

# PRACTICING THE NEW CREATION: WESLEY'S ESCHATALOGICAL COMMUNITY FORMED BY THE MEANS OF GRACE

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## INTRODUCTION

Wesleyan studies are constantly challenged to understand and articulate the broad themes of John Wesley's thought and practice for the contemporary church. Such is the case in current efforts to relate Wesley's emphasis on the "new creation" as both a personal and global transformation.<sup>1</sup> Theodore Runyon, in the introduction to his book *The New Creation*, concludes, "the cosmic drama of the renewing of creation begins, therefore, with the renewal of the *imago Dei* in humankind. This is the indispensable key to Wesley's whole soteriology."<sup>2</sup> This assertion invites another key question: "how?" How is Wesley's emphasis on the renewal of humanity realized in the intersection of prevenient grace and eschatological hope in the new creation for the sake of persons today? Following justification by grace through faith, how does Methodism "go on" to participate with the grace of God for the sake of the full transformation of persons and society, better known as holiness of heart and life? Historian Henry Abelove, offers an interesting but controversial explanation open to dispute.<sup>3</sup> An alternative, yet committed and constructive interpretation of Methodist practice, may prove more helpful yet also open to ongoing revision and dialog.<sup>4</sup>

## ABELOVE'S INTERPRETATION

Abelove concedes Wesley's interest in the renewal of humanity. Abelove argues, however, that this renewal's highest Wesleyan expression, Christian perfection, is primarily a reinterpretation of Puritan expectation of an imminent apocalyptic.<sup>5</sup> Abelove writes, "Perfection was just the old Puritan apocalypse internalized. It was an instantaneous change that produced 'Heaven below,' but inside the believer, rather than in the world at large."<sup>6</sup> Abelove's association of apocalyptic with internalized religious experience is reminiscent of the ongoing struggle between understand-

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THE ASBURY THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

FALL 2002 / SPRING 2003  
VOL. 57 / VOL. 58 • NO. 2 / NO. 1

ing Methodism as the doctrine and practice of holiness or a “re-assertion of religious experience as the key feature of Christian living.”<sup>7</sup> As such, Ablove’s interpretation seems to maintain a division between disciplined practice and religious experience that was evident at times in Wesley’s generation, but much more indicative of subsequent Methodist periods when such practices, like the class meetings themselves, declined.<sup>8</sup>

At dispute is how such an internalized experience could be maintained in light of Ablove’s other characterizations. Ablove argues that Wesley relied upon deference to distinguish himself from his lay ministers, creating a hierarchy of social control similar to the social classes of Wesley’s day.<sup>9</sup> Through contrasts of dress, religious status (ordination), and financial support, Ablove asserts that Wesley was able to “play the gentleman,” and thus distance himself from the next tier of Methodist leadership.<sup>10</sup> Ablove argues Wesley tried to control the societies by garnering their affection in a seductive manner,<sup>11</sup> and that Wesley mixed social distinction with the affection of Methodist followers to insure his leadership.<sup>12</sup> While these theses are interesting if not controversial they offer little evidence as to why Methodists were able to sustain their “experience” of holiness.

### **A DIFFERENT “HEAVEN BELOW”**

Ablove’s assertions, though contested, open the door to a new investigation of Wesleyan experience and practice in anticipation of the New Creation. Wesley’s emphasis on the means of grace, as community as well as individual practices, provides a more adequate framework for exploring the new creation as a “communal” rather than merely individual expression. Ablove is correct in asserting that this renewal is much like “heaven below,” but Ablove misses a key assumption that this doxological term is a liturgical expression, and therefore communal expression, rather than merely an individual, experiential term. Ablove’s emphasis on Wesley’s Puritanism overlooks John’s Anglican sensibilities that provide an equally rich, sacramental understanding of the New Creation.

Wesley’s vision of the New Creation included a “liturgical” community, shaped by Christian practices known as the means of grace. There are preliminary clues to this form of liturgical eschatology both from studies of utopian communities and from the re-shaping of English “custom” through Wesley’s disciplinary efforts. In a sense, Wesley shaped a particular community, and intentionally (and to some degree unintentionally) replaced the local customs of the English countryside with a new set of practices that mirrored their life in the New Creation.<sup>13</sup> In addition, in contrast to Ablove, Wesley’s manner of leadership in shaping such a community was as much informed by his life as an Anglican priest as by class deference.

Beyond the trajectories of commune and custom, Methodists lived on occasion as if “heaven has come down” in their midst through a series of practices (and discipline) that formed the community into a sacramental reality of accountability and action.<sup>14</sup> Methodist daily life in community was an extension of doxological worship through the means of grace. The various practices in the means of grace (sacramental practices that Wesley categorized either as institutional/prudential or as works of piety/works of mercy) shaped a community that provided a doxological vision of the possibility of living out Christian perfection.

Wesley’s vision for the renewal of humanity included shaping a particular community via the means of grace, in order to live this vision. We will first explore two trajectories

that provide a better understanding of Methodist order and practice (including Wesley's leadership). The rest of this endeavor will unveil the nature of the means of grace as a series of sacramental and therefore liturgical practices that shape "heaven below" for Methodist practice.

### **COMMUNE & CUSTOM: TRAJECTORIES TOWARD PRACTICING THE NEW CREATION**

The complexity of Wesley's efforts in discipleship is often beguiling in light of British social class and custom. As Abelove seems to indicate, interpreters often fail to note the paradoxical nature of Wesley's social deference and political control in tension with Wesley's ministerial care and Methodist practices.<sup>15</sup> Wesley's efforts to change the lives of Methodists from within the social structure raise interesting questions about communal life of Wesleyans, particularly in light of eschatological ideals.

At least two such investigations, on utopian communes and social customs, reveal some interesting, albeit limited, information that provides research "trajectories" into the practice of the New Creation. The first trajectory compares Methodist practice with utopian communities who also sought to model an alternative life. A second trajectory, more worth noting, includes Wesley's efforts to change the plebian customs of the Methodist people. Did Wesley merely hope to end questionable customs or set new ones? If new customs were indeed a part of Methodist practice, which customs were most fitting? Both trajectories will be addressed.

### **UTOPIAN COMMUNITIES AND METHODISM**

Investigating utopian practice may seem like an odd beginning. Utopian communities and other communes are often perceived as a later American, European, and Israeli phenomenon, though their history actually goes much deeper, influencing the nature of Christianity and the history of England as well.<sup>16</sup> Communes are most often groups defined as "devoted to communal living for its own sake as a way of institutionalizing friendship within and around a chosen domestic place."<sup>17</sup> It appears clear that Wesley did not adopt the most obvious communal practice where most utopian communities relied upon a specified location to both provide group coherence and protect members from the influences of broader society.<sup>18</sup> Such an investigation warrants some consideration, however, if only to compare/contrast tendencies toward utopian visions of communal life, beginning particularly with one Wesley may have been most familiar with, the Moravian community of Herrnhut.

#### *Utopian Roots: Herrnhut*

The Moravians of Herrnhut did manifest both a geographical identity and strong leadership, the community also influenced Wesley in a number of ways. Moravian group practices, such as band meetings, did inform Wesley's future experimentation with Methodist class meetings.<sup>19</sup> Apparently Herrnhut also influenced Wesley's design at Kingswood, Wesley's understanding of primitive Christianity including his use of the love feast, and also influenced Wesley's communal economic vision at Hawnby in Yorkshire where a number of families co-habitated in the same home.<sup>20</sup>

The relationship between Herrnhut and utopian communities might bear a closer

investigation. Moravian efforts in England have been viewed as Utopian experiments.<sup>21</sup> Herrnhut bore several characteristics of communal living, including charismatic leadership and selective membership.<sup>22</sup> Other Moravian efforts in the United States, such as Bethlehem and Nazareth, Pennsylvania, also demonstrate at least a quasi-communal effort if not outright communes.<sup>23</sup>

#### *Utopian and Methodist Social Ideals*

Communes are also given to utopian idealizations that, according to Rosabeth Kanter, included the following traits: perfectability, order, brotherhood, merging of mind and body, experimentation and the community's uniqueness.<sup>24</sup> These ideals were not always realized but they do provide a set of goals/purposes that reveal similarities in how utopian communities pursued the development of their communities and how Methodism grew as a movement.

