

Paul W. Chilcote

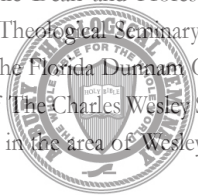
The Wesleyan Vision: Foundations

Abstract

This article discusses the integral nature of theology and spirituality in the writings and practices of John and Charles Wesley. It describes works of piety and works of mercy as a holistic foundation upon which the Wesleys built their movement of renewal in the Church of England in the eighteenth century. Particular attention is given to the means of grace – prayer, biblical engagement, Christian fellowship, and Eucharist, as well as the connection between the sacrament and mission. This article was the first of two lectures originally delivered at Booth College (Winnipeg) as part of the inaugural Earl Robinson Lectures series.

Keywords: Wesleyan spirituality; works of piety, means of grace; Eucharist; Christian revitalization

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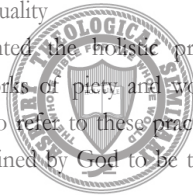


The spirituality of John and Charles Wesley shaped their vision of the Christian faith and how Christian disciples live in the world.¹ The integral nature of theology and spirituality – Christian faith and faithful practice – defined the early Methodist movement. The way in which the Wesleys held faith and life together by means of Christian practices made their project of renewal a powerful spiritual force of enduring significance. Over the past several decades, two questions have come to dominate those with a renewed interest in Christian practices in our own time: “What does it mean to live the Christian life faithfully and well?” and “How can we help one another to do so?” (Dykstra 2005:xii-xiv). Contemporary students of ecclesial practices are discovering much about how these activities both shape people and reflect their values and senses of meaning (Bass 1997). Craig Dykstra describes these practices in a way that resonates strongly with the vision of the Wesley brothers:

Christian practices are not activities we do to make something spiritual happen in our lives. Nor are they duties we undertake to be obedient to God. Rather, they are patterns of communal action that create openings in our lives where the grace, mercy, and presence of God may be made known to us. They are places where the power of God is experienced. In the end, these are not ultimately our practices but forms of participation in the practice of God (http://www.practicingourfaith.org/prct_what_are_practices.html).

The life and ministry of the Wesleys revolved around the same concerns that have fueled the contemporary revival of Christian practices. The driving passion of John and Charles Wesley was to live faithfully in Christ and to establish communities in which others claimed this as their primary vocation as well. They found it impossible to separate their personal experience of God and devotion to Christ from their active role as ambassadors of reconciliation and social transformation in the world. Those practices that exerted the greatest influence on the Wesley brothers reflect their immersion in the Anglican heritage they loved and emulated. It is not too much to say that they apprenticed themselves to the great spiritual masters within their beloved Church of England. Their vision of the Christian life revolved around Anglican practices that have stood the test of time. They practiced a holistic spirituality

The Wesleys oriented the holistic practice of the Christian faith around two primary foci: works of piety and works of mercy. They also used the term “means of grace” to refer to these practices, defined as those outward signs, words, or actions, ordained by God to be the ordinary channels by which



persons in search of life encounter God's grace (Outler 1984:395). John Wesley described prayer (and fasting), Bible study, Christian conference (or fellowship), and participation in the Sacrament of Holy Communion as instituted means of grace, as opposed to prudential means, such as doing all the good you can. The instituted means, in particular, not only nurtured and sustained growth in grace among the early Methodist people, but also provided the energy which fueled the Wesleyan movement as a powerful religious awakening. These activities nurtured and sustained growth in grace and love. As a consequence, the Wesleyan movement was a powerful religious awakening, evangelical in terms of its rediscovery of God's word of grace and Eucharistic in its identification of the sacrament of Holy Communion as a profound place to experience that grace. Wesleyan spirituality also included a profound incarnational dimension. In addition to these works of piety, they strongly advocated active social service, commitment to the poor, and advocacy for the oppressed. Authentic Christianity, they had learned, is mission; sincere engagement in God's mission is true religion (Chilcote 2004:93-104). The primary means by which the early Methodists lived out this holistic understanding of Christian discipleship was through the practice of mercy that paralleled the more interior works of piety. The Wesleyan movement of renewal reveals a missionary vision, therefore, with an evangelistic core.

