

Worship in Eighteenth-Century Anglicanism and Methodism

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

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Assistant Editor, Charles A. Green

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Archives and History Center
Drew University
Madison, NJ 07940

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The Society promotes the study, preservation, interpretation, and dissemination of Charles Wesley's poetry and prose. It acknowledges a strong Anglican/Methodist heritage, but, in the spirit of the broad, dynamic, spiritual impact of Wesley's hymns, it is ecumenical, pluralistic, and inclusive. Its concerns are textual, musical, historical, theological, pastoral, and literary. As the Society encourages a high level and quality of scholarship and research in these arenas of concern, *Proceedings* reflects a broad spectrum of scholarly and pastoral exploration of subjects related to Charles Wesley's works by specialists in the designated and related fields. The views and positions represented in the papers are those of the authors and are not to be construed as those of the Society.

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For subscriptions or membership information write to:

USA: The Charles Wesley Society
Archives and History Center
Drew University
Madison, NJ 07940

UK: Mr. E. Alan Rose
26 Roe Cross Green
Mottram, Hyde
Cheshire SK14 6LP
United Kingdom

Books for review may be submitted to:

Dr. S T Kimbrough, Jr., *Editor*
128 Bridge Avenue
Bay Head, NJ 08742

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S T Kimbrough, Jr., *Editor*
President, The Charles Wesley Society

Charles Wesley

A Man of the Prayer-Book

John Lawson*

Introduction

The author wishes to pay tribute to the invaluable help he has received in preparation from the minister of his own church in Exeter, England, the Rev. Norman Wallwork, M.A. He is a member of The Charles Wesley Society, and one of the leading authorities in liturgical matters in the British Methodist Church. He has helped me both in the discussion of ideas, and very practically in readily lending to me out of his own fine collection many necessary books, including some which are not easy to find.

My mandate is to place Charles Wesley in his background in the devotional life of the Church of England. The chief medium of that devotion is the Book of Common Prayer. So my theme is "Charles Wesley, a man of the prayer-book."

I. The Origin and Ethos of the Book of Common Prayer, 1662

This little battered book which I hold in my hand is the one which I use for my own prayers, night and morning. To me it is a matter of profound satisfaction that it is the very same form of devotion as that used daily by Charles Wesley, and by his brother John. Furthermore, when on Sunday I go into our magnificent cathedral to hear this book read at early Communion, I first pass the memorial tablet to Bishop Lavington, described there among other virtues as "The successful expositor of enthusiasm and pretence." And then when I kneel at the rail I like to remember that John Wesley records: "At the cathedral we had a useful sermon, and the whole service was performed with great seriousness and decency. Such an organ I never saw or heard before, so large, beautiful, and so finely toned; and the music of 'Glory be to God in the highest,' I think, exceeded the 'Messiah.' I was well pleased to partake of the Lord's Supper with my old opponent, Bishop Lavington. Oh may we sit down together in the kingdom of our Father!"¹ So the book which is the subject of this lecture is for me no authoritative but distant source-document. It is part of my heart and soul.

The Elizabethan Church Settlement, of which the prayer-book is an essential element, was by intention at least a settlement of compromise, of moderation. Long history shows that the English people are, in general, moderate people, ill at ease with revolutionary change. In contrast to some countries, the Protestant Reformation in England was a moderate reformation. Its aim was to repudiate

*Former Professor, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, GA; supernumerary minister of The Methodist Church, Exeter, Devon, UK.

¹*Journal*, August 29, 1762.

papal government, and to put the service into English, and to change other things as little as possible.

We had the advantage that our Reformation was presided over not by some great constructive theologian, thirsting to mold things according to a new and systematic theology, but by two strong monarchs, Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, both informed theologians, but whose chief interest was to safeguard the unity of the kingdom. And the Archbishop of that crucial time, likewise, Thomas Cranmer, was no dominating ecclesiastic, but a quiet and rather submissive man, the nature of whose principles have been much debated. Was the creative prayer-book of 1549 the work of a basically "Zwinglian" Cranmer, cautiously preparing the people for a break with "catholic" doctrine, or was the short-lived book of 1552 the work of a basically "catholic" Cranmer being over-borne by prevailing Protestant sentiment? It is hard to say. However, the nation was fortunate in that the one who had to revise the services of the Church was a liturgist of genius.

The prayer-book which emerged was a largely Protestant book, but with as much residual catholicism in it as Queen Elizabeth could get away with in face of growing Calvinist opinion in the Church. The two chief elements in this compromise are both things which we have to consider when we turn to Charles Wesley.

In the first place, the Ordinal continues the traditional sacramental ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons, though it claims a little beyond historic certainty in the statement of the Preface that "it is evident unto all men diligently reading holy Scripture and ancient Authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these three Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church: Bishops, Priests, and Deacons." So with the momentous change of ecclesiastical supremacy and language the country did not have a new Church, but the old priest with a new book.

The other chief mark of attempted comprehension is symbolized in the Communion Service. Cranmer's first service of 1549, with its Words of Administration: "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life" could reasonably be represented as recognizably "catholic," which did not endear it to the growing Calvinist party. The words in the second book, of 1552, were "Zwinglian," *i.e.*, radical Protestant: "Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart with thanksgiving." The Elizabethan prayer-book judiciously put them together in the time-honored and familiar formula, as continued in the 1662 book, and in the Methodist services derived from this. Here is a telling symbol of a Church aspiring after unity through comprehension. The hope is that such essentially "catholic" believers as can bring themselves to be separated from the Pope, and such essentially "reformed" believers as can bring themselves to tolerate government by bishops, and a clergyman in that hated "rag of popery" a surplice, will all be able to kneel together in the same parish church. This is the mark of a Church of England looking both ways in those issues which so often were painfully divisive at the Reformation.

The practical working of this comprehension was, however, constantly pushed in the direction of regular Protestantism by the circumstance that Roman Catholicism was the religion of the enemy, of Spain, and then of France, and was therefore viewed by normal English people as "a bad thing." This is indeed not a spiritual or a theological argument, but it is a natural and very persuasive one! So in thanksgiving for the defeat of the Jacobite invasion of 1745, an episode inglorious for England, but the subject of endless romantic and patriotic sentiment in Scotland, Charles Wesley the loyalist can sing:

And *Spanish Gold*, and *Gallic Pride*,
And *Holy Church* is on their Side.

Hymns for the Public Thanksgiving-Day, October 9,
1746. (n.p., 1746), p. 6

II. A High-Churchman Turned Evangelist

We may define Charles Wesley, and brother John likewise, as "a high-churchman turned evangelist." What, then, were these two traditions? In the first place, we must not equate a high-churchman of this period with the later Anglo-Catholic. A high-churchman of that period was not commonly conspicuously different from a low-churchman in church furnishings, in ritual and dress, in frequency of celebration, or in desire for friendly relations with Rome. It is indeed convenient to classify all those church bodies which have descended from the Church of England as "Anglican," but it is in fact an anachronism to speak of the Church of England of this period as Anglican, or the high-churchmen of the 16th and 17th centuries as Anglo-Catholics. These terms were coined much later by the Tractarians of the 19th century, in order to affirm the place of the Church of England as a branch of the ancient and universal church, comparable to the Roman Church.

There was, then, within the comprehension of the Church of England, the old High Church party, represented supremely by the saintly Bishop Lancelot Andrewes. He cherished the "catholic" elements in the prayer-book. He loved traditional beauty and decorum in worship, and cherished a sense of the universal church, in his private prayer linking the Church of England, Roman Catholicism, and continental Protestantism together as "the Western Church," the partner of the distressed and distant "Eastern Church." The sacramentalism of men of his stamp is highly significant for our present subject. They affirmed that it is possible in principle for all to be saved, in as much as the sacraments are open to all reverent people, and those who received them in faith could trust God's promise in them to grant effectual saving grace.

There was also in the church a growing and lively evangelical party, usually described as the Puritans. They held a strong Augustinian doctrine of salvation by grace alone, through faith, and a belief in the possibility and necessity of con-

version. They strongly disliked features of ceremony which were reminiscent of the pre-Reformation past of the church. The influence of this party was sufficient to give the general body of the 18th century church the character of a Protestant Church, so far as ceremony was concerned. The Puritan program to complete, as they would have argued, the rightful reformation on the national Church in England, is well represented by the Millenary Petition of 1603, presented on the death of Elizabeth to the new King James I and VI.² In addition to a variety of administrative and legal reforms this urged, in ceremonial matters, the abolition of a number of customs regarded as objectionable, such as the sign of the cross in baptism, confirmation, the wearing of surplices, the observation of Saints' Days, the use of the wedding-ring, and permitted amusements on Sunday.

This influential party hung on, under protest, in the State-established Church, hoping for long-delayed "reform," until the fatal collapse of the Commonwealth, which handed power to their adversaries. In 1662 they were largely driven out of the national church, and from then onwards constituted separated churches, the old English Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists. These Dissenters, later more politely termed Nonconformists, gradually obtained legal toleration, and the old idea of a religiously unified nation slowly declined.

