

THE TWO VERSIONS OF THE FIRST EDITION OF JOHN WESLEY'S "THE SUNDAY SERVICE OF THE METHODISTS IN NORTH AMERICA"

J. HAMBY BARTON

The first (1784) edition of John Wesley's abridgment of *The Book of Common Prayer*, *The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*, is a puzzle. The copies have different texts. The differences are found on pages 135-36, 141-44. One variant text has the rubrics for the manual acts in communion (p. 136), the prayer of reception and the rubric for the sign of the cross (signation) in infant baptism (p. 142); the other omits them. The question is, "Which version did Wesley intend to send to America?"

In the physical makeup of the volumes there were different printings for the variant pages. A set of substitute pages (called *cancels*) was printed on a separate sheet. In the binding process the original leaves were cut out and the substitutes were tipped into the binding. Of the extant copies some were bound this way, and some with no cancels tipped in.¹ Thus we have two versions of the same edition.

I. History of the Problem

Nineteenth century scholarship differed in comments on *The Sunday Service* depending on the variant which was at hand. Robert Emory and David Sherman affirmed the inclusion of the signation. P. A. Peterson, writing in Nashville in 1889, inserted a note to the effect that Emory and Sherman "erroneously state" that the signation was retained by Wesley.² Nolan Harmon's *Rites and Rituals of Episcopal Methodism* (1926) was based on reference copies which did not contain the signation or the manual acts. Harmon found a copy containing the manual acts and the signation in Emory's papers at Drew University, but it was a defective

¹Frank Baker, *A Union Catalog of the Publications of John and Charles Wesley* (Durham: Duke University, 1966), pp. 173ff. Baker lists twenty-six extant copies, about equally divided between the variants. This author has examined thirteen volumes, seven without and six with the cancels.

²P. A. Peterson, *History of the Revisions of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Nashville: Barbee, 1889); David Sherman, *History of the Revisions of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1874); Robert Emory, *History of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1844).

copy without a title page, consequently he considered it to be of another edition and rejected its authority.³

The problem was not exposed until 1948 when James R. Joy, perusing a copy of the 1784 prayer book, found that it contained two sets of pages numbered 135-136, 141-144; one set had both the manual acts and the signation and the other had neither. Dr. Joy's discovery was the first evidence that the differences originated in the very book which Wesley had sent to North America.⁴

Joy discussed the odd volume with Nolan Harmon, book editor for The Methodist Publishing House. Their notes were in turn transmitted to Wesley Swift who first faced the problem of which version was Wesley's original text. Acting on this information Swift proposed that the original printing retained the manual acts and the signation.⁵

In 1958 this writer, reviewing the scholarship on *The Sunday Service*, checked five available copies and discovered that the original printing had omitted the manual acts and the signation and that they were restored by the cancel leaves. On the authority of the original printing, the text without the manual acts and the signation was identified as John Wesley's original work.⁶

II. The First Edition, 1784

In Coke and Moore's *Life of Mr. Wesley* a brief paragraph describes the origin of the prayer book. "At the conference held in Leeds in 1784, [Wesley] declared his intention of sending Dr. Coke and some other preachers to America. . . . Before they sailed, Mr. Wesley abridged the Common Prayer-book of the Church of England. . . ."⁷ This abridged prayer book had morning and evening prayer, litany, collects, psalms, services for communion, baptism, marriage and burial. There was also an ordinal for deacons, elders and superintendents and an abridgment of the Articles of Religion.

On order of Thomas Coke the prayer book was printed in August-September, 1784, by Strahan, a prominent London printer. Coke also

³Nolan B. Harmon, *The Rites and Rituals of Episcopal Methodism* (Nashville, 1926), pp. 72-73, 206-207.

⁴The copy found by Dr. Joy has not been identified. A copy containing both sets of leaves is in The Pierpont Morgan Library. (The Morgan copy was acquired in the 1920's; the librarian doubts that Dr. Joy examined this copy.) See Baker, *op. cit.*

⁵Wesley Swift, "The Sunday Service of the Methodists" in *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, XXXIX, March 1953, pp. 10-20.

