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S T Kimbrough, Jr.  
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# The Wesleys' Sacramental Theology and Practice in Georgia\*

Geordan Hammond

The ideal of primitive Christianity exerted a profound influence on John and Charles Wesley during the last few years they spent at Oxford before becoming missionaries in the recently established colony of Georgia (chartered in 1732).<sup>1</sup> This impulse to restore the purity of the early church was an established tradition within mainstream Anglicanism that was mediated to the Wesley brothers through their high-church predecessors including their parents, and the Nonjurors, Anglicans who declined to take the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy to William and Mary (r. 1689–1702 and 1689–94), and were also known for their desire to restore primitive Christianity. For John and Charles Wesley, primitive Christianity—especially as mediated to them through certain aspects of the high-church movement—was much more than a romantic ideal, it was a living tradition to be engaged both in the realms of academic study and clerical practice.<sup>2</sup> Their focus was primarily on the primitive standard for liturgical purity and holy living. John Wesley, in particular, approached the Georgia mission (October 1735 to December 1737) as a laboratory for implementing his vision of primitive Christianity.<sup>3</sup> This article examines the Wesleys' sacramental theology and practice in Georgia in the context of their attempt to create primitive Christianity anew in the primitive Georgia wilderness.

In his 1785 letter to Dr. Chandler, Charles Wesley noted that he had been observing the Eucharist weekly since 1729. This was clearly a key practice for Charles as indicated by his undated manuscript possibly written around the time of the Georgia mission “On a Weekly Sacrament.”<sup>4</sup> The same practice, later rec-

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\*I would like to thank Dr. Mark H. Mann for his comments on a draft of this article.

<sup>1</sup>On the Oxford period see Richard P. Heitzenrater, “John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists, 1725–35,” Ph.D. diss. (Duke University, 1972).

<sup>2</sup>Geordan Hammond, “High Church Anglican Influences on John Wesley’s Conception of Primitive Christianity, 1732–1735,” *Anglican and Episcopal History* 78:2 (2009):174–207. For further definition of high churchmanship see F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 767; and Peter Nockles, “Church parties in the pre-Tractarian Church of England 1750–1833: the ‘Orthodox’—some problems of definition and identity,” in *The Church of England c. 1689–c. 1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism*, ed. John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 335–36. In addition to the evidence given below, Charles Wesley’s high regard for and natural affinity with high churchmen during his brief time in Boston (Sept. 24–Oct. 26, 1736) reveals something of his own high churchmanship. See *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, M.A.*, eds. S T Kimbrough, Jr., and Kenneth G. C. Newport, 2 vols. (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2007), 1:55–59; henceforth cited as *Manuscript Journal* followed by volume and page number.

<sup>3</sup>Geordan Hammond, “Restoring Primitive Christianity: John Wesley and Georgia, 1735–1737,” Ph.D. thesis (University of Manchester, 2008).

<sup>4</sup>The Manuscript is catalogued DDCW 9/14, Methodist Archives and Research Centre, John Rylands University Library of Manchester. John C. Bowmer, *The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper in Early Methodism* (London: Dacre Press, 1951), 226. Bowmer provides a full transcription of the manuscript.

commended by his Nonjuror friends, was adopted by John Wesley in 1725.<sup>5</sup> The observance of weekly communion, which was atypical in the Church of England at the time, illustrates the significance the Wesleys attached to the sacrament at a time when three communion services per year was required by the Prayer Book and four a year was common in country parishes.<sup>6</sup> Stress on frequent communion was maintained by the Wesleys long after the Georgia mission, and was emphasized, for example, in their *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* (1745).<sup>7</sup>

John Wesley and Charles Wesley followed the practice of a vocal minority of Usager or Essentialist Nonjurors that "four usages" (i.e. practices) contained in the 1549 book ought to be restored.<sup>8</sup> Wesley was familiar with the usages through his June 1733 reading of the Manchester Nonjuror Thomas Deacon's (1697–1753) *The Doctrine of the Church of Rome Concerning Purgatory* (1718) in the company of the Oxford Methodists.<sup>9</sup> In Deacon's words, the four usages of the Nonjurors included: "(1) The mixture of water and wine in the sacramental cup; (2) The oblation of the Eucharistick elements as the representative sacrifice of Christ's body and blood; (3) The Blessing of them or the Invocation of the Holy Ghost upon them; and (4) The recommending of the faithful departed to God's mercy at the Celebration of the Christian Sacrifice."<sup>10</sup> The prayer of oblation or *anamnesis* was said before the congregation received the elements in order to "emphasize the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist;" the prayer of invocation or *epiclesis* designed to effect the descent of the Holy Ghost on the elements was given during the consecration of the elements and formed one prayer with the prayer of oblation;<sup>11</sup> the mixture of water and wine was done in public view after

<sup>5</sup> John Wesley, *Journal and Diaries I (1735–38)*, eds. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, vol. 18 of The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), May 24, 1738, 244. John Wesley to Susanna Wesley (Feb. 28, 1731/2), in *Letters I*, ed. Frank Baker, vol. 25 of The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 328. John Clayton to John Wesley ([July [25], 1733], *Letters I*, 352. John Wesley convinced the Savannah Moravians to adopt weekly eucharistic observance. Geordan Hammond, "Versions of Primitive Christianity: John Wesley's Relations with the Moravians in Georgia, 1735–1737," *Journal of Moravian History* 6 (2009):44–45. See also George Whitefield to John Wesley (April 1737), *Methodist Magazine* (1798):358 on weekly communion.

<sup>6</sup> F. C. Mather, "Georgian Churchmanship Reconsidered: Some Variations in Anglican Public Worship 1714–1830," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985):255–83.

<sup>7</sup> See hymns 124, 137, 164 in the 1745 edition reprinted by The Charles Wesley Society (Madison, NJ, 1995) and John Wesley, *Journal and Diaries II (1738–1743)*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, vol. 19 of The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), June 27, 1740, 158 and *Journal and Diaries V (1765–1775)*, *ibid.* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 22:441 on his continuing belief in daily communion in the early church.

<sup>8</sup> Robert D. Cornwall, "The Later Nonjurors and the Theological Basis of the Usages Controversy," *Anglican Theological Review* 75 (1993):170. Cornwall's article as well as James David Smith's *The Eucharistic Doctrine of the Later Nonjurors: A Revisionist View of the Eighteenth-Century Usages Controversy*. Joint Liturgical Studies 46 (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2000) elucidates the differences between the Usager and non-Usager Nonjurors.

<sup>9</sup> Heitzenrater. "John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists," appendix IV.

<sup>10</sup> Deacon, *The Doctrine of the Church of Rome Concerning Purgatory*, xx.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Sharp, "100 Years of a Lost Cause: Nonjuring Principles in Newcastle from the Revolution to the Death of Prince Edward Stuart," *Archaeologia Aeliana* 5th series, 8 (1980):40.

the oblation and invocation and was placed on the altar and the words "militant in earth" were removed or omitted from the Prayer Book liturgy "so that the prayer for the whole estate of the Church might include the living and the dead."<sup>12</sup>

In all likelihood Charles read Deacon's *A Compleat Collection of Devotions, both Publick and Private: Taken from the Apostolical Constitutions, the Ancient Liturgies, and the Common Prayer Book of the Church of England* (1734) a revised version of the Book of Common Prayer which advocated the reintroduction of neglected aspects of the *Apostolic Constitutions* and *Canons* and a return to the four usages based on the *Constitutions* and the 1549 Prayer Book at Oxford and probably also on the voyage to Georgia.<sup>13</sup> (The *Constitutions* are a compilation of ecclesiastical law, liturgical material, and prayers which were commonly believed to have been apostolic in origin, while the *Canons* form the final chapter of the *Constitutions* and are made up of eighty-five teachings attributed to the Apostles which deal with the ordination, responsibilities, and moral conduct of the clergy.)<sup>14</sup> John Wesley noted that he read the work on each of the first nine days on the vessel "with [Charles] Delamotte, etc" presumably intending the etcetera to refer his other co-missionaries: his brother and Benjamin Ingham.<sup>15</sup> On the day following his ninth consecutive day reading Deacon, Wesley noted that he "thought" and then "read resolutions." This might be a reference to a document probably written on the voyage to Georgia in which Wesley wrote out the liturgical practices he intended to observe in the colony.<sup>16</sup> It is probable that all four Methodists agreed together to follow the liturgical practices laid out in Wesley's manuscript, which included the commitment to observe the four usages of the Nonjurors and to baptize by trine, i.e. triple immersion.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Gordon E. Rupp, *Religion in England 1688–1791* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 18.

