

Hymns on the Lord's Supper
250 Years

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With Eloquence in Speech and Song

Anglican Reflections on the Eucharistic Hymns (1745) of John and Charles Wesley

J. Neil Alexander*

Lesser Feasts and Fasts, the calendar of commemorations used in The Episcopal Church, assigns to the lesser feast of John and Charles Wesley (March 3) the following collect:

Lord God, who didst inspire thy servants John and Charles Wesley with burning zeal for the sanctification of souls, and didst endow them with eloquence in speech and song: Kindle in thy Church, we beseech thee, such fervor, that those whose faith has cooled may be warmed, and that those who have not known thy Christ may turn to him and be saved; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.¹

This collect is certainly not one of the more inspired prayers in the Anglican liturgical tradition. It is a prayer sadly lacking any element of thanksgiving, traditionally a principal element in the church's witness to the living faith of those who have died in Christ. The prayer's petition to "warm up" those who have "cooled down" in the faith is, I suspect, a near-charming and irresistible reference to Aldersgate. But the Wesleys' eloquence in speech and song—John in speech and Charles in song is perhaps the intent—captures not only their faithful efforts to secure the tradition that was their inheritance, but their struggle to enable that tradition to live and flourish in their own day, and to be advanced with integrity for the benefit of those who were to come after them. It is perhaps that aspect of the lives of the Wesleys—their respect for the tradition that shaped them, their desire that the tradition prosper for the sake of the gospel, and their heartfelt yearning to reform that tradition from within—that will guarantee in perpetuity a place for them in the hearts of Anglicans.

Your gracious invitation to read a paper on the eucharistic hymns of John and Charles Wesley from an Anglican perspective seemed, at the time, a great deal more straightforward than it has turned out to be. My immediate thought was to place the Wesleys, particularly John, in the context of the patristic revival in Anglicanism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and to demonstrate, at least suggestively, how dependent are the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, 1745, on that literature with which both the Wesley's and Daniel Brevint would have been

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¹*Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, 1991. (New York: Church Hymnal Corp.) 159. Charles Wesley died on March 29, 1788 and John Wesley died on March 2, 1791. The Episcopal Church commemorates them on March 3, the date nearest the death of John that is open in the calendar. March 2 is kept as the commemoration of Chad, the 7th century bishop of Lichfield.

thoroughly familiar. I only recently discovered that Professor Wainwright in his characteristically detailed and insightful fashion did precisely that last year.² But I am emboldened by the admonitions of Robert Taft, who repeatedly reminds us that scholarship moves forward not because of the generation of new data (“there’s nothing new under heaven”) but by creating new structures of intelligibility for what we already know and by asking new questions.³ So in that spirit, let us proceed.

The eighteenth century is surely the most neglected period in Anglican history and theology. Even the most cursory review of the literature reveals extensive interest and scholarship in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and again in the nineteenth century, but very little in the eighteenth century. In my own institution, we have historians who specialize in early classical Anglicanism and in the Tractarians and the Oxford Movement, but no one claims the eighteenth century. In fact, in informal conversations with my colleagues in the field of Anglican Studies, we could identify scholars who had written about eighteenth-century topics, but no one came immediately to mind that we readily associate with critical study of eighteenth-century sources. Everyone seems to be tidying things up after the seventeenth century, or setting the table for the turmoil of the nineteenth; it’s the century in between. I am sad about this state of affairs because this brief detour into the eighteenth century has shown me what I should have known more clearly, that the eighteenth-century sources have been well trodden by Wesley scholars and those of other disciplines, but those same sources have not received the attention they deserve from scholars who read with Anglican glasses. The reason for this seems obvious: the nineteenth-century experience of Anglicanism—the Tractarians, the Oxford Movement, the Cambridge-Camden Society, the Gothic revival, and nineteenth century romanticism in general—caused in much of Anglicanism a selective return to the formulations of earlier times, particularly those of the “high church” Caroline divines of the seventeenth century, fortified by a greater, though not always accurate, understanding of the early church. For many nineteenth-century Anglicans, especially those influenced by that century’s catholic revival, the eighteenth century and the movements it produced were precisely the problem to be dealt with by, in their minds, getting back to basics.

The impact of all of this is still being felt today. At least among “Scottish Non-Juring American Episcopalians” it is very difficult to get a sufficient distance on our post-Tractarian experience in order to get a quality reading of pre-Tractarian sources. It is always a jolting experience for a new graduate student when he/she

²Geoffrey Wainwright, “Our Elder Brethren Join: The Wesleys’ *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* and the Patristic Revival in England,” *Proceedings of The Charles Wesley Society* 1 (1994), 17–47.

