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The Lord's Supper

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The revival of interest in the Lord's Supper is one of the most striking features of the current ecumenical scene, and in considering what doctrinal contribution Methodism can make to the whole ecumenical movement we ought to take a lively interest in this field. Moreover, our history entitles us to do this, for the sacramental practice and teaching of the Wesleys were an important part of their contribution to the century in which they lived and have still much to teach us. It would be a great mistake to draw some sharp opposition between sacramental and evangelical emphases and then simply to label the Wesleys as evangelical. Evangelical of course they were, but they were sacramentalists as well; indeed they are a pre-eminent example of the compatibility of these two trends. It has been the great service of J. E. Rattenbury to draw attention to the once neglected facts which abundantly attest this claim. Whether the Methodists of subsequent generations have successfully maintained this combination is another question, but the current ecumenical trend gives us a good opportunity to recover it.

We shall consider first the practice of the Wesleys and then two aspects of their doctrine, and under each heading shall relate the matter to the current ecumenical situation. It might be objected that we ought to start from the New Testament, but that would only duplicate work which has already been done. The Wesleys will serve at any rate as our starting point, but of course the New Testament will be present in our minds as the standard and norm.

The practice of John Wesley has been thoroughly investigated by John C. Bowmer in his book *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism*. In a later work *The Lord's Supper in Methodism, 1791-1960* he investigated the period after Wesley in British Methodism. Wesley's practice is summed up in the title of a sermon which he wrote before the Aldersgate experience in 1733 and published long after that experience, in 1788, the sermon on "The Duty of Constant Communion." The word "constant" he deliberately chose in preference to "frequent," which he regarded as inadequate. In this as in other matters he practiced what he preached. Thus in the year from June 1, 1740, to May 31, 1741, he received the communion at least forty times on Sundays and fifty-eight times on weekdays. In the last ten years of his life, despite considerable gaps, he received the communion on an average every five days. His practice varied a little according to where he was, but when he was in London he received the communion nearly every Sunday morning.

There was a certain development in the place of these communion services. At first they were in parish churches, in the English sense of that term; i.e., in the churches belonging to the Church of England. He would celebrate the communion elsewhere in only one case (apart from Anglican college chapels and the like); i.e., for a sick person in a private house. As his followers became less welcome in the parish churches, however, he began to celebrate more freely in private houses, then in Hugunot chapels, and finally in Methodist preaching houses or chapels. As early as 1741 in a French chapel in Wapping (an example of the intermediate stage),

he arranged for his members, a thousand in number, to receive the communion two hundred a week in rotation.

In the provinces—apart from Bristol and Norwich—the development was much slower than in London. Toward the end of his life Wesley celebrated the communion in Methodist chapels in the provinces on his visits, but in his absence there was not usually an Anglican clergyman willing to do this, and the number of men ordained by Wesley for England was negligible. So Wesley was constantly urging the people to receive the communion at the parish churches, as indeed he sometimes did himself, even to the end of his life. The people were increasingly unwilling to follow his lead, however, nor was this surprising in view of the attitude of many of the Anglican clergy.

Thus we may broadly say that the norm, as demonstrated in London and in Wesley's own practice, was at least weekly communion.

This has not been maintained in British Methodism. A prime reason was the lack of ordained clergymen and then after Wesley's death the disputes which preceded the Plan of Pacification in 1795. This permitted the traveling preachers to administer the sacraments and thus virtually claimed for them the status of ordained ministers. Even then there were far more chapels than there were ministers, as in England there still are, and because of all these difficulties the people lost the habit of receiving the communion frequently. Indeed, in the provinces they may never have had the opportunity of acquiring it. Old circuit plans suggest that for a considerable period only the town chapels had communion services. Country Methodists separated themselves only gradually from the Church of England and, no doubt, went sometimes for communion to the parish church, as to this day some of them do for marriages and burials. At a later period fear of the so-called ritualism of the Oxford Movement and then of the growing influence of Romanism led to a further decline in sacramental practice. In America, similarly, the conditions in which the circuit riders worked so nobly

on the frontier must have militated to some extent against settled sacramental observances.