<sup>13</sup> John Wesley first read this work in May 1734. Heitzenrater, "John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists," appendix IV. On Deacon see Henry Broxap, *A Biography of Thomas Deacon: The Manchester Non-Juror* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1911) and Robert D. Cornwall, "Deacon, Thomas (1697–1753)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Modern scholars, however, have dated them c. 350–80 and they are thought to have been of Syrian origin. E. A. Livingstone, ed. *Oxford Concise Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 32. A convenient edition of the *Constitutions and Canons* can be found in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994).

<sup>15</sup> Wesley, *Journal and Diaries I*, Diary, Oct. 17–25, 1735, 312–15; cf. Nov. 8, 1735, 319; "with Delamotte, etc": Oct. 17, 1735, 312.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 26, 1735, p. 316. The entry "Read resolutions to Charles, etc." could also be a reference to this document. *Ibid.*, Jan. 20, 1736, p. 342; Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (London: Epworth Press, 1970; repr. 2000), 40.

<sup>17</sup> This manuscript catalogued LDWMM/1998/7129 is housed at Wesley's Chapel, City Road, London and discussed in detail in Hammond, "Restoring Primitive Christianity," 79–89; see page 80, n. 57 on the debate over the date of this manuscript.

### The Influence of the Eucharistic Theology of John Johnson on the Nonjurors and the Wesleys

In his manuscript "On a Weekly Sacrament" Charles Wesley referred to "the unbloody Sacrifice,"<sup>18</sup> and hymn VI in the Wesleys' *Hymns for Our Lord's Resurrection* (1746) includes a reference to "The great Unbloody Sacrifice." This may well indicate that Charles Wesley read John Johnson's (1662–1725) well-known high-church tome *The Unbloody Sacrifice* (1714–18) at an early date. The reference in his Georgia journal to "offering up the Christian Sacrifice" resonates with the theology of Johnson, Deacon, and high churchmen in general.<sup>19</sup>

J. Jardine Grisbrooke has persuasively shown that Anglican eucharistic liturgies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were "based upon that characteristic 'appeal to the primitive Church' which was both the foundation, and dominant note of 'high' Anglican faith and worship."<sup>20</sup> John Wesley's reading, practice, and network of friends at Oxford from 1732 conclusively demonstrate his deep interest in eucharistic liturgy and places him within this central stream of high Anglican piety. His thoughts on the Eucharist were fundamentally shaped during his latter years at Oxford by his colleague John Clayton (1709–1773) and the Nonjurors.<sup>21</sup> The eucharistic theology of the Nonjurors was profoundly influenced by John Johnson's *The Unbloody Sacrifice* and differed little from that of mature high Anglicanism.<sup>22</sup> In 1732, Wesley read Johnson's earlier work, *The Propitiatory Oblation in the Holy Eucharist Truly Stated, and Defended, from Scripture, Antiquity, and the Communion-service of the Church of England* (1710) and *A Collection of Discourses, Dissertations, and Sermons*, 2 volumes (1728) the first volume of which largely consists of Johnson's *The Primitive Communicant: In Three Discourses on the Sacrament of the Eucharist. In which the Sacrifice of Christ and of the Church are Fully Explain'd. With Devotions for the Altar*.<sup>23</sup> In the manuscript notebook containing his Georgia diary from February 13 to August 31, 1737, Wesley transcribed the first twenty sections (pages 3–29) of *The Primitive Communicant* indicating the profound impression Johnson's view of the Eucharist as a sacrifice had on Wesley.<sup>24</sup> Wesley's reading of Johnson at Oxford was followed up by his study of Johnson's *magnum opus*, *The Unbloody Sacrifice*, on the *Simmonds* en route to Georgia to which he devoted a significant number of hours between November 24 and December 24,

<sup>18</sup> Bowmer, *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, 226.

<sup>19</sup> *Manuscript Journal*, Mar. 28, 1736, 1:16; cf. Mar. 10, 1736, 1:2.

<sup>20</sup> W. Jardine Grisbrooke, *Anglican Liturgies of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Alcuin Club Collections (London: SPCK, 1958), xiv.

<sup>21</sup> On Clayton's influence on Wesley, see Hammond, "High Church Anglican Influences," esp. 201–07.

<sup>22</sup> Grisbrooke, *Anglican Liturgies*, 71.

<sup>23</sup> Heitzenrater, "John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists," appendix IV. *The Primitive Communicant* was later published separately in a second edition in Manchester in 1738.

<sup>24</sup> Methodist Archives and Research Centre, Colman Collection 12.

1735, suggesting he read the entire 647-page tome. If Charles Wesley had not read the work with his Methodist friends at Oxford, he almost certainly would have gained some familiarity with it during the time his brother was reading it on the *Simmonds*.

A short summary of Johnson's *Unbloody Sacrifice* will provide essential context for the Wesleys' "high" view of the Eucharist.<sup>25</sup> Johnson set out to show that the Eucharist properly understood is a sacrifice offered to God. He defined sacrifice as a material offering in continuity with sacrificial offerings of the nation of Israel as described in the Old Testament which always contained a material element.<sup>26</sup> Johnson was careful to downplay the material aspect in the sense that "Whatever Power or Efficacy is ascribed to the Eucharist, flows wholly from the Original Sacrifice" of Christ.<sup>27</sup> Here he comes close to the doctrine of *instrumental causality*, which defines the elements not as the causes of the grace conferred, but as the instruments by which grace is imparted.<sup>28</sup> Johnson's emphasis differs somewhat from the Prayer Book stress on the communicants' "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving" and offering of his or her self to God.<sup>29</sup> Building on his Christ-centered interpretation of sacrifice, Johnson made it clear that while the bread and wine are not transformed into the body and blood in substance, they are Christ's *representative* body and blood "in mystery and inward power" or in "power and effect."<sup>30</sup> Therefore, Johnson maintained a strong view of the presence of Christ in the eucharistic celebration through the language of representation.<sup>31</sup> Theologians have labeled this as the doctrine of *transignification*, a concept which holds that while Christ is not locally present at the eucharistic celebration, he is nonetheless personally present which is sometimes explained as a "pneumatic" presence. The meaning or significance of the bread and wine change so that while the actual substance of the elements remain, they express the presence of Christ.<sup>32</sup> Johnson also upheld the presence of Christ through the language of *virtue*, a technical term also found in the Wesleys' *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*.<sup>33</sup> He often referred to Christ's presence in "power and virtue" or "virtue and effect."<sup>34</sup> In theological terms this has become to be known as *virtualism*; a

<sup>25</sup> I am indebted to Grisbrooke's concise and useful summary of Johnson (*Anglican Liturgies*, 72–87).

<sup>26</sup> Johnson, *The Unbloody Sacrifice, and Altar, Unvail'd and Supported: In which the Nature of the Eucharist is Explain'd . . .* (London: Robert Knaplock, 1714), 4.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

<sup>28</sup> William Crockett, "Holy Communion," in Stephen Sykes, John Booty, and Jonathan Knight, eds. *The Study of Anglicanism*, rev. ed. (London: SPCK, 1998), 310.

<sup>29</sup> See "The Order for the Administration the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion," in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.

<sup>30</sup> Johnson, *Unbloody Sacrifice*, 2:60; 1:141, 177.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:27, 31, 147, 151, 158, 159, 179, 239, 317, 355, 356, 2:xviii.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:ix, 158, 212, 257, 346, 355, 2:11.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Hymn number fifty-seven.

