special presence here.

.....  
 He bids us drink and eat  
 Imperishable food,  
 He gives His flesh to be our meat,  
 And bids us drink His blood:  
 Whate'er th'Almighty can  
 To pardon'd sinners give,  
 The fulness of our God made man  
 We here with Christ receive.

#### g. The Anamnesis

In AC VIII.12.38, the anamnesis commemorates Christ's "passion and his death and his resurrection from the dead, his return into the heavens, and his future second advent." In the Wesleyan *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, Christ's pas-

sion and death are commemorated with particular strength, as will already be clear from texts so far quoted. His death is seen as his access to the heavenly sanctuary, where he "pleads" his sacrifice on our behalf even as the earthly Church "shows" it by sacramental rite to the Father. So hymn 116:

Victim divine, Thy grace we claim  
While thus Thy precious death we show;  
Once offer'd up, a spotless Lamb,  
In Thy great temple here below,  
Thou didst for all mankind atone,  
And standest now before the throne.

And hymn 124:

All hail, Redeemer of mankind!  
Thy life on Calvary resign'd  
Did fully once for all atone.  
.....  
Yet may we celebrate below,  
And daily thus Thine offering show  
Exposed before Thy Father's eyes;  
In this tremendous mystery  
Present Thee bleeding on a tree,  
Our everlasting Sacrifice.  
Father, behold Thy dying Son!  
Even now He lays our ransom down,  
Even now declares our sins forgiven;  
His flesh is rent, the living way  
Is open'd to eternal day,  
And lo, through Him we pass to heaven!

The Wesleys invoke the exalted Christ even now to return, so that his eucharistic manifestation may be at least an anticipation of his final advent in glory. Thus the fifth and sixth verses of hymn 38:

Come, great Redeemer of mankind,  
We long Thy open face to see;  
Appear, and all who seek shall find  
Their bliss consummated in Thee.  
Thy presence shall the cloud dispart,  
Thy presence shall the life display;  
Then, then our all in all Thou art,  
Our fulness of eternal day.

## h. The Oblation

We have already noticed that, for the Wesleys, the eucharistic action “shows” the sacrifice of the Son to the Father. That idea is developed in hymn 121 (“Father, behold Thy favourite Son”):

To us Thou hast redemption sent;  
And we again to Thee present  
The blood that speaks our sins forgiven. . . .

And in hymn 125 (“O God of our forefathers, hear”):

With solemn faith we offer up,  
And spread before Thy glorious eyes  
That only ground of all our hope,  
That precious bleeding Sacrifice,  
Which brings Thy grace on sinners down,  
And perfects all our souls in one.

In the section of the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* on “the sacrifice of our persons,” the Wesleys take up a notion prominent in the Communion Service of the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*, namely that the worshipers “offer themselves” to God in “spiritual service” (cf. Romans 12:1). This takes place only in union with the sacrifice of Christ, and the Wesleys insist that our “weak,” indeed “sinful” self-oblation is covered and carried by Christ's. Thus hymn 147:

Jesu, to Thee in faith we look;  
O that our services might rise  
Perfumed and mingled with the smoke  
Of Thy sweet-smelling sacrifice.  
Thy sacrifice with heavenly powers  
Replete, all holy, all divine;  
Human and weak and sinful ours:  
How can the two oblations join?  
Thy offering doth to ours impart  
Its righteousness and saving grace,  
While charged with all our sins Thou art,  
To death devoted in our place.  
Our mean imperfect sacrifice  
On Thine is as a burden thrown;  
Both in a common flame arise,  
And both in God's account are one.

## j. The Epiclesis

Already the 1549 Book of Common Prayer included an epiclesis in its Communion Service, though perhaps it owed more to a Mozarabic than to an

Eastern tradition: "Hear us, O merciful Father, we beseech Thee; and with Thy Holy Spirit and Word, vouchsafe to bless and sanctify these Thy gifts and creatures of bread and wine, that they may be unto us the Body and Blood of Thy most dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ, who in the same night that He was betrayed, took bread. . . ." This prayer was maintained in the Scottish and American rites but disappeared from the English in 1552 and 1662. It is all the more remarkable that the Wesleyan *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* include a pneumatological epiclesis for the consecration of the elements (72):

Come, Holy Ghost, Thine influence shed,  
And realize the sign;  
Thy life infuse into the bread,  
Thy power into the wine. . . .

Even more remarkable is the invocation of the Holy Spirit as "witness of the sufferings" of Christ, an image drawn directly from AC VIII.12.39 (*ton martura tôn paphêmâtôn tou Kuriou Iêsou*).<sup>42</sup> It is in this capacity that the Holy Spirit becomes the Divine Agent of the eucharistic anamnesis, the "Recorder" or "Remembrancer" at the royal court. Thus hymn 16:

Come, Thou everlasting Spirit,  
Bring to every thankful mind  
All the Saviour's dying merit,  
All his sufferings for mankind;  
True Recorder of His passion,  
Now the living faith impart,  
Now reveal His great salvation,  
Preach His gospel to our heart.  
  
