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“OUR HEAVEN BEGUN BELOW”: A CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY
OF EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE IN THE WESLEYAN TRADITION

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“OUR HEAVEN BEGUN BELOW”: A CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY
OF EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE IN THE WESLEYAN TRADITION

A Dissertation Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the

Dedman College

Southern Methodist University

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

with a

Major in Religious Studies

by

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“Our Heaven Begun Below”: A Contemporary Theology
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Advisor: Dr. Bruce Marshall

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In 1984, The United Methodist Church adopted a new eucharistic rite which asserts that Christians “offer ourselves...as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ’s offering for us.” The language of sacrifice employed here is much stronger than that of any of the previous rites used by the Church, or any of its successors, as far back as the first English rite written by Thomas Cranmer. While the Cranmerian rite calls for a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, the new rite calls for the communicant to offer themselves as a “holy and living sacrifice,” a change which calls for a significant shift in religious values: no longer is simply praise and thanksgiving demanded, but holy—that is, ethical—living.

Unfortunately, however, while this language, in principle, calls for a real change in religious values, the true liturgical, theological, and ethical implications of this language have been only marginally embraced or wholly ignored by United Methodists. This dissertation seeks to construct a theology of eucharistic sacrifice for The United Methodist Church based on the claims made in its own rite which is both consistent with the denomination’s Wesleyan heritage and sensitive to concerns raised by feminist theologies.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ENNT</i>	<i>Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament</i>
<i>HPMF</i>	<i>His Presence Makes the Feast</i>
<i>HLS</i>	<i>Hymns on the Lord's Supper</i>
<i>MF</i>	<i>The Mystery of Faith. 2 vols.</i>
<i>MFHO</i>	<i>The Mystery of Faith and Human Opinion, Contrasted and Defined</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Summa theologiae</i>
<i>THM</i>	<i>This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion</i>
<i>Works</i>	<i>The Works of John Wesley. Bicentennial edition.</i>

Dedicated to all those who made sacrifices
that I might have life and
live it abundantly.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: THE LANGUAGE OF SACRIFICE

In his book *Trinity and Truth*, Bruce Marshall frames his examination of what Christians believe is true and what truth is by attempting to discern what he describes as identity-constituting beliefs: those beliefs which contribute to the self-identification of the Christian community. Furthermore, Marshall asserts that by attending to what a community says and does, one can discern what the most central, identity-forming beliefs of a community are. For the Christian community, this means attending to what the community does in its liturgical life and, in particular, its eucharistic worship. In 1984, The United Methodist Church assumed just such an identity-forming belief as part of its eucharistic worship when it adopted a new eucharistic liturgy. The oblation of the new eucharistic prayer asserted that Christians “offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ’s offering for us.” The language of sacrifice employed here is not only stronger than the Cranmerian language of the previous rite which beseeches God “to accept this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving,” and where we offer and present “ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee...although we be unworthy...to offer unto thee any sacrifice”; it is, even further, stronger than the language of the first draft revision of the text which asked God to “accept our sacrifice *of* praise and thanksgiving, in union with Christ’s offering for us, as a reasonable and holy surrender of ourselves.”

The problem is that, while this language, in principle, contributes to the identification of the United Methodist community apart from other Christian communities by its eucharistic worship, the real liturgical, theological and ethical implications of this language have been, at best, only marginally embraced and, at worst, largely or wholly ignored by the very United Methodists who find these words on their lips. On the one hand, the language of “offering ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ’s offering for us” is quite Wesleyan in its contour. The most complete explication of John and Charles Wesley’s doctrine of eucharistic sacrifice may lie in their 1745 collection entitled *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*, which consists of 166 hymns based on, and prefaced by, an abridgment of a treatise by Daniel Brevint (c. 1616–1695) entitled *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* (1673).¹ The sacrificial imagery in *HLS* is anything but ambivalent: the Eucharist is “the true sacrifice of peace offerings” and “a kind of sacrifice, whereby we present before God the Father, that precious oblation of his Son once offered.”² Not only do we present Christ *and* Christ’s offering, but Christ’s main intention therein was “to invite us to his sacrifice, not as done and gone many years since, but, as to grace and mercy, still lasting, still new, still the same as when it was first offered for us” (II.7).

On the other hand, United Methodist language on eucharistic sacrifice is, at best, ambivalent, if not intentionally vague and evasive. *This Holy Mystery*, the official statement of The United Methodist Church on the Eucharist, while affirming the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ, asserts that the Eucharist is a *type* of sacrifice in that it is a re-presentation of the sacrifice of Christ and in that we present ourselves as a sacrifice in union with Christ’s offering (cf. Rom 12:1; 1 Pt

¹ John Wesley and Charles Wesley, *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* (Bristol: Felix Farley, 1745). Hereafter *HLS*.

² *HLS*, §IV.7, §VI.2. Hereafter, references to the extract will be cited parenthetically by section and paragraph (e.g., IV.7). References to the hymns will be cited parenthetically by hymn number, stanza, and line (e.g., 1:1.1–4).

2:5), the second part of this assertion being borne up in the oblation found in the United Methodist eucharistic rite.³ As has already been pointed out, this language represents a strengthening of the sacrificial claims as compared to the earlier draft text of 1972. Yet however much the *rite* may have been strengthened, in practice the church's leadership has been more ambivalent. Of the four times that *Living into the Mystery*, the United Methodist customary for the Eucharist published by the General Board of Discipleship in 2006, refers to the Eucharist as a sacrifice, twice it refers to it as a sacrifice *of* praise and thanksgiving.⁴ The difference in language between a sacrifice *of* praise and thanksgiving and that of offering something else, namely ourselves, *in* praise and thanksgiving cannot be overemphasized. To equivocate between the two, as the customary does, is to misunderstand the performative force of the ritual speech act. The latter refers to a disposition, not the actual content of the offering. There appears, therefore, to be a confessional disconnect between the church's official rite, the denomination's cherished heritage, and the contemporary believer's practical commitments, thus leaving the status of this potential identity-forming claim in question.

The situation is further complicated by the critique which feminist perspectives have brought in the last half-century against the concept of sacrifice. One of the greatest problems for feminist theologians is that women have been historically marginalized by being forced into roles, such as child-rearing, in which sacrifice as self-giving has been valorized. Unfortunately, however, this sacrifice-as-self-giving, often more broadly conceived as *agape*, often leads to self-destruction. This critique is substantial and must be taken seriously in light of a gospel which professes to

³ The General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church, *This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion* (Nashville: GBOD, 2004), 8. Hereafter *THM*.

⁴ E. Byron Anderson et al., *Living into the Mystery: A United Methodist Guide for Celebrating Holy Communion*, ed. Taylor Burton-Edwards, *Living into Our Worship*, vol. 1 (Nashville: GBOD, 2007), 29, 31.

bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, and freedom to the oppressed (Lk 4:18) and which claims to abolish death—the ultimate destruction of the self—and bring life and immortality (2 Tim 1:10). The critique would seem to be of even greater import for a church which affirms that all persons are of sacred worth and equally valuable in the sight of God.⁵ In order to develop a theology which adequately supports The United Methodist Church’s current “identity-forming” claim with respect to eucharistic sacrifice, then, we must hold in tension the church’s Wesleyan heritage and the theological setting in which the church comes to consciousness in the twenty-first century, particularly with respect to feminist theological critiques.

With these concerns and observations before us, we will attempt to construct a theology of eucharistic sacrifice using the metaphor of language as a lens.⁶ Such a lens lends itself well to this approach precisely because the identity-forming belief we are seeking to explicate is grounded in the language of the church’s rite and because ritual is comprised not only of words but also of actions and, as such, intends to have performative force as a speech act. Moreover, there are certain frameworks by which a language functions: grammar structures it, semantics convey meaning, syntax orders it, and pragmatics effect action. And each of these frameworks provides a helpful lens for understanding how a theological claim embodied in ritual—that “we offer ourselves...in union with Christ’s offering for us”—forms identity, both for the community and the individual. Thus, we will begin in this chapter with an overview of the language of

⁵ Cf. United Methodist Social Principles, Preamble, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2012* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012), 105.

⁶ The invocation of metaphor as an epistemological tool here is done so in the spirit of Janet Martin Soskice. That is to say, metaphors are not seen simply as ornamental or reducible but rather as performative, expressing that which would otherwise be unexpressed, increasing our knowledge in incremental ways and stretching our noetic structure. See Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

sacrifice in both the Wesleyan and United Methodist contexts, while each of the following chapters will take up the aforementioned frameworks of grammar, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics, in turn.

1.1. The Language of Sacrifice: Liturgical Reform

Beginning in 1968, The United Methodist Church launched what would be a twenty-year journey of far-reaching and unprecedented liturgical reform for the denomination. Liturgically, the union of 1968 was a “watershed event” for the newly formed United Methodist Church. Growing dissatisfaction with the official liturgies of both former denominations existed but, given that new liturgies had just been approved only years before for each of the new church’s forerunners, change needed to move slowly and be gradual. The General Conference of 1968 constituted a Commission on Worship to examine the church’s liturgy and return to the next General Conference with recommendations. The Commission was, in large part, guided by the consultation of James White, and it took as its first focus the liturgy of the Lord’s Supper.⁷

As the winds of the liturgical renewal stirred up by Vatican II began to fan the flames for liturgical renewal in the newly formed church, one of the first tasks taken up by members of the Commission under White’s leadership was to reshape the structure and fundamental imagery of the prayer. There was a large camp of people who believed the Lord’s Supper centered on Jesus passion and death.⁸ The word “resurrection” had only been added to the liturgy in the most recent official version in 1966, and even at that, very tenuously. One or two efforts were made to

⁷ In fact, none of the systematic theologians at any of the United Methodist seminaries participated in the reform process or even saw a reason to participate. Don Saliers may have been one exception, but he did not come on board until the late 1970s.

⁸ James F. White, *Keynote Address: Order of St. Luke 2000 Convention*, DVD in Bridwell Library (Cleveland, OH: Order of St. Luke, 2000).

include resurrection imagery and some eschatological reference, but these efforts were small and not very powerful.⁹ The lack of significant change may be evidence that there was general complacency regarding Sunday worship when the 1964 General Conference adopted the new official liturgy. The rite of 1965 remained overwhelmingly focused on Jesus' passion and death and overwhelmingly penitential. In some places, this imagery was even strengthened, such as is the case with the *Agnus Dei*.¹⁰ Given the prevailing malaise toward the sacraments in general and the Eucharist in particular, the Commission established several important and not immodest goals. Among them, the liturgy should be based on a more orthodox theology and must get past the history of Zwinglian memorialism from which the sacrament currently suffered. As White puts it, "unless sacraments are regarded as far more than just pious aids to remember past events, genuine reform of sacramental practice is impossible."¹¹

Revision and reform began in earnest in 1972 with the publication of *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper: An Alternate Text* and culminated in 1984 with the official adoption of the new liturgy by the General Conference. In the end, the process was guided in large part by James White, Hoyt Hickman, Don Saliers and Grady Hardin. New liturgies, beginning with the Eucharist and eventually including all the church's rites, were issued as Supplemental Worship Resources. In all, seventeen such supplements eventuated.¹² The core of the Commission's work

⁹ A quick comparison of the former text, promulgated in 1944 after the merger of the MEC, MEC,S, and the MPC, and the text adopted in 1964, at the height of Vatican II, confirms the tenuousness of the reformers' efforts. The opening address and petition of the 1965 rite adds "until his coming again" to "and did institute...this memorial of his precious death" and adds "resurrection" to "in remembrance of his passion and death." Additionally, the phrase "preserve thy soul and body unto everlasting life" is added to the instructions at distribution. The Methodist Church, *The Book of Worship for Church and Home* (Nashville, TN: The Methodist Publishing House, 1944), 378–81; and *The Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: The Methodist Publishing House, 1964), no. 830.

¹⁰ White somewhat humorously points out that the Eucharist is not the time to play all the passion music you can, for it not only celebrates the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but *all* of God's saving acts through both the Old and New Testament (White, *Keynote*).

¹¹ White, *Sacraments as God's Self Giving* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 145.

¹² The number of supplements is not insignificant, for it represents the painstaking efforts which the Commission, and the new denomination through the dedication of its publishing house resources, undertook to field

was adopted officially into the rite of the church and incorporated in the 1989 hymnal and the 1992 *Book of Worship*. Much of the remainder of the work wound up in the unofficial resource *Handbook for the Christian Year*.

The theology underlying the new Eucharistic rite is thoroughly Wesleyan and curiously modern. As a son of the Enlightenment, Wesley managed to maintain a Eucharistic theology that for his time was surprisingly pneumatological, eschatological, and *sacrificial*, even at a time when it was still considered blasphemous to refer to the Eucharist as sacrificial. In many ways, the current service is more Wesleyan than Wesley. Wesley himself only changed one word in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* when constructing his 1784 order of worship for the American Methodists. The new rite commemorates not just the passion, death, and resurrection, but the entirety of salvation history, from creation through the Parousia; foregrounds images of social justice; and identifies the actions of the communicants as offering a sacrifice of themselves “in union with Christ’s offering for us.” In fact, according to White, the United Methodist rite in its statement of eucharistic oblation reflects the strongest statement of Eucharist as sacrifice in any then-current Protestant liturgy.¹³

In the end, the Commission ended up with a classical Eucharist prayer based on the West Syria/Antiochene pattern. Yet while Vatican II, with much flourish and publicity, came out with four eucharistic prayers after over 1000 years of only one prayer, many of the reforms undertaken by mainline Protestant “have been almost as sweeping [as Vatican II], but often have gone unheralded in their progress.”¹⁴ This may be, in large part, due to ecclesial structure. In his

test, refine, and disseminate, as well as acculturate people to, the new liturgy. Such efforts stand in relief to the denomination’s current attempt to revise its hymnal and liturgical resources, which the publishing house effectively ended by cutting off funding because it didn’t see it as a viable financial investment.

¹³ James F. White, *The Sacraments in Protestant Practice and Faith* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 113.

¹⁴ White, *Self Giving*, 134.

preface to the new edition of *Sacraments as God's Self Giving* (2000), White admits that there has still, after over twenty years of *active* use, been a mixed reaction. Alas, after all his careful research and crafting, White was forced to admit that “the sacramental practices to which we are too accustomed play a major role in shaping what we experience and believe. For this reason, practice seems to have a priority to faith.”¹⁵ The presentation of the new liturgy at the 1972 General Conference was only intended to be a trial run, but the overwhelmingly positive, and even enthusiastic, reception it received was not anticipated and, as such, may have caused the Commission to short-circuit the process. In his keynote address to the Order of St. Luke at their quadrennial convention in 2000, White acknowledged that the Commission should have preceded the publication of the new rite with whitepapers. In hindsight he realized that *Sacraments as God's Self Giving* was intended as his whitepaper, but it didn't appear until 1983 after being told by numerous publishers that there was not market for a Protestant book on sacramental theology. Perhaps this attitude alone should have been some kind of red flag at the time.

Since at least Prosper of Aquitaine (c. 390–455), the church has affirmed the principle of *lex orandi, lex credendi*. Yet the problem may not lie simply in hoping to shift liturgical practice. As White readily acknowledges, the Commission likely should have engaged in efforts to provide resources to adequately educate the new church about the theology which grounded and shaped its new prayer. A whole host of issues could, and likely needed to, have been addressed. But if what White asserts is true—that the new rite reflected the strongest statement of eucharistic

¹⁵ White, *Self Giving*, 9ff. Similarly, in the introduction to an entire issue of *Quarterly Review* dedicated to the Eucharist, editor Hendrik Pieterse asserts that no matter how profound the transformation is that has taken place in our liturgy, that transformation has failed to take hold in the eucharistic practice of most United Methodist congregations. Hendrick R. Pieterse, “Eating with United Methodists.” *Quarterly Review* 22, no. 3 (Fall 2002), 222.

sacrifice in any then-current Protestant liturgy—then articulating a theology of eucharistic sacrifice would seem to have been one of the most pressing tasks, whether through the members of the Commission or others on behalf of the church. This is especially true given the sensitive nature of referring to the Eucharist as a sacrifice among Protestants. And it would seem even more so for Wesleyans, who were, largely unknowingly, heirs to a rich doctrine from their founders.

1.2. The Language of Sacrifice: Theological Explorations

That is not to say there were not attempts to do so. There is, of course, the classic study of J. Ernest Rattenbury (1870–1963), first published in 1948.¹⁶ In many ways, it became the definitive baseline study—even somewhat of a “gold standard”—for all future examinations of the Wesleys’ eucharistic doctrine, especially as it dealt with eucharistic sacrifice, despite the fact that it contains errors in its scholarship which led Rattenbury to make erroneous conclusions. This was followed by two major studies: one by Franz Hildebrandt (1909–1985), a German-Lutheran-turned-American-Methodist trained in theology in Berlin, Marburg, and Tübingen, entitled *I Offered Christ: A Protestant Study of the Mass*, published in 1967;¹⁷ and one by Ole Edvard Borgen (1925–2009), bishop of the Northern Europe Central Conference, entitled *John Wesley on the Sacraments: A Theological Study*, published in 1972.¹⁸ All three of these studies have as their aim an examination of Wesley’s eucharistic theology but, more importantly, pre-date the work of the Commission and, therefore, do not directly address the particular theology

¹⁶ 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*, 3rd American ed. (Akron, OH: OSL Publications), 2006.

¹⁷ Franz Hildebrandt, *I Offered Christ: A Protestant Study of the Mass* (London: Epworth Press, 1967).

¹⁸ Ole E. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments: A Theological Study* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972).

of eucharistic sacrifice embodied there. In other words, they do not attempt to articulate the new *lex orandi* of the church.

One of the first relevant attempts was a study by Richard Lee Fleming entitled *The Concept of Sacrifice in the Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley*.¹⁹ This study, a doctor of ministry project completed at Southern Methodist University in 1980, would probably not warrant attention but for two salient facts: it was supervised by James White,²⁰ and its stated aim was to “aid United Methodists in the appropriation of their own heritage of eucharistic theology, and to identify what contributions they may make in the on-going discussion of eucharistic sacrifice.”²¹ As such, Fleming’s project marks the first which focuses specifically on examining the Wesleys’ understanding of eucharistic sacrifice in light of the church’s new rite.

Fleming’s study, indeed, builds upon Rattenbury and Borgen, asserting that the Eucharist is a sacrifice “by its very participation in the Sacrifice of Christ.”²² In doing so, Fleming emphasizes the Wesleys’ grounding of eucharistic sacrifice in union with and participation in Christ. The Eucharist is that means “which brings together the sacrifice [of the Cross], the acceptance of the sacrifice, and the persons from whom that sacrifice is offered.”²³ When considering the effects of participation in Christ’s sacrifice, Fleming notes the Wesleys’ belief that sacrificial rites effect “new life in the worshippers attendant upon those rites.”²⁴ All these theological claims are foregrounded by the rite in the statement of eucharistic oblation.²⁵

¹⁹ Richard Lee Fleming, “The Concept of Sacrifice in the Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley” (DMin project, Southern Methodist University, 1980).

²⁰ The rest of the committee consisted of William Babcock and Roger Deschner.

²¹ Fleming, 1.

²² *Ibid.*, 105.

²³ *Ibid.*, 104.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 101–2.

²⁵ Curiously, what is absent is an increased emphasis on the agency of the Holy Spirit, which is somewhat surprising given the fact that James White advocated intensely for a strong *epiclesis* in the new, emerging rite.

Despite this early attempt to “aid United Methodists in the appropriation of their own heritage of eucharistic theology,” the discourse on eucharistic theology seems to have fallen silent during the most important period of liturgical renewal in the church—from Fleming’s study in 1980 through the promulgation of the new rite in 1989 and 1992 with the production and release of the new denomination’s first hymnal and book of worship—only to be revived by the occasion of the 250th anniversary of *HLS*. In 1995, the Charles Wesley Society focused the theme of its sixth annual meeting on *HLS*, its impact (or lack thereof), and contemporary implications. While providing an opportunity to renew the discourse surrounding the hymn collection after a fifteen year hiatus and focusing its attention on the ecclesiological and ecumenical ramifications which began to emerge in Fleming’s study, the papers presented at the Society’s meeting do not pick up in any decisive way the theme of eucharistic sacrifice which was central to the Wesleys’ collection, Fleming’s project, and the newly released United Methodist rite.²⁶

In its efforts to explore the ecumenical dimension of *HLS*, the Society invited several scholars from different traditions to reflect on *HLS* from their own ecclesial perspective. In that context, several of the authors comment on eucharistic sacrifice as it concerns *HLS*. J. Neil Alexander in his “Anglican Reflections” mentions that, in his judgment, the Eucharist “as the intersection of heaven and earth...receive[s] its fullest expression from Daniel Brevint”; and that “almost inseparable from it...is Brevint’s retrieval of Eucharist as sacrifice and the relationship

²⁶ This is not to imply that the members of the Society would or should have been aware of Fleming’s study, but instead merely to point out that eucharistic sacrifice is perhaps *the* aspect which makes *HLS* unique (and, one might say, ahead of its time) but in any case, according to White, certainly the aspect which makes the United Methodist rite unique.

of Eucharist as sacrifice to Eucharist as sacrament.”²⁷ From there, however, the issue of sacrifice is dropped.

James Logan in his “Methodist Perspective” states that, for John Wesley, the themes of memorial, means of grace, and pledge of heaven are “held in a unity through the undergirding logic of the atoning sacrifice and heavenly intercession” and that “the hymns treat extensively the sacrament as implying a sacrifice complete with the continuing ministry of the heavenly Priest at the heavenly Altar.”²⁸ He even asserts that “the full reality of Christ crucified and risen, sacrificing and interceding is manifested in a real presence when in faith one participates in the Eucharist.”²⁹ Here Logan acknowledges a link, albeit weak and only implied, between sacrifice and participation, but other than these two brief statements, the concept is not pursued further.

For her part, Teresa Berger in her comparison of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and *HLS* points out that the language of sacrifice permeates both the *Catechism* and *HLS* and that all the ways in which the *Catechism* interprets the Eucharist as a sacrifice are present as themes in *HLS*. In fact, “both bodies of texts show amazing convergence at this point.”³⁰ The scope of Berger’s comparison, however, is broader than simply the theme of sacrifice, so the concept fades into the shadows.

Fr. Francis Frost in his discussion of what he sees as the Wesleys’ sacramental veil states that, although “the sacramental veil is not taken away...[i]n the sacrament of the Eucharist, we

²⁷ J. Neil Alexander, “With Eloquence in Speech and Song: Anglican Reflections on the Eucharistic Hymns (1745) of John and Charles Wesley,” in *Proceedings of the Charles Wesley Society*, vol. 2, ed. by S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. (Madison, NJ: The Charles Wesley Society, 1995), 44.

²⁸ James C. Logan, “The Wesleys’ *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* from a Methodist Perspective,” in *Proceedings of the Charles Wesley Society*, vol. 2, ed. by S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. (Madison, NJ: The Charles Wesley Society, 1995), 54.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

³⁰ Teresa Berger, “‘Finding Echoes’: The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*,” in *Proceedings of the Charles Wesley Society*, vol. 2, ed. by S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. (Madison, NJ: The Charles Wesley Society, 1995), 68.

go through the veil of the rent flesh of Jesus to the point of being intimately united with the love of God.”³¹ Here Frost gestures toward the theme which we have seen emerge with respect to the Wesleys’ understanding of eucharistic sacrifice, union with or participation in Christ, but Frost does not explicitly place these concepts in the context of sacrifice nor does he discuss their interconnection any further.

So, while the Wesleyan understanding of eucharistic sacrifice is not ignored by the conference papers, in the end they do not represent any significant advancement in the discussion. And given the conference’s aim to explore the impact of *HLS* and its contemporary implications, it seems quite odd that no mention of the United Methodist rite is made in light of its unusual and bold claims (for Protestants) about eucharistic sacrifice. That said, the conference may possibly be credited with bringing the issue back to the attention of scholars and theologians working in the Wesleyan tradition, for the next fifteen years produced more, promising scholarship. Following in the wake of this renewal of the discourse, several works have appeared: Lorna Khoo’s 2002 dissertation, “Wesleyan Eucharistic Spirituality: Its Nature, Sources, and Future,” subsequently released in book form (2005); Daniel Stevick’s detailed study of the hymns, *The Altar’s Fire: Charles Wesley’s Hymns on the Lord’s Supper, 1745: Introduction and Comment* (2004); Aaron Kerr’s 2007 dissertation, “John and Charles Wesleys’ Hymns on the Lord’s Supper (1745): Their Meaning for Methodist Ecclesial Identity and Ecumenical Dialogue”; and Stephen Sours’ 2011 dissertation, written under the supervision of Geoffrey Wainwright at Duke University, “Eucharist and Anthropology: Seeking Convergence on Eucharistic Sacrifice between Catholics and Methodists.”

³¹ Francis Frost, “The Veiled Unveiling of the Glory of God in the Eucharistic Hymns of Charles Wesley: The Self-Emptying Glory of God,” in *Proceedings of the Charles Wesley Society*, vol. 2, ed. by S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. (Madison, NJ: The Charles Wesley Society, 1995), 96.

One of the first large-scale studies to emerge is Lorna Khoo's dissertation and subsequent book on Wesleyan eucharistic spirituality.³² Her examination of the way the Wesleys' eucharistic theology cultivates a particular spirituality allows certain issues of discipleship to come into the foreground, particularly those of suffering and holiness, which are salient to our investigation and will be addressed in chapters 4 and 5. Khoo identifies seven different types of eucharistic sacrifices in the Wesleys' thought, one of which is that we plead Christ's sacrifice to God, praying that God will look on us through Jesus' wounds and hear his blood interceding for us; and another of which is the offering of our own lives, the willingness to live Christ's life, and identifying with him in his sufferings.³³ Khoo insists that in the end, a Christocentric view of the sacrament, combined with the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, profoundly impacts Christian identity. It sets before Christians "a physical, tangible reminder of who [they] are, whose they are, what they are called to be and what they are called to do....[It] could not but colour the way Christians see themselves, the divine, other people, the world and time."³⁴ For the Wesleys, Christian identity is formed at the Eucharist and, moreover, it is shaped by *sacrificial* language. Given the identity-forming belief The United Methodist Church assumed in its new rite, Khoo's claims offer valuable insight into the importance of articulating a Wesleyan theology of eucharistic sacrifice. Yet in the end, Khoo leaves the ecclesial implications of her claim unexamined.³⁵

³² Lorna Lock-Nah Khoo, *Wesleyan Eucharistic Spirituality: Its Nature, Sources, and Future*, ATF Dissertation Series 2 (Adelaide, Australia: ATF Press, 2005).

³³ *Ibid.*, 77, 83.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 192.

³⁵ Such a choice might be overlooked given that Khoo is ordained in the Methodist Church in Singapore and not The United Methodist Church. However, she studied at Southern Methodist University under John Deschner, whom she describes as her "theological father," and given that she advocates in her book for a restoration of Wesleyan eucharistic spirituality, it would seem that The United Methodist Church and its liturgical practice would have provided a perfect case study.

Daniel Stevick provides one of the most detailed expositions of *HLS* since Rattenbury's was penned sixty years prior.³⁶ Like Fleming and Khoo before him, Stevick also emphasizes the theme of participation in his discussion of Wesleyan eucharistic sacrifice. Under the heading "Sharers with Christ" in his chapter on "Concerning the Sacrifice of Our Persons," Stevick affirms that for the Wesleys, the believer shares in, and is conformed to, not only Christ's death and resurrection, but also his sufferings. In a short excursive "essay" entitled "On Jesus' 'Wounds'," Stevick argues that the imagery of Jesus' wounds provide "a way of speaking paradoxically of a wounded healer or of healing wounds."³⁷ He goes on to emphasize that in this sinful, fallen world, things are not set aright without pain, and Jesus' wounds signify his solidarity with sinful humanity, speak to the hurt that human redemption inflicted on him, and provide "authority for Christ's continued, availing plea for his people."³⁸ True though these statements may be, solidarity and authority would not seem to be all that the Wesleys had in mind when they petition God to "look through Jesus' wounds on me" (*HLS* 120:1), a line which Stevick quotes, although he does not tie the image back to the believer's own participation and, indeed, sanctification. The promising image of wounded healer/healing wounds—one which, again, implies a process of sanctification—unfortunately remains unexplored.

In his 2007 dissertation exploring the way in which *HLS* could serve as a "bridge document" between Roman Catholic and Methodist theologies, Aaron Kerr specifically links sacrifice and holiness when he states that "we must explore the particular way that holiness implies sacrifice," for the hymns in *HLS* "carry forth notions of holiness that convey the sacrificial dimension of

³⁶ Daniel B. Stevick, *The Altar's Fire: Charles Wesley's Hymns on the Lord's Supper, 1745: Introduction and Comment* (Peterborough, Eng.: Epworth Press, 2004).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 179.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 170–80.

Eucharistic life.”³⁹ In his exploration of the ethical implications of sacrifice, Kerr puts forth the idea that, as created beings, humans are “stewards” of everything they have. He asserts that this concept of stewardship—the idea that in our own sacrifice we return to God that which God has lent us—is directly related to Christ’s atoning work in his own sacrifice, for “Christ did that which we cannot, reconciling humanity to God through his Trinitarian offering of death. This effect arouses in the steward a sense of life’s lending. It ‘takes’ our sin, freeing us to return the gifts we have been given.”⁴⁰ For Kerr, Christ actively takes our sins, and it is this very act of taking that enables our own sacrifice and which, in turn, enables our own holy living. Kerr is quick to point out, however, that the Wesleys do not advocate that believers are called to suffer simply for the sake of suffering. Rather, “holiness is a result of the church joining its offering to that which Christ offered.”⁴¹ Here, then, Kerr has tied the sanctification which enables ethical (and holy) living directly to the sacramental sacrifice. By placing its sacrificial offering on the sacrificial offering of Christ, the church has not only identified itself with Christ’s holiness, but also immersed itself in and united itself with Christ’s holiness.

Perhaps the most recent work to be produced is Stephen Sours’ 2011 dissertation, which was supervised by Geoffrey Wainwright, a theologian who has dedicated a great deal of his career to cultivating a deeper understanding of eucharistic sacrifice in a Wesleyan context, both as a part of his own work and as part of the Roman Catholic-Methodist dialogues.⁴² Moreover, Sours’ dissertation examines eucharistic sacrifice as it shapes and is shaped by the Wesleys’

³⁹ Aaron K. Kerr, “John and Charles Wesleys’ Hymns on the Lord’s Supper (1745): Their Meaning for Methodist Ecclesial Identity and Ecumenical Dialogue” (PhD diss., Duquesne University, 2007), 235.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 238.

⁴² Stephen Sours, “Eucharist and Anthropology: Seeking Convergence on Eucharistic Sacrifice between Catholics and Methodists” (PhD diss., Duke University, 2011).

anthropology. Echoing Stevick and, to some extent, Khoo and Kerr, Sours affirms that the Wesleys, along with Orthodox Christianity, are intent on speaking of the Eucharist as spiritual medicine for healing our diseased nature. Sours asserts that one of the Wesleys' aims is to hold together the interiority of faith *with* the need for an external signification. Quoting from VI.3 of Wesley's extract, Sours points out that in addition to the forgiveness and sanctification that those who are "under the shadow of his cross" hope to obtain by presenting to God the "figure of his sacrifice," the goal of human agency in uniting to the Cross is to "present ourselves in very deed before him."⁴³

Further, Sours points out that in the following section of the extract, "VII: Concerning the Sacrifice of Ourselves," this refusal to reduce faith to an interior disposition and, instead, contend for a faith which is fully embodied becomes foregrounded when Wesley insists that the believer's sacrifice is not incidental to the life of faith: "[it] 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."⁴⁴ Even further, Wesley goes on to state that believers cannot expect to enjoy communion with Christ in glory unless they "have *conformity* with him here in his *sufferings*" (VII.4; emphasis original). Sours concludes, therefore, that for the Wesleys the consequence of union with Christ's sacrifice in the Eucharist "is nothing short of a complete transformation from sin and guilt to atonement and pardon, the crucifixion of the sinful body in order to offer oneself as a holy and living sacrifice to God."⁴⁵

All of these authors draw attention to the highly christocentric understanding of eucharistic sacrifice espoused by the Wesleys. In the Eucharist, Christ's once-for-all sacrifice is made

⁴³ Ibid., 152.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 153, quoting VII.1 (emphasis original).

⁴⁵ Sours, 156.

present and the full measure of the benefits thereof is conveyed to the believer. At the same time, the believer casts his/her own sacrifice—of praise and thanksgiving, of self, of goods, of vows, and of deeds—onto the sacrifice of Christ which is presented through Christ as a joint oblation before the heavenly throne. All of this is accomplished with the added agency of the Holy Spirit, who makes Christ’s sacrifice present to the believer and the believer present to it and thereby communicates the grace contained therein. The eucharistic sacrifice, then, grounded in the joint oblation of the believer and Christ, is nothing less than the believer’s full participation in and union with Christ’s sacrifice. It is this communion and joint oblation which serves as the gateway by which our sacrifice is accepted by God. Because our own oblation already includes ourselves, our goods, and our deeds, the sanctification which we receive in the sacrament manifests itself as holy living or sacrificial discipleship.

This would appear to be a fairly reasonable summary of the Wesleys’ understanding of eucharistic sacrifice based on our survey of these authors’ works. More importantly, such an understanding of eucharistic sacrifice forms the foundation on which any claim of eucharistic oblation in the United Methodist rite rests—presuming that it intends to “be” Wesleyan. And there is no reason to believe that it didn’t. Those involved in crafting the United Methodist rite were all students of Wesley and, in particular, Wesley’s teachings on eucharistic sacrifice as contained in *HLS*. Furthermore, it is not a stretch to see such a theology sown into the fabric of the United Methodist statement of eucharistic oblation. Yet none of these authors tie their work directly back to the explicit statement of eucharistic sacrifice in the church’s rite. So, does this work bring to birth a theology of eucharistic sacrifice for the church as it embodies it in its prayer? Does this articulate a *lex credendi* for the church’s new *lex orandi*? To answer this question, we will turn to a quick examination of the church’s own teaching, as well as ancillary

documents promoted by the church's official agencies, and to the church's ecumenical dialogues with Roman Catholics to see how eucharistic sacrifice is understood and articulated.

1.3. The Language of Sacrifice: Ecclesiastical Expressions

Given the fact that United Methodists have not developed a doctrine of the Eucharist as sacrifice, examination of current thought will draw on three sources: *This Holy Mystery*; the current United Methodist eucharistic rite as found in the *Book of Worship*, adopted by the General Conference in 1992; and *Living into the Mystery*.

The title *This Holy Mystery* comes from the Prayer after Receiving in the United Methodist rite, thus showing a preference for the language of the rite as identity-forming. *THM* was first adopted by the General Conference in 2004 and subsequently renewed in 2012.⁴⁶ As mentioned above, while affirming the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ, *THM* asserts that the Eucharist is a *type* of sacrifice in that it is a re-presentation of the sacrifice of Christ and in that we present ourselves as a sacrifice in union with Christ's offering. The document also acknowledges that the Wesleys published a collection of 166 *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* and that they wrote about sacrifice as part of their understanding of the "multifaceted nature of the Lord's Supper."⁴⁷ Beyond this, however, the document has nothing to say about a Wesleyan understanding of eucharistic sacrifice. It does acknowledge that Zwingli taught that Communion is a "memorial or reminder of Christ's sacrifice." But while it states that "Zwingli's views are widely shared today,

⁴⁶ Resolutions of the General Conference expire after eight years and must, therefore, be renewed. Since *THM* was last renewed in 2012, it will require renewal again this year if it is to remain an official statement (i.e., teaching) of the church. It will be interesting to see if the General Conference is able to do this amid all the other competing exigencies for the church, or if it will become one more innocent casualty in the church's struggle to find its identity.

⁴⁷ *THM*, 5.

especially within evangelical churches,” it never explicitly states that the Wesleys repudiated this view.⁴⁸

Given the apparent stress in the Wesleys understanding of eucharistic sacrifice on the offering of ourselves and our gifts as the primary mode by which we participate in Christ’s sacrifice, we might expect some emphasis on these aspects of the eucharistic celebration. *THM* states that it is appropriate for laity to present the eucharistic elements as part of the offering, but it does not tie this action back to any concept of sacrifice.⁴⁹ The discussion as to how to use the basic pattern of worship in the *Book of Worship*, the church’s other authoritative document on worship, does state that the bread and the cup, brought by representatives of the people, should be brought forward during the Offertory. However, the eucharistic elements are listed last in a list of three after 1) monetary gifts or products of labor and 2) other appropriate gifts such as memorial gifts or other items to be dedicated.⁵⁰ If the normative pattern of worship for Sunday is to include a eucharistic celebration, and the presentation of the eucharistic elements is to be interpreted as a significant way in which the assembly participates in the offering (sacrifice), it seems odd that the eucharistic elements would be listed last. On the other hand, to help reinforce that the Offertory be considered part of the Eucharist, *THM* points out that the United Methodist rite calls for the celebrant to stand behind the altar-table, facing the people, beginning with the Offertory and continuing through the Fraction. It is not insignificant, therefore, that the explication of the rite in the *Book of Worship* states that the first act of the historical four-fold

⁴⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 28.

⁵⁰The United Methodist Church (U.S.) and Langford, *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), 28.

action—take, bless, break, give—takes place during the Offertory (i.e., not during the eucharistic prayer).

In 2007, the General Board of Discipleship, the global agency which oversees worship resources for the church, published *Living into the Mystery: A United Methodist Guide for Celebrating Holy Communion* as a customary to accompany *THM*.⁵¹ As mentioned above, of the four times that *Living into the Mystery* refers to the Eucharist as a sacrifice, twice it refers to it as a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving: once while discussing the gifts we have to offer and once while discussing the Great Thanksgiving as a ritual act.⁵² On the other hand, contrary to what the list of offerings in the *Book of Worship* might imply, *Living into the Mystery* asserts that the primary offering presented in the course of the community's worship is the offering of bread and wine and clearly communicates a theology which sees the entire sweep of action from the Offertory to the Distribution as the Eucharist.⁵³ It also states that the statement of eucharistic oblation points beyond vocalization to a full physical embodiment of giving and sacrifice.⁵⁴ The customary suggests, therefore, that the celebrant and the gathered assembly not only both stand but also both adopt the posture of praying in the *orans* position, a posture which embodies both the offering ourselves and a readiness to receive God's gifts.⁵⁵ Reinforcing the idea that we offer ourselves in the Eucharist (and that the Offertory is part of the eucharistic action), *Living into the Mystery* describes the Confession, Pardon, and Peace, which take place immediately prior to the Offertory, as "a profound act of final preparation to offer ourselves and our gifts fully to God."⁵⁶

⁵¹ Perhaps ironically, the first sentence of the preface states, "United Methodists have created and published outstanding resources for interpreting the *theology* of our worship" (emphasis original).

⁵² Anderson, "Living into the Mystery," 20, 31.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 27, 31.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

These mixed results are joined by other statements of greater ambivalence—if not detriment—in other resources published and promoted by the global agency, now marketed under the names Discipleship Ministries and Discipleship Resources.⁵⁷ While *THM* advocates for the preferred use of the hyphenated “altar-table” as a way to mitigate the tensions between sacrifice and ritual meal, a study guide to *THM* published in 2005 states that “it is preferable that the table not be referred to as the ‘altar,’ since that terms carries the meaning of sacrifice and may obscure the other rich meanings of the sacrament.”⁵⁸ What happened to the preference for the hybrid terms which maintains the tension, ambiguity, and polyvalent nature of the sacrament? Such a comment serves, in the assessment of Aaron Kerr, not only to confuse clergy and laity, but also “diminishes the synthetic and therefore ecumenical potency of the United Methodist identity.”⁵⁹ An additional resource, *The Meaning of Holy Communion in The United Methodist Church* by E. Byron Anderson, makes no mention of sacrifice, despite the fact that *THM* names sacrifice as one of six *meanings*.⁶⁰ Moreover, Anderson states that “in the Eucharist, we continue to offer our praise and thanksgiving to God”⁶¹ and that “at the Lord’s table we are shaped in the language of thanksgiving and remembrance.”⁶² Note that there is no mention of offering ourselves in the first statement, and the last statement comes in the final paragraph of the monograph in answer to the question, “What does Holy Communion mean for United

⁵⁷ To be clear, resources published by the General Board of Discipleship, Discipleship Ministries, and Discipleship Resources do not hold official status. However, because they are published and promoted by an official, global agency of the church, they are often received and perceived as having the same status as other documents such as *THM*. This is particularly the case with the study guide to *THM*.

⁵⁸ Gayle Carlton Felton, *This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2005), 49.

⁵⁹ Kerr, 206.

⁶⁰ E. Byron Anderson, *The Meaning of Holy Communion in The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2016). While it is true that Anderson’s text originally appeared in 2000 before the adoption and promulgation of *THM*, a revised (and significantly expanded) edition was published in 2014.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 64.

Methodists?” Not only does this exclude four of the six meanings claimed by *THM*, it seems to rule out that we are shaped by the language of sacrifice, something with which Khoo might take issue, precisely because it forecloses the ethical implications entailed therein.⁶³ The closest Anderson comes to anything near the sacrificial theology implied in the eucharistic oblation is a statement he makes which exegetes the “third section” of the prayer (post-Sanctus, Institution Narrative, and Anamnesis). There he states that, “having remembered God’s mighty acts in Jesus Christ and Christ’s offering for us, we join ourselves to Christ and offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving.”⁶⁴ This might be understood as a relatively strong statement of eucharistic sacrifice, except that it comes under the heading “Remembrance,” thus reinforcing the primary, if not only, function and thrust of the liturgical act is memorial.

In the wake of Vatican II’s call for greater visible unity of the body of Christ, the Methodist World Council and the Roman Catholic Church have supported a Joint Commission for ecumenical dialogue since 1967. This commission has issued regular quinquennial statements beginning with their report of 1971. These statements are commonly known as the *Denver Report* (1971), the *Dublin Report* (1976), the *Honolulu Report* (1981), the *Nairobi Report* (1986), the *Singapore Report* (1991), the *Rio de Janeiro Report* (1996), the *Brighton Report* (2001), the *Seoul Report* (2006), the *Durban Report* (2011), and the *Rome Report* (2016).⁶⁵ Of the ten reports, six of them (Denver, Dublin, Singapore, Rio de Janeiro, Seoul, and Durban) address eucharistic sacrifice in some fashion.⁶⁶ While these reports by nature identify significant

⁶³ The implications of this move will be the topic of chapters 4 and 5.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁵ Reports may be accessed online at <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/consiglio-metodista-mondiale/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo.html>. Hereafter, citations will be given parenthetically by section number and city name when needed for clarification, i.e., (§68) or (*Denver* §68).

⁶⁶ The *Honolulu Report* states that, in response to the presence of disobedience in the world, “only the daily offering of our bodies as a living sacrifice can display the triumph of his grace. By the Spirit we drink the cup of Christ and share his life” (§19). The *Nairobi Report* states that “in the eucharist Christ is really present to the

points of convergence and divergence on theological and doctrinal issues, for the purposes of this study our examination will focus on Methodist articulations of their own understanding of eucharistic sacrifice, particularly as it progresses over the course of the 40-year span of the reports.