<sup>34</sup> Johnson, *Unbloody Sacrifice*, 1:159, 184, 201, 223, 225, 351, 397, 2:29, 45, 171.



concept similar to instrumental causality and transignification which defines the change in the elements as spiritual rather than in substance so that the faithful communicant receives the virtue of Christ's body and blood. In another place he wrote of the Eucharist "as the main Channel" for receiving the blessings of God's grace.<sup>35</sup> Johnson followed the liturgy of the *Apostolic Constitutions* (VIII.12) in his assertion that the elements become an effective channel of God's grace by the agency of the Holy Spirit through a threefold process of consecration performed in the following order: "1. The Reciting the Words of Institution. 2. The Oblation [or offering] of the symbols. 3. The Prayer of Invocation."<sup>36</sup> Johnson's emphasis was squarely on threefold consecration as the effective cause of Christ's presence although the benefits of the Eucharist are received in proportion to the faith of the communicant.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, Johnson believed consecration effected an objectively real presence of Christ, and, therefore, unlike many Anglican clergy, he did not teach a "receptionist" doctrine since he maintained consecration was permanent.<sup>38</sup> Johnson specified that there were six essential rites to be performed in celebrating the Eucharist; these include: the use of bread and wine, saying the words of institution, breaking the bread and pouring the wine, offering the bread and wine to God in "Commemoration of Christ's Death, Resurrection, and Ascension," the prayer of invocation of the Holy Spirit on the elements, and intercessory prayer for the whole church. The absence of any of these six rites makes the Eucharist "defective and imperfect." Johnson took the view derived from St. Cyprian that schism and heresy invalidate the Eucharist. This led him to insist that Dissenters could not validly offer the Eucharist.<sup>39</sup>

In preparing the 1718 Nonjuror *Communion Office* Thomas Brett (1667–1744) noted that he and his colleagues came to the conviction that significant revisions to the 1549 Prayer Book were necessary. In the 1549 book the order is invocation, institution, and oblation; the Usagers determined that the ancient liturgies (with the exception of St. Mark, the Ethiopian, and the Roman) including the Clementine were unanimous that the order should be institution, oblation, and invocation.<sup>40</sup> In their conception of a threefold process of consecration, the authors of the 1718 rite followed Johnson.<sup>41</sup> As far as Brett was con-

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:150; cf. 1:183, 252, 2:28. John Wesley later wrote that the "ordinary channels" were prayer, Scripture, and the Lord's Supper. "The Means of Grace," in *Sermons I*, ed. Albert C. Outler, vol. 1 of The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 381.

<sup>36</sup> Johnson, *Unbloody Sacrifice*, 1:234.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:213, 348; see Johnson's emphasis on worthy reception, 2:225–48.

<sup>38</sup> Richard F. Buxton, *Eucharist and Institution Narrative: A Study in the Roman and Anglican Traditions of Consecration of the Eucharist from the Eighth to the Twentieth Centuries* (Great Wakering, UK: Mayhew-McCrimmon for the Alcuin Club, 1976), 170.

<sup>39</sup> Johnson, *Unbloody Sacrifice*, 2:175–181; 2:175; 2:185–190.

<sup>40</sup> Grisbrooke, *Anglican Liturgies*, 96–97.

<sup>41</sup> Buxton, *Eucharist and Institution Narrative*, 180, 183. Their view of "eucharistic presence" was also identical to Johnson's (*Ibid.*, 187).

cerned, matters were made much worse when the authors of 1552 Prayer Book eliminated the prayer of invocation and moved the prayer of oblation to post-communion, changes maintained in the 1662 Book.<sup>42</sup> The Prayer Book revisions indicated that consecration of the elements takes place during the recitation of the words of institution rather than by the invocation of the Holy Spirit. This matched the contemporary understanding of the Roman Catholic Church whereas the Orthodox position came close to the Nonjurors in their insistence that consecration was effected by the Holy Spirit through the prayer of invocation. It is highly probable that John Wesley's comment that he "Revised [the] Common Prayer book" in preparation for his ministry in Georgia indicates that he adopted the position that the primitive threefold order of consecration was essential.<sup>43</sup>

In sum, the majority of eighteenth-century Anglicans held closely to the theology of the 1662 Prayer Book which they interpreted as promoting "a memorialist doctrine of the eucharistic sacrifice, a real receptionist view of the presence, and a belief that the consecration of the elements was effected by prayer, a prayer that must include the institution narrative."<sup>44</sup> During their last few years at Oxford and in Georgia, the Wesleys held to the minority view in the Church of England that espoused:

Firstly, a belief in the eucharistic sacrifice as a real, objective, and effectual Godward pleading of Christ's sacrificial offering of himself on Calvary (with which offering some would have wished to link the Last Supper). Secondly, a belief in a permanent and objective real presence, expressed by saying that by the action of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine become in power, virtue, and effect the body and blood of Christ. Thirdly, a doctrine of consecration that was quite specific in regarding the Holy Spirit as the agent of consecration, combined with a belief that the institution narrative—oblation—epiclesis sequence was the necessary and essential liturgical material by which consecration was effected.<sup>45</sup>

### **John Wesley's Theology of the Eucharist in His Early Writings**

John Wesley's high regard for the Eucharist was a constant and unwavering aspect of his life and ministry. John Bowmer estimated that he received the Eucharist an average of every five days during his lifetime, and if sufficient records were extant they would probably show that Charles Wesley maintained a similar frequency.<sup>46</sup> John Wesley's disciplined observance of the Eucharist led to an exchange of letters in 1732 with his mother in which they both affirmed the real presence of Christ in the sacrament. They agreed that in the Eucharist Christ is united to the believer in a mysterious manner. Susanna wrote in a letter to John (which Charles would have almost certainly read since it was part of a double let-

<sup>42</sup> Grisbrooke, *Anglican Liturgies*, 110.

<sup>43</sup> Wesley, *Journal and Diaries I*, Diary, Mar. 5, 1736, 363.

<sup>44</sup> Buxton, *Eucharist and Institution Narrative*, 192.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>46</sup> Bowmer, *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, 17.

ter, with one addressed him), “surely the divine presence of our Lord, thus applying the virtue and merits of the great atonement to each true believer, makes the consecrated bread more than a bare sign of Christ’s body, since by his so doing we receive, not only the sign, but with it the thing signified, all the benefits of his Incarnation and Passion!”<sup>47</sup> Susanna’s concise doctrine of the eucharistic presence of Christ reveals she had adopted the high-church expression of this doctrine. Her use of the terms “virtue” and “merits” and “consecrated bread” indicate her acceptance of the standard high-church view of the Eucharist. She quoted with approval the words of John Wesley’s friend that the presence of Christ is imparted “by the operation of his Holy Spirit” perhaps hinting that she adhered to the Nonjurors insistence that the prayer of invocation was an essential aspect of the communion service.<sup>48</sup> Susanna’s stress on the pneumatic presence of Christ firmly links her with doctrine of instrumental causality, transignification, and virtualism held by John Johnson and the Nonjurors. This emphasis can also be easily ascertained in the Wesleys’ *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*.<sup>49</sup>

The two primary sources for John Wesley’s early views on the Lord’s Supper are his sermon on “Constant Communion” (1732; published in 1787) and his *A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week* (1733).<sup>50</sup> In his prayer for Sunday morning there is a strong reference to the Eucharist as an oblation: “Let the Prayers and Sacrifices of thy holy Church offered unto Thee this Day, be graciously accepted.” The Sunday evening prayer offers thanksgiving “for so often feeding my Soul with thy most precious Body and Blood, those Pledges of Love, and sure Conveyances of Strength and Comfort.”<sup>51</sup> As expressed in Susanna Wesley’s comments, there is a clear belief in Christ’s presence in the Eucharist. In common with Johnson and Susanna Wesley, John Wesley’s prayer sees the elements as conveyors or instruments of God’s grace.

