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The Altar and the Cross

The Atonement in Charles Wesley's *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*

Daniel B. Stevick

The slender book that John and Charles Wesley issued in 1745, *Hymns on the Lord's Supper,* gives their principal statement of sacramental spirituality and doctrine. Yet another theme is interwoven. Neither Charles nor John anywhere gives a fuller account of the atonement than is given in the 166 Communion hymns. Charles Wesley, whom I take to be the author of all but a handful of the hymns, would have held that the two realities, Jesus' cross and the church's altar, cannot be separated. The opening hymn sets the Last Supper within the passion events, remarking that Jesus instituted the Supper "in that sad and memorable night" when he was betrayed (1:1.1). The cross and the Supper were parts of a single redemptive event in history, and they still hold a common significance. Wesley speaks of the bread and wine as "the tokens of his death" (119:3.3), or of his "dying love" (158:1.3), and of the Holy Communion as "the picture of thy passion" (87:1.1), a "sacramental passion" (145:5.4), and the "image of his sacrifice" (118:3.3). Repeatedly Wesley says "now"—the "now" of the sacrament: "Now, Saviour, now thyself reveal" (30:3.3). The sacrament is a present actualization of the atoning deed and a fresh bestowal of its power and benefits (111:1–2). In Wesley's mind, what the cross meant, the sacrament means. It supplies "full atoning grace" (123:4.3).

> Yes, thy Sacrament extends
> All the Blessings of thy Death
> To the Soul that here attends.
> (64:2.1–3)

We might observe that in the hymn collections for occasions in the church year that were written at about the same time as *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* there are books for the Nativity (1745), for Easter (1746), Ascension (1746) and Whitsun (1746), but there is none for Holy Week and Good Friday. One suspects that none was needed. Charles Wesley had declared his mind on the subject of the cross quite fully in the sacramental hymns, which remained in print and in use throughout his lifetime.

It is our purpose here to ask what Charles Wesley thought about the atonement, as evidenced in his principal poetic statement.

The Wesleys challenged many things in eighteenth-century religion, but they did not intend a doctrinal revolt; they nailed no theological manifesto to the door of Christ Church, Oxford. Rather, they sought loyalty to the formularies of their church, often appealing to underplayed emphases in the Articles and Homilies.

The encounter with the Moravians and the unplanned but authoritative experience of the Revival gave them some new proportioning and emphases, to be sure, but in general one does not look in the Wesleys for innovative teachings on the major heads of doctrine. The newness in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* lies not in what is said about the cross, but in the way in which the cross is drawn to the theological and experiential center.

Throughout *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* Jesus is spoken of as "the Crucified." As in Paul and in the Creed, everything concentrates on the passion. Jesus' teaching is barely spoken of; a few healing miracles are mentioned, but as allegories of the fundamental healing from sin brought about by the saving death. But over and over again, Wesley speaks of Jesus' death. Jesus is "our dying Lord" (30:2.3) or "the bleeding Savior" (4:1.2). As Wesley distills it, the gospel story is of one "who was born and was slain to redeem a lost race" (156:1.3). Knowing that he came and that he died—or that he came to die—one knows the essential thing (132:2.4).

Wesley speaks circumstantially, especially in Part I, of Jesus' passion. But Jesus' death was not simply a part of his own biography—the tragic end of a good man. Rather, it was redemptive—an act carried out for others: "Thee, whose blood for us did flow,/Thee who diedst to save thy foe" (12:1.4). Jesus in his passion stood with us, for us, "The blood for our redemption given" (11:3.4–5), ". . . expiring in the sinner's place" (24:1.1). Jesus' death is only truly known from the inside, from the viewpoint of those who stand within its influence. Wesley universalizes the word "Forgive them" that Jesus spoke from the cross, making it a word that he speaks freshly in the sacrament to each communicant (18:2.6; 19; 126:6.3–4).

The sacrament connects the believer now with the past saving event, a connection which Wesley expresses (especially in Part I of the hymns) in what I call his "dramatic presentism." The Supper transports the devout communicant, not to Jesus' meal with the disciples in the Upper Room (which could invite sentimentality), but to the starkness of Calvary. Jesus' cruel death is presented in a vivid, sensory way. In "endless scenes of wonder," we see "our Maker . . . , crucified before our eyes" (21:2.1–4). One beholds Jesus and his tormentors; one hears his cries, one trembles at the earthquake and the darkness; one sees and even feels his blood (7:3; 18:2.1–4; 21:4–6; 22:3.2–4; 26):

> Place us near th' accursed wood
> Where thou didst thy life resign.
> (22:2.1–2)

> As though we every one
> Beneath his cross had stood,
> And seen him heave, and heard him groan,
> And felt his gushing blood.
> (4:3.5–8)

Standing at the crucifixion the communicant can point to "yonder tree"—as though the cross itself were nearby (22:3.5). Through this "sacramental passion," calendar time vanishes; then is now, and now is then. "Jesu's death is ever new;/he whom in ages past they slew/doth still as slain appear" (3:2.4–5).

We must appreciate the paradoxicality of all this. In a largely unadorned, colorless, neo-classical, eighteenth-century church, with plain glass windows and no cross or candles in sight, one looks towards the east end and sees a plain table with only the necessary vessels on it, and a celebrant, wearing a plain white surplice, kneeling at the north end. But devout communicants see more than these things. They see the crucifixion.

'Tis done; the Lord sets to his seal,
  The prayer is heard, the grace is given,
With joy unspeakable we feel
  The Holy Ghost sent down from heaven;
The altar streams with sacred blood,
And all the temple flames with God!
(89:4)

Wesley's vision of the Holy Communion somehow reminds me of William Blake's way of seeing: "What," it will be questioned, "when the Sun rises, do you not see a round disk of fire somewhat like a Guinea?" "Oh no, no, I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.'"[1]

Where did Wesley get his single-minded emphasis on the cross and his remarkable sense of the believer's contemporaneity with it at the Lord's Table? The Mass in the west had for centuries been cross-centered, and the theologies, liturgies, and pieties of the Reformation did little to displace this "staurocentric" emphasis.[2] It was a point of ecumenical agreement that the sacrament put the devout communicant in mind of Calvary. The Holy Communion was suffused not with Easter, but with Good Friday. But such an answer does not go far to point us to Wesley's probable sources. A *theologia crucis* was hardly in vogue in moralistic, rationalistic eighteenth-century England. Wesley was certainly influenced by the Moravian emphasis on the crucified Jesus, and he may have gotten some of the emphasis from Luther. And Luther followed St. Paul who sought to glory only the Cross of his Lord. But the origin of Wesley's *theologia crucis* surely lies not so much in prior written sources, many of which may be untraceable, as in the mystery of what creative passion can do to mix, heighten, and transform the sources at hand. Other people had the sources Charles Wesley had, but no one in eighteenth-century Britain saw the Holy Communion as he saw it.

