

Wesley, the Methodists, and the Eucharist in Early Methodist Liturgical Practices
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The Wesleyan branch of the revival of religion in eighteenth century England was characterized not only by renewed religious fervor, but also by a new appreciation for the sacraments--especially the Eucharist or Holy Communion. There are at least two ways that Eucharistic issues might be examined: the theologies held concerning the nature of the sacrament, or the rubrics used in the practice of administering and receiving communion. While this paper started out with the objective of examining the practices, it quickly became an amalgam of practice and theology. The basic reason for this, as John C. Bowmer has pointed out, "there is nowhere a detailed account of an early Methodist Communion service."¹ Bowmer's approach was to rely largely on the works of John and Charles Wesley to form a picture of the way in which such services were typically conducted. There are, however, other sources, some of which Bowmer alludes to, others of which he did not know about or did not see as relevant.

Bowmer wrote from the perspective of "mainline" British Methodism. Certainly most of the material covered by Bowmer is also relevant to the Methodist experiences in the United States, but there were independent American developments that impinged on or expanded Methodist perspectives on Communion. It should be quickly noted, however, that Bowmer did not ignore some of the developments intended for America, particularly Wesley's revision of the *Book of Common Prayer*, although the failure of the General Conference of 1792 to ratify its use limited its influence in the United States.

From John Wesley's time to the present Methodists have been portrayed as holding ideas of the Eucharist as diverse as the consubstantiation of Luther² to the mere memorial service of Zwingli.³ There have been two primary views regarding the concept of the Sacraments. On the one hand there are those Churches which emphasize the concept of the sacrament as sign (the Reformed or Zwinglian-based churches), and on the other hand those which emphasize the concept of Grace working in the sacrament (Anglicans, Lutherans, Roman and Eastern Catholics). In terms of the Eucharist--the sacrament given primary importance in all Christendom--the first group regards the elements as mere signs or remembrances of Christ's death. The other group maintains that there is a Real Presence of Christ in the elements. The doctrine of the Real Presence is further subdivided by those who hold with transubstantiation, consubstantiation, or impanation.⁴

In American Methodism the issues revolving around Communion as memorial versus Communion as the Real Presence of Christ have been further exacerbated by the relationship between the early founders (particularly Otterbein) of what came to be the Evangelical United Brethren Church and early American Methodists (especially Francis Asbury), and the subsequent merger of The Methodist Church with the EUB in the 1960s, forming the United Methodist Church. The reason why this development can have some importance is that Otterbein had a very different understanding of the Eucharist than did Wesley. In this paper some views of early Methodist/United Brethren thought and practice regarding the Lord's Supper will be presented and explicitly compared with Wesley.

Holy Communion in a Wesleyan Perspective

Wesley's Concept of Holy Communion

Wesley's ideas altered, shifted, and grew throughout his life. His concept of the Church in relation to ordination and apostolic succession, for example, saw a real development. His concept of the Sacraments--an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace⁵--by way of contrast, saw little, if any, change. Wesley started with a High Church approach to the Sacraments and retained that approach throughout life. Along with most of Protestantism, he accepted the view that there are but two sacraments--unlike Roman Catholicism which recognizes seven sacraments--the Eucharist and baptism.⁶

It is clear first of all, in virtually all of Wesley's writings that he flatly rejected a simplistic or Zwinglian interpretation of the Eucharist as a mere memorial service.⁷ The Eucharist was, for Wesley, a means of grace by which God worked in man. By "means of Grace" he meant outward signs, words, or actions, "ordained of God, and appointed for this end to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace."⁸ Holy Communion was, for Wesley, one of the means, perhaps the major means, whereby God ordinarily channeled his Grace to people.⁹ There was the idea of sacrifice as well.¹⁰ It cannot be denied, therefore, that Wesley thought of the Eucharist in terms of the Real Presence:

Is not the eating of that bread, and the drinking of that cup, the outward, visible means, whereby God conveys into our souls all that spiritual grace, that righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, which were purchased by the body of Christ once broken and the blood of Christ once shed for us? Let all, therefore, who truly desire the grace of God, eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.¹¹

Wesley was also firmly convinced that in the Eucharist God operated independently and objectively; it was not necessary that the communicant even believe that the sacrament was true. In fact, said Wesley, if God did not operate objectively in the sacrament then,

it is certain Christ must have known it. And if he had known it, he would surely have warned us; he would have revealed it long ago. Therefore, because he had not, because there is no tittle of this in the whole revelation of Jesus Christ, I am fully assured your assertion is false, as that this revelation is of God.¹²

For the Sacrament to be validly administered it was necessary that a properly ordained clergy person do the task. Wesley believed that it was not possible for a layman to administer any of the sacraments--certainly a part of his concept of apostolic succession if not a rejection of the "priesthood of all believers." However, so long as the clergy person was genuinely ordained, Wesley maintained that s/he could legitimately offer the sacraments regardless of his/her own intentions or moral character:

