

## THOMAS OSMOND SUMMERS, METHODIST LITURGIST OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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The worship life of nineteenth century American Methodism drew its energy to a great extent from the revival and the camp meeting with their fiery preaching, gospel songs, and altar calls. Yet it would be a mistake to assume that the liturgical practices of the period were simply equivalent to revivalism. The Ritual continued to be published in the *Discipline* and authorized hymnals were produced which gave relatively little place to "gospel songs." Moreover, while concern with liturgical matters among some Methodists was limited to doctrinal debates over the administration of baptism, there were a few Methodist leaders whose interests in liturgy were more broad and who actively contributed to the development of Methodist worship. Thomas Osmond Summers, the chief book editor for the Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South from 1850 until 1882, and the first dean of the Divinity School at Vanderbilt University, was without question the most important figure in the development of liturgy in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in the nineteenth century. Indeed, the influence of Summers can still be seen in the worship practices of many United Methodist churches in the southern United States.

T. O. Summers' name will likely be familiar to students of American Methodism, since it was attached to virtually every book which issued from the Publishing House under his tenure as book editor. This article will present a brief account of his life and work with special attention to his work in the area of liturgics.

### Summers' life

T. O. Summers was born on October 11, 1812, on the island of Purbeck, in the county of Dorset, England.<sup>1</sup> His parents died while he was still a small boy, and he was reared to adolescence by his maternal grandmother who was a member of an independent church in England. His grandmother had a strong influence on his early religious formation, teaching him the value of prayer and, especially, of John Calvin. At the age of sixteen, Summers broke with the Independents and began attending both the Church of England and a Wesleyan chapel. His connection with the Wesleyans caused him to question the Calvinist teaching of his

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<sup>1</sup>See *The World Methodist Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Summers, Thomas, Osmond," by Nolan B. Harmon, Jr. Vol. II, 2275-2276.

early childhood, particularly the doctrine of predestination which had often caused him to fear for his own salvation.

It was not until Summers immigrated to America in 1830 to seek his fortune that he finally joined a Methodist society. He became a probationary member of Ebenezer Methodist Church in Washington, D.C. on October 18, 1832, and attended class meetings in that congregation.<sup>2</sup> Questions about Calvinism continued to plague him, and at the suggestion of a Methodist laywoman, he began reading Clarke's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* for help with spiritual and theological problems. On January 16, 1833, while reading the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John, Summers had his conversion experience—a conversion as much from Calvinism and predestinationism as from unbelief.<sup>3</sup>

Summers' intellectual abilities were quickly recognized and his fellow Methodists soon judged him to be a fit candidate for the ministry. Summers himself was somewhat reluctant to accept the call to preach; nevertheless, the will of the church prevailed and he was given a license to preach in 1834. His first sermon was delivered on November 9th of that year at Bell's Meetinghouse in Prince Georges County, Maryland.<sup>4</sup> In March, 1834, Summers was admitted on trial to the Baltimore Conference. He was appointed to the Augusta Circuit, a twenty-five station charge with only four hundred members that stretched across many miles of the Blue Ridge mountains.<sup>5</sup> It was while riding horseback on the mountain trails that Summers began his theological education, reading as he traveled. His studies included the required course for preachers-on-trial: the Bible, Methodist theology, the *Discipline*, and church history.<sup>6</sup>

Summers was ordained deacon and elder in 1837 and was immediately appointed to the Baltimore City station church.<sup>7</sup> While serving there he suffered an unfortunate accident that left his health somewhat impaired for the rest of his life. Summers seems to have been prone to sleep-walking, and one night during a particularly frightening dream, he rose from his bed and jumped out of the bedroom window which was eighteen feet above the ground. He broke several bones and almost died from the fall. However, Summers did not allow his fragile health to keep him from his rigorous ministerial activities. For his next appointment, he served as a

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<sup>2</sup>O. P. Fitzgerald, *Dr. Summers, A Life Study* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1885), 21.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 29ff.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 41ff.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 45-46.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>7</sup>There is some confusion about the dates of Summers' ordinations. Neither Fitzgerald nor Harmon mentions Summers' elder's ordination; his obituary in the General Conference newspaper, *The Daily Christian Advocate*, of May 9, 1882 states that he was ordained both deacon and elder in 1837.

missionary in Texas helping to form the Texas Conference.<sup>8</sup> In 1844, he moved to the Alabama Conference, and on January 31 of that year, he married a Miss N. B. Sexton, an Alabama woman whom he had met on an earlier fundraising tour for Texas missions.<sup>9</sup> From the Alabama Conference, he moved to Charleston, South Carolina in 1846 to become the assistant editor of the denominational paper, *The Southern Christian Advocate*, which had been newly-organized after the southern Methodists separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1844.<sup>10</sup>

Soon after moving to Charleston, Summers was asked to serve on the editorial board for the publication of a new hymnal for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and his liturgical work for the church began in earnest. