

2007

John and Charles Wesleys' "Hymns on the Lord's Supper" (1745): Their Meaning for Methodist Ecclesial Identity and Ecumenical Dialogue

Aaron Kerr

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John and Charles Wesleys' *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* (1745): Their Meaning for
Methodist Ecclesial Identity and Ecumenical Dialogue

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty

of the Theology Department

McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Aaron K. Kerr

February 28, 2007

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Acknowledgments

I am very grateful to Duquesne's theology faculty for their effective integration of rigorous scholarship and the existential prospect of spirituality. Dr. Anne Clifford exemplified that connection for me in a challenging seminar in/on *Soteriology*. I am thankful for the encouragement of Dr. Jim Hanigan who offered me a teaching assistantship while chair of the department. This study would not have been initiated without the assistance of the late Michael Cahill, Ph.D.. He taught me to appreciate the hymnic genre in Scripture and then pointed to my own Methodist heritage of theological poetry. To teachers who directed my comprehensive exams: Dr. George Worgul, Dr. Jim Bailey, for their time I am grateful. I have been blessed by the work of my dissertation director, Dr. William Thompson-Uberuaga. His thought suggested itself through the merit of its relevance. He also honored the dignity of my own development as a scholar so that what is contained here in these pages is my own, and I take responsibility for any hermeneutical errors. Dr. Thompson-Uberuaga teaches the theologian that effective interdisciplinary scholarship is both inevitable and engaging. And I am grateful especially for his patience. Duquesne University nurtures a rich intellectual context. Recently, the President's lecture series on the Holy Spirit brought the prominent Methodist scholar Dr. Geoffrey Wainwright to campus. The Silverman Phenomenology Center hosted a two-day event, "Paul Ricoeur and Phenomenology" which gave me much to integrate and reflect upon. I'd like to thank those who have taken the time to read this dissertation and especially to Rev. Dr. David Morse, who at a "connectional" committee meeting one day suggested I look into theological study at Duquesne. I lift humble thanks to this scholar and pastor, a rare and unusual combination in this 21st century.

I am grateful for the contexts of ministry which certainly influenced and supported this study, Allegheny College and Stone United Methodist Church. Jonathan Helmreich, Ph.D., read most of the study and is the chairperson of the Pastor Parish Relations committee at Stone UMC. I am appreciative of his encouragement in the midst of pastoral duties. Thanks to friend and colleague Rev. Eric Leonard who also read portions of this study. Great thanksgiving for my father (Rev. Erwin) and step mother (Barbara) who gave safe haven through the comprehensives. To Stan, Elisa (sister) and Rachael Liang who let me stay at their house one day a week each semester when I commuted from Meadville. To my sister Alison Kerr who checked my French and saw so much more to clarify, thanks. To Aunt Sara Chapman, Ph.D., who is so very interested and read the first chapter and to cousins Bruce Stephens, Ph.D. and Larry Wheelock, minister of music. I hope Larry can put some music to the *HLS* lyrics someday. Thanks to Joanie Madalinsky of Noblestown UMC who has put at least one of these hymns to music. For my immediate family Gretchen, Elias and Maxwell, fearfully and wonderfully made. Finally I would like to lift up all my graduate work and this dissertation in memory of my mother, Clara Louise Tulloch Kerr. Her life's work involved nurturing a family, teaching English literature, music performance, all done with passion. It is hard for me to imagine what she would do if she could be here while I earn this degree. Had she been here and now, she may have sung a happy tune and then said something theological, perhaps too she would demand that we all eat something in celebration!

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction: *Sing and Sign*

The reversal of two letters is the only thing that separates the words in italics above. The words resemble one another. Singing is something the human being does, it is an extension of speech.¹ Signs, we are taught by Augustine are “those things...which are used in order to signify something else.”² An example is that bread and wine are potent signs of Jesus Christ. Yet singing is also a sign. Its tones fill words and words are symbolic. Singing with others may be deemed a sign, a sign of an eschatological community, that of the church whose end is to offer ourselves in the harmony of the Spirit.

Singing and signs, this is the topic of the following dissertation. A discussion develops which explores the relationship between hymnody and ritual. Singing and ritual, music and sacrifice, song and meals, have long been connected. Prior to Christianity, the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher Philo, a contemporary of the gospel writers, described the banquets of the *Therapeutae* as joyous occasions where discourse, food, prayers and hymns would be shared. After the discourse, prayers, and feast the lyrical hymns would sum up the evening:

After the meal they hold the sacred vigil, which is celebrated in the following manner. They all rise up in a body and at the center of the refectory they first form two choirs, one of men, the other of women, the leader and precentor chosen for each being the most highly esteemed among them and the most musical. They then sing hymns to God composed in many meters and melodies, now chanting together, now moving hands and feet in concordant harmony, and full of inspiration they sometimes chant processional odes, and sometimes the lyrics of a chorus in standing position as well as executing the strophe and antistrophe of the choral dance.³

¹ Don Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 160-161.

² Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, 107.

³ Philo of Alexandria, *The Contemplative Life*, 56.

Music and the lyrical serves to encapsulate and refine liturgical order, fostering a mood that is sometimes celebratory and bold, and other times diminished. There is a strong relation between discourse, prayer, and hymnody.

Through that relation a conversation evolves between two traditions, Roman Catholicism and Methodism. These traditions are themselves “signs” for rich historical expressions broadly defined as sacramental and evangelical. The relations between signs and singing cultivate an appreciation for the mixing of the perceptual distinctions between manifestation and proclamation.

A “type” of religious experience, manifestation draws one into a sense of the sacred, of presence, an epiphany. Another “type” of religious expression and experience, proclamation is an incisive act of acclaiming religious truth, of sharing a transcendent message, a liberating word that breaks in upon humanity. John and Charles Wesley’s *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* (1745) convey both of these dimensions of the church catholic and convey this relationship between word and sacrament, proclamation and manifestation. Because of their subject matter, these one-hundred and sixty six hymns bridge these areas of Christian existence.

A bridge will connect two fields or spaces. An assumption that unfolds in this discussion is that ecumenical fields are to open in order to be bridged. Through songs and signs, evangelical and sacramental, hymns on the Eucharist, an effort is made to point out and explore recognizable theological categories on either side of the bridge. At many points along the connection there will be more than one issue, theological knot or interpretive tool employed on the bridge.

LYRICAL POETRY

Charles Wesley is said to have composed some nine-thousand hymns in his lifetime, it was a rare day when he would not write at least one poem.⁴ Lyrical poetry as a genre of theological literature receives well deserved analytical attention in what follows. This study interprets hymnody as a multi-faceted liturgical, social and theological phenomenon the aim of which is to resolve tensions. The form of the lyrical will be explored. For this discussion I have relied principally on the philosophical work of Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur's inter-disciplinary and disciplined thought influences the following in many ways. In chapter four, I have utilized what may seem to some to be philosophical jargon. Ricoeur translates many categories from Greek philosophy into his native French. Translators then have the task of giving these words an English transliteration. Words like *mimetic* and *noetic* derive from Ricoeur's careful reading of Aristotle and less often Plato. But just as ritual and song are ancient arts, Ricoeur's retrieval of ancient categories provides helpful awareness of what may be going on in lyrical poetry about the ritual of the Eucharist. The use of Ricoeur and others to make sense of the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* for current ecclesiological and ecumenical discussions should make it clear that this is an argument in theological hermeneutics. I have relied on very well respected Wesleyan studies scholars, most notably Richard Heitzenrater, to provide contextual interpretations of the Wesleyan movement. I have tried to remain sensitive to that Methodist guild's developed discoveries as well as to current questions that remain vital to the enterprise of Wesleyan studies. Any misappropriations of Wesleyan thought must be attributed to me, not the interpreters who have spent the better part of their lives

⁴ ST Kimbrough, *Lost in Wonder*, 17-23.

with Wesleyan texts. I have had at my disposal the 1958 edition of the *Works of John Wesley* and have cited, when appropriate, most any literature contained therein, sermons, letters, journal entries, essays.

Two primary texts and three authors are key to this argument about songs and signs. I have deliberately attempted to bring the seventeenth century Anglican Priest Daniel Brevint (1616-1695), John Wesley (1703-1791) and Charles Wesley (1707-1788) into mutual recognition, interpreting them as collaborative partners in an ecclesiological enterprise. Each had a distinctive role in the production of *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*. Brevint was the author of *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*, the fundamental source text from which Charles Wesley worked in order to compose the Eucharistic hymns. To my knowledge, that fact's significance has not been acknowledged or explored. Charles Wesley was a sort of poetic medium for Brevint's thought, another way in which the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* is a bridge document. I proceed with the assumption that neither Charles Wesley nor his brother John ought to be construed as ecclesiological innovators. In the popular Methodist mind this has been the reigning perception. The consequences of that assumption are that John Wesley and the Methodists are rendered as some sort of ecclesiological rebels, with subsequent Methodist ecclesiology relying too heavily on the Wesleys as originators of a new church. But the Methodist movement, resembling the lyrical poetry which sustained it, forms historical characteristics that are not unlike those of a Roman Catholic order, not a separated ecclesial entity. The interpretive efforts at illuminating the role of Brevint and taking the spot light off of John Wesley is the corollary to Methodist identity construed as an intrinsically ecumenical

tradition that is called to the form of an order connected to an established sacramental structure.

ROMAN CATHOLIC AND METHODIST THEOLOGY

The broad contours of the evangelical and sacramental theologies of the Protestant and Catholic traditions are well worn categories. Attention is paid, therefore, to the distinctive marks of so called “Methodist” theology in relation to Roman Catholic “methods.” Roman Catholic theology is largely propositional, built upon logical statements which teach a received truth in the stylized language of theology. Protestantism too has thrived on propositional catechesis, though there has developed a range of categorical prospects unconfined to the ecclesiological focus of Catholicism. It is conceivable that in Protestantism there could be salvation outside the church provided that you start a new one!

In a sense less developed ecclesiology means far fewer propositions of faith. Or, in a certain strand of Protestantism the propositional is singular and the relations between propositions are never explored. One thinks of “Saved by grace through Faith.” If that proposition is never connected to “The Church and its sacraments mediate the Grace of God,” enrichment is lost and virtually no creativity is won. The great gift of Catholic theology is the bringing together of propositional truths that are in tension. This is the true nature of theological creativity. Mainline Protestant theology still wrestles with this holistic view and tends to see its work as resolving the tensions by plumbing the depths of one end of a dialectical pole. This could lead to imbalance in mind and heart.

Though Methodism is not solely a propositional tradition (there is no catechism save the hymnal in the Methodist tradition) it does center its identity upon the classical

theological themes inherent in Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Its ecclesiology has developed through worship, but it has been less inclined to articulate the propositional terms and theological significance of that worship. In this way Methodism has resonances with the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Even when Methodism does provide propositional categories to fund and ground its ortho-praxis, these cannot be "forced" upon Methodists. There is no ecclesiology that would give these propositions due authority. This leaves the tradition with a kind of spiritual dichotomy; you either are really engaged in God's process of sanctification or you consider yourself a Methodist because people at your church are nice (and so they are, very nice).

In the Roman Catholic theological tradition ecclesiology is a primary point. Theology is always the church's responsibility. Theology of the Eucharist is theology of the church. But these propositional ecclesiological aspects often limit what theology might do, especially in the lives of the "faithful" (the faithful is Roman Catholic hierarchical language for lay folk, e.g. the nice people who show up at Mass "faithfully"). How might a propositional mandate turn into an alluring aesthetic vision of God's glory and calling?

The answer to that question, from a Roman Catholic perspective, has often relied on yet one more propositional grouping to "order" the cognitive prospect of faith, diminishing the exciting catalyst of living theology to the umbra of received propositions. The propositional grouping offers this. There is the propositional theological character of the faith, the *lex credendi* (law of belief) and then there is the more aesthetic, one could say doxological aspect, the *lex orandi* (law of prayer). The danger inherent in a tradition that leans too heavily on propositional faith is that these categories remain fixed and confining, and they never touch one another in the mind's eye. But lived Christianity takes umbrage with being fixated on what can become dichotomous categories. This is

true because living a Christian life integrates in a wonderful way the law of belief and the law of prayer. The lyrical is explored, therefore, as an expression that is between the purely propositional and the purely experiential. Somewhere on the way back from the *lex credendi* to the *lex orandi* and back again one may traverse the bridge of the lyrical. The hymn has didactic dimensions. It teaches in its way incarnation and atonement. Yet it is also embodied speech, speech that breathes through participation. For the lyrical evokes “more than a feeling,” in the language of a contemporary lyric, because it *is* music and it also embodies music, being a sign of the fusion of intellect and heart.

THE MEASURE OF THE ARGUMENT

These aforementioned markers of method and assumptions should be joined by a few other guiding tones that I will now offer as they are heard throughout this argument. The research topic arose out of what may be deemed a Post-modern obsession with identity and difference. This theme finds Christian denominations attempting to articulate the identifying marks of their own traditions. Ecumenical thought, if it is to remain authentically dialogical, must never “water down” the charisms of particular historic forms of faith. The first part of this study hopes to enter into the historic particularities of Methodist theological literature in order to ascertain what identifying marks may surface so that ecumenical prospects remain central to Methodist identity.

What can these one hundred and sixty-six hymns, written at the height of the Methodist revival in England (1745), tell us about Methodist ecclesial identity today? The identity of Methodists has not always been clear, even to Methodists themselves. (There are African Methodist, Wesleyan Methodist, Free Methodist, and United Methodist “denominations” in the United States.) In what follows, for example, I have a

tendency to inter-change Methodist and United Methodist. “Methodist” generally refers to the British context while United Methodist refers to that international body of believers growing out of North American Methodism. In proper post-modern academic protocol I should reveal my “identity” as a United Methodist clergy person. This too may color the argument somewhat.

These branches of Methodism stem from an original separation from the Church of England that was less an event arising from any theological debate, and more a practical necessity. Recent interpretations of Methodist ecclesial identity find certain Wesleyan characteristics, and even a creative synthesis of what history would deem to be disparate strands of the larger catholic tradition. This has led Albert Outler to interpret Methodism as an evangelical order of the church catholic and his ecclesial interpretation has strongly influenced what develops below.⁵

The *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* were originally intended to provide spiritual incentive to early Methodist converts in order that they communicate within the larger sacramental structure of the Church of England. When these hymns are cited by contemporary United Methodist Church documents, their meaning for ecclesial identity should not be passed over. In the most recent statement on “United Methodist” Eucharistic teaching, *This Holy Mystery*, the *Hymns* are cited without contextualization and the document as a whole does not develop the question of ecclesial identity in a comprehensive way. In fact, I note a large ecumenical void in the *This Holy Mystery*. At the 2004 General Conference of the United Methodist Church in Pittsburgh, this document was adopted as the “official” teaching on United Methodist Eucharistic

⁵ Albert Outler, *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, edited by Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden , 225.

practice with the stipulation that “teaching resources” be made available to congregations.⁶ One teaching document is explored in chapter five and though helpful, it tends to neutralize tensions rather than creatively deal with tensions within the tradition. This is particularly true of the nature of Eucharistic sacrifice.

Though these teaching documents are readily available, as has already been intimated, there is very little ecclesial will to implement a comprehensive Eucharistic revival in the United Methodist Church. Such revival will be carried out, if at all, in geographical pockets of sacramental revival. Perhaps this is helpful, for the fruit of revival takes hold when practitioners “own” the ground out of which revival roots itself. Uncultivated soil yields little effect.

In the thirty year history of the Methodist-Catholic dialogue these hymns have provided a point of conversation. The Methodist-Catholic dialogue has noted the resource these hymns provide, even as Methodists acknowledge their distance from them and Roman Catholics share their attraction to them.⁷ Given the contemporary context of renewed interest in United Methodist Eucharistic practice and the stated ambivalence of Methodist church identity, these hymns seemed an apt entry point into Methodist ecclesial identity and ecumenical dialogue with Roman Catholicism. In that vein, the teaching potential of the lyrical and music will provide the backdrop for discussions of the ecumenical issues of real presence and sacrifice in chapter five.

⁶ General Board of Discipleship, "This Holy Mystery," www.gbod.org, May 2004; Linda Green, "Delegates Approve Document on Holy Communion," www.umc.org/interior, 7 May 2004.

⁷ Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer, ed., *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 310, 321, 325.

This study proposes to explore the following questions: To what degree can contemporary Methodist ecclesial teaching “own” these hymns? Where do they fit in the developing Methodist canon? How do these hymns touch upon the relationship between Eucharistic practice in “denominations” and universal Church unity? Another way to put that question is: Do these hymns also belong to the church universal, and to what extent? How do hymns, as a distinct theological genre, reflect the content of early Methodist revival, particularly as those within the revival understood their own ecclesial identity?

UNITY AND PARTICULARITY

One theological dimension of Eucharistic thought is the unity of the Christian Church. Any exploration of the Eucharist from the Protestant, and particularly Methodist end of the spectrum, must wrestle with the meaning of Eucharistic practice in the midst of a separated Christianity. *This Holy Mystery* seems to skirt this issue.

Though denominational theologians can emphasize other dimensions of Eucharistic theology, such as, “presence,” pneumatology, Christology, etc., ultimately “separation” must be considered. With overwhelming evidence of their own sacramental origins, Methodist theologians, especially, will be led to consider the theological meaning of Eucharistic practice as a separated ecclesial body. When unity becomes a primary arbiter of Eucharistic meaning, then “presence,” sacrifice, pneumatology and Christology are more vigorously engaged as recognizable common or distinctive teachings.

Investigation into Methodist origins will also tell us that the Anglican sacramental system was not able to accommodate the early Methodists, so that separation was a “two way street.” Methodists eventually separated from the Anglican communion, but one of the many reasons for this was that the Anglican communion was unwilling to receive

lower-middle class Methodists whose numbers were increasing rapidly. The purpose of the hymns was to provide access into and participation in the Anglican liturgical community. This historical use points to their original “bridging” capacities and demonstrates that the *Hymns* are a poetic and didactic theological expression of the significance of the Church’s ritual system for the life of holiness. As such they are a vital expression of a living sacramental theology and allow an interpretation of early Methodism as an order within the larger sacramental system of the *Ecclesia Anglicana*. When placed, therefore, in historical context as an expression of the early Methodist mission, the *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* are a body of theological literature that promote a eucharistic ecclesiology concerned with the visible unity of the Church catholic.

These lyrics point to the prospect that contemporary Eucharistic practice must be accompanied by the larger ecclesial question and Methodism’s place in the ecumenical landscape. In other words, in addition to evoking a renewal of Eucharistic practice, their use must also inspire a re-examination of the question of the inherent ecumenical meaning of Methodist ecclesial identity.

The last book-length study of these hymns was J. Ernest Rattenbury’s *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley*. Written in the 1940s, Rattenbury was eager to defend the hymns against the criticisms of those who saw them as too “Roman” or too “Anglo-Catholic.” Rattenbury concludes his essay with the well founded conviction that they serve to undergird what at the time was a developing sense of the corporate nature of eucharistic sacrifice. His study is helpful in its exegetical unveiling and he is eager to claim the hymns as Methodism’s only “authoritative Sacramental doctrine.”⁸ Rattenbury,

⁸ J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (Akron: Order of St. Luke Publications, 1990,1996), 3 (page citations are to the 1996 edition). (Hereafter cited as *EH*).

a British Methodist, wrote at a time when Methodism was feeling the force of its institutional prowess. At that time, Methodist theologians were at work attempting to substantiate their theological validity among the giants of Protestant Christendom, the Lutherans and Reformed. The Ecumenical movement, Methodist self-understanding and the Liturgical movement all have developed considerably since Rattenbury's text was written. It seems an appropriate moment for the Eucharistic hymns to be explored again, especially their ecumenical significance. Though there have been articles on the hymns, indicating their significance for certain theological themes, there has been no sustained treatment of their ecclesial, or ecumenical significance.

THEMES AND SEQUENCE

The following three chapters extend examinations of three areas, the historical, the textual and the theological. Each successive exploration builds on the previous one so that in the fifth chapter these findings are brought to bear on contemporary Methodist identity and Roman Catholic Eucharistic thought. A brief "Reprise" speculates about possible areas that deserve more sustained attention and encourages a practical-theological thrust for Methodist life and thought. In this way the end of the essay reflects the Methodist tradition as interpreted throughout, a school of classical Christianity familiar with the mysterious art of sanctification. Music and hymnody are at the core of this art, it is argued.

The chapter exploring history will examine the Wesleyan movement in its political/religious, liturgical and intellectual context. These three dimensions of religion will inter-face in the rest of the dissertation since ecclesiology integrates all of these areas of theology. A brief explanation of British political/religious history will precede an

exploration of the identifying dimensions of what came to be called the Methodist movement. Attention will be paid to the diversity of Christian expressions in eighteenth century England. In addition the development and use of hymnody in liturgical settings will be described. An interpretation of the function of lyrical poetry will be offered. The “state” of Eucharistic theology and practice in 18th century England will be examined while a focus on the tone and inclinations of Wesleyan Eucharistic piety are interpreted.

The third chapter concentrates on the development of the *Hymns* as a text. In the history of the Methodist tradition, these hymns on the Eucharist have been both embraced and rejected, perhaps demonstrating unwittingly Methodism’s intrinsic ambivalence as an ecclesial body. In the Wesleys’ lifetime there were nine editions of these hymns published. Since then, Anglo-Catholics re-published them in the nineteenth century; in the mid-late twentieth century, Methodists re-produced several more editions. These developments convey the multi-author richness of the text. The production process involving these authors’ hands is shown to bolster a thoroughly ecclesial interpretation of the *Hymns*.

The second part of this chapter will focus on the only extended “Methodist” interpretation of these hymns, that by J. Ernest Rattenbury. Rattenbury’s ecclesial assumptions will be examined and some of his theological emphases will be contextualized. The strengths and weaknesses of his interpretation will be offered.

The fourth “theological” chapter will move from an examination of history and textual tradition into a contemporary interpretation of the hymns. In each section some of the Eucharistic hymns will serve to focus the argument. The chapter will proceed within the

framework of the relation between lyrical poetry and theology. Drawing on the work of various interpreters, the particularity of the language of lyrical poetry will be considered.⁹ In this chapter the metaphor of “bridge” will receive its philosophical and theological foundation. I will argue that lyrical poetry acts as a connective expression of religious experience and therefore is an apt communicative device through which we can explore the experience of Eucharistic participation in its ethical and formative conditions.

The second part of this chapter will build on this bridge metaphor, arguing that “hymns” on the “Eucharist” are indicative of a Wesleyan synthetic thrust. They bring a characteristic of Dissenting Protestant worship—song—into dialogue with the primary catholic liturgical expression—Eucharistic ritual. The rest of this section will show the way singing and the *Hymns* point to the evangelical nature of Eucharistic sharing. Hymns and the singing of hymns are “communication” about communion. The chapter will conclude by showing that lyrical poetry in the Wesleyan synthesis is a bridge to ecclesial participation. The *Hymns* call persons to holiness through the Eucharist. The bodily dimensions of such participation—hearing, seeing, touching—will be explored through the body of hymnody.

The final and longest “chapter” will attempt an interpretation of Methodist ecclesial identity, building on the foundations and conclusions of the previous chapters. The distinctive “Methodist” synthesis will be explained through an appropriation of our previous discussion of the Methodist movement and the use of the *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*. The contemporary meaning of Methodist identity will be explored by placing

⁹ William Countryman, *The Poetic Imagination* (New York: Orbis, 1999); Jaime Garcia, “Theologie et Expression Poétique,” *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 68, no. 2 (1994): 173-96; Paul Ricoeur, “Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation,” in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 73-118; William M. Thompson, *Fire and Light: The Saints and Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1987).

both the *Hymns* and Methodism within the ecumenical landscape, particular attention in this regard being paid to music and song as distinctive “gifts” to be shared with the Roman Catholic propositional tradition.

The *Hymns* confirm that Methodism is ecumenical at its core, containing an evangelical impulse through the communication of universal salvation. This impulse is served well within a larger sacramental structure. The sacramental thought of Catholicism will be engaged in the hope of some mutual recognition and deepened connections.

CHAPTER TWO: The *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* in Historical Context

In placing the Wesleyan movement of the eighteenth century in historical context, we will attempt a description of three dimensions: the political/religious, the intellectual, and the liturgical. The dynamic among these three was always at work, as we will see, but the categories grant a certain focus to the descriptive task. Throughout the description I have risked interpretation of the meaning of these dimensions, particularly as they relate directly to the Wesleys and their Eucharistic hymns. I want to point out that our description of the political dimension is more accurately termed *politico-religious*. In some ways sixteenth century England represents the beginnings of the supposed separation of the “religious” from the “political,” the sacred from the secular. Our contemporary political assumptions about these “two” great institutional structures finds its genesis in the two centuries prior to the Wesleyan movement. Our description will be careful, therefore, to accentuate the political implications of ritual in this period.

THE POLITICO-RELIGIOUS DIMENSION 1509-1689

One could interpret the volatile political dialectic in Post-Reformation British history as a struggle to characterize the religious identity of the State: How Protestant? How Catholic? Only seventeen years after the German Reformation the Roman Catholic King of England, Henry VIII, initiated the inception of England's religio-cultural venture into self-definition.

Although he appreciated almost all of Roman Catholic doctrine (he had written a book against Luther), Henry VIII (1491-1547) split with Rome in 1535, declaring England independent so that he could be granted a divorce. In 1536, Henry's Chancellor, Thomas Cromwell, dissolved all the monasteries; perhaps an effort to rid England of the symbols of Rome. Henry died in 1547. His successor and daughter, Mary Tudor (1553-58) repealed the Henrician split, and in 1553 England was ostensibly loyal again to Rome. Henry's second daughter Elizabeth, fruit of his marriage with Anne Boleyn, succeeded Mary, and Elizabeth's reign carried England into the 17th century.¹⁰

In 1559 Elizabeth passed the *Act of Uniformity*. Appended to this Act was an updated form of *The Book of Common Prayer*, largely a theological synthesis of the Lutheran Reformed and Roman Catholic traditions.¹¹ Theologian Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury, was responsible for this theology of the "middle way," publishing the first Common prayer book in 1548 and the second in 1552. In the 1552 edition, the word

¹⁰Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 383-84; Norman Jones, *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaptation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 2-3,14.

¹¹ Hans J. Hillerbrand, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), s.v. "Book of Common Prayer."

“Mass” was replaced by “communion,” and neither Puritans nor Roman Catholic sympathizers were pleased with the theological and liturgical changes. The nomenclature “Lord’s Supper”, which we can trace to Calvin, was the choice of words the Wesleys would appropriate to describe this ritual. Between “Mass” and “Lord’s Supper”, communion provided a “middle way.” Another change in the 1552 edition of interest is that Cranmer placed a *hymn* at the end of the communion service. This *Gloria in Excelsis*, provided an uplifting ending to the liturgy and its placement may have been inspired by Cranmer’s reading of Mark 14:26. Here, the disciples and Jesus sing a hymn after the last supper and head to the Mount of Olives.¹² These liturgical changes are some of the identifying marks of the gray Anglican middle---- intercontinental, inter-theological---- and would come to characterize Anglican theology and practice to this day.¹³

The 1559 *Book of Common Prayer’s* eucharistic liturgy was especially synthetic. It kept both the Roman Catholic doctrine of “real presence”(but not transubstantiation) and the Reformist understanding of the Eucharist as a memorial.¹⁴ Thus, the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer* bequeathed to Anglican theological history, and subsequently to both of the Wesleys, an integration of what some would consider the “best” of the Protestant and Roman Catholic sacramental traditions. As such, it would also become the basis for a variety of readings and therefore remain a serious point of contention between the more

¹² Gordon S. Wakefield, "The Hymns on the Lord's Supper in History and Eucharistic Theology," in *Like a Two Edged Sword*, Martin R. Dudley, ed.,139-160 (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1995), 141-142.

¹³ Countryman, *The Poetic Imagination*, 31-36.

¹⁴ This is a descriptive and general account of Eucharistic understanding. The actual eucharistic theologies of Luther, Calvin and Zwingli are certainly more complex , but the poles I am dealing with here account for a general tension between Sacramental and more Word centered traditions.

Reformed and more catholic-minded. More specifically *The Book of Common Prayer* would have a clear influence upon the Wesleys' Eucharistic hymns and therefore give us one component of so called "Wesleyan eucharistic theology."¹⁵

Seventeenth century England would struggle to maintain the Elizabethan settlement. Queen Elizabeth's status quo became "unsettled" after her death. The Stuart line began in 1603 with the accession of James I (1603-1625). James encountered generous amounts of pressure to reform the National Church. He believed, however, in the Divine Right of Kings. Therefore, James supported the Church of England as it was at the time of his secession. And yet he did yield on the Puritan suggestion to provide a new translation of the Bible and in 1611 the *King James Version* was published. This was, according to Walker et al., one of James' few concessions to the Puritans.¹⁶ The product of a broad scholarly consensus, the King James translation would be the main text, in addition to the Greek, that the Wesleys would imbibe and appropriate all their lives. Along with the Book of Common Prayer and Daniel Brevint's text on the sacrament, the KJV would be a source of the Wesleys' theological language in their poetry about the Eucharist.

This period was wrought with the tension between Catholic and Puritan radicals. Reformers continued to demand a more thoroughly Protestant change and were now coming to be called Puritans, those who would purify Anglican Christian life. Under the rule of Charles I (1625), Puritan dissent, as well as social fragmentation, multiplied. The social divisions were dramatically demonstrated as Charles and the parliament vied for

¹⁵ Kathryn Nichols, "Charles Wesley's Eucharistic Hymns: Their Relationship to the Book of Common Prayer," *The Hymn* 39, no. 2 (1988): 13-21.

¹⁶ Williston Walker and Richard A. Norris, *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribners and Sons, 1985), 549.

political power. The main division can be construed as that between Roman Catholic and Puritan antipathies. Charles I desired autonomy from Parliament, but in the meantime Parliament formed the Westminster Assembly in 1643 for the purpose of a reform of the National Church. The clash of wills between Charles I and the reforming Parliament led to England's civil war some sixty years before the births of John and Charles Wesley. One of the gory details of this war was the beheading of Charles I in 1649. This is necessary to remember, for it gives us a sense of the violent religio-political past that haunted the Wesleyan age.¹⁷

Such a past would cement a tension within Wesleyanism. This tension can be described as that between the desire to act passionately upon one's faith claims and the hushed disposition of never allowing those claims to lead to the kind of conflict England had seen a century before. It also explains somewhat the Deistic theological naturalism of the eighteenth century, a theological fashion the Wesleys would certainly understand, but never subscribe to, as their sacramental hymns well attest. In short, the civil war of the seventeenth century gives us a telling example of the way religious identity and political volatility converge in England. Power and the fight for power were largely expressed through a constructive theological worldview. In the most general terms the questions seemed to be: Would England remain an ordered/hierarchical society or would it appropriate the captivating vision of the liberty of conscience embodied by Luther and others? Or, would England negotiate various and variant forces? What is more, the civil war's haze placed a certain fear of enthusiasm *and* a desire for social harmony that

¹⁷ Nicholas Tyacke, "The Rise of Puritanism and the Legalizing of Dissent," in *From Persecution to Toleration*, Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel and Nicholas Tyacke, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991). 17-49.

affected the tone of Eighteenth century piety, the Wesleys being an example of the attempt to live within the tension of enthusiasm and harmony.

The “peace” that came after the war ushered in a state that, for the first time in British history, claimed to be Presbyterian in tone and temper. The dialectic, forging the Anglican middle way and driven by theo-political diversity, would arch to the height of its Reformed identity for only eleven years. Though brief, its effects were long lasting. One result of its methods of operation meant the exile of many Episcopalians.

In 1644, in the throes of civil war, the majority Puritan parliament abandoned the *Book of Common Prayer* for a Presbyterian order of worship known as the *Directory*.¹⁸ In addition, with much Scottish Presbyterian influence, the Parliament approved of the Westminster Confession in 1648. This document, an effort to solidify a more Presbyterian religious unity, carried “British Augustinianism, Puritan Covenant theology, the Reformed theology of the Rhineland, and Calvinism,” though the “liberal Calvinism of Saumur” was stifled. In the Confession, the language about Eucharist is clearly Reformed; there is not “any real sacrifice offered up, but only a commemoration of that one offering up of himself.” Careful to distance itself from the “Popish Mass,” the Westminster Confession would also lend itself to be interpreted as a mere Zwinglian memorialism.¹⁹

The Wesleys were influenced by both ends of this dialectic between a Presbyterian State and the “Restoration” of the Anglican middle way (1649-1689). Further, these

¹⁸ Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* , 555.

¹⁶ John H. Leith, ed., *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine From the Bible to the Present* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 192, 225.

“identities” suffered under the duress and power of one another. To clarify, we will examine two men who were contemporaries. They are Daniel Brevint (1616-1695), from whom the Wesleys take their Sacramental notions, and the influential Richard Baxter (1615-1691), a prolific Puritan Divine.

THE RELIGIO-POLITICAL DIALECTIC: WESLEYAN APPROPRIATIONS

Brevint was an “Episcopalian” Divine who would not sign on with the Westminster confessions and therefore lost his fellowship at Jesus College, Oxford. Brevint received his theological training at Saumur (that left leaning Calvinist school) and when he refused to sign the Covenant was exiled to France. He became pastor of a Protestant congregation in Normandy, then a chaplain to a French family of political privilege. He would meet with Charles II in Paris and was returned from exile during the Restoration period. In 1681 he became the Dean of Lincoln College, Oxford (where John Wesley would become a Fellow). Brevint can be “placed” within the theological landscape as a “Caroline Divine,” those Priests and theologians of the seventeenth century Anglican Church who “at once confirmed her rejection of the claims of Rome and refused to adopt the theological system of the continental reformers.”²⁰

Perhaps because he was a pastor and chaplain, Brevint’s theology was practical, with a sustained focus on the spiritual dimension. He had written *The Depth and Mystery of the Roman Mass* and, key for our study, penned *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* (1673), a work of practical eucharistic theology and devotion which John Wesley would

²⁰ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Caroline Divines.”

append to the Wesleys' *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*.²¹ We will examine later the extent and method of Charles Wesley's appropriation of Brevint in his lyrical poetry. It is important to note at this point that Brevint was working at correcting the ostensible danger of reducing the Eucharist to a memorial, a possibility if the Westminster Confession were not carefully interpreted. In addition, we notice the way the political and religious context in the seventeenth century forged the theological construction of an integrated eucharistic theology such as Brevint's. Eleven years of a Presbyterian state in England tested the waters of a more Protestant identity for Britain. And though dissent remained sizable, Charles II would be "restored" in 1660. This period, just under fifty years before the Wesleys' were born, brought interesting and telling parliamentary acts to which we now turn.

Legislative attempts to guide England to a modicum of toleration in all things political and religious was at once a yearning to return to the Elizabethan age and a response to the intellectual and theological diversity that would blossom in the eighteenth century.

In the Restoration period dissent was by no means quashed. Concluding that tolerance ought to replace violence as a way to come to consensus, Parliament produced legislation that would inform eighteenth century piety and politics. In 1662, the *Book of Common Prayer* was re-imposed on every congregation in England. In retrospect, it looks as though this legislative action "created" a non-conformist clergy. Some 1,800 clergy could not "conform" their pastoral practice to the demands of a Common prayer book, and so left their posts as Anglicans. Perhaps the most famous of these men, Richard Baxter, left the Church "sorrowfully" and represents a decision of conscience that marks

²¹ Rattenbury, *EH*, 9.

Puritan piety. His *The Reformed Pastor* would become a classic in pastoral theology and John Wesley abridged and published Baxter's works of "Practical Divinity," *A Call to the Unconverted* and *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*. Baxter also published fourteen hymns for monthly preparation for the Lord's Supper. Though hymnody was frequently "borrowed" across theological lines, the Wesleys did not draw any of their eucharistic hymns from Baxter. The only sources for the *Hymns* that can be traced, other than the highly influential Brevint, are Anglican George Herbert (1593-1633) and a translation made by John of the Moravian Zinzendorf. These "borrowed" poems provide the backbone of only three hymns in the Wesleyan Eucharistic corpus of 166.²²

We are led, then, to affirm that in creating their 166 hymns based on Brevint, and in not appropriating any of Baxter's but borrowing from Anglican Herbert, the Wesleys understood themselves within the Anglican sacramental tradition. However, they remained sympathetic to Baxter regarding other theological matters. Baxter could not remain Anglican because of the 1662 dictate that Episcopal ordination was required for Christian ministry. Though himself "ordained," he perhaps concluded that apostolic succession should not hold sway over authority in pastoral matters.²³

Like Baxter before him, John Wesley struggled with "separation." Indeed, the Wesleys' paternal grandfather John **Westley**, a contemporary of Baxter, was one of those "priests" who was forced to leave his pastoral post. He was accused of "irregular

²² Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, "'In Thankful Verse Proclaim': English Eucharistic Hymns of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Studia Liturgica* 26 (1996): 240-241.; see Rattenbury, *EH*, 10.

²³ Robert C. Monk, *John Wesley: His Puritan Heritage* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 42; Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, A Treasury of Christian Books (London: SCM Press, 1956), 9.

worship and preaching, as well as lack of proper education.”²⁴ But it is difficult to argue that John Wesley ever desired a separation from the Church of England. Neither Wesleys ever expressed any such desire, and John even argued that since he was a Presbyterian of the Church of England his American itinerants were technically Anglican.²⁵ In this case, it is the question of succession that is at issue, not a self-conscious break. Nevertheless, the Wesleys’ admiration of both Baxter and Brevint would only serve to complicate their agreement upon priestly succession and the question of ordaining “Methodist” preachers to perform the sacrament. Ultimately, their own nationalism and adherence to the Anglican middle way would give the Wesleys, but not necessarily Methodists, their theological compass. They were able to develop what they considered to be appropriate, though possibly divergent, responses to England’s growing religio-political multiplicity.

By and large, Charles Wesley would take the traditional Anglican line, assured of the priestly vocation as one of succession. John, on the other hand, was less convinced of the inherent truth of succession. He muddied the waters with his ultimately practical insistence on the Church’s task at saving souls, the implication being that “feeding” the flock with sacramental bread was more important than the supposed apostolic identity of the feeder. Charles’s view of the priestly vocation comes to the fore in the eucharistic hymns, and as we will see, even as late as 1945, Rattenbury’s treatise on these hymns wrestles with the ambiguous legacy of the Wesleys on this question. And yet Baxter’s *Reformed Pastor* has a deep spirit of ecumenical cooperation, containing “The Agreement of the Worcestershire Association,” a brief rationale for unity among

²⁴ Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodist* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 15.

²⁵ John Wesley, “Of Separation from the Church,” in *The Works of John Wesley* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1958), 13:256.

Presbyterian and Episcopal ministers/priests. John Wesley's admiration of Baxter included the sense that Baxter had an irenic spirit and remorse about disunity. John even compares a contemporary dissenter with the more noble Baxter: "In how different a spirit does this man write from honest Richard Baxter! The one, dipping, as it were, his pen in tears, the other in vinegar and gall. Surely one page of that loving, serious Christian weighs more than volumes of this bitter, sarcastic jester."²⁶ This is a clear indication that John Wesley appropriated those theologies which in *form* did not carry the vitriol or sarcasm inherent in some attempts to speak to, and in, controversy.

In a sense, the Wesley brothers embody the theological and political tensions of their age. Their theological wrestling at the borders of disagreement not only symbolizes the zeitgeist of eighteenth century England, it also remains the foundation of an intrinsic ambiguity in "Methodist identity." At present it is enough for us to point to the 1662 dictate and its effect on the likes of Baxter, a reluctant non-conformist who in Puritan fashion followed his conscience rather than a legislated theological conformity. We are not fearful of overstressing the point. John Wesley appreciated Baxter's spirit of reluctance in the face of separations and so appreciated his non-conformity. But the Wesleys would not give their Methodists Baxter's hymns about the Lord's Supper. Rather, in order to inculcate a Eucharistic devotion, they appropriated Brevint, by no means Puritan, but not Catholic either—a more moderate Calvinist with other French influences who found his place as a tried and true Anglican.

So the Wesleys cultivated an appreciation for the exiled Episcopalian strand of the Anglican theological tradition and the Puritan strand. They would appropriate both the

²⁶ Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, 123-126; Wesley, "Journal" in *Works*, 2:329(1958).

“exiled become restored” and the composers of the alternative to the *Book of Common Prayer*, the *Directory*. This seemingly theo-political divergence can create a sense of ambivalence in their interpreters. We can label them as leaning neither more or less to their Anglican or their non-conformist heritage. And this ambivalence is compounded by the brothers’ tension among themselves regarding Methodism’s relation to the Established Church. And yet contemporary Methodists will claim that both John and Charles created for Methodism its fundamental theological compass. It remains true that the Wesleys, to say nothing of their followers, cannot be easily “labeled” as to their theological and social standing.

LEGISLATION, RITUAL AND IDENTITY

After the re-imposition of the Book of Common Prayer, Parliament forged further legislation. In 1664 Parliament mandated that religious meetings follow the form of the Church of England. If they diverged, meetings would be deemed “illegal.” In 1673, the *Test Act* demanded that all holders of civil and military office had to receive the sacraments according to the Anglican rite. In addition, those participating must declare their disbelief in transubstantiation. To place an exclamation point on the 1673 Act, in 1678 parliament passed a law banning Catholics from service in Parliament.²⁷ These acts, though strange to our post-modern sentiment, were efforts at clarifying and defining ecclesial/national identity. As such, they present us with the notion that national and

²⁷ Walker, *History of the Christian Church*, 559.

religious identity have long been integrated, especially in what might be deemed “Protestantism.” These acts also clarify for the historian that theological conflict is rooted in cultural, as well as intellectual conditions. Though the parliamentary ruling on transubstantiation may be construed as the Western intellectual debate between Platonism (England) and Aristotelianism (Rome), it serves nonetheless to point out a religio-cultural identifier. How many civil servants would have read Thomas on transubstantiation? Is it not true, however, that civil servants would have cultivated a disdain for supposed authoritarian Roman Catholic control over religious and national meanings? We can suppose an affirmative on the latter. Civil servants and military officers, national/cultural symbols of “England,” could not imbibe *any* Catholic sympathies, and the Test Act insured that they would not be asked to do so. It is also clear that the religio-political legislators understood the Eucharist to be a unifying event in which one’s national identity was to be expressed. As such, the Anglican Eucharist of the late seventeenth century seems to appropriate the theological meaning of Eucharistic unity in an idolatrous way. The Wesleys would remain relatively consistent all their lives on their insistence that their societies communicate within an Anglican parish. Though they would both make exceptions, the general tenor of their overall inclination was rooted in the ground of unity. Perhaps when they made exceptions, we can see both of them desiring to bring the sacrament to those who, in terms of national identity, would be considered “less” than your average Anglican.²⁸ Thus their sense of unity, and more importantly, their mission, was grounded in a more universal, less nationalistic, tone.

²⁸ See John R. Tyson, *Charles Wesley: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 123. Charles performed and gave the sacrament to prisoners awaiting the gallows; and consult, Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodist*, 319; for the way John Wesley varied his practice based on his perception of

One commentator has seen in these legislative acts the “breaking away” of the secular realm of government over and against sacred ecclesiastical structures, a sign of things to come in England when the State would dwarf the Church. The implications of this interpretation are that Anglican religious practice subsided when the State began to dictate religious life in the midst of a developing plurality of faiths. To be sure, as we have seen, there developed through these Acts of Parliament a functional use of religious ritual; the State assumed that theological conformity could be enacted as national loyalty through ecclesiastical structures. This *Test Act* seems to have backfired and by the time of the Wesleyan revival Anglican eucharistic practice was at a “low.”²⁹

After the re-imposition of the Book of Common Prayer, these subsequent Acts take on an evolving anti-Catholic sentiment. As such, they refine the Anglican middle way, even as a multiplicity of dissent is finding expression---Quakers, Baptists, Moravians, and of course Puritans. Fourteen years before the birth of John Wesley, Parliament passed the Toleration Act (1689) which granted freedom of worship to Dissenters. This Act would not repeal the Test Act of 1673 and it was passed with the stipulation that all religious meetings confess belief in the Trinity, thus adding Unitarians to those religious groups who were unacceptable.³⁰ It is interesting to note that Charles Wesley, in addition to writing *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*, and hymns for other Anglican Church festivals, also wrote *Hymns on the Trinity*. One may see in this hymnic output an explicit effort to identify the Wesleyan movement within the dogmatic tradition of the Christian faith. But

necessity. Inevitably this meant some would “receive” the sacrament in unorthodox circumstances, that is, outside the ecclesiastical rules of the Church of England.

²⁹ A.D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England* (New York: Longman, 1976), 6.

also, given the context, one may see these hymns as a clear reflection of the Wesleys' desire to place themselves within the center of both ecclesial and national identity, that is, as Anglicans.

CONCLUSION

We now have a sense of the “dialectic” in the evolving religio-political scene in the two centuries before the Wesleys. We also see that Wesleyan identity is, so far, marked by a range of theological characters that rode the wave of this dialectic's ebb and flow. The Wesleys would appropriate the exiled Brevint's major sacramental work in the *Hymns*. And Baxter---a classic example of the Puritan conscience growing “out” of Anglican ecclesial structures--- would certainly influence John Wesley's sense of pastoral practice. Further, and key for our study, we acknowledge how these historical strands manifest the implicit disagreement between the Wesleys and therefore express *ab ovo* a tension or ambiguity in Wesleyan identity. The nouns and adjectives on either side of this “and” (Puritan, Roman, enthusiast, tolerant, KJV, Book of Common Prayer) surface most explicitly in the liturgical trends of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: Puritan “Worship” and Anglican “Liturgy.” Before exploring this vital dimension, we must examine the intellectual currents of eighteenth century England, especially in their relationships to the making and use of hymns on the Eucharist.

THE INTELLECTUAL DIMENSION

It is important to view the intellectual currents of eighteenth century England in light of the political tides of the seventeenth. Two theological dimensions, Deism and Pietism, were intellectual responses to the political volatility and violence of England's

³⁰ *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, s.v. “Act of Toleration.”

seventeenth century. Both were also shaped by the more general intellectual turn to the mathematical sciences, though Pietism's "shape" took form as it moved inward toward the heart, away from the calculated and objective discourse of the Enlightenment. Deism, on the other hand, was a theological affirmation of the philosophical skepticism of the age.

DEISM

Deism could be characterized as an overzealous Calvinism mixed with an evolving emphasis on the necessity and primacy of reason. Calvinism's affirmation of the sovereignty of God allowed for a radical transcendence to take shape. In Deism, God created the universe and its laws but is in no way "immanent" in this Creation. God transcends nature as a watchmaker transcends the watch he sets in motion.

In Deism's theological construal revelation must conform to reason. The currents of eighteenth century Christian theology, especially the Anglican mainline, felt compelled enough by the Deistic challenge to affirm some of its treasured tenets. The revelatory in Christian doctrine and life were regarded with suspicion, and a dichotomy developed between "natural religion and revealed Christianity."³¹ Special revelation was in doubt because of the primacy of reason, but also because the Deistic vision seemed "safer." This was due to Deism's ability to overcome the more revelatory theological passions

³¹ George Rupp, *Religion in England: 1688-1791* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 261.

that led to the bloody civil war. Revelation sparked emotion, emotion could lead to violence and Deism gave credence to a cool detachment from the affective dimension.

The result was a bold denial of the mystical and the mysterious in religion. Indeed, the encounter with mystery in religious experience was labeled as “superstitious.”³² The most explicitly anti-revelatory and influential theological text of this period was John Toland’s (1670-1722) *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696). Toland denied revelation altogether, basing his interpretation of Christianity on reason alone. He argued against a priesthood that placed divine mysteries before believers which the faithful could not comprehend. Deists captivated Anglican theology and practice throughout the eighteenth century and the work of the Wesleys, with their explicit appeal to religious experience, can be understood as an effort to balance a theological vision bereft of the meaning and encounter with Revelation.³³

In this Deistic Anglican context the role of the Eucharist was visibly diminished and worship generally took the form of sermonic discourse. The common Christian, therefore, was lost in this milieu and the Wesleys’ hymns and evangelical preaching would fill a spiritual void.³⁴

It is vital to our understanding of the meaning of hymns on the Eucharist to reflect on the Wesleyan sacramental awakening in this Deistic context. The attempt to revive the Eucharist’s primacy in the midst of the prevailing sense of Christianity’s

³² Albert Outler, "Pietism and Enlightenment: Alternatives to Tradition," in *Christian Spirituality: Post Reformation and Modern*, ed., Louis Dupré and Don Saliers, 240-56 (New York:Cross Road, 1998).

³³ Rupp, *Religion in England*, 261; John H.S. Kent, "Christian Theology in the Eighteenth to Twentieth Centuries," in *A History of Christian Doctrine*, , 459-565 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 465.

³⁴ Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, vol. 3, *From Watts and Wesley to Maurice, 1690-1850* (Grand Rapids, MI.:Eerdmans, 1996), 58.

“reasonableness” was to re-affirm the originary revelatory event of the Christian faith. In addition, the Wesleyan emotional/sacramental revival asked of the Church a renewed commitment to mystery and the mystical in religion. And lyrical poetry was perhaps the most effective vehicle for the common expression of revelation in such a context. Not only was the revelatory able to be mediated to “common” Christians through song/devotional poetry, but also, lyrical poetry did not share the rationalists’ rules of discourse and therefore was outside the communicative media of Deism.

Lyrical poetry on the Eucharist could revive eucharistic practice and understanding precisely because it operated from within a wholly other communicative form than that of the Deistic construal of reality. We will examine lyrical poetry’s form in relation to its meaning in chapter four. For now it is enough to point out the historical context in which lyrical poetry functioned. The Wesleys’ use of hymns as testimony to that original revelatory event affirmed what Christianity has always considered the truth through participatory experience, as well as expressed the piety/emotion that drove their mission.