The idea of comparing Methodist marriage practice alongside the complex marriage arrangements of the Oneida community may seem quite jarring (or facetious), but there are other parallels worth noting, if only in passing.<sup>25</sup> For instance, Methodism did operate with a strong belief in human perfectibility, a tenant of utopian communities. However, the articulation of perfectibility differs strongly between Methodism's emphasis of holiness of heart and life and an utopian vision of identifying and following a natural order that evoked perfectibility.<sup>26</sup> Utopian idealizations concerning order, mutual relational ties (including ritual practices), and an emphasis on holistic living also find points of correspondence with Methodist discipline and also with Wesley's behavior.<sup>27</sup> Finally Wesley did come to see Methodism as emerging in a particular history and the practices that encouraged social solidarity occurred both within the Methodist societies and from outside persecution.<sup>28</sup> The combination of order and solidarity are particularly expressed in Wesley's, "Advice to the People Called Methodists" where Wesley describes Methodists as "a new people" who should "consider, with deep and frequent attention, the peculiar circumstances wherein you stand."<sup>29</sup> Wesley acknowledged not only that the name "Methodist" was new but that Methodist principles, opinions concerning certain moral stances, modes of worship, use of ordinances, strictness of life, communal unity and resultant persecution from others provided a peculiarity to this Wesleyan community.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Methodist lay leadership and class direction significantly influenced the spiritual experience of those who participated within the societies, suggesting a strong sense of social identity.<sup>31</sup> So, with qualifications to come, there does seem to be some corollary between experiences within utopian communities and among Methodists.

#### *Limits to Utopian Comparisons*

As intriguing as the Herrnhut relationship might be, and in spite of the tendencies of Methodism to mirror some aspects of communes, there are other sources to Wesley's efforts that limit utopian comparisons. Wesley was also indebted to the Religious Societies that predated his own movement, including the S.P.C.K. An emphasis on self-examination had already been established by these earlier Anglican efforts. While Wesley's Methodist societies might have drawn educational structures from Herrnhut, the desire for mutual accountability was much older. Religious societies were also indebted to conti-

mental influence, including pietism, which resulted in a strange mixture of Anglican conviction and Puritan practice.<sup>32</sup> The Societies, however, were also deeply concerned about Anglican doctrinal orthodoxy. The societies' original guidelines, fashioned with the Restoration's Act of Uniformity in mind, included oversight by clergy; though this was sometimes more ideal than real.<sup>33</sup> Politically, Wesley would have never endorsed a communal model since many such efforts over the previous two hundred years were condemned as heretical and a direct challenge to the Church of England.<sup>34</sup> Methodists were already experiencing difficulty in some settings in attempting to meet as classes. Challenges associated with the Conventicle Act of 1670 over issues of Dissent or Jacobite concerns were more than enough to deter any Communal activity.<sup>35</sup>

### **EXCURSUS: WESLEY'S LEADERSHIP**

Rather than sexual desire or communal charisma, as Abelow suggests, ministerial oversight might have fueled some of Wesley's personal application of deference and theological control. A quick overview of the Conference' minutes reveals that the third party answers to the general questions came from one source, John Wesley himself. Wesley's strong oversight of his Methodist Helpers was probably motivated by a desire to remain doctrinally orthodox. This need to insure orthodoxy was also evident in earlier religious societies, when an Anglican priest was required to oversee each society.<sup>36</sup> There are other reasons for Wesley's strong control of the leadership of the societies, such as his encounter with the stillness controversy at the Fetter Lane Society. In all, Wesley was the dominant leader of the Methodist movement throughout his life.<sup>37</sup>

Wesley's Methodist structure, combined with his Tory beliefs, also raises a number of questions for further exploration concerning the relationship between the societies and social control. E. P. Thompson asserted that Methodism actually fostered a working-class, plebian, mentality of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century industrial England.<sup>38</sup> Thompson's observations do acknowledge the tension in reconciling Wesley's politics with other practices that empowered Methodist followers.

Additional investigation of the political climate of Wesley's day reveals an alternative rationale. Wesley's Toryism is actually most evident late in his ministry during the American Revolution, but following a time in the 1740s when many Methodists might have been suspected of Jacobitism and of supporting Charles II in his invasion of England.<sup>39</sup> Wesley, both from political sympathy and from concern for the societies, was a supporter of the crown. In spite of critiques by Thompson and others, Wesley's Toryism and hierarchy may not have suppressed other beneficial practices within the societies. Historian John Rule notes:

As class leaders as well as local preachers, persons of humble birth had the opportunity to play a responsible role in their communities. Confidence gained and abilities thus discovered, for example in organizing or in public speaking, could be harnessed for wider purposes.<sup>40</sup>

While later Methodism may have contributed to Thompson's critique, Wesley's social structure embodied a paradox of hierarchical oversight combined with liberative local practices within the classes themselves.<sup>41</sup>

This paradox becomes more complex when one discovers that the learned, politically conservative Wesley also challenged other persons of similar social stature by preaching against the sinfulness of "the rich, the patrician, or the conventionally learned."<sup>42</sup> Methodists rejected the traditional hierarchical values of the higher social classes even while certain Methodist practices empowered members to move up the social ladder. For instance, Methodism's economic impact on its members was enough to rouse a concern from Wesley in how the income was used.<sup>43</sup> This paradox is reminiscent of a struggle during the later Methodist revivals, where leaders had to reconcile expressions of experiential enthusiasm with a conservative Methodist discipline.<sup>44</sup>

The complexity of Wesley's social position, his political status, and his efforts to protect the societies within the social context of the eighteenth century reveals that more information is needed before a true picture of Methodist leadership and discipleship can be portrayed. Beyond utopian ideals and leadership, a different trajectory might shed greater light on Wesley's vision of a communal "new creation" as English social customs were re-conceived through Methodist discipline and devotional practice.

### WESLEY AND SOCIAL CUSTOM

E. P. Thompson notes that the lower class's (plebian) emphasis on "custom" provided them with a series of practices and beliefs that sustained them, particularly when aristocratic oversight demanded either a level of literacy or social sophistication not available to the working class. Such customs ranged from legal issues, to economics and work, to social life (including marriage and divorce).<sup>45</sup> Thompson sees these practices as subversive to aristocratic control.<sup>46</sup>

Wesley's personal use of the term custom is vague. Wesley did not plan to use customs as a specific strategy. He sometimes described foreign customs (as in the case of Hermhut), Catholic practices, or observed the local customs of people who chose not to interfere with his preaching.<sup>47</sup> At other times John used the term in a pejorative sense.<sup>48</sup> Other Methodists viewed customs as deplorable activities.<sup>49</sup> Mary Bosanquet, for instance, resolved the world to be sinful and vowed "no more to be conformed to its customs, fashions or maxims."<sup>50</sup> Wesley notes, in the *Character of a Methodist*, that he did not believe in "actions and customs or usages of an indifferent nature," be they particular dress, position of prayer, or denial of a social practice (including marriage), if God did not ordain their practice or call for abstention.<sup>51</sup> However, as this passage indicates, Wesley apparently believed there were some appropriate practices, even if describing them in cautionary terms, "neither will any man who know whereof he affirms fix the mark of a Methodist here, in any actions or customs purely indifferent, undetermined by the Word of God."<sup>52</sup>

Wesley inadvertently provided new customs, or reinvigorated older practices, for social groups through education, through the creation of the class structure, and through Society chapel meetings.<sup>53</sup> While Wesley was reluctant to use the term "custom" to describe his activities, others have been less constrained.<sup>54</sup>

#### *Changing Custom Through Education*

Wesley's educational efforts impacted the popular religious ideas of the lower class. Wesley's publishing efforts probably contributed to the popular education of many

Methodists. For instance, Manfred Marquardt asserts that Methodist societies, as centers of education, empowered individuals by creating a community where mutual discussion could occur over texts like those in *The Christian Library*.<sup>55</sup>

How much of Wesley's literature was economically accessible by the lower classes is questionable. There were, in addition, other vigorous publishing concerns, including a number of chapbooks, or cheap popular literature, that would have competed with Wesley's material.<sup>56</sup> Actually Wesley was probably deeply indebted to the earlier work of the S.P.C.K. in establishing markets for his publishing efforts. These publications, while later competitive with Wesley's materials, set an example for popular religious publications.<sup>57</sup>