⁶J. Hamby Barton, "The Sunday Service of the Methodists," *Proceedings*, XXXII, March 1960, pp. 97-101. The findings were (a) that the cut edges of the original leaves showed in the "gutter" of the volume where they had been cut out; and (b) the disputed materials were printed on cancel leaves which had printer's marks to indicate to the binder the location for them to be "tipped in."

⁷Thomas Coke and Henry Moore, *The Life of Mr. Wesley* (London, 1792), p. 458.

ordered a special edition of the Wesley hymns, *A collection of Psalms and Hymns for the Lord's Day*, which was to be bound with the prayer book in America. When the sheets were finished they were packed and shipped unbound to Bristol by Strahan.

During this time Mr. Wesley was in Bristol. Coke traveled from London to Bristol, arriving on August 31. On September 2, 1784, John Wesley "for the work of the ministry in America . . . set apart as a superintendent . . . Thomas Coke." It is probable that he used "The Ordination of Superintendants [sic]" service which was included in the new prayer book.

To complete the prayer book, John Wesley wrote a preface, dated at Bristol, Sept. 9, 1784. On Sept. 10 he wrote a letter "to Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our brethren in North America" which was "to be printed, and circulated in America."⁸ Coke sailed for America on Sept. 18, taking with him the sheets of *The Sunday Service, A collection of Psalms and Hymns for the Lord's Day* and the additions which had been prepared in Bristol.

Upon arrival in America, Dr. Coke's mission to organize the Methodists as a church was carried out with Mr. Asbury and the American preachers at the "Christmas Conference" in Baltimore Dec. 24-Jan. 5, 1784-85. The conference accepted the prayer book and the twenty-four articles of religion, adding one article, "Of the Rulers of the United States of America." (Wesley wisely left the matter of civil authority in America to the Americans.)

The *Minutes* of this conference was printed in Philadelphia by Charles Cist in 1785.⁹ The *Minutes* was then bound with *The Sunday Service* and *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for the Lord's Day*. This should have been the standard volume, but the makeup of the bound copies was quite irregular. Of the extant copies some have the prayer book alone, some combine it with the hymnal, some have the conference minutes bound between the prayer book and the hymnal. The "letter" and the "preface" were used inconsistently and each shows more than one printing. And in the prayer book the copies have several different combinations of the original Strahan printing and the variant leaves.

The question of these events is, "Who was responsible for printing the cancel leaves which restored the manual acts and the signation?" If the cancels were printed in London, Dr. Coke would have been responsible for them. If they were printed in Bristol the case would be that Wesley, finding the omissions, had the cancels printed to restore the rubrics. If, finally, the

⁸Coke and Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 459.

⁹*Minutes of Several Conversations between The Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D., The Rev. Francis Asbury and others at a Conference, begun in Baltimore, in the State of Maryland, on Monday the 27th. of December, in the Year 1784. Composing a Form of Discipline for the Ministers, Preachers and other Members of The Methodist Episcopal Church in America* (Philadelphia: Charles Cist, 1785).

cancels were printed in America, it would have been under the direction of Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury.

We can demonstrate that the cancels were not printed in London or in America. First, let us consider the American case. We have in the *Minutes* the printing which was used by Coke and Asbury and it is quite different from the known London work. The makeup is 4vo., the type is smaller and, most significant, the paper is of a different quality.¹⁰ The London paper was of a uniform quality and thickness. The American paper varies in quality and its thickness is very uneven. Some copies of the "letter" and the "preface" exhibit similar unevenness, but the cancel leaves are uniform with the body of the prayer book and the hymnal. The cancels are evidently from England.