However, we are wrong to give any impression that would place the Wesleys in an irrational vein. John Wesley taught logic at Oxford. He also required his preachers to be well-versed in logic. Indeed, John showed his young assistants how logic worked by having them examine his own sermons which “exemplify the logical method.” John not only edited hymns, he was also a great extractor and redactor of classic texts. In addition to providing a *Compendium of Logic*, he also extracted a text on the use of logic, *Of the Manner of Using Logic*, from Bishop Sanderson. At the end of this detailed explanation Wesley appends citations from his own sermons which demonstrate deductive reasoning. “The sermon on the Means of Grace, in the first volume of Mr. Wesley’s Sermons, is a treatise of this kind.” *The Means of Grace*, along with the *Hymn’s on the Lord’s Supper*,

were both written in order to refute the Quietists who would refrain from the Lord's Supper as a "means."³⁵

PIETISM

Pietism, too, can be understood as one response to the conflicts of the seventeenth century. But unlike Rationalism and Deism, in Pietism the epistemological quest was turned inward. For that reason, Pietism, if not fully vested in communal practices or ecclesial structures, cannot deny the charge of commencing a spiritual individualism. That is, if emotions are not shared in a common space or structure, a more singular spirituality ensues. Most simply, however, Pietism can be called the "religion of the heart," a phrase Methodists have given much weight because of the witness of their primary founder, John Wesley, who explained that his heart had been *strangely* warmed when he became aware of the Grace of Christ.³⁶ But in its eighteenth century manifestations, notably in the Methodists, the "religion of the heart" was shared in an intimate connection or community.

Pietism was born in Germany but spread quickly to England in the Post-Reformation era. Above all, feeling and experience were the measure of authentic Christian existence. Attempt was made to restore Christianity to its primitive authenticity through a disciplined life whereby the "image of God" could be restored in the disciple. In Pietism, the life of holiness was much more important than the debates of speculative philosophy and theology. Pietists, therefore, cared little for the controversies of the religio-political

³⁵ Wesley, "Of The Manner of Using Logic," in *Works*, 14: 184-189(1958).

³⁶ See his account in *Works*, 1: 103 (1958).

kind and regarded themselves as *ecclesiola in ecclesia* (a little church within the church).³⁷

Because of Pietism's general anchorage in religious experience, there developed the practice of singing to one-another and to God as a spiritual discipline. Hymns became the participatory expression of the creedal aspects of Christian faith and life. The head and heart merged in Pietism through song—when the doctrines of the faith would find their articulations in the modulating tones of devotional group sing.

There was a spiritual danger, however, in Pietism's use of song. The danger was that the hymnic compositions would become too mystical, flying away with subjectivity, ignorant of the more objective strains of Christian truth.³⁸ John complained that some of his brother's poetry expressed an inappropriate familiarity with the Divine. In particular, he was bothered by the use of "dear" in reference to God, as in "dear Lord." In his exposition of the problem he argues that refraining from such familiarity may lead to less "enthusiastic" behavior.

Possibly it may prevent loud shouting, horrid unnatural screaming, repeating the same words twenty or thirty times, jumping two or three feet high, and throwing about the arms or legs, both of men and women, in a manner shocking not only to religion but to common decency...³⁹

³⁷ Outler, "Pietism and Enlightenment: Alternatives to Tradition," 241-244.

³⁸ See William Thompson in *Christology and Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 1-6, for a discussion of the difficulty in defining mysticism. Thompson shows that the misled mystic can be either an escapist or emotionalist, and Wesley deemed the latter "mystical." Robert Tuttle, in *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1989), 22, states that mysticism is an "innate consciousness of the beyond...and mysticism arises when one tries to bring this higher consciousness into close relation with the other contents of the mind." This epistemologically based definition, involving "mind," points us in the right direction, I think.

³⁹ Wesley, "On Knowing Christ After the Flesh" in *Works*, 7: 295 (1958).

John Wesley connects the use of an overly intimate theological term of endearment with outlandish spiritual behavior. Hymnody, like appropriate piety, ought not to engender negative behavior. Hymnody ought to bring one into a common experience of decency, not uncommon flights of subjective mysticism. Certainly the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* are symbolic of the Wesleys' general sense of the need for objective theological and ecclesial criteria to be applied to the Methodists' religious experience. For the Wesleys, a healthy piety would draw the individual into the community and tradition (Eucharist).

Both Deism and Pietism were intellectual and spiritual responses to political volatility and Enlightenment. The Wesleys' *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* were born between these visions of Christian existence. Lyrical poetry as an expression of Pietism's "feeling intellect" gave heart to Christian life and thought when the mystical was undervalued. But Wesleyan hymns on the Eucharist are corrective, collective and objective expressions of a more balanced Pietism.

HOW CHRISTIANS GATHERED: THE LITURGICAL DIMENSION

If the mood of intellectual life in restoration England can be construed as a dichotomy between Pietism and Enlightenment, then there is a certain sense in which these two construals of the world and God were embodied in Non-Conformist and Anglican worship respectively. "Worship" prior to the evangelical revival of the eighteenth century can be categorized by at least three bodies, the Anglican, the Puritan and the more radical non-conformists—the Baptists and Quakers. In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries one would have to include the Unitarians as well. We will be

concerned here, however, to describe in broad outline the Anglican and Puritan/non-conformist tendencies in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

THE ANGLICAN

The two centuries prior to the Wesleyan revival represent formidable changes and challenges in the Anglican Liturgical tradition. After surveying some general characteristics of this tradition we will attempt to place Brevint and the Wesleys within it. First, let us describe at least two characteristics that inscribe Anglican liturgical practice, order and architecture.

We have already seen that in the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer*, Cranmer placed a “hymn” in the Anglican liturgy after the sacrament. But this too distinguishes Anglican liturgy from Dissenting worship in that the “hymn” of Cranmer was the *Gloria in Excelsis*, a set form based on a longstanding tradition. What was “new” in Cranmer’s use of singing was the placement of the hymn after the Eucharist. Anglican worship in the period under consideration would not have been comfortable with the kind of singing that the Methodist societies and Dissenters enjoyed. That kind of “human” composition would have been frowned upon, not only because the singing was composed rather than inherited, but also because it would engender “enthusiasm.”⁴⁰ Indeed, one could make the argument that it was the Wesleys and others whose hymnic revival brought forth the present form of Anglican liturgical song and thereby solidified the active hymn singing that is a part of most American denominational worship experiences, including the Roman Catholic.

⁴⁰ Westerfield-Tucker, *In Thankful Verse Proclaim*, 65; Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, 3:242.

Cranmer's placement of the *Gloria* does sound a distinctively Anglican note (as opposed to the Roman Catholic) but it also demonstrates a clear Anglican trait—the necessity and appreciation of a prior tradition. Whereas radical Dissenters would relinquish a prior liturgical order altogether, Anglicanism at least remained fixated on the skeleton of the Roman Mass. The order of the Mass was edited, its sequence changed and made theologically more “Reformed,” but the fact that there would be a set “order” was never called into question.⁴¹ The worship was focused, if now not exclusively, on the Eucharistic rite and the leader of the worship event was still a “priest,” not a “preacher.” The “priest” had a role as the arbiter of a sacrificial ritual, although in Reformation England the meaning of this was not always clear. The “order” of the liturgy was indicative of an ecclesiastical order that was slowly losing its political power but nonetheless clearly the sanctioned authority on matters of Baptism, Eucharist and parish boundaries. The language of “parish” rather than a dissenting notion of “church” was a sign of the national role of Anglican practice. A parish was the place of a citizen's birth and the home of the British Christian's practice. John Wesley and the Methodists upset this parish boundary line and would often be accused of “sheep stealing” because they came into a parish to revive Christian life and would, so it seemed to the Anglican parish priest, draw loyalty from those in and around a local parish. Prior to 1689, however, attendance at Anglican Liturgy was mandatory, having unmistakable political benefits.⁴²

Tradition's “staying power” was also fixed in parish buildings. Because of England's Roman Catholic roots, the haunts of Catholicism, namely architecture, prevented the

⁴¹ Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, 3: 21-22.

⁴² John R. Tyson, “Charles Wesley, Evangelist: The Unpublished New Castle Journal,” *Methodist History* 25, no. 1 (1986): 56; Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Dacre Press, 1964), 694.

Established Church from forgetting its debt to Roman theology and practice. The liturgical space especially would influence and surround all Anglicans (and of course the Wesleys) in its grandeur, arrangement and aesthetic. Wesley scholar Richard Heitzenrater introduces the multiplicity of influences on the Wesleys by describing the space John Wesley stood in to preach a sermon in a rural Anglican church, St Michael's in Oxfordshire, in 1738:

Relatively unspoiled in the rural preserve of Oxfordshire, the eleventh-century church of St. Michael in Stanton Harcourt contains in its very stone and mortar the traditions of its Roman Catholic founders. Seclusion was, however, not able to protect or preserve the faith of the members or the fabric of the building from the iconoclastic zeal of the Anglican and Puritan reformers—the carvings in wood, stone, and brass did manage to survive more intact than either the stained glass or the Roman faith of the medieval patrons.⁴³

Tradition is preserved in physical space. And though some relics became damaged-- signs of an unsettled relationship to the Roman Catholic tradition-- the architecture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries supplemented the liturgical/practical and eucharistic focus for Anglican identity. Within the space of the sanctuary there would be an Altar on which the activity of the rite would take place. Not only does an Altar point to the Roman Catholic past in England, it also gives more credence toward the development of the notion of the meaning of eucharistic sacrifice in the seventeenth century. An Altar is also an object that can center the vision and the “seeing” of a congregation, whereas the non-conformist “table” has different eucharistic connotations.⁴⁴ Though the Wesleys

⁴³ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodist*, 1-2.

⁴⁴ Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, 3: 36; see also Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 620-622. Dix describes the way medieval Christians became fixated on “seeing” the altar and concludes that this is the reason Roman Catholicism became fixated on the “exact metaphysical relation of the physical realities of the bread and wine to our Lord’s Body.”

adapt Calvin's title for the ritual---The Lord's Supper---we will see that the lyrical poetry itself contains throughout the call to "see," as well as explicit references to the Altar.

After the Henrician split from Rome, nationalism inevitably could be seen in the architecture. The royal coat of arms was built into the doorways and archways of cathedrals and churches. This symbol of Anglican identity would draw criticism from Roman Catholics and non-conformists alike. On this national note, we remember the ostensible unifying probability of the eucharistic liturgy. The Anglican tradition and identity could be passed on through the distinctive liturgical shape of its praise. A "printed national liturgy" unified in a way that "free" prayers could not. The concern here, if we interpret this notion positively, was to provide the very real sense of what could be held in "common."⁴⁵

Just as Roman Catholic architecture would be nicked and marked with Puritan/Anglican dents and tearing, the Order of the Mass would be taken apart and put back together and the result of this liturgical change would evolve and adapt up to 1660. In short, the Anglican liturgical tradition was being "worked out" theologically in the seventeenth century. Again, the Parliament and imperial powers were using Anglican worship and identity as motivation for national unity. There are two dimensions of that evolution that concern us here. Both the question of the effect of the Anglican middle way on liturgical practice and the theological problem of the meaning of eucharistic sacrifice will be discussed in turn.

The "Anglican middle way," of course, is a historical construct written into the narrative of British history by modern secular and ecclesiastical historians. As we have

⁴⁵ Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, 3: 26, 40.

seen with the religio-political dimension, forging a middle way can be violent. And viewed from the angle of the history of the Anglican liturgy, we can surmise two things: the middle way created a severe disruption in liturgical practice for the “common” English person and it also cast a cloud of fear over liturgical experience.

The liturgical scholar Dom Gregory Dix, in his monumental *The Shape of the Liturgy*, reluctantly ends that tome on the history of the western liturgy with a sort of epilogue that documents England’s liturgical history. He shows that the forging of the liturgical “middle way” had rather negative effects on churchgoing in general. He concludes that the *legislated liturgy*, mediated through the *Book of Common Prayer*, was intended to bind a citizenry together that had long been used to the Latin rite. In Dix’s estimation, this served to confuse and alienate not only many priests, but common “practicing” folks, as well. This liturgical disruption subsequently cast a certain hegemonic spirit over the worship of God. Not only were Roman Catholics persecuted, the Puritans were as well, and the tenor of the later part of the seventeenth century contained a general sense of unease with regard to Liturgy. Dix laments this. In an almost intuitive commentary, Dix offers the possibility that the seeds of eighteenth century liturgical laxity in Anglican parishes were sown in the political and theological controversies of the seventeenth. Churchgoing was surrounded with serious and threatening prescriptions regarding security, political standing and life itself. Certainly this spirit is what Puritans and Non-conformists, to say nothing of Catholics, were up in arms about. Ironically, the legislation of liturgy and the power to back up such legislation seemed to create more fragmentation than unity.⁴⁶ And perhaps this gives us a clue about the meaning of the

⁴⁶ Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 686-687, 694-699; consult Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England*, 7, for a more “scientific” view that draws the same conclusion.

Wesleyan revival. In a more tolerant eighteenth century context, the Wesleys could begin to re-appropriate liturgical practice in more theological and spiritual terms, that is, in terms of discipleship. And the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* gained a large hearing in this regard. They were clearly written with unity in mind, but it was a universalism based on more Christocentric, not necessarily nationalistic, themes. And the *Hymns* carried an integrated theology with regard to eucharistic sacrifice which had been articulated by Brevint (1673) just a few generations prior to the Wesleys.

THE PROBLEM WITH EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE

The Protestant Reformation had demonstrated that one of the major abuses of Rome was centered in a poor theology of eucharistic sacrifice. In short, Rome had been understood to have come to consider the Mass an opportunity for a “fresh” repetition of the passion of Christ. In other words, the claim was made upon both lay person and priest that what was happening in the ritual was the repeated and actual death of Christ. Of course, a valid theological response to this has something to do with the depth of presence accorded through anamnesis. However, the response from the likes of Zwingli and others was to recast the eucharistic ritual as more of a memorial of Christ's life and death, thereby relegating the passion to the first century and allowing the Lord's Supper to be a mere reminder of Christ. Cranmer adapted this “memorialism” and wrote it into the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*. For Cranmer, “sacrifice” referred to the body of

believers, their sacrifice of praise in response to the “once and for all” sacrifice of Christ.⁴⁷

From 1549 to 1660 the question of eucharistic sacrifice remained a vital part of the political and theological debate. Would the Anglican liturgy emphasize the sacrifice of Christ thereby making the center of the rite an Altar? Or would the rite be a more word-centered experience of remembering, making the liturgy a medium of the *lex credendi*?

In 1679 Brevint published his treatise on the Eucharist. His emphases are varied and integrative of both the sacrifice of Christ once and for all and the nature of ritualistic sacrifice. He argued that indeed, the Eucharist implies a sacrifice, not only the sacrifice of Christ, but also the sacrifice of Christians. He also wanted to emphasize the way in which Christ is made manifest to the degree the church remembers him, a more Zwinglian sense of the rite. In this construal, Brevint is careful to clarify that Christ’s sacrifice “need never be repeated.” Brevint writes:

All comes to this (1) That the Sacrifice in itself can never be repeated; (2) That nevertheless, this Sacrament, by our remembrance, becomes a kind of *Sacrifice*, whereby we present before God that precious Oblation of the Son once offered. And thus do we every day offer unto God the meritorious sufferings of our Lord, as the only sure ground whereon God may give, and we obtain, the blessings we pray for.⁴⁸

The developing sense of the necessity of “oblation” perhaps is founded upon a corresponding architectural symbol, that of the Altar. An “oblation” is that which humanity offers to God. The bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ, are offered by the priest, they are “presented” as the “Son once offered.” Here, as with the Wesley

⁴⁷ Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, 3: 21.

⁴⁸ Rattenbury, *EH*, 139.

hymn below, the offering by the Son is a revelatory event that binds humanity through ritual into that one offering of Christ.

In Brevint, as with Anglicanism as expressed by most Caroline Divines of the time, the sacrifice of Christ was once and for all, but *that* sacrifice is at least *implied* in every Eucharistic service. Brevint's attempt at remaining true to the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist *and* affirming that the action of Christ happened once and for all meant the emphasis was placed on the spiritual power of mercy and grace being always new, not necessarily the original sacrifice being repeated. Let us hear the Wesleys on the issue of the meaning of sacrifice and how Christ's is made present, though his sacrifice is not repeated. This is hymn 5, stanzas two and three:

Thy offering still continues new,
Thy vesture keeps its bloody hue,
Thou stand'st the ever slaughtered lamb,
Thy priesthood still remains the same,
Thy years, O God, can never fail,
Thy goodness is unchangeable

O that our faith may never move,
But stand unshaken as Thy love!
Sure evidence of things unseen,
Now let it pass the years between
And view Thee bleeding on the tree
My God, who dies for me, for me!⁴⁹

We note first that this is a prayer. God is the receiver of these words and the feelings that bring them to the surface. God is the conversation partner. It is the Trinitarian God, first addressed as the sacrificial Son, then addressed as the eternal God whose power enters time. The power is "seen" in this God's bringing to the present His sacrificial love of the past. Here, there is a strong sense of the historical event of the crucifixion visiting the

⁴⁹ Ibid, 162.

present context of ritual. The “offering” is new but God is “unchangeable.” The reader’s/singer’s faith, like God’s love, must remain “unshaken” if we are to view ---to see---the Sacrifice a loving God made (makes) for us. Any sense of “repetition” for the Wesleys and Brevint, is not bound by the moments of the daily round (so that, the more Eucharists one witnesses, the more holy one becomes) but by the eschatological and eternal power and presence of a God who is always and already at work. In their appropriation of Brevint the Wesleys incorporate an integrative theology of eucharistic sacrifice.

So, the developing tradition of Anglican worship rendered a sacrificial construct as the basis of the sacrament but clearly repudiated the repetition that was held to emanate from Roman Catholic medieval practice. In so doing the forged tradition of Anglican liturgy contained a sacramental center. Though the politico-religious dialectic mentioned earlier would sunder eucharistic practice in the eighteenth century, especially as intellectual currents and Deistic and Unitarian influences were felt, this sacrificial catholic liturgical tradition was something the Wesleys would always draw upon.

Tradition, then, takes on a particular Anglican cast in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It had a nationalistic tenor that overlay a sacramental order. In a sense, its essence was to articulate the way that British national Church practices were different from Roman Catholicism and a more stringent Protestantism. So at the time of the Wesleys, tradition did not mean what it means today. It was not a deep appreciation of the whole, for it intentionally excluded the Medieval. In short it was anti-Roman Catholic. The Wesleys provide a good example here. Even though they drew some of their spirituality from Roman Catholic French and German mystics, much ink would be

spilled defending their anti-Catholic sympathies.⁵⁰ And in terms of the Eucharist, their clarion call to renew sacramental practice in the spirit of the “tradition,” referred not to the Medieval Roman Catholic tradition, but to the apostolic one. Here they follow Brevint, who understood eucharistic tradition to encompass the apostolic witness of the “primitive church” up to Augustine.⁵¹

The Anglican liturgical tradition, out of which the Wesleys’ own sacramental theology would come, was rooted in a Roman Catholic past as seen in the architecture and the order of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Eucharistic practice was inhibited, however, by a nationalistic legalism that would drain the theological and spiritual meaning of the ritual. And it was developed in theological controversy, the best fruit of which is plucked by the Wesleys from Brevint’s integrative sacramental theology of eucharistic sacrifice. But the Wesleys were not content with the Anglican liturgical tradition. Their spirituality contained reliance on “free prayers” and, of course, the hymnody born of the Reformation and cultivated in the English non-conformist tradition, to which we now turn.

DIMENSIONS OF WORSHIP IN THE NON-CONFORMIST TRADITION

The identifying marks of the non-conformist worship tradition were developed in reaction to the Roman Catholic and then Anglican focus of liturgical experience.

⁵⁰ See Mark Massa, S.J., "The Catholic Wesley: A Revisionist Prolegomenon," *Methodist History* 22 (1983): 38-53, for the ambiguity inherent in the Wesleys’ overall attitude toward Roman Catholicism. See ST Kimbrough, ed., *Charles Wesley: Poet and Theologian* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1992), 205-221, for Charles Wesley’s response to Catholic persecution during the Gordon Riots and his shame and embarrassment at his son’s conversion to Rome.

⁵¹ Rattenbury, *EH*, 139.

“Worship” in contradistinction to “liturgy” provides a foundational sense of the difference between the two approaches. Our contemporary notion of liturgy may be of some help here. Liturgy has come to mean a carefully constructed order, usually ending with the climax of the Eucharist. Worship connotes rather an almost iconoclastic focus on God alone. In other words, those who would want to empower a church to authentic worship might conclude that the liturgy could get in the way of the worship.

The emphases discussed below, therefore, are characteristics that signify the often-justified reactions of Christians coming to terms with the crisis of the Reformation. It is important to note as well that in this study we merely want to describe the range of worship experience and thus identify the Wesleyan movement growing out of, and in response to, these dimensions. Certainly, we do not want to characterize historical developments, though this is a danger in our task. For example, to say that the Reformed (Puritans and other Dissenters) in England cared nothing of the Eucharist—a characterization lived into by many of the American contemporary inheritors of the Reformed tradition—is just wrong. The Puritans, we remember, can be characterized as Reformed Anglicans in a time when the term Anglican had yet to be characterized. Furthermore, we remember that the reluctant Puritan Richard Baxter had written hymns for the Lord’s Supper. And what is more, he composed an intricate Eucharistic liturgy as a Puritan option to the *Book of Common Prayer*.⁵² But history shows that the practices of the “Reformed” became more and more extreme (or pure, depending on one’s point of view). So below we will describe characteristics that will help us to see the distinctions

⁵² Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 677.

between the Anglican and the non-conformist just prior to the Wesleyan eighteenth century. To demonstrate these distinctions we will focus on architecture, Lord's Supper, "church," and of course we will explore the Protestant/non-conformist development of hymn singing.

Prior to 1689 (*Act of Toleration*), worship spaces of Dissenters were often disguised or simply referred to as meeting houses. Their simplicity had as much to do with their plain theology of worship as with not drawing attention to themselves for fear of persecution.

The meeting house was a place where the remnant, or "true" Christians, *gathered*. These were what Horton Davies has termed "auditory" buildings. That is, their primary function was to provide space for the hearing of God's word—whether that be through reading, preaching or singing. Here, we note the didactic sense of worship in the Reformation church tradition in general. In auditories the art and ornament of the medieval style, what one could see, was absent. The buildings were "modest" with virtually nothing that would aesthetically demarcate these edifices as churches.⁵³

In these auditories, not only was the pulpit central, but the "table of the Lord" was as well. The *table*, as has already been intimated, is the physical manifestation of a eucharistic theology whose hermeneutic assumptions are much more inclined to conclude that the Christian's task is to embody not only the sayings of Christ, but the actions, too. The Lord's last supper happened at some kind of table and the attempt to be true to the biblical narrative resulted in the non-conformist gathering around a table rather than seeing the sacrifice at an Altar. Davies has pointed out the sacred character of the table, noting its distinctive Dissenting identity. Regarding the table, he says, "often the only

⁵³ Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, 3: 35.

object permitted on a Dissenting Communion-table, apart from the Bible, was a copy of Foxe's book of Martyrs."⁵⁴ The anti-Catholic sentiment was not exclusive to the Anglican rite.

This gathering space was home only to the "true church." The ecclesial notion of non-conformist worship and its emphasis on the Lord's Supper entailed a rigorous discipleship and an exclusive fellowship. There is not the sense, as with Anglican national identity, that one has a right to communion by virtue of one's birth in England. Rather, the communion table was the boundary and mark of who was in and who was outside of this *ecclesia*.⁵⁵

This notion of church was driven by the perceived goal of the community of faith, holiness. Holiness was the prevailing telos that superseded all other theological categories and meanings, namely beauty and universalism. One can construe the distinction between the Puritan/non-conformist and the Anglican vision as that between those whose calling takes them *from the world* toward holiness (Puritan/non-conformist) and those *who enter the world*, being made holy in and through the Anglican.⁵⁶ The dynamic of these two visions is summed up nicely by Davies: "If Anglicans venerated the holiness of beauty, Puritans respected the beauty of holiness."⁵⁷ John Wesley, more than Charles, held these two in great tension, that is, he seemed to appreciate both, perhaps

⁵⁴ Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, 3: 44.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 103.

⁵⁶ For the modern tensions consult, Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (NotreDame, IN.: NotreDame Press, 1983); cf. Robin Lovin, *Christian Ethics: An Essential Guide* (Nashville, Abingdon, 2000), 81-101. Both of these Ethicists are "Methodist." See also, Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891-Present* (Washington D.C., Georgetown University Press, 2002), the RC social encyclical tradition wrestles with the same tensions, but within a more refined tradition.

⁵⁷ Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, 3:37.

holiness more than beauty. His mission was a universal one and his mission was a call to holiness.

We need to point out that when John Wesley visited the Moravian community in Germany in 1738 he was advised to abstain from the Eucharist until he had the feeling of faith (assurance).⁵⁸ That is, subjective feeling became the litmus test for genuine discipleship. This advice is evidence of the way holiness of heart can detract from orthopraxis. Wesley eventually rejected such quietism vehemently and thereby strengthened the evolving emphases on the Eucharist as a means of Grace in the Methodist movement.⁵⁹ Wesley's answer to the Moravians upholds the sacrament as a means of Grace and therefore takes the emphasis off of the subjective feelings of the individual Christian. This objective view of the sacrament certainly places John Wesley in the more sacramental camp of the tradition as a whole, although his emphasis upon the plain sense of the sacrament is for the individual believer's evolving process of discipleship. For John Wesley, the emphasis on the objective status of the sacrament serves to augment the growth into Christian holiness. Here, we acknowledge that the Wesleyan thrust is much more interested in piety/spirituality than in the theological debates to which Brevint provided constructive delineation. Put another way, theology must be consistent with experience.

John Wesley's experience of being rejected at the Lord's Supper certainly affected his subsequent theological universalistic eucharistic views. In Wesleyan Eucharistic piety, as

⁵⁸ Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory: Reflections on Early Methodism* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1989), 124.

⁵⁹ Wesley, *Works*, 1: 247-249, 323-355 (1958).

in Wesleyan “practical divinity” in general, the theological meaning of the sacrament can only surface, and that appropriately, when the Christian participates within the ritual.⁶⁰

By accentuating this participatory aspect of the Eucharist the Wesleys were clearly opting for the prevailing sacramental structure, and not particularly interested in cultivating some eucharistic theology other than that which they had inherited (in contradistinction from the Lutheran and Reformed). Though their mission was grounded in the telos of holiness, the Wesleys saw the means to this holiness as coming in part from the more universalist Anglican ecclesiology. And this, I suggest, is evidence of their role and identity as an order within a larger, objective sacramental structure. They did appropriate, however, a reliance upon the non-conformist tradition of the use and composition of hymnody as part and parcel of the way of salvation. We cannot overstate the significance of hymnody for Methodist identity in general, and with regard to the aforementioned Eucharistic piety in particular. To deepen our sense of this vital dimension of the Methodist movement, we will briefly examine the distinctively Protestant use of hymnody in historical context, and then we will place the Wesleys within that evolving hymnic context.

NON-CONFORMIST HYMNODY IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Music and song are intrinsic to human being, and therefore they are intrinsic to the conscious religious experience of being. The Judeo-Christian tradition is unequivocal in its use of music and song in its ritualistic expressions. The Passover festival was celebrated in song and the Psalms provide not only the heart of Jewish and Christian

⁶⁰ Wesley, “The Duty of Constant Communion,” in *Works*, 7:147-157(1958).

theology, but also a lyrical songbook at the center of the Bible.⁶¹ Because music and song are human universals, the particularity of their expressions takes on various styles, rhythms, and importance. The Christian tradition has not been exempted from controversy with regard to music and singing. Like the Eucharist, song and music carry powerful meaning within the celebrations and lamentations of our tradition. As such music and song are at the center of controversy. Music can be a powerful device. In the wrong hands its ability to evoke emotion can confuse the community. Singing the wrong words can result in theological heresy. The evolving Protestant tradition was careful in its appropriation of music, for singing could empower the priesthood of all believers but it could also create a spiritual reversion. There was never a Protestant consensus in the development of the use of music and song in the Worship of God in the Post-Reformation era.⁶²

Martin Luther (1483-1546) encouraged the use of music and singing at his Masses. He was synthetic in this appropriation in his concern that persons live out and participate in their own spiritual development. Luther was a composer and therefore appreciated the use of composed lyrical poetry in conveying the theological meaning of Christian existence. But also he remained true to the inherited Roman Catholic tradition, integrating Gregorian Chant into his new Mass.⁶³

Zwingli (1484-1531) had the opposite view. Worship of God had to remain quiet and still. The attention paid to the Godhead was too vital to be corrupted by the sounds of

⁶¹ Paul Westermeyer, *Te Deum: The Church and Music* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1998), 9,11,19-24.

⁶² Ibid, 141.

⁶³ Ibid, 147.

human voices and composition. Though Zwingli himself was an accomplished musician and was said to have loved music, he reasoned upon the separation of nature and grace to the extent that material things such as singing detracted from “the spirit.”⁶⁴

Calvin (1509-1564) can be characterized as careful, and perhaps somewhere in between Zwingli and Luther. He thought music to be a gift from God, but as such it had the potential to be abused. Music had limited uses, to praise God and edify others. For Calvin, music was a human invention and could entice the human heart to further perversion.⁶⁵

The composers of hymnody in England inherited these views and wrestled to formulate some of their own. With variant Protestant interpretations of the use of composed lyrical poetry available to them, non-conformists may have expressed their “identity” through the degree and way they appropriated singing in worship. Speaking most generally, the Puritans followed Calvin, perhaps his stringency more than his appreciation. But the German Moravians, followers of the Protestant martyr Jan Hus (1372-1415), cultivated an intensely intimate Christian community through song composition and experiential singing. The way the Moravians “used” singing and their deeply communal piety had a profound effect on both the Wesleys.

THE METHODIST MOVEMENT AND THE PRODUCTION OF HYMNS

The use of hymnody in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in England varied according to the identity of the religious group. Some radical non-conformists like

⁶⁴ Ibid, 151.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 156.

the Quakers reasoned, as Zwingli had, that corporate singing distracted worshippers from the Spirit. Others, like Anglicans, maintained the musical setting of the Psalms in the vernacular. But for Anglicans, composed hymns generally were frowned upon. Baptists would fluctuate, attempting to align themselves with the “plain” worship of the radical reformation (no hymns) but also eager to disassociate themselves from the Psalm-only liturgy of the Anglican and Roman Catholic expressions.⁶⁶

It was Isaac Watts, a well-respected Congregationalist, who would argue persuasively for the use of hymns in public worship. His influence on the Wesleys is apparent in their hymnbooks, which mimic the titles of Watts. In addition to Watts, two other influences captivated the Wesleyan hymnic movement: the Anglican societies and of course the German pietists, the Moravians.⁶⁷

The Anglican societies were religious clubs that sprang up in the 1670’s. Their aim was to promote Christian living and reform the nation through individual groups who would live by the rule of the society. *The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (SPCK) is perhaps the most famous of these early societies. Richard Heitzenrater has suggested that “the program of the religious societies resembles the development of the lay third orders within the Roman Catholic Church.” The earliest Methodists understood themselves to be in line with this Anglican tradition. However, devotional singing was not accepted in Anglican public worship until the nineteenth century.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: Vol. 2, From Andrewes to Baxter and Fox, 1534-1690* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 283-284.

⁶⁷ *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 7, “A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists” ed. Oliver A. Beckerlegge, Franz Hilderbrandt, with the assistance of James Dale (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 61. (Hereafter cited as *Works*, 1983).

⁶⁸ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodist*, 21-22.

When they formally began their “holy club”(society) at Oxford in 1730, the Wesleys and others made hymns part of their prayer regimen. Hymns served as texts for devotional meditation. If we take this meditative practice into the year 1745, the year of the publication of the *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*, we can say that the Wesleys developed and endorsed a uniquely Protestant form of devotion to the Eucharist.⁶⁹

After a failed mission trip to the Georgia colony, John and Charles Wesley both absorbed the hymnic piety of the Moravians who accompanied them on their voyage. From the Moravians the Welseys learned that religion of the heart and unabashedly confident faith could be captured through lyrical poetry and practiced as spiritual song.⁷⁰

After their return from Georgia the Wesley brothers would begin a life long partnership in hymn composition, editing and publication. Speaking most generally, Charles would write the hymns, John would edit and publish them, and the Methodist preachers would sell them to the Methodist societies. The money from the sales would then be invested in the pension fund for Methodist preachers, who would apparently need a rest after a life of evangelizing and organizing the British countryside.

HYMNIC USE WITHIN THE MOVEMENT

From 1738 to 1785 the Wesleys published sixty-four separate hymnbooks. Many of these were published in more than one edition (the *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* were

⁶⁹Wesley, *Works*, 7:61(1983); cf. Heitzenrater’s *Mirror and Memory*, 78-105.

⁷⁰ Wesley, “On Knowing Christ After the Flesh,” in *Works* 7: 293 (1958).

published nine times in the Wesleys' lifetime). According to late Methodist churchman and theologian Franz Hildebrandt, the hymns were used as a primer in theology and a manual for worship. In the Post-Reformation era, hymns took over the function of creeds and were necessary to cultivate the creedal element in worship and piety. One could say, with hymnologist Erik Routley, that the printing and use of hymns is comparable to the use of the Roman Breviary. They also created creedal confusion and multiplicity. But because of Methodism's intrinsically practical focus, hymns played an important role at all Methodist society gatherings: the bands, the class meetings, the watchnights, the prayer services, and, of course, the Eucharist.⁷¹

The *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* were published at the height of the Methodist evangelical revival. We acknowledge again, and now more explicitly, that they were written in response to the Eucharistic quietism suggested by the Moravians. There is historical irony here. Hymnody was a spiritual discipline that the Wesleys inherited in part from the Moravians. Having been enriched by their brand of hymn-singing, the Wesleys turned their own tool against them, providing constructive theological response to Moravian error. We could speculate at this point that there was an almost self-conscious effort to speak persuasively to the Moravians in a language they could understand. In this case, the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* are explicitly apologetic, giving the multifaceted eucharistic interpretation of Brevint an alternative discourse that would sound clearly in the hearts and minds of common Christians.

As editor, John Wesley was careful to include only those hymns that echoed sound Christian doctrine. This was not difficult, given his brother's own theological training

and Charles's penchant for imbibing scripture and expressing his poetry through its themes and metaphors. His poetry tended to be centered in and through a Christocentric vision of scripture, so that Charles Wesley's most famous and best poem (*Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown*) is a Christological and poetic midrash on the story of Jacob wrestling the angel in Genesis 32:22-32.⁷²

The center and objective interpretive tool for the *Hymns* was Brevint's text. Edited by John Wesley, these hymns would be accompanied throughout the Methodist movement by other hymns on Church festivals and the Church year. Along with the *Hymns on the Trinity*, these liturgical hymnbooks represent the fundamental ecclesial thrust of mid-century Methodism.

But even those hymn- books that were not ordered and centered by the Anglican liturgical year were "ordered" nonetheless. It has been suggested that the most comprehensive and Methodist of the hymnbooks, the 1780 collection, was not ordered to the liturgical calendar because editor John Wesley did not want to make it appear that the Methodists had developed their own liturgy.⁷³ This 1780 hymnbook, however, was explicitly ordered according to "the personal experience of salvation for the "real Christian."⁷⁴

⁷¹ Wesley, *Works*, 7:1(1983); Carlton R. Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1993), 11; Erik Routley, *The Musical Wesleys* (New York, Oxford: 1968), 33.

⁷² See Glen Clark, "Charles Wesley's Greatest Poem," *Methodist History* 26, no. 3 (1988): 163-71. The poem was cited by brother John in Charles' obituary, and the poem's title is different from the hymn title. This poem's hymnic version remains in the United Methodist Hymnal, #386, with the full text on the following page.

⁷³ Wesley, *Works*, 7:56 (1983).

⁷⁴ Berger, *Theology in Hymns*, 71.

Other Wesleyan non-liturgical hymnbooks were ordered according to religious experience, a topic, or event. This emphasis on the sacred dimension saturating all of life connects the private life of the Christian with more public and common experiences. And unlike other non-conformist hymnbooks of the time period, those seemingly thrown together for no apparent theological reason, the Wesleyan non-liturgical hymnbooks were ordered and produced for particular occasions/experiences.⁷⁵

Furthermore, John Wesley developed a *regula*, or rules, for singing (1761) that seems to be an effort to balance the tendency toward unbridled enthusiasm in song. A *regula* for singing may seem to our modern ears an overly scrupulous sense of the importance and danger of music and singing. But in the context of eighteenth century England, a time when the extent, kind, content and method of singing would identify your group, a *regula* can be understood as an explicit expression of a more balanced piety. In addition, a rule for singing developed, perhaps, in order to assure a uniformity in the evolution of the Methodist synthesis.

One commentator has suggested that by 1761 hymns had become the “theological memory” of the movement so that to take singing seriously was to take theology seriously.⁷⁶ In a sense, the production of hymns became the theological media for memory, as well as an expression of faith. For those common persons the Wesleys sought to revive, hymns would be able to be sung, but not necessarily read. In this way hymns and hymn singing are analogous to the regular practice of Eucharistic ritual. For

⁷⁵ See Wesley, “List of Poetical Works,” in *Works*, 14: 319-346 (1958). Included in the collections are *Hymns on Select Passages of Holy Scriptures*, *Hymns on God’s Everlasting Love*, and *Hymns for the Watchnight*, (experience), *Hymns for Use of Families and on Various Occasions*, *Funeral Hymns*, and *Hymns for New Year’s Day* (topic) *Hymns Occasioned by the Earthquake*, *Hymns for the Expected Invasion*, and *Hymns for New Year’s Day* (event).

⁷⁶ Young, *A Companion to the United Methodist Hymnal*, 320-321.

in the eucharistic liturgy and in the singing of hymns, there is a participatory *noetic* dimension. And both contain a poesis that involves the affective/emotional dimension, as well. Hymns on the Eucharist, therefore, are an especially rich deposit of theological meaning and experience. And the rules for singing demonstrate the historical development of the efficacy and function of hymns in public worship.

The seven rules demonstrate the Wesleyan mix of emphases: that worship should not be formal but that there must be limits necessary for equanimity. Rule number two is the instruction to “Sing lustily.” Rule number three commands, “Sing modestly.” Our modern ears may speculate with some amusement on the meaning and demeanor evinced by a lusty modesty and/or a modest lust. But in terms of *spirituality* it is easier to understand what John Wesley was trying to proscribe for his Methodists. His rule called for a balanced spirituality and practice, an effort at an authentic experiential process whereby the focus of one’s praise and devotion would remain on the God of Jesus Christ, not the song, singer, composer or one’s neighbor.

The fourth rule, “Sing in time,” is worthy of some consideration, especially as we prepare for more careful study of hymns on the Eucharist. In this rule John Wesley’s concern is that one become cognizant of the corporate nature of song. That participants not lag and that lazy singers not drag down the whole was important to Wesley. By singing-in time one is able to remain with those in the lead, those for whom the song has become an experience rather than an arduous process of learning.⁷⁷

What does a consistent effort at a balanced spirituality, compounded by an abiding sense of the corporate nature of Christian discipleship, look like? Throughout this

⁷⁷*The United Methodist Hymnal: Book of United Methodist Worship* (Nashville, TN: U.M. Publishing, 1989),vii.

chapter we have been attempting a phenomenological view of the theological and spiritual amalgamation of the eighteenth century religious movement known as Methodism. We have tried to show that there is a certain tension in Wesleyan thought and practice due to the religio-political, intellectual, and liturgical context out of which Methodism was born. We acknowledge here that most creative movements of the Spirit, and most creative persons, are able to hold together various and variant ideas, values, and allegiances. This necessarily places creative people in the middle of the dichotomies, very often misunderstood by those on either side. The Wesleyan movement was just that kind of movement, and if we examine history with integrity, we will see that John and Charles Wesley held views or took actions that cut against the grain of our own supposed, inherited or created identities.

Throughout, we have focused on the way the Wesleys appropriated sometimes divergent visions. Two religious visions, Anglican and non-conformist, are the broad and separate tents under which the Wesleyan movement took shape. The liturgical high church dimension goes to the non-conformist tent to receive the informality of hymnody. The word-centered, explicitly Protestant auditory of preaching is augmented by the objective sacramental focus from the Anglican tent. In Methodism, the Anglican religious societies provide the model and medium for German-fed, Protestant Pietism. The Book of Common Prayer and its usage are appreciated by the Wesleys, but so too is informal and free prayer.

Even within the use of hymnody and within the practice of the Eucharist we find the Wesleys acting as a bridge. In hymnody, John Wesley wants to maintain a free informality in worship, in order to allow persons to feel the Spirit's power in worship. But he also writes out rules for singing as if to insure that hymnody will not carry

Christians into an inappropriate enthusiasm. And finally, the Eucharist, as we will see, is the place where this tension becomes brute historical fact. When the Wesleys sought a sacramental renewal, they sought it both for those within the Anglican communion and those without. But their vision for a sacramental revival remained just that, as the evangelical revival and the move toward Methodism as British sect, and eventually separated *ecclesia*, began to take shape.

THE HYMNS ON THE LORD'S SUPPER: 1745

By 1745 the Methodist Societies had grown into a network and were moving toward what Richard Heitzenreiter has interpreted as a “consolidation.” At the same time, John and Charles Wesley were defending their Methodist societies against accusations that they were sectarian or disloyal to a more Nationalistic religiosity. Several criticisms could not be ignored and were spurred by the perception that the Methodist societies were the cause of separation within the Church of England. Proof of this accusation, according to the accusers, could not only be seen in Methodists’ enthusiast propensities, but also because they were not following the canons and rules of the National Church. In addition, the accusation was made that the Methodists’ field preaching was in line with a seditious spirit because it broke the Law of Uniformity. In short, it was sure evidence of non-conformity and dissent. The Act of Toleration had given non-conformists the right to worship in chapels and in their private gatherings, but field preaching betrayed the spirit of this law. Wesley refuted the charge by suggesting that the field preaching of

Methodists was not illegal because the Methodists were Church of England loyalists through and through.⁷⁸

In 1744 the Methodists were at work forging some self-understanding through their conference, which included a hammering out of the questions: What to teach? How to teach? and What to do? In that conversation, agreement was made upon the nature of their tasks. Theirs would be no effort to separate from the Church of England, theirs was a movement, rather, that sought to “invite, to offer Christ and to build up.” There were only ten attendees at the 1744 conference. In 1745 the conference of preachers met again, and there decided that the conference of preachers should happen yearly. United Methodists continue this practice in their particular region, participating in an annual conference.⁷⁹

In this dynamic period for Methodism (1743-45) a creative tension became much more explicit. While John Wesley and the Methodist preachers were giving serious attention to the nature, parameters, foci and end of their mission, John and Charles were giving time and attention to the affirmation of the National religion as a Church. Erik Routley has phrased the way the Wesleys perceived their ecclesial home accurately when he said, “John loved his Church through rebuke; Charles loved it directly.”⁸⁰ In his *Appeals* John Wesley stood between his Methodists and his Church and attempted to show how the Methodists were in line with the best lights of the Church of England, while also calling to account the priests and administration of that formidable ecclesial

⁷⁸ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodist*, 147-181; Wesley, “An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,” in *Works*, 8: 32 (1958).

⁷⁹ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodist*, 147-152.

⁸⁰ Routley, *The Musical Wesleys*, 29.

body. And it was at this time of tension and ambiguity that the Wesleys would write, edit and publish almost two hundred hymns on the Eucharist which clearly articulate the joy, purpose and meaning of a Church gathered as the one Body of Christ. The years from which the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* were drawn are years of tension between the power of a new and exciting missional expansion for the Church and a tired, formal institution that, in the minds of the Wesleys at least, could be revived.

Perhaps the clearest expression of the Wesleys' optimism---that the Anglican Church might bend in its formality and that the Methodist societies would cling to Anglican Ecclesial foundations---was that a sacramental revival would catch for both Anglican formalism and evangelical piety. It might take more detailed social-historical study to delineate the statistical effects of the Wesleys' sacramental thrust. At least one author has traced the Anglo-Catholic revival of the eighteenth century (the movement which captivated and converted one Cardinal John Henry Newman) back to the Methodist revival.⁸¹ Such speculations, however, can only come after describing in more detail the tension that hung around the Eucharist in the eighteenth century.

Deism in thought resulted in formalism in worship. Eighteenth century Anglican Eucharistic practice, still ambiguous due to its seventeenth century legacy, was clearly lagging, at least according to John and Charles Wesley. There were Anglican parishes that celebrated the Lord's Supper weekly, as John Wesley's practice well attests. But in general, rural parishes celebrated only on high holy days. Other parishes would celebrate

⁸¹ Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, 3:209.

only once a month. We also know that the Wesleys encouraged their Methodist societies to constant communion, that is, at least once a week.⁸²

The Wesleys were acting on a strong belief that they had learned and cultivated at Oxford. There they studied what they might have called “primitive Christianity” and what we might deem the “Patristic era.” Not only had they understood the earliest Christians to be those who celebrated the Eucharist everyday, but Brevint, too, said as much in his treatise on the sacrament.⁸³ This insistence, though repeated throughout their lives as Anglican priests and leaders in the evangelical revival known as Methodism, seems to have waned in Methodist practice after their deaths.

EUCCHARIST AND ECCLESIOLOGY: WESLEYAN INCLINATIONS

The significance of this eucharistic emphasis may be merely a practical suggestion for living a life of holiness. Indeed, that is the way United Methodists with a sacramental desire or inclination will cultivate and appropriate this historical “fact” as part of their United Methodist identity. And we would do the same if the Wesleys were seeking to rejuvenate Christians according to just any method of participating in this ritual—Puritan, Baptist, Lutheran, Congregationalist etc. But the assumption of the Wesleys’ insistence, at least at the time of the publication of the *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* (1745), was that those revived and in full Christian participatory mode would *communicate* within an Anglican parish. This raises the question of the meaning of ecclesiology and its relationship to Eucharist. And here, we are focusing on the question of Eucharist and

⁸² Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (Nashville, TN.: Abingdon, 1992), 19; Wesley, “The Duty of Constant Communion,” in *Works*, 7: 147-157(1958); Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, 3:204-207.

⁸³ Rattenbury, *EH*, 39.

unity, a question that is, perhaps, just as important for authentic participation in the ritual as is regular “praxis.”

The existence of the *Hymns* with the supplement of Brevint’s extracted text points to the fact that the Wesleys wanted those unfamiliar with the rubrics of Anglicanism to join with those unfamiliar with the informality of the Methodists. The Wesleys’ logic seems to have been to encourage Methodists to receive the sacrament at the hands of Anglican priests, even as Anglican priests were encouraged to provide the sacrament more consistently. Brevint was solidly within the Anglican “middle way” of late seventeenth-century Anglicanism. Charles clearly affirmed the National Church in his poetry and life witness and was appalled when, in 1786, his brother ordained an American Methodist as Bishop.⁸⁴

The years 1743-1745 provide us with a clear picture of John Wesley standing in between his Methodists and the Anglican ecclesial structure. In his love for the Church “through rebuke,” he clearly defends his encouragement of sending his Methodists beyond their parish boundaries for the Eucharist because, often, they could not find a time to communicate within their own parish.⁸⁵ Perhaps this practical outcome of the spiritual discipline of regular communication provoked John Wesley’s Anglican colleagues to accuse him of “sheep stealing” or, worse yet, creating dissension. Note that he sent them to other Anglican parishes; he neither desired nor practiced a separate communion, a theological oxymoron for the Wesleys. What is more, many Methodists felt that the Anglican priesthood did not have the requisite moral rectitude to preside over

⁸⁴ S.T. Kimbrough, ed., *Charles Wesley: Poet and Theologian*, 184.

⁸⁵ Wesley, “A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,” in *Works*, 8: 119 (1958).

the kind of communion that Methodists would deem fitting. And, *The Book of Common Prayer* dictated that communion only had to be received three times a year.⁸⁶

The Wesleys, therefore, found themselves at odds with both Methodist followers and Anglican leaders, albeit for different reasons. The Methodists wanted the Wesleys to advocate weekly communion outside parish walls, and Anglican leaders would have appreciated it if the Wesleys had remained content with Anglican sacramental practice as it stood.

It is clear that John Wesley agreed in principle with his Methodists' critique of the Anglican priesthood's moral laxity.⁸⁷ But a more important principle must have stymied that incredulous critique. The principle of ecclesial unity, I suggest, is that which gave John Wesley his moral compass in the face of the temptation to initiate and bless a Methodist communion. And perhaps this principle was symbolized for him in the witness and passion of his brother's ecclesial ideals. And the *Hymns*, full of the fervent joy of evangelistic outreach, careful in their clear delineation of ecclesial unity in Christ, express well this intrinsic ecumenical thrust in Wesleyan identity.

If United Methodists inherit the Wesleys' creative synthesis, practical theology, exocentric, Spirit-empowered emphases, then they also may inherit the ambivalence regarding the Church of England. That latter inheritance has not been embraced as has the former. However, these two dimensions of the Wesleyan heritage (exocentrism and ambivalence toward a sacramental structure) cannot be separated. Perhaps the other

⁸⁶ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodist*, 191-193; Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 418.

⁸⁷ Wesley's rebuke: "There are among yourselves ungodly and unholy men; openly, undeniably such; drunkards, gluttons, returners of evil for evil.;" in "An Earnest Appeal," in *Works*, 8: 29 (1958).

centered and synthetic movement grows from the same root as the inclusive, tension producing, sacramental ecclesial dimension.

