

Anthropology and Transcendence: Wesley's Sacrificial Eucharistic Theology in Ecumenical Context

What specifically do Protestants understand takes place when they gather to celebrate the Lord's Supper, both with respect to Christ's actions toward the church, his body, and with respect to the church's actions toward its head, the Lord? Likewise, what *service* is performed, by whom and for whom, at a Service of Word and Table? The language of *service*, *Word and Table*, and *Lord's Supper*, rather than *the sacrifice of the mass* or *eucharistic sacrifice* attests to the fact that historically these questions lie within the scope of dogmatic, ecclesial, and ecumenical controversy. As a result of the Reformation, Protestant churches have either all but abandoned the language of eucharistic sacrifice—sometimes even abandoning the language of offering—or severely truncated its scope, subjecting it to rigid qualifications. For most of its history, Methodism is one such Protestant tradition that fits this description; this diminishment in eucharistic theology, however, in no way accurately describes the practice of the Methodist revival or the theology of the Wesleys, since a theology of sacrifice figured prominently in the hymnody of the revival under them.¹

Reformation controversies that stumble, for example, on issues of valid priestly orders, the correct definition of sacrifice, or even the nature of sacramental theology often belie deep-seated anthropological convictions about the human person that go unaddressed.² In large part,

¹ J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley: To Which Is Appended Wesley's Preface Extracted from Brevint's Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice Together with Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, 2nd American ed. (Akron, OH: OSL Publications, 1996). Wesleyan eucharistic theology resides chiefly in John's *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*, a condensed volume extracted from Dean Brevint's work of the same title, that is accompanied by Charles' collection of *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, the organization and theology of which follow closely Brevint's text. John Wesley's frequent republication of this volume, basically unchanged over the course of his life, signals its status as perennially representing Wesley's theology of the Eucharist. Rattenbury's work includes both these sources and his analysis of them. As the classic work among Methodist eucharistic theology, this essay relies heavily on his insights.

² Of the many interrelated issues in eucharistic theology—priestly orders, ecclesial identity and authority, the status of the elements, and sacrifice—only the latter is addressed in this paper in detail.

Wesley and Catholicism insist on the necessary sacrificial dimension of the eucharist based on similar anthropological conceptions. In this paper, I argue that theological anthropology offers a fruitful dimension from which to research further the issues intrinsic to eucharistic sacrifice. This essay addresses the topic of eucharistic sacrifice in the writings and hymns of John and Charles Wesley and seeks to explore how Methodism may re-appropriate their teaching on eucharistic sacrifice in a very different ecclesial context. This context is one of *rapprochement* in light of the liturgical renewal and ecumenical movements, Vatican II, the impact of *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (BEM), and thirty years of ongoing Catholic-Methodist dialogues. Consider a woefully truncated yet representative Catholic statement from the latest dialogue:

Vatican II taught that through the sacraments, and most especially by Baptism and the Eucharist, we are ‘united in a hidden and real way to Christ in his *passion* and glorification.’ In other words, we are sacramentally united with Christ, as his body, in the great single act of his *sacrifice*, by which he entered into glory. There can never be any repetition of that act...Nevertheless, the Eucharist truly has a sacrificial character because Christ is really present there in the very act of his supreme self-gift to his Father. *The sacramental presence of Christ himself is at once the sacramental presence of his sacrifice also, because the Christ who is present is he who has entered the sanctuary once and for all bearing his own blood to secure an eternal redemption* (Heb. 9:12). He now lives forever, exercising a perpetual priesthood, making intercession for us. Catholics regret any impression they may have given of a repetition of Christ’s sacrifice in the Mass, but they also reject the overreaction which denies a sacrificial character to the Eucharist” (#131, emphasis added).³

This essay, then, offers an interpretation of Wesley’s sacrificial and sacramental theology—in light of his anthropology—as a favorable response to Catholic dogmatic claims.