[1]From Blake's notebook for 1810, quoted here from Michael Davis, *William Blake: A New Kind of Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 133.

[2]The word "staurocentric" was coined by Francis Frost in his paper "The Veiled Unveiling of the Glory of God in the Eucharistic Hymns of Charles Wesley: The Self Emptying Glory of God," in *PCWS* 2(1995): 94.

Neither we nor Wesley can in the matter of the atonement get behind the apostolic witness; all thought on the subject traces to the New Testament and its vocabulary of images for describing what Christ, particularly in his death, has done for alienated humanity. The New Testament images which speak of Christ speak at the same time of humanity renewed—contrasting an old, flawed condition with a new, restored condition. These images, since they are images and not definitions, tend to mingle and pass into one another. They can be true and exact, but as a poem is true and exact. In *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* Wesley uses many of these biblical images, sometimes entering them by a significant word, and often passing quickly from one of them to another. These earliest and still indispensable images of redemption express the church's immediate grasp of an act of grace that comes from God's initiative and transforms human existence, giving "pardon, grace and glory,/peace and power and heaven" (15:2.7f).

The biblical images, like all true images, have a certain opacity or indirectness. They bear witness and suggest; they do not explain, reason or argue. They challenge the mind and point it in certain directions, but they do not in themselves add up to a theory or definition. Let us try to put these unassorted biblical images and poetic terms in some sort of order and ask, on the evidence of *Hymns on the Lord's Supper,* what Charles Wesley thought about the atonement. He did not write discursive theology, but hymns. His thought on the atonement was not original, but used the going doctrinal formulations. His mind in the matter was somewhat eclectic. Yet when he spoke of the cross, he spoke with urgency, focus and passion. His hymns on the cross grew out of his preaching of the cross, and they were validated by the course of the Revival and the experience of the Methodist converts.

Using the essential metaphoric talk of the Bible, with an overlay of church interpretation, what did Charles Wesley say about the atonement?

We may begin to answer by identifying several of the major ways of understanding the mystery of the atonement which find expression in Wesley's *Hymns on the Lord's Supper.*

In *Christus Victor* Gustaf Aulén has identified the earliest and "classic" idiom for speaking of the work of Christ as the "Christus Victor" motif. Human life lies under the thralldom of sin and death and the devil. Humanity was made for freedom, but is everywhere in chains, unable to free itself. It was the work of Christ to enter the human lot and engage these ancient enemies. Paradoxically it was by his very dying that he broke the power of humanity's great oppressors.

Wesley speaks in the idiom of Christ the Conqueror frequently and exultantly, crying "Burst our bonds, and set us free" (20:2.5; also 78:3.2–3); "Come to our relief, come down,/and break the dire Accuser's chain" (41:1.5–6). The Redeemer brings forgiveness and life to those in sin and death (19:1–4; 14:1.8). Celebrating an accomplished redemption, Wesley says, "Sin shall tyrannize no

more,/purg'd its guilt, dissolv'd its power" (164:5.1–2). The "Christus Victor" motif is implied in the Christological use of the exodus story in which God brings the new Israel out of bondage to sin and into glorious freedom. Wesley often pictures Christians as Israelite pilgrims.

> Thou very Pascal Lamb,
> Whose blood for us was shed,
> Through whom we out of Egypt came;
> Thy ransomed people lead.
>
> Throughout the desert way
> Conduct us by thy light,
> Be thou a cooling cloud by day,
> A cheering fire by night.
>
> (51:1, 3)

Under the "Christus Victor" motif we may place the image of "ransom"—the death of Jesus bringing release to the many. The ransom image is not used often in the New Testament, but it is always memorably stated. The Son of Man came to give his life to buy the freedom of humanity in bonds (Mk. 10:45; Mt. 20:28). 1 Timothy 2:6 says (in what is probably a hymn) that Christ "gave himself as a ransom for all." And 1 Peter 1:18 emphasizes the cost by which freedom was secured: "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver or gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." This image has its roots in the Jewish Scriptures in which Israel is the ransomed of the Lord (Isa. 35:10).

Wesley describes Christ's death as a divine act "to purchase life and peace for you" (1:2.2, and see 156:2.3). In Christ the sinner's debt is paid (79:2.3; 119:2.4; 128:2.1). His death is a ransom for forfeited lives (2:3.6; 21:5.4; 52:1.2; 65:1.3; 116:2.5; 124:2.8). The ransoming act of one frees many: "His life to ransom ours is given" (2:4.4). But Wesley does not explain or elaborate the image. Like his New Testament sources, he does not say to whom the ransom was paid or how it became effective; he simply drops the suggestive metaphor, leaving it to do its work in the imagination.

Histories of atonement doctrine sometimes remark that this early Christian "Christus Victor" theme, despite its power, is hardly a "theory of the atonement" at all. Rather, it is a proclamation—the sort of immediate, unreflective statement that gives rise to theory, but that does not raise and answer questions about the death of Christ with any rigor.

Such criticism can seem like a put-down—not a theory; merely proclamation. But the first form of Christian theological statement was the apostolic preaching, from which in time theories arose. One might contend that doctrinal formulation is, or should be, answerable to proclamation—as we want preaching to exhibit good theology. Perhaps I can appeal to a former professor at Drew University,

Edwin Lewis, who was known to explain a theological point and then leaning over the lectern ask "Can you preach that, Gentlemen?" (We were all "gentlemen" at the time.) If the doctrine did not cry out to be preached, the theology was somehow wrong. Something had to be done. So the idea would go back for some fundamental reworking. And then Lewis would present it again, corrected and made vital by the gospel. And again he would ask "And now, Gentlemen, can you preach that?" If it could be—indeed, if it had to be—preached, we were beginning to get the theology right. Preachability was a test of good doctrine.

The Lord's Supper, as Wesley saw it, put the communicant in touch with the Christ who broke the power of canceled sin and set the prisoner free. Without benefit of Aulén, "Christus Victor" was a part of his understanding of the atonement—one that required to be proclaimed in the Word and celebrated in the sacrament.

Satisfaction and substitution: Now, leaping ahead by several centuries, we combine two ideas and literatures, for by Wesley's time they had largely merged.