When it came to the issue of eucharistic sacrifice, the original Joint Commission raised in the *Denver Report* the question of “how far we may speak of a sacrifice” and admitted that it could not hope to “come up with solutions of questions which still exercise the scholars in the learned world” (§81). Nevertheless, the Commission was able to reach “an astonishing, helpful and hopeful measure of agreement” (§82). In principle, they affirmed (§83.II):

1. The Eucharist is the celebration of Christ’s full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, offered once and for all, for the whole world.
2. It is a memorial which is more than a recollection of a past event. It is a re-enactment of Christ’s triumphant sacrifice and makes available for us its benefits.
3. For this reason Roman Catholics call the Eucharist a sacrifice, though this terminology is not used by Methodists.
4. In this celebration we share in Christ’s offering to [*sic*] himself in obedience to the Father’s will.

And while further, explicit discussion is not offered with respect to what is offered in the Eucharist, the last point above implies that there is a “double offering”; that is, that we offer

believer (cf. *Dublin Report*, 1976, no. 54), who is thus bound together in *koinonia* both with the Lord and with others who share the sacramental meal” (§12). In both of these cases, however, no further exploration of eucharistic sacrifice is pursued. In fact, the *Nairobi Report* in a footnote qualifies the reference to the Eucharist mentioned above, stating that “both in this paragraph and the succeeding one the references to the eucharist emphasize only certain communal and personal aspects which are immediately relevant to this discussion of the Church. In the *Dublin Report*, nn. 47–74, the Commission has given a much fuller account of the present areas of agreement and of remaining disagreement concerning this sacrament” (n2).

ourselves in union with Christ's offering, though, as we shall see, this language is somewhat contested. Nevertheless, such a claim, which would be congruent with the emerging United Methodist rite even if it did not yet articulate it, is undermined by the assertion that Methodists do not use the terminology of sacrifice.⁶⁷ While the report did not go further in exploring eucharistic sacrifice, the measure of agreement reached is encouraging given the nascent nature of the United Methodist's exploration of this doctrine and that the Methodists were candid in not hiding the fact that "the Eucharistic devotion of the Wesleys and the hymns of Charles Wesley are no index at all to the place of holy Communion in the life, thought and devotion of modern Methodists" (§80).

In the *Dublin Report* (1976), the Commission sustained their affirmation in the *Denver Report* of a common mind regarding eucharistic sacrifice (§§ 62–63), including that the Eucharist "expresses our response—both personal and corporate—to God's initiative in a sacrifice not only of praise and thanksgiving, but also of the glad surrender of our lives to God and to his service. Thus, we are united with Christ in his joyful and obedient self-offering" (§52). While this language does not explicitly state that in the Eucharist we "offer" ourselves, it would be hard to interpret the "surrender of our lives to God" as anything other than an offering. Thus, the language of *Dublin* appears to affirm that of *Denver*, that in the Eucharist there is a two-fold or double offering, of ourselves and of Christ.

Beyond this, however, the language begins to break down. The report admits that Methodists are not accustomed to using the term "sacrifice" with respect to the Eucharist and that it is more prominent in the hymns of the Wesleys than in the prayers of the various traditions (§64). It also

⁶⁷ While it is true that the dialogue involved Methodists from several traditions—with perhaps a bias toward British Methodists, The United Methodist Church being still quite young—the absolute nature of the statement implies it is not used in any Methodist tradition.

states that, when they do use such language, it refers first to Christ's once-for-all sacrifice on the Cross, second to our "pleading" of the sacrifice, third to our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and lastly to the sacrifice of ourselves (§65). To accept the language that the Eucharist makes Christ's once-for-all sacrifice present in a sacramental way would imply for some Methodists that Christ is still being sacrificed. Rather, Methodists would prefer to say that, having offered himself once as a sacrifice for sins, Christ "now lives to make intercession for us so that we in union with him can offer ourselves to the Father, making his sacrificial death our only plea" (§66).

It is difficult in ecumenical dialogues such as these to puzzle out individual ecclesial voices given the pan-denominational nature of the Methodist side of the dialogue. Since language must be agreed upon by consensus, one can only presume that limits of agreement are often set by the outlying voice(s). The preoccupation with the distance between "pleading" a sacrifice and "offering" a sacrifice—a distance which will be stated explicitly 35 years later in the *Durban Report*—is curious, however. On the one hand, we can only presume that such a distinction comes from another Methodist tradition, perhaps British. The United Methodist tradition doesn't include reference to pleading in its successor eucharistic prayers, and the 1972 text of the emerging prayer, which was so enthusiastically embraced at General Conference, asks that God "accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, in union with Christ's offering for us as a reasonable and holy surrender of ourselves."⁶⁸ This language is nearly identical to the language of §52 above. One might wonder if the American Methodists had a hand in crafting this language, inspired by their emerging prayer.

⁶⁸ The United Methodist Church (U.S.), *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper: An Alternate Text*, Supplemental Worship Resources, no. 1 (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1972).

On the other hand, it is hard to see how if the communicant is (1) offering a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, which is the holy “surrender” of our lives, and (2) that offering is in union with Christ’s offering, that the communicant isn’t in some way also offering Christ’s sacrifice with Christ, for as the head, so the body. The language of “pleading” would seem to put too much distance between the action of the head and the body and call into question which kind of union (or participation, as the document also speaks) the faithful are actually experiencing. And if there was such a distance between American Methodists and other Methodists on whether we “offer” or “plead,” then it is curious that the report didn’t offer some indication of this distance between Methodists just as it did with respect to eucharistic sharing.⁶⁹ We shall return to the relationship between our offering and Christ’s offering as the central issue in chapter 4.

The *Singapore Report* (1991) returns to, and perhaps clarifies, the language of offering.⁷⁰ Whereas the *Dublin Report* spoke in terms of “surrendering our lives,” the *Singapore Report* states that believers “partake of the eucharistic meal, where, through and with Christ, in the Spirit, they offer a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to the Father” (§28). In response to their experience of the presence of Christ in worship, believers “present to God all that they have and all that they are as their own sacrifice of praise” (§68). So here, it seems, Methodists have embraced the language of offering and presentation, at least with respect to their own lives as a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. The report is silent on whether Christ’s sacrifice (or offering) is “offered” or “pleaded.” It does, however, emphasize the language of union and

⁶⁹ The report offers just such a clarification with respect to its statement regarding the Methodist practice of so-called “open table”: “Certainly Methodists welcome to the Lord’s table baptised communicant members of other communions who desire to come to it. But this does not mean that Methodism historically accepted *or now universally accepts* the method whereby an open invitation is given to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ (irrespective of church membership), although such an invitation is often given.” *Durban Report* §68 (emphasis added).

⁷⁰ One might wonder if some of the clarification gained here might be due to the solidification, and, finally, adoption, of language by The United Methodist Church since the topic was last addressed in Dublin in 1976.

participation. As already noted above, the report asserts that we offer our sacrifice “with Christ,” and when discussing the church’s early worship as described in community of Acts 2, the report states that “the profound nature of their relation to each other was manifested in the giving of the peace and, pre-eminently, in the Holy Communion” (§44).

The Commission’s next report, *Rio de Janeiro* (1996), reaffirms that Methodists and Catholics agree that the Eucharist is a memorial of Christ’s sacrifice. But it then goes on to say that as the baptized partake of the Eucharist “they present and plead his sacrifice before God the Father” (§102). So, while *Singapore* was silent on whether Christ’s sacrifice is “offered” or “pleaded,” *Rio de Janeiro* makes clear that the language is still in play. The report does, however, reaffirm and even expand the language of union and participation. The sacramental life of the church “expresses communion with God and with one another in a profound way.” The bread and the cup are a participation in the body and blood of Christ (drawing on I Cor 10), and “‘discerning the body’ (I Cor 11:29) means both to recognize the reality of our communion with Christ *and* to be responsible for the fellowship with brothers and sisters in the Lord” (§118).

Renewed direct discussion of eucharistic sacrifice was taken up in the Commission’s 2006 report, “The Grace Given You in Christ: Catholics and Methodists Reflect Further on the Church” (the *Seoul Report*). In this report, the Catholic Church invites “Methodists to look afresh at those doctrines which, in the turmoil of the Reformation, became obscured in Protestant thought and life instead of simply being reformed of their excesses. Outstanding among these would be the *sacrificial* aspect of the Eucharist.” But reaffirming Vatican II’s assertion that dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas but also an exchange of gifts,⁷¹ part of the gift

⁷¹ The concept of dialogue as an exchange of gifts is first expressed by Pope Paul VI in his 1964 encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam* (§83), and then reaffirmed by Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium* (§13). It is then subsequently reaffirmed by Pope John Paul II in his 1995 encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint* (§28).

Catholics would like to share with Methodists is a new articulation of Catholic doctrine as it relates to the sacrifice of the Eucharist (§130; emphasis original).

For their part, Methodists, while treasuring the Wesleys' emphasis on the Eucharist, acknowledge that they "would benefit from a more developed theology of the Eucharist, such as can be found in Roman Catholic teaching" (§111). However, no further expression of a Methodist understanding of eucharistic sacrifice is provided in the report. Rather, one of the report's proposals for developing relations between the two churches based on the existing degree of mutual recognition is that Methodists, drawing on both the Wesleyan *and* Catholic traditions, "might usefully articulate a more developed theology of the Eucharist with special reference to its sacrificial nature, the sacramental memorial of Christ's saving death and resurrection, the real presence, the ministry of those who preside, and the link between eucharistic communion and ecclesial communion" (§155).

The next report of the Commission, and the last report to address eucharistic sacrifice, the *Durban Report* (2011), does contain a lengthy chapter (§73–134) on the Eucharist in general and eucharistic sacrifice specifically. The chapter was authored by Bishop Michael Evans, who served as the main drafter, and Rev. Dr. Karen Westerfield Tucker, with input from the committee.⁷² The report celebrates that Methodists and Catholics hold a number of beliefs in common, such that "a profound degree of agreement can be reach on the Eucharist as the sacramental memorial of Christ's saving death and resurrection, 'the Holy Eucharist as it implies a sacrifice'" (§89).⁷³ At the same time, the report acknowledges the major differences which remain as articulated in the *Seoul Report*. Among other concerns, it states that "particularly in the

⁷² Email communication with Karen Westerfield Tucker, 30 January 2020.

⁷³ The quotation is a reference to the title of the fourth section of *HLS*.

use of the language of ‘sacrifice’ about the Eucharist, there are important differences of approach between Catholics, who often speak of ‘offering’ Christ’s sacrifice, and Methodists, who sometimes speak rather of ‘pleading’ that sacrifice” (§74). After referencing *HLS*, the report states,

The hymns focus on the intimate union of Christ with his people at the Lord’s Supper, a union by which Christ himself draws his disciples into his sacrifice. “The Wesleys taught an understanding of the eucharistic sacrifice as one in which the offering of the obedient hearts and lives of the communicants was united by grace to the perfect, complete, ever-present and all-atoning sacrifice of Christ.”⁷⁴

Here, then, is the fullest statement regarding eucharistic sacrifice the Commission has yet made (though, ironically, the Methodist portion of the statement is drawn from a document published by the British Methodist Conference in 2003). The statement not only affirms a strong sense of union with and participation in Christ in the Eucharist, it also affirms that communicants are drawn into and united with Christ’s own sacrifice. We are united to Christ as a head to a body such that we are present with Christ as he “presents his saving sacrifice before the Father” (§91). The report asserts that “in this celebration we really share in Christ’s offering of himself in obedience to the Father’s will” (§93). Here the report references *Denver* §83 and *Dublin* §63, though as we have demonstrated above, the language in those places is slightly different, more distanced from “presenting” and “offering” than stated or implied here. The report goes on to say that “we can only give to God what we have already been given by him; we can only ‘offer’ what we have first received” (§94). The apparent closing of the gap between the language of *Denver* and *Dublin* in the language in *Durban* is not insignificant, though evidently also not without qualification as the use of quotation marks suggests.

⁷⁴ *Durban Report* §77. The quoted material comes from British Methodist Conference, *His Presence Makes the Feast: Holy Communion in the Methodist Church* (Peterborough, Eng.: Methodist Publishing House, 2003), §1. Hereafter *HPMF*.

The apparent distance between “offering” and “pleading” returns under the heading of Christ’s eternal priesthood, where the report states that, “Catholics and Methodists are united in understanding the ‘offering’ and ‘pleading’ of Christ’s unique sacrifice—of his blood—as fundamental to his heavenly intercession” (§99). The question from earlier documents, and, indeed, with respect to eucharistic sacrifice as we are concerned here, is not whether the action of offering and pleading of Christ’s sacrifice can be predicated to Christ in his heavenly intercession. Of that there would seem to be no doubt based on the witness of the Epistle to Hebrews (cf. Heb 12:24). The question that seems to be creating distance here is whether the offering of *Christ’s* sacrifice can be predicated to *us* in our eucharistic action. The report makes statements around this concept, as when it later states that Christ “comes in the Eucharist to unite us with himself so that we can be one with him in his eternal giving of himself” (§105) and asserts that both Catholics and Methodists understand the Eucharist to be a making present of Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice “so that Christ’s Church can be one with him in his offering” (§107), a statement which is followed by two sections entitled “Participants, not just bystanders” (§§110–112) and “Christ unites his Church with his self-offering” (§§113–120).

If there is any question, however, as to whether there has been over the Commission’s 40 years of dialogue any influence exerted by Wesley—who, as we will see in chapter 4, seems to be clear that we can somehow offer Christ because we are united to him—or by the United Methodist statement of oblation, which at the very least leaves open the possibility, the definitive evidence comes in §114:

It is Christ himself who makes the offering, and we are drawn into it by him. It is Christ who pleads his sacrifice before the Father: we can only participate by grace....When we ask the question “Who offers the eucharistic sacrifice?”, our answer together as Methodists and Catholics is “Christ our Head united with his Body, the Church.”

This statement is affirmed by quotes from Augustine that the church itself “is offered in the offering *which she makes* to God” (§115; emphasis added) and from Wesley in *HLS* (140.3) who pleads that God see us “ourselves presenting with our Head” (§116).

And yet even in the light of such convergence, there is still distance between the two positions. The report goes on to affirm that the Roman Missal stresses that the church offers Christ’s one sacrifice (§118) but that “Methodists” emphasize that “we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ’s offering for us” (§119); and that, as the British Methodist Church puts it, in the Eucharist “Methodists plead the completed and eternal sacrifice of Christ, and we offer ourselves anew in and through the eternal sacrifice, but we do not in any way offer the sacrifice again” (§124).⁷⁵

There is some irony, and, perhaps, insight, in the last statement from the British Methodist Church. On the one hand, it is a much stronger and clearer statement on eucharistic sacrifice than anything in United Methodist documents and precisely the beginnings of the kind of statement for which we are calling in this project. On the other hand, it may point directly to the kind of influence that Wesley, ecumenical dialogues such as these, and the use of the rite itself may have had over the course of the last 40 years. It is hard to imagine the statement in §114 cited above being made in 1972. At the same time, while the theological clarity of the British Methodist statement may be lacking in any United Methodist documents, American Methodists seem much more comfortable with the concept of “offering” Christ’s sacrifice than the British Methodists, who continue to speak of “pleading” Christ’s sacrifice. As the report generously states, “There

⁷⁵ One has to wonder if “Methodists” in the former case doesn’t refer to United Methodists since the quotation is a direct quote of the United Methodists statement of oblation. The quotation from the British Methodist Church comes from *HPMF* §171.

remain a variety of opinions among Methodists on this issue, but a sacrificial understanding has never been completely lacking in Methodist eucharistic thinking and devotion” (§132).⁷⁶

With this background of Wesley and United Methodist thought in mind, we now turn our attention to an important area of concern regarding sacrificial language before concluding our preliminary discussion and proceeding with our constructive work.

1.4. The Language of Sacrifice: Feminist Concerns

Feminist theologians have offered a great deal of thoughtful insight into the relationship between redemption, sacrifice, and suffering. They have shined a light on the abuse, violence, and self-abnegation with which women have been especially burdened as they have been encouraged to imitate Jesus as the Lamb of God led quietly—and willingly—to slaughter. They point out that, historically, so-called “redemptive” suffering and sacrifice is largely demanded by those in power from those who are already suffering, already oppressed, already marginalized. Moreover, when the narrative of redemptive sacrifice becomes (re)inscribed on the bodies of those already dying, bleeding, and suffering, it falls so short of anything redemptive and it stands itself in need of redemption. Such a (re)inscription produces “toxic psychological and social effects.”⁷⁷ This toxicity is turned on those who themselves suffer as it discourages critique of the systems which brought about their suffering in the first place and prevents them from resisting the imposition of injustice.⁷⁸ Rebecca Parker provides an apt overview of the feminist critique in a crescendo of rhetorical questions:

⁷⁶ It is interesting to note this is the first time we have noted a clear admission of divergent voices on the Methodist side of the dialogue.

⁷⁷ S. Mark Heim, “Christ Crucified: Why Does Jesus’ Death Matter?,” *The Christian Century* 118:8 (March 7, 2001): 14.

⁷⁸ Krista Millay, “Ritual Under Negotiation: A Catholic Feminist Engagement with Sacrificial Atonement Theology,” (ThD diss., Boston University, 2011), 8.

What if the consequence of sacrifice is simply pain, the diminishment of life, fragmentation of the soul, abasement, shame? What if the severing of life is merely destructive of life and is not the path of love, courage, trust, and faith? What if the performance of sacrifice is a ritual in which some human beings bear loss and others are protected from accountability or moral expectations?⁷⁹

Mary Daly was one of the earliest voices to raise this critique in her seminal book *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*.⁸⁰ She asserts that Christianity holds women in a kind of double bind because the very qualities it lifts up as ideal are the very qualities of a victim: “sacrificial love, passive acceptance of suffering, humility, meekness, etc.” These qualities are idealized, of course, because they are associated with Jesus, the Lamb of God, who was led to the slaughter as a victim, and coupled with the fact that Jesus died for our sins, which reinforces a scapegoat model. “Given the victimized situation of the female in sexist society, these ‘virtues’ are hardly qualities that women should be encouraged to have....As the powerless victims of scapegoat psychology, women are deprived of the ‘credit’ for sacrifice and the dignity of taking an active role.”⁸¹ Moreover, she asserts that the emphasis on charity, humility, obedience, self-abnegation, and sacrifice has only been *theoretical* because it has been largely one-sided. As a moral ideology, it became accepted not by men, but rather by women, “who hardly have been helped by an ethic which reinforces the abject female situation.”⁸²

Such power differentials are more than imagined or theoretical. Pamela Cooper-Smith points out that often these same forces work to upend the church's ethical framework with respect to victims. Rather than focusing on the least of these, the church often ends up demonstrating a preferential treatment for the offender. She suggests that there is something deep in the Christian

⁷⁹ Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, *Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering, and the Search for What Saves Us* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 25.

⁸⁰ Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).

⁸¹ Daly, 77.

⁸² Daly, 100.

psyche that “derives more joy and satisfaction out of trying to redeem an offender than trying to protect and vindicate a victim.” Resources—and sympathy—are mobilized for the abuser “while the pain, fear, and very serious safety needs of the victim(s) are downplayed or largely ignored.”⁸³ Such a misdirection and misidentification may happen because the victim’s suffering is already seen as redemptive.⁸⁴ In the process of seeking those who are in need of redemption, the abused have already been counted: by embodying the qualities of a victim they are already “following Jesus.” And so the church’s gaze drifts to the abuser. One might wonder if such a “psyche” is grounded in thought-landscapes such as those of the lost sheep, where the good shepherd will go to extraordinary lengths to save the one who has “wandered from the fold.”

Further, Regula Strobel asserts that there is, paradoxically, a second process of erasure that ensues. To describe those who suffer, or those who choose solidarity with them, as ones who “freely chose” to do so in the face of power structures—whether legitimate or illegitimate, just or unjust—means that not only do we fail to see the victim in their pain, but we once again “make invisible those who *order* crucifixions and oppression.”⁸⁵ In other words, while the abuser as an agent in need of redemption is the object of sympathy and compassion, the abuser as an agent of injustice is quietly overlooked or not even seen. Moreover, by cloaking all of this misidentification, misdirection, and erasure in an effort to live out the ethic of Christ, “we remain

⁸³ Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar: Violence against Women and the Church’s Response* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 210.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Kathleen Zuanich Young’s discussion of the story of Maria Goretti in “The Imperishable Virginity of Saint Maria Goretti,” in *Violence Against Women and Children*, ed. Carol J. Adams and Marie M. Fortune (New York: Continuum, 1995), 279–86.

⁸⁵ Regula Strobel, “New Ways of Speaking About the Cross: A New Basis for Christian Identity,” in *Toward a New Heaven and a New Earth: Essays in Honor of Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza*, ed. Fernando F Segovia (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 359 (emphasis added).

stuck in the dominant discourse of sacrifice. We remain convinced that victims and oppressors are unavoidable on the way to salvation and liberation.”⁸⁶

Because the Eucharist is not only the ritual reenactment of Christ as the victim *par excellence* but also historically the central ritual act of the church, it has become the focal point for the embodiment of a great deal of pain and, thus, a great deal of criticism by feminists. The former is especially true for survivors of sexual abuse.⁸⁷ While untold numbers of examples remain unspoken because of the pain, terror, and shame involved in the very memory of them, Rebecca Parker bravely shares her own experience in the book she co-authored with Rita Nakashima Brock, *Proverbs to Ashes*:

Even before I began to recover memories of having been sexually molested I had decided to stop taking communion. I remember one Sunday sitting at the back of the church when the words of the communion liturgy were being read. An overwhelming feeling came over me that I had to get out of the sanctuary. The place felt dangerous. The idea that the sacrifice of somebody was a good idea, to be praised, suddenly felt directly threatening to me.⁸⁸

Perhaps no one has written more from this particular perspective than feminist liturgical scholar Marjorie Procter-Smith. Borrowing language from American feminist and poet Adrienne Rich (1929–2012), Procter-Smith asks, “Does the liturgy ‘translate violence’ into beautiful forms, disguising its danger for women?”⁸⁹ Procter-Smith asserts that the liturgical language (and practices) of the Eucharist robs abused women of the spiritual resources they need to reject

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ What follows is a largely a summary of issues relevant to this project drawn from Christopher Grundy’s excellent study of this matter. See Christopher Grundy, “God’s Resilient Table: Male Violence Against Women and the Embodied Logic of Holy Communion” (PhD diss., Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, 2006), esp. chapter 2.

⁸⁸ Brock and Parker, *Proverbs to Ashes*, 213.

⁸⁹ Marjorie Procter-Smith, *In Her Own Rite: Constructing Feminist Liturgical Tradition* (Akron, OH: OSL Publications, 1990), 13.

the violence inflicted upon them and emancipate themselves from their abuse.⁹⁰ In doing so, the rites invisibly suppress the ability of women, and, indeed, of all suppressed people, to say, “no” to their abusers.⁹¹ Jesus’ suffering is glorified in a way that can make suffering that results from injustice such as abuse seem desirable rather than something to be resisted. “Women need an alternative to the narrative that says women who engage in resistance and seek fuller lives should expect death.”⁹² In order to correct the problem, Procter-Smith argues that “we must disrupt these processes of marginalization, claim the central prayers of the church as our prayers, and thereby transform them from the language of the rulers to the language of the whole, free people of God.”⁹³

Although she sees profound problems in the broader “political and hierarchical context in which the Eucharist is celebrated,” Procter-Smith identifies the eucharistic prayer’s dependence upon sacrificial language and imagery as the central issue.⁹⁴ Procter-Smith argues that the representation of Jesus as a sacrifice coupled with the necessity of his death and the connection, particularly in Protestantism, between communion and forgiveness are all deeply problematic for feminist Christians.⁹⁵ But, “for the survivors of violence and for those working with them, all of these issues are intensified.”⁹⁶

Nor does Protestantism’s historic rejection of the Eucharist as a sacrifice mean that sacrificial language and imagery has been purged from Protestant rites. “Nothing could be further from the

⁹⁰ Marjorie Procter-Smith, “The Whole Loaf: Holy Communion and Survival,” in *Violence Against Women and Children*, ed. Carol J. Adams and Marie M. Fortune (New York: Continuum, 1995), 470.

⁹¹ Marjorie Procter-Smith, *Praying with Our Eyes Open: Engendering Feminist Liturgical Prayer* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 47.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 103.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁹⁵ We would also add the connection between Holy Communion and thanksgiving.

⁹⁶ Procter-Smith, *Eyes Open*, 116–17.

truth,” says Procter-Smith. Neither the theological reforms of the Reformation nor the liturgical reforms of the twentieth century, both of which sought to varying degrees to reject the *sacrament* as sacrificial, went so far to reject Jesus’ *death* as sacrificial, which is, of course, memorialized in the sacrament.⁹⁷ Not only is this the case, but there is an additional irony in the fact that the Protestant proclivity over time to dramatically reduce the rite has contributed to practices that are focused sometimes exclusively on the words of institution and Christ’s suffering and death as redemptive.⁹⁸ Recent liturgical reforms such as those embodied in the current United Methodist rite have sought to correct this hyper focus, but practice nonetheless persists, even in United Methodist contexts.⁹⁹ Hence, Procter-Smith asserts that despite efforts to the contrary, the Eucharist can still be experienced as “a ritually reiterated commemoration and—in some ways of thinking—re-presentation of an abused but glorified male body.”¹⁰⁰

Procter-Smith and others also suggest that the deployment of sacrificial imagery and Jesus’ suffering as redemptive also gives rise to processes of objectification. Procter-Smith points out that sacrifice, by its very structure, requires the objectification of the victim, which, in some sense, is the inverse of the receding and eventual invisibility of the perpetrator. The objectification of the victim allows us to shift our perspective of the victim from subject to object. When we then view persons as the subject of sacrifice, we are allowed to shift our understanding of them from *Thou* to *it*. Such objectification is rampant in contemporary culture, but it also invades the church, and Procter-Smith insists that “prayer that makes our bodies, or

⁹⁷ Ibid., 126.

⁹⁸ See June Christine Goudey, *Feast of Our Lives: Re-Imaging Communion* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2002), 76–82, for an excellent summary.

⁹⁹ See Anderson, *The Meaning of Holy Communion*. One of the “frequently asked questions” in the revised edition is “what is the shortest version of The Great Thanksgiving that will ‘get the job done’?” On many occasions, United Methodist elders—and bishops—have been known to reduce the prayer to the words of institution in an effort to “save time.”

¹⁰⁰ Procter-Smith, *Eyes Open*, 116–17.

the cycles of our bodies, or the products of our bodies separate from our own choices and responsibilities must be rejected.”¹⁰¹ Moreover, Cooper-White asserts that such objectification gives rise to “the annihilation of connectivity, the dulling and erasure of human relationality.”¹⁰² Such an annihilation and erasure is particularly tragic in the case of the Eucharist, which, of course, holds communion and connectivity as its goal.

For survivors of violence and sexual abuse, sacrificial language and imagery spiritualizes, mystifies, and even justifies the violence to which they have been subjected. It simultaneously provides a model of Christian behavior for abusers that threatens the survival of their victims. By employing such imagery, the Eucharist presents a dangerous—in fact, distorted—understanding of suffering and death to those abused and oppressed, particularly women, whose own suffering does not necessarily lead to beneficial gains such as stronger character or deeper faith, and, most importantly, whose suffering and death saves no one.¹⁰³ Furthermore, what suffering Jesus did endure is mystified and spiritualized in a way which obfuscates the concrete, oppressive facts of the political context of Jesus’ arrest and torture by means of an abstract, spiritual narrative. The painful, concrete details of Jesus’ battering and abuse recede behind the “baptism of his suffering” in the words of the United Methodist rite. “It is precisely these moves”—from political to religious meaning and from openly named culpability to scapegoating—“that make it so difficult to confront suffering and oppression directly.”¹⁰⁴

Not only do the details of Jesus’ suffering recede into invisibility, but so do those who perpetrated the violence, as Strobel has already brought to our attention. Carol Adams refers to

¹⁰¹ Procter-Smith, *Eyes Open*, 63.

¹⁰² Cooper-White, 18.

¹⁰³ Procter-Smith, “Whole Loaf,” 473.

¹⁰⁴ Procter-Smith, *Eyes Open*, 102–3.

these invisible perpetrators as the “absent referent.”¹⁰⁵ As with Strobel, Adams points out that, no longer the subject of the action, the perpetrators hide behind a veil of silence and invisibility. Adams stresses how this same phenomenon occurs when those who perpetrate domestic violence disappear behind the phrase “battered women,” the violence having attached itself to the woman’s body while the perpetrator hides from view, a situation which has particular resonance with Jesus’ suffering.

The spiritualization of such violence becomes particularly sharpened in the Eucharist, where eating “the broken body” and drinking “the blood poured out” appears to “justify the real life broken bodies and spilled blood of women and children,” says Procter-Smith. “As long as body and blood language is used, the pain and suffering of survivors is increased.”¹⁰⁶ In other words, even when we understand the violence perpetrated upon Jesus as, in some sense, opposed by God and contingent upon his unique salvific action, the use of the symbols of body and blood while we ritually retell the story of abuse and suffering undermines our clear comprehension of that violence and of contemporary domestic violence, for both abusers and abused. Such ritualization and spiritualization dulls our sense to violence, undermining resistance, and running the risk of re-traumatizing survivors. Against all this, some may well try to argue, as Christopher Grundy suggests, “that, understood correctly, a ‘subverted’ understanding of sacrifice has been a positive, even helpful concept for us in certain ways. Again, the point is not that we all experience the sacrament in the same way. Nor is the point that we all interpret sacrifice the same way.”¹⁰⁷ But, at the very least, as Procter-Smith reminds her reader—and the *Lima*

¹⁰⁵ Carol J. Adams, *Neither Man nor Beast: Feminism and the Defense of Animals* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 101.

¹⁰⁶ Procter-Smith, “Whole Loaf,” 473, 476.

¹⁰⁷ Grundy, 28.

document affirms—the Eucharist is an “effective sign” of Christ’s sacrificial death.¹⁰⁸

Sacramental signification aside, she stresses on a more pragmatic level, “the fact that domestic violence occurs in the homes of ‘church-going’ Christians, including the homes of Christian clergy, ought to make us wonder what is being heard, seen, said, and done in our Christian Assemblies that allows the violence to continue.”¹⁰⁹

And yet, not all feminists’ assessments of sacrifice and suffering end in utter and total rejection. Even as she repudiates self-sacrifice, Daly admits that women must be prepared to

¹⁰⁸ Procter-Smith, *Eyes Open*, 124; cf. *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 11. The issue of the Eucharist as an effective sign touches on more than one important matter, including ordination of women. Take, for example, the following from *Inter Insigniores* (1976), the declaration of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the question of admission of women to the ministerial priesthood: “The Church’s constant teaching, repeated and clarified by the Second Vatican Council and again recalled by the 1971 Synod of Bishops and by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in its Declaration of 24th. June 1973, declares that the bishop or the priest in the exercise of his ministry, does not act in his own name, *in persona propria*: he represents Christ, who acts through him: ‘the priest truly acts in the place of Christ,’ as Saint Cyprian already wrote in the third century. It is this ability to represent Christ that Saint Paul considered as characteristic of his apostolic function (2 Cor 5:20; Gal 4:14). The supreme expression of this representation is found in the altogether special form it assumes in the celebration of the Eucharist, which is the source and center of the Church’s unity, the sacrificial meal in which the People of God are associated in the sacrifice of Christ: the priest, who alone has the power to perform it, then acts not only through the effective power conferred on him by Christ, but *in persona Christi*, taking the role of Christ, to the point of being his very image, when he pronounces the words of consecration. The Christian priesthood is therefore of a sacramental nature: the priest is a sign, the supernatural effectiveness of which comes from the ordination received, but a sign that must be perceptible and which the faithful must be able to recognize with ease. The whole sacramental economy is in fact based upon natural signs, on symbols imprinted on the human psychology: ‘Sacramental signs,’ says Saint Thomas, ‘represent what they signify by natural resemblance.’ The same natural resemblance is required for persons as for things: when Christ’s role in the Eucharist is to be expressed sacramentally, there would not be this ‘natural resemblance’ which must exist between Christ and his minister if the role of Christ were not taken by a man: in such a case it would be difficult to see in the minister the image of Christ. For Christ himself was and remains a man. . . . we can never ignore the fact that Christ is a man. And therefore, unless one is to disregard the importance of this symbolism for the economy of Revelation, it must be admitted that, in actions which demand the character of ordination and in which Christ himself, the author of the Covenant, the Bridegroom, the Head of the Church, is represented, exercising his ministry of salvation—which is in the highest degree the case of the Eucharist—his role (this is the original sense of the word *persona*) must be taken by a man.”

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19761015_inter-insigniores_en.html (accessed May 8, 2020). I am indebted to Professor Heather Murray Elkins for bringing this to my attention. The issue raised here is certainly interwoven with the concept of eucharistic sacrifice and, even while it lies outside the scope of the current project, deserves to be addressed in a broader context. One might begin with asking whether the presider must bear a natural resemblance to the historical Jesus, who was born a male, or to the resurrected Christ, who clearly, it seems from the biblical witness, intended (and succeeded) to move beyond normative categories for human bodies by moving through walls and appearing and disappearing.

¹⁰⁹ Marjorie Procter-Smith, “‘Reorganizing Victimization’: The Intersection between Liturgy and Domestic Violence,” in *Violence Against Women and Children*, ed. Carol J. Adams and Marie M. Fortune (New York: Continuum, 1995), 428.

accept suffering if they are to act with courage and discipline. Significantly, however, such suffering is the result of a collective (female) struggle to end (female) oppression rather than that which results from individual self-effacement for the benefit of males. Such suffering is endured in order to free creative (female) energies.¹¹⁰

Procter-Smith offers a similar assessment when discussing what she calls a “feminist emancipatory eucharist.” Sacrifice, she says, can have be “a profound expression of solidarity when undertaken voluntarily and on behalf of someone else.”¹¹¹ Such a statement is, of course, the goal of the very language of the United Methodist rite Procter-Smith critiques. The problem occurs when such sacrifice is forced upon those who already have nothing and are expected to embody self-abnegation. The call to emulate a servant is not emancipatory or redemptive for those who are already servants. Sacrifice can be emancipatory, however, when it is viewed as a communal act rather than an individual act, just as the Eucharist itself is a communal rather than an individual act. The whole community must be called upon to sacrifice on behalf of the poorest and most vulnerable. And such sacrifice must support women’s struggle for survival and dignity. Those of privilege and power who benefit from the oppression of women must be willing to sacrifice their privilege and power for the benefit of women. Such an approach to an emancipatory understanding of sacrifice takes a high degree of discernment, however, because interlocking layers of power and privilege are always at play. Any emancipatory use of the motif of sacrifice in the Eucharist, therefore, “must be informed by critical consciousness about both the demand for sacrifice of unjust power and the complexity of interlocking oppressions.”¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Daly, 110.

¹¹¹ Procter-Smith, *In Her Own Rite*, 148.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 149.

Other feminists such as Sarah Coakley offer a different and even more favorable approach. She suggests that if we are to confront the deepest challenges to human flourishing in our current twenty-first-century environment, sacrifice stands in need of theological reclamation, not rejection.¹¹³ Coakley asserts that the disjunction of the concepts of gift and sacrifice—one of Maurice de la Taille’s central concerns, as we shall see in the next chapter, and, in fact, one of the concerns the language of the United Methodist rite critiqued by Procter-Smith sought to address—comes at “great theological cost, for if sacrifice is only destructive, how is the divine gift within the Trinity to be rendered when it hits the timeline of human sin?”¹¹⁴ Coakley, in fact, points us to de la Taille as a way to re-heal the division between gift and sacrifice. Finding perhaps resonance with Procter-Smith, Coakley argues that, when entered into voluntarily and *purgatively* for the purposes of life, sacrifice can become a vehicle for the integration and purification of mind and heart, desire and action. “It is the productive pain of purgation, contemplation and transformation by which the communicant unites herself to Christ in the Eucharist, much like the productive pain of child birth described in Rom 8 which leads to the consummation of all creation.” She cautions, however, that this cannot be done “without continuing to police, and with infinite care, the always-ambiguous line between productive pain and veiled abusive violence.”¹¹⁵

1.5. The Language of Sacrifice: Transformation

In her book *Redeeming Memories: A Theology of Healing and Transformation*, Flora Keshgegian asserts that “if the promise of Christianity’s redemptive Word is to be kept for those

¹¹³ Sarah Coakley, “Beyond Sacrifice? The Eucharist, Violence and Gender in a World in Need of Altruism” (The Bell Lecture, University of Tulsa, Tulsa, OK, April 8, 2014).

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

who suffer, then that Word must include their words and their memories in a way that actively shapes redeeming truth.”¹¹⁶ If we are to take Keshgegian’s assertion seriously, and if we are to, indeed, include the words and memories of those who suffer, then we must develop a framework for the language of sacrifice in which the consequence of sacrifice is not pain, shame, abasement, the fragmentation of the soul, and the destruction of life, but rather one which avoids these kinds of toxic psychological and social effects—effects which are contrary to anything redemptive. Surely the end of oppression and the promotion of survival, and the upholding and dignity and the release of creative energy, is precisely what the rite has in mind with “holy and living sacrifice.”

As we seek to develop a framework for an authentic understanding of Christian sacrifice as expressed in the United Methodist statement of oblation, our path will need to be one which leads us to a theology that doesn’t focus on oppressors and victims. Such a framework must avoid the kind of misdirection and misidentification that focuses on the redemption of the abuser at the expense of the victim. Instead, it must seek to be a profound expression of solidarity with those who suffer and are oppressed as a common act of the community. The language of such a frame will need to focus on the emancipation and transformation of both oppressor and victim through their own journey of purgation and integration and, in doing so, articulate a narrative in which those who seek transformation and redemption—even when that effort involves resistance to oppression—might not expect death but anticipate life. Such a narrative should allow us to avoid the process of objectifying the believer as victim and instead maintain the believer as a subject of their own transformation. Additionally, if Christian sacrifice indeed involves

¹¹⁶ Flora A. Keshgegian, *Redeeming Memories: A Theology of Healing and Transformation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 23.

purgation, then whatever suffering or violence is involved must be named, owned, and confronted openly, not spiritualized away, just as the transformation of the believer into a holy, living sacrifice is to be more than simply spiritual.

With all these things in mind, we will now proceed to examine the underlying grammar which regulates the language of Christian sacrifice and orders it toward emancipation and transformation.

Chapter 2

THE GRAMMAR OF SACRIFICE

2.1. The Grammar of Sacrifice: Introduction

The New Testament narrative provides a clear witness that, through the Incarnation, God is in Christ reconciling the entire created order back to himself (2 Cor 5:19). This process of reconciliation requires a transformation of the existing order into a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). Furthermore, the New Testament consistently witnesses that this transformation necessitates rewriting the rules of the most basic of human categories, life and death. Paul may capture the depth of this transformative rewriting most poignantly at the end of his discourse on resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 when he asks death, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” Paul’s question goes beyond mere rhetorical flourish, for it is not merely the case that he does not intend to elicit an answer; death *has* no answer. The rules of life and death have been rewritten: those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for the sake of Christ will save it (Mk 8:35); anyone who hears Christ and believes in the one who sent him has passed from death into life (Jn 5:24); those who believe in Christ, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in him will never die (Jn 11:25).

Moreover, the rewriting of the rules of life and death are ultimately rewritten through Christ’s sacrifice: “And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them” (1 Cor 5:15); “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may

have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). Understanding the rules and, more importantly, the underlying structure and nature of Christ’s sacrifice is critical, therefore, to understanding the rules, structure, and nature of our own sacrifice, for in the context of our own study, the statement in the United Methodist rite that we offer ourselves “in union with Christ’s offering for us” implies that our sacrifice is not only linked to, but also somehow dependent upon, Christ’s offering. Scripture supports such a link between our sacrifice and Christ’s as, for example, when Paul says in Ephesians, “be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5:1–2).

That the rules of sacrifice, just as the rules of life and death themselves, are being rewritten is further captured in the rite’s statement that we offer ourselves “as a holy and *living* sacrifice.” The phrase is, of course, a reference to Paul’s exhortation to the Romans to “present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1). But while the category of “holy” as applied to a sacrifice, and especially a sacrificial victim, is quite naturally understood, the category of “living” as applied to a sacrifice, much less a sacrificial victim, is quite curious. This is especially so because the victim set aside to be given as a holy gift to God was killed or immolated in some form or fashion *in order to be offered* to God. Sacrifice, nearly by its definition, means death; to speak of a sacrifice as “living,” then, is, conversely, paradoxical. To speak thusly does not conform to the rules of sacrifice.

Because grammar describes the rules of a language that govern the way in which individual words or components are put together in order to form proper sentences,¹ grammar provides a helpful metaphor for describing—and understanding—the way in which the rules of sacrifice

¹ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “grammar,” <https://www-oed-com.proxy.libraries.smu.edu/view/Entry/80574?rskey=Yr1ipL&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid> (accessed March 31, 2020)

have been rewritten in Christ and, more fundamentally, how these new rules dictate the ways in which the individual components of sacrifice are put together to form proper Christian sacrifice. To deploy grammar as a metaphor in theological discourse is not a novel concept. Martin Luther spoke of theology as the grammar of sacred scripture, John Henry Newman spoke of a grammar of assent, and, perhaps most famously, Ludwig Wittgenstein used the concept of grammar extensively to describe the idea of theology. Nor is the use of grammar as a metaphor novel in the field of ritual studies. Rituals, which by definition are a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order,² must have a set of rules in order that they might be performed regularly and invariably in a proper manner in order to achieve their intended aim. This principle also extends to sacrifice, perhaps even more so because the stakes in divine-human relations are so high.³ In fact, it is precisely the internalization of the “grammar” of sacrifice which allows us, as holy and living sacrifices, to generate an unlimited number of combinations and actions which, while grounded in the grammar of Christ’s sacrifice, exist in new and particularized ways which neither repeat it nor follow its outward form.

Most who study and discuss sacrifice would readily admit that the grammar of sacrifice is complex, involving a number of agents—donor, victim, priest, God—and a number of discrete components and actions—gift, offering, immolation, acceptance, to name only a few. But common practice and thought tends to reduce sacrifice to a simple grammatical binary: offering—immolation. Thus, Canon Eugène Masure (1882–1958) states that, throughout medieval manuals with little substantive variation, sacrifice is defined as “the oblation of a sensible object, and its

² *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “ritual,” <https://www-oed-com.proxy.libraries.smu.edu/view/Entry/166369?redirectedFrom=ritual#eid> (accessed March 31, 2020).

³ See, for example, Naphtali S. Meshel, *The “Grammar” of Sacrifice: A Generativist Study of the Israelite Sacrificial System in the Priestly Writings, with a Grammar of [Sigma]* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

immolation by destruction or otherwise, these performed by a legitimate priest, to the honor of God, to recognize the sovereign power of the Creator and to obtain from him pardon for our sins, this immolation normally followed by communion.”⁴

This definition is, admittedly, an oversimplification. All of these medieval manuals would claim some sort of genealogy from Aquinas, who states that “a ‘sacrifice,’ properly speaking, requires that something be done to the thing which is offered to God.”⁵ However, as we will later see, Aquinas has a much more nuanced understanding of the complex system of parts which constitutes a proper sacrifice. But because these two actions, offering and immolation, come to be understood as the substantial essence of sacrifice, the grammar has, for all intents and purposes, become reduced to this binary form. Moreover, because the change or immolation that occurred with respect to the offering in those Old Testament sacrifices that effect atonement—the burnt offering, the sin offering, the peace offering, and the guilt offering—was, in fact, death, the binary grammar of offering–immolation became further reduced, by way of metonymy, to the binary life–death.⁶ That is, something which is living, such as an animal or person, or represents flourishing, such as a possession or behavior, is surrendered (offered) and killed or abolished (immolated). Or as Masure puts it, “the *genus proximum* of the definition thus formed and explained is immolation and even destruction,” and “for our Western minds, the *genus proximum* is all important; it controls the whole philosophy of the subject. Here, then, is sacrifice conceived from the start and essentially as a putting to death.”⁷

⁴ Eugène Masure, *The Christian Sacrifice*, (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1947), 28; quoting Juan de Lugo, Disputation XIX *de Eucharistia ut est sacrificium*, sect. i *de sacrificio in communi*.

