During the 18th century, the Church of England was beset by problems. Among these were challenges to the traditional doctrines of Christianity, persistent anti-clericalism, inappropriate training for pastoral ministry, and the inefficient deployment of clergy. Leaders and spokesmen for the church responded to these problems in a variety of ways. For example, the bishops gathered information regarding their dioceses and tried to address the difficulties which this data revealed. Churchmen set the printing presses to work. They published many kinds of books, including expositions of Christian orthodoxy, apologetic works affirming the inspiration of Scripture and showing the congruence between traditional theology and "modern" science, and "practical divinity," comprising catechisms, aids to devotion, and manuals for communicants. Clergy and laypersons joined in organizing voluntary societies on both the local and national levels. Local societies met week by week for prayer, reading, and Christian conversation.¹ The Society for Promoting Christian knowledge published religious literature. Dr. Bray's Associates established parochial libraries. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel sent missionaries abroad. Anglican "evangelicals" focused upon the three R's, "Ruin by the Fall" of Adam, "Redemption by the Cross of Christ," and "regeneration by the Holy Spirit."² Some of the evangelicals adopted a dramatic style of preaching, which appealed to a significant number of persons (although it repelled others).³

A. E. Peaston, M. J. Hatchett, and other scholars have called attention to another response to the challenges confronting the church. I refer to the 18th

¹For a description of these religious societies, see John S. Simon, John Wesley and the Religious Societies (London: Epworth Press, 1921), chapter 1.
century liturgical movement, that is, efforts to renew and reform the worship of the church. This movement comprised three elements:

(a) enforcing the rubrics in the Book of Common Prayer and the canons adopted by the Anglican Convocations;

(b) "enriching" the services prescribed by the Prayer Book, for example, by elaborating the ceremonial or providing more opportunities for congregational song; and

(c) revising the text of the Prayer Book, either for practical or theological reasons. The Sunday morning service, according to some, was much too long. Pastors who wanted to hold the attention of their flocks might wish to shorten the service. The watchword of those who sought to revise the Book for theological reasons was the revival of "primitive Christianity." This might take a "catholic" direction, as with the Non-Jurors and their successors, or a "liberal" turn, in the case of moderate and latitudinarian reformers. The liturgies associated with Thomas Deacon of Manchester, an acquaintance of Wesley, illustrate the first category. The Prayer Book, as modified by Samuel Clarke, would be an example of a "liberal" revision.

John Wesley, it bears repeating, was an ordained minister in the Church of England. He is better known, of course, as the principal founder of the Methodist societies. Wesley had several goals in mind when he organized these groups, one of which was to reform his church. It is not surprising, therefore, that he was an active participant in the liturgical movement of his day. Wesley shared many of the ideals of Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), the Archbishop of Canterbury who set his stamp on the Anglican liturgical tradition. The 1662 Prayer Book, which Wesley knew and loved, was the book which Cranmer had prepared in 1552, modified to some degree in light of changing circumstances.

What Wesley wanted to do was this: to revive, under 18th century conditions, the type of Sunday worship which Cranmer had envisaged two hundred years earlier. Two kinds of evidence support this hypothesis. The first is Sunday morning worship at the New Chapel, City Road, London (known as Wesley's

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Chapel). This building, designed by George Dance the Younger (1744–1825), was opened for public worship on Sunday, November 1, 1778. We can be sure that the structure itself, and the services which were conducted within its walls, express Wesley’s own ideas. He chaired the group which commissioned the building and raised a good deal of money for its construction. Wesley was in a position to supervise the services, since he lived next door during the part of the year he resided in London.

The other piece of evidence is The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America. With Other Occasional Services. This volume is a revision of the Book of Common Prayer, carried out by Wesley and published by him in 1784. The revision, at least as regards Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and the Lord’s Supper, is rather conservative in character. The following outline of Wesley’s communion service illustrates this point.