Now the ecumenical scene presents something of a return to early Methodist practice. Roman churches, not content with passive attendance at Mass, are urging the people actually to receive the communion each Sunday. Anglican Churches are breaking away from the pattern that has prevailed in many of them for a century or so—the pattern of Holy Communion for the few at 8 A.M. and Morning Prayer for the many at 11 A.M.—and are increasingly having one main morning service including both preaching and communion, usually at 9:30 A.M. Continental Protestants are also ceasing to regard the communion as a sort of occasional appendage to the preaching service and are holding, often once a month, a full service of Word and sacrament. Karl Barth has described a service of preaching without the sacrament as a "torso,"¹ and there would be widespread agreement among liturgical scholars that the normal full Christian service, which ideally would be the main service each Sunday morning, is a service which includes both the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Ought Methodism to approve of such a development? We have seen that it is in accordance with John Wesley's practice and, we might add, with the intentions of the Anglican Prayer Book and of Luther and Calvin, though Calvin was prevented by the magistrates at Geneva from carrying out his intention. But the real test must be the New Testament, and though it is nowhere formally stated in the New Testament that regular Sunday worship is to take this form, we can see from the New Testament itself (as has been shown by such books as O. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* and C. F. D. Moule, *Worship in the New Testament*) and from such writers as Justin that this was almost certainly the practice of the New Testament and quite certainly that of the early Church. A practice favored by the New Testament, the principal Reformers, and the Wesleys has strong claims on us. In each of these three cases it was

¹ *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd., 1938), p. 211.

afterward modified, but we may perhaps ascribe that to human weakness rather than to any defect in the practice itself. We should therefore welcome the current ecumenical trend and encourage it within Methodism.

The first step should be to see that when communion is observed the service should be regarded as a single whole, Word and sacrament forming a kind of double climax. This does not mean that there can be no opportunity for the departure of those who do not wish to stay; there is ancient precedent for the dismissal of catechumens and excommunicate persons, though not for the departure of full members. People ought not, however, to be dragged into being present at the communion. On the other hand, where the service does proceed without a break to the communion, as in some places is the practice, the congregation is often larger on such occasions than on other Sundays, which seems to give some support to the idea of completely omitting any pause.

The norm for such services should be that form of communion service which includes the elements of reading the scriptures and preaching. The first order in the British Book of Offices does this, and so does the first in the American Ritual, the one which springs, I believe, from the old Methodist Episcopal Church. In my judgment, however, the more conservative form of the prayer of consecration in the second American order, that from the old Methodist Episcopal Church, South, is to be preferred at that point. (The alteration of this prayer does not go far back, however, in the history of the old Methodist Episcopal Church.) Yet it is not essential to use these orders, so long as their main spirit is preserved. Indeed, the time is ripe for revision, such as that with which the American General Conference concerned itself in 1960. The British Conference also is likely to take the matter in hand; indeed, certain unofficial proposals are already circulating.

It would be too much to hope that in the near future such services could be held weekly in our churches, though as a theologian I think that is plainly the right course. It would not be too much to arrange them monthly, however, and so to order the service on

other Sundays as to bring out the resemblance both in purpose and in structure between the communion service and the preaching service. This last point was suggested by the report of the Commission on Worship made to the British Conference in 1960.

Before we leave these matters of practice we might digress a little to consider certain other features of that aspect of the ecumenical movement which is called the liturgical movement. As well as the stress on the centrality of the communion service, in the sense of a full service of Word and sacrament, certain other notes are now commonly struck. Most of these concern the corporate nature of Christian worship. It is pointed out that *leitourgia* is derived, though somewhat indirectly, from *laos*, people, and *ergon*, work, and, though James Barr, in *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, has thrown some doubt on the value of such etymological arguments, the fact cannot be denied that worship is the task of the whole people of God. It is not something done by a body of clerics for the rank and file of the people; it is offered by the whole people of God, which includes ministers and what we call "laymen" alike, who all belong to a priestly body.