The Wesleys and the early Methodists engaged in these practices in a context of mutual accountability. Despite the sibling rivalry that characterized the relationship between John and Charles Wesley, it is abundantly clear that they were intentional about being accountable to one another in virtually every aspect of their living. The way in which they "watched over one another in love" modeled a way of life imitated by their followers. Through their practice they inculcated accountable discipleship among their followers and developed structures that affirmed each Christian's need of others to successfully complete the journey of faith. In his hymns, Charles Wesley celebrated the small groups—the bands and classes—in which the early Methodists provided mutual encouragement and genuine care for one another:

Help us to help each other, Lord,
Each other's cross to bear;
Let each his friendly aid afford,
And feed his brother's care.

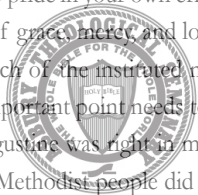
Help us to build each other up,
Our little stock improve;
Increase our faith, confirm our hope,
And perfect us in love (Wesley 1742:83).



John Wesley wrote a sermon essay on “The Means of Grace,” later published among his standard sermons (Outler 1984:35-47). He clarifies the difference between the proper use and possible abuse of Christian practices, or means of grace, in faithful discipleship. The sermon was a forceful attack against those who regarded all outward actions as superfluous, or even harmful, to the spiritual life, emphasizing a passive and interior spirituality. These so-called “quietists” were the audience he targeted in the sermon. Wesley’s purpose was to argue both the validity and necessity of the means of grace. He proclaimed an “active faith” over against the passivity of those embroiled in this “Stillness Controversy.” He marshaled a simple line of argument. Christ provided certain outward means in order to offer us his grace. Some began to mistake the means for the end and focused on the outward works rather than the goal of a renewed heart. Because of the abuse of the means of grace, some began to assume that they were dangerous and should not be used. But, in spite of the abusers and the despisers, others correctly held true, inward and authentic, outward religion together. Wesley concluded that whoever really wants to be in a vital relationship with God must “wait” for God by immersing him or herself in the means God has provided. To put it on a more intimate level, a relationship only grows if you put yourself into it. The relationship is a gift, but it also requires discipline.

Wesley demonstrates how three principles, in particular, govern the use of the means of grace. First, the means are never meant to be ends in themselves. They are means to spiritual ends (Knight 1992:50-91). To turn means into ends is a certain trajectory leading to idolatry. Secondly, the means are “ordinary channels” of God’s grace. God is always “above” the means. But while God’s grace and love may be offered freely in extraordinary ways, it would be a mistake to abandon those practices in which God has promised to meet God’s beloved. Thirdly, the means should be viewed as places of divine/human encounter. It is in the means that we meet God anew, but the potency of our communion with God is not dependent upon our ability to find God; rather, the virtue of the means is in the ability of God to find us. Wesley concludes the sermon by offering simple instruction for the proper use of the means. As a general rule, use all of the means. Remember that God is above all means, and apart from God, all means are useless. So seek God alone in the means and take no pride in your own effort or presumed success. Open your heart to God’s promise of grace, mercy, and love.

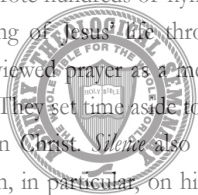
Before exploring each of the instituted means of grace as foundational to the Wesleyan vision, one important point needs to be made somewhat unique to the Wesleyan tradition. If Augustine was right in making the claim that “to sing is to pray twice,” then the early Methodist people did a lot of praying! Singing praise



to God transforms the singer. Sacred song shapes the people of God, and Charles Wesley's hymns not only formed the minds of the people called Methodists, they also tempered the spirit of this unique community of faith. The hymns themselves were a powerful tool in the Spirit's work of revival and affected the spirituality of the Methodist people, perhaps more than any other single force beside the Bible. Charles reminds us all that a singing faith is a contagious faith. Because of the central place of sacred song, therefore, in the Wesleyan heritage, Charles Wesley's hymns will serve to illustrate many of the points central to our theme.

Prayer. Prayer is the foundational means of grace in the Wesleyan vision. It would be correct to say that prayer informs all the other means of grace in one way or another; indeed, it is the bedrock of the Christian life. John and Charles Wesley practiced a disciplined devotional life. They learned this lesson in the Epworth Rectory, their childhood home, under the spiritual instruction of their mother, Susanna. Throughout the course of their lives, they began every day with Morning Prayer and ended every day with Evening Prayer from the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*. This practice, in and of itself, may have formed their spirituality more than any other influence. Praying these set forms of prayer daily meant that they recited the entire Psalter on a regular basis. The Psalms became their principal songbook. They engaged scripture daily on the basis of a set schedule of readings – *lectio continua* (continuous reading) – drawn from the full canon of the Bible, including the Apocrypha. A rich collection of so-called “Office Hymns,” mostly drawn from scripture, like the *Magnificat* and the *Sursum Corda*, shaped their vision of the faith.

Four primary concerns shaped their life of prayer. The *seasons and cycles* of the Christian Year framed their lives. The liturgical year they observed drew the attention of the Christian community to the saving work of God in Jesus Christ through an annual cycle of remembrance. Revolving around the major festivals of Christmas and Easter, these seasons involved periods of preparation, celebration, and reflection. The annual anticipation of Christ's coming, the celebration of the nativity of Jesus, the revelation of God's love in his Son, the commemoration of Jesus' death, the glorious celebration of his resurrection, and the remembrance of the Spirit's descent upon the original believers informed the life and witness of the Wesleys. Charles Wesley wrote hundreds of hymns that enabled the Methodist people to ponder the meaning of Jesus' life through this cycle of prayer and reflection. The Wesleys also viewed prayer as a means of *sharing sacred space* with Jesus, of abiding with Christ. They set time aside to be with their Lord, to nurture their relationship with God in Christ. *Silence* also enabled them to discern their way in quiet anticipation. John, in particular, on his many journeys on horseback



across the British Isles spent much time in silence. This provided an opportunity for him to listen and to attune his spirit to the will and way of God. The Wesleys also prayed the *scriptures*. They prayed the Word with intentionality, sometimes following a pattern of meditation developed by Francis deSales. Charles Wesley concludes a poetic exposition of the whole armor of God with this reminder of St. Paul's admonition to the church at Thessalonica that underscores the importance of prayer:

Pray, without ceasing pray
(Your Captain gives the word),
His summons cheerfully obey,
And call upon the Lord;
To God your every want
In instant prayer display;
Pray always; pray, and never faint;
Pray, without ceasing pray (Wesley 1749:1:238).

Biblical Engagement. “I am determined to be a Bible Christian,” John Wesley once claimed, “not almost but altogether” (Outler 1987:93). The Wesleyan revival, like other movements of Christian renewal, was quite simply a rediscovery of the Bible. The early Methodist people believed that “their book” was not simply a compilation of letters and histories, of prayers and biographies, of wise sayings and encouraging words; rather, they realized that these ancient “words” could become the “Living Word” for them as they encountered scripture anew through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They understood the Bible to be the supreme authority in matters of faith and practice. In both preaching and personal study, the scriptural text sprang to new life, forming, informing, and transforming their lives with immediate effect and lasting influence.

The Wesleys understood the power of the Word. It is interesting to ponder the fact that all human interaction is based on spoken words and acted signs: saying and doing. It is little wonder, therefore, that Christian worship includes both word and sacrament. The Wesleys also understood that words shape people and give them their identity. I'll never forget as a youth how my father bade me farewell at the doorway on the evening of a date with those powerful words, “Paul, remember who you are.” Words create identity, enabling us to remember who we are and to whom we belong. In the context of our pilgrimage of faith, the Word quite simply helps us to remember. This concept is captured in the Greek term *anamnesis*. This is the same term used in the New Testament narratives about the Lord's Supper when Jesus says, “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). Rather than a simple act of memory, the connotation of this form of remembrance entails the idea of experiencing the reality of something remembered in the present

moment. Scripture, therefore, functions to make the realities of God real to us here and now. Through our engagement with the Word, we remember what God has done – how God has acted in human history – experiencing and living into that liberation now.

