Hymns on the Lord's Supper
250 Years

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"Thy nature and thy name is Love." This leit-motif of the last six verses of "Wrestling Jacob" states clearly what Wesley\(^1\) expresses elsewhere in an abundance of poetic turns of phrase: the glory of God is his very nature as being love and its outpouring into creation. Wesley knows that God’s chosen people wrestled for centuries to give voice in limited human language to God’s unspeakable self-communication to us. The root meaning of the Hebrew word for glory, kabod, is simply “weight” or “heaviness.” We have to wait for one of the shorter writings of the New Testament canon—the only place in fact in the canon where the categorical statement is made—to hear that the full “weight” of God in our regard is divine love: I John 4:8, 16. Hymn 102 sums up the long centuries of wrestling with the concluding lines:

All the Glorious Weight to bear  
Of everlasting Love.

“Everlasting love” echoes “dying love” at the end of the second line of verse 1. Here the “glorious weight” is “the length, and breadth, and height / and depth” of this “dying love.” For Wesley the bleeding to death of Jesus on the cross is the supreme manifestation to us of God’s love, as being God’s total self-gift to us. In Jesus, glory becomes one with self-emptying:

The eternal God from heaven came down,  
The King of Glory dropp’d His crown  
And veiled His majesty;  
Emptied of all but love He came;  
Jesus I call Thee by the name  
Thy pity bore for me.  

(Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord [1745], 15:2)

“Emptied of all but love He came.” That is a poetic way of intimating, not so much that Jesus manifests his love for us in the absence of all else, as that the love is in the very self emptying. “Il est le propre de l’amour de s’abaisser,” said abbé

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\(^1\)“Wesley” means “Charles” Wesley, unless otherwise stated.
Huvelin, a remark to which his most illustrious disciple, Charles de Foucauld, was always harking back: "Self-lowering is of the essence of love."

"And veiled His majesty." The self-emptying is also a veiling of the Godhead. Why? Jesus did not cease to be God in the self-emptying. Precisely because the very love which is God is in the self-emptying, the self-emptying is a manifestation of the Godhead. But it is an unveiling of it in veiling. The love unveils itself in the veiling of self-emptying.

Herein lies the deep doctrinal and spiritual harmony which Wesley perceives between the whole economy of salvation culminating in the cross of Jesus and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The entire corpus of eucharistic hymns celebrates the sacrament as truly mediating to us the whole reality of the redemptive love of Jesus for us and bringing us into the closest possible graced intimacy with the reality of his cross. Yet it can only do this by casting a sacramental veil over this graced closeness. The graced closeness thus itself becomes an unveiling of what is veiled and a veiling of what is unveiled. It is a pledge of heaven, a foretaste of eschatological plenitude in which we shall at last have an unveiled share in God's glory unveiled:

But wait to see our Heavenly King;  
To see the great Invisible  
Without a Sacramental Veil,  
With all his Robes of Glory on.  

(Hymn 93:1,6–9)

In Hymn 107, Wesley designates this veiled sacramental mediation of the graced foretaste of eternal glory as a "type":

Communion of thy Flesh and Blood,  
Sure Instrument thy Grace to gain,  
Type* of the Heavenly Marriage-Feast,  
Pledge of our Everlasting Rest.  

(107:1,3–6)

The word "type" derives from the New Testament τύπος. In I Corinthians 10, for instance, St. Paul designates the Israelites in the desert in their ungrateful behavior towards God who nourished them with food and drink, as τύποι, "types," or models, and, therefore, as a warning against our own possible abuse of God's heavenly gift of eucharistic food and drink. Because of its thrust forward to eschatology, Wesley's use of the word "type" comes even closer to the New Testament ἀντίτύπος where the prefix ἀντί underscores the pointing forward to fulfillment. Hebrews 9:24 designates the holy place (Ἁγία) of the Old Testament dispensation as an "antitype" of the only true holy place, heaven itself into which Christ entered by his once and for all sacrificial offering of himself. Similarly,

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*Italics added.*
says Wesley, the sacramental veil, under which graced intimacy is vouchsafed to us at present, will pass away into eschatological plenitude.

Nourish us to that awful Day
When Types and Veils shall pass away,
And perfect Grace in Glory end.

(Hymn 44:4,1–3)

It is not without significance for our present subject that in his biography of Charles Wesley, Thomas Jackson, in order to illustrate the purpose for which the collection of *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* was published by the two brothers, reproduces the last hymn, 166, *in extenso*. This hymn underlines forcibly the contrast between the sacramental graced intimacy with Jesus, as a here and now walking with God in heaven, and the unveiled glory towards which it is moving.

Of the early Christians, Wesley says:

Throughout their spotless Lives was seen
The Virtue of this heavenly Food,
Superior to the Sons of Men
They soar’d aloft, and walk’d with God.

(Hymn 166:6)

Of the deep aspiration for eschatological fulfillment in the members of the early Methodist movement, he says:

Come quickly, Lord, the Spirit cries,
The Number of thy Saints compleat,
Come quickly, Lord, the Bride replies,
And make us all for Glory meet.

(166:20)

Of the corpus as a whole Jackson writes: “and although they all refer to one subject, they are distinguished throughout by a remarkable variety of thought and expression.”* Remarkable variety of thought and expression* is a reference by Jackson to Wesley’s poetic creativity. The “one object” is the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Quotations already made from the corpus suggest an examination of how Wesley contemplates this mystery as a veiled unveiling of a graced closeness to a mystery which is itself the unveiling of love in the veiling of self-emptying, Jesus bleeding to death for us on the Cross. The nub of such an analysis must be the vital relationship between Wesley’s poetic creativity and his theological and spiritual insights into the mystery of the Eucharist.

Hence the exposition which follows will proceed in two stages. We will examine the sacramental quality of Wesley’s poetic language in general. This will
lead on to a consideration of how specific sacramental themes contribute to the poetic shaping of a great deal of the material to be found in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*.

1. The Sacramental Quality of Wesley’s Poetic Language

It is as word-music that Wesley’s poetic language is possessed of a sacramental quality. Hence the two parts of this first stage: (a) The Word-Music; (b) Its Sacramental Character.

(a) The Word-Music

Frank Baker makes the following important observation: “His (Charles Wesley’s) sight was poor, but his hearing was acute. Sounds rather than scenes gave him his pictures. Above all else his intuitions and spiritual insight helped him to conclusions at which brother John arrived by sheer logic.” 3 Wesley’s poems are, of course, full of word-pictures and images. Because of their scriptural basis it could not be otherwise. Nevertheless, it is first of all as music, music in words, that the poetic language is rich in sacramental connotations. We have to be sensitive to the way in which word-music and word-pictures are inextricably woven into each other. Only then will we discover in the poems not only the theological and spiritual insights which brother John reached by logic, but, I would aver, many others, and perhaps more profound, which he never reached at all!

Hymn 54 is a defense of the rightness of frequent communion, as practiced by the early Methodists, over against the exclusive emphasis put by the Moravians on justifying faith as experienced in the privileged state of spiritual stillness. In conducting his argument, Wesley in no way undervalues the spiritual experience of the Moravians. The accumulation of s’s, preparing for, and leading up to, the spiritual experience of “tasting heaven” at, the end of the first verse, gives us an almost sensuous awareness of the beauty and intensity of the Moravian experience:

\[
\text{Might we not all by Faith obtain,} \\
\text{By Faith the Mountain-sin remove,} \\
\text{Enjoy the Sense of Sins forgiven,} \\
\text{And Holiness, the Taste of Heaven?} \\
\]

(54:1,3–6)

On the other hand, these s’s contrast with the dental sounds which, in the first two lines, recall to the Methodist believer how deliberate and definite was the command given by Jesus to celebrate the memorial of his passion and death:

The Veiled Unveiling of the Glory of God

Why did my dying Lord ordain
This dear Memorial of his Love?

(54:1,1–2)

Yet again these dental sounds are themselves intertwined, in a partially chiastic way, with labial and other soft sounds, which suggest that there is more than a contrast between deliberateness of dominical command and sweetness of Moravian experience, because what is commanded is itself full of tenderness and love (Lord ... memorial ... love).

Does then this interplay of word-music between the two opening lines of the poem and the rest of the stanza take us to the heart of the theological insight which gives it its unity? This question cannot be answered without asking another one: does the word “taste,” as would seem at first reading, refer only to the privileged evangelical experience of stillness in justifying faith, shared by Moravian and Methodist alike? Or does it have eucharistic overtones which oblige us to look further?

The word for “taste” in the New Testament is γεύσομαι. It is used for tasting in both a material and a spiritual sense. When the spiritual sense is meant, the middle voice form of this verb can have overtones of an emphasis on the reflex consciousness of this spiritual “tasting.” Thus, quoting Psalm 34:8: “O taste and see that the Lord is good,” and comparing this tasting with the physical delight felt by babies when they breast-feed, I Peter 2:2 says: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (Χρηστός, in Greek, which means “sweet” or “delightful”).

Because of the reference to the Old Testament, eucharistic overtones cannot be excluded from this allusion by I Peter to a spiritual tasting of the Lord through the word. There is a striking parallel between the “graciousness” or “sweetness,” here described, and what Exodus has to say about the bread which God gave the Israelites in the desert: “… and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey” (16:31). Furthermore, Hebrews speaks of the taste of a heavenly gift which could well be the Eucharist, although it doesn’t specify this clearly “For it is impossible to those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come . . . .” (54:6,4–5). It would be natural to relate these two acts of tasting to sacrament and word respectively.

In other words, Wesley is deliberately making poetic use of this ambivalence in meaning of the New Testament γεύσομαι. Whilst granting this word to the Moravians as the most apt for describing their spiritual experience, he suggests eucharistic overtones which prepare the reader for what he will say about union with God through the Eucharist: “And yields the larger draughts of God” (54:5,4). Thus the word “taste” not only gives unity to the dual presentation by
the first verse of the dominical ordinance concerning the Eucharist and the Moravian concept of spiritual stillness, but it is really the keystone which bears the weight of the whole poetic edifice.

It is often through word-sounds that Wesley is able to concentrate into a word-picture several biblical images so that these latter point to a spiritual insight of which their many facets become a rich expression, even as a prism transmits the many-colored richness of light. This process of concentration and condensation of images takes place sometimes in a single expression; for instance, in a substantive qualified by a contrasting adjective. In verse 2 of this same poem No. 54, the expression “immortal food” is first of all a piece of word music by its juxtaposition of a short Anglo-Saxon word with a longer Latin one. This musical quality highlights the paradox in the contrast between the substantive and the adjective. Is it really possible that the transcendent God, whom I Timothy 1:17 describes as “eternal, immortal, invisible,” should come close to us with all the closeness of one of the most necessary common places of our everyday life: food? Yet these are not the only two facets of what the word picture really contains. That is why, in stanza 4, the expression becomes “immortal bread.” What is immortal is now Jesus. What is absolute heaviness can lower itself to the earthly and the commonplace, because Jesus is the bread which has come down from heaven. But this facet of, or window to, the mystery of the Incarnation brings us further to Eucharistic aspects. As bread, Jesus is veiled, but it is precisely as veiled that he can give us a sacramental closeness with immortality and Divinity which is of the order of eating and assimilating what we eat:

But chiefly here my Soul is fed
With Fullness of Immortal Bread.

(54:4,5–6)

At other times, as we have seen from stanza 1 of Hymn 54, the condensation of images takes place on a wider canvas. The word-sounds knit there together, producing a unity of theological and spiritual insight, which extends to a whole stanza and, from a stanza, to a whole poem. On this wider canvas, rhythm becomes of prime importance. Breaks in rhythm, even the slightest irregularities in stress, can be the vehicles of deep theological insight.

The poetic creativity is never the mere substratum of the generalizations of theological propositions. Wesley theologizes poetically. The outward expressions which his poems give to this inward process are the vehicle of communication of his theology. They bring us into empathy with his deepest intuitions.

Here lies, it would seem, the only possible starting point for a solution to the problem of authorship. By the nature of the case this problem ought to be stated as follows: Given that the main author of the collection of Hymns on the Lord’s Supper is Charles, how many hymns have to be attributed to John? In evaluating the internal literary and theological criteria, whether proposed by his predeces-
ors or stemming from his own meticulous research, John Tyson writes: "It became clear that in many cases the criteria were simply too subjective to be of enduring value."