Lord’s Supper
Collect for Purity
Ten Commandments (with responses)
two Collects, including the Collect of the Day
Epistle and Gospel (as appointed in the lectionary)
(Wesley omits the Nicene Creed.)
Sermon
Offertory Sentences
Prayer for the Whole State of Christ’s Church
(Wesley omits the Exhortations.)
Invitation and General Confession
Absolution (Wesley excises this term, which appears in the Prayer Book, and changes “pardon and deliver you from all your sins” to “pardon and deliver us from all our sins,” etc.)
Comfortable Words
Sursum Corda, Preface (proper prefaces for five occasions, following the Prayer Book),
Sanctus
Prayer of Humble Access
Prayer of Consecration
Communion (Words of Delivery, as stated in the Prayer Book)
Lord’s Prayer

1 I disagree with George W. Dolbey’s evaluation: “City Road Chapel . . . appears to be much more an expression of the needs and practices of Methodism at that stage of its development than the personal views of Wesley on building, influential and respected though he was” (Architectural Expression of Methodism [London: Epworth Press, 1964], 47).


John Wesley and the Liturgical Ideals of Thomas Cranmer

Prayer of Oblation (The Prayer Book offers a choice between two post-communion prayers. Wesley endorses the first of these and omits the second.)

Gloria in Excelsis
(Wesley adds an opportunity for "Extempore Prayer.")

Blessing

The circumstances surrounding the publication of The Sunday Service are these. Wesleyan Methodism had been introduced to North America in the year 1760. Wesley expected the American Methodists to attend the Church of England as well as their own societies. Following the American Revolution, what had been the Anglican Church in the colonies was in a sad state of disarray. The surviving congregations lacked episcopal oversight. Many of them had no pastors. Under these circumstances, Wesley believed, the formation of a new church, the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, was justified. The Sunday Service was the liturgy which he prepared for the infant denomination.

According to Thomas Cranmer and the Prayer Book, the principal service every Sunday morning was to be a service of Word and sacrament, which would include the reading of Scripture, a sermon, and the Lord’s Supper. During the second half of the 18th century, few parish churches met this standard. The usual diet was a service of the Word only, combining three sections of the Prayer Book, Morning Prayer, the Litany, and Ante-Communion, that is, the liturgy for the Lord’s Supper through the sermon or the Prayer for the Whole State of Christ’s Church. On most Sundays, the Lord’s Supper itself was not administered. Anglican practice varied by diocese and locality. Most commonly, the sacrament was administered three or four times a year, Easter being one of these. Less common was a monthly communion, perhaps with an additional service on Good Friday. Least common was the weekly communion which the Prayer Book and the canons enjoined.

By way of contrast, at the New Chapel in City Road the Lord’s Supper was administered each Sunday at 9:30 in the morning. The building was in part designed for this purpose. A semi-circular apse was constructed at the east end of the building, opposite the public entrance. The communion table was placed within the apse, against the east wall. The apse itself was railed off from the body of the chapel. A second rail, running from west to east down the center of the building, separated the men in the congregation from the women.


George J. Stevenson, City Road Chapel and Its Associations Historical, Biographical and Memorial (London: The Author, [1872]), 118 reproduces a preaching plan which states that the service began at nine o’clock. However, this plan is dated 1792, the year after Wesley’s death. For the 9:30 hour, see Wesley’s diaries and a letter from James Freeman to Charity Freeman, November 23, 1789 (Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society 23 [March 1942]: 103).
The 9:30 service included Morning Prayer and the Lord’s Supper. This conclusion might be challenged. During his ministry in Georgia (1735–37), Wesley had divided the two. He read “the morning service,” i.e., Morning Prayer, at 5 AM and “the Communion Office (with sermon), at eleven.” Perhaps, therefore, the 9:30 service at City Road consisted of the Communion Office/Lord’s Supper only. On the other hand, the texts from which Wesley preached at 9:30 point in another direction. Wesley’s sermon would be part of the Communion liturgy, as prescribed in the Prayer Book. On occasion, he preached, not from the Epistle or Gospel appointed for a given Sunday, but from a lesson appointed for Morning Prayer on that day. This implies that Morning Prayer had been read prior to the Communion liturgy. The Scripture passage which Wesley intended to expound had already been placed before his hearers. More broadly, Anglican precedents and congregational expectations carry some weight as well. The inference that the Litany was omitted is based upon *The Sunday Service*. According to it, the Litany is to be said on Wednesdays and Fridays only.

The choice of persons to lead the service illustrates an aspect of Wesley’s doctrine of the ministry. He made a distinction between an ordained or priestly ministry, which was authorized to administer the sacraments as well as preach the Word, and an unordained or prophetic ministry, which was called to proclaim the Gospel. At City Road, therefore, the liturgy was read from the Prayer Book by an ordained clergyman, either John or Charles Wesley, or a “curate” employed by the City Road trustees. The sermon would be delivered by a lay preacher assigned to the London Circuit or by one of the Wesley brothers.

Both the Book of Common Prayer and Wesley’s *Sunday Service* encourage, as a part of the communion rite, the collection of money for the relief of the poor. However, according to these books, the reception of alms can be omitted from any celebration of the Lord’s Supper. At City Road, a “sacrament” collection was received each Sunday morning. This is demonstrated by the financial records of the stewards. The receipts were probably added to the other funds which the Chapel set aside for the relief of the poor.

Cranmer’s ideal was “common” prayer, that is, public worship in which both clergy and laypersons have their roles to play. The Prayer Book offers many opportunities for the congregation to take part, either by making

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10 For examples, see *Journal*, VII, 352 (January 1, 1788), 354 (January 27, 1788), 464 (January 18, 1789), 465 (January 25, 1789).
12 Bowmer, 149–55.
13 For information regarding the curates at City Road, see Stevenson, 149 (James Creighton), 150–1, 396–7 (Peard Dickenson), 146–7, 375–6 (John Richardson), 152–3 (Thomas Vasey). See also Charles Pollard, “The ‘Reader’ At City Road Chapel: A Forgotten Appointment,” *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 29 (December 1954): 178–84.
14 Accounts for August 1, 1787 through August 5, 1789, Greater London Record Office (Acc 2330/22).
responses to the minister, or by singing or reciting the psalms and canticles, the creeds, and certain prayers.\textsuperscript{17} Conclusions are hard to draw, but it would appear that Anglican churchgoers did not participate very fully. Many persons were illiterate. They could not have followed the Prayer Book, even if they had owned one. Of course, if a person attended church regularly, he would pick up some of his lines, and if he had been catechized properly, he would have memorized the Apostles’ Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. Nevertheless, I have the impression that congregations said very little. The liturgy tended to become a dialogue between the parish clerk, substituting for the people, and the minister in charge of the service. As for singing, some congregations sang metrical psalms or even an occasional hymn.\textsuperscript{18} Once again, however, the parish choir, if one existed, tended to displace the people.\textsuperscript{19}

Wesley, on the other hand, was dedicated to Cranmer’s ideal, “common” prayer. Methodists were encouraged and even required to participate in the service. The means whereby Wesley reached this goal was congregational singing, but singing of a new and different kind. I will comment on three aspects of this subject: text, tunes, and performance.

The versification of the psalms known as “Sternhold and Hopkins” dates from the 16th century.\textsuperscript{20} This psalter was still in use two hundred years later. Wesley was offended by the verse; he condemned it as “miserable, scandalous doggerel.”\textsuperscript{21} The Methodists sang hymns for the most part, not psalms.\textsuperscript{22} Wesley published a series of hymnbooks for their use.\textsuperscript{23} His criteria for including a hymn, stated in his 1780 \textit{Collection}, run as follows:

(1) In these hymns there is no doggerel, no botches, nothing put in to patch up the rhyme, no feeble expletives.

(2) Here is nothing turgid or bombast [sic] on the one hand, nor low and creeping on the other.


\textsuperscript{19} Temperley, I, 125, 126.


\textsuperscript{22} However, Wesley included a large number of metrical psalms in the collection which he prepared in 1784 for the use of American Methodists.

\textsuperscript{23} J. Ernest Rattenbury provides a convenient list of them (\textit{The Evangelical Doctrines of Charles Wesley’s Hymns} [London: Epworth Press, 1941], 338–40).
(3) Here are no cant expressions, no words without meaning. . . . We talk common sense . . . both in verse and prose, and use no word but in a fixed and determinate sense.

(4) Here are (allow me to say) both the purity, the strength, and the elegance of the English language—and at the same time the utmost simplicity and plainness, suited to the meanest capacity.24

Of particular interest are the one hundred sixty-six Hymns on the Lord’s Supper written by Charles Wesley, and published in 1745 by his brother John.25 The hymns are arranged under six headings derived from Daniel Brevint’s tract, The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice.26 (Brevint [1616–95] was Dean of Lincoln; the first edition of his tract is dated 1673.) The headings run as follows:

(1) As it [the Lord’s Supper] is a memorial of the sufferings and death of Christ;
(2) As it is a sign and Means of Grace;
(3) As a pledge of Heaven;
(4) The Holy Eucharist, as it implies a sacrifice;
(5) Concerning the sacrifice of our persons;
(6) After the Sacrament.

These hymns were reprinted on eight occasions during Wesley’s lifetime; five of these reprints were published in London.27 In all probability, therefore, some of the eucharistic hymns were used at City Road. Curiously, none of them is to be found in the collection of hymns and psalms bound with The Sunday Service of 1784, an odd circumstance since Wesley intended for the Americans to celebrate the Lord’s Supper each Sunday. The Pocket Hymn-Book issued under the names of Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury, the first bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, provided a remedy. Nine of Charles Wesley’s eucharistic hymns are included in this hymnal (numbers 1, 4, 17, 27–30, 33 and 81 in Rattenbury’s edition).28

26 Rattenbury, Eucharistic Hymns, 176–93.
28 I have used the “eighteenth edition” of the Pocket Hymn-Book (Philadelphia: Parry Hall, 1793). This book descends from a pirated edition of Wesley’s Collection of Hymns, issued in 1781 by Robert Spence of York. Frank Baker observes that “Spence’s editions of Wesley’s hymns became more popular than Wesley’s own, possibly through the influence of Dr. Thomas Coke, whose bookseller sold them” (Baker, 183). The earliest edition printed in America was published in 1786, two years after Coke arrived in America.
Wesley also published hymnbooks. Some of the tunes would be familiar to Anglican churchgoers, since they were widely used for the singing of metrical psalms. Other tunes were adaptations of secular music. Still others were composed specifically for the Methodists by John Frederick Lampe (1703–51), the bassoonist in the Covent Garden orchestra and a convert from Deism.29

As to performance, many details are unclear. Each Methodist was expected to sing and to sing “lustily.” At City Road Chapel, the hymns were “lined out,” that is, two persons shared the responsibility of leading them. The clergyman or preacher read a line of the text. Thereafter the leader of the singing announced the tune to which the hymn would be sung, and sang the line which the preacher had given out. Then the congregation had its turn, singing the same line with the support of a band of “singers.” The preacher would then read the second line of the hymn, and the whole process would be repeated. As one can imagine, this method of singing was extremely laborious and time-consuming. Furthermore, congregations tended to sing at a slower and slower rate. Wesley exhorted his listeners again and again to pick up the pace of their singing, and one can see why.

The 9:30 service at City Road probably included at least three hymns, performed at the beginning of the service (that is, prior to Morning Prayer), before the sermon was preached, and during the communion of the people. This conclusion rests upon the following considerations. In Anglican parish churches, hymns and psalms might be sung before Morning Prayer, before or after the sermon, and during the people’s communion. These customs establish precedents for Methodist practice. A hymn was sung at the beginning of the Methodist preaching service (a service which did not include the Lord’s

29 Lightwood, 16, 22.
30 See preface to Sacred Melody, a tune-book which Wesley published in 1761 (quoted by Lightwood, 33).
31 “If a Preacher be present let no singer give out the words” (Large Minutes [1780], quoted by Lightwood, 37).
32 Lining out was introduced by the Puritans and adopted by the Anglicans. The term has more than one meaning. At the least it means, reading a line of the psalm or hymn before the line is sung (Temperley, I, 82). The line may be sung once or twice. The parish clerk or song leader may begin to sing the line, with the expectation that the congregation will join him (Temperley, I, 89–90). Alternatively the line might be sung twice, first as a solo by the clerk or leader and then by the congregation. This was the procedure at City Road (Stevenson, 583; for other references to the leaders of singing, see Lightwood, 81; Stevenson, 184).
33 Wesley says that no more than five or six verses of a hymn should be sung at one time (Conference Minutes [1746], cited by Lightwood, 19). This method of singing helps to explain why he issued such a directive.
34 Temperley, I, 91–3.
35 See preface to Sacred Melody [1781] (quoted by Lightwood, 33), conference minutes [1765] (quoted by Lightwood, 35, 36); Large Minutes [1780] (quoted by Lightwood, 37).
36 Temperley, I, 123–24.
The following quotation supports the idea of a hymn before the sermon: “After reading the liturgy one Sabbath morning in the City Road Chapel, a short time before his death, Mr. Wesley ascended the pulpit to conduct the remaining part of the service. A rush of holy thought poured into his soul, and, instead of announcing the hymn, he stood for ten minutes in perfect silence.” In this quotation “the liturgy” means Morning Prayer and Ante-Communion through the Nicene Creed. Wesley would enter the pulpit to deliver the sermon, which follows the Creed in the Prayer Book. During a celebration of the Lord’s Supper at the West Street Chapel, London, August 28, 1743, conducted by Charles Wesley, hymns were sung during the communion of the people. John Fletcher recommended the practice to John Wesley, in a letter dated December 13, 1756. A visitor, describing the Lord’s Supper at West Street, October 25, 1789, commented, “They sung [sic] two or more hymns out of Mr. Wesley’s Collection during the ceremony.” “Ceremony” is ambiguous, but this sentence suggests that hymns were sung during the distribution of the elements. John Wesley administered the Lord’s Supper on this occasion.

The hymns would be sung without instrumental accompaniment. In general, Wesley discouraged the installation of organs in Methodist chapels.

In letters dated November 17 and December 14, 1785, Wesley calls for two hymns per service (Letters, VII, 301, 304). This reference seems to rule out the interpretation given in the text. Notice, however, that Wesley is referring here to a preaching service, not the Lord’s Supper.

For the background to Wesley’s opposition to organs, see Temperley, I, 135–38, especially 137.

The Book of Common Prayer permits the singing of an anthem during Morning Prayer. Whether or not anthems were sung at City Road is an open question, since Wesley’s attitude towards them shifted back and forth. Sometimes he condemned anthems; at other times he spoke of them in positive terms (negative attitude: Journal, VI, 182, 236, 312; positive appraisal: Journal, IV, 452; V, 512). He could accept a simple anthem, sung in unison with a clearly articulated text. This emphasis upon melody and intelligibility is typically Wesleyan. Towards the close of his life, however, Wesley modified his views. Sacred Harmony, a tune-book which Wesley published in 1780 and republished in 1788, includes two anthems in the first edition and four in the second (Lightwood, 38, 39). The sub-title of Sacred Harmony reads, “music in two and three parts for the voice, harpsichord, and organ.” These anthems could not have been performed at City Road, at least not with the instrumental accompaniment specified. Perhaps they were intended for private use, in the houses of the few Methodists who were persons of means. I suggest that countering the opposition may have been on Wesley’s mind as well. Martin Madan, a Calvinistic Methodist, had organized an elaborate music program at the Lock Chapel (Temperley, I, 211; Wesley heard Thomas Arne’s oratorio, Judith, at the Lock on February 29, 1764). Wesley may have wanted to show that he was as interested in “art” music as any Calvinist. His final word, in 1787, was to forbid the singing of anthems altogether (conference of 1787, cited in Journal, VII, 307).
singing the hymns, not to remain seated, as was the practice in certain parish churches.