In Methodism we are apt to think that, as we undoubtedly believe in the priesthood of all believers, we are in no danger of an erroneous sacerdotalism and that therefore the liturgical movement has much to teach others but nothing to teach us. Our practice hardly bears this out, however. We do, indeed, at least in England, make extensive use of laymen as preachers, but when they are conducting worship they naturally act much as ministers do, and tend to dominate the worship. What is meant in ecumenical circles by the active participation of the laity is that the people of the congregation should take a more active part. Of course the singing of perhaps five of our great hymns gives them a part which is more significant than other communions perhaps realize, but we ought to be ready to consider some of the methods now used in other communions—the reading of the scripture by lay people, the opportunity given to the congregation to suggest subjects for intercession, the bringing up of the elements by representatives of the

people, the corporate saying of the prayer of humble access, and so on. The people in our services need to be far less passive, and here *we* need to experiment just as much as do other traditions; we are more in danger than we realize of a false clericalism. By this I do not mean that the ordained ministry has no distinctive role; the priesthood of all believers does not mean that any believer may appropriately fulfill every type of ministry within the Church. But the ordained minister must not be so strongly set over against the people; although as preacher he must to some extent confront them, yet as leader of the more responsive part of worship he must rather be ringed round by others performing supporting ministries.

The phrase "ringed round" serves to introduce the current trend in ecclesiastical architecture. Instead of a Gothic-type chancel with its suggestion of God "out there" beyond the east window, we see now a reversion to the style of the early basilicas, where a free-standing table is surrounded by the chief minister and his assistants gathered on the one side and the rest of the people on the other sides. Methodism should welcome this.

This whole new stress on the corporate is congenial to our emphasis on fellowship. But it is opposed to that individualistic pietism which has sometimes intruded itself into Methodism, whereby the service is regarded simply as a means of doing good to the so-called souls of the individuals present, so that the only test of the validity of an act of worship comes to be whether the people present think they get any spiritual benefit from it, which can easily degenerate into whether the people like it or enjoy it. On this view, a variety of services is provided; like one selecting from a menu, you choose what suits you best. This attitude is now rightly replaced by the notion that it is the duty of God's people in any one place to gather together each Sunday to hear his Word and to offer him the worship which is his due, whatever their individual feelings may be. Incidentally, now that many British Methodists go to church only once on Sunday, choosing the morning or evening as suits them best, the question arises whether we should not eliminate this lack of corporateness by having only one main ser-

vice. The American multiplicity of morning services might also be called in question were it not happily necessitated by the large size of the congregations.

Another note sounded by the liturgical movement is that of contemporaneity. We must speak to our own age and divest ourselves of the trappings of the Gothic, the eighteenth-century, or the Victorian era. The popularity of the New English Bible is a sign of this trend. It raises a delicate question, Which elements of worship are rooted in the gospel itself (the use of bread and wine, for instance, is surely a proper part of the scandal of particularity) and which may properly vary in varying ages and varying cultures (which in our overseas missionary work is known as the problem of the indigenization of worship)? In this respect we have probably been too conservative, though we must remember that worship gains dignity by a use of traditional elements; e.g., the robes of the ministers, even though these represent a tradition which does not go back to the gospel itself. We need not abandon the use of traditional music any more than we abandon Bach or Beethoven in the secular concert hall. Nor need we pull down historic buildings. But as a good concert will often contain not only Bach but also contemporary music, as side by side with ancient buildings modern buildings are erected and, indeed, to ancient buildings modern additions are made; so in music, in architecture, in translations of the Bible, and in the style of its prayers, the Church must ever seek to blend the new with the old. It was once asked, "Why should the devil have all the best tunes?" Thus we must claim for Christ's worship the best elements of contemporary culture and avoid giving the impression that to become a Christian is somehow to become a man of an earlier century.

From this digression we turn back to the Lord's Supper, and having considered matters of practice, we now come, in the second place, to matters of doctrine, and of these the first is its relation to sacrifice. It is often simply assumed that Romans and Anglo-Catholics regard the Eucharist as a sacrifice and Protestants regard it simply as a memorial or act of remembrance. The hymns of the

Wesleys show that this is too simple a dichotomy, and in recent years it has been widely said in ecumenical circles that agreement on the vexed question of Eucharistic sacrifice is in sight. Thus just as in the practice of weekly communion, so in the formulation of a doctrine of Eucharistic sacrifice which combines "Catholic" and Protestant elements, the Wesleys can be shown to have anticipated the modern trend. In indicating, however, the nature of this agreement, I must sound also a note of caution, for the reconciliation of "Catholic" and Protestant elements is unfortunately not yet as complete as some ecumenical enthusiasts would have us believe, though undoubtedly it is far more complete than many who are still entrenched in old controversies would suppose.