³Robert Taft, S.J., “The Structural Analysis of Liturgical Units: An Essay in Methodology,” *Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding* (Washington: The Pastoral Press, 1984), 151–164.

discovers that the so-called “catholic” eucharistic theology of the Caroline divines still bears many of the marks characteristic of the Protestant theological debates of the sixteenth century; it often breaks their post-Tractarian hearts.

I shall not spend any time reviewing the impact upon the Wesleys of the revival of patristic studies in the Church of England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That material is well-known among you and it has recently received a fresh reading at the hands of Professor Geoffrey Wainwright of the Duke faculty, and Professor Ted Campbell of Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington.⁴ In the last two years, however, several Anglican scholars have given their hand to a reappraisal of eucharistic theology prior to the nineteenth century. John Booty’s long-awaited commentary on Book V of Richard Hooker’s *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* is an essential companion for anyone who wants to understand the Eucharist in Anglicanism.⁵ A 1993 work by Dr. Christopher Cocksworth entitled *Evangelical Eucharistic Thought in the Church of England*⁶ is a careful study of the role played by Evangelicals in the debates over eucharistic theology and practice from the sixteenth century to the present. In 1994, Dr. Kenneth Stevenson, who is on this very day being ordained Bishop of the Diocese of Portsmouth, England, published a study of the eucharistic theology of the Caroline divines under the title *Covenant of Grace Renewed*.⁷ It is the first work in decades by an Anglican that has given significant treatment to Daniel Brevint. Also in 1994, Archbishop Henry McAdoo published a brief, but important, study of Brevint and the Wesleys.⁸ And earlier this year, McAdoo and Stevenson jointly published *The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Anglican Tradition*,⁹ a work in which the Caroline divines and Daniel Brevint play an important role.

I trot out these names and titles for two reasons. First, I want to acknowledge my dependence upon these sources in the preparation of this study. Trying to discover what, if anything, current scholarship might be offering to the discussion at hand, was clearly an important part of my preparation. But more to the point, I want to suggest that we are, one hopes, at the beginning of a resurgence of interest in the sources of Anglican eucharistic theology prior to the nineteenth century.

⁴Ted A. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Change* (Nashville: Abingdon/Kingswood, 1991).

⁵John E. Booty, “Introduction,” (Vol. VI, Part 1) 183–231; and “Commentary,” (Vol. VI, Part 2) 653–832, in W. Speed Hill, ed. et. al, *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker VI* (Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1993).

⁶Christopher J. Cocksworth, *Evangelical Eucharistic Thought in the Church of England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁷Kenneth Stevenson, *Covenant of Grace Renewed: A Vision of the Eucharist in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Dart, Longman, and Todd, 1994).

⁸Henry Robert McAdoo, “A Theology of the Eucharist: Brevint and the Wesleys,” *Theology* 97 (July/August 1994), 245–256.

⁹H. R. McAdoo and Kenneth Stevenson, *The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Anglican Tradition* (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1995).

Even Daniel Brevint, whose influence upon the Wesleys has been well-known among you for some time, by comparison to his contemporaries, is relatively unknown among Anglicans. (This latter point is not only supported by a review of the literature, but in an unscientific poll conducted in the last month or so, I have repeatedly inquired of Anglican historians, theologians, graduate students, and others well-read in the sources, asking, "What can you tell me about Daniel Brevint?" Without exception I received the reply, "Daniel who?") Even so standard a work as C. W. Dugmore's *Eucharistic Doctrine in England from Hooker to Waterland*,¹⁰ published in 1942, never once mentions Daniel Brevint.

It is important, therefore, to look into this recent Anglican literature on Daniel Brevint and seventeenth-century eucharistic theology in England. Have the scholars mentioned above brought any precision to our understanding of Brevint as one of the principal links between the Caroline divines and the eucharistic theology of the Wesleys?