I turn now to quite a different theme. Under canon law, excommunication is a penalty which the spiritual courts may impose upon a person who has committed an offense. These courts and their proceedings have no relevance here. However, the Prayer Book describes other situations in which individuals may be prohibited from receiving Holy Communion. In these cases, the decision rests with the parish priest. The rubrics say that he should exclude a person who is "an open and notorious euill liver" and one who refuses to be reconciled to his neighbors.45

The reasons for fencing the table are not explained very well in the literature.46 Certain things, such as consecrated bread and wine, or certain spaces, such as the area surrounding the communion table, may be regarded as especially holy. Unworthy persons may not be allowed to touch these things, or to enter these spaces, lest they defile and profane them. The clergy could envisage the right to admit or repel as a means of exacting obedience and controlling behavior. But the exclusion of certain individuals could also be conceived in pastoral terms. This appears to be what Cranmer had in mind. Persons who come to the sacrament properly disposed will receive there the benefits of Christ’s death and oblation. On the other hand, those who come unprepared receive no benefits; indeed, they actually do harm to their souls. The warrant for this distinction is the apostle Paul’s admonition to the Corinthians, “He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself” (I Corinthians 11:29). 47 The faithful pastor will prepare his congregation for the sacrament. However, if he finds that an individual is not ready, despite his ministrations, he will serve him well by not permitting him to participate, and giving him time to reflect upon his condition, to repent, and to renew his faith.

Fencing the table had all but disappeared in the 18th century.48 Wesley was determined to revive the practice. In the next paragraph, I will describe the procedure which he followed. First, however, let me state another point

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45 Charles Wheatley discusses the exclusion of "scandalous offenders" as a matter of civil and ecclesiastical law (A Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England [London: George Bell and Sons, 1890], 258–62).


48 A clergyman who excluded persons from the Lord’s Supper might suffer for his temerity, as Samuel Wesley, John’s father, and John himself learned to their cost.
which Cranmer made, a point which would have appealed to Wesley. According to the Archbishop, the Lord’s Supper is the sacrament of unity. It has been established to encourage love and friendship among all persons and to express the regard and affection which each member of the Church should have for the others.⁴⁹ To admit to the Supper hostile and envious persons destroys the symbolism. These ideas fit Wesley’s conceptions. His images of the church include the circle of friends, a circle of spiritual equals, and the family, especially the bond between sisters and brothers.⁵⁰

All persons were welcome to attend the preaching services at City Road Chapel. On Sundays these were held before sunrise and at 5:00 in the afternoon.⁵¹ However, only members of the society were allowed to receive the Lord’s Supper. It was assumed that the members qualified as worthy communicants, as prescribed in the Prayer Book. This was a plausible assumption. To be admitted to a Methodist society, an individual had to complete a probationary period and to satisfy certain requirements. The applicant was assigned to a “class,” which she or he was expected to attend every week. More importantly, the probationer was expected to behave in an appropriate manner, “avoiding all known sin, doing good after his own power, and attending all the ordinances of God.”⁵² At the end of three months, if no objection against him had been raised, he was admitted to the society. The new member was given a “ticket,” the equivalent of a membership card. In order to maintain the society’s standards, the ticket of each member was renewed every three months. Wesley or a preacher assigned to the London circuit examined the conduct of each person. Those who failed the test were denied a new ticket. In turn, only persons with current tickets were admitted to the sacrament.⁵³

To summarize: Wesley was an important figure in the liturgical movement of the 18th century. He wanted to revive, under the conditions of his own time, the type of Sunday worship which Thomas Cranmer had envisaged two hundred years earlier. Wesley’s administration of the Lord’s Supper week by week, his efforts to encourage the congregation to participate in the service, and his practice of fencing the table support this conclusion.

⁴⁹Cranmer, 30.
⁵⁰For a discussion of these images, see John C. English, “‘Dear Sister,’ John Wesley and the Women of Early Methodism,” Methodist History 33 (October 1994): 26–33.
⁵¹The early morning service was held either at 4:00, 5:00 or 5:30, the sources disagree.
⁵³Bowmer, 56; Stevenson, 515. Under unusual circumstances, an individual might receive a communion note, admitting him or her to the sacrament without a ticket.