That the death of Christ may be described in sacrificial categories seems beyond dispute. A modern Methodist, Vincent Taylor, has shown the richness of New Testament teaching on this point. There are of course theories of the atonement other than the sacrificial; there are the Abelardian, the penal, the *Christus Victor* theories. Wherever we start, however, we ought surely to make some use of the sacrificial categories which are used by the New Testament itself—and not only Hebrews or Paul but also the synoptic Gospels. They are not the only categories—some would say not the chief categories—which the New Testament uses, but they are sufficiently prominent to make it permissible for us to use them. Of course problems arise about their interpretation and possible demythologization, but that is true of almost all the New Testament categories. It is also obvious that the New Testament refers not only to the sacrificial death of Christ but also to the sacrifice of praise and the sacrifice of ourselves and to priesthood, the high priesthood of Christ and the royal priesthood of God's people.

When we ask, however, whether in some sense a sacrificial character attaches to the Lord's Supper, which is the memorial of his sacrificial death, the New Testament gives no plain answer, though we note that in First Corinthians Paul, admittedly for a particular purpose, draws an analogy between the Lord's Supper and pagan sacrifices and sees the Supper as a participation (*koinonia*) in the

Body and Blood of Christ (I Cor. 10:16), so that some scholars speak of the Lord's Supper as a sharing in Christ's sacrifice. The amplification of this idea is to be found in the Fathers, and there are three main types of theory which we may attribute respectively to Irenaeus, Cyprian, and Augustine. Wesley, in his emphasis on the passion, most closely resembles Cyprian.

Let us turn to Wesley himself. Our exposition will be based on *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* by John Wesley and Charles Wesley. It is sometimes contended that this doctrine springs from Charles rather than John, but this seems to be a somewhat *a priori* judgment about what John is likely to have held. John was surely too careful a man to allow his name to be used in connection with doctrines which he did not approve. Before the hymns there is a preface "The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice," extracted from Dr. Brevint.² The hymns are divided into sections, each of which has a heading; the wording of the headings closely corresponds to that of the section headings in Brevint, who was a Caroline divine. In order to put the hymns on sacrifice into their context I shall deal briefly with all the sections. The hymns themselves are often almost a paraphrase of Brevint.

The first of the sections in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* is headed "As it is a Memorial of the Sufferings and Death of Christ." The word "memorial," *anamnesis*, has been much discussed in recent ecumenical theology. The view has been expressed by Professor Jeremias and others that the words in I Cor. 11:24 usually translated "this do in remembrance of me" should be translated "this do to remind God of me." It is still in dispute whether this is linguistically sound, but the objection that it is improper for us to

² The hymns and the preface are most conveniently accessible in J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (London: The Epworth Press 1948), which contains within itself the whole book. In citing the hymns, I give the numbers as in the Wesleys and in Rattenbury. Some of the hymns are of course in the hymnbooks in common use. I have followed the original text, but with some modernization of spelling and punctuation. Hymns which are not found in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* I have cited from *The Methodist Hymn-Book* (London, 1933), and these numbers are prefixed by *M.H.B.*

remind God of anything would have found no echo in the Wesleys, for in the hymn "Lamb of God, whose bleeding love We thus recall to mind" (20) each verse ends:

O remember *Calvary*
And bid us go in peace.

Whatever may be thought of this theory, we may accept the view widely held in ecumenical circles that *anamnesis* is more than a psychological recollecting and is rather a dynamic re-calling. The linguistic evidence for this is not always clearly stated, but it seems to be in harmony with biblical modes of thought. The Wesleys, however, were rather prone to use the phrases "recall to mind" and "call to mind," which do not altogether support this view.

The second section is headed "As it is a Sign and a Means of Grace." I pause here only to note the hymn "Come, Holy Ghost, Thine influence shed" (72). When it was the fashion to think that the great prayer of the Eucharist should have an epiclesis in the Eastern style, this hymn was hailed by liturgically minded Methodists as evidence that the Wesleys were pioneers in the recognition of this need. But now that fuller understanding of the Jewish method of consecration by thanksgiving has drawn attention again away from the epiclesis, this hymn has fallen into the background once more.