This chapter has focused in broad outline on the multiplicity of factors and forces that impinged upon and evoked the Methodist Movement. We have attempted to provide a sense of the rich British religious scene at the time of the Wesleys. Our aim, however, has been limited to showing that context in relation to the making and meaning of hymns on the Eucharist. We move now to examine the hymns in more detail. We will explain how they were edited and ordered; delineate the theological emphases therein; show when and for whom they have been published throughout Methodist history; and examine in some detail J. Ernest Rattenbury's sustained treatment on *The Hymns on the Lord's Supper* (1948).

CHAPTER THREE: *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, The making of the Textual Editions

This Chapter will explore how the *Hymns* were created and edited. In addition, their subsequent dates of publication and a sustained examination of a modern interpretation, that of J. Ernest Rattenbury, will be considered. Since our concern is their contemporary ecclesial implications, our exploration will seek to present the *Hymns* as evocative of the question of ecclesial identity. We want to remain open to a multi-vocal rendering of ritual, lyrical poetry and practical theology. Therefore, ecclesiology and the meaning of tradition will remain in the forefront. And the Wesleys' understanding of their role in creatively conserving an ancient Christian and evolving British theological tradition will be before us.

In keeping with contemporary hermeneutical theory, we begin this chapter by acknowledging a certain ambiguity about the nature of texts and their authors. It is not that we cannot proceed with confidence regarding the Wesleys' production of the nine editions of the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*. It is, rather, that we must wrestle with our hermeneutical assumptions regarding authorship and authority. Though the recent United Methodist teaching document, *This Holy Mystery*, cites the *Hymns* as proof of Wesleyan eucharistic foundations for contemporary praxis, the implications of Daniel Brevint's text (1673) as the root from which the *Hymns* grew has received little attention. We want to re-open the question of the meaning of John Wesley's extraction of Brevint, how Charles "authored" the lyrics and the *Hymns*' ecclesial implications.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: a postmodern at/theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) 74-93; David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 99-107; Gayle Carlton Felton, *A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2005), 11.

THREE VOICES, ONE CORPUS OF POETRY: AN ECCLESIAL HERMENEUTIC

Bishop Ole Borgen, in his 1972 study of John Wesley's interpretation of the sacraments, revealed that, like the recent teaching document, Methodist theologians have largely ignored Brevint's text. He wrote: "It is surprising to note that none of these scholars have found it necessary or useful to consult Brevint's original work, the importance of which will become evident in the course of this study."⁸⁹ Borgen does go on to describe the implications of this oversight later in his text when he demonstrates that careful attention to Brevint clarifies John Wesley's insistence upon the notion of sacrifice implicit in the ritual. Despite such a finding, United Methodism continues to be suspicious of the traces of atonement in Eucharistic theology and practice.⁹⁰ The suspicion's concern may be simply that the Eucharist not be *reduced* to Christ's sacrifice. But Borgen's point in 1972 was that we ought to think about the Eucharist in more balanced ways, and Brevint can be a resource in that regard. Borgen did argue that the Wesleys wanted to "water down" any of Brevint's overtly Roman language, for example, the use of "oblation." This "revision" was due to Borgen's sense that the Wesleys were, in short, anti-clerical. That is, for Borgen, the Wesleys would disavow the efficacy of the priest in the offering of the sacrifice of Christ. Borgen refutes Rattenbury here.⁹¹

However, John Wesley's extraction also "deletes" a more profound sense of the symbolic, a semiotic sense that is grounded in Augustine's notions of signs, as we will

⁸⁹ Ole E. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments: A Theological Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Asbury Press, 1972), 27, n. 46.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 240-241; Felton, *This Holy Mystery*, 49.

⁹¹ Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, 246.

see. A contemporary theology of the Eucharist may do well to re-appropriate Brevint's semiotic sense. And so we want to at least raise the question: Does the Wesleyan reliance on extraction mean that the gold of eucharistic theology is sacrificed for the dross of efficiency? The lyrical poetry would seem to tell us no, for the symbolic and metaphoric sense is preserved in these. But the semiotic logic, rooted in Augustine, is lost through the extraction process.

The *Hymns*, though useful to accentuate the practical efficacy of Methodism, betray the lack of attention to theology proper.⁹² Pragmatic sufficiency can leave us bereft of theo-logical substance because reliant upon the affective dimension of poesis. And often such a lack veils a fully orb'd theology of the sacrament. Such practical sufficiency may be indicative of the fact that Methodism, as Albert Outler has suggested, was a movement that can be interpreted as an order within an ecclesia, not an ecclesia itself. Since we have touched upon the issue of sacrifice in chapter two, we will only touch upon its ecclesial implications, those meanings derived for ethics and doxology in which the body, the church, joins in the offering of Christ.

It is Borgen's concern for theological adequacy through an understanding of Brevint that echoes our concern with regard to ecclesiology. If Borgen suggested we retrieve Brevint to clarify John Wesley on the Eucharist, our concern is to retrieve Brevint to clarify Eucharistic ecclesiology.

Unfortunately, Borgen remained dedicated to the unhelpful notion of individual heroes and reformers. Borgen unflinchingly cites the extract from Brevint as Wesley's own sacramental thought. He cites as "Wesley" both Brevint's extracted thoughts and Charles

⁹² See Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 64-68. I refer to Tracy's typology and consider the Wesleys to be "confessional" theologians who lacked the time to delve further into sacramental theology.

Wesley's lyrical poetry.⁹³ This interpretation confuses John Wesley's editorial skill with theological acumen. Though both are vital to the task of theology, Borgen's focus on John alone extracts the historical form of the production of the Hymns from ecclesial to individual.

So what is an extract? And how does an editor *authorize* a text? The question is critical for ecclesiology and identity, for its answers either confound or conform ecclesial reason. A question which might be worthy of some consideration in this regard is: if John Wesley becomes the primary arbiter for Methodist "teaching," then why, in this search for a Methodist Eucharist, is it viable to cite the *Hymns* at all? A more concise Methodist rendering may be found solely in John Wesley's *The Duty of Constant Communion*.⁹⁴

It seems that Methodists borrowed this "hero" ideal from the Reformed tradition and projected it onto John Wesley. Seen in this light, the role of Wesley is impoverished. He is deemed a reformer, creating a new tradition rather than evolving an established one. Brevint represents a tradition of which the Wesleys are heirs. The Wesleys' decision to print Brevint's Preface along with the *Hymns* is itself a conscious message of this lineage. They are acting in continuity, even if the context of this perpetuation is an "extract." The printing of extracts itself is a technologically new take on the work of medieval glosses. In extraction, commentary is provided by both what is left out and what is brought forward. In the gloss process, commentary is provided by what is added on, even if that is by way of correction. John and Charles Wesley clearly understood themselves as evolving an established tradition. What is more, the historical and ecclesial conditions of

⁹³ Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, 250,259.

⁹⁴ Wesley, *Works*, 7:148-157 (1958).

both Luther and Calvin cannot be transposed onto an interpretation of John Wesley as the “founder” of a great Church. Not only is John Wesley’s England distinct from earlier continental contexts, his loyalty to the Church of England along with his critique of its abuses, cannot be lined up with, say, Calvin’s robust differentiation. Put negatively, John Wesley was ambivalent about his Church of England. Put positively, he held together the priestly and prophetic dimensions of ecclesial leadership.

By taking the singular focus off of John Wesley, especially as we interpret a thoroughly ecclesial text, we seek to complexify Methodist identity. Simply put, the Methodist movement loses its richness and its ecclesial connections if we rely solely on one founder, John, to bear the marks of its theology. The theological *conversation* implicit in the composition of the *Hymns*, therefore, is characteristic of a powerful movement of the Spirit, but also muddies the waters of our individualistic interpretations of history, interpretations that long for the clarity of the *one* hero of faith.

The implications of this are ecclesiological, for Brevint’s Carolinian identity makes the Wesleys intrinsically sacramentalists with a clear ecclesiological bias. If we cite the *Hymns* in order to justify “United Methodist” praxis, and fail to acknowledge both their ecclesial form (a creative collaboration) and the subsequent fear of ecclesial ambiguity they entrust to us, then we do not honor the Wesleyan tension implicit in our tradition. The form, as well as the method through which the *Hymns* took shape, are ecclesial in product and process. That is, the three voices within the *Hymns* demonstrate well the ecclesial form of the Methodist movement. But the three may have been reduced to one in the evolving Methodist tradition, especially as pragmatic concerns overcame a sacramental vision.

THE FORM OF PRODUCTION

Before we examine the individual parts and producers of the hymns, a word about ecclesial form is in order. Both Brevint and the Wesleys, in their different historical contexts, found themselves in some sense “exiled” from their spiritual home. And both understood the Eucharist as the ecclesial answer to the question of the revelation of Christ and a lived discipleship. David Ford has touched upon the way ritual functions in the absence of formal creeds—he cites the early church as that gathered community that came to “know” the salvific significance of the death of Christ through worship and ritual. And George Worgul has given a similar interpretation of the function of ritual in relation to “tradition.” If the revealed truth of Christ’s sacrificial death be “mimicked” and, in a sense, kept alive, ritual is the embodied arbiter of the revelatory.⁹⁵

This approach to revelation means that the Church is “made” in the vicissitudes and ambiguities of history through a renewal of eucharistic participation. The Wesleys and Brevint, each in their own time, were drawn into the mimetic rite that clarifies ecclesial identity by way of symbolic action and noetic experience. The Wesleys utilize Brevint to mimic eucharistic significance in their deistic/enthusiastic context, while Brevint mimics the early Church as he attempts to forge an ecclesial identity in the midst of a French Catholic majority and a Continental Reformed minority.⁹⁶ The Wesleys and Brevint were drawn into the Eucharist as it “made” the church. And what is more, the Wesleys’ use of Brevint and collaboration on the publication of the hymns connotes ecclesial form. That

⁹⁵ David Ford, *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge, 1999), 137-139; George Worgul, “Ritual as the Interpreter of Tradition,” *Louvain Studies* Fall (1984): 141-150.

⁹⁶ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Image Books, 2002), 172; William Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics and the Body of Christ* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998).

is, it is a plural effort in which gifts are shared for the witness of the originary revelation in Christ Jesus. Further, it is an incorporation of a saint (Brevint) into the living present, or an incorporation of the living present (the Wesleys context) into the communion of saints. One of the ways, therefore, to interpret John Wesley's extraction of Brevint is to see the lyrical poetry that is attached to the extract as a new form of telling Brevint's older story. Paul Ricoeur sees this diachronic interpretation as indicative of the western human project, namely, the evolution of "symbol systems carrying within themselves different layers of interpretation and re-interpretation." John and Charles resource, it seems, all of Brevint, but they extract much less than is available. The poetry *is* Brevint in a new form. The extraction is "proof" of what is showcased or exemplified in the *Hymns* themselves. The transposed *Hymns* are "precisely this diachronic process of re-interpretation we call tradition."⁹⁷ Tradition and its participial form, theological "traditioning," is a process of creativity.

Within the context of the broader Protestant tradition there has been some renewal surrounding the question of tradition. Protestants have always "traditioned" but have come late to acknowledge it as a necessary and positive force for ecclesial and ecumenical understanding.⁹⁸ The Protestant suspicion of tradition is obviously rooted in the one time vital critique of Roman Catholicism's grand narrative of medieval hegemony. The Protestant task, with the Roman Catholic, is to now "tradition" in such a way that the dialectic between preservation and the Spirit's lure remain healthy or

⁹⁷ Richard Kearney, *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1984), 25.

⁹⁸ James K.A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 65,n..7, notes this Protestant ambivalence.

balanced. Methodism, as I will try to show through the work of Rattenbury, has its own tradition but errs on the side of the call from the Spirit, resulting in both an ambiguity within the tradition and a tendency to move fast into indiscriminate ecclesial waters. Nonetheless, the *Hymns*, as we recollect, are an example of healthy Methodist traditioning.

I hope the stage is set to examine the form and content of the *Hymns* as they relate to the question of Methodist ecclesial identity. We will now examine the roles of Brevint, John Wesley and Charles Wesley in the production of the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* (1745).

WESLEYAN EUCHARISTIC INCLINATIONS: THE ROLE OF BREVINT'S *CHRISTIAN SACRAMENT*

We would reduce the interpretive task to the psychologization of Brevint if the notion of exile were not a theological category deep within the Jewish and Christian scriptures and tradition. One of the most memorable symbolic accounts in scripture, the Great Flood, was composed during the biblical Exile. At that time, the people of Israel were struggling with the meaning of their own failures, the favor of God, and the unfamiliar. Luther used this memory of exile to convey his sense of alienation from the Church. His main critique regards the heart of ritual in the Roman Church. These experiences of dissonance and disassociation, alienation and the strange warrant in the community some expression that will both connect them to the memory of their origin and propel them into coping with their present.⁹⁹ The significance for us is that there is, implicit in Brevint's

⁹⁹ Walter Brueggeman, *Candences of Home* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1997), 3; Martin Luther, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," in *Three Treatises* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 123-260.

text, a functional ecclesial memory in operation. We will prescind for the moment from the possible pneumatological implications of the evocation of ecclesial memory while in exile. But the witness to some ordering process, rooted in Christ, and expressive of identity, is concurrent with Brevint's efforts. Again, what this process may be called is traditioning.

Brevint, we remember, had been exiled in the mid seventeenth century when he would not sign on with the Puritan-led Parliament's Directory and Covenant(1648). It is difficult to say that the praxis envisioned by Brevint in his text was normative for him. His text could be characterized as an example of Tillich's correlational method. That is, Brevint's exiled situation, and the Eucharist as "answer" to that situation are juxtaposed.¹⁰⁰ This is not to say that he did not practice regularly; it is only to suggest that he is articulating a memory of the sacrament that existed in his mind's eye in the Patristic era, never really existed in England because of the evolving controversy of which he was a part, or, existed in his mind in the future when he would return to England.

TEXTS CONFERRED: BREVINT'S STRUCTURE AND THE EXTRACT

Daniel Brevint's text was originally entitled, *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice: By way of Discourse, Meditation, and Prayer upon the Nature, Parts, and Blessings of the Holy Communion*. As the title suggests, the text contains "breaks" of written prayers between the sections. This is true of each section excepting the first ("The Importance of Understanding Well the Sacrament"), after which there is no prayer, and the last section,

¹⁰⁰ David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York:Seabury, 1975), 46.

in which paragraphs 15 and 16 are separated by a prayer of preparation that seems to invite readers to prepare to join Christ in his sacrifice. The prayers are made to stand out in Brevint's text by a larger font and this creates a sense of textual transition into the next expository section, summing up the previous section via devotion. The text, therefore, reveals a flow between reason and emotion; a balance between these two perhaps best described as contemplation.¹⁰¹ John Wesley keeps the prayers in tact, but he does not make them distinct in his extract.

Wesley makes the prayers in his extraction only another numbered paragraph in the same font, thus losing the sense of a clear break in transition in preparation for the next section of discourse. Because John Wesley "left out" so much of the discursive part of the text, he may have wanted to fill in with the prayer, giving the sense of more text. In section two, "Concerning the Sacrament, as it is a Memorial of the Sufferings and death of Christ," John Wesley reduces the number of subsections from eleven to nine. And in section six, for example, whole sections are combined, so that subsections 1 and 2 in Brevint's original are combined into one section in the extract. This means that Brevint's subsection 3 in section six is Wesley's subsection 2 in section six. That subsection begins, "Nevertheless, this Sacrifice which by a real *Oblation* was not to be offered more than once..." In Wesley's extract it reads, "Nevertheless, this Sacrifice, which by a real *obligation*, was not to be offered more than once..."¹⁰² The reductive tendency in John

¹⁰¹Daniel Brevint, *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice: by way of discourse, meditation & prayer upon the nature, parts, and blessings of the Holy Communion* (At the Theater in Oxford: 1673), microfilm. Hereafter cited as *CSS*. See also William Thompson, *Christology and Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 172-179; Thompson describes contemplation as a unitary process of refinement in which theory and practice refine one another.

¹⁰² Brevint, *CSS*, 74; Rattenbury, *EH*, 139 (emphasis mine); Rattenbury's 1996 edition is not unlike a "Wesleyan" text in that it contains Brevint's extracted Preface, the hymns and Rattenbury's commentary.

Wesley's extract conforms to this desire to change overtly Roman language (oblation) to a more Protestant characterization (obligation). It must, however, depend on the context, because oblation is "kept" when it refers to the church's role later in the treatise. In addition, Charles uses the word in his lyricism.¹⁰³ What is more, John Wesley refers to the "full and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world," in his sermon titled, *Spiritual Worship*.¹⁰⁴ In the oblation/obligation quote above, Wesley changes the tone of the text from one of "offering" to one of "duty." Obligation connotes the Christian's duty to practice a Eucharistic piety, something born out in John Wesley's famous essay, *The Duty of Constant Communion*.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps the choice of "obligation" is a bridge word. John Wesley generally changes that sacrificial language of Brevint's which would deem the priest as "effective" in the arbitration of Grace. For this, and perhaps in the name of brevity and the employment of simpler language, Brevint's original is reduced by one-third in Wesley's extract. Then too, some of this reduction could be due in part to the cost of printing. Fewer pages would cost John Wesley less to print. Also, given his schedule, he could have scoured the text for his notes (he had read the text in 1734) and marks and published the extract in a hurry. In addition to publishing *Hymns* with Charles Wesley in 1745, in this same period Wesley published extracts and tracts, including works by Jonathan Edwards, William Law, Henry Scougal, Abbe Fleury and Richard Baxter.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Rattenbury, *EH*, 142, 195; Hymn 140 uses the word oblation, among other hymns.

¹⁰⁴ Wesley, *Work*, 6:428 (1958).

¹⁰⁵ Wesley, *Works*, 7:148-157 (1958).

In Brevint's original, seven sections discussed the Eucharist as both a sacrament (sections 2-5) and a sacrifice (sections 6-8). Sections two through five are an explication of what Brevint calls the three "faces" of the sacrament. These three aspects "face" time differently: one to the past, one to the present, one to the future. John Wesley extracts the three themes but deletes the use of "faces." Sections six through eight build on the three faces of the sacrament, now in relation to the theology of sacrifice. The sacrifice too is structured around time: past sacrifice, present eucharistic experience (the sacrifice of our persons) and the future sacrifice of justice (stewardship). So Brevint seems to think in terms of time, specifically creation/incarnation, cross/atonement, eschatology. Today, Roman Catholics and others would deem this holistic vision the paschal mystery. The incarnational/sacramental dimension of the Eucharist, that is, that which explicates memory, presence/Grace, are the subject of sections 2-5. The sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist, that which connotes memory, cross/atonement and Christian morals/ethics, make up sections 6-8. We see then, a balance between incarnation and atonement, especially as these impinge upon the meaning of Eucharistic practice.¹⁰⁷

Brevint's tripartite structure is natural, given his subject matter. But he too is at work "traditioning." In addition to references to Ignatius the Martyr, Tertullian, Irenaeus and Cyprian, Brevint makes use of Augustine. Other than scripture, Augustine is cited more than all others. Sometimes Brevint will, with an asterisk at the bottom of the page, cite a

¹⁰⁶ Frank Baker, "Approaching a Variorum Edition of *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*," in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper: 250 Years*, ed. S.T. Kimbrough, 7-16 (Madison, N.J.: Charles Wesley Society, 1996); Heitzenreiter, *Wesley and the People Called Methodist*, 155.

¹⁰⁷ Brevint, *CSS*, 4-5; Rattenbury, *EH*, 130.

particular work of Augustine. Mostly, however, he will refer to Augustine in the text, and paraphrase or translate a sentence here or there. The paschal structure of Brevint's text, I suggest, is inherited from Augustine. In section six Brevint writes:

S. Augustin did explain, when he said that the holy Flesh of Jesus Christ was offered up in three manners; by Pre-figuring Sacrifices under the law, before his coming into the World: in *real deed* upon the Cross: and by a *Commemorative Sacrament* after he is ascended into Heaven.

And in Wesley's extract we read:

St. Austin *explained* when he said, the holy flesh of Jesus was offered in three manners, by prefiguring sacrifices under the law before His coming into the world, in real deed upon His Cross, and by a commemorative sacrifice after He ascended into Heaven.¹⁰⁸

The "three manners" notion is from Augustine's *Reply to Faustus the Manichaen*, a long treatise that defends Christian faith against the attacks of one Faustus, who critiques Christianity for many things, but here, Augustine replies to the charge of hypocrisy. Faustus has seen Christians who leave their "sacrifice" drunk. After Augustine retorts that it is unfair to judge the authenticity of the sacrament by the standard of immature Christians he explains in more detail how the ritual fits into the scheme of all time.

Before the coming of Christ, the flesh and blood of this sacrifice were foreshadowed in the animals slain; in the passion of Christ the types were fulfilled by the true sacrifice; after the ascension of Christ, this sacrifice is commemorated in the sacrament.

It is this Augustinian vision of the sacrament's role in time for all time that Brevint brings to the fore. The structure of the text, reflecting time's salvation in Christ,

¹⁰⁸ Brevint, *CSS*, 74; Rattenbury, *EH*, 139.

concludes by inviting the believers to participate in Christ’s sacrificial life and consider their whole existence in terms of that sacrifice (sections 7 and 8 below).¹⁰⁹

Brevint’s Text	John Wesley’s Extract of Brevint
Introduction: To Lady Carteret	
I. The Importance of well understanding the Nature of this Sacrament	I. The Importance of well understanding the Nature of this Sacrament
II. Concerning the Sacrament, As it is a memorial of the Sufferings and Death of Christ	II. Concerning the Sacrament, as it is a Memorial of the Suffering and Death of Christ
III. Of the blessed Sacrament, as it stands for a sign of Present Graces	III. Concerning the Sacrament, as it is a Sign of Present Graces
IV. Concerning the Communion, as it is not a representation only, but a means of Grace	IV. Concerning the Sacrament, as it is a Means of Grace
V. Concerning the Sacrament as it is a Pledge of Future Glory	V. Concerning the Sacrament, as it is a Pledge of Future Glory
VI. Of the Holy Eucharist as it implies a Sacrifice. And first of the commemorative Sacrifice	VI. Concerning the Sacrament, as it is a Sacrifice. And first, of the commemorative Sacrifice
VII. Concerning the Sacrifice of our own persons	VII. Concerning the Sacrifice of Ourselves
VIII. Concerning the oblation of our Goods and Alms, or the sacrifice of Justice	VIII. Concerning the Sacrifice of our Goods

Five of the eight sections’ titles were abridged by John Wesley. “Blessed Sacrament” becomes “sacrament” and “stands for a sign” becomes more simply, “as it is a sign” in section three. Section four’s changes are more significant. Brevint’s “only” after

¹⁰⁹ Augustine, *Reply to Faustus the Manichaen*, vol. 4 of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956), 155-345, no.21; see Thomas Aquinas, *Selected Writings*, trans. and ed. Ralph McInerny, (New York: Penguin, 1998), 781. Aquinas cites this passage from Augustine in the *Summa*, 3rd part Q. 6, article six.

“representation,” reveals, perhaps, his concern that England not go all the way into a memorialist interpretation of the sacrament. Wesley’s more straightforward title seems to leave that debate behind.

BREVINT’S SECTION EIGHT AND THE LIMITS OF EXTRACTION

The abridgement and extraction of section eight echoes our concern above, namely, that often extraction leads to the deletion of important theological resources in the tradition. The ecclesial notion Brevint describes in section eight is the way in which the corporate body of believers are those who withhold nothing, joining their Lord in the offering of themselves and their goods. John Wesley does not bring forth this kind of language and what is missing is an explicit connection between the Church’s ritual and worship and its everyday, “ordinary” life. In his section title (above), Brevint clues the reader into the fact that justice involves sacrifice. The deletion of “oblation” leaves subsequent “Methodist” eucharistic piety with a gap. One wonders why John Wesley did not replace “oblation” with the simple “offering,” maintaining a connection between sacrifice and justice, liturgy and life. Our contemporary concern here is that Methodist tradition has failed to bring forth a holistic eucharistic spirituality. This is perplexing, given the homiletic emphasis John Wesley placed on responding to the whole of existence with the whole of one’s life and livelihood.

In his sermon *The Danger of Riches*, John Wesley warns that anything beyond the necessities of life--- food, clothes and shelter--- is an extravagance. Here and in other sermons about goods and money, Wesley stresses our general lack of propriety when it comes to goods. God alone “owns” all that is. The human is primarily and only a steward. All we have, according to John Wesley, should be used and stewarded for the

greater glory of God. These teachings are consistent with Brevint's original discussion of our "goods" and their proper sacrifice. In John Wesley's sermon *The Good Steward*, the Proprietor, God, has "entrusted us": souls, bodies, worldly goods, and talents.¹¹⁰

This anthropological totality construes humanity as "steward" above all else. Brevint's thrust, in the last two sections of his treatise, is that the celebration of the ritual is the first means of expressing our human totality in relation to that which Christ gave, his life. In short, all is offered (oblation) with Christ. The body of Christ, in doxological mode, pours itself out. Ourselves and our goods, according to Brevint, are brought to the eucharistic sacrifice and seen in its light. What remains "behind" in Brevint's original draws deeply from scripture and treats of the Eucharist's analogical potential. Citing 1Kings 18:39, Brevint connects the surrender and acknowledgement of God as All with Elijah's calling down fire upon soggy wood on the altar of the Lord:

"Both Israelites and Christians seconding their Protestation of obedience, and their prostrations of Body and resignations of their minds, with secondary sacrifices: those of Bulls and Rams; these of Alms and Pious works."¹¹¹

Just as bulls and rams are the affirmation of a total surrender to God, so in Brevint's Christian context alms and pious works are the Christian's excess and expression in offering themselves with Christ. John Wesley must have resonated with this affirmation. But we see that because this richer biblical and analogical exposition was, if you will, underextracted, the tradition of linking sacramental liturgy and "constant communion" to

¹¹⁰ Wesley *Works*, 7:3; 6:146, 137-139 (1958).

¹¹¹ Brevint, *CSS*, 116.

a holistic vision of discipleship waned in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The extraction of section eight, whose original contains what I consider to be clear eucharistic ecclesiology, reduces a twenty-three page section to six paragraphs. As a result, a broader conceptualization of the necessity of symbolic and doxological expression in relation to stewardship is clipped at the stem. Charles Wesley, it seems, had read Brevint's original and in a lyrical mode echoes Brevint's reference to 1 Kings.¹¹² This "layering" of interpretations grounds the next chapter, as we examine the lyrical and how it might shed light on theo-logic. But here we see that in both John Wesley's later sermons and Brevint's sense of ecclesial oblation, a holistic vision of a life of sacrifice is developed.

ECCLESIA: A LIVING SACRIFICE

In spite of John Wesley's "underextraction" of Brevint, such ecclesiology is brought forth through the extract and the lyrical poetry of Charles Wesley. A "Church" must exact theological integration of the two dimensions of the sacrament. Christ's sacrifice is that which makes present God's love poured out for all. It is also that which, in a very nuanced sense, is incomplete without Christ's body, the Church. Brevint's words are:

The Gospel most commonly describes Jesus Christ and his Church, not only as two Parties, that do nothing the one without the other, but sometimes also as one Person alone; as particularly, 1. Cor. 12.12. Christ acts, officiates and suffers for his Body, in that manner that doth become the Head: and the Church imitates and follows all the motions and sufferings of this heavenly and holy Head, in such a manner as is possible to its weak Members.

And John Wesley's extract reads:

Jesus Christ does nothing without the Church, insomuch that sometimes they are represented as only one person; seeing Christ acts and suffers for this Body in that

¹¹² Rattenbury, *EH*, 197, no. 145.

manner which becomes the Head, and the Church follows all the motions and sufferings of its Head, in such a manner as is possible to its weak members.¹¹³

Brevity and clarity seem to be John's concern. The same "concept," the sacrifice of the Church, Christ's body, incorporated into Jesus's sacrifice, with him as "head," is certainly reduced. But also, the language is updated, made more "contemporary" by John. Charles Wesley, for his part, generally follows the extract and in this case, allows one paragraph of Brevint/Wesley to be the springboard for the poeticization of Brevint. In the following, Charles's last two stanzas of Hymn no.129 re-present the text above. In all likelihood, Charles simply follows the text, composes his poetic version and moves on to the next section of the text. It is difficult to detect a precise correlation between the sections in Brevint and how many stanzas Charles chooses to "play" with a particular thematic symbol, image or metaphor from Brevint. The imprecision may be due to the fact that Charles may have worked from both Brevint's original and his brother's extract. If only the latter, we are confounded further because, as we have shown, the extract leaves behind so much and combines subsections. And below, by comparing Charles's lyrics to Brevint, and John Wesley's extract, we can see the hermeneutical layering process at work. The following echoes the passages from Brevint above:

With Him, the Cornerstone,
The Living stones conjoin;
Christ and his church are one,
One body and one vine;
For us he uses all His powers,
And all He has, or is, is ours.

The motions of our Head
The members all pursue,
By His Good Spirit Led
To act, and suffer too

¹¹³ Brevint, *CSS*, 81; Rattenbury, *EH*, 140.

What'er He did on earth sustain,
Till Glorious all like Him we reign.¹¹⁴

The poeticizing process is accompanied by the play of creativity. We note a few things here. John's abridgement and extraction of Brevint is reduced further through the poetry so that we see the trace of the notion of the Church and Christ being one body, "Christ and his church are one." But above and below that near-verbatim line we see Charles's imagination go to other biblical and theological/incarnational language. He transposes the church as body to the Church as living stones---a metaphor from 1 Peter 2:1-9 even though Brevint explicitly mentions 1 Corinthians. The passage from 1 Peter has a clear collective tone, whereby all Christians are to be priests, a royal priesthood. In addition, Charles images the "living stones" that are the Church as conjoined. The notion of conjunction can be traced to Nestorius as he questioned the way in which the two natures of divinity and humanity reside in Christ. Nestorius argued that the relation in Christ was one of conjunction---a conjoining of the natures (Gk. *Synapheia*). Perhaps Charles and John wished to deviate from the Chalcedonian formulation of union because the unity of which Brevint speaks refers to Christ-Church, not God-Man. John "clarifies" Brevint by changing Brevint's "as one Person alone" to "represented as only one person." The Church as the body of Christ is *represented* through the ecclesial sacrifice whereas in Brevint's original the Church and Christ are one. The role of mediating constructs for reality is more evident in John Wesley's use of the language, at least here. "Conjoined" is Charles's word, meaning it does not exist in that particular section of either Wesley's extract or Brevint. Charles may refine further still, in that he wishes to connote the language of mediation along with "Christ and his Church are one." But then again,

¹¹⁴ Rattenbury, *EH*, 193, no.129.

“conjoin” may simply have been a convenient word in that it is consonant with “vine.” In the second stanza Charles Wesley introduces the Spirit as that reality that leads the church to follow Christ. The “Spirit” is not present in those layers of Brevint or the extract, it is a poetic nexus, perhaps “coming out” in the very process of composition.

CHARLES’S IMPROVISATION: WAS BREVINT OR THE EXTRACT HEARD?

Given that Charles Wesley was not only a poet, but also a “theologian,” it becomes extremely difficult to discern whether Charles worked from Brevint’s original or his brother’s extract. His ciphering abilities were due in part to his theological formation.¹¹⁵ As we intimated above, perhaps all we can show is that Charles was not overly concerned with staying within the limits of his brother’s extracted and abridged language.

At times Charles seems simply to mimic the extract in its more contemporary wording. We take notice that John never extracts the word “Eucharist,” instead he abridges it with “Holy Communion.” However, in hymn 123 Charles keeps the words “eucharistic mystery;” and this in spite of his brother’s changing Brevint’s title heading in section six from “Holy Eucharist” to “Sacrament.” Brevint repeatedly owns the words “Eucharist,” “Eucharistical” and “holy Eucharist.” He uses “communion” in conjunction with “conformity,” as we will see. Charles may simply prefer Brevint’s original language here and use the extract there. Whatever the case, from his use of “Eucharist” we can induce a clear autonomy with regard to his brother John’s preferences. And that is the primary point. In the ecclesial conversation between Brevint, Charles and John Wesley,

¹¹⁵ Kimbrough, *Charles Wesley: Poet and Theologian*, 106-7, 112-13.

Charles says yes to Brevint's usage of Eucharist and John says no.¹¹⁶ In the context of this particular avenue for sacramental reflection, both "holy communion" and "eucharistic mystery" apply. This is so because of the experiential moment in question, that liturgical focus on the remembrance of Christ's sacrifice and the Church's communion and thanksgiving for such a mystery as Christ crucified.

THAT WHICH THE EXTRACT OF BREVINT CANNOT CONTAIN

Brevint's Anglican take on Eucharistic sacrifice is revealing in its sensitivity to both Protestant concerns about the efficacy of the priestly role in a "new" sacrifice and the clear patristic sense of the role of atonement in salvation. The two dimensions are able to cover both camps, and it seems that in the United States, United Methodists base their theology on either incarnation and divine love (sacrament) or the love of a bleeding sacrificial lamb and the washing away of sin (sacrifice).

Brevint is careful to open up the necessity for both incarnation and atonement. These two dimensions and their careful integration are held together by Brevint's passionate concern that the sacrament's power gets lost in the debilitating controversies of history. His concern seems aesthetic, and the moral tone of his discussion builds upon his perception of the beauty of the ritual. He sees his moral task as the preservation of that beauty. To get a sense of this aesthetic and moral tone we turn now to the introduction of the text, the whole of which John Wesley chose not to "keep" or extract. In leaving this out, John Wesley begins his extraction with "section I." The following gives a sense of the historical context and demonstrates a possible source of the Wesleyan ecumenical and irenic spirit. That is, though John Wesley does not bring forth this introduction in his

¹¹⁶ Rattenbury, *EH*, 130-144, *passim*, 191, no.123; cf. Brevint, *CSS*, 74.

extraction, the sentiment of the ecclesial middle way and the role of the Eucharist is within the Wesleyan spirit, as we showed in chapter two. Here, Brevint is explaining to his benefactor, one Lady Elizabeth Carteret, why he wrote his tract. In this explanation he defers to the early Church:

“Those great and holy Souls had no desire, more earnest then to contemplate and embrace Christian religion in its original beauty, & see it freed from the Encombrance which ordinary Controversies most commonly throw upon it.”

Perhaps hoping for some Gallican ecclesial and Huguenot sympathies, Brevint reveals his ultimate concern, to lay out a eucharistic theology that has been neither abused by Rome, or anxiously mishandled by the Continental reformers. Note in the next two longer quotes, both from the introduction, the language of longing. It is a longing for being at home in the Church’s Eucharist . These also carry with them a reference to Eden and a desire for restoration.

I can assure you Madam, that upon this account the holy Communion which is as the tree of life in the Paradise of God, the most generous plant in his Vineyard of the Church, hath bin the worst dealt with. For as it was most despitefully treated by Popery; the Protestants did spend most of their care this way to secure it, whereby it could not be well expected that men thus taken up in raising fences, in planting thorns and quicksets against wild Bores, could have much time to dress and improve better plants.

Brevint’s Anglican *via media* shines through here. His disdain for Rome is equaled by his sense that Protestant efforts to re-deem the sacrament were driven not by a spirit of thanksgiving for the gift (the tree of life in the Paradise of God) but by building fences of protection so that a boundary kept the sacrament free from further abuse. But as Brevint intimates, spending all day making scarecrows leaves little time to nurture the soil, let

alone eat the fruit of the vine. Brevint's exposition, by way of discourse, meditation and prayer, will:

Restore all back again both the full meaning and institution of Christ, who is the Planter as well as the Master of the Vineyard, and to the Practice of the Holy Fathers, who for several hundreds of years, dressed it and made it bear excellent fruit. So here I take no more notice of either Papists or sectaries, no nor Protestants neither, then as if the former had never appeared in the world to the trouble and spoil the Church of God, nor the latter to assert and redress it.¹¹⁷

Brevint acknowledges the Medieval only to negate it. And he is not altogether sold on the Protestant eucharistic efforts either. The Wesleys clearly inherit this historical sense. The Church Fathers are vital to the Methodist movement. It may be that Brevint, and other Caroline Divines, did as much to give the Wesleys their appreciation of the Fathers as the Wesleys own explorations at Oxford did.¹¹⁸ If the Wesleys' hermeneutics of Church history falls in line with Brevint, then obviously their appreciation of Brevint's Eucharistic doctrine is clear. But John chooses not to print this introduction in his extraction of Brevint. Did he want to rid the text of its historical context, thereby drawing attention away from controversy? Was he wary of the French connection? This is doubtful, he read and appreciated the French mystics.¹¹⁹ Was he unable to share Brevint's vision of Protestant eucharistic thought as "raising fences" rather than improving plants? It could be. The Eucharistic hymns that Charles Wesley pens make no lyrical mention of the Eucharist as the "tree of life in the paradise of God," an aesthetic sentiment with immense poetic possibilities.

¹¹⁷ Brevint, *CSS*, introduction.

¹¹⁸ See Ted Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Change* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991).

¹¹⁹ Tuttle, *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition*, 91-93.

Finally, Brevint gives detailed attention to the broad relation between the Old and New Testaments. He demonstrates “signs of God’s presence” through references to Moses and the Cloud, David as a sign for all Israel, the Ark as a sign, Abraham and the symbolic significance of the sight of Mamre, the Rainbow, Burning Bush, Abraham’s furnace, Gideon’s fleece. All these “signs” are described in the first thirteen pages of Brevint’s text. Brevint calls this “sacramental equipage” which could represent in some degree the message the biblical characters had to deliver. For Brevint, these biblical accounts of signs “were Sacraments of great Things.”¹²⁰ John Wesley leaves behind the deeper discussion of what today would be called semiotics, a theory of signs. In language that reminds one of contemporary studies in human anthropology, Brevint describes the body’s ability to convey meaning without words:

All men by a natural instinct do somewhat like this when they second their expressions with some signs and motions of their Body, though they think of no Mysteries. So that you hardly can hear any man being somewhat earnest and serious upon any matter, whether of Request, or complaint, Submission of Excuses, but you may see him at the same time wither bowing the knee, or joining his hands, or uncovering his head, which Acts are, in a manner, civil and natural Sacraments, to confirm his expression.¹²¹

Why would John not include a passage such as this? This describes humanity as a symbol-making creature, expressing meaning in word *and* action. Brevint deems all human action as potent with a multiplicity of meaning, expressions which empower the human symbolizer to convey just who it is they are through bodily form. Perhaps Brevint’s reading of Augustine informed this discussion. Today, Augustine is cited as one of the resources for a contemporary theory of signs. Brevint’s semiotic- sounding

¹²⁰ Brevint CSS, 20.

¹²¹ Ibid, 20-21.

discussion above echoes Augustine's discussion in Book II of *De Doctrina Christiana*; there, Augustine writes:

Of the signs, therefore, with which human beings communicate their thoughts among themselves, some are directed to the sense of sight, most of them to the sense of hearing, very few to the other senses. Thus when we beckon, we are only giving a sign to the eyes of the person whom we are wishing by this sign to acquaint with our will. And some people do indeed signify a great many things with the *gestures they make with their hands*.¹²²

At the time of the Wesleys, semiotics was just being re-discovered as a philosophical possibility.¹²³

Wesley reduces Brevint's section 4 considerably. The section is carved from fourteen subsections to eight, and the numbered subsections do not coincide. Wesley's extraction of Brevint's subsection 8 becomes subsection 3. There is not, therefore, an easy and flowing continuity between the texts. As we have suggested, this is so because the goal of brevity for Wesley meant that renumbering was inevitable. In section 3 of Brevint's original, he cites Augustine in concert with Tertullian. Brevint writes: "Whensoever they call the Eucharist, *Type, Image* or *figure*; for the proper and immediate use of Images is to represent Things."¹²⁴ Wesley may have been uncomfortable with Brevint's more semiotic focus, and he may have had theological problems with the notion of "natural sacraments." In short, what John extracts lacks a more comprehensive biblical and theological background. Brevint's discussion of bodily symbolic expression, with

¹²² St. Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, trans. and notes Edmund Hill, O.P. (New York: New City Press, 1996), 130 (emphasis mine).

¹²³ See John Deely, *Introducing Semiotic: Its History and Doctrine* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), 17,67-106, for an introduction to this development.

¹²⁴ Brevint, *CSS*, 38-39 (emphasis in original).

biblical examples, may be too “immanental” for Wesley’s developing Enlightenment vision. But obviously such incarnational language was acceptable in the *Hymns*, the created inheritors of Brevint’s sacramental vision.

A FINAL NOTE: CONFORMITY AND COMMUNION

One last ecclesial concern of Brevint’s cannot escape our attention. Brevint’s section 7 is peppered with specific language about disciples as those who “conform” to Christ’s sacrifice. According to Brevint, when the Church imitates Christ, it conforms to him and has communion with him. There is an eschatological tenor to this: “...we shall follow him into heaven, if we shall follow him here on Earth: and we shall have communion with him in his glory, if we will keep conformity with him here in his sufferings.” Nearly all of the references to conformity in Brevint are accompanied by the word “communion.” These words were brought forward by John Wesley, and the extract sums up well how “conformity” and “communion” coincide.

These expressions, to *follow*, to have *conformity*, and to have *communion*, oblige us all to follow our Lord as much as in us lies, through all the parts of His life, and every function of His office. We must be born with him, die on His Cross, be buried in His grave, suffer in His tribulations. *Christ* and Christians must be continually together: *Where I am*, saith he, *there shall My servant be*. But of all these duties, the most necessary is the bearing of His Cross, and dying with Him in *Sacrifice*.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Rattenbury, *EH*, 140; Brevint, *CSS*, 82.

And Charles reiterates this lyrically

Jesu, we follow Thee,
In all Thy footstep tread,
And pant for full conformity
To our exalted Head ¹²⁶

In Brevint's context of exile and certainly for the Wesleys, "conformity" is not merely descriptive of the call of discipleship. For all of them the word "conformity" has weighty political and ecclesial meaning. Charles Wesley never considered the Anglican way as antithetical to his ministry and thought. John, though he eventually appointed "Superintendents over our Brethren in North America" for the fledgling Methodist community in the United States, continuously wrote against any separation from the Church of England.¹²⁷ In 1745, both of the Wesleys would have yet to encounter more stringent demands from their Methodist colleagues to separate. Even when broiled in that debate, Charles Wesley's passionate insistence on "conformity" seems to have won the day.¹²⁸ Having been exiled by those who would not "conform" to the Book of Common Prayer, one must conclude that Brevint's use of the word conformity resonates deep within him, especially as he uses it in terms of Christ and the Church's communion with Him. Though we are apt to interpret both Brevint's and the Wesleys' use of the term in a structuralist way, uncovering its rhetorical focus in terms of its relation to structures in England and France, it behooves us to allow Brevint's usage to open out his understanding of ecclesial communion. For Brevint, Christ ordains both the sacrament and the presence within that communion as vehicles for the Church's conformity with

¹²⁶ Rattenbury, *EH*, 193, no.130; see also, 195, no.140.

¹²⁷ Whether Wesley ordained "Methodist" clergy is still a vigorous debate, see Wesley, *Works*, 13:254 (1958).

¹²⁸ See Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People called Methodist*, 192-193, for the debate's details.

sacrificial love. His political standing, perhaps, only deepens his appreciation of exile and alienation as catalysts for a more Christic existence. The Wesleys neither leave behind the term nor ignore its lyrical potential. The *Hymns* only evolve a Eucharistic ecclesiology in conformity with the paschal drama.

1745-1786: NINE EDITIONS OF THE *HYMNS*

At a retreat with Dr. Richard Heitzenrater, the foremost interpreter of John Wesley and the Methodist movement, Dr. Heitzenrater was asked why the Wesleys published nine editions of the *Hymns* with Brevint's extracted preface over a period of forty-one years. His answer was direct, "because they needed them," he said. This answer of practicality points to the issue of usage in the evolving root- and-shoot relationship between Anglicanism and the Methodists. The *Hymns* were meant to function as both didactic/devotional preparatory guides for eucharistic participation, as well as liturgical supplements for use during and after Eucharistic reception.¹²⁹

There may have been an unspoken connection between those worshippers who saw other like-minded Methodists carrying their Eucharistic devotionals with them to an Anglican service. A connection such as this may be analogous to those Roman Catholics who carry their rosaries into Mass. There is no question, however, that the *Hymns* served as supplemental affective instruments while long processions received the elements. The "fruit" of the *Hymns* came, it seems, in the decade of the 1780's. John Wesley's journal

¹²⁹ *Methodist Pilgrim's Guide to the Shrines and Icons of our Tradition*, May 17-19, 2004, A retreat with Dr. Richard Heitzenrater, Olmstead Manor Retreat Center, Ludlow, Pa.

from this period tells of his travels: sermons preached, members admonished and Lord's Supper celebrations worth reporting.

At "preaching houses," as well as in Anglican parishes, John Wesley was eager to record the number of communicants. In Macclesfield, seven-hundred were served, at Leeds, "sixteen to seventeen hundred persons," at Birmingham five hundred. In cases where he does report numbers, "clergy" preside (often him).¹³⁰ In the minds of the Wesleys, therefore, it is not the place that indicates ecclesial recognition, it is, rather, the symbolic representative of the priest presiding that indicates the celebration's ecclesial context. Four editions were published from 1771 to 1786, an indication that the eucharistic cast of the Methodist movement waned only after the Wesleys' deaths.

In 1995 Frank Baker published a stemma of all the editions produced during the Wesleys' lifetime. Baker "collated" all these editions by :

Printing all the 3579 lines comprising the 166 Hymns of the first edition, and comparing all these with the corresponding lines in all eight subsequent editions, a minimal total of over 32,0000 operations.

This tedious work yielded the following conclusion from Baker:

Revision of the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* took place at various stages throughout the history of the text, from the second to the ninth edition, and almost all have a few unique readings, though the variants are for the most part unimportant. This is true for the volume as a whole.¹³¹

Below, we will chronicle a few "variants" as exemplars and explore in more detail some editorial tendencies of John Wesley that reveal both the practical and therapeutic thrust of Methodist spirituality.

¹³⁰ Wesley, *Works*, 4:260, 285, 328, (1958).

¹³¹ Baker, "Approaching a Variorum of the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*," 7, 12.

The chronology of the nine publication dates, contextualized by just one earlier hymnic collection and post mortem publication are:

1739 *Hymns and Sacred Poems*
1745 *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*
1747
1751
1757
1762
1771
1776
1779
1780 *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*
1786 *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*
1788 Death of Charles Wesley
1791 Death of John Wesley
1794 10th edition: *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* (Last publication of the *HLS* contemporaneous with the Wesleys' historical period.)

Subsequent editions were published in 1825, 1936, 1941 and 1951. The twentieth century editions were published by the *Methodist Sacramental Fellowship*. This group of the British Methodist Church was founded in 1935. Its purpose was to witness to the Wesleyan roots of a liturgically formed spirituality and practice. Its third president was J. Ernest Rattenbury, whose book length study of the *HLS* is still referenced as the definitive study of the lyrical poetry. The *Sacramental Fellowship* has evolved in the United States and is now known as a liturgical order of the Church universal, *The Order of St. Luke*.¹³² An 1871 edition will be examined in a moment. In this 1871 edition, compiled, edited and introduced by Anglican Priest W.E. Dutton, the 4th edition, with a title page from the 10th edition was used. Dutton titles this compilation *The Eucharistic Manuals of John and Charles Wesley* and includes John Wesley's extract

¹³² Paul W. Chilcoate, "The Legacy of J. Ernest Rattenbury," *Methodist History* 21, no.1(1983): 217.

from Thomas A` Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*, titled by Wesley *A Companion for the Altar*.¹³³

Brevint's extracted Preface remained in all nine editions as well as the 1794 edition, though John Wesley revised it four times during his lifetime. These changes, like the lyrical variants, are unimportant. The most recent reprints of the *Hymns*, those published in 1995 and 1996 respectively, are reprints of the first edition.¹³⁴

In the lyricism itself, Baker records thirteen changes in wording, emphasis, and rarely, concept/image. Changes ranged from the insertion of a comma in 43:2:5:

I am a frail sinful man (editions 1-7)
I am a frail, sinful man (editions 8-9)

to the changing of a word in 116:2:6:

And spread salvation (1-6)
And speaks salvation (7-9).

The change from "spread" to "speaks" seems arbitrary and could engender much unnecessary speculation. Spread and speak refer to the blood of Christ; where just a line above Charles had penned: "Thy blood our ransom found." "Speaks," it seems to me, promotes a more "word centered" theological position and is less likely to perk the sacramental imagination. And perhaps this may be a case in which John Wesley edits in order to convey the notion that, like the Eucharist itself, blood is a witness that "speaks" to a broken world. Such editing may also be due to the charge that the Methodist lyrics lacked a more refined sense of the poetic art. And his late editing, perhaps, is John

¹³³ W.E. Dutton, *The Eucharistic Manuals of John and Charles Wesley* (London: Bull, 1871), microfilm.

¹³⁴ John and Charles Wesley, *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, introduction by Geoffrey Wainwright (Madison, N.J.: The Charles Wesley Society, 1995); J.E. Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* Timothy Crouch, ed. (Akron: Order of St. Luke Publications, 1996).

Wesley’s way of backing up claims he had made that in the Methodist hymns, one will find “no doggerel.”¹³⁵ The poetry uses Brevint’s thematic sections, but not all of them.