Adult literacy among the poor was a primary issue, but obviously Wesley's publications served other functions as well for seventy percent of the workers in England who had a limited literacy, many living in rural settings. Historians note that in rural settings the poor incorporated a number of superstitious practices with their doctrine.<sup>58</sup> Wesley's writings also included everything from his account of his childhood ghost, "Old Jeffry," to later journal accounts of dramatic conversions, prophecy and supernatural encounters.<sup>59</sup> Wesley's "plain speech for plain people" may have provided a necessary bridge between the regional, superstitious practices of the poor and the rational view of enlightenment religion.<sup>60</sup> Wesley's Methodism provided a language that moved people (sometimes slowly) from superstition to religious belief. Thompson notes, however, that often in these settings, writings alone would not have helped since they were altered by the larger oral tradition of the local customs, Wesley would use other means to respond to these circumstances.<sup>61</sup>

#### *Changing Custom Through Discipline*

E. P. Thompson notes that the lower class's (plebian) emphasis on "custom" provided them with a series of practices and beliefs that sustained them when education was not available. Often, in these settings, writings alone would not have helped since they were altered by the larger oral tradition of the local customs.<sup>62</sup> Beyond literacy, Wesley may have provided another form of "education" (or socialization) through the various Methodist practices. Methodism challenged the local popular pastimes of the lower class (drinking, hurling, wrestling, bull-baiting and cock-fighting as well as certain feasts, festivals and fairs).<sup>63</sup> Wesley noted how new faith often ended the destructive practices in local communities like Cornwall, often destructive either to local inhabitants or others.<sup>64</sup> Wesley writes, "they who had been eminent for hurling, fighting, drinking, and all manner of wickedness, continued eminent for sobriety, piety, and all manner of goodness."<sup>65</sup> The strong moralistic code of Methodism, better known as Methodist discipline, left little room for such distractions.<sup>66</sup> David Hempton notes that "Serious Methodists could be recognized by their dress, hairstyles and physical detachment from the world of revelry, sports and dancing."<sup>67</sup> While general characteristics are often fraught with limitation and often open to caricature by Wesley's contemporaries (and apology by early Methodist historians) it would be a fair estimate to acknowledge Wesley intended Methodists to adopt rather strict lifestyles often opposing the "popular cultural" characteristics of many in the English social system.<sup>68</sup>

In spite of the restrictions on Methodists, Wesley inadvertently also provided new customs for poorer social groups through the creation of the Methodist class structure and

Society chapel meetings.<sup>69</sup> Alternative gatherings were offered—watch-night services, love feasts, society and class meetings, and even Eucharist. Henry Rack notes,

Methodist devotions and duties, by accident or design, tended to monopolize the scanty free time of the members. But this they seem to have welcomed, and even members who were not preachers spent much of their time this way.<sup>70</sup>

Methodist practices, usually described as means of grace, offered the opportunity to create new customs.<sup>71</sup> Adherence to this new way of life was crucial.<sup>72</sup> Methodists were given a new set of social practices, new or revitalized customs as they were, to help shape the total life of the Methodist people.

Abelove suggests that Methodists rejected theater-going by “making a theater of their own among themselves.”<sup>73</sup> Abelove may be close to the truth with this observation. Wesley, however, also connected the new Methodist gatherings to earlier religious customs by encouraging members to attend Communion, practice the means of grace, and observe other religious “festival” activities. Indeed, it has long been hard to draw the line between restrictive discipline and devotional practices like the means of grace. The dichotomy between categories may be flawed, particularly if Methodism is to be understood as a way of life.<sup>74</sup> These practices, as customs, probably provided as much influence for the lower class as Wesley’s written endeavors. As such, new “customs” were encouraged; replacing popular customs through the practices of the means of grace. With these customs came a new version of “heaven below” for the Wesleyan community.

### THE MEANS OF GRACE AND LITURGICAL ESCHATOLOGY

Combining both Discipline and Devotional Practice ultimately places Methodist “custom” under the rubric of the means of grace, a sacramental category that can be defined as one of “liturgical” practice (broadly conceived). If one locates these many practices under the various categories of John Wesley’s means of grace a new question arises concerning their common connection.<sup>75</sup> What held these varying practices together? The clue might be the primary liturgical practice within the means of grace, the Eucharist, and the doxological character of this liturgical practice. Just as Eucharist occurs within a doxological framework of “heaven come down,” all of the means of grace might well be attempts to practice the New Creation, to live as if the eschaton has/is/will occur. To establish this thesis the means of grace must be defined and situated within Wesley’s sacramental/liturgical framework.

The means of grace is a term associated with Wesley, John’s most explicit definition is found in his sermon with the same title.

By “means of grace” I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end—to be the *ordinary* channels whereby he conveys to men, preventing, justifying or sanctifying grace.<sup>76</sup>

The term’s use, for which Wesley sometimes substituted the term “ordinances,” begins primarily during a controversy with Moravians over the Fetter Lane society and culminates



with Wesley's instructions to ministers to utilize various practices (and dispositions) for Godly living.<sup>77</sup> Wesley's detailed argument for the means of grace at Fetter Lane set the stage for his continued use of this term to emphasize an increasing number of Christian practices. Wesley actually described the various practices in the means of grace using different categories in sermons and other writings, particularly in key documents of Methodist polity. Practicing the means of grace became a standard for Wesley in Methodist polity and ministry. Wesley, in "The Nature, Design and General Rules of the United Societies," stressed that Society members should evidence their desire for salvation in three ways, by doing no harm and avoiding evil, by doing good, and by attending upon all the ordinances of God.<sup>78</sup>

The "Larger" Minutes of 1778 may be one of the most important documents to demonstrate how Wesley incorporated the means of grace as a part of the regular examination of all lay ministers.<sup>79</sup> Wesley encouraged his ministers to view their "helpers" as pupils and to encourage them in using all the means of grace.<sup>80</sup> In this document, Wesley revealed a description of the means of grace that differs from the language of acts of mercy and piety. Wesley now used the language of instituted and prudential means of grace. The instituted means (very similar to Wesley's understanding of ordinances or acts of piety) include Prayer (private, family and public), searching the Scriptures (by reading, meditating and hearing), the Lord's Supper, Fasting and Christian Conference.<sup>81</sup> The prudential means include particular rules, arts of holy living, acts of ministry and larger attitudes toward daily living listed under the headings of watching, denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and exercising the presence of God.<sup>82</sup> Wesley's practice and advocacy of the Eucharist grace provides the central sacramental emphasis of all of these practices.<sup>83</sup>

Wesley lived a life anchored in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and the worship that surrounded this key practice. He regularly participated in the Eucharist and encouraged Methodist followers to do the same.<sup>84</sup> Wesley often avoided advocating a particular "mode" of worship in his writing, allowing diversity of style much like that of varying religious opinion.<sup>85</sup> Wesley, however, apparently uses "modes" of worship to compare Presbyterian, Independent or Anabaptist liturgical practices.<sup>86</sup> It might be a fair assertion that while Wesley would allow for some diversity in worship practice (as he would in religious opinion) there were some liturgical non-negotiables much like there were basic doctrines that could not be dismissed as opinion. Apparently, however, he did have a high opinion of specific liturgical practices and expected persons to participate in worship, lest they be guilty of a practical as well as speculative latitudinarianism.<sup>87</sup>

Wesley acknowledged that he was faithful to the rubrics of the *Book of Common Prayer* and had a high opinion of the BCP Eucharistic liturgy.<sup>88</sup> Wesley was not only the leader of a Methodist movement, he was also an Anglican priest and John made clear that Methodism was not to be perceived as a nonconformist sect by diverging greatly from the Church of England's liturgy.<sup>89</sup>

This "liturgical" disposition affords Wesleyans a framework for understanding the sacramental character of Methodist practice. It must be conceded that Wesley did not use such a term as liturgical eschatology, however, his liturgical world was also an eschatological one, shaped by the doxological expectation of "heaven come down." Such expectation undoubtedly shaped Wesley's understanding of holy character and liturgical community...shaped through the practices of the means of grace.