Wesley’s Theological Anthropology:

Wesley’s sacramental and sacrificial theology distinguishes itself from the magisterial Reformers. Luther and the early Reformers react strongly against the medieval hierarchy of mediated and participated ecclesial grace: sacraments are no longer mediating causes of grace, but testaments, signs marking the boundary of creaturely faith and God’s promise. This dramatic

³ World Methodist Council and Roman Catholic Church, *The Grace Given You in Christ: Catholics and Methodists Reflect Further on the Church* (Lake Junaluska: The World Methodist Council, 2006).

change provokes a reorientation of epistemology and faith, which consequently takes an individualist and intellectual turn, resulting in an interior and personal encounter with God.⁴

Wesley most decidedly does not follow Luther's lead concerning sacramental theology or faith, even while he accepts the standard anti-Catholic polemics of his day. Precisely as a result of his theological anthropology, he consistently maintains what Luther denies, that is, the sacramental mediation of divine grace.⁵ He grounds his sacramental theology in the universal practice of the "apostolic church," which firmly held to the sacraments as "channels of [God's] grace" (I.1). God instituted the means of grace by which Christians receive preventing, justifying, and sanctifying grace (II.1). He exhorts the Methodists to avail themselves of the means of grace and to remember that whatever power and mercy accompany the sacraments come from God and not the means; there is power only in the Spirit and merit only in Christ's blood (V.4). For Wesley, the sacraments are tailored to the way, anthropologically, creatures receive grace, and (in response to Catholic stereotypes) he is careful to teach that the sacraments are no mere mechanistic means of procuring grace apart from faith: first, all who desire grace—believers and unbelievers alike—hear the Word preached or shared; then, one reads the Word and meditates upon it; if one is convicted, a penitential prayer for pardon and forgiveness follows; then, participation in the sacraments communicates divine grace (V.1-2). Such is the ordinary, i.e. normative and mediated, way in which God imparts grace to the creature who is made in the divine image.⁶

Furthermore, with respect to the medieval designation of the eucharist as both a

⁴ Cf. Francis Clark, *Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 96-97, 103-05; Alasdair I. C. Heron, *Table and Tradition: Towards an Ecumenical Understanding of the Eucharist* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1983), 107-110; David Power, *The Sacrifice We Offer: The Tridentine Dogma and Its Reinterpretation* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 91-99.

⁵ "The Means of Grace," in John Wesley, Albert Cook Outler, and Richard P. Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 157-72.

⁶ For a thorough exposition of Wesley's teaching on the means of grace, see Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, Tenn.: Kingswood Books, 1994), 192-229.

sacrament and a sacrifice, Wesley makes some remarkably noteworthy affirmations: primarily, that it is a sacrifice. As with the means of grace, Wesley's theological anthropology—often implicit in his work—underlies his notion of eucharistic sacrifice. Grace is mediated through created means, and creatures receive grace and extend worship via these means. Consider, for example, the epistemology of hymns 30:4, 8 and 54:3, the union of matter, faith, and grace, and the suggestion of participation in the divine life:

The tokens of Thy dying love, O let us all receive
 And feel the quickening Spirit me, and sensibly believe
 Now, Lord, on us Thy flesh bestow, and let us drink Thy blood
 Till all our souls are fill'd below with all the life of God.⁷

Saviour, Thou didst the mystery give, that I Thy nature might partake
 Thou bidd'st me outward signs receive, One with Thyself my soul to make;
 My body, soul, and spirit to join, inseparably one with Thine.

Anthropological assumptions also inform Wesley's theology of sacrifice: "the holy Sacrament, like the ancient Passover, is a great mystery, consisting both of Sacrament, and Sacrifice; that is, of the religious service which the people owe to God, and the full salvation which God hath promised to the people."⁸ Wesley accepts the classical definition of a sacrament as the outward sign of an inward and spiritual grace, but he also notes that this ordained mode of revelation and grace-filled mediation corresponds to the human constitution; thus, for example, God used the burning bush with Moses and the cloud with Israel, although they were not sacraments (Rattenbury, 133; III.1). A final reference that analysis of Wesley's theology of eucharistic sacrifice needs to attend to his anthropology comes from a comment that signals the prominent place of human cooperation in conjunction with divine grace: "Too many who are called Christians live as if under the Gospel there were no sacrifice but that of Christ on the

⁷ Rattenbury writes that this hymn "expresses with great emphasis Charles Wesley's zeal for the Sacrament and the need of its restoration as a daily sacrifice" (116).