I am confident that the main lines of Brevint's biography are known to the members of this Society, but it is important to read a few notes into the record. Daniel Brevint was born in the Channel Islands, a territory greatly influenced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by the French Reformed (Huguenot). Even after Elizabeth I placed the parishes in the Channel Islands under the direct control of the Diocese of Winchester, it was not until after the Restoration that "the religion of the realm and the Book of Common Prayer" was fully established there. In addition to having Huguenot parents, Brevint took his first degree in philosophy at the French Protestant University in Saumur (1624). Some years later (1636), he was admitted to Oxford and in spite of haggling from Archbishop Laud about the credibility of his French academic credentials, he received the master's degree (1638). After a short stay at Oxford as a university fellow, he retreated first to the Channel Islands, and eventually back to France in 1650/1651 to escape the Civil War. He found refuge in the Anglican community in Paris where he became acquainted with the exiled Charles II and became a good friend (some would say protégé) of John Cosin, the future Bishop of Durham who will come to play such an important role in the formation of the 1662 Prayer Book. It was during his Paris exile that Brevint received holy orders at the hands of Thomas Sydserf, the exiled Scottish bishop of Galloway, the diaconate and the priesthood being conferred in the same rite.¹¹

These particular aspects of Brevint's life are important for the interpretation of his work. Although Brevint will return to England and enjoy the support of the crown, first as a parish priest and prebendary of Durham and later as Dean of Lincoln, his French Reformed background and Protestant university education

¹⁰C. W. Dugmore, *Eucharistic Doctrine in England from Hooker to Waterland* (London: SPCK, 1942).

¹¹Stevenson, *Covenant of Grace Renewed*, 85. I acknowledge my dependence upon his reconstruction of the details of Brevint's background and relationship with John Cosin.

continued to be a moderating influence on his thought throughout his life. Brevint's contempt for Roman Catholicism is well known by way of his polemical writings and his uneasiness with the theology of more radical Protestantism can also be documented. While taking his first degree Brevint would have come into contact with a group of French Calvinist scholars who were attempting to revise and expand the eucharistic thought of John Calvin on the basis of the rapidly expanding knowledge of the ancient sources. This group, led most notably by Philippe du Plessis-Mornay, held that the Eucharist could be a sacrifice as long as it was understood to be "a commemoration of the cross, the sacrifice of thanksgiving and intercession, the offering of the gifts, and the sacrifice of the worshipers"—all themes that make their way into the work of Brevint, all themes that struggle to find a balance between the hard objectivity of post-Tridentine Roman Catholicism and the soft subjectivity of the more radical parties of Protestantism. (It is important to note here that the work of members of this same group also influenced others in England, a fact particularly visible in the work of Jeremy Taylor.)

At this point, let us backtrack for just a moment and examine Brevint's relationship with John Cosin, his fellow exile in Paris. Cosin was roughly twenty years Brevint's elder and most of Cosin's personal history is associated with the diocese of Durham. He moved through the ranks from domestic and hospital chaplaincy, to parishes small and large, and finally to become Archdeacon of Durham East. Bishop (not yet Archbishop) William Laud recommended Cosin to be the master of ceremonies at the coronation of Charles I (1626). That was the first of several liturgical extravaganzas orchestrated by Cosin that made a positive impression on the crown. Cosin's pre-exilic reputation as the liturgical amateur of Durham included, in the minds of his antagonists, such detestable enormities as "comely and large surplices with wide and large sleeves," copious copes, fully sung Prayer Book services including the choral rendition of the ordinary, and the restoration of a second ambo from which to read the prayers of the liturgy, ostensibly to dilute the Puritan emphasis on preaching associated with a singular pulpit.¹² It was, however, Cosin's obsession with candles that might well be regarded as his pre-exilic claim to fame. Durham's 1628 celebration of Candlemas (February 2) so outraged the Puritan Peter Smart that in July of the same year he was still so angry that he both preached about it and filed a formal complaint with Parliament. In the sermon, Smart wrote:

On Candlemas Day last, Mr Cosins, in renewing that Popish ceremony of burning candles in the honour of Our Lady, busied himself from two on-the-clock in the afternoon till four in climbing long ladders to stick up wax candles in the said Cathedral Church. The number of all of the candles burnt that evening was 220, besides 16 torches, 60 of those burning tapers and torches standing upon or near the high altar.¹³

¹²Stevenson, *Covenant of Grace Renewed*, 88.

What Smart seems to have missed, according to Kenneth Stevenson, is that in spite of appearances (and a truly passionate love of candles!) Cosin had a moderating influence upon the celebration of Candlemas, if one holds in mind certain comparisons: the service for which Cosin was climbing the ladder in preparation was no doubt evensong, not the Eucharist which would have been the decided preference of the strongly catholic camp. Furthermore, it is Cosin who seems to be responsible for the shift in emphasis in the Anglican liturgical tradition from the feast of the purification of the blessed virgin Mary, to the feast of the presentation of Jesus in the Temple, a change that was formally executed by Cosin during the preparation of the 1662 Prayer Book.