There is a Romish error which many Protestants sanction unawares. It is an avowed doctrine of the Romish Church that 'the pure intention of the minister is essential to the validity of the sacraments.' If so, we ought not to attend the ministrations of an unholy man; but, in flat

opposition to this, our Church teaches in the 38th Article that 'the unworthiness of the minister does not hinder the validity of the sacraments.' Although, therefore, there are many disagreeable circumstances, yet I advise all our friends to keep to the Church.¹³

(It should be pointed out that here Wesley harbors a misconception concerning Roman Catholic doctrine, nor was this the only time that his understanding of Roman doctrine was superficial. Both the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England does accept the premise that ordination validates the administration of the sacraments, not the moral worthiness of the minister.)¹⁴ Finally, Wesley suggests concerning the Eucharist that

we learn that the design of this sacrament is, in the continual remembrance of the death of Christ, by eating bread and drinking wine, which are the outward signs of the inward grace, the body and blood of Christ.¹⁵

Here Wesley rather explicitly enunciates the doctrine of impanation and places himself within the context of the Anglo-Catholic interpretation of the Eucharist. As Todd points out, Wesley generally held a catholic rather than a reformed view of the Eucharist.¹⁶

The Rubrics for Holy Communion

The rubrics provided for the conduct of Holy Communion can be instructive in understanding both the theology and practice of the rite. In one fashion or another, much of the service of Communion of The United Methodist Church in the United States, the Methodist Conference in Great Britain, the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, and, of course, the Anglican Church, derives from Thomas Cranmer's revision of the *Mass* in the 1549 edition of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Even with the ecumenical revisions of the 1980s Methodism has preserved or returned to some of its own liturgical heritage, a process restarted in 1940 after the merger of the three major Methodist denominations (in 1939). By way of introduction to Methodist practice, it is useful to note the instructions given in the *Book of Worship*¹⁷ of 1944-1952, for they not only continued common practice of American Methodism, but were placed self-consciously in the Wesley tradition. There are five introductory rubrics.

The rubric of most interest for the present purposes is the fourth: "It is our custom to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper kneeling, but if persons so desire, they may receive the elements while seated or standing."¹⁸ This is similar to but not precisely the same as the Protestant Episcopal Church's (U.S.A.) *Book of Common Prayer* from about the same time period:¹⁹ "Then shall the Priest . . . deliver . . . to the People also in order, into their hands, all devoutly kneeling." By 1936, this rubric in British Methodism, had turned into the rather vague "The minister . . . delivers . . . to the people in order, into their hand,"²⁰ although a later rubric does mention dismissal from the table of the group currently taking communion. The method of receiving the sacrament shared by Methodism and at times by the Protestant Episcopal Church--kneeling at the altar rail--is a linear descendent of the custom of the Church of England in the 18th century. The procedure is one whereby the people proceed to the rails at or about the altar/table and there kneel while the minister/priest delivers *both* elements into each individual's hand.²¹ It is interesting to note that Anglican practice during most of the 20th Century, influenced as it was by the Oxford Movement of the 19th Century, was often less like 18th Century practice than was true of Methodism and American Episcopalianism. This approach to taking the Sacrament is to be contrasted to the reformed tradition in which communicants

took the elements in their pews.

Note that American Methodism has not rejected this technique, but it certainly is not in common use. In England, too, there were occasionally varying practices extant in Methodism. That this was so even in Wesley's time is clear from a journal entry by John Valton when he noted that Thomas Coke, at the Conference of 1790, gave the Sacrament with the members of the Conference, including John Wesley (whom Valton says was fatigued), taking communion in their seats.²²

The way in which the sacrament is taken is important because it reflects significant theological understandings of the rite. Both John and Charles Wesley were in the tradition of Bishop William Laud and his followers who saw in the Lord's Supper an Eucharistic Sacrifice and in the table an altar. The reformed tradition, on the other hand, saw only a table and the Lord's Supper as simply a fellowship meal.²³ The Wesley's clearly adopted the Laudian understanding of the Supper as sacrifice,²⁴ although it was also more than that. The idea of the Eucharistic Sacrifice shows up most clearly in the Wesley hymns. Note, for example, Number 116 (verse 1)²⁵ in Appendix I. Even more graphic, however, is Number 4 (verses 1, 2)²⁶, found in Appendix II. Verse 1 clearly implies the sacrificial nature of the Supper while Verse 2 is a distinct statement of the Real Presence. The point of all this is that those who saw the Eucharist only as a fellowship meal sat or stood in the pews. Those who believed the table to be an altar "and the communion act the dramatization of Christ's sacrifice, knelt."²⁷ The inclusion of other postures, as in American Methodism, implies an alteration in the understanding of the Eucharist. In fact, for a period of time Methodists swung so far from Wesley's understanding that some writers clearly misrepresented his ideas to the church.²⁸

Holy Communion in a Methodist Perspective

The Sacramental Impact of the Wesleyan Revival in Britain

The Wesleyan revival stirred up new interest in the Sacrament during a time of general Eucharistic neglect within the Church of England.²⁹ Wesley's insistence on constant Communion, along with the example of his own practice, led to renewed attendance at the Communion services of the Church in areas where Methodism was active. One of the things that happened was that some Methodist preachers, following Wesley's dictates, organized groups of Methodists to attend the local Anglican Church for communion. John Valton, for example, records in his journal for Christmas day, 1770, that he held a Christmas preaching service. The preceding week³⁰ he had read to his flock a "discourse on the Lord's Supper," and on Christmas day Valton and his company walked to "Thurrock Church, and received the sacrament."³¹

The sacramental emphasis of the Methodists resulted in statistics like those shown in Appendix III. Wesley frequently made references to the numbers of people to whom he preached, or, as in this case, the numbers to whom he administered communion. It must be kept in mind that there were a number of ordained Anglican clergy who were part of the Methodist movement. John and Charles Wesley are obvious examples, but their ranks included Thomas Coke and others. There was extensive agitation for a number of years for Wesley to ordain in England and this pressure increased after his ordinations for the United States. By and large he resisted the pressure to ordain in Great Britain, but this did cause some difficulties and he did, in fact, ordain a few people for service in England late in life. The demand for ordination arose, in part, from the desire to administer the sacraments. Thomas Taylor, another of Wesley's preachers, notes that at one time he

received a petition from ten leaders in a local society strongly recommending that there be no Methodist services that would conflict with the local Anglican church hours, and that the Methodists not provide the Sacrament. Another group of about thirteen, however, argued that the society members needed and wanted a Methodist service during church hours. Taylor also records that there were three abstentions.³² On November 16, 1791, Taylor succumbed to the pressure even though he quoted Wesley's own negative views on this issue, but "perceiving that two-thirds of the society were grieved and hurt, I . . . began the service at half-past ten in the forenoon."³³

Taylor was, apparently, one of the ring-leaders for expanded services, for as soon as he recorded his decision to hold morning services in competition with the local Anglican church he started describing activities that led to the provision of Communion. Taylor published a pamphlet justifying his previous actions, and immediately started agitating for the provision of the Lord's Supper in the local societies. He records that he was solicited to provide Communion and that he believed that he had a right to do so. There was, however, some difficulty in that Taylor was not ordained and although he was willing to step out on a limb, he wasn't willing to provide Communion without ordination. He indicated that while he believed it lawful for one who was not ordained to give the Sacrament, he "did not think it expedient, to celebrate the Lord's Supper without some formality of that kind." Taylor managed to get ordained, and not withstanding the continued view that Methodists should attend the Anglican services, his District Meeting approved his request to administer "the Lord's Supper at Liverpool." It was now late 1791 or early 1792 and John Wesley was dead. Because of the dissension caused by his actions, however, Taylor decided not to persist in providing Communion until the Conference of 1792 where he was put to a formal hearing over his conduct, although he was exonerated of improper activities.³⁴

Peace in the Connection was preserved only with some difficulty in 1792 in part because the Conference decided to have no sacrament in the Methodist chapels that year, but by the Conference of 1793 there had, apparently, been a net loss of members, attributed by some to not providing Communion. The result was that in 1793 the Conference designated at least some places in Methodism where the Sacrament might be served.³⁵ John Pawson followed Taylor at Liverpool in 1793-1794. As Taylor had already noted, Pawson found the Liverpool society divided on the issue of Communion. Pawson was reappointed to Liverpool in 1794 and "as it was not in our power to keep the people in general quiet without the sacrament, we were under the necessity of complying with their wishes." The result of these activities were that "great numbers constantly attended that sacred ordinance." The Liverpool society lost a number "church party" members that year, however, over the administration of the sacrament. There was a considerable amount of strife within the Connection and had been since Wesley's death. In 1795, for example, Joseph Bradford was chosen president of the Conference primarily because he was of neither party on the Communion issue. By 1796, however, Thomas Taylor was chosen Conference president, and, according to Pawson, "we had much difficulty in settling our affairs."³⁶

Another way of coming to an understanding of the importance of the Eucharist to Methodists toward the end of Wesley's life and shortly thereafter is to assess the theology of the Sacrament promoted by Methodists other than Wesley. It would be nice to find documents from people like Valton, Taylor, and Pawson that discuss not only the organizational problems caused by the debate over Communion, but also some explicit theological discussions concerning what they understood the Lord's Supper to be and explicit descriptions of how it was administered. In lieu of such a find it is possible to

turn to other Methodists that did at least think about the meaning of Communion in writing. One such person was Lady D'arcy Maxwell, *née* Brisbane (1742-1810), of Edinburgh. Lady Maxwell was a dedicated Methodist, there is a significant correspondence between John Wesley and Lady Maxwell, and she generated a journal and other correspondence. Some of these documents were found sufficiently significant to republish on several occasions during the 19th Century.³⁷

Lady Maxwell lost her husband two years after marriage, and six months later her only son died. These circumstances dictated that suffering would likely be an enduring theme in her thinking. Wesley, sometimes without much tenderness, sought to have her confront her depression directly. Out of her experiences Lady Maxwell developed an affinity with such mystics as the Marquis de Renty and Brother Lawrence, both of whom Wesley also admired. Wesley first met Lady Maxwell during a tour in Scotland in 1764. She was, as Simon suggests, "much impressed by the doctrines he preached."³⁸ In September, 1764, Lady Maxwell resolved to join the Methodist Society, a fact which, according to Simon, "gave Wesley much pleasure." In 1770 Lady Maxwell established a Methodist school in Edinburgh for the purpose of providing Christian education to poor children.