The third section "The Sacrament a Pledge of Heaven" shows the Wesleys to be pioneers of what is now called "realized eschatology." It thus throws an indirect light on the question of sacrifice. At the Lord's Supper the barriers of time are in some sense, though not literally, transcended. Thus we are not yet in heaven, but we have an earnest of the messianic feast. We shall see in a moment that this is true also of the past. We are not literally taken back to Calvary, but in some sense we *are* taken back there.

We now come to the controversial fourth section, "The Holy Eucharist as it implies a Sacrifice," which begins with the great

hymn "Victim divine" (116). The Wesleys never for a moment doubted that the sacrifice of Calvary, the one oblation once offered, was unique and unrepeatable. But, on their view, in remembering this, we plead it or present it, as what Brevint called a "commemorative sacrifice"; that is, we spread it before the Father as the only ground of all our hope. I illustrate this from a hymn that is not well known, "All hail, Redeemer of mankind" (124). In the following passage we shall observe first the entirely satisfactory evangelical emphasis on the sufficiency of Christ's redeeming work and then the reference to our presenting it.

Angels and Men might strive in vain,
They could not add the smallest Grain
T' augment thy Death's atoning Power,
The Sacrifice is all-complete,
The Death Thou never canst repeat,
Once offer'd up to die no more.

Yet may we celebrate below,
And daily thus Thine Offering shew
Expos'd before thy Father's Eyes;
In this tremendous mystery
Present Thee bleeding on the Trec,
Our everlasting Sacrifice.

Such language is not always acceptable to the modern evangelical; yet he will cheerfully sing John Wesley's somewhat unrhythmical translation of Zinzendorf (*M.H.B.* 370).

Even then this shall be all my plea—
Jesus hath lived, hath died for me!

In fact, however, it must be admitted that the Wesleys went beyond this. Thus the second stanza of "O God of our forefathers, hear" (125) almost anticipates the hymn "And now, O Father, mindful of the love" (*M.H.B.* 759) by William Bright, an Anglo-Catholic. The Wesleys wrote:

With solemn faith we offer up,
 And spread before Thy glorious eyes
 That only ground of all our hope,
 That precious bleeding Sacrifice,
 Which brings Thy grace on sinners down,
 And perfects all our souls in one. (125.)

It is in such hymns that the Wesleys come near to Cyprian, who wrote "The passion of the Lord is the sacrifice which we offer" (*passio est enim Domini sacrificium quod offerimus*) (Ep. lxiii. 17). This is a welcome relief from those modern expositions of the Eucharist which so follow what Irenaeus said about its being an offering of the first fruits of creation, a kind of harvest festival, that they make no mention at all of the passion of the Lord. The reference to the passion is absolutely right, but I should not myself defend the use of the word "offer" either by Cyprian or by the Wesleys, though I can see that it is easily reached from such words as "plead" and "present."

This raises, however, the larger question, How did the Wesleys conceive of the present activity of Christ? Is he, in their view, being slain afresh; is he offering himself; is he sitting on the right hand of the Father; or what? We need to digress from the particular section which we were considering and ask this question about the writings of the Wesleys generally. There is no doubt that he is conceived of as standing before the throne of the Father to plead for us. So in "Entered the holy place above" (*M.H.B.* 232) one verse ends:

He pleads His passion on the tree,
 He shows Himself to God for me.

And the next begins: "Before the throne my Saviour stands." Some have objected to such descriptions on the ground that the Bible speaks rather of Jesus as having taken his seat in triumph at the right hand of the Father. Of course Charles Wesley wrote in that way also; thus in "Rejoice, the Lord is King!" (*M.H.B.* 247) we read:

When He had purged our stains,
 He took His seat above.