### WESLEY'S LITURGICAL WORLD

Wesley's appreciation of, and participation in, the Lord's Supper cannot be understood unless attention is given to the liturgical context (and the disputes) that surrounded the Eucharist for three generations prior to his day. These ongoing formulations framed the creation and revisions of the *Book of Common Prayer (BCP)* and shaped Wesley's own liturgical sensibilities.<sup>90</sup> The crafters of the *Book of Common Prayer* sought to create a world for Anglicans through the practices defined by the various rubrics (instructions) to the priests or ministers. The language of the *Prayer Book* indicated a particular view of both the nature of the Eucharistic community and the "real presence" of Christ. Wesley's Eucharistic theology was deeply intertwined with these sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth century constructions and debates over the sacrament and accompanying liturgy.<sup>91</sup>

Controversies over the actions of the liturgy and the placement of the altar continued across the centuries preceding Wesley.<sup>92</sup> The structure of the *BCP*, however, began to shape a particular world of praise to God and celebration of the Eucharist. Each successive change in *The Book of Common Prayer* included elements of conservatism and controversy.<sup>93</sup> The intent is not to rehearse all the nuances in the history of the *BCP*, from 1542 to Wesley's day. The concepts that emerge from the historical process did influence Wesley's practice, including the creation of many Methodist hymns. Even Wesley's abridgement of *The Sunday Service* for American Methodists was a conservative revision, primarily to accommodate the special circumstances of the American social environment and to include extemporary prayer as well as John and Charles Wesley's Hymns.<sup>94</sup> While the battle for the *Prayer Book* included a number of political and social agendas, three theological issues seem to summarize the struggle: determining the culture of the Eucharistic community (doxology), remembering Christ's sacrificial life in community (oblation), and understanding the celebration of Christ's dynamic presence via the Holy Spirit at the table and in the world (epiclesis).<sup>95</sup> Doxology provides a reference for entering into the nature of the eschatological community.

#### *The Eucharistic Community as Doxology*

Doxology, praise and worship toward God, remains a key theme describing Wesley's understanding not only of the focus of individual believers but understanding also the character, or culture of the liturgical community that received the Eucharist. Descriptive words were important in connection to the "speech act."<sup>96</sup> While prayers often conveyed meaning, the actions did likewise, suggesting a particular intent to the liturgy.<sup>97</sup>

Wesley's personal sacramental practices actually agreed more with the Anglican High Church, the Nonjurors, than with the Nonconformists. Horton Davies notes that Wesley actually preferred the first *Prayer Book* of Edward VI written by Bishop Thomas Cranmer.<sup>98</sup> Wesley favored Cranmer's collects and traditional lections when John wrote the *Sunday Service* for American Methodists.<sup>99</sup> Wesley clearly observed practices consonant with the tenor of the earlier 1549 *Prayer Book*, even when at variance with the 1662 *Prayer Book*.

Doxology, for Wesley and others, emphasizes the corporate context of worship as praise to God. The broader liturgical setting that surrounded Holy Communion, generated a "world" for the participant, a culture inhabited by the God of the Eucharist. The creation of this world included ritual actions, the organization of space and ordering of time,

as well as some degree of involvement by the participants. The arrangement of furniture, including the altar, and the order of the liturgy often determined who would and would not be a part of the "world" of the Eucharist.<sup>100</sup> The Lord's Supper, in this interpretation, becomes a transformative event in which eschatology, the new heaven, becomes realized in the midst of the worshipping people. The arrangement of the worship "space" (from placement of the Supper, reception of the elements, and other actions) indicates something of the representation (even nature) of heaven on earth. Tension often occurred in determining who was able to participate in this new community.<sup>101</sup> How persons were included or excluded (including rulers, enemies and even the dead) and how they were treated in the service indicated how they were or would be received in heaven.<sup>102</sup>

Wesley, who fenced the table while in Georgia, later opened communion to all willing to receive during the Methodist revival so that full participation in the liturgy was expected of all.<sup>103</sup> Although there is no detailed account of an early British Methodist Communion service, John Bowmer provides a detailed reconstruction of Wesley's practice of the Lord's Supper. Bowmer notes that Wesley expected an attitude of reverence when taking the Eucharist. Wesley, however, included the unconventional practice of using hymns to establish the ethos of the service, and he inserted these hymns within the BCP liturgy. The result was a modified text, but a text intent on preserving the doxological ethos of worship that surrounded the Eucharist.<sup>104</sup> Doxology, in its fullest expression, became the overall structure that defined our "eternal" relationship with God, best *remembered* in the sacrificial act of Jesus Christ and *practiced* in worship.

### *Doxology as Eschatology*

If doxology describes the communal context of the Eucharist, it might also describe the social world engendered by the practices of the means of grace. The same way that the various actions and activities within worship were designed to assist persons in participating in the midst of a "realized" eschatology ("as if" heaven had come down) in worship, the larger practices within the means of grace might be interpreted as extending this liturgical practice into the everyday lives of the Methodists.

Wesley was not deeply interested in eschatological categories, including millennial speculation, though he offered commentary on end time events.<sup>105</sup> It may be a fair assumption, however, that Wesley did believe that Methodism, like the Church in general, was called to live toward an alternative reality, or alternative Kingdom. Wesley writes of the Church,

It is a body of men compacted together in order, first, to save each his own soul, then assist each other in working out their salvation, and afterwards, as far as in them lies, to save all men from present and future misery, to overturn the kingdom of Satan, and set up the Kingdom of Christ. And this ought to be the continued care and endeavor of every member of his church. Otherwise he is not worthy to be called a member thereof, as he is not a living member of Christ.<sup>106</sup>

The most persistent vision of this "kingdom of Christ" was nurtured in the eschatological elements of doxological liturgy, and lived out through the various practices of the means of grace.

To review, Wesley's convictions and practice reveal that he considered the Eucharist the chief exemplar of the means of grace, bestowing a sacramental quality to each practice. However, just as the Lord's Supper and its broader liturgical/worship context are interrelated (so as not to be separated), the broader social context of Methodist discipline and devotion informs and is formed by the means of grace. This broader community practice provides a communal "liturgy" that is by analogy doxological, and therefore eschatological in nature, at least eschatological in the sense of living as if "heaven comes down" in the midst of the liturgical community. Admittedly these assertions are based as much on Methodist "practice" as on Wesley's written thought. As noted, Wesley acknowledges that one specific mode of worship does not condition this practice but that there be an overall worshipful participation "desiring only that the love of God and his neighbour be the ruling principle in his heart, and show itself in his life by an uniform practice of justice, mercy, and truth...this 'the way' (called 'heresy,' by Dr. Maclaine and others) 'according to which we worship the God of our fathers.'"<sup>107</sup> While Wesley did not comment extensively on the nature of the liturgical community, he did draw from an ancient-future metaphor that, according to his sources, embodies not only conduct but also worship in defining the Christian life.

#### **BACK TO THE FUTURE: PRACTICING PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY**

Henry Rack and others note that practicing Wesley's form of Eucharistic piety was extremely difficult for Methodists and Anglicans alike due to the scarcity of communion services in some settings.<sup>108</sup> Wesley overcame limited Eucharistic practice not only through democratized versions of the Eucharist like the lovefeast, but by casting all devotional practices in sacramental light.<sup>109</sup> The means of grace and, by extension, other Methodist "custom," take on sacramental qualities, cast in the language of primitive Christianity.

Wesley apparently was interested in recovering primitive Christianity though he rarely discussed this personal pursuit, or Methodist practice, as a form of eschatology. Wesley focused instead on the practice of ancient Christians.<sup>110</sup> For Wesley, the Methodist movement was an attempt to practice "primitive, scriptural Christianity" and adopted practices he thought in concert with the primitive Church.<sup>111</sup> The exact meaning of the phrase, much like its exact dating, is a bit ambiguous but seems to point to the Christian period prior to Augustine.<sup>112</sup> Wesley often related his efforts to that of the primitive church. As such Wesley's efforts were an extension of the early church. Henry Rack often contrasts Wesley's Anglican sensibilities and his desire to emulate primitive Christianity in reality they might be more complimentary than realized.<sup>113</sup> Noting that Wesley's "High Church" sensibilities were out of step in early eighteenth century England, Michael Hill and Bryan Turner write,

Against this background it is not difficult to place John Wesley's initial innovations very firmly in the high church tradition which emphasized the importance of the primitive church: indeed the label 'innovations' is only appropriate in the context of the eighteenth century Church of England because in most cases the practices which Wesley instituted were simply reinstatements of primitive practices.<sup>114</sup>

Wesley's vision of the Primitive Church was influenced by William Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, a text which included not only the "lives and manners" of the early church, but their liturgy, festivals and sacramental practices as their "ancient rites."<sup>115</sup> Cave's text, organized around his understanding of Pauline views of "piety towards God, sobriety towards ourselves, righteousness towards others" includes as well a vindication for persecuted Christians, and includes a number of chapters on the liturgical world of primitive Christianity.<sup>116</sup> Cave also includes chapters on worship space, time (festivals and fasts) and church membership.<sup>117</sup> Cave also included specific direction on worship and the celebration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, all at the beginning of his text in explicating piety towards God.<sup>118</sup> His description of the Eucharist was equally detailed, including specific actions and the relationship between Communion and the Lovefeast.<sup>119</sup> In all Cave provided a detailed discussion of the liturgical world of the "heavenly Banquet" as part of one's piety toward God.<sup>120</sup>

These liturgical descriptions influenced Wesley's later approach to the sacraments as did his Anglican upbringing.<sup>121</sup> Wesley would call the Lord's Supper "a little emblem of the primitive church."<sup>122</sup> He also acknowledged the presence of primitive Christianity in the liturgy of Anglican morning and evening services.<sup>123</sup> And Wesley, for all his toleration of varying modes of worship, concluded that the worship he currently engaged in was "truly primitive and apostolical."<sup>124</sup> Wesley then saw no difference between the liturgical practice of primitive Christianity (with its doxological implications) and the practice he encouraged Methodists to embrace as primitive, scriptural, Christians.