Brevint’s Text	Charles Wesley’s Headings
<p>Introduction: To Lady Cateret</p> <p>I. The Importance of well understanding the Nature of this Sacrament</p> <p>II. Concerning the Sacrament, As it is a memorial of the Sufferings and Death of Christ</p> <p>III. Of the blessed Sacrament, as it stands for a sign of Present Graces</p> <p>IV. Concerning the Communion as it is not a representation only, but a means of Grace</p> <p>V. Concerning the Sacrament as it is a Pledge of Future Glory</p> <p>VI. Of the Holy Eucharisti as it implies a Sacrifice. And first of the commemorative Sacrifice</p> <p>VII. Concerning the Sacrifice of our own persons</p> <p>VIII. Concerning the oblation of our Goods and Alms, or the sacrifice of Justice</p>	<p>I. As it is a Memorial of the Sufferings and Death of Christ</p> <p>II. As it is a Sign and Means of Grace</p> <p>III. The Sacrament as a Pledge of Heaven</p> <p>IV. The Holy Eucharist as it implies a Sacrifice</p> <p>V. Concerning the Sacrifice of Our Persons</p> <p>VI. (Added from 1747 on) After the Sacrament</p>

Charles Wesley’s art, a fluid and creative form, utilized Brevint’s structure only as a measure from which the lyrics could render the “more” of Brevint’s themes and words. Another avenue for reflection is the way verse was added in subsequent editions. Frank Baker theorizes that Charles’s last lyrical section, “After the Sacrament,” contains hymns that the Wesleys wanted in the Lord’s Supper collection but that their content would not

¹³⁵ Wesley, *Works*, 7:74 (1983).

fit under the headings provided by Brevint. Baker thus suggests that the experiential thrust of “After the Sacrament” was not the primary motivation for including such a section.¹³⁶

TRANSLATABLE SACRAMENTAL AND EVANGELICAL ELEMENTS

Chapter two demonstrated that, in the midst of a variegated and plural Christian eighteenth century, John Wesley appropriated seemingly divergent strands of the tradition---Caroline Divine Brevint and Puritan Richard Baxter. In the *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* it is believed that Charles Wesley penned nearly all of the lyrics. It could be that John wrote some too, but generally we see his hand in publishing and editing skill. Such editing reproduced three hymns by other writers and churchmen, the Anglican George Herbert and the Moravian Zinzendorf. These adaptations, along with others penned by the Wesleys, were taken from the 1739 collection, *Hymns and Sacred Poems*.¹³⁷

Nicholas Zinzendorf is the author of hymn 85, a translation made by John of “Verliebter in der Sünderschaft” (O Thou whom Sinners love). Certainly the product of Moravian pietistic experience of the Eucharist, the translation evokes therapeutic notions (“from thy blest wounds our life we draw”) and recalls the process of theosis, a result of

¹³⁶ Baker, “Approaching a Variorum Edition,” 10

¹³⁷ Ibid, 13.

Eucharistic participation. “Stamp thy whole image on our heart, and all our souls be thine.”

Such therapeutic, less forensic ideas are expressed in the adaptation from Anglican priest George Herbert’s “The Invitation” (no. 9). The six stanzas invite all manner of people (“all” that is “humanity”) burdened by particular vices to trade their desires for the feast of Christ. Here, the universal thrust and plural nature of existence is articulated. Not only are all burdened by some manifestation of a mis-tutored desire, but all can have their burden healed (“To heal Your souls and sin subdue”) through the feast of Christ. The last line concentrates this universal invitation in a theological statement of presence. The words echo the *Letter to the Ephesians* (4:6) and present sentiments regarding a vision of life free from idolatry. “That where All is, there all should be!”¹³⁸

John Wesley had a habit of appropriating seemingly divergent theological visions. Here, in the context of lyrical poetry on the Eucharist, John’s editing brought together the Pietist German Moravian and the Anglican Herbert. By utilizing Herbert, John Wesley was affirming an exemplary priest of the seventeenth century. Herbert’s lifelong priesthood has been considered “a pattern for others’ emulation.”¹³⁹ Herbert’s emphasis on the catholic witness of the all-encompassing love of Christ is a Wesleyan evangelistic theme.

John and Charles Wesley experienced Moravian spirituality too. Enamored by the sentiments of “Verliebter,” the Wesleys’ understood the necessity of some subjective

¹³⁸ George Herbert, *The Country Parson, The Temple*, Classics of Western Spirituality, ed. John N. Wall, (New York: Paulist, 1981), 2; Rattenbury, *EH*, 163.

¹³⁹ Herbert, *The Country Parson, The Temple*, 2.

inner experience of assurance, evoked by the Moravian way. But notice too that these spiritualities reveal theologies that are often at odds. Indeed, the sacramental universalism, at least in its modern day manifestation, becomes a law unto inclusion whereby compassion gets reduced to inclusivity. And the Moravian call to holiness, in its modern manifestation, often rejects the world in a judgmental and hostile dualism. Do the Wesleys temper one view with the other? These poems that John Wesley edited into the collection may provide some theological parameters notable in the collection as a whole. This may be so only in the following way. Like Herbert, Charles Wesley deeply respected and honored his own priestly identity. In the controversies of the seventeenth century, Herbert attempted to provide a solid foundation for Anglican life through the practices of the Church. And as we will see, the ecclesial dimension of communion is a vital focus of Charles Wesley's Eucharistic hymns. But just as John Wesley adds a poem from the Pietist, Charles's experience of individual transformation is assumed in the lyrics. What these appropriations reveal is the revivalistic thrust of Methodism, a revival that lived in the tension between universal love and holy living. Perhaps what these two non-Wesleyan authors share is their poetic stress on the Lord's Supper as a corporate sharing in a healing power resulting from the sacrificial love of Christ.

ANGLICAN DUTTON'S *The Eucharistic Manuals of John and Charles Wesley* (1871)
AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH CATHOLIC

The amalgam of emphases contained in Methodist ecclesial identity is well documented, both here and in other research. And contemporary Roman Catholics and Anglicans have published articles and books on either Wesleyan Eucharistic Piety or the

Hymns. But no one has published the *Hymns* save Methodists, no one excepting nineteenth century Anglican Churchman, W.E. Dutton.¹⁴⁰

Dutton's 1871 publication was used to persuade a conflicted Anglicanism and a plural Christian England to attend to Anglican Eucharistic practice. More specifically it was Dutton's attempt to move separated British Methodists toward an authentic appropriation of their own heritage, Wesleyan Eucharistic piety. This publication is evidence of the subtle ecclesial distinctions forged in Anglo Church history, ecclesial distinctions which seem to become more pronounced in the United States. Not unlike John Wesley using hymns as rhetorical tools to correct Moravian sacramental error, Dutton attempted to correct nineteenth century Methodists by way of their own medium, *Hymns*. One-hundred years after the sixth printing of the *Hymns* Dutton wrote:

It has often been asserted of late that the Wesleys held opinions, and taught doctrines, now known as Catholic, yet far in advance of the times in which they lived, and very different from the doctrines taught by that body of men who are now called by their name.¹⁴¹

We face a question of the meaning of history here, that is, a hermeneutical question. If the *Hymns* are used by Dutton as argumentative tools for proof of a particular agenda, then we must at once acknowledge this trap and move to other possibilities. Using the past merely to foster an agenda driven "fight" is, in effect, the contemporary method of historical fact-finding that weighs heavily on contemporary United Methodist ecclesial

¹⁴⁰ Owen Cummings, "John Wesley and Eucharistic Ecclesiology," *One In Christ* 35 (1999):143-151; Mark Massa, S.J., "The Catholic Wesley," *Methodist History* 22 (1983) 38-53; J Neil Alexander, "With Eloquence in Speech and Song: Anglican Reflections on the Eucharistic Hymns (1745) of John and Charles Wesley," in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, ed. Kimbrough, 25-50; see especially Paul Wesley Chilcoate, *Recapturing The Wesleys' Vision: An Introduction to the Faith of John and Charles Wesley* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004), for a discussion of the appropriation of divergent visions.

¹⁴¹ Dutton, *The Eucharistic Manuals of John and Charles Wesley*, vii..

unity. Then too, without the hierarchical structures (Roman Catholicism) or a sacramental center (Anglicanism), the fragmentation of contemporary United Methodism and the search for usable past(s) seems inevitable.

But if Dutton's intention is, rather like the Wesleys', to revive and creatively bring forward a tradition, in conversation with contemporary culture and society, then we can focus our gaze on a distinct characteristic of Wesleyan identity. The whole Anglican tradition and its violent past through which Roman Catholics and Puritans spilled their blood, has come to live in the ambiguity of a conversation. Two of the poles of this conversation are the evangelical pole and the sacramental one. Revival of inheritance, not the least of which involves an assumed irenic stance, is an invitation to grow deeply into the breadth of an evangelical catholicism, a tradition the Wesleys worked at refining.

Anglican Dutton's edition of the *Hymns* attests well to the inherent richness of revivalistic Christianity the Wesleys bequeathed to the Church universal. The maintenance of this creative tension of evangelicalism and catholicism, which at root are derived from the same source, was lived into as the Wesleys and others responded to God through Jesus Christ. This response led them out of, for lack of better language, sociological worlds. When led to other worlds they could interpret these worlds in terms of the theological categories of their learned experience of doctrine. John and Charles Wesley were grounded in both worlds---the world of the High Church and the intellectual retrieval of the early church, and the world of the common (read: poor) British. But the Trinitarian ground of existence enveloped both the exo-centric offer of salvation (evangelical/catholic) and the good news rehearsed in the ritual of institutional structures (catholic/evangelical).

Dutton's 1871 edition of the *Hymns* is a historical witness to the breadth, balance and unity of the Wesleyan revival. It accentuates that balance through its rhetorical thrust---return to the sacrament. Just as the Wesleys and others' open air preaching sought balance through the retrieval of the urgency of the evangelical offer, so Dutton's edition of the *HLS* brought a message of sacramental balance to a pluralistically Christian nineteenth century England. Dutton brings his introduction to the lyrical poetry to a close by inviting his "own" to study the Wesleys' handiwork:

To Churchmen it will be useful as a handbook of Sacramental teaching, compiled by a Priest of their own Communion, whose name now commands among his compeers almost as much reverence as it once suffered obloquy for the cause of Catholic truth.¹⁴²

Wesleyan Eucharistic piety and the *Hymns* in particular reveal a clear form and expression of the inevitable sacramental and evangelistic unity of revival. And perhaps the deeper one incarnates the compassion of Christ in empathetic experience and humility and service, the more one desires communion with Christ in the ritual. Perhaps this is so because as the ecclesia is the body of Christ for the world, that witness and identity needs to be both nurtured and habitually pronounced as a body with a mission. Other saints and mystics have given witness to the "darkness" which surrounds their deepening discipleship. The darkness and cloud of unknowing may find, at the very least, luminous markers in the Eucharist, the anamnetic place of Christ's darkness.¹⁴³ In the case of John and Charles Wesley a correlation is clear: the frequency of their communion was matched by their obedience and discipleship, a mission to the poor. Put simply, the more

¹⁴² Dutton, *The Eucharistic Manuals*, xxvii.

¹⁴³ See Friedrich von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion: As Studied in Saint Catherine of Genoa and her Friends* (1923; repr., New York: Crossroad, 1999), 113, for Catherine of Genoa's frequent communion, especially as she cared for the dying. See also Thompson, *Fire and Light*, 76-111, for a discussion of the "dark night" of St. John of the Cross.

we give of ourselves the more we are apt to recognize our deep need to receive from God. Herein we find a clear revivalistic tendency, the bond between worship and service. Perhaps if revival becomes “church,” a lively evolution devolves into the maintenance of structures. Dutton’s edition reveals that the *Hymns* are unlikely to function as either “evidence” for a particular ecclesial vision of United Methodism or the deposit of definitive United Methodist sacramental theology. But, if they are received and used as tools for a theological renewal for eucharistic participation, given for the Church universal, they may then provide a way of living that is both obedient and doxological.

J. ERNEST RATTENBURY AND THE RETRIEVAL OF METHODIST SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY

Before we review Rattenbury’s important *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley*, we will proceed by taking note of his significance as a Methodist evangelist and liturgical theologian.

J. Ernest Rattenbury (1870-1963) was steeped in the Methodist tradition and therefore cultivated and developed Methodist identity in the twentieth century. His grandfather and father were Methodist ministers. His brother and nephew were also clergy. Rattenbury himself could begin to address the parameters and core of what we can now call the Methodist tradition, having been formed through its living trajectory and concerned for its healthy future.¹⁴⁴ A voice for a social evangelism, Rattenbury precedes Wesleyan scholars such as Frank Baker and Albert Outler by a generation. Unlike other Methodist scholars and pastors who also wrote or taught about distinctively “Methodist” worship and liturgical questions, Rattenbury’s voice carried across the ocean into North

¹⁴⁴ Chilcoate, “The Legacy of J. Ernest Rattenbury,” 207.

America where his influence continues to be felt most notably in the American version of the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship, the *Order of St. Luke*, founded in the States in 1946. Rattenbury's primary research dealt with hymnody, and thus he has influenced scholars who have sought to clarify the meaning of hymns and hymn-singing for liturgical and theological studies. Bernard Manning, Robert N. Flew and Teresa Berger have taken up hymnody's significance for theology.¹⁴⁵ In his major published works, Rattenbury was concerned with what he would call evangelical experience. For him, this experience had to do with the love of God poured out in Christ. And more, that the love of Christ knows no bounds and therefore the Christian becomes a personal mediator of such love to others. Here we are entering into the discourse of mysticism, particularly the experience of the relationship between joy and love. For Rattenbury, mysticism had to do with the awareness of the presence of Christ. God's love was never easily confined or limited by ecclesial or sociological ties. Rattenbury made clear the connection between personal faith and social reality. And lurking behind such a solid integration is Rattenbury's focus on the relation between sacramental Grace and Evangelical experience.¹⁴⁶

The two poles of a holistic Christian vision were fragmenting in the mid-twentieth century. In England, the conflict Dutton sought to address in the nineteenth century had continued. Rattenbury was irenic without compromising on both the evangelical and sacramental fronts. His focus on the Wesleyan revival in both research and witness was

¹⁴⁵ David Tripp, "'And We are to the Margin Come': The Passing of a Generation of Methodist Liturgists," *Doxology* 21 (2004):14.

¹⁴¹ Chilcoate, "The Legacy of J. Ernest Rattenbury", 216; J.Ernest Rattenbury, *The Evangelical Doctrines of Charles Wesley's Hymns* (London: Epworth Press, 1941), 184.

given clear expression by what may be considered his two most important published works, *The Evangelical Doctrines of Charles Wesley's Hymns* and *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley*.

In the late 1930's, The Sacramental Fellowship, of which Rattenbury was a member and its second president, came under criticism from certain British Methodist quarters. The Sacramental fellowship was thought to be a divisive group, and the organization, it was feared, leaned too far toward Rome. Rattenbury was clear not only in his defense of the Fellowship, but also in his explanation of the nature of sacramental restoration, rooted in the evangelical experience of the Wesleys.¹⁴⁷ Rattenbury dedicated his treatise on the *HLS* to the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship. The *Eucharistic Hymns*, therefore, is a text that was written in order to clarify and defend the Wesleyan Sacramental heritage in the face of particular historical and theological challenges, most notably an awareness of the growing excitement and ecumenicity of the liturgical movement, fear of Roman Catholicism in certain evangelical Methodist circles, and a growing transatlantic focus for Methodist liturgical thought.

RATTENBURY'S *EUCCHARISTIC HYMNS*: OVERVIEW AND SCOPE

The first chapter of Rattenbury's analysis reveals an intrinsic hermeneutic that tells us about both the context of his writing and the content of subsequent chapters. The shape of that context and the tradition United Methodism has inherited, in its posture toward worship in particular, is a liminal space between worship as free form and worship's more liturgical focus. Not wanting to give too much to free-church evangelicals nor high

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 217.

church Anglo-Catholics, Rattenbury was careful to place the Wesleys and their hymns somewhere between these poles. This means that at times Rattenbury feels the need to defend the *Hymns*. This defense of John and Charles Wesley, as well as Daniel Brevint, as anti-Catholic is continuous throughout the text. Though lamentable, it speaks Rattenbury's task---to legitimate the Wesleyan heritage as sacramental in the mid-twentieth century. Rattenbury relies on Charles Wesley's lyrics to construct a clear evangelical focus for the hymns, and therefore attempts to distinguish Brevint from the passion of revival, making him out to be merely a theological didact. As we have seen, this interpretation is flawed.¹⁴⁸ Brevint is far from dispassionate about the necessity and mysticism inherent in the corporate experience of Eucharist. In this way Rattenbury falls prey to much of Methodist scholarship even today: an attempt to ratify the splendor of the Wesleys as theological inventors without taking stock of that which they creatively tradition. Rattenbury therefore searches for "Methodist" teaching in the *Hymns* without connecting them with Brevint and the long and complex history of Anglican Eucharistic controversy and the *via-media*.

This too is understandable. Not only does Rattenbury want to distinguish the Wesleys from the high church Oxford Movement of the nineteenth century, he wants, as we said, to legitimate the Wesleys' sacramental thrust even as he sensitively deals with twentieth-century Methodists fearful of high church propensities. Rattenbury writes:

Both the Anglo-Catholic and their contemporary Methodist controversialists tended to judge the hymns in relation to a contemporary controversy, which unfortunately led to extravagant expressions on both sides.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Rattenbury, *EH*, 8; see J.Richard Watson, "Hymns on the Lord's Supper, 1745, and Some Literary and Liturgical Sources" in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, ed. Kimbrough, 17, for comment on Rattenbury's neglect of Brevint's text.

¹⁴⁹ Rattenbury, *EH*, 9.

The problem for us, as interpreters of both Rattenbury and the Wesleys, is the extent to which Rattenbury can at once maintain the liminal shape of Wesleyan Eucharistic praxis and theology while naming said “shape” as an ecclesial and doctrinal prospect.

Rattenbury is caught between his desire to find Methodist ecclesial sacramental teaching in the hymns and his accurate interpretation of the Wesleyan integration of sacramental-evangelism as revivalistic and not reformational.

He admits John Wesley’s almost exclusively pragmatic sacramental writing, noting the lack of doctrinal teaching on the matter. This survey of John Wesley’s emphasis on praxis, in fact, is what leads Rattenbury to the following conclusion:

Where then can we find a satisfactory account of the early Methodist teaching on the Eucharist? The answer is plain: in the hymns of John and Charles Wesley on the Lord’s Supper, and in the extract from Dr. Brevint, which Tyerman rightly says: “by publishing, Wesley made his own.” The truth is that the extract from Brevint and the hymns of the Lord’s Supper by the Wesleys do contain the true Methodist doctrines on the Eucharist.¹⁵⁰

In the mid twentieth century, Rattenbury sought to establish the relationship between revival and eucharist, but also attempted to carve out some Methodist doctrine that might have been revealed in the sacramental hymns. Elsewhere, Rattenbury argues that John Wesley’s usage of hymnody was primarily for didactic purposes. Not only does this say much for Methodist theology in general, it also provides the inner logic for Rattenbury’s search for Methodist teaching on the Eucharist.¹⁵¹ Related to this hermeneutic

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 7.

¹⁵¹ Rattnenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, 62.

assumption is Rattenbury's sense that the *Hymns* were published to ground the Methodist movement in the historic dogmas of the Christian faith, a boon against the oft accurate characterization of early Methodists being "enthusiasts." Inner mystical experience, or inward religion or piety, so named in English Protestantism, can, and indeed will, unhinge itself from a balanced and healthy spirituality without the virtue of humility. And Rattenbury correctly sees that Eucharistic hymnody served to draw students of Christ away from their own spiritual propensities into a collective experience of the paschal drama. The relationship between epistemology and the Lord's Supper, or more generally, ritual, is worthy of reflection. Rattenbury intimates that lyrical poetry was supplemental---a tutor---to the possibility of more refined Eucharistic contemplation. However, the search for "Methodist Doctrine," as we are learning, is founded upon a dilemma that may be characterized as a Eucharistic identity crisis.

John and Charles Wesley were satisfied with the Anglican "doctrine" of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. And John's vision, at least, was also informed by the "witness" of the ante-nicene church. What is more, both Wesleys confirmed and endorsed Brevint. In short, the Wesleys, unlike Calvin and Luther, and even Thomas Cranmer, had no desire to construct distinctive theologies of the Eucharist. And yet, for what seemed to be entirely evangelistic reasons, John Wesley ordained an Anglican Presbyter, Francis Asbury, to ordain "Methodists" in the fledgling United States in order that persons be able to receive the sacraments.¹⁵² Clearly, the revolutionary air of the United States would not tolerate a post revolutionary *Anglican* revival, but the Methodists would work. The point is that almost simultaneously John Wesley solidified a pragmatic *Methodist*

¹⁵² Wesley, "Letter to Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury and our Bretheren in North America," in *Works*, 13:251-252 (1958).

devotion to the Eucharist along with an endorsement of *Anglican* sacramental theology. Denominational Methodism was born into this Eucharistic snare. It is no wonder that Rattenbury, and others after him, were groping for distinctively Methodist teaching on the Eucharist, even if it had to come from poesis.

Like Brevint, Rattenbury separates his treatise into two parts, the Christian Sacrament and the Christian Sacrifice. Between the introduction and a concluding chapter—“The Eucharist and Modern Methodism”---Rattenbury’s commentary follows roughly the six sections John Wesley abridged from Brevint. These are given a contemporary nuance by Rattenbury and provide avenues for theological reflection on the sacrament. His emphasis and interpretations demonstrate a working knowledge of the following theological concerns.

In “A Protestant Crucifix” he explores the relationship between memory and presence, advocating for the Wesleys as much more than “mere memorialists,” and therefore outside the Zwinglian camp. In so doing he provides an analogy that both restores the sensate “focus” for the Lord’s Supper and gives a rich interpretation of how we might understand hymns on the ritual. Rattenbury deems one of the memorialist hymns a “verbal crucifix.” This interpretation reframes the Catholic emphasis on “seeing” into verbal cognition, a way of “hearing the image.” This synesthesia enables, perhaps, the participant to link the word and sacrament effectively. “Seeing” the sacrifice of Christ through hymnody that evokes the imagination may be the Protestant way to focus on the crucifix. We have traced the parameters of free- church worship as distinct from the Anglican liturgical tradition in the previous chapter. The focus on

remembering in the Puritan and free -church traditions capsizes the sensate in worship in favor of either right thinking or right feeling, that is, receiving the “word” properly. The more catholic and sacramental heritage, founded upon hearing but more especially seeing, remains the focus in the drama of Anglican/Episcopalian liturgical tradition. Rattenbury opens up the possibility for dialogue in his discussion of the verbal crucifix. The picture, and subsequently, the picture made with words, could be a powerful center in this our twenty-first century imagistic culture. Singing the crucifix is a particularly concrete avenue for moving into ecumenical discussions. Rattenbury’s second chapter, “A Protestant Crucifix,” invites us into these prospects.

In “Symbol and Instrument” Rattenbury demonstrates how, following Brevint, Charles Wesley’s lyrics integrate the symbolic within the efficacious so that, as Charles Wesley writes, the sign is “realized.” Rattenbury also conveys the corporate sense of the rite, and, in language that was perhaps more striking in his day, argues that the Wesleys’ communicate an authentic theory of the “priesthood of all believers” through the hymns about sacrifice.

The scope of these chapters present the Wesleys as distinctive Eucharistic thinkers, but just what makes them distinct continues to hound United Methodist thought and was never really addressed by Rattenbury. To make the Wesleys distinct, he often uses them interchangeably to clarify said distinctiveness. In large part, he uses John Wesley’s pragmatic thrust to re-introduce sacramentality as a primary Wesleyan trait. He also uses arbitrary textual comments John Wesley had made in letters and sermons to argue for the Wesleys’ notion of “real presence.”¹⁵³ Rattenbury then demonstrates through Charles’s

¹⁵³ Rattenbury, *EH*, 47.

lyrics how “presence” functions, namely as the presence of the personality of Christ. There is no question that John and Charles Wesley denied transubstantiation. And yet Rattenbury takes issue with his contemporary Methodist memorialists by establishing John as a “presence” thinker. Rattenbury demonstrates how some lyrical poetry serves to point to the Holy Spirit as the instrumental cause of presence. He acknowledges certain tensions between the East and the West on the epiclesis and concludes that the Wesleys were, at the very least, cognizant of these debates.¹⁵⁴ Rattenbury’s awareness, drawn primarily from Dom Gregory Dix, lays out an agenda for Methodist sacramental thought. He thus pre-figures the more mature concerns and consensus regarding the relationship between the Holy Spirit and anamnesis. However, the way lyrical poetry itself is created and performed, especially in relation to memory and Spirit, is not taken up by Rattenbury.

As he does elsewhere, in this discussion of presence Rattenbury emphasizes both of the Wesleys’ differences from Rome as well as from Luther. However, Teresa Berger has recently shown the relationship between Charles Wesley’s invocation of the Holy Spirit through hymnody and a sense of presence. In *Theology in Hymns?* Berger traced the relationship between Pneumatology and Soteriology in Charles Wesley’s work to German Pietism’s Lutheran roots.¹⁵⁵ It may be that Charles Wesley called on the Spirit to effect sanctification, but Rattenbury sees, in his Eucharistic hymns at least, more of an awareness of the issues of Christology, Priesthood, the Holy Spirit and the liturgical role of the epiclesis. Certainly, given the revivalistic thrust of the *Hymns*, the Spirit’s role in

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 40.

¹⁵⁵ Berger, *Theology in Hymns?*, 121.

sanctification may have been at the forefront of Charles Wesley's mind. Although we have no reason to doubt, with Rattenbury, that he was aware of the East-West debate. In short, the plurality of influences on the Wesleys once again provides us with many tributaries, and we agree with Berger that hymnic invocation of the Holy Spirit was primarily a matter of sanctification for Charles Wesley. But we can also say that sanctification is one of the dimensions of a liturgical form that relies on an epiclesis.

Throughout his text, Rattenbury is at work distinguishing Charles Wesley's verse from Brevint's thought. At one point, Rattenbury argues that Charles Wesley "does not follow Brevint in detail though most of his figures are woven into the hymns."¹⁵⁶ Here, it may be that Rattenbury, in his effort to distinguish Charles Wesley's thought, fails to appreciate the mode of Charles's thinking, lyrical poetry. "Making" poetry necessitates the use of figures, but not in detail---for poiesis is a process of discovery and creativity, which inevitably will not merely echo the "text" from which it works. Though in the case of Charles Wesley, Brevint provides a rather solid base line.

In a most aptly titled fourth chapter, "Realized Eschatology," Rattenbury describes what he considers to be the most "Methodist" of all the hymn sections, Charles Wesley's section titled, "The Sacrament as it is a pledge of Heaven." Rattenbury rightly notes the consistency between what mid-century biblical scholarship had discovered as realized eschatology and the Wesleyan revival. Not unlike the earliest Christians, at least according to C.H. Dodd, whom Rattenbury cites, the earliest Methodist connection considered itself the embodied expression of God's kingdom on earth. Rattenbury

¹⁵⁶ Rattenbury, *EH*, 21.

clarifies the plural nature of earliest Methodism, its collective mystical experience and its assumption that the Glory of God had been poured out onto them. He finds much solid evidence for this eschatological and evangelical experience, especially in Charles Wesley's verse. In this case, the hymns showcase, or provide a window into, the assumptions of the revival, namely, that the Methodists were (re)living the earliest apostolic times in their Eucharistic devotions and such experience involved an intrinsic expectation of the heavenly banquet. In terms of ecclesiology, Rattenbury concludes that the *Hymns* mean that the church triumphant inspires both the church militant and the church expectant. In the context of this discussion, Rattenbury does not clarify the shape of either the church militant or church expectant.¹⁵⁷ With regard to the church militant and expectant the more mundane question of "which church?" remains. But in shaping a Methodist sacramental heritage, such clarification was not his primary task. Rattenbury's search to solidify some distinction for Methodism led to what seems to me to be an under-appreciation of Brevint:

Where Wesley in this section follows Brevint closely he is only less pedestrian than Brevint, but it is remarkable that he breaks loose from Brevint because the Evangelical Revival gave a note of triumphant joy to Sacramental devotions unknown to Caroline Divines.¹⁵⁸

What he describes as the most "Methodist" section of the hymns are those poems that describe a religious experience of joy. Perhaps what Rattenbury's commentary lacks is a definition of doctrine as such, or, more particularly, simply a map of the relationship between lyrical poetry and doctrine. If the doctrine is worship as realized eschatology,

¹⁵⁷ Rattenbury, *EH*, 58-64.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 53.

there is not all that much “Methodist” about such a teaching. In this way, Rattenbury perceptively foreshadows Geoffrey Wainwright’s work *Eucharist and Eschatology*, a call to renew this dimension of Eucharistic doctrine. In no way does Wainwright deny other vital dimensions of the Lord’s Supper.¹⁵⁹

What Rattenbury reveals is that in his search for Methodist teaching he comes to the core of revival, namely, the Eucharist. But Rattenbury neither places this positively in relation to other traditions nor connects it to the ultimate question of the unity of the church universal. It may be, however, that we would not have such a question to ask were it not for Rattenbury’s resilient effort to establish Methodism firmly on a sacramental foundation, a task that led him to confront rather hostile forces on both the Methodist-evangelical and Anglican–high church sides.

The fifth chapter, “Priesthood and Sacrifice,” is really an effort to place John Wesley in relation to the Church of England and it has very little substantial commentary on the hymns themselves. The summation of the whole chapter is that John and Charles Wesley were active, fully-vested priests of the Anglican communion, and only built upon their Anglican training by living out an evangelical call for the world. Rattenbury is clear in this chapter that he is more interested in discrediting those of his colleagues who argue that John Wesley was really a “low-churchman.” This chapter only feeds on previous findings, namely, that the distinctive Wesleyan and Methodist characteristic is evangelical love. In Rattenbury’s words, “Wesley was compelled to re-orient his new evangelical experience to the old beliefs of his Anglican training.” A revealing

¹⁵⁹ Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (London: Epworth Press, 1971); “Sacrosanctum Concilium,” in *The Documents Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (New York: Herder, 1966), 154.47.

statement: rather than demolishing what is old, John Wesley, according to Rattenbury, made sense of the new in relation to what was “old.”¹⁶⁰

In “Sacrifice and Altar” Rattenbury is cautious about Charles Wesley’s overuse of the “blood” language in his hymns. He is wary of some of the lyrics “anthropomorphic” strains and deems some of the blood usage as uncharacteristic of Charles Wesley’s more reflective poetry. Rattenbury rightly notes a juridical atonement theory at work, one in which the Son merely appeases an angry God through vicarious suffering on behalf of all humanity. This ultimately anti-Trinitarian separation between Father and Son misconstrues the essential relational character of God. Those hymns that are overly juridical ought not be used to restore the sacrificial form of the ritual. The way Wesley may be exonerated is his consistent use of “Divine Love” in a kenotic vein poured out for the world in incarnation, passion and resurrection. Rattenbury sees these more appropriate themes in Charles Wesley’s *Hymns on the Trinity*.¹⁶¹ Teresa Berger has found in Charles Wesley’s use of “blood” a key to his soteriology. She writes: “The word *blood* is used by Wesley almost exclusively in reference to the blood of Christ and indicates a short-hand formulation for Christ’s work of redemption by his suffering and death on the cross.”¹⁶² Berger is interpreting primarily the 1780 collection of hymns and so lifts up the oft used Charles Wesley phrase, “the blood applied”---meaning effective salvation. In the Eucharistic Hymns (1745), as Rattenbury notes, Charles is caught up in the “height” of revival and therefore affluent in his blood language: the blood is “warm,”

¹⁶⁰ Rattenbury, *EH*, 75.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 90.

¹⁶² Berger, *Theology in Hymns?*, 120.

or “flowing.” Not unlike Mel Gibson’s recent movie, the sacrifice and the blood of Christ become the means for a certain “awe” in the believer’s contrite heart. Such wonder is not unlike the focus of Athanasius’ discussion of Christ’s death in *On the Incarnation*.

He Who suffered thereon in the body was not man only, but Son of God and Saviour of all. The sun veiled his face, the earth quaked, the mountains were rent asunder, all men were stricken with awe.¹⁶³

The question becomes, does such evocation lead to shame or thanksgiving? Blood language may be, however, the way to a witness in terms of martyrdom and sacrifice. It is also indicative of the epistemic and grace filled experience of an Empathic God. Blood, sacrifice, martyrdom and witness may unite the churches in a common vision of discipleship. What is more, United Methodists must begin to address the inter-Methodist disunity, particularly that between the African Methodist Episcopal church and the United Methodist church. In the African-American tradition in general, the “blood of Christ” is a key soteriological theme. This is so, perhaps, because in the suffering of Christ, humanity can “see” Divine empathy. Having suffered under much oppression and facing seemingly unending racism in American culture, African Americans know a God who knows their sufferings. Note too, how this more empathic theme is contingent upon the relational and therefore Trinitarian focus of Father and Son.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, trans. by a Religious of C.S.M.V. (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s, 1998), 48.

¹⁶⁴ I am drawing on a panel discussion at the AAR Wesleyan Studies Group, November 20, 2004 in San Antonio, TX.. Myself and Dr F. Douglas Powe dialogued regarding African American Eucharistic themes. Dr. Powe’s paper, “Evangelism in the Wesleyan/Methodist Tradition: Is there One Message for Both Blacks and Whites?” and my, “John and Charles Wesleys’ ‘Hymns on the Lord’s Supper’: Their Appropriation and the Contestation of Methodist Ecclesial Identity,” were presented.

Rattenbury finally cautions that curtailing the sacrificial themes (and thus the “blood”) would ultimately be anti-Wesleyan. He concludes that just as we are cautious about anti-Trinitarian and juridical atonement theories, so we should not forego totally the death of Christ. “There is far greater danger,” Rattenbury warns, “to Modern Protestantism in the rationalism that forgets the death of Christ.”¹⁶⁵

Beginning with the end of chapter six and concluding in his final chapter, “The Eucharist and Modern Methodism,” Rattenbury connects the Lord’s Supper’s corporate and experiential nature and sacrifice with Methodism’s future. His concern that the church not be over-identified with Christ’s body and sacrifice reveals a valid Protestant concern. However, as our examination of Brevint confirmed, Eucharistic sacrifice authentically joins the feeble and creaturely ecclesia to the sacrifice offered through Christ. Rattenbury’s concern is a question of the worthiness of humanity to enter into communion with the Divine sacrifice. How can it be? Charles Wesley asks this question in his poetry and therefore points to the response of wonder implicit in Christology in general. “How can the two oblations join?,” wonders Charles. And Charles’s rhetorical question is answered in the following stanzas from #147 (*EH*).

Thy offering doth to ours impart
Its righteousness and saving grace,
While charged with all our sins Thou art
To death devoted in our place.

Our mean imperfect sacrifice
On Thine is as a burden thrown;
Both in a common flame arise,
And both in God’s account are one

Charles has this sense that humanity’s sin dies with the second Adam, Christ. In this way, Jesus is the representative God-Man, and carries the renewal of creation in his body.

¹⁶⁵ Rattenbury, *EH*, 95.

This interpretation is questioned by Rattenbury: “The actual laying of our sins on the altar would be quite a foolish thing, for it is an insult to God to offer up our sins.”¹⁶⁶ But if God’s presence in history in and through Christ is initiated for God’s own self-communication, and that communication takes on the fear of death that gives rise to sin, then God’s own death is a death that carries the sin of all for all, “both in a common flame arise.” Rattenbury seems not to appreciate this re-creative process of “dying with Christ” as Paul the apostle puts it. Charles Wesley’s poetic process allows a plurality of metaphors to collide in his expression of the atonement. On the one hand, he draws upon the Old Testament image of the burning sacrifice, and on the other, he construes the Christ figure as the righteous servant who bears the marks of humanity’s sin in his body. This creative process cannot easily contain the caution of Rattenbury’s more diligent Protestant concern that the holiness of God somehow remain apart from humanity’s gross inebriation in sin. Or, rather, that sin inevitably seduces humanity into thinking that we can join with Christ in the process of sanctification. Rattenbury’s caution conveys the Protestant thrust of United Methodism, though he concludes that: “It is one (sacrifice) because to do God’s will is to share the life and death, to share the sacrifice of the one who says: ‘Lord I come to do thy will.’”¹⁶⁷ And further, it is only through God’s initiative that we join in with Christ’s sacrifice.

The concluding chapter builds on the corporate sacrifice of Methodist liturgical identity. Rattenbury clearly shows that the Wesleyan tradition carries this indicative of collective Eucharistic sacrifice. He conveys that if this is the case, then a priest is needed for Methodist worship. But the priest must not be isolated: “It should be clearly the

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 112.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 95.

oblations which all make through the priest, and not the oblation of a priest isolated from the people for the people.” In short, Methodism can provide the lyrical resources through which Eucharistic sacrifice may be expressed as an “act of the whole priesthood.”¹⁶⁸

Rattenbury certainly establishes the Methodist sacramental heritage as one of real presence and sacrifice. And he demonstrates how the *Hymns* bring together evangelical fervor, corporate action and an eschatological imagination. His arguments against his various detractors, both Methodists and Anglo-Catholics, reveal a strong voice in the face of historical ecclesial and political conflict. In this way, Rattenbury’s text seems to conform to the Wesleyan past he seeks to clarify. And though he attempts to bring forward Methodist sacramental doctrine, notably the eschatological dimension of Eucharistic worship and the relationship between priest and congregation in offering the sacrifice, he shows clearly the simultaneity of revival and Eucharistic praxis. Evangelism and Eucharist are of one piece. Rattenbury does not, and perhaps could not have touched upon the ecumenical potential of the hymns. There may be an implicit acknowledgement of their universal scope. But Rattenbury leaves for another generation the way in which they may be used by other churches. Nor does Rattenbury clarify just how hymns might function to illumine ecclesial and liturgical speech. We still must provide some parameters for the way lyrical poetry illumines Eucharistic teaching. Rattenbury makes little of lyrical poetry as a genre of reflection distinct from second order speech about God. These concerns, key to Methodist ecclesial and liturgical identity, will comprise the next chapter.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 127.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

This chapter sought to clarify the nature of the Methodist tradition by examining how and what John and Charles Wesley “traditioned” in the *HLS*. In this historical process, the sacrificial nature of liturgy came to the fore, from Brevint’s 1673 devotional text to Rattenbury’s 1941 commentary. Understanding of the Methodist movement, from both within and without, grew to see it as an evangelical revival carried at its core by Eucharistic renewal. As such, praxis was the point, and the theological ground and horizon of the Lord’s Supper were less vital to the development of this tradition. We may conclude that this tradition’s strength is its weakness for inevitably the benefits of Eucharistic practice---renewal of meaning, purpose, identity and the experience of grace in the collective---lead to serious theological questions about Christian unity, the nature of the priesthood, the use of the elements, the nature of ritual, etc. In the words of David Ford, the Eucharist has this “superabundance of meaning,” and deserves deeply informed praxis.¹⁶⁹ Our next task will be to clarify the genre of Eucharistic source known as lyrical poetry, and its embodied liturgical experience, hymn singing.

Chapter Four: A Contemporary Poetic-Theological Interpretation of the *Hymns*

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, an examination of the publications of the *Hymns* led to the conclusion that in the very process of production, the Wesleys demonstrated an ecclesial awareness and thereby expressed a particular Eucharistic tradition. Now we are concerned with the form of the literature itself, the lyric. Poetic texts cannot be

¹⁶⁹ Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 144-45.

examined with the same interpretive lens as a theological treatise, essay or philosophical argument. These modes of inquiry cannot simply be applied to poetry with the intention of extracting theological principles from the lyrics. Rather, attention to content first demands attention to form.

We may be tempted to leave lyrics to the literary critic, satisfied to see how they stand or fall within certain poetic criteria. Or, we may think it wise to limit the definition of theology, thereby dismissing poetic expression as outside the realm of theology proper.¹⁷⁰ These options are alluring, for they drive us back to the interpretation of history and make for vital debate. But since our discussion is concerned with contemporary Methodist identity, an interpretation of the theological meaning of hymns is imperative. Methodism has, for many generations, lived in its hymns. Does such living connote applied theology? If not applied, what kind? In addition, hymnody has been, and continues to be, one of Methodism's gifts to the church universal. The Methodist theological story is told in both John Wesley's sermons and treatises, but hymnody remains at the center of Methodist liturgical and theological experience. If identity is, as Ricoeur suggests, the embodied activity that endures through time, then Methodist identity is less informed by John Wesley's writings and more informed by the practice of robust hymn singing.¹⁷¹ The kernel of John and Charles Wesleys' role for hymns remains.

In the words of social historian Lionel Adey the Wesleys' hymns are "popular by destination." Their hymns are that method of inculcating theological concepts to a semi-literate, and perhaps in some cases, illiterate class. Adey contrasts a more insular

¹⁷⁰ Thomas Langford, "Charles Wesley as Theologian" in Kimbrough, ed., *Charles Wesley, Poet and Theologian*, 97-105.

¹⁷¹ Dan R. Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur: New Directions in Hermeneutical Theology*, 170.

Calvinist evangelical and family piety with the Wesleys exco-centric outreach to the poor. The Calvinist evangelical temper was “socially select;” and the Calvinist hymnody reflected this concern for family piety. The Wesleyan hymnody, “popular by destination,” was intended to bring theology to the minds of those who, it was likely, the Wesleys would rarely encounter within their own social class. Their poetic form became a method for retaining theological wisdom.¹⁷² Singing as an ecclesial act serves such a function, and other functions, today.

What is the theological significance of the lyric? To proceed it is vital to an understanding of Methodist identity to reflect on the significance of poesis in contradistinction to the more noetic forms of faith. Our discussion must focus on the form of lyrical poetry, thus providing insight into Methodist liturgical experience. Recent interpreters have focused on doxology as the way into such a discussion. We need to be cognizant of this focus on doxology, if only to refine our own. Doxology as a problematic that conditions prayer or conceptualization of the Divine clarifies the meaning of praise but does not attend to the particularity of the lyric---a particularity that is both textual and contextual. To distinguish the focus of our argument let us examine two recent examinations of liturgical language.

Recent interpreters have focused on doxology in order to explore the affective and conceptual parameters of liturgical speech. Teresa Berger uses the 1780 Methodist hymnbook to explore the relationship between doxology and theology. James K.A. Smith explores Augustine’s understanding of doxology to shed light on the possibility of speaking about God without doing violence through the “concept.” For Smith, thinking

¹⁷² Lionel Adey, *Class and Idol in the English Hymn*, 5-6, 9-10.

itself may “damage” authentic perception of God while also bringing the possibility of damaging human relationships. Berger’s task is to bring clarity to both systematic theology and liturgical theology while Smith is working in a more philosophical vein.

SOUNDINGS FROM STUDIES IN DOXOLOGY

Teresa Berger’s *Theology in Hymns?* examines the nature of doxology in relation to theology. In this work she surveys some Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox thinkers on the relation between praise and theological thinking. Berger focuses on the degree and kind of interaction between the law of prayer and the law of belief. In the Roman Catholic tradition, this debate takes the form of the relationship between the magisterium and the liturgy. Whence comes Catholic teaching? Is the starting place for theological reflection the dogmatic assertions of the tradition or the lived experience of the assembly gathered in the name of Christ? Berger concludes that for the Roman Catholic tradition, liturgy cannot function to determine dogma, “but rather its peculiar nature will be respected as having its own contribution to make as a specific form of faith expression.” For Berger then, the Catholic tradition has come to see the liturgy and liturgical speech (doxology) as self-referential. It holds its own authenticity and can never be reduced to providing parameters for doctrine. In short, prayer cannot be used to instruct---speech loses its doxological character at that point.

Berger clarifies that Protestant theology takes the question of linguistic difference between theology and liturgy into the realm of “devotion.” For Protestants, the language of praise may take a non-liturgical form, a development Berger calls “the language of faith.” Berger points to the groundbreaking work of Methodist theologian Geoffrey Wainwright, who sees a “deep interdependence between liturgy and theology.” Liturgy

can become a source for theological reflection. Wainwright frames the relationship as that between *theologica prima* (doxology/liturgy) and *theologica secunda* (dogma/theology). The question for us is what links said interdependence? What is that connective tissue between these uses of speech and how strong is it? Can it become stronger? Weaker? We will pursue these questions ahead.

Berger then explores another Protestant voice, that of Dietrich Ritschl. Ritschl sounds a note of dissonance between liturgy and theology based on the notion of the kind of speech each employs. Doxological speech, according to this view, must never become the starting point for descriptive or theological reasoning. To analyze prayer is to miss the point of prayer, namely praying. Protestantism, therefore, has more “options” than both Roman Catholic and Orthodox renderings. This is the case both in the way it frames the question and comes to its conclusions. Finally, Berger points to the East as having a radically different assumption about the relationship. This is because in the East, the liturgy is the “ontological condition” of life.¹⁷³

Though Berger’s discussion is an immense help in tackling the relationship between liturgy and theology, we note that it remains dedicated to the idea that hymnody is solely “praise.” We learn from Berger’s analysis that doxology is a particular kind of speech in the service of praise in the encounter with the living God.¹⁷⁴ It is also clear from her discussion that “unadulterated” doxology never intends to “teach” something about God. Put positively, doxological speech opens a “space for the encounter of praise with God” and as such this space is “agenda free.” In other words, it is not utilitarian, it has no

¹⁷³ Berger, *Theology in Hymns*, 41-49, passim.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 166.

reason for being except its own authenticity.¹⁷⁵ It is worth noting too the way doxological speech provides space for encounter, a prospect that “appears” in both liturgical and devotional life.

The *HLS*, as we have seen, were perhaps used in “private” devotion, a notion particular to British Protestant Christianity and subsequent political ideas about public and private experience. The early Methodists would have prepared for the Eucharist by reading or praying the hymns in their daily devotions just prior to eucharistic reception. And in the case of the *HLS*, the content of the devotion might have led the private pray-er into an ecclesial imagination, and, one would think, ecclesial participation. What is more, the *HLS* also have a didactic function, theology of the Eucharist is *both* taught and prayed in the lyrics. So here, we want to go in a new direction, even as we acknowledge Berger’s invaluable discussion. There is more going on in lyrical poetry and hymnody than “praise,” though praise is a function of the lyric’s form, which is our primary concern at this point. Though what is made manifest through the lyric may adulterate doxology, it may have other positive and edifying dimensions.

James K.A. Smith, in his *Speech and Theology*, incisively relates that doxological speech is primarily affective. Like Berger, he wants to “place” doxological speech. But if Berger is focused primarily on praying (liturgy), Smith is concerned with our contemporary philosophical question of how to *conceptualize* the divine. He is informed by Augustine’s clarity that the only way to speak about God in a “non-objectifying, non-positivistic mode of conceptualization” is to speak in the mode of praise. The problem is that “theology is marked by an employment of language and concepts which seeks to

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 169.

define the divine, to grasp the essence of God (and to employ such knowledge to marginalize any who disagree.)”¹⁷⁶

Through Augustine’s notion of praise as described in *De Doctrina Christiana*, Smith fashions a notion of God-talk which does justice to ineffability. “The words offered by the *predicator* are no longer representations or predications, but rather iconic pointers which deflect the gaze beyond themselves.”¹⁷⁷ In this case, an overflow of words which serve only as pointers to what is beyond them. Words about God, Smith argues, are ciphers for what is beyond their limit: they only point to God; they cannot be descriptive. Smith seems to suggest that doxology may predicate the excess of God, and therefore the signs themselves “teach” ineffability. One wonders if the author, a philosophical theologian, merely reiterates what Berger has suggested about “authentic” doxology. To “predicate” ineffability is just how authentic doxology might function and this is Berger’s point. The excess of speech as “pointers” to the unknown God may in some sense “teach” the mystical. Smith’s text serves as some kind of “answer” to the problem of language within the realm of the philosophy of religion. Against this backdrop, Smith articulates that the mode of speech (in this case praise) serves to inform an intransigent “unknowing.” Through the philosophical lens of Smith, we can enter into a problematic that saturates philosophical and spiritual theology. Smith’s work of conversation with post-modern philosophy grants the reader opportunity to survey the continental shifts in philosophical theology. And the way Smith provides us with a method for reflection on the meaning of doxology assists in exploring the lyric’s potential to point to the

¹⁷⁶ James K.A. Smith, *Speech and Theology: Language and the Logic of Incarnation*, 128, 5.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 129.

incarnation. But Smith does not connect the picture of doxological conceptualization to the frame of congregational practice, the gathered practice of song. Smith's discussion of conceptualization provides the limit of language and describes the symbolic function of words in theology. Both Berger and Smith articulate a facet of doxology in the form of the lyric and we appreciate the way they distinguish liturgical speech as authentic prayer (Berger) and non-objectifying conceptualizing speech (Smith). This paper is concerned, however, with the text itself, the form of the lyric, and the ecclesial context of song. These are at least two dimensions of theological hermeneutics that are evoked by the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*. By way of comparison we have refined our task, namely, to allow the form of lyrical poetry as text, used in context, to bring forth a fresh understanding of "hymn" and "Eucharist."

The assumption here is that form, both cognitive and expressive, is, in a sense, a human response to an unfathomable process unfolding. That process may be named as the Trinitarian ground of existence acting purposefully through human history. Our more particular concern is just how that form provides some essential clue to ecclesial motions in history. Furthermore we ask what these motions tell us about the ecumenical potency of the Wesleys' response to the Holy Spirit?

THE FORM OF LYRICAL POETRY

It will be helpful to clarify how the idea of form is being used here. First, the form that results from lyrical composition contains a clue about the message itself so that the way the words are structured reveals something of the message the words convey. Second, the lyrical derives from encounter, a relational experience that is both affective and cathartic. Third, the lyric's form is analogous to sacramental experience. Poetry and

Eucharist share, at the very least, a propensity to simultaneously reveal and to conceal meaning.