⁸ Rattenbury, 130; *Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*, I.1; citations of Wesley other than from his sermons come from this text in Rattenbury's volume.

Cross. And indeed there is no other that can atone for our sins or satisfy the justice of God...But what is not necessary to this Sacrifice which alone redeemed humankind, is absolutely necessary to our having a share in that redemption. So that though the sacrifice of ourselves cannot procure salvation, yet it is altogether needful to our receiving it” (140; VII.1).⁹ Creaturely cooperation in God’s act of salvation is far from a rallying cry of the Reformation, yet due to his anthropology and epistemology, it lies at the center of Wesley’s soteriology.

The goal of eucharistic sacrifice is conformity with Christ, following Paul’s teaching, and this conformity is one of freely living in Christ because Christ now lives in the believer. Rattenbury iterates succinctly what the following section takes up in detail: “The symbolic offering of Christ is not the whole sacrifice of the Church, which is a real oblation of itself, that is, of the Body of Christ, for Christ’s body are we. The sacrifice is corporate, made by the collective body of believers who are priests of God, who altogether offer both symbolically and really the body of Christ to God” (117). Rattenbury’s words highlight several of the themes that Catholic theology also advances: the creaturely need for a real sacrifice, the use of sacramental signs, the real presence of the Lord, and the ecclesial dimension of the Eucharist.¹⁰

Hymns on the Lord’s Supper: Wesleyan Eucharistic Theology of the “Christian Sacrifice”

Wesley’s theology of eucharistic sacrifice provides valuable resources for Methodists

⁹ See “Grace and Response—the Nature of Human Salvation” (141-56), and the subsection “The Co-Operant Character of Salvation” (147-51) in Maddox. Wesley writes: “This act of the Church consecrating itself to God, and so joined to Christ, as to make but one Oblation, is the Mystery which was once represented by the daily sacrifice [of Israel’s sacrifice], but now in the Eucharist” (141; VII.8).

¹⁰ Two other prominent interpreters of Wesley, Raymond George and Ole E. Borgen, read Wesley’s theology of eucharistic sacrifice in a manner more disjunctive with respect to Catholicism and more consonant with the concerns of the continental Reformers; see Raymond George, “The Lord’s Supper,” in Dow Kirkpatrick and World Methodist Council., *The Doctrine of the Church* (New York,: Abingdon Press, 1964), 140-60; and Ole E. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments: a Theological Study* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972). Their Pelagian concerns, however, are overly sensitive precisely because they fail to consider Wesley’s theological anthropology.

Rattenbury rejects that the Last Supper was a sacrifice, but Heron’s exegesis calls that denial into question; J. Ernest Rattenbury, *Thoughts on Holy Communion* (London: Epworth Press, 1958), 107.

attending to contemporary ecumenical concerns; these can helpfully be considered under the categories of (1) Christ as eucharistic host and his agency of intercession (or self-offering); (2) the liturgical (i.e. anthropological) dimension of the eucharist as sacrifice; (3) and participation.

Christ the Host: Victim and Priest

The Catholic response to BEM regrets that the text “does not *say* unambiguously that the eucharist is in itself a *real sacrifice, the memorial* of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross,” but Wesley unequivocally does, referring to the Lord’s Supper as the Christian Sacrifice or the daily Sacrifice. Furthermore, sacrificial language and content obtain for both the anthropological and Christological movements in the eucharistic celebration: the Christ-led prayer and self-offering of the Church to the Father, and the self-offering of Christ to his church and to the Father. The Catholic position consistently suggests—in Trent, encyclicals, Methodist-Catholic dialogues, and the response to BEM—that the Christological questions concerning eucharistic sacrifice are the controlling ones, so it is appropriate to begin here.

Wesley’s eucharistic theology shares the same orientation; not only is Christ the Host and Feast of the meal, he is also the Priest and the Victim. Rattenbury notes; “the work of Calvary, if a finished work in the sense that Christ dying once would die no more, was still unfinished; He was not dead, but risen, ascended at God’s right hand. The High Priest was the Lamb of God, raised up from the dead to be the Great Shepherd of the Sheep. He is the Priest-Victim.”¹¹ Borgen agrees and says, “The whole question of ‘sacrifice’ in connection with the Lord’s Supper turns around Christ’s Priestly Office” (237).