In these two descriptions, that he stands to plead and that he sits in triumph, the metaphors are indeed inconsistent, but there is no inconsistency between the two spiritual states which they represent.³ This truth can be equally well expressed by saying that he pleads from the throne.⁴

There is, however, scriptural warrant for the disputed phrase. Christ is said to have entered heaven "now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf" (Heb. 9:24). There is also warrant for the word "standing" in "a Lamb standing, as . . . slain" (Rev. 5:6). That "as" is often found in the Wesleys. So in "Victim divine" (116):

Thou standest in the holiest place,
 As now for guilty sinners slain.

And in "God of my salvation, hear" (*M.H.B.* 365):

Standing now as newly slain,
 To Thee I lift mine eye.

Often this thought is expressed in vivid metaphors. In "O Thou eternal Victim, slain" (5) we have:

Thy offering still continues new,
 Thy vesture keeps its bloody hue.

Again, In "Father, let the sinner go" (122) we have:

Still, O God, the blood is warm,
 Cover'd with the blood we are.

A more theological account is given in a hymn which begins thus:

³ I have heard a sentence to this effect; it was said to have come from the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. A. M. Ramsey), but I do not know the exact source.

⁴ Cf. B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London, 1889), p. 230.

He dies, as now for us He dies!
 That all-sufficient sacrifice
 Subsists, eternal as the Lamb,
 In every time and place the same;
 To all alike it co-extends,
 Its saving virtue never ends. (140.)

Apart from passages where the Wesleys regarded themselves, by a kind of poetic use of the historic present, as being present during Christ's passion or at the moment of his death or, indeed, of his resurrection, the dominant thought is that Christ's atoning death is as though it had just happened. The idea that the blood still flows is a way of saying that the death is still efficacious. Many ideas may be connected with this—the idea that in every generation a man must celebrate the passover "as if he came forth himself out of Egypt"⁵ and the whole conception of annual commemoration and of liturgical time ("Christ the Lord is risen today"), the Pauline conception of dying and rising with Christ, Platonic notions of eternity, and so on, themes too large for investigation here.

We must regretfully admit that this way of transcending the categories of time sometimes led the Wesleys to speak of Christ still offering himself; so in "Thou Lamb that suffer'st on the Tree" (117) we have the line: "Still offer'st up Thyself to God." This goes beyond the scriptural notion that Christ still pleads, and the transition from Christ's pleading to Christ's offering resembles the transition which we noticed earlier from our pleading to our offering. In that earlier instance, however, there was more than an error about time, for there never was a time when we offered Christ, whereas the statement that Christ offers himself is unscriptural only as regards its tense.

These unscriptural expressions have led to some discussion of the relation of the Wesleys' view to the Roman view. There can be no doubt that in their stress on the uniqueness of the sacrifice of Calvary they repudiated the Roman view as popularly conceived. But a whole host of Anglican apologists, notably Bishop F. C. N.

⁵ *Mishnah*, Pes. 10.5. I owe this reference to my colleague, the Rev. H. J. Cook.

Hicks in his book *The Fullness of Sacrifice*, have contended that, while we should reject distorted views based on medieval conceptions of sacrifice, we may well accept the true doctrine of Eucharistic sacrifice which, they contend, is common to true Romanism and true Anglicanism. Authors of this school may perhaps wish to include the Wesleys in their synthesis. This view goes somewhat as follows: The essence of sacrifice is not the slaying and death of the victim; these are only a preliminary stage which, in the case of Christ, is indeed concluded. Further stages are the oblation and the sacrificial meal. The oblation continues as Christ offers himself continually and eternally on the heavenly altar and we offer him continually in our Eucharists, and the sacrificial meal continues, as it were dispersedly, in the Church's Eucharists. Thus, on this view, we are neither commemorating a past sacrifice nor repeating it (a pair of false alternatives between which at the time of the Reformation men unfortunately thought they must choose). We are quite literally engaged still in the concluding stages of the one and original sacrifice.

This view, like some expressions of the Wesleys, disregards the scriptural statement that where there is remission of sins "there is no longer any offering for sin" (Heb. 10:18), but it does so much more flagrantly than the Wesleys did. The Wesleys did not regard themselves as present at a later stage of the one sacrifice, that stage being an essential part of the process, as Bishop Hicks affirmed; they did, indeed, emphasize the heavenly intercession of Christ, which is perfectly scriptural, but their main stress was on the cross itself, the only stage of the sacrifice proper. Their occasional use of unscriptural expressions arose partly from the vivid devotion which led them to feel that they were present at it and partly from the theological desire to make clear the fact that it is still potent and thus to emphasize our dependence on it.