A further small but theologically influential division within the High Church party is of interest to the present study because of its influence upon some members of the Wesley family. This reflects the strict royalist sentiments of the old high-churchmanship. On the death of his Stuart wife and joint monarch Mary II, William III was left on the throne alone as a purely parliamentary monarch, possessing no vestige of hereditary divine right. A number of clergy, including some bishops, could not bring themselves to swear allegiance to such a king, and were excluded from office. These constituted the party of the Non-jurors. It is generally agreed that the formative Reformation period was followed by a decline of religious zeal in England. The reasons for this are conveniently summarized in John Bowmer, *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism*.³ It can hardly be doubted that the chief reason was the natural reaction of disillusioned men and women to the religious zeal which had filled the country with controversy, and then even to civil war, with the final horror of the sacrilegious execution of an anointed king. If this be the fruit of religious zeal, ordinary people in effect said: "A plague on both your houses!" The exclusion of a succession of zealots of various opinions from the Church of England weakened the national Church, but it is significant that the Dissenters also shared the general decline. Folk sought a "reasonable religion," purged of uncouth zeal. Such a movement tends to leave behind it the deposit of a pale moralism.

²See Bettenson's *Documents*, pp. 384-87.

³Dacre, 1951, pp. 2-5.

For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*, iii.

The extent of this decline has been the subject of very varying estimates, and is not easy to define or determine. Methodist writers have conventionally tended to darken the situation, so as to enhance the contrast with the new light of the evangelical revival. And it is certainly bad to read that in 1800 there were only six communicants at St. Paul's on Easter Day.⁴ Nevertheless, there would be a splendid musical service on that day, such as had years before helped John Wesley on the day of his evangelical experience. Wickham Legg, in his definitive *English Church Life from the Restoration to the Tractarian Movement*,⁵ has collected detailed figures, particularly from London, which show that in a substantial number of churches there was daily reading of Morning and Evening Prayer, and at a few churches a weekly sacrament. Many other churches celebrated monthly. Some of the more religiously regular families said these prayers at home.

The religious devotion of the country of that time may be likened to the ashes left next morning after a great bonfire. The aspiring flame has gone out, but there remain abundance of glowing embers waiting to be kindled to a flame by the wind of the Spirit. Such, for example, was the faithful, disciplined, and orthodox family at Epworth Rectory, conscientious in service, but seeing only modest success in face of "the faithless coldness of the times."⁶ We see here a picture of the frequent religious situation in modern Britain, where a devoted minority continues undiscouraged to witness, swimming against the tide of prevailing good-natured apathy. And in this situation there is hope.

The effect of this decline in spirituality is noteworthy, and in both wings of the Church of England. If the high-churchman lost the prevailing sense of God in worship, and lapsed into customary formality, the residue which was left was attachment to traditional authority, of the bishops, and more particularly, of the king, for the bishops were in point of fact largely subservient to the civil power. Thus the anonymous writer of the popular ballad "The Vicar of Bray," satirizing a time-serving office-holder in the Church, has no difficulty in hitting off this characteristic attachment to the divine right of kings:

In good King Charles' golden day,
When loyalty no harm meant,
A zealous high-churchman was I,
And thus I got preferment:

⁴Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England* (Princeton/Oxford, 1961), p. 58.

⁵Longmans, 1914, pp. 30-41, 87-110.

⁶Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, cvi. 18.

To teach my flock I never missed
 Kings were by God appointed;
 And lost are they that dare resist,
 Or touch the Lord's anointed.⁷

On the other hand, when the Calvinist underwent the same decline in spirituality, what was left was an academic system of predestinarian doctrine. The characteristic Calvinist theology of particular election and predestination was a system of speculation drawn from the great conversion experience that one had come to the gift of saving faith not through one's own meritorious religious discipline, but through the wonderful and mysterious action of God. The experience "God did it all" is scriptural and true, but if "The wonder, 'Why such love to me!'" fades from "The o'erwhelming Power of Saving Grace"⁸ the picture of God which remains is that of a mysterious, and indeed arbitrary Monarch, not a loving Father of salvation. And this view naturally tends to Deism, and the next stage of the process is the "simplification" into Unitarianism, the religion of unaided moral effort. This leads to decline.

Into this scene God raised up as prophets the Wesleys, Whitefield, and many others. Dr. Outler, one of the outstanding scholars of Methodism in this generation, in his volume on John Wesley in the *Library of Protestant Thought*,⁹ opens his discussion of Wesley's theology with the observation that Wesley was "an eclectic who had mastered the art of plastic synthesis." The most important element in that synthesis is that represented by the proposition "A high-churchman turned evangelist." And this was equally the characteristic of brother Charles. Two leading elements in the Church of England, the High Church, and the Calvinist Puritan, were in danger of falling apart into mutual spiritual and intellectual impoverishment. However, the evangelical Wesleys were as strong and clear as any Calvinist on the gospel of converting and sufficient saving grace, but through their High Church descent were unentangled in the fatal heritage of predestinarian speculation.

Here was a new theological synthesis, which released the polarization of the church. However, it was not the case that a new theological synthesis produced spiritual revival. Theologians of today often cherish this sort of expectation, and need to be reminded that God does not work that way. It was, and is, the other way round! The spiritual revival produced the synthesis, and liberated English theology into Arminian evangelicalism. It is the personal experience of a divine Saviour which renders Trinitarian orthodoxy credible and natural. And of course, "the new liberating theology" was not in fact new! It was where the scriptural wisdom of the church stood in the matter, in the period before St. Augustine and Pelagius polarized and obscured the issue. So the English churchman's charac-

⁷Cf. 1 Sam. 26:9, 1 Chron. 16:2.

⁸*Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1749), 1:260.

⁹Oxford, 1964, p. 119.

teristic attachment to the supposed "pure and undivided church of the first centuries" was to this extent vindicated.

III. The Frontier Pastor

We now pass to consider Charles Wesley, a zealous young clergyman, late of the Holy Club, Oxford, facing his duty as a parish priest, and in the very rough and ready conditions of the American frontier. This was a searching test indeed, as he sought to carry out conscientiously the religious discipline of the prayer-book, and from the background of a home church where this was by no means always customary. In a long letter of February 5, 1736, to "Varanese," Sally Kirkham, a friend of Oxford days, now published by J. R. Tyson in *Charles Wesley, a Reader*,¹⁰ written on the ship at the end of the long and arduous voyage, Charles Wesley is found in deep depression. "God has brought an unhappy, unthankful wretch hither, through a thousand dangers, to renew his complaints—In vain have I fled from myself to America. I still groan under the intolerable weight of inherent misery!" After three paragraphs of writing in this strain to his lady friend he cheers up a little, and comes to "a strange expansion of heart." And on February 14th he writes, "I look with horror back on the desperate spirit that dictated those words above—The work I see immediately before me is the care of 50 poor families; (alas for them that they should be so cared for!)."

We turn then to Charles Wesley's own *Journal*, published in two volumes by Thomas Jackson.¹¹ Many valuable extracts from this are printed, together with related writings, by Tyson in his *Reader*. He sets about his work with devotion and application. "Tuesday, March 9th, 1736, about three in the afternoon, I first set foot on St. Simon's Island, and immediately my spirit revived. No sooner did I enter upon my ministry than God gave me, like Saul, another heart" (pp. 1-2). After discussion with his parishioners on this his first day he reads evening prayers, presumably Evening Prayer of the BCP.

We are then introduced to something characteristic of Charles Wesley's *Journal* as a whole, making it different from John Wesley's better known systematic chronicle of events. He transcribes a continuous passage of Scripture (Col. 4:2-6, 17), which has brought him encouragement. It does not appear that this was the regular lectionary lesson, which for that day would be in 1 Corinthians. Why should he, having a Bible to hand, regularly write out *in extenso* quite long passages of Scripture? He is clearly not using his diary chiefly to record events, particularly as some facts which one would expect to be recorded are passed over. The keeping of the *Journal* is chiefly a devotional exercise, to record spiritual impression, and to concentrate the mind upon passages which have brought spiritual awakening.

¹⁰London: Oxford, 1989, pp. 61-63.

¹¹London: Wesleyan Book-Room, 1849.

At five next morning he "read short prayers to a few at the fire." These would be men warming themselves before they went out to work. Even in sunny Georgia it can at times be cold in March at five o'clock in the morning. Prayers at five in the morning were perhaps not seen as strenuous then as we are apt to think today, for in those days people accustomed to work out-doors worked by the sun and not by the clock, and often got up much earlier than most of us do today in days of electric light and evening television! Anyway, it was a resolute start in a new parish! But he did not try to read the whole of Matins, though he would doubtless read it to himself, as required by the rubric.

The same afternoon he is discussing the baptism of a baby by immersion, required indeed by the rubric as the general rule, but in those days, as now, almost never carried out. In both these exercises we see the prayer-book zealot, late of the Holy Club, at work. This most unusual clergyman must have made quite an impression! By March 14th (p. 4), Wesley's first Sunday in his parish, "M[rs]. Germain now retracted her consent for having her child baptized: however, M[rs]. Colwell's I did baptize by trine immersion, before a numerous congregation." One is sure that there would be, to view this "nine days' wonder." And how exactly does the priest "dip the Child in the water discreetly and warily," as the book says? One hopes he did not get his surplice wet!