This rich concept of remembrance finds roots in the ancient synagogue and the survival of the people of Israel in exile. For the Hebrew people, if they had any hope of retaining their identity as the children of Jahweh while embedded in a foreign culture, they had to develop dynamic methods of remembrance. The institution of the synagogue and the development of a body of sacred literature facilitated this “dynamic of living memory.” Four movements constituted this sacred process in the context of synagogue worship. 1) *Reading*. They read the story of God’s action in the sacred narratives they had committed to writing. 2) *Reflecting*. Those to whom they had delegated authority in their community interpreted the story to the community of faith. 3) *Rejoicing*. The community celebrated the story of God’s action on its behalf in song and in prayer. 4) *Renewing*. The whole purpose of this dynamic process was the renewal of their identity as the beloved children of God, the primary consequence of remembering. The Wesleys and the early Methodist people approached scripture in very much the same way and for the same purposes. They not only believed that the Spirit breathed life into the Bible – those who collected, composed, and canonized these sacred texts – but also invigorated the individuals and the communities who engage these texts in the spirit of prayer. Dead words became the “living Word” for countless Methodists who practiced the scriptures.

Christian Fellowship. In defense of his expanding network of Methodist Societies, John Wesley identified small groups as the distinguishing mark of the movement. In addition to organizing a network of itinerant preacher/evangelists, he built up a structure to sustain that ministry and in which his followers were encouraged to watch over one another in love. The first Societies developed in Bristol initially as small groups that met weekly for worship, fellowship, prayer, and instruction. Originally inspired by the Anglican religious societies made up predominantly of laity, the classes and bands of early Methodism also owed much to their counterparts among the Pietists (Watson 1989 & 1991). Band meetings developed as intimate groups of four to seven members who voluntarily banded together to encourage one another in the quest for holiness of heart and life. Class meetings, typically larger than bands and consisting of approximately twelve members, encompassed the entire membership of the Society and provided a means for the practice and maintenance of disciplinary standards.

For friendship form'd, her constant heart
 With pure, intense affection glow'd,
 She could not give her friend a part,
 Because she gave the whole to God:
 Her friend she clasp'd with love intire,
 Inkindled at the Saviour's throne,
 A spark of that celestial fire,
 A ray of that eternal Sun (Wesley 1756-87:44)!

John Wesley developed the *General Rules of the United Societies* in 1743 as a basic “rule of life” for the emerging Methodist groups in Bristol (Davies 1989:67-75). In her best-selling guide to the spiritual life entitled *Soul Feast*, Marjorie Thompson defines a rule of life as “a pattern of spiritual disciplines that provides structure and direction for growth in holiness . . . A rule of life, like a trellis, curbs our tendency to wander and supports our frail efforts to grow spiritually” (1995:138). Wesley’s *Rules* provided a guide to help the Society and its individual members grow in holiness of heart and life. He established only one requirement for any to become a Methodist: “a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins.” He believed that if their desire for salvation were genuine it would be shown by the way they lived their lives. For Wesley, belief and practice were intimately related. In order to remain a Methodist, however, two things were required. The disciple had to participate in an accountability group and provide evidence of their practice of the general rules. The Wesleys’ assumption was that their followers could not maintain a rule of life on their own. When disciples held one another accountable, however, the result was growth in faith and holiness. The general rules, in and of themselves, were profoundly simple: 1) “Do no harm.” Avoid all things that cause separation from God and one another in the Christian life. 2) “Do good.” Do all in your power to actively love others. 3) “Attend upon the ordinances of God.” Practice the instituted means of grace – those spiritual disciplines that have stood the test of time.