As much as the original design of ancient worship included the doxological emphasis mentioned earlier, primitive Christianity was not only an ancient practice but also a "future" practice. Wesley's call to Methodists to practice primitive Christianity was also a call to live out the liturgy's eschatological vision, to practice the New Creation, in the fullness of their lives individually and communally.

## CONCLUSION

Henry Abelove's insistence on an internalized eschatology appears flawed when one considers a number of factors that may have created a communal or liturgical form of eschatological practice more adept at sustaining holiness. Several trajectories seem to support the necessity of a communal understanding of living the new creation.

The investigation of utopian communes yields little evidence towards Wesley's "liturgical eschatology" as a way of practicing the new creation; however, the search does reveal one source of possible influence in Wesley's efforts, Herrnhutt, and the importance toward a communal as well as individual approach to holiness of heart and life. More importantly, the search reveals a varying account of Wesley's leadership that may account for a different interpretation than Abelove. Similarly the investigation into the nature of English custom provides clues into a broader series of Methodist practices. Wesley strongly opposed certain customs of his day and noted Methodism's influence in alleviating certain practices. Wesley's practices, including his emphasis on regular meetings and church attendance, may have influenced the poorer classes in British society as much as Wesley's literacy efforts. More to the point, these same practices seemed to create new "customs" oriented not only in Methodist discipline, but also in the means of grace.

The means of grace provide a hermeneutical “clue” of worship or sacramentally oriented practices. These practices enabled Methodists to practice “primitive, scriptural Christianity” that also embodied a liturgical eschatology. Heaven had indeed “come down,” as Abelove contends, but in the midst of community, living in relative degrees as if they were already a part of the New Creation. As Leslie Church noted the Methodists “grew in grace together and realized, in fellowship, the wonder of being themselves part of the family of God.”<sup>125</sup> It seems only appropriate for Wesleyans to accept a *via media* between the macrocosmic vision of the redemption of all creation and the microcosmic vision of personal transformation. An ecology of practices, known as the means of grace, provided Methodism with a liturgical world, doxologically informed, as the mediating realm.

The decline of Methodist practices in subsequent generations may be one reason why Methodism has had such an uneven history in living out the vision of the New Creation. Methodist communities of discipleship, themselves means of grace, provide a necessary form of life that fuels any possible vision of both personal and social transformation. It may well be that recoveries of this form of liturgical eschatology may help future Wesleyan communities better understand the shaping/transforming, liturgical, renewal of persons in light of the New Creation.

#### NOTES

1. This article is based on a presentation given at the Eleventh Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies held at Christ Church, Oxford England August 20, 2002 (available on-line, Oct. 10, 2002 at <http://www.oxford-institute.org/>). The conference theme centered on “New Creation.”
2. Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 12.
3. Henry Abelove, *The Evangelist of Desire: John Wesley and the Methodists* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990); John Wesley, “The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained,” ed. Rupert E. Davies, vol. 9 of *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989) 9:161-63.
4. Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989, 1992), 420; Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History*, rev. (New York: Orbis Books, 1991, 1995), 108.
5. Abelove, 88, 90-95.
6. Abelove, 90-91.
7. J. M. Turner, “Victorian Values—Or Whatever Happened to John Wesley's Scriptural Holiness?” *Wesley Historical Society Proceedings* 64, no. 3 (October 1988), 165.
8. William Walter Dean, *Disciplined Fellowship: The Rise and Decline of Cell Groups in British Methodism*, Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1985 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI, 1986), 311-62. Henry D. Rack, “The Decline of the Class-Meeting and the Problem of Church-Membership in Nineteenth-century Wesleyanism,” *Wesley Historical Society Proceedings* 39, no. 1 (February 1973), 13-14; Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 400; David Lowes Watson, “The Demise of the Methodist Class Leader,” paper presentation at the Wesleyan Studies Group, American Academy of Religion, 25 Nov. 1991. Dean asserts that the classes lost their religious dynamism and were replaced by other evangelistic strategies, particularly prayer meetings; with a theological shift placing greater emphasis on experiential expressions of conversion and sanctification. Dean and Rack note that the rising criticisms concerning class leadership, combined with increase in Methodist chapel activities, resulted in a decline in class attendance. Methodist chapels were growing, but attendees did not join the classes, creating a large fringe

group of "hearers." Rack asserts that class meetings ended primarily as Methodism accepted its role as Church (so class meetings could no longer define membership) and Methodists moved to a more mainstream social standing. David Lowes Watson attributes the demise of the class meeting in the United States to the loss of the class leader. Watson notes that the American frontier did not readily support the social and ecclesial order that was present in English society in Wesley's day.

9. Ablove, 18.

10. Ablove, 7-18, 24. It would be an equally fair assumption that Wesley's status as a gentleman, quite real by eighteenth century standards, probably did establish a level of deference between himself and other Methodist leaders. This is not surprising in British social culture, nor particularly alarming. However, this social distinction, as Ablove notes, did more than preserve Wesley's status. The social distance insured that the helpers were not perceived as a threat to the local aristocracy, and so protected the lay ministers from imprisonment and other abuses.

11. Ablove, 24-39. Ablove's use of deference as a part of the English social structure is intriguing in light of the cultural analysis of British historians like E. P. Thompson (mentioned later in this article). See Ablove, 24, n. 1. Ablove's interpretation of Wesley's use of seduction is reminiscent of Sigmund Freud's description of leadership. See Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1959), 5, 26-76. Freud posits a similar form of leadership control through libidinal ties within an hierarchical group (35). Freud sees the leader as the father figure of the group (76).

12. Wesley's strong control may actually originate from a different source, the hierarchical practice of strong ministerial oversight, which was inherent in the eighteenth century British social structure. Wesley may have modeled his own leadership practices based upon the influence of the Religious Societies that predated his movement and in response to the political climate of Wesley's day.

13. E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (New York: The New Press, 1993).

14. Steven T. Hoskins, "Eucharist and Eschatology in the writings of the Wesleys," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 29, nos 1-2 (Spring-Fall 1994), 64-80; Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994); Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

15. Douglas Hay and Nicholas Rogers, *Eighteenth-Century English Society: Shuttles and Swords* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 171-72.

16. William H. G. Armytage, *Heavens below; Utopian experiments in England, 1560-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961); Mark Holloway, *Heavens on Earth: Utopian Communities in America, 1680-1880*, 2nd ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1966); Yaacov Oved, "The Lesson of the Communes," in *Kibbutz: An Alternative Lifestyle*, eds. David Leichman and Idit Paz (Ramat, Israel: Yad Tabenkin Publisher, 1997), 159-67; Yaacov Oved, *Two Hundred Years of American Communes* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1988).

17. Philip Abrams and Andrew McCulloch, *Communes, Sociology and Society* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 33.

18. Michael Hill, "Methodism as a Religious Order," in *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain*, 6; ed. Michael Hill (London: SCM Press, 1973), 93-94. Hill notes earlier speculation that Wesley, had he not separated from Zinzendorf, might have formed similar communities in England.

19. Clifford W. Towson, *Moravian and Methodist: Relationships and Influences in the Eighteenth Century* (London: The Epworth Press, 1957), 183-247, see especially 246-47. Towson includes the following particular influences Moravians had on Methodism: the Band system, hymn-singing, the Love-feast, the Watch-night, and the Conference.