On Thursday, March 11th (p. 2), Wesley writes: "At ten this morning I began the full service, to about a dozen women; . . . intending to continue it, and only read a few prayers to the men before they went to work. I also expounded the second lesson with some boldness." "The full service" in those days meant Matins; and on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday, the Litany; and then the Ante-communion, with sermon. This would take at least an hour, and so Oglethorpe provided a tent (March 10th, p. 2).

The frequent word "expounded" leads to a discussion of Charles Wesley's preaching method, which contrasts strongly with that of his brother, as may be seen by comparing his Sermon III, "Awake, thou that sleepest!" with other sermons by John in the 44 *Standard Sermons*. Tyson in his *Reader* (pp. 172-83) most interestingly publishes the text of an early sermon which has recently come to light, on John 8:1-11, and which has been transcribed from the shorthand original by Thomas R. Albin and Oliver A. Beckerlegge.¹² It is there well observed by the editor that this is a departure from a formal style to a "free-flowing treatment that he aptly describes as an 'exposition.'" A few words are quoted, and then briefly commented upon, and then Wesley swiftly passes to a few more in succession. This is a preaching-style analogous to the method of his hymns, which in almost every line is a mosaic of an immense variety of Scripture references, united with admirable skill and ingenuity.

¹²Charles Wesley's *Earliest Evangelical Sermons* (Ilford: Wesley Historical Society, 1987), pp. 71-86.

We find as the *Journal* continues that he constantly states that he preached on some passage, clearly the choice of the moment, and “off the cuff.” We may suppose that this would be his regular style, well suited to preaching in the open-air. An impromptu method such as this is dangerous in the hand of run-of-the-mill preachers, who require careful preparation. Yet it was doubtless very powerful when one had a preacher of genius, equipped with Charles Wesley’s consummate knowledge of every part of the Scripture.

From Wesley’s numerous mentions of reading prayers, and preaching, we gather that he made a sustained effort to carry out the rubric that Morning and Evening Prayer were to be read every day. We may now turn to his sacramental ministry. We plainly see that this was a matter of the greatest importance to Wesley, though the *Journal* is tantalizingly vague concerning information about procedure. For example, on Easter Sunday, April 25th (pp. 20–21), he does not mention any celebration, though surely there must have been one. The *Journal* for that day is all taken up with the coming battle with the Spanish, about which General Oglethorpe was clearly most apprehensive, anticipating even the prospect of his own death.

On his first Sunday in his new parish, March 14th, being the first Sunday in Lent, Wesley writes: “We had prayers under a great tree” (p. 3). We are not told whether there was a communion, or whether this could have been in the open air. However, there was a baptism. By March 28th, it is mentioned that the worshipers enjoyed the use of a room for their worship (p. 13), and from a note on March 25th (p. 7) that there was a drum-beat to announce the time for church service. This was presumably in substitute for the statutory churchbell. So: “I went to the storehouse (our tabernacle at present) to hearken what the Lord would say” (March 28th, p. 13)—regarding, that is to say, the notorious scandal raised by Mrs. Hawkins, the doctor’s wife, and her gossips, to punish Charles for having prevented her husband from hunting on Sunday. He finds the appointed lesson, on Joseph and Potiphar’s wife, very appropriate to his condition, for he had been falsely accused by Mrs. Hawkins of misconduct with herself.

On the same day “at ten Mr. Ingham preached an alarming sermon on the day of judgment, and joined with me in offering up the Christian sacrifice.” We here meet first mention of the sacramental theology of the later hymns, namely that of the commemorative sacrifice. This is also an indirect indication that Charles Wesley, like John later at Savannah,¹³ had “divided the service.” That is to say, he said Matins early in the morning, and read the Communion Service later, making the celebration the chief service of the day, as brother John observes, “according to the original appointment of the Church: (still observed in a few places in England).” Furthermore, the dispute with Mrs. Hawkins, about which the published *Journal* is very reticent, brings the first indication that there was a regular

¹³*Journal*, May 9, 1737.

Communion. On March 25th (p. 8), Wesley protests to Oglethorpe that of his accusers of immorality "not one comes constantly to prayers, or sacrament."

So Charles Wesley returned to England after a brief span of service, leaving for Savannah on May 12, 1736 (p. 27). It has often been asserted that his mission was a complete disaster, particularly by those who have wished to discount the integrity and effectualness of the ministries of the Wesley brothers before their evangelical experience. This judgment is too severe. Charles Wesley's zeal did unsurprisingly arouse some measure of opposition. Thus: "M. W. . . . declares she will be no longer priest-ridden, and jests upon prayers" (March 27th, p. 13). He is accused of "forcing the people to prayers" (March 25th, p. 9). And he is for a time denied reasonable supplies (March 29th and 30th, p. 14). As a result of his troubles he acknowledges that "I have seldom above six at the public service" (March 26th, p. 11), and on April 5th (p. 16) when the colony is plagued with sand-flies, and he is very ill, his Monday evening congregation is down to three. However, he did maintain regular services even with small congregations, which were perhaps all that could reasonably be expected in the small colony of fifty families, not all of whom would be English, and of these not all members of the Church of England.¹⁴ He returned ultimately largely through ill-health, and when he is safely home he is still planning to return to Georgia, "cast down but not destroyed."

IV. Evangelical Maturity

Return to England brings a second and momentous episode in Wesley's pilgrimage. He is now a young clergyman without any regular appointment, but in a condition of waiting and development. He is in regular contact with the various religious societies, chiefly in London, and the *Journal* shows that he had many invitations to preach. It is possible that fees for pulpit supply may have represented his modest income in this period. It would appear that he was a modular preacher, and though with the development of Methodism rejection eventually faced him, this seems to have developed less rapidly and strongly than with John Wesley. His flowing scriptural eloquence was doubtless a more winning style than his brother's more systematic and schoolmasterly presentation. After all, the acceptability of a preacher, particularly with a new and unpopular message, depends just as much on how he says as what he says! Brother John discovered this on the first occasion when he preached in the city of Exeter, and was rejected with the Rector's rebuke: "I allow all you have said is true: and it is the doctrine of the Church of England. But it is not guarded; it is dangerous; it may lead people into enthusiasm or despair."¹⁵

¹⁴See letter of February 14, 1736, in Tyson, p. 63.

¹⁵*Journal*, November 25, 1739.

Charles Wesley is no longer a parish priest regularly reading prayers, but is revealed by his *Journal* as a regular and earnest communicant, actively and expectantly seeking growth of grace in the Sacrament. We list a number of representative examples of devotional activity from this formative period, though we may be certain that the unsystematic nature of the *Journal* entails that he only mentions those occasions when there is something particular to bring the matter to mind. He is certainly aware of the Christian Year, but is not particularly interested to note its passing. Thus there is no entry for Christmas, 1738, and he does not bother to record that the day of his great evangelical experience was Whitsunday, though brother John does. However, on Sunday, December 5, 1736 (p. 56), we read: "I received comfort with the sacrament at St. Paul's." The following week he rose from his sick-bed, and, "Contrary to my Doctor's advice, I ventured out, Sunday December 12th, to the sacrament in Duke-street" (p. 58). On Trinity Sunday, June 5, 1737 (p. 71), "We all went in an hired coach to Warmley; where I preached 'Few saved;' and was pleased to see the family [of the House] stay for the unexpected sacrament."

We get a characteristic picture of domestic evangelism when Wesley was on a visit to Oxford, on September 16, 1737 (p. 75, "I walked over with Mr. Gambold to Stanton-Harcourt"), where he had a long conversation with his sister Kezia.

Calling accidentally [at her room] . . . she fell upon my neck, and in a flood of tears begged me to pray for her. Seeing her so softened, I did not know but this might be her time, and sat down. . . . She was full of earnest wishes for divine love; owned there was a depth in religion she had never fathomed; that she was not, but longed to be, converted; would give up all to obtain the love of God; renewed her request with great vehemence that I would pray for her. . . . I prayed over her, and blessed God from my heart; then used Pascal's prayer for conversion, with which she was much affected. After supper, (at which I could not eat for joy,) I read Mr. Law's account of Redemption. She was greatly moved.

Wesley prayed with her again on the 17th and 18th. On the 18th, being Sunday, "I preached at the Castle [the Oxford prison], and gave the sacrament to three score communicants."

It is to be noted that this gracious and earnest evangelist is Charles Wesley before he came to the evangelical experience. So according to the accepted system of evangelical doctrine he is, at least to a certain extent, a "legal" Christian. Yet God can employ him as an evangelist! This position, apparently paradoxical to some, is declared plainly by John Wesley in his famous sermon "The Almost Christian." This curious figure, a stylized self-portrait of Holy Club days, among his many works of piety and charity "labours to awaken those that sleep; to lead those whom God has already awakened to 'the Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness,' that they may wash therein and be clean; and to stir up those who are saved to adorn the gospel."¹⁶ Clearly, the gospel is not true because the

¹⁶*Sermons*, II. i. 6.

preacher has experienced it, but because God has revealed it. However, as we shall see, the gospel when preached by the fully evangelical preacher may well be attended by more effectual grace than when sincerely declared by the "legal" preacher.