The first extended, connected doctrine of the work of Christ was that of St. Anselm (eleventh century) in *Cur Deus Homo,* one of the most influential works of the Middle Ages. His thought grew from the system of owings that held Medieval society together. God's honor was offended by human sin, and satisfaction had to be made. But the offenders lacked the capacity to make it for themselves. Christ, God incarnate, in his death made the necessary satisfaction—made it as God, who was equal to the task, and made it in the flesh, for humankind's offering must be made by a human being. Because Christ, the sinless one, did not need his sacrifice for his own sins, its benefit could pass to others.

Anselm's idea has real profundity and had great influence. It rooted the atonement in the character of God—albeit in God's righteousness rather than in God's love. It might be remarked that whereas the "Christus Victor" motif read Christ's work as a movement from God to humanity, Christ's work, as Anselm saw it, was a sacrifice directed to God. Hence it is difficult to describe Anselm's teaching without at least suggesting a separation between the severe, demanding Father and the compassionate Son whose task was to avert the Father's wrath towards the sinner.

Before Anselm's ideas reached Wesley, they had been mixed with the penal ideas introduced in the sixteenth century, principally in the Reformation traditions. Whereas the background for Anselm's doctrine had been the system of owings in Medieval society, the penal idea grew from the sense of abstract law. Sin incurred guilt, and penalty was required. But since sin disqualified the sinner from paying the necessary penalty, the Sinless One paid it. The punishment that should have fallen on errant men and women fell instead on Christ, and the righteousness of Christ is made over to the believing sinner.

This idea had much influence in Protestant preaching and teaching. Many people were (and, indeed, still are) quite sure that it is all in the Bible. However,

it introduces crucial categories of guilt, penalty and substitution that owe more to sixteenth-century legal thought than to the Scriptures. And this theory is prepared to live with the idea of a good God inflicting wrath on an innocent Jesus. Yet the doctrine flourished—and indeed, in popular Protestantism, it still flourishes, often with crudities that would have appalled the Reformers.

Now Wesley, we must say, understood the atonement in satisfaction and penal substitution categories—which were the going categories, at least among traditionally minded seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Christians. He says to the Christ who is "mighty to atone":

> Thou only hast for Sinners died,
> By one Oblation satisfied
> Th' Inexorably righteous GOD.
> (128:1.4–6)

And he says that Christ's blood "quenched the wrath of hostile heaven" (36:3.2).

Wesley shares with Brevint and others the idea that on the cross Jesus' suffered not only at the hands of evil men, but he endured the wrath of God.

> The Bread dried up and burnt with Fire
> Presents the Father's vengeful ire
> Which my Redeemer bore:
> Into his Bone the Fire he sent,
> Till all the flaming Darts were spent,
> And Justice asked no more.
> (2:2)

In one stanza Wesley has Christ say:

> I the Father's fav'rite Son,
> Have the dreadful Wine-press trod,
> Borne the vengeful Wrath alone,
> All the fiercest Wrath of GOD.
> (17:4)

Wesley once says to the Father, "Jesus thy wrath hath pacified" (10:2.4).

This emphasis on Jesus as the object of divine wrath (which falls almost entirely in Part I of the hymns) is at least suggested in the New Testament in 2 Cor. 5:21 and Gal. 3:13, texts which express the mystery of Christ standing with us and for us in our sin. However, these Pauline texts come far short of saying that God visits wrath on the innocent so that the guilty can go free.

The Anselmian circle of ideas troubled at least a few serious Christians in Wesley's own time. In this matter John Wesley and William Law once passed in the night. The received idea of the atonement seemed to Law to be gravely mistaken. He said in his glowing, but not always clear work *The Spirit of Love,* 1752/54:

> The infinite love, mercy and compassion of God toward fallen man is not purchased, or procured for us by the death of Christ, but the Incarnation and sufferings of Christ come from and are given to us by the infinite antecedent love of God for us and are the gracious effects of His own love and goodness toward us.[3]

Law proposes that a true account of the atonement must begin not with offended divine honor, but with a God who is love—always and only love. Divine judgment and wrath must be seen as the obverse side of love. The atoning act comes from a loving God, not an offended God. God is not the party whose favor needs to be secured by the cross, but the one who in gracious favor gave the cross to restore the broken relation.

Law had made the point in his earlier work *The Spirit of Prayer,* 1749–50, and when John Wesley came upon it there, he noted his disagreement in his *Journal.* Although he grants that Law writes in a lively and entertaining way, what he teaches in this matter is, Wesley says, "another Gospel, for if God is never angry (as this Tract asserts), he could never be reconciled, and consequently, the whole Christian doctrine of reconciliation by Christ falls to the ground."[4] Despite their early admiration for Law, on this doctrine John (and there is no reason to think that Charles thought otherwise) concluded that Law was mistaken on a matter crucial to the gospel itself.

However, we may take this dialectic a step further. Law would have replied to Wesley that if it had been the purpose of the work of Christ to extinguish divine wrath, "then it must be said that Christ made an atonement for God and not for man, that he died for the good and benefit of God and not of man, and that which is called our redemption ought rather to be called the redemption of God, as saving and delivering him from his own wrath."[5] Wesley was concerned that God be reconciled, while Law maintained that the biblical message of the cross is that humanity, not God is reconciled.

Wesley, however, despite what might be thought the legalism and harshness of some of his expressions, was arguing something essential. He would have said to William Law that if God is simply love and can deal with sin by overlooking it, we do not have a righteous God, but an indulgent God. This would indeed be "another gospel."

For purposes of this largely descriptive essay, I am prepared to continue to struggle with this profoundest of theological issues, leaving myself poised uneasily between William Law and the Wesleys.

The Cross and love: It is hard to find the Abelardian alternative to Anselm—the "moral influence" theory—clearly expressed in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper.*

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[3]William Law, *The Spirit of Love,* London: 1752 edition, Second Dialogue, 92f. In the *Classics of Western Spirituality* edition, *William Law,* ed. Paul G. Stanwood (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), the passage is on p. 433.

[4]John Wesley, *Journal,* July 27, 1749.

[5]Law, pp. 86f; *Classics of Western Spirituality* edition, p. 430.

Yet something rather like it appears when Wesley emphasizes repeatedly that the cross is an expression of God's love (an idea which traces most directly to Rom. 5:8). In his opening hymn he has Jesus say, "Do this [*i.e.,* observe the supper] my dying love to show" (1:2.4). God is asked to love "the dearly ransomed race in the Redeemer's love" (10:3). A communicant prays, "By thy dying love to man, take all our sins away" (20:2). And looking at the cross, a communicant exclaims, "Was never love like Thine!" (21:2.8).