FORM AND MESSAGE

Drawing on the work of philosopher Paul Ricoeur, William Thompson describes the importance and function of form, particularly as it relates to message:

The form may not merely be a tool of communication, easily replaced by another form. It may be an essential dimension of the message; in some way, the message can communicate only through a particular literary form.¹⁷⁸

How, then, does lyrical poetry communicate communion? The lyric is a particular form of poesis and as its etymology suggests, is meant to be sung with the lyre. The lyrical is meant to be accompanied. Unlike other poetic forms, the lyric is composed not only for public expression, but public expression that attempts to draw an assembly into participation.

ST Kimbrough has described a certain inner tension from which the lyric springs. The tension is between the expansive unknown of creativity experienced as human consciousness and the parameters that bind the lyrics through technical precision. Lyrics are derived from “a mysterious inner effervescence of soul and spirit” and come to utilize, “the conscious exercise of technical discipline.”¹⁷⁹ The lyric is a bringing together, a nexus of reason and emotion. In the lyrical, language is refined and limited by the rules of composition. The composition itself is informed by the matrix of experience (prayer) and doctrine. *Lex orandi et lex credendi simul sunt in tempore.*

¹⁷⁸ William Thompson, *Fire and Light: The Saints and Theology*, 77.

¹⁷⁹ ST Kimbrough, “Lyrical Theology,” *Journal of Theology* 98 (1994): 19.

Since Charles Wesley composed *HLS* from the foundational work by Brevint, his lyrical form is limited further still. We may consider prayer to be that precedent experience that builds upon Brevint's Eucharistic notions. Prayer is that expansive mode of consciousness and creativity that takes up Brevint and the memory or expectations of Charles Wesley's Eucharistic experiences. The lyric forms prayer into both proclamatory, doxological phrases, as well as descriptive, dogmatic statements. We see here that the form of the lyric has a limit in its very composition. The necessity of rhyme and the rules that accompany meter means that abstractions must often be simplified and made "common." Rhyme and meter provide the limits under which concepts must function. The lyric is born through the limits of a poetic genre "made" to communicate a most sublime message in a common medium. The lyric, therefore, is analogous to incarnation, "the word became flesh." God's word, so powerful and incisive, so beyond human knowing, took on the limit of the knower so that the creature might know the word more intimately. The limits for lyrical composition serve to "ground" the mystery. Wesleyan lyrical composition has little interest in serving up beautiful ballads for the purpose of literary appreciation in the realm of critics and commentators. It is, rather, composition conditioned by its evangelical intent: to draw sinners to participate in the life of God.

FORM AND THE REVELATORY

The theological lyric is a response to revelation. Revelation calls out for thematization.¹⁸⁰ Thematization of the revelatory has, in a sense, been the

¹⁸⁰ Jaime Garcia, "Théologie et Expression Poétique," *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 68, no.2 (1994): 175.

point of theology. Theology has wrestled with how to bring what has been revealed in the encounter with Christ to some clear articulation that would provide criteria for making judgments about both metaphysics and moral problems. There are distinct roles for particular genres of theological expression. Now it is necessary to lay out foundational statements via creeds. Now it is important to respond with rhetorical acumen to a particular affront to a Christian insight. Now the theologian is captivated by a philosophical knot with which theological categories must deal. Now the contemporary context demands prophetic reasoning regarding a new cultural or scientific development. Each of these espousals of Christic revelation “thinks” with the grain of the particular necessity. Theology demands that the form of thematization of theological insight somehow relate to that very expression. And of course, all the forms find their origin in the diversity of scripture.

At times, response to the revelation and its thematization has inevitably sought to possess the revelation. The form of expression, in its very articulation, has failed to do justice to the message itself. This (in)articulation of revelation is due in part to an over reliance on the noetic dimension. An attempt from the human knower to say too much and to claim surety is a modernist tendency according to Smith.¹⁸¹ Therefore, how language situates itself, how it is made into a form that references an encounter features prominently here. For revelation is not so much an idea to be grasped, but rather unfolds in *encounter*. To seek to “master” the revelation amounts to its loss. “Or, vouloir posséder, maîtriser la Révélation, revient à la perdre.”¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 5.

¹⁸² Garcia, “Théologie et Expression Poétique,” 175.

The lyrical as response to the revelatory is a particular type of comprehension. Though reasonable in itself, it is less a response to an ideal or an idea, and more a response to an experience or encounter. It relies heavily on the affective dimension of human flourishing and, in Ricouer's words, is cathartic rather than strictly persuasive.¹⁸³ The lyric, therefore, is the language of desire which is often preceded by a "resonant silence."¹⁸⁴ This is a silence that is full, or, as "resonant" suggests, a silence ready to respond to a divine word echoing in human residence. It is a silence that will break forth into words of power and doxology. The lyric is the first order expression of an encounter with a living reality.

FORM AND EUCHARIST

Recently, sacramental experience has been described as "fluid." According to Susan Ross, sacramental experience, by its very nature, "is an inherently ambiguous reality, and the dangers of overstating either its disclosive or concealing powers are great." The reality of ritual participation is more ambiguous because it is a participation in symbolic forms. The form of the theological response to these experiences, the lyric, can provide insight into sacramentality, a perceptual focus on the world itself as potential sign of God's working. As has been mentioned, in its very production the lyric is an attempt to bring together and balance the powers that Susan Ross has described as dimensions of authentic sacramentality, the "disclosive and concealing." "There is both an opacity and

¹⁸³ Paul Ricouer, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 13.

¹⁸⁴ Garcia, 177-78.

a transparency to the sacraments.”¹⁸⁵ In the Wesleys’ growing literate context, the lyric is evoked through Eucharistic participation even as the lyric evokes heightened devotion to Eucharistic participation. *HLS*, therefore, is that bridge from opacity to transparency--- there is mystery, there is clarity. Moreover, hymnic composition itself takes the form of that clear and mysterious synthesis. The ultimate horizon of “experience” is refined through representation so that the symbols that are the language of faith function as portals to various meanings.

FORM’S CONNOTATIONS

There are, therefore, at least three ways that form connotes the particularity of the hymnic genre of theological construction. It first reveals a process of synthesis whereby the expansive consciousness of the pray-er (in our case, Charles Wesley) is brought to the rules of composition, so that a refinement of emotion and thought is brought to a point of creative composition. The affective and the reasonable meet in the lyric. Second, the lyric is a type of theological expression among other types. It is expressive of an encounter between the poet and some other living reality. In this way, lyrical poetry’s form is potentially non-violent. That is, lyrical poetry does less damage to the primary encounter of the revelatory in its particular expressive form. This is so because it is “formed” in encounter, not strictly in the experience of cognitive processes. Last, the form of lyrical poetry is not unlike the fluid experience of ritual. There is a certain necessary ambiguity in both the sacrament and the lyric because of the simultaneity of

¹⁸⁵ Susan Ross, *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology*, 39.

symbolic representation: concealment and disclosure go hand in hand. The lyric's form, therefore, is somewhat analogous to the form of Eucharistic participation.

LYRICAL POETRY AS BRIDGE

When a theological or spiritual movement integrates varied emphases there is often an excess of meaning. In an effort to thematize this excess a metaphor may limit the scope of reasoning about "hymns on the Eucharist." One thinks of the catholic "and," a rhetorical strategy to refine a universal faith: sacramental *and* evangelical, word *and* sacrament, individual *and* community, ad infinitum. Though we are apt to locate the Wesleyan movement as indicative of the synthetic in history---perhaps nodding to Hegel, we prefer here to utilize the metaphor of "bridge" to describe the movement. The *HLS* is a textual expression of both the artistic, expressive and mystical, and the didactic, the logical and analytic.

A bridge connects and joins while allowing the foundations on either side to remain deep and solid. But more, the bridge can shape the landscape to the extent that contents from one side of the bridge are brought and appropriated on the other side. Another more organic analogy that may illumine how we are using this metaphor is that of the corpus callosum of the human brain. This "matter" of the human anatomy connects the two perceptual hemispheres of the brain. Its role is to transmit information in order to perceive reality at once in a more integrated, holistic way. James Ashbrook has described the brain hemispheres in terms of religious experience, among other ways. Ashbrook interprets the right hemisphere as the perceptual receiver of "manifestation," a more sacramental consciousness. He describes the left hemisphere as that perceptual location

of the proclamatory.¹⁸⁶ His categories, manifestation and proclamation, are borrowed from David Tracy in *Analogical Imagination*, where Tracy employs Ricoeur's hermeneutical framework to intimate how the "manifestation" oriented tradition has been located in Roman Catholicism while the "proclamation" emphasis has grown intensely in the Protestant tradition.¹⁸⁷ The lyrical presents us with a comprehensive range of perceptual consciousness, rooted as it is in both sacramental experience and historic word-centered orientations. The lyrical, therefore, as an expression of Methodist revival can be an illuminating source of the synthetic thrust of Wesleyan Christianity. Here, "bridge" functions to connect, to bring together creatively in the midst of rich sources of meaning and practice. Lyrical poetry is such a bridge and can be construed as that kind of genre that connects the "hemispheres" or dimensions in the Christian theological heritage: the internal and external, silence and speech, affectivity and logic, individual and ecclesia.

We continue, therefore, by examining how lyrical poetry functions as bridge and as the "and" between the following: desire and encounter, the apophatic and kataphatic, and poetics and logic. We will draw upon examples from the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* in order to demonstrate and explore this form. The dynamic interplay between all these dimensions is in some way indicative of the human response in love to a love experienced in Christ Jesus. Poetry is a way into an exploration of the emotional force of the giving and receiving of love.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ James Ashbrook, "Brain, Mind and God," *The Christian Century*, March 19-26, (1986): 295-298.

¹⁸⁷ Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 202-218.

¹⁸⁸ Countryman, *Poetic Imagination*, 61.

THE LYRICAL AS THE BRIDGE BETWEEN DESIRE AND ENCOUNTER

We first want to give some brief definition of what is meant by desire in this context, both as an anthropological given and as the internal affective movement outward toward encounter. Our definition of desire is shaped by an assumption about desire's end and therefore we understand desire in a thoroughly theological context. Hence, the relationship between desire and prayer is the framework for this discussion and lyrical poetry is the manifestation or expression of desire in relation to transcendence.

Desire is the affective precedent to an encounter or relationship. In the western philosophical and theological tradition there is an acknowledgement of some basic thrust of human existence which moves humanity into some sort of relationship. It may be called, "the desire to transcend humanity," or "the pull of the absolute." Or, it has been referred to as "the soul's desire to ascend to unmediated communion with the absolute," and finally it can be described in terms of its limit: "a yearning at once unappeasable and unsatisfiable."¹⁸⁹ Certainly the Christian tradition since at least Augustine has conveyed the negative effects of un-tutored desire. And John Wesley understood desire as something from which we might be saved.¹⁹⁰ Desire as concupiscence is all the more reason to tutor desire through participation in the social fabric of Christian practices.

What we are here naming desire is an anthropological given which both thrusts the human being in search of another, and gathers affectivities into identifiable "common" words through which the human may express the initiation of relationship. Desire is the

¹⁸⁹ Fergus Kerr, *Immortal Longings: Versions of Transcending Humanity*, 160.

¹⁹⁰ Wesley, "The Circumcision of the Heart," in *Works* 5:204-205 (1958).

precursor of dialogue. The lyric frames the dialogue, bringing external compositional focus to those “immortal longings.”

According to Martin Buber, the first human sounds, initiated in nativity, are givens of relationship and evolve into the “words” of relation. Language points to the authentic relational end of desire. The first “word” and end of desire is the encounter with another, in our case, a holy Other.¹⁹¹ The human is encountered and thus spills words of longing into the liminal sphere between two (I and Thou). Buber understands the liminal as the “space” of the Spirit, expressive as it is of the relational character of being. This is described exceptionally well in the following excerpt from *I and Thou*.

Spirit is the word. And just as talk in a language may well first take the form of words in the brain of the man, and then sound in his throat, and yet both are merely refractions of the true event, for in actuality speech does not abide in man, but man takes his stand in speech and talks from there; so with every word and every spirit. Spirit is not the *I*, but between *I* and *Thou*.¹⁹²

Though imperative to acknowledge the small and Jewish “s” Buber uses to describe the relational event of Spirit, our focus cannot veer off into inter-religious dialogue. If we were to sit with the question of the Holy Spirit in relation to spirit, we may be drawn into a discussion of the Trinitarian implications of dialogue.¹⁹³ But here, we only want to acknowledge the “in between” or liminal event of desire, language and encounter. Consider how the lyric brings the emotional timbre of desire to the surface. Surfacing the language of desire in encounter “refracts,” as Buber reminds us, from the surety of a full presence. Put another way, in the surfacing there is a mediation that inevitably “holds

¹⁹¹ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, 27

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 39.

¹⁹³ See Thompson, *Christology and Spirituality*, 1-44, for an entryway into the relation between Trinity and participatory conversation.

back” something of the purity of encounter in the very process of articulation. Thus the *human* ability toward the incarnation of the word is fragile, but a refinement necessary for any authentic communication. The process of refraction then takes up a tradition, connecting resonant affectivity not only to the experiential but the “deposit” of the revelatory as it is formed through the collective experience of tradition. Note how Charles Wesley creates a nexus of desire and encounter in Christological language here:

Eternal Spirit, gone up on high
Blessings for mortals to receive,
Send down those blessings from the sky,
To us thy gifts and graces give;
With holy things our mouths are fill'd,
O let our hearts with joy O'erflow;
Descend in pardoning love reveal'd,
And meet us in Thy courts below.¹⁹⁴

This lyric is indicative of an ascending/descending motif, a theme discussed in terms of mystical theology below. We note that it provides focus for the end of desire as well as the Eucharist's end, that Christ “meets us” (note the plural pronoun) with pardoning love. There is a sense too that the lyric itself is an “offering” given from the mouth of the Church within the ongoing dynamic of giving and receiving initiated by the Creator. As offering, the lyrical forms itself in a Eucharistic way, it is desire's offer through words to a loving and hospitable Other.

The lyricist, therefore, is drawn out through creativity as he encounters another and his particular experience of the context in which he finds himself. The lyricist is receiver and giver. Reception precipitates perceptual and generative emotions through which the lyricist constructs an arrangement of words. Making (*poiesis*) and offering images, the lyricist builds the possible by way of technical form. Desire and encounter involve

¹⁹⁴ Rattenbury, *EH*, 188, no.112.

affectivity and catharsis as well as precise boundaries in composition. The lyric is that bridge that expresses the power of both desire and its resultant encounter within the experiential----a participation in the Spirit.

THE BRIDGE BETWEEN THE APOPHATIC AND KATAPHATIC

Kataphatic and apophatic are Greek terms connoting particular mystical approaches to the revelatory. It would be foolish to attempt a comprehensive overview of these terms presently. We will attempt, however, to simply classify these approaches so that we have categories that shed light on the mystical in Eucharistic lyricism.

The apophatic, or *via negativa*, finds God “radically different” such that God is “best known by negation, elimination, forgetting, unknowing, without images and symbols.” The kataphatic, or *via affirmativa*, “finds God in all things” such that, “God can be reached by creatures, images and symbols.”¹⁹⁵

When taken together, the terms refer to a holistic process of spiritual transformation. The process builds on the interpretation of the manifestation of Jesus Christ as incarnation. The descending God positively affirms a particular communication of love while the ascension particularizes the negations of divine presence. The descending affirmations are kataphatic and disclosive, the ascending negations curtail and conceal the known.¹⁹⁶ This tradition comes forth in the English Medieval mystics who precede Brevint and the Wesleys. I make no claim, nor attempt, to connect in explicit terms seventeenth century piety and fourteenth century mysticism. I only take note that the

¹⁹⁵ Harvey Egan, “Christian Apophatic and Kataphatic Mysticism,” *Theological Studies* 39 (1978): 403.

¹⁹⁶ Mark A. McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology*, 55.

kataphatic/apophatic tandem lives in England in the likes of such great mystical writers as Richard Rolle, Julian of Norwich and the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*.

Furthermore, the medieval English mystics sought to ground their expressions in practical and poetic media that might instruct others into the captivating Love of God. Rolle, in fact, expressed his devotion as both lyrical and sacramental: “I have found that to love Christ above all things will involve three things: warmth, song and sweetness.” In addition, Bernard McGinn has suggested that in the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, one finds that “meditation on Jesus’ passion begins the way to God.” In the *HLS* the first twenty seven hymns are poetic meditations on “the sufferings and death of Christ.” As the *Cloud* describes growth in the Spirit, the path to God is one that leads to an “unknowing,” an entrance into “inner suffering.”¹⁹⁷

THE LYRIC AS KATAPHATIC MOMENT IN APOPHATIC MYSTICISM

Any lyrical expression that simultaneously addresses the passion of Christ and inward preparation for ritual reception of Grace connotes, on the surface, cross purposes. Eucharistic devotional and lyrical literature instigates corporate memory, a felt sense of visitation driven by Divine Love. And yet this Love seemingly goes so far as to empty itself into nothing. In this way, the lyrical is reflection on Divine purpose and is a movement into the awareness of the contingency and vulnerability of Christ. Through the lyric one discovers that Divine relinquishment is human empowerment. In this absence there is presence; in fact absence is evocative of the cognitive and emotional affirmation

¹⁹⁷ Bernard McGinn, “The English Mystics,” in *Christian Spirituality: Post Reformation and Modern*, 197-200.

of presence. In the dying is the life, in the darkness one sees. The paradox, in sum, is derivative of encounter. Garcia describes the way the lyric is predicated upon some felt memory of an ever elusive yet affirming presence.

Lyrical poetry and mystical poetry share a common theme: the dialectic of absence-presence or the theme of a “burning passion,” because the absence which comes through lyrical poetry is not just any absence, but an absence between two presences.¹⁹⁸

In the lyric there is an acknowledgement of both presence and absence. And more, one could say that in the lyric there is an affirmation of negation, a coming to terms with an absence. Garcia’s statement deserves some attention, especially the notion of an “an absence between two presences.”

Presence as experienced is contingent upon relationality. Presence as such, to say nothing of reflection on presence, cannot come to fullness without another. The lyric voices a remembrance of presence. This remembering is itself a recognition, a coming back, a foray of one who is apprised again of the possibility of a loving presence. Both the lyric as vocal, and the Eucharist as the enacted word, allow for a convergence of presences. In this way the power of these actions is their integrative movement: the internal and external converge. Therefore these actions may be construed as attending to the Divine in a corporate way, that is, with others.

According to Wesleyan theologian Randy Maddox, John Wesley understood grace as “God’s loving personal presence at work in our lives.” This is a presence that restores

¹⁹⁸ Garcia, *Théologie et Expression Poétique*, 178-9, “La poésie lyrique comme la poésie mystique a un thème commun: la dialectique absence-présence ou le theme de l’ <<absence ardente>>, car l’absence qui traverse la poésie lyrique n’est pas une absence quelconque, mais une absence entre deux présences. (translation mine)

humanity toward the fullness of moral life. Maddox's interpretation explains that humanity could, according to John Wesley, "resist" such presence. Consistent with the Anglican tradition, Wesley affirmed a co-operative notion of Divine grace and human response.¹⁹⁹ We cannot pursue the complexity to which speculation on co-operation with Divine grace may lead. We only note that "absence" can be due to human resistance to the Divine gift of loving presence. So, in the midst of an "absence between two presences" the lyric is a response that re-acts, initiating in both lyricist and singer an offering of response, a movement into presence. Making the lyric, as well as living the lyric through congregational song, can be construed as a "kataphatic moment" in an apophatic spirituality. Writing especially is the exteriorization of silence. The word comes forth, not unlike the Divine logos that dwells, present to those who re-act.

Some corollary connections present themselves here. The human emotional/perceptual parallel to receiving and giving is silence and speech. The sacramental focus for reception and offering is mimetic. The Divine invites the Church to sacrifice (to make holy); to remember the body of Christ poured out and to become that body for the world. Silence and speech, bodily reception and offering; both are events that bring form and expression to the pervasive interchange between God and humanity. Hymnody and Eucharist, therefore, bring balance, offering variant methods of participation in the meaning of "responsible grace." And the lyric is that bridge between the silence of unknowing, and Christ known in bread and wine. The relations between mimesis, poetry and action will be developed ahead.

The lyric is the refrain (in the musical sense) of corporate memory of a gracious presence, and thereby expresses the perceptual grasp of Divine ascension, exploring that

¹⁹⁹ Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*, 86-87.

which cannot be understood in its fullness. Stanzas five through eight of Charles' poem twenty-one are a path way into affirmation and negation, the kataphatic/apophatic dynamic. Below, the "All" is said to withdraw and in the Cross everything is suddenly shrouded in night. But two stanzas later, the Eucharistic gathering senses the Author of ecclesial generation and turns to adore its "Head":

Dies the glorious Cause of all
The true eternal *Pan*,
Falls to raise us from our fall,
To ransom sinful man:
Well may *Sol* withdraw his light,
With the Sufferer sympathise
Leave the world in sudden night,
While his Creator dies.

Well may heaven be clothed with black,
And solemn sackcloth wear,
Jesu's agony partake,
The hour of darkness share:
Mourn th'astonied hosts above,
Silence saddens all the skies,
Kindler of seraphic love,
The God of angels dies.

O, my God, He dies for me,
I feel the mortal smart!
See him hanging on the tree
A sight that breaks my heart!
O that all to Thee might turn!
Sinners, ye may love Him too;
Look on Him ye pierced, and mourn
For One who bled for you.

Weep o'er your Desire and Hope
With tears of humblest love;
Sing, for Jesus is gone up,
And reigns enthroned above!
Lives our Head, to die no more;
Power is all to Jesus given,
Worshipp'd as He was before,
The' immortal King of Heaven.

The paschal narrative is here told from the emotive/subjective “trance” of Charles Wesley. And yet it is an invitation to others to embrace both darkness and light, divine death and divine life. The above brings together the contrasts of spiritual perception into the narrative of Christ’s absence and presence. The most efficient way into authentic and even corporate mysticism, as recent writers have reminded us, is a sharing in Christological foci.²⁰⁰

We have been examining how the lyric forms a bridge between the ongoing dialectic of desire and encounter and the interpretive categories of mysticism, the kataphatic and apophatic. The interpretive metaphor of bridge is a reflection of the integrative capacity of poetry, how the lyric is able to travel from desire to encounter, from absence to presence and back again. The fluidity of poetry also draws together theological emphases, alive in discrete traditions, yet un-distracted in the everyday prospect of eighteenth-century disciplined praxis. Our anthropological examination now takes a theological turn as we focus on the bridge between logic and poetics.

THE BRIDGE BETWEEN LOGIC AND POETICS

Poetics and logic are ways of knowing. It is tempting to construe them as distinct ways of knowing, for though distinguishable, they must be recognized as present in one-another. A way to focus on their shared perceptual field is to examine, as Paul Ricoeur

²⁰⁰ For Von Balthasar’s interpretation of the Christological imperative in mysticism see, Mark McIntosh, *Christology from Within: Spirituality and the Incarnation in Hans Urs Von Balthasar* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000); for an historical example of a “Christologian” participating in Jesus’ mysteries see William Thompson, *Christology and Spirituality*;45-86; for a discussion of some avenues for a “Wesleyan” Christology see, David L. Watson, “Proclaiming Christ in all His Offices: Priest, Prophet and Potentate,” in *Portion for the Poor: Good News to the Poor in the Wesleyan Tradition*, ed. by M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Kingswood, 1995).

has, the way in which metaphor is “used” in both “forms of discourse.”²⁰¹ In describing some attributes of each way, we are prepared to interpret the poetic within the logical and the logical within the poetic. This is especially true of theology, a field of inquiry as varied as the modes of biblical speech on which it is based. The twentieth century Protestant inclination to constitute theology on the more logical side of the spectrum has resulted in a more recent retrieval of poetic strands. Such a retrieval, however, also presents the necessity of reflection on the nature of poetics, in order that, as John Wesley may have warned, we not slip off into mere “enthusiasm.” The lyrical as bridge may function to bring balance to ecclesial experience. A brief discussion of what is meant by both poetics and logic will provide a backdrop for the way the Wesleys balanced theological ways of knowing in a revivalistic context.

POETICS

Poetics is distinguished as a form of discourse by that which it evokes: pleasure and learning.²⁰² Poetics is mimetic, that is, it provides some resemblance of perception through the “play” of language. The poet re-makes and arranges words in order that new dimensions of experience, even new worlds and possibilities, may be disclosed.²⁰³

In this sense poetry can be construed as the discourse of revival and manifestation. Ostensibly, the poet does not seek to “win” participants. Rather, the poet’s freedom in

²⁰¹ Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 12; in addition, Lenore Langsdorf, “Rhetorical Intentionality” (paper given at Duquesne University’s “Paul Ricoeur and Phenomenology,” a Silverman Phenomenology Center symposium, Pittsburgh, PA. March 16-17, 2006); the symposium brought clarity to the following thoughts on logic, poetics, rhetoric and ethics.

²⁰² Ibid, 39.

²⁰³ Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology*, 133; cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, 60.

the arrangement of words invites deeper participation within the life-world to which the arrangement points. Poetics seems to naturally coincide with a certain passivity, or at least the use of the passive voice. If poetry proves to share in the adjective “mystical,” it participates in a sense of being that is constituted from without; a wonder at what is received. Poetry in a theological vein is itself a recognition of being recognized, a knowledge of being known.

But in this way of knowing a danger lurks. The poet runs the risk of collapsing upon himself a totalizing of his own cathartic expression (solipsism). This may have a therapeutic function, but ultimately words arranged without any referent but one’s own subjectivity lose touch with a more public or mystical poetics: a mode of awareness attuned to shared worlds of meaning. Put psychologically, there is no pure purge; memory always provides the gift of theological integrity and also serves as the residue of the sin in our own experience. For an example of a more balanced poetics that avoids the kind of danger we are describing, one might examine the Psalms of lament.²⁰⁴ Here are poetics that serve to vent, but inevitably the Psalms convey an acknowledgement of God’s sovereignty and human helplessness. Overly subjective poetics detract from the necessary convergences that intimate a “surplus of meaning.” A more balanced poetics may be less cathartic, but more attuned to its own particularity within a matrix of tradition, others, history, context and God.

²⁰⁴ See Psalms 5,6, 26, 35, 55, among others.

LOGIC IN RHETORIC

Logic, used here within the frame of rhetoric, has a different goal. Logic is the arrangement of words to convince another of the probable. We may describe this use of words as rhetoric that invites deliberation, a strategy for words through which particular contextual goals are sought and particular actions evinced. The rhetor argues, as the poet does not, and through argument she attempts to move persons into the probable, indeed the probable as that which may motivate for action. The rhetor seeks to move the mind to word-willed action, the poet seeks to move the heart toward perception of awe, that which is new. The rhetor actively constitutes the conditions for a definite conclusion. The words are constituted by a connection between the intellect and will. Statements are made through which the rhetor herself constitutes a probability and brings a procession of logical intellectual moves toward a definite conclusion.²⁰⁵

Without logic, however, rhetoric devolves into manipulation. Logic demands that the rhetor arrange words for a conclusion that signifies the search for truth. But persuasion can lose its way. Persuasion may use deception as a means toward even the most well-intentioned end. In this way an emphasis on the product and results inevitably tempts the rhetor to neglect a logical process toward true conclusions. Arguments can deceive. A theory of the probable can be reduced through its own eloquence to mere manipulation. If poetics can devolve into totalizing subjectivity, thus strengthening the destructive capacities of individualism, then rhetoric can infect the body politic with an influence that

²⁰⁵ Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 28-29.

is deceptive, bringing a narcissistic vision to bear on the whole. Without the rigors of logic rhetoric can veer off into the “subtlest forms of violence.”²⁰⁶

JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY: CONNECTED BY LOGIC AND POETICS

This very brief comparison may be illumined, especially within the context of Eucharist and Methodist identity, as we compare John Wesley’s logic of the probable and motivational rhetoric in his *The Duty of Constant Communion* with Charles Wesley’s lyrical poetry. The lyrical especially will, of course, be shown to serve as a bridge between the poetic and the logical as we interpret the didactic nature of *HLS*.

The Wesleyan movement was driven by an abiding relationship between John and Charles Wesley. Without their bonds and reciprocal energies it is difficult to imagine either one of them bearing the fruit of the Methodist movement alone. If we would answer “John was the leader and driver,” that may be true in some sense but without the more passive voices and Charles Wesley’s hymn production the movement would have looked (and sounded) very different. But then again, it all may be construed as a powerful participation in the Holy Spirit.

In spite of the post-modern intuition to interpret history as the movement of people and events “behind the texts,” there is very little pragmatic sense in abandoning the primary texts of a particular tradition. Perhaps the solidity of the Wesleyan tradition---- despite the apparent lack of an iconic and definitive theological rubric like “sola fide,” or the Sovereignty of God’s providence---- may be due to the balance expressed through the texts that transmit the responsive lives of John and Charles Wesley. These texts manifest responsive spirituality making history.

²⁰⁶Ibid, 11.

Both of these men were eagerly responsive to the Grace in which they lived and moved. One could interpret the fruits of their loving response to God as an integrative and balanced approach to Christian life and livelihood. Such balance leads us to see in the Wesleys lives conditioned by a disciplined synthesis of prayer and thought. This lifestyle meant that their gifts came to full flower; Charles is said to have written over 7,000 poems.²⁰⁷ And, in addition to organizing what would be the equivalent to a strong religious lay order, John Wesley published four volumes of sermons, not to mention essays and a plethora of editorial work.²⁰⁸ The fullness of a logical poetics and the poetry of the logical can be seen in the Wesleys' emphasis on expressing the meaning of the Lord's Supper in the everyday media of the common person. This means, as we have seen in previous chapters, that the significance of the practice of the Lord's Supper is the primary arbiter of the meaning of the ritual, not its theological and post-Reformational intellectual knots.

LOGIC, POETICS AND THEOLOGICAL ETHICS

Given that practical logic, we can learn much about praxis amidst revival by examining the logic of living eucharistically through sermon and hymns. To clarify, it may be helpful to depend upon ethical discourse to refine further the way Wesleyan poetics and logic interrelate in discussions about Eucharist. Present day ethical discourse generally provides frameworks through which moral reasoning may function. Among other methods, pastoral "advice" which seeks to make Christian practice relevant relies

²⁰⁷ ST Kimbrough, *Charles Wesley: Poet and Theologian*, 21.

²⁰⁸ Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory*, 182.

on either a persons' sense of duty (deontological ethics) or sense of compassion (developing a moral imagination). The mandate and the discourse of duty has been at the forefront of Wesleyan Eucharistic piety, as the title of John Wesley's sermon, *The Duty of Constant Communion*²⁰⁹ suggests. But also, the *HLS* provide ample resources to evoke the moral imagination. The following comparison of genres explores the way theological discourse functions. It will make clear, therefore, the practical and theological connection between hymnody and the moral imagination.

JOHN WESLEY AND THE LOGIC OF THE MANDATE

The use of logic in rhetoric often bespeaks a sense of the deontological. The rhetoric of duty expresses the implications of the law. The law is reasonable and duty is shown to provide an axis around which an argument may process. Discourse regarding the obligation to receive regularly the Eucharist also carries a rhetoric of praise and blame, even as it is deliberative and persuasive. After all, in his sermon on communion, Wesley first reminds the potential participant that Jesus commanded his disciples to "do this" in remembrance of him (Luke 22:19). Eucharistic action can be construed as the proper consequence and end of obligation. In the stringent accountability of the Methodist bands, societies and class meetings, spiritual strength for dutiful action was an outcome of lived discipleship.²¹⁰ Wesley's sermon contains an ethic of obligation, the "must" of moral living. His logic is based on Christ's "command" and he enters into the reasoning of those who would refrain from "constant" communion. After entertaining their reasons,

²⁰⁹ Wesley, *Works* 7:147-157 (1958).

²¹⁰ Wesley, *Works* 7:272 (1958).

John Wesley shows just where they err. In addition he supplements the focus on obligation by forging the logical outcome of Eucharistic action: the reception of God's grace. The reader of the sermon is asked a poignant question, namely, what is it about the human condition that prevents us from receiving from God's storehouse of mercy? Why can't God's grace be received? Here, John Wesley moves from the obligatory to the pastoral, maintaining a discussion of the logic of God's grace and human response. We note here too one of John Wesley's hermeneutical assumptions, namely, that commandments are "covered promises"; that is, if God commands believers to do something, God will also empower that person to carry out the mandate.²¹¹ The command to receive can also serve to uphold persons in the midst of the more apophatic phases of their lives. In the midst of a felt sense of nothingness, duty and habit may be that which revives the heart's journey toward hope.

The obligatory dimension of moral theology, often called deontological ethics, provides the base line for John Wesley's brief sermon on the vitality of Eucharistic practice. John Wesley presents not only the rhetorical strand of practical theology but roots that strand in the central focus of moral action. Theological discourse that is attuned to the necessity of duty is encased, very often, in a logic that accounts for the demand and necessity of certain practices. The language of duty is arranged for the consent of reason.

²¹¹ W. Stephen Gunter and others, eds., *Wesley and the Quadrilateral: Renewing the Conversation*, 57.

CHARLES WESLEY AND THE RESEMBLANCE OF SOLICITUDE

Motivation for action, however, is not the singular prospect for any Christian ethics or practical theology. There is also a poetic dimension that frames an understanding of the possible. By poetic we mean, as discussed above, that which enlightens and pleases. One thinks of Jesus here too, in his beautiful invitation to discipleship, “Come to me all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28) There is an attraction here. If John Wesley’s logic of Grace invites critical reflection on the necessity to “receive,” poetics presents a world in which it is possible to live in “constant communion.” Poetics provides an evocation of attraction and compassion. In poetics, feelings are generative of a new way of being in relation to another. The ethical here is captivated by way of “feeling with.” If duty and action are the outcome of logical rhetoric, then care and concern are evocative of poetic expression. Paul Ricoeur, drawing on Aristotle’s discussion of friendship, names this sense of care in “feeling with” as *solicitude*. Ricoeur’s discussion is a response to the philosopher Levinas, and he wants to bring balance to what can be construed as an ethic that unrealistically relies on obligation. Though Levinas’ focus is certainly warranted given the overwhelming horrors of the Holocaust, Ricoeur wants to move the discussion into a more dynamic recognition of self-love and other love. That discussion is taken up within the ethical aims in encounter so that poetic expression can become an apt prospect for reflection on solicitude. Ricoeur presents solicitude as that which is “underneath” a more narrow focus on obligation. He describes the commissioning of solicitude as a “benevolent spontaneity.”²¹²

²¹² Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself As Another*, 190; cf. Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 90-91.

Solicitude is awareness and care for another person. Its more relational focus allows us to see in the lyrical a dimension of spiritual action that is informed by affectivities.

These are the raw materials in the economy of the poet. Ricoeur writes:

Let us confine ourselves here to emphasizing the role played by feelings---which, in the last analysis, are affects---in solicitude. For it is indeed feelings that are revealed in the self by the other's suffering, as well as by the moral injunction coming from the other, feelings spontaneously directed toward others. This intimate union between the ethical aim of solicitude and the affective flesh of feelings seems to me to justify the choice of the term solicitude.²¹³

The lyrical captures and expresses feelings such as sympathy and compassion, especially in relation to Christ. For Charles Wesley, Christ is "another," even a suffering other with which the lyricist's compassion and awe resonate. The pathos of the awareness that accompanies the empathic grasp of another's suffering turns forcefully upon the singer/lyricist at the point of recognition; the one who suffers there suffers there *for* the whole inhabited earth. Poetics endures the call of another upon one's life. The lyricist invites the reader/singer into felt concern for the suffering of another.

The lyrical, therefore, distinguishes itself from logic in rhetoric by that which surfaces from the depths of human emotion. This way of knowing has in itself a certain logic in that the lyrical "possesses" the undercurrents of reason, perhaps here named the heart. In the following example, hymn 22, we find solicitude for Christ "mediated" by solicitude for Mother Mary. The reader/singer is invited to feel the pangs of Mary's overwhelming shock at her son's and Savior's death. The more Anglo-Catholic resonance of the "use" of Mary is also worthy of some reflection. Obviously, the ecumenical (and especially Roman Catholic) tone of this hymn comes through. Charles Wesley invites the

²¹³ Ricoeur, *Oneself As Another*, 191-192.

reader/singer into a relationship that has its own relational history and foundation, the love between Christ and Mary. In our present discussion, however, the distinguishing mark of poetics is its capacity to thoroughly resemble a world through which both emotion and imagination might take flight. Charles Wesley first “places” the reader/singer at Golgotha and then gives opportunity for the sense of solicitude, as he portrays a resemblance of Christ Crucified.

Prince of Life, for sinners slain,
Grant us fellowship with Thee;
Fain we would partake Thy pain,
Share Thy mortal agony:
Give us now the dreadful power
Now bring back Thy dying hour.

Place us near th’ accursed wood
Where Thou didst Thy life resign,
Near as once Thy mother stood;
Partners of the pangs Divine,
Bid us feel her sacred smart,
Feel the sword that pierced her heart.

Surely now the prayer He hears;
Faith presents the Crucified!
Lo! The wounded Lamb appears:
Pierced His *feet*, His hands, His side,
Hangs our Hope on yonder tree,
Hangs, and bleeds to death for me!

The Eucharistic drama unfolds as the readers/singers (we) are asked to “partake” of the bodily pain of the “hour” of Christ’s death. This is the expressive language of solicitude, inviting words of affectivity for empathic consciousness. The reader/singer is “moved” from Mary’s grief to her own awareness that the object of Christ’s purposeful suffering is humanity (us). “He bleeds to death for me.” Through the affectivities of Mary’s broken

heart (she “partners” with Jesus) the participant is led to a realization that is both bewildering and full of Grace. There is the recognition that Christ died for us out of love, that crucifixion is “for us.” Because poetics can take us through this epistemological “problematic”---namely that God gets personal--- it may more appropriately instruct upon the paradoxical situation incarnation entails.

Through this discussion of the way poetics and rhetorical logic facilitate particular dimensions of theological ethics, we have been able to show the inevitable variations in lived Christianity. The mandate and the surfacing of solicitude are brought forth in particular forms of theological discourse which utilize the logical (mandate) and poetic functions of writing. These correspond to the particular spiritual contexts of sanctification through which, at various times, persons will respond to either dutiful or enlightening speech. We have also taken note that there is no “pure” form of either poetics or logic. Instead, like our other spheres on either side of the “bridge,” there is a flow of discursive expressions that take their place along the horizontal “in-between.” Nevertheless, taken together, John and Charles Wesleys’ expressive capacities give balance through their ordinary texts, writings which present an indication of the integrative and unapologetically sacramental prospect of Methodist spirituality.

RESEMBLANCE IN SIGN AND SPEECH

The mimetic dimension of poetics is clearly distinguished here as expression “which composes and constructs the very thing it imitates!” Ricoeur clarifies that the mimetic function of poetry is not mere “duplication,” but has within it a tension: between “submission to reality—to human action—and the creative action which is poetry as

such.”²¹⁴ In the lyrical, the event and “plot” of crucifixion is simultaneously “heard” and creatively re-presented. In addition, poetics can also illuminate the way the linguistic and generative capacities of lyrical speech more appropriately render the Eucharistic ritual. For the ritual is a mimesis involving language, the body and semiotics (signs).

The Eucharist is Christian poesis, it “makes” the church. We make a distinction here based on Ricoeur’s discussion of the relationship of poesis and mimesis. It may be helpful to show the significance of “hymns” on the “Eucharist” by distinguishing between the poetic/linguistic and the poetic/mimetic. Ricoeur is clear in his interpretation of Aristotle that because mimesis and poesis both involve creativity that “mimesis is poesis, and poesis is mimesis.”²¹⁵ The shared core of both is the creativity involved in resemblance. Here, the mimetic is the gathered community “resembling” through action the giving and receiving, the presentation of the Body before God’s nourishment. This imitative enactment is always a “copy” of the Last Supper but it is always new and creative in different contexts. As such it is a resemblance that is renewed through new music, among other liturgical factors including the persons who are present in the gathering. Mimesis as creative resemblance may “leave room” in the creative task for the pneumatological. Indeed, as we will see, that is the first plea of the Body in hymn seven, “Come Holy Ghost.” The “enacted Word,” whether more or less creative in its capacity for resembling, is the non-linguistic presentation of a Divine poetry: Christ crucified for all.

The lyrical, therefore, is the *linguistic mimetic counterpart* to the Body’s enactment. It is poetry on poetry. Hymns on the Eucharist grasp to articulate that which is made in

²¹⁴ Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 39.

²¹⁵ Ibid

the Eucharist, the meaning of Divine action. By forming words into the discourse of poetry, hymns on the Eucharist are a poetic interpretation of the fluid mimesis of ritual.

COMMUNICATION ON COMMUNION

In this paper the lyrical is the foundation of both sides of the bridge. It signifies an expression of an identity that may be called Methodist. Through our discussion it has become clear that Methodism is not easily classified. This is so in terms of both theological and denominational emphases. The lyrical as bridge integrates the surplus of meaning—the anthropological, spiritual and theological. If the lyrical is taken as an authentic mark of Methodist spirituality and theological expression then Methodism is an integrative movement within the Church catholic. Integrative spirituality and theology necessarily cannot “stand out.” This is so because their task is to bring forward with integrity often disparate dimensions of Christian existence and in so doing the dimensions are sometimes perceived to be hampered by the integrative process itself. The place, therefore, that we may examine the integrity of these dimensions is in liturgical acts, particularly singing and Eucharist. Let us turn our attention to these.

It is highly significant that, in the midst of the ongoing English Reformation and the disparate eighteenth-century Christian communities that sought to counter one or another perceived theological error, the Wesleys brought the sacramental dimension of Christian existence to focus through the non-conformist media of hymnody. Our contemporary task is to derive a phenomenology of singing in the assembly for the purpose of describing the integrative thrust of Methodism.

TOWARD A PHENOMENOLOGY OF SINGING

In this discourse of literary and theological form, we may lose sight of the lived liturgical praxis that was the end of the *HLS* and the end of this contemporary interpretation. Therefore in remembering that the lyric was meant to be sung or read in real time we emphasize what we can say of a musical composition, namely, that it becomes music only when it is played. Here, the discussion will attempt to bring a description of singing and participation to bear on ecclesiology. We will limit the following description by focusing particularly on the body of the individual participant in relation to the Body of the gathered community.²¹⁶

Singing is a particular way to situate and utilize the body in the production of sound and meaning. Singing is, in a sense, a hyperbolic and intensified form of speech. But it is the process of embodying the poetry of another, a participation in mimesis. With the emotions evoked by the music and words, the mimetic process is mediated through an individual's interpretation via voice volume and crescendo or diminishment and tonal quality. Singing is a public expression of a poet's interpretive use of words, but unlike a public "poetry reading" or a rock concert, the hymn belongs to the gathered community. From "within" the practice of the community, the hymn and its enactment belong ultimately to God.

To sing doxologically often the participant will stand, a movement which both acknowledges a certain reverential tone to the occasion as well as gives the production of

²¹⁶ These "phenomenological" reflections are a response to John Wesley's rules for singing found in the *United Methodist Hymnal*, vii. What would prompt these rules? I conclude that John Wesley's negative and positive experiences of singing among Methodists gave him the impetus for developing rules. The rules are reflection on what makes for good praxis. David Ford develops a notion of singing as communication of the self among "others" in *Self and Salvation* (107-136). Ford's reflections echo here too. In the above discussion the body of the individual participant, small "b," is distinguished from the ecclesial gathering, the Body.

the vocal sound more potential. Standing also places the body upright, a condition through which the head may focus ahead and above, a distinctively human perceptual possibility. Singing is a practice through which the body remembers. Songs are learned only through participation. Even though not every one is a musician, everyone can sing. There is a universal character to song. One might say that music itself is a human trait, a shared symbol of human capacity across cultures. Its inter-cultural and therefore ecumenical potency cannot be overstated.

Singing stimulates the memory through the body's rhythm and breath and ear. There is a simultaneity of senses in the singing, an integration of sound and sight and touch. What is more, there is a recognition of self in singing, a fully functioning self who brings musical sound to words. These "felt" words then stimulate more affected sound in order to bring the body's full interpretive capacities to the words. We might describe this process as a dialectic of understanding and expression pervading the conscientious singer.

In the gathered assembly called the Church, participating in the liturgy through hymn is a distinctively corporate experience. The participant in the hymns comes to self only in relation to other voices. The integrative process involves not only the senses, mind and heart of the individual, but the individual in relation to others. The individual integrates her voice into a whole such that through participation in hymn-singing the singer/believer becomes in-corporated. Hymn-singing, therefore, is the Body fully alive. Metaphor can provide insight into the role of the singing ecclesia. "Harmony," "offering," "finding one's voice," are conditioned through ecclesial sharing discovered through song. There is a surplus in and through participation. Every voice "blends" into the whole. Singing only becomes fuller and richer-sounding when more voices are added. Less participation

detracts.²¹⁷ Like other communal practices such as conversation (what Methodists have deemed “conferencing”) each voice adds something, bringing enrichment. Through consistent participation, the Body learns to modulate voices in a manner befitting the song. In addition, singing invites responsive sensitivity to other voices. In singing the individual is asked to listen. One comes to one-self as one listens for fit connections to the whole through the voice’s offerings. As the person “listens” to the words, the body listens for both its own voice and that of others. This conscious practice may integrate voices appropriately in order that the Body makes a pleasing sound for God. The practice of hymn-singing, therefore, is a participatory and symbolic refinement of ecclesia. Attentive praxis can deepen ecclesial recognition and even self-understanding in relation to others within the Body. A helpful and generative motif that may illuminate the basis of hymn-singing is that of “giving and receiving.” The individual gives voice to faith by receiving the promise inclusive of the poetry. The individual offers her body in praise and/or affirmation, even lament. The offering is given sensitively in relation to others, others which she receives in response. The individual receives recognition of others through resonance within the whole. Ultimately the gift of voices is offered back to the Other, an acknowledgement and participation in the giftedness of Creation itself. Hymn-singing is an integrative practice which brings cohesion. Primarily, singing integrates both the fully flourishing body in simultaneity with the Body, the gathered community. The body then participates in the Body, becoming an instrument of the Spirit. Hymn-singing is an intensification of being, a being construed theologically as being in Christ, the ground of the *ecclesia*.

²¹⁷ Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 120-22.

THE PLURAL PRONOUN IN THE *HYMNS*: THE WORD FROM THE BODY

What we have briefly described as a Christian ontology of liturgical singing is deeply inscribed in the particular language used throughout the *HLS*. Charles Wesley used the plural pronouns “we,” “us,” and “our” liberally throughout these hymns on the Eucharist. Eighty-three percent of the 166 *HLS* contain plural pronouns. Hymns on the Eucharist necessarily bring to the surface the ecclesial dimension of any authentic Christian spirituality. In the high percentage we see that Charles Wesley’s lyrical process and thought was dominated by a communal concern. Even Brevint’s seventeenth century discourse, the basis of Wesley’s verse, cannot convey the awareness of participation with others that Charles Wesley’s lyrical poetry is able to craft. Lyrical poetry is a discourse the form of which shifts in empathic moves from subject to predicate and from the passivity of direct object to the active subject. The ecclesial prospect is given precedence over an insular and unhealthy individualistic spiritual or intellectual perspective. Twenty-eight hymns contain singular pronouns alone. In other words, some hymns contain both singular and plural pronouns; the individual comes to self understanding in relation to the Body. There are hymns, as we have seen, that speak to the individual believer or are in a confessional mode. In these cases Charles Wesley invites the reader/singer into his subjective experience of faith. But the majority of the *HLS* contain the plural pronoun as part of either subject or predicate in the lyrical form. In the lyrical the pronouns are both subject and the predicate that elucidates the subject, inscribing the language of an ecclesial consciousness. The pronouns form a Body as both the passive receiver of God’s salvific act in Christ and the active respondent in faithful action to

Divine love. Receptivity and responsibility are brought near in the lyrical. Below are stanzas one and two of hymn 7 (the pronouns' emphasis is mine):

Come Holy Ghost, to set Thy seal,
Thine inward witness give,
To all *our* waiting souls reveal
The death by which *we* live

Spectators of the pangs Divine
O that *we* now may be,
Discerning in the sacred sign
His passion on the tree

The Body receives through the action of the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit is the subject. "Our souls" are part of the predicate, and then the reception is a collective action. "We" become the subject, namely "spectators" who act: we live, we discern. Note the action evinced through the plural pronouns, a balance of reception and response. This balance may be construed as the inner "energies" of God's grace and our response. In addition, it may be deemed the linguistic expression of an "inward" reality of giving and receiving as the Body participates in Divine life. The lyrical is not only "closer" to the experience of Eucharist than other forms of discourse, it may be that its depiction of activity in Divine Grace provides an accurate portrayal of the fluid interchange between God's initiative and *our* response through Christ.

The question of this paper is how is this "we" identified? Who is we? What does Charles mean when he uses "our" and "us" in the majority of this hymnody? No doubt Charles Wesley utilized the plural pronoun in many other hymns of his huge corpus of seven thousand. And yet there remains in American Methodist spirituality and hymnody a penchant for individualistic renderings of Christian faith. The "Jesus and me" genre can

be traced to some of the Wesleyan corpus. We will pursue this question strictly in terms of the ritual for which the *HLS* were penned.

The Eucharist is perhaps the most intimate of spiritual experiences. The believer, after all, eats and drinks Christ. The grace of Christ is received, “mediated” by a most intimate act. And yet in the *HLS*, such intimacy is expressed in thoroughly collective terms. Indeed, the *HLS* corpus expresses and invites a consciousness of shared need, common object of faith, and shared experience of meaning and practice. The “we” gathers not around hymns, though hymns serve to direct the Body to become one voice. In the *HLS* the plural pronouns declare that a singular center is common to all. As “memorial,” as “means of Grace” as “Pledge” as “sacrifice” as “sacrifice of our persons,” the Eucharist gives a range of meanings emanating from the core that is Eucharist itself. The plural gathers around the singular and Trinitarian reality, Christ present. Hymns communicate that which is made, bodies becoming the Body of Christ through Eucharistic gathering. The pronouns may merely describe the Body from within, that is, from the practice itself.