On October 30, 1737 (p. 78), Charles Wesley, again in London, writes, "we heard Mr. Whitefield, and communicated together." In December he travels to the west country, to visit his elder brother Samuel, who was the headmaster of Blundell's School, Tiverton, Devon, on the occasion of his illness. On Sunday, December 4th (p. 80), "I was much melted at the sacrament. In the evening I reprov'd my sister [in-law] (which I am often forced to do) for evil-speaking." Thursday, December 22nd: "Quite wearied out by her incessant slanders, to-day I had a downright quarrel with her about it. My brother on these occasions is either silent, or on my side." So they cannot have had a very merry Christmas, which Charles does not mention!

The following year, February 19, 1738 (p. 82), Wesley, again in Oxford, "received the sacrament once more at Christ-church." He was able to communicate in the splendid Chapel, and Cathedral Church, of his old College. On February 28th (p. 83-84) he writes to his brother John, who is now also at Tiverton, at length about his continued and serious illness, which has at last compelled him to give up the idea of returning to Georgia. He concludes: "We communicated almost every day." A sick-visitor of significance was none other than Peter Böhler, who had arrived in London about February 7th. Coming to Oxford, Charles started to teach him English on the 20th, but soon after was taken ill. On February 24th (p. 82), having prayed with confidence for Wesley's recovery, Böhler brought the same evangelical challenge to Charles as he did to John. "He asked me, 'Do you hope to be saved?' 'Yes.' 'For what reason do you hope it?' 'Because I have used my best endeavours to serve God.' He shook his head, and said no more. I thought him very uncharitable, saying in my heart, 'What, are not my best endeavours a sufficient ground of hope? Would he rob me of my endeavours? I have nothing else to trust to.'"

An interesting and inspiring ministry of household evangelism starting in this period is revealed to us in Charles Wesley's many visits to the friendly Delamotte family, in their spacious House with private Chapel. Here we indeed have a moving example of "A little Church in every House," as celebrated in the hymn "Primitive Christianity."¹⁷ The first mention seems to be on August 18, 1737 (p. 73), when Wesley meets Mrs. Delamotte in London, and "fell into discourse upon resignation," she having recently lost a child. From September 10th to 13th (pp. 74-75) he is at the Delamottes' house, and makes a good evangelical impression, speaking to "Miss Hetty" about the new birth. On Sunday "I preached the one thing needful: and had some serious talk with Miss Betsy." He reads William

¹⁷*Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1749), 1:333, stanza 4.

Law, and Scougal, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, with Hetty. On Saturday, September 24th (p. 76), Charles is at Blendon again, has "two hours in conference and prayer" with Hetty, and again reads Scougal. "She was quite melted down." Next day "I met her at the sacrament . . . and endeavoured to prepare her for persecution." There is the prospect of opposition from Mrs. Delamotte, but further visits follow.

On October 16th Wesley rides over to Blendon, reads with the two sisters, and prays for conversion. On the 18th he and Jacky Delamotte ride together and on the 28th, he again spends two hours with him and Miss Betty. On the 30th, the whole family rise at five and go to London to hear Whitefield preach. On November 4th (p. 79), Wesley meets Betty in London, "who then told me that the reason why I was not sent for to Blendon, was, Mrs. Delamotte's fear of my making Hetty run mad." But on the 10th, he visits again. Mrs. Delamotte, at first "still cold, averse, and prejudiced against the truth" on Sunday "thanked me for my sermon . . . and was quite altered in her behaviour towards me." On the 14th, "Little Molly burst into tears upon my telling her that God loved her. The whole family now appear not far from the kingdom of God." In January 1738 there are more visits (p. 81), and on April 25, 1738 (p. 84), we find that they are meeting in "our little chapel."

There is discussion, John Wesley also being present, on "whether conversion was gradual or instantaneous. My brother was very positive for the latter, and very shocking; mentioning some later instances of gross sinners believing in a moment. I was much offended at his worse than unedifying discourse.—I stayed, and insisted, a man need not know when first he had faith." He was soon to be led to another opinion! This mission at Blendon extends in scope after Wesley's evangelical experience.

As we approach Charles Wesley's momentous evangelical experience we recollect that the prayer-book can be apprehended in two ways. There is the "low road" and the "high road." The low road is the common-sense religion of the majority who profess to be followers of the Church of England, of the moderate Englishman, with his feet firmly on the ground, and with no great taste for religious raptures, who wishes to live the life of a decent citizen, and a good husband and father. He knows that he needs divine assistance, and feels that a modicum of church-going and private prayer are a good influence in life. So the prayer-book provides this man, his wife and family with

Daily work begun and ended,
With the daily voice of praise.

John Ellerton

And this issues in the practical religion of

The trivial round, the common task,
 Would furnish all we ought to ask;
 Room to deny ourselves; a road
 To bring us, daily, nearer God.

John Keble, *The Christian Year* (1827), "Morning," v. 14

Then there is the high road, taken by the one who is fortunate enough, and troubled in heart enough, by grace to take seriously the prayer: "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may *perfectly* love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name." This awakened believer can cry out with Charles:

11. My Soul breaks out in strong Desire
 The Perfect Bliss to prove,
 My longing Soul is all on Fire
 To be dissolv'd in Love.

Hymns and Sacred Poems (1742), p. 96

The multitude, perhaps, will never be able to grasp this, but this is what the Wesleys called "real Christianity." The difference between the two paths is expressed in the lines of the famous "Conversion Hymn":

2, lines 5-6 Should know, should feel my Sins forgiven,
 Blest with this Antepast of Heaven!

Hymns and Sacred Poems (1739), p. 101; 2, lines 5-6

However, I do not like the word "conversion" in this connection, in spite of the fact that the Wesleys use it. They were both devout Christians beforehand, and faithful servants of God. So I always use the phrase "evangelical experience."

The distinction lies in the contrast between "know" and "feel." The evangelical experience of "a personal experience of Christ" is that special work of the Holy Spirit whereby the assured knowledge of God, and of the saving work in Christ, comes to take possession of the affections and emotions of the heart, so as effectually to move and empower the moral will, and so work a decisive change of inward character and outward conduct.

True religion is not a matter of "feeling." No thoughtful or mature Christian ever argued: "I feel this creed to be true, therefore for me it is true," or "I feel saved, and therefore I am saved." The test of true religion is not that one is "happy," *i.e.*, lifted up emotionally. The faith begins with knowledge: knowledge of the saving facts of God's action in history, recorded in Scripture, interpreted and verified in the long tradition of the church. This knowledge remains secure, even if I do not "feel" it, or choose to deny it. But if the believer is to advance from sincerely held theory and formal worship to a victorious life in Christ, the

whole personality must move from "know" to "know and feel." And this is true of "catholic" Christianity, as well as "evangelical."

As Charles Wesley approaches this life-giving change, we observe how the spiritual discipline of the prayer-book helps him on his way, though he does not at every point realize it. An understanding sacramentalist holds to God's secure promise that the sacraments are *means of grace*. That is to say, they are something which I may obediently and reverently do, in order that God may grant grace. So, if at the Eucharist I reverently, thoughtfully, and expectantly "Do this in remembrance of him" I may be assured that God's promises will be fulfilled, and God will make me, as part of the worshiping Church, one in spirit with Christ as He eternally offers His atoning sacrifice. So we are granted effectual saving grace. This remains true even if on some particular occasion of communicating one does not "feel lifted up in spirit" at the communion. So Wesley shows himself fully aware of this truth, and is not at the mercy of his feelings. So he declares in a revealing sacramental hymn:

1. And shall I let Him go?
 If now I do not *feel*
 The streams of living Water Flow,
 Shall I forsake the Well?
2. Because He hides his Face,
 Shall I no longer stay,
 But leave the Channels of his Grace,
 And cast the Means away?
5. He bids me eat the Bread,
 He bids me drink the Wine;
 No other Motive, Lord, I need,
 No other Word than Thine.

Hymns on the Lord's Supper (1745),¹⁸ pp. 73-74

However, the believer does instinctively, and for that matter rightly, hope that in the worship of God there may be found a comforting and enabling sense of the presence of God. We are not to depend on these feelings, but they are a vital support to faith. And Charles Wesley did find at the Lord's Table a precious and inspiring communion with God. Thus we have seen him "much melted at the sacrament," on December 4, 1737 (p. 80). And he can sing at the Eucharist:

4. In rapturous Bliss
 He bids us to do This,
 The Joy it imparts
 Hath witness'd his gracious Design in our Hearts.

¹⁸Henceforth HLS followed by page number.