He therefore makes the decision, for his own exposition of the theology of Charles Wesley, to rely exclusively on poems which external evidence ascribes with certitude to Charles. Such an option would mean the abandonment of the present enterprise. Rather have we adopted the commonsense approach of John Bowmer in his exposition of the doctrine of the eucharistic hymns: "On lack of evidence to the contrary, however, we shall assume that the hymns of this collection are all by Charles." On the basis of this commonsense assumption, it would seem, from our preceding analysis, that the required complementary evidence really is forthcoming, namely a marked difference between the two brothers in the relationship between poetic creativity and theological insight. Such a difference makes it possible, for instance, to attribute hymns 58 and 62 to John. In these hymns, the unity of composition does not stem from spontaneous poetic creativity. Rather the biblical images, which constitute their content, are rigidly subordinated to a theological idea, which could be expressed in an abstract generalization. The controlling theological generalization of Hymn 58 would be: "the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a converting ordinance"; of Hymn 62: "It is the supreme ordinance of the Christian life." No such general propositions spring to mind when one ruminates on the compositions of Charles. Hymn 98 also has about it a tidy formality, uncharacteristic of Charles's poetic creativity.

(b) Its Sacramental Character

By its inseparability from biblical word-pictures and images, Wesley's word-music already shows itself to be sacramental in character. The nature, however, of this sacramentality needs to be further explored in the light of Wesley's understanding of the Bible as a whole.

His skill in opening up images, derived from sense-experience, to a multifaceted expression of unitive theological insight, is greatly enhanced by his resolutely typological interpretation of the Scriptures, which makes of the person of Jesus the focal point of both Testaments in their entirety. For Wesley, the Christocentric interpretation of both Testaments has a solid foundation in the New Testament understanding of Christ. It is only in the gift of his Spirit that we can reach that understanding. Wesley's basic hermeneutical principle is, therefore, constant recourse to a \textit{sensus plenior}, a spiritual understanding of the material content of scriptural texts, which can only be reached in the grace of the Spirit:

\textsuperscript{4}Charles Wesley's Theology of the Cross, doctoral thesis (Madison, NJ: Drew University), part 1, 13.

\textsuperscript{5}The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism (Dacre Press, 1951), 167.
Whate'er the antient Prophets spoke
Concerning Thee, O Christ, make known,
Sole Subject of the Sacred Book,
Thou fillest all, and Thou alone;
Yet there our Lord we cannot see,
Unless thy Spirit lends the Key.

*(Hymns for Our Lord's Resurrection [1746], 6:2)*

In particular, certain texts of Hebrews have a definite influence on this Christocentrism. There are three of them: 7:25, 13:8, and 13:20. In his introduction to the theology of the 1780 *Collection*, Franz Hildebrandt notes all of them as belonging to the list of constantly recurring key texts which constitute a kind of *summa* of Wesley's biblical theology. 6 Hebrews 7:25 speaks of the priesthood of Jesus which saves us “to the uttermost,” because he “ever liveth to make intercession for us.” Hebrews 13:8 affirms: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day and for ever.” In verse 20 of the same chapter, it is the blood of Jesus which, in its being shed, has become an everlasting covenant. The permanence of Jesus of the second text makes, of everything that exists and happens in our earthbound time and especially of all that constitutes the successive phases of salvation history, a possible window opening on to the very person of Jesus. The other texts, in combination with this one, show that this permanence implies a universal Lordship which Jesus exercises in costly redemptive love. His pleading with the Father, which is as permanent as his very person, is a pleading with his shed blood. He is in the words of Revelation 13:8 “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” or, in the words of I Peter 1:19–20, “a lamb without blemish and without spot” (therefore able to become a perfect sacrifice), “foreordained before the foundation of the world.” The everlasting covenant in shed blood of which Hebrews 13:20 speaks, makes it clear that the expressions—“from the foundation” and “foreordained before the foundation” of those last two quotations—mean that a bloody sacrifice, carried out in time, is taken up into eternity and made eternal in the eternity of the second Person of the Trinity made man.

This is Wesley’s justification for making his christocentric interpretation of the Scriptures also *staurocentric* (from σταυρός in Greek, meaning “cross”). Every single word of Scripture has, for him, an inner sacramental orientation towards Jesus bleeding to death for us on the Cross.

2. Key Sacramental Themes

In the present phase of salvation history, the sacramental act, at the heart of everything in human experience which can become a window opening on to Jesus

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eternally pleading for us with his shed blood, is the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. This perspective enables Wesley to give full sacramental signification to certain theological propositions of Dr. Brevint, a long extract of whose treatise on The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice is reproduced as a preface to the Hymns on the Lord’s Supper. In section VI of the extract, concerning the Sacrament as it is Sacrifice, Brevint states: “To men it [Holy Communion] is a sacred table, where God’s minister is ordered to represent from God his Master the passion of His dear Son, as still fresh, and still powerful for their eternal salvation. And to God it is an altar, wherein men mystically present to Him the same sacrifice, as still bleeding and suing for mercy.”