THE LYRICAL SACRAMENT: IDENTITY

It could not have been the intention of the Wesleys, nor even the interpretation of the Methodists, to experience the Eucharist as anything but an associative exercise in piety. The association bridged and unified all within the sacrament, a sacrament that had clear and known institutional ties. This conjunctive enthusiasm and renewed devotion to Eucharistic praxis no doubt confounded already tenuous British Reformed identities. What is more, there is an implicit liminal element in ritual that resists human claims to identity. And as the subtext of this paper has surfaced, the Holy Spirit has figured in some of this interpretation. One of the roles of the Holy Spirit, as developed in scripture

(Acts 2:5-12,) is to dissolve discrete identities through shared understanding and witness across linguistic-cultural divides. As action within the scope of a broad interpretation of Reformation and history, the Eucharistic revival the Wesleys convey unsettles our very conjectures of identity. The Spirit's actions "re-make" God's new community. The *HLS* express an experience of unity in Christ. Nonetheless, it is clear that Charles Wesley had in mind a foundational sacramental structure, including the *Book of Common Prayer*, the sursum corda, sanctus, consecration, epiclesis, etc.²¹⁸ This Anglican form of Methodist praxis is supplemented and enriched by hymns and hymn-singing. In the eighteenth-century, this practice was a mediation practice. Those unfamiliar or estranged from the Anglican communion and the meaning of its rite, the Eucharist, were connected via devotion and song to both ecclesial structures and a living historical tradition. The Wesleys "traditioned" the centrality of Eucharistic praxis. In this way, the *HLS* is a literary effort to supplement the experience of what may be called a normative Christian experience.

Given that the Wesleys and other "Methodist" leaders were nurtured and ordained in the Anglican tradition, it is logical that none of the 166 hymns contain the word "Methodist." And according to Heitzenrater's careful narrative of Methodist development, the *HLS* was first published just one year after the movement began to be "consolidated."²¹⁹ John Wesley utilized the same title, *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, for all of the editions published during his lifetime. And so, the Eucharistic lyrical poetry is that bridge of communication, both intra and extra. The lyrical use of pronouns is an

²¹⁸ Kathryn Nichols, "Charles Wesley's Eucharistic Hymns: Their Relationship to the *Book of Common Prayer*," *The Hymn* 39, no. 2 (1988): 13-21.

²¹⁹ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodist*, 147-149.

instructive intra-communicative method of allowing the Body to answer the question, “What are we doing here?” It is an extra- communicative method, an affirmation of the ecclesia’s doxological purpose, a collective prayer-offering to the God of Jesus Christ. Perhaps all we can say here is that some of the fledgling Methodists could not identify with what seemed to them a distant and cold Anglican formality in the liturgy. But those persons could identify with the desire, passion and encounter of lyrical poetry and song which portrayed the very meaning of the liturgy. And some Anglicans, John and Charles Wesley among them, could identify with the sacramental thrust and theology of the *Book of Common Prayer*, even as their piety was deflated somewhat by what seemed to them a mere formal rite of the status quo. The Wesleys and their expression functioned as bridge. Ultimately the Wesleys sought to express through the lyrical the clarity of revival, namely, the identity of Christ alive, crucified, risen and present. And in the *HLS* the “we,” the Body sharing in lyrical communication, ultimately yields to the presence and power and “identity” of the body and blood of Christ.

We have attempted to provide some interpretation of the evangelical/communicative within the sacramental and the *HLS* as a valid expression of Wesleyan integrative theology and spirituality. We conclude this chapter with a sense of the way the ritual is a universal performance, representing universal and enacted theological claims. Singing corporately seems to come to the edge of ritual, it is universally known to provide potential for unity in participation. Foundationally, all must eat and drink, all can sing.

LYRICAL POETRY AND CATHOLICITY: PARTICIPATION IN ECCLESIA

Here in “Hymns on the Eucharist” we find basic human projects which span cultures. Let us suspend the theological task only to pursue further the universal scope of these

focal practices: singing and ritual action. Put into the form of questions communities and cultures must pursue together, singing and ritual action are negotiating the answer to these fundamental questions: How do we share in nourishment? How do we express our deepest emotions? Ritual and song belong together in their ability to convey meaning because they “perform” both collective value and artistic expression. There is catholicity of need in terms of the *meaning* of food and drink. And within the perspective of praise and thanksgiving there is a common desire for cultures to share not only in song, but also song that typifies the human capacity for artistic expression. In the west we may want to construe these fundamental “universals” as the forces that shape both politics and art. Christians are those persons “called” to the particular Christological focus of politics and art. Ritual and song serve to intensify, craft, and memorialize their meaning. Christian practice heightens the purposive meaning of all manner of sharing: bodies, minds, hearts, and goods.

As this interpretation has developed, the Wesleys have come to signify eighteenth-century piety. They were holy in the sense that they sought to heighten both religious participation and its meaning for any English (and Irish for that matter) person willing to commit to the disciplines that would order human life for the betterment of physical and spiritual health. John Wesley himself defined holiness as a “habitual disposition of the soul,” and as that which, “directly implies, the being cleansed from sin...”²²⁰ For the Wesleys, discipline was the perceived need that would open the door toward sanctification. It is in the context of discipline, therefore, that we interpret both the Eucharist and the *HLS*. However, in this contemporary interpretation we cannot avoid an

²²⁰ Wesley, “Circumcision of the Heart” in *Works* 5:203.

issue that both reveals the Wesleyan focus on participation and conveys a problematic that, perhaps, is the direct result of an integrative and ordered “movement” of the Spirit becoming an institution. Any movement of the Spirit, as in the Wesleyan movement, that develops a strong connection between Eucharist and evangelism must wrestle with how to convey the depth of the ritual while simultaneously pursuing the ritual as an open opportunity for invitation and conversion.

EXCURSUS: THE CONTEMPORARY QUESTION OF THE OPEN TABLE

Much has been made of the fact that John Wesley considered the Eucharist a “converting ordinance.”²²¹ He saw in communion opportunity for God’s grace to pervade to such an extent that transformative conversion would be the result. And according to Randy Maddox, John Wesley viewed the Spirit as a universal and “prevenient” presence, a gift that convicted persons of sin. Since atonement was the emotive-cognitive catalyst for such conviction, certainly a liturgical event for reception of the Eucharist provided an ideal context for the universal work of the Spirit.²²² The *Duty of Constant Communion* was a tract of rhetorical persuasion. As we have seen, its aim was to coax persons who were imbalanced in their guilt consciousness (we might say hyper-convicted of their own sin) to gather for common worship. This advice was directed toward persons already conscious of the high stakes of living a life of faith. So,

²²¹ Matthew W. Charlton, “Evangelism, Hospitality, and the Eucharist,” *Doxology: A Journal of Worship* 20 (2003): 60-75; Charlton wishes to emphasize a unifying theme in Methodist Eucharistic thought, namely, Grace. He therefore rejects placing conversion prior to Grace in Eucharistic practice.

²²² Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 123.

as Karen Westerfield-Tucker argues, the Wesleys saw the Eucharist as a “means” to broaden the participant’s dormant reception of grace. It is difficult, therefore, to transpose John Wesley’s notion of the Eucharist as “converting ordinance” onto a contemporary context in which potential converts have no sense of the Christian narrative, and even less a sense of sin.²²³ But this does not dismiss the ever pervasive and universal presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the world, the evocative agent of the conviction of human sin.

Some of the United Methodist debate today revolves only around the inclusive without acknowledging the Spirit’s work of conviction of human sin. So it is the responsibility of the clergy to invite those to experience new life in the Spirit only through an acknowledgement of sin, as the United Methodist liturgy states: “Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another.”²²⁴ Only through the universal and personal acknowledgement of sin is the universal and personal communion with Christ authentic. This brief invitation which acknowledges sin is, in a sense, a portrayal of the Wesleyan insistence that evangelism and Eucharist coincide.

Today’s danger is an overly inclusive emphasis that de-sensitizes the participant to the weight of the Eucharistic moment. A certain degree of informal openness necessarily loses an attentive grip on the perception of presence. On the other hand, a danger lurks in construing the Eucharist only as a purging of acknowledged sin and thereby Eucharist

²²³ Karen Westerfield Tucker, “Table Etiquette: Means and Manners,” <http://www.gbod.org/worship/articles/table.html>. (accessed May 10, 2006).

²²⁴ *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 7.

can squelch the ever-pervasive possibility of common Grace. In the North American context perhaps there is an imbalance on the side of evangelism. In a desire for inclusion the weight of sin and therefore salvation becomes diminished. And I would say this is true for both those on the so called conservative “side” of Methodism as well as those on the more “liberal” side. A devoted participant need only sit with Charles Wesley’s poetry on how the Eucharist is a sign of the means of Grace to deepen understanding on the relation between sin, atonement and human healing. Hymn 39:

Sinners with awe draw near
And find thy Saviour here,
In his ordinances still
Touch His sacramental clothes
Present in His Power to heal,
Virtue from his body flows

His body is the seat
Where all our blessings meet
Full of unexhausted worth,
Still it makes the sinner whole,
Pours Divine effusions forth,
Life to every dying soul

Pardon and power, and peace,
And perfect righteousness
From that sacred Fountain springs;
Wash’d in His all cleansing blood
Rise ye worms, to priests and kings,
Rise in Christ, and reign with God

Sin and salvation are so close in this lyric, worms become kings. What is more, Christ’s body is the encounter point of “our” blessing. The joy and weight of existence inhere through participation. Our question is the extent to which participation itself informs the “debate.” That is, how can coming to know through participation alleviate the tensions between an all inclusive celebration and an existential experience of encounter and repentance? This debate regarding inclusion within Methodism is an echo

or form of ecumenical debate all manner of Protestants have with Catholicism. And one side of the debate, the side for inclusion (universalism without an “intensification” of sin) asks of Roman Catholicism: “why can’t non-Catholics receive communion in the context of a Mass?” There are any number of answers to that question from the Roman Catholic perspective, and each of them in some way may touch upon the relation between orthodoxy and ortho-praxis. If we allow the Wesleyan evangelical thrust of Eucharistic sharing to remain in the forefront, then we can explore the way Catholicism takes more time with its evangelical mandates. In Catholicism, participation begins in and through instruction so that there is an anticipatory building toward “first communion.”

In United Methodism, participation in some sense is more intensive and urgent and the Eucharist itself is the catalyst for instruction. In the absence of formal and instructive processes history manifests “Hymns on the Eucharist.” And this must have been the way the *HLS* functioned within the British Christian pluralistic context. The *HLS* didactic function surfaces as we focus on the relation between evangelism, Eucharist, a dormant Anglican sacramental structure and the Wesleyan revivalistic tendencies. If we take John Wesley’s intention, articulated in his movement defining tract, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, as an indication of his understanding of the didactic function of hymnody, then we conclude that hymns were that bridge of understanding between experience and doctrine. John Wesley wrote of the “doctrine” of Christian Perfection being conveyed in his preface to *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, which were to serve as participatory preserves of the meaning of salvation:

Not long after, I think in the Spring, 1741, we published a second volume of Hymns. As the doctrine was still much misunderstood, and consequently misrepresented, I judged it needful to explain yet farther upon the head; which was done in the preface...²²⁵

²²⁵ Wesley, *Works*: 11:378 (1958).

Hymns served as clarification for the rising tide of Methodism and its primary “teaching,” a going on toward greater and greater holiness.

The present debate within Methodism is not driven by the concern for Christian perfection or holiness, but rather fueled by the question, “How open is the table?” As I have intimated, I would agree with Westerfield-Tucker, that, in the case of Eucharistic participation, “converting ordinance” refers to those who have received faith, but have either not “received the Holy Spirit” or have “forgotten” their utter need of grace. It “does not refer to those who stand totally outside the Church and who have not faith at all.”²²⁶ And yet there is some important way in which the Eucharist “teaches.” So the question United Methodism wrestles with is whether it is appropriate to invite to the table even the pre-initiate. This author’s “answer” to the question of the open table feels temporary and somehow unstable, but that too is the inevitable gray area, the in-between or via-media bequeathed to Methodism by Anglican inheritance. Methodism must honor and transport its charism of evangelism even as it sees Eucharistic sharing as a tangible “end” of the invitation. Therefore it is advised that the invitation always be accompanied by an acknowledgement of human sin, as described in the liturgy in the *United Methodist Hymnal*.

²²⁶ Westerfield-Tucker, “Means and Manners.”

PARTICIPATION AND KNOWING

The question of the open table was not a question the Wesleys asked. Their question was what kind of practices make us holy? The outcome of those practices may result in inclusivity of some kind, but the primary thrust of Wesleyan spirituality is holiness. As we wrestle with contemporary Methodist identity, we must account for the degree to which that Wesleyan question is our question. And if it is not able to be a contemporary Methodist question due to the institutional structures of a North American denomination, does our question of the open table in some way signify the nature of United Methodist ecclesiology? Or, is it the nature of Methodism itself to bring the question of holiness into the expansive horizon of inclusivity? Our present question is less overwhelming, for we want to ask how the lyrical expression of Eucharistic participation brings clarity to faithful corporate response to God's grace? Our emphasis as we conclude this chapter is on how lyrical poetry---poetry on the poetry that is Eucharist itself---stimulates disciplined participation in the ecclesia. How does this poetry help the church to know itself ?

We have seen that the Wesleys' England was very different from our more secular context. All British citizens were in some way affiliated not only with a "parish," but a national religious entity known as the Church of England. John Wesley's editorial choice that placed George Herbert's universalist poetry (hymn 9) within the catholic tone of the *HLS* is instructive; it demonstrates what seems to us a homogenous Anglican ideal and catholic theology. As we have discussed, even if the lyrical poetry of the *HLS* was used more for individual moments of Eucharistic devotion, the language of the lyrics is so soaked with plural pronouns that there would be little merit in pursuing this devotion without gaining a broad and generous ecclesial consciousness.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE: SENSITIZING ECCLESIAL IDENTITY

All along we have been reflecting theologically on what may be deemed spiritual experience. Desire, encounter, the senses of presence and absence, the use of logic and the perceptual promise of poetics, all are conditions or actions garnered through the intentionality of participation. Though evolving through the period of Enlightenment, the Wesleyan movement's intellectual expression was focused almost exclusively on participatory avenues: sermons, essays, lyrical poetry, journals, prayers, rules, notes. In Wesleyan piety, knowing was conditioned through the "experiment" of evolving individual and corporate holiness. There is no theological system here. The "system," in the mind of the Wesleys, was already in place. Anglican theological sources supplemented, enhanced and revived by way of return to patristic and even medieval sources. The creative product of the movement was organizational, providing clear connections for intense spiritual growth through a comprehensive vision of discipleship. Prior to Eucharistic participation, however, the Wesleys certainly assumed an acknowledgement of human shortcomings, the fault, as Ricoeur has termed it. The epistemological frame of the *HLS* is a human awareness of some lack or need. What all Christians, according to the British Protestant piety of the time, should bring to the table is their utter lack. This is why there is such a focus on resembling atonement in the *HLS*. This resembling task brought the participant near to his own senses. Participation always does. And so we "look" into Charles Wesley's lyrics for what participation in poetry about poetry knows.

Participation is itself a dynamic way of knowing: knowing others, self, Christ, and even coming to terms with something like grace, e.g. "Amazing Grace." The language of the lyrical specifically targets the imagination. The "we" is invited to come

into a living knowledge of the kenotic event of Christ. Participation in the lyric has this anticipatory dimension of seeking, of going out in imagination, an empathic feeling with another.²²⁷ Often the lyric will invite the participants to focus on the sensate, to participate through eyes, touch, and hearing. The “image” comes to mind through engagement in and with the lyrical. Christ is said to “appear” (33)²²⁸ and the singer/reader is asked to look upon him (16). Sometimes the “we” is invited to see beauty (77) sometimes the ritual itself “shows” Christ (1) through “expressive bread.”(2) The reader/singer is asked to “behold” (21) and often it is God or Christ who sees the gathering (31, 58). A poetic midrash on the Gospel of John’s narrative of the crippled man waiting by the Bethesda pool (John 5:1-18), hymn 58 explains that Jesus first saw that man before healing him. Indeed, the way Charles Wesley invites the image and the sense of sight in both literal and metaphorical terms----seeing as understanding-----is reminiscent of John’s Gospel. Charles Wesley pleads for God to “give us eyes thy love to see.” (83)²²⁹

Touching is also indicative of hymns of the Eucharist. This is a foundation of sacramental poetry. In addition to the numerous references to tasting, eating and drinking, Charles Wesley employs words that evoke the sensate: the reader/singer is implored to “touch sacramental clothes.” (39) Since the Eucharist is the “place” of encounter, or in the words of Charles Wesley, where we “meet” Christ, it is a basic

²²⁷ For human characteristics of participation see William Thompson-Uberuaga, *Jesus and the Gospel Movement: Not Afraid to be Partners* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006),22-26; for an interpretation of John Wesley’s notion of temperament in relation to participation in the Divine life see, Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 131-134.

²²⁸ Parenthetical references in text are to hymn numbers in *EH*.

²²⁹ In addition to the hymns cited above, there are a host of others which accentuate the eyes, including 12, 18,28,29,50,64,76, among still others.

premise of rendering the ritual that touch be primary. The sacramental as mystery of the ordinary is given through the lyrics. Bringing transcendence and imminence “close,” Charles Wesley turns what seems to be a multi-layered phrase, calling the divine “Matter of Eternal Praise.”(21) The eternal is said to have matter! In the sacrament God matters, and the church is “made” when Christ becomes the central matter of the community’s life. Of course in the lyrical, sound also factors in Eucharistic practice.

Using the Lukan text of the road to Emmaus as a springboard, Charles implores the living Christ to “feed” our souls and “To thy followers speak.” In the following stanza, Grace has volume when the lyricist asks Christ to “unseal the volume of Thy grace.” In a reference to how the resurrected Christ opened both the minds of the disciples and the Holy Scriptures, Charles plays with the word “volume.” This lyric presents the participatory power of the Emmaus encounter with the risen one.

Unseal the volume of Thy grace
Apply the Gospel word
Open our eyes to see Thy face,
Our hearts to know the Lord. (29)

God is “heard” with more clarity and volume in the encounter at table. Hospitality, recognition, and “hearing” the voice of Christ only “matter” through participation. Lyrical poetry *develops* awareness and understanding very close to experience. It is, in a sense, “between” first and second order theological thinking.

At base, participation is an entry way to holiness through the door of the senses. The lyrical involves itself closely with the participant whose very senses become the ciphers for imagination. The belief world of the Christian is thus “sacramentalized” through an evangelical and sensate poetry. Charles Wesley himself has a grasp of the significance of

participation for faithful knowing. In hymn 30 the lyricist describes this way of knowing formed through the Holy Spirit.

The tokens of Thy dying love
O let us all receive
And feel the quickening Spirit move,
And sensibly believe.

According to this lyric, belief is “sensitized” in and through corporate worship. This is where the Spirit is active, and the Spirit is received in relation to the believer’s activity. Participation senses belief in ways that intellectual intensity alone cannot.

Participation as bodily engagement, enlivening the intellect, emotions, senses, and song, is a way of knowing that the lyrical both intensifies and reveals. This knowing is not categorical, that is true for all persons. It is not objective, that is, the perception of things in their essential nature.²³⁰ It is, however, common knowledge. Participation intensifies the mediation of weighty but common words. There is in participation both an intensity and integration of mind and heart through sensate experience.

CONCLUSION

The form and poetry of the lyrics demonstrate what I have called ecclesial consciousness, that awareness born of participation that forms individuals as Body into a dynamic organic exchange. If the *HLS* is received as a core text of the evolving Methodist tradition, then a mark of that tradition is simply a call to intensive participation; a Body gathered through liturgical acts engendering corporate holiness. From the Methodist viewpoint, the danger of the individualist piety, as we can clearly see

²³⁰ Gunter et al, *Wesley and the Quadrilateral*, 113.

in the United States and in some hymn texts, is that it empowers “believers” to embrace an illusory anthropological vision of Christian life. In this view, the “I,” it is assumed, is conditioned through liberalism’s pure autonomy only in relation to a loving and forgiving Jesus who died “for me.” Knowledge of Jesus is only knowledge of the “I” and its lack. The predecessor to this misconception, along with its roots in liberalism, may be what Wolfhart Pannenberg has called penitential pietism. Known for its “self aggression” and being “excessive,” it is, no doubt, what John Wesley was arguing against in his *Duty*, when he attempted to convince persons to receive grace together.

Pannenberg deems this penitential pietism as “virtual individualism” and “concerned primarily with individual salvation.” The “other” in this pietistic consciousness “was seen as another individual, wrestling similarly with the question of his or her eternal salvation.”²³¹ The perennial casualty of such piety is evident in some American forms of United Methodism, where persons on individual journeys gather around individual “preachers” in order to hear how to live another day. This is certainly true in communities where hymnody and/or Eucharist are either forsaken or deemed merely as liturgical trimmings. It is significant, therefore, that the United Methodist Church has developed a teaching document on the Eucharist. It is significant for at least two reasons. First, in our era of individualism it becomes very easy for denominational churches to forgo their traditions in favor of theologies of “what’s happening now.” Though vitality has something to do with the cutting edges of culture and academy there is often little depth to a church based solely on becoming a mega-church or a church focused on one or another theological position. And so a return to Eucharistic participation and

²³¹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Christian Spirituality*, 31-33.

understanding clearly brings United Methodism to a broad and alluring place in the development of its tradition.

Second, there is historical consistency here. For the revival of United Methodist identity coincides with a turn to more intensive Eucharistic practice. The Wesleyan revival insisted on a holistic praxis with theological depth. This depth, it was hoped, would be plumbed through lyrical poetry and Eucharistic participation. The following question reveals a fear however: Will *This Holy Mystery*, like the *HLS* themselves, become passing fad in United Methodism? Will this document languish, as did the *HLS*, into a rather obscure place in the tradition? Or is *This Holy Mystery* and the lyrical poetry that provides the roots for this heritage, to become a clear mandate and a attractive prospect for United Methodist praxis? And if it does, what could that mean for Methodist identity and ecumenical dialogue? To these questions we now turn.

Chapter Five: The Ecclesial and Ecumenical Significance of the *HLS*

This last chapter attempts to demonstrate the shape and significance of Methodist tradition in order that ecumenical mission remain central to United Methodist identity. In order to pursue this line of reasoning the historical, textual and theological findings of chapters two-four will be brought to bear on the question of Methodist ecclesial identity. In particular we will examine the *HLS* in relation to the latest Eucharistic manifestation of Methodist tradition, *This Holy Mystery*, a recent United Methodist teaching document. *This Holy Mystery*, it is argued, does not attend to the *HLS* enough. Perhaps if the *HLS* were more widely appropriated and studied by the United Methodist tradition, we may be

less inclined to characterize Methodist identity without an ecumenical vocation. Such a concern means that in the following there is an intra-Methodist dialogue going on. Particularly, the nature of United Methodist doctrine, sacramental praxis, and ecclesiology push the discussion. The focus is on demonstrating that Methodist identity without ecumenicity at the core is inconsistent with the poetic-theological nature of the tradition.

To pursue this discussion the meaning of tradition and Methodist tradition will be contextualized, especially in relation to the broader Roman Catholic tradition and its plural yet unified nature. As the discussion proceeds, Roman Catholic Eucharistic thought is engaged. The Methodist tradition as “sung theology” probes, supplements, questions and hopefully illumines the Roman Catholic Eucharistic categories of real presence and sacrifice. Methodist ecclesial identity is seriously questioned through a description of Methodist movements which resemble Roman Catholic orders and demonstrate the Methodist tradition’s developed organic structure. Since sacrifice especially is a recognizable shared emphasis of both the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and Wesleyan lyrical theology, this notion is explored in relation to variant ecclesial fields

When tradition is understood as an organic reality, then attention must be paid to that which is ignored (under-cultivated) or even dismissed as ineffective (cut out). Since Methodism is a young tradition relative to other Protestant and Catholic renderings of Christian existence, this tradition is still learning how to engage in the conversation of identity. An assumption here is that coming to terms with the meaning of doctrine, identity and tradition involves patient listening and edifying discussions. The foregoing therefore listens especially for easy dismissals and even attempts to give credence to the

dismissed notion, idea or motif in order that at least some of the “point” of this or that theological emphasis is not lost. This is true especially of the meaning of sacrifice and the more Catholic notion of “altar.” The latest Eucharistic expression of Methodist identity, *This Holy Mystery*, is critiqued for its tendency to neutralize the theological meaning of sacrifice, thereby undermining Methodism’s ecumenical potential. Through these investigations, Methodism’s particular charism as a participative musical tradition is affirmed. And the Eucharistic lyrical poetry is finally understood as a rich text that may only reach its full significance as it is embraced and indeed owned by the church catholic.

In terms of the Methodist tradition a tension and apparent ambivalence is certainly present. Such a tension, I argue, only enhances the vision of Methodism as an inherently ecumenical tradition. It should be exceedingly clear at this point in the discussion that there is no such thing as a “pure” Methodism, just as there can be no such thing as a “pure” Catholicism. There is, however, unending and constructive analysis of the perennial revelatory categories of God, Christ, Church; categories traditioned most predominantly and commonly in Eucharistic assemblies.

LOCATING TRADITION

Tradition has a variety of meanings. Edward Farley has described four helpful entry points into understanding the nature of tradition. These ways of description also clarify the contemporary context in that Farley’s definitions themselves are in some way a retrieval of significance for tradition in the post-modern era. Farley sees tradition as: connected to the sacred, “the way the divine presences itself” in history. But there is

more, for the sacred dimension is not merely “past.” “The mystery here is the mystery of a past wisdom that is somehow contemporary...a living remembrance.”

Secondly, tradition provides wisdom, not merely aphoristic clarity, but an insight into reality, “the way things are.” Though Farley acknowledges that our contemporary times warrant a healthy skepticism toward the universalizing tendencies of any tradition, it is clear that the particular “truth and wisdom” of a limited people can provide insight for any people, even people who are far beyond the chronological and geographical circumstances of the tradition. A third entry point is that the wisdom shared from tradition gives it a certain authority. Here Farley intimates the complex inter-reactions between the development of enlightenment and reformational notions of human autonomy and the enduring efficacy of tradition. But as the *HLS* show, there is a danger in a sense of autonomy unhinged from the bonds of community. The ecclesial consciousness affirmed in the previous chapter reveals a healthy alternative to a pure and therapeutically driven self-rule. Tradition as authority tempers the authority of the self and provides both epistemological and moral alternatives.

Finally, tradition “carries memory.” For Farley, the human act of memory must have “vehicles” in order to carry meaning through time. These “carriers” of memory are the media and forms of expression: both oral and ritual forms, “repeated narratives of a tribe, a liturgical tradition, or a collection of texts.”²³² Theologians are generally more concerned with this fourth description of tradition. But as is evident from all four descriptions, any discussion of tradition and identity will engage in these four dimensions of the idea and question of tradition. The fourth entry point may be construed in terms

²³² Farley, *Deep Symbols*, 29-36, passim.

of anthropology: every human culture finds ways to transport the founding and edifying memory into the present in order to form identity. Or, from “within” the western theological tradition, the fourth dimension may be construed both theologically and institutionally. Speaking theologically, it is a “revelatory event” that lives through the forms of human expression, both corporate and individual. Speaking institutionally, it is the “deposit of faith” that captivates a social entity and provokes a duty toward preservation and proclamation, be it through word or sacrament or both.²³³

In this interpretation of the *HLS* and Methodist identity, we are concerned primarily with these theological categories of revelation and institutional perpetuity. More specifically, this discussion is limited to the way tradition “works” in Farley’s fourth way. In the following then, “tradition” refers to the inter-relationship of form and content. As the tradition comes to form in new contexts, is there some way particular expressions more appropriately communicate the specified tradition?

TRADITION’S CONTENT AND FORM: TRADITION AND TRADITIONING

Tradition means the *content* of that which is handed on; the intrinsic core of teaching, the thrust inherent in the life world of a particular social entity. Tradition also refers to the *process* by which that content is transmitted. The methods that carry forth in time the particular teachings a tradition bequeaths. Tradition carries itself within sermons, hymnody and ritual. Form and content are symbiotic such that there is probably some *via media* between the modern communications theorist Marshall McLuhan’s notion that the “medium is the message” and a singular and limited notion that there is some purity of

²³³ Friedrich von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion*, vol. 1, 50-55; Von Hügel informs such classifications, especially his notion of Religion having three elements: the institutional, reasonable and

doctrine that always comes forth.²³⁴ We have named the creative process of “handing on” as traditioning. Traditioning is the process that is able to bring the “durable” and “abiding” forth in the context of “handing it on.” Organic metaphors are an apt conceptual tool for tradition. Indeed, religion’s growth is like “the growth of the body, which over time develops and changes while remaining the same.”²³⁵ Content comes to be expressed in fresh ways in different contexts. The anatomy of just one example of that process was shared in chapter three. John Wesley’s editorial choices and Charles Wesley’s poetic work drawn from Brevint are an expression of that process. The restoration of tradition as experiential defines early Methodism’s primary thrust. In the British context and beyond, Methodism has relied heavily on new forms in order to respond to new situations. One thinks first of hymns and secondly perhaps of North American revival meetings and a final example may be highly technical organizational ecclesial polity, a bureaucracy evolving and formalized in the twentieth century. Each of these forms carried something of the sanctifying and participatory thrust of Methodism. Methodism has been effective in responding to the particularity of varied contexts, be they Irish, Scottish, North American or elsewhere.²³⁶ Such a dynamic response often means that Methodism remains committed less to “doctrine” and more to praxis. Or, the form of the praxis leaves some dimension of the revelation or teaching in dimmer light. So there is an inevitable inseparability of form from content, as well as the potential

mystical. Each element “touches” upon each other, not unlike my interpretation of Farley’s descriptions interacting.

²³⁴ Thomas G. Guarino, “Tradition and Doctrinal Development: Can Vincent of Lérins Still Teach the Church?,” *Theological Studies* 67, no. 1 (2006): 34; see also Marva Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down*, 254-259; Dawn wrestles with this tension, particularly in relation to the Protestant traditions.

²³⁵ Guarino, 36.

²³⁶ David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 81-84.

horizon of authentic integration of “teaching” and participation. In the creative response of hymns on the Eucharist, our concern presently is the question of that which was gained and that which was lost. In the *HLS*, what of Brevint remains the same, what changes? From the Wesleys to Rattenbury what is lost or gained? From Rattenbury to *This Holy Mystery*, what is affirmed, what is lost? By exploring these questions we may see traditioning at work and conjecture an interpretation of Methodist identity. These questions assume that some organic process has left contemporary interpretation to us. If that assumption is based on illogical grounds, or is not the task of Methodist theology as such, then Methodism must be able to articulate its intrinsic identity with clear theological and ecclesiastical criteria. But since Methodism is, in a sense, an exemplary case of the responsive dynamism of many and varied theological and political appropriations, then the current horizon of Methodist identity can be explored and hopefully clarified. And an answer to these questions will perhaps pinpoint a Eucharistic offer to the ecumenical task, thereby preserving Methodism’s very purpose and identity within that particular framework of ecclesial/catholic meaning. In short, how do *HLS* fit into the United Methodist and Catholic traditions? Answering the question brings critical reflection to the nature of tradition itself, a process of gain and loss, dying and new life. That process is as existential as it is institutional.

METHODIST TRADITION

The Methodist tradition is in its infancy relative to the Christian tradition as a whole. An attempt to affirm particular currents of this tradition is complicated by the fact that Methodism initially saw itself in terms of a *ressourcement* (to borrow a modern term) of

the first three centuries of Christian history.²³⁷ This is true, at least, of the early Oxford Methodism which Richard Heitzenrater has contextualized. Heitzenrater notes that the earliest Methodists were simply diligent in fulfilling the expectations Oxford University placed on their students. What made Methodists distinctive, according to Heitzenreiter, was the “peculiar combination of activities and personalities that composed the movement...the intensity and persistence with which their ‘methods’ permeated (or were intended to permeate their lives).”²³⁸ Components of those peculiar activities included scholarship, devotion and social outreach. And relevant to this argument, “the public did not take any notice of them until they began, toward the end of 1730, to attend regularly the Sacrament at Christ Church and to visit the prisons and the poor folk in town.”²³⁹

As we have seen, the emphasis on regular Eucharistic praxis was engendered through their return to the ancient sources, which they believed conveyed the importance of daily participation in the ritual. In this way, John and Charles Wesley lived out a retrieval of tradition and forecast the French Catholic movement from which I borrowed the term at the beginning of this section (*ressourcement*). Many throughout history are visionaries and can capitalize on certain intellectual currents. Few have the persistence to carry out these visions en masse, and it seems that with John Wesley at the helm, and Charles providing the media of lyrical poetry, the Methodist *ressourcement* was popularized and brought many under its compassionate tutelage. The pre-Vatican II, largely French Catholic theological movement was one of “Catholic theological creativity” and involved

²³⁷ Gunter, et al, *Wesley and the Quadrilateral*, 73-74.

²³⁸ *Mirror and Memory*, 85-86.

²³⁹ *Ibid*, 86.

a return to patristic sources, liturgical renewal and an explicit effort to make ancient sources more accessible. Many theologians of this caste were derided and punished, and some intellectual careers were stymied due to hierarchical resistance. This twentieth century Catholic *ressourcement* sought to integrate the hermeneutical enterprise, thereby re-unifying theology. In an effort to make theology more applicable to the modern, two theologians of the *nouvelle theologie* made relevant medieval and patristic texts available to a wider audience, thus echoing John Wesley's appreciation for getting the right texts to the right people for ortho-praxis.²⁴⁰ Our comparison could go further, bringing the nineteenth century Oxford movement to bear on this discussion, the struggles and conversion of John Henry Newman may apply, and thereby we would place Newman in some tangential curvature within the Wesleyan strand. Certainly the historical contexts, ecclesial particularity and geographical differences would make for clear lines of delineation and difference here. And an acknowledgement of the way Reformation thought was a *ressourcement* is necessary. But the major distinction that must be made between the Wesleyan and *nouvelle theologie* efforts and the work of Zwingli, Calvin and others is that of the location of the interpreter. Today we would describe this as "social location." The location of Zwingli and Calvin is not, however, that of the economically oppressed and such a clarification is necessary since the term derives from an interpretation of class. Whether we utilize the term social location or some derivative thereof, the point is that self-identification is determinative of the conclusions any

²⁴⁰ See Susan K. Wood, "Henri DeLubac: Theologian of the Church," *Theology Today* 62 (2005):318-319; also, Fergus Kerr, "Rebels with a Cause: Twentieth Century Roman Catholic Theologians," 297-304 in *ibid*; Kerr reminds the reader that though Barth faced resistance with modernist critics, his reputation and "place" in history were stabilized and secure relative to the trouble faced by DeLubac, Danielou, Chenu, Congar and their American colleague John Courtney Murray.

hermeneut of tradition might draw.²⁴¹ Zwingli and Calvin's "location" of hermeneutical retrieval was understood by them as ruptured from a corrupt sacramental structure. The Wesleys, early Methodists and the Catholic *ressourcement* movements considered their retrieval from within the sacramental structure, even if that structure had become static or debilitating. Though obvious, this distinction is significant in the way tradition is interpreted, construed and articulated. The Wesleys' work at renewal from within has drawn Methodism into a mediating role in the modern and contemporary ecumenical field. The roots of mediation derive from a generosity from "within" a sacramental structure and even acknowledge, perhaps, the theological necessity of rupture. There is no question that John Wesley appreciated the Anglican appropriation of Luther's insight into the nature of Grace. But he was quick to bring balance to the incipient "grace alone" consequences of quietism and became suspicious of Luther's interpreters, especially the Moravians.²⁴² And Charles Wesley's appreciation of scripture has been compared to Luther's understanding of scripture as "sacrament." But both Wesleys were skeptical of "separation," making unity a genuine witness to God's purposes.²⁴³

The "location" of the retriever of tradition certainly influences how retrieval itself is both understood and carried out. Frank Senn has remarked that one of the dangers of generous appropriations and additions into what he calls the "cradle" of the catholic tradition is that the "gospel" has been smothered at times. Accumulation can help the

²⁴¹ See Tyron L. Inbody, *The Many Faces of Christology*, 108-114 for the significance of "social location" in Christology.

²⁴² Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodist*, 135.

²⁴³ See Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, 215-231, for Charles' views of Scripture and Sacrament; Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 320-321; for an appraisal of John of Wesley's pluralistic appropriations, including the Lutheran; also, though the event's significance is contended, John Wesley's experience of his strangely warmed heart took place as he overheard Luther's commentary on Galatians, Wesley, *Works* 1: 103 (1958).

community to forget even as its intentions are to remember. He also acknowledges that when throwing out “excess quilts and toys,” there is a danger of throwing out the baby (gospel).²⁴⁴ The interpretive task of utilizing the tradition requires balance, which, as we will see demands a certain philosophical distancing from both events and texts.²⁴⁵

What is clear from both Heitzenrater’s interpretation of John Wesley and the developed theme of this argument is that the search for tradition’s relevance in early Methodism was driven by the desire to enliven people with a practical sense of a holistic faith.²⁴⁶ In the traditioning efforts of John and Charles Wesley we see a genuine effort to inform and empower people in their praxis, in short enabling deeper appreciation for the participatory nature of salvation.

The production of the *HLS* exemplifies the appropriation of tradition for praxis. The *HLS* come from the desire to restore an ancient emphasis on Eucharist in conjunction with the seventeenth century doctrine about said practice. But the form of these appropriations was the real catalyst of more regular and informed practice. This form of lyrical poetry elicited participation and touched upon the particulars of Eucharistic experience. The content of many of the hymns in this collection, however, are so focused on the assumed relationship between the ritual and unity, that it is evident that something of the content of the lyrical poetry was lost on the developing “Methodist” tribe. Since *This Holy Mystery* calls upon this text in a contemporary context of United Methodist Eucharistic renewal, it behooves us to reflect on the relationship between the Wesleyan

²⁴⁴ Frank C. Senn, *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), xix.

²⁴⁵ See Werner G. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 71, for a discussion of Ricoeur’s sense of the necessity of “distancing;” an emphasis taken up later in this chapter.

²⁴⁶ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People*, 320-321.

tradition of ecclesial unity and the present practice of the ritual, its ultimate end and purpose.²⁴⁷

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONTEMPORARY AFFIRMATIONS

It is important to remember that the recent document on United Methodist Eucharistic teaching is in line with the Wesleyan focus on *ressourcement* as we have described it above. This document attempts to enliven practice by returning to the tradition, including the originating economy of retrieval, praxis and revival the Wesleys envisioned and accomplished. At this point in these concluding reflections a focus on the question of the meaning of formal and official documents must precede attention to the document itself in relation to the *HLS*. What is happening with a denomination when it senses the need for clarification in relation to its rituals? And why do rituals become the primary focus for United Methodist education regarding tradition and identity?

Perhaps a century ago the Methodist ecclesial structure's desire was to bring identifiable theological emphases in line with organizational polity.²⁴⁸ Today, it seems the security of the American liberal tradition cracks under the weight of fragmentation and a democratic cynicism. The turn to ritual is a sign or response, perhaps, to political and societal transition. For the fragmentation of which we speak is highly evident within the mainline Methodist house. And so the attempt to refine theological meaning for "Methodist" worship is a risky business. As the study guide to *This Holy Mystery* says,

²⁴⁷ The sense of unity is clear in 83% of the *HLS* containing the plural pronoun. The "we" refers to the ecclesial dimensions of religious experience. In addition there is more explicit reference to unity in hymns 13,37,52,60,91,93,96,100,104,111,113,132,144,165.

²⁴⁸ Robert Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism*, 185-186.

much time and effort was spent listening to world-wide concerns about the Eucharist.²⁴⁹ These “listening posts” convey a particular Methodist concern for inclusivity in process, and a certain desire to remain open to a variety of constituencies. The concern for the universal and multi-cultural scope of United Methodism is clearly evident in the “method” of discerning the meaning and clarification of Eucharistic renewal. In addition, one gets the sense that in the midst of fragmentation, United Methodist unity can be renewed through a concerted effort at conveying afresh the core of the ritual tradition Methodism has forged. *This Holy Mystery* is the second of such documents, the first being a statement on Baptism, agreed upon at the General Conference of 1996. When a movement or ecclesial body begins to formalize by bringing clarity and setting the parameters to their rituals, something vital is afoot in the evolution of tradition. United Methodism has chosen to define itself primarily in relation to its habits of worship. Both *This Holy Mystery* and *By Water and the Spirit* take their titles from the liturgies which are largely a response to the catholic churches 20th century liturgical movement, especially its post-Vatican II Methodist manifestation.²⁵⁰

There are at least two ways, therefore, that the current United Methodist emphasis on ritual captivates and clarifies the evolving tradition. First, official teaching documents about ritual seek to transcend a fragmented and broken body, thereby pointing to the potential of United Methodist unity in the midst of ambiguity. Indeed, the inability to share, communicate and understand perceived appropriations of the tradition within the

²⁴⁹ *This Holy Mystery*, 5.

²⁵⁰ See James F. White, “Where the Reformation was Wrong on Worship,” *Christian Century* 99, no.33 (1982): 1074-1077; and “A Protestant Worship Manifesto,” *Christian Century* 99, no. 3 (1982): 82-86.

context of diverse United Methodist expressions of North American Christianity make reflection on ritual a generous prospect for understanding. Secondly, ritual identifies a people in a way intellectual and doctrinal statements cannot. The “root metaphor” of a culture, as George Worgul has explained it, is revealed in rituals. The “root metaphor” is a “corporate ground and basis for a common interpretation of experience and, from this, corporate life and action.”²⁵¹ To identify and bring denominational reconciliation, these are at least two roles of the renewed attention to ritual in United Methodism.

Official documents signify, in large part, a tradition coming to terms with itself. Methodism in general and United Methodism in particular have spent a lot of time and energy attempting to clarify the tradition. One could interpret the Methodist tradition as an evolving effort to pursue the question of identity.²⁵² So close has Methodism been to the dominant culture and yet so potentially counter-cultural, it has thrived on coming to grips with its own intrinsic theological diversity.²⁵³ The *HLS* as expressions of Methodism’s root metaphor demonstrate such diversity. At base they are evangelical renderings of catholic experience. The lyrical poetry of *HLS* were a fresh interpretation of reformed England’s ritual structure because they re-shaped the Eucharist as both celebratory and confessional. Note that this eighteenth century liturgical development precedes the emphasis on celebration implicit in the Eucharistic renewal of the twentieth century. Doxology and the catharsis of confession belong within a potent and holistic spiritual experience. The word of Grace and the enacted word are clearly brought

²⁵¹ Worgul, “Ritual as the Interpreter of Tradition,” 143-144.

²⁵² See Clive Marsh, et. al, *Unmasking Methodist Theology*, for a British example of “coming to terms.”

²⁵³ Hempton, 206-207.

together in the *HLS* in a way that foreshadows the ecumenical liturgical movement.²⁵⁴

The United Methodist concern, evident in the careful appropriation of the Brethren roots of the evolving Methodist tradition in *This Holy Mystery*, can reveal too in the hymnological and word centered focus for interpretation of the sacramental core of Christianity. This is to say that the richness of hymns on Eucharist is a strong anchor which sustains the diverse expressions of Methodism into a common ground. However, an anchor ought not be confused with the ship itself. *This Holy Mystery* clarifies the Eucharist but does not explicitly outline what the Eucharist might mean as a sign of Methodism's intrinsic ecumenical role.

AFFIRMATIONS IN THE FACE OF DOCTRINAL AMBIGUITY

In this interpretation we have characterized Wesleyan Christianity and Methodism itself as a creative response to tensions in the wider Christian tradition. The media of hymnody and other pragmatic media are often caught within the tensions. And if the Methodist tradition attempts to rely solely on hymnody to derive so called Methodist doctrine, the fullness of hymnody as practical theology is missed. Hymns can be “used” as are John Wesley’s sermons or essays or journals, as mere “proof” for a supposed vision of Wesleyan and United Methodist meaning and theology. The tensions of which we speak lay bare the very process of tradition. And when tradition is used as a static proof for agenda driven classifications, creativity and the weight of the profound call of God are missed. Robert Chiles describes this Methodist problem nicely:

²⁵⁴ See, White, “A Protestant Worship Manifesto,” 85; and see Dwight Vogel, *Food For Pilgrims: A Journey with Saint Luke*, 70-71, for a “United Methodist” inter-penetration of confession and celebration.

Between the demand for theological integrity and the demand for theological relevance inevitably there seems to be a dialectical tension. In Methodism, both demands have had their servants.²⁵⁵

These doctrinal operations and the tension could be the inevitable result of a “movement” made into the institution of a “church,” thereby perpetuating the internal ambivalence of John Wesley’s response to both British and North American Methodists who desired a “break” from the Church of England. What is more, maintaining the balance between theological integrity and theological relevance requires adept grounding in both the evangelical imperative and the truth of salvation. When, for example, John Wesley’s writings become used as the sole source of what Methodists ought to believe, the very generosity of Wesley’s theological appropriations are lost. Perhaps an appropriate gift of such singular interpretation is John Wesley himself, for his life was clearly a proven integration of relevance and integrity. And yet this singular focus ought to be open to conjecture and interpretation of other voices, expanding the lens of tradition in Methodism. As the *HLS* demonstrate, there is an *ecclesial* corroboration in the very process of hymn production. Multiplicitous strands of tradition are incorporated in response to a new context for evangelism.

Chiles’ “tension” can be perceived negatively as “ambiguity” or worse yet as doctrinal confusion. However, we may find that with the salient emphasis on praxis within the United Methodist life-world, the breadth of the tradition is re-discovered through practice. In this way, it is as though doctrine is revealed to be true, affirmed, even deepened, as engagement in human connections and sacramental conditions are renewed. Doctrine is, in a sense, behind all praxis and certainly can be intellectually embraced and

²⁵⁵ Chiles, 198.

questioned from outside the existential structure of engagement. But doctrine is “revealed” through action and encounter.²⁵⁶ Through praxis doctrine “lives,” it is understood and clarified through engagement with texts, people, outreach and connectional ministry. United Methodism’s official foray into the meaning of ritual is a healthy response to a variegated and often fractured denominational structure. Ritual is engagement in the deep symbols of tradition, and reflection on ritual necessarily remains close to the classical doctrines of the catholic tradition. It is also a sign of an ecclesial body coming to deeper appreciation of the role and character of its own ecclesial grounding. Official documents on ritual can at once identify a particular tradition but also there is the danger of defining a social entity to the extent that the ecumenical goal is thwarted. In effect, the official document describes an anchor with little attention to the lines which tie it into a broad, historically shaped and universal church. These limitations can be ameliorated however, when the affirmed identity carries within itself openness to the ecumenical future.

The “problem” of Methodist doctrine involves a tension between relevance and integrity. And as a bridge movement, Methodism displays a problem at the heart of the Christian tradition as a whole. But that tension also provides strength for renewal. The strength comes from the creativity of form that remains grounded in both doctrine and relevance. Methodism identifies itself humbly as a tradition driven by creativity in an effort to remain true to relevance and revelation.

²⁵⁶ See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone*, 90-91, for a description of the way revelation and dogma interact in encounter.

If compared to Roman Catholic or Lutheran catechetical renderings of teaching, United Methodism is bereft of such doctrinal expression. There are “official doctrinal standards” which are statements embraced from the Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodist traditions, but in the years since the 1968 merger an emphasis on the theological criteria for reflection has been confused with the “doctrinal standards” of United Methodism.²⁵⁷

METHODIST TRADITION AND THE DIDACTIC POWER OF SONG

United Methodism has inherited an expressive theology through its hymnic charism. Methodist theology has been characterized as practical and “sung.” If taken as complementary theologians, John and Charles Wesley are interpreted as grounding a full liturgical tradition, integrating creative lyricism and traditional liturgical order with bold preaching.²⁵⁸ This liturgical emphasis has differentiated Methodist tradition from more propositional theological traditions like Catholicism. Nevertheless hymnody has an experiential cast that presents an intellectual process to the attentive participant. This impact greets and integrates affective faith into a holistic and learned Christianity.

²⁵⁷ See Gunter, et al, *Wesley and the Quadrilateral*, 10, for an accurate description of the confusion that resulted when, in 1972, the doctrinal standards of the newly formed United Methodist Church got misinterpreted as the “Quadrilateral,” that is, theological method involving the appropriation of scripture, tradition, reason and experience. In short doctrinal standards became theological criteria such that United Methodists might begin to say, “We believe in scripture, reason, tradition and experience,” rather than “we understand the role of theological sources and utilize the quadrilateral in our theological reflection.” The “quadrilateral” is basically what most traditions understand to be sources for theological reflection in the modern/postmodern era.

²⁵⁸ See Geoffrey Wainwright, *Methodists in Dialog*, 172 ; also Chilcoate, *Recapturing the Wesleys’ Vision*, 15.

Hymnody has a functional role in faith formation, and one must acclaim that role as one of the original intentions of the Wesleys' hymnic project. Through hymns doctrine sticks and is remembered.