6. Receiving the Bread,
 On Jesus we feed:
 It doth not appear,
 His Manner of working; but Jesus is here!

HLS, p. 79

There is in Wesley, then, a salutary balance of devotion. The "evangelical" Wesley, fresh from the writing of his great hymn, was on May 24, 1738 (p. 94), faced very searchingly with the discipline of the sacramental experience. "Being to receive the sacrament today, I was assaulted by the fear of my old accustomed deadness; but soon recovered my confidence in Christ, that he would give me so much sense of his love now, as he saw good for me. I received without any sensible devotion, much as I used to be, only that I was afterwards perfectly calm and satisfied." Joy is not the criterion of salvation. Yet joy in God is very precious, and it is promised in season. And joy in God is the great dynamic for effective evangelism and faithful service.

It is a great pity that the fascinating story of Charles Wesley's evangelical experience is not as well known as that of John's at Aldersgate Street. There is such a contrast between the two, for the one is the experience of a poet of mercurial temperament, the other of a common-sense and down-to-earth exponent of moral discipline. This is not the occasion to discuss the experience in detail, but rather to consider it in relation to the devotion of the prayer-book. On May 11, 1738 (p. 86), came the momentous move of Charles Wesley's lodgings to the devout home of William Bray, the working man, and worker in brass, and clearly an intelligent man. To him Charles recorded a celebrated tribute, framed indeed in language which many would find unacceptable in these equalitarian days, yet a sterling tribute in the estimate of anyone whose mind is fixed on the things of the Spirit. "God sent Mr. Bray to me, a poor ignorant mechanic, who knows nothing but Christ; yet by knowing him, knows and discerns all things." Peter Böhler had just left for America, writing his farewell letter from Southampton in Latin. "Mr. Bray is now to supply Böhler's place."

A measure of scholarship is indeed a due part of the equipment of the competent preacher, and is not to be disdained, but the qualification for the effective evangelist is the mysterious call of divine grace. On April 28th (p. 85), suffering from pleurisy at his lodgings with James Hutton, Wesley writes: "In the morning Dr. Cockburn came to see me; and a better physician, Peter Böhler, whom God has detained in England for my good." He considered Böhler's presentation of faith, which would doubtless emphasize that those who had received saving faith would receive an assurance of salvation. However, on May 1st "After receiving the sacrament, I felt a small anticipation of peace, and said, 'Now I have demonstration against the Moravian doctrine that a man cannot have peace without assurance of his pardon. I now have peace, yet cannot say of a surety that my sins

are forgiven.' The next and several times after that I received the sacrament, I had not so much as bare attention, God no longer trusting me with comfort." This is a perceptive judgment. Regular communion brought to Wesley a general sense that he was indeed a believer accepted by God, but he did not enjoy at that moment that heightened emotional awareness "in the heart" which belongs to the full assurance of salvation by the witness of the Spirit. This "comfort" is a spiritual privilege added by God.

However, on May 11th (pp. 86ff) Wesley, still unwell, removes to the Bray household. On this and the following days he discusses the question of faith with Mr. Bray, his evangelical sister Mrs. Turner, John Wesley, and a number of other sick-visitors. He also reads Luther on Galatians. We come across a characteristically Wesleyan phrase: I "confessed my unbelief and want of forgiveness, but declared my firm persuasion that I should receive the atonement before I died." Clearly, there was a true sense in which Wesley, the regular and devout communicant, had already received the benefit of Christ's atoning sacrifice. However, the phrase "receive the atonement" indicates the movement and growth from "know" to "know and feel." And without this he feels himself in a condition of unbelief. So on the 19th Wesley writes: "I received the sacrament; but not Christ." Thankfully he did not fully understand himself, and how effectually God was working in him, actually though mysteriously.

On May 20th (p. 89) Charles "continued all day in great dejection, which the sacrament did not in the least abate." On the 21st, being Whitsunday (though he does not mention this), he is visited by brother John on the way to church.¹⁹ Still in his sick-bed he was "composing himself to sleep" when Mrs. Turner, Bray's sister, having been specially commanded by a vision of Christ some days previously to go and speak to Wesley, and having on the advice of her brother overcome the objection that "she was a poor weak sinful creature, and should she go to a Minister?" quietly slipped into the bedroom. She declared: "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise, and believe, and thou shalt be healed of all thy infirmities," and as quickly slipped out. Wesley felt "a strange palpitation of heart. I said, yet feared to say, 'I believe, I believe!'" The faithful Bray assured him that he did indeed believe. And having been granted at last the full evangelical experience, the first thing that he did was to turn to the prayer-book, his inseparable spiritual mentor. He says that he looked into the "Scripture," but it was in fact Psalm 39:8, and then Psalm 40:3, both in the prayer-book version.

Next day, May 22, the now "evangelical" Charles Wesley continues to record religious reflections and passages of Scripture, and writes: "To-day I saw him chiefly as my King, and found him in his power: but saw little of the love of Christ crucified." It is significant that both Wesleys in the strength of their new evangelical experience speak chiefly of power over sin, rather than of unbound-

¹⁹See John Wesley's *Journal* for this date.

ed spiritual joy. "In the evening we sang and prayed again. I found myself very weak in body, but thought I ought to pray for my friends, being the only Priest among them. I kneeled down, and was immediately strengthened, both mind and body. The enemy did not lose such an opportunity of tempting me to pride: but, God be praised, my strength did I ascribe unto Him. I was often since assisted to pray readily and earnestly, without a form." It is interesting to see Wesley facing both ways. Among the un-named company of visitors he is aware that he is a clergyman, under the mandate daily to read prayer. But he also ventures upon extempore prayer, a thing he would have previously avoided, as savoring of the worship of the Dissenters. Presumably some of the evangelical friends had prayed in this way. And his salutary fear of pride is characteristic. One who has come to a great evangelical experience may be tempted to feel that this is something which one has attained, rather than something received from God.

May 23rd was a day to be remembered. "I waked under the protection of Christ, and gave myself up, soul and body, to him. At nine I began a hymn upon my conversion, but was persuaded to break off, for fear of pride" (p. 94). We have grown so accustomed to singing:

Should know, should feel my sins forgiven,
Blest with this antepast of heaven!

Hymns and Sacred Poems (1739), p. 101

that it is somewhat lost upon us how bold this phrase must have seemed when newly uttered. However, the faithful Bray "encouraged me to proceed in spite of Satan." When the hymn was finished "the devil threw in a fiery dart, suggesting, that it was wrong, and that I had displeased God." The answer is again the prayer-book mentor. "Casting my eye upon a Prayer-book, I met with an answer for him. 'Why boastest thou thyself, thou tyrant, that thou canst do mischief?'" (Psalm 52:1).

Charles Wesley's devotion is variable. As we have already observed, on May 24th "Being to receive the sacrament today, I was assaulted by the fear of my old accustomed deadness" (p. 94). But on the 25th, "Before communicating, I left it to Christ, whether, or in what measure, he would please to manifest himself to me, in this breaking of bread. I had no particular attention to the prayers" (p. 95). His mind wanders at Matins! However, at the Lord's Table Wesley receives his evangelical and catholic reward. "In the prayer of consecration I saw, by the eye of faith, or rather, had a glimpse of, Christ's broken, mangled body, as taking down from the cross. Still I could not observe the prayer, but only repeat with tears, 'O love, love!' At the same time, I felt great peace and joy; and assurance of feeling more, when it is best." Here is the devotion of the Five Sacred Wounds.

3. Five bleeding Wounds He bears,
 Received on *Calvary*;
 They pour effectual Prayers,
 They strongly speak for me."

Hymns and Sacred Poems (1742), p. 262

V. The Sacramental Evangelist

Charles Wesley, in the strength of his new evangelical experience, gradually moves into the more familiar role of the traveling evangelist. First we find him in homes and private fellowships, then he accepts invitations to preach further and further away from Bristol and London, his centers of activity, and finally he travels the country after the manner of his brother, a most powerful and courageous open-air preacher. Then with the passage of years, partly though the natural calls of happy marriage and family life, partly through persistent ill-health, his work becomes more and more centered around Bristol, the chief city of the southwest, where was his home.

A little glimpse of his life is given in June 1738 (pp. 98-99). He communicates on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th, and therefore probably also on the 4th, being a Sunday, though unsystematically he does not say so. He is troubled by spiritual darkness, in which his diagnosis reveals maturity and understanding. "The darkness was not like the former darkness . . . because though I could not find I loved God, or feel that he loved me, yet I did and would believe that he loved me notwithstanding." He is hold of a spiritual security not dependent on feeling.

An hidden God indeed thou art!
 Thine absence I this moment feel:
 Yet must I own it from my heart,
 Conceal'd, thou art a Saviour still,
 And tho' thy face I cannot see,
 I know thine eye is fixt on me.

Based on Isa. 45:15 in *Short Hymns on Select
 Passages of the Holy Scriptures* (1762), 1:346

On June 8th (pp. 101-5) the evangelical Wesley rides again to Blendon, and is now significantly blessed with a still more effective ministry, for the gospel message now spreads also to the household servants. In those days these would, in a large country house, and if the family were religious, attend the family prayers, in this case in the private chapel. On the journey there "I was full of delight, and seemed in new heavens and a new earth. We prayed, and sang, and shouted all the way. At Blendon they prayed for salvation with Miss Betty, and Hetty. On the 9th, "Miss Betsy plainly informed me, that, after her last receiving the sacrament, she had heard a voice, 'Go thy way, thy sins are forgiven thee.'" On the

10th Wesley records a long meditation on the morning lesson, so he is "expounding" at daily prayers. It is a scene reminiscent of the more celebrated house of Little Gidding, presided over in the previous century by the devout Deacon, Nicholas Ferrar, "the complete Church of England man."