The peace which Bishop Hicks and others thought they had established between conflicting views of this question was in any case shattered in 1960 by Father Francis Clark, S. J., in *Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Reformation*; he contended that the Roman doc-

trine was uncompromisingly the same throughout, that the alleged medieval distortions are a figment, and that the Reformers knew perfectly well what they were doing in rejecting the whole Roman doctrine of the sacrifice of the Mass; from their own point of view the Reformers were acting rightly. Moreover, the focal point of sacrifice is indeed the slaying and death of the victim, as Romans and evangelicals have alike asserted. This book has thus disturbed an ecumenical *rapprochement* which had appealed to many moderates, and this has brought undisguised satisfaction to the more extreme evangelicals who had always been suspicious of this tendency. It is too early to say whether this book will command the general approval of critical opinion, and so for the moment the controversy rests there. It may well be true that Roman and Protestant opinions on this point are sharply opposed; after all, this is what Brevint and the Wesleys themselves believed, in company with the great mass of opinion, both Protestant and Roman, down the centuries. The Wesleys clearly intended to be on the Protestant side, as for the most part they unmistakably showed. For our purposes, however, it is not really necessary to determine what is the authentic Roman doctrine. If—despite Fr. Clark—it should ultimately emerge that the Roman position does not diverge from scripture as much as some Protestant polemical writing has made it appear to do, we ought to be eager to recognize the fact; what matters now is that the views of the Wesleys, including their slight divergence from scripture, should be made clear.

We may sum up these views by again saying that they strongly emphasized our utter dependence on the unique sacrifice of Christ. Calvary is the atoning or propitiatory sacrifice; the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a commemorative or Eucharistic sacrifice, part of the "sacrifice of praise" (Heb. 13:15) of which scripture speaks. It is a *sacrificium* which is primarily *beneficium*. They linked the sacrifice of Calvary with the heavenly intercession of Christ which is based upon it, a doctrine which some evangelicals have neglected. The series of vivid metaphors which they employed to show that Christ's death retains its efficacy or that we may view it as though

it had just happened is a rich contribution to the treasury of Eucharistic devotion. Never do they assert that the Eucharist is an atoning sacrifice, but, to return to the careful heading of the section which we have been considering, "it implies a Sacrifice."

The fifth section is headed "Concerning the Sacrifice of our Persons." There is very little here of the idea of Irenaeus that we offer the bread and wine as the first fruits of creation or of that of Augustine (*Sermon* 229) that as members of the Body of Christ *we* are on the table and in the cup. It is sometimes said today that, whereas the Roman doctrine is that we offer Christ, the Protestant doctrine is that Christ offers us, though actually the latter is no more a scriptural expression than the former. It is also said that we are presented to God and acceptable to him through our incorporation in the Body of Christ, and this is well expressed in a hymn, albeit an Anglo-Catholic hymn, to which reference has already been made, "And now, O Father, mindful of the love" (*M.H.B.* 759) in the line "And only look on us as found in Him." The Wesleys mostly express these truths in other ways; they speak of our self-oblation being joined to or mixed with that of Christ. They are fond of the notion of Christ as the Head; the correlative term, however, is not usually "body," but "members," and this does not lead to a strong theology of incorporation. The following lines from "See where our great High-Priest" (129) have not many parallels:

With Him, the Corner-stone,
The living stones conjoin;
Christ and His church are one,
One body and one vine.

According to the Wesleys Christ does not primarily offer us; he offered (and sometimes they say he offers) himself, and the Eucharist is spoken of in sacrificial terms primarily because it "implies" that sacrifice.

The sixth heading is simply "After the Sacrament." The content of the section is largely praise, for the previous section had dealt

with self-oblation. It is perhaps too much to see in this a comment on the highly controversial question of the position of the prayer of oblation, which John Wesley, in fact, made no attempt to move.