But the cancels were not printed in London. We know this from the survival of the account books of the printer, Strahan. These books have been preserved in the manuscript division of The British Library in London.¹¹

1785 Nathaniel Smith 1790		
Decr	Statement of the Debts, Credits, and Effects of	
	the East India Company, & Co. 184000	12 12
	with many Alterations, (184000)	18
	and Printing Books up for Dr. D. 1790	20 12
and Decr 10, 1790.		
1784 The Rev. Dr. Thomas Coke, (at Mr. Hodgkin's)		
Sept	Sunday Service of the Methodists in North	
	America, 10th Sheet, 182000. 212:25	28 7
	Extra for Calendar, and Corrections throughout	1 9
	Primer and Hymns, 14th Sheet, 182000.	9 9
	18th of fine Paper for the Service, 217:62	16 16
	18th of fine Paper for the Hymns,	15 15
	and Printing Dr. and Postage to Bristol	1 9
	and Aug. 22, 1790.	105 5
1790		
March	Address to the Pious and Reverend, 1st Sheet	
	182000 18th Jan.	1 5
	18th of Paper for Dr.	1 10
	and Sept 8, 1790.	2 15

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¹⁰The *Minutes* is a 4vo. volume with vertical chainlines. The Philadelphia paper has 22 wirelines/inch (Imperial inch) vs. 20 for the London paper in the prayer book. Systematic measurements for thickness of a typical sheet of the Philadelphia paper vary up to 38% (.0047 to .007 in.). Measurements of the London paper vary no more than 16% (.004 to .0047 in.).

¹¹The British Library, Addl. Ms. 48815 (729F), Strahan Papers, Vol. XVIII, Account Book for 1777-1789. Ledger folio #6 (ms. #19).

Strahan's account notation for *The Sunday Service* is as follows:

The Revd. Dr. Thomas Coke (at Mr. Wesley's)

1784

<i>Sept. Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America,</i>	
<i>13½ sheets, No. 2000</i>	28: 7
<i>Extra for Calendar, and Corrections throughout</i>	1: 9
<i>Psalms and Hymns, 4½ Sheets, No. 2000</i>	9: 9
<i>53½ Ry of fine Demy for the Service. @ 17s.6d.</i>	46:16
<i>18 Ry of Do. for the Hymns,</i>	15:15
<i>Paid Packing Do. and Portorage to Bristol</i>	1: 9
	<hr/>
<i>paid Aug. 22, 1785</i>	103: 5

Although Strahan had printed for Wesley since the early days of the Methodist revival, this was the first entry for Dr. Coke in the accounts, and he was identified "at Mr. Wesley's." Subsequently he was carried under his own account.

The date of the entry was September. From Wesley's *Journal* we know that Coke came to Bristol on Tuesday, August 31. If the account book is correct, then the printing was not finished in time for Coke to take the sheets to Bristol with him (although it is possible that he did have galley proofs). This is consistent with the dates of the "Preface" and the "Letter," September 9 and 10.

The prayer book was printed on *demy* size paper (17½ by 22½ inches), twelve pages each side, twenty-four to the sheet (thus a *duodecimo* volume). In a duodecimo volume each sheet is folded to make a booklet, or *signature*, of twelve leaves, twenty-four pages. After folding, the several signatures are gathered and sewed together to make up the volume. The 13½ sheets is consistent with the size of the book, 13 full signatures plus a partial one. The number of copies was 2000.

The prayer book was a standard print job. There were no charges for "expedition" to indicate a rush job. Six compositors are identified in the work by their "slugs" set in the galley forms which make up one side of each sheet. The major charge of £28:7 was for type setting and printing.

The additional charges are interesting. The complicated calendar of the Sunday "lexionary" incurred additional charges, as did the corrections Coke made in the text after reading the galley proofs. The printer corrected his typographical errors without charge, but charged the customer for changes after the galley proofs.

One might think that the charge for "corrections" could thus include the printing of the cancels, but this was not consistent with Strahan's business practice. Throughout the accounts there were charges for "cancels." For instance, in the account of Mr. James Buckland, March 1781, "half sheet cancelled . . . 12s." and in the account of Mr. Thom. Cadell, March, 1786, "one sheet cancelled £1." Seeing that there was no charge for printing cancel leaves for *The Sunday Service*, Strahan did not print them.

The paper which Strahan used is important for our understanding of the work. The "demy" size has been explained above. The quality was "fine" and cost more than common paper. Undoubtedly, to match this quality of paper in America would have been even more expensive when Cist printed the *Minutes* in Philadelphia.

The last charge, "Paid Packing Do. and Porterage to Bristol," is important. It confirms that the sheets were sent to Bristol without the cancels.