Although Wesley uses uncritically terms from satisfaction and penal substitution fields of meaning, he avoids the tangles over guilt, punishment, merit, and equivalency that were often associated with these theories, and he makes a massive affirmation that persons who use satisfaction and penal terms do not always make, saying often that the work of Christ comes from unmerited divine love.

> His mercy cast a pitying look;
> By love, meer causeless love inclin'd,
> Our guilt and punishment he took,
> And died a victim for mankind.
> (36:2)

The Lord's Supper, the sacrament of the cross, exhibits Jesus' "dying love" (1:2.4). The bread and wine are "tokens of thy [the Redeemer's] love" (12:2.4).

For Wesley, the cross is love in action, and not even love almighty can reconcile an alienated world without pain. Wesley makes the point through his startling "crucified God" motif. The theme had been suggested in Daniel Brevint's *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice,* 1673, on which Wesley drew heavily; and it figures several times in Isaac Watts' hymns "Prepared for the Lord's Supper," 1709, which I take to be Wesley's principal model for a series of hymns on the sacrament.[6] The theme was articulated in the eucharistic prayer of the *Apostolic Constitutions* (fourth century), and that prayer was followed closely by Thomas Deacon in his *Compleat Devotions,* 1734: "Although impassible, he was nailed to the cross; and although immortal, died."[7] These were sources that Wesley knew, and whether or not he took the theme from them, he made it his own and developed it vividly, even daringly:

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[6]Watts' twenty-five sacramental hymns form Book III of his *Hymns and Spiritual Songs,* first published in 1707; the major revision was the second edition of 1709. In these hymns he expresses the "death of God" theme several times, as in the lines, "O the sweet wonders of that cross/Where God the Saviour lov'd and dy'd" (10:5.1–2). Texts of these hymns are now a little hard to find. A full edition of Watts' *Works* was issued in six volumes by David Jennings and Philip Doddridge in 1753, beautifully reprinted in 1810; the poetry is in volume four. For some introduction to these hymns, see Daniel B. Stevick, "'The Fruits of Life O'erspread the Board,' Isaac Watts' Hymns for the Lord's Supper," in Neil Alexander, ed., *With Ever Joyful Hearts: Essays on Liturgy and Music in Honor of Marion J. Hatchett* (New York: Church Publishing, Inc., 1999), 227–243.

[7]A full edition of Thomas Deacon's text is in vol. VI of the old and virtually unobtainable *Fragmenta Liturgica,* edited by Peter Hall (Bath, 1848). The eucharistic text only is given, with commentary, in W. J. Grisbrooke, *Anglican Liturgies of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (1958).

My God, who dies for me, for me!
(5:3.6)

To weep o'er an expiring God.
(6:1.5)

Jesu, suffering Deity.
(12:1.1)

My God, that suffers there!
(21:3.8)

When God doth for his Creature dye.
(45:1.6)

By faith even now we see
The suffering Deity.
(132:2.1–2)

The Sinless Body of our God
Was fasten'd to the Tree.
(135:1.2–3)

These are a few of the thirty or more instances of the theme in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper.*

It is a theme with revolutionary implications. Wesley had subscribed to Article I of the Church of England which said that God is "without body, parts or passions." God, being beyond time and change, is beyond suffering; since God is eternally God, no emotions can be attributed to the divine, for emotion would mean that God was acted upon by something outside the divine self. But Wesley, without explanation, rejects the tradition of divine impassibility.[8] He has no interest in the disengaged God of the philosophers and of deism, and, almost throwing defiance at the Age of Reason, he affirms that human redemption had a cost for God. Wesley took with utter seriousness the Incarnation. (The hymns which speak of the death of God should be held alongside the *Hymns for the Nativity* in which Wesley speaks of God being born: "Being's source begins to be,/And God himself is born!"[9]) If the biblical witness presents God as the almighty One who is from everlasting, it also depicts God as one who freely came within time. In the experience of the human living, suffering, and dying of the divine Christ, the

[8]The Wesleys handled the matter of impassibility elsewhere. John Wesley in his abridgment of the Articles for the American churches simply omitted "or passions" from Art. I, which had described God as "without body, parts, or passions." Charles, for his part, drawing on Thomas Deacon (as quoted above), spoke in paradox, as in his line, "Impassive He suffers, immortal He dies" (in *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1749), Volume I, 42:3.6, Osborn, *PW,* IV, pp. 371–72).

[9]*Hymns for the Nativity,* 1745, 4:2.7–8. Facsimile reprint edition (Madison, NJ: The Charles Wesley Society, 1991), 10–11.

Creator was engaged in the human struggle, and its pain fell on the vulnerable, but finally adequate and prevailing God.

Wesley's emphasis that the cross demonstrates love gives to his atonement doctrine the needed flow from God to humanity. The cross is gift, grace.

Wesley's doctrine and proclamation: These several sides of Wesley's atonement doctrine suggest its eclectic character. Yet it coheres. With several of its strands before us, we return to Edwin Lewis' question: "Can you preach that, [ladies and] gentlemen?" It must be answered that while we might affirm with Wesley that the cross is a demonstration of God's love, many of us would have great difficulty in preaching doctrines such as that the death of Christ was paid to divine vengeance. We may feel at this important point some embarrassment at parts at least of what Wesley said.

Yet, however uncomfortable some of us may be with their doctrine, the Wesleys themselves could "preach that." The theories were caught up in an understanding of the gospel—the good news of divinely-provided salvation held out to sinners. We might observe also that many great preachers have held similar—to my mind at least partially unacceptable—doctrines of the atonement. They would wonder that anyone saw contradictions between their atonement doctrine and their proclamation of good news. Critics were inventing problems where Jonathan Edwards or Charles Spurgeon—or John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield—would have recognized none.

Hebrews and the eternal sacrifice: But Wesley does not see the sacrament connecting the communicant only with Calvary, for Christ's redemptive work is not entirely situated in the past. All accounts of the atonement must consider how a long-ago act can touch redemptively human life of later generations. How can any particular act be of universal moment? Wesley answers in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* by citing Christ's heavenly priesthood as he finds it in the book of Hebrews. The saving work of Christ continues. His is "the Blood atoning yet/For us and All Mankind" (126:2.3). Wesley's *theologia crucis* is balanced by a *theologia gloriae*—but of his own sort. In the rough dualism of the book of Hebrews, the one who was an itinerant rabbi and healer (but who was also the eternal Son) and who died, lives now as "our Eternal Priest" (118:1.1), standing in the holiest place (116:2.1). His cross on earth was an event in heaven which continues as the eternal sacrifice.