⁵ Aquinas *ST* II-II, 85.3, ad 3.

⁶ Even the meal offering, which does not technically involve the death of an animal, is always accompanied by an offering of blood.

⁷ Masure, 28.

Certainly there is some truth in this metonymy: in offering up an errant behavior to God, we hope that God might “kill” it and replace it with something more edifying and glorifying to God; or in offering up a possession to God, one held, perhaps, too tightly, we hope that God might use it for a greater good, thus causing the “death” of our use of the possession and bringing about a use which brings glory to God. But it is precisely this kind of metonymic oversimplification and overemphasis on death which causes “all sorts of theological mischief in the history of Christian thought”⁸ because “an insufficient metaphysic of sacrifice...or the purely academic splendor of pompous exordia and flamboyant perorations...[when] taken over into a system of the moral and spiritual life...can set the poison at work throughout a great Church.”⁹ It also leads directly to the kind of death-as-*telos* thinking to which feminist and womanist theologies so strongly object, for the natural end point of this line of thought is that in offering ourselves as a sacrifice to God, we are to offer—and freely accept—our own self-abnegation, annihilation and death.

And the biblical references seem quite explicit: the New Testament witness, and the grammar of the rite, would appear to support these objections. The rite’s profession, and Paul’s exhortation from which it is drawn, that we are to offer ourselves as a *living* sacrifice would seem to deny explicitly the assertion that death is the *telos* of Christian sacrifice. In addition, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews insists that Christ, who offered a single sacrifice (10:12) of himself (9:26) by suffering and tasting death (2:9), nonetheless did so with an indestructible life (7:16) and is now living (4:12), having opened up a new and living way through the curtain (10:20). On the other hand, the language of death is also inescapable in the biblical witness. Again, the New Testament language is consistently clear: Christ died for our sins, and we are to

⁸ Richard D. Nelson, “‘He Offered Himself’: Sacrifice in Hebrews,” *Interpretation* 57, no. 3 (2003): 252.

⁹ Masure, 31.

die with Christ (Cf. Rom 5:8, 1 Cor 15:3; Rom 6:8, Gal 2:19, Col 2:20). Even scholars as ardent as Marjorie Procter-Smith admit that feminists cannot wholly reject the Bible, even while they assert that the Bible cannot be enshrined as received and put into practice “as if it came from God.”¹⁰ We must, therefore, find a role for death in the grammar of sacrifice without falling into the oversimplified grammar of death-as-*telos*, a grammar that asserts that “*in spite of* suffering and death, God brings forth life.”¹¹ And that, in the words of Sarah Coakley, “precisely breaks and interrupts the normal ordering of manipulating sacrifice...into a different, divine exchange...the higher, divine exchange of love.”¹²

The search for this grammar, as we shall see, will create a “crash of meaning” which pushes us “to the end of [our] interpretative resources,”¹³ by rewriting the grammar of sacrifice. Christ, and by extension the rite, is pointing us to an entirely different *tropos* for the Christian concept of sacrifice by providing a new type of sacrifice.¹⁴ Certainly Christ’s sacrifice is an antitype for all Old Testament sacrifices, a theme which is central to the Epistle to the Hebrews, for all of the Old Testament sacrifices are mere (fore)shadows of the reality which is Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice (8:5). But Christ’s sacrifice is a better sacrifice (9:23) that brings about a better covenant (7:22) grounded in better promises (8:26) made by Christ as a superior priest (7:11, 15, 26–27). It will be helpful, therefore, for us to be attentive to the difference between two other designations in the category of type: that of prototype, an early, usually primitive, version of something that later versions reflect but from which they may (and most often do) depart; and

¹⁰ Procter-Smith, *Praying with Our Eyes Open*, 120.

¹¹ Procter-Smith, “The Whole Loaf,” 476 (emphasis original).

¹² Sarah Coakley, *The Cross and the Transformation of Desire: Meditations for Holy Week on the Drama of Love and Betrayal* (Cambridge: Grove Books Limited, 2014), 21.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁴ There is an intentional play on words here between “type,” from the Greek *týpos*, and *trópos*, meaning “mode of being,” the reordering of which Maximus the Confessor asserts is the primary fruit of union with the Logos and, thereby, of deification or, in Western terms, salvation. See Maximus, *Ambiguum 5*.

that of archetype, the most perfect possible form of something which is often unattainable, a topic to which we shall return. In the meantime, our journey in search of a truly Christian grammar of sacrifice will begin with Maurice de la Taille, S.J., (1872–1933) a French Jesuit who significantly influenced the modern liturgical movement and who offers an expanded understanding of those actions in which Christ’s sacrifice consists by providing a helpful distinction between oblation and immolation. De la Taille’s understanding will in turn be brought into dialog with the thoughts of the spiritual fathers of Methodism—John Wesley (1703–1791) through his writings and broad leadership and Charles Wesley (1707–1788) through his hymns—in order to broaden further our understanding of the relationship between the Last Supper, the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the heavenly sacrifice, all of which are integral to understanding Christ’s offering as a sacrifice. We will then turn to an examination of the Epistle to the Hebrews and some of the grammatical issues addressed by this epistle regarding Christ’s own sacrifice, followed by a discussion of some considerations concerning the numerous agents of sacrifice that have been raised by the various authors and viewpoints we have examined. We will then conclude with an explanation of how Christ’s own sacrifice has rewritten and expanded the grammar of Christian sacrifice.

2.2. The Grammar of Sacrifice *in genere*: de la Taille

De la Taille begins his examination and explication of Christ’s sacrifice by defining the grammar of sacrifice in general. According to Michon Matthiesen, the three central features of de la Taille’s understanding of sacrifice are that (1) it belongs to the species of gift; (2) it is grounded in a creaturely obligation of *latría* and, as a result of our fallen state, propitiation; and, therefore, (3) sacrifice includes both oblation and immolation as distinct aspects which, while

sometimes overlapping, are not always conjoined.¹⁵ The grammar of sacrifice, then, will be constructed within the economy of gift upon the principles of *latria* and propitiation from which emerge the essential elements of oblation and immolation.

As *latria*, sacrifice is grounded in the principle that all things are created to attain God as their supreme good. Beyond this, however, humans as rational creatures partake of God in a superior manner and therefore should pay special homage to God as the source not only of their creation and life, but of all goodness and delight. “The first and highest duty of [humanity], therefore, is to hand [itself] over, to surrender, to submit [itself] to God; and the name *latria* is given to this duty.”¹⁶ It is important to note here, however, that this duty to surrender and submit is not grounded in divine omnipotence, but rather in divine goodness and love. As love itself, God creates out of love, and the creature, created in love and made to attain its end, is driven therefore by its first cause, which is love.¹⁷ Hence, since God is love and the source by which we receive any and all good, it is fitting that our *latria* include recognition of God’s loving generosity by thanksgiving and return gift to God.¹⁸ It follows, then, that the creaturely obligation of *latria* becomes the ground for sacrifice as oblation. As return gift, the creature hands itself over as an oblation of love in praise and thanksgiving to God who is both “attracting love and the end of human happiness.”¹⁹

¹⁵ Michon M. Matthiesen, *Sacrifice as Gift: Eucharist, Grace, and Contemplative Prayer in Maurice De La Taille* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 33.

¹⁶ Maurice de la Taille, *The Mystery of Faith: Regarding the Most August Sacrament and Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ. Book I: The Sacrifice of Our Lord* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1940), 2. Hereafter *MF* 1 followed by the page number.

¹⁷ *MF* 1:2n2.

¹⁸ As such, sacrifice as gift and *latria* ultimately finds its grounding principle, even while not belonging properly, in the trinitarian exchange of *kenosis* and *plerosis* where all is pure gift and thanksgiving. Cf. Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing*, 243. Though note the problematization of gift language by Coakley in *Flesh and Blood: The Eucharist, Desire and Fragmentation* even while she holds sacrifice and gift together. Sarah Coakley, *Flesh and Blood: The Eucharist, Desire and Fragmentation*, “Lecture III: Gift Re-told: Spirals of Grace,” The Hensley Henson Lecture Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004–2005).

¹⁹ Matthiesen, 36.

However, even while demonstrating how sacrifice is grounded in the creature's obligation of *latría*, de la Taille also exposes a "second source" of obligation to offer sacrifice, that of propitiation, which cannot be absolutely divorced from that of *latría* given the fallen state of humanity. But if sacrifice as *latría* is offered as a gift of love to God—who is attracting love and the end of happiness—how can such a gift also be propitiatory? As Sarah Coakley puts it, it is only when the divine gift "hits the human time-line of sin" that we come to understand that "the demanding effects of the reception of divine, trinitarian Gift, *while sin still reigns in the order of the 'world,' are inevitably 'sacrificial.'*"²⁰ Or, as de la Taille puts it, propitiation simply becomes that form of *latría* most fitting the creature in its fallen state.²¹ Because human beings are in a state of broken relationship with God, every gift given to God must include some expression of a desire for reconciliation, for just as Christ, who was without sin, declares that he is turned *toward* God when fulfilling the religious obligation of *latría*, so those who are turned *away* from God because of sin must declare the need to turn toward God in their own fulfillment of their obligation of *latría*. Otherwise, the gifts would bear the "savor" of coming from one who was "unfriendly."²² All this is necessitated by the grammar of gift-giving, which requires genuine love and friendship. Thus, *latría* and propitiation are seamlessly woven together, we might say, as two different *tropoi* of the same movement toward God, each dictated by the economy in which the gift is given.

Sacrifice, according to William of Paris, "is a gift which is made sacred in the offering, and to offer sacrifice is essentially this, to make the actual gift sacred by the offering."²³ Or as

²⁰ Coakley, "Beyond Sacrifice?" and "*Flesh and Blood*" (emphasis original).

²¹ *MF* 1:12.

²² *MF* 1:10.

²³ William of Paris, *De legibus*, c.24, as quoted in *MF* 1:7

Coakley puts it, “as the Spirit breaks open the heart, so we are changed, purged: ‘the sacrifice of a broken heart thou wilt not despise,’ as the Psalmist writes.”²⁴ In other words, because our very act of oblation requires us to turn toward God in reconciliation, our sacrificial oblation requires a change, or immolation, in us in order to be made sacred.²⁵ Thus, de la Taille demonstrates that a real or metaphorical death and mortification befits sacrifice as propitiation, even as love plays an essential role in the very desire to change.²⁶ It is in the offering that the “sacrificial essence (*esse sacrificiale*)’ is determined; the immolation sustains it and is the subject of that determining form.”²⁷ So it is that de la Taille does not specify a process of purification *before* offering a sacrifice; rather this element of change or immolation “pertains to the act of sacrificial oblation proper, such that the purification is embedded in the offering.”²⁸ De la Taille thus concludes that immolation, either by destruction or change in the gift, “does not suffice to integrate the sacrifice. No matter what the change, or however complete the destruction, an *offering* to God of the thing changed or destroyed is absolutely essential.”²⁹ Immolation *per se* neither signifies nor effects the dedication or making sacred of the gift. Because sacrifice belongs to the species of gift, some act of offering or handing over of the gift constitutes the essential act of sacrifice.

The act of immolation can be separate from the act of offering, as de la Taille demonstrates, drawing on evidence from the biblical witness of the Levitical cultus, such that the gift or victim may be offered *to be* immolated, *by* immolation, or *as* immolated. So, the slaying of the victim could be carried out by the priest or by the donor prior to the more significant act of the priest

²⁴ Coakley, *Flesh and Blood*.

²⁵ John Milbank makes a similar argument: a gift must be inevitably and unavoidable altered and, in fact, continuously alter, in its passing into the hands of the recipient, for it will naturally come to exhibit the character of its new owner. John Milbank, “The Ethics of Sacrifice,” *First Things* 91 (March 1999): 36.

²⁶ *MF* 1:11.

²⁷ Matthiesen, 46.

²⁸ Matthiesen, 38.

²⁹ *MF* 1:13.

offering the victim to God. In fact, de la Taille points out, while the immolation may be carried out by either priest or donor, the offering *must* be carried out by the priest. Thus, while the former admits the possibility of identity between offering and immolation, the latter precludes it.³⁰ De la Taille, therefore, concludes that while “we often find writers who use the words *offering* and *immolation* without making this distinction clear...as far as possible we shall always adhere to the distinction, not only in thought but in word, between the offering and the immolation.”³¹

Yet even beyond these two essential elements, states de la Taille, we must distinguish the total act of sacrifice which includes a two-fold consummation: one on the part of God in *accepting* the sacrifice, the other on the part of humanity in *partaking* of the sacrifice. On the one hand, a gift which is given but not accepted is null and void because it does not change owners and, in the case of a gift to God, is further not made sacred but remains profane.³² In neither case does it achieve its intended end. On the other hand, the particular aim of sacrifice is to open a path by which the donor may obtain the favors of God.³³ Sacrifice, being born out of the creaturely obligation of *latría* and offered in love and thanksgiving as a gift to God who is love itself and the origin of all good, fittingly and freely secures divine favors from God who will “not be outdone in generosity.”³⁴ According to de la Taille, therefore, the perfection of the sacrifice is found in the communication of such divine favors through the return of the gift, sanctified through its divine reception, most fittingly signified by the banquet in which God and humanity

³⁰ *MF* 1:13.

³¹ *MF* 1:14.

³² *MF* 1:15.

³³ *MF* 1:17.

³⁴ Matthiesen, 36.

feast together and by which humanity is sanctified by partaking in the gift and thus united with God.³⁵

According to de la Taille, then, sacrifice consists of a tripartite grammar: *oblation*, *immolation*, and *consummation*, the last of which consists of a two-fold movement of *acceptance* and *partaking*. Humanity lovingly offers gifts as sacrifice to God as an act of *latria* in thanksgiving for God’s goodness and love, but because humanity finds itself in a fallen state, turned away from God and marred by sin, the very act of oblation requires a change or immolation in the gift in order that it may pass into God’s possession because it must be purified and made holy once again. Yet no gift can be given without being received, so every sacrifice requires a sign of God’s acceptance of that gift. Moreover, God, who will not be exceeded in generosity, not only accepts our sacrifice but returns the gift as sanctified and holy that we may partake of it, thus consummating and perfecting the sacrifice.

There is one more essential feature of sacrifice for de la Taille to which we have gestured but that we must acknowledge before we can understand his grammar as applied to Christ’s sacrifice: in addition to belonging to the species of gift, sacrifice also belongs to the species of sign. As we stated above, the psalmist reminds us that “the sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit” (Ps 51:17a). The goal of sacrifice is interior devotion, the movement of the will in reciprocal, loving friendship toward God who is love. This is true *latria*. But because we are embodied creatures who both perceive the world and express ourselves through the senses, our interior devotion must be expressed outwardly in exterior signs. So, while the most important and essential element of sacrifice—the “true sacrifice,” in the words of Augustine³⁶—consists in

³⁵ *MF* 1:18–19.

³⁶ Augustine *City of God* I.10.5.

the interior, invisible gift, that gift must be signified by the handing over of some external, material gift, the sign of our true sacrifice, or no act of sacrifice is achieved. So, de la Taille states,

for the proper understanding of sacrifice as latreutic, we must distinguish, exactly as in the sacraments, between the *sign* and *the reality*. For the handing over of the external gift, though it is in itself *res*, that is to say it is real giving, is nevertheless not a *res tantum*; it is a *res et signum*. The offering of the internal gift is a *res tantum*.³⁷

The act of sacrificing—making sacred—requires a sensible act, without which there is no sacrifice. Moreover, sacrifice must be “clothed in sensible rites” because God created humanity both in and for relationship as a social creature. Thus, true and proper sacrifice may only be offered within the “society of the body of Christ which is the church.”³⁸ So, like the sacraments, the ritual requirement of sacrifice, in addition to its nature as sign, demands of it: (1) a donor as the one who offers internal devotion (*latria*); (2) a victim as a gift which is made holy (*immolation*); (3) a priest as the one who mediates between donor and divine and hands over the external gift to God (*oblation*); and (4) God as the one who receives the gift and returns it as sanctified (*consummation*).

With de la Taille’s tripartite grammar in mind, as well as an understanding of sacrifice as a species of sign, we are now prepared to examine how de la Taille understands Christ’s sacrifice in relation to the Last Supper, the Cross, and the Resurrection, Ascension and the heavenly sacrifice.

³⁷ *MF* 1:9.

³⁸ *MF* 1:3–4.

2.3. The Grammar of Christ's Sacrifice: de la Taille

In a footnote to his initial discussion concerning the nature of Christ's sacrifice, de la Taille states that if we are to attribute to Christ an act of sacrifice in the truest sense, we should not only be ready to honor our faith in the power of Christ's sacrifice, "but also as a theologian should, to give reasons for that faith. In other words, we must examine and find out how every element of a true and properly so called sacrifice (that is, liturgical and ritual), is found in the sacrifice of the Redeemer, including the actual offering of the priest."³⁹ It is de la Taille's conviction that sacrifice belongs to the species of sign that drives his examination and understanding of Christ's sacrifice, and particularly for our purposes, how de la Taille's explanation of oblation and immolation not only explain but demand a relationship between the Supper and the Cross. For, because sacrifice belongs to the species of sign, "a pragmatic locution signifying an invisible thing," it must be plainly evident *as sacrifice*, and anything that is in any way indeterminate as sacrifice and could be just the same even if it were not a sacrifice is, by definition, not self-evident *as sacrifice*.⁴⁰ We must, therefore, look for a complex of events which are plainly self-evident as sacrifice, and it is here that the interplay of sacrifice as a species of sign and sacrifice as a species of gift play an integral role in explicating Christ's sacrifice. For, on the one hand, the interior devotion of the donor is *sine qua non* the essential element of sacrifice *as gift*. And the latreutic gift of the donor, the end of sacrifice, is the voluntary and propitiatory turning toward God, the purgation of desire for worldly things and the reorientation of the will to God. But without an exterior, ritual sign, the sacrifice is nonetheless incomplete, for this is essential to sacrifice *as sign*. Willingness, while necessary, is not sufficient "to constitute a sacrificial

³⁹ *MF* 1:33n6.

⁴⁰ *MF* 1:46.

offering. There must be something more. It must carry with it a direction of the gift to God, and this direction must be outwardly manifested.”⁴¹

So, where does Christ offer a plainly evident sign of his intention to offer sacrifice? Where does he sensibly manifest that the gift of his *latria* is directed to God? When does Christ hand himself over to the Father? Is it in the Garden of Gethsemane when he says, “not my will but yours be done” (Lk 22:42)? Is it at the moment of death on the Cross when he says, “into your hands I commend my spirit” (Lk 23:46)? Surprisingly, de la Taille’s answer to these last two questions is negative. As Matthiesen points out, “while he concedes that the complexus of actions and words *ab horto ad crucem* reveals signs of Christ’s self-surrender to the passion, what remains lacking is a *definitive* indication of Christ as victim, ritually handed over to God’s ownership as a latreutic and propitiatory gift.”⁴² As for Christ’s words on the Cross, de la Taille says that these are words of beseeching rather than offering. Furthermore, a sacrificial offering must be more than words, it must be pragmatic. As for Christ’s words in the Garden, de la Taille says that these are words of consent rather than offering and, again, there is no pragmatic offering.⁴³ “Therefore, the passion of our Lord is not sufficiently specified as a sacrifice (properly so called) by this complexus of events.”⁴⁴

Instead, de la Taille insists that the Supper marks the moment when Christ as priest actually gives himself over as victim to the Father *to be* immolated. The immolation is representative and sacramental, but the oblation is real and present, not merely an “effigy of some more secret

⁴¹ *MF* 1:42.

⁴² Matthiesen, 60. Moreover, de la Taille underscores the import of the interplay between offering, sign, and gift by distinguishing in a footnote between giving oneself to death *per se*, such as a soldier or a martyr, and giving oneself to death “by way of sacrifice to God,” for the two “are not identical: for sacrifice includes the concept of gift presented to God (as a sign of internal dedication). This gift concept is intrinsic to all true sacrifices, without it a sacrifice can neither be, nor be known to be” (*MF* 1:46n19).

⁴³ *MF* 1:44–45.

⁴⁴ *MF* 1:46.

giving” simply pointing proleptically forward to another, real oblation.⁴⁵ De la Taille asserts that in the Supper the offering is real because the direction of the gift to God is demonstrated in the thanksgiving and blessing of the gift of his body and blood to be surrendered to God.⁴⁶ As Christ sacerdotally enacts the image of his passion, he offers himself as victim *to be* immolated in reality on the Cross in the image of that very immolation in the bread and wine.⁴⁷ And as student of the church Fathers, de la Taille is never in want of support from the tradition, such as Gregory of Nyssa, who asserts in his *Oratio I in resurrectionem* that Christ

does not wait for the impending betrayal...allowing as it were their malice to be the origin and the cause of [humanity’s] redemption, but in his wisdom he opens the way by a sacrifice ineffable and invisible to [humanity], and he offered himself for us an oblation and a victim, priest and at the same time that Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. When did he do this? At the very moment when he openly showed that his body was to be received as food.⁴⁸

Moreover, there can be no sacrificial banquet in which those who partake feast upon a victim not yet offered, and nothing can become a victim until it is offered.⁴⁹ If the Supper is to be a sacrificial banquet with the disciples, Christ must already be constituted as a victim. Further, one of the great differences between the old sacrifices and Christ’s sacrifice is that Christ is able to effect that which he signifies, but if Christ were to say, “this is my body,” and it be only his body *in figure*, then he would not have effected what he signified. In declaring “this is my body,” Christ constitutes himself as victim.⁵⁰ Finally, the Epistle to the Hebrews is clear that Christ offers in the order of Melchisedech, who offers bread and wine, not in the order of the Aaronic

⁴⁵ MF 1:53.

⁴⁶ MF 1:52. Indeed, de la Taille points out that though the gifts are *given to* the apostles, they are *surrendered to* God *for* the apostles.

⁴⁷ MF 1:51.

⁴⁸ MF 1:62.

⁴⁹ MF 1:81.

⁵⁰ MF 1:34.

priesthood, which offered the blood of bulls and goats. Thus, Christ's offering must be ordered to and effected under the signs of bread and wine.⁵¹

All this evidence leads de la Taille to assert unequivocally that the Supper is a sacrifice. But, he insists, the Supper is not to be understood as preparatory for or "subordinated to the sacrifice on the Cross"; rather, the supper is "co-ordinated and co-numerated" with the Cross such that the two are united as constitutive parts of the same single sacrifice.⁵² If the Supper marks the moment when Christ hands himself over as victim *to be* immolated, the Cross marks the moment when Christ is handed over as victim *by* immolation. The oblation is continuing; the immolation is real. Again, de la Taille finds significant evidence not only in patristic writers but also in the liturgy of the early church, as, for example, in the Chaldean liturgy in which "we read that in the Supper the Lord instituted the true Pasch which is the Pasch of the Lord immolated on the Cross."⁵³ From this, de la Taille concludes,

the meaning appears to me to be: that through the mystery of the Supper he is led to the Cross, and thus we know that the Pasch who was *immolated* on the Cross, appears as *introduced* in the Supper: that is, the sacrifice of the one Lamb, commenced in the Supper, is completed on the Cross—as he hastens on from the offering to the immolation.⁵⁴

The new Pasch begins in the Supper and continues on to the Cross, which is to say that, while formal determination of Christ's oblation is "plainly evident" in the ritual action of the Supper, the offering does not cease at the end of the meal but continues on "uninterruptedly...kept up by the continued acts" of Christ's will until his death on the Cross.⁵⁵ In other words, the

⁵¹ *MF* 1:94–95.

⁵² *MF* 1:116.

⁵³ While de la Taille sites numerous pieces of evidence to support his claim, this one is particularly interesting in the case of the United Methodist rite since de la Taille identifies the Chaldean liturgy as an offshoot of the Syro-Antiochene liturgy and the United Methodist rite is, in fact, based on the same. See James F. White, "Keynote Address," *Order of St. Luke 2000 Convention*, DVD (Cleveland: Order of St. Luke, 2000).

⁵⁴ *MF* 1:92–93.

⁵⁵ *MF* 1:138–39.

“interrupted” continuity of the one sacrifice offered in the Supper and on the Cross is possible because there is simply a change in the *modus oblationis*, from *to be* immolated constituted under the sign of immolation to *by* immolation as formally dedicated and consecrated victim.⁵⁶

Having considered the nature of Christ’s sacrifice in relation to the Supper and the Cross and the unity therein, we now turn to de la Taille’s understanding of Christ’s sacrifice in relation to the Resurrection, Ascension and heavenly sacrifice, for, as Matthiesen puts it, “the notion of an eternal sacrifice and victim is the second pillar to de la Taille’s theory of eucharistic sacrifice.”⁵⁷

De la Taille poses the question thusly:

when Christ died laden with pain and sorrow, was this the end of his sacrifice, or did it in some way continue on? As offering or immolation nothing could be added to it...there is now no place for any further offering on the part of the priest, or immolation of the victim. But could it not be, as we have shown to occur in other cases, that here too there might accrue to the sacrifice completely enacted an added perfection coming from God and consummating the victim as such, thus crowning the work of [humanity] by the divine acceptance?⁵⁸

In considering the answer to this question, de la Taille believes there are two types who err: (1) those who err by *defect* and “overlook” or deny the heavenly sacrifice; and (2) those who err by *excess* and consider the heavenly sacrifice in an *active* manner.⁵⁹ Christ’s heavenly “activity” as it relates to Christ’s sacrifice must be conceived in a way which understands it as integral to Christ’s sacrifice but which precludes any suggestion of a new or different sacrifice. Therefore, de la Taille seeks to take a “middle course” by which there is no “formal continuation or renewal of the active offering of Christ in heaven; but that there is a virtual duration of that active offering, consisting in this: that by virtue of his offering, one in time and valid for eternity—

⁵⁶ *MF* 1:81.

⁵⁷ Matthiesen, 81.

⁵⁸ *MF* 1:183.

⁵⁹ *MF* 1:247–54; cf. Maurice de la Taille, *The Mystery of Faith and Human Opinion, Contrasted and Defined* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1930), 54, 70–74. Hereafter *MFHO*.

because since Christ gives irrevocably, God accepts eternally—Christ remains forever Theohyte—sacred to God.”⁶⁰

On the one hand, de la Taille points out that theologians such as Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, and Augustine attribute three elements to the true Pasch—the Supper, the Resurrection, and the Ascension—such that they “make one integrally perfect sacrifice.”⁶¹ In the Resurrection, the victim passes over to and is received by God and thereby accepted and ratified by God, thus consummating the sacrifice making it true and efficacious.⁶² So Augustine states in his exposition on Psalm 130, “in the passion he was made a sacrifice; in the Resurrection he renewed that which was slain, and offered it as his first-fruits unto God, and says unto you, ‘All that is yours is now consecrated: since such first-fruits have been offered unto God from you.’”⁶³ Or in his exposition on Psalm 141, “That then is the ‘evening sacrifice,’ the passion of the Lord, the Cross of the Lord, the offering of a salutary victim, the whole burnt offering acceptable to God. That ‘evening sacrifice’ produced, in his Resurrection, a morning offering.”⁶⁴

Here, Augustine points to an important distinction for de la Taille between the evening sacrifice of the Cross and the morning offering (or better, gift) of the Resurrection. The sacrifice of Christ is completed on the Cross, once-for-all, to which nothing can be added, not even, it seems, the morning offering. “Must we then say that there is no sacrifice in heaven?” de la Taille asks.⁶⁵ There is no sacrifice in the “active” sense of the risen Christ. The “active” sacrifice has passed and is at an end; it is neither repeated nor in a “continual process of completion (*in*

⁶⁰ *MF* 1:254.

⁶¹ *MF* 1:185.

⁶² *MF* 1:191–93.

⁶³ Augustine *Exposition on Psalm 130:5*.

⁶⁴ Augustine *Exposition on Psalm 141:3*.

⁶⁵ *MFHO*, 70.

feri).”⁶⁶ Instead, the sacrifice remains as the “passive” sacrifice, that is, as the thing offered, rather than in the “active” sense, which is the sacrificial action. The passive sacrifice endures “as long as that state into which it has been the purpose of the sacred rite to bring the victim.”⁶⁷ And, as stated above, because God accepts eternally, Christ remains eternally in his state of being as accepted victim. And here de la Taille reiterates the connection between sacrifice and gift, for the passive sacrifice “is nothing else than the gift made to God, retaining the character of gift...Christ is in heaven, in the quality of gift, offered once, accepted and kept by God for ever. This is what is meant by designating Christ as eternal victim, or celestial sacrifice.”⁶⁸

On the other hand, de la Taille is quick to point out that the heavenly sacrifice cannot be taken as a mere metaphor. Christ as victim passed over and was received by God in the Resurrection, and without this, as we have already discussed, the sacrifice would be void and ineffectual. Further, whereas the acceptance and consummation of the victim was only figurative by earthly fire in the Levitical sacrifices, the acceptance and consummation of Christ in his glorification was a true, effectual acceptance. The heavenly sacrifice does not merely imply some internal devotion on the part of Christ but is a sacrifice “in the strict sense” and “connotes a distinct outward condition” of Christ’s humanity: specifically, “the glory procured by the sacrifice...and ratified and sanctioned forever by the Father.”⁶⁹

Nor is the heavenly sacrifice a sign, as Christ’s sacrifice manifests the closure between sign and signified. There is, in fact, no place for signs, no need for figure or veil, in heaven because “all is truth resplendent *in its own light*. For in heaven the sacrifice signifies the devotion of the

⁶⁶ *MF* 1:202.

⁶⁷ *MFHO*, 70.

⁶⁸ *MFHO*, 70–71.

⁶⁹ *MF* 1:202.

sacrificer, but in such a way that what signifies and what is signified—that is the sign and the thing signified by the sign—are one and the same thing.”⁷⁰ What Christ presented on earth as a sacrament of himself is now presented in resplendent truth. And as Matthiesen points out, this closure is “far from trivial” for de la Taille, because from it flows the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice to sanctify us through the sacraments, which are “neither ‘vain’ nor ‘empty,’ only because they signify that full sacrifice that remains eternally held as gift and thereby eternally sanctifying of those now participating in it.”⁷¹

To summarize, de la Taille frames the grammar of Christ’s sacrifice with the helpful distinction between oblation and immolation and identifies three different phases in or *loci* for Christ’s sacrifice: the Supper, the Cross, and Heaven.⁷² Sacrifice, properly understood given our sinful condition, is both laetitic and propitiatory and therefore must involve both the offering of something to God and the change, or destruction, of that which is sacrificed. These two necessary constituents of sacrifice properly understood correspond to the offering (or oblation) and immolation of the thing sacrificed. With respect to Christ, who is both victim and priest, the oblation and immolation occur within a complex of actions that begins in the Supper and concludes upon the Cross. In the Supper, Christ as victim voluntarily and actively dedicates himself to God and as priest offers himself to God as a victim *to be* immolated. Thus in the Supper, the oblation is real, the immolation is sacramental. It is by the real and present offering in the Supper that Christ gives himself over to the ownership of God and to the passion, through which his offering would continue morally by virtue of his sustained will, and to the Cross, by

⁷⁰ *MF* 1:202.

⁷¹ Matthiesen 83; cf. *MF* 1:203.

⁷² To be clear, de la Taille never uses, to our knowledge, the term grammar.

which he would be immolated. Thus on the Cross, the immolation is real, the oblation is continuing.

With respect to heaven, de la Taille asserts that, though we can, and in fact must, say that from a certain aspect the offering and immolation are at an end, for nothing more externally could be added to Christ's sacrifice, from the aspect of the victim and its acceptance, any understanding of closure continues, in a certain sense, to expand. Not only is the divine acceptance of a sacrifice necessary for its ratification, a state which for Christ is manifest in the Resurrection, but the victimal condition brought about by the sacrificial action perdures as long as the victim remains incorrupt, a state which continues eternally for Christ. The heavenly sacrifice is, therefore, "a sacrifice in the strict sense," though it must not be considered to be so in an active sense but rather a passive one. There is "no formal continuation or renewal of the active offering of Christ," but rather there is a "virtual duration" of that active oblation in the perpetual victim. Here, then, de la Taille attempts to navigate a *via media* between two extremes: the heavenly sacrifice is neither new nor repeated, neither active nor metaphor, neither continuation nor separate.⁷³

Finally, de la Taille's paradigm has important implications for constructing a grammar of Christian sacrifice, particularly with respect to addressing the feminists and womanist concerns central to our work. Most importantly, his emphasis on the primacy of oblation over immolation provides an escape from the thicket of immolationist theories which grew up in the wake of Trent and dominated the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It goes without saying that such theories, which locate the essence of sacrifice in the destruction of the victim, overemphasize the

⁷³ De la Taille's efforts here are, perhaps, not unlike the Chalcedonian definition, in whose spirit de la Taille might say that the celestial sacrifice is without newness, without repetition; without activity, without metaphor; without continuation, without separation.

propitiatory aspect of sacrifice, *often to the total eclipsing of its latreutic aspect*, and give rise to precisely the kind of grammar of Christian sacrifice which feminist and womanist concerns critique. To recall Eugene Masure's statement quoted above, "here, then, is sacrifice conceived from the start and essentially as a putting to death."⁷⁴ By contrast, de la Taille's emphasis on oblation points to the will, desire, devotion, and love that form the foundation for Christ's sacrifice, thereby allowing the latreutic nature of sacrifice to remain its primary ground and framing it in an understanding of sacrifice as directing a thing to its proper, final end.

2.4. The Grammar of Christ's Sacrifice: Wesley(an)⁷⁵

We turn now to examining John Wesley's understanding of Christ's sacrifice. Before we do, however, a few comments are in order to identify the nature of Wesley's theological method and work. First, it is widely accepted that Wesley was not a systematic theologian, at least as the field is defined today. Although he was well-read in patristic literature and a student of the early church, his concern, rather than developing a systematically integrated theology, was always focused on the practical application of theology for the spiritual life and health—and evangelical

⁷⁴ Masure, 28 and, more broadly, 27–33; cf. Mattheisen, 3–25.

⁷⁵ While the primary voice at this point will be that of John Wesley, the primary lens will be that of the 1745 collection *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*. And while it is generally presumed and accepted that John authored the extract and Charles primarily authored the hymns, and some attempts have been made to distinguish the two brother's separate voices, puzzling out individual voices is problematic. Neither brother ever sought to do so, and the collection, which was printed nine times before John's death, was always published under both authors' names with no further ascription of authorship. John's extract is extremely brief, reducing Brevint's 123-page treatise to a mere thirty-two. Charles' hymn texts often reach back behind the extract and reclaim language from the original treatise which John had edited out of the extract but did not edit out of the hymns. Given that John is known to have had a strong editorial hand in other circumstances when publishing his brother's hymns and that he chose to publish the collection under their joint authorship, it seems reasonable to presume that John did not disagree with any of his brother's re-appropriations of Brevint. Our examination will freely draw from both the extract and the hymns, and thus might be considered as representative of both brothers and, thus, "Wesley(an)." We will presume that anything from *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, while perhaps not actually penned by John, is still in full agreement with John's views and thus representative of him. For our purposes, unless otherwise specified, Wesley will be used to refer to John.

rebirth—of the church, what many have called Wesley’s “experimental and practical divinity.”⁷⁶ It is in this light that Randy Maddox points out that Wesley’s theological activity demonstrates that he is more in the mold of an Anglican divine than a continental (Protestant) scholastic.⁷⁷ His theological activity of extracting treatises like the 1673 treatise by Daniel Brevint (1616–1695), *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*, is an example of his desire to remain a student of the church and its tradition while making this tradition and theology accessible and applicable to the living—or revitalized—church of the day. His writing is much more devotional in nature, and any sustained argument he makes is often to the end of inspiring proper Christian piety and discipline rather than theological disputation. Such an approach will require that we often “read between the lines” of Wesley’s own writing, including examining those authors on whose shoulders Wesley stands and whose texts and arguments he has both presumed and appropriated.

For Wesley, sacrifice is an activity which is both natural to humanity as *latria* and needful as propitiation in humanity’s fallen state. It must, therefore, involve both interior disposition and exterior signification. Such an understanding is very similar to, if not entirely consonant with, de la Taille’s. This should, perhaps, not be surprising, for, as a student of patristic literature and the early church (like de la Taille) as well as the heritage that he had received through his own ecclesial tradition, one might say that Wesley embodied in the best way the Anglican idea that England and Rome followed parallel, rather than divergent, paths.⁷⁸ And such a desire for continuity with tradition—even as Wesley sought to revitalize the church—allowed Wesley’s

⁷⁶ Cf. Thomas A. Langford, “John Wesley and Theological Method,” in *Rethinking Wesley’s Theology for Contemporary Methodism*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1998), 35.

⁷⁷ Randy L. Maddox, “Reclaiming an Inheritance: Wesley as Theologian in the History of Methodist Theology,” in *Rethinking Wesley’s Theology for Contemporary Methodism*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1998), 216–17. Maddox goes on to praise the degree to which recent theological studies have focused on—and given positive consideration to—Wesley’s model of theological method (224).

⁷⁸ Cf. Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 429–49.

thought on the Eucharist, as with de la Taille's, to find deep resonance with the historical, catholic tradition. As Stephen Sours notes, although Wesley championed the Reformation as he understood it, his theology of eucharistic sacrifice does not fall subject to the charge of "eucharistic idealism" that Matthew Levering levels against those Catholic theologians and traditions that move away from an essential sacrificial dimension to the Eucharist by way of "the linear supersessionist displacement of the Jewish mode of embodied sacrificial communion by spiritualizing accounts of eucharistic communion with God."⁷⁹

So, Wesley states in his extract that "there never was on earth a true religion, without some kind of sacrifices" which is our "acceptable duty to God" (VI.1). Beyond duty, however, the second great end of sacrifice is the atonement for sins (VI.1), and the sacrifice of ourselves, as well as our participation in Christ's sacrifice, is absolutely necessary to our own salvation because we are sinful and separated from God (VII.1). Of all the duties the Christian has, the most necessary is dying with Christ in sacrifice by presenting at the altar the very soul and body "which God hath given" that it may be useful to do the will of God (VII.5, 11). And this offering requires both the believer's internal devotion and a material offering, for "in order to become a spiritual worshipper, the work must be done 'in spirit and in truth'" (VIII.5). Moreover, just as Wesley's understanding of sacrifice in general resonates with de la Taille's, so, with respect to Christ's sacrifice, Wesley's view also aligns very closely with de la Taille's: he sees three loci to Christ's sacrifice in the Supper, the Cross, and heaven, and he understands Christ's self-oblation to begin in the Supper, continue to the Cross, and extend into heaven, although, as we shall see, there are some not inconsequential differences.

⁷⁹ Sours, 55 (see chap. 1n42); Matthew Webb Levering, *Sacrifice and Community: Jewish Offering and Christian Eucharist* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 8.

Central to apprehending Wesley's understanding of Christ's sacrifice as it relates to the Supper is grasping the influence on Wesley of others following in the tradition of the Anglican Divines such as John Johnson (1662–1725), a Laudian who was known to be intimate with George Hicke (1642–1715). And while a great deal has been written about Brevint's influence on Wesley because of the genetic link between Brevint's treatise and *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, less has been written on the influence of other key theological mentors, including

Johnson.⁸⁰ Moreover, Geordan Hammond points out that the hymns, while “substantially influenced by Brevint,” also draw heavily on the theology of Johnson and the Nonjurors.⁸¹

⁸⁰ The connection between Brevint and Wesley has been acknowledged and examined by authors (to varying degrees) for at least 150 years. In 1871 as the Methodists tried to figure out their place in the long wake of the Oxford Movement and the Anglo-Catholic revival it sparked, W. E. Dutton published a volume titled *The Eucharistic Manuals of John and Charles Wesley* in which he stated that the abridgement of Brevint’s treatise appended to the front of the collection “was deliberately adopted as a clear and concise statement of Wesley’s own teaching...and stood forth to the world for half a century as the authorized standard of Methodist teaching upon this most important and vital doctrine” (John Wesley, Charles Wesley, and W. E. Dutton, *The Eucharistic Manuals of John and Charles Wesley Reprinted from the Original Editions of 1748-57-94* [London: Bull Simmons, 1871], viii). In his biography of Wesley published one year after Dutton’s volume, Luke Tyerman claimed that by publishing an abridgement of Brevint’s treatise, Wesley had made it “his own” (Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., Founder of the Methodists* [New York: Harper & brothers, 1872], cited in 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*, 3rd American ed. [Akron, OH: OSL Publications, 1990], 10). In the twentieth century, Tyerman’s claim had moved from assertion to assumption by the time John Simon published *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies* in 1923. Simon acknowledges that the hymns are based on Brevint’s treatise, which is “much abbreviated, but nothing is left out that is essential to a clear understanding of Dr. Daniel Brevint’s theological position,” and that as the hymns are “dominated by the spirit and teaching of Dr. Daniel Brevint it is necessary to know something about him and his opinions” (John S. Simon and John Wesley, *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies* [London: Epworth Press, 1923], 303). For more than fifty years, the “gold standard” for studies of Wesleyan eucharistic theology has been J. Ernest Rattenbury’s 1948 publication, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley*, which not only republished the hymns and the extract, but provided extensive commentary on both of them, asserting that “no adequate understanding of the Eucharistic teaching of the Wesleys is possible without [Brevint’s treatise]. It will, I think, be a great boon to readers of my book to have at hand these writings to which reference is essential for confirmation of my arguments” (Rattenbury, ix). The most thorough work from the mid-twentieth century is Ole Borgen’s *John Wesley on the Sacraments: A Theological Study* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972). This was followed by a great deal of activity in the late 1980s and early 1990s leading up to the 250th anniversary of *HLS*. Much of this activity culminated in the publication of a facsimile of the first edition of *HLS* and in the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Charles Wesley Society which was titled *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper: 250 Years* (Charles Wesley Society, *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper: 250 Years: Papers Presented at the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Charles Wesley Society, October 1995, the Divinity School, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina*, Proceedings of the Charles Wesley Society 2 [Madison, NJ: Charles Wesley Society Archives and History Center Drew University, 1997]). Following this scholarly climax, periodic work has appeared, including another paper presented at the Charles Wesley Society annual meeting in 1998 by Daniel Stevick. Stevick’s work eventually resulted in a new volume, *The Altar’s Fire: Charles Wesley’s Hymns on the Lord’s Supper, 1745: Introduction and Exposition* (Peterborough, Eng.: Epworth Press, 2004), a work that will no doubt replace Rattenbury’s 1948 text. Most recently, Aaron Kerr in his 2007 dissertation provides a detailed analysis of Brevint’s and John’s voices in the last section of the treatise/extract by way of showing the limitation of extraction, and he brings to light the fact that elsewhere in the extract John edited out Brevint’s semiotic logic, rooted in Augustine, almost entirely (Aaron K. Kerr, “John and Charles Wesleys’ *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* (1745): Their Meaning for Methodist Ecclesial Identity and Ecumenical Dialogue” [PhD diss., Duquesne University, 2007]). See also my chapter, “Eucharistic Piety in American Methodist Hymnody (1786-1889),” in *Music and the Wesleys*, eds. Nicholas Temperley and Stephen Banfield (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 88–102.

⁸¹ Geordan Hammond, *John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 64.