Whatever Cosin's catholic leanings, particularly with respect to liturgy and ritual, a decade or so in exile seems surely to have had a moderating influence upon him. Perhaps it was just maturity, or simply political prowess, but the John Cosin we see in 1660 has calmed down considerably from earlier years. He is still a reformed catholic, in the best sense, and he certainly carries that banner (or was it a candle?) into the negotiations with the Puritans and others that will produce the 1662 Prayer Book. He continues to be a man very anxious about the Puritan agenda, and given his loyalty to the crown, that anxiety probably has as much to do with politics as it does with liturgy and ritual.

This detour into the life of John Cosin is important if, in fact, his relationship with Daniel Brevint was as close as is often presumed. Cosin was both the presenter and preacher at Brevint's ordination in Paris, and upon their return to England, Brevint succeeded Cosin as the incumbent of Durham's Brancepeth parish and served Durham Cathedral during Cosin's episcopate. In the years of their close, perhaps daily association, for a decade in Paris and for another in Durham, Cosin and Brevint seem to have matured together into a balanced, reformed catholic position. Both remained anti-Roman to the day they died and at the same time possessed a fear of more radical Protestantism. One can almost hear late night conversations between the two of them: Cosin expounding the virtues of a liturgically rich reformed catholicism very much within the mainstream of the Church of England, and Brevint thinking out loud about how much his thinking had changed since his days as a minister in the French Reformed Church. A most significant learning from recent Anglican scholarship on Daniel Brevint is that, if we are going to know him, we must know John Cosin as well. Cosin is known among Anglicans mainly for his liturgical leadership at Durham and as a major player in the preparation of the 1662 Book. With a few exceptions, his devotional and theological writings, and other aspects of his life, have not received the scholarly attention they deserve; and while I am optimistic that

¹³Cited in Stevenson, *Covenant of Grace Renewed*, 90.

such work is beginning, I remain convinced that until we more thoroughly unpack John Cosin, we shall know Daniel Brevint only in a preliminary way.

At this point it is tempting to launch into an analysis of Brevint's treatise, *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*, and compare its structure and content with that of the Wesleys' *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, 1745. But such comparative work is very well trodden territory and little would be served by rehearsing those findings again, as important as they are. The Wesleys' attachment of an abridgment of Brevint's treatise to their collection of eucharistic hymns, their organization of the collection following Brevint's structure, and most importantly, the way the Wesleys carried forth many of Brevint's themes in the devotional poetry of the hymns, represents data that is just about as secure as it gets.

So perhaps there is another question that should be raised: does the treatise of Brevint, in fact, represent an accurate synthesis of late seventeenth-century Anglican eucharistic theology? There appears to be a widespread assumption in the literature that it does, and while there are a number of studies that trace discreet lines of thought, I am unaware of any one work that attempts to provide a comprehensive analysis of Brevint against the background of seventeenth-century theology. Does his work represent simply a compilation of disparate seventeenth-century themes, or is there evidence of development of original thought? Does his work represent only the catholic stream of the seventeenth century, or are there also Protestant, perhaps even Puritan, voices imbedded in his prose that we have failed to see because of our own post-Tractarian biases? And another question, of a different sort, has also been something of an irritant to me: Since the form of the treatise attached to the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* is an abridgment of Brevint's original, has anyone compared the original with the abridgment to determine whether any of the deletions are significant? If the Wesleys excised mostly prosaic clutter, that's one thing; but, other deletions might in fact tell us something rather significant about the thinking of the Wesleys in the mid-1740s. (I suppose it goes without saying that these and many similar questions may be exhaustively covered in literature unavailable to me; I do wish, however, that they had occurred to me sooner.) With those questions and caveats in place, I want to raise, as briefly as possible, two points often raised in the literature on the relationship between Brevint and the Wesleys, and then ask two academically perilous questions that I believe require further exploration.