Eucharist. Among these works of piety, Eucharist held a special place for both Wesley brothers; they described this practice as the chief means of grace. They viewed sacramental grace and evangelical experience as necessary counterparts of an authentically Christian spirituality. In one of his 166 *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*, Charles Wesley bears testimony to the importance of the means of grace— those places where God has promised to meet us in our Christian practice— but bears witness to the primacy of the Lord’s Table:



The prayer, the fast, the word conveys,
When mixt with faith, thy life to me,
In all the channels of thy grace,
I still have fellowship with thee,
But chiefly here my soul is fed
With fullness of immortal bread (1745:39).

Not only does the sacred meal enable the community to remember the past event of the cross and Christ's redemptive work for all, it celebrates the presence of the living Lord in a feast of thanksgiving and orients the community in hope toward the consummation of all things in the great heavenly banquet to come.

First, *the Lord's Supper is a memorial of the passion of Christ* (the past dimension). It reminds us of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on our behalf. The opening hymn of the Wesleys' collection sets the somber tone for the hymns devoted to the Lord's Supper as a memorial of Jesus' passion:

In that sad memorable night,
When Jesus was for us betray'd,
He left his death-recording rite (1745:1).

St. Paul reminds the Corinthian community (1 Cor. 11:26) that the Sacrament proclaims "the Lord's death until he comes." This "death imagery" of Charles should be no surprise; the wondrous dynamic memorialized in the sacrament, however, is the fact that the redemptive suffering of Jesus procures eternal life for the believer:

The grace which I to all bequeath
In this divine memorial take,
And mindful of your Saviour's death,
Do this, my followers, for my sake,
Whose dying love hath left behind
Eternal life for all mankind (1745:2).

Charles Wesley's masterful use of imagery creates what J. Ernest Rattenbury called a "Protestant Crucifix," poetry that brings the event of the cross to the forefront of our consciousness and into our experience:

Endless scenes of wonder rise
With that mysterious tree,
Crucified before our eyes
Where we our Maker see:
Jesus, Lord, what hast thou done!
Publish we the death divine,

Stop, and gaze, and fall, and own
Was never love like thine!

Never love nor sorrow was
Like that my Jesus show'd;
See him stretch'd on yonder cross
And crush'd beneath our load!
Now discern the deity,
Now his heavenly birth declare!
Faith cries out 'Tis he, 'tis he,
My God that suffers there (1745:16)!

The most amazing fact about the cross, of course, is that this instrument of death should become the supreme symbol of God's love. It is, after all, the "Lamb of God, whose bleeding love," Charles reminds us, "We thus recall to mind" (1745:15). The *anamnetic* refrain of this hymn, "O remember *Calvary*,/And bid us go in peace," points to God's mighty act of salvation in Jesus Christ and the way in which God's love "bursts our bonds," "sets us free," "seals our pardon," and restores God's very image.

Secondly, *the Eucharist is a celebration of the presence of the living Christ* (the present dimension). To use Wesleyan language, the sacrament is a "sign and means of grace." Without any question, the earliest Eucharistic feasts of the Christian community, at which the disciples of Jesus "ate their food with glad and generous hearts" (Acts 2:46), were characterized by joy and thanksgiving. One of the early terms for the sacrament, drawn directly from the Greek word, *eucharistia*, simply means "thanksgiving." This was the "Thanksgiving Feast" of the early Christians; a celebration of the Resurrection and the presence of the living Lord. Charles captures that primitive Christian spirit:

Jesu, we thus obey
Thy last and kindest word,
Here in thine own appointed way
We come to meet our Lord;
The way thou hast injoin'd
Thou wilt therein appear:
We come with confidence to find
Thy special presence here.

Our hearts we open wide
To make thy Saviour room:
And lo! The Lamb, the crucified,
The sinner's friend is come!
His presence makes the feast,
And now our bosoms feel
The glory not to be exprest,
The joy unspeakable (1745:69).

In one of his most powerful hymns, Charles plumbs the depths of this mystery of faith:

O the depth of love divine,
Th' unfathomable grace!
Who shall say how bread and wine
God into man conveys?
How the bread his flesh imparts,
How the wine transmits his blood,
Fills his faithful people's hearts
With all the life of God!