In the previous chapter we explored a phenomenology of collective hymn singing in order to describe the ecclesial/social-ethical potential of hymnody. We now seek to draw some conclusions about singing as an experiential and cognitive process. To refine the discussion, the two mental processes of memorization and remembering will serve as related active signs of the way hymn-singing teaches motifs in theology in general and Eucharistic theology in particular. The Methodist tradition's original production of hymnody and subsequent liturgical and spiritual habits make singing and music a core stimulus for Methodist identity. In the context of the Roman Catholic-Methodist dialogue, Catholics have found "recognition" in Charles Wesley's hymns, especially the Eucharistic hymns.²⁵⁹ The following, therefore, seeks to point to possible implications for this common appreciation, inviting the Catholic tradition to consider a path toward constructive educational potential for hymnic experience.

Paul Ricoeur has explored the distinction between remembering and memorization. In memorization one is actively appropriating "the ways of learning relating to forms of knowledge, know-how, capacities marked...by a feeling of facility, ease, spontaneity, in such a way that these are fixed and remain available for activation." Memorization is that process through which one finds a method to retain and actualize a memory. Certainly the Wesleys saw hymnody as a "method" to memorize the faith, for poetry is perhaps the most effective and efficient way to memorize. Its rhythm and rhyme collude and

²⁵⁹ Wainwright, *Methodists in Dialog*, 41.

conspire to wear a deep groove in the brain's circuitry. In this way memorization and hymnody are part of the paideia of Methodism. Chilcoate accentuates the way in which the ancient Greek notion of paideia implied discipline. In the case of the tradition of Methodism, hymnody may be understood as a discipline in memorization.²⁶⁰ But memorization is, in a certain sense, only a step in the developed process toward deeper reflection on that which has become memory. Memorization is the pre-cursor and stepping stone in the matrix of spirit and intellect toward remembering. Ricoeur notes too that the methods of memorization carry the instructor's authority. Memorization invites the memorizer to engage certain texts offered by the guide or teacher. Hymnody has that kind of role in Methodism too. Originally, as discussed in our first chapter, the *HLS* were an authoritative response to Moravian Eucharistic error. The Methodists imbibed the *HLS* as "correct" Eucharistic renderings of the faith. This doctrinal agenda cannot be overlooked, for we would ignore the theological and political potency of hymnody otherwise. As we shall see, the rejection of certain sacrificial themes in the *HLS* is a direct result of perceived theological irresponsibility.

Tied to the authority of the instructional guide in memorization is its capacity to unite in the social bond. Ricoeur deems this power memorization's political aspect.²⁶¹ The danger in hymnody lies in a faith that ceases to bridge memorization to remembering. And perhaps memorization fails to be drawn into the process of remembering when lyricism is disconnected from a sacramental structure.

²⁶⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 2004) 58; Chilcoate, *Recapturing the Wesleys' Vision*, 67-68.

²⁶¹ Ricoeur, *Memory*, 60.

Obviously, hymnody's function is not limited to memorization. Hymnody as experiential has a deeper didactic function, and has the capacity to engender practices of remembering, practices which could broadly be defined as the task of anamnesis. For Ricoeur, remembering is constituted when "the emphasis is placed on the return to awakened consciousness of an event recognized as having occurred before the moment when consciousness declares having experienced, perceived, learned it."²⁶² Remembering has the potential to expand consciousness, to recreate or become recreated into an event experienced as grace perhaps. Perceptions repeat through remembering and through such repetition earlier memories may be retained, opened out or even re-interpreted. Ricoeur's use of "awakened" is helpful here, for the lyrical has the capacity to awaken more than one memory simultaneously, in effect binding the Story of Christ to the story of the Christian. Remembering has its specific didacticism involving affective and intellectual habits of integration. This is Methodism's experiential emphasis sounded in the tradition's hymnological charism. Music and song, therefore, have this role in illuminating Eucharistic teaching, giving the Catholic tradition a way of liturgical knowing that may enrich its propositional clarity.

There are at least three ways music and song "teach" the significance of Eucharistic experience. The first way has to do with sound. Sound and silence is another couplet that may be added to the tension described in chapter four between desire/encounter, apophatic/kataphatic, presence/absence and poetics/logic. We find that Augustine interpreted this couplet within music as an indication of the "alternation of the coming into being and the passing into non-being which must characterise a universe out of

²⁶² Ibid, 58.

nothing.”²⁶³ Ordered sound that breaks in upon silence affirms that which we seem to know, namely, that something comes from nothing. In the Judaic and Christian traditions this is *creatio ex nihilo*. Sound fractures meaningless silence, creating an audible order where there was nil. Sound and silence also activate, perhaps, a memory of logos sounding through the manifestation of Christ, a given expression in the life-world of the Gospel of John. Singing catches one up in the “something” of creation, thereby also echoing a participation in presence, a Eucharistic given.

Secondly, when interpreted through the lens of Augustine, music is the “science of proper modulation.” There is a sense of harmony and balance that is evoked through music heard and sung. Given Augustine’s metaphysical assumptions, such modulation is a limited representation of the “music” of the entire universe, a harmonious whole of modulated relations. And ultimately, such harmony can evoke in the participant the memory of the diverse tones of the Trinity yielding the one sound. What is more, this harmony, or polyphony, is a dimension of our experience that lies “beyond our reasonable grasp.” On the page the notes can be analyzed and even “remembered” as singular etchings of sound to be made audible. But when “sounded” the tones create a fullness that is multidimensional.²⁶⁴ Singing is an intentional method of expressing one’s part of the complex inter-relationships that govern an ordered reality. The rich diversity of lyricism, its moods and tones, can also inform and modulate the liturgical assemblies’ overall Eucharistic tone.

²⁶³ Catherine Pickstock, “Music: Soul, City and Cosmos After Augustine,” in *Radical Orthodoxy*, ed. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, 243-277 (New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 1999), 247.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 246-247.

Furthermore, the working out of history brings contextual emotive and intellectual diversification to Eucharistic celebrations, as does the liturgical calendar. These may be “modulated” through particular tonal and lyrical renderings of the memories of Jesus. Now the Eucharist is made to be an emphatic confessional rite due to either collective or individual sin (or individual sin which affects the collective). Now the Eucharist is a rite of radical celebration in the midst of perceived acts of God in the community and world. Now the Eucharist brings the heart of the ordinary to bear, pointing to the way in which the whole created order involves rhythmical familiarity of waking and sleeping, eating and drinking. Hymnody that is as diverse as the Wesleyan Eucharistic corpus teaches the participant that the faithful need not contrive joy, equanimity or repentance, rather, these hymns inform all of these spiritual and theological inevitabilities.

The third way music and singing “teaches” is related to the above. Both music and participation through music give the sense that the tension or destructive tendencies in human relationships can be overcome. Reconciliation is possible and people can, indeed, “make beautiful music together.” The forgiveness of God expressed in Eucharistic prayers is supplemented by the sounds of different voices coming to share in the one reverberation. Like the forgiveness that Christ’s paschal mystery shares, music denotes the possibility of the resolution of tensions. With music there is tenderness, this was known for the ancient Greeks, as Plato conveyed substantive legal ideas through persuasive musical compositions.²⁶⁵ Music makes conversion “easier on the ear.” As

²⁶⁵ William Thompson, “Eric Voegelin: A Pre-Nicene Christian?,” *The Ecumenist* 38 (2001):12; also Elaine Ramshaw, *Ritual and Pastoral Care*, 30-33.

with ritual, music itself deals well with the tension inherent in the human propensity toward ambivalence. In both ritual and music, resolution is taught and enacted.

Catherine Pickstock has called this a “musical ontology” and suggests that for Augustine, the “proper modulations” belong also to the relations between soul and body. Singing and music teach us that the body is the soul’s instrument. The soul is given proper extension through the singing body. The soul’s attraction toward doxology is given full integrative voice through music. Through music and song the soul and body find their proper measure and modulation, especially within a doxological context. Only God incarnate, however, possesses the correct ordering of soul and body. As Christ’s body the imperfect church reflects through song the tones of the incarnation, God’s perfect ordering of soul and body. Pickstock puts it this way:

For Augustine, therefore, the highest music in the fallen world, the redemptive music, is initially corporeal rather than psychic, although it is the cure of the soul. It is none other than the repeated sacrifice of Christ himself which is the music of the forever repeated Eucharist.²⁶⁶

Pickstock’s metaphor that music is Eucharist resonates with the tone of chapter four, namely that lyrical form is Eucharistic form. From whichever angle the metaphor is employed one finds a thick ecclesial reality. Singing is a collective act ordering soul and body and Eucharist a ritual ordering the giftedness of creation. The *HLS* bring a creative and powerful fusion of these liturgical acts, a fusion through which singing and Eucharist can mutually enhance and intensify each other.

Practicing hymnody within the context of Eucharist and liturgy has implications for learning theological truths. Memorization and remembering are two active cognitive

²⁶⁶ Pickstock, 264.

“methods” that share in this learning process. Though Methodist tradition contains a propositional gap in its theological tradition, a fuller experiential grasp of theological motifs is certainly present. When connected to the conversational and ecumenical theologies of more propositional traditions, Methodism’s “sung theology” can broaden its own and others’ theological territory.

The propositional “thinness” of Methodism is redeemed, moreover, as history reveals a people fully engaged in service to the greater good of humanity. A renewal of ritual can become, in some sense, a pre-reflective exercise that reminds the body/Body of the reasons for such self-sacrificial service. When self-sacrificial love is rendered in disciplined relationships, Eucharist has a vital role. *This Holy Mystery* has a particular nature and shape and cites the *HLS* to ground itself. The relations between tradition, doctrine and practice condition *This Holy Mystery*. One wonders if such a document can function to renew Eucharistic praxis without an explicit teleological ecumenical vision. As United Methodism seeks to define *itself* via *This Holy Mystery* it may lose its intrinsic identity as a bridge movement, a social entity of communion within the ecumenical field. To name the particular is to come to grips with the universal. If *This Holy Mystery* legitimates a particularity that solidifies and cauterizes a more static definition of “United Methodist,” then the developing tradition may fail to grasp the particularity of Methodism’s “bridging” and ecumenical capacities.

THIS HOLY MYSTERY: TRADITION IN NEUTRAL

One can evaluate the nature of *This Holy Mystery* by way of comparison to the official teaching documents of the Roman Catholic tradition. The documents of Vatican II, especially the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, provide “principles and norms” that are

established for unanimity of praxis. Drawing on that document and others, the *Catechism* serves as “an instrument for ecclesial communion, strengthening bonds of unity.”²⁶⁷

Doctrine functions to unify. Unity is the over-riding purpose for doctrine. In other words, the conciliar documents and the *Catechism* are binding. Their appropriation, though in some cases contested, remains a method of assuring unity of universal praxis.

United Methodists, on the other hand, are “bound” by the *Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, in some sense a working document that is open to change every four years. Nevertheless, the *Discipline* has little to say on liturgical uniformity and so *This Holy Mystery* is published and promulgated within a more tolerant, but perhaps naturally more segmented, ecclesial structure. Such segmentation, discussed briefly above, is due also to the ecclesial body that is authoritative in the life of every United Methodist Church, the General Conference. The General Conference approved *This Holy Mystery* in 2004 and “called for the implementation and wide use of this interpretive document.”²⁶⁸ There is no sense in which this document is binding in the Catholic sense. It may provide principles and norms for praxis, but *This Holy Mystery’s* spirit may more accurately be described as one that “urges” the study and practice of Eucharistic life. A highlight of that implementation is “weekly celebration of Holy Communion,” clearly a retrieval of an emphasis of both John and Charles Wesley.²⁶⁹

Implementation of *This Holy Mystery’s* suggestions will not develop unilaterally, but in keeping with the form of United Methodist ecclesiology, development and

²⁶⁷ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 5-6; Austin Flannery, ed. *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, (New York: Costello, 1975), 2.

²⁶⁸ *This Holy Mystery*, 6.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 19.

implementation will be concentrated in geographical centers of praxis. These are places where, due to strong leadership and appropriate persuasion, the United Methodist Church in a particular region will pioneer a retrieval of Protestant Eucharistic life. One may sense the way that United Methodist ecclesiology is concerned with unity, for the expression of an “official” teaching document warrants reflection on identity and that which may unify the denomination. At the same time the authority of the General Conference is less concerned with the unifying and binding dimension of doctrine and more concerned with enlivening revival through persuasive expression and subsequent study and praxis. In an important sense, the “official document” affirms United Methodism as a sacramental tradition. Once and for all, the question of the inert dichotomy between the evangelical and the sacramental can be resolved. That debate is put to rest with this document. United Methodism is a Eucharistically oriented tradition.

There may be a relationship between the form and refinement of what is prescribed and the binding role of a teaching document. Quite simply, the affirmation of a certain plurality, a clear and positive rendition of the United Methodist tradition’s unwillingness to carve out essential priorities for doctrine, may itself function as the impetus for official teaching documents being “non-binding.” And yet there is this sense that these official United Methodist documents are indicators that the worship rituals are intrinsic to the identity of this ecclesial body. In this way, *This Holy Mystery* can be construed as an identifying mark of the Methodist tradition, for it perpetuates that Anglican insistence, rooted in Brevint, that the purity of Eucharist is found only in its practice and there are a plurality of meanings “found” in that practice. What is more, Brevint’s work, the foundation of Wesleyan Eucharist piety, affirms both the necessity of atonement and

redemption as well as incarnation and its resultant mysticism (holiness). The historical context of Brevint's text, an exiled Caroline Divine in Catholic France, and the Wesleys' own Christian pluralistic context of revival, make clear that United Methodism has inherited a tradition driven by social and theological tension. Historical context demanded affirmation of core rituals to maintain identity, but at the same time said rituals had to evade authoritatively singular renderings. *This Holy Mystery* attempts to acknowledge this but may neutralize rather than synthesize these tensions. The neutralization can be seen in the document's hyphenated "altar-table" as a synthetic response to the sacrifice/meal dichotomy in Eucharistic thought. However, the study guide (which is commentary written along-side the official document) seems to denounce any sacrificial notion by suggesting that "it is preferable that the table not be referred to as an "altar" since that term carries the meaning of sacrifice and may obscure other rich meanings of the sacrament."²⁷⁰ What happened to the synthesis? Why not comment on the integrative prospect of Methodist Christianity? Sacrifice too, is part of the richness inherent in the Eucharistic tradition. When the study guide denounces the notion of sacrifice, it only serves to confuse clergy and laity who are eager to renew both Eucharistic practice and understanding. Furthermore, such a comment at once diminishes the synthetic and therefore ecumenical potency of the United Methodist identity.²⁷¹ By neutralizing certain motifs and rendering the Wesleys as original sacramental theologians *This Holy Mystery* sacrifices theological tension for denominational clarity. I see a

²⁷⁰ *This Holy Mystery*, 49.

²⁷¹ See David Tripp, "Liturgics as Ecumenical Theology: James F. White, 1932-2004," *Doxology* 23(2006): 8-20; an essay in which Tripp sees the *HLS* as an "ecumenical rapprochement," 14.

different opportunity. It may be that both the Methodist tradition and the future call for the sacrifice of Methodist denominational identity for ecumenical clarity and eventually inter-communion.

Roman Catholicism as “catholic” has many Eucharistic renderings. The Eucharist is Catholicism’s richest portal for meaning. As such, however, the overarching emphasis of Roman Catholic Eucharistic sharing, it seems to me, is unity. What may be deemed from the Protestant perspective as “exclusion” from the Lord’s table is only the corollary to authentic ecclesial unity. Roman Catholicism may provide synthetic sacramental/theological claims on many dimensions of Eucharistic practice, but the Roman Catholic tradition will not bend, and cannot neutralize the notion that the symbolic core of the ritual is catholic. Authentic unity of people in Christ, paradoxically, is that which provides the first criterion for denying the potential communicant the body and the blood.

This brief comparison raises the question of the relation between doctrine and ecclesial unity and how implementation of doctrinal reflection functions toward the ultimate end of the church universal. It also demonstrates that reflection on doctrine itself is an imperative function of theology. Suspending the debate about the content of the teaching in order to reflect on the role doctrine plays in the Christian community helps the church and the world to gain the necessary perspective such that emotional, intellectual and spiritual damage is not wrought. This kind of “distantiation” allows for reflection on the role of doctrine prior to examining its content. It is also a necessary step to take in order to refrain from the temptation to neutralize vital aspects of the theological tradition.

Certainly the generosity of *HLS* is indicative of this necessity to construe sacramental experience in more than one way. And John Wesley in particular becomes a model for theological tolerance, since his response to his nephew's conversion to Rome places Charles' reaction to his son in stark contrast to John's graceful generosity.²⁷² Doctrine ought to reflect a shared "space" of perception. It can help humanity to remain connected and bring persons into the common field of shared understanding. Doctrine can function as a "guide" through the process of building up awareness toward that which binds human to human.²⁷³ Interpreted in this way, doctrine has definite boundaries that limit the expression and language of the church: "God, Christ, Church."

THE LIMITS OF PROPOSITIONAL AND LYRICAL FAITH

Methodism's doctrinal role, it seems to me, is to bring a certain tension to the clear dogmatic markers of Roman Catholicism. In this way the catholic connection between the Methodist tradition and the Catholic remains firm. The ecumenical task involves a process of "mapping territories with a view to developing mutual recognition and joint action."²⁷⁴ The theological task in this process is to make ready possible recognitions within the doctrinal field, to show some deeper resonances in the theological and spiritual traditions.

²⁷² Rattenbury, *EH*, 67.

²⁷³ William M. Thompson, "Eric Voegelin: A Pre-Nicene Christian?," 10-13, 11.

²⁷⁴ Wainwright, *Methodists in Dialog*, 31.

One of the “limits” of doctrine, conveying identifying marks for both Catholics and Methodists is the notion of “presence.” The doctrines of Eucharistic presence developed in Methodism have definite resonances with the Roman Catholic understandings. And a phenomenological tone to presence is not unfamiliar to either United Methodist or Roman Catholic theology. In this sense of “presence” one reflects on the broad process of anamnesis that ritual and singing orders. But as we continue to “limit” our focus, we see that the major difference has to do with the Roman Catholic proposition of real presence, most aptly conveyed in terms of transubstantiation. *This Holy Mystery* shares the Roman Catholic insistence that the presence of Christ is manifest in the Holy Spirit, through the community gathered in the name of Christ, through the Word and through the elements of bread and wine shared (perhaps the past tense of “share” provides a clue to a more fluid inter-active presence in Methodism).²⁷⁵ Drawing on the lyrical theological tradition of Charles Wesley, *This Holy Mystery* affirms the “what” of presence while denying any ability to understand the “how.” “The Wesleyan tradition affirms the reality of Christ’s presence, although it does not explain it fully.” The document goes on to cite a Wesley hymn contained in the latest *United Methodist Hymnal*, “O Depth of Love Divine.” This hymn is number fifty-seven in the original Eucharistic corpus, and echoes many other hymns in its section. In at least three of these hymns, fifty-seven, fifty-nine and sixty-one, the presence of Christ is wed to superlative cognitive experiences, God presents “unfathomable” grace, it is “God incomprehensible” that man (sic) can never search out fully. And in sixty-one, God is “far above our loftiest thought.”²⁷⁶ These

²⁷⁵ *This Holy Mystery*, 23; cf., Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi, 38-39, accessed 2/20,2007.

²⁷⁶ *This Holy Mystery*, 24; *EH*, 57.1, 59.1, 61.1.

anaphoric like expressions must be clearly differentiated from the teaching of transubstantiation articulated by Paul VI in *Mysterium Fidei*.

Transubstantiation, it seems, is itself a doctrine of limits. It is limited in its metaphysical assumptions, harboring an Aristotelian worldview. It limits “presence” to the material, though Paul VI especially acknowledges other liturgical dimensions of presence. Finally, transubstantiation limits theology to the propositional, a positive and necessary prospect for developing the core intellectual conditions for discipleship. This propositional task of a concept like transubstantiation potentially draws the disciple into deeper understanding of the incarnation.

If “memorized” in Ricoeur’s sense transubstantiation draws the remembering capacities of the participant, thus representing the Chalcedonian formulation, Christ was a single person possessing two distinct natures, divine and human. According to Enrico Mazza, this was Luther’s concern in constructing some viable notion of “real presence,” to establish a “direct connection between the sacrament and the Hypostatic Union.”²⁷⁷ Transubstantiation engenders a “type” of incarnational thinking, since the essence or substance of bread and wine appear to be the same, but, claims the *Catechism*, “the whole substance of the bread...and wine” are changed into the body and blood of Christ.²⁷⁸ Luther was less interested in the theory and more concerned with the connection between sacramental teaching and incarnation. Our interpretation seeks to apply a Wesleyan generosity in this acknowledgement of the Roman Catholic gift of dogma and theological

²⁷⁷ Enrico Mazza, *The Celebration of the Eucharist*, 237-238.

²⁷⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1374, <http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/p2s2c1a3.htm#V>, accessed 2/20/07.

development. Transubstantiation at least repetitively brings to the fore the ancient tradition and formula of incarnate love. The teaching significance of transubstantiation is its analogical potential, clearly articulating the truth of the Word become flesh. We need not be tied down by the Chalcedonian formulation, for it too carries past metaphysical categories. We can, however, ever embrace that cognitive mystery established as the catholic framework and foundation for theological reflection in 451.

Could a conversation develop between this Catholic analogical impetus and the way in which lyrical poetry is itself an “incantation” of transubstantiation? Lyrical poetry is, in a sense, the transubstantiation of words. Through the lyrical the substance of propositional truth maintains essentials. Substantive categories are given life in a new form. The substance of poetry and hymnody can convey the same substance of doctrine, therefore sharing in the one revelation. The lyrical in the context of worship *really and truly* is a media evoking presence in order to convey the truth of God for us and with us. Music conditions the idea of transubstantiation too, but in a different sense. Music can be bi-tonal, two tones can be fully “present” in one chord or tone. The fullness of one note is not diminished by the other, and vice versa. Rather, in a more refined harmony two fullnesses coexist. In this way the harmonic is analogous to the fully divine fully human paradigm formulated at Chalcedon. Experiential harmonics therefore accentuates this teaching and its Eucharistic “sign” transubstantiation.

When brought into the light of Roman Catholic propositions like real presence, the lyrical can become a fruitful dialogical partner in the meaning of ritual. However, if neglected and unattended to, forgotten doctrine ceases to guide the perplexed. Transubstantiation is a sort of theological anchor around which the traditions might float. As such it conditions the conversation about real presence, giving it parameters and in a

certain sense boundaries. It need not be ignored but can bring further clarification in the ecumenical conversation.

When other Eucharistic theological motifs like sacrifice and altar are ignored and inhibited, the tension in the tradition fails to drive the theological conversation. In this case theological balance and critical dialogue are forgotten. A theological stalemate is the result. When theology takes a back seat to praxis or when reflection on praxis ceases to be a discipline, the consequence is a “thin” faith. In other words, there ought to be some criteria that maintain a balance between revelation and relevance. But the more subtle danger to “thin” praxis is the disintegration of shared understanding within the Body, a restless and often violent activity shorn of both ontological and theological exploration. It seems that in Catholicism, the “end” of doctrine is unity. It is by no means explicit that this is the “end” of either Eucharistic praxis or “doctrine” in the “official” United Methodist document *This Holy Mystery*.

THE END OF *THIS HOLY MYSTERY*

This Holy Mystery has two parts. The first part names and appropriates the theological tradition. The second part names and articulates the contemporary significance of Eucharistic experience, particularly in relation to the ecclesial body and the practical and ethical questions that inevitably result from regular practice. The last section of the second part of the document is devoted to “Holy Communion and the Unity of the Church.” Here the document names some United Methodist doctrinal emphases. Quoting from the United Methodist *Book of Discipline*, the document names Grace as the “undeserved, unmerited, and loving action of God in human existence through the ever-

present Holy Spirit.” This is one of the main emphases of Methodist teaching. A second longer quotation from the *Book of Discipline* provides foundational doctrinal criteria:

Devising formal definitions of doctrine has been less pressing for United Methodists than summoning people to faith and nurturing them in the knowledge and love of God. The core of Wesleyan doctrine that informed our past rightly belongs to our common heritage as Christians and remains a prime component within our continuing theological task.²⁷⁹

What seems to be conveyed here are two things. Tradition is vitally important and that tradition’s richest gift to the present is an honoring of diverse theological visions for the more primary United Methodist purpose: “summoning people to faith and nurturing them in the knowledge and love of God.”

It does seem that a local congregation is placed in a precarious position if the above quote from the *Discipline* informs the practice of the local church. If the pastor is unable to negotiate the diverse claims of the tradition and thereby relies on her/his own authority and training, often the congregation is asked to imbibe the contemporary fads/emphases from whatever seminary the clergy attended. Or, the pastor doggedly wears so many theological hats, pleasing the diversity of ecclesial and theological visions that exist in many churches. This ultimately allows laity to be buffered from encountering and engaging theological understandings different from their own. Or, what often happens in United Methodist Protestantism is that there develops a scriptural literalism due to the fact that “doctrine” is culled merely from a pastor’s or a strong lay leader’s interpretation of scripture. All this makes for a rather benign and ultimately superficial formation “program.” And ecclesiology is thereby reduced either to the personality of a pastor or the authoritarian prescriptions of biblical fundamentalism. What *This Holy Mystery*

²⁷⁹ *This Holy Mystery*, 61-62.

seems to be offering is a fourth option, namely, that Eucharistic experience can form the ecclesial prospect for United Methodism and intensify the foundational doctrinal diversity through praxis.

Such an emphasis is clear in the first part of the document. And in the descriptive section outlining the United Methodist heritage, the following provides a foundation for an interpretation of the evolving United Methodist tradition. It is also consistent with the findings of chapter one of this paper.

During the years in which Methodism was beginning and growing, Wesley himself communed an average of four to five times a week. His sermon “The Duty of Constant Communion” emphasizes the role of the sacrament in the lives of Christians in ways that are keenly meaningful today. The Wesley brothers wrote and published a collection of 166 *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*. They wrote about love, grace, sacrifice, forgiveness, the presence of Christ, mystery, healing, nourishment, holiness and pledge of heaven. They knew that Holy Communion is a powerful means through which divine grace is given to God’s people. Our sacramental understandings and practices today are grounded in this heritage.²⁸⁰

Note that the Wesleys command a certain authority here. Though this may be obvious to the United Methodist or other denominational expert, such authority is a condition through which Methodist identity might evolve. It is not, however, an authority for the sake of authority itself. Rather, their lives are seen as models for wise living, and in this case their Eucharistic emphasis bears force upon the present. In addition, the sacramental priority of the Wesleys is received as wisdom about how the Christian ought to live in a disciplined rhythm of worship and service. In this sense the Wesleys carry weight in the contemporary life-world of United Methodism to the extent that they show where “our sacramental understandings” come from. Summoning people to faith, can it be done

²⁸⁰ Ibid, 11.

without an intrinsic emphasis on ecclesial unity? How shall we frame this relationship between holiness and unity?

Certainly John Wesley's own practice, as well as his pastoral advice, tells of the inner need for "constant communion." Such a need derives in part from the helplessness inherent in the self-perceptual ground of vulnerability. The desire to participate with Jesus is made public through gathering and liturgy. As one relies on participation more frequently one comes to the humble realization that human fragility is an existential state that is common to all. The liminality of ritual brings a knowledge through which the veils of identity based on power, prestige, intellect, and a prideful piety are lifted. Communion speaks to our common vulnerability and therefore the intentioned disciple hungers for its Grace frequently, at once acknowledging his great need in communion with all the rest. The paradigm for holiness the Methodist tradition brings is incomplete when the desire for unity is taken from the journey in holiness. The social conditions for spiritual health are, perhaps, the original reason for becoming Methodist. I refer here explicitly to the accountability groups, the bands, societies and classes.²⁸¹ And yet the tension between the little church within the larger sacramental structure (*ecclesiola in ecclesia*) seems to be worked out within the liturgy. A band, class, society or order, easily slips off into a self enclosed social entity, potentially cut off from the call of the Spirit, if separated from the ordered structure of ritual. Not only does authentic holiness bring the desire for unity and communion, but enacted unity and communion can prevent spiritual pride or mis-placed spirituality. One thinks of Jesus' dictate about those who pray, the distinction between the pray-er who thanks God he is not like the pitiful fool

²⁸¹ Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory*, 81-83.

next to him and the true pray-er who asks God to have mercy on him(Luke 18:9-14). The Liturgical order of communion, a sacramental structure, keeps the search for holiness grounded in humility. Eucharistic praxis within the search for holiness connects one to another and invites the participant to embody the idea that being set-apart (holy) brings the believer into the heart of the ordinary, the heart of community. The intrinsic ecumenical and gospel gift of sanctification integrates the desire for unity and the desire for God in Christ. The *HLS* certainly exemplify this. In hymn fifty-seven the word “perfect” is connected to “one.” For John Wesley, perfection referred to the maturity of Christian discipleship through which “obedience had become so habitual that the will had lost its tendency to resist the sovereignty of grace.”²⁸² It is irresponsible to project that definition onto the lyric of Charles Wesley below. But certainly Charles’ use of the term “perfect” has a “fluid” role in the stanza. “Perfect” is used as a verb form. It is clear that, for Charles, it is an action and activity of God. In this way, the Lord’s Supper is ultimately an action of God, an action through which humanity participates to “form” the Son’s body in the world. Perfection is God’s action, the “Eucharist makes the church.”

Sure and real is the grace
The manner be unknown;
Only meet us in Thy ways
And perfect us in one (57)

How God “does it” is unknown according to Charles Wesley. However we may speculate upon his poetic offering. Perfect unity is, perhaps, like our notion of perfect harmony, an experiential grasp of the significance and beauty of an event. Or it is complete and/or finished. The “perfect fifth or octave” is heard in distinction to the

²⁸² David Lowes Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 63-64.

“imperfect third or sixth.” Then too, the perfect tense relates that which had been done, an action completed, e.g. “Jesus had breathed his last and said it is finished”(John 19:30).

We see here how poetry opens out worlds of interpretation, the multiplicitous allure of the active word. This lyric also points to the necessity to remain ecclesial in our experience of sanctification. The intricacies of the doctrine of perfection are mediated in this “spiritual theology” of holiness so that David Lowes Watson can say: “Small group fellowship can quickly become a means of diverting energies and commitments from the proper task of the church.”²⁸³ Watson wants to maintain that an accountability group should not become a club, ignoring the call of the poor or justice. And Charles Wesley seems to be poetically rendering the action of a God who calls a people together into the holiness of the Body of Christ. A connection within the depth of truth, what we have termed a revelatory mimesis, makes the Wesleyan search for holiness an ecclesial and sacramental undertaking by necessity.

But in the retrieval *This Holy Mystery* undertakes, note too that the broader catholic tradition remains virtually unacknowledged. Though there is a nod to an ecumenical movement, ecumenical work is seen to reside in the denomination’s “General Commission on Christian Unity and Inter-religious concerns” and not as the core project of the denomination.²⁸⁴ In the quote above taken from *This Holy Mystery* the Wesleys are conveyed as individuals promoting Eucharistic renewal, but there is no reflection on the sacramental structure that formed their Eucharistic consciousness or any sense that

²⁸³ Ibid, 148.

²⁸⁴ *This Holy Mystery*, 62.

ecclesial unity may be a given of their Eucharistic longings. What is missing is some acknowledgement that the Wesleys, though creative responders to tradition, were not attempting to craft a “new” Eucharistic tradition. Just as *This Holy Mystery* shares the North American, African, Latin American and Eastern European expanse of the United Methodist movement, expression of the cultural web of Eucharistic thought prior to the Wesleys is also an edifying ecclesial identification.

To interpret the Wesleys as Eucharistic innovators limits the very fluidity the *HLS* bring. If we treat the Wesleys as Eucharistic innovators and fail to acknowledge the broader catholic tradition in their practice and thought, we run the risk of harboring a static institutionalist identity. For Jesus did not “innovate” to create “new” sacraments, but rather invited deeper and revelatory participation within his Jewish tradition. There is less emphasis on creating new ritual and more focus on new meaning. In and through Jesus, Jewish ritual gained new meaning. The Wesleys’ Eucharistic renewal was not in any sense new “fabric.” As Tad Guzie suggests, “new meanings, new religious insights can be worked into the fabric, but only if there is a fabric there and a thread to which the insights can be tied.”²⁸⁵ Guzie shows clearly that ritual is not a process of “origination” though it points to “origins.” Like the development of myth itself, ritual develops out from practices and stories which ante-date the existing ritual, creatively

²⁸⁵ See Tad W. Guzie, S.J., *Jesus and the Eucharist*. 51, 45-51, passim; the main thrust of our discussion echoes Guzie’s reflections. Just as the Eucharist cannot be ripped from its Jewish fabric, or “untied,” so Methodism cannot authentically forge its own “Eucharistic tradition.” My hope for *This Holy Mystery* is that it will bring renewal to praxis, and in so doing the United Methodist body will come to see itself in relation to established Eucharistic communions. Three hundred years into the Methodist tradition it would be unwise to establish a “Methodist” Eucharist. Methodism’s ecumenical vocation deserves delicate attention. We are at work here tending to the frazzled threads that tie traditions together.

appropriating forms and symbols which “speak” afresh. Guzie’s use of the term fabric and the action of tying is biblical of course and helps us to recall (anamnesis) Jesus’ teaching on bringing together the old and the new. In Mark 2:18-22 Jesus warns about expecting too much from fresh converts. The new disciples should not be stretched too far, otherwise they will “break away.” All the more reason for practical theology to reflect on the “tying” process and the way in which Eucharist functions to initiate the converted into a process of spiritual integration. Though we may be tempted to see Mark 2:18-22 as a way into the meaning of Tradition and traditions, it is more aptly interpreted, I believe, in terms of pastoral theology: conversion, conscience and Christian practice. This is how Charles Wesley understood the text. His lyric on this passage begins:

A pastor should consider long,
The task, and strength to fit,
Nor much require from converts young,
Or services too great:
By urging novices too fast
While yet their grace is small,
He stops and makes them worse at last,
He mars and ruins all.²⁸⁶

Notice the sensitivity in working with “novices,” a clear indication of the Wesleyan intent to forge spiritual societies as part of an existing ecclesial body. *This Holy Mystery* seems to eliminate the broader Anglican and catholic fabric of Wesleyan appropriations. The new insight the Wesleys’ bring and “tie” to the already existing fabric is the media of hymnody. *This Holy Mystery’s* limits may be inevitable as the document seeks to simplify the narrative of Wesleyan Eucharistic piety. The Wesleys’ work drew renewed

²⁸⁶ Charles Wesley, *The Poetical Works*, ed. G. Osborn, D.D. (London: Wesleyan Methodist Conference, 1871), 10: 460.

Christians into an ancient Eucharistic wisdom. Such wisdom integrated holiness with a longing for unity among human beings.²⁸⁷ For this Wesleyan universalism to “sing” in the contemporary Eucharistic context, the spiritual longing for holiness and communion must be tied together.

This Holy Mystery, therefore, is lacking a more explicit expression of Methodist identity as temporary. Methodism has always conceived of itself as transitioning; engaging the ecumenical field aggressively. The longing for unity is contingent upon the Methodist mark of holiness or sanctification. If holiness permeates identity, the search for unity and the transitory identity of the United Methodist “Church” will inevitably surface.²⁸⁸ *This Holy Mystery* did not, and perhaps could not, give enough weight to the *HLS*. If given more weight in a Wesleyan/Methodist canon one would find the generosity and the desire for unity the *HLS* conveys.

What is the ecumenical hope of *This Holy Mystery*? By an ecumenical hope I mean an ecclesial movement whose future is open enough, and whose doctrinal parameters fluid enough, to allow for the horizon of full communion within a more refined sacramental structure. There are several helpful comments through which the document hints at the place of United Methodism within the ecumenical field. “This ritual expresses the unity of the universal church of Jesus Christ and exemplifies our connection within the United Methodist Church.”²⁸⁹ But such hints, I believe, ought to

²⁸⁷ M. Douglas Meeks, ed., *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 121-122.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 124

²⁸⁹ *This Holy Mystery*, 39.

be the core and primary role of the United Methodist tradition. Are not United Methodists, as both Geoffrey Wainwright and Albert Outler have suggested, more of a transitory people, eager to die to institutionalism in the teleological caste of unity? *This Holy Mystery* betrays the ecclesiological ambiguity inherent in the tradition, an ambiguity which can be creatively appropriated toward the primary thrust of United Methodism, transitive sacrifice or “death of the denomination” for the true hope of catholicity.²⁹⁰

THE *HYMNS ON THE LORD’S SUPPER*: AN ECUMENICAL PROPOSAL

The idea that tradition can be a creative force in the life of a denomination takes the interpreter into fruitful reflection on the relationship between tradition and experience, half of the so called Wesleyan quadrilateral. Let us examine the *HLS* as a mediating force of relevance and integrity. Therein we will explore an essential dimension of tradition itself, creativity. The action of mimesis, a “leavening” and therefore a living process, is intrinsic to both ritual and lyrical poetry, as we have seen. Our focus is on the ways of creativity, how it brings forth tradition, makes tradition to live, but also how creativity refines tradition. By “refine” I refer to a process of purification, whereby essential elements of a tradition are brought to the surface. This process brings life but it also connotes a necessary death or a “letting go” of what no longer enlivens. Tradition is always a bringing together of what is old and what is new. Avery Dulles speaks of “continuity and innovation” as the often dichotomous pair that are contained in the traditioning process.²⁹¹ But tradition and creativity are clearly linked in the lived action

²⁹⁰ Meeks, ed., *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 124.

²⁹¹ Avery Dulles, “Tradition and Creativity: A Theological Approach,” in *Quadrilog: Tradition and the Future of Ecumenism*, ed. Kenneth Hagen, 312-327 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 312.

of a community. The transmittal of tradition is not merely an oral process. It is not limited, therefore, to the realm of ideas. The creative tension of continuity and innovation are focused often in the activity of a response to the Spirit. Creativity comes from the free response of human beings engaged in the context of bringing the continuous meaning of revelation to bear on ever new circumstances. Dulles connects this relation between creativity and tradition to 20th century Orthodox thinkers, Lossky and Berdyaev in particular. As Eastern Christians, they understood human creativity as indicative of the *imago Dei*. Human beings, like God, are creative by nature. Furthermore, the existential condition for creativity is freedom, an inherently creative prospect. To create is at once to enact freedom.²⁹² Dulles cites poetry as exemplary of the creative process. The poet allows the “spiritual unconscious” to surface. What is more, “poetic intuition” is caught up in both cognitive and creative processes. On the one hand the poet is directed toward “concrete realities,” on the other the poet “perceives deeper dimensions both of reality and of their own subjectivity.”²⁹³ Herein lay the integration of innovation and continuity. For poetry to be authentic it remains connected to social and “concrete” realities and yet can enter freely into the broader, what Dulles discusses as “deeper dimensions,” of reality and personhood. The human being, in poetic construction and thought, is a person in touch with imminent realities: self, world and identity. Yet at the same time, the poet conjoins these “into the service of the transcendent.” Tradition festers without creative ways to make it a public and common focus. When the Mass is said in the vernacular, something dies, but the essential is communicated. The

²⁹² Ibid, 318.

²⁹³ Ibid, 318-319.

communication of meaning becomes essential for the primary purpose of articulating that which is common to all. Poetry's public, and therefore transcendent function, is to render again the truth of that which humanity shares one with another. As the locus for the mediation of tradition, the poet's consciousness is "in tune" with imminence (particularity) and transcendence (universal). The poet risks sharing his/her own perceptual grasp in order to invite what is inherently true for all. The "I" becomes "we." There are not a few theological implications here. First, there is the sense in which the creative task is an offering or a human response to the divine gift. Second, there is the sense that creativity is inherently incarnational: it invites that process of kenosis, of emptying. The creative task, then, is ultimately for others. It grants to "the world" that which is most precious. Such a characterization of creativity does indeed implicate the human as the *imago Dei*, "re-discovered" in the Greek-Hebrew synthesis.²⁹⁴ In the writing of poetry, a disciple like Charles Wesley presents us with a catalyst for tradition. As Dulles affirms, "theologically alert authors...let the past live." The alert poet/theologian incarnates the past into the present, or the theologically alert "lets the past live." Such living necessarily means that this creative task involves adapting ways of communicating the significance of the past.²⁹⁵

Adaptation in tradition has many implications for how we understand the anatomy of tradition. Such implications can be construed in a variety of ways. For our purposes, two

²⁹⁴ See Alan F. Segal, "The Incarnation: The Jewish Milieu," in *The Incarnation*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, 116-312, (New York: Oxford, 2002), for a discussion of Philo's appropriations and rejections of Plato.

²⁹⁵ Dulles, "Tradition and Creativity," 320.

examples from the *HLS* will suffice. The *HLS* involve an explicit adaptation of Brevint's "devotional and practical" treatise on the Eucharist. Through the lyrical's adaptive measures, something of Brevint is certainly lost, but something of Brevint is illuminated. Perhaps that which is illuminated is Brevint's reliance on the poetic function implicit in theology, the way in which language is always at work conforming to the "devotional and practical." We make an attempt to express the experiential in spite of the limits of language. Brevint's attempt in exile to portray the "garden" of the Eucharist, its purity, demanded a certain poetic strain to his interpretation. Brevint's use of Augustine is also adapted by Charles Wesley as he consistently explores lyrically the way Christ is the "head of the body."²⁹⁶

The construal of what is happening in Charles' adaptive process may be described in terms of creativity as *chiaroscuro*. Guarino claims that this term from the visual arts is an apt way to describe the "effect" creative traditioning might have. Chiaroscuro is a visual rendering an artist employs to construe the tensions between what is illumined in a picture and that which is veiled or darkened. In a famous painting one object or area is shown in bold relief and another object or area is rather shrouded. Adaptation in tradition seems to conjure and illumine certain dimensions, but in the very act of adaptation, leaves another dimension of the tradition "in the dark." That which is darkened is not gone, or destroyed, it is veiled. Yet it remains de-centered or is not "brought to light."²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ See hymns 91, 129,130,132,140.

²⁹⁷ Guarino, 50-51.

In the language arts chiaroscuro is inevitable. This is at base a problem in translation, but it has broader implications in the descriptive task. The lyric has limitations based on rhyme and meter, but other dimensions of Eucharistic experience are brought to the fore. Chapter four has attempted to analyze such a process. Certainly what is lost in Wesleyan Eucharistic renderings, that which is darkened through the chiaroscuro effect, is the explicit noetic and reasoned teaching about the Eucharist. The Eucharist's relevance as an imperative for holiness is brought to light, however.

This chiaroscuro effect may well be a viable way to render the organic and evolutive capacities of tradition. This would mean that in some sense Christian movements (and one could include Catholic orders) are always at work recovering and illuminating a forgotten aspect of Christian revelation and life. As such the chiaroscuro effect in tradition is a window into the particularity of historical context. Through the window we can often see gaps in ecclesial life, and new movements act as reminders to embrace a more comprehensive vision of faith and tradition. The contemporary pentecostal and charismatic movements may allow for critical scrutiny of such "ecclesial gaps." Attending to these movements may bring insight into the hunger for the experience and genuine encounter these efforts promise.²⁹⁸ Turning to the *HLS*, we may grasp the "charism" of the Wesleys as enlivening corporate Christianity with a participatory note, while renewing the Eucharist as a vital expression of identity. Since the historical context of England at the time of the Wesleys remained fixated on sacramental

²⁹⁸ See David M. Chapman, *In Search of the Catholic Spirit: Methodists and Roman Catholics in Dialogue* (Epworth, Werrington: 2004), 88-89; where Chapman discusses British Methodist theologian J. Agar Beet, and his "pragmatic ecclesial vision" in which he sees the gifts of separate churches as making up a whole. Divisions, caused by sin, are in fact God's method of purifying said whole. Chapman sees a similar vision articulated in the Papal Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (1995).

controversy, the *HLS* and their engaging attention to Eucharistic experience took the Eucharistic conversation in a new direction.

In Wesleyan identity, therefore, the corporate nature of Christian existence is certainly emphasized. But what is lost is the explicit doctrinal delineations that express the theological integrity of the Lord's Supper. Integrity here is meant in an almost literal sense as that which is brought together, an explicit focus regarding the reason for the emotive thrust of ritual. "Eucharistic Evangelism," a gift of the originary texts of Methodism, remain clear and distinct "pieces" of the Methodist ecclesiological puzzle.

ORDERING METHODIST ECCLESIOLOGY : MENDICANT PROPENSITIES?

All along we have been unpacking the way the *HLS* tie together and bridge the word and sacrament, sound and silence, mind and heart, the institutional and mystical, the catholic and the evangelical. Through the evolution of the Methodist tradition and its chiaroscuro effect, these "pieces" have surfaced within the Methodist ecclesial structure, functioning as concentrated orders of sacramental or evangelical giftedness. Not unlike Roman Catholicism's gifted orders, North American Methodism has found itself honoring renewal movements which seem to "grow out" of an integrated historic expression like the *HLS*. These movements from within the institutional ecclesial structures may be analogous to the "typoi" of various Catholic ecclesial forms. Founders of these Catholic typoi, like Francis of Assisi, engendered distinctive gifts for ministry and discipleship.²⁹⁹ We can interpret the Wesleyan movement as analogous to these developing ecclesial forms. Engaging, disciplined, evangelical and sacramental, the

²⁹⁹ Chapman, *In Search of the Catholic Spirit*, 145.

earliest Methodists are similar to 13th century mendicants, the Franciscans and Dominicans.³⁰⁰ What is more, when we see the earliest Methodist movement as an order similar to the mendicant orders of Roman Catholicism, we are led to interpret recent Methodist renewal movements in light of this rendering.

One of these Methodist “orders” has had transatlantic significance, starting in England and captivating “brothers and sisters” in the United States who have become the *Order of St. Luke*. Discussed briefly in chapter three, the Order’s mission is to magnify the sacraments by way of their dedication to sacramental and liturgical scholarship, teaching and practice. The order exemplifies an emphasis on liturgical tradition and awareness, an ecclesial emphasis on the renewal of sacramental focused worship. This order brings forth the Wesleyan emphasis on liturgical continuity along with sacramental efficacy. Liturgical integrity is a value of the order, for such integrity brings authentic Christian shape to the local church. The order has continued to develop and adapt, and has been shaped by its Abbots, who have been United Methodist pastors and liturgical scholars. The order refined its Rule in 1967, making corporate worship its binding task. It developed its emphasis on the “daily office” at that time, what Roman Catholics call the “Liturgy of the Hours.” In 1984 the order was officially recognized by the United Methodist General Conference.³⁰¹ This order traditions, among other aspects, the Wesleyan discipline of informed sacramental worship.

³⁰⁰ Jill Raitt, ed., *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, 15-31; see Wesley, *Works* 4: 295 (1958), for a *Journal* entry in which John Wesley describes begging for the poor in the slush covered streets of London. That description places John Wesley in some sort of relation to the mendicants, I suppose. The year was 1785, John Wesley was eighty-two years old.

³⁰¹ Hoyt Hickman, OS�, “The Story of the Order of St. Luke,” *Sacramental Life* 8, no.4 (2006): 23-25.

But the *HLS* are formed also by the contagion of relevance. Their content is soaked with the words of Eucharistic dogma. Yet the media of hymnody breaks out of the mold of institutionalist stasis in order to bring new life to those who may need milk before meat (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). The relevance of the Eucharist needs to be couched in a readable and understandable media and form. The very notion of a mendicant mission means that response to the Spirit takes one outside the form of liturgical continuity into the social context of persons estranged from formal rites. Hymnody provided an opportunity for the Spirit to broaden the participatory nature of the sacrament, sharing the experiential depth of Eucharistic life. Such an emphasis on renewal in the Spirit has developed in the North American Methodist context, surfacing the powerful witness and relevance of a life in the Spirit of Christ. *Aldersgate Renewal Ministries*, recognized through a petition of the 1972 General conference, has developed the Charismatic arm of United Methodism. Though *Aldersgate Renewal Ministries* would not call themselves an “order” of the UMC, they do present to the world a Wesleyan “teaching” on the Holy Spirit, and convene in order to offer churches guidance into the life of the Spirit. In the case of this movement, renewal is construed as a response to the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, the General Conference of 1972 produced guidelines in order to appreciate and understand the broad ranging ecumenical phenomena known as the Charismatic movement. The guidelines were approved at the 1976 General Conference. The abiding concern of these guidelines is ultimately educational in the service of church unity. The clear indicator of a movement’s in-authenticity, according to these guidelines, is when that movement (such as the Charismatic movement) causes division rather than heals fragmentation. These guidelines grounded this critical emphasis in John Wesley’s

theology of grace.³⁰² Cardinal Walter Kasper has suggested that from a more sociological perspective, Charismatic and Pentecostal movements develop intensely in times of social, economic and cultural change. Individualism is also noted as a response to seeming ambiguity in the social and economic life of culture. Such individualism has Pentecostal manifestations that often leave communities separated and hostile rather than open and dialogical.³⁰³ The *HLS*, as response to and reflection on the Holy Spirit, bring such transitioning to definite communal, not individualist, markers. And yet their fluid nature reflects the change they seek to address through this Eucharistic poetry.

In all, the *HLS* may be described as a part of a whole movement's response to the Spirit. And there are particular lyrics that explicitly refer to the Spirit's work.³⁰⁴ These verb forms that represent the Holy Spirit's work all have to do with the communicants' perceptual grasp of the relation of Christ, God or Spirit, to the "we," those gathered for the ritual. The Spirit, therefore, is that force that engenders a shared cognitive experience. These hymns could potentially enrich the epicletic turn in the anaphoric experience. This would produce a more fluid experience of the Eucharistic prayer, yet it may engender deeper congregational participation perhaps in the manner of Taizé'. Given the modulations discussed earlier, these hymns have the possibility to sound a more congregationally centered epicletic tone to the liturgy.

³⁰² *Guidelines: The United Methodist Church and the Charismatic Movement*, (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources 1976).