Most would agree that the central theme of Brevint's treatise is the Eucharist as the meeting place between heaven and earth, the unity of sacrament and sacrifice, God's board and the Heavenly Altar. Archbishop McAdoo has called attention to this theme in other seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century literature.¹⁴ That it had captured the imaginations of many can be noted most easily in the

¹⁴McAdoo, "A Theology of the Eucharist: Brevint and the Wesleys," 246ff. I acknowledge my dependence upon McAdoo's analysis of this material.

frontispiece of (Charles) Wheatley's *A Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer* (2nd ed., 1714). According to McAdoo's description, the drawing illustrates "the communicants kneeling on the chancel floor before the rails of the altar at which the celebrant is consecrating the elements. Above him in a cloud of glory stands the Savior, hands raised before the heavenly altar." The lettering in the halo refers us to the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the 1611 Authorized Version, these passages read:

[Hebrews 9.11]—But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building.

[Hebrews 9.23]—It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

[Hebrews 7.25]—Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Notice how Brevint's text reads almost like a description of the Wheatley illustration:

So let us ever turn our eyes and our hearts toward Jesus our eternal High Priest, who is gone up into the true sanctuary, and doth there continually present both his own body and blood before God, and (as Aaron did) all the true Israel of God in a *memorial*. In the meantime we, *beneath in the church*, present to God his body and blood as a *memorial*, that under that shadow of his cross, and figure of the Sacrifice, we may present ourselves in very deed before him. [VI.3]

And, of course, this same picture can be detected in the *Hymns*:

- Hymn 124: 2. Yet may we celebrate below,
 And daily thus thine Offering shew
 Expos'd before thy Father's Eyes;
 In this tremendous Mystery
 Present Thee bleeding on the Tree
 Our everlasting Sacrifice.
- Hymn 125: 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.
- Hymn 126: 1. Father to Him we turn our Face
 Who did for All atone,
 And worship tow'rd thy Holy Place,
 And seek Thee in thy Son,

2. Him the true Ark and Mercy-seat
By Faith we call to mind,
Faith in the Blood atoning yet
For us and All Mankind.

4. The Lamb his Father now surveys,
As on this Altar slain,
Still bleeding and imploring Grace
For every Soul of Man.

The holy sacrament [writes Brevint] is the *table* purposely set to receive those mercies that are sent down from his *altar*. . . . Here then I wait at the Lord's table which . . . *offers* me the richest gift . . . the Lord Jesus *crucified* . . . bless thine ordinances, and make it an *effectual* means of thy grace Come in thou eternal priest; but cleanse thy house at thy coming. [IV8]

This is beautifully captured by the Wesleys:

- Hymn 43:
1. Saviour, and can it be
That Thou should dwell with me?
From thy high and lofty Throne,
Throne of Everlasting Bliss,
Will thy Majesty stoop down
To so mean an House as This?

 3. Yet come Thou heavenly Guest,
And purify my Breast,
Come Thou great and glorious King,
While before thy Cross I bow,
With Thyself Salvation bring,
Cleanse the House by entering Now.

This eucharistic intersection between heaven and earth is not only Brevint's "master theme," (to use McAdoo's apt phrase), but it is a theme that runs consistently through the texts of the seventeenth century: it is there in the sermons of Lancelot Andrewes, in the *Mensa Mystica* of Simon Patrick, and, prior to Brevint, gets its most eloquent formulation from the pen of Jeremy Taylor. Note the following excerpt from Taylor's *The Worthy Communicant*:

For when Christ was consecrated on the cross and became our high-priest, having reconciled us to God by the death of the cross, he became infinitely gracious in the eyes of God, and was admitted to the celestial and eternal priesthood in heaven; where in virtue of the cross He intercedes for us, and represents an eternal sacrifice in the heavens on our behalf. That He is a priest in heaven, appears in the large discourses and direct affirmatives of St Paul; that there is no other sacrifice to be offered but that on the cross, it is evident, because 'He hath but once appeared in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;' and therefore since it is necessary that he hath something to offer so long as he is a priest, and there is no other sacrifice but that of Himself offered upon the cross; it follows that Christ

in heaven perpetually offers and represents that sacrifice to His heavenly Father, and in virtue of that obtains all good things for His Church.