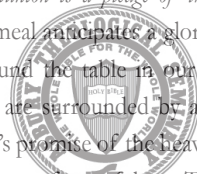
Sure and real is the grace,
The manner be unknown;
Only meet us in thy ways
And perfect us in one,
Let us taste the heavenly powers,
Lord, we ask for nothing more;
Thine to bless, 'tis only ours
To wonder, and adore (1745:41).

Faith constitutes the key to this present dimension. It is through faith that the outward sign transmits the signified. The grace of God is applied by the means of faith. And the heights to which faith can move us are immeasurable:

The joy is more unspeakable,
And yields me larger draughts of God,
'Till nature faints beneath the power,
And faith fill'd up can hold no more (1745:39).

At the close of a summer course of study, the class I was teaching had responsibility for the concluding worship service. We wanted this to be a joyful celebration of Eucharist and incorporated many African songs to enhance the festive nature of the experience. At the distribution of the elements we invited the participants to dance their way to the exits of the chapel where the bread and wine were to be dispensed. Afterwards, one of the students proclaimed, "Today I experienced joy in the Eucharist for the very first time." The risen Christ was present in the breaking of the bread.

Thirdly, *Holy Communion is a pledge of the Heavenly Banquet to come* (the future dimension). The holy meal anticipates a glorious future feast of the faithful in heaven. As we gather around the table in our experience of worship in this world, we are not alone. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, and together look forward to God's promise of the heavenly banquet when all of God's children are reunited in one great feast of love. The Wesleys spoke often of the



Sacrament as a foretaste of this banquet, an earnest, or pledge, of things to come. Their rediscovery of “the communion of the saints” in relationship to this Holy Communion was a significant contribution they made to the sacramental theology of their own day. The keynote of this future dimension, of course, is hope and the consummation of all things in Christ.

“By faith and hope already there,” sings Charles, “Ev’n now the marriage-feast we share” (1745:82). This is a “soul-transporting feast,” that “bears us now on eagles’ wings” and seals “our eternal bliss” (1745:82-3). The amazing imagery in Charles’s lyrical theology gathers us into a community of hope:

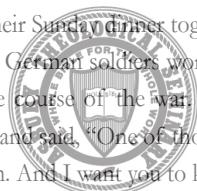
How glorious is the life above
Which in this ordinance we taste;
That fulness of celestial love,
That joy which shall for ever last!

The light of life eternal darts
Into our souls a dazzling ray,
A drop of heav’n o’reflows our hearts,
And deluges the house of clay.

Sure pledge of extacies unknown
Shall this divine communion be,
The ray shall rise into a sun,
The drop shall swell into a sea (1745:87).

You may recognize the name of Jürgen Moltmann, a name synonymous with the “theology of hope.” I first met Professor Moltmann when I was a graduate student at Duke University. During one of his visits to campus, I timidly invited him to lunch and we enjoyed a wonderful meal together. While introducing myself to him more fully, I explained that I was working in my doctoral studies with Frank Baker. “Oh,” he interrupted, “I’d like to share a story with you about Frank and Nellie Baker.”

He said that during the war there was a German prison of war camp on the northeast coast of England. A young pastor and his wife served a small Methodist circuit close by. They were filled with compassion and compelled to do something to reach out to these men. So they went to the commander and asked permission to take a prisoner with them to church each Sunday and then to their home where they would eat their Sunday dinner together. It was agreed. So Sunday after Sunday, a steady flow of German soldiers worshiped and ate with the Bakers in their home throughout the course of the war. This world famous theologian paused, looked at me intently, and said, “One of those soldiers was a young man by the name of Jürgen Moltmann. And I want you to know that the seed of hope was



planted in my heart around Frank and Nellie Baker's dinner table." This meal always fills us with hope.

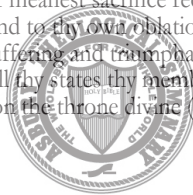
The Wesleys employ these various dimensions in an effort to communicate the depth and breadth of meaning in the sacrament and to enrich the experience of the participants. In this sign-act of love, the past, present, and future—faith, hope, and love—are compressed, as it were, into a timeless, communal act of praise. The community of faith celebrates the fullness of the Christian faith is the mystery of a holy meal; God empowers his people to faithful ministry and service.