O Thou eternal Victim slain, a sacrifice for guilty man,
By the Eternal Spirit made, an offering in the sinners stead,
Our everlasting Priest art Thou, and plead’st thy death for sinners now.

Thou offering still continues new, Thy vesture keeps its blood hue,

¹¹ Rattenbury, *Eucharistic Hymns*, 84.

Thou stand'st the ever slaughte'd Lamb, thy Priesthood still remains the same,
Thy years, O God, can never fail, Thy goodness is unchangeable (5:1-2).

He also notes: “In sacrament, God is the giver; in sacrifice, man is the giver...the latter is wholly dependent on the former” (237). Because sacrifice is essentially a human act directed toward God the Father for the purposes of reconciliation (Rom. 5:10), eucharistic sacrifice and Jesus’ human nature are intrinsically related. Just as Jesus’ full humanity is necessary for our full redemption, resurrection, and glorification, so one essential feature of eucharistic sacrifice—Christologically and anthropologically— is that the church’s sacrifice is made in union with Jesus, whose divine-human self-offering eternally makes atonement between humanity and God. The content of Christ’s intercession that Wesley emphasizes here is one of priestly self-offering; it is a “sacrifice for guilty man” that “still continues new.” He maintains this eucharistic theology not just in poetry, but in doctrine, for in *Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* Wesley writes: “The sacrifice of Christ being appointed by the Father for a Propitiation that should continue to all ages...It must in all respects stand eternal, the same yesterday, today, and for ever” (II.7).¹² Wesley therefore designates the nature of Christ’s intercession as self-offering and sacrifice, and fully agrees with Trent that the eucharist is the same sacrifice as the cross.

In his Christology, Wesley is intent on maintaining the biblical truth that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, at the same time as maintaining the gospel truth that the sacrifice of Jesus in his death and resurrection is the soteriological center of the Trinity’s saving work. Wesley is not regularly one for overt metaphysical speculation, but his preaching, teaching, and hymnody reflect that he has not failed to reflect on the concept of Christology and time. Indeed, the way in which he relates time-bound humanity to God’s unchangeableness

¹² See a similar passage: “The great and holy Mystery communicates to us the death of our blessed Lord, both as offering himself to God, and as giving himself to man. As he offer’d himself to God, it enters me into that Mystical body for which he died, and which is dead with Christ: yea, it sets me on the very shoulders of that Eternal Priest while he offers up himself and intercedes for his spiritual Israel” (IV.7).

Borgen calls Wesley's "Eternal Now"¹³: the effect of Christ's suffering and atonement touches all times and places.

Thou Lamb that sufferedst on the tree, and in this dreadful mystery
Still offer'st up Thyself to God, we cast us on Thy sacrifice,
Wrapp'd in the sacred smoke arise, and cover'd with th'atoning blood.

For us he ever intercedes, his heaven-deserving passion pleads,
Presenting us before the throne; we want no sacrifice beside
By that great Offering sanctified, one with our Head, forever one. (117:1-2)

Live, our Eternal Priest, by men and angels blest!
Jesus Christ the Crucified, he who did for us atone,
From the cross where once he died, now he up to heaven is gone.

He ever lives, and prays for all the faithful race;
In the holiest place above, sinners' Advocate he stands,
Pleads for us his dying love, shows for us his bleeding hands. (118:1-2)

Jesus is the risen and glorified Lord even while he is always the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The work of the Word incarnate perfectly corresponds to the person of the Son before the Father, and the nature of this work controls our language of Jesus' intercession. As Borgen notes: "Christ's priestly office also involves a never-ending offering of himself before God: he always appears in the presence of God for us. He died once, but he also ever lives and intercedes perpetually for us, by continually representing to his Father his sacrifice as present" (45).¹⁴

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

He lives for us to intercede, for us he doth this moment plead,
And all who could not see him die, may now with faith's interior eye
Behold him stand as slaughter'd there, and feel the answer to his prayer. (140:1-2)¹⁵

¹³ "Christ's suffering and atonement is not just an event which happened once at a certain point in history. Its virtue extends backwards as well as forwards, covering all sins of the past as well as of the future" (45).