The manner of administering the Sacrament in Scotland was different than in England since the Church of Scotland was Presbyterian in character rather than Anglican. For that reason Methodism in Scotland did not follow the rubrics of the Church of England.³⁹ On Sunday, the 17th of June, 1764, during the tour of Scotland when he met Lady Maxwell, Wesley was informed "that the Lord's Supper was to be administered in the west kirk . . . at length I judged it best to embrace the opportunity, though I did not admire the manner of administration."⁴⁰ Wesley described the Communion service in some detail and it is instructive to read the contemporary account, for this is the service with which Maxwell would have been familiar:

After the usual Morning Service, the Minister enumerated several sorts of sinners, whom he forbade to approach. Two long tables were set on the side of one aisle, covered with table-cloths. On each side of them a bench was placed for the people. Each table held four or five and thirty. Three Ministers sat at the top, behind a cross-table; one of whom made a long exhortation, closed with the words of our Lord; and then breaking the bread, gave it to him who sat on each side of him. A piece of bread was then given to him who sat first on each of the four benches. He broke off a little piece and gave the bread to the next; so it went on, the Deacons giving more when wanted. A cup was then given to the first person on each bench, and so by one to another. The Minister continued his exhortation all the time they were receiving; then four verses of the twenty-second Psalm were sung, while new persons sat down at the tables. A second Minister then prayed, consecrated, and exhorted. I was informed the Service usually lasted till five in the evening. How much more simple, as well as more solemn, is the Service of the Church of England!⁴¹

Lady Maxwell took seriously Wesley's admonition for constant Communion and as John Lancaster described her behavior, "delightfully embraced every opportunity of this kind, not only at one but at different churches, and also at the [Methodist] chapel where her attendance was constant . . ."⁴² She looked on constant Communion as an act of obedience to Christ. For her it formed a bond of union among God's faithful followers and the most intimate participation of God in the life of the believer. The Sacrament also

became if not the primary means of grace certainly one of the most important. It was a practical avowal of the Christian's attachment to Christ as well as a public renewal of the covenant between God and his people.⁴³

Lady Maxwell paid attention to the process of preparation for the Sacrament. For example, on Friday, February 8, 1772, she was to take the sacrament in the Cannongate and after arising in the morning she "began to examine the state of" her mind and found "God was with me to bless; and in secret prayer."⁴⁴ Her conclusion on that Friday was that "I can truly say, my communion has been with the Father and the Son." By Sunday, she attested, that "with a greater earnestness than ever, I desired to go to the Lord's table." She notes further that "I went to prayer, and was enabled to plead the blood of Jesus with such prevalence for all wanted at his table, as I never remember before, and it was a truly profitable day."⁴⁵

The issues implied and generated by Wesley's sacramentalism were important to British Methodism. It is clear from the documents that Wesley was successful in convincing his people that the Lord's Supper was important, and that what was happening in the Sacrament was an involvement with God in Christ that did not take place in other circumstances. In the Sacrament the presence of God was real and true and the Sacrament worked whether it was believed or not. It was, moreover, a tool for conversion as well as a tool for buttressing the faith. He also seems to have succeeded in Britain, at least, in convincing Methodists of the efficacy of frequent and constant Communion. As Methodism drew farther away from the Church of England, the need for frequent or constant Communion became the basis for pressures for ordination independent of the established church. It is interesting to note, however, that no matter how independent of thought Methodists might become, the relationship between ordination and the valid administration of the Eucharist was not seriously challenged. Even people like Taylor, who seemed to question the theological necessity for validating the Lord's Supper through ordination, confirmed the practical problems inherent in that point-of-view. The way in which Methodists actually administered and took the Sacrament seems to have followed, without much question, the 18th Century Anglican forms, except in Scotland, where the prevailing norms of the Church of Scotland were used. These 18th Century Anglican norms also carried over into American Methodism as will be seen below.

Sacramentalism in the United States in the Late 18th Century

The Methodist Episcopal Church

The conflicts over the Eucharist that were evident in Great Britain were important because Methodism in Great Britain took the Lord's Supper seriously. It can be argued that by way of contrast that American Methodism, until modern times, failed to take the Sacrament seriously. The General Conference of 1792 rejected Wesley's *Sunday Service* of 1784 as the norm for worship for American Methodists. The actual reasons for this deviation are unclear, although Francis Asbury's apparent disregard for the rite must have entered in. Moreover, the revolutionary years during which Methodists had to rely *only* on lay preachers led to disuse, although the use of the love feast, perhaps in place of Communion, was apparently common. By 1792 it is possible that many American Methodist preachers, relatively unschooled in liturgy and theology, simply did not see the value of Communion in the same fashion as their British counterparts. Certainly the idea of the Lord's Supper as a converting ordinance has not been strong in the United States. Also the quite large circuits to which many of the early American Methodist preachers

were appointed, even if they were ordained, would have precluded the frequent administration of the sacraments. When the 1792 form of the Lord's Supper is compared to Wesley's *Sunday Service*, it is apparent that the drastic changes made by American Methodists altered not only the form but also the role and importance of the Sacrament.⁴⁶