Eucharist and Mission. Finally, the Wesleys conceived an intimate connection between the sacrament and mission. Eucharistic practice actually constitutes a bridge of sorts between the works of piety and the works of mercy that we will explore in the second address. This emphasis finds its fullest expression in the Wesleys' conception of sacrifice as it relates to the sacrament. In Charles Wesley's sermon on Acts 20:7 we encounter a concept of sacrifice consonant with the view he espouses in his *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* devoted to this theme. Charles views the Lord's Supper as a "re-presentation" of the sacrifice of Christ (Newport 2001:277-86). As Rattenbury (1948:123-47) demonstrated, his stress is persistently on the two-fold oblation of the church in the Sacrament; the body of Christ offered is not merely a sacred symbol of Christ's "once-for-all" act of redemption, but is also the living sacrifice of the people of God.

The sacrificial character of the Christian life, in which the worshiper participates repeatedly at the table of the Lord, and its relationship to the sacrifice of Christ, is clarified in Charles' hymns. In this regard, he adheres very closely to the position articulated in Daniel Brevint's *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*, namely, "The main intention of Christ herein was not the bare *remembrance* of His Passion; but over and above, to invite us to His Sacrifice" (Rattenbury 1948:178).

While faith th' atoning blood applies,
Ourselves a living sacrifice
We freely offer up to God:
And none but those his glory share
Who crucified with Jesus are,
And follow where their Saviour trod.

Saviour, to thee our lives we give,
Our meanest sacrifice receive,
And to thy own oblation join,
Our suffering and triumphant head,
Thro' all thy states thy members lead,
And seat us on the throne divine (Wesley 1745:110).



As faithful disciples of Jesus repeatedly participate in the Eucharistic actions of taking, and blessing, and breaking, and giving—the constitutive aspects of an authentic, sacrificial life—God conforms them increasingly to the image of Christ. Our lives become truly Eucharistic as faith working by love leads to holiness of heart and life. Through the sacrament God shapes disciples as those who are taken into the hands of God for a divine purpose, blessed to be a blessing, broken so they can share their lives freely, and given, like Jesus, for the life of the world. Inaugurated into and invested in the reign of God, Christ followers immerse themselves in the life of God’s world as ambassadors of peace, joy, reconciliation, and love.

End Notes

¹ I was invited to deliver the inaugural Earl Robinson Lectures in Wesleyan Studies at Booth College in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in November 2013 and chose as my theme “The Wesleyan Vision.” I had come to know Commissioners Earl and Benita through our participation in The Salvation Army/World Methodist Council Bilateral Dialogue and came to hold them both in high esteem as we engaged in conversation about our common heritage. I had always appreciated the work of the Army, but the Robinsons and their Salvationist colleagues helped me better understand the larger dimensions of the Army’s work around the world. This address, then, is the first of the two Robinson Lectures. The second lecture was previously published: “The Wesleyan Vision: Gospel-bearers,” *Word and Deed: A Journal of Salvation Army Theology and Ministry* 17, 1 (November 2014): 15-34.

In the preparation of these lectures I borrowed liberally from several of my previously published works, relying primarily on four sources, “Preliminary Explorations of Charles Wesley and Worship,” *Proceedings of the Charles Wesley Society* 9 (2003-2004): 67-82; “Eucharist among the Means of Grace,” *Word and Deed: A Journal of Salvation Army Theology and Ministry* 8, 2 (May 2006), 5-22; *Early Methodist Spirituality: Selected Women’s Writings* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2007); and “Charles Wesley and Christian Practices,” *Proceedings of The Charles Wesley Society* 12 (2008): 35-47. In this first lecture on the Foundation of the Wesleyan vision, I address works of piety more fully, while exploring works of mercy in the second lecture on Gospel-bearing.

All hymn texts are taken from Charles Wesley’s Published Verse, Duke Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition, <https://divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/cswt/wesley-texts>, with grateful acknowledgment.



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