¹⁴ Cf. "Salvation is a present reality. Until God ends all time, there is an 'Eternal Now' operating in God's grand plan of salvation" (92).

¹⁵ Hymn 84:3 Jesu, Master of the feast, the feast itself Thou art / Now receive Thy meanest guest, and comfort every heart / Give us living bread to eat, manna that from heaven comes down / Fill us with immortal meat, and make Thy nature known.

Wesley's language of Eucharistic sacrifice is biblical and evangelical: Christologically speaking, it is faithful to BEM, yet goes beyond it to provide precisely what the Catholic response calls for, namely, a theology and language that grounds intercession in the sacrifice of the cross as it is made eternal by Christ.

Eucharistic Sacrifice as Anthropological Sacrifice: not because God needs it, but because we do

As noted above, the sacrificial dimension of the risen Christ's intercession grounds the sacrifice of the eucharist in its anthropological dimension. In fact, most of the sacrificial hymns refer to the nexus of the divine-human encounter as it occurs in the elements and the eucharistic rite. Rattenbury notes that these hymns convey "Wesley's sense of the continuing sacrifice of Christ in heaven which is basal to all Eucharistic worship regarded in its sacrificial aspects" (89). A theological anthropology not far removed from Augustine (*City of God, Book X*) and Aquinas (ST.III.73-83) functions in Wesley's eucharistic theology. In correspondence on these matters, Wesley writes: "We believe there is, and always was, in every Christian Church...an outward priesthood, ordained by Jesus Christ, and an outward sacrifice offered therein" (Rattenbury, 68).

Victim Divine, Thy grace we claim
While thus Thy precious death we show. (116:1)

He reads [the name's of Israel's tribes], while we beneath present our Saviour's death,
Do as Jesus bids us do, signify his flesh and blood,
Him in a memorial show, offer up the Lamb to God. (118:4)

To us Thou hast redemption sent; and we again to Thee present
The blood that speaks our sins forgiven, that sprinkles all the nations round;
And now Thou hear'st the solemn sound, loud echoing through the courts of heaven.
(120:4)

Wesley's facility with biblical imagery from both testaments reinforces that the eucharist is a sacrifice: Jesus is the Pascal Lamb, and his sacrifice on the cross was the "True Passover."¹⁶ Owing to this, Wesley calls the sacrifice of the eucharist wine-offerings, burnt-offerings, and

¹⁶ Borgen, 186.

peace-offerings—a sacrificial offering that relies on Christ’s atoning work, to be sure, but a necessary offering all the same. It is in this manner that Jesus’ disciples continue the sacrificial meal he inaugurated in which they “set forth the death of Christ” (Borgen, 241). Consider how Wesley begins his treatise:

At the Holy Table the people meet to worship God, and God is present, to meet and bless his people. Here we are in a special manner invited to offer up to God our souls, our bodies, and whatever we can give: and God offers to us the body and blood of his Son, and all the other blessings which we have need to receive. So that the Holy Sacrament...is a great mystery, consisting both of sacrament and sacrifice; that is, of the religious service which the people owe to God, and of the full salvation which God has promised to his people (I,1).¹⁷

Rattenbury notes the sacrificial reciprocity between Christ’s sacrifice and the eucharist. Like the former on which it depends, the latter is neither simply a memorial nor a sacrifice of praise. It is at least these things, but it is also its own proper, corporate, liturgical sacrifice, and this liturgical sacrifice corresponds to the self-offering of those who are incorporated into Christ at baptism and who are strengthened in the eucharist.¹⁸ He comments: “The broken bread and the poured-out wine, the tokens of the passion of Christ, plead that passion. When Brevint calls it a kind of sacrifice, he does not mean that it is no sacrifice, but that it is a sacrifice of a different kind from that of Calvary...the whole content of it is what happens in heaven and is symbolized on earth” (98).