When Wesley introduced the 1784 *Sunday Service* to the United States, his assumption and demand was that there would be not only a service of the Word (as found in the services for morning and evening prayer) but also a weekly Eucharist would be the norm for American Methodist worship.⁴⁷ From 1784 through 1792 the *Sunday Service* was the official standard if not the behavioral norm. It was, however, probably better followed in urban centers than in outlying areas. The key, as in Britain, may be the date. The first General Conference following Wesley's death was that of 1792. Not having to appease Wesley may have had something to do with the revision, although that is a subject for further research. In 1792 the service of Communion officially ceased to be a weekly event and an integral element of "common Sunday worship for American Methodists."⁴⁸ Actually, the *Discipline* of 1792 gives no suggestions to the expected frequency or even minimal annual observance of the Sacrament. From 1792 until very recent times the Lord's Supper was demoted from a normal focus of public worship to an occasional office to be celebrated as a special service.⁴⁹

The important point to make is that only in the last quarter of the 20th Century has American Methodism started a return to some of the central themes of worship that were stressed by Wesley. Regardless of the reasons for the original deviations, it is clear that the variations were real and extensive. This in itself has had theological implications in that these departures from sacramental centrality are also departures from Wesley's rather clear concepts of the importance of what constituted appropriate behavior for a Christian. He, in fact, thought that the Lord's Supper was so important that it "gives us strength to perform our duty and leads us on to perfection. . . . This is the true rule: so often are we to receive as God gives us opportunity."⁵⁰ In a very fundamental way the sacramental worship championed by Wesley was supplanted by an unordered and informal evangelistic service centered on the Sermon alone. Methodism in America came to have a reputation, and probably a reality, as a denomination without a theology.

The United Brethren Tradition

Because of the merging of the United Brethren and The Methodist Churches in the 1960s, it is appropriate to look at the contributing traditions of the UB as well as mainline Methodism. Philip William Otterbein was to the United Brethren what Wesley and Asbury were to American Methodism and overlapped both. By 1774 he had become the pastor of the semi-independent German Evangelical Reformed Church of Baltimore that he was to serve for the remainder of his life.

Otterbein's understanding of the Lord's Supper came, essentially, from the Calvinist *Heidelberg Catechism*, which was the official doctrinal statement of the German Reformed Church. The *Catechism* reflects Calvin's understanding of the presence of Christ in the sacrament to be spiritual in form, rather than partaking even of the essence of the physical, as in Luther's consubstantiation. The view set forth in the *Catechism* is very like the Anglican understanding as well as Wesley's. Very unlike Wesley, who regarded Communion as both a converting and a confirming rite, Otterbein saw it primarily as a "sign and seal of this spiritual change within" the individual⁵¹ (a confirming rite).

As Otterbein matured he became increasingly involved in the revivalism of the late 18th and early 19th Centuries and this, along with his pietistic background, led him to place less emphasis on the Sacrament than was true of some of his Reformed contemporaries or of the *Heidelberg Catechism*. Certainly the idea of making the Eucharist the primary means of grace would have been rejected.⁵² Martin Boehm, the other major figure prominent in the development of the United Brethren, came from a Mennonite background and had what has previously been described as a Zwinglian position on the Lord's Supper, a position clearly stated in the *Dordrecht Confession*. For Boehm the sacrament was only an outward sign of the regenerating work of Christ in the individual.

If American Methodists failed to see the value of Communion as a converting rite, the early United Brethren were actively opposed to the idea. While American Methodists were busy focusing in on Wesley's Aldersgate experience to the exclusion of other equally important, and possibly more central, themes, with the founding of the United Brethren Church in 1800 enunciated the one central doctrinal theme, that of the crisis "new birth experience, superseding understandings of sacraments, ethics, church order, or even theology."⁵³ The early UB were fundamentally convinced that there was no efficacy in the sacraments apart from a changed heart.⁵⁴ In 1814, when the UB formulated their first official doctrinal statement, they merely *recommended* the use of baptism and Communion. While the practical difference between the Methodists and the UB at the turn of the 18th and 19th Centuries regarding Communion might have been slight, a significant difference theologically was implied by the commitments made by Methodists at ordination. With the Methodists Communion might be occasional, but it was not optional.

The American Experience in Retrospect

Although we have a sample of only two denominations (Methodist Episcopal Church and the United Brethren) in this paper, it is tempting to suggest that the American experience itself had something to do with the denigration of sacramentalism. The raising of personal experience almost to the level of importance of Moses obtaining the tablets from God or God raising Jesus from the dead was an extreme enthusiasm early in the 19th Century. The Methodists, while doing damage to the Sacrament, seem not to have even been aware of the damage they were implicitly doing to theology and theological perspective. The UB, at least, seem to have been following their theology more or less systematically. It hasn't been until the last half of the 20th Century and perhaps the last quarter that the United Methodist Church has started to recover its theological heritage from Wesley. Or for that matter, to recover a theology at all.