<sup>47</sup> Susanna Wesley to John Wesley (Feb. 21, 1731/2), *Letters I*, 326; *Susanna Wesley: The Complete Writings*, ed. Charles Wallace, Jr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 149. For Samuel Wesley’s thought on the Eucharist, see his *The Pious Communicant rightly prepar’d: or, a discourse concerning the blessed sacrament: wherein the nature of it is described, our obligation to frequent communion enforced, and directions given for due preparation for it, behaviour at, and after it, and profiting by it: With prayers and hymns, suited to the several parts of that holy office: To which is added, a short discourse of baptism* (London: Charles Harper, 1700).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* On Susanna Wesley’s connection to Nonjurors, see Hammond, “High Church Anglican Influences,” 176–80.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, hymns sixteen and seventy-two.

<sup>50</sup> John Clayton was influenced by the former text and helped compile the latter text and Benjamin Ingham read both works; therefore, we can conclude with reasonable confidence that these writings were representative of the Oxford Methodists. See Clayton to John Wesley (Sept. 6, 1732), *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, ed. Nehemiah Curnock, 8 vols. (repr. London: Epworth Press, 1938), 8:280–81 on his pastoral use of Wesley’s sermon; *Diary of an Oxford Methodist Benjamin Ingham, 1733–1734*, ed. Richard P. Heitzenrater (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), appendix 3. Ingham also read the two Nelson works and Brevint discussed below.

<sup>51</sup> Wesley, *A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week*, 5th ed. (Bristol: J. Palmer, 1755), 13, 17. The first extant edition was printed in 1738.

Wesley's sermon "The Duty of Constant Communion" holds an important place in the corpus of his works due to its status as the "fullest and most explicit statement of his eucharistic doctrine and practice."<sup>52</sup> Significantly it was first written as an extract of Robert Nelson's (1656–1715) *The Great Duty of Frequenting the Christian Sacrifice* (1707) which was an expansion of the chapter on "Vigils" from Nelson's highly-regarded *Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England* (1704).<sup>53</sup> Wesley's utilization of Nelson to encourage his students at Oxford to disciplined observance of the sacrament is noteworthy because of Nelson's prominence as a high-church/Nonjuror liturgist.<sup>54</sup> During his ministry on the *Simmonds* and in Georgia, Wesley continued to read Nelson to willing parishioners.<sup>55</sup> Some of the authority traditionally ascribed to the sermon has been derived from Wesley's opening note "To the reader" that since the time it was written for his students, his "sentiments" had not changed.<sup>56</sup> The thrust of the discourse is accurately reflected in its title, the benefits of which are "the forgiveness of our past sins and the present strengthening and refreshing of our souls."<sup>57</sup> Wesley conceived of eucharistic observance in terms of imitating "the first Christians, with whom the Christian sacrifice was a constant part of the Lord's day's service. And for several centuries they received it almost every day."<sup>58</sup> Wesley identified himself with the high-church sacramental tradition by referring to the "Christian sacrifice" indicating a belief in the Eucharist as an offering or oblation to God of the elements as a commemoration or representation of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.<sup>59</sup> To stress the centrality of the sacrament to the church, Wesley paraphrased the eighth and ninth *Apostolic Canons*. Wesley's paraphrase was: "If any believer join in the prayers of the faithful, and go away without receiving the Lord's Supper, let him be excommunicated, as bringing confusion into the church of God."<sup>60</sup> Because the manuscript of Wesley's text is no longer extant we cannot recover the aspects of the sermon he "retrenched" before printing it in the *Arminian Magazine*, however, his retention of terms such "Christian sacrifice" and "altar" identify the sermon with the high-church tradition.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>52</sup> *Sermons III*, ed. Albert C. Outler, vol. 3 of The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 427.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* 427. The extract is in volume twenty of the Colman Collection, Methodist Archives and Research Centre. Wesley read *The Great Duty* in Jan. 1732 and the *Companion* in Sept. 1731. Heitzenrater, "John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists," appendix IV.

<sup>54</sup> Buxton has commented that Nelson's doctrine of consecration is "remarkably similar" to John Johnson's which led him to propose that his work may have influenced Johnson (*Eucharist and Institution Narrative*, 173).

<sup>55</sup> Wesley, *Journal and Diaries I*, Diary, Dec. 24, 1735, and Feb. 4, 1737, p. 333, 468.

<sup>56</sup> *Sermons III*, 428.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 429.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 430. Hymn 166 in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* calls on the church to "Restore the daily Sacrifice."

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 428, 430, 434.

### Charles Wesley's "On a Weekly Sacrament"

Charles Wesley's undated essay "On a Weekly Sacrament" provides significant insight into his high-church theology of the Eucharist. While there is no evidence to date it with certainty, the theology and intense interest in the church fathers and *Apostolic Constitutions* in the essay aligns closely with what is known about his thought and practice at the time of the Georgia mission. The threefold aim of the essay is to prove by Scripture and church tradition that the sacrament should be offered at least weekly; that the teachings of the Church of England support this; and to make some practical observations.<sup>62</sup> However, only the first part of the essay has survived. Wesley argued that Acts 2:46 shows that the Lord's Supper was celebrated daily, and Acts 20:7, I Corinthians 16:2, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Pliny, and the *Apostolic Constitutions* demonstrate that it was observed at least weekly on the Lord's Day. He criticizes the popes and schoolmen for inventing the doctrine of transubstantiation leading to the "scandalous infrequency" of participation in the Eucharist and Luther and Calvin for teaching "the doctrine of the non-necessity of constant communion."<sup>63</sup> Wesley advocated a method for interpreting Scripture and Christian tradition in a manner that approximates the Vincentian Canon (the consensus of antiquity: what has been believed everywhere, always, and by all). He saw the "Apostolic tradition" or "the tradition of the Holy Catholic Church" as a sure rule for interpreting Scripture.<sup>64</sup> In his interpretation of Acts 20:7 Wesley made the case that the express reason that the early church gathered on Sundays was to celebrate the Eucharist. This view of the sacrament as the pinnacle of worship and Wesley's language used in describing the Eucharist identifies his essay with the high-church tradition. His explanation of the Eucharist "as the unbloody sacrifice of the Representative Body and Blood of Christ" mirrors the words of John Johnson and Thomas Deacon, and the doctrine of transignification.<sup>65</sup> Likewise, his stress on the sacrificial and offertory aspects of the Eucharist strongly links his essay with the high-church theological tradition.

### Daniel Brevint's *Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*

Because John and Charles Wesley published *Hymns on the Lord's Supper: With a Preface Concerning the Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*. Extracted from *Doctor Brevint* (1745), Brevint deserves special attention in any study of the Wesleys' eucharistic theology. Although the hymns were substantially influenced by Brevint, they also heavily draw on the eucharistic theology of John Johnson

<sup>62</sup> Bowmer, *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, 227.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 226, 227.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 226. John Wesley was convinced of the Vincentian Canon as a trustworthy theological method. See Hammond, "High Church Anglican Influences," 192–93, 200–01, 203.

<sup>65</sup> Bowmer, *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, 226.

and the Nonjurors.<sup>66</sup> Daniel Brevint (c. 1616–95), dean of Lincoln, descended from a Huguenot family in Jersey where he was ordained as a Reformed pastor before being ordained in the Church of England during the Interregnum. His famous theological/devotional treatise *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* (1673) influenced by the French Reformed tradition as well as the authoritative Anglican theologians Richard Hooker and Jeremy Taylor inspired the Wesleys' hymns.<sup>67</sup> John Wesley first read Brevint's treatise in July 1732 at a time when he was being increasingly influenced by high churchmen, including the Oxford Methodist John Clayton who may have recommended this work to him. Wesley consulted this book again both on the *Simmonds* and in Georgia in his meetings with his Saturday evening religious society designed as a communion preparation class.<sup>68</sup> The Wesleys' thirty page abridgment of Brevint's treatise first printed as a preface to the hymns and later printed separately went through eleven editions.<sup>69</sup> J. Ernest Rattenbury has stated that the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* was the most widely used collection of Wesleyan hymns other than the General Collections.<sup>70</sup> The importance of the hymns shows that the Wesleys led a revival that was a liturgical and evangelical.<sup>71</sup> A summary of the abridgment will provide a reliable insight into the Wesleys' eucharistic theology that continuously stretches from Oxford to the end of their lives. The paucity of their own writings on the Lord's Supper makes Brevint's treatise all the more important for understanding the Wesleys' theology of the Eucharist.