To the blood that speaks above, calls for Thy forgiving love;
To the tokens of his death here exhibited beneath. (119:3)

With solemn faith we offer up, and spread before Thy glorious eyes
That only ground of all our hope, that precious bleeding sacrifice
Which brings Thy grace on sinners down, and perfects all our souls in one. (125:2)

Father, our sacrifice receive; our souls and bodies we present,
Our goods, and vows, and praises give, whate’er Thy bounteous love hath lent.

¹⁷ Cf. “Nevertheless this sacrifice, which by a real oblation was not to be offered more than once, is by a devout and thankful commemoration, to be offered up every day. This is what the Apostle calls, to set forth the death of the Lord; to set it forth as well before the eyes of God his Father, as before the eyes of men” (VI.2). Or again: “this sacrament, by our remembrance, becomes a kind of sacrifice, whereby we present before God the Father, that precious oblation of his son once offered” (VI.2). This language and content is also common to Medieval theology.

¹⁸ See too, Borgen, 243-44.

Thou canst not now our gift despise, cast on that all-atoning Lamb,
Mix'd with that bleeding sacrifice, and offer'd up though Jesu's name. (153:2)

The inclusion of this last stanza with respect to Wesley's sacrificial theology moves the discussion into a contested sphere of interpretation. The sacrifice mentioned in the stanza above falls under the section of hymns "Concerning the Sacrifice of our Persons"; consequently, Borgen and Rattenbury engage in heated debate over the precise status of the bread and wine in Wesley's eucharistic theology. Borgen (along with George) denies any suggestion that the elements are offered to God as a sacrifice, while Rattenbury, who personally disagrees with Wesley on the nature of priesthood, nevertheless interprets him more in the Anglo-Catholic tradition. Wesley provides ample resources to substantiate both possibilities.

With this caveat, then, I offer a pair of reasons why Borgen's strictly Protestant position remains unsatisfying.¹⁹ First, Wesley is clear that the eucharist is a sacrifice, and he does not delimit the definition to one of praise and thanksgiving; instead, the sacrifice is a complete offering of the self (a holy and living sacrifice) at the same time that it is a sacrifice of all that believers have—not just a sacrifice of self, but one of possessions and goods as well. To whom does the bread and wine belong if not the church before it is offered to God; and what other word can describe its change of ownership from creature to Creator and its change of function from fruits of creation to body and blood of Christ if not *offering*. The elements once belonged to God, who gave them to the church; the church receives it as good food and drink, and in return offers it back to God to do with it what the risen Lord always does with it—use it as the means of communion with him. The offering is made, not because God needs it, but because the church does. This action of the church in offering the bread and wine corresponds to the action of Christ with respect to the elements of the Last Supper: "this is my body which is given for you."

¹⁹ His comments are interspersed in his chapter on eucharistic sacrifice, mainly through pages 241-68.

Second, Borgen relates the debates associated with justification and the *ordo salutis* to the same facets in Wesley's theological anthropology that I have been trying to highlight, but he does not make the move to the eucharistic elements. He notes that only through active reception on the part of believer can justification occur, and that only in actively receiving the means of grace can sanctification and perfection ensue.²⁰ But he does not see that in order for believers actively to receive the grace that God gives through the means, the elements must first be offered up so that God can use them as means. To offer the elements is not to initiate any saving action (as George fears) if it is Jesus' presence that makes the feast, that is, if he is the Host. No creaturely salvific work is being claimed in offering up the elements and the whole right as a sacrifice, for God does not need sacrifices. On the contrary, the church must make just the opposite assertion: namely, that only when they are used of God can any saving work take place. The church does not protest its faith to the Father by putting its trust in bread and wine, but in the Son's body and blood;²¹ likewise, no *anamnesis* or *epiclesis* occurs, no kerygma or evangelism, and thus no sanctification or deification can transpire unless the materials are sacrificed to God so they can become divine means.²²

An interpretation of Wesley's teaching—or a faithful ecumenical application of it—that the eucharistic elements themselves are a proper sacrifice is entirely commensurate with his teaching that in the eucharist Christ offers himself to God and that the believer does also. The

²⁰ Randy Maddox refers to this theological anthropology as responsible grace, and Geoffrey Wainwright uses the phrase responsible reception. Speaking not of Wesley, but anthropologically in general, Wainwright refers to the church's reception of grace and its work of the eucharistic celebration, thus: "There is room and need, therefore, for human acceptance of the gift and human obedience to the command [of Jesus to 'do this...']" (Eucharist in the Churches' Responses to Lima, 65).