Now what Christ does in heaven, He hath commended us to do on earth, that is, to represent His Death, to commemorate this sacrifice, by humble prayer and thankful record; and by faithful manifestations and joyful Eucharist to lay it before the eyes of our heavenly Father, so ministering His priesthood, and doing according to His commandment and His example; the church being the image of heaven, the priest the minister of Christ; the holy table being a copy of the celestial altar, and the eternal sacrifice of the lamb slain from the beginning of the world being always the same; it bleeds no more after the finishing of it on the cross; but it is wonderfully represented in heaven, and graciously represented here; by Christ's action there, by His commandment here.¹⁵

While not everyone's prose (or vision of the priesthood of Christ) soars to quite the same level as Jeremy Taylor's, even those of less-mediatorial sympathies would have known well the Prayer Book collect for the feast of the Lord's Ascension:

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe thy only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

This picture of the Eucharist, as the intersection of heaven and earth, visible in the writings of a number of seventeenth-century writers, does in fact, in my judgment, receive its fullest expression from Daniel Brevint. It is, of course, not Brevint's only theme. Almost inseparable from it, and visible already in the texts cited, is Brevint's retrieval of Eucharist as sacrifice and the relationship of Eucharist as sacrifice to Eucharist as sacrament. Also intertwined with the Eucharist as sacrament and sacrifice is, of course, Brevint's concern for the nature of Christ's presence. One can, for example, detect the three of these themes coming together in Brevint's words:

His body and blood have everywhere, but especially in this sacrament, *a true and real presence*, when he offered himself upon earth . . . and since he is gone up, he sends down to earth the graces that spring continually both from his everlasting sacrifice, and from the continual intercession that attends it.

The maddening thing, at this point, is that Brevint is unwilling to get back into the theological debates of the sixteenth century about the manner of Christ's presence. But here again, as a man of his time, he stands in a secure tradition. It was clearly of deep concern to the Catholic tradition within seventeenth-century Anglicanism to speak of "the true and real presence" of Christ in the sacrament, but unlike their fifteenth- and sixteenth-century forebears, they were not going to sharpen their philosophical tools by debating "the shelf life" of the real presence. "*Mysterium est*," writes Jeremy Taylor, "it is a sacrament and a mystery: sensible instruments consigning spiritual graces."¹⁶ And Brevint follows in his train:

¹⁵Cited in McAdoo and Stevenson, *The Mystery of the Eucharist*, 153–154.

¹⁶Cited in McAdoo, "A Theology of the Eucharist," 251.

I come then to God's altar, with a full persuasion, that these words, *this is my body*, promise me more than a *figure*; that this holy banquet is not a bare *memorial* only, but may actually convey . . . many blessings to me Indeed, in what *manner* this is done, I know not; it is enough for me to admire. (IV.3)

As Archbishop McAdoo has observed, "Brevint is in the Anglican tradition from Andrewes onwards through such as Bramhall, Thorndike, and Taylor in refusing any mandatory definition of what Hooker calls 'the manner How.'"¹⁷ And, of course, the eucharistic hymns of the Wesleys stand very much in this same tradition. So strong is this idea in Hymn 57 that it is worth quoting in full: (*italics added*)

1. O the Depth of Love Divine,
Th' Unfathomable Grace!
Who shall say how Bread and Wine
God into Man conveys?
How the Bread his Flesh imparts,
How the Wine transmits his Blood,
Fills his Faithful Peoples Hearts
With all the Life of God!
2. Let the wisest Mortal shew
How we the Grace receive:
Feeble Elements bestow
A Power not theirs to give:
Who explains the Wondrous Way?
How thro' these the Virtue came?
These the Virtue did convey,
Yet still remain the same.
3. How can heavenly Spirits rise
By earthly matter fed,
Drink herewith Divine Supplys
And eat immortal Bread?
Ask the Father's Wisdom *how*;
Him that did the Means ordain
Angels round our Altars bow
To search it out, in vain.
4. Sure and real is the Grace,
The Manner be unknown;
Only meet us in thy Ways
And perfect us in One,
Let us taste the heavenly Powers,
Lord, we ask for Nothing more;
Thine to bless, 'Tis only Ours
To wonder, and adore.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 252.

I believe it is fair, on the basis of this one very narrow trek through the sources, to concur with what seems to be the conventional wisdom that understands Daniel Brevint as a worthy representative of the catholic vision of the Eucharist in seventeenth-century Anglicanism. But let me hasten to add, once again, that there is much work still to be done on Brevint and his connection to the works of those who went before him and those who were his influential contemporaries. I am thus far unsatisfied that Brevint's work has received the sort of "text-grinding" in the Puritan and Huguenot sources comparable to the work that has been done on the texts of the Caroline divines of the catholic sort.