Come, Thou Witness of His dying,  
Come, Remembrancer divine,  
Let us feel Thy power applying  
Christ to every soul and mine . . . .

To be "strengthened in godliness" and finally "to obtain eternal life" are included in the benefits of Communion for which the Clementine Liturgy prays (AC VIII.12.39). We may compare the Wesleyan hymn 40:

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<sup>42</sup>In Thomas Deacon's translation, the epiclesis from the Clementine Liturgy reads: "And send down thine Holy Spirit, the witness of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, upon this sacrifice, that he may make this Bread the Body of thy Christ, and this Cup the Blood of thy Christ; that they who shall partake thereof, may be confirmed in godliness, may have remission of their sins, may be delivered from the devil and his snares, may be replenished with the Holy Ghost, may be made worthy of thy Christ, and may obtain everlasting life, Thou being reconciled unto them, O Lord Almighty" (*Compleat Collection of Devotions*, 92f).

Author of life divine,  
 Who hast a table spread,  
 Furnish'd with mystic Wine  
 And everlasting Bread,  
 Preserve the life Thyself hast given,  
 And feed and train us up for heaven.

Our needy souls sustain  
 With fresh supplies of love,  
 Till all Thy life we gain,  
 And all Thy fulness prove,  
 And, strengthened by Thy perfect grace,  
 Behold without a veil Thy face.

In hymn 32 ("Jesu, to Thee for help we call"), the Wesleys reflect the notion of St. Irenaeus and St. Athanasius that the Son of God became Son of Man so that the sons of men might become sons of God:

Thou God of sanctifying love,  
 Adam descended from above,  
 .....  
 We here Thy nature shall retrieve,  
 And all Thy heavenly image bear.

#### k. The Intercessions and Trinitarian Doxology

While the anaphora of *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII contains lengthy intercessions, the Wesleyan *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* contain few specific eucharistic intercessions, but the benefits of Christ's saving work are claimed generally for humankind and for the Church as well as for the particular communicants. The commemoration of the saints at *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII.12.43 is narrowed to a concentration on the martyrs in the Wesleyan hymn 106 ("What are these arrayed in white?"). A Trinitarian doxology constitutes hymn 155:

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
 One in Three, and Three in One,  
 As by the celestial host  
 Let Thy will on earth be done;  
 Praise by all to Thee be given,  
 Glorious Lord of earth and heaven!

### 3. The Rites and Prayers Surrounding Communion

#### a. The Prayer of Humble Access

Where the Clementine Liturgy has a prayer for cleansing and for worthy communion (AC VIII.13.10), the Wesleys have a hymn (43) echoing the "Domine, non sum dignus" of the Roman mass-rite (cf. Matthew 8:8) and the "prayer of humble access" of the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*:

Saviour, and can it be  
That Thou shouldst dwell with me?  
From Thy high and lofty throne,  
Throne of everlasting bliss,  
Will Thy majesty stoop down  
To so mean a house as this?

I am not worthy, Lord,  
So foul, so self-abhorr'd,  
Thee, my God, to entertain  
In this poor polluted heart:  
I am a frail sinful man,  
All my nature cries, Depart!

Yet come, Thou heavenly Guest,  
And purify my breast;  
Come, Thou great and glorious King,  
While before Thy cross I bow,  
With Thyself salvation bring,  
Cleanse the house by entering now.

The Clementine prayer after Communion that partaking may not have been "unto condemnation" (AC VIII.14.1; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:27–34) finds a correspondence in the Wesleyan hymn 56 ("How dreadful is the mystery").

b. The Sancta Sanctis

At the elevation of the elements, AC VIII.13.11–13 makes an acclamation of Christ and issues an invitation to Communion. Among the texts that compose the people's response to the "Sancta Sanctis," the "One Holy, One Lord Jesus Christ" is matched by the "Jesu, my Lord and God" of the Wesleyan hymn 66, from whom sanctification is to be received in the sacrament. The beginning of the Greater Gloria ("Glory to God in the Highest") is prolonged by the hymn 163 ("Glory be to God on high, God whose glory fills the sky"), which versifies the entire canticle *Gloria in excelsis* (which the 1662 Book of Common Prayer located after the reception of communion). The "Hosanna to the Son of David" and *Benedictus qui venit* find an eschatological equivalent in the Wesleyan hymn 98 ("Where shall this memorial end?"), which however appears indebted also to the Cherubic Hymn of the Eastern liturgies:<sup>43</sup>

Lo, He comes triumphant down,  
Seated on His great white throne!  
Cherubs bear it on their wings,  
Shouting bear the King of kings.

<sup>43</sup>The Cherubic Hymn is sung in the Byzantine Liturgy at the Great Entrance, when the bread and wine are brought to the altar ready for the Anaphora. An English version based on the text in the Liturgy of St. James is found in G. Moultrie's hymn "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence."



The Agnus Dei, which made its eucharistic appearance only in the sixth or seventh century, finds a counterpart in the Wesleyan hymn 20, "Lamb of God, whose bleeding love . . . And bid us go in peace."

### c. The Communion

At Communion, the words of distribution in the Clementine Liturgy are simply "The Body of Christ" and "The Blood of Christ, the cup of life" (AC VIII.13.15). A strong conception that "the sign transmits the signified" is found in the Wesleyan hymn 71:

Sure pledges of His dying love,  
Receive the sacramental meat,  
And feel the virtue from above,  
The mystic flesh of Jesus eat,  
Drink with the wine his healing blood,  
And feast on the incarnate God.

### d. Prayer after Communion

Final salvation—"life in the world to come"—figures among the benefits which the Clementine Liturgy seeks for those who have received Communion (AC VIII.14.1). In the ancient Western rites, eschatological themes are quite prominent in the post-communion prayers.<sup>44</sup> In the Wesleyan *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* an entire section is devoted to "The Sacrament a Pledge of Heaven" (hymns 93–115). In "After the Sacrament" (hymns 159–166), the second verse of hymn 158 ("All praise to God above") runs thus:

O what a taste is this,  
Which now in Christ we know,  
An earnest of our glorious bliss,  
Our heaven begun below!  
When He the table spreads,  
How royal is the cheer!  
With rapture we lift up our heads,  
And own that God is here.

The note of anticipated eschatology struck in that hymn raises the theme of the communion of the saints that transcends history, and we are thereby returned to the title of this study: "our elder brethren join."

## V. "Our Elder Brethren Join"

Whatever their dismay (and particularly Charles's) at "separation" from the Church of England, the Wesley brothers are willy-nilly the founders of our particular Methodist tradition. They are our progenitors in the Gospel, our senior

<sup>44</sup>See G. Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 53–55.

evangelists, our doctrinal guides, our spiritual advisors, our classic hymnographers. Thus for Methodists, John and Charles Wesley function much as do the Fathers in the broader Christian Tradition.<sup>45</sup> But since, ultimately, we have but one Father and one Teacher, and all the rest of us are sisters and brothers, our fathers in the faith are best seen as "elder brethren."

The eucharistic hymns of the Wesleys allow us to join these elder brethren in two ways. First, the hymns provide *textual* access to John and Charles Wesley and, through them, to the Scriptures that they interpret and to the earlier liturgical and doctrinal Tradition of Christianity.<sup>46</sup> Second, the hymns provide *personal* access to John and Charles Wesley and to the saints of the apostolic, patristic, and later Church in whose company they belong; for "our hymns" function as a kind of poetic and musical iconography, analogous to the way in which the Eastern Orthodox, themselves no mean lovers of hymnody, by the liturgical use of icons enact the presence of the saints so that the joy of heaven may be known upon earth.<sup>47</sup> Hymn 98 of the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* describes thus what takes place at the Lord's Table:

Gathered to the well-known sign,  
We our elder brethren join.  
.....  
Take our happy seats above,  
Banquet on [Christ's] heavenly love.

That sacramental anticipation of heaven did not allow the Wesleys to neglect their calling to serve the present age. Nor should it allow us. Faithful eucharistic practice, now as then, may aid the spread of the Gospel and the upbuilding of the Church. Reform and renewal in the Church and its evangelistic mission may be furthered by eucharistic proclamation and by what John Wesley called "constant communion."<sup>48</sup> At the Lord's Supper, we may be strengthened in the faith that was once delivered to the saints, has been transmitted by them from apostolic times through every generation—patristic, medieval, Reformation, Wesleyan—to our own, and which it is now our responsibility to hand on.

<sup>45</sup>See G. Wainwright, "Tradition and the Spirit of Faith in a Methodist Perspective," in *New Perspectives on Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff*, ed. Bradley Nassif (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 45–69.

<sup>46</sup>See G. Wainwright, "Tradition as a Liturgical Act," in *The Quadrilog: Tradition and the Future of Ecumenism. Essays in Honor of George H. Tavard*, ed. Kenneth Hagen (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994), 129–46.

<sup>47</sup>See G. Wainwright, "Wesley and the Communion of Saints," *One in Christ* 27 (1991), 332–45.

<sup>48</sup>Sermon 101, "The Duty of Constant Communion" (1732; 1787), in the *Bicentennial Works of John Wesley*, volume 3, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 427–39.