²¹ Hymn 58:3-4 In vain I take the broken bread, I cannot on Thy mercy feed;
In vain I drink the hallow'd wine, I cannot taste the love Divine.
Angel and Son of God, come down, Thy sacramental banquet crown,
Thy power into the means infuse, and give them now their sacred use.

²² Cf.: "There never was on earth a true religion without some kind of sacrifices...The Holy Communion alone brings together these two great ends, atonement for sins, and acceptable duty to God, of which all the sacrifices of old were no more than weak shadows" (VI.1). These words are quite commensurate with both Irenaeus and Aquinas.

corporate, liturgical act is the ecclesial channel in which the material channels of the means of grace function, and it is also the epistemological channel that corresponds to the embodied way in which humans responsibly receive God's grace. It is fully appropriate, indeed even necessary, that the liturgical rite that unites Christ's sacrifice with the church's sacrifice be itself a sacrifice.²³

Conclusion: Participation

Wesley's eucharistic theology is a consistent extension of his theology of the *ordo salutis*. The creature cooperatively and responsively participates in God's saving work, and this participation takes the form of sacrifice.²⁴ Wesley does not use the language of participation that has become so prominent in current parlance, but the concept encompasses ideas that figure prominently in his theology, namely, communion, sanctification, and the unity of the church's sacrifice with Christ's.

Because the sacrifice of the believer and of the church relies on Christ's eternal sacrifice, and because the eucharistic celebration relies on Christ's saving sacrifice in history, the idea of communion operates implicitly throughout Wesley's eucharistic theology. The ecclesial and human sacrifices, therefore, become acceptable to God only in their union with Christ's heavenly sacrifice.²⁵ As Borgen notes: "the sacrifice as offered by the believers on earth and by Christ in heaven is twofold: the communicant pleads Christ's death and sacrifice to God here, while Christ does the same in heaven," which renders the "earthly plea effectual" (256). In addition, it is surely through communion with Christ that the Holy Spirit bestows the fruits of his atonement.

The eucharistic feast our every want supplies,

²³ Cf. VIII.

²⁴ For a similar argument with respect to Aquinas' eucharistic theology, see Matthew Levering, "Aquinas on the Liturgy of the Eucharist," in Thomas G. Weinandy, Daniel A. Keating, and John Yocum, *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), 183-97.

²⁵ Borgen: "[The believer's] prayers are sanctified through Christ, and can only be offered up with Christ's sacrifice" (263).

And still we by his death are blest, and share his sacrifice;
By faith his flesh we eat, who here his passion show,
And God out of his holy seat shall all his gifts bestow. (4:2)

Come, Holy Ghost, set to Thy seal, Thine inward witness give,
To all our waiting souls reveal the death by which we live. (7:1)

Let Thy blood, by faith applied, the sinner's pardon seal,
Speaks us freely justified, and all our sickness heal;
By Thy passion on the tree let all our griefs and troubles cease;
O remember Calvary, and bid us go in peace. (20:3)

The fruit of Jesus' atonement, divine grace, is the sanctifying work that God imparts to the believer. These hymns remind the believer that even while salvation begins on earth as a pledge of heaven, the language of *sanctification* inadequately expresses Wesley's sense of communion with God without the conviction that sanctification entails conformity with Christ. In short, sanctification is sacrificial discipleship.

We would, we would partake Thy every state below,
And suffer all things for Thy sake, and to Thy glory do. (130:1)

First-born of many sons, his blood for us atones,
Saves us from the mortal pain if we by his cross abide,
If we in the house remain where our Elder Brother died. (132:3)

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. (128:3)

Rattenbury observes that all the hymns of oblation are sung in the plural, thereby suggesting a corporate incorporation of the eucharistic sacrifice with Christ's: "The Church can do nothing apart from Christ and out of union with its Head" (108). The unity between Christ's passion and his eternal sacrifice, and this unity on which the church's eucharistic sacrifice depends, demands a unity between the church's sacrifice and Christ's. The eucharist is not two complementary and simultaneous sacrifices: because Christ is really the Guest and Host, the eucharistic is, therefore, the one sacrifice of Christ. As Wesley writes in language similar to Trent's: "the Saviour thus offering himself, and the saved so united to him by faith, so partaking of his sufferings, and so

given up to his will, are accounted before God one and the same sacrifice” (VII.7).