20. Rattenbury, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 185, 201, 283, 365, 410. Rack also includes Methodist John Pritchard's band of single men who shared common resources and held prayer meetings. Rack concludes, "Community of goods was an old and sinister charge against dissident sects, and

Methodism did not escape it" (365).

21. Armytage, 47-57.

22. Armytage 47-51, Oved, *Two Hundred Years of American Communes*, 379, 385

23. Oved, *Two Hundred Years of American Communes*, 30.

24. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 32-53. Kanter's idealizations are summarized as follows: *Perfectibility*: The idea that the chaotic social order may be controlled so that humanity might be perfected. Anchored in the belief that persons are basically good so internal "tensions" are the result of environmental problems. "It would thus be possible to perfect man and to bring about a higher order of human life by establishing the right environmental conditions" (33).

*Order*: All actions have purpose and design. "Utopia is not only an intended but a predicted society, in which events follow a pattern and an uncertain future is made certain." Planning extends to all aspects of community and member participation is not only a matter of community policy but also community welfare. (39-41)

*Brotherhood*: Interpersonal harmony is accentuated by removing barriers to that cause competition, jealousy, conflict and tension. "Utopian communities attempt to erase these barriers by substituting for individual possession community of property, of work, of lovers, or of families" (43). Proactively utopian communities also provide forms of common dress, social practices, ritual activities, with even more intense interpersonal intimacy and total group involvement for members (43-49).

*Unity of Body and Mind*: the merging of values, ideas, and spiritual matters with physical events, the union of mind and body, spirit and flesh. Such belief includes an emphasis on manual labor and physical expressions of spiritual/intellectual experiences including human contact (even sexual contact). (49-51)

*Experimentation*: Not only are the communities themselves social experiments but different forms of human relationships were experimented. Experimentation may also take on other forms of lifestyle: diet, spiritual pursuits, dress and ritual. (51-52)

*Coherence as a Group*: Utopians value their own uniqueness and coherence as a group, recognizing their historical role, developing a clear sense of boundaries (distinguishing who is inside and outside the group), developing criteria for status and accountability within the group. Often they develop a strong sense of self-sufficiency, utilizing their own forms of communication and approaching outside agencies as one unit. (52-53)

25. Kanter, 12-13. Henry D. Rack, "But, Lord, Let It Be Betsy!": Love and Marriage in Early Methodism," *Wesley Historical Society Proceedings* 53, no. 1 (February 2001), 1-16.

26. Kanter, 33-39.

27. Kanter, 39-51, John Lawson, "Our Discipline," in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, vol. 1, eds. Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1965), 183-209.

28. Hill, "Methodism as a Religious Order," 91-99. Hill's argues that Methodism, with all of its complexity, might be argued as a "religious order" within the Church of England. Hill's description includes a number of traits that resemble a strong sense of social order or group coherence from both within and outside the movement. Additional information is offered later in this writing.

29. Wesley, "Advice to the People Called Methodists," *Works*, ed. Davies, 9:125.

30. *Ibid.*, 125-31. Wesley did maintain the most peculiar aspect of Methodism was that, in spite of being a specific *religious set* of people, Methodists had not separated from the church of England (127).

31. Thomas R. Albin, "An Empirical Study on Early Methodist Spirituality," in *Wesleyan Theology Today, A Bicentennial Theological Consultation*, ed. Theodore Runyon (Nashville: Kingswood Press, 1985), 275-90.

32. M. G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action* (Cambridge: University Press, 1938), 5-10. One interpretation of the mix of social practices and the-



ological convictions comes from Jones. While establishing the backdrop for the Charity school movement, Jones refers to the philanthropic activities of Robert Nelson, a staunch Nonjuror and liturgist of the day. Jones defines Nelson's charitable activities as "Puritan" in practice. Morgan writes, "Robert Nelson, at the beginning of the century, is representative of eighteenth-century Puritanism at its best. A Jacobite, a High Churchman, a non-juror, his life conformed to puritan standards" (8). Jones argues that "conduct, not dogma, stamped the Puritan of the eighteenth century" (6).

33. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists, XIII*; Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies* (London: Epworth Press, 1921), 15. Simon notes that the actual directions for the societies, modeled on *The Book of Common Prayer*, actually included some liturgical changes so that it could be used by laymen who were stewards. Simon writes, "Its compilers saw that, owing to the lack of 'pious and orthodox' ministers, the conduct of the Societies, in some places would fall into the hands of laymen."

34. Armytage, 3-18.

35. Leslie F. Church, *The Early Methodist People* (London: The Epworth Press, 1948), 44-50.

36. Simon, *Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 15. Josiah Woodward's 1712 directions to the early religious societies included that an "orthodox and pious minister" be chosen "to preserve order, excite zeal and resolve doubts."

37. W. Stephen Gunter, *The Limits of Love Divine: John Wesley's Response to Antinomianism and Enthusiasm* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1989), 156-80.

38. J. C. D. Clark, *Revolution and Rebellion: State and Society in England in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 6-44; Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, 350. Thompson writes, "From the outset the Wesleyans fell ambiguously between Dissent and the Establishment, and did their most to make the worst of both worlds, serving as apologists for an authority in whose eyes they were an object of ridicule or condescension, but never of trust." Thompson is the classic representative of what J. C. D. Clark characterizes as the "Old Guard," Marxist interpreters of history. J. C. D. Clark characterizes British Historians in three categories. The "Old Hat" historians tend to see British history as a teleological, liberal yet gradual unfolding of democratic ideals. The "Old Guard" tends to view British history through a Marxist lens of revolutionary Whig/democratic change. The "Revisionists" are a newer set of historians that emphasize a rethinking of the historical method of either previous group in order to acknowledge competing ideologies including the loyalist/Tory perspective (2, 6-23).

39. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 161, 261-66.

40. John Rule, *Albion's People: English Society, 1714-1815* (London: Longman, 1992), 153.

41. Manfred Marquardt, *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principle*, trans. John E. Steely and W. Stephen Gunter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 49-66.

42. J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 378.

43. David Hempton, *The Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion c. 1750-1900* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 15.

44. Hempton, *The Religion of the People*, 12-14. In response to Thompson's critique that the Methodist revival was primarily sexual, Hempton writes, "popular religious enthusiasm, for women and men, was as much a vehicle for personal freedom as it was for social discipline or social control" (12).

45. E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common*.

46. Thompson, *Customs in Common*, 71-72.

47. John Wesley, "Thoughts on the Consecration of Churches and Burial Grounds," *Works*, ed. Davies, 9:531; John Wesley, Journal entries, *The Works of John Wesley: Journal and Diaries*, eds. Reginald A. Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater; vols. 18-23 of *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial

ed. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988-1995.18:268-69; 20:219, 73.

48. John Wesley, *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion, and Certain Related Open Letters*, ed. Gerald C. Cragg, vol. 11 of *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975; reprint, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 11:237, Wesley, "The Reformation of Manners," Sermon 52, *Sermons 34-70*, ed. Albert C. Outler, vol. 2 of *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 2:306.

49. Church, 37, 104.

50. Bosanquet, quoted in Church, 208. "Custom" here probably refers as much to rules of social etiquette as to that of social order and practice. Such etiquette practices though, reinforced order as well as other forms of custom.

51. John Wesley, *The Character of a Methodist*, ed. Davies, 9:34-35.

52. *Ibid.*

53. Michael Hill and Bryan Turner, "John Wesley and the Origin and Decline of Ascetic Devotion," in *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Great Britain*, 4, ed. Michael Hill (London: SCM Press, 1971), p. 108.

54. A. Raymond George, "The People Called Methodists—The Means of Grace," in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, vol. 1, eds. Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1965), 260. George writes, "For Wesley not only observed the custom of his Church with a conscientious zeal not altogether common in his day; he also introduced fresh customs."

55. Marquardt, 59.

56. Victor E. Neuberg, *Popular Education in Eighteenth Century England* (London: The Woburn Press, 1971) 115-26, 133.

57. Neuberg, 127-31.

58. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 435, 444; Rule, 149-50. Rule writes, "In Cornwall, which was to grow into one of Methodism's early strongholds, the teachings of John Wesley were absorbed only through a haze of superstitious beliefs and practices."