Conclusions

What conclusions can be drawn from this analysis? First, early Methodism in England was sacramental in character and viewed the Lord's Supper as a converting as well as a confirming rite. Second, it was seen as needed constantly or at least frequently. Third, it reflected a doctrine of the Real Presence not only in the formal writings of Wesley, but also in its manner of delivery (kneeling at the rail). Fourth, there was early a major divergence between British and American Methodism on the issue of the importance of the Eucharist. By 1792 the Americans had, in a sense, disregarded the rite, while the British were still trying to come to grips with whether it should be offered in the Methodist Chapels in addition to the Church of England churches.

The English Methodists, however, toward the close of the century, still clearly held the Lord's Supper in great esteem and saw it as central to the task of Christian salvation. In this they remained closer to Wesley than did the Methodists in the United States. The importance that Communion can have to the individual is perhaps best characterized by testaments like that of Lady Maxwell as she took her spiritual journey through life. The problem with the approach taken by the Methodists and the UB in the United States is that they lost perspective on what the "whole" Christian might be like or need in their commitment to an exclusively emotion-based, yet shallow understanding of religion.

Appendices

Appendix I - Number 116, verse 1

Victim Divine, Thy grace we claim
While thus Thy precious death we show;
Once offer'd up, a spotless Lamb,
In Thy great temple here below,
Thou didst for all mankind atone,
And standest now before the throne.

Appendix II - Number 4, verse 1

Let all who truly bear
The bleeding Saviour's name,
Their faithful hearts with us prepare,
And eat the Paschal Lamb.
Our Passover was slain
At Salem's hallow'd place,
Yet we who in our tents remain
Shall gain His largest grace.

This eucharistic feast
Our every want supplies,
And still we by His death are blest,
And share His sacrifice:
By faith His flesh we eat,
Who here His passion show,
And God out of His hold seat
Shall all His gifts bestow.

Appendix III - Numbers attending.

Location	No.
Bath	Large
Birmingham	750
Birstall	1,550
Bolton	1,250
Bristol	1,000
Dublin	500
Leake	800
Leeds	1,650
Leeds	1,650
Leeds (Old Church)	1,100
London	1,150
Macclesfield	1,300
Manchester	1,350
Manchester	1,150
Manchester	1,000
Manchester	1,000
Manchester	1,200
Manchester	1,600
Plymouth	600
Sheffield	500
Sheffield	650

Rattenbury quotes Holden, Wesley among High Churchmen, on these numbers but attests that he independently checked them all. The numbers are quoted, untested, from Rattenbury, p.3.

Notes

1. John C. Bowmer, *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism* (London: Dacre Press 1951), p. 82.
2. Franz Hildebrandt, *From Luther to Wesley* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1951), pp. 69, 148ff.
3. Robert W. Goodloe, in *The Sacraments in Methodism* (Nashville, TN: The Methodist Publishing House, 1953), p. 69, very erroneously says that Methodists tend to follow Zwingli rather than Luther or the Anglicans, although Goodloe does probably represent 1950s thinking. Since Goodloe wrote, there has been a return to a more substantial understanding of Communion as may be seen in such books as William H. Willimon, *Sunday Dinner* (Nashville, TN: The Upper Room, 1981), pp. 28ff. Both these books reflect an attempt to provide an interpretation of the Sacrament for laity as well as clergy.
4. *Transubstantiation*: the doctrine (*Roman Catholicism*) that the sacramental elements of bread and wine, when consecrated in the Mass, are changed into the body and blood of the risen Christ. *Consubstantiation*: The Lutheran doctrine of the mode of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, the divine substance coexisting with the substance of the bread and wine. *Impanation*: The doctrine that the body of Christ is present after the consecration in the Eucharistic bread and wine without these changing their substance. A fourth perspective of the Real Presence might be one that understands Christ's spirit present in the corporate act of worship represented by the administration of the Lord's Supper. This would be an even softer view than impanation, but not yet Zwinglian. See also the discussion by Ole E. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1972), Part Two.
5. For this definition of a sacrament, see the "Articles of Religion," *Doctrine and Discipline of the Methodist Church, 1956* [or any other edition] (Nashville, TN: The Methodist Publishing House, 1956), articles XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, pp. 30-32.
6. There will be cause in this paper to cite both the "Jackson" and the "Bicentennial" editions of Wesley's *Works*. Thomas Jackson (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d., a photo offset reproduction of the authorized edition published by the Wesleyan Conference Office, London,

England, 1872). Citations to this version will be simply as *Works*, sometimes preceded by other titles, or succeeded by references to specific sermons. The newer compilation of Wesley's works, Frank Baker (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley* (Nashville, TN: The Abingdon Press, in process), will be referred to as *Works (Bicentennial)*, preceded or succeeded by appropriate titles, designations, and subsidiary editors. Wesley himself in a note to the reader of a sermon entitled, "On the Duty of Constant Communion," contended that with respect to Communion, while he had written the sermon for his students at Oxford, 55 years later he could "thank God I have not yet seen cause to alter my sentiments in any point which is therein delivered." Albert Outler (ed.), *Sermons*, vol. 3, *Works (Bicentennial)*, "The Duty of Constant Communion," Sermon 101, pp. 428ff.

7. Wesley explicitly rejected such a view of the Eucharist as Zwingli put forth, as does the sixteenth Article of Religion of The Methodist Church: "Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace, and God's good will toward us, by which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm, our faith in him." In speaking explicitly of the Holy Communion the eighteenth article says that "the Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death; insomuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ."
8. "The Means of Grace," *Works*, vol. v, Sermon xvi, p. 187; and *Works (Bicentennial)*, vol. 1, Sermons I, Sermon 16, p. 381.
9. *Ibid.*, p 185.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 194; and vol. vii, sermon ci, p. 148. See also, Bowmer, pp. 180-184.
11. *Works*, vol. v, Sermon xvi, p. 195. See also, Colin W. Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1960), p. 160.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 195.
13. *Letters*, vol. vi (to Mary Bishop, October, 1778), p. 327.

14. John M. Todd, *John Wesley and the Catholic Church* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1958), pp. 149, 176. Wesley's view of transubstantiation was also inaccurate, for he apparently did not understand the scholastic use of the term "substantial" or "substance." Rather, he viewed the whole thing from a rather one-sided position of Lockean empiricism. See "A Roman Catechism Faithfully drawn out of the Allowed Writings of the Church of Rome," *Works*, vol x, pp. 117-119. See also, Todd, p. 147, 148.
15. *Works*, vol. vii, Sermon ci, p. 149.
16. Todd, pp. 146-172. See also, John S. Simon, *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies* (London: The Epworth Press, 1923), pp. 31, 32, 308, 309; and Williams, pp. 116-139, 154-165; Bowmer, pp. 166-186; J. E. Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (London: The Epworth Press, 1948). The Catholic tendencies in Wesley's thought are brought home once more in his notes on the *Apostolic Canons*, reproduced as an appendix in Bowmer, pp. 233-237. These notes are in Wesley's own hand commenting on some of the ancient canons of the Church. Most students of Wesley have ignored these and only two books, one by R. Denny Urlin and Bowmer's, quote them at all. The standard biographies of Tyerman (3 volumes) and Simon (5 volumes) ignore them and the only other modern writer to make use of them is J. E. Rattenbury, *The conversion of the Wesley's* (London: The Epworth Press, 1938), p. 223, and he only refers to them rather than quoting them. It is worthwhile noting that Wesley seemed to have a high regard for at least some of the canons. The following quote from Wesley's notes gives some indication of his views and substantiates the conclusion that Wesley took an essentially "Catholic" view of the Eucharist, as well as some other liturgical usages. Wesley said, "I believe (myself) it is a duty to observe, so far as I can (without breaking communion with my own Church): . . . 2. To use Water, Oblation of the Elements, Invocation, Alms, a Prothesis, in the Eucharist. . . . I think it prudent (our own Church not considered): 1. To observe the Stations [Wednesday and Friday fasts]. . . . 3. To turn to the East at the Creed." (p. 235)
17. The Methodist Church, *The Book of Worship for Church and Home* (Nashville, TN: The Methodist Publishing House, 1944, 1945, 1952), p. 369.
18. It should be noted that Wesley left this rubric out of his *Sunday Service*. Bowmer, p. 211, notes that "The

- omission of the rubric concerning kneeling to receive the elements may have been made in deference to the susceptibilities of Dissenters; on the other hand, as Methodists usually knelt to receive the elements, Wesley may have felt that such directions were unnecessary." The *Sunday Service* was designed for American Methodists and kneeling or not has never, to my knowledge, been an issue. As will be noted later, Methodists in Scotland tended to adopt Scottish norms which did not involve kneeling and Wesley might have had the Scottish model in mind. Bowmer's summary is probably as precise as we can be.
19. The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: The Church Pension Fund, 1945), p. 82.
 20. The Methodist Conference, *The Methodist Service Book* (London: The Methodist Publishing House, 1975), p. B55.
 21. Bowmer, p. 93.
 22. "John Valton," in John Telford (ed.), *Wesley's Veterans* (Salem, OH: Schmul Publishers, n.d., reprint of a version dated 1913), vol. vi, p. 111. Bowmer also makes this point using this reference, p. 95.
 23. *Ibid.*
 24. See the discussion in J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (Cleveland, OH: OS� Publications, 1990), p. 91-112.
 25. In Rattenbury, p. h-37.
 26. *Ibid.*, p. h-2.
 27. W. Maynard French (commentator), *The John Wesley Prayer Book* (Nashville, TN: The Parthenon Press, 1956), p. 66.
 28. A good example of this is Goodloe.
 29. See Thomas H. Barratt, "The Place of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism," *The London Quarterly Review*, vol. 140 (July, 1923), pp. 56-73, for a detailed study of the issue of constant Communion. During the 18th Century the administration of the Lord's Supper had declined severely in the Church of England. Barratt, for example, notes that in 1763 only 20 out of 310 churches in Essex had Communion as often as once a

- month. (p. 57)
30. One of the problems with Anglican sacramental practice is that they required communicants to inform the priest a week in advance if they intended to participate in the Lord's Supper. The fact that Valton had given a Communion sermon the preceding week may relate to the week's notice requirement. If insufficient numbers of people signed up, Communion would be canceled. In his *Sunday Service* Wesley dropped this notification requirement. This has sometimes been interpreted as a desire for more open Communion, although bear in mind that tickets were issued to people to attend early Methodist Communion services and the tickets were acquired only on recommendation of a class leader.
 31. John Telford (ed.), *Wesley's Veterans*, vol. vi, p. 66.
 32. John Telford (ed.), *Wesley's Veterans* (Salem, OH: Schmul Publishers, n.d., reprint of the 1914 printing), vol. vii, p. 85.
 33. *Ibid.*, p. 87. Note, however, that Wesley died on March 2, 1791. Until he died Wesley was apparently able to contain the pressures for competition with the Church of England and to largely deny to his preachers the ability to administer the sacraments. A number of Methodist chapels were built with the facilities to administer the Lord's Supper, however, in recognition of the fact that there were some ordained Methodists. Church of England clergy would sometimes be hired to conduct Communion for Methodists in Methodist Chapels.
 34. This story can be traced in *Ibid.*, pp. 87-91.
 35. Note Thomas Taylor, *Wesley's Veterans*, vol. vii, p. 91.
 36. John Telford (ed.), *Wesley's Veterans*, vol. iv (Salem, OH: Schmul Publishers, n.d., reprinted from the edition of 1912), pp. 68-71.
 37. The material available included John Lancaster, *The Life of Darcy, Lady Maxwell, of Pollock; Late of Edinburgh*, 2nd Edition (London: J. Kershaw, 1826) and William Atherton, *The Life of Darcy, Lady Maxwell*, 5th Edition (London: John Mason, 1863). Both the foregoing volumes contain extracts from Maxwell's diary and correspondence. For a brief description of the correspondence between Wesley and Maxwell, see Martin Schmidt, *John Wesley: A Theological Biography*, vol. ii, "John Wesley's Life Mission," Part ii, Denis Inman (trans.) (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1966, 1973),

- pp. 151-153.
38. John S. Simon, *John Wesley the Master-Builder* (London: The Epworth Press, 1927), pp. 156-157 notes that "The second event which increases the interest of this visit to Scotland concerns a friendship which began at this time. He met Lady D'Arcy Maxwell, who was much impressed by the doctrines he preached. A correspondence began between them soon after he left Edinburgh, which was continued for many years. . . . Her religious experience teaches lessons that are helpful to those who know little about a sudden conversion. With timid steps they walk along a path which shines more and more to the perfect day. . . . He admits in his letter that he wishes Lady Maxwell to experience 'an instantaneous work'; but the memories of the past awoke in him, and the thought of the 'gradual work,' which he had experience, restrained his hand." (See also, *Works*, xii, 324.)
 39. Bowmer, p. 94.
 40. *Journal, Works*, vol. iii (June 16, 1764), p. 183.
 41. *Ibid.*
 42. Lancaster, p. 93.
 43. *Ibid.*, p. 92. See also, Atherton, pp. 41-43.
 44. From Lady Maxwell's diary, see Lancaster, p. 95.
 45. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
 46. William Nash Wade, *A History of Public Worship in the Methodist Episcopal Church and Methodist Episcopal Church, South, From 1784 to 1905* (Notre Dame, IN: Department of Theology, Notre Dame University, 1981, unpublished dissertation), p. 115.
 47. Wade, p. 116.
 48. *Ibid.*
 49. Wade, p. 116, suggests that it wasn't until 1976 with the publication of *Word and Table, A Basic Pattern of Sunday Worship for United Methodists* (Nashville, TN: The Methodist Publishing House, 1976), pp. 8-24, that the attitude changed: "We express the hope that the full service of Word and Sacrament will eventually become normative for United Methodist worship on the Lord's Day." Actually, this change in perspective had

been developing for several years. The introduction to "The Order for the Administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion" in the *Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: The Methodist Publishing House, 1964, 1966), #830, states that "It shall be the duty of the pastor to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at regularly appointed times to the people committed to his care, remembering the charge laid upon him at the time of his ordination: 'Be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God, and of his holy Sacraments.'" Although specific instructions on frequency were dropped from the ritual for Communion, there were always auxiliary commitments for ministers to actually administer the Sacrament. Wade is correct, however, in commenting that there was certainly decreased emphasis during the years he specified and the observation can be made that the church is still paying the price of that neglect.

50. "The Duty of Constant Communion," *Works (Bicentennial)*, Sermon 101, vol. 3, Sermons III, p. 429.
51. Daryl M. Elliott, "The Lord's Supper and the United Brethren in Christ," *Methodist History*, vol. xxvii, no. 4 (July 1989), p. 212.
52. *Ibid.*
53. F. Ernst Stoeffler (ed.), *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), p. 100, as quoted in Elliott, p. 215.
54. Paul Henkel, a Lutheran frontier preacher, observed around 1800 that the UB doctrine was organized to "deny the grace of the Holy Sacraments, and to seek their inherent efficacy in their personal experience. . . ." Quoted in John Dallas Robertson, *Christian Newcomer (1749-1830), Pioneer of Church Discipline and Union Among the United Brethren in Christ, The Evangelical Association, and the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Washington, DC: George Washington University, 1973, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation), p. 67, and cited in Elliott, p. 215, n. 13.