Whate'er we cast on him alone is with his great oblation one;
His sacrifice doth ours sustain, and favour and acceptance gain.

Mixed with sacred smoke we rise, the smoke of his burnt sacrifice;
By the Eternal Spirit driven, from earth in Christ we mount to heaven. (137: 3,6)

With him, the Corner-stone, the living stone conjoin;
Christ and his church are one, one body and one vine;
For us he uses all his powers, and all he has, or is, is ours.

The motion of our Head the members all pursue,
By his good Spirit led to act, and suffer too;
Whate'er he did on earth sustain, till glorious all like him we reign. (129: 2-3)

In general, Wesley locates ecclesiology under soteriology, which is a systematization that may be debated. At the same time, these hymns show that Wesley locates his anthropology—itsself shaped by the virtue of hope and a biblical eschatology—under Jesus' Incarnation, a systematization that is entirely appropriate. His eucharistic theology brings these themes together: “so Jesus Christ does nothing without the Church, insomuch that sometimes they are represented as only one person; seeing Christ acts and suffers for this Body in that manner which becomes the Head, and the Church follows all the motions and sufferings of its Head, in such a manner as is possible to its weak members” (VII.2).

Thy sacrifice with heavenly powers replete, all holy, all Divine;
Human and weak, and sinful ours; how can the two oblations join?

Our mean imperfect sacrifice on Thine is as a burden thrown;
Both in a common flame arise, and both in God's account are one. (147: 2, 4)

The discussion has now moved from eucharistic sacrifice to the verge of ecclesiology. Taking eucharistic sacrifice as a theological doctrine in isolation to priesthood, transubstantiation, and ecclesial unity, admittedly a task that cannot occur in practice, Wesley's eucharistic theology holds the resources that Methodists need, should they choose to avail themselves of them, in order to respond to the questions that Catholic theology raises:

- (1) Wesley's theological anthropology is broadly commensurate with Catholic theology.
- (2) He unambiguously calls the eucharistic celebration a sacrifice, a memorial of Christ's sacrifice, and he affirms that the cross did not end the Christian duty of sacrifice.
- (3) Christ's eternal offering in heaven is named a sacrifice, as it renders eternal the atonement of the cross; sacrifice equally describes the self-offering of the church, since it is a union with Christ's sacrifice.
- (4) His dynamic sense of *anamnesis* enjoys ecumenical consensus: Christ is really present as the Priest and joins with him all that the church is *and* has.
- (5) Consequently, by extension, the bread and wine become an offering to the Father that then becomes the body and blood of Christ.

This extension is all the more logical when Wesley's anthropology is explicitly integrated into his sacramental theology, and especially when Methodists realize that the theology of sacrifice in no way threatens the doctrine of justification by faith(ful reception). Most importantly, though, what was a logical extension has now been implicitly and explicitly affirmed in United Methodism. Implicitly, the Methodist bishops raised no concerns at BEM's teaching that the bread and wine are "presented" to the Father (E 4). Whereas BEM needed to skirt the language of offering, the United Methodist Great Thanksgiving explicitly employs it. The *epiclesis* reads: "Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine"; the gifts in this context must be what the church offers to God, for if they were already God's gifts given to the church, they would already belong to the Spirit, and the *epiclesis* would be superfluous. United Methodism and Catholicism may *think* that they lack "doctrinal agreement about the specific sense in which the offering of the church is the full offering of Christ," but Wesley's theology replies admirably to this question and others raised in the dialogues.²⁶ The degree to which contemporary Methodists remains Wesleyan is the degree to which they can hope to seek convergence concerning eucharistic sacrifice.

²⁶ *Eucharistic Celebration: Converging Theology—Divergent Practice* (United Methodist-Roman Catholic Dialogue, 1981), 316