It is important that accounts of the work of Christ do justice to its God-ward thrust, as Anselm's did. Wesley, drawing on the book of Hebrews, is able to say that Christ's redemptive work, which was *from* God and *for* humanity, was at the same time offered *to* God. "Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Heb. 5:1). Christ's sacrifice was his death, but his death grew out of his

obedient life, which was his fundamental sacrifice.[10] Capturing the voluntary and the God-ward aspects of the Redeemer's vocation, Wesley says that Christ was "Offered by himself to God" (132:1.3).

Christ's redemptive work—his obedient life which led to his obedient death—culminates at the right hand of God (Heb. 10:11–14; 12:2). Indeed, his work continues as he lives, deeply and forever bonded both with God and with humanity (118:2–3). He is the first-born, the elder brother in the family (132:3). The eternal Son who became one of us never reversed the process, but in glory he remains one of us. He carries in heaven—indeed, he shows in heaven—the wounds he received in his earthly life, where they still cry out for mercy for sinners.

> In the holiest place above
> Sinners' Advocate he stands,
> Pleads for us his dying love,
> Shows for us his bleeding hands.
> (118:2.4–6)

Critics have pointed out that Wesley and the tradition on which he draws go beyond the book of Hebrews when they speak of Christ, the eternal priest, offering up a continual sacrifice as his plea for sinners. Similarly Hebrews says nothing of the church in the sacrament showing Christ's passion to the Father (122:1.2–4; 125:2.1–5). (Bishop Westcott, in his careful exegesis of Hebrews, observed all of this more than a century ago.) But Wesley (with some reverent extrapolation from elsewhere in the New Testament) is developing the emphasis in Hebrews on Christ's continual heavenly intercession. Putting his own stamp on the teaching, he says repeatedly that the High Priest's intercession is not by words, but by his sacrifice, by his saving act. It is his blood that speaks: "Thy blood of sprinkling speaks, and prays,/all-prevalent for helpless man" (116:2:3–4; and see 119:3.1,4.1; 120:4.2–3). And Jesus says, "My blood that speaks your sins forgiven" (1:4.5; 121:1.9).

[10]The Jewish tradition held that "to obey is better than to sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:22, and *cf.* Ps. 50, esp. vss. 12–25). The author of Hebrews, treats the point Christologically. In his idiosyncratic way, he uses fragments from Ps. 40:6–8 as though they were words of the Son conversing with the Father about his redemptive mission:

> When Christ came into the world, he said,
> "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
> but a body you have prepared for me;
> in burnt offerings and sin offerings
> you have taken no pleasure.
> Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will.'"
> (Heb. 10:5–10, NRSV, and see 5:7f)

This moralizing of sacrifice is echoed by Brevint (VII. 15) and Wesley, 143:1.1–3, both of whom use the words "I come to do thy will," which in Hebrews are the avowal of the obedient Son, to speak of the self-declaration of the obedient Christian.

The motif of Christ's speaking blood derives from a Wesleyan conflation of biblical themes, which he characteristically leaves unexplained. Hebrews had drawn on the mythic story of Cain and Abel in which God says to murderous Cain, "Your brother's blood cries from the ground"—cries out for vindication. Hebrews, drawing a contrast, says that the blood of Christ speaks "better things than that of Abel" (12:24). Jesus' blood cries out too, but it cries for the forgiveness of sinners. Wesley repeats this idea often. Christ's intercession for sinners is by his blood, by the sacrifice he carried out in the sordidness of Calvary, but which is the glory of heaven. It is "the blood that speaks our sins forgiven" (121:1.9). He urges the Father to "hear the blood of Jesus/Speaking in thine ears above" (14:1.1–2; 119:3.1).

In describing Christ's continual high-priesthood, Wesley (following Brevint, but not Hebrews itself) describes the bond between priest and people using the image of Aaron's ephod—a garment worn by the high priest on the day of atonement which carried precious stones on which were engraved the names of the tribes of Israel. When the high priest went before God, he carried in this symbolic way the people with him (near to his heart, as Wesley notes, 117:2.3). (I sometimes try to envision eighteenth-century Methodist congregations singing hymns about Aaron's ephod.) The image speaks of Christ, the heavenly high priest, who bears our names before the Father. In a Wesleyan touch, as Christ presents his sacrifice, the Father reads our names (118:3.5–4.2).

In a paper read before this Society,[11] Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky observed that in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* the resurrection goes almost unmentioned. (This is one of several interesting *lacunae* in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper.*) When I noted the point in my reading some time ago, I was puzzled. Then it occurred to me that when we identify this omission, we are reading Wesley in the light of St. Paul, who often pairs death with resurrection. From that vantage one thinks that Wesley has left out something essential. Yet clearly, as his Easter hymns show, Wesley affirms the resurrection. That is not the issue. But in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper,* he is not following the theological pattern of St. Paul. I assume that all or most of the sacramental hymns were written within a fairly short time, and during that time Wesley was probably under the spell of the book of Hebrews which, like Wesley in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper,* nowhere mentions the resurrection. Rather, the contour of the work of Christ, as Hebrews presents it, moves from his obedient life to his obedient death—and then passes at once to his life at the right hand of the heavenly throne. "Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, . . . endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). And that movement of thought in Hebrews is also the movement of thought in these hymns:

[11] "The Wesleys' *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* and Orthodoxy," *PCWS* 2 (1995): esp. 81–84.

From the Cross where once He dies
Now He up to Heaven is gone.
(118:1.5–6)

Wesley's Hebrews-derived reading of the eucharist and the living Christ came to him through the high Anglican tradition which was traced by Neil Alexander in a previous paper for the Charles Wesley Society.[12] This tradition provided a body of affirmations linking the church's sacrament with Christ's heavenly priestliness—affirmations which have been widely taken for granted among Anglicans. The Episcopal Church often sings the nineteenth-century hymn "Alleluia, sing to Jesus," whose fourth stanza concludes:

Thou within the veil hast entered,
Robed in flesh, our great High Priest:
Thou on earth both Priest and Victim
In the eucharistic feast.[13]

But not everyone follows this line of thought—not even all Anglicans. Eighteenth-century dissenters and many later Anglican evangelicals affirmed the Christological vision of Hebrews, but found no connection between that vision and the sacrament. Wesley stands within an Anglican sacramental tradition when he speaks of the Holy Communion in terms of heavenly priesthood and sacrifice and reads his principal biblical source as he does.

Sacrifice: Cross and Altar, earth and heaven, combine in Wesley's theme of sacrifice. The word is pervasive, appearing more than fifty times in the 166 hymns and in all parts of the collection. If related words such as "oblation," "offer/offering," "present," "accept," "victim," or "atone/atonement" are included, the incidence is much increased.