Without a doubt, Johnson's most influential work was his treatise entitled *The Unbloody Sacrifice*, published in two volumes in 1714/18. Wesley apparently first came to know Johnson's work through the influence of John Clayton (1709–1773), a devotee of the Manchester Nonjuror Thomas Deacon (1697–1753) and member of the Oxford Methodist group, whose advice Wesley had sought on primitive Christianity and spiritual life. Wesley first read Johnson's work in 1732, known from a 1734 letter in which Clayton refers Wesley back to Johnson regarding the question of how the Eucharist can apply Christ's merits to the believer, particularly "in the ch[apter] which proves the Holy Eucharist to be a sacrifice both expiatory and propitiatory."⁸² This may have contributed to Wesley's decision to take the volume with him aboard the *Simmonds* on his voyage to Georgia in 1735 and, according to the manuscript copy of his journal, devote a considerable number of hours between 28 Nov and 24 Dec to (re)reading the 1,000-page volume while *en route*.⁸³

⁸² Wesley, *Works* 25:391–3; cf. Hammond, 41.

⁸³ Wesley, *Works* 18:325–33. He usually devoted himself to reading Johnson's treatise between 6am and 7am daily, though almost never on Sunday. During this same time (16 Dec) Wesley begins to write a treatise on the Eucharist. On 23 Dec, he began reading Brevint's treatise with another passenger aboard the *Simmonds*. After finishing Johnson (or at least what he reread of Johnson) on 24 Dec and celebrating Christmas on 25 Dec, Wesley notes in his journal on 26 Dec that he began a "Treatise On Sacraments." Whether this is the same treatise he began on 16 Dec is unclear as no such treatise with that particular title has surface in his writings. What is clear is that Wesley devoted significant attention and devotion to the sacrament of the Eucharist. Additionally, according to Hammond, Wesley also took with him on his voyage to Georgia Johnson's later work, *The Primitive Communicant: In Three Discourses on the Sacrament of the Eucharist in which the Sacrifice of Christ and of the Church are Fully Explain'd. With Devotions for the Altar* (1728), as the notebook containing his diary from 13 Feb to 31 Aug 1737 contains the transcription of the first twenty sections of that work. Interestingly, this period of time coincides with the time that Wesley refuses communion to Sophia Williamson (3 Aug), causing a warrant to be issued for his arrest (8 Aug) and a grand jury to be called (23 Aug and 31 Aug), all of which eventually contributed to his return to England (22 Dec). Clearly, Wesley was imbued with Johnson's teachings on eucharistic sacrifice (Cf. Hammond, 50–51). Bowmer suggests that Wesley was so enamored with Johnson's *Unbloody Sacrifice* that it may have been the treatise of which he brought 500 copies with him on the journey, though he provides no proof and admits that "we are not told explicitly what the treatise was" (Bowmer, 30). This seems highly unlikely since 500 copies of any volume at that time would be an enormous cache and Johnson's treatise weighed in around 1,000 pages. I believe it is more likely, though equally as speculative, that the 500 volumes may have been a treatise by Simon Patrick (1626–1707), *The Christian Sacrifice: A treatise shewing the necessity, end and manner of receiving the Holy Communion: together with suitable prayers and meditations ... In four parts*, as Wesley was known to use this treatise in the instruction of preparing communicants for the sacrament (Cf. Wesley, *Works*, 18:423–429, 456). As the title indicates, Patrick's volume is much more devotional in nature than Johnson's, which truly is a theological

For his part, Johnson was also a student of patristic literature and, like de la Taille, his work is magisterial in its examination and compilation of patristic sources on Christ's sacrifice. From his long catena of patristic voices, he asserts that

the sum of what these Fathers teach us is, that Christ entered upon His priestly office in the Eucharist; that there He began the one oblation; that He offered Himself in a spiritual mystical manner, as He afterwards did corporally upon the Cross... These Fathers give their judgment, that in the institution of the Eucharist this Sacrifice was first made, in our Saviour's will and intention; that then He made the tender of His Body and Blood... these two parts of the oblation were but one continued solemnity.⁸⁴

Elsewhere when speaking of the Supper, Johnson says, "what Christ there gave, or offered to God, was His Sacramental Body and Blood, the Bread and Wine."⁸⁵ And when speaking of Christ's priesthood, he states, "that one great part of our Saviour's Melchisedecian priesthood consisted in offering Bread and Wine; and that in offering them He did mysteriously, spiritually, and intentionally beforehand offer His own Body and Blood"; and that "in the Eucharist He executed his Melchisedecian priesthood, that there He began the one only oblation of His Body and Blood, which he finished on the cross."⁸⁶

That Johnson's view appears entirely congruous with de la Taille's is, perhaps, without need of further comment—such passages could have been written by de la Taille himself! Christ's sacrifice of himself to God by way of his will and intention was made through the sacramental offering of his body and blood under the signs of bread and wine, and this offering continues on to the offering on the Cross with which it is numerically *and* ritually one. Though this position is certainly a minority one in the Anglican Church, Wesley does, under the influence of theologians

treatise freighted with historical and scriptural citations and extended theological argumentation. The Patrick treatise would thus be much more in keeping with Wesley's "experimental and practical divinity" discussed above.

⁸⁴ John Johnson, *The Unbloody Sacrifice, and Altar, Unvail'd and Supported: In which the Nature of the Eucharist Is Explain'd According to the Sentiments of the Christian Church in the Four First Centuries: Part the First* (London: Printed for Robert Knaplock, 1714) 1:144–5.

⁸⁵ Johnson, 1:92.

⁸⁶ Johnson, 1:122–3.

such as Johnson and Brevint, see the Supper as a type of sacrifice which sacramentally anticipates the Cross.⁸⁷ Wesley reads the institution narrative in the Gospels figuratively in that he understands Christ's gifts of bread and wine to be signs of, or to signify, his body and blood and the new covenant.⁸⁸ He grounds this mode of signification in the efficacious signification of ancient Passover:

Therefore, as at the Passover, the late Jews could say, "This is the Lamb, these are the herbs, our fathers did eat in Egypt;" because these latter feasts did so effectually represent the former: so at our Holy Communion, which sets before our eyes Christ our Passover, who is sacrificed for us; "our Saviour," says St. Austin, "doubted not to say, This is my body, when he gave the disciples the figure of his body:" especially because this sacrament duly received, makes the thing it represents, as really present for our use, as if it were newly done. (II.3)⁸⁹

The comparison between the Passover and "our Holy Communion" in the first half of the passage clearly refers to the power of the Eucharist to bring the past sacramentally into the present. The juxtaposition with the quote from Augustine, which speaks of the Supper, asserts that the same sacramental power made the bread in the hands of Christ the true figure—"really present"—of Christ's own body. The Supper is a sacramental feast that looks forward to the Cross and makes present that which is to come.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Cf. Hammond, 54; Richard F. Buxton, *Eucharist and Institution Narrative: A Study in the Roman and Anglican Traditions of the Consecration of the Eucharist from the Eighth to the Twentieth Centuries*, Alcuin Club Collections 58 (London: SPCK, 1976), 193.

⁸⁸ Cf. John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1976), Mt 26:26, Mk 14:24. Hereafter *ENNT*.

⁸⁹ The quotation from Augustine can be found in *Contra Adimatum*, cap. 8, and *Contra Adamantium Manichæum*, cap. 12. It is also referenced, among others, by John Jewel and Peter Martyr.

⁹⁰ Thankfully, this seems to be one area where Wesley does not fall prey to the typical Protestant misinterpretation of sign and signified and the subsequent objection which naturally follows and which persists even into modern theology despite the hard work of the Liturgical Movement. Take, for example, Steven Walton's critique of G. D. Kilpatrick: "Kilpatrick makes the classic mistake with the accounts of the Last Supper of confusing the thing signified with the sign itself. It is beyond dispute that the bread and wine of the Last Supper speak of the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross. But *the thing signified* (the death of Christ) being sacrificial does not mean that *the sign itself* is sacrificial. The stronger statement that could be made is that of Aulén: 'the Eucharist of the Last Supper was not in itself a sacrifice, but it has nevertheless a sacrificial character, because everything is concentrated around the final, self-giving sacrifice which immediately followed.' In other words, the Last Supper is not itself a sacrifice, but points to a sacrifice" (Steve Walton, "Sacrifice and Priesthood in Relation to the Christian Life and Church in the New Testament" in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, eds. Roger T. Beckwith and Martin J. Selman [Grand

In that sad memorable night,
 When Jesus was for us betray'd,
 He left His death-recording rite,
 He took, and bless'd, and brake the bread
 ...
 He took into His hands the cup,
 To crown the sacramental feast,
 And full of kind concern look'd up,
 And gave what He to them had blest. (1:1.1–4, 3.1–4)

As such, the Supper can only be a sacrament of the offering yet to come on the Cross. Moreover, the question of sacrifice with respect to the Supper is grounded in Christ's priestly office.

Because Christ is our Melchisedechian great high priest, Wesley has no qualms in asserting that the Supper is a sacrifice, for there Christ offers himself.⁹¹

Wesley is careful, however, to make distinctions between Christ's self-offering in the Supper and on the Cross: the offering of the Supper is a peace-offering, while that of the Cross is a sin-offering:

This great and holy mystery communicates to us, the death of our blessed Lord, both as "offering himself to God," and as giving himself to [humanity]. As *he "offered 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. And by this means it conveys to me the "communion of his sufferings," which leads to a communion in all his graces and glories. *As he offers himself to [humanity],* the holy Sacrament is, after the sacrifice for sin, the true sacrifice of peace-offering, and the *table* purposely set, to receive those mercies that are sent down from his *altar*. "Take and eat; this is my body which was broken for you. And this is the blood which was shed for you." (IV.7)⁹²

Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995]). While it is true that sacraments point to the thing signified, it is also true that a sacrament makes present that which is absent, such that the sign is no longer simply an empty sign pointing to something else but actually becomes the present, real, and true signification of that which is otherwise absent. This is how we can say that bread and wine are body and blood. Thus, one cannot say that the thing signified is sacrificial without also saying that the sign which sacramentally points to it *and makes it present* is also, itself, sacrificial.

⁹¹ Borgen, 237 (see chap. 1n18); cf. Johnson's unequivocal statements quoted above.

⁹² Note the intriguing reversal of the agency in the peace offering, which people offer to God, but in this case Christ (God) is offering to the people, again, both in the Supper and the Eucharist (emphasis original); cf. Sours 141; Colin E. Gunton, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Essays toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 189.

The astute reader will note that the change in tense between Christ “offering himself” and Christ who “offered himself” indicates that Wesley is moving equivocally between the Eucharist and the Supper. Thus, even while the true sacrifice of peace-offering references the present (“as he offers”), Wesley has already established that there is nearly no distinction (in this case) for him between the Eucharist and the Supper because both are grounded in a sacrament’s power to transverse—or collapse—time into what Borgen calls the “eternal now.”⁹³ So, even while distinctions are made between types of sacrifices, Wesley still refers to the Supper as a sacrifice. These distinctions between the Supper and the Cross may not be the same ones we observed in de la Taille and Johnson—for example, sacramental oblation as opposed to real oblation or *to be* immolated as opposed to *as* immolated—but such an understanding, via Johnson, surely lies in the background of Wesley’s thought, and it should be noted again that his theological activity

⁹³ Borgen, 45; cf. Wesley’s *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*, Is 53:12, in which he states that Christ intercedes for transgressors “by the sacrifice of himself, which, though past, he continually represents to his father, as if it were present”; Wesley’s *ENNT*, Heb 9:26, in which he states that “the sacrifice of Christ divides the whole age or duration of the world into two parts, and extends its virtue backward and forward, from this middle point wherein they meet”; *Sermon 58*, “On Predestination,” §15: “The sum of all is this: the almighty, all-wise God sees and knows, from everlasting to everlasting, all that is, that was, and that is to come, through one eternal now”; and *Sermon 14*, “The Repentance of Believers,” §II.4: “Continue to believe in him that loved thee, and gave himself for thee; that bore all thy sins in his own body on the tree; and he saveth thee from all condemnation, by his blood continually applied. Thus it is that we continue in a justified state. And when we go ‘from faith to faith,’ when we have faith to be cleansed from indwelling sin, to be saved from all our uncleannesses, we are likewise saved from all that *guilt*, that *desert* of punishment, which we felt before. So that then we may say, not only,

Every moment, Lord, I *want*
The merit of thy death;

but, likewise, in the full assurance of faith,

Every moment, Lord, I *have*
The merit of thy death!

For, by that faith in his life, death, and intercession for us, renewed from moment to moment, we are every whit clean, and there is not only now no condemnation for us, but no such desert of punishment as was before, the Lord cleansing both our hearts and lives” (emphasis original). See also Sours, 140; and Charles’ Wesley’s use of the same in *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley: Reprinted from the Originals, with the Last Corrections of the Authors; Together with the Poems of Charles Wesley Not Before Published. Collected and Arranged by Charles Osborn* (London: Wesleyan-Methodist Conference Office, 1868–72), 1:313 (*Hymns and Sacred Poems* [1740], “Hear, holy, holy, holy Lord”), 5:35 (*Hymns and Sacred Poems: In Two Volumes*, vol. 1, Hymn 138), 8:189 (*Versions and Paraphrases of Select Psalms*, Psalm 102), and 12:305 (*Hymns on the Four Gospels, and Acts of the Apostles*, Acts 15:18).

here is not one ordered toward theological disputation (as, more so, with Johnson and de la Taille) but rather toward spiritual life and liturgical devotion.

Not surprisingly, Wesley's understanding of the Cross as the apex of Christ's sacrificial action as victim is firmly rooted in the historic tradition. Just as the Hebrew people were delivered from Egypt by the sacrifice of the Passover, so Jesus, the Truth foreshowed by this figure, was the true Passover when he died upon the Cross (III.5). Christ "Freely as the Victim came / To the altar of His cross" (131:1.5–6) where, as eternal priest and sacrifice, he offered himself up in the fullness of time in the midst of the world on the altar of the Cross (IV.5, VII.6). Although Wesley does not draw the connection between Christ's offering in the Supper and on the Cross the way de la Taille does (nor does Brevint), Wesley does state that Christ's sacrifice on the Cross is by "real oblation," and he retains Brevint's unascribed quote of Augustine in which Augustine says that Christ offered his body in "real deed" upon his cross (VI.2), language which contrasts with that of the sacramental offering in the Supper discussed above.⁹⁴ In his death on the Cross, Christ offered once the grand oblation of his sacrifice.

The cross on Calvary He bore,
He suffer'd once to die no more,
But left a sacred pledge behind:
See here!—It on Thy altar lies,
Memorial of the sacrifice
He offer'd once for all mankind.

Father, the grand oblation see,
The death as present now with Thee
As when He gasp'd on earth—Forgive! (121:2.1–9)

⁹⁴ Wesley's language with respect to Christ's oblation is, of course, precisely the opposite of what de la Taille argues; that is, that Christ's real oblation in the *Supper* is continued on the Cross; what is *real* on the Cross is his immolation. But, again, methodologically speaking Wesley is not focused on making the fine theological distinctions that de la Taille's is. Wesley is simply guilty of the very conflation of immolation and oblation against which de la Taille is trying to contrast his own argument.

In many ways, Wesley's language about Christ's heavenly status is very close to de la Taille's in that he states that "the burnings that completed the sacrifice are many years scattered and spent...Any other sacrifice by time may lose its strength: but Thou, O Victim, offered up to God through the eternal Spirit, remainest always the same" (II.9); and "he feeds from heaven, by continually pouring out his blessings, the souls he redeemed" (III.5-6). Christ remains in heaven eternally in his victimal state and continually pours out life and blessings on his people. J. Earnest Rattenbury, long-held to be one of the most exemplary and thorough discussions of Wesley's eucharistic theology, also uses language very similar to de la Taille's in terms of the expansion of Christ's sacrifice. Although Rattenbury does not speak as restrictively in terms of Christ's victimal status as de la Taille does, he states that "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."⁹⁵ Hymn 124:1 asserts the completeness and finality of Christ's work:

All hail, Redeemer of mankind!
Thy life on Calvary resign'd
Did fully once for all atone;
Thy blood hath paid our utmost price,
Thine all-sufficient sacrifice
Remains eternally alone:

Angels and men might strive in vain,
They could not add the smallest grain
To' augment Thy death's atoning power,
The sacrifice is all complete,
The death Thou never canst repeat,
Once offer'd up to die no more.

⁹⁵ Rattenbury, 101 (see chap. 1n16).

But 124:2 begins with the word ‘yet,’ implying that there remains to the completeness an exception which effects a kind of openness or access, or, in de la Taille’s terms, a kind of expansion:

Yet may we celebrate below,
And daily thus Thine offering show
Exposed before Thy Father’s eyes;
In this tremendous mystery
Present Thee bleeding on a tree,
Our everlasting Sacrifice;

Father, behold Thy dying Son!
Even now He lays our ransom down,
Even now declares our sins forgiven;
His flesh is rent, the living way
Is open’d to eternal day,
And lo, through Him we pass to heaven!

Moreover, since Christ has ascended to heaven, he continually sends down to earth the blessings that spring “both from his everlasting sacrifice, and from the continual intercession that attends it” (IV.5).

Whereas de la Taille, while he admits that the Fathers freely use the term “offering” for what happens in heaven as well as for what happens on the Cross and in the Supper, insists that only his earthly activity is “offering” while his heavenly activity is only “presentation” in order to underscore its “passive” nature and distinguish it from the “active” offering of the Supper and Cross, as we have already seen, Wesley does not hesitate to use “offering” with respect to Christ’s priestly work in heaven (IV.7).⁹⁶ For Wesley, the content of Christ’s heavenly activity is that of priestly self-offering: Christ’s sacrifice is “still lasting, still new, still the same as when it was first offered...and withal, being everlasting by the privilege of its own *order*, which is an

⁹⁶ Wesley also uses “presentation,” though it would appear he employs both terms indiscriminately; cf. VI.3: Jesus is “gone up into the true sanctuary, and there doth continually present both his body and blood before God.”

unchangeable priesthood, and by his worth who offered it, that is, the blessed Son of God, and by the power of the eternal Spirit, through whom it was offered; it must, in all respects, stand eternal, the same yesterday, today, and for ever” (II.7). In Christ, “That all-sufficient sacrifice / Subsists, eternal as the Lamb, / in every time and place the same” (*HLS* 140:1.2–4).

Wesley sees Christ’s presentation of his body and blood as high priest before the Father in heaven as the continuation in heaven of the effects of the Cross, the continuation of Christ’s sacrifice in heaven in God’s “eternal now.”⁹⁷ Christ does not offer a new sacrifice in heaven. He offers himself *as sacrificed* as he represents his sacrifice to God: “Behold Him stand as slaughter’d there” (140:2.5). Christ is not presenting himself *by* immolation, what de la Taille terms the “active” aspect of sacrifice, but rather *as* immolated. Rattenbury notes that the hymns in *HLS* “emphasize most of all the *newness* of the sacrifice and its perpetual continuation.”⁹⁸

The instruments that bruised Him so
Were broke and scatter’d long ago,
The flames extinguish’d were;
But Jesu’s death is ever new,

⁹⁷ In September 1733, Wesley read *The Worthy Communicant* by Jeremy Taylor (Hammond, 51n43). There, Taylor states, “For when Christ was consecrated on the Cross, and became our High Priest...and was admitted to the celestial and eternal Priesthood in Heaven; where, in the virtue of the Cross, he intercedes for us, and represents an eternal Sacrifice in the Heavens on our behalf...That there is no other sacrifice to be offered, but that on the Cross it is evident, because he hath but once appeared in the end of the World to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; and therefore since it is necessary that he hath something to offer so long as he is a Priest, and there is no other Sacrifice but that of himself offered upon the Cross; it follows that Christ in Heaven perpetually offers and represents that Sacrifice to his Heavenly Father, and in virtue of that obtains all good things for his Church...” (Jeremy Taylor, *The Worthy Communicant; Or, a Discourse of the Nature, Effects, and Blessings consequent to the Worthy Receiving of the Lord’s Supper, and of all the Duties required in Order to a Worthy Preparation: Together with the Cases of Conscience occurring in the Duty of Him that Ministers, and of Him that Communicates; As also Devotions Fitted to Every Part of the Ministration*, I.IV.4 [London: Printed by R. Norton for John Martin, James Allestry, and Thomas Dicas at the Bell in St. Paul’s Church-yard, 1660]). Note that Christ does not sacrifice afresh but rather *presents* his sacrifice. Though Taylor does, of course, turn around and state that Christ offers and represents that one sacrifice offered on the Cross. Here is the very distinction upon which de la Taille insists, but laying greater stress, perhaps, on continuity: Taylor goes on in the next paragraph to state, “the eternal Sacrifice of the Lamb slain from the beginning of the World, being always the same; it bleeds no more after the finishing of it on the Cross; but it is wonderfully represented in Heaven” (I.IV.4). One might interpret Taylor’s statement “it bleeds no more after the finishing of it on the Cross” to point to the distinction between offering *by* immolation and offering *as* immolated.

⁹⁸ Rattenbury, 101; cf. Rattenbury, 107.

He whom in ages past they slew
Doth still as slain appear. (3:2)

Sours insists that Wesley does not speak of Christ's heavenly work as a sacrifice (presumably, in what de la Taille would call the active sense), "although he comes close"; instead, just as his passion and death make atonement for all in all times and places, so "the presentation as High Priest of his body and blood before the Father continue the effects of the cross in Heaven."⁹⁹

Wesley does not ever appear to speak of Christ's heavenly work as that of being *in the act of sacrificing* (de la Taille's active sense), though he does speak of Christ's eternal or everlasting sacrifice. So, while Christ may not *sacrifice* (verb) in heaven, he must *have* a sacrifice (noun), for without one he could not be a priest, an assertion with which de la Taille would readily agree.

To summarize, Wesley's understanding of the grammar of Christ's sacrifice is quite consonant with de la Taille's in that he, too, sees a tripartite relationship between the Supper, the Cross, and the heavenly sacrifice. Although it does not play prominently in his writing, Wesley, heavily influenced by John Johnson, accepted that the Supper was not only a sacramental offering of that which Christ was to offer on the Cross, his body and blood, but it was also, in fact, the beginning of that self-same offering, just as we found in de la Taille. And firmly rooted in the historic tradition, Wesley understood the offering on the Cross to be the apex of Christ's sacrifice. Finally, like de la Taille, Wesley understands Christ to remain as eternal victim in heaven where Christ's completed work on the Cross as victim undergoes a kind of expansion in God's "eternal now" by which he, as eternal victim, pours out onto his people those blessings which are an effect of his own offering.

⁹⁹ Sours, 149n115.

Such rich consonance with de la Taille notwithstanding, Wesley diverges from de la Taille in the language which he uses to describe Christ's heavenly activity. De la Taille, it will be remembered, distinguishes between Christ's "active" sacrifice on the Cross and his "passive" sacrifice in heaven. And although the heavenly sacrifice is still a sacrifice strictly considered, there is no formal continuation or renewal of the active offering of Christ; rather, there is a virtual duration of that active oblation in the perpetual victim. Wesley would agree that Christ's heavenly activity is a sacrifice in the strict sense and that there is no renewal Christ's sacrifice, but he would likely not distinguish between the continuation of the active offering of Christ, which de la Taille rules out, and the virtual duration of the active oblation in the victim of Christ, which de la Taille accepts. Additionally, Wesley does not distinguish between offering/oblation and presentation with respect to Christ's heavenly activity as de la Taille does. For Wesley, as with de la Taille, though perhaps more urgently, there is great unity between the Supper, the Cross, and the heavenly sacrifice:

"To thy pard'ning grace receive them"
Once he pray'd upon the tree,
Still his blood cries out "Forgive them,
All their sins were purg'd by me."
Still our advocate in heaven
Prays the prayer on earth begun,
Father, show their sins forgiven,
"Father, glorify thy Son!" 14:2

The first two couplets here clearly link the sacrifice of the Cross and the heavenly intercessions as two parts of a continuing act. This unity is reinforced by the link made in the third couplet between the heavenly intercessions and the "prayer on earth begun," which, presumably at this point, is the prayer on the Cross (Lk 23:34). The fourth couplet, however, reaches back, via the Farewell Discourse in John, to the prayer Jesus prayed on the night of the Supper (Jn 17:1), thus linking all three in one continuous prayer or act. So even while Wesley sees a distinction

between Christ's sacrifice and Christ's intercessions, he sees a great unity between the Supper, the Cross, and Christ's heavenly state: the sacrifice of the Cross is taken up through the Resurrection and Ascension into the "eternal now" of heaven and there remains "still lasting, still new, still the same as when it was first offered." Though to be sure, for Wesley, Christ presents himself in heaven *as* immolated, not *by* immolation, a distinction which de la Taille might well accept as a "friendly," even if not complete, description of the difference between Christ's active and passive sacrifice. It appears, therefore, that we need to gain greater clarity on the relation of Christ's heavenly activity to his sacrifice in order to gain clarity in the grammar of Christ's sacrifice.

Chapter 3

THE SEMANTICS OF SACRIFICE

3.1. The Semantics of Sacrifice: Introduction

The attempt on de la Taille's part to distinguish between Christ's "active" sacrifice on the Cross and his "passive" sacrifice in heaven points to a key problem that must be addressed before we can complete our understanding of the grammar of Christ's sacrifice: what action, specifically, are we including in the scope of meaning when we speak of Christ's sacrifice? In other words, what action is *signified* when we speak of the Christ's sacrifice? We have already demonstrated how both de la Taille and Wesley believe that the Last Supper is included in the scope of action when speaking of Christ's sacrifice. But where is the terminus of that action?

We are faced here with an important question of signification. In keeping with our framework of language to describe the rules which govern the way in which we understand Christian sacrifice, semantics, or the study of the meaning of signs and "the relationship of sign vehicles"—in this case, a word—"to referents"—in this case, action—provides a helpful metaphor through which to explore the scope of action which is signified or referenced by the signifier "sacrifice."¹ As we have already seen, de la Taille seeks to bracket off any action after the Cross as somehow not properly signified when speaking of Christ's sacrifice. Wesley, on the other hand, seems less concerned to do so and speaks more freely of Christ's "heavenly

¹ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "semantics," <https://www-oed-com.proxy.libraries.smu.edu/view/Entry/345083?redirectedFrom=semantics#eid> (accessed March 31, 2020).

sacrifice.” And as with many other things in the life of Jesus Christ—the birth of a baby, the parables by which he taught, the partaking of bread and wine, or a crucifixion—that which is apparently signified by such signs is only a portion of the truth. In order to answer this question of scope and bring to a conclusion our examination of the grammar of sacrifice, we shall first turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews, which seems to speak specifically to this question of scope of action, followed by a discussion of some considerations of Christ as unique sacrificial agent.

3.2. The Semantics of Christ’s Sacrifice: Hebrews

More than any other portion of the New Testament, Hebrews is concerned with Jesus’ sacrifice and priesthood, especially as they relate to his death. The epistle frames Jesus’ sacrifice in terms of his priesthood “according to the order of Melchizedek,” which is of a superior order to that of the Aaronic priesthood (7:4–10). The whole rhetorical sweep of the epistle up to the final exhortation seeks to convince the reader that Jesus’ priesthood and sacrifice are superior to those which came before (13:8–10), an aim which moves beyond mere critique of sacrifice in the Levitical system and requires a “fracturing of older categories” and “calls forth a whole new cultural map system.”² Jesus’ change in priesthood must lead to a change in law (7:12) and Jesus’ sacrifice is a better sacrifice (9:23) that brings about a better covenant (7:22) grounded in better promises (8:26) made by Jesus as a superior (better) priest (7:11, 15, 26–27). De la Taille points out that the question of Christ fulfilling the Aaronic priesthood in the Passion was raised by Trent but firmly “corrected” in the final draft, and he accordingly emphatically rejects any idea that Christ somehow has a dual sacrifice which is Melchizedekian at the Supper and

² Richard D. Nelson, *Raising up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology*, 1st ed (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 142, 145–48.

Aaronic on the Cross.³ Despite any parallels the epistle might draw (or the reader might see) between the Levitical priesthood and that of Jesus, Jesus' high priesthood is fundamentally of a different order (5:1–6). And as David Peterson points out, “*kata tήν tàçiv* means more than ‘order’ or ‘rank’ in the understanding of Hebrews. It also refers to the entirely different nature of Melchizedek’s priesthood as compared with that of Aaron.”⁴

Here, surely, is an example of Coakley’s “crash of meaning” which “precisely breaks and interrupts the normal ordering of manipulating sacrifice” mentioned earlier. The epistle is not simply pointing us to a better, more perfect sacrifice at the end of a long line of sacrifice; rather, it points us to an entirely different *tropos* for the Christian concept of sacrifice by providing a new *type* of sacrifice. While the Aaronic priesthood may have provided for the sacrifice of Christ a prototype—an early, primitive version of something that later versions reflect—what was established in the eternal priesthood of Christ was an archetype—the most perfect possible form of something which is often *unattainable*. That is, while there will be a type of concatenation between Christ’s priesthood and the Aaronic priesthood, between Christ’s sacrifice and the Levitical sacrifices, there will also be discontinuity. This sacrifice is neither one more iterative improvement on the old prototype nor itself a new prototype. The mode by which Christ’s sacrifice is concatenated to the sacrifices of old is not one of *proto* but rather one of *arche*, which even in its continuity signals discontinuity.⁵ Christ’s sacrifice is raised to a different order, a

³ *MF* 1:107, 154–57.

⁴ David Gilbert Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the “Epistle to the Hebrews”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 84, 233n78; cf. Oliver Herrenschildt, “Sacrifice: Symbolic or Effective?” in *Between Belief and Transgression: Structuralist Essays in Religion, History, and Myth*, ed. Michel Izard and Pierre Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 35; Wesley, *ENNT*, Heb 7:1, 15, 20; 8:6.

⁵ A reading of Hebrews 1–3, the material leading up to the introduction of the Melchizedekian theme, supports this claim. In the comparison with both angles and Moses, Jesus is not shown to be simply the perfection of these prototypes, but to exist on a different level and to stand in a different relationship to God—in other words, to serve

different nature, even while it is offered in the natural order. As Matthias Joseph Scheeben (1835–1888) states, “the nature and form of his sacrifice are thoroughly supernatural and mystical, in spite of the fact, or rather on account of the fact, that it is the realized ideal of all that sacrifice in general, even as it is offered in the natural order, strives to attain and represent.”⁶ In this sense, it is also the most perfect antitype: that which has been both foreshadowed by the earlier system and at the same time stands wholly over and against the old system. Christ’s priesthood and sacrifice are yet one more example of his exclusive inclusivity, of the “irreducible originality” of his experience.⁷ Moreover, a priesthood of a new and different nature brings about not only a new and different law; that new law signals a new *grammar*, the *lex* which governs a language, or, in this case, priesthood. And a new grammar of priesthood necessitates a new grammar of sacrifice.⁸ However, grounded in the eschatological promise that God makes all things new—that is, God’s eschatological promise is one of *creatio ex vetera* not *creatio ex nihilo*—Hebrews is clear that the grammar of sacrifice in Christ is still grounded in the grammar of Levitical sacrifice even while it rewrites and surpasses it.

As we have already noted, de la Taille lifts up the necessity of divine acceptance for a sacrifice to be valid, and Masure reminds his reader that it is a mistake to understand de la Taille to mean that sacrifice consists merely in offering something to God, for assurance is needed that

as an archetype. See A. N. Chester, “Hebrews: the Final Sacrifice,” in *Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology*, ed. Stephen Sykes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 57–72.

⁶ Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, trans. Cyril O. Vollert (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006), 432.

⁷ Peterson, 93; cf. Kenneth Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews: The Settings of the Sacrifice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 96; Gunton, 149, 190. More broadly, see Christopher Morse, *Not Every Spirit: A Dogmatics of Christian Disbelief*, 2nd ed (New York: Continuum, 2009), esp. chs. 6–8.

⁸ The very rhetorical structure of Hebrews signals this. By introducing Jesus as priest according to the order of Melchizedek before discussing Jesus’ sacrifice, the author of the epistle causes the reader to “reread” the nature and character of Jesus’ sacrifice through this new lens, this new grammar, much like introducing to the reader the fact that the wolf in Little Red Riding Hood goes to the grandmother’s house and eats and impersonates her (unbeknownst to Little Red Riding Hood) causes the reader to “reread” everything the “grandmother” says through the lens of its revealed knowledge, i.e., with a new grammar.

God accepts and receives the sacrifice, thus allowing it to achieve its final end. Otherwise, it would be an empty gesture.⁹ Any effort on our part of sacrificial propitiation, much less that of latreutic adoration, fails unless God accepts it and ratifies it, and the victim is only ratified “at the moment, and only at the moment, when it is accepted by God, and thus passes into the dignity of things divine.”¹⁰ The theology of divine acceptance would seem to call into question whether, or how, we can consider the terminus of Christ’s sacrifice to be his immolation on the Cross if the acceptance and ratification of the sacrificial offering is an integral and necessary component of the sacrificial complex.

If the victim is only ratified at the moment that it is accepted by God and passes into the dignity of divine things, then with respect to Christ this would seem to occur at the Resurrection and not at the Crucifixion.

Christ’s resurrection and glorification are often conceived merely as the fruit of his sacrifice on the cross. And such it is in all truth, but not that alone. In the idea of God and of the Church, it is also a continuation and fulfillment of the first act. According to the Apostle’s teaching, the carrying of the blood of the sacrificed animal into the holy of holies, whereby it was appropriated by God, was a type of the function of Christ in heaven...The resurrection and glorification were the very acts by which the victim passed into the real and permanent possession of God...By his resurrection and glorification he made it a holocaust. Finally, by his ascension he transferred it to heaven, and places it at the feet of his Father.¹¹

Scheeben provides a beautifully concise summary of these thoughts on the sacrifice of Christ, *considered in its totality*, by quoting St. Bernard: the sacrifice of Christ is essentially a “sacrifice of passover that is, to God.”¹² De la Taille, as well, repeatedly affirms that it is in Christ’s Resurrection (and Ascension) that he, as victim, passes over to God.¹³ Thus, there is a strong

⁹ Masure, 42.

¹⁰ *MF* 1:15.

¹¹ Scheeben, *Mysteries*, 436–437. Earlier in the paragraph, Scheeben even refers to the destruction of Christ’s life as “the first act of latreutic sacrifice.”

¹² Scheeben, *Mysteries*, 436n6.

¹³ *MF* 1:193, 1:196, 1: 200 ; cf. Phil 2:5–11; Acts 2:32–33; Heb 7:26–27.

sense in which God brings the “movement” of sacrifice to its conclusion through divine ratification and acceptance.¹⁴ The entry into the sanctuary is a constituent element of sacrifice, as de la Taille would surely agree. Yet as Francis Durrwell points out, while immolation and offering bear Christ toward God, they do not complete the sacrificial movement.¹⁵ The “movement” of the sacrifice from offerer to benefactor, from human to divine, is still in motion, in process, at the point of immolation (and offering) and this “movement” with respect to Christ’s sacrifice is only completed in the Resurrection and Ascension. Though while de la Taille admits that the Supper, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension are “knit together” in one sacrifice,¹⁶ there is a consistent hedging in which the Resurrection and Ascension are semantically “segregated off” so that it is the Supper and Passion which “complete” the sacrifice and the Resurrection and Ascension which “consummate” or “perfect” it.

The language of consummation or perfection is, indeed, historically used by the tradition. And we see the same language in Wesley, who in his notes on Heb 1:3 states that Christ’s act of sitting down denotes the consummation of his sacrifice.¹⁷ Durrwell describes the language of consummation as “the shining reverse side of oblation” which “characterizes more directly the effect of the sacrifice upon the *offerer* than upon the *victim*.”¹⁸ Here we see the distinction between two agents in the sacrificial complex, between donor and victim. This distinction is important for two reasons. First, as Durrwell points out, in the Levitical system the victim did not consummate the donor because it did not attain its own consummation; it was only offered as a

¹⁴ Masure, 44.

¹⁵ F. X. Durrwell, *The Resurrection: A Biblical Study*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (London: Sheed and Ward, 1960), 68.

¹⁶ *MF* 1:185; cf. 1:190.

¹⁷ Wesley, *ENNT* Heb 1:3.

¹⁸ Durrwell, 70 (emphasis added).

sign. Second, this distinction between donor and victim is erased in Christ because as victim he did come to consummation in God.

Additionally, the distinction between completion and consummation points to another distinction between sacrificial agents. In the Levitical system it would have been quite natural—and, in fact, necessary—to distinguish between the agents carrying out the two “sides” of sacrifice: humans offered (and immolated) a “complete” sacrifice—that is, sacrificial offering—which the divine then consummated and perfected. But in the case of Christ’s sacrifice, there is a unity of agents: the one who is completing the sacrifice is both human *and* divine, so that there is a unity of agency across both sides of the sacrificial complex. Thus, in considering the epistle’s assertions in light of a theology of divine acceptance, there appears to be a shifting in agents and agency that may, therefore, require the distinction between completion and consummation to be reconsidered in this once-for-all, unique case—an issue to which we shall return shortly. For now, however, we are drawn to the fact that there appears to be in the epistle’s explication of Christ’s sacrifice an indication that, just as Christ’s priesthood is of a new and excellent order, so his ability to mediate and cross the boundary between the human and the divine is of a new and different order.

In the Levitical sacrificial system (as with nearly all religious sacrifice), the priest stands at the center of all transfers along the route of exchange that leads from the human sphere to the divine sphere. Thus, Hebrew scripture defines the priesthood in terms of those who have access to God.¹⁹ To mediate the divine-human relationship, to cross the divine-human boundary, is the characteristic *sine qua non* of a priest, and the mediation of this relationship and boundary-crossing is accomplished by the priest in the ritual act of offering. The central act of sacrifice in

¹⁹ Nelson, *Raising Up*, 61.

the Levitical system is to transfer ownership from the human to the divine, and it is the priest as mediator who crosses this boundary and effects the transfer.²⁰ So while responsibility for the slaughter of the victim may lie with either the offerer or the priest, responsibility for this boundary-crossing activity lies exclusively with the priest.

By “transmuting” his priesthood, as well as his sacrifice, from one order to another, Christ has also brought about a transmutation of boundary-crossing.²¹ Whereas the Levitical priests enter an earthly sanctuary made by human hands (Heb 8:5; 9:1–7), Christ entered a greater, more perfect, tent not made by human hands, into heaven itself (Heb 9:11, 24). The boundary crossed by Christ is not from one earthly place to another, but from this earthly plane to the heavenly plane. Wesley notes regarding Heb 4:14 that “as the Jewish high-priest passed through the veil into the holy of holies, carrying with him the blood of the sacrifices, on the yearly day of atonement, so our great high-priest went once for all through the visible heavens, with the virtue of his own blood, into the immediate presence of God.”²² Christ’s goal is not the earthly ark, but the very throne of God (Heb 8:1–2).²³ Christ’s priesthood and sacrifice, its eternality, perfection, and unchangeableness, as well as its all-sufficient efficaciousness and particularity (“once-for-all”), are “inextricably bound up” with language which speaks of him as having crossed a unique boundary and entered heaven itself, signified by and terminated in sitting at the right hand of God.²⁴ As Wesley notes, “sitting denotes the consummation of his sacrifice. This word, sat down, contains the scope, the theme, and the sum of the epistle.”²⁵ Nelson confirms this

²⁰ Nelson, *Raising Up*, 59; cf. Nelson, “He Offered,” 253; Meshel 10n40. See also Lev 1:5; 3:2, 8; 4:24–25.

²¹ Nelson, *Raising Up*, 149.

²² Wesley, *ENNT* 4:14.

²³ Cf. Heb 1:3; 6:19–20; 10:12; 12:2.

²⁴ Chester, 63.

²⁵ Wesley, *ENNT* 1:3.

exegesis, stating that the act of sitting down, in contrast to the priestly posture of standing before God at the altar, marks the conclusion of Christ offering his single sacrifice (Heb 10:12). Though in words which echo de la Taille's distinction between the active and passive sacrifice, Nelson adds that Hebrews "does not conceptualize Christ's ongoing activity as minister in terms of an eternal sacrificial self-offering (*leitourgos*; Heb 8:2, cf. v. 6). That sacrificial offering encompassed a series of acts (self-offering, death, entrance and appearance, removal of sins) done only 'once.'"²⁶

Hebrews, therefore, appears to be pointing to a terminus other than the Cross. The epistle seems to be clear that Christ's sacrifice is effective due to the transmutation of his boundary-crossing ability through the establishment of a new, superior priesthood, which is precisely what allows the *telos* of his priestly work to be his entrance into the Holy Place, that is, the heavenly sanctuary (9:11–12). In other words, as the eternal high priest, it was in his death that Christ passed through the veil *in order to enter into the sanctuary of heaven*. These two events are sequential and not coincidental, both in the way in which they are presented by the author of the epistle and in the Old Testament sacrificial typology of the Day of Atonement on which the author draws, in which the immolation of the victim took place outside the holy of holies and only the blood was carried inside. Note in Nelson's description above that the series of acts which constitute Christ's sacrificial self-offering includes the entrance and appearance which occur *after* his death. The sacrifice in its earthly phase, that is, on the Cross, "is only mentioned indirectly *as a means* of gaining entry to the sanctuary'; for it is not completed simply in the outpouring of blood."²⁷

²⁶ Nelson, "He Offered," 257.

²⁷ Durrwell, 66, quoting Joseph Bonsirven, *Épître aux Hébreux*, 5th ed. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1943), 384 (emphasis added); cf. Nelson, "He Offered," 255.

This sequence of events raises the question of what has been identified, perhaps unfortunately, as the “double offering.”²⁸ In the Temple model, there are actually two moments of offering: the offering of the immolated or prepared gifts by the offerer in handing them over to the priest; and the offering of God’s portion by the priest at the altar. De la Taille argues that the first act of offering does not count as an offering because it is not carried out by the priest.²⁹ It should be noted, however, that neither the Septuagint nor the epistle makes a strong distinction between the two offerings as liturgical act, as they use the same word for both.³⁰

Interestingly, for the sin offering, the second offering involved the act of pouring blood around or upon the altar. Especially on the Day of Atonement, the focus is the cleansing of the sanctuary by the ritual use of blood. And it is the priestly act of bringing the victim and its blood into the sanctuary before God and applying the blood to the altar that is the center of gravity for this sacrifice.³¹ Furthermore, while in most instances the first offering is made by an individual, in the sin offering on the Day of Atonement the gift was offered by the high priest in the name of the whole people (Lev 16). This act is the typical priestly function by which the epistle explains Christ’s continuing priesthood. In this act, the priest, in a “single function,” offered a sacrifice in the name of the people outside the sanctuary before the altar of the forecourt, the first act of offering, before completing it in the sanctuary, the second act of offering.³² De la Taille has already located the first offering, of the victim *to be immolated*, in the Supper. If we apply the model of the double offering, which Scheeben has already identified as a “single function,” to

²⁸ See, for example, Michael McGuckian, *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass: A Search for an Acceptable Notion of Sacrifice* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Pub., 2005), 29–32.

²⁹ *MF* 1:13n18.

³⁰ Nelson, “He Offered,” 253n3; cf. McGuckian, 30.

³¹ Nelson, *Raising Up*, 150.

³² Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1948), §1493.