That Saturday evening there are prayers for the household. "After supper I discoursed on faith from the lesson. The poor servants received the word gladly" (p. 104). On Sunday the family goes to the Parish Church, and "In singing I observed Hetty join with a mixture of fear and joy. I earnestly prayed, and expected she would meet with something to confirm her." That evening, "After family prayer I expounded the lesson, and, going up to my chamber, asked the maid (Mary) how she found herself. She answered, 'O, Sir, what you said was very comfortable, how that Christ was made sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in Him.' . . . 'Do you then believe this, that Christ died for you?' 'Yes, I do believe it; and I found myself so as I never did before, when you spoke the word'" (p. 105). So in times of spiritual revival the chambermaid can grasp the atonement.

On Wednesday he spoke to Hannah, another maid, who had found blessing in reading the Collect (doubtless as expounded by Wesley). A week later (21st, p. 107), the gardener had come to faith. By the 26th (pp. 109–110) Mrs. Delamotte is still resistant to Wesley's message, and feels that her children are being drawn away from her. The time had come to leave. "Poor Hannah and Mary came to the door, and caught hold of my hand. Hannah cried 'Don't be discouraged, Sir: I hope we shall all continue steadfast'" (p. 110). In times of revival the great social divide between housemaid and mistress can be spanned, though it easily creeps back again. And in parting they sing:

Shall I, for fear of feeble Man,
Thy Spirit's Course in me restrain?

Hymns and Sacred Poems (1739), p. 200

Charles Wesley continues a widening and various ministry in 1738. On September 3rd (p. 129) "I preached salvation by faith at Westminster Abbey; gave the cup." So a very dignified part of the Establishment was not yet alienated by "Methodism." October 15th (p. 132), "I preached the one thing needful at Islington, and added much extempore," and on the 20th (p. 133) he took courage to preach extempore for 45 minutes. October 21st brings a most illuminating account of a visit by John and Charles Wesley to the Bishop of London. They explain what they mean by assurance and justification by faith, and their strong opposition to antinomianism, and have these parts of the Methodist doctrinal emphasis approved.

Of more direct concern to our present subject, some matters are discussed with the Bishop of concern to the developing Methodist movement arising out of the Church discipline expressed in the Book of Common Prayer. They inquire

regarding the "re-baptism" of one baptized by a "layman" (i.e., in this connection one baptized by a preacher of one of the dissenting congregations, not possessing episcopal ordination). John Wesley had apparently offended the Bishop by claiming episcopal authority for proceeding to such a baptism. This is a very rigid attitude, not in accord with the more considered tradition of the Church of England, which has allowed the essential validity of a baptism performed with water and in the Triune Name, even by one who is not a regular minister. The Bishop disowns Wesley's attitude.

A more practically important point, which proved troublesome to later Methodism, was "whether reading in a Religious Society made it a conventicle." The point of this is that under the Toleration Act the public worship of churches other than the established Church was legally permitted, if the building and congregation were licensed by the Bishop. The generality of "Religious Societies" were normally under the oversight of a clergyman, and were at least nominally part of the Church of England, and thus allowable. However, the Methodist gatherings were somewhat different in character. This raised the question, did the reading in them of the public prayers of the Church, or preaching, or the administration of Holy Communion, turn them into illegal "conventicles." This was a moot point, and the Bishop was non-committal in his answer. This difficulty later led to many Methodist buildings being registered under the Toleration Act as meetings of "Protestant Dissenters," a step which caused John Wesley much misgiving as it seemed to imply separation. We note in passing that on November 16, 1738 (p. 136), Charles Wesley "baptized Mrs. Bell with hypothetical baptism," or as we would say, conditional baptism. We must presume that this woman had been baptized according to some form which Wesley regarded as dubious.

As time goes on the *Journal* becomes more and more an account of conversations on spiritual matters, leading often to conversion, records of preaching, often to large crowds, and when opposition increased, accounts of Charles Wesley's great courage in facing the mob. It is not our present purpose to pursue this inspiring story. However, connected with the devotion enjoined in the prayer-book, and in particular with the proper estimate of and use of the Holy Communion, is the long and troublesome controversy regarding "stillness." This occupies much of Charles Wesley's *Journal*.

It is a sad pity of human perversity that some, though of course by no means all, of the Moravians, whose clear evangelical witness had brought such valuable guidance to the Wesleys at a formative period, should have slipped into an "error of excess." It is all too possible for some who have followed the past of churchmanship without apparent spiritual reward, and who have then come to a new conversion experience which has filled them with joy and peace, imprudently and impatiently to turn their backs on the discipline of churchmanship. An unbalanced and unhealthy degree of emphasis upon "salvation by grace, through faith alone" can lead to a deprecation, or even rejection, of the means of grace.

All evangelicals agree that we cannot hope to attain to saving faith in Christ by our own meritorious acts of devotion or charity. Saving faith is the free and mysterious gift of divine grace. So we are to wait upon God's "unspeakable gift." However, the momentous question for the earnest spiritual seeker is: How are we to wait? The answer of scriptural and rational devotion is that God has appointed a place of waiting, and that if we wait there, God will assuredly fulfill the promise, and through grace grant the gift. And the place and method of waiting upon God is in the reverent, obedient, and expectant use of the means of grace. These are worship, prayer and meditation, the reading and preaching of Scripture, and supremely, the sacraments. Thus those who would grow in grace, and come to a deeper experience of God, are to wait upon God in the paths of disciplined churchmanship, though without trusting in their diligence in churchmanship to save them. They are to trust God alone. Clearly Charles Wesley, the high-churchman turned evangelist, the man of the prayer-book, is a firm exponent of this way of devotion.

The perverse error is the affirmation that one cannot devoutly and dutifully use the means of grace without coming to trust in them for salvation. So there were some who rebelled against the discipline of churchmanship, proclaiming themselves thereby to be more truly and completely "spiritual," and more faithfully and consistently "evangelical." They declared that the church-centered religion of the means of grace was in fact a subtle and corrupting form of the unevangelical religion of salvation by the merit of good works. Thus the true spiritual seeker must withdraw from the use of the means of grace, and in particular from church-going and the Eucharist, into private meditative retirement, there to await God's spiritual work. One of the favorite texts cited in their support by these people was "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). So the Wesleys customarily describe this error as "stillness." This pervasive doctrine clearly sabotaged all the disciplined life of the Church of England, and of the Methodist meetings for fellowship. The latter part of Charles Wesley's *Journal* is taken up to a considerable extent to resistance to this error, an unhappy and unprofitable controversy, though in the circumstances necessary.

The central point of the controversy was clearly the proper use and estimate of the Lord's Supper. So Charles Wesley's powerful argument in favor of scriptural and rational Christian devotion is best stated in terms of his spiritually constructive and normative *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*. This book has a most interesting and unusual origin. Dr. Daniel Brevint was a Caroline high-church divine born in the Channel Island of Jersey. Under the Puritan Commonwealth regime he was ejected from his Oxford Fellowship for refusing to sign the Covenant, and lived in exile in France. During this time he composed for some high-born French Protestant ladies a book of sacramental devotion, *The Christian*

Sacrament and Sacrifice. This attracted the attention and warm approval of John Wesley, that habitual and talented abbreviator, who characteristically made extracts from it for the use of his followers.

Charles Wesley, that skilled versifier, then did what perhaps only he would have thought of doing. He versified some of the more important phrases from Brevint, and wrote a number of free compositions on the subjects covered by Brevint. These were published together in 1745 as the 166 *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*. This little book, which had a wide circulation in the first days of Methodism, and has been cherished since by that strain of Methodist thought which has valued the sacramentalism of the Wesleys, is to be regarded as definitive for their thought and devotion. Here we view, as perhaps nowhere else, Charles Wesley as a man of the prayer-book, and a "complete Church of England man." For a further study of this rewarding subject one should refer to *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley*, by J. Ernest Rattenbury.²⁰

The use of all the means of grace is affirmed against the defective spirituality of those individualists who would take refuge in a solitary religion.

1. Why did my dying Lord ordain
 This dear Memorial of his Love?
 Might we not all by Faith obtain,
 By Faith the Mountain-sin remove?
 Enjoy the Sence of Sins forgiven,
 And Holiness the Taste of Heaven?
2. It seem'd to my Redeemer good
 That Faith should *here* his Coming wait,
 Should here receive Immortal Food,
 Grow up in Him divinely great,
 And fill'd with Holy Violence seize
 The Glorious Crown of Righteousness.
4. The Prayer, the Fast, the Word conveys,
 When mixt with Faith, thy Life to me,
 In all the Channels of thy Grace
 I still have Fellowship with thee:
 But chiefly here my Soul is fed
 With Fulness of Immortal Bread.