By thus excluding London and Philadelphia from consideration, we conclude that the cancel leaves for pages 135-36 and 141-44 were printed in Bristol.

The work was completed in Bristol. Although Coke had served as agent for printing in London, Wesley could not have seen proofs before Coke's arrival in Bristol. A review of the printed sheets and the writing of the preface remained for Wesley's hand to complete the work. The need for such corrections as the cancel leaves would be expected under these circumstances. We must conclude that Wesley had the cancel leaves printed in Bristol and sent with the preface and the original sheets as integral parts of the work. Wesley thus intended this edition of *The Sunday Service* to have the manual acts and the signation.

III. Later Editions, 1786 and 1788

Wesley published four editions in five printings of the prayer book. Although the 1784 edition was the first printing, subsequent editions should be considered for a balanced understanding of John Wesley's liturgy.

A letter, now at Drew University, written jointly by Wesley and Coke to Freeborn Garrettson, gives us a good picture of the circumstances surrounding the production and uses of the 1786 prayer book.

Garrettson had been appointed by the American conference as a missionary to the new English settlements in Nova Scotia. Many of the Methodists there were loyalists who had fled from the United States. Garrettson was sensitive to their prejudices against the new United States, so had written to Wesley for "some of the new prayer books adapted to the kingdom."¹²

Wesley and Coke replied to Garrettson in a letter written from London, February 25, 1786. Wesley wrote, "In the States you know, the Dissenters do not at all object to our corrected Common Prayer Book. But I do not confine myself: I constantly add Extemporaneous Prayer, both to the Morning and Evening Service. I will communicate what you say concerning 'adapting the Prayer books to the Northern Provinces' to Dr. Coke & we will consider what can be done."

On the reverse side of Wesley's letter, Coke wrote, "I would have you introduce the Prayer-book every where, as far as you possibly can without giving great Offence: but I would not give great Offense to precious souls even for the best of forms. I purpose, God willing, to be in Hallifax [sic] in Nova Scotia about the latter end of next September. . . . I shall also, God willing, bring with me one or two hundred copies of our abridged Liturgy, suited to the British Dominions."¹²

The result of the Garrettson correspondence was that a part of the 1786 edition of the prayer book was entitled, *The Sunday Service of the Methodists in His Majesty's Dominions*. It had prayers for the royal family in place of those "for the Supreme Rulers of these United States." And the royal government was recognized in the Articles of Religion. With these variations the 1786 edition served both the United States and the British possessions in America.

The letter to Garrettson, with the letter to Walter Churchey,¹⁴ gives us insight to the editorial work on the prayer book. The Churchey letter has been open to an impression of tension between Wesley and Coke. But this is far from the case. Coke was Mr. Wesley's faithful agent. His exercise of some independence in his actions came from his relationship to Wesley, as Wesley never failed to support him in any controversy which resulted. Their joint work in *The Sunday Service* defies our analysis, but we must remember that the claim of authorship was Wesley's.

The special problem raised by the two versions of *The Sunday Service* is the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Wesley was attached to the doctrine of infant baptism, but his revival was based on a doctrine of conversion, responsible acceptance of God's saving grace. Rigorous logic would require that one or the other be abandoned, but for Wesley logic fell before the authority of the scriptures and the practices of the Church. He found both conversion and the necessity of baptism in the Bible, so he held both.

¹²Garrettson to Wesley, April 25, 1786, "I wrote in a former letter for some of the new prayer books adapted to the kingdom." Nathan Bangs, *The Life of the Rev. Freeborn Garrettson* (New York, 1929), p. 168.

¹³J. Hamby Barton, "A Double Letter, John Wesley and Thomas Coke to Freeborn Garrettson," *Methodist History*, XVII, No. 1, Oct. 1978, p. 97ff.

¹⁴Wesley to Walter Churchey, June 1789. "Dr. Coke made two or three little alterations in the Prayer-Book without my knowledge." *Letters*, viii, p. 144.

Of interest is Strahan's account book record of the 1788 prayer book (*op. cit.*, folio 75):
Sept. 1788—The Revd. Dr. Thomas Coke—The Sunday Service—18 sheets, No. 3000—@ £2:18:0—52:4.