59. Wesley's Journal, *Works*, eds. Ward and Heitzenrater, 19:70, 259, 276, 302-03, 306, 308, 311-12, 317. See also Richard Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*, 2 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 1:43-49.

60. Hay and Rogers, 168-70; Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 431-36. Wesley not only supported the supernatural he also provided a means, say Hay and Rogers, "to close the cultural gap between rich and poor by addressing the irrational and superstitious elements in popular culture" (169).

61. Thompson, *Customs in Common*, 8.

62. *Ibid.* 1-14.

63. Abelove, 104-05, Hay and Rogers, 170.

64. David Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society, 1750-1850* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1984), 13-14; John Wesley, "A Short History of People Called Methodists," *Works*, ed. Davies (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989) 9:438. Wesley writes, "Indeed I hardly know any part of the three kingdoms where there has been a more general change. Hurling, their favourite diversion, at which limbs were usually broke, and very frequently lives lost, is now hardly heard of: it seems in a few years it will be utterly forgotten. And that scandal of humanity, so constantly practiced on all the coasts of Cornwall, the plundering of vessels that struck upon the rocks, and often murdering those that escaped out [of] the wreck, is now wellnigh at an end; and if it is not quite, the gentlemen, not the poor tinnens, are to be blamed. But it is not harmlessness, or outward decency alone, which has within few years so increased, but the religion of the heart, faith working by love, producing all inward as well as outward holiness." David Hempton notes that residents in Cornwall were remarkably resilient to this transformation.

65. *Ibid.*

66. John Lawson, "The People Called Methodists—Our Discipline," in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, vol. 1, eds. Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1965), 183-209.

67. Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society*, 14.

68. Church, 3, 184-221; Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society, XII-XIV: John Munsey Turner, Conflict and Reconciliation: Studies in Methodism and Ecumenism in England: 1740-1982* (London: Epworth Press, 1985), 31; Robert Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Common People of the Eighteenth Century* (London: The Epworth Press, 1945), 239-68. Turner notes, "clandestine class meeting and private love feasts brought similar rumors as those which plague the early church. Wesley was thought to be a Jacobite or a crypto-papist or bribed by the Spaniards to raise a peasant army – after all some of the itinerants received horses at the about the same time as their Roman counterparts." Leslie Church may be the most apologetic of Methodist practices, emphasizing the "joy" of Methodist obedience (3); while Hempton notes that caution need be given to characterizing all of Methodism with strict codes.

69. Wesley's Journal, *Works*, eds. Ward and Heitzenrater, 18:268-69; 20:219, 73. ed. Cragg, 11:237.

70. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 430.

71. Alan D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change, 1740-1914* (London: Longman, 1976), 90-91; Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society*, 27; Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 413. Hempton, citing the work of Dr. J. G. Rule, writes, "Thus, Cornish Methodists declared holy war on drink, hurling, wrestling, bull-baiting, cock-fighting, and folk superstitions but replace them with revivals, Love Feasts, watch-nights, hymn singing, providential interventions and colourful local versions of the cosmic drama between god and the devil." Gilbert notes that Nonconformists and Methodists also used such practices into the next century. Gilbert writes, "But in the place of the 'worldly pleasure' which they excluded from their communities, Evangelical Nonconformists provided alternative recreational and communal activities. In many social contexts, moreover, the recreational satisfactions available in the chapel community did not have to compete with secular alternatives, at least of the organized kind. In the new settlements of the early industrial era the cultural equivalents of the wakes, fairs, or sports of pre-industrial society were often monopolized by the new popular religious organizations."

72. Lawson, 184, Lawson writes, To Wesley the acid test whether a member of the Society was true or false was not his profession of spiritual experience, but the circumstance whether he lived a sober and upright life, and went regularly to Church, 'The question is not concerning the heart but the life.' (citing Wesley's Journal March 10, 1747).

73. Abelove, 106.

74. Lawson, 185.

75. Dean G. Blevins, *John Wesley and the Means of Grace: An Approach to Christian Religious Education*, Ph.D. diss., Claremont School of Theology, May 1999 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI, 1999), 175-226; Knight, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life*, 4-5, 122. Along with Wesley's categories of instituted/prudential and works of piety/mercy, Henry Knight introduces a larger category "the General Means of Grace," that is indicative of Discipline as well as Devotion. These categories might also fit under Prudential means but Knight's description is helpful.

76. John Wesley, "The Means of Grace," ed. Albert Outler, *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial ed., 15 vols. gen. eds. Richard P. Heitzenrater and Frank Baker (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975-1995), 1:381. Subsequent references to the multi-volume, Bicentennial set, *The Works of John Wesley*, will be cited as *Works*. Since this series is not complete, other citations are taken from editor Thomas Jackson's *The Works of John Wesley*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872; reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986).

77. Blevins, *John Wesley and the Means of Grace*, 136-66; C. J. Podmore, "The Fetter Lane

Society," *Wesley Historical Society Proceedings* 47, no. 1 (May 1990), 156-85.

78. Wesley, "General Rules of the United Societies," *Works*, ed. Rupert Davies, 9:69-73. The ordinances Wesley lists include: The Public Worship of God; The Ministry of the Word, either read or expounded; The Supper of the Lord; Family and Private Prayer (Family prayer added in the 1744 revision) Searching the Scriptures; and Fasting or Abstinence (73).

79. Wesley, "A Plain Account of Kingswood School," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Jackson, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872. Reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986), 13:299, "A Short History of the People Called Methodist," *Works*, ed. Jackson, 13:322-24.

80. Wesley, "A Short History of the People Called Methodist," *Works*, ed. Jackson, 13:322.

81. *Ibid.*

82. *Ibid.*

83. Ole E. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments* (Zurich: Publishing House of the United Methodist Church, 1972; reprint Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1985; John C. Bowmer, *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism* (London: Dacre Press, 1951); Steve Harper, *The Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Upper Room, 1983); Henry Hawthorn Knight, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: A Contemporary Understanding of John Wesley's Means of Grace*, Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1987 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI, 1988); Henry Hawthorn Knight, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1992); Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994); J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1948); Paul S. Sanders, "The Sacraments in Early American Methodism," *Perspectives on American Methodism: Interpretive Essays*, eds. in Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1993), 77-92. Studies by Henry Hawthorn Knight, Ole E. Borgen, Steven Harper, and others may provide fruitful theological ground for relating Wesley's theology to his practice as they lift up Wesley's Anglican/sacramental heritage as a major framework for understanding Wesley's thought and practices. Sanders echoes an ongoing belief that Wesley's revival was as much a sacramental revival as an evangelical revival (80).

84. Wesley, "The Duty of Constant Communion," *Works*, ed. Outler, 3:427-39.

85. Wesley, "Advice to the People Called Methodists," *Works*, ed. Davies 9:126, 130; Wesley, "A Short History of People Called Methodists," *Works*, ed. Davies 9:502-503.

86. Wesley, "Thoughts upon a Late Phenomenon," *Works*, ed. Davies, 9: 536.

87. Wesley, "Catholic Spirit," *Works*, ed. Outler 2:81-95. Wesley writes, "But the man of a truly catholic spirit, having weighed all things in the balance of the sanctuary, has no doubt, no scruple at all concerning that particular mode of worship wherein he joins... There he partakes of all the ordinances of God. There he receives the Supper of the Lord. There he pours out his soul in public prayer, and joins in public praise and thanksgiving. There he rejoices to hear the word of reconciliation, the gospel of the grace of God. With these his nearest, his best beloved brethren, on solemn occasions he seeks God by fasting. These particularly he watches over in love, as they do over his soul, admonishing, exhorting, comforting, reproving, and every way building up each other in the faith. These he regards as his own household, and therefore according to the ability God has given him naturally cares for them, and provides that they may have all the things that are needful for life and godliness" (93-94).

88. *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church* (England, 1663; Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1986), microfilm.

89. Bowmer, 99-100; Wesley, "Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," *Works*, ed. Cragg, 11:79.

90. Louis Weil, *Sacraments and Liturgy: The Outward Signs* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 3.

91. Blevins, "Appendix: Anglican Eucharist in Historical Context," *John Wesley and the Means of Grace*, 409-29.

92. David Cressy, and Lori Anne Ferrell, eds, *Religion and Society in Early Modern England: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1996), 8-9; Dugmore, 48. For instance, Puritans often celebrated Communion at a simple table in the midst of the congregation. Archbishop William Laud created controversy in 1616 in Gloucester by moving the altar from center of the Church to an area dominated by the clergy and demanding all to bow to it. For Puritans this was an act of idolatry.