The first hymn of the series on The Holy Eucharist as it implies a Sacrifice, Hymn 116, is an admirable commentary of this sacramental understanding of the portrayal by Hebrews of the eternal pleading of the shed blood of Jesus:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Thou standest in the Holiest Place,} \\
\text{As now for guilty Sinners Slain,} \\
\text{The Blood of Sprinkling speaks, and prays} \\
\text{All-prevailing for helpless Man,} \\
\text{Thy Blood is still our Ransom found,} \\
\text{And spreads Salvation all around.}
\end{align*}
\]

(116:2)

All the commentators on the eucharistic doctrine of Charles Wesley have brought out, in one way or another, this aspect of the influence on it of the sacramental theology of the epistle to the Hebrews. One of the most detailed expositions of this connection is to be found in John Tyson’s doctoral thesis quoted earlier.8 What seems, however, to have escaped the notice of the commentators is that Wesley goes much farther in his use of the sacramental categories of Hebrews than the overall sacramental relationship between eternity and time.

In three places in Hebrews (6:19–20, 9:3, and 10:20) there is explicit mention of the καταπέτασμα, that is, the veil which, in the Temple in Jerusalem, separated the Holy of Holies (‘Αγια Αγιων) from the other sacred space for sacrifice which, in 9:3, Hebrews designates as ‘Αγιος, translated by the Authorized Version (henceforth AV) as “the sanctuary.” Hebrews 6:19–20 compares Jesus’s paschal going from this world to the Father to the once-a-year entry of the High Priest into the Holy of Holies beyond the καταπέτασμα. This comparison puts the all-sufficient sacrifice of Jesus into a sacramental relationship with the Old Testament sacrifices. The shedding of blood in the latter was, in itself, radically incapable of washing away sin. The shed blood of Jesus, however, as an eternal reality, transcending all time and space, retroactively gives a certain efficacy to the Old

7 G. Osborn, The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley (hereafter designated as PW followed by volume and page number: 3:204).
8 See Charles Wesley’s Theology of the Cross.
Testament shedding of blood, which thus becomes a kind of sacramental figure, not only pointing forward towards the perfect sacrifice of Christ, but also communicating a real foretaste of its merits. In the sacramental perspective of Hebrews, Old Testament sacrifice can thus become a model of the here and now connection between the eternal pleading of the shed blood of Jesus in the presence of the Father and the earthly Eucharistic table. Stanza 2 of Hymn 127 puts it this way:

Did They tow’rd the Altar turn
  Their Hopes their Heart and Face,
Whence the Victim’s Blood was borne
  Into the Holiest Place?
Toward the cross we still* look up,
  Tow’rd the Lamb for Sinners given,
Thro’ thine only Death we hope
  To find our Way to Heaven.

It is that little word “still” which expresses Wesley’s wish that we make an explicit connection between Israelite hope, made concrete in blood sacrifice, and our own lifting of our eyes in hope to Jesus, in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Hebrews 10:20 enables us to go much further. The AV reads: “By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh . . . .” Here the καταπέτασμα is not the separation between earthbound ritual, whether Old Testament sacrifice or New Testament Eucharist, and the heavenly Jesus pleading before the Father. It has now become the very flesh of Jesus. Even as the Israelite High Priest passed, with blood of the sacrificial victim, beyond the veil into the Holy of Holies, so Jesus, by the sacrificial shedding of his blood, passes through and beyond his mortal flesh. The mortal flesh of Jesus enabled him to penetrate the lowly realities of our earthbound existence with his Divine Presence. Yet in the very act of unveiling that Presence to us, his flesh must needs veil it. On the cross and in death, that fleshly veil was rent. Hence the synoptic gospels synchronize the death of Jesus with the rending of the καταπέτασμα in the Temple.

Are we men able to see through that veil to what is beyond? Wesley answers in the affirmative:

Sinners, approach, the Lamb is slain,
  And lo, the veil is rent in twain,
The heavenly sanctuary true
  Is now exposed to mortal view.

(PW 11:90–1; commentary on Mark 15:38)

*Italics added.
Not only do we view the heavenly sanctuary, but we go up into it through the opening in the flesh of Jesus:

His Flesh is rent, the Living Way
Is open'd to Eternal Day,
And lo, thro' Him we pass to Heaven!