In the Jewish system, sacrifice was the God-appointed place in which remedy was at hand for sin and its defilement. The earliest Christians, with that system in mind, spoke of Christ's death as a sacrifice for sin. "Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:2). Wesley's thought develops along this line, even (following Brevint and the suggestion in Ephesians) bringing the imagery of animal sacrifice, burning, smoke and a sweet smell into his depiction of Calvary. "The smoke of thy atonement here darkened the sun" (116:3.1–2; cf. 137:7.1–2; 141:6.1–2; 147:1.3–4). The smoke of Jesus'

[12]"With Eloquence of Speech and Song: Anglican Reflections of the Eucharistic Hymns (1745) of John and Charles Wesley," *PCWS* 2 (1995): 35–50. This paper is now also available, somewhat revised, in J. Neil Alexander, ed., 244–260.

[13]By William Chatterton Dix, 1837–1898; the hymn was published in 1868. I often wonder what this stanza means to Episcopalians who tend to sing this hymn enthusiastically—a hymn which I note does not appear in *The United Methodist Hymnal* (1989).

sacrifice spreads through earth and skies, envelops the communicants, and carries them to heaven.

In speaking of the sacrifice theme, we must say something of Jesus' "blood"—Wesley's one-syllable designation of the saving work. Jesus is the "dying Savior" who "bleeds to death for me." Drawing on the Jewish sacrificial system, the blood, which is life, is "thy healing blood" (25:3.5). The word is used more than one hundred times in the hymns—more than that if the instances of "bloody," "bleeds," and "bleeding" are added. (It is used in every hymn in Sec. 4.) Wesley depicts the potency of Jesus' blood by exaggerating its quantity, making it a gushing fountain, a flowing stream or a pool into which sinners may plunge (24:1.5–2.1; 27:3.5–8; 39:3.4; 131:3.5; 137:4.4). To be sure, Wesley is generally celebratory. Like Paul, Hebrews, and Revelation he encloses the emphasis on Christ's blood within the Good News. Even so, one who reads many of these sacramental hymns at one sitting can tire of the references to "blood."

Within the first generations after the apostles, the language of sacrifice which from the start had been used of Christ began to be used also of the sacrament. However, in the first few centuries it remained undeveloped; if the eucharist was in some sense sacrificial, no one cared to say what was sacrificed in the eucharist or by whom or to whom or to what effect.

Half of Wesley's references to sacrifice are to Christ's sacrifice—the "grand Oblation" (123:3.7) whose complete efficacy for dealing with human sin Wesley repeatedly affirms.

> All hail, Redeemer of mankind!
> Thy life on Calvary resigned
> Did fully once for all atone;
> Thy blood hath paid our utmost price,
> Thine all-sufficient sacrifice
> Remains eternally alone.
> (124:1.1–6)

Yet having made the claims he has for Christ's sacrifice, Wesley goes on to say that in the eucharist Christians do not simply think about that Great Sacrifice; they themselves make sacrifice. Both Wesley and Brevint held that to remember a sacrifice was itself a kind of sacrifice—a "commemorative sacrifice." Moreover, following Heb. 13:15f and Rom. 12:1–2, they spoke of believers making a sacrifice of prayer and praise, and indeed, of life itself. The sacrifices of Christians are thus in the first instance response-sacrifices—eucharistic acts done "because of."

However, Wesley might not find the simple idea of "response" adequate; he might prefer something more like "participation." His thought is complex, and in seeking to describe it one wishes it were possible to say several things at the same time rather than being under the necessity of saying them in sequence.

We may find some order by noting Wesley's thesis that the church, as it makes eucharist not only offers itself, but "shows" or "sets forth" or "exhibits" Christ's sacrifice before the Father's eyes (116:1.2; 122:4.3–5; 124:2.1–6; 125:1). This is not ritual immolation—Wesley would be appalled at the thought. Yet it is a real action—a showing of Christ's sacrifice to the Father. The idea did not come from Hebrews, but from an interpretation of 1 Cor. 11:26. When Paul said that in the Supper, Christians "show" or "proclaim" the Lord's death, he would seem to have meant that they set Christ's death before the world or before the powers of the world. But Wesley (following Brevint[14] and some Anglican tradition) takes Paul to speak of showing Christ's death to the world *and to the Father.*

> Yet may we celebrate below,
> And daily thus thine offering show
> Exposed before thy Father's eyes,
> In this tremendous mystery
> Present thee bleeding on a tree,
> Our everlasting Sacrifice.
> (124:2.1–6)

But Wesley takes his point also from a theological thesis. While he often affirms the unique, solitary role of Christ the Redeemer (17:4), he also develops his profound sense of the union between Christ and his people, using many images: the bond between high priest and people, the corner stone and the building stones, a vine and its branches, body and members, head and members, and the firstfruits and the harvest. Christ in his work is never alone, but is always with his people—he in them and they in him. (Hymn 129 brings together several of these images.)

Indeed, taking Paul's idea of crucifixion with Christ (Gal. 2:20) very seriously, Wesley says that the church was in some sense with Christ on his cross (134:5.4–5; 154). The Savior, Wesley says, would not die alone, but with his people. Christians lay their hands on the sacrifice and "die while Jesus dies" (131). They are with him; he is with them. Moreover, the church is so united with Christ that, in the Holy Communion, Christians appear with him in heaven as sharers in his sacrifice (117:1.7–12).

In affirming that the church "exposes" or "presents" Christ, Wesley goes further and says what still can shock even his loyal partisans. In the sacrament the church, Wesley says, offers Christ: "We . . . present our Savior's death," "show" him in a memorial, and indeed, "offer up the Lamb to God" (118:4; 121:1.8–9; 122:1.3–5; 124:2; 125:2; 137.1). But the doctrine is not arrogant; the church does not manipulate Christ or use the eucharistic offering in self-assertion. While the

[14]Brevint says more than once that the Holy Communion sets forth the Lord's death "as well before the eyes of God his Father as before the eyes of all men" (VI. 3). John Wesley interprets 1 Cor. 11:26 in this same way in his *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament.*

idea can sound Pelagian, Geoffrey Wainwright urges: "Could not the contentious notion 'we offer Christ' paradoxically be seen as antipelagian? It could be an acknowledgment that we have nothing else to offer."[15]

Moreover, if the church offers Christ, it is also the case that in the eucharist Christ offers himself. As Wesley sees it, the one eucharistic act in which the church makes response to Christ, is at the same time Christ's own act in the church. The sacrament is the church's act, to be sure. It is made up of our very human selves, our bread and wine, our prayers and praises. But while we act on earth, at our holy table the living Christ is also acting. If the church offers Christ, Christ is also "offering up his Death to God" (64:1.3; and see 41:2.4 and 118:3.1–2).