Brevint's epistolary dedication stated his goal was "to restore all back again both to the full meaning of and institution of Christ . . . and to the practice of the Holy Fathers;" an ideal shared by the Wesleys.<sup>72</sup> Because Brevint wrote in the generation prior to the Nonjuring schism his emphasis is not on three-fold consecration, however, his treatise is representative of the high-church tradition the Nonjurors drew on; therefore, they share significant themes in common. As with

<sup>66</sup> This point was made by Paul Burnham in a paper delivered at a conference entitled "An Eighteenth-Century Evangelical for Today: A Tercentenary Celebration of the Life and Ministry of Charles Wesley" (Liverpool Hope University, 2007). In his essay "The 'Nonjuror' Influence on the Eucharistic Hymns of Charles Wesley and its Relevance for Today," Burnham also argued that this connection was hidden because of the Wesleys' desire to avoid any association with Jacobitism.

<sup>67</sup> Kenneth W. Stevenson, "Brevint, Daniel (bap. 1616–95)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>68</sup> Wesley, *Journal and Diaries I*, Diary, Dec. 23, 1735 and Apr. 30, 1737, 333, 504. On the Saturday society, see Hammond, "Restoring Primitive Christianity," 203–04.

<sup>69</sup> Frank Baker, *A Union Catalogue of the Publications of John and Charles Wesley*, 2nd ed. (Stone Mountain, GA: George Zimmermann, 1991).

<sup>70</sup> J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1948), 11.

<sup>71</sup> Crockett, "Holy Communion," 313; cf. Bowmer, *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, 205; Geoffrey 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): 6.

<sup>72</sup> Brevint, *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice: By Way of Discourse, Meditation, and Prayer upon the Nature, Parts, and Blessings of the Holy Communion* (Oxford, 1673), unpaginated.

the Nonjurors who came after him, Brevint saw the Eucharist as “a kind of *Sacrifice*, whereby we present before God the Father that precious Oblation of His Son once offered.”<sup>73</sup> For Brevint, the sacramental event is a self-offering of both the communicant to God and of Christ (as the eternal high priest) to the believer.<sup>74</sup> Brevint’s theology of eucharistic sacrifice offers an insight into what the Wesleys meant by referring to the “Christian sacrifice” since they approvingly published Brevint’s words on the sacrament as “a kind of *Sacrifice*.”<sup>75</sup> Brevint’s emphasis on Christ’s heavenly intercession and continuous offering of himself on the “heavenly altar” as the great high priest draws out his key theme of the meeting of heaven and earth in the eucharistic event.<sup>76</sup> Although Brevint does not show the same concern as the Nonjurors for precise liturgical ritual, they share a similar emphasis on the Eucharist as a sacrifice and oblation.<sup>77</sup> Brevint saw Christ and the Church in unity as completing the sacrifice prefigured in Old Testament offerings.<sup>78</sup>

One of the persistent themes of Brevint’s treatise is the envisioning of the past, present, and future aspects of the Eucharist; it looks back to Christ’s sacrifice, conveys the graces of Christ’s presence and the benefits of his Passion in the present, and provides hope for the future and an assurance of future “happiness in heaven.”<sup>79</sup> As already suggested, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is central to Brevint’s thought. When referring to the elements he uses the language of representation and virtue to describe the manner by which Christ is present.<sup>80</sup> Fundamentally Brevint was committed to the traditional Anglican stance that the means by which God’s blessings are conveyed is a mystery.<sup>81</sup> He frequently used the term virtue when proposing that the consecrated bread and wine represent Christ’s body and blood and are instruments for applying the merit and virtue of Christ’s sacrifice to the soul of the believer. Hence, in Brevint as with Johnson we find the doctrines of instrumental causality, transignification, and virtualism. The primary difference between Brevint and the Nonjurors was the Nonjurors’ concern for liturgical method as a means of invoking Christ’s presence in the Eucharist. An important aspect of Brevint’s theology (shared by the Wesleys) is that through celebrating the Eucharist, the faithful receive God’s grace and are empowered for holy living.<sup>82</sup> Although Brevint’s focus was more on devotional language and mystery than theological terminology and definition, his emphasis

<sup>73</sup> Brevint, VI.2. Citations from Brevint follow the Wesleys’ first edition of *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* (Bristol: Felix Farley, 1745).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, I.1, IV.7–8, VII.10.

<sup>75</sup> See *Sermons III*, 430.

<sup>76</sup> Brevint, VI.2–3.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, for example, I.1 and VI.2.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, VII.8.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, II, III, V.V.4, 5; cf. Johnson, *Unbloody Sacrifice*, 2:107.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, representation: II.3, III.1, 6, VI.3; virtue: II.5, III.3, V.4.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, I.1, IV.3; Crockett, “Holy Communion,” 311.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, III.3, VII.12.

on conformity to Christ on the part of the believer approximates Richard Hooker's doctrine of "receptionism" which stresses that the union of God's grace and the recipients' faith makes the presence of Christ effective.<sup>83</sup> The Wesleys' stress on communicating at all opportunities and their doctrine of the sacrament as a "converting ordinance" seemingly downplayed the importance of worthy receptionism.<sup>84</sup> With the Nonjurors, they preferred to move beyond the Anglican reformers and link Christ's presence in the Eucharist to the *epiclesis*.<sup>85</sup>

### The Wesleys' Eucharistic Practice in Georgia

A number of controversial practices characterized John Wesley's eucharistic practice in Georgia. Upon arrival in the colony he revised the Book of Common Prayer to bring it into line with the 1549 Book along with Deacon's *Devotions* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, he reformed the liturgy to follow the Usages. He offered the Lord's Supper to his congregants every Sunday, on Church festivals, other special celebrations relating to Georgia, and in the homes of the sick. He kept a parish register noting the names of his communicants and how often they communicated.<sup>87</sup> To emphasize the importance of the sacrament he held a Saturday evening communion preparation class in his parsonage.<sup>88</sup> Communion was controversially offered to young boys who had not been con-

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<sup>83</sup> Crockett, "Holy Communion," 309, 313. Similar to "receptionism" is the "personalist" view that grace is received through grace-faith relationship rather than in a mechanical manner (310). Wesley's stress was on God's promise of grace while he maintained the need for personal faith. Paul S. Sanders, "Wesley's Eucharistic Faith and Practice," *Anglican Theological Review* 48 (1966):172.

<sup>84</sup> In his sermon "The Means of Grace," Wesley recommends self-examination before communicating, but in "The Duty of Constant Communion" he argued that this was "not absolutely necessary" (*Sermons*, 1:389, 3:430). Although John Johnson urged worthy receptionism, he was reluctant to declare that the sacrament did not benefit unworthy receivers (*Unbloody Sacrifice*, 1:213, 348). August Spangenberg reported in Georgia that Wesley viewed communion as "a means of grace" and a possible means of conversion, providing evidence of his early thoughts on communion as a converting ordinance, a theme found in early 1740s conversion letters to Charles Wesley. Douglas L. Rights, "A Moravian's Report on John Wesley—1737," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 43(1944):407–08; Henry D. Rack, "Charles Wesley and Early Methodism," in Kenneth G. C. Newport and Ted A. Campbell, eds. *Charles Wesley: Life, Literature and Legacy* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2007), 50–51. Later references by John Wesley to communion as a converting ordinance include: "The Means of Grace," *Sermons I*, 381, 393; *Journal and Diaries II*, 19:158, *Journal and Diaries III* (1743–54), eds. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, vol. 20 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 42, 101, *Journal and Diaries IV* (1755–65), *ibid.* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 21:233, 244. The majority Anglican position was that Communion was a "confirming ordinance" rather than a "converting ordinance." John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646–1689* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 346; Colin Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England, 1728–1760* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 64; Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, 3rd ed. (London: Epworth Press, 2002) 405–07.