Hebrews, the epistle appears to locate the second offering of victim *as immolated* in the heavenly sanctuary. And such a reading would be consistent with the exegesis that the act of sitting (on the throne) denotes the conclusion of Christ's priestly activity, i.e., priestly offering, an interpretation also found in Wesley, who exegetes "who is set down" in Heb 8:1 as "having finished his oblation."³³ Additionally, the pouring of the blood of the victim on or around the altar and/or the burning of parts of the victim in a holocaust are the two most common priestly actions that express the sign of divine acceptance. De la Taille is insistent that, on the one hand, Christ as priest operates only internally on the Cross because he could not operate externally (i.e., effect his own immolation) and, on the other hand, that sacrifice must be accompanied by an outward sensible, pragmatic action.³⁴ It would seem, then, that the pouring out of blood or the burning of the holocaust could not be located in the Cross with respect to the divine acceptance of Christ's sacrifice because Christ does not carry out—as priest—an outward, sensible sign on the Cross.

Indeed, as we have already noted, Hebrews appears to locate the pouring out of blood with respect to Christ's sacrifice not on the Cross, but rather in Christ's entrance into the heavenly sanctuary with his own blood. In fact, Scheeben points out that the sprinkling of blood with respect to Christ is not mentioned at all by the author: „der Grund ist wohl der, daß es bei Christus, der selbst Sühnthron und Altar ist, mit dem Blut tragen sachlich ebenso zusammenfällt, wie in seinem Willen das Opferbringen und Darbringen.“³⁵ Scheeben's observation is not insignificant, because it points to the fact that, even while building upon the existing Levitical grammar of sacrifice, the author is indicating that the grammar *as it applies to*

³³ Wesley, *ENNT*, 831.

³⁴ *MF* 1:46.

³⁵ Scheeben, *Handbuch*, §1495.

the sacrifice of Christ, has fundamentally changed. In this case, Hebrews insists that Christ must carry that very blood into the heavenly sanctuary, for it is this act which makes his once for all sacrifice effectual in surpassing all those former sacrifices, a point which de la Taille repeatedly asserts.³⁶ Recalling that de la Taille goes to great lengths to demonstrate the unity of the Supper and the Passion as one numerical sacrifice, insisting that the action of redemption in the Supper and the Passion must be “undivided,”³⁷ it would seem, then, that that which is signified semantically by Christ’s sacrifice must be expanded, for the act of crossing the boundary into the heavenly sanctuary must be contiguous and continuous with those of the Supper and the Passion in order for Christ’s sacrifice, not to mention his priestly action, to be “undivided.” Moreover, the continuity of agent—Christ is priest in both instances—would appear to maintain the undivided action upon which de la Taille rightly insists. This appears, in all likelihood, to be de la Taille’s aim in using the language of “active” and “passive” sacrifice, but this is not the language of Hebrews, and one must wonder if it doesn’t stretch the language of “unity” and “undivided” beyond credulity.

These matters of transfer of ownership, boundary-crossing, priestly offering, and divine acceptance naturally lead to consideration of the epistle’s understanding of Christ’s sacrifice especially as it relates to his death. It is in this light that Masure calls into question our very understanding of immolation (change) when he asserts that, in principal, immolation as a distinct liturgical gesture lies in the one who offers the sacrifice “far more than in the slaughtered animal.” It is the offerer who renounces property and deprives themselves of their wealth; “the victim, living or otherwise, only changes its master, and it loses nothing by the change, since it

³⁶ *MF* 1:191, 1:193, 1:196, 1:200, 1: 208.

³⁷ *MF* 1:74.

passes to God's service."³⁸ Masure's point only underscores de la Taille's (and Wesley's) assertion that the proper end to which sacrifice is oriented is a change (immolation) in the one offering, in handing over their devotion to God, not in the actual slaughter (immolation) of the victim. As Masure points out, Aquinas asserts that "a sacrifice, properly speaking, requires that something be done to the thing which is offered to God...The very word signifies this, since sacrifice is so called because a [person] does something sacred (*facit sacrum*)."³⁹ In other words, in sacrifice there is a doing or making sacred. And while in the Levitical system that doing or making sacred often involved the slaughter of the victim, the true goal of sacrifice is the making sacred of ourselves, the donor.

And while in the Levitical system immolation is associated with both the offerer and the priest, it is more often associated with the offerer and does not require a priest. The priestly code is clear that some responsibility for killing the animal falls to the offerer and that the central role of the priest involves not the killing of the animal, but rather some sort of post-mortem manipulation. Therefore, death *per se*, while a necessary step for most sacrifices, is neither the central act nor the center of gravity for sacrifice, but rather one step in a complex of events, as we have already noted above in the complex of events which lies at the heart of the message in Hebrews. The center of gravity is the offering and presentation of the gift(s) to God. In the Levitical system, to offer does not equal to kill, and, moreover, the victim's death never served

³⁸ Masure, 36. This is, naturally, precisely the type of thinking—that a slaughtered victim loses nothing because it "passes to God's service"—against which feminists and womanists object, especially when they have predominately been the ones historically to be asked to offer themselves up as victims. The critique is, of course, central to our concern and will not go unanswered. Our goal here is simply to draw attention to the fact that Masure is pointing to a center of gravity—and, indeed, end—for immolation different than the destruction of the victim. Only slightly later in his argument, Masure asks emphatically how one can fail to notice that in the epistles of both Paul and John, the words ἱλασμός (1 Jn 2:2; 4:10), ἱλαστήριον (Rom 3:25), προσφορά and even θυσία (Eph 5:2), are applied neither to Jesus' death, to his oblation, nor to his immolation, but to Jesus himself (Masure, 39).

³⁹ Aquinas *ST* IIa IIae, q. 85, a. 3. ad3; cf. Masure, 34.

as a substitute for the donor's death, but rather served to obtain "blood for purification, food for the communal meal, and a gift to offer God on the altar of fire."⁴⁰ Death is simply the starting point. It is what allows the very boundary crossing between the human sphere and the divine sphere, between creaturely life and eternal life, required in order for the gift(s) to transfer to the ownership of God. Death does not restore order—whether physical, moral, ritual, or spiritual—which was the goal of the Levitical sacrificial system. Slaughter is only a means to an end. And as Nelson points out, it is all too common to equate the sacrificing of something with the killing of it, and "this oversimplification of the sacrificial act and the overemphasis on the death of the victim has caused all sorts of theological mischief in the history of Christian thought."⁴¹

Against this backdrop, the central claim of Hebrews is that the death of Christ, while an integral part of his redemptive work, was part of a greater complex of events which constituted his sacrifice as Christ's death only achieves its redemptive power in the heavenly sanctuary.⁴² In his exegesis of Heb 2:9, Durrwell states that the phrase 'crowned with glory and honor' is the "summit" of the sentence in the Greek; death is only a condition for, and that which leads to, his redemptive work.⁴³ "The Resurrection constitutes the basic, prime and total object of the merit of the Passion."⁴⁴ The power of Christ's indestructible life (Heb 7:16) could not essentially be damaged even by death, and even as the Cross of Christ's sacrifice, offered through the eternal spirit (9:14), was "fixed on earth, he was thenceforward 'on earth' no longer (8:4), for his death opened out into the life of heaven."⁴⁵ Durrwell's striking use of the construct "open out into"

⁴⁰ Nelson, "He Offered," 252–53; cf. Nelson, *Raising Up*, 55, 70.

⁴¹ Nelson, "He Offered," 252. What Nelson characterizes as theological mischief, feminists and womanists would probably characterize as theological harm.

⁴² Chester, 61.

⁴³ Durrwell, 32–33.

⁴⁴ Durrwell, 56.

⁴⁵ Durrwell, 140.

contradicts our natural sense of death, which presumably forecloses life. This resonates with de la Taille's sense of the expansion of Christ's sacrifice from the aspect of the victim—which is, of course, that aspect of the sacrifice most closely linked with death—and its acceptance—which is the focus of Hebrew's discussion of Christ's heavenly activity.

One can see this shift in emphasis from death to life even in the way the epistle addresses the issue of Christ's blood vis-à-vis his death. Nelson points out that even when the author moves beyond the sacrificial system to invoke the notion of wills and testaments, which require the death of the testator, the author's argument reverts to the matter of blood, rather than death *per se*, as blood is used to seal the covenant and purify that which is used for worship (9:15–22).⁴⁶ In shifting the emphasis from death to blood, the author is in essence shifting the emphasis from death to life. And Durrwell asserts that the text does not state that the way is opened “thanks to the blood of Christ—thanks, that is, to the merit won forever through its being poured out—but *in that blood.*”⁴⁷ The epistle seems to be drawing a distinction between blood, in which is life (Lev 17:11), and death *per se*, emphasizing again that the death is only necessary insofar as it is required to access the blood. It is the blood, that is, the life, which is instrumental. The epistle's shift of emphasis, then, appears not only to be from death to life, but to “reorder” death as a *terminus* to death as a *transitus*, a “living way” made possible through the power of Christ's indestructible life. That which is signified semantically by death in the grammar is sacrifice is being rewritten.

Furthermore, because Christ has become a priest through the power of an indestructible life according to the order of Melchizedek, Hebrews appears to assert that even the immolation and

⁴⁶ Nelson, “He Offered,” 254.

⁴⁷ Durrwell, 144.

death of the victim must be reordered to a higher, more perfect archetype. The characterization of Christ's priesthood, and thereby his sacrifice, as belonging to the order of Melchizedek rather than the Aaronic order would also seem to point semantically to a different *telos* for the completion of his sacrifice. The Melchizedekian character of Christ's priesthood is often cast in terms of the manner of offering Christ makes, particularly with respect to the external material of the sacrifice, and that, specifically, in the Supper.⁴⁸ Whereas priests according to the Aaronic order offer the blood of bulls and goats, Christ offers bread and wine in similitude to the offering Melchizedek made in blessing Abraham. But the Melchizedekian character of Christ's priestly offering could surely not end simply in the similitude of the external materials of the offering. The *manner* of Melchizedek's offering is categorically different. A fairly straightforward reading of Hebrews leads to the conclusion that the rite of heavenly sacrifice is categorically different from that of an earthly one, if for no other reason than that the (living) priest enters the sanctuary *with his own blood*. Christ is made a priest *forever* according to the order of Melchizedek, so the ordering of his sacrifice in its similitude to that of Melchizedek, including the offering itself, must have an enduring, even eternal aspect. De la Taille cites Rupert of Deutz who, explicating Christ's high priesthood, asserts that Christ "sacrifices in a wonderful manner according to his own order, according to the rite of a heavenly sacrifice."⁴⁹ Yet Matthiesen points out that, while de la Taille acknowledges many similarities between Christ and Melchisedech beyond what he considers the "preeminent resemblance," that of the ritual form and mode of sacrificial offering, he sees these additional similarities as "superficial" likenesses. But she also notes that he would have "abetted his own position on Christ's eternal priesthood had he underscored what Luke

⁴⁸ *MF* 1:94–95.

⁴⁹ *MF* 1:104.

Timothy Johnson takes to be the central likeness between Melchisedech and Christ: Melchisedech does not know an ‘end of life’ (Heb 7:3); Jesus’ life and priesthood is ‘indestructible’ (Heb 7:16, *passim*).⁵⁰ Moreover, Jesus, being born of God, is a priest not by heredity, as with the Aaronic priesthood, but for all eternity.⁵¹ Jesus’ priesthood is of an entirely different and superior order.

The reordering of Christ’s sacrifice according to the order of Melchizedek must be thoroughgoing, from the offering of bread and wine in the Supper to the offering of (his own) blood in the heavenly sanctuary. If the offering of redemption is made not on the Cross but in the Supper, then the immolation on the Cross must be remade and reordered to life. Otherwise, how could Christ open a living way and enter the sanctuary still living to offer his own blood? As the eternal high priest, it was in his death that Christ passed through the veil *in order to enter into the sanctuary of heaven*. The final, once-for-all nature of the sacrifice means that it will not have to be repeated, but it is the eternalization of the sacrifice by passing into the eternal sanctuary rather than the earthly one, that, in some sense, allows it to be final and once-for-all. The Christ who dies, now lives and remains united with humanity in his heavenly life. It is because Christ ever lives that his priestly act, which was begun in an historical act, is continually effective on earth through his present heavenly life.

De la Taille refers to Hebrews as presenting an “insoluble exegetic difficulty” if we do not admit the unity and numerical oneness of Christ’s sacrifice.⁵² Durrwell insists, as well, that when reading Hebrews we must reconcile the need for a unique sacrifice with the need for continuity.

⁵⁰ Matthiesen, 66n33 (chapter 2n15); cf. Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 175–81, 186–89.

⁵¹ Herrenschildt, 35.

⁵² *MF* 1:95.

De la Taille, of course, was focused on the numerical oneness between the Supper and the Cross.

Durrwell, on the other hand, points us to the need for numerical oneness between the Cross and Christ's entry into the heavenly sanctuary:

If we are to make this text fit in with the absolute uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice in both number and kind, which we believe, we must allow that the mystery of the Cross is prolonged in eternity. In the thought of this epistle, the Christian sacrifice was not a deed which took place and was wholly completed in time, so that only the merit remains. In the author's mind, the act of offering is eternal and heavenly, because it becomes eternal in itself, and is prolonged in Christ's existence in glory.⁵³

Christ's sacrifice is not divided into two phases, one on earth and a second, more important one, in heaven—the epistle does not support this. The exegesis is, indeed, difficult and appears at times to make contradictory statements. Christ's sacrifice is once-for-all and eternal. His priesthood (and Sonship, for that matter) are somehow both consecrated and consummated at the Resurrection (5:5–10) and already possessed.⁵⁴ But fundamentally, the epistle seems to assert that this once-for-all unique event “reorders” the grammar of sacrifice because Christ's glorification and entrance into the heavenly sanctuary places his priestly activity in the “eternal now” of God, which is not simply a duration in time, but an exultation to a whole new (divine) order.⁵⁵ Because Christ serves as priestly agent “through the power of an indestructible life,” we can assert that the offering is in fact one oblation, offered first sacramentally in the Supper carried through death on the Cross and into the heavenly sanctuary. There is no longer any need to point to the two moments of offering McGuckian identifies because the one offering which is

⁵³ Durrwell, 143–44.

⁵⁴ Durrwell, 138. Peterson makes a similar point when discussing the perfection of Christ's priesthood, a subject which is central to the epistle's understanding of Christ as our high-priest. Peterson asserts that understanding the perfection of Christ's priesthood too narrowly through his Ascension and entrance into the heavenly tent is “to obscure the wider perspective of our writer concerning the consummation of Christ as high priest”; rather, Peterson argues, the perfecting of Christ's priesthood must include the entire sweep of his life of obedience, self-offering in death, and “transitus” into heaven (Peterson, 121).

⁵⁵ Durrwell, 139; cf. John Wesley's use of the concept of “eternal now.”

begun in the outer sanctuary is continually carried out as offering until it reaches its *telos* in the inner or, in this case, heavenly sanctuary. In short, the offering is one, but while the final, once-for-all nature of the sacrifice means that it will not have to be repeated, it is the eternalization of that offering by passing into the eternal sanctuary, which, in some sense, allows it to be final and once (historically) for all (eternally).⁵⁶ Thus, Hebrews appears to knit together semantically the Supper, Cross, and heavenly entrance in one “complexus of events” which signify Christ’s sacrifice.

3.3. The Semantics of Christ’s Sacrifice: Agential Considerations

Discussion of Christ’s sacrifice has historically considered Christ’s role in terms of two agents: victim and priest. This is quite natural as the language of Hebrews in particular names and discusses Christ in these two roles. As we have already seen, it is essential to the author of Hebrews that Jesus is the one who offers himself (Heb 7:27; 9:11–14, 25–26), and in doing so he is both priest and victim. De la Taille captures these dual roles when he eloquently asserts that Christ was “the Priest of His Victim and the Victim of His Priesthood,” the former in the Supper and the latter on the Cross.⁵⁷ Indeed, there is no denying that Christ both priest and victim—the assertion is critical to claiming the merit of Christ’s redemptive work—but the victim and priest are not the only agents involved in a sacrifice and the epistle’s attempt to “reorder” the grammar of sacrifice appears to raise some issues about the various agents involved in sacrifice.

First, the logic of sacrifice requires a differentiation between the donor and the priest as essential agents. We will recall from chapter 2 that as *latría*, sacrifice is grounded in the principle that all things are created to attain God as their supreme good and that as humans, our first and

⁵⁶ Cf. Heb 10:10–14.

⁵⁷ *MF* 1:137n4.

highest duty is to hand ourselves over to God.⁵⁸ It is our duty to offer ourselves as return gift to God. Yet while it is our duty to offer ourselves to God, thus acting as donor of the gift of ourselves, we cannot actually offer ourselves to God because the offering, according to de la Taille, must be carried out by a priest. Such a differentiation is the same one insisted upon by French anthropologists Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, who distinguish between the *sacrifant*, one who has a sacrifice performed for his or her benefit, and the *sacrificateur*, the one who actually performs the sacrifice.⁵⁹ Thus, in the complexus of events that constitutes sacrifice, a strict differentiation between the donor as agent of certain actions (the offering of the gift) and the priest as agent of other actions (the offering of the gift to God) must be maintained. Since we offer ourselves as return gift to God, there is an identification between donor and gift which is necessitated by the economy of sacrifice, because the essence of sacrifice is to make the gift given sacred and the goal of Christian sacrifice is to make *us* a holy sacrifice. Yet at the same time, however, the distinction between the donor and the gift cannot be erased but must be maintained in the economy of sacrifice. As Durrwell points out, in the Levitical system the victim did not consummate the donor because they were separate agents. As we have already mentioned above, Durrwell describes the language of consummation as “the shining reverse side of oblation” which “characterizes more directly the effect of the sacrifice upon the *offerer* [i.e., donor] than upon the *victim*.”⁶⁰ Thus, there must be a distinction between offerer and victim, or donor and gift, in the sacrificial complex. So, while there may be some identification between donor and victim as agents, there must also be distinction between the same and between donor and priest as three different agents.

⁵⁸ See Ch. 2: The Grammar of Sacrifice *in genere*: de la Taille.

⁵⁹ Huber and Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

⁶⁰ See n18 (emphasis added).

Nelson also draws attention to the fact that the drama of animal sacrifice, in particular, involves the three separate roles: victim, donor, and priest. Within the historical tradition and the Epistle to Hebrews, Nelson points out that the superlative nature of Christ's sacrifice lies in the fact that he simultaneously took on the roles of priest and victim, offering himself as a sacrifice that benefited his followers (Heb 7:27; 9:14, 26).⁶¹ At the same time, however, Nelson points out that Jesus had no need to be the beneficiary of his sacrifice, which only adds to the extraordinary nature of Christ's sacrifice. "As such, Jesus differs from all ordinary priests, who as sinners need the benefits of sacrifice themselves (5:3; 7:27; 9:7). This was a sacrifice like no other. The priest and the victim were one and the same, but the one who offered sacrifice was not included among those for whom the benefit of sacrifice was required."⁶² Here Nelson seems to deny that Christ plays, in any way, the third role of donor or beneficiary. However, he points out:

The high priest atoned for the sinful nation (Leviticus 16:17, 24, 30, 31)...the sin offerings described in Leviticus also had important effects on the human level as well. The repeated phrase "it shall be forgiven for them/him"...indicates that these rituals were also understood as benefit in the offenders themselves.⁶³

In other words, even the archetypal sacrifice of the Day of Atonement allowed for some identification between offerer (*sacrificateur*) and donor (*sacrifiant*). And Nelson admits that in addition to stressing the language of Christ as priest and victim, Hebrews stresses that the goal of Christ's work as priest and victim is the "perfection" of Christians (Heb 10:14; 11:40; 12:2). "Hebrews speaks of the 'perfection' (i.e., completion of the decisive goal) of the Christian as the outcome of Christ's work (10:14; 11:40; 12:2)...a matter of transformation, one that changes the believer in a decisive way."⁶⁴ In fact, we are perfected and transformed in a decisive way *as*

⁶¹ Nelson, "He Offered," 257.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 258.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 259

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 261.

donors. Christ's sacrifice sanctifies us (Heb 2:11; 13:12) because he offered it *as a human* with a perfect human nature.

Thus, while it is true that, as divine victim, Christ did not need to benefit from his sacrifice, as human, that Christ is the beneficiary of his own sacrifice is, in fact, the soteriological locus of his sacrifice. It is precisely as obedient victim that Christ is the beneficiary donor, for it is in presenting a perfect, obedient human nature that we are forgiven and the sacrifice of redemption is effective. It is indeed true that Christ had no need to offer sacrifice for himself; unlike other priests Christ was already holy as a victim. But on behalf of those for whom Christ offered in his solidarity, Christ needed to offer because it was the only way to effect salvation. The infinite merit of Christ's sacrifice is able to be passed on precisely because we, by our nature, are present with Christ also. Both Hebrews and Paul assert that Christ's soteriological work is inextricably linked up with the fact that he shares our humanity; it was essential that the one who brings the offering be fully human (cf. Heb 2:11–18; Rom 5).⁶⁵ So even while Nelson pointed out earlier that there is never any sense in which the death of the victim is a substitution for the death of the donor, here there is the substitution: the sacrifice is not simply *for* followers, but *of* the very nature which he himself carries. As on the day of the atonement, one substitutes for all. But the substitution here is not one of *like* kind but rather one of *unique* kind.

Indeed, Christ had no need to be the beneficiary of his own sacrifice. He was already holy. We are the ones who need holiness. But it is Christ presenting human nature as holy *as one of us* which sanctifies us. So it would seem that Christ plays the roles not only of priest and victim, but also that of donor. Additionally, while sign and res find closure in Christ and, in fact, will not be

⁶⁵ Cf. Morna D. Hooker, "Christ, the 'End' of the Cult," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 200.

required in heaven, they cannot be collapsed or erased in “the human-time line while sin still reigns” or the economy collapses and we have no need for propitiation. And while this is an instance where the *tropos* of Christ’s sacrifice as perfect and once-for-all and the *tropos* of our sacrifice diverge, both *latria* (donor) and immolation (victim) are *required* to be present in Christ if Christ’s sacrifice is to “hit the human timeline.”

Further, as we have already noted in our earlier discussion of the economy of sacrifice, there are, in fact, not simply three roles involved in a valid sacrifice but rather four: donor, victim, priest, and recipient. That Jesus is both human and God is, after much fourth-century debate, affirmed by the Church and orthodox Christian theology as foundational to Christ’s soteriological role and work as defined by the economy of the Incarnation. And, of course, Christ’s sacrifice is central to the culmination of his soteriological work. And, as we have already discussed, the recipient of Christian sacrifice is God, to whom our *latria* and propitiation is rightly due. So as God and human, Jesus, in some sense, participates in the roles of both donor (human) and recipient (God) in his own sacrifice. In fact, this shift in roles is part of what distinguishes sacrifice in the first covenant from sacrifice in the new covenant. That is to say, whereas in the first covenant each of the four roles—donor, victim, priest, God—were related to four distinct agents, in the new covenant there is a collapsing of roles and agents, such that “we can even speak of an absolute identity of all the [roles], since Christ is, above all, both man [*sic*] and god.”⁶⁶ Indeed, an “absolute identity” is key to understanding how the sacrifice of Christ works. It is more than a parenthetical (as Herrenschildt notes it)—it is the point of

⁶⁶ Herrenschildt, 36.

solidarity/identity in the Incarnation and the Epistle to the Hebrews, as summarized in 9:24–26.⁶⁷ Jesus is sacrificially both priest and victim *and* both God and human.

Thus, it seems the matter becomes one of ordering and prioritizing of roles and agents when it comes to Christ's sacrifice. The priest and victim tend to be the focus of any sacrificial act because, of course, they are the locus of the most dramatic action. But in the economy of sacrifice, they are, in fact, secondary. They serve (merely) as intermediaries and "substitutes" for the primary actors: the donor and the recipient. For though these two agents are often ignored in terms of the *sacrifice* per se, they are fundamental to understanding sacrifice as grounded in *latría* and belonging to the species of gift: our highest creaturely duty is to hand ourselves over to God, to make of ourselves a return gift to God.

Masure draws attention to both the intersectionality at play here and the primacy of the agents of donor and recipient when considering the connotation(s) of *communion* in the theology of sacrifice, which plays an important role in the idea of a return gift to God (and the subsequent union effected thereby).⁶⁸ Masure points out that in this context we understand the word *communion* to have two different, yet cognate, senses. In the first sense, it may indicate the encounter of the oblation (or victim) with God in the moment when God receives our sacrifice. In that moment, the oblation (or victim) is united with God who, in accepting it, sanctifies it and by virtue of its transfer to God's ownership, in some sense, makes it divine. This is the communion of the oblation with God. In the second sense, the oblation (or victim) may, subject to the divine will and proper ritual form, be given back to us as a pledge or incarnation of the

⁶⁷ In fact, scripture draws the circle even tighter by asserting that it is also God who offers the sacrifice (cf. Jn 3:16, Rom 3:25). So not only does Christ play the role of donor as a human, he also somehow participates in the role of donor *as* God as well as participating in the role of recipient as God. Much of this is, of course, the focus of Anselm of Canterbury's inquiry and explication in *Cur Deus Homo*.

⁶⁸ The following summary is drawn from Masure, 47.

divine favor it now manifests by virtue of its union with God. In receiving it, most often by consuming it, we are united with the victim in the communion *of us with the oblation*—a communion which also unites us with God.

Masure, drawing on Marius Lepin, goes on to point out that the French School has “splendidly exploited” the first sense, the communion of the oblation (victim) with God, by applying it to Christ’s Resurrection and Ascension when, receiving the Son at the right hand, God communicates to him divine splendor and glory, thus entering into communion with the Son *as victim*. As we have already discussed and demonstrated, Hebrews not only suggests such a movement and communion, but “demands this doctrine absolutely.” Masure laments that our historical preoccupation with the second sense described above in terms of distinguishing between the sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of the Eucharist has led to a “hasty mode of speech” which “leaves the resplendent aspect of the Christian Paschal Mystery, Christ’s entry in Heaven, too much in the shade.”⁶⁹ And while de la Taille asserts that the French School—pointing specifically to Lepin—errs in the form of excess by claiming the continuation of sacrificial action in heaven, it is precisely Masure’s assertion with which we have been concerned, that de la Taille has left Christ’s entry into heaven too much in the shade, especially in light of the assertion of the author of Hebrews.

Our path out of this dilemma appears to hinge on a question of economies. De la Taille’s language of active and passive sacrifice already, it seems, points to the existence of two different economies. There is an economy in which certain things or agents are active and an economy in which certain things or agents are passive. But how do these two economies map onto or

⁶⁹ Masure, 47 ; cf. Marius Lepin, *L’Idée du Sacrifice de la Messe, d’après les théologiens depuis l’origine jusqu’à nos jours* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1926), 472.

coincide with the ones we have already identified and discussed? Certainly, within the macro-economy of sacrifice there is period or micro-economy during which the donor is the active agent, namely, the presentation of the victim, if not also its preparation and immolation, and a point past which the donor *cannot* be active, namely, after handing the victim over to the priest. Recall that the ability to mediate the divine-human boundary and effect the transfer of the victim from the possession (and ownership) of the donor to the possession (but not ownership) of God is the express prerogative of the priest. Equally as certain within the macro-economy of sacrifice there is a micro-economy during which the recipient (God) must, according to the theology of divine acceptance, be the active agent and a point before which the recipient *cannot* be the active agent as the oblation (victim) must come freely from the donor, otherwise it is not a gift.⁷⁰ Likewise, as we have already noted, the priest *must* be the active agent during the liminal period of transferring the victim from human possession to divine possession, and *may* be the active agent during the presentation, preparation, and immolation of the victim depending on the type of sacrifice, but *cannot* be the active agent as the recipient of the sacrifice.⁷¹

Further, Hooker emphasizes how Hebrews shifts the language of Christ as sacrifice, that is, victim, which has already been used by the tradition, by combining it with the language of Christ as high-priest, which forms the basis for explaining how Christ could offer himself—and, not insignificantly, himself entering into God’s presence and communion—and thereby open up a

⁷⁰ Although, within a Wesleyan theology of prevenient grace—as well as historical Christian theology—God is presumed to be active even in and with the donor by enabling the donor to act in the first place. Here, however, we might, just as de la Taille does, qualify divine agency and human agency into two categorically different modes or *tropoi*.

⁷¹ Again, there are admittedly cases in which the priest appears to be an active agent as the recipient of the sacrifice, as when the priest pours the blood of the victim on or around the altar and/or burns parts of the victim in a holocaust, but these actions are only *signs* of the divine acceptance, not actually the act of divine acceptance *per se*, so, once again, we might in this case qualify divine agency and human agency into two categorically different modes or *tropoi*, just as we do in any sacrament.

way for others.⁷² But this shift from Christ as victim to Christ as priest-victim changes the way Christ functions as a sacrifice. And this shift radically alters the phases in which he exercises agency: according to the epistle's argument, the whole point of the image of Christ as priest is so that he can exercise agency past the point at which the victim is slaughtered. The entrance into the holy of holies is, it must be remembered, a liturgical/ritual act of the priest and a necessary component of his sacrifice (Heb 9:24–25; 13:11),⁷³ which the epistle binds to Christ's Resurrection and Ascension (Heb 9:24; 13:20). The binding of this action to Christ's Resurrection and Ascension thus further reinforces the assertion that Christ's agency in his own sacrifice extends past the point of the slaughter of the victim on the Cross and into the next phases of the sacrifice in which the victim is transferred from human possession to divine possession. In this same way, Johnson, whom we may recall had a strong influence on Wesley, points to this same shift in agency and action when he declares, "nay, we may add, that the Ascension of Christ into heaven many days after, was but the finishing of this one oblation," meaning, of course, the once-for-all oblation on the Cross.⁷⁴ Yet even here as Hebrews appears to be arguing for the expansion and/or multiplication of Christ agential roles, there is a movement toward the unification of action and agents, for the epistle is equally clear that Christ need not enter twice as the priests of old did, but only once (9:12).

If we are to think of the various roles involved in sacrifice in terms of the larger economies discussed earlier, it seems clear that the priest and victim belong primarily to the economy of sacrifice. It is only the need for sacrifice which necessitates the presence of a victim and priest.

⁷² Hooker, 209.

⁷³ Exod 23:15b; Deut 16:16; Lev 16:2–3, 15, 17, 23; cf. Nelson, "He Offered," 255–56.

⁷⁴ J. Johnson, 1:145.

Once the economy of sacrifice collapses in the final consummation of all things, there will be no further need of priest or victim.

On the other hand, however, the donor and recipient belong primarily to the economy of the Incarnation, even while playing fundamental roles in the economy of sacrifice. This should not be troubling or even surprising, for the economy of sacrifice is only necessitated because the divine gift of love has “hit the human time-line of sin,”⁷⁵ but the donor, who was created to offer the gift of love to God as pure *latría*, and recipient, who is attracting love and the end of happiness, are both the foundation of the economy of the Incarnation. Masure captures this eloquently when he states:

This profound reality, the substance of sacrifice, seen in its eternal bearings, in the conditions true for every state, that of nature and that of supernature, that of sin and that of innocence, is the final meetings of the creature with the Creator, the return of the creature to Him who has made it for Himself so that it may find its end and therefore its happiness in Him and for His glory... Sacrifice is the movement or action by which we try to bring ourselves to God, our end, to find our true beatitude in our union with Him. To sacrifice a thing is to lead it to its end.⁷⁶

So donor and recipient may play primary roles in the economy of sacrifice where *latría* is also propitiation even as they find their true home in the economy of the Incarnation. Gunton reinforces this when he states that the “metaphor is sacrifice” is used precisely as a way of capturing the meaning of everything that has happened to the Son as a result of the Incarnation, because “the whole of the life and its outcome are understood, at one level, as the gift of God to the world. The one who, according to the old dispensation, received the sacrifice, now becomes the giver.”⁷⁷

⁷⁵ See ch. 2.

⁷⁶ Masure, 41.

⁷⁷ Gunton, 189.

The issue, then, appears to be not to place the donor-recipient into the economy of sacrifice, but rather to place the priest-victim in the economy of the Incarnation. Scheeben gestures toward this kind of reframing in his own way when we states that just

As the Incarnation itself was to be the prolongation and extension of the eternal generation, and can be adequately comprehended only from this viewpoint, so the sacrificial surrender of the God-man was to be the most perfect expression of that divine love which, as God, he shows forth in the spiration and effusion of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁸

Scheeben reminds us that we can only truly understand the Incarnation when we reframe it in terms of its proper orientation and grounding—or economy—that of the eternal generation or trinitarian perichoresis. Likewise, we can only truly understand Christ’s sacrifice when we reframe it in terms of its proper orientation, which is also grounded in the economy of trinitarian perichoresis or love. Certainly, de la Taille, an admirer of Scheeben’s, understands this, too, for on more than one occasion he frames Christ’s sacrifice in terms of his Incarnation. The coincidence, or, perhaps, interlocking, of these two economies is possibly most poignantly expressed when de la Taille draws his reader’s attention to the care with which Maximus of Turin distinguishes between the roles played by God and by the priest in Christ’s Incarnation and sacrifice. Maximus states, “for in the mystery of the Incarnation, Mary bore the Priest in her womb as in a sanctuary. For what was to come into this world was wholly from her womb: God, Priest, and Victim: God of the Resurrection, Priest of the Offering. We see all his in Christ.”⁷⁹

In her own discussion of de la Taille, Matthiesen, perhaps inadvertently, signals the ambiguity and interplay between these two economies when she states that ‘in Christ’s sacrifice, the offerer and the gift have become the same: the Priest offers himself as victim.’⁸⁰ While it is

⁷⁸ Scheeben, *Mysteries*, 446.

⁷⁹ *MF* 1:251n8; cf. *MF* 1:139n7.

⁸⁰ Matthiesen, 83.

true, as we have already noted, that in the economy of sacrifice the priest must be the offerer and not the donor, in the strict sense, however, the donor must be the offerer of the *gift* while the priest offers the *victim*. The overlap and interplay of categories, roles and economies can, at times, become clumsy if not confusing, all of which points to the need to maintain a proper orientation in order to achieve semantic clarity. It seems incumbent upon us, however, to understand Christ's sacrifice in terms of a single, unified economy, and that of the Incarnation or, perhaps better, the divine economy of love. In point of fact, it might be more accurate for us to speak of Christ's sacrifice in terms of a set of economies, each providing a different frame of understanding for or expression of the divine economy, like facets on a jewel, but all being unified in the divine economy. Matthiesen points to this very unity of the economy of the Incarnation, the economy of sacrifice, and the economy of the Paschal Mystery, in stating that "in Jesus's oblation both as human being and God, all three mysteries converged: supper, death, and resurrection."⁸¹

Contemporary Catholic and Wesleyan theology also affirm such an understanding. The ninth report of the International dialogue between the World Methodist Council and the Roman Catholic Church, "Encountering Christ: Church and Sacraments," commonly known as the *Durban Report*, emphasizes this unity of economies. The report is framed by a meditation on Phil 2:1–11, the *kenosis* hymn, which draws attention to the manner in which Paul explicates how both the Incarnation and the divine economy are manifest in the Paschal Mystery (§§1–8).⁸² Chapter One of the report describes a common understanding for Catholics and Methodists of the

⁸¹ Matthiesen, 80.

⁸² As we have already noted, the Incarnation is that economy which serves as the primary framework for Christ's action in and interaction with the created order; it is, as well, the primary expression of the divine economy as it "hits the time-line" of the created order, to borrow the language of Coakley.

Paschal Mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. The unity in which all things are held together in the Paschal Mystery, and thus the divine economy and the Incarnation, are summed up by the statement, "Christ and his sacrifice and his victory are one and inseparable" (*Durban* §14). Here we see that there is no distinction between Christ himself, the incarnation of divine love, and the sacrifice. The two are inseparably and semantically linked. Chapter Three, "The Eucharist: Presence and Sacrifice," affirms again that Christ's sacrifice is grounded in the divine economy, asserting that "this sacrificial self-giving of Christ is something 'made flesh' once-for-all in human history on the cross, but the innermost reality of Christ's 'Grand Oblation' is an eternal mystery at the very heart of the Holy Trinity" (*Durban* §103). In fact, Jesus' death on Cross can be understood as the very "sacrament" of the divine economy of self-giving.

To speak of Christ's sacrifice, therefore, is to speak, coincidentally of the divine economy of love and the Paschal Mystery. Thus, what is signified when speaking of Christ's sacrifice must also include the divine economy of *kenosis* and *plerosis*, of emptying and filling, of thanksgiving and begetting, as well as the Paschal Mystery of Cross and Resurrection (and, indeed, Ascension), of death and new life. Drawing from the Reformed tradition, Gunton sums this up eloquently when he states that

sacrifice, in this concrete realization of the transcendental [i.e., the Incarnation] is the expression in outworking of the inter-trinitarian relations of giving and receiving. The inner being of God is a *taxis*, a dynamic orderedness, of love construed in terms of mutual and reciprocal gift and reception. If the sacrifice that is Jesus' human life and death is a realization in time of the eternal *taxis*, then it is indeed universal.⁸³

From all this we must conclude that the terminus for the action for Christ's sacrifice must lie somewhere other than the Cross, because what is semantically referenced by the sign vehicle

⁸³ Gunton, 149.

“sacrifice” in this case includes much more than simply that action which began in Jesus’ Last Supper with his disciples and concluded on the Cross.

3.4. The Semantics of Christ’s Sacrifice: Expanded

It now seems clear that in order to capture, comprehend, and communicate properly what we mean by Christ’s “sacrifice,” we must have an expanded framework for what we signify semantically when we speak of Christ’s sacrifice. The foregoing discussions of implications from the Epistle to the Hebrews and the unity of economies lead us to frame the semantic expansion of what we mean when we speak of Christ’s sacrifice in terms of the eternalization of Christ’s offering. To be sure, there is both controversy and difficulty in speaking of this. This is, in fact, the very matter which led de la Taille to condemn some for erring in the form of defect and others for erring in the form of excess and, consequently, led him to speak in terms of “active” and “passive” sacrifice.

Nevertheless, de la Taille is certainly not the only one who has wrestled with how to express the relationship between Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross and his heavenly “sacrifice.” Nor is his language of active and passive sacrifice the only paradigm. Coakley speaks of the divine gift of love “hitting the time-line” of humanity (and human sin). Similarly, Gunton, as we have just noted, speaks of the “eternal *taxis*” of God’s inner being, that of eternal, reciprocal gift and reception, being realized in time. But he also speaks of this serving as the grounding of the universality of Christ’s sacrifice, of its “for all-ness,” of its “once-ness,” which implies that it cannot be left in the timeline but must somehow return to its native, *eternal taxis*.

Johnson also addresses the manner in which Christ’s “one personal oblation” is eternalized. It cannot, he asserts, be “confined to any one instant of time,” but rather what was commenced in

the Supper and the Passion was finished in his Ascension. To “restrain the oblation to the cross alone” would “exclude Christ’s sacerdotal entry into heaven as the holy of holies,” thus asserting that the “oblation was finished before the Blood of the Sacrifice was brought into the most holy place, and there offered,” which is clearly contrary to what Hebrews teaches (9:7).⁸⁴ Johnson affirms that it is “owned on all hands”—including his own—that the mactation (i.e., immolation) and satisfaction was made on the Cross and that the “substantial Sacrifice of Christ’s natural Body was there once for all yielded to God the Father.”⁸⁵ Thus, Johnson is not arguing that that which was accomplished on the Cross and properly belongs to the Cross in terms of Christ’s sacrifice, that is, his immolation and the substantial oblation of his natural body, is somehow taken up into heaven or snatched out of time to be made eternal. Rather, Johnson, as de la Taille did, marks a distinction between immolation and oblation, and, according to Hebrews, the sacerdotal act of oblation which Christ began in the Supper must necessarily continue on to his Ascension, which alone marks his entrance into the holy of holies.

In fact, language characterizing the sacrifice as eternal is not uncommon to the Laudian Tradition. Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667), who along with the later John Johnson was a follower of Archbishop William Laud (1573–1645), uses language along these lines in his work *Rule and Exercise of Holy Living and Dying* (1650–51), a work known to have had a strong influence on Wesley.⁸⁶ Here, Taylor argues that, although Christ’s sacrifice be “be one, and that once,” it was

⁸⁴ J. Johnson, 1:164. Admittedly, Johnson does speak here in terms of the “double offering” on the Cross and in the holy of holies, but this seems to be an equivocation of language rather than the type of double offering of which McGuckian speaks (See n28) as Johnson has immediately prior, in the same sentence, affirmed the single “oblation” of the Cross and the Supper.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Wesley first came in contact with Taylor’s two works, *Rule and Exercise of Holy Living* (1650) and *Rule and Exercise of Holy Dying* (1651), later published as a single work, in 1725, which he recounts, among other places, in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* §2 (Wesley, *Works* 13:136). Wesley was “exceedingly affected” by Taylor’s work, such that he instantly “resolved to dedicate *all my life* to God; *all my thoughts*, and words, and actions; being thoroughly convinced, there was no medium, but that *every part* of my life (not *some* only) must

necessary for the needs of the world that a “perpetual ministry” be established so that Christ’s “one sufficient sacrifice should be made eternally effectual.”⁸⁷ Thus, Christ was made a priest forever, as Hebrews teaches. Christ’s priesthood began on earth on the Cross “but was to last and be officiated in heaven, where He sits perpetually representing and exhibiting to the Father that great sacrifice which He offered on the Cross...as already offered.”⁸⁸ Although Taylor does not specifically state that Christ does not offer a new sacrifice, the past tense of “already offered” implies as much. And Taylor explicitly rules out any new sacrifice in a similar passage in his earlier work, *The Great Exemplar: The History of the Life and Death of the Holy Jesus* (1649), with which Wesley was also familiar. Taylor states there that Christ does not offer a new sacrifice, for “he does not sacrifice himself afresh.” Rather “he *represents* his sacrifice to God” as he “offers himself *as sacrificed*.”⁸⁹ In other words, Taylor is arguing that without a sacrifice, Christ could not remain a priest, and since he is a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek, his sacrifice must also be forever. Or more succinctly: no eternalized sacrifice, no eternal priesthood. Given the influence of both Johnson and Taylor on Wesley, it is quite natural to see this same language in his own characterization of Christ’s sacrifice. So, as we have already noted in the previous chapter, Wesley sees Christ’s presentation of his body and blood as high

either be a sacrifice to God or to myself, that is, in effect, to the devil” (emphasis original). In addition to Wesley’s explicit reference to the concept of sacrifice here, Taylor’s work “reacquainted Wesley with the practices of holy living that would be his constant companions through life,” including, among others, frequent communion (Ibid. 13:10).

⁸⁷ Taylor, *Holy Living*, Ch. IV, Sec. X, ¶2, in *The Whole Works of the Right Rev. Jeremy Taylor, D.D., Lord Bishop of Down, Connor, and Dromore: With a Life of the Author, and a Critical Examination of His Writings by Reginald Heber*, ed. Charles Page Eden, New ed., 10 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1851), 3:214.

⁸⁸ Ibid, ¶3–4. It is also interesting to note in light of our discussion that that when speaking of the blessings received from the sacrament, Taylor, rather than speaking of them as being “purchased on the cross” as he does in earlier works, characterizes them as “purchased for us by Christ in His death and resurrection, and in His intercession in heaven,” implying an indivisible unity of the three. Taylor, *Whole Works* 3:220.

⁸⁹ Jeremy Taylor, *The Great Exemplar*, Part III: Section XV: Discourse XIX, §7, in *Whole Works* 2:643 (emphasis added).

priest before the Father in heaven as the continuation in heaven of the effects of the Cross, the continuation of Christ's sacrifice in heaven in God's "eternal now," for Christ's sacrifice "must, in all respects, stand eternal, the same yesterday, today, and for ever" (II.7).