> Thou Lamb that sufferd'st on the Tree,
> And in this dreadful Mystery
> Still offer'st up Thyself to God.
> (117:1.1–3)

For Wesley the eucharist is complex. When the church offers Christ, it participates reverently in Christ's prior and ongoing sacrifice. It is drawn into union with the Sacrificed One. The Father beholds Christ's sacrifice as it is shown in the eucharist (119:2–4; 126:5) and sees the communicants in it (121; 141:7.2–4). They are forgiven in him (126:5–6). Their persons and their service are accepted in Christ's acceptance (121:2.11; 123:4.7; 139:2.2; 140:4.1–2). Christ who once offered himself still, in the sacramental act, offers himself, and the church, in its offering of itself, is "to Jesus in oblation joined" (140:4.2; 128:3.9).

Many people who are otherwise of Wesley's school have not followed him in his ideas on eucharistic sacrifice. Some simply find the ideas baffling or uncongenial, but some must in conscience object to them. It is the purpose of this paper to describe, not to defend—except insofar as a sympathetic description may in itself be a mode of apology. I do not want to suggest that I would be altogether comfortable saying some of what Wesley says nor to persuade others to adopt his doctrine. I only want to indicate that his thought has an evangelical coherence. We must understand that Wesley's mind is capable of entertaining tensions. To persons of a single idea, since Christ's sacrifice is sufficient and final, all talk of eucharistic sacrifice must be disallowed, for perforce it abridges the once-for-allness of Christ's atoning deed. But Wesley would urge that the two are complementary. The church does not make sacrifice as an independent action, but as participant in the prior and continuing sacrifice of Christ.[16]

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[15]Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 272f.

[16]Wesley urges the typological argument that as in the Jewish daily sacrifice secondary offerings of meal and oil were "cast on" the fundamental offering of a lamb, so Christians' offerings of themselves are united with the "great oblation" of Christ (137:2–3 and 5, and many other lines). He uses this idea, which he takes from Brevint, so often as to suggest that he thinks of it not as illustration of his point, but as proof.

I hope I do not put too many words into Charles Wesley's mouth when I summarize the matter of sacrifice this way: If the sacramental grace-giving approach of God to the church is in Christ's sacrifice, Wesley insists also that the church's faithful response to God is similarly by sacrifice and in Christ. The entire divine–human exchange has a Christological and sacrificial character. The church offers the sacrifice it has first received. Wesley's thought is complex because the reality he sets forth is many-sided. Critics may become impatient with Wesley, thinking him muddle-headed. But Wesley, for his part, might appreciate Bishop Stevenson's remark that eucharistic theology is "not a neat, packaged piece of doctrine, but a paradox, a union of opposites, almost a self contradiction."[17]

Particularly in Hymn 116, "Victim Divine," Wesley shows altar and cross and heavenly sacrifice in a unifying vision. In his many-sided presentation, Christ's saving death is once-for-all—incapable of being repeated or added to. Yet at the same time it is present, freshly enacted, and made accessible in the eucharist. But the past historic act and the present ecclesial act are linked by the continual sacrifice of the living Christ. These, as Wesley sees them, are not three and distinct, but are one.

Perhaps Wesley's idea of altar and cross and of earthly and heavenly sacrifice can be captured by a picture better than it can by words. There is an engraving that often stood as the frontispiece of Richard Whateley's durable commentary *A Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer.*[18] The scene is in the east end of a classically-designed church. In the foreground a latecomer is being handed the communion order by a verger in black gown and tabs. Beyond them a congregation is kneeling, facing away from the viewer and towards the holy table which stands beyond them behind a heavy rail. On it are a Prayer Book, two patens, two chalices, and two flagons of wine. The celebrant, in surplice and hood, is kneeling at the north end. The commandments are mounted on the east wall over the table. It is all reverent, orderly, and quite plain.

But the engraving shows above the holy table a parallel scene of heavenly splendor. Clouds, borne by three innocent-looking cherubs, shield the congregation from a streaming sunburst. In the center of the light there is an altar, with the smoke of incense rising from it. Beneath the altar the engraver has printed the reference "Rev. VIII. 3, 4." Standing to the left of the altar is the figure of Christ, garbed in a long, cinctured alb, his arms in the orant position. In a nimbus around his head are written the references "Heb. IX. 11, 23; VII, 26." The engraving is very literal and a little awkward, and it requires words to make its intention clear.

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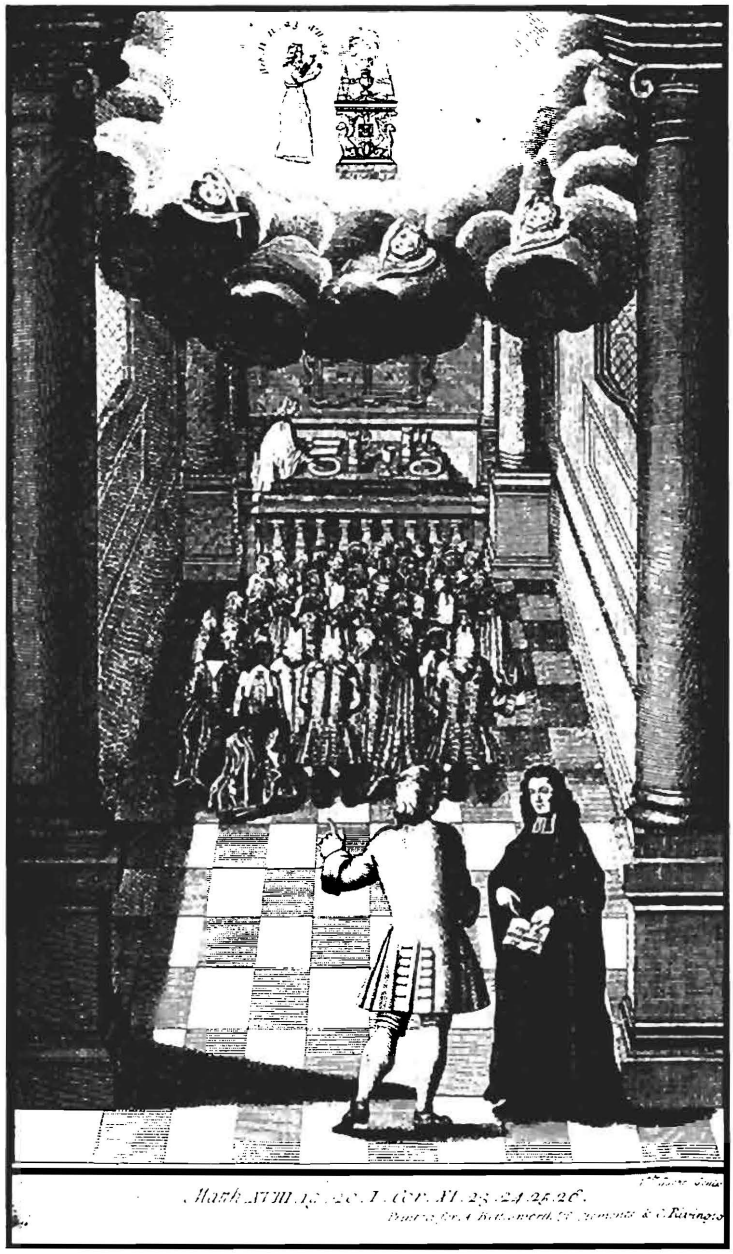
[17]Kenneth Stevenson, *Accept This Sacrifice: The Eucharist as Sacrifice Today* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1989), 11.