<sup>85</sup> See John R. Parris, *John Wesley's Doctrine of the Sacraments* (London: Epworth Press, 1963), 9–10.

<sup>86</sup> Hammond, "Restoring Primitive Christianity," 159–60.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 171–73.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 203–04.



firmed.<sup>89</sup> While this might be interpreted as a liberal move, Wesley was fundamentally a high-church rigorist. During his first Sunday service in Savannah he announced to his congregation that he would admit none to the Lord's Table but those who informed him of their intention in advance.<sup>90</sup> What he meant by this is that he required all prospective communicants to be scrutinized and approved by him before partaking.<sup>91</sup> Ongoing discipline was maintained by his "resolution to speak once a week at least to every communicant apart from the congregation."<sup>92</sup> This rigorism led to his practice of asking non-communicants to withdraw before pronouncing the benediction and may have extended as far as to require them to leave the service before the communion office.<sup>93</sup> Depending on one's perspective, Wesley's eucharistic practice in Georgia might be called high-church legalism or high-church sacramental piety.

The Wesleys and with their co-missionaries Benjamin Ingham and Charles Delamotte resolved on the voyage to Georgia to act as a missionary team; therefore, as might be expected, there is evidence that Charles Wesley preferred the 1549 Prayer Book, observed the usages, and drew on Deacon's *Devotions* in Georgia. In Georgia he referred to "offering up the Christian Sacrifice" with Benjamin Ingham—a clear reference to the oblation and nearly the exact subtitle of Deacon's communion liturgy.<sup>94</sup> His words "consecrate at the sacrament" may have specifically referred to the invocation or the threefold process of consecration as a whole.<sup>95</sup> Frequent references to the sacrament in Charles Wesley's journal are indications of its importance to him, and his commitment to offer the Lord's Supper on a weekly basis. Although he was suffering from the "bloody flux" (dysentery) he ventured out on Sunday April 4, 1736, to administer it. Likewise, after he had returned to London, on December 12, 1736, against his doctor's orders he ventured out while still sick with dysentery to receive the sacrament. On Sunday October 3, 1736, he was relieved to partake of the sacrament in Boston and administer it with assistance from Dr. Timothy Cutler after two months without its "benefit." He shared his brother's conviction that receiving the Lord's Supper could have healing benefits as indicated by the note that he "Recovered a little strength in the Sacrament" the following Sunday.<sup>96</sup> Although

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 175–76.

<sup>90</sup> Wesley, *Journal and Diaries I*, Manuscript Journal, Sept. 11, 1737, 563. The first reading would have been on Mar. 7, 1736, although there is no particular note of this in his diary.

<sup>91</sup> Hammond, "Versions of Primitive Christianity," 51–52.

<sup>92</sup> Wesley, *Journal and Diaries I*, Manuscript Journal, Mar. 7, 1736, 365.

<sup>93</sup> Hammond, "Restoring Primitive Christianity," 181–82.

<sup>94</sup> *Manuscript Journal*, Mar. 28, 1736, 1:16. During his second day in Frederica, Charles endeavored to persuade Anne Welch "to give herself to God in the Christian sacrifice." *Journal*, Mar. 10, 1736, 2. Deacon's subtitle is "The Form of Offering the Sacrifice." *A Compleat Collection of Devotions* (London: for the Author, 1734), 74.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, Apr. 11, 1736, 21.

<sup>96</sup> On John Wesley, see *Journal and Diaries I*, *Journal* and Manuscript Journal, Dec. 18, 1735, 141, 332; cf. Benjamin Ingham's Journal, in Luke Tyerman, *The Oxford Methodists* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1873), Dec. 19, 1735, 72.

there is no known parallel in John Wesley's ministry in Georgia, in Savannah, Charles Wesley noted he "read the prayers for the energumens" to a dying fifteen-year-old girl suffering from immense physical pain. His use of Deacon's "Prayers for the Energumens, or persons possessed by evil spirits" (based on the *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII.6–7) rather than his "Order for the Visitation of the Sick" indicates he sensed a demonic force at work in the suffering of this young girl. Showing his sensitive pastoral heart Wesley remarked, "We were all in tears. She made signs for me to come again."<sup>97</sup>

### The Wesleys' Baptismal Doctrine

The esteem John Wesley had for William Wall's (1647–1728) *A History of Infant Baptism* (1705) was handed down to the Methodist movement in his *Thoughts upon Infant-Baptism* (1751) consisting of twenty-one pages of extracts from Wall's two-volume tome.<sup>98</sup> Wall served as vicar of Shoreham in Kent, and is almost solely remembered as the author of this diligently researched work that continued to be valued and reprinted in the nineteenth century. Almost immediately after the book was published, Wall received an endorsement from the Lower House of Convocation led by the high-church Dean of Carlisle, Francis Atterbury, later a friend of Samuel Wesley, junior. Although a leader of the Whig-dominated Upper House complained that there was no reason Wall's work should have been singled out for praise, the approval of the Lower House gave the book an official recognition that would have appealed particularly to high churchmen.<sup>99</sup> Following the publication of the Nonjuror Roger Laurence's *Lay Baptism Invalid* (1708), the issue of the validity of lay baptism<sup>100</sup> was hotly debated at Convocation in 1712. While the Upper House of Convocation declared that no one baptized with water in the name of the Trinity should be rebaptized, the Lower House refused to concur.<sup>101</sup> Along with lay baptism, Nonjurors were concerned to promote trine immersion. Wesley had already sided with them on the

<sup>97</sup> *Manuscript Journal*, May 25, 1736, 1:34.

<sup>98</sup> For a more generalized view of Wesley's thoughts on baptism, see *A Treatise on Baptism in The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 3rd ed., vol. 10 (London: Mason, 1829–31), 188–201. This *Treatise* is an edited abridgment of his father's *The Pious Communicant Rightly Prepar'd* (1700), which contains an appendix on baptism.

<sup>99</sup> Francis Atterbury, *Some Proceedings in the Convocation, A.D. 1705: Faithfully Represented* (London: Jonah Bowyer, 1708), 35; *An Account of the Proceedings in the Convocation* (London, 1706), 58. The latter work has been variously attributed to either Edmund Gibson or White Kennett.

<sup>100</sup> Lay baptism referred to baptism by a dissenting minister, that is, anyone but a Church of England clergyman. Because they were not in communion with the Church of England, some high churchmen believed dissenters could not validly perform the rite of baptism. This was accompanied by the conviction that dissenting baptisms were invalid because Dissenters had not been ordained in the apostolic succession.