³⁰³ Cardinal Walter Kasper, "The Holy Spirit and Ecumenical Dialogue: Theological and Practical Dimensions" (2nd Annual Holy Spirit Lecture Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA., October 9, 2006), www.theholyspiritcolloquium.duq.edu.

³⁰⁴ See, 16,72,75,93,130,150,151,155; in these lyrics the Spirit is an active force of anamnesis that evokes a certain consciousness or awareness, whether that be of sin, grace, or pictures that condition the perception of both. The Holy Spirit is described by Charles as "remembrancer" (16), the Holy Spirit "influences,"

To distinguish, the Spirit in the *HLS* cannot be construed as a one to one (God to singular human) encounter. Rather the Spirit is perceived and experienced with others in a shared focus of understanding. In this way these *HLS* affirm the Spirit's role of unifying and healing. It is clear, then, that one can "read" both charismatic renewal and liturgical integrity in the *HLS*. Whether the *Order of St. Luke* and *Aldersgate Renewal Ministries* ought to be construed as a healthy traditioning, bringing integrity and relevance to the contemporary church, is a question of conjecture that can be pursued elsewhere. Our focus here is on the way the United Methodist ecclesial form has allowed these dimensions of Wesleyan praxis to surface. What is more, these "orders" function to bring "gifts" of Christian existence to the church. These groups, deeply conditioned by their particular mission or response to God, tradition the heart of the Methodist charism: the experiential and corporate inevitability of authentic Christian existence as a response to the Holy Spirit. These *ecclesiolae* also demonstrate Methodism's character as a pragmatic and worship centered tradition. These United Methodist appendages also reveal that Christian experience must conform to the Trinitarian shape of existence. For Methodism, doctrine, again, is authenticated through experience. What I am suggesting is that the "order" of Methodism begets more orders which bring the core and depth of the Wesleyan tradition to light. As renewal movements these ecclesial arms of United Methodism teach from their Wesleyan charism, liturgical integrity and relevant spirituality.

These contemporary movements reveal the form and charism of the Methodist tradition. For their primary thrust is not reformation of doctrine, but renewal of emphasis

"realizes the sign,"(72) "records,"(75) and "quickens" (130). These all refer to the perceptual range of the communicant. In 93 the Spirit leads to "springs of living comfort," echoing John's Gospel.

and deepened understanding of particular dimensions of Christian existence. And these contemporary movements reflect the synthesis of emphases the *HLS* shared, most broadly defined as the evangelical and sacramental. The Methodist tradition, therefore, is clearly gifted for developing the sanctifying arts, especially as these reveal the consensus of the doctrinal heritage (orthodoxy). The gift of the *HLS* as a doctrinal document is limited by the ablative. Through and by experience is the Christian revelation understood. That revelation, however, has conditioned history in various times and places as the church Catholic. This Catholic body is the necessary power of institutional perpetuation, inclined to preserve its message and meaning.

Unlike Catholic thought on ritual, Methodism's de-centered and lyrical Eucharistic expressions fail to convey some singular over-riding thematic thrust. If such a thrust does exist, it may be that emphasis on praxis for holiness. As we have seen, the search for holiness as expressed in the *HLS* is soaked in a communal sense of unity. But poetics can only go so far in showing the meaning of Eucharistic unity in the midst of the renewal of Eucharistic relevance. The contemporary question is how ecclesial unity may be illumined more forcefully in the years to come. How can the search for holiness and the search for unity become integrated? How might the poetic dimensions of faith become integrated into more noetic forms such that these are seen as implicit in one another? *This Holy Mystery* mimics Methodist tradition by accentuating well the relevance of Eucharistic praxis. However, reflection on the broader and teleological meaning of "Methodist" Eucharist is lacking. If, in Methodist style, the intention of the document is to focus on praxis in order to foster the potential for future unity, as is intimated, then that emphasis should have been more clearly articulated.

Methodism's Eucharistic gift to the church universal, *HLS*, is exemplary for the chiaroscuro effect in tradition's process. At the least, these *HLS* demonstrate the way creativity and a response to the Spirit may manifest themselves in history. Creativity, a responsive act of freedom, energizes movements and renders meanings through easily absorbed media and repeatedly embodied actions. The pneumatological significance of creative response leads to a wonder regarding the action of God in history and the purpose of movements in the overall economy of the Christian witness.

Methodism would do well, therefore, to share in intensive conversation with existing Roman Catholic orders. This focus should accompany the well established and fruitful bilateral dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church. For it is these "official" dialogues that have conveyed a common and exciting prospect for Catholic-Methodist understanding, that is, holiness or sanctification.³⁰⁵ Such a dialogical effort with Roman Catholic orders may bear even more fruit, since Methodism and orders are often "closer" to the experiential dimension of life. What is more, the form of Methodism, its tradition of practices, foci and developed awareness of the working of grace in the sanctifying process, are more particular to the concerns of orders as well. Most recently, the Methodist-Benedictine Consultation (2003-2004) has published *Occasional Papers* in order "to provide resources and information for conversations that are already in progress." The second set of papers includes an *Afterword* by the convener of the dialogue which lays out seven areas for further inquiry. In that essay Michael Cartwright suggests that focused studies that compare the practices of the rules of Dominic and

³⁰⁵ Geoffrey Wainwright, *Methodists in Dialog*, 45; see also Chapman, *In Search of the Catholic Spirit*, 141, since John Wesley serves as the primary arbiter of Methodist theology, Chapman writes, "there is a convergence between Wesley's approach to Christian experience and 'mainstream' Catholic spirituality."

Francis (in particular communities) with Methodist practices (in particular societies) would be “illuminating.”³⁰⁶ Given the Roman Catholic ecclesial “devotion to the Eucharist” it may also be interesting to compare how these lyrics might function in Catholic orders and Methodist communities.

The Wesleyan movement and the *HLS* in particular are described here as “bridges” to broader institutional structures. When one opens the heart of the tradition, one may discover that dialogue with orders will be an apt way to connect with the Roman Catholic Church. To prepare for such “bridging” this last section will focus on the meaning of sanctification in relation to Eucharistic sacrifice.

HOLINESS, SACRIFICE AND UNITY

The backdrop against which we place the following discussion must be music itself. For music, as we have seen, has a role in conditioning ecclesial holiness. Hymnody enacted is a forceful participatory factor in sanctification, and its praxis unifies the body of Christ, the church. This may be called its “political function” in that, like the process of memorization, music strengthens the social bond. Unlike mere memorization, however, music has a stronger aesthetic pull, it holds “people in thrall round one centre.”³⁰⁷ Sound and participation in sound “centers” a body of believers. For Quakers centering is processed through silence, for Methodists song, for Roman Catholics and others Eucharist. And of course these are characterizations and each tradition no doubt

³⁰⁶ Michael Cartwright, “Conversations Along the Way,” in *St. Brigid of Kildare Methodist-Benedictine Consultation Occasional Papers #1* (University of Indianapolis and Upper Room Publications, 2004), 6-9; and “Afterward: Agenda for Further Inquiry,” in *Saint Brigid of Kildare, Occasional Papers #2* (2006), 41-42.

³⁰⁷ Pickstock, 266.

borrowed from each other. According to Pickstock, Augustine and Christian Medieval thought understood the musical center that held people together to be a “sacrificial” center. In Christian thought on musical offering, music as sacrificial center yielded the resurrected “other” and could result potentially in the resurrected self. For this tradition’s sensibilities the cosmic music was always music of the passion.³⁰⁸ As we will see offering the sacrifice of praise renews the self and figures the church as stewards, stewards of body and soul. Music has long been distinguished as a sacrificial and centering act and hymnody can give the multi-dimensional aspect of sacrifice a broader interpretive liturgical and theological context.

What is holiness? How might it be received and embodied? These are worthy questions, and gaining some sense of the answers can provide mission to ecclesial bodies, mission which can potentially bring transformations to societal and political realms. To conclude, we only want to focus on the communal prospect of the meaning of sacrifice. In this way we draw our attention to the relation of spirituality and theology. By spirituality I refer to that process of personal and ecclesial integration in light of levels of reality not immediately apparent.³⁰⁹ We may also describe this as the process of sanctification. By using the term sanctification we are entering into more refined Christian language and bring a clearer category to bear on the spiritual process. Sanctification, perhaps, brings us to the sense of process, but also opens out the Wesleyan *via salutis*, interpreted exceptionally well by Randy Maddox in his *Responsible Grace*.³¹⁰

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Michael Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 32, provides our definition.

³¹⁰ Maddox, 157-191.

To ground Methodist dialogue, especially as Methodism relates to more Roman Catholic expressions (orders) of our common heritage, we must explore the particular way that holiness implies sacrifice. For the *HLS* carry forth notions of holiness that convey the sacrificial dimension of Eucharistic life.

“Sacrifice” has many meanings related to variant fields of inquiry. There are three cognate fields, Christian ethics, pastoral care, and Eucharistic theology, which in some sense construe the particular significance of sacrifice. Now sacrifice refers to a particular act of discipleship, and the criteria for judgment that would deem an act “sacrifice.” Now sacrifice refers to the often violent ritualization of irrational anger, a hidden dimension of relationship in which the victim sacrifices wholeness in order to protect a perpetrator. Now sacrifice refers to the use of particular speech and action to imitate, rehearse and call to mind the offering Christ made for humanity in his self-sacrificial love. In keeping with our focus on practical theology and hermeneutics, we must unpack various meanings of sacrifice while we focus on the Methodist heritage of self-sacrificial love. This is important as we bring clarity to the relationship between *HLS* and *This Holy Mystery*. Ultimately it is in the working of the *ecclesia*, the particular and local community of faith, where these renderings of sacrifice are understood, embodied and/or confronted. For in Christian experience and engagement, one finds that various renderings and meanings “bleed” onto one-another.

STEWARDS OF SACRIFICE

Christian ethics insists on interpreting and construing the human person, in order that ethics has some frame of reference. For example, Stanley Hauerwas claims that human

persons have to learn that they are sinners. Formed by the biblical story of alienation from God, the human being comes to such self-understanding. Others may frame the meaning of moral action in terms of human dignity. In this case the person is understood as created in the image of God. This has become a theme in expressing the meaning of Catholic Social Thought.³¹¹ The point is that each of these emphases influences the description of God, Christ, redemption, incarnation, atonement and the like. Is there a construal that broadens our interpretation to incorporate the Eucharistic self?³¹² Or what might the implications of a Eucharistic self be for an ethical frame of reference?

John and Charles Wesley affirmed in various texts that the human being could be construed as “steward.” In the *HLS* in particular we find twenty-nine hymns under Brevint’s established rubric *Concerning the Sacrifice of our Persons*. These hymns display a working assumption about Christ’s sacrificial love on the cross and the role of the Christian in “joining” that sacrifice. Furthermore there is an accompanying sense that all goods, powers, intellect and will, are merely “lent” to the human person. Such lending has implications for responsibility and how sacrifice is understood. That which constitutes human sacrificial action can only be understood in terms of that which Christ “did” through sacrificial love. The sense that humanity has been “lent” life, goods, awareness and will determines both the existential condition of our creaturliness and the nature of our free response. The *ecclesia* is commissioned with the task of responsibly administering the created order which is given weight as a gift and lent for the time. Time understood as sacred and time through which humanity lives and moves.

³¹¹ Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 46-47; Charles Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching*, 131.

³¹² See Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 137-165, for a description of the term borrowed here, the “Eucharistic self.”

Father our sacrifice receive;
Our souls and bodies we present
Our goods, and vows, and praises give,
Whate'er Thy bounteous love hath lent.
Thou canst not now our gift despise,
Cast on that all atoning Lamb,
Mix'd with that bleeding Sacrifice,
And offer'd up through Jesus' name (153)

Proper worship is the context for these lines, not how atonement affects individual believers. That which is pleasing to God is both made known to us and enacted through Christ, who lived and loved doxologically, even from the Cross from which he proclaimed the hymn of absence, Psalm 22 (Matthew 27:46). In the Wesleyan lyric above Christ has done something for us which simultaneously provides a way to join his sacrifice, offering all that we have been given. The human person is steward and in this frame of reference ethical reflection begins by examining the way life is gift given from the Creator. Proper worship is proper stewardship of life: soul, heart, goods. Indeed, idolatry may mean giving undue attention to any one of these gifts. Atonement theory which separates salvation from proper worship may idolize the heart and the result can be that what Christ has done gets de-contextualized from what Christ shows. The opposite may be true too, we may only focus on what the life of Jesus shows us. In this case we misleadingly “think” we need only gain the proper perspective and the specificity of Christ’s death and its effect is thwarted. But Christ did that which we cannot, reconciling humanity to God through his Trinitarian offering of death. This effect arouses in the steward a sense of life’s lending. It “takes” our sin, freeing us to return the gifts we have been given. All is gift to be returned. Life itself ought not be “possessed.” As gift we have no “hold” on life’s terms or conditions, this is what Christ shows us. This Trinitarian outpouring (crucifixion) demonstrated authentic human existence, a life of

offering all for the greater glory of God, lyrically expressed above. The anthropological description of the human as “steward” provides the context for Christ’s death as a perfect sacrifice, analogous to the widow Jesus pointed out as “giving all she had” (Luke 21:1-4). Charles Wesley determined that creation itself expresses God’s “bounteous love.” As stewards our imperfect sacrifice is joined to the perfect one Christ offered once for all. All this is properly expressed within the worshipping community.

But notice that the lyric limits that which the human being gives back: goods, vows and praises. We might update these categories in order to say that our sacrifices are of our resources, commitments and praise. In terms of vows it may be that Charles has in mind the disciples’ commitment to Christ expressed through the order of worship as prayers and creeds. In the *Book of Common Prayer*, for example, an order for Holy Communion includes the Decalogue and the Nicene creed.³¹³ Christ’s sacrifice orders the church’s life of stewardship.

But the limits Charles placed on the sacrifice also provide criteria so that disciples are in no way constrained or “called” to use their freedom of offering to suffer for the sake of suffering. Rather holiness is a result of the church joining its offering to that which Christ offered. In the liturgical setting of the community of faith sacrifice is understood within the context of “offering.” Offering also connotes the sense of freedom. In this interpretation, creation is gift and humanity itself is “given” appropriately when the gift of freedom elicits giving in return. Sacrifice is an act of freedom. In this way the disciple’s sacrifice is “willed” as is Jesus’ offering in John’s Gospel: “I Lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord”

³¹³ *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 67-71.

(John 10:18). Ultimately it is an act of insuring proper worship, for in christic sacrifice life itself cannot be idolized.

Drawing on patristic sources David Power articulates something similar to the interpretation of sacrifice and offering expressed lyrically by Charles Wesley. Referring explicitly to the Roman Catholic doctrine of the gathered liturgical assembly, Power offers the following synthesis:

It is thanksgiving that constitutes the offering. This thought of the martyr of Lyon is in keeping with formulations noted also in other writers such as Justin Martyr that gave a metaphorical twist to the words “sacrifice” and “offering” by stating that the only religious act acceptable to God in the new dispensation is thanksgiving and communion with that over which thanks are rendered. The Church’s self dedication can be expressed only in words of thanks and praise in which God’s works are remembered and acknowledged.³¹⁴

Dedication, thanks and praise are at the least two of the three “sacrifices” Charles Wesley expressed in the lyric above. The third being goods. It may be that the bread and wine themselves are the symbol of the goods of the earth, although the ethical implications of that symbol need to be “fleshed out” in Roman Catholic Eucharistic/ethical thought.

If the crucifixion/resurrection is any indication of the way the giftedness of creation is ordered, that which is returned, returns again. This is construed in theology as the economic Trinity. This is, as Michael Downey reminds us, the grammar of gift and a “form of liminal discourse” because we come here to the edge of comprehension.³¹⁵

That the human being is an agent of offering, able to make a “free” response, implies that God does not expect the human person to “perform” under the threat of some punitive measure. The human as steward and sacrifice as offering our giftedness is brought to the

³¹⁴ David N. Power, “Roman Catholic Theologies of Eucharistic Communion: A Contribution to Ecumenical Conversation,” *Theological Studies* 57 (1996): 594.

³¹⁵ Michael Downey, *Altogether Gift: A Trinitarian Spirituality*, 48.

fore in the lyrical poetry of Charles Wesley. This interpretation may illumine the way a “sacrifice” or “altar” motif can indeed function in the renewal of Eucharistic theology. *This Holy Mystery* seems to be ambivalent about altar and sacrificial language, but if dismissed the rich Wesleyan legacy of the meaning of sacrifice is missed and ecumenical conversation may wane.

PRESENTING SACRIFICE: METHODIST AND CATHOLIC IMPLICATIONS

In the Wesleyan hymn (153) and to a certain extent in Power’s interpretation, two of the three delineations of sacrifice outlined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* are affirmed. The sacrifice of praise along with the sacrifice of the whole church in concert with Christ’s offering; we need to explore the third notion of sacrifice covered in the *Catechism*, namely, that in the Eucharist Christ’s sacrifice of the cross is represented. To clarify the *Catechism* does affirm that Christ’s bloody sacrifice on the “altar” of the cross is the same sacrifice offered in an un-bloody manner on the altar of the Eucharist. This Eucharistic representation, from a Catholic perspective, is understood as a *re-*presentation, and thereby integrates with the doctrine of “presence.”

Teresa Berger has shared that the difference between the propositional *Catechism* and the lyrical theology of *HLS* amounts to the difference between the *lex credendi* (law of belief) and the *lex orandi* (law of prayer). She then looks for Eucharistic “echoes” between these two texts, responding to the Catholic-Methodist dialogue in her essay *Finding Echoes: The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Hymns on the Lord’s*

Supper.³¹⁶ She finds that the echoes with the highest decibel count are those that ring back and forth between notions of sacrifice. Berger focuses especially on the resonance between the *Catechism's* insistence that the different altars of Calvary and liturgy receive the same Christic sacrifice (one bloody, one un-bloody) and Charles Wesley's imagistic poetry, conveying what Rattenbury described as the *Protestant Crucifix*.³¹⁷ The twenty-seven hymns under the heading *As it is a memorial of the Sufferings and Death of Christ*, are sometimes graphic in what can only be described as a "depiction" of the crucifixion. This depiction "places" the participant before the Cross. The lyrics, whether sung or prayed, give portraits, images, and one could say details that determine the shape of memory and remembering. One example begins:

Expiring in the sinner's place
 Crush'd with the universal load
 He Hangs!---adown His mournful face
 See trickling fast the tears and blood
 The blood that purges all our stains
 It starts in rivers from His veins (24.1)

Seeing and vision are emphasized explicitly in many of these blood hymns.³¹⁸ And the image is drawn in the mind by the detail, e.g. "trickling." The image therefore draws the imagination into the church's memory, a memory of "truth" we assume. In the imagistic moment the memory connects individual to the church of history. Because memory is reflexive, the song grants that we simultaneously remember ourselves. We are the ones who see and reflexively we see the truth of ourselves. But as Ricoeur reminds us it is helpful to remember the "what" before the "who."³¹⁹ Perhaps Ricoeur's now well known

³¹⁶ Teresa Berger, "Finding Echoes" in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper: 250 years*, 64; cf. Wainwright, *Methodists in Dialog*, 41.

³¹⁷ Rattenbury, *EH*, 14-23.

³¹⁸ See *EH*, 161-166, #'s 2,4,6,8,12,16,18,21.

³¹⁹ Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 3.

“The symbol gives rise to thought,” can be transposed to “the image gives rise to the memory.”³²⁰ However, that relationship (between image and memory) is highly complex and beyond the scope of my philosophical abilities. Nonetheless, when speaking of an external stimulus, like the word pictures of poetry tied to the reverb of song, or the images of other art “taken in” through the senses, the image becomes a catalyst setting off pathways of memory (associations). In the imagistic poetry there is the now, perhaps the representation is conducive to the perception of grace, a moment of insight present. In the imagistic poetry there is the past, the past of crucifix looking toward the participant remonstrating, perhaps, present sins and experiences of sins, sins remembered colluding with grace remembered. Through poetry’s pictures and images presence comes to mind. Presence appears or we might say subsists in the image. We may even say that the intensity of representation is contingent upon the image. Thus Ricoeur states, “the presence in which the representation of the past seems to consist does indeed appear to be that of an image.” This is a philosophical problem precisely because of the suspicion the western philosophical tradition has garnered for the imagination. The problem of image and imagination is the improper use of these. The philosophical wrestling with image, memory and imagination has to do with the affective rage of the imagination, its potential to skirt reason only to be duped by diabolical powers. Those with the power over the images can manipulate and wield power over others by stimulating the imagination. Certainly this is a problem in the image of sacrifice. But in finding “echoes” between lyrical poetry and the *Catechism’s* teaching on sacrifice, we may propose that liturgy itself presents a healthy economy of image, memory, affectivities and imagination. Thus

³²⁰ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 347-357.

hymnody enlarges and intensifies the Eucharistic and anaphoric dimensions of the *ecclesia*.

Since sound, music and participation intimate a kind of sacrifice (the sacrifice of praise) through the visceral expression of, and engagement with the latent violent nature of humanity, music resolves ambivalence or even a socio-political tension. Singing can truly reflect through sound the image of sacrifice, catching up the participant in the passion itself. What is more, through singing, the image of crucifixion is “made” socially and the presence of the cross is experienced from “within” the Jesus narrative. The lyrical places the participant in this intimate mode of friendship with Christ, we are no longer arbitrary bystanders, curious objective observers to an exhibition of vicarious violence. Rather, participating in the lyrics grants an engaged representation of our remorse and grief. As Jesus’ friends, the body of hymn singers becomes the object of Christ’s love. Charles Wesley:

Ah give me, Lord, my sins to mourn
My sins which have Thy body torn;
Give me with broken heart to see
Thy last tremendous agony,
To weep o’er an expiring God
And mix my sorrows with Thy blood. (6.1)

The sung representation “mixes” human affectivities with the life giving “blood” of God. The objective condition of sacrifice is given full representation and through the lyrical the person offers his/her subjectivity to the Eucharistic sacrifice. What is more this representation of sacrifice, if kept within the “work” of holistic worship, can never stand as the singular image of the Eucharist. Sacrifice and its imagistic poetry is only a “moment” in an ordered reality of thanksgiving and offering. In an integrated anaphoric tradition other images accompany these. One need only look through the Eucharistic

prayers of both United Methodist and Roman Catholic liturgies to see, e.g.

”Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.” The piety donned through such imagistic and meditative poetry personalizes the Eucharistic moment even as it represents a historic event, an event full with the Christian interpretation of Divine sacrifice.

Such an interpretation of sacrifice is maligned, however, when human freedom is either ignored or repressed through relationships of power, as Ricoeur and others contend. The preceding discussion of sacrifice, offering and stewardship is largely a response to a critique feminist theology has made of both Systematic and Sacramental theology. It is imperative that this critique be addressed; first for the sake of the health of human relationships, and subsequently for the sake of ecumenical relationships.

To proceed, let us look at a lyric Charles offers us which employs a diagram of punitive suffering at the “hands” of both humanity and God. This atonement hymn takes the metaphor of “bread” and then utilizes rather violent imagery in relation to guilt. We will then explore the implications of this hymn, particularly in relation to a feminist critique of substitutionary atonement theory. We see here that the Wesleyan Eucharistic corpus is not “consistent” in its theology. It is difficult to say how it could have been, given both the lyrical rendering and the diversity of pastoral response necessary in revival. In other words, the hymn below “speaks” to a person at the edge of despair, one unable to accomplish anything, and one certainly unable to accomplish “righteousness” before God. Certainly we imagine an audience here, but given the sociological evidence from the period of revival, it may be that this punitive expression is heard as “good news” by those for whom it would have been impossible to embrace the privilege of more refined theological expressions.

In this expressive bread I see
The wheat by man cut down for me
And beat, and bruised, and ground:
The heavy plagues, and pains, and blows,
Which Jesus suffer'd from His foes,
Are in this emblem found.

The bread dried up and burnt with fire
Presents the father's vengeful ire,
Which my redeemer bore:
Into his bones the fire he sent,
Till all the flaming darts were spent,
And Justice ask'd no more. (2)

There are both systematic and practical/ethical theological dangers in this hymn. This is one of the few hymns in the collection that only uses the singular pronoun (under 20% of the hymns do so use the singular). Though cathartic in some sense, the hymn can be interpreted as Arian and its image of God is problematic for relational ethics. Christ is construed as satisfying an angry Father/God. Feminist and Womanist theology in particular have found such imagery alarmingly irresponsible. The critique comes from a contemporary concern about passive suffering. The experience of women, their passive suffering at the hand of abusers, is "traced" to theories of atonement which express Christ's death as having an assuasive effect on the anger of the Father. The result is the assumption that "Jesus suffered in obedience to his Father's will." Feminist theologians have deemed this "divine child abuse" and develop the implications of this theological construal of God and Christ. At its worst, such an image of divine child abuse can result in a Christian identity that passively suffers under the constant threat of abuse because Christ is the exemplar of Christian existence and must be modeled. Anyone, particularly women, who find themselves in these repressive circumstances have little recourse to self expression and have no recourse to articulate their intrinsic worth. The image of Christ's apparent passive suffering seals this context of abuse. Sacrifice is understood in both

physical and spiritual terms, even lifted to a kind of piety. The physical abuse passively received is aligned with Christ's passion, and the wordless submission a vicarious identification with Christ's humiliation.³²¹

Women's bodies, therefore, are potentially integrated into the liturgical sacrifice as abused, or in the Catholic context, women are integrated only in a virginal or asexual way. Drawing on the work of Mary Collins, David Power suggests that the notion of sacrifice "be metaphorically allied with thanksgiving." This would conform nicely to a Wesleyan understanding of the disciple as "steward" motif and the concept of Eucharistic offering as the "sacrifice of ourselves and our goods."³²²

This revisionist work on the human as steward and the *ecclesia* as offerers of sacrifice of mind, heart and goods, cannot fully address what seems to be a stifling inconsistency in Charles Wesley's Eucharistic lyricism. The contradiction that exists between hymn number one-hundred fifty three and the second hymn in the corpus which portrays an angry God in need of assuaging is a pointed example of the core tensions within the Methodist tradition. But a host of hymns are certainly appropriate in rendering the representational dimension of Eucharistic sacrifice so vital to Catholic thought.³²³ These are hymns that represent the cross without the *Ira Dei*, as expressed in hymn number two above.

The tension in the Wesleyan tradition is clearly seen here. One hymn, so clear in its ecclesial significance, its constructive sacramental understanding and rubric, seems to

³²¹ J. Denny Weaver, *The Non-Violent Atonement*, 127, 122-156.

³²² Power, "Roman Catholic Theologies of Eucharistic Communion," 596.

³²³ Consult hymns 1-27 as well as 28, 36, 116, 120, 149.

foreshadow much of the twentieth century's liturgical renewal. The other hymn, emotionally compact with the ambivalence of repentance and grace, the wonder of guilt and forgiveness, seems to communicate the truth of *human* affectivity in the midst of conversion. I want to suggest that in the realm of a spiritual theology, all of these contradictions may bring balance, but only within the context of the gathered assembly called the church. Notice the singular pronouns in the hymn which emphasizes the anger of God. We have called the overall emphasis on the plural pronoun in the *HLS* an ecclesial consciousness. The hymns with the singular pronouns, therefore, must be theologically "checked" against the hymns with a more communal strain. Such a method is in keeping with the broader Catholic insistence that individuals discern the truth in relation to the church.³²⁴ But it is inappropriate to dismiss altogether these individualist hymns. In terms of conversion and revival they certainly speak to the mysticism brought by a potent experience of Grace. They also describe the conversionary process as beginning within the existential perception of sin, guilt, remorse and Divine favor. In the United Methodist communion liturgy we say, "he (Jesus) healed the sick, fed the hungry and ate with *sinners*."³²⁵ Even though the individual feels the lonely remorse of his/her own sin and guilt, the church reminds that Jesus ate with sinner(s). The gathered community may give more balance to an unhealthy individualism. In the guilt lyric above, it is almost as if the emotional force of the guilt of the sinner is projected onto a patriarchal god-head, giving much credence to Feuerbach to say nothing of Sigmund

³²⁴ See Thomas Dubay, S. M., *Authenticity: A Biblical Theology of Discernment*, 39-56, for an incisive and forceful discussion of "subjectivist illusion."

³²⁵ United Methodist Hymnal, 10, emphasis mine.

Freud.³²⁶ We would do well, however, to see these more individualist hymns as indicative of the nature of conscience at work. In so doing we affirm the truth of the anthropology revealed while seeking the truth of God in more Trinitarian or plural Eucharistic offerings.

By embracing the ostensible inconsistency in the *HLS* we embrace the inevitable plurality of lived Christianity. And as a bridge document, the *HLS* clearly show that conversion comes to deeper dimensions and holiness to more refined expressions within the sacramental structure of a gathered Eucharistic assembly. It is also inappropriate to dismiss altogether the pathos of the atonement hymns, for they reveal a theological constant within the tradition, namely, God's pathos. This would mean that Divine anger results in Divine compassion, emptying and connection. We are reminded by Jewish scholar Abraham Joshua Heschel that God's anger, the *Ira Dei*, is the direct result of the social neglect of the poor, the widow and the orphan.³²⁷ Such anger is appeased, no doubt, in proper worship habits. One thinks of the now oft-quoted "lyric" from Micah the prophet through which Israel queries about what ought to be brought to the altar. What the Lord requires is simply, "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:6-8). Proper and holistic worship is a precedent of social justice. Here again we enter the realm of the relation between holiness and communion. And we see that the problem of "right worship" is a social and political one through and through. I would suggest that a sacramental structure that connects people to the mercies and goodness of God will surely result in the dissolution of social and

³²⁶ Michael J. Buckley, "Modernity and the Satanic Face of God," in *Christian Spirituality and the Culture of Modernity*, ed. Peter Casarella and George P. Schner, S.J., (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 100-122

³²⁷ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets*, 79-86.

political barriers. Any evangelical movement conditioned by catholic propensities invites the convert into the grace filled sacrament, an expression of salvific identity. (e.g. the Wesleyan movement). In addition such work and worship will be the didactic context for the meaning of proper sacrifice.

The tension gripping the Methodist tradition is the gift Methodism brings to the ecumenical future. To alleviate the tension is to relinquish the ecumenical core of Methodism, sacrificing the soul of the tradition in order merely to legitimate a denomination. When tradition is understood organically its growth demands tending to and cultivation. If the Wesleyan movement is the seed of Methodism, Methodism's growth rests secure on a tension that resists static *denominational* prescriptions. The *HLS* resemble well the tension of a movement very much in between ecclesial/theological entities and longing to bring *universal* prescriptions to bear on pluralistic Christian society. Being in-between certainly means being misunderstood and often means risking such misunderstanding in order to allow evangelical sharing to override more limited refinements of lived Christianity. Contemporary Methodism shares with both the Anglican tradition that birthed it and the Roman Catholic tradition of *ressourcement* a creative tension that makes conversation about spiritual practices conducive to deeper understanding of that which is shared by all. But what Methodism lacks is a sufficient ecclesiology that would match its conversation partners.' If present day Methodism is seeking to be true to its vocation, it may be time to let go of its search for distinctive "Methodist" characteristics in order to plumb the depths of the catholic tradition for ecumenical resources for the future. The *HLS* are a distinctive part of the Wesleyan cannon in that, in true Methodist fashion, they point beyond themselves to broader

traditions as well as engender insights into various liturgical practices, particularly the Roman Catholic. Therefore *HLS* are more aptly interpreted not as denominational resources, cited solely for the buttressing of a narrow denomination's identity, but rather as a bridge text, leading Methodists to history's generous path toward common catholic Eucharistic understanding.³²⁸

Chapter Six: Reprise with Themes that Deserve a Full Hearing

The *HLS* are a bridge text in that they record a movement's particular appropriations of variant traditions while functioning to bring newly revived Christians into the center of the sacramental tradition as understood by John and Charles Wesley. The eighteenth century Methodist revival was situated in a particular political, liturgical and intellectual context. Socio-politically it was tense. But by the eighteenth century efforts were afoot to assuage disruptions of violence, which made the Wesleys an exemplary witness to the best of an irenic spirit. Perhaps John Wesley was even more irenic than his brother.

By tracing these dimensions of revival we have demonstrated that tradition, experience, and reason figure prominently in the Wesleyan thrust from the beginning. Specifically we have seen that hymnody and the composition and production of hymnody were a creative and synthetic way to deal with the socio-political (tradition), liturgical (religious experience) and intellectual (reason) tensions of the eighteenth century's context.

³²⁸ Albert Outler, *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, 225.

The way Methodism appropriated what are often construed as divergent British theological traditions clarifies that often our efforts to simplify and label denominational origins are mistaken. The Wesleyan creative synthesis also connotes the intrinsic ecumenical potential inhering in Methodist origins. What might be the status of Daniel Brevint in the economy of the “saints” of Methodism? His significance has been all but ignored in previous discussions on the *HLS*. His life and theology, especially his anti-Roman commentary which preceded *CSS*, may well be worthy of some exploration. However, the prior question concerning Brevint is his “Methodist” status. He is more important, I think, than either Richard Baxter or George Herbert, for it is becoming clear that to the degree that contemporary United Methodism appropriates the lyrical Eucharistic tradition, Brevint will need to be understood and put in a proper light. In rendering Brevint’s place among “Methodist” saints, the chiaroscuro effect mentioned in the last chapter needs to be applied. Further study of Brevint may yield insight into the meaning of tradition itself and Methodist Eucharistic tradition in particular. Since this paper called into question sole reliance on John Wesley as the theological arbiter of Methodist tradition, the next step may be to evaluate the ecclesiological implications of Brevint’s role in Methodist Eucharistic thought and place him in the developing Eucharistic canon of Methodism.

Contemporary United Methodists are left with further difficulties however. In the field of ecumenics there is a basic methodological principle that must be clarified, put this way by Geoffrey Wainwright. “Is a particular ecclesial tradition to be represented in its “ideal,” its “classical,” or its “empirical” form?”³²⁹ When at the table of dialogue

³²⁹ Wainwright, *Methodists in Dialog*, 41.

which Methodist “church” is displayed? How does the interpreter go looking for the Methodist church and which church does one look for? The parameters of a Methodist ecclesiological hermeneutics are not easy to trace. But if we maintain a focus on the plurality of influences contained in Methodist texts, we may be on the right track.

The first chapter attempted to gather empirical historical data as a foundation for the Methodist tradition’s ecumenical house. Certainly I drew heavily from more able interpreters, Richard Heitzenrater in particular. But even if we do gather historical themes in order to inform current ecumenical dialogue, we still must establish criteria for authorization. This is why so much of the last chapter was concerned with the intra-Methodist dialogue. Methodists have trouble agreeing on that which may be the basis of our ecumenical thrust. In that context, more work needs to be done as the Methodist traditions engage one another. Our “separation” borders on the diabolical when the rift between the European Methodist tradition and African Methodist tradition is so wide. The *HLS*, I believe, would be a positive way to bridge this gap too. This is an assumption which has developed on an intuition regarding the African American theological tradition and its understanding of the significance of the blood of Christ. There is, perhaps, a different tone to the way this sacrificial emphasis sounds within an African American context. As for the lyrical dimension of theology, the African American theological tradition is rich in its lyrical offerings and can bring light to this poetic-theological issue. Perhaps a good place to start is James Cone’s *The Spirituals and the Blues*.³³⁰

This intra-dialogue, it seems, is necessary to expose to the broader ecumenical field, thereby providing a clearer picture to our Roman Catholic partners of the inherent

³³⁰ *The Spirituals and The Blues* (New York: Orbis, 1991).

ambiguity of the Methodist tradition. I have assumed that the Wesleys must figure prominently in the conversation of identity. However, since the United Methodist church is a uniting of the Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist churches, we must be careful not to weight the scales too heavily with Wesleyan concerns. And yet, as *This Holy Mystery* shares, the Evangelical United Brethren tradition is bereft of Eucharistic writing, at least in the case of its originators. In coming to terms with the question of how to represent an ecclesial tradition (empirical, classical, ideal) one must certainly engage the meaning of hymnody, particularly within the British Protestant traditions. It is clear that hymnody, like Methodism's revivalistic process, is an expression of creativity and synthesis. And in terms of historical study, ecumenical relations and doctrine, much could be gleaned from Charles Wesley's other thematic hymnody, most notably his *Hymns on the Trinity*.³³¹ What was the basis of this text, to what was he responding? Did John Wesley influence his poetic process as he did with the *HLS*?

Chapter one delineated the multiplicitous influences on both John and Charles Wesley, providing the backdrop to the production of the *HLS* (1745). The hymnic nature of the Methodist theological and doctrinal tradition may invite further clarification on the nature and role of hymnody in relation to theological authority.

The textual process was then explored. Another rather controversial and interdependent process was brought to light, namely the nature of extraction and the editorial process. After the original publication of the hymns in 1745, eight other editions were published in the Wesleys' lifetimes. Eight editions may be an indication of the popularity of the text, and it certainly may speak to the Methodist tradition's original

³³¹ See, *The Poetical Works*, 3:343-354; these hymns were published in 1746, one year after *HLS*; there are only 24 hymns and 1-7 appeared in a 1740 collection, *Hymns and Sacred Poems*.

rendering of Eucharistic evangelism. That relationship might be explored in the Catholic tradition. One thinks of contemporary Eucharistic devotions, and how these function in relation to the revival of Catholic life and thought. The tension in that realm for Catholics, of course, is the patient preparation needed for Eucharistic participation, at least if one comes to the faith from the outside. United Methodists do not seem to have that problem, but the open table presents other issues. Eucharistic evangelism is clearly seen in *This Holy Mystery* and the document in some way clarifies certain issues that Methodist practitioners will face as they bring converts into the ritualistic structure of Methodism.

Surely this essay deemed the process of hymn production an ecclesial project. More light is shed on the relations of the arbiters of Methodist meaning when the collaborative nature of the *HLS* is examined. In a way, Daniel Brevint, Charles Wesley and John Wesley express their particular gift and calling in the economy of the ecclesial tradition through the *HLS*. To bring a contemporary analogy, it is as though Brevint is the screen writer, Charles Wesley the creative director/actor, while John Wesley is the film editor. No role can undermine another, though the editor does have a final “say.” In a sense, John Wesley brought it all together with an eye toward its ultimate end, and in that way his role might be analogous to the “producer” as well. The point is that there is less of a need to posit a hierarchy among the historical agents in the tradition when we construe the hymnic project as a thoroughly ecclesial collaboration. The seventeenth century church of Brevint and the eighteenth century church of the Wesleys produced a composite literary document which sought to revive the same church. The author of this essay considers that these ecclesial products are to be interpreted from a contemporary

ecclesial place, and therefore the contemporary result of this ecclesial process is to place this tradition's plural collaborative thrust in conversation with the plural yet unified Roman Catholic tradition.

The discussion of the editorial process has had an impact on how the Wesleys' and their hymn production may serve the present ecumenical age. In all it has provided a clarion call for an integration of an *ecclesial hermeneutic* along side what may be deemed efforts in contemporary *historiography*, or *Wesleyana* among other academic specialties.

AN ECCLESIAL HERMENEUTIC: METHODOLOGICAL LOCATIONS

Clarity is gained in the fields of both history and theology when the interpreter can build layers of learning upon one historical figure, become versed in this historical actor's life narrative, life world and writings, and then adeptly prescribe particular principles which somehow may give successive generations their identity. This academic advantage often creates a wistful cadre of experts, followers and schools and unwittingly creates a groundswell of source material for ecclesial fragmentation or agenda driven classifications. Such is the academic project of theological- biography, perhaps growing out of the fascination western historiography has with eminent figures who have influenced the currents of society. One task for theology may be to provide criteria for who is remembered, why they are remembered, and the significance of that particular memory. This would be analogous to the Roman Catholic "method" of naming a saint, though the criteria may differ. An alternative, to focus on movements and schools, to unearth their dynamic engagement, "what makes them tick;" this strategy illumines movements and may provide near formulaic probabilities for resembling past successes.

The propensity for both theological biography and unearthing a movement's secret in pure form, stem in some part from the Protestant tradition's often obsessive tendency to protect against the memorable possibility of falling prey again to an adulterated faith, such adulteration found in the memory of Medieval Roman Catholicism.

Less clarity but more genuine ecclesial ground is gained when, for example, the interpreter begins to listen to variant interpretations of the same actor, e.g. Lutheran and Catholic interpretations of Augustine. Or, if rather than choosing either Reinhold or H. Richard Niebuhr, we begin to read their ethical thought in light of one-another, then our classifications are quickly derailed and we begin to search for the handrail of theological hermeneutics. Or we slip deeper into the trees when we begin to examine a movement in terms of the relationship between its leaders, say John and Charles Wesley. In the case of the Wesleyan movement speculation may be given to John and Charles' complementary theological propensities, how they enacted their particular charism for the greater good. But then we must ask, for the greater good of what? If we are historians, we may not even venture to answer that question, having gained access to their primary texts and the context of their life-world, we might be satisfied with strong research but benign conclusions. But when we look at a text that had been produced and disseminated in the midst of particular historical circumstances, then the text becomes a cipher to see the relationships, the ecclesial relationships, between historical actors whose primary purpose seemed to be the edifying of the church wherever and whenever they may have found themselves.

So the exploration of the editions of the *HLS* has convinced this writer that the question of historical figures and movements must be asked from the present day *church* to the *church* of history, and therefore we find very different questions and conclusions

indeed. Since both Brevint's *Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* and the Wesleys' *HLS* were put together for the church's good, we must ask to what degree our interpretive lens is influenced by that same church. What is continuous from our vantage point and how are we construing the necessarily collaborative nature of the ecclesial project? Academic theology has fallen into a rather individualist habit in our era, and it is difficult for the church as a social entity with particular concerns to gain a hearing within the fragmented proliferation known by its various names, e.g. religious studies, history of religions, theology. Therefore the conclusions of an exploration of the editions of the *HLS* convey quite a clear ecclesial process and subsequent interpretations within this paper attempted to explore the *HLS* from an ecclesial lens.

What was found in Brevint's text was not only the basis of Charles Wesley's Eucharistic lyricism, but also an imaginative recourse to Augustine and other early church theologians, aptly named "the fathers." In this way the boundaried edges of the traditions are seen to be paper thin indeed, and if one studies a body of Charles Wesley's verse, one must be prepared to be opened out onto the broader catholic tradition, ready to research its significance for the contemporary context. In this way the editions as ecclesial expressions get at the nature of the Methodist tradition from a different angle; is Methodism merely a tributary to the big river of Catholicism or is there something distinctive there in the waters of Methodism, worth preserving on its own? Singing and the lyrical may be a substantial part of that distinctive dimension.

HYMNIC FORM, ECCLESIAL FORM

Hymnody has a particular form, a lyrical form. Only a few aspects of this form were taken into consideration in this exploration. Rhyme and meter were named as limits to

the form of the lyrics. And poetry's general literary and cognitive attributes received some attention. More could be said about Charles Wesley's literary habits, the nature of his verse, and any significant way this verse may be compared to other poetic offerings. The Hebrew poet could be both conventional, as in Proverbs, or subversive, as the Psalms sometimes are (I refer here to the songs of lament in particular). The New Testament poet could provide a radical or prophetic vision (Luke 1:46-55) or a metaphysical formula (Colossians 1:15-23).

HLS may also be compared to some Medieval Roman Catholic hymns on the Eucharist. I refer here to the poetry attributed to Thomas Aquinas, the *Pange lingua* (Sing, my tongue,) and *Adoro te Devote* (I adore You, O hidden God).³³² These and others may be contextualized and brought into conversation with some of the *HLS*. A comparison of form may lead to other theological discoveries for ecumenical understanding.

One wonders about the way in which this kind of mystical poetry aligns with the American folk tradition, the way there is a catholic (universal) tone to hymnody that both challenges and sustains conventions and given meanings. My hunch is that the American folk tradition builds upon the hymnic tradition of which Charles Wesley is such an important part. Wesley just precedes the American lyrical tradition that Cone explores. One commentator of contemporary lyrical poetry has seen the role of poet in a variety of ways. The poet is wordsmith, historian, entertainer, conscience, visionary, commentator, myth maker, psychologist, and explorer.³³³ This late twentieth century rendering, we notice, only has traces of the poet as theologian as we are wont to read Charles Wesley.

³³² Richard Kieckhefer, "Major Currents in Late Medieval Devotion," in *Christian Spirituality*, 98.

³³³ David, R. Pichaske, *The Varieties of Poetry: Beowulf to Beatles and Beyond*, xxiii-xxv.

But since good theology seems to encompass all these other roles for the interpreter of words, Charles Wesley's ecclesial verse may be brought into conversation with these other ecclesial roles. Also, we might want to add the poet as mystic in that litany of roles for the poet.

The poet's role, or the lyricist's role within the church, as we discovered, is to build bridges of meaning for the edification of the church. And Charles Wesley's Eucharistic poetry is exemplary for its public function. Wesleyan lyricism, like all good mystical poetry and folk poetry, is without jargon, fancy or a brilliance of arrangement for aesthetic purposes only. Rather, the ecclesial poet's public role is to communicate meaning, thereby illuminating how it is the church can bring common words to unsearchable yet shared experiences. We have seen that the ecclesial poet crafts balance, and in so doing illuminates the balance between experiential dimensions of Christian existence: desire/encounter, apophatic/kataphatic, poetics/logic. All these are worthy of reflection and lead to understanding of the broader relationship between theology, spirituality and ethics. This public process of poetry makes it clear that any individualistic interpretations of eighteenth century revival are inconsistent with Wesleyan piety.

We have been persistent in the acknowledgement of Charles Wesley's use of the first person plural in the hymns. The significance of this seems especially relevant today in North America. Just as we argued that Methodist identity does not make sense without an ecumenical core, so the lyrical nature of Wesleyan theology cannot be interpreted without a corporate spirituality. Both John and Charles Wesley, though deep existential Christians, lived in a context through which their discipleship became inevitably socially

shaped. The form of the lyrics, as explored in chapter four, may help us to understand the Methodist tradition of “connectionalism,” a Methodist word referring to the ecclesiological structure which brings many together for the one mission. In addition, the fluid nature of the lyrical also provides a construct for the social fluidity of the Methodist tradition of itinerancy, a necessary condition of the Episcopal ecclesial form shared also by the Roman Catholic tradition, among others.

In the previous chapter, the *HLS* historical, textual, and theological dimensions were brought together in order to show the way the lyrical might provide avenues for Roman Catholic-Methodist dialogue. The nature of Methodist ecclesiology was explored in the last chapter, and the Methodist tradition as a “bridge” tradition was emphasized. At least two areas deserve more attention in the Roman Catholic-Methodist field of common understanding.

The Holy Spirit kept “showing up” throughout the paper. The historical context of revival, the constancy of didactic perpetuity through the transitioning of tradition, and the liturgical depth in such issues as presence, sacrifice and transubstantiation, make the Holy Spirit an alluring area of study in relation to Wesleyan Eucharistic piety and the nature and end of the church catholic. In particular, the creative composition of the lyrical and the role of the Spirit in the active singing of the lyric as part of the liturgical setting deserves practical theological commentary. One could “read” the activity of the Spirit in the hymns, the verb usages pertaining to the Spirit, and then “read” also the liturgical action of congregational song.

Within the context of the Roman Catholic –Methodist dialogue more constructive work needs to be done in the area of the anaphoric role of the *HLS*. Broadly defined the anaphora is the structure of the Eucharistic prayer that sacralizes the order of the liturgy

in a prayerful flow of thanksgiving and praise. *The Hymns on the Lord's Supper* can serve as a deliberate piece of the overall Eucharistic prayer. In this case we face the tension between the more liturgically oriented traditions and those traditions steeped in an ex-temporaneous understanding of worship. The singing of hymns can carry one off into un-chartered Eucharistic waters. If more than one-hundred Eucharistic hymns are available and an able song leader accompanies the ordained presider, there may be an improvisational anaphoric process that “listens” for the Spirit in the midst of the sacrificial meal. In the congregation I presently preside in, the anaphora continues through song as the body receives the bread and wine. This perhaps is less foreign to the Roman Catholic tradition since music may accompany the reception of the body of Christ.

Many of the *HLS* would be appropriate anaphoric offerings and could be placed appropriately within the traditional liturgical order shared by Roman Catholics and Methodists. Perhaps to accentuate the diversity of “prefaces” contained in the Roman Catholic anaphoric tradition, the *HLS* could be used as an intensification of that particular seasonal preface, giving particular emphasis to a spiritual aspect of the liturgy while providing opportunity for broader liturgical participation in the “preface.”³³⁴ The hymns may also function as an act of congregational unity and centering after an epiclesis, which has traditionally served to call upon the Holy Spirit while thankfully asking God to bring the gift of unity.

³³⁴ Enrico Mazza, *Celebration of the Eucharist*, 283, 57.

SIGNS THAT SING

Singing and making signs of things real go together. Both actions express a universal longing to share meaning with other human persons. The *HLS* are clearly a classic text in the sense that they are songs on the “sign” of Christian identity, containing layers of meaning that have yet to be plumbed. It is not enough to say that these one hundred and sixty six hymns were before their time. We can say, rather, that they reflect the classical structure of Christianity which precedes an existence which seeks to live authentically the evangelical mandate of the faith, a force for social and ecclesial engagement of the first order. Their potential lies in the eschatological vision of the unity of the church catholic, centered upon the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. But I am afraid that dissertations and studies will never do these lyrics justice. They will be most effective in our common catholic moments when they are searched over, engaged, prayed and brought to the surface through new musical scores and the living instruments of the church, the body of Christ. Perhaps that is the most pressing task, to “feed” these lyrics to creative musicians so that the “we” of universal salvation in Jesus Christ might be heard in the present tense.

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