[18]Whateley's commentary was published in 1710 and later revised and enlarged. It remained in print through much of the nineteenth century. I am using a third edition of 1720. The later editions did not always use the frontispiece described here.



Frontispiece of Whateley's *Rational Illustration*
Richard Whateley, *A Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer* (published 1710; third edition, 1720), frontispiece

But it is at the same time imaginative and quite splendid. A devout eighteenth-century communicant, looking at the unadorned table and the plainly vested celebrant, sees in and beyond them the heavenly altar at which Christ in glory offers his continual sacrifice.

The Cross and sanctity: If Charles Wesley were listening in, he might or might not consent to what had been said about him here, but he would surely want one more thing added. The cross is not only something momentous that happened to Jesus Christ long ago; it is something transforming that happens to each believer. The cross brings forgiveness of sins, and, as Wesley says repeatedly, the eucharist too is for the forgiveness of sins. But the cross also yields holiness of life:

> The sin-atoning blood apply,
> And let the water sanctify,
> Pardon and holiness impart,
> Sprinkle and purify our heart,
> Wash out the last remains of sin,
> And make our inmost nature clean.
> (31:2)

Unless the sacrament, which is the cross in contemporary action, brings about a life of disciplined godliness, it is as though Christ had not died: "The blood removed our sin in vain,/if sin in us must always stay" (37:2.1–2; cf. 135:3–4).

The fine English Methodist exegete Vincent Taylor, in the closing pages of his *Jesus and His Sacrifice* (1937) with Charles Wesley's *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* expressly in mind, remarked in his measured, straightforward way: "No modern presentation of the doctrine of the Atonement is likely to be satisfactory which ignores, or deals imperfectly with, the doctrine of the Eucharist."[19] Taylor affirmed what Charles Wesley had implied two centuries earlier: One cannot understand the sacrament adequately without seeking to understand the atonement, and one cannot understand the atonement profoundly apart from the sacrament and the sacramental community. The atonement is our access to the interior of the sacrament, and the sacrament is our access to the interior of the atonement. The cross is bodied-forth in word and sacrament, and the word proclaimed and the sacrament celebrated are a re-actualization of the cross.

Yet studies of the atonement continue to be produced which see no need to mention the sacraments, and many studies of the sacraments run through the work of Christ as though it were a known preliminary. However, when we seek in such ways to put asunder what God has joined together, Charles Wesley is there to resist our efforts.

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[19]Vincent Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice: A Study of the Passion-Sayings in the Gospels* (London: Macmillan, 1955), 322.

His Spirit in These Mysterious Leaves

A Wesleyan Way of Reading

Maxine E. Walker

His Spirit in these mysterious leaves
Unerring testimony gives
To Christ the Lord most high:
O would He take of Jesus' blood,
Blood of the true, eternal God,
And to my heart apply![1]

For many of us claiming the Wesleyan/Holiness heritage in America, Wesleyan hymns are infrequently sung in contemporary worship services, and if sung, a few verses are indiscriminately chosen from the entire hymn. Moreover, the reading of Scripture is a relatively short exercise; brief Scripture passages are chosen to undergird the morning message; frequently there is minimal biblical exegesis in the sermon. Sunday school classes tackle complex social issues—family, marriage, parenting, personal relationships—and the Bible may or may not be an integral part of the study. Frequently a recent Christian best-seller is the centerpiece for small study groups or retreats. Bible studies are not attended by laity in a consistent way.[2] At the United Methodist Church I attended for All Saints' Day, an Old Testament passage and a Psalm were read; the Ephesians' reading was eliminated due to a time problem but was referred to throughout the sermon. Illustrations in the sermon were far-ranging: Rollo May, the Eastern church, music and art, Celtic celebrations, Blaise Pascal, Wittenberg and the Reformation, Cathedral of Salisbury and other great European Gothic cathedrals, Barbara Tuchman, the darkness of understanding in Karl Marx.

In the Academy, theories about language, culture, and interpretation, from both Christians and non-Christians, command the disciplines, ideas that influence or question how we read the Bible as Scripture. Some examples follow:

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[1]S T Kimbrough, Jr., and Oliver A. Beckerlegge, eds. *Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley: Hymns and Poems for Church and World,* vol. 3 (Nashville, TN: Kingswood/Abingdon, 1992), 175; henceforth cited as *Unpublished Poetry* followed by volume and page number(s). The three poems entitled "Before Reading the Scriptures" (MS Richmond, p. 106), "Before Reading The Scripture" III (MS CW I [p] 3–4), IV (MS CW I [p] 5–6), V (MS CW I [p] 6–8), VI (MS CW I [p] 8), and "Before Reading Scripture" (MS Misc. Hymns, p. 228) are from *Unpublished Poetry,* 3:172–76.

[2]This is not to suggest that the following study is a "complaint" about the current trends in worship styles and patterns or the vast array of "authorities" used in preaching and devotions. What I do want to suggest is that the loss of hymns in tandem with the other ecclesial practices not only discovers the little amount of time devoted to reading the Bible but also tell us that we may no longer be reading the Bible as Scripture. In the early Methodist preaching-house, the service came to include two Scripture lessons, a pastoral prayer, three to five hymns, and the sermon; the Scriptures by the very words of the hymns and sermon were additional "readings" of Scripture. (Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver Beckerlegge, eds. *The Works of John Wesley. A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists,* vol. 7 [Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983; reprint, Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989], 63.)