(Hymn 124:3,4–6)

Rent is the sacred flesh of Him
Whose death does every soul redeem;
He made the new and living way
Which leads to everlasting day,
That all mankind alike forgiven
Might pass through Jesus' wounds to heaven.

(PW 11:91; commentary on Mark 15:38)

How is all this possible? This time Wesley’s answer is that all this reality, the “substance” of it, as he puts it, is given to us sacramentally in the Eucharist:

Those Feeble Types and Shadows Old
Are all in Thee the Truth fulfill'd,
And thro' this Sacrament we hold
The Substance* in our Hearts reveal'd.

(Hymn 123:3,1–4)

Or again:

Honour the Means Ordain'd by Thee,
The great Unbloody Sacrifice,
The deep Tremendous Mystery;
Thyself in our inlighten'd† Eyes
Now in the Broken Bread make known,
And shew us Thou art all our own.

(Hymns for Our Lord's Resurrection, 6:6)

We dwell in Jesus, and Jesus in us, in such a way that love gives us eyes to see this love of Jesus for us. As God is love, the heavenly realities really are ours in substance:

Inkindle now the heavenly Zeal,
And make thy Mercy known,
And give our Pardon'd Souls to feel
That God and Love are One.

(Hymn 29:4)

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*Italics added.
†Italics added.
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It is not without good reason that in the 1780 *Collection*, the most quoted text of Hildebrandt's "biblical *summa*" is Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (The objective genitive "faith of" etc. . . , which is a literal AV translation from the Greek, here means "faith in"). Doubtless there is Luther's influence on Wesley's predilection for this text. But, in the context of a theology of love, it takes on a much richer meaning. In particular there can be no true experience of the love of Jesus with the "enlightened eyes" of the sacramental grace, without sharing in the way in which Jesus has manifested this love, that is in his cross:

Fain we would be like to Thee,
   Suffer with Our Lord beneath:
Grant us full Conformity,
   Plunge us deep into thy Death.

(Hymn 154:3)

Throughout the whole collection of eucharistic hymns, Wesley is saying to us what St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Corinthians 2:2—another text which figures in the "biblical *summa*"). And here Wesley means by knowledge what St. Paul, with the whole of Scripture, means by it: knowing in a shared living experience.

This explains the almost paradoxical way in which certain hymns of the collection treat the resurrection narratives of the gospels. Hymn 55 invites us to go beyond the experience of the two disciples, Peter and John, running to the tomb, with expectancy not yet transformed into living faith. We do not approach the eucharistic signs as a tomb from which Jesus is absent. "'Tis not a dead external Sign / Which here my Hopes require" (v. 1,1–2). We come to them as containing the living power of the Divine Love of Jesus: "The living Power of Love Divine / In Jesus I desire" (v. 1,3–4). So we are swift in our running as the two disciples were: "Swift, as their rising Lord to find / The two Disciples ran, / I seek the Saviour of Mankind" (v. 3,1–3); but our state of mind is not uncertainty as to what we shall find: "Nor shall I seek in vain" (3, 4). But what do we find? Not the risen Jesus, but the Jesus of Calvary. Or rather, it was to Calvary that we were being directed in the first place, because it is first and foremost with Calvary that the Eucharist brings us face to face: "Come all who long this Face to see / That did our Burden bear / Hasten to Calvary with me, [Wesley's italics] / And we shall find Him there" (stanza 4).

That is why the sacramental veil is not taken away. In faith, we can see through the rent flesh of Jesus to the heavenly sanctuary and know that God is love; but we cannot put this rent flesh aside, because it is the absolute proof to us, in our weak earthbound condition, that Jesus really does bring us all the love of
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God. In the sacrament of the Eucharist, we go through the veil of the rent flesh of Jesus to the point of being intimately united with the love of God; but the sacramental veil is never put on one side either because, in our weakness once again, we would be unable to bear the “weight” of love’s glory: “That heavenly Life in Christ conceal’d / These earthen Vessels could not bear” (Hymn 101:2,1–2). Yet eucharistic union with Jesus is a most unspeakable, heavenly experience.

The Part which now we find reveal’d
No Tongue or Angels can declare.
(Hymn 101:2,3–4)

It is the veiled unveiling of love’s glory. Should this not, therefore, be real presence?