<sup>101</sup> There were some Restoration clergy who advocated the rebaptism of Dissenters, but it was not widely accepted by the bishops and became characteristic of the Nonjurors after the Revolution of 1688. John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646–1689* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 159.

necessity of water baptism (by which he appears to have meant trine immersion) in his December 1733 manuscript "Essay on Water Baptism."<sup>102</sup>

Wesley had read *A Conference between Two Men that had Doubts about Infant Baptism* (1706) in 1732, an abridgment of Wall's larger work that focuses on his arguments from Scripture. Wesley "began Wall on Baptism" less than two weeks after he had boarded the *Simmonds* indicating it was a high priority for him. In this case, we can be confident that Wesley read Wall's two-volume work due to the evidence his diary provides that he devoted approximately twenty-four hours to this task.<sup>103</sup> Nearly every day between October 29 and November 25, 1735, Wesley read Wall and prayed from six to seven o'clock in the morning (the missionaries' third hour of the day set aside for reading "something related to the primitive church."<sup>104</sup>)

In his preface, Wall admitted that the New Testament does not directly deal with the issue of infant baptism and that some will criticize his work because he is unable to prove his case from Scripture. Nonetheless, he expresses unyielding confidence that the question can be validly and irrefutably solved by examining the practice of the primitive church as "there is no Body that will doubt but that the Apostles knew what was to be done in this Case: and consequently, that the Christian Churches in their Time did as they should do in this Matter."<sup>105</sup> Wall, therefore, staked his argument on the consensus position amongst high churchmen that issues which cannot be resolved by Scripture can and should be decided by appeal to Christian tradition. John Wesley agreed and would have been particularly persuaded in this manner since his beloved *Apostolic Constitutions* (VI.15) called for the baptism of infants. Since the purity of the primitive church was virtually unquestioned, Wall was convinced that he could persuade open-minded Baptists to accept the Church's teaching in favor of infant baptism by proving that this was the practice of the church in its purest ages; at the least, he

<sup>102</sup> "Water Baptism is the Baptism of Christ," MS in "Portraits and Letters of Presidents of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference," vol. 1, fol. 14, Methodist Archives and Research Centre. In this five-page treatise, Wesley argued that the literal meaning of the Greek word *baptizo* is "to wash" signifying the necessity of water baptism as a command of Christ. Insinuating that Dissenters had recently undermined the universal practice of the church, Wesley asserted that until the year 1650 no one from the age of the Apostles had spoken against water baptism. His argument for water baptism is summed up as follows: "1) Because Christ did practice Water Baptism, 2) Because the Apostles did it after him, and 3) Because the Catholic Churches have done it after Them." Heitzenrater, "John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists," 259 gives the date as December 1733.

<sup>103</sup> Wall also published *A Defence of the History of Infant Baptism* (1720), but it is highly unlikely that Wesley would have chosen this book over Wall's 1705 two-volume work or have devoted this much time to Wall's *Defence*.

<sup>104</sup> Benjamin Ingham's Journal, in *The Oxford Methodists*, Oct. 21, 1735, 69; cf. Wesley, *Journal and Diaries I*, Journal and Manuscript Journal, Oct. 21, 1735, 138, 314.

<sup>105</sup> William Wall, *The History of Infant Baptism*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (London: R. Bonwicke, 1720), I:vii. The third edition is the final and most complete edition and almost certainly the version Wesley read.

hoped to convince them not to separate from the Church over the issue of baptism.<sup>106</sup>

Part one of Wall's book consists of over five-hundred pages of quotations from the church fathers and early councils comprising a compilation of witnesses to infant baptism in the primitive church, while part two deals with the historical practice and theological issues involved. In part two, Wall deals with three issues of historic baptismal practice that surface in John Wesley's Georgia ministry: rebaptism, the mode of baptism, and private baptism.<sup>107</sup> The mode of baptism (and possibly rebaptism) was a contentious issue in Charles Wesley's ministry in Georgia. As to rebaptism, Wall noted that the primitive church was divided over this question. On the one hand, St. Cyprian stated the view held by the churches in Africa, Egypt, and Asia that any baptism received by the hands of those not in communion with the one true church is void; for the western church, converts from sects who baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity needed only to be confirmed by the church with the laying on of hands and anointing—this would procure the gift of the Holy Spirit which could not be obtained outside the true church.<sup>108</sup> In his baptismal practice in Georgia, John Wesley adopted the eastern position which was supported by one of his primary sources for theological guidance, the *Apostolic Canons*. Charles also indicated that he adopted this position, although there is no evidence that he had the opportunity to implement it.<sup>109</sup> Canon forty-seven declares that any bishop or presbyter that does not rebaptize "him who is polluted by the ungodly" in other words, any schismatic, shall be deprived of his clerical office.

Wall devoted a considerable number of pages to defending trine immersion as "the general practice of all antiquity." For Thomas Deacon, "The descending into the water represents his death, and denotes our mortification or dying to sin: the being under water represents his burial and denotes our being buried with Christ into his death: the ascending out of the water represents his resurrection, and denotes our rising again with his to newness of life."<sup>110</sup> According to Wall, exceptions to the general rule of immersion include "sickness, weakness, haste, want of quantity of water, or such like extraordinary occasions" in such circumstances, "baptism by affusion of water on the face was . . . counted sufficient baptism."<sup>111</sup>

<sup>106</sup> For the background of the Anglican-Baptist debate on infant baptism, see Oscar C. Burdick, "Wall, William (1647–1728)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). The final chapter of Wall's work is "A Dissuasive from Separation on Account of the Difference of Opinion about the Age or Time of receiving Baptism."

<sup>107</sup> As to private baptism, Wall condemned "indifferent" clergy who made no effort to persuade parents to bring their children to church to be baptized. *History of Infant Baptism*, 2:228.

<sup>108</sup> Wall, *History of Infant Baptism*, 2:133, 353–54, 394.

<sup>109</sup> *Manuscript Journal*, May 11, 1736, 1:33.

<sup>110</sup> *A Full, True and Comprehensive View of Christianity . . .* (London: S. Newton, 1747), 71; cf. *Apostolic Constitutions* VII.44.

<sup>111</sup> Wall, *History of Infant Baptism*, 2:352, 381. This practice was acceptable based on the Church's Canon 30. See *Canons and Constitutions Ecclesiastical* (1604).

This general pattern was represented in the 1549 Prayer Book which instructs the minister to immerse the child three times making the sign of the cross by dipping the child first to his right side, secondly to the left and thirdly in front of him while saying, "I baptize thee in the name of the father, and of the son, and of the holy ghost." The act is to be "discreetly and warily done. . . . And if the child is weak, it shall suffice to pour water upon it." The word "thrice" was removed from the 1552 Prayer Book while the 1662 Book shifts the onus to the godfathers and godmothers to tell the clergyman whether the child can "endure" being immersed or to "certify" that the child was "weak" and should receive baptism by pouring. Wall complained that the changes in the liturgy coupled with the discouragement of immersion during the Interregnum (1649–60) led to the demise of the primitive practice of trine immersion.<sup>112</sup> The Wesleys' practice in Georgia shows that they agreed with Wall that the rubric was being abused both by godparents who rarely asserted that the child could endure immersion and clergymen who shirked their duty to ask if the child is weak. However, while Wall simply hoped to encourage immersion, the Wesleys wanted to restore the practice of trine immersion based upon the primitive standard reflected in the 1549 Prayer Book and the *Apostolic Constitutions*. This was the consensus view of the Nonjurors and was reflected in Deacon's *Devotions* and John Clayton's exhortation to John Wesley at the time of his departure for Georgia.<sup>113</sup> The fiftieth Apostolic Canon probably reinforced the Wesleys' position with the radical demand that clergy who fail to perform trine immersion must be deprived. In addition, John Wesley adopted the principles of the Nonjurors that only baptism by an episcopally ordained minister in the apostolic succession was valid and, with Charles Wesley, he believed that Dissenters, since dissenting ministers were not ordained in either the episcopal manner or in the apostolic succession, should submit to rebaptism. These issues were hotly debated by the Convocation of 1711–12 and left unresolved although the majority of bishops came down firmly against rebaptism.<sup>114</sup>

### **The Wesleys' Baptismal Practice in Georgia**

Reflecting on clerical practice in Wiltshire, Donald Spaeth has argued that a flexible approach to the performance of baptisms (and funerals) could be essential for eighteenth-century Anglican clergymen to retain the support of their parishioners.<sup>115</sup> John and Charles Wesley's high-church opinions on baptism

<sup>112</sup> Wall, *History of Infant Baptism*, 2:368–69.

<sup>113</sup> Drawing on the *Constitutions*, Deacon advocated strict baptismal practices including: 1) trine immersion; 2) public baptism preformed only between Easter and Pentecost; 3) baptism only by a member of one's own sex (by a deaconess for women); 4) exorcism of the baptismal candidate as part of the baptismal ceremony. *Devotions*, 102, 115, 117–118, 125. Regarding the Wesleys, we only have evidence for the first of Deacon's four practices, which John Clayton encouraged John Wesley to implement. See Clayton to Wesley (written on a letter of Sept. 9, 1735 from James Oglethorpe), *Letters I*, 433.