93. G. J. Cuming, *A History of Anglican Liturgy*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1982), 15, 30-44, 104; Edward P. Echlin, *The Anglican Eucharist in Ecumenical Perspective: Doctrine and Rite from Cranmer to Seabury* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1968), 47-63; John Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 166-67; Ronald C. D. Jasper, *The Development of the Anglican Liturgy, 1662-1980* (London: SPCK, 1989), 1-7; Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1961; reprint, Cleveland: William Collins Publishers, 1962), 236-43, 345-405. Cranmer's first edition (1549) represented a shift from Latin to English vernacular, which actually began with other documents in 1534. This BCP was a rather conservative revision of the Roman Sarum or Salisbury Rite. Cranmer's revision was due to immediate controversy, primarily with the inclusion of older ceremonies that could be misunderstood as representing the "Old Learning" of transubstantiation versus the "New Learning" of memorialism (Cuming, 15; Echlin, 47-63; Bard Thompson, 236-43). The controversy of the order of worship, including the order of Holy Communion, did not end. The BCP was revised in 1604 when the King James Bible was introduced into the readings, though the final Bible was not complete until 1611 (Cuming, 104) The BCP was again revised in 1662, just after the Restoration. This Prayer Book was created in an environment of conservatism and nostalgia for earlier times before Cromwell's rebellion and Puritan rule of England. This last revision was the most moderate, accommodating neither High Church nor Puritan fully. The revision relied heavily on the 1604 text (Jasper, 1-7). While this text remained in observance during Wesley's day, there were other books and manuals of prayer that challenged the 1662 BCP, both prior to its creation (including the Westminster Directory and the Savoy Conference liturgy) and following its inception. Later challengers included Scottish, Puritan, Nonjuror, and Unitarian groups (Cuming, 128-46; Jaspers, 1-39; Bard Thompson, 345-405).

94. Bowmer, 211-15; James F. White, *Introduction to John Wesley's Sunday Service* (Nashville: Quarterly Review, 1984), 9-37. One must note that Charles Wesley had considerable influence on John in particular and Methodism in general. A limitation of this writing is that much of Charles' influence is discussed only indirectly through studies of John. Such limitation is noted and probably should be remedied at a later time but it will suffice for now to acknowledge Charles' influence if not his direct thought. One obvious place where the Wesley voices "merge" is in the hymns that will be discussed in the future.

95. Dean Blevins, "We are the Church: The Liturgical Construction of the Self" *Doxology: A Journal of Worship*, vol. 18 (2001); Dean Blevins "A Wesleyan View of the Liturgical Construction of the Self" forthcoming *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Spring 2003; Clifford W. Dugmore, *Eucharistic Doctrine in England from Hooker to Waterland* (London: SPCK, 1942); H. R. McAdoo and Kenneth Stevenson, *The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Anglican Tradition* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1997). Dugmore, McAdoo and Stevenson utilize similar categories throughout their texts.

96. Teresa Berger, *Theology in Hymns? A Study of the Relationship of Doxology and Theology According to A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodist (1780)*, trans. Timothy E. Kimbrough (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 19, 163-65.

97. Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: A and C Black, 1945; Reprint, New York: Seabury Press, 1982), 2, 13; Cressy and Farrell, 47-48; Cuming, 90, 122-23; Echlin, 50-51, 84-88. The act of kneeling at an altar rail versus receiving the elements in a pew suggested something not only about the authority of the priest in relation to the congregation, but also suggested to communicants whether the presence of Christ was explicitly in the host (an issue of transubstantiation).

This distinction created the addition of the celebrated "black rubric" in Cranmer's revised 1552 edition of the *BCP*. Cranmer, responding to a theological and political controversy over a particular liturgical action, created what Echlin believes is Cranmer's most mature view of "Real presence" in order to mitigate a particular impression created by the act of kneeling.

98. Cuming, 45-66; Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*. Book 2, Pt. 3. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961. Revised, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 187; Jasper, 19.

99. James F. White, "Introduction," in *John Wesley's Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America* (Nashville: Quarterly Review, 1984), 27.

100. Dix, 598; John Harper, 156-65; Bard Thompson, 39-51, 98-101, 145-46, 293. As the Gallican ceremonies were added to the Mass, the liturgy around the Lord's Supper became more ornate. The idea of participating in the sacrifice (oblation) shifted away from the activity of the people toward a new understanding of the activity of Christ in the elements, which was mediated by the bishop or priest as the central "actors" of Eucharistic worship. Reactions by the Reformers also included liturgical reform in a variety of expressions.

101. Dix, 36-37; Keith Watkins, *The Great Thanksgiving: The Eucharistic Norm of Christian Worship* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1995), 94-128. The structure or "shape" of the liturgy appears to be fairly consistent since early apostolic times. It consisted of two major but separate parts, the synaxis (or gathering) followed by the Eucharist (thanksgiving), which fused into a single rite by the fourth century. Later both sections again began to separate into services of "Word" and "Table." Each service also developed its own particular structures, rites, and ceremonial actions. The *BCP*, following this general pattern across its development, included variations of Morning Prayer (Matins) or a Sunday litany followed by the Eucharistic service.

102. Echlin, 35, 50-69.

103. Bowmer, 103-22.

104. Berger, 137-42.

105. David Ingersoll Naglee, "Chapter 12: Paradise Improved: The New Creation," in *From Everlasting to Everlasting: John Wesley on Eternity and Time*, 2 vols (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 605-26; Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 382.

106. Wesley, "The Reformation of Manners," *Works*, 2:302.

107. Wesley, "A Short History of the People Called Methodists," *Works*, ed. Davies, 9:502-503.

108. Viviane Barrie-Curien, "The Clergy in the Diocese of London in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Church of England c. 1689-c. 1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism*, eds. John Walsh, Colin Haydon and Stephen Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 99; Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 419.

109. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 411.

110. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 78, 114. Rack believes Wesley experienced varying interpretations of primitive Christianity, including one from the Moravians that complicated his view in relation to Anglican practice.

111. Wesley, "Thoughts upon Methodism," *Works*, ed. Davies, 9:528. Wesley believed the practice of men and women setting apart at the Foundery consistent with the primitive church.

112. John English, "John Wesley and some Liberal strands in the Anglican tradition," in *Methodism in its Cultural Milieu*, ed. Tim Macquibban (Cambridge: Applied Theology Press, 1994), 24-25, John Wesley, "Farther Thoughts on Separation from the Church," *Works*, ed. Davies, 9:538. Wesley writes, "from a child I was taught to love and reverence the Scripture, the oracles of God, and next to these to esteem the primitive Fathers, the writers of the first three centuries" (which Wesley also calls the primitive church).

113. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 364.

114. Hill and Turner, 106.

115. William Cave, "Preface to the Reader," in *Primitive Christianity*, 4th ed. (J.H. for R. Chiswel, 1682) selected from Donald Wing, *A Short-title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and British America and of English Books Printed in Other Countries, 1641-1700* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945; microfilm Ann Arbor, MI: Xerox University Microfilms reel 652), "a 4." Note, the pagination of this document is suspect or absent at times, additional information will be provided where needed.

116. Cave, "Preface" unpaginated but third page from the end of the preface.

117. Cave, "Part One," 122-260.

118. *Ibid.*, 260-352.

119. *Ibid.*, 330-52, see especially 344.

120. *Ibid.*, 342.

121. Geoffrey Wainwright, "Introduction" in John Wesley and Charles Wesley, *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* (Bristol: Felix Farley, 1745. Facsimile Reprint, Madison N.J.: Charles Wesley Society, 1995), v.

122. Wesley's Journal, December 25, 1774, *Works*, eds. Ward and Heitzenrater, 22:441.

123. Wesley, "On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel" *Works*, ed. Outler 3: "The scriptural, primitive, religion of love, which is now reviving throughout three kingdoms, is to be found in her morning and evening service, and in her daily as well as occasional prayers; and the whole of it beautifully summed up in that one comprehensive petition, 'Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee and worthily magnify thy name.'"

124. Wesley, "Catholic Spirit," *Works*, ed. Outler 2:86.

125. Leslie Church, *More About the Early Methodist People* (London: Epworth Press, 1949), viii.

126. Randy Maddox, "Social Grace: the Eclipse of the Church as a Means of Grace in American Methodism," in *Methodism in its Cultural Milieu*, 131-60.