When we come then to compare the Wesleys' views on Eucharistic sacrifice with those now common in the ecumenical movement we find an almost complete absence of the views derived from Irenaeus and Augustine which are now so common. These views, in my judgment, have until recently been accepted somewhat uncritically, but the warnings now sounded against what is called "offertory-theology" show a welcome hesitation and the beginnings of a reaction, at least as regards Irenaeus. Methodism has not moved in this direction and will not need to retrace its steps. But this comforting thought should not exempt us from asking whether there is not here some measure of truth of which we should be aware.

Our positive contribution lies in the somewhat Cyprianic doctrine of sacrifice to be found in the Wesleys. This has not been fully maintained in Methodism, and it is to this day probably more congenial to many non-Methodists than it is to us. The reason for our caution lies in the occasional use of expressions which go beyond a sound biblical theology, and we may well deplore the rather cavalier way in which some non-Methodist writers sweep aside evangelical objections to such phrases. Yet we are surely much to blame if, going beyond necessary caution, we blindly neglect the whole rich doctrine of the high-priesthood and heavenly intercession of Christ in their bearing on the Eucharist. When all is said, the Wesleys produced a doctrine far richer than that of most other writers, far richer than that of most of their successors. Their doctrine holds out at least some hope of reconciling so-called "catholic" and evangelical views. They deserve in this, as in much else, to be hailed as ecumenical pioneers. Indeed the more discerning spirits of the ecumenical movement have already paid them tribute, and we should hasten to draw the attention of liturgists and systematic theologians in this direction.

Only brief consideration need be given to the other doctrinal

topic, the real presence. This has been the classic field of Eucharistic controversy—especially between Lutherans and Calvinists. Attempts have been made to classify the Wesleys in the traditional categories, as virtualists, dynamic receptionists, and so on. Their own comment, in "O the depth of love Divine" (57) was:

Who shall say how bread and wine
God into man conveys!

But a theology which transcends the bounds of time to some extent transcends this problem. If we are in some sense in the heavenly places or at Calvary, then clearly Christ is present. The Eucharist is the making present in time of the once-for-all sacrificial *act* of Christ. We are to ascribe to the humanity of Christ a time-universalization in contrast to a space-localization. Real presence is in an action rather than in a substance. Thus in Hebrew thought "the thing" is always "the thing done"; space is produced by event. In these last few sentences I have been quoting a liturgist of another communion who is himself in part quoting others;⁶ and I venture to suggest that the Wesleys by their interest in the question of sacrifice and their comparative neglect of static and local doctrines of the real presence have to some extent anticipated this insight, or rather anticipated the revival of it, for it is itself biblical and patristic. The notion of "time-universalization" has its dangers, as we have seen, but it is nevertheless a very fruitful insight.

In the doctrinal part of this discussion I have sought to throw the spotlight on the relation of the Wesleys to two major fields of controversy about the Lord's Supper rather than to give a general exposition of the doctrine. Such an exposition would contain references to other familiar truths such as that the Lord's Supper is a meal of fellowship with the saints on earth and the saints in heaven. If my contentions are true, however, then the Wesleys in their sac-

⁶ The reference is to T. O. Wedel in *The Liturgical Renewal of the Church*, edited by Massey H. Shepherd, Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 6, 11.

ramental practice and in their carefully balanced sacramental doctrine, as much as in their evangelical practice and emphasis, have much to teach the universal Church—much that, rightly understood, might yet serve to reconcile many, if not all, the tensions within Christendom. To the ecumenical movement we may yet hope to contribute it, but first we must ourselves possess our possessions and seek to enter, not only academically but also devotionally, into their spirit.

9

**The Discipline of Life
in Early Methodism Through Preaching
and Other Means of Grace**

GERALD O. McCULLOH

The Methodist movement, from its beginnings, has been concerned with the discipline and nurture which are essential to the new life given through grace by faith. Our task today is to discover the necessary engagements of the ongoing life of those who have become convinced of the truth of the gospel and who in penitence receive the forgiveness of their sins and seek to lead a new life following the commandments of God.

What was the nature and purpose of discipline for Wesley and the early Methodists? How was it structured, and how was it engendered and enforced through preaching and the means of grace? Wesley, in responding to an inquiry from the Vicar of Shoreham (1748) concerning the "people called Methodists," said that "they had no previous design or plan at all; but everything arose just as the occasion offered. They saw or felt some impending or press-