

Oxford Institute - Wesley Studies and Early Methodism Group  
**The Lord's Supper: Banquet for All**

Outline

- I. History of the Closed to the Open Table – Development of Eucharistic Thought and Practice: Reformers to Wesleys
- II. Ramifications on understanding the mission of the church

In light of the tercentenary of Charles Wesley's birth and the recent attention to his hymns on the Lord's Supper, this essay examines the development of eucharistic thought and practice from the Protestant reformers to the Wesleys. The purpose of this article is to show how religious thinkers impacted the historical development of the Eucharist from the late medieval period to the early modern context as it moved from a closed table to an open table. In addition to the appeal to Scripture, both the Protestant reformers and the Wesleys referred to the testimony of ancient writers and while they differed in some of their uses of patristic sources and at times qualified their support, both deployed the ancient writers in addition to Scripture as a source of religious authority in their program for change. This religious authority whether real or perceived enabled them to introduce changes to Eucharistic thought and practice, while claiming to be within the boundaries of the church's tradition. By presenting views of the Lord's Supper as a "converting ordinance", the Wesleys understood the mission of the church to be embodied in the Lord's Supper namely to reach as many as possible.

### **I. Development of Eucharistic Views from the Reformers to the Wesleys**

In late medieval practice, the ritual of the Lord's Supper vividly demonstrated the hierarchy of believers. In addition to the divisions based on social class, there was also the delineation between priests and laity in which the priests could be seen as the insiders and the laity as outside spectators of the Lord's Supper. The key moment in the Eucharist was the consecration when the priest spoke the words of institution, often whispered and barely heard. Therefore, the single most important gesture of the priest was the elevation at the moment of consecration when he raised the Host above his head with his back to the congregation. Only a consecrated priest could speak the verbal formulas in the ancient Latin tongue - *hoc est enim corpus meum* - and perform the ceremonial gestures with precision. At the altar, many priests enacted the ultimate mystery of transforming a simple wafer of unleavened bread into the body of the living God and each priest did this by speaking a few words while standing alone. Although most church attendants communed at least once a year, usually at Easter, the common experience of communion did not require the actual eating of the bread. For most people, most of the time, the experience of community came from seeing rather than eating. During Lent, the priest and the elements were hidden by a veil that entirely blocked the laity's view of the altar. Hearing little or none of the words spoken, the congregation waited

expectantly for the thrilling moment of elevation, which was announced by the ringing of bells. The key moment of consecration and transformation of the elements was kept at a distance from lay Christians as their participation was often limited to observation. As observers of a mystery, lay participation and understanding was not necessarily encouraged, although lay participation varied greatly by town and parish.<sup>1</sup> If they did receive the elements for Communion, it was only the bread. Because of the steps of preparation required for Communion, namely the sacrament of confession which included the fulfillment of assigned penance, often Communion on a regular basis was limited to the priests, those in religious orders and baptized laity who were repentant confessors. Most of the laity in fact were baptized but barred from the table fellowship.

Early in the sixteenth century, the Protestant reformers starting with Luther responded to the late medieval practices, which they considered contrary to Scripture. They challenged late medieval conceptions of eucharistic doctrine and practice by developing a Reformation conception of the sacraments. Late medieval theologians espoused an Aristotelian conception of substance and “accidents” and contended that the bread and cup had to be transformed into the substance of Christ’s body and blood to be efficacious.

Luther rejected the Catholic notion of transubstantiation as “one miracle too many” while he insisted on Christ’s bodily presence in the elements. Luther and his followers called for a literal interpretation of the words of institution, not simply because of biblical methodology, but because of theological reasons. For Luther, the bodily presence of Christ was necessary so that humanity might be redeemed completely. Christ in his total humanness must be really present in the sacrament so that the means of grace can be applied to our full humanity. Because the elements are Christ’s body and blood, those who partake without faith eat unworthily to their judgment. Calvin tried to reach a consensus between Lutheran and Swiss views of real and spiritual presence, respectively and in effect created another doctrine of the Eucharist.<sup>2</sup> For Calvin, the Lord’s Table did not simply commemorate Jesus’ death and resurrection, rather the Holy Communion was a way for Christ’s real spiritual presence to descend through the Holy Spirit. Each time we gather at the Lord’s Table, Jesus himself draws near to the heart of the faithful community. Further Calvin described not only the descent of Christ’s spirit on believers but also the ascent of believers to Christ. Calvin’s way of describing how Jesus is in the Supper was based on the *extra-Calvinisticum* (the Calvinist extra). Based on the creedal formula, Jesus was considered to be at the right hand of the Father. Luther had explained Christ’s presence in the Supper through a doctrine of ubiquity, namely that Christ was wherever he said he would be since the resurrected Christ had supernatural capabilities and could walk through doors. Yet Calvin interpreted Jesus’

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<sup>1</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile the Anabaptists, although their views were diverse, generally understood the Lord’s Supper as a symbolic act that is repeated because Christ commands it.

presence as Jesus' power, spirit or virtue. The extra-Calvinisticum showed that just as the second person of the Trinity is at work during Jesus' earthly life, this Spirit of Christ is at work and descends to be present at the table.

Because faith is a necessary prerequisite for receiving the benefits of Christ, those who receive without faith simply taste bread and wine. Rather than arguing for an objective reality, Calvin and Reformed thinkers after him considered the subjective reality of Christ's body and blood for those who receive by faith. Calvin appealed to the early church fathers, especially Augustine to reiterate the imagery of the Eucharist as spiritual food and drink, received by those who are spiritually alive.

While the Reformers appealed to Scripture as their most important standard and measure for Christian doctrine and practice, they also recalled the early church fathers to put forth alternative interpretations of Scripture and understandings of the Eucharist. Among the Protestants, the fathers were used to authorize a new interpretation of the 'ancient' tradition. Striving to identify themselves in the lineage of the 'good' fathers, the reformers presented their doctrine as having the consent of the ancients. Yet they also found occasions to illustrate fallibility in the church fathers. In this sense, reformers differed from their medieval predecessors in their willingness to critique the writings of the church fathers. By recognizing the church fathers as human authorities, the reformers could reserve the right to challenge or correct them, if necessary. Implicit in the prerogative to criticize ancient authorities was the effort to create a space for the reformer's views to be heard. Critique invites a corrective. The deployment of the fathers served as the means of the intellectual battle over the interpretation of Scripture and contributed to the reformers' sense of authority to expound on their own doctrinal views of the Eucharist.

In his 1520 "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," Luther strongly criticized the misuse of the Lord's Supper, especially the withholding of the cup and blamed the Roman church for depriving the laity of what Christ instituted.<sup>3</sup> Because Luther regarded the sacrament of the Lord's Supper the most important of all, he insisted that its practices be governed by the Scriptures, specifically the gospel passages on the Lord's Supper in Matthew, Mark and Luke and I Corinthians, but excluding John chapter six. While Luther was confident that the Scriptures were "on his side," he also leaned on the support of patristic writers such as Cyprian who had "recorded the custom in the church at Carthage to give both kinds to many of the laity, even children."<sup>4</sup> Young Luther like many Reformers after him cited Augustine numerous times usually to locate themselves in a lineage of good teachers of the church and validate their views.

The call for reform in the sacraments of the church affected the practice of the Lord's Supper in several ways. First, the Reformers recognized two sacraments and consequently confession rather than being considered a

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<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (Pagan Servitude of the Church) in *Luther's Works* v. 36 (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> Luther, "The Pagan Servitude of the Church," *Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings*, John Dillenberger, ed., (New York: Anchor Books, 1962), 262-263. Luther was referring to Cyprian's *On the Lapsed*, book V.

separate sacrament gradually became incorporated into the rites of Holy Communion. Second, the reformers scoffed at the withholding of the cup from the laity and opened up the partaking of both elements – bread and wine. Third, the reformers opened up the Lord’s Table to the laity by calling for more frequent communing. Calvin excoriated the practices of offering the Eucharist only once a year and withholding of the cup from the laity,<sup>5</sup> because they both withheld from the faithful the nourishment of their faith and overrode the teaching of the apostolic church.<sup>6</sup> In the polemical context surrounding the sixteenth-century Eucharistic controversies, the Reformers referred to the ancient church fathers predominantly to criticize opponents and to validate their own theological perspective. In fact, the patristic writers became one of the tools to entrench divisions – first between Catholics and Protestants and later among Protestants themselves, most notably among Lutheran and Reformed thinkers. Nevertheless, changes in Protestant practice began to create a different church as elaborate vestments and ornate decorations were simplified and lay persons were offered the cup and more frequent communion, although not nearly as much as some Reformers, such as Calvin recommended. With the Protestant Reformation, the table opened up a bit more to laity participation in communion.

As part of the Protestant tradition, the Wesleys demonstrated common threads of eucharistic thought with key Protestant Reformers in their efforts to understand “one of the greatest mysteries of godliness” even as both generations tried to appropriate eucharistic thought and practice in their own contexts. The medieval Western Christian writers declared that the mass was a repeated sacrifice for recurrent sin. In cadence with the Protestant reformers, Wesley rejected this notion. Wesley described the Lord’s Supper as a commemoration of Christ’s sacrifice but he clearly meant more than a mere remembrance or memorial. The communion service “re-presented” Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice in such a way as to convey its salvific power.<sup>7</sup> While the Wesleys experienced spiritual awakening through the writings of Luther – Charles (Luther on Galatians) and John (Luther’s Preface to Romans), they did not follow Luther’s doctrine of ubiquity concerning the presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper. The Wesleys’ connection to Calvinism although often qualified in many areas was apparent in the doctrine of eucharistic presence.<sup>8</sup> In the 1563 revision of the Anglican Articles, the articles reflected a more characteristically Calvinist language that Christ is present in the Lord’s Supper according to a heavenly and spiritual manner.<sup>9</sup> The Reformation controversies over the nuances of how Christ is present did not take up too much of the Wesleys’ time. Rather they trusted that Christ by his promise was really present - a real spiritual presence - by the virtue

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<sup>5</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, Book IV, Chapter 17, section 44-50.

<sup>6</sup> Lee Palmer Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 165.

<sup>7</sup> Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 203.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Stevick, *The Altar’s Fire* (Peterborough, Great Britain: Epworth Press, 2004), 8-9.

<sup>9</sup> Maddox., 204.

of his Spirit. They accepted that there was an integral connection between the commemoration of Christ's past sacrifice and its present empowering effect in our lives.<sup>10</sup> The language they used to describe this empowering presence reflects the *extra-Calvinisticum*. This is not surprising although often overlooked.

For example, in the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, the eschatological hope of the sacrament is described as a pledge of heaven. The language indicates a lifting up toward just as Hymn 27 says,

With the life of Jesus fed,  
Lo! From strength to strength we rise,  
Follow'd by our Rock and led  
To meet Him in the skies.

One could argue that this meeting or ascent may simply refer to a future hope. However, the Wesleys seem to understand Christ's presence as occurring in the present celebration of the Eucharist, rather than isolating the ascent of the believer's spirit to a futuristic dimension. For Hymn 13 says,

Come all who truly bear,  
The name of Christ your Lord,  
His last mysterious supper share  
And keep His kindest word...  
His blood which once for all atones,  
And bring us *now* to God.

Wesleys' Anglican formation would have included theology mediated through Reformed thinkers such as Peter Martyr Vermigli<sup>11</sup> who expounded on understanding the believers' participation as a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, Thomas Cranmer who wrote the basis for the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer* and later the Puritans. Through the seventeenth century, the theological conversation of the Church of England had been with the Reformed tradition.<sup>12</sup> The Wesleys cited the Articles of Religion as an authority for their doctrine but also looked to other sources for developing their understanding the Eucharist. While the Wesleys were at Oxford, they also read much in pre-Reformation sources including the literature of the early church. Retaining Augustinian language of the Eucharist used by many Protestant Reformers (and many others), Wesley referred to the Lord's Supper as a source of "life-giving nourishment" that provides pardon and strengthens spiritual growth. Like the Reformers, the Wesleys also studied patristic writers as a source of religious guidance. Because John Wesley believed that Christian faith and morals were purest in the earliest, apostolic community and then declined as the years passed, he portrayed the Methodist movement as representing the religion of the

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<sup>10</sup> Maddox, 205.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Martyr Vermigli who was appointed Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford and made a canon of Christ Church became swept into the sixteenth-century controversies over the Lord's Supper at Oxford by taking part in a famous disputation in 1549 with Tresham, Chedsey and Phillips. See David Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> Stevick, 9.

ancient church.<sup>13</sup> John Wesley ascribed a special status to ancient Christian authors as interpreters of scripture, as illustrations of scriptural teaching practices and standards of morality, as suggestions of Christian practices and as confirmation of teachings that the Methodists had taken up.<sup>14</sup> While the Wesleys' most direct source of their sacramental thought was identified as the seventeenth-century Anglican divine Daniel Brevint as the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* begin with an abridgement of Brevint's work *The Christian Sacrifice and Sacrament*,<sup>15</sup> they drew on various sources to explain the mysterious supper.

Wesley's original assumption was that Methodists would commune as he did – at the local Anglican church, since he believed that the Lord's Supper should be officiated by an ordained elder.<sup>16</sup> The Wesleys emphasized that the Eucharist was an empowering stimulus for further progress along the way of salvation: therefore Wesley urged people to the duty of constant communion – or frequent Communion.<sup>17</sup> Encouraging frequent Communion in the hymn, "Come to the feast, for Christ invites," Charles writes,

Tis not for us to set our God  
A time his grace to give,  
The benefit wher'er bestowed,  
We gladly should receive.<sup>18</sup>

However many came to Methodist societies from non-conformist traditions that did not offer communion as frequently as Wesley recommended. In addition, tensions developed between several societies and local Anglican priests, leading to the Methodists' absence from Sunday worship. Wesley's response was an increasing acceptance of celebrating the Lord's Supper in society meetings whenever he or another ordained Methodist preacher was available.<sup>19</sup> It is to aid in these celebrations that the Wesleys published *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*. As the Wesleys refrained from setting limits to the timing of God's grace in the Lord's Supper, they opened up the possibility of the Eucharist as a "converting ordinance." When the Wesleys called the Lord's Supper a "means of grace", that term expressed a definite and particular channel for the conveyance of the grace of God – both justifying and sanctifying grace to the souls of believers.<sup>20</sup> In his "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, VI," John Wesley referred to the Eucharist as the "grand channel" whereby the grace of the Spirit is conveyed to souls of all the children of God.<sup>21</sup> Departing from Brevint who saw two groups - the faithful communicants receiving Christ and the faithless abusing Christ, Wesleys on the basis of their experience saw a third group – those for whom

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<sup>13</sup> Ted Campbell. *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991), 47-51.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>15</sup> See Stevick, "Introduction," and "Appendix 2: Wesley's Use of Brevint," 21-25, 239-243.

<sup>16</sup> Maddox, 202.

<sup>17</sup> Maddox 205.

<sup>18</sup> S.T. Kimbrough Jr., "Still Shaping Our Faith," in *Circuit Rider* (September/October 2006): 13-15.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>20</sup> J. Ernest Rattenbury. *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1948), 40.

<sup>21</sup> John Wesley, "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, VI," *John Wesley's Sermon: An Anthology*, Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 232.

Holy Communion might be the means through which one might be converted, a means of evangelism.<sup>22</sup> Since the Wesleys were convinced that the Holy Communion might be a “converting ordinance”, they invited sinners and seekers to the table. Hymn 8 begins,

Come to the Supper come,  
Sinners there still is Room  
Every Soul may be his Guest  
Jesus gives the general Word;<sup>23</sup>

Because of the development toward an open table, the history of eucharistic practice in the Protestant tradition, particularly in the Wesleyan tradition reveals how ecclesial practices might bring outsiders into a community of faith and how the mission of the church would begin to seriously consider those previously excluded from the table fellowship. The Wesleys believed that the sacrament was not only a means of “confirming” grace (that is sustaining the believer in the transit home) but could also be a place where the gift of faith in Christ is initially bestowed. In recent times, the open table has taken on a meaning in the United Methodist Church in North America that the Wesleys did not intend. For many, Methodist openness typically means openness to everyone who may be present at the communion service – be they Christian, or curious agnostic, or even Jewish, Hindu or Buddhist.<sup>24</sup> Yet the invitation to sinners in verse one of Hymn 8 is followed by a second verse that expects a response of faith and allegiance to the triune God. The Wesleys did not mean for The Lord’s Supper to be so much a free-for-all but an invitation to a deepening faith in Christ extended to all. Hymn 10 shows that the result of the open table should be this:

Resolved to lead our lives anew,  
Thine only glory to pursue  
And only Thee obey.

The Wesleys offered a new perspective when they opened the table fellowship to include those never allowed before. Who did they have in mind? They had in mind genuine seekers, backsliders who wanted to return home, and those with a repentant heart. Hymn 60 tells us for whom the Supper is intended.

Tis here He nourishes His own  
With living bread from heaven,  
Or makes Himself to mourners known  
And shows their sins forgiven.

## II. Eucharist Reconfigures the Mission of the Church

Up until the eighteenth century, the Eucharist had been treated as a reward in the Church for godly Christian behavior. In other words, the Lord’s Supper was becoming more a certification of one’s good-standing in the Church

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<sup>22</sup> Stevick, 34.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>24</sup> L. Edward Phillips, “Open Tables and Closed Minds,” in *Liturgy* vol. 20, issue 4, (2005): 27-28.

than a vital means of nourishing one's spiritual growth.<sup>25</sup> While the Reformers' efforts to uphold scriptural Christianity increased lay participation in the Eucharist, they maintained the traditional notion of the Eucharist as reserved for the community of baptized believers free of mortal sins and those who could prove it. While the Reformers' views of the Eucharist were tied up with Christology and to some extent their ecclesiology, Wesley's views of the Eucharist were much more bound up with soteriology.<sup>26</sup> As a result, the Wesleys opened up the celebration to those without assurance of faith. They believed that Christ extends his supper invitation to believers, half-believers, sinners and the troubled.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, the Methodist practice of the open invitation to the table introduced qualifications, such as membership in the Methodist classes, in order to deter the careless and the merely curious.<sup>28</sup> The Wesleys were convinced that the focus on the saving sacrifice of Christ's body and blood offered for all should regularly send believers out from worship to be faithful servants of Christ and the church.<sup>29</sup>

The extension of the table recognizes that all people are in need of God's grace. In *Live to Tell*, Kallenberg's example is a modern rendition of how the Lord's Supper might serve as a converting ordinance. It is an example of the table fellowship including those previously excluded.

Allen was a young writer for the local newspaper who claimed himself to be an atheist because he had some serious questions about the reliability of Christianity. On Christmas eve, he came forward to receive communion with tears streaming down his face. He had been at communion services at the church before but had never partaken, reminding Pastor Brad Cecil that he was an atheist. Hoping that Allen's decision this time wasn't simply due to the sentimentality of the occasion, before Cecil administered communion to him, he asked Allen whether something about his atheism had changed. Allen's yes was very convincing, and for the first time Allen took communion as a self-proclaimed follower of Jesus.<sup>30</sup>

The open table is therefore first an act of invitation into the mysterious workings of God's grace and second an opportunity for the building up of faith. Such a practice of the Lord's Supper reiterates that the mission of the church is to make disciples and that discipleship is a continual process infused with grace.

The Wesleyan movement was both evangelistic (a rediscovery of the importance of the Word) and eucharistic (a rediscovery of the importance of the sacrament of Holy Communion).<sup>31</sup> The Wesleys believed that sacramental grace

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<sup>25</sup> Maddox, 220.

<sup>26</sup> Stevick, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>29</sup> S.T. Kimbrough Jr., "Still Shaping Our Faith," *Circuit Rider* v. 30 n.5 (September-October 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Brad J. Kallenberg, *Live to Tell* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2002), 92-93.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Stevick notes that it came to be understood among Evangelical churches in America that Christian groups which were interested in evangelism would not be interested in sacraments and that persons or churches which cared about sacraments would show little interest in evangelism. This bifurcation would

and evangelical experience were necessary counterparts of a balanced Christian life.<sup>32</sup> In the Wesleys' view, the Eucharist becomes a thanksgiving for Christ's suffering and death – his sacrifice – on our behalf.

The Lord's Supper proclaims the new life to be found in table fellowship just as there is a reason to celebrate when the prodigal son returns to his father's presence. The Eucharist becomes an invitation to reconciliation and community. Nourished and strengthened into a relationship those who break bread together are drawn into and participate in mission of overcoming alienation. The church offers the world an invitation to a new relationship with Christ, a new communal life and a new social identity as citizens of heaven.<sup>33</sup> The sacrament is not only a means of individual grace; it is an action that connects a community of God's children. If the table is open to those struggling in their faith then the sinners, half-believers and troubled are at the center of the mission of the church. The Wesleys' notion of an open table reconfigures the mission of the church to those on the fringes of faith. If they were ignored before, they cannot be ignored any longer because they are now sitting at the table. An open table is not permission for a church to be lax but a reminder of the church's responsibility to teach about (and sing about) Christ's sacrifice for human sin, and nurture Christian love and joy by celebrating Christ's power and benefits.

## Conclusion

Inviting someone to supper symbolizes solidarity. Several colleagues from seminary termed it "muk-ja" theology – that is the Korean way of saying "let's eat." They noticed that their meals together deepened their friendships and prayers for one another. The evangelistic aspect of eating surfaces within the Gospels such that Jesus' meal patterns receive special attention. Many of his critics observed that "this fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." They were appalled that Jesus welcomed everyone to his table. His behavior indicated acceptance and friendship with those who had been judged unfit for table fellowship; the tax collector, the Gentile, the prostitute. His open invitation "manifested the radically inclusive nature of his kingdom, a kingdom that cuts across the barriers we erect between insiders and outsiders – barriers often most rigidly enforced at the table. In the Lord's Supper, the followers of Jesus are summoned to be a community where amazingly diverse people allow themselves to be formed by one Lord into one body around a common table. When the table is less than the fullness of Christ's invitation, then believers eat and drink to their judgment. This kind of judgment is corporate.

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have been incomprehensible to the Wesleys for whom conversion and sacrament formed a unity of faith and obedience. See Stevick, *The Altar's Fire* (Peterborough, Great Britain: Epworth Press, 2004), 7. See also Paul Wesley Chilcote, *Recapturing the Wesleys' Vision* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004) and J. Robert Nelson, "Methodist Eucharistic Usage: From Constant Communion to Benign Neglect to Sacramental Recovery," in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* v. 13 (Spr 1976):278-284.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Wesley Chilcote, *Recapturing the Wesleys' Vision* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 81.

<sup>33</sup> See John and Charles Wesley, *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, no.158 and 160 in Rattenbury's *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley*.

Jesus took the bread and the cup and in front of his disciples made the connection between ordinary things and an extraordinary life. Since then believers have tried to understand this rite that stands as one of the defining marks of the church. Protestant Reformers adjusted the theology and practice of the Lord's Supper to remove some barriers and to increase accessibility to believers. Wesley went a step further to provide accessibility to those who hoped to be believers. For the Reformers, the mission of the church was to renew scriptural authority for the thought and practice of the Church and to rectify deviations. Building upon that, the mission of the church for the Wesleys was to envision the Lord's Supper as a banquet for all. The Lord's Supper would be the place where the benefits of Christ, namely union with Christ, and the whole Church, pledge of eternal life, forgiveness of sins and spiritual nourishment were offered to all who desired a deeper relationship with Christ and within the body of Christ.