At this point, I shall change gears a bit, and do what is perhaps more characteristic of a liturgiologist, that is, address the topic before us from the standpoint of the Book of Common Prayer. This approach is, of course, not new, and there is a good bit of literature that places the eucharistic hymns of the Wesleys in their Prayer Book context. In my survey of this literature, I have been fascinated to discover that in several cases the comparisons have been alongside a Prayer Book eucharistic structure, generally unidentified, but presumably that of 1662. In a couple of other cases, I have noted that the comparisons were against a liturgical structure similar to the aborted 1637 Scottish Book (or one of the "amplified editions" of that text that were the "Wee Bookies" utilized by the Non-Jurors en route to the Scottish Liturgy of 1764, and eventually the first American Prayer Book of 1789), but nearly all of the references are simply to "the Prayer Book" as though that is some sort of generic text that has remained unchanged.

Everyone knows, of course, that liturgical historians can get real fixated on the smallest of details and can ruin an otherwise pleasant party. But it does make a difference if one is comparing the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, 1745, with the Prayer Book, which Prayer Book one is talking about. It is not helpful to refer to the Wesleys' fondness for "the *epiclesis* of the Prayer Book" when, in fact, the 1662 Prayer Book did not (and does not) have one. Nor, is it helpful to suggest that John Wesley was so fascinated with the *epiclesis* that he made sure to add one to the 1784 Prayer Book he prepared for the United States. I do not consider myself an expert on Wesleyan *epicleses*, but I have consulted Professor James White's new edition of Wesley's 1784 Prayer Book and for the life of me, I cannot find an *epiclesis*.¹⁸

And on the subject of the anamnesis and oblation: first, it makes a great deal of difference whether one sees them as inseparable parts of a unified liturgical syntax, that is, that oblation is the natural consequence of anamnesis; and second, it is a matter of no small magnitude whether the anamnesis and oblation are parts of the whole action of eucharistic praying, whether or not (and in what sense) one understands the institution narrative to be consecratory. Then, there is also the

¹⁸*John Wesley's Prayer Book: The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America.* With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary by James F. White (Cleveland: OSL Publications, 1991).

structural relationship between the anamnesis/oblation and the *epiclesis*. For example, in 1662, the “prayer of consecration” ends with the institution narrative, followed by the “Amen,” after which the elements are delivered to the people. The so-called “anamnesis and oblation” follows the reception of the elements. There is no *epiclesis* before or after the reception of communion. This stands in contrast to other Prayer Book structures in which the anamnesis and oblation follow the institution narrative, and in which the position of the *epiclesis* is before the institution narrative (as in 1549) or after the oblation of the gifts of bread and wine (as in the Scottish Liturgy of 1764 and the first American Prayer Book of 1789).

The fact that any number of the Wesleys’ *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* (1745) can be traced, either thematically or textually, to the 1662 Prayer Book, is in fact, very useful. But far more important, I believe, would be an analysis of the Wesley hymns from the standpoint of the rich liturgical ferment going on among the Non-Jurors. We know, of course, that early on both of the Wesleys had plenty of alliances with the Non-Jurors, and at least up to the publication of the eucharistic hymns in 1745, seem to have been captivated by their general theological orientations. This liturgical research and ferment, the work of Thomas Deacon on *Apostolic Constitutions VIII*¹⁹ and of Thomas Rattray on *The Liturgy of St. James*,²⁰ to mention only two representative works, seems clearly to have influenced the Wesleys in their preparation of *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*.

But again, let me emphasize the structural implications of these questions: the fact that one finds textual or thematic similarities between an epicletic text from the Prayer Book and a Wesley hymn that invokes the Holy Spirit is only the beginning of the story. Since there is no *epiclesis* in 1662, then the Wesleys are perhaps interested in the *epiclesis* before the institution narrative in the 1549 Book (a Book for which the Non-Jurors had no small degree of affection), or perhaps they were interested in the restoration of post-anamnesis/oblation position for the *epiclesis*, an issue that was very much on the front burner during the days of their Non-Juror associations. Asked another way, is the *epiclesis* the Wesleys have in mind structurally before the institution narrative (as in 1549), or are they anticipating what will eventually be the solution in the Prayer Books of Scotland (1764) and America (1789), that is, placing the *epiclesis* not only after the institution narrative, but after the anamnesis and the oblation of the bread and wine as well? On the basis of Hymn 72, the “*epiclesis* hymn” quoted most often in the literature, such a question seems impossible to answer:

¹⁹Thomas Deacon, *A Compleat Collection of Devotions* (London, 1734); see also *A Full, True, and Comprehensive View of Christianity* (London, 1747).

²⁰Thomas Rattray, *The Ancient Liturgy of the Church of Jerusalem, being the Liturgy of St. James* (London, 1744).