Not surprisingly, we are faced, again, with a matter of language if we are to understand and articulate how Christ's sacrifice is "brought into the most holy place, and there offered" such that it "stands eternal" as it is "represented," "exhibited," or "presented" to the Father. One need only note how the reports produced by the International Methodist-Catholic Dialogue Commission (formerly known as the Joint Commission between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council) speak of Christ's heavenly activity to see that this language remains problematic. The *Durban Report* asserts that "the innermost reality of Christ's 'Grand Oblation' is an eternal mystery at the very heart of the Holy Trinity," but that "issues of time—of past, present and future—cannot be ignored when discussing the Eucharist" (§§103–104). Later, when discussing Christ's heavenly activity, the report goes on to state that "as he intercedes in heaven for humanity, the risen Christ 'pleads' his sacrifice, 'presenting' to the Father his offering on the cross. Christ himself is the sacrifice that is offered. It is Christ who 'pleads', 'presents' and 'offers' himself to the Father, and who draws his priestly people into his 'pleading' and 'presenting', into the movement of his 'offering'" (§124).⁹⁰ The use of quotation marks around "present" and "offer" (and even "plead") when used with reference to Christ's heavenly activity—and *not* his activity on the Cross—will not be lost on the astute reader.

As we have already discussed in the previous chapter, Wesley uses the language of offering, oblation, and presentation interchangeably. For his own part, De la Taille, despite equivocation in the historical tradition, attempts to draw a distinction between the language of "presentation"

⁹⁰ Cf. *Dublin* §65 and *Rio de Janeiro* §102.

and “oblation,” just as he did earlier by drawing a clear distinction between oblation and immolation. This distinction, of course, underscores de la Taille’s differentiation between the “passive” nature of Christ’s activity in heaven and the “active” nature of his activity in the Supper and on the Cross. De la Taille asserts that while “presentation, whereby a thing is made present to God, is very closely akin to oblation or offering,” they are significantly distinct. In presenting himself, Christ is “simply abiding in Him who has already received Him,” whereas in making a sacrificial offering (or oblation), “a thing is handed over to God and received by Him.”⁹¹ So while the Fathers may have been equivocal in their use of presentation and offering, what they clearly attributed to Christ’s heavenly activity is the “presentation of something *already offered*” and not “the offering of something *to be* made sacred.”⁹² De la Taille brings together the concept of past and present with his concept of passive and active in a summary statement:

In a word, to say that Christ offers in heaven is the same as to say that Christ is in heaven, the Victim, the offering (in the passive sense) or the reality offered. This is undoubtedly true, though no oblativ action is performed in heaven, this action having been performed in the past.⁹³

Yet earlier, de la Taille is happy to point to the hymns of Ephraem, which extoll Christ

for having ascended as an *oblation*, because he ascended and offered: that is, bringing gifts to God, which were first offered on earth by himself: . . . Thou art an offering both in heaven and on earth. . . thou didst go up to heaven and thou wast made the great offering; thou didst ascend, O Lord, and thou didst offer.⁹⁴

Again, it is “owned on all hands” that Christ does “offer” in heaven, even by de la Taille. The question is how that offering in heaven relates to the offering on earth on the Cross. If de la

⁹¹ *MF* 1:253n13.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *MF* 1:197 (emphasis added).

Taille's translation of Ephraem is to be trusted—and there is no reason to believe he would suddenly fail here in its accuracy—then it seems that Ephraem, while characterizing Christ's heavenly *activity* as an offering, clearly claimed that he ascended *as* an oblation, implying continuity with his oblation in the Supper and on the Cross as the same oblation, an oblation which is now somehow eternalized in the ongoing act of offering in heaven. The only other logical conclusion from Ephraem's claim would be that he ascended as another, second oblation, which would clearly be unacceptable. The issue for de la Taille, admittedly as for the tradition, seems to be to grasp language which distinguishes between oblation *activity* such that nothing can imply that a new or fresh sacrificial offering is added to the Cross in heaven.

In order to lay hold of a model for such language, the Council of Trent points us in the right direction when speaking of the difference between the sacrifice of the Mass and the sacrifice of the Cross. There, the Council states that “For the victim is one and the same, the same now offering by the ministry of priests, who then offered Himself on the cross, the manner alone of offering being different.”⁹⁵ While here the Council is, admittedly, speaking of the difference between the Mass and the Cross, the same logic can be applied to the difference between the Cross and Christ's heavenly activity. Note the difference Wesley makes in *HLS* between slew (an action in the past) and as slain (an past act as completed) when speaking, in the first case, of Christ on the Cross and, in the second case, of Christ in heaven:

The instruments that bruised Him so
Were broke and scatter'd long ago,
The flames extinguish'd were;
But Jesu's death is ever new,
He whom in ages past they slew
Doth still as slain appear. (3:2)

⁹⁵ The Council of Trent, Session XXII, Ch 2.

Or in Wesley's perhaps most well-known hymn from *HLS*, "O Thou Eternal Victim, Slain," where he clearly speaks twice of Christ's sacrifice using the past tense and yet also speaks of his offering (somehow) "continuing new":

O Thou eternal Victim, slain
A sacrifice for guilty man,
By the eternal Spirit made
An offering in the sinner's stead,
Our everlasting Priest art Thou,
And plead'st Thy death for sinners now.

Thy offering still continues new,
Thy vesture keeps its bloody hue,
Thou stand'st the ever-slaughter'd Lamb (5:2–5:3.3)

The condition of being "ever-slaughtered" points to condition which is enduring (for)ever. But the simple past of slaughtered constrains the action as having been completed in the past. It would seem that, in Wesley's mind, the convergence of these two conditions in the "eternal now" is precisely what allows the offering to "still continue new."⁹⁶ And this would also seem to be where Taylor and Johnson are pointing when speaking of Christ "offering" himself (present tense) "as sacrificed" (a past act as completed).

We are not arguing, as the French School does, that the sacrifice of Christ began here on earth only to be continued in heaven. Nor even further that he made a first offering here on earth and a second offering in heaven. Nor that he makes some kind of destruction or annihilation in heaven.⁹⁷ We would assert, rather, that the categories for distinguishing modes of oblation—*to be immolated*, *by immolation*, *as immolated*—are already sufficient to guard against that which

⁹⁶ We might wonder if this is precisely that to which de la Taille is pointing when he speaks of the "virtual duration" of Christ's one active offering, though he would surely eschew the use of the word "new."

⁹⁷ *MF* 1:249.

de la Taille fears.⁹⁸ This is especially the case because of the true, unique continuity of agent in Christ's sacrifice, something which surpasses and completes the entirety of the sacrificial system.

De la Taille's preferred language, his own *via media*, as we have already mentioned in the previous chapter, is to speak of the "virtual duration" of Christ's one active offering. To understand him better here, we might turn to a passage in one of de la Taille's later "elucidations," *Letter Addressed to a Missionary on the Oblation of Christ and the Oblation of all Our Masses by Christ*. There, de la Taille explains that while it is right to speak of Christ's heavenly activity in terms of "a mode of intercession and of mediation," that of the victim laid upon the heavenly altar where God had already taken possession of the victim, nonetheless,

it is intercession which is no longer in process of going on; it is mediation whose function no longer is to draw opposites close together, but to keep them welded into unity. One activity only remains to Christ, and it is to cause life to circulate from the divine summits to the lower regions of our fallen humanity, from the Father to all his children.

In terms of a like analogy it is right to say that Christ in heaven adores and renders homage to his Father: he is the great life-long Adoration because he is the Sacrifice. But being a sacrifice in its terminal stage, it must be understood that his adoration is not now a homage of dependence but the fruit of past acts of homage, in the present enjoyment of his Father's independence and majesty. His adoration is no longer a movement leading back to God, but it is a repose in the Supreme God. It is no longer a consecration in the making, but a consecration which has reached its final state of an appurtenance to God, of a union with God, and, in the case of Christ, not any sort of union of human nature, but of the Hypostatic Union consummated in all its developments, in all the accessory reaches of that substantial unity which, dating from the moment of the Incarnation exerted all its connatural efficacy through the inferior faculties of the soul and the fibres of his vesture of flesh.⁹⁹

Here, then, de la Taille acknowledges a distinction in the "mode" of intercession and mediation, even of adoration; yet it is intercession, mediation, and adoration nevertheless. And yet de la Taille does not feel compelled to distinguish in plain language between intercession and

⁹⁸ As we have already noted, Wesley, as Taylor and Johnson before him, is clear that Christ offers himself in heaven "as slain," the semantic equivalent of "as immolated."

⁹⁹ *MFHO* 54.

mediation which is “active” and that which is “passive.” It is sufficient to speak of heavenly intercession or mediation and understand that the mode is necessarily different. And so, we would argue, with oblation.

Note, also, that de la Taille points to the hypostatic union (and Incarnation) as the ground for the differentiation, just as Scheeben, as we have already noted, points to reframing our understanding of the Incarnation (a past act as completed) in terms of the eternal generation.¹⁰⁰ Scheeben provides a helpful reframing here, too, for understanding Christ’s offering. According to Scheeben,

Jedenfalls aber kann man von einer steten lebendigen Rekapitulation das heißt Wiederaufgreifung des Kreuzesopfers reden, weil damit direct die Aufopferung und nur indirekt die Opferung bezeichnet wird; und aus demselben Grunde kann man, wie von einer fortgesetzten, so auch von einer mit der Auferstehung beginnenden und sodann ewig dauernden neuen lebendigen Darbringung des Kreuzesopfers im Himmel sprechen.¹⁰¹

Scheeben admits that it is not appropriate to speak of actual sacrificial activity of Christ in heaven if such activity is to be understood in terms of renunciation of the bloody sacrifice on the Cross. But we are in full agreement with Scheeben that the heavenly oblation/offering/presentation is not understood in terms of renunciation, but rather in terms of that which has already been renounced and is now eternally glorified and ratified in its renounced state. Scheeben goes on to state that what is characterized by others as “substantive repetition” is essentially the same thing that he calls “virtual continuation” and could also call “substantive continuation” because the same sacrificial love, which was the principle and soul,

¹⁰⁰ See also Francis Frost who points to a dependent link between the Incarnation and the heavenly sacrifice when he states that “a blood sacrifice, carried out in time, is taken up into eternity and made eternal in the eternity of the second Person of the Trinity made [hu]man.” Frost, “Veil Unveiling,” 94.

¹⁰¹ Scheeben, *Handbuch*, §1497.

and thus core and substance, of the sacrifice on the Cross, is also active in the recollection of this sacrifice.¹⁰²

Moreover, scripture makes it necessary to accept a true and actual sacrifice of Christ in heaven in that Christ, as the “liturgist” of the true sanctuary and tent, must sacrifice in these too, especially since Hebrews immediately points out that Christ, if he does not offer in heaven, would not be a priest because on earth other priests were appointed to sacrifice (Heb 8:1ff). Thus, Scheeben concludes, „Wir bestreiten durchaus nicht, nehmen vielmehr selbst an, daß aus dem Geiste dieser Stelle folge, Christus opfere im eigentlichen Sinne auch noch im Himmel, weil die Liturgen des mosaischen Heiligthums nicht bloß vor demselben im Vorhofe, sondern auch in demselben wirklich opferten, nämlich in den unblutigen Opfern.“ Nevertheless, he states, such a heavenly sacrifice cannot be proved and defended from the notion of renunciation and destruction, but rather in consideration of another concept of sacrificial change: namely, the altar-fire as a new form of the activity of the sacrificial love. Here, the heavenly sacrifice appears specifically as the effect of the heavenly priestly power of Christ. Thus, he asserts, the persistence of the sacrifice of the Cross in the heavenly sacrifice “finds its right place and a fuller illumination, while the difficulties and complexities arising in the other version are removed.”¹⁰³

According to Scheeben, the altar-fire consists in a second, higher change of the offering by which the sacrifice of the Cross is completed, not in its expiatory power but in its laetitic-eucharistic tendency, and at the same time the perfect form of the continual preservation of its power and effectiveness is created.¹⁰⁴ In the altar-fire, the transfiguring resurrection of Christ through his divine power is to be regarded as a “kindling of his sacrifice on the altar” effected by

¹⁰² Ibid., §1498.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., §1499.

his priestly authority and, thus, as a priestly, transformed offering of a sacrifice in the form of the burnt offering. However, if in the sacrifice of the burnt offering the natural sacrifice lasts as long as the sacrifice burns on the altar, „dann dauert die Opferung hier um so mehr fort, weil das verklärte Leben des Leibes der stete Reflex der *caritas* und stete Wirkung der priesterlichen Macht seiner Seele ist.“¹⁰⁵

We would argue, then, with Scheeben that the heavenly sacrifice is an eternalization of the offering of the sacrifice offered in the Supper and on the Cross but in a different mode. Surely this is what de la Taille was grasping for in his language of “active” and “passive” sacrifice, but, as we have argued earlier, such language allows for too much distance between the two, allowing the “sacrifice of the Cross” to stand on its own as a complete act in the mind of many. Rather, it seems clear that it is crucial that the semantic of “sacrifice” expand to see Christ’s activity in the Supper, the Cross, and heaven as a whole.

3.5. The Grammar of Sacrifice: Expanded

We are now in a position to conclude our examination over the last two chapters of the semantics and grammar of Christ’s sacrifice, for it seems clear that given our expanded semantic framework in addition to our examination in the previous chapter, we also now require an expanded paradigm for the grammar which governs the language of sacrifice. Specifically, rather than the binary form of Supper-Cross for the grammar of Christ’s sacrifice, we would argue that Christ’s reordering of the grammar to a new *tropos* requires a ternary, Supper-Cross-Heaven, form. Just as the Supper is not to be viewed as preparatory for or subordinated to the Cross but rather co-ordinated and co-numbered with it (de la Taille), so too the heavenly sacrifice is also.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., §1500.

The categories of active and passive cannot (and do not) apply to the sacrifice *per se* (or the complexus) precisely because they misconstrue the grammar and create a false division. Rather, they apply to the *tropos* of the offering: in the Supper Christ offers himself to be immolated; on the Cross Christ offers himself by immolation; in heaven Christ offers himself as immolated.

We might describe such a ternary understanding of sacrifice, to borrow from Coakley, as a “queering” of the life-death binary so commonly used to define sacrifice. In such a queering of the binary understanding of sacrifice, death is understood as a *transitus*, an idea which lies at the heart of the Christian mystery: will we not die, but we will be changed (1 Cor 15:51). Change, of course, is the root meaning of immolation, and by definition a change cannot have occurred if a new, post-change state does not obtain. Masure emphasizes the importance of change rather than death as the goal of sacrifice in his own attempt to “queer” the life-death binary when he states that

this great transaction would have been simpler in the state of nature...reduced almost to a unity by the reduction of these two stages into one...In any case, we see God’s plan condemned to a detestable delay which splits the movement of our religious life into two parts which seem at enmity with one another; first, a symbol of death as a negation of that dire negation, sin; then, in the wake of our victim which has found the right way again for itself and us thanks to this previous immolation, we taste God’s peace when He welcomes and transfigures us.¹⁰⁶

If there is any “death” now to speak of in sacrifice, it is the death of sin, for the goal of sacrifice now—in the wake of the death of the *once-for-all* victim—is our transfiguration and own life of peace in God.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Masure, 63.

¹⁰⁷ Gunton points in this same direction in asserting that “‘sacrifice’ does not now mean the death of the dumb creature, but the kind of thing that Jesus did in both life and death. With the new meaning come implications for life, as when Paul enjoins his readers to give their bodies as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1).” Gunton, 190. The language of Rom 12:1 is, of course, the language on which the United Methodist statement of oblation rests.

For her own part, Coakley, arguing from a feminist perspective, offers a similar argument.

She asserts that in queering the life-death binary, we develop an understanding of sacrifice which

involves a stepping into the *life* of the Trinity, purgative to be sure...and painfully de-stabilizing of things we may have long taken for granted; but not *annihilating*: this is a re-forming of the self *in* God rather than a shattering of an uneasy ego in death. And this last distinction is particularly important from the feminist perspective...a view of the person in which the self is most truly established *in God*.¹⁰⁸

Here, then, Coakley points us to the heart of the feminist argument, and we see a convergence between authors as diverse as Masure and Coakley. Any view—and indeed the prevailing view—of sacrifice that sees its trajectory and, indeed, end as death fails on two counts. First, as we have already discussed in the introduction, they lead to conclusions about Christian sacrifice that are dangerous to persons not in positions of power because they equate the merit of imitating Christ with imitating him in his physical death *as a mode of sacrifice*, which leads, not simply to the purgation of the self, but rather to the abnegation and ultimately destruction of the self. In doing so, they fail on the second count by bifurcating the “transaction” of sacrifice such that it misses its true goal: the transformation and transfiguration of the self into a new self that is established in God. To be sure there is a “de-stabilizing of things we may have long taken for granted” through purgation and immolation. But that which experiences immolation—and death—is *sin*, not the sinner, that is, the self.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Coakley, *Flesh and Blood*. Masure offers very complementary language: “In meeting its God, the creature countersigns and ratifies its own being and its own true worth. It declares itself as God had wished it and framed it to be. It finds at this supreme point all that God had placed in it from the beginning, neither more nor less; and in achieving its course and being reunited to its principle it exhausts all its internal powers, which pass completely into act. It adds nothing to its nature, but it realizes it to the full; the two extremes touch or rather interlock, both the great creative act which has given us existence and the noble sacrificial act of the creature which, recognizing itself, submits to God’s will and finds its whole self in Him.” Masure, 43.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Aquinas *ST Ia IIae*, q. 102, a. 3, ad 5, where, when replying to an objection that God is the Author of Life and, therefore, only living rather than slain animals should be offered to God, asserts that (1) the animals are slain because it is by killing them that they become useful (i.e., their death is instrumental, not an end in itself, just as Nelson has argued above); and (2) that the slaying of the animals signifies the death of *sin* (he does not say it signifies the death of the *sinner*). Indeed, Aquinas does state that we are deserving of death because of sin, but the goal of the sacrifice (and the concomitant death) is to expiate sin so that the sinner may live at peace with God.

A similar queering or reframing toward transfiguration and life shows up in Wesley as well, which is not surprising given its presence in the Carolinian voices from whom he drinks deeply. Take, for example, Taylor, who asserts in *The Worthy Communicant* that “according to his own exposition, Christ is to be desired for Life, and to be devoured by Hearing, to be chewed by the Understanding, and to be digested by Faith; all this is the Method and œconomy of Heaven, which whosoever uses and abides in it, hath Life abiding in him.”¹¹⁰ In *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*, Wesley argues that just as under the law the one offering sacrifice did not die at the altar—the victim alone being destroyed—but, rather, by association with the victim through the laying on of hands as it was dying, “they were reputed to offer up themselves as well as the victim. So, Christians are not crucified in the same manner as Christ was” (VII.7). Rather, Christ’s sacrifice obtains the grace “to renew and preserve the life he hath given” (III.4), such that in the sacrament are both life and death: “the life is mine, the death my Saviour’s. O blessed Jesus, my life comes out of thy death” (III.6). Life is the goal and gift for the believer in the Eucharist, just as the goal of the first Passover was to save the Hebrew people and deliver them to a new life. As Stephen Sours observes, each of us is like Lazarus to the degree that we have been “called to come out from death to life.”¹¹¹ Or, in the words of the *Durban Report*, in being called to be sacrificial people, we are called into “communion with Christ’s sacrifice in a way that transforms our life” (§96).

For de la Taille as well the goal of sacrifice is perfection of the individual and not destruction. Matthiesen points out that in the very first Elucidation of *The Mystery of Faith*—indeed in the first footnote—de la Taille establishes his understanding of sacrifice in opposition

¹¹⁰ Taylor, *Worthy Communicant*, I.II.1, in *Whole Works* 8:17. Note how Taylor points to the importance of economy, as we have discussed earlier.

¹¹¹ Sours, 116.

to theologians like Cardinal de Lugo, who hold that sacrifice as *latría* worships God as the omnipotent “Author of life and death.” Rather, for de la Taille, “sacrifice must signify the *perfecting* of the creature; it cannot be a diminution (“inimicam”), but only an enrichment (“amicam”) to the life of a human being.”¹¹² In this context, de la Taille quotes Aquinas, who argues in *Summa Contra Gentiles* that worship in external forms is required by our human nature not that through loss of life or existence we might be further removed from God, who is “a Subsistent being and the plenitude of life,” but that by sacrifice we may be drawn nearer to God.¹¹³ So we see de la Taille leaning in the same direction again: the law of sacrifice in its true, Christian sense cannot point toward—much less end in—death, but must rather point to something beyond itself, something which is the enrichment of the self, something of greater “plenitude” than what it was.

Grammatically, then, we could say that, by Christ’s sacrifice, death is changed from an intransitive state, that is, something that does not point beyond itself (an end), to a transitive state, that is, something that points to the way in which it mediates action between its subject and its object, a meaning which might more fully, and faithfully, capture the connotation of change in the concept of immolation.¹¹⁴ Such a grammatical shift is not in contradiction to or undermining the grounding principles of sacrifice, both as *latría* and propitiation. Recall that *latría* and propitiation are seamlessly woven together in sacrifice as two different manners *of the same movement toward God*, each dictated by the economy in which the gift is given. Sacrifice is grounded in the desire to change in order to restore relationship (living). Because our latreutic

¹¹² Matthiesen, 35.

¹¹³ *MF* 1n1; cf. Aquinas *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, c. 119.

¹¹⁴ We might recall here that Aquinas, in describing the difference between an oblation and a sacrifice, points out that a sacrifice requires that something must be done to that which is offered, i.e., there must a change (or immolation). See n39.

sacrifice takes place in the “time of human sin,” we must “de-stabilize” through purgation, thus effecting immolation, that which keeps us from living at peace with God in order to hand over the gift of ourselves to God. The rewriting of grammar in Christ allows this movement to be realized in a fuller, more seamless way.

As we have already noted, de la Taille is quick to assert that “as offering or immolation nothing could be added to it...there is now no place for any further offering on the part of the priest, or immolation of the victim.” De la Taille’s caution not to err in terms of excess is well taken. For it is this very type of excess that leads people to believe that no immolation, no change—in Wesleyan terms we might say sanctification—is needed on their own part with respect their sacrifice; whereby, faith becomes vacuous. On the other hand, to divide too severely between the offering and immolation in the Supper and on the Cross and the offering in heaven is to miss the point and, as history (if not the definition) has shown, seemingly inevitably leads back to a “death-as-*telos*” understanding of sacrifice.

But, in fact, by de la Taille’s own definition of sacrifice something *must* be added to it in order for it to not be null and void—simply not by the *priest* or *donor*. Rather, this belongs to the role of the *recipient*. And according to Hebrews, something does continue to happen (though without addition) with the offering by way of the agency of the priest, who is Christ. This does not assert a “formal continuation or renewal of the *active* offering of Christ in heaven” (emphasis added) because that activity belongs, properly and completely, to the *donor* as agent, who after the Cross (though, in a formal sense, the Supper) no longer exercises “active” agency. Rather, what Hebrews does assert, and we affirm, is that the “virtual duration” of that offering occurs through the agency of the priest and the divine recipient, both of whom converge, in a unique way, in the single agent of Christ, who, of course, is also donor and victim.

In order to navigate the distinction between the actions of the donor and the recipient, there is a tendency, as we discussed in the previous chapter, to distinguish between the “completion” of sacrifice and the “perfection” or “consummation” of sacrifice. The former is used to denote the offering and immolation by the donor, while the latter is used to describe all that happens after the immolation in the acceptance of the victim by the recipient. Such language rightly highlights that there is nothing that can be done by the donor as an agent after the completion of the immolation. Any acceptance and ratification of the sacrifice relies wholly upon the agency of the recipient. So there is an appropriate and real sense in which we accurately speak of a sacrifice being “completed” with the offering and immolation with respect to the donor or human agent.

On the other hand, however, such language can leave the impression that the sacrifice is complete *per se* at the point of immolation and anything after that is simply “icing on the cake” or some kind of optional (albeit desirable and beneficial) divine accretion. Thus, this latter situation leads to a certain sort of qualification of the language. For example, in his discussion of the theology of divine acceptance, de la Taille states, “When to the sacrificial action, perfected as far as [humanity] was concerned, there was added God’s acceptance, this did not mean that the sacrifice was thereby completed, but that the already completed sacrifice was *extrinsically* consummated, having reached its intended goal.”¹¹⁵ Note the qualification “as far as [humanity] was concerned.” The sacrifice is completed, and in some sense perfected, as far as any human agent is concerned, but it is not yet perfected (or consummated) with regard to the divine agent. With this we do not disagree, but it is also true that a sacrifice which has not “reached its intended goal” is, in a real sense, not complete.

¹¹⁵ *MF* 1:17n23.

It is hopefully apparent by now that the strict distinction between the anthropological side of sacrifice (the donor and, to some extent, the priest) and the divine side of sacrifice does not pertain to the unique economy of Christ in which his unique, once-for-all sacrifice was offered. On the one hand, it is proper to say that Christ's sacrifice is complete on the Cross in terms of the offering (and immolation) of the perfect human life—and by association, perfected human nature—as a human agent. But in terms of Christ as *unique* agent—fully human and fully divine—the sacrifice cannot be complete. Even de la Taille admits that “in the Resurrection [the Fathers] see a descent of God on the victim, in the Ascension the raising of the victim to God. They considered that then the victim was accepted and taken into the bosom of God, *when the cycle of Christ—entering the world as priest, returning to the Father as victim—was completed. With God the sacrifice and the priesthood of Christ would find rest, having reached their goal.*”¹¹⁶ The tradition seems to acknowledge that something unique about the “cycle of Christ” is still ongoing just as the roles of priest and victim have been shifted, blurred, and reordered to a new *tropos*.

Nor does such language of “completion” fully reflect Christ's unique status as victim. Matthiesen points out that in order to explicate his doctrine of the ecclesial sacrifice, de la Taille postulates that “if oblation and immolation constitute the two external acts of sacrifice, then once those acts are accomplished, the sacrifice may be said to be at an end. Yet, considering the matter from the aspect of the victim and its acceptance, that closure expands.”¹¹⁷ We might, however, restate Matthiesen's summary by saying that if oblation and immolation constitute the two external acts of sacrifice, then once those acts are accomplished, the sacrifice may be said to be

¹¹⁶ *MF* 1:196 (emphasis added).

¹¹⁷ Matthiesen, 82.

at an end for *Christ*. Yet, considering the matter from the aspect of the victim (who is Christ) and its acceptance, that closure expands for *Christ*. A closure which expands, however, is not closed, especially when we're speaking of the same agent whose action has somehow come to closure but whose closure is expanding. We can see, then, how the unique economy of Christ is complicating the matter. Matthiesen states that, for de la Taille, the Resurrection and Ascension "intervene" in the case of Christ so that "the flesh of the victim becomes inviolate and utterly sanctified, living eternally in glory."¹¹⁸ But while this may be true as far as it goes with respect to the victim, it does not place the "intervention" early enough with respect to the unique agent, Christ; that occurs in the Incarnation itself when the two sides of sacrifice, human and divine, are brought together in a single agent.

As United Methodists, we might return to the rite which is the cause of our investigation and come to the conclusion that we need not bother with the language of sacrifice in heaven, because the rite claims we unite ourselves with "Christ's offering for us," not Christ's *sacrifice* for us. This would allow us to adopt a more conventional understanding of sacrifice that is constrained to the oblation and immolation of the donor and move on to nuancing our understanding of that which Christ is "offering" for us in heaven. Two things stand in our path, however. First, it is not clear from the rite what "offering" denotes. Does this point toward the former offering on the Cross or the presenting "offering" in heaven? Or even the offering in the Supper? Or could it point to all of those simultaneously? And, if so, how does one offering (the rite uses the singular) point to several different things that are not somehow joined? Second, the rite states that we offer ourselves "as a living sacrifice." But how can we offer ourselves as something that Christ has not already embodied and modeled, for Christ became like us in every way (Heb 2:17)? Further, to

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

assert that we were to attain a state of being that Christ had not would, in some sense, place ourselves above Christ. Again, the language of the rite itself seems to be pointing us to a rewriting of the language of sacrifice such that we understand the semantic range as well as the underlying grammar in a new way.

We can acknowledge that there is a real sense in which language that speaks of the “sacrifice of the Cross” serves as a synecdoche for the larger complexus of Christ’s sacrifice. And in doing so, this language provides both insight and diversion. On the one hand, it offers insight by reminding us of the inescapable central role that immolation (change) plays in Christian sacrifice. There is no road to “stepping into life in the Trinity” and “the self most truly established in God”—to resurrection living—except through immolation, an immolation which involves real, transformative purgation. On the other hand, such language undermines a clear grasp of the unitive nature of Christ’s sacrifice as Supper, Cross and Heaven, subverting our understanding of the way in which Christ’s unique once-for-all sacrifice forever reordered the grammar of sacrifice through his life, death, and Resurrection/Ascension—language which appears consistently throughout the tradition, including Wesley’s guiding voices,¹¹⁹ Wesley’s own writing, official statements of the Roman Catholic Church,¹²⁰ official teaching of The United Methodist Church,¹²¹ and, therefore not surprisingly, shared ecumenical statements.¹²²

From all this, we must conclude, therefore, that what Christ accomplished in the “sacrifice of the Cross” was a rewriting of the grammar of sacrifice, reordering it from the binary of life-death to a new, ternary *tropos* which we might call life-death-living. Such a ternary construction not

¹¹⁹ John Johnson, *The Unbloody Sacrifice, and Altar, Unvail’d and Supported In Which the Nature of the Eucharist Is Explain’d ... Part the Second*. (London: Printed for Robert Knaplock, 1718), 2:276.

¹²⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, §14.

¹²¹ *THM*, 10.

¹²² *Durban* §§101, 131.

only captures the grammar of life-death-resurrection/ascension we see in the language of the tradition, it is also mirrored in the very elements, the external signs, of the eucharistic sacrifice in which wheat is ground into flour and made into bread and grapes are pressed into must (pulp) to make wine. Most importantly, claiming such a rewriting of the grammar of sacrifice allows us to address head on the concerns raised by feminist and womanist theologies by subverting the former grammar with one which is directed toward life. The former, intransitive death (“death-as-*telos*”) is now transformed into a transitive which points toward and, in fact, mediates the transformation of the subject, the life which is offered, into its final objective, the new self that has been firmly established in resurrection living.¹²³ It may well be the case that as our sacrifice “hits the timeline of sin” there may be some sacrifices which *appear* to end in death and self-abnegation. We cannot deny the reality of living in a broken, still-in-the-process-of-being-redeemed world. But such sacrifices must now be seen as grammatically incomplete and thus not normative as they do not fulfill the intention of sacrifice as established in Christ, which seeks to transform us into a *living* sacrifice.

Having established our understanding of the grammar of Christ’s sacrifice and, thus, Christian sacrifice, we are now in a position to turn our attention to the syntax of Christian eucharistic sacrifice. In doing so, we may understand how it is that we join the sacrifice of ourselves to Christ’s own sacrifice (“in union with Christ’s offering for us”), which is the focus of our next chapter.

¹²³ Such a ternary understanding of the grammar of sacrifice may even help subvert and rewrite the concepts which underpin feminist and womanist concerns of feasting on—and, indeed, glorifying—broken bodies. In such a grammar, the broken body of Christ is not denied, but seen as a *transitus* between the powerful *healing* body of Christ, which gave life to those who came in contact with it, and the *nourishing* body of Christ which gives life (and power) to those who feast upon it in the form of bread.

Chapter 4

THE SYNTAX OF SACRIFICE

4.1. The Syntax of Sacrifice: Introduction

Having established the underlying grammar of Christian sacrifice as it is grounded in Christ's own sacrifice, we now turn our attention to our own sacrifice in the Eucharist. In particular, we need to examine how Wesley understands the relationship between our sacrifice in the Eucharist and Christ's own sacrifice. In the study of language, syntax is "the set of rules and principles in a language according to which words, phrases, and clauses are arranged to create well-formed sentences," or, we might say, grammatical sentences.¹ That is, whereas grammar describes the overall rules and structures which govern the language as a whole, syntax describes how words, phrases, and clauses are arranged given the governing grammar. Syntax comes from the Greek word σύνταξις, meaning "coordination," which consists of σύν, meaning "together," and ταξις, meaning "ordering." In other words, how do we "arrange" or "order" our sacrifice and Christ's sacrifice such that ours conforms to, and doesn't violate, the underlying grammar of Christian sacrifice established in the grammar of Christ's sacrifice as we have outlined here? Specifically, how do we offer a eucharistic sacrifice such that it doesn't violate the grammar of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice—the question that has occupied the center of eucharistic debate since at least the Protestant Reformation? We will proceed by first examining how Wesley understands some of

¹ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "syntax," <https://www-oed-com.proxy.libraries.smu.edu/view/Entry/196559?redirectedFrom=syntax#eid> (accessed March 31, 2020).

the key principles that define the Eucharist as sacrament as outlined in his extract of Daniel Brevint's treatise *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* and then move to discussing how Wesley understands our sacrifice to be syntactically arranged with Christ's within the grammar of sacrifice.

4.2. The Syntax of Sacrifice: Sacramental Presence

After beginning his extract by stating that the Lord's Supper is one of the greatest mysteries of the Christian faith, Wesley states his main thesis: Holy Communion is both a sacrament, at which we receive, and a sacrifice, at which we offer. This sacrament and sacrifice is the special meeting place between us and God. Wesley proclaims that "at the Holy Table the People meet to worship God, and God is present, to meet and bless his People" (I.1). Later, he states that while to humanity the sacrament is a "sacred table,...to God, it is an altar" (VI.2). These two themes appear throughout *HLS*, as they do in Brevint's treatise, and it is clear, even to the casual reader, that the Wesleys remained relatively faithful to Brevint's intent to describe the sacrament as a meeting place for humankind and God. The hymns speak some twelve times of God meeting us in the sacrament.² Yet, not only does God meet *us* in the sacrament. In the Eucharist, believers come together and "all in Jesus meet" (165:3.4), Jesus "bids us meet him on the hill" of Calvary (114:7.3), and we answer the call to "arise, and meet the Bridegroom near" (93:2.8) as "from strength to strength we rise" and are led to "meet him in the skies" (27:4.6–8).³ This language of both location and directionality has led some to question whether the Wesleys really see Christ's sacrifice as truly present in the sacrament or whether, like most Protestants, they are so cautious

² See 25:1, 33:1, 46:4, 57:4 (see also *United Methodist Hymnal* 627), 63:2, 76:4, 77:2, 78:9, 79:1, 81:1, 89:3, 112:1.

³ Cf. 90:5.6, 96:4.4, 123:2.8.

to maintain the distance between the Eucharist and Calvary that they end up advocating for two separate sacrifices. As we shall see, however, nothing could be further from the truth.

The logic of the altar-table as meeting place is grounded in a logic of *unity* of location but *diversity* of perspective, and Brevint establishes this logic in the opening section of the treatise, “Of the Importance of well understanding the Nature of this Sacrament,” which, of course, Wesley follows. For Brevint, reference to *sacrifice* in a section discussing the Lord’s Supper as a *sacrament* maintains the balance between sacrament and sacrifice, giving and receiving, ascending and descending. In the sacrament, God delivers something to humankind. In the sacrifice, humankind delivers something to God. Brevint even describes the Eucharist as that which “ties the very Knot, which in a manner joins [humankind] with God.”⁴ It is, perhaps, somewhat unfortunate that Wesley made the editorial choice to omit this colorful metaphor because it captures so succinctly Brevint’s commitment to the unity of the two concepts of sacrament and sacrifice in the Eucharist. Such clarity might have helped to quiet some of Wesley’s critics.

⁴ Brevint, §I.2. Also omitted is the following: “For the Body of Christ, as the holy Fathers distinguish it, being of two Sorts, to wit, the Natural, which is in Heaven, and the Sacramental, which is blessed and given at the holy Table; the primitive Heretics, whom the Spirit of Antichrist set up, and animated against the Church, spent all their Strength and their Venom, at the very Time, and in the Face of the Apostles, in order to destroy the first, which is the Human Nature of Christ, and to reduce it to a Phantasm.” These two omissions are related and substantive because they remove direct reference to the doctrine of the Incarnation. In terms of Brevint’s present topic, the Eucharist is that “knot” which joins humankind with God by means of the sacramental exchange. The primary “knot” by which humankind and God are joined, and by which the promise of salvation is made possible, is, of course, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. By referencing the “two sorts” of the body of Christ, Brevint has further linked the Eucharist, the sacramental body, to the Incarnation, the natural body, and his reference to the Gnostic heresies of the early church implies that profound and fundamental issues of doctrine are at stake in any discussion of the sacrament. In terms of our own discussion, it would have resonated well with our argument regarding the semantic range when we speak of “sacrifice” (see chap. 3). Wesley likely did not want to address this substantive doctrinal issue both in terms of the compact nature of the extract and the devotional nature of the collection. Interestingly, Charles did not pick up the image of “knot” in any of the hymns, even though he does reintroduce many images that John had edited out of the extract. Nevertheless, both Wesleys likely understood the doctrine of the Incarnation as the ground for any discussion of the Eucharist as a sacrament, especially since they see it as the grand channel among all the means of grace and, as we shall see, one with significant soteriological implications.

As the text from hymn 114 quoted above implies, that Jesus “bids us meet him on the hill” of Calvary, the sacrament for Wesley is not merely a matter of the communicant having access to Christ’s atoning grace and salvific power. The Cross is present before our very eyes. It is transported here on the altar just as much as we are transported to Calvary.

See the slaughter’d Sacrifice,
See the altar stain’d with blood!
Crucified before our eyes
Faith discerns the dying God,
Dying that our souls might live,
Gasping at His death, Forgive! (18:2)

The profound sense of the Eucharist as *the* special meeting place for us and God that the Wesleys inherited from Brevint is grounded in a strong sense of *anamnesis* in the eucharistic rite. The “reality” with which the eucharistic *anamnesis* depicts what it remembers is a concept which is nearly ubiquitous throughout *HLS*. The Wesleys’ strong sense of *anamnesis* is exemplified in countless statements which call the communicant to “see,” “touch,” “feel,” “hear,” and even “smell” the events of Calvary now present to them.

Although for his own part Brevint never employs the word *anamnesis* in his section on the sacrament as it is a memorial of Christ’s suffering and death, he certainly invokes the concept. As the Eucharist is a sacrament, “this great Mystery shows three Faces, looking directly towards three Times”—past, present, and future.⁵ The Eucharist is our present participation in the past event of Christ’s suffering and death. “This sacred Mystery...expose[s] to faithful Beholders as a present and constant Object, both the Martyrdom and the Sacrifice of this crucified Savior, giving up his Flesh, shedding his Blood, and pouring out his very Soul.”⁶ Through the Eucharist,

⁵ Brevint, §II.1. There is a strong sense, for both Brevint and Wesley, in which *all* time, not just past and present, collapses into the sacramental moment.

⁶ Brevint, §II.2; cf. *HLS* II.2.

we call the sacrifice of the Cross into the present in such a real and effectual way that the Eucharist “makes the thing which it represents as really present for our Use, and as really powerful in order to our Salvation, as if the thing itself were newly done or in doing.”⁷

Given Wesley’s evangelical commitments, it should not be surprising that for him, much of the real, dynamic nature of the sacramental encounter is accomplished largely through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is referenced thirty times in twenty-six hymns, which constitutes over fifteen percent of the collection, an impressive threshold for a collection devoted to the sacrament of Christ’s passion and death. As evidence of Wesley’s commitment to the agency of the Holy Spirit, this represents a much higher frequency than in Brevint’s treatise.⁸ Yet not only does Wesley expand the number of references to the Spirit, he also expands the Spirit’s role. For Brevint, the Spirit is largely described as a teacher, an enabler, and a sanctifier.⁹ But the Spirit’s role in the sacrament is vague at best. In a prayer petitioning for the blessing of the sacrament, Brevint asks that God send with it “some” influence of the Spirit—a petition which Wesley strengthens to *the* influence of the Spirit (VI.4). For his part, Wesley says that the Spirit gives life to believer (30:4) and to the elements (72:1), provides assurance to those who receive the sacrament (93:4, 94:4), and serves as a companion-sanctifier, helping to shape the believer’s identity.¹⁰

Wesley also calls the Spirit the “Remembrancer Divine,” who witnessed the savior’s death and thereby served as the “true recorder of his passion” (16). Thus, the Holy Spirit becomes the

⁷ Brevint, §II.3; cf. *HLS* II.3.

⁸ Khoo, 89 (see chap. 1n32).

⁹ Khoo, 90; cf. Brevint, §II.8, §VII.11, §VIII.13, 16, 17.

¹⁰ This latter role will be important to our discussion in the next chapter. In fact, Wesley puts more emphasis on this role for the Holy Spirit than any other role.

divine agent who can provide the “supernatural quickening of the imagination”¹¹ necessary for Wesley’s vivid sense of sacramental *anamnesis* as well as the one who is directly petitioned to do so:

Come, Thou everlasting Spirit,
Bring to every thankful Mind
All the Savior’s dying Merit
All His Suffering of Mankind. (16:1.1–4)

and

Come, Holy Ghost, set to Thy Seal
Thine inward Witness give,
To all our waiting Souls reveal
The Death by which we live.

Spectators of the Pangs Divine
O that we Now may be,
Discerning in the Sacred Sign
His Passion on the Tree. (7:1–2)

These prayers are not in the spirit of an *epiclesis*, that the Spirit would be active upon the elements to make Christ present, though Wesley does also offer such a hymn. These hymns petition that the Spirit be active in the communicant’s mind so that the events of Calvary would be present. Borgen, who devotes an entire chapter to the Holy Spirit as agent in the sacraments, asserts that even in the idea of “memorial”—a concept which is usually seen as quite cerebral and therefore highly anthropocentric—the Holy Spirit and the believer are both actively involved in the “dynamic drama of worship” which constitutes the Wesleys’ concept of memorial.¹² Indeed, Borgen insists that the Wesleys’ conceptualization of memorial is *so* dynamic that it brings about a “real and lasting interpersonal relationship between Christ and the believer,

¹¹ Rattenbury, 24 (see chap. 1n16).

¹² Borgen, 88 (see chap. 1n18).

nothing less than the ‘communion of Christ’s body,’ a ‘communion of the sufferings’ which the sacrament shows forth.”¹³

We shall return to the image of communion with the Christ’s sufferings in the next chapter. For now, against this backdrop of Wesley’s understanding of the sacrament as a meeting place for God and humanity and his strong sense of sacramental *anamnesis*, we shall examine the syntax of our eucharistic sacrifice and Christ’s sacrifice, first with respect to the community as a whole and second with respect to the individual, largely because this is the order and priority in which Wesley understands the syntax of eucharistic sacrifice.

4.3. The Syntax of Sacrifice: The Community

The corporate nature of the church is critically important for the Wesleys, especially when it comes to the Eucharist and eucharistic sacrifice. The church is not merely a collection of individuals, as it is for many contemporary Protestants and, thus, many of the Wesleys’ heirs. Rather, the church is a corporate body which moves and acts as one, an image which is beautifully captured in the penultimate hymn of the collection:

How happy are Thy servants, Lord,
Who thus remember Thee!
What tongue can tell our sweet accord,
Our perfect harmony?

Who Thy mysterious supper share,
Here at Thy table fed,
Many, and yet but one we are,
One undivided bread.

One with the living Bread Divine
Which now by faith we eat,
Our hearts, and minds, and spirits join,
And all in Jesus meet.

¹³ Borgen, 93.