But conversion was the stronger doctrine. At every point in the prayer book baptismal regeneration was altered to prevent its intrusion as a doctrine of assured salvation. The sign of the cross, although restored for the 1784 edition, was expunged along with its prayer in the 1786 edition and never restored. That this was no accident may be seen in the changes made in the prayer following baptism. The 1784, "grafted into the body of Christ's Church," became in 1786, "admitted into the body of Christ's Church"; and the phrase "that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning," became in 1786, "that this child may lead the rest of his life to the glory of God." The changes of 1786 were continued in the edition of 1788, consequently the omission of the sign of the cross and the prayer of reception must be Wesley's final position on the matter.

The manual acts in communion were restored in the 1784 cancels, and they remained in place through subsequent editions. There is no evident reason for their omission in the first printing. This rubric was strongly supported by Puritan tradition, and we find no precedent for removing it in other liturgical experiments. The manual acts were retained in the services adopted in later conferences and were used until the mid-nineteenth century, when they were discarded.¹⁵

Despite Mr. Wesley's impression that "Dissenters do not at all object to our corrected Common Prayer Book," the services of morning and evening prayer were not well received. Jesse Lee reported, "At this time the prayer book, as revised by Mr. Wesley, was introduced among us; and in the large towns, and in some country places, our preachers read prayers on the Lord's day: and in some cases the preachers read part of the morning service on Wednesdays and Fridays. But some of the preachers who had been long accustomed to pray extempore, were unwilling to adopt this new plan. Being fully satisfied that they could pray better, and with more devotion while their eyes were shut, than they could with their eyes open. After a few years the prayer book was laid aside, and has never been used since in public worship."¹⁶

In contrast to the rejection of the formal services for Sunday worship, the sacraments and the doctrines of the prayer book were welcomed and used. The Americans had wanted the sacraments so much that at a conference in 1779 in Fluvanna County, Virginia, they had taken it upon themselves to ordain one another. Asbury dissuaded the preachers from exercising their orders and applied to Wesley for ordained ministers to administer the sacraments. Coke's mission was Wesley's answer. It was for this need of the sacraments that Wesley ordained ministers for America. Wesley's preface avowed this, "For some hundred miles together there is none either to baptize or to administer the Lord's supper."¹⁷ When Coke

¹⁵Harmon, *op. cit.*, p. 143f., The M.E. Church, South, removed them in 1854 and the M.E. Church made them optional in 1864.

¹⁶Jesse Lee, *A Short History of the Methodists* (Baltimore, 1810), p. 107.

arrived in America he was welcomed because he brought the sacraments with Wesley's blessing.

Coke's administration of the Lord's Supper in the Nov. 14, 1784, service at Barratt's Chapel (where he met Asbury) was the first communion for many who attended. Among them was young Ezekiel Cooper, a leader among the Methodists.¹⁸ The sacraments were welcomed and the services which Wesley had abridged were adopted almost without change from the later editions of *The Sunday Service*. In the 1792 *Discipline* they were affirmed and printed as the ritual services.¹⁹ *The Sunday Service* was a living book, a work which adapted itself to a living, maturing church.

In studying these volumes, one is impressed with the care which went into the work of each person—Wesley, Coke, Asbury and the American preachers. Their work shows that they understood the meaning of these services. Doubtless there were differences of opinion, but they were united in the central matter of developing a ritual which would support the evangelical work of the Methodists in the world parish.

¹⁷James F. White, ed. *John Wesley's Sunday Service* (Nashville: United Methodist Publ. House, 1984), p. (ii).

¹⁸John Emory, *A Defence of Our Fathers* [1829] (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1880), p. 85.

¹⁹The 1792 *Discipline* contained:

Section X. Sacramental Services, etc.

The Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper

The Ministration of Baptism of Infants

The Ministration of Baptism to such as are of riper Years

The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony

The Order for the Burial of the Dead

The Form and Manner of making of Deacons

The Form and Manner of ordaining Elders

The Form and Manner of ordaining a Bishop.

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