1. Come, Holy Ghost, thine Influence shed,
And realize the Sign,
Thy Life infuse into the Bread,
And 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.

But in the stanzas of several other hymns, one sees structural similarities that are closer to patterns emerging among the Non-Jurors than to the 1662 Prayer Book itself. For example (from Hymn 3):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Then let us go, and take, and eat*
The heavenly everlasting Meat,
For Fainting Souls prepar'd;
Fed with the living Bread Divine
Discern we in the sacred Sign
The Body of the Lord. | <i>Institution Narrative</i> |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Then let our Faith adore the Lamb
To day as yesterday the same,
In thy great Offering join,
Partake the Sacrificial Food,
And eat thy Flesh and drink thy Blood,
And live forever Thine. | <i>Anamnesis</i>

<i>Oblation</i>
<i>(The result</i>
<i>of) Epiclesis</i>
<i>Doxology</i> |

It does not require too much imagination to see in the structure of these two stanzas the institution narrative, anamnesis, oblation, and (the result of) *epiclesis*, and even doxology, in that order.

Most of you, of course, know both the hymns and the entire Wesley corpus far better than I ever shall, and you would consequently have a better sense about whether this suggestion is useful or simply the product of an over-active imagination. But in either case, I hope it suggests an important point: textual comparisons that pay attention only to echoes in language (words) and fail to pay sufficient attention to ritual structures into which that language is placed, may well be missing the more important point. An *epiclesis*—whether single, double, or split—is not *just* an *epiclesis*. Quite apart from the specific formulation of the words, the *position* of the *epiclesis* within the liturgical sacramental syntax of the total eucharistic action tells one at least as much about what is believed to be happening sacramentally as the precise meanings of the words themselves.

The Anglican and Wesleyan traditions, because of their common heritage, must often tolerate with grace the insinuations from others—particularly those of

*Boldface added by this author.

the confessional traditions—for not having theological positions than can be pinned-down with philosophical sophistication and precision. Although I would be inclined to debate what they *really* mean by that, it is true that we do not do as well as others when it comes to a tidy history of doctrine, nor do we excel quite as well as, say, Roman Catholics or Lutherans, when it comes to creating “agreed statements” on fine points of doctrine and practice. At this point in my life, I prefer to embrace this as a strength, not as a weakness. I find it helpful to look back at the theological inheritance of the seventeenth century, for example, and see the struggle between the Caroline divines of a sacramental-liturgical persuasion and their colleagues of more Puritan convictions, and honor both sides as part of our common history—both sides deeply committed to the pursuit of the truth as it was known to them, not as truth *per se*, but as the love of God in Jesus Christ. That there needed to be, indeed *had* to be, an eighteenth-century evangelical revival is not to be regarded as an unfortunate historical blemish, but, in fact, as a period of great strength that, despite our sad divisions, left us all stronger and more deeply committed to the gospel “as we have received it,” to paraphrase the Prayer Book. And in time, there *had* to be a catholic revival—complete with little parish churches that deep in their hearts wanted to be great cathedrals with pointed windows, stained glass, chasubles, incense, and all that—to irritate us, and remind us, that life in God is not limited to the parameters of one’s own faith experience.

Bishop Stevenson has suggested that the *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*, indeed the entire corpus of Wesley hymnody, might well be understood as a *supplement* to the Prayer Book tradition, not only to enhance it, but also to provide for what may be lacking.²¹ I suspect that the point the bishop is making is that there are limits to the ability of speculative theology to capture the wonders and graces of the Holy Eucharist, so the church turns first to prayer and then to song—each with its own language and affections—in an effort to give voice to the unspeakable mystery of it all.

Dr. Cocksworth expressed it this way:

On one level (generally corresponding with his writings), Wesley’s doctrine may be stated quite precisely. However, on another level (generally corresponding with the hymns), the reality of the eucharistic mystery cannot be fully known by a spotlight on one or two systematic points; it is too diverse and complex—like a beam refracted through a prism into several colourful rays.²²

There was a time in my own theological formation when uncertainty was an intolerable burden; but by God’s mercy I have grown out of that, and now prefer to wallow around and delight in the rich ambiguity of it all. I have always suspected that is what Charles had in mind when he wrote:

²¹McAdoo and Stevenson, *The Mystery of the Eucharist*, 172.

²²Cocksworth, *Evangelical Eucharistic Thought*, 68.

Changed from glory into Glory
Till in Heaven we take our place
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love and praise.