So dear the tie where souls agree
In Jesu's dying love:
Then only can it closer be,
When all are join'd above. (165)

The unity which the church achieves as a body is found in Christ as its head, an idea which is, of course, not new to the Wesleys but which is deeply embedded in both Pauline and Johannine imagery. It does, however, play a critical role in understanding the syntax of eucharistic sacrifice, for Christ “does nothing without his people” (VII.2). In fact, Rattenbury recognizes “the identification of the Savior with His Church” as one of the Wesleys’ guiding principles, which Rattenbury states includes three subthemes: (1) “Our Great High Priest’s identification of His people with Himself”; (2) “The identification by His people on earth with their Lord”; and (3) “The collectivity of the Church.”¹⁴

Moreover, this union is so organic that it is a dynamic, living oneness:

With Him, the Corner-stone,
The living stones 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. (129:2)

The church is not built merely of stones, but rather *living* stones (1 Pt 2:5), an idea which perhaps combines the ideas of the church as a temple, with Christ as the cornerstone, and the church as living branches of the vine, which is Christ. As the body of Christ, the church follows the motions of Christ its head (129:3.1–2). Indeed, the church can do nothing apart from Christ, for apart from Christ “it would only be a decapitated corpse, not a body.”¹⁵ The completeness of the union between Christ and the church is such that the two are often identified as a single entity.

¹⁴ Rattenbury, 123.

¹⁵ Rattenbury, 128.

Fleming notes that “the idea of ontic solidarity...of Christ as the new Adam” and of “the oneness of Christ with his people...come together in a number of the Wesleyan eucharistic hymns.”¹⁶ In light of this solidarity, Fleming asserts that phrases such as “in our place” and “ransom paid” must not be “wrenched out of context,” but rather must be viewed in light of the “over-arching confidence” the Wesleys have in the solidarity between the Father and the Son, mirrored in the solidarity between Christ and his people.¹⁷ Thus, the eucharistic sacrifice is grounded, once again, in the union brought about in the Incarnation, which we explored in the last chapter.

Our unity with Christ and conformity to him form the foundation of our sacrifice. Not only does he not do anything without his people, “Christ never designed to offer himself for his people without his people” (VII.6). This claim is grounded in the Levitical sacrificial system, “as Aaron never came in before the Lord without the whole people of Israel, represented both by the twelve stones on his breast, and by the two others on his shoulders” (VII.2). This image is exploited by Charles hymn 117, “Thou Lamb that sufferedst on the tree,” a hymn which in one single gesture moves from Calvary through the Eucharist to the heavenly liturgy in its first three lines (Thou Lamb that sufferedst on the tree / And in this dreadful mystery / Still offers’t up Thyself to God) and then expands to describe the union between Christ, the great high priest, and the church as it offers the eucharistic sacrifice:

Parts of Thy mystic body here,
By Thy Divine oblation raised,
And on our Aaron’s ephod placed
We now with Thee in heaven appear.

Thy death exalts Thy ransom’d ones,
And sets ‘midst the precious stones,

¹⁶ Fleming, 105–106 (see chap. 1n19).

¹⁷ Fleming, 108. Interesting, what is absent is the increased emphasis we noted in Borgen on the agency of the Holy Spirit, which is somewhat surprising given the fact that James White, Fleming’s advisor, advocated intensely for a strong *epiclesis* in the then new, emerging United Methodist rite.

Closest Thy dear, Thy loving breast;
Israel as on Thy shoulders,
Our names are graven on the hands,
The heart of our Eternal Priest. (117:1.9–2.6)

But exactly “how can these two oblations join” (147:2)? Wesley’s rhetorical question is the central issue with respect to the syntax of eucharistic sacrifice. Wesley has already established that Christ does nothing without the church and, indeed, did not design to offer himself for the church without the church. The church, therefore, can only offer itself *with* Christ. The church’s sacrifice is joined with Christ’s and, in some sense, becomes one and the same sacrifice with Christ just as it is one and the same person with Christ.¹⁸ To be clear, however, the sacrifice of the church is joined to Christ’s sacrifice in a subordinate, dependent manner. Just as the church is conjoined to Christ the cornerstone as living stones, so the church’s offering is “cast” (117:1.4; 123:3.7; 133:1.4; 137:3.1) and “thrown” (147:4.2) on Christ’s own offering, such that the church’s oblation joins with Christ’s (128:9; 133:4.5; 140:4.2; 141.5.3) in one “joint oblation,” the latter being the clear foundation of the former (136:4.1; 147:4.1–2).¹⁹

In order to explain the secondary and dependent nature of the church’s oblation, Brevint turns, not surprisingly, to a great deal of Old Testament imagery. Just as those offerings consisted of a primary offering of the Lamb to which was added a secondary offering of grain or drink, so the church’s secondary offering is “thrown upon the first,” the Lamb of God. And just as these two offerings were considered one sacrifice in the Levitical system, so the primary sacrifice of Christ and the secondary sacrifice of the church are considered one sacrifice.²⁰ And

¹⁸ Cf. *HPMF* §164.

¹⁹ In his discussion of the “joint oblation,” Hildebrandt admits that Luther used the same verb as Wesley—*casting*—to describe the “joyous exchange” between the sinner and Christ, but he quickly points out that Luther refused to acknowledge any sense of offering in the sinner’s exchange with Christ, much less an understanding of a sacrifice joined to Christ’s own sacrifice. Hildebrandt, 62 (see chap. 1n17).

²⁰ Brevint, §VII.10, 17.

while John naturally excises a great deal of this imagery out of the extract, the concept remains fundamental to the Wesleys' understanding of our "joint oblation" with Christ in the Eucharist and, as we have already seen, Charles does not shy away from it in the hymns. Such an understanding of the syntax of eucharistic sacrifice focuses on the intimate union of Christ with the church wherein "Christ himself draws his disciples into his sacrifice" and in which the offering of the church is "united by grace to the perfect, complete, ever-present and all-atoning sacrifice of Christ" (*Durban* §77).²¹

To be clear, however, Christ remains the active agent in offering the sacrifice. The church is active only in its receptivity. The body can only "pursue" the motions of its head (129:3:1–2). While the church does indeed "offer up...that only ground of all our hope, that precious bleeding Sacrifice" (125:2.1–4),²² it does not "offer Christ to the Father as a mediating intercessor."²³ Borgen points out that when Wesley discusses the sacrifice of ourselves, he usually adds phrases such as "through Jesus Christ" or "acceptable through Jesus Christ." Christ's sacrifice is an enabling sacrifice; that is, in responding to God, the church lays claim to the very basis which enabled the response, such that "Christ does not only invite [believers] to his sacrifice; he actually offers to make this sacrifice theirs: as he offers himself to God, so he offers himself to [humanity]."²⁴ As members of Christ's mystical body, we stand before the throne of God and

²¹ Cf. *HPMF* §1.

²² Cf. 118:4, 137:1.

²³ Khoo, 75. Interestingly, one of the matters the *Durban Report* returns to in an effort to address some of issues raised in the *Seoul Report* is an "important difference of approach between Catholics, who often speak of 'offering' Christ's sacrifice, and Methodists, who sometimes speak rather of 'pleading' that sacrifice." *Durban* §74. Curiously, however, in *HLS* the verb "plead" is only ever applied to Christ's heavenly activity. Conversely, as noted above, what the church does in the Eucharist is "offer up," and that the spotless Lamb of God. So it seems that Wesley would be confused by the very distinction the *Durban Report* draws (and that presumably by the Methodists). Nevertheless, the *Durban Report* affirms that "Catholics and Methodists are united in understanding the 'offering' and 'pleading' of Christ's unique sacrifice—of his blood—as fundamental to his heavenly intercession (cf. Heb 12:24)." *Durban* §99. With this Wesley would certainly agree; cf. 5:1, 46:3, 117:2, 118:2, 137:2, 140:2–3, 148:2.

²⁴ Borgen, 183; cf. 256, 268.

find our sacrifice accepted. Yet, for Borgen, even in this situation the church does not give or offer anything: Christ's sacrifice is *conveyed* to the church; the church simply receives.

What is perhaps lost in the idea of union through subordination and dependence, as well as the assertion that Christ is the active agent in the sacrifice, is a strong assertion that, for Brevint, in the joining of Christ's offering and the church's offering, the self-sacrifice of the church *is* the offering of the body of Christ since the church *is* the body of Christ.²⁵ Brevint notes that the sacramental sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of ourselves are so closely identified with each other that Augustine "more than once, by the Body of Christ, in the holy Communion, understands Christ's mystical Body, which is the Church."²⁶ And when discussing the "joint oblation" of the church in terms of the meat and drink offering as discussed above, Brevint repeats this identification, stating that the "Bread in the Communion, considered as *Sacrament*, signifies the *natural* [body of Christ]; but considered as *Sacrifice*, it represents the *mystical* Body of Christ, that is, his Church."²⁷ Wesley, naturally, does not use this language explicitly, but he seems to maintain Brevint's sense of identity, and even Brevint's imagery, when he bids that Christ make the church "one hallow'd undivided bread / One body knit to Thee our Head" (91:4.5–6), and, as stated earlier, that we are parts of Christ's "mystic body," raised together with his own oblation (117:1.9–10).

When he discusses the sacrifice of the Eucharist as it is a memorial, Brevint reiterates that, in the offering the church makes, it presents before the Father the body of Christ. There he returns to quote the authority of Augustine, who states that "the holy Flesh of Jesus Christ was offered up in three Manners; by *prefiguring Sacrifices* under the Law, before his Coming into the World,

²⁵ Rattenbury, 127–28.

²⁶ Brevint, §VIII.2.

²⁷ Brevint, §VII.10.

in *real Deed* upon the Cross; and by a *Commemorative Sacrament* after he is ascended into Heaven.”²⁸ Brevint entertains no weak sense of commemoration, memorial, or figure here, however, for “we present and expose before [the Father’s] Eyes that same holy and precious Oblation once offered.”²⁹ The strength of Brevint’s understanding of the identity between Christ’s offering and ours as figure is reinforced in his rhetorical close to the section when he states that

Jesus, our eternal Priest, being from the Cross, where he suffered without the Gate, gone up into the true Sanctuary, which is Heaven, there above doth continually present both his Body in *true Reality*, and as *Aaron* did the twelve Tribes of *Israel* in a *Memorial*, Exod. xxviii. 29. And, on the other Side, we beneath, in the Church, present to God his Body and Blood in a Memorial, that under this Shadow of his Cross, and Image of his Sacrifice, we may present ourselves before him in very Deed and Reality.³⁰

The identity of the two offerings, highlighted by the parallel of “true reality” and “very deed and reality,” is unequivocal. And while Wesley naturally edits this material down, he retains the statement that “we beneath, in the church, *present to God his body and blood*” (VI.3; emphasis added). If this identity is so, then, with Rattenbury, the only conclusion it seems one can draw is that in offering itself in the Eucharist, the church is actually, in some sense, offering the Body of Christ—*with* Christ and *to* the Father.

In this light, it is intriguing to note that, when touching on the typology of the meat and drink offering in his own discussion, Sours states that it is interesting “Wesley calls the sacrament ‘the true sacrifice of peace-offerings,’ thereby reversing the typical agency of peace-offering as that which people offer to God.”³¹ In other words, the peace-offering is something that people offer to God, but a sacrament is something God offers to people. Wesley actually assumes this image

²⁸ Brevint, §VI.3.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., §VI.4.

³¹ Sours, 141 (see chap. 1n42).

from Brevint, so if anyone has reversed the agency, it is Brevint and not Wesley. And while it is true that Brevint (and Wesley) are discussing the Eucharist as a locus in which Christ offers himself to humanity (i.e., under the sign of bread), it is not clear, given the interdependence of directionality in Brevint's and Wesley's conception of the Eucharist—not to mention the interdependence of agency—whether Brevint and Wesley might not also have in mind the ultimate return gift of ourselves as part of our joint oblation, which would, indeed, be reflective of the typical agency of the peace-offering. In such a light, we might read Borgen, as quoted above, both as an affirmative voice—“*as* [i.e., while, in the process] he offers himself to God [sacrifice], so he (also) offers himself to humanity” [sacrament]—and as misreading Wesley: the church does, indeed, offer something, precisely because Christ's sacrifice is conveyed to it. In fact, this constitutes the grounds for the church offering Christ's sacrifice, though, to be clear, only *with* and *through* Christ. Not only, as the *Durban Report* states, can we only offer what we first receive, but we can only offer what we *are*, which is the body of Christ (§94). So, here, Sours offers valuable insight when he contends that

the conceptualization of the eucharist as directional is helpful—indeed necessary—in many respects, but what Borgen fails to grasp is that these directions intersect on the altar and in the elements and are, in fact, united in Jesus, who is both sacrificially God and human, and sacrificially priest and victim. Christ unites the church's offering to his such that the two coincide and are in fact one. It is not that the church receives Christ's sacrifice and then offers its own; rather, in the eucharistic sacrifice, the church receives Christ's sacrifice as it offers its own.³²

Furthermore, as Durrwell reminds us, we must not only be united with Christ, but “savior and saved must take the same road, and Christ's final perfection must be no less than that of the saved.”³³ As we are united to Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist, “we really share in

³² Sours, 141n94.

³³ Durrwell, 70 (see chap. 3n15).

Christ's offering of himself in obedience to the Father's will" (*Durban* §93).³⁴ We are more than mere observers, just as the sacrament is more than a bare memorial: we are participants with and in Christ. Real communion with Christ demands action on our part because it demands conformity to Christ's action.³⁵ Though Wesley does not explicitly use the language of participation, it is none the less present in the very way he conceives of the church's union with Christ. As the body of Christ, the church must *pursue* the movement of its head. The theme of union with Christ naturally evokes and leads to the theme of participation in Christ, which Wesley directly ties together in hymn 131:

Would the Saviour of mankind
Without His people die?
No, to Him we all are join'd
As more than standers by. (131:1.1–4)

Interestingly, in his own discussion of the "joint oblation," Hildebrandt notes that the themes of unity and participation—themes which, as we have seen, permeate the Wesleyan eucharistic hymns—dominate the Catholic understanding of the Eucharist "over against the 'pure receptivity' of the Protestant Communion," a claim which essentially sets the Wesleys outside Protestantism without directly accusing them of such.³⁶ At one point, Hildebrandt goes so far as to state that the idea of partaking in every state of Jesus' life on earth is such a consistent *leitmotiv* in the Wesleys' thought that one "would almost expect the stigmata to appear next" as a sign of union and participation.³⁷ We shall return to this image shortly, but for now, it is sufficient to say that such a characterization of the Wesleys seems to be not only unsympathetic but misguided, for it makes the mistake, all too common, of presuming that the evangelical and

³⁴ Cf. *Denver* §83, *Dublin* §63.

³⁵ Brevint, §VII.15.

³⁶ Hildebrandt, 151; cf. 60.

³⁷ Hildebrandt, 161.

the sacramental must be mutually exclusive, not mention the fact that it essentializes all Protestants as receptionists, a view which discounts the very stream of Protestantism in which the Wesleys stand.

On the other hand, Hildebrandt does offer a helpful observation with respect to the idea of participation with Christ, especially as it addresses the feminist concerns we have before us, even if he did not intend it to such an end. Hildebrandt notes that, indeed, believers are called to be conformed to Christ; but he is insistent that they are “called to take up their cross, not to carry his” and that “they enter into the fellowship of his sufferings (Phil 3:10) as recipients, not as contributors; as beneficiaries, not as imitators.”³⁸ Likewise, he insists that when the believer is called to “draw near with faith” (Heb 4:16, 10:22), it is “not an invitation to act, not even with or for Christ, but to receive by faith.”³⁹ In response to the idea that the believer is called to “die with Christ,” Hildebrandt insists that there is no eucharistic parallel to Romans 6, where participation in Christ which is linked to *Baptism*. Incorporation in this sense with respect to the Eucharist is absurd. “It is, however august, a simplification to claim that the conformity with Christ is brought about by eucharistic action...both the nature of discipleship and of the sacrament are falsified by this interpretation; for discipleship is truly sacrificial and the sacrament is not.”⁴⁰

³⁸ Hildebrandt, 154.

³⁹ Hildebrandt, 158.

⁴⁰ Hildebrandt, 165. This last statement is perhaps the most sympathetic to the Wesleys and, at the same time, the most revealing as to the depth of Hildebrandt’s misunderstanding of them. On the one hand, Hildebrandt’s statement that discipleship is sacrificial is deeply Wesleyan. The Wesleys firmly believe that justification led to sanctification and that a life of holiness would include trials and tribulations. At the same time, however, Hildebrandt apparently fails to take into account the full implications of the Wesleys’ doctrine of sanctification as inherent holiness—Hildebrandt is still operating in terms of imputed righteousness, while the Wesleys are operating in terms of actual righteousness—something which can only result in misinterpretation. Moreover, Hildebrandt’s inability to see how fellowship with Jesus’ sufferings could be essential to fostering holiness and true discipleship causes him to fail to see how sacrificial discipleship is connected to the sacrament. In fact, Hildebrandt’s statement that the sacrament is not sacrificial betrays his Lutheran convictions and prevents him from understanding the whole foundation on which the Wesleys have built their eucharistic theology. Despite all this, Hildebrandt’s critique may help to throw in greater relief some of the essential concepts for grasping the Wesleys’ understanding of the

However misguided Hildebrandt might be about the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist, such a distancing between the idea of participation with Christ and imitating Christ (to the point of mimicking) would surely be a welcome one in answer to the concerns raised in chapter 1 regarding the call to be imitators of Christ in his suffering (and dying).

4.4. The Syntax of Sacrifice: The Individual

The theme of participation, and, in particular, Hildebrandt's admonition, already draws our gaze from the corporate body of the church to the individual believer, for even as the church participates by following the movements of its head and casting its oblation on that of Christ, the individual presents themselves to God in the Eucharist "in very deed" (VI.3). Yet the syntax by which the church as a body and the believer as an individual find their union with and participation in Christ through the Eucharist is very different. The church, as we have already seen, finds its union with Christ through its identification as the body of Christ with Christ as its head and by casting its own oblation on Christ's in one "joint oblation." For the individual believer, union with Christ arises out of a desire to share in the sufferings of Christ, for Wesley believes that "to know the fellowship of his suffering is to make oneself a real companion of the Crucified."⁴¹

Jesu, we follow Thee,
In all Thy footsteps tread,
And pant for full conformity
To our exalted Head;

We would, we would partake
Thy every state below,

connection between sacrament and discipleship, sacrifice and holiness, a topic to which we shall return in the next chapter

⁴¹ Rattenbury, 125; cf. Borgen, 188.

And suffer all things for Thy sake,
And to Thy glory do. (130:1)

and

Jesu, we know that Thou hast died,
And share the death we show:
If the first-fruits be sanctified,
The lump is holy too.

The sheaf was waved before the Lord,
When Jesus bow'd His head,
And we who thus His death record
One with Himself are made.

The sheaf and harvest is but one
Accepted sacrifice,
And we who have Thy sufferings known
Shall in Thy life arise. (134:1–3)

and

Into the fellowship
Of Jesu's sufferings take
Us who desire with Him to sleep,
That we with Him may wake:

Plant us into His death,
That we His life may prove;
Partakers of His cross beneath,
And of His crown above. (148:3–4)

We are, as Thomas was, invited to enter into Christ's own wounds, praying that God will see

Christ "and then the sinner see, / look through Jesu's wounds on me" (120:1.5–6).⁴² The

⁴² Cf. *Durban* §102. Rattenbury states that "a phrase like 'Look through Jesu's wounds on me' does rather disgust one" (107). Yet Rattenbury goes on to describe how a Wesleyan hymn which asserts that Christ's bleeding wounds "pour effectual prayers" on us and that our names are "written on his hands" had a profound effect on his faith—even since childhood—despite the fact that he could not understand it as a child (113–114). Given his assertion of Christ's unique agency with respect to the church's offering, one would tend to think that Rattenbury's argument would follow the same logic in the case of the individual's offering and subsequent union. Instead, he makes the curious claim that this is impossible because "at the end [the believer] remains sinful still" (132). Rattenbury acknowledges that "the altar sanctifies the gift" (cf. Mt 23:19; *HLS* 137), but he asserts that "the actual laying of our sins on the altar would be quite a foolish thing, for it is an insult to God to offer Him our sins....[T]he altar cannot sanctify sin" (132–133), even while he admits that "in Christ we have shelter from sin," and that in the hymns Wesley asserts that "thy offering doth to ours impart its righteousness and saving grace" (132–33; *HLS* 147).

Eucharist conveys a “‘communion of his sufferings,’ which leads to a communion in all his graces and glories” (IV.7). For Wesley, then, the sufferings of Christ as made available in the Eucharist become a kind of gateway for the individual in their union with and participation in Christ. Yet, just as with the church’s oblation, none of this can happen by human act or effort, for even in our offering we remain a sinner (*simul justus et peccator*):

O Thou holy Lamb Divine,
How canst Thou and sinners join?
God of spotless purity,
How shall man concur with Thee;

Offer up one sacrifice
Acceptable to the skies?
What shall wretched sinners bring
Pleasing to the glorious King?

Only sin we call our own;
But Thou art the darling Son,
Thine it is our God to’ appease,
Him Thou dost for ever please.

We on Thee alone depend,
With Thy sacrifice ascend,
Render what Thy grace hath given,
Lift our souls with Thee to heaven. (136)

Under the heading “Sharers with Christ” in his chapter on “Concerning the Sacrifice of Our Persons,” Stevick affirms that for the Wesleys, the believer shares in, and is conformed to, not only Christ’s death and resurrection, but also his sufferings. Believers suffer with Christ (131:1), partake of his grief and shame (133:2; 142:7), bear his cross (131:4, 5), and die with him as “sharers with the dying God” (131:3). Believers even ascend with Christ to heaven (136:4). In a

So while Rattenbury rightly emphasizes the concept of union in and participation with Christ for the Christian in eucharistic sacrifice, in the end he appears unable to tie this concept in any meaningful way to that of holiness—an idea to which we will return in the next chapter—much less to identify the *locus* of this sanctification in the placement of the believer in the wounds of Christ.

short excursive essay entitled “On Jesus’ ‘Wounds’,” Stevick argues that the imagery of Jesus’ wounds “need not be gruesome or morbid,” but rather “a way of speaking paradoxically of a wounded healer or of healing wounds.”⁴³ He goes on emphasize that in this sinful, fallen world, things are not set aright without pain, and Jesus’ wounds signify his solidarity with sinful humanity, speak to the hurt that human redemption inflicted on him, and provide “authority for Christ’s continued, availing plea for his people.”⁴⁴ But how does communion with Christ’s suffering make us a holy and living sacrifice? Is it simply by the infusing of the grace of Christ’s sacrifice?

Sours makes one interesting comment which we should note here and which will aptly serve as a transition. In a discursive footnote, Sours observes that Charles sees a deep connection between a believer’s faith and his/her emotional experience. Moreover, Charles, much more so than John, seeks to provoke such an emotional disposition through evocative, imaginary language. Sours goes on to note that Joanna Cruickshank, in an article entitled “‘Appear as Crucified for Me’: Sight, Suffering, and Spiritual Transformation in the Hymns of Charles Wesley,” demonstrates that Charles’ interest in provoking an emotional response is not in the service of mere emotionalism, but rather represents a “theological engagement with the question of suffering.”⁴⁵ Cruickshank, Sours explains, argues that this is so because Charles believes that “seeing” and experiencing Christ’s passion is a way by which believers are transformed into the likeness of Christ through greater fellowship with him. Thus, the hymns which exhibit these characteristics “demonstrate Charles’s conviction that suffering was an essential part of the

⁴³ Stevick, 179 (see chap. 1n36).

⁴⁴ Ibid., 179–80.

⁴⁵ Joanna Cruickshank, “‘Appear as Crucified for Me’: Sight, Suffering, and Spiritual Transformation in the Hymns of Charles Wesley,” *Journal of Religious History* 30, no. 3 (2006): 313.

Christian experience and a key element in the relationship between Christ and the believer.”⁴⁶ It is curious, however, given our observations above, that Sours left this insight relegated to a footnote and did not use it to strengthen his argument for the Eucharist as a sacrifice made by individual believers of themselves—as a holy and living sacrifice—and of their own sacrificial discipleship, specifically as embodied in the texts of *HLS*.

Sours’ note would seem to imply that Joana Cruickshank has asked and answered the question of how communion with Christ’s sufferings makes us a holy and living sacrifice. A closer examination of Cruickshank’s claims, however, demonstrates that she makes the same fatal error that most evangelical revivals make: they focus on the inner disposition of the believer to the (near) exclusion of the external embodiment of that disposition. Cruickshank sets out to examine the relationship between sight, suffering, and spiritual transformation and argues that Wesley’s hymns present the sight of Christ’s suffering as having profound transformative power. Yet this transformative power is always cast in terms of a profound emotional response which produces feelings such as guilt, pity, grief, gratitude, joy, and love and, ultimately, which brings about the repentance of the individual; in other words, “the inward change of heart that is repentance and self-renunciation.”⁴⁷ At one point she highlights a strain of thought in eighteenth-century English culture which believed that to view suffering would produce empathy for the one suffering on the part of the viewer, but when she discusses how “Wesley’s hymns clearly resonate with these convictions,” she ties this to the hymns’ ability to “bring about the appropriate responses of repentance, love, and gratitude.”⁴⁸ At no point, even when explicating one of the hymns from *HLS*, does Cruickshank tie the encounter with suffering back to an

⁴⁶ Sours, 157n130. The internal reference and quotation is to Cruickshank, 313.

⁴⁷ Cruickshank, 317.

⁴⁸ Cruickshank, 325.

embodied response. In fact, she goes so far as to assert that “‘faith’s interior eye’ sees more powerfully than the physical eye. While Wesley uses the language of sight, these hymns ultimately devalue the potential of physical sight in favour of an interior, imaginative, spiritual sight.”⁴⁹

Cruickshank has rightly turned our attention to the issue of Christ’s suffering. Not only are Christ’s sufferings the ground of our hope for receiving Christ’s grace in the Eucharist, the phrase “communion with his sufferings” or a variant thereof appears seven times in three different sections of Wesley’s extract.⁵⁰ It seems reasonable to conclude, then, that understanding the way in which we commune in the sacrament with Christ’s suffering has a direct impact on understanding the way in which we understand the Eucharist as a holy and living sacrifice. For the Wesleys, it seems, it is by sensual “contact” with Christ’s wounds that we come to experience union with and participation in Christ. In other words, for these two evangelical revivalists, the Eucharist involved an important movement from evangelical affect to sacramental contact. And, moreover, this particular type of sacramental “contact” allows the communicant to “engage the question of suffering” in a way which will profoundly transform them as believers.

The idea that contemplation on, and communion with, Christ’s sufferings, especially in the context of the Eucharist, makes us participants with Christ is not a new one. It has ancient roots and finds perhaps its greatest expression in medieval eucharistic piety. By meditating on Christ’s suffering, we are reminded that Christ suffered for us and suffers with us. Our own suffering is a sharing in Christ’s suffering and through our suffering we are becoming conformed to Christ,

⁴⁹ Cruickshank, 329.

⁵⁰ IV.7, V.7, VII.3, 4, 7, 10 (twice).

and, therefore, we will eventually become glorified like and with Christ. The Wesleys certainly stand in this tradition.

Into the fellowship
Of Jesu's sufferings take
Us who desire with Him to sleep,
That we with Him may wake:

Plant us into His death,
That we His life may prove;
Partakers of His cross beneath,
And of His crown above. (148:3–4)

Belief in the power of Christ's suffering to transform one's own suffering, or, even further, somehow to bring some good out of it, is not limited to finding expression in formal, European piety, however. Consider the observations of M. Shawn Copeland, who, speaking from a completely different context, notes how Spirituals were an important source for solidarity and resistance for those who created them and sang them because in and through them, the suffering of one became the suffering of a people.⁵¹ Further, she asserts that any "glorying" in the sufferings of the Cross was not for any masochistic enjoyment of suffering, but because the suffering of the Cross "enthroned the One who went all the way with them and for them."⁵²

So it is that, although such language stands dangerously close to the edge of justifying suffering for the sake of suffering, or suffering *per se* as redemptive, a feminist like Elizabeth Johnson in her magisterial work *She Who Is* can claim that for the vulnerable and oppressed who already experience profound affliction, speaking about a suffering God who loves in solidarity

⁵¹ M. Shawn Copeland, "'Wading through Many Sorrows': Toward a Theology of Suffering in Womanist Perspective," in *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering*, ed. Emilie M. Townes (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 119.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 120.

with the suffering of the world can actually be a sign of comfort and hope.⁵³ Dorothee Sölle makes a similar claim: “the consolation that the passion offers us cannot be grounded in this presupposition. Not that the Son of God suffered, but how the man Jesus suffered means a strengthening, a presentation of human possibilities, a hope of humanizing even our suffering.”⁵⁴ For Johnson and Sölle, then, just as for Copeland, Christ’s solidarity with those who suffer can help them overcome their mute isolation and powerlessness, humanizing their suffering and giving them expression and voice to resist suffering and conquer powerlessness. Christ as wounded healer arises from the contemplation of what have now become healing wounds, to use Stevick’s image. This is precisely the kind of emancipatory eucharistic practice upon which Procter-Smith was insisting.

This is only half of the story, however. There must be something beyond Christ simply identifying with the believer in her own private suffering, for this does not move the issue very far back from the position of glorifying and valuing suffering in and of itself; and it is this very line of thinking which, for example, causes well-intentioned people to send battered wives back to their husbands. That there must be more to our “theological engagement with the issue of suffering” seems particularly true for a society in which, according to Sölle, “certain forms of suffering are avoided gratuitously”; a situation out of which “an inability to perceive suffering develops, not only one’s own, through indifference, but especially the suffering of others.”⁵⁵ In our first-world context, we have placed a high value on freedom from suffering, but “freedom

⁵³ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 267: “In the midst of the isolation of suffering the presence of divine compassion as companion to the pain transforms suffering, not mitigating its evil but bringing inexplicable consolation and comfort.”

⁵⁴ Dorothee Sölle, *Suffering* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 17.

⁵⁵ Sölle, 38.

from suffering is nothing other than a blindness that does not perceive suffering.”⁵⁶ From Johnson’s perspective, “freedom has come to mean being in control, existing self-contained and self-directed, apart from the entanglements of others....Being free from others and being incapable of suffering in one’s own person because of them become the goal.”⁵⁷ Those that suffer, and the suffering they endure, are willed invisible, and invisibility breeds apathy.⁵⁸ Here we see Sölle drawing our attention to a mechanism very similar to the ones lifted up by Cooper-Smith, Strobel, Adams, Procter-Smith in chapter 1.

Given these cultural and societal conditions, if the sacramental “contact” with Christ’s very wounds which the Wesley’s commend to us is to be transformative—and, indeed, emancipatory—then our “theological engagement with the issue of suffering” must expand beyond simple identification with *our* suffering to include solidarity with *the* suffering. Fortunately, Copeland has provided some resources for just such an expansion; and one such resource which she emphasizes is already deeply embedded in the sacrament of the Eucharist: memory. Copeland asserts that memory is an essential source of resistance for those who are suffering. She quotes Mary Prince, a slave, who explained that, ““In telling my own sorrows...I cannot pass by those of my fellow-slaves—for when I think of my own griefs, I remember theirs.””⁵⁹

As Wesley has already shown us, the type of memory involved in eucharistic remembering is much more than mere cognitive and affective identification with a prior act. It is *anamnesis*, the

⁵⁶ Sölle, 39.

⁵⁷ E. Johnson, 252.

⁵⁸ In many ways, what Sölle describes is the same kind of problem to which sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva points when he speaks of seemingly benign but deceptively malevolent structures which “form an impregnable yet elastic wall that barricades whites from the United States’ racial reality.” Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 47.

⁵⁹ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 49.

“making-present” of a past event in order that it might be effective in the present. And, indeed, in her more recent work, Copeland argues that “solidarity begins in anamnesis.” Further, she asserts that “this memory cannot be a pietistic or romantic memorial...Our recognition and regard for the victims of history and our shouldering responsibility for that history form the moral basis of Christian solidarity.”⁶⁰ Here is an important insight into two different kinds of memory. On the one hand is the remembrance of Jesus for those who suffer. This type of remembrance aligns with the historical understanding of “identification with our suffering” discussed earlier. On the other hand, however, drawing on a more profound sense of anamnesis, is the remembrance *of the mind* of Jesus who is in “solidarity with the suffering.” When we engage in this type of remembrance, when the very mind of Jesus is made anamnesticly present to us, then it would seem we cannot help but be consumed by the very compassion of Jesus for those who suffer and, thereby, be compelled to enter into solidarity with them. Copeland agrees: when we remember, we are morally bound to shoulder responsibility; and when we shoulder the suffering of the “other” in a praxis of solidarity, we take up a position beside the exploited.⁶¹ Moreover, Copeland, too, links the remembrance of suffering with the sacrament of the Eucharist. Borrowing from William Cavanaugh, she asserts that a praxis of solidarity with those who suffer must be “ordered by the Eucharist.”⁶² From our position in Christ’s side, Christ teaches us with healing wounds how to become wounded healers.

Copeland warns that in order to distance itself from any form of masochism, a theology of suffering must reevaluate the virtues of patience, long-suffering, forbearance, love, faith, hope—

⁶⁰ Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 100.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁶² William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ, Challenges in Contemporary Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 237. Cited in Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 105n70.

precisely those virtues which are valorized for self-sacrificing victims.⁶³ Certainly, Jesus identifies with us in our suffering; and certainly, as Johnson, Sölle, and Copeland asserted, there can be consolation, and even healing, found in such identification. But just as certainly, the biblical witness calls us to act, and Christ-like action takes the form of solidarity with those who suffer. And in a society incarcerated by the inertia of apathy, this may be precisely where the sacrament of the Eucharist and the sacramental placing of ourselves in the wounds of Christ becomes formative. Christ's wounds become a type of epistemological "gateway" by which God conveys union—solidarity—with Christ that manifests itself in terms of compassionate love poured out for those who suffer. Johnson points out that communion can not only become a profound source of energy for the healing of suffering, but it can also help by strengthening human responsibility in the face of suffering: "In fact, a chief source of the energy that generates 'willing the good' and relieving misery lies precisely in this experience of compassionate solidarity with the suffering of those we love....the suffering God reorders the human ideal toward compassionate solidarity. The logic of the symbol discloses that if God's compassionate love struggles against destructive forces, then being in alliance with God calls for a similar praxis. Living out this stance...empowers action on behalf of those who are suffering."⁶⁴ Christ teaches us to see suffering from his perspective. Rather than take up a position beside the suffering, we have taken up a position within the One who suffers; or to use Copeland's term, eucharistic solidarity "enfolds" us. The conformity to Christ in his sufferings to which Wesley exhorts us, then, cannot be simply to suffer like Christ.⁶⁵ Rather, the conformity must be to *see*

⁶³ Copeland, "Wading through Many Sorrows," 122.

⁶⁴ E. Johnson, 266–268.

⁶⁵ None could do so, for Christ suffers not simply as a human, but as the second person of the Trinity. See Hildebrandt's earlier admonition.

like Christ, for this is of great use to disciples who find themselves placed in a culture overcome by apathy. In doing so, the sacrament becomes the very fulcrum which takes the evangelical life of a strangely warmed heart and leverages it into the world to be in solidarity with the poor and the least of these, to lead a life of discipleship, which shall be the focus of our final chapter.

4.5. The Syntax of Sacrifice: Conclusion

Wesley's understanding of the syntax of eucharistic oblation is deeply grounded in the church as a single, united body. We do not stand in eucharistic oblation primarily as individuals who have a personal relationship with Jesus, but rather as members of one body whose head is Christ Jesus and whose motions we must follow. Any offering which is made in the Eucharist is fundamentally ordered first through the church as the body of Christ. The United Methodist rite reflects such an understanding both in the statement of eucharistic oblation—the sacrifice which we offer is a single sacrifice—and, more fully, in the *epiclesis* which immediately follows:

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ *that we may be for the world the body of Christ* redeemed by his blood. *By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry* to all the world until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

The second thing that is made clear here in the *epiclesis* about a Wesleyan syntax of eucharistic oblation is that our ability to offer anything in the Eucharist comes through our participation in the body of Christ as the body of Christ. Our union with Christ comes before, and is therefore the ground of, any other union. We are the body of Christ, and it is only by our union with Christ that we are able to appear before God and offer anything. And if that which we do offer is ourselves, then as the body of Christ, what we do offer with Christ and to the Father is, in a strong sense, the body of Christ. To be clear, however, there is no offering other than Christ's offering. Because Christ is our head and we are united to him through participation, we

do not offer directly to God, but rather through Christ and with Christ's own offering. Thus, our offering is "cast" on his—indeed, as a burden, because it is so feeble—and carried by Christ to be presented to God with his as a joint oblation.

All of this, as we discussed in the last chapter, is made possible by the expanded semantic scope of what we mean when we speak of Christ's sacrifice and, more specifically, his oblation. The oblation to which we are joined, and which is now presented before God in heaven, is not a separate oblation from the Cross. Rather, the once-for-all oblation, which was begun in the Last Supper when Christ offered himself *to be* immolated and was carried to the Cross where Christ offered himself *by* immolation, was, in the Resurrection, lifted up out of the "timeline" of humanity and taken up into the heaven, such that it is now eternalized, whereby Christ offers himself *as* immolated. The oblation is one, only the manner of offering is different.⁶⁶ To this one oblation which is now eternally presented and offered to the Father, we join our own oblation by virtue of our union with Christ as his body.

The union of our oblation with Christ's, which is the same oblation made on the Cross, calls us to enter into his own suffering by way of "placing ourselves in his wounds." This identification with Christ's suffering and woundedness becomes a kind of gateway for the individual believer's own offering in the Eucharist. Although for Wesley eucharistic oblation is grounded in the church as a single body, the individual does, indeed, make an offering also, for "we offer ourselves," and as embodied creatures, the only way we can offer ourselves is as selves. To be sure, however, this offering is both dependent upon and embedded within the

⁶⁶ Nor should we understand this oblation as still in the process of being completed, as de la Taille warned. The action of oblation is "complete" as pertains to Christ as donor and victim, as we discussed in the previous chapter. There is nothing that can be added. Note Brevint's use of tense above when speaking of the *anamnesitic* presence of the Cross in the Eucharist, "*as if* the thing itself were newly done or in doing" (n8; emphasis added). There is nothing newly done or still in the process of "doing."

community. Just as there is nothing the church can do apart from Christ, for apart from Christ we would be a dead corpse, so there is nothing any of us can do apart from the body which is the church. The Eucharist is an act of the church, and apart from the church there is no sacrificial offering. Just as we are *members* of the body, as individual members we come to Christ and the offering of ourselves in the Eucharist is through the body.

Our identification and “communion” with the sufferings of Christ is not for the sake of suffering itself. Rather, our communion with Christ’s sufferings calls for a change—immolation—on our part. Our identification with Christ’s sufferings calls for us to develop a deep compassion for those who suffer. Such compassion, in turn, calls us to move to take up a new position alongside the suffering in solidarity with them. This call to be changed by identification with Christ’s suffering into persons of compassion and solidarity is embedded in the very grammar of sacrifice as Christ has reordered it. For just as Christ reordered death from something intransitive, something which is its own end, to something transitive, something which necessarily leads to something else, so communion with suffering of Christ is reordered to lead to something else. And commensurate with the newly ordered grammar of sacrifice in which death now leads to living, so, too, placing oneself in the healing wounds of Christ leads to a life of discipleship as a wounded healer, someone who through their own experience of woundedness is able to work toward the healing of others through compassion and solidarity. This is the life of sacrificial discipleship to which we now turn our attention in the final chapter.

Chapter 5

THE PRAGMATICS OF SACRIFICE

5.1. The Pragmatics of Sacrifice: Introduction

As with Wesleyan spirituality in general, works of mercy flow naturally from works of piety, just as love of God naturally leads to love of neighbor.¹ The goal of Wesleyan eucharistic sacrifice is not simply an inwardly spiritualized love of God or evangelical change of heart, critical though these are to the believer. In order for eucharistic sacrifice to reach its *telos* in a Wesleyan understanding, the inward disposition must be paired with outward behavior. The change or immolation which is wrought in the believer must be borne out in a lived ethic: *lex orandi, lex vivendi*. As the *Durban Report* reminds us, “we are called to be a sacrificial people, in communion with Christ’s sacrifice in a way that transforms our life into one of humble and self-giving love for God and for our fellow human beings” (§96).

In linguistics, the study of the use of linguistic signs in actual situations is called pragmatics.² Etymologically, the English word pragmatics comes, via Latin (*pragmaticus*), from the Greek πραγματικός (*pragmatikos*), which can mean “fit for action,” itself deriving from the noun πράγμα (*pragma*), meaning “deed” or “act,” which derives from the verb πράσσω (*prassō*), meaning “to do, to act, to pass over, to practice, to achieve.” Thus, as a field of linguistics,

¹ Wesley, *Sermon 43*, III.8–10; *Sermon 23*, I.1.

² *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “pragmatics,” <https://www-oed-com.proxy.libraries.smu.edu/view/Entry/238187?rskey=VLirIh&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid> (accessed March 31, 2020).

pragmatics encompasses speech act theory, which includes illocutionary acts (the thing accomplished by the speech act) and perlocutionary acts (the consequences for or effect upon the listener). Therefore, within the linguistics framework we are using to examine the nature of eucharistic sacrifice, the concept of pragmatics provides a helpful metaphor for understanding the ethical implications for Wesleyan eucharistic sacrifice. For just as a properly constructed sentence that conforms to the rules of grammar and syntax will have performative or pragmatic implications and effects, so a proper eucharistic sacrifice in the Wesleyan tradition will have implications for discipleship.

It is also fitting for us to end our examination of eucharistic sacrifice looking through the lens of pragmatics because all along our work has been framed by the words of the United Methodist rite, and ritual aims itself to be pragmatic. One of the very goals of ritual—some might say one of its primary goals—is to create ritualized bodies. In the field of ritual studies, ritualized bodies are people whose bodies have been shaped by the organizing logic or sense of ritual through their repeated interaction with the performance of the ritual, such that the structure of the ritual literally structures their own bodies, actions, reactions, and movements. As Catherine Bell states, “the construction of [the ritual] environment and the activities within it simultaneously work to impress these schemes upon the bodies of participants.” As people embody the rite, their bodies become habituated to the structures and movements of that environment. The result is that the ritualizations, i.e., structures and movements, of the rite become “socially instinctive automatisms of the body.” As these automatisms become instinctive, they become norming principles for behavior *and* perception not only within future performances of the rite, but within broader, unrelated social situations as well.³ In short, we might say that ritual reorders our praxis.

³ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 98–99.

So it is that Nathan Mitchell describes the Eucharist as “a *technology* whose use *transforms the assembly that enacts and embodies it.*”⁴ Far beyond the goal of producing meaning, the goal of the Eucharist, Mitchell states, aims “to produce a ritually inscribed body (both personal and corporate) that knows how, liturgically, to ‘do’ a redeemed world.”⁵

As we noted in the last chapter, we see this already in the *epiclesis* of the United Methodist eucharistic prayer:

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ *that we may be for the world the body of Christ*, redeemed by his blood. By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and *one in ministry to all the world* until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

The call to offer a eucharistic sacrifice is the call to be shaped as sacrificial disciples. And as we already discussed, the individual’s gateway for Wesley into the eucharistic sacrifice and thus the life of sacrificial and eucharistic discipleship is to enter into the wounds of Christ. Such an entry into Christ’s suffering and woundedness, however, is not for the sake of suffering *per se*, nor does it see suffering as its end, but rather for the purposes of life and living, for from the wounds of Christ we draw life (85:3.1). As both Coakley and de la Taille assert, our entry into union with Christ in such a posture is oriented toward the productive pain of purgation and transformation, much like the productive pain of childbirth described in Romans 8 leads to the consummation of all creation. Such sacrifice, voluntarily entered into purgatively, is purposed to life. And yet, this cannot be pursued without extreme caution: while our sacrifice still occurs in

⁴ Nathan Mitchell, “Ritual as Reading,” in *Source and Summit: Commemorating Joseph A. Jungman, S. J.*, ed. Joann M. Pierce and Michael Downey (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 176 (emphasis original).