HLS, pp. 38-39

Furthermore, the symbols in the means of grace, and the sacramental symbols in particular, are operative symbols. They both portray a spiritual truth, and by divine action perform a saving work corresponding to that truth.

²⁰London: Epworth Press, 1948.

1. Draw near, ye blood-besprinkled Race,
And take what God vouchsafes to give;
The Outward Sign of Inward Grace,
Ordain'd by Christ Himself, receive:
The sign transmits the Signified,
The Grace is by the Means applied.

HLS, p. 50

That this should be so is an especial work of the Holy Spirit, whose sacred Name is in the consecration of the elements invoked upon them in the prayer called epiclesis.

1. Come Holy Ghost, thine Influence shed,
And realize the Sign;
Thy Life infuse into the Bread,
Thy Power into the Wine.
2. Effectual let the Tokens prove,
And made by Heavenly Art
Fit Channels to convey thy Love
To every Faithful Heart.

HLS, p. 51

So, as the church comes together in worship, her prayer is that the Holy Spirit will enable her to "receive the atonement," and appropriate in present experience the effect of what Christ accomplished once for all, and for the whole world, in dying for us, and rising again.

1. Come, Thou everlasting Spirit,
Bring to every thankful Mind
All the Saviour's dying Merit,
All his Suffering for Mankind;
True Recorder of his Passion,
Now the living Faith impart,
Now reveal his great Salvation,
Preach his Gospel to our Heart.

HLS, p. 13

By splendid consequence, the Eucharist is the divinely-appointed means by which is granted to the church the experience of the Real Presence of the risen and glorified Lord. He who is in principle always present is there made known with a convincing and secure promise.

1. 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 Injoin'd
 Thou wilt therein appear:
 We come with Confidence to find
 Thy special Presence here.

4. 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.

HLS, pp. 69–70

And, if we follow the wisest mind of the Church of England, and of the Wesleys, this Real Presence is not to be thought of as some intangible “essence” concealed under the cover of the bread and wine, but a personal union with a personal Saviour, granted through the eating of that bread, and the drinking of that cup. Therefore:

5. We need not now go up to Heaven,
 To bring the long-sought Saviour down;
 Thou art to All already given:
 Thou dost ev'n Now thy Banquet crown:
 To every faithful Soul appear,
 And shew thy Real Presence here.

HLS, p. 99

And by further consequence of this sacramental Real Presence, the Eucharist is the church's commemorative sacrifice. By the celebration of this she makes herself one with our great High Priest in glory, who once for all historically offered, and who now eternally offers, His “full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.” As we make ourselves one with Christ we have access to God, and share in the fruits of Christ's incarnation, atonement, resurrection, and ascension to glory.

2. 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.

HLS, p. 106

The sacramental devotion of the church focuses in two ways, according to her state of spiritual development. The evangelistic church, largely composed of believers who are deeply aware that they have been gloriously converted from a spiritually careless, or even sinful past, gives central place to the atonement, and the release from the guilt and power of sin. This element is naturally and fittingly very strong in Charles Wesley.

3. 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!

HLS, p. 16

And the response is the prayer for forgiveness:

2. By thine Agonizing Pain,
 And Bloody Sweat, we pray,
 By thy Dying Love to Man,
 Take all our Sins away;
 Burst our Bonds, and set us free,
 From all Iniquity release:
 O remember *Calvary*,
 And bid us go in Peace.

HLS, p. 15

By contrast, a more settled worshipping congregation is apt to fix upon another, and a complementary, sacramental truth. This is that the Presence is made known of the risen Christ, joyful and triumphant. The sacrament is then viewed more as a Eucharist, a thanksgiving, a celebration. This element is present also in the prayer-book service, and Charles Wesley is aware of it.

- 2, lines 5-8 His Presence makes the Feast;
 And now our Bosoms feel
 The Glory not to be exprest,
 The Joy unspeakable.
- 3, lines 1-4 With pure celestial Bliss
 He doth our Spirits chear,
 His House of Banqueting is This,
 And He hath brought us here.

HLS, pp. 69-70

and again:

1. Ah, tell us no more
The Spirit and Power
Of JESUS our God
Is not to be found in this Life-giving Food!
4. In rapturous Bliss
He bids us do This,
The Joy it imparts
Hath witness'd his gracious Design in our Hearts.
6. Receiving the Bread
On Jesus we feed,
It doth not appear
His Manner of working; but Jesus is here!
10. Bring near the glad Day
When all shall obey
Thy dying Request,
And eat of thy Supper, and lean on thy Breast.

HLS, pp. 78–79

With all these things in mind it is clearly both the duty of the Christian, “of perpetual obligation,” to come to the Lord’s Table, and also the chief joy. Herein is Wesley’s repudiation of the perverse error of “stillness.”

3. Get Thee behind me, Fiend,
On Others try thy Skill,
Here let thy hellish Whispers end,
To Thee I say *Be still!*
6. I chearfully comply
With what my Lord doth say,
Let Others ask a Reason why,
My Glory is T’obey.
8. Because He saith Do this,
This I will always do;
Till Jesus comes in glorious Bliss,
I *thus* His Death will *shew*.

HLS, pp. 73–74

VI. The Christian Year

It is most significant that the early and creative *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of 1739, which contains some of the most inspired outpourings of the first days of the evangelical revival, should include hymns for Christmas Day, the Epiphany,

Easter Day, Ascension Day, and Whitsunday. Herein is the effective beginning of a new sort of hymn. Isaac Watts, the pioneer of scriptural hymns, and Charles Wesley's chief forerunner, was a Dissenter of the Puritan tradition, and therefore did not celebrate the Christian Year among his great hymns. Thus "When I survey the wondrous cross" is entitled "At the Sacrament," for Watts conscientiously did not observe Holy Week or Good Friday. But Wesley, the high-churchman turned poet of Christian devotion wrote with a less restricted scope. He wrote a very large number of fine hymns which can be used to celebrate the Christian Year, though significantly he, and his brother, never brought them together systematically to do this. Had they done this John Keble would have been anticipated, and possibly even demoted. Keble ushered in the Oxford Movement of catholic revival with his widely-circulated *Christian Year* of 1827. This consists of a collection of religious poems rather than hymns, taking their inspiration from texts either from the Epistle or Gospel for the day, or from the lectionary. So it is a devotional companion for the Christian Year, designed to bring one's "own thoughts and feelings into more entire unison with the Prayer Book." Charles Wesley could have done this more amply, more scripturally, and in better poetry!

The reason for this omission is not far to seek. In publishing hymns the Wesleys never seriously considered Methodism as a denomination of congregations meeting separately for regular Sunday worship, such as would need a hymnal adapted for the observance of the seasons of the Christian Year, and the Festivals. It was assumed that the Methodists went to the parish church on Sunday, though this assumption gradually got more and more out of touch with the reality of the situation. Methodism was viewed as an evangelistic and devotional society operating within the Church of England. What was required for this was plainly a hymn-book tracing out the stages of the Christian experience. And the formative *Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* of 1780, which did so much to determine the form and contents of later Methodist hymnals, was such a book. Thus it did not open liturgically with Advent, or theologically with the nature of God, but evangelistically with "Exhorting Sinners to Return to God." And it continued with the walk of the soul to holiness, and the meeting of the Society. But as Methodism turned into a separate church the book had to be provided with supplements.

The creative character of these numerous hymns which celebrate the doctrines associated with different parts of the Christian Year may be illustrated from the leading example of the 1739 Christmas hymn, "Hark how all the welkin rings,"²¹ now long and universally amended to "Hark, the herald-angels sing." Previous to this time there had been plenty of popular and light-hearted Christmas carols, based on poetic fancy or mediaeval legend. And there was John Byrom's hymn "Christians awake!" But Charles Wesley's Christmas hymn was a theologian's

²¹*Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), pp. 206–208.

Christmas hymn. It set forth the doctrine associated with the season, the incarnation of our Lord, in careful catholic orthodoxy, and it expressed it comprehensively in scriptural language. It was a hymn, in fact, to be taken seriously as a companion to the liturgy, and as part of the doctrinal instruction of the Church of England. As one would expect, in reducing its original ten verses for use in hymnals, some of the more theological and scriptural verses have been abandoned.

7. Come, Desire of Nations, come,
Fix in Us Thy humble Home;
Rise, the Woman's Conqu'ring Seed,
Bruise in Us the Serpent's Head.
8. Now display thy saving Power,
Ruin'd Nature now restore,
Now in Mystic Union join
Thine to Ours, and Ours to Thine.