<sup>114</sup> See Bernard G. Holland, *Baptism in Early Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1970), 25.

were highly controversial in Georgia.<sup>116</sup> Several of the twenty-five baptisms or christenings John Wesley recorded administering during his tenure in Georgia provoked controversy.<sup>117</sup> He insisted on rebaptizing Dissenters, adhering to the method of trine immersion, public as opposed to private house baptisms, and having three godparents who were communicants as required by the Church of England's Canons and Book of Common Prayer. Rebaptizing Dissenters and trine immersion also characteristic of Nonjurors had been foreshadowed in Wesley's ministry on the *Simmonds*<sup>118</sup> and were elements of his view of authentic primitive Christianity. In common with the Cypriatic tradition (i.e. that derived from St. Cyprian the early church father) and *Apostolic Canon* forty-seven, he believed Dissenters must be rebaptized because only clergy ordained within the apostolic succession could validly administer this rite. A comment in Charles Wesley's journal that a colonist desired to be baptized "having only received lay-baptism before" indicates that he took the same position, a stance he adamantly took in a November 1738 discussion with the bishop of London, Edmund Gibson.<sup>119</sup> This is an indication of the Nonjuror influence on Wesley, and evidence from his journal suggests he put his conviction into practice.<sup>120</sup> John and Charles Wesley were convinced that trine immersion was the sole baptismal method of the primitive church and this was also the rubric of the more "primitive" 1549 Prayer Book. John Wesley worked to overcome what his father called his "biggest struggle" in Epworth by insisting on public rather than private baptisms.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Spaeth, *The Church in An Age of Danger: Parson and Parishioners, 1660–1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 202. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, who paid Wesley's salary, did not want its missionaries to take a flexible approach, but to "duly consider the Qualifications" of baptismal candidates. *A Collection of Papers Printed by Order of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts* (London: Joseph Downing, 1715), 24; cf. David Humphreys, *An Historical Account of the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts* (London: Joseph Downing, 1730), 70.

<sup>116</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the theological background and John Wesley's baptismal practice in Georgia, see Hammond, "Restoring Primitive Christianity," 95–102, 149, 164–71.

<sup>117</sup> Wesley, *Journal and Diaries I*, Diary, Mar. 12, May, 8, 10, 16, 31, (two on) June 3, July 4, Sept. 23, Oct. 6, 7, Nov., 18, 29, Dec. 7, 1736, Apr. 5, June 5, July 16, Aug. 18, 1737; *Manuscript Journal*, June 5 and Nov. 30, 1737. After the entry of May 8, Wesley used the designation "Christened" in his diary with the exception of the June 5, 1737 note. Almost certainly due to his controversial practice, Wesley's number was significantly lower than his predecessor, Samuel Quincy's claim of thirty-four baptisms in seventeen months. Samuel Quincy to Harman Verelst (June 28, 1735), *Original Papers of the Trustees and Oglethorpe, 1732–35*, vol. 20 of *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, ed. Kenneth Coleman and Milton Ready (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982), 407.

<sup>118</sup> Hammond, "Restoring Primitive Christianity," 99–102.

<sup>119</sup> *Manuscript Journal*, May 11, 1736, 1:33; Nov. 14, 1738, 1:153–54. He also reported that in an earlier conversation his brother declared to the bishop that he would baptize anyone who was unsatisfied with lay-baptism. See *ibid.* Oct. 20, 1738, 1:150.

<sup>120</sup> See *Ibid.*, Nov. 16, 1738, 1:154 and Oct. 30, 1739, 1:218.

<sup>121</sup> Hammond, "Restoring Primitive Christianity," 101, 167; Samuel Wesley, *Advice to a Young Clergyman* (London, 1735), 66; cf. Wall, *History of Infant Baptism*, 228. Nicholas Beasley has noted that private baptism was common in British plantation colonies and disputes occasionally arose between clergy who insisted on church baptism and clergy who were willing to privately baptize people from outside of their parish. Nicholas M. Beasley, "Domestic Rituals: Marriage and Baptism in the British Plantation Colonies, 1650–1780," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 76(2007):346–47, 350–51.

In baptismal method, the Anglican missionary colleagues worked in tandem: Charles Wesley insisted on baptism by immersion in Frederica and while the Wesley brothers were in Frederica, Benjamin Ingham “baptized a child [in Savannah] by trine immersion” which he called “that good old way.”<sup>122</sup> On his second day in Frederica, Charles Wesley persuaded Joyce Germain and her husband Michael to consent to having their child baptized in this manner since the Prayer Book requirement that it was a strong and healthy child was met.<sup>123</sup> She “retracted her consent” a few days later, but Charles was able to baptize a child of John and Constance Calwell “by trine immersion, before a numerous congregation.” Subsequent references in his journal indicate that he maintained a favorable opinion of baptism by immersion.<sup>124</sup>

Sacramental theology and practice formed a central element of the Wesleys’ study and clerical practice in Georgia. Their theology and practice was worked out within the context of their desire to restore the primitive church in the infant colony, which was driven in large part by high-church and Nonjuror influences on them. And this manifested itself in careful thinking about precise liturgical practices they believed could aid the restoration of primitive Christianity. Subsequent to the Georgia mission John Wesley continued to value and justify by primitive precedent trine immersion.<sup>125</sup> There is also some inconclusive evidence that he continued to rebaptize Dissenters.<sup>126</sup> John and Charles Wesley’s *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* (1745) shows that nearly a decade after returning from Georgia the Wesleys had retained their high-church theology of the Eucharist.<sup>127</sup> The hymns clearly refer to three of the usages of the Nonjurors: the mixture of water and wine (hymns 31, 37, 74, 75) oblation (hymns 116, 118, 121–26), and invocation (hymns 16, 72). John Wesley also continued to defend prayers for the dead as a faithful usage of the Prayer Book, which suggests he may have observed this ritual.<sup>128</sup> Nonetheless, the Wesleys’ radical experimentation with

<sup>122</sup> Benjamin Ingham’s Journal, Apr. 14, 1736, Lincoln Cathedral Library MS 299. This entry is found in the Lincoln Cathedral Library manuscript only.

<sup>123</sup> Thus the Prayer Book exception clause that an ill child could be baptized by sprinkling was not met.

<sup>124</sup> *Manuscript Journal*, Mar. 14, 1736, 1:4; Oct. 30, 1739, 1:218.

<sup>125</sup> Ted A. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Change* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991), 86–89, 94–100, 107–08.

<sup>126</sup> Wesley, *Journal and Diaries II*, V, Jan. 25, 1739, 32, Feb. 10, 1767, 70, *Journal and Diaries VI (1776–86)*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1995), Dec. 26, 1785, 383. See Brian J. N. Galliers’s conclusion that Wesley maintained an ambiguous position on rebaptism. “Baptism in the Writings of John Wesley,” *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 32 (1960):156.

<sup>127</sup> On the legacy of the Nonjurors on the Wesleys’ post-1738 theology and churchmanship, see Henry D. Rack, “The Wesleys and Manchester,” *Proceedings of The Charles Wesley Society* 8 (2002):15–23.

<sup>128</sup> Wesley, “A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Conyers Middleton,” *Works*, 10:9–10; Wesley, *A Second Letter to the Author of The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar’d* (London: H. Cock, 1751), 52.

altering the Book of Common Prayer and implementing Thomas Deacon's alternative liturgy ceased after the Georgia mission. While the "success" or "failure" of the Georgia mission will continue to be a topic of debate,<sup>129</sup> the high sacramental theology and practice of the Wesleys' should continue to shape Wesleyan theological reflection and sacramental practice.

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<sup>129</sup> See Geordan Hammond, "John Wesley in Georgia: Success or Failure?" *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 56:6 (2008):297–305.