⁵ Mitchell, 178.

the “time-line of human sin” it must be vigilantly policed that it does not cross the “always-ambiguous line between productive pain and veiled abusive violence.”⁶

The life which pragmatically results from proper eucharistic sacrifice for Wesley is not only sacrificial living, however: it is also eternal life. It is renewed and redeemed life for the soul which offers sacrifice. The sacrifice we offer in the Eucharist is so real and profound for Wesley that “though the sacrifice of ourselves cannot *procure* salvation, yet it is altogether needful to our *receiving* it” (VII.1). Thus, the sacrifice of ourselves in the Eucharist through our joint oblation with Christ so conforms us to him that we are transformed more and more into holy people, a “holy and living sacrifice.” In short, proper Christian sacrifice brings about our own sanctification, which shapes us into new, Christ-like people who walk the path of Christ and live as the body of Christ for the world.

Our examination of the pragmatics of sacrifice will, therefore, follow a four-fold path. First, drawing on the work of Lorna Khoo and Aaron Kerr, we will discuss how eucharistic sacrifice and the placement of ourselves in the wounds of Christ allows us to see things differently, which, in turn, moves us to be people who can know and feel the suffering of others. Next, we will examine how our identification with Christ’s suffering leads to our own sanctification, which, in turn, leads to solidarity with those who suffer. Finally, we will discuss how our new life of solidarity with those who suffer shapes us into a new self, giving us a new identity in Christ.

5.2. The Pragmatics of Sacrifice: From Seeing to Sym-pathy

Lorna Khoo offers helpful insight in her discussion of how our experience in the Eucharist shapes our perception of life when she speaks about how the Eucharist changes the way we *see*

⁶ Coakley, “Beyond Sacrifice?” See chap. 1.

things. Specifically, she discusses the way in which our experience in the Eucharist shapes the way we see God, ourselves, others, and the world. In terms of the way we see God, Khoo suggests that the God we encounter in Wesleyan eucharistic spirituality is “a vulnerable, risktaking, loving God whose love will not let us go...in his hands are written our names.”⁷ The Christ we meet in *HLS* is not one who is far off, but rather is our “Elder Brother” (132:3.6) and a “sinner’s Friend” (81:2.1; 82:1.1; 100:1.2; 109:2). More poignantly, he displays his vulnerability as the “suffering deity” (12:1.1; cf. 131:2; 132:2) and “dying God” (131:3.7). Yet he is also the “Prince of Life” (22:1.1; cf. 34.1) and the “Tree of Life:” (49:1.3) who sustains us (46:4.2) and enables us to stand (47:2.1).

Without question, however, the most prominent depiction of God in *HLS* is one who is “perfect love” (75:4.4), “True Love” (9:4.4, 9:5.4), the “Father of everlasting love” (50:1.1), the “pardoning God” (110:3.2), and the “God of unexampled grace...whose love is ever new” (21:1.1, 8).⁸ God is the “searcher of hearts” (76:1.1) who “gave Life to us” (9:5.5) and meets us in the Eucharist to “dismiss [our] guilty fear” (9:3.4). It should not be surprising, however, given Wesley’s therapeutic model of salvation, that God’s most prominent role is that of one who comes to us in the Eucharist to “heal our Souls” (9:3.6). The theme of healing appears in no fewer than thirteen hymns, more frequently than any other role.⁹

Certainly, not all the images of God depicted in *HLS* are positive. As the well-beloved of God, Jesus has pacified the wrath of God (10:2.4–5), our “dear Chastiser” (144:3.3), from whose wrath we pray to be released (14:1.3). And the baking of the bread, “dried up and burnt with fire / presents the Father’s vengeful ire” (2:21–2) while the “fiercest fire of heaven / Consumes the

⁷ Khoo, 195 (see chap. 1n32); cf. 117:2.5.

⁸ Cf. 29.4.

⁹ Cf. 20:3; 24:2; 25:3; 27:3; 39:1; 56:3; 58:1, 5; 59:3; 61:2; 71:2; 78:5; 83:2; 85:1.

Sacrifice” (2:4.5–6).¹⁰ But overwhelmingly, the depiction of God is one who loves, saves, and heals, and such language is consistent with the language of both the United Methodist Great Thanksgiving and *THM*. God is described as one who forms us in the divine image and breathes the breath of life into us, who delivered us from captivity and made covenant with us, and whose love remained steadfast even when our love failed. Drawing from Luke 4, Christ is described in terms of Isaiah 61 as one who was anointed to preach good news, proclaim release, recover sight, and free the oppressed. In ministry, he is described as one who “healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners.”¹¹ *THM* consistently lists healing as one of the ways divine love and power work in us and through us in the Eucharist, stating that “through Eucharist, we receive healing and are enabled to aid in the healing of others.”¹² The God United Methodists meet in the Eucharist is a healing God who “works to bring about reconciliation between God and humanity, among individuals and communities, within each person, and between humanity and the rest of creation.”¹³

According to *HLS*, we come to see ourselves in the Eucharist as ones who come to God as “passive clay” (143:2.4) who are needy (40:2.1), helpless (47:2.3; cf. 82:2; 87:7; 116:2; 143:3), fainting (3:1.3; cf. 82:1), waiting (7:1.3), struggling (20:1.6), feeble souls (50:2.2; cf. 82:1). We are the weakest servants (47:1.1) who hunger and thirst with “ravish’d taste” (160:5.3; cf. 30:6; 34:1; 61:2; 82.1; 109:1; 112:2) and are “sinful, and blind, and poor, and lost” (69:1.1–2). “Yet,” Khoo says, “there is no place for self-hate nor groveling.”¹⁴ She underscores this with reference to Wesley’s instructions in the *Sunday Service* that communicants go *forward* to receive the

¹⁰ Cf. 17:4; 36:3

¹¹ *United Methodist Hymnal*, 9.

¹² *THM* 10.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Khoo, 193.

Eucharist rather than sit and wait passively for the elements to be distributed through the pew as in the Reformed tradition. Khoo asserts that Wesley's rubric affirms the graced and empowered state of the sinner, an embodiment of Wesley's understanding of co-operative grace.¹⁵

Khoo's characterization of the view of the self in Wesleyan eucharistic piety is certainly not without merit. *HLS* describes those gathered at the Eucharist as the "favour'd race" (105:4.4) and "well beloved of heaven" (163:1.4) who are called to be Christ's guests (8:1.3). We are "flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone" (114:6.4) and the "tenderest branch" of Christ, the "Tree of Life" (49:2.1). But there is also a fair amount of self-loathing and even actual groveling. While we are described as the "darlings of the Incarnate God" (45:1.9) who claim a "rich inheritance" (45:2.9), we are also "worms" on which God bestowed grace (45:1.7–8). We, indeed, have value and dignity as priest and kings (39:3.6), which Khoo points out, but we rise to this dignity from "worms" (39:3.5; cf. 155:3). We are "well-pleasing oblations" (138:1.4), but we came to Jesus as "poor heathens from afar" (138:2.1). We also offer God a "worthless...abject soul" (57:1.2, 2.5), but hope that God will convert it into a "sacred shrine" (57:2.4). We may have forgotten our "heavenly birth" (160:4.1), but this very forgetfulness manifests itself in the fact that our degenerate souls "clave to earth" (160:4.2) such that God found us "groveling on the ground" (160:4.6). In other places, we are described as those "whose grov'ling Taste / Inslaves [our] Souls, and lays them waste" (9:1.1–2). We are "not worthy, Lord, so foul, so self-abhorr'd" with a "poor polluted heart" (43:2.1–2, 4; cf. 87:7; cf. 120:2; 155:2). And we are "wretched sinners" (136:2.3), "foul and helpless" (87:7.1) "ungodly" creatures (15:1.4) who represent a "loathsome leprosy" (67:1.6) to Christ as we cast ourselves on him.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Such language is certainly not uncharacteristic of Wesley, who had a very strong view of the total depravity of humanity and of the pervasiveness and power of sin, nor of eighteenth-century English piety in general. But such strong imagery of self-hate and abasement is precisely the kind of language which troubles feminists because it keeps the abused and oppressed trapped, thus denying them the very healing and life which the Eucharist offers and the very “liberty for those who are oppressed” for which the eucharistic prayer petitions. It is precisely this kind of language which allows the “always-ambiguous line between productive pain and veiled abusive violence” to be crossed all too easily and stealthily.

Thankfully, this is not the language embodied in the United Methodist rite. Not only is the language of confession separated from the eucharistic rite proper—both the Peace and the Offering occur between the Confession and the Eucharist—but the language of the Confession is described in terms of behavior, not in terms of the self. Every confessional statement in the prayer uses the construct “we have” (e.g., we have broken your law, rebelled against your love, not loved our neighbors). Nowhere does the rite use the language “we are...”.¹⁶ Moreover, *THM* points to Wesley’s sermon “The Duty of Constant Communion” in which he explains that Paul’s admonition to not partake of the Eucharist unworthily does not apply to *persons*, but to the *manner* in which we partake.¹⁷ “We come to the Eucharist out of our hunger to receive God’s gracious love, to receive forgiveness and healing.”¹⁸

In many ways, the logic of Wesleyan eucharistic sacrifice is grounded in the logic of the other and thus affects the way we see others. Such is the case because, for Wesley, eucharistic

¹⁶ *United Methodist Hymnal*, 8. The language of rebel was used by Wesley, even favored by him, though most often he coupled it with God’s pardoning love; cf. 73:3.4; 116:3; 121:2.12.

¹⁷ Wesley, *Sermon 101*, II.8.

¹⁸ *THM* 17

sacrifice is grounded in intercession: it is only because Christ has ascended into heaven and eternally intercedes on our behalf that we are able to join our sacrifice to his.¹⁹ “As he ‘*offered 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).

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, for ever one. (117:2.7–12)

Moreover, in joining our sacrifice to his, we, in turn, become oriented toward the task of intercession, which, by its very nature, is other-oriented. The fundamental work of a priest is to intercede between the divine and humanity, to bring the offerings of humankind to God in order to restore the divine-human relationship to harmony.²⁰ This other-oriented mission is captured in the United Methodist rite, beginning in the Prayer of Confession, which acknowledges that “we have not loved our neighbor, and we have not heard the cry of the needy,” and continues in both the *epiclesis*, as noted above, and in the Prayer after Receiving, which bids that we might “go into the world in the strength of your Spirit, to give ourselves for others.”²¹ It is also deeply

¹⁹ Khoo, 199. The intimate, inseparable connection for Wesley between Christ’s sacrifice, which is the ground of our hope and into which we enter, and Christ’s intercession, which serves as the grounds for our entry into his sacrifice, may be bound up in the action of “pleading,” which we have already discussed in the previous chapter. In a single action, Christ both offers himself, and thereby his sacrifice, and pleads for us. Consequently and likewise, therefore, we both offer Christ to the Father (albeit *with* and *through* Christ) and plead Christ’s sacrifice. Pleading and offering are, in some sense, two sides of the same coin, but it may very well be this double dimension which distinguishes offering (both Christ’s and ours) in its “eternalized” state from Christ’s offering *per se* in time on the Cross.

²⁰ While it is true that a priest does also offer on his/her own behalf, this is not the priest’s *primary* function, and the offering on the priest’s own behalf is only to restore their own relationship with God to harmony so that s/he may carry out the work of intercession effectively.

²¹ *United Methodist Hymnal*, 8, 11. See Karen Westerfield Tucker, “Liturgical Expressions of Care for the Poor in the Wesleyan Tradition: A Case Study for the Ecumenical Church,” *Worship* 69:1 (January 1992): 51–64, who

embedded in the logic of the Eucharist for Wesley, who insists not only that works of mercy flow naturally from works of piety,²² but also that love of neighbor is what lies at the heart of Paul's admonitions to the Corinthians regarding the Eucharist in I Corinthians 11.²³ Wesley also emphasizes the connection between the Eucharist and love of neighbor in Section VIII of the extract, "Concerning the Sacrifice of our Goods," when he states

Now though our Lord, by that everlasting sacrifice of himself, offers himself at all times and in all places, as we likewise offer ourselves and all that is ours, to be a continual sacrifice: yet because Christ offers himself for us at the holy Communion, in a peculiar manner; we also should then, in a more special manner, renew all our sacrifices. Then and there, at the altar of God, it is right, both to repeat all the vows and promises, which for some hindrance or other we had not yet the convenience to fulfill; and to renew all those other performances, which can never be fulfilled, but with the end of our days.

5. But at the same time that the Christian believer does any good work, let him draw out of the good treasure of his heart fire and frankincense, that is, such zeal and love as may raise good, moral works into religious sacrifices. Whenever he helps his neighbour, let him so reverently and fervently lift up his heart to God, as may become both that Majesty he adores, and the pious act which he intends. And then whenever he does it at his door, or in the temple, it matters not; for the hour is long since come, that acts of religion are not confined either to Jerusalem, or to "this mountain." Wheresoever thou hast the occasion of doing a holy work, there God makes "holy ground" for thee: only, in order to become a spiritual worshipper, the work must be done "in spirit and in truth:" with such a mind and thought, with such faith and love, as though thou wert laying thy oblation upon the altar, where thou knowest that Christ will both effectually find, and graciously accept it. (VIII:4, 5)

To be united with Christ—as a head to a body and in one joint oblation—means to be united with him in his mission, which is for all the world. Thus, by our union with Christ in eucharistic sacrifice, we are moved to see others differently, even as if from Christ's own viewpoint.

Yet, even as the Eucharist as a ritual changes the way we see others, taking up a posture in Christ's own wounds, as Wesley suggests, it changes the way we respond to others. In exploring

points out that Wesley retained the collection of alms for the poor at communion in the *Sunday Service* and that some vestige of this survived well into the twentieth century (58).

²² See, for example, *Sermon 98*.

²³ Wesley, *ENNT*, I Cor 11:20–27, esp. vv. 22, 24, 27. When Wesley speaks of the "design" of the Eucharist's appointment in v. 27, he has in mind, among other things, "obligations to love," which he mentions v. 24.

the way in which *HLS* could serve as a “bridge document” between Roman Catholic and Methodist theologies, Aaron Kerr makes an auspicious observation in the midst of his review of Rattenbury’s work. While discussing Rattenbury’s aversion to Wesley’s use of “blood language,” Kerr notes that such language

may be, however, the way to a witness in terms of martyrdom and sacrifice. It is also indicative of the epistemic and grace filled experiences of an Empathic God. Blood, sacrifice, martyrdom and witness may unite the churches in a common vision of discipleship.... This is so, perhaps, because in the suffering of Christ, humanity can ‘see’ Divine empathy.²⁴

One of the things which is so striking about this comment is that it sees the possibility of something positive in the “blood language” which many modern worshipers eschew and against which many feminists, like Procter-Smith, hold strong objection. But even beyond this aspect, Kerr appears to have made the critical link between sacrificial “blood language” and discipleship via empathy. Kerr insists, therefore, that it is “inappropriate to dismiss altogether the pathos of the atonement hymns, for they reveal a theological constant within the tradition, namely, God’s pathos.”²⁵ For as Kerr points out, Abraham Joshua Heschel reminds us that God’s anger is the result of social injustice and the neglect of the poor, the widow, and the orphan.

Put differently, Kerr’s observations might suggest that it is only by sym-pathy with God’s pathos that the believer learns empathy; it is only by com-passion with God’s passion that the believer becomes impassioned. In other words, rather than the Enlightenment’s move to “turn to the subject,” there is, to borrow the words of M. Shawn Copeland, a turning *of* the subject.²⁶ Taking up a position in the very wounds of Christ helps us to understand how God was working in Christ to bring the divine compassion of God to the “passion history of the world” through

²⁴ Kerr, 118 (see chap. 1n39).

²⁵ Kerr, 248.

²⁶ Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, chapter 4, “Turning the Subject,” 85–105.

Christ's own passion.²⁷ Moreover, through his own passion, Christ "identifies God with the victims of violence" and identifies "the victims of violence with God, so that they are put under God's protection."²⁸ This identification of divine empathy with victims of violence consequently turns our gaze toward the suffering and the wounded of the world. And since ritual is already oriented toward creating "socially instinctive automatisms," both perceptively and behaviorally, the turning of our gaze—and our very subject—toward the suffering and wounded of the world teaches us sympathy, or better yet, empathy. This latter distinction—we might say to "feel within" rather than simply to "feel with"—is crucial because it speaks to the way in which the turning of *our* subject toward a "new" subject, that of the wounded and oppressed, reorders our praxis, our pragmatic, so to speak, toward solidarity.²⁹ Sarah Coakley offers a complimentary argument in *Powers and Submissions* when she argues that "seeking and recognizing the resurrected Christ require a *process* of change...it will involve an initial 'turning-around' morally, then practice in seeing the world differently."³⁰ And like Copeland's "turning of the subject," Coakley goes on to say that such an approach would involve "some 'turning' in one's posture or attitude, some difference of perspective or visual angle."³¹ But before we turn our attention to how the Eucharist orders our praxis in terms of solidarity with others, we will first examine how our experience of Christ's suffering has salvific implications for us in terms of sanctification.

²⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 130.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Copeland, 105. See also Cavanaugh, 237.

³⁰ Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 139–40.

³¹ *Ibid.*

5.3. The Pragmatics of Sacrifice: From Suffering to Sanctification

In his exploration of the ethical implications of sacrifice, Kerr puts forth the idea that, as created beings, humans are “stewards” of everything they have. Everything they have is “lent,” an idea which explicitly comes to the surface in *HLS*:

Father, into Thy hands alone
I have my all restored,
My all, Thy property I own,
The steward of the Lord. (145:1)

and

Father, on us the Spirit bestow,
Through which Thine everlasting Son
Offer'd Himself for man below,
That we, even we, before Thy throne
Our souls and bodies may present,
And pay Thee all Thy grace hath lent. (150:1)

and

Father our sacrifice receive;
Our souls and bodies we present
Our goods, and vows, and praises give,
Whate'er Thy bounteous love hath lent. (153:2.1–4)

Kerr asserts that this concept of stewardship—the idea that in our own sacrifice we return to God that which God has lent us—is directly related to Christ’s work in his own sacrifice. Indeed, we might say from a theological standpoint that the concept of stewardship is embedded in the Incarnation itself. Christ was “lent” human life in the Incarnation that he might redeem human nature by recapitulating it. We might even say that, in a strong sense, Christ is “lent” death on the Cross, for death is the antithesis of that which rightly belongs to the God of life. But it is in Christ’s very “stewardship” of death that he is able to “return” to God as redeemed and reordered the “gift” which was entrusted to him. And it was necessary for all of this—human nature in the Incarnation and death on the Cross—to be carried not by us, but by a steward, for “Christ did that

which we cannot, reconciling humanity to God through his Trinitarian offering of death. This effect arouses in the steward a sense of life's lending. It 'takes' our sin, freeing us to return the gifts we have been given."³²

This last comment by Kerr regarding our sins touches on another concept which appears in *HLS* and to which Rattenbury raised strong objections. In a discussion regarding the need for our sacrifice to conform to Christ's, Rattenbury asserts that Wesley takes the "metaphor" too far because Wesley speaks of offering our sins by laying them on the altar (135:3.1). "The actual laying of our sins on the altar would be quite a foolish thing, for it is an insult to God to offer Him our sins."³³ Although Rattenbury acknowledges that "the altar sanctifies the gift" (cf. Mt 23:19; *HLS* 137:5.4), "the altar cannot sanctify sin."³⁴ The issue here may simply be semantic, for Rattenbury admits that "in Christ we have shelter from sin," and that in the hymns Wesley asserts that "thy offering doth to ours impart its righteousness and saving grace," though he editorially leaves out the next line, "While charged with all our sins Thou art "(147:3.1–2). Rattenbury asserts that what we have to offer to God is our best, not our worst, and that though what we have may be stained by sin, we are still capable and good because we are created in the image of God and of righteousness.³⁵ True though this may be, what Rattenbury seems to have not grasped is the concept of stewardship which Kerr brings to our attention. Scripture is clear that Christ "took" our sins (Jn 1:29; Heb 9:28). At the same time, scripture is clear that even while Christ takes on our sin, he is still and at the same time without sin (1 Jn 3:5). Christ taking

³² Kerr, 237. Such a sentiment certainly echoes de la Taille's position regarding the relationship *latría* and sacrifice, thus demonstrating through a different lens the connection between our offering as gift and our offering as sacrifice.

³³ Rattenbury, 132 (see chap. 1n16).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 133.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 132–33.

on our sin is central to his redemptive work. And while scripture never speaks of laying sin on the altar, the concept of laying sin on the scapegoat is central to the imagery of the Levitical sacrificial system. Further, if Christ is, in some sense, the altar, then by laying our sins on Christ we are, in some sense, called to lay them on the altar. Divorced from the idea of stewardship, the concept of placing our sins on the altar might, indeed, be foolish. For Kerr, in direct contradiction to Rattenbury, not only *can we place* our sins on the altar, but Christ *actively takes them*, and it is this very act of taking that enables our own sacrifice and which, in turn, enables our own holy living.

Kerr's concept of stewardship links directly to de la Taille's concept of gift, for "proper worship is proper stewardship of life." In this context, Kerr notes that "atonement theory which separates salvation from proper worship may idolize the heart and the result can be that what Christ has done gets de-contextualized from what Christ shows."³⁶ While reexamining atonement theory as a whole lies outside the scope of our current investigation, recontextualizing it in this way—(re)tethering it to proper worship—could do a great deal to mitigate a number of concerns contemporary theologies, such as feminist theologies, have regarding atonement theory. At the same time, however, Kerr warns against leaning too far in the opposite direction and focusing on what Christ shows to the exclusion of what Christ did. "In this case we misleadingly 'think' we need only gain the proper perspective and the specificity of Christ's death and its effect is thwarted."³⁷ Here, then, Kerr seems to have pointed us back to the necessity to place ourselves in Christ's wounds. We cannot "think" ourselves into empathy for the suffering and the wounded, any more than we can "think" ourselves into solidarity with others, as will be discussed later.

³⁶ Kerr, 237.

³⁷ Ibid.

The perspective necessary for empathy (and solidarity) can only be through experience. Kerr is quick to point out, however, that the Wesleys do not advocate that believers are called to suffer simply for the sake of suffering. We are called to offer our goods, vows, and praises. “The limits Charles placed on the sacrifice also provide criteria so that disciples are in no way constrained or ‘called’ to use their freedom of offering to suffer for the sake of suffering. Rather holiness is a result of the church joining its offering to that which Christ offered.”³⁸

Such a distinction—and boundary—is crucial if we are to avoid the “always-ambiguous line between productive pain and veiled abusive violence” and address the concerns before us of those who already suffer. In the Eucharist, we become stewards of Christ’s passion and suffering as we place ourselves in Christ’s wounds, but such stewardship must be ordered toward “productive purgation.” Stewardship is not simply about holding (preserving) or taking on (experiencing), it is about the good, productive use to which we put that which we have been given/gifted (cf. Mt 25). By joining our sacrifice to Christ’s sacrifice and placing ourselves in Christ’s wounds in the Eucharist, we, in some sense, become stewards of Christ’s sacrifice as Christ has “lent” it to us for our own use, and this produces pardon and sanctification. By regularly participating in the eucharistic sacrifice, not only does the believer actually partake of God and commune with Christ’s suffering, but the believer is “empowered to live the life of holiness.”³⁹

Kerr points directly to this movement when he states that the hymns in *HLS* “carry forth notions of holiness that convey the sacrificial dimension of Eucharistic life.”⁴⁰ In the first place,

³⁸ Kerr, 238.

³⁹ Borgen, 212 (see chap. 1n18).

⁴⁰ Kerr, 235.

the Eucharist is the “grand channel” through which we experience grace (54:4).⁴¹ Our contact with grace in the Eucharist “confirms to us the pardon of our sins by enabling us to leave them.”⁴² But pardon and forgiveness of our sins naturally leads to holiness. The Wesleys understand redemption, salvation and holiness—justification and sanctification—to be inseparable. If the sacrament communicates grace (which it does), then it brings forgiveness, and forgiveness *necessarily* brings about a new creation, that is, holiness. This connection between justification and sanctification is witnessed throughout the hymns, where pardon and holiness are directly linked multiple times (1:2; 31:2; 38:3; 60:3; 111:1). At the sacrament, we ask God to “make our inmost nature clean” (15:2.4) and then depart “resolved to lead our lives anew” (10:1.4). Stevick and Borgen both believe that it is this very connection between forgiveness and holiness that the Wesleys have in mind when they speak of the water and the blood which flowed from Jesus’ side, the blood representing pardon and new life and the water denoting the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.⁴³

The stream that from Thy wounded side
In blended blood and water flow’d
Shall cleanse whom first it justified,
And fill us with the life of God.

Proceeds from Thee the double grace;
Two effluxes, with life Divine
To quicken all the faithful race,
In one eternal current join.

Saviour, Thou didst not come from heaven,
By water or by blood alone;
Thou diedst that we might live forgiven,
And all be sanctified in One. (37:3–5)

⁴¹ Cf. Wesley, *Sermon 26*, III.11.

⁴² Wesley, *Sermon 101*, I.3.

⁴³ Cf. Borgen, 193; Stevick, 101–2 (see chap. 1n36).

By placing its sacrificial offering on the sacrificial offering of Christ, the church has not only identified itself with Christ's holiness, but also immersed itself in and united itself with Christ's holiness through the power of the Holy Spirit. And union with Christ's holiness naturally leads to sanctification. Moreover, not only does holiness necessarily lead to sanctification, but both naturally lead to a life of sacrificial discipleship, of holy living. "If a life of holiness does not follow from faith, it is as though Christ had died in vain."⁴⁴

Khoo's examination of the way the Wesleys' eucharistic theology cultivates a particular spirituality allows certain issues of discipleship to come into the foreground. While Khoo identifies several roles which the Holy Spirit plays in the sacrament, she asserts that by far the most important one for the Wesleys is that of "companion-sanctifier," in which the Spirit enables the believer to grow into a life of holiness.⁴⁵ This emphasis, combined with a therapeutic view of salvation and an understanding of the Eucharist as the chief means of grace, links the sacrament and the Wesleyan concept of Christian perfection in a heretofore unexplored way.⁴⁶ She points out that the Wesleys' highly Christocentric view of the sacrament naturally leads to several benefits: it provides a clear model to follow for Christian perfection (i.e., Christ); it roots the believer more strongly in this world by focusing on Christ's historical "rootedness" (i.e., his crucifixion); and it demands physical participation as an act of relating to the divine (i.e., eating and drinking the body and blood). All of these things encourage commitment to a life of discipleship to Christ and service to humankind.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Stevick, 36.

⁴⁵ Khoo, 92

⁴⁶ Ibid., 101–2.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 169–70.

Sours affirms that the Wesleys are intent on emphasizing the deifying presence of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament and speaking of the Eucharist as spiritual medicine for healing our diseased nature. In short, for the Wesleys the fruit of the Cross which is made available in the sacrament is both pardon *and* power for holy living.⁴⁸ Here, again, we see what, by now, are familiar themes foregrounded: the agency of the Holy Spirit, a therapeutic model of salvation, and the inseparable connection of pardon on the one hand and sanctification and holy living on the other. In other words, the Wesleys' intent is to hold together the interiority of faith *with* the need for an external signification, exactly as de la Taille insists.

Further, as we discussed in chapter 1, Sours points to the foregrounding of this intention when Wesley insists in Section VII, "Concerning the Sacrifice of Ourselves," that the believer's sacrifice is not incidental to the life of faith: "[it] 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" (§VII; emphasis original). Even further, Wesley goes on to state that believers cannot expect to enjoy communion with Christ in glory unless they "have *conformity* with him here in his *sufferings*" (VII.4). Again, Sours' conclusion from all this is that for the Wesleys the goal of union with Christ's sacrifice in the Eucharist is "complete transformation" that the believer might live a new life, offered and ordered as a holy and living sacrifice to God.⁴⁹

It follows naturally for the Wesleys, Sours asserts, that the Eucharist would entail the sacrifice of our goods: if the believer can offer his/her entire self in the Eucharist, then any act of mercy or charity toward his/her neighbor simply becomes an extension of this personal self-

⁴⁸ Sours, 135n81 (see chap. 1n42).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 156.

sacrifice.⁵⁰ Sours states that “these hymns remind the believer that even while salvation begins on earth as a pledge of heaven, *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.”⁵¹ Sours, therefore, has rightly drawn together within the concept of sacrifice the themes of pardon and sanctification *as a life of sacrificial discipleship* (contrary to Hildebrandt’s understanding).

In summary, our union with Christ’s sacrifice in the Eucharist bring about not only the pardon and forgiveness required for holy living but also begins the process of sanctification. At the same time, the placement of ourselves in the wounds of Christ, our conformity to and communion with Christ’s sufferings, shapes that life of discipleship by changing the way that we see God, ourselves, and others, and thereby nurturing in us an empathy which allows us to see suffering and abuse, and those who suffer and are abused, as God sees them. This process of sanctification, of productive purgation, must lead to—in fact, *is*—a life of discipleship, for “if a life of holiness does not follow from faith, it is as though Christ had died in vain.” But what does the sanctified life of discipleship, of *sacrificial* discipleship, look like? If, as we claimed earlier, this new life is now turned toward the “new” subject of the suffering and wounded of the world, and if this new orientation engenders in us not simply sympathy (to feel with) but actual empathy (to feel *within*), how do we live out our new life faithfully?

5.4. The Pragmatics of Sacrifice: From Sanctification to Solidarity

Forgive, the Saviour cries,
They know not what they do;
Forgive, my heart replies,
And all my soul renew;

⁵⁰ Ibid., 158.

⁵¹ Ibid., 166 (emphasis original).

I claim the kingdom in Thy right,
Who now Thy sufferings share,
And mount with Thee to Sion's height,
And see Thy glory there. (19)

For Wesley, to share in Christ's sufferings is, in some way, the gateway to lay hold to our claim in God's kingdom, not only in terms of our own pardon and reconciliation, but in terms of our sanctification and perfection. But even more, to know the fellowship of his suffering is to make oneself a real companion of Christ (133:5). The *Durban Report* reminds us that "to live a life 'hidden with Christ in God' (Col 3:3) is of itself to share in his paschal mystery" (§14). And that Paschal mystery includes not only his Resurrection, but also his passion and death. We have already spoken of the danger of cleaving the former from the latter in terms of losing sight of the ultimate goal of Christ's passion and death. But to cleave them from one another also runs the risk of making the one who ate with sinners and knew our sorrows and grief, the one who through his very own suffering and woundedness identified with the suffering and wounded of the world, someone who is entirely foreign to us and to make us as blind as the goats in Matthew 25 to the life we are called to leave.

Copeland suggests that our life "hidden in Christ" is one which must be ordered by the concept of solidarity. Solidarity, she explains, "presents a discernable structure with cognitive, affective, effective, constitutive, and communicative dimensions." Moreover, "through the praxis of solidarity, we not only apprehend"—by seeing things differently, as we saw with Khoo—"and are moved by the suffering of the other"—through empathy, as we saw with Kerr—"we confront and address its oppressive cause and shoulder the other's suffering."⁵² This act of confront, addressing, and even shouldering suffering and oppression is the life of discipleship. Our own

⁵² Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 94.

praxis of solidarity is grounded in the ontic solidarity of Christ with his people. As the body of Christ, we must pursue the motions of our head, moving in harmony with him.

Further, Copeland insists that solidarity which is ordered by the Eucharist naturally leads to praxis: “Eucharistic solidarity orients us to the cross of the lynched Jesus of Nazareth, where we grasp the enormity of suffering, affliction, and oppression as well as apprehend our complicity in the suffering, affliction, and oppression of others....Because that solidarity enfolds us, rather than dismiss ‘others,’ we act in love; rather than refuse ‘others,’ we respond in acts of self-sacrifice.”⁵³ Nor is such a link foreign to the Wesleys’ eucharistic theology. In fact, it can be no other way. If the grace we receive in the Eucharist is to be transforming, then it *must needs* lead to holy living and, by extension, works of mercy.

Take my soul and body’s powers,
Take my memory, mind, and will,
All my goods, and all my hours,
All I know, and all I feel,
All I think, and speak, and do;
Take my heart—but make it new. (155:4)

“Give ear to my cry: Do not be silent at my tears.”⁵⁴ Throughout scripture, “the knowledge urged to the reader as normative and proper is the kind upon which one must act.”⁵⁵ Indeed, scripturally, the divine model given to us evinces that to “hear” another’s cry means to act: “I have heard their cry...Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey”; “If you abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry... And if your neighbor cries out to me, I will listen, for I am compassionate.”⁵⁶ Modern

⁵³ Ibid., 128.

⁵⁴ Ps 39:12.

⁵⁵ Dru Johnson, *Biblical Knowing: A Scriptural Epistemology of Error* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013), 39.

⁵⁶ Ex 3:7–8; 22:23, 27c.

epistemology has equated “apprehension” and “knowing” with cognition; the biblical witness is clear that “apprehension” and “knowing” mean action, just as Copeland asserted. Therefore, to “know” about a battered spouse’s abuse morally binds one to act.⁵⁷ And so, having entered into solidarity with the suffering and oppressed of the world through the epistemological “gateway” of placing ourselves in Christ’s wounds, as we discussed in the previous chapter, we are now morally bound to act through a life of sacrificial discipleship in solidarity with those who suffer. From our position in Christ’s side, Christ teaches us through healing wounds how to become wounded healers for others.

5.5. The Pragmatics of Sacrifice: From Sacrifice to the New Self

We began our study with reference to Marshall’s assertion in *Trinity and Truth* that what a community says and does contributes to a Christian community’s self-identification and reveals its most central identity-forming beliefs. For nearly forty years, the United Methodist community has been saying in its eucharistic prayer that “we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ’s offering for us.” But how does our commitment to this statement shape—or have the potential to shape—who we are, to shape our self-identification? If we truly took these words to heart and lived into their formative value such that

⁵⁷ And yet the coinherence of these two things has often been subverted. Unfortunately, too often we find ourselves in a church where a priest, upon learning during confession that a wife is being abused, responds by saying, “if you come back when I’m in my office, then I can act upon this knowledge; otherwise, I cannot break the sanctity and confidentiality of the confessional. In the meantime, return home to your husband and know that Christ is with you in your suffering and through your suffering you are being conformed to Christ.” To be sure, the basic problem described here is not unique to the Roman Catholic Church; the temptation to hide behind the sanctity of the confession is merely one example among many that could be given. Other “impregnable yet elastic walls,” to quote Bonilla-Silva, could be cited, such as the sanctity of marriage, which are used to “barricade” the battered spouse in her/his abuse and suffering (Bonilla-Silva, 47). Yet surely such a privileging of law over grace is precisely that against which Jesus preaches: “You have heard it said..., but I say to you....” Or perhaps more to the point: when confronted with breaking the Law by healing on the Sabbath, Jesus responds with indignation and rebuke (Lk 13:10–17). Nowhere in the witness of the Gospels does Jesus, when faced with suffering, respond with “come back on Monday during office hours.”

their performative force as ritual speech acts were emancipated as identity-forming statements, what would that identity look like for us in the Wesleyan tradition as United Methodists?

For the Wesleys, Christian identity is formed at the Eucharist and, moreover, it is shaped by *sacrificial* language. As we have discussed, the first move for us would be to place ourselves in Christ's own wounds. The Eucharist is the grand channel in which we come into direct contact with Christ's grace, and that contact for the Wesleys involves, in part, sacramental contact with the very wounds of Christ. Though the intent of such contact can easily be misconstrued as gratuitous masochism or, even worse, justification for continued abuse and oppression of others, nothing could be further from the truth—and such misunderstandings should be vigorously corrected and constantly guarded against. Rather, because we have a Christ who became like us in every way and was wounded and suffered like us in every way, so we have a Christ who identifies with us in our own woundedness and with whom we can identify (Heb 2:17–18). Because of this, our entrance into the wounds in Christ's own side allows us to enter into salvation and renewed life (Heb 4:14–16). Not only do we encounter a Christ who can sympathize with us in every way and who stands in solidarity with us in every circumstance, but the very path which brought it about opens up a path to healing.

This healing begins with and within the self. The Wesleys understood salvation to be a therapeutic process, that is to say, a process of healing. We become sharers with Christ, identified with him and his acts, for the purpose of being made whole. The Wesleyan very Christocentric view of the Eucharist, combined with the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, puts communicants in touch with Christ's own holiness in such a profound way that they are made holy and empowered to move more deeply in sanctification and toward Christian perfection. The Eucharist sets before communicants “a physical, tangible reminder of who [they] are, whose they

are, what they are called to be and what they are called to do.”⁵⁸ Our contact with Christ’s woundedness calls us first to a process of purgation of our own woundedness and brokenness, which Christ actively takes upon himself, such that Christ’s own wounds become for us healing wounds.

Such purgation, again, is neither for the purpose of self-abnegation or self-loathing nor to the end of keeping those who are suffering and marginalized trapped in situations of abuse and oppression. All of this is governed by a grammar of sacrifice which has been reordered toward life. The immolation (change) and purgation required of us as a part of the grammar of sacrifice has been reordered from death into life, from something which was intransitive—something pointing to nothing other than itself—to something which is transitive—something which not only points beyond itself, but actually *requires* an object in order to make grammatical sense. While it is true that in the “time-line of human sin” little is set aright without pain, and it is equally true that some things will not be set aright until the veil is removed and all things have been released from their groaning (Rom 8:23), when immolation and purgation do not lead to greater human flourishing for those enduring them, such pain and purgation must be recognized as a *failed* sacrifice because they do not conform to the grammar of *Christian* sacrifice as reordered by Christ’s own sacrifice. Nor do they semantically identify with that which is signified by Christian sacrifice as reordered by Christ’s own sacrifice. Rather, in proper Christian sacrifice, we are emancipated through such a process of immolation and purgation to live lives now as wounded healers.

⁵⁸ Khoo, 192.

Such a profound experience changes our perspective, because it “could not but colour the way Christians see themselves, the divine, other people, the world and time.”⁵⁹ The God United Methodists experience in the Eucharist is one who loves, saves, and heals our souls, who works for the reconciliation of all things. Our identification with a God who is both steadfast in love and sympathetic in suffering teaches us to be empathetic with others. The eucharistic prayer teaches us that God seeks not only to reconcile us to Godself, but also to reconcile us with each other, as we are “made one with Christ and one with each other.” We receive healing in the Eucharist so that we may heal others, so that “we may be for the world the body of Christ,” redeemed (healed) by Christ. Our identification with Christ’s suffering allows us to begin to understand how God was working in Christ to bring divine compassion to the suffering of the world through Christ’s own passion, and as we begin to turn our gaze, we begin to see others, but most especially the suffering, wounded, and oppressed of the world, as Christ sees them.

The development of such empathy for the “other,” combined with Christ’s own solidarity with us, empowers us to take up a praxis of solidarity with the suffering and oppressed of the world. Solidarity, as Copeland reminds us, is something “deeper and beyond the moral attention that social justice accords to the distribution of the material and cultural conditions for human living.”⁶⁰ Solidarity is the act of confronting, addressing, and even shouldering the cause(s) of suffering and oppression for the other, just as Christ confronted, addressed, and even shouldered the cause(s) of our own suffering and oppression. Having fixed both our gaze and our empathy on those whom Christ sees and with whom Christ empathizes, we can no longer dismiss the

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 93.

other. We are morally bound to act in love toward the other as we work as a “holy and living sacrifice” to “set at liberty those who are oppressed.”

The praxis of solidarity “revalues our identities and differences, even as it preserves the integrity and significance” of our own bodies and selves.⁶¹ The balance between these two seemingly opposing poles is significant to our new identity, for the praxis of solidarity never seeks to erase the self in self-abnegation, either for us for the other, even while it can never be a solitary praxis. Rather,

In this praxis of solidarity, the “other” retains all her (and his) “otherness”—her (and his) particularity, her (and his) self; she (and he) is neither reduced to some projection, nor forced to reproduce a mirror image. Likewise, we retain particularity and self; we are not reduced by *resentment* to projection or caricature. Rather, perhaps, a new and authentic human “we” emerges in this encounter; yet, that new “we” can only be realized in the gift of grace.⁶²

Even as Christ draws us each up into his body “that we may be for the world the body of Christ,” each of us as members of the body remains distinct even as we are knit together, each coinherent in and codependent upon one another (1 Cor 12). Copeland reminds us that Christ’s body is “the only body capable of taking us *all* in as we are with all our different body marks,” but “this taking us in, this in-corporation, is akin to sublation, not erasure, not uniformity.”⁶³

Our own flourishing is now linked to the flourishing of all (I Cor 11:17–34; 12:22–26). In the words of Copeland, “personhood is now understood to flow from formative living in community rather than individualism” and, as noted already, “from the embrace of difference and interdependence rather than their exclusion.”⁶⁴ Or, in the words of Wesley, “the gospel of Christ

⁶¹ Ibid., 83.

⁶² Ibid., 89–90

⁶³ Ibid., 83 (emphasis original).

⁶⁴ Ibid., 89.

knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness.”⁶⁵ The new identity for the self, the new personhood, which emerges through Wesleyan eucharistic sacrifice emerges from and is embedded in the community which is the Body of Christ, the church. The church is not merely a collection of individuals, independent of one another and voluntarily gathered together under the identity of a congregation or denomination, the church is a corporate body which moves and acts as one, and each member is interdependently bound together. Such interdependence is captured beautifully in the United Methodist eucharistic prayer where, even when there might appear to be a multiplicity of individuals, as in the oblation (“we offer ourselves”), the action is unified: there is *one* sacrifice (“we offer ourselves...as *a* holy and living *sacrifice*”). The same is true for the *epiclesis*, in which the church petitions that God “make us *one* with Christ,” not “make us each one with Christ.” Our relationship to our head can only be realized by way of the entire body. We do not stand in eucharistic oblation primarily as individuals who have a personal relationship with Jesus, but rather as members of one body whose head is Christ Jesus and whose motions we must follow. Any offering which is made in the Eucharist is fundamentally ordered first through the church as the body of Christ. Because the church is the body of Christ, the church offers the body of Christ as it offers itself with and through Christ. Having joined the motion of its head and “cast” its own sacrifice on Christ’s own sacrifice, the church is presented to God as a sacrifice with Christ. There is no offering other than Christ’s offering. The church does not offer directly to God, but because Christ is the head and the church is united to him through participation it offers itself through Christ and with Christ’s own offering.

Our union with Christ comes before, and is the ground of, any other union. The self which emerges through eucharistic practice is one which is both affirmed in all its uniqueness and

⁶⁵ John Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), viii.

bound together in solidarity with all other parts of the body, many yet one, just as God is three yet one. Our unity with each other in Christ is grounded in Christ's unity with us through the Incarnation, itself grounded in the unity of the Godhead. As such, each member of the body, through its union with Christ and Christ's own sacrifice, is shaped by God's own pathos and as such is turned toward the other in love and self-giving. Through Wesleyan eucharistic practice, each member is carried by Christ through the immolation and purgation of Christ's own sacrifice to emerge as a holy and living sacrifice in a new life of love and flourishing for self and neighbor.

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