Hymns and Sacred Poems (1739), p. 207

In the *Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord* (1745), there are three other truly great hymns on the incarnation, though they have been sung only among Methodists of the Wesley tradition. "Glory be to God on high" (pp. 5–6) is a powerful statement of the *communicatio idiomatum*. "Let earth and heaven combine" (pp. 7–8) is a fine treatment of *kenosis*. And "All glory to God in the sky" (pp. 10–11) deals with the coming of the kingdom of peace. This small volume also contains "Come, Thou long expected Jesus" (p. 14), widely sung as an Advent hymn. This is only a small sample of what Charles Wesley has to offer in celebration of the Christian Year. And of the five pioneer hymns in the 1739 book three of them have received the reward of becoming some of Wesley's most widely-sung hymns. In addition to the Christmas hymn these are "Christ the Lord is risen to-day" and "Hail the day that sees Him rise."²²

VII. The Old Ship

A final issue which concerns Charles Wesley's relation to the Church of England is that which arose around his brother's action in establishing the original polity of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the newly independent American Colonies. It is a real sadness that in the latter part of their long ministry together there should have been some element of alienation between the two essentially loving and loyal brothers. However, the alienation was not complete, and a breach was avoided largely because the aging Charles Wesley, troubled by ill-health, gradually withdrew from the active control of Methodism in Britain, and ceased to attend a Conference which was increasingly demanding policies of which he could not approve. As so often in the life of the church, that "great

²²*Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), pp. 211–13.

amphibian," living both on earth and in heaven, the issue was between the ideal and the practicable. Ideally both brothers sincerely wished to prevent the separation of Methodism from the Church of England. However, John Wesley, in charge of the practical government, had a clearer view of what was practicable, whereas Charles Wesley insisted on original principles, as they became increasingly out of touch with the real situation. And, it has to be admitted, the position of neither brother was entirely free from ambiguity, as is so usually the case in an imperfect world.

Whatever may have been the case of America, it can hardly be doubted that in England the gradual separation of Methodism from the Church of England was a major spiritual misfortune, though a virtually inevitable misfortune. More and more of the people drawn into developing Methodism had never possessed that original strong loyalty to the Church of England which marked the first generation. They responded naturally with ill-will to persecution or exclusion, or they simply preferred the lively service at the Methodist Chapel to the more stately proceedings at the parish church, and "voted with their feet." There was also the powerful social element, as in the 19th century by a gradual evolutionary process Britain was democratized. The Established Church was controlled by the upper classes, whereas Methodism gave abundant scope for leadership to the rising middle classes, and enjoyed the support of many of the more intelligent, responsible, and sober of the working classes. The effect of gradual separation was to rob the Church of England of many people who might well have developed into active and evangelical supporters. And even more, the original sacramental enthusiasm of Methodism was all too often damped down, as a separated church drifted into the position of ecclesiastical competition with an influential rival. There was a defensive tendency within Methodism to move away from things which savored of the Church of England, and to look upon liturgical worship as "empty formalism."

However, the urgent crisis was not in England but in America. After the War of Independence those parts of the American Colonies which had been predominantly Church of England were often left without any ministers of religion. A large part of the clergy, being by tradition strongly royalist, had fled, or had been driven out by the people. There was also the manifest danger that if in the confusion events were left to look after themselves, the American Conferences might dissolve into independency and lose a regular and disciplined ministry. So Wesley felt that he had quickly to set up an agreed and authoritative polity, while his own position of leadership was such as to make it "stick." So he sent Dr. Coke as his representative to see to the ordination of the American preachers, and to set up the constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This was done at the Christmas Conference, Baltimore, 1784. And to this step Charles Wesley strongly and conscientiously objected, as a breach of the Orders of the Church of England, and the creation of a separation.

The ambiguity on John Wesley's part was his action in laying hands upon Dr. Coke to "set him apart" as the first General Superintendent of the Church in America, with a mandate to ordain Francis Asbury as the second Joint General Superintendent. His theological principle in doing this was that in the New Testament "bishop," and "presbyter" or "elder," were names for essentially the same office.²³ As he was himself a Presbyter in due succession of ordination, he had the power latent within himself to ordain to the ministry if that should become necessary. As a Presbyter (or "priest") placed by what appeared to be divine providence in a position of government over other presbyters, he was a "scriptural *episcopos*," that is to say, an ordaining bishop in the New Testament sense.

But in placing Dr. Coke, already an ordained Presbyter, in the position of a "scriptural *episcopos*," or "General Superintendent" for the American ordinations, why did he lay hands on him, an action which by tradition would indicate that he was being given a different spiritual status? If the difference between a "bishop" and a "presbyter" is simply that the one is in a superior administrative position, would it not have been theologically consistent simply to appoint Dr. Coke to his new office by vote of Conference, and to give him a written certificate to take to America? It is presumably for this reason that in his *Journal* Wesley had to say of Dr. Coke that he "set him apart." He could not well say "ordain," or "consecrate," for these are the words used in the prayer-book Ordinal for the Church order from which he was deviating: thus, "The form of Ordaining or Consecrating of a Bishop" (BCP).

In so vehemently objecting to John Wesley's action Charles Wesley is likewise on uncertain ground. In the first place, and in general, it is dangerous to affirm dogmatically that the traditional continuous ministry of bishop, priests, and deacons goes back to the very first days of the church. There is insufficient evidence. This ministry does indeed go back to the ancient church, and may be respected as a mark of the continuity and authority of the church. But it rests upon the tradition of the church, not any express ordinance of our Lord, or word of Scripture. But more particularly, the old high-church Caroline divines to which Charles looked back with such reverence are less strict. Nigel Yates in *Buildings, Faith, and Worship*²⁴ has summarized evidence that in this period "though Anglican divines were prepared to defend their own form of ministry, they were willing to accept as equally valid the ministries of other Reformed Churches" (i.e., other established Protestant national Churches), even if they did not possess an unbroken episcopal order. It was on this issue that the great Lancelot Andrewes himself declared: "We are not men of iron." So brother Charles would have been wise to be more restrained! Tyson in his *Reader* (pp. 398-438) has done us a great service in collecting together the literature of this unhappy dispute.

²³Compare Acts 20:17, 28, where these two names are given to the same people.

²⁴Oxford: Clarendon, 1991, pp. 9-11.

Furthermore, and more recently, Vol. III of *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley*, ed. by S T Kimbrough, Jr., and Oliver Beckerlegge,²⁵ has provided the text of another substantial poem addressed to John (pp. 95–101). Much of this is well-phrased polemic verse, for which Charles Wesley certainly had a talent, and is interesting to read as an historic record. However, it is hardly to be regarded as fair comment upon John Wesley's action. Charles first attributes the ordination to the unworthy ambition of the preachers, of Dr. Coke, and even of brother John himself.

I fear, your pure benevolence
And care of souls, is meer pretence
Your own desires to gratify,
That dying, you may never die,
But vindicate your sacred Claim,
And purchase an immortal Name.

p. 95, lines 11–16

Your Preachers importun'd in vain,
They cou'd not get you to Ordain:
Hard-pressing you on every side
To gratify their secret pride,
(Eager the Envied Priests to ape,
And gain a feather in their cap.)

p. 95, lines 27–32

Charles alleges that it is the infirmity of old age which has allowed his brother's judgment too much to be swayed by the arguments of Peter King's book on the constitution of the early church. King was a churchman of Presbyterian background.

Would King's weak reasons have prevail'd,
Had not your Solid judgment fail'd,
Had not your wavering heart misled,
And got the better of your head?

.

Now to your utmost height you rise,
And your whole Office exercise
Nor Presbyters, nor Bishops need
To lay their hands upon *your* head,
But nobly, self-appointed, dare
To seize an Apostolic Chair,
And on the creatures of your will
Your glorious ministry fulfil.

p. 96, lines 37–40, 61–68

²⁵Nashville: Abingdon/Kingswood, 1992.

And first your sacred hands are laid
 On giddy Coke's aspiring head,
 Your throne Prelatical t'inherit
 Worthy thro' dint of pure demerit.

p. 97, lines 69–72

He then waxes sarcastic at the expense of John Wesley's celebrated statement in paragraph 4 of the Preface to the *Sunday Service* of 1784: "And I have prepared a liturgy little differing from that of the Church of England (I think the best constituted national church in the world) which I advise all the travelling preachers to use." It is interesting in this connection to observe how that of the two parts of the Church Order which Wesley offered to American Methodism, the appointive Episcopacy endured in effective practice, whereas the "Sunday Service" did not take root, and was largely laid aside.

Your Liturgy so well-prepar'd
 To E[ngland]'s Church proves your regard,
 Of churches national the best
 By you, and all, the world confest:
 (Why shou'd we then bad counsel take
 And for a worse the best forsake?)
 You tell us, with her Book of prayer
 No book so worthy to compare?
 Why change it then for your Edition,
 Deprav'd by many a bold omission?

p. 97, lines 81–90

The "bold omissions" to which Charles objects, and which it is not our present purpose to examine in detail, have a recognizable and dignified ancestry. They are the sort of revisions which the Puritan section of the Church of England, from Baxter onwards, had long been desirous of securing. The evidence for this is well summarized in C. J. Cuming, *A History of Anglican Liturgy*.²⁶ So John Wesley had his reasons, but they are not likely to have mollified his brother!

So we say farewell to "the sweet singer of Israel," with his letter to the Leeds Conference of 1756, by which time murmurs of separation were already spreading. "Continue in the old ship. Jesus hath a favour for our Church, and is wonderfully visiting and reviving His work in her." Charles Wesley failed in his plea, but happily it has not altogether prevented Jesus from showing favor to our church.

²⁶New York: Macmillan, 1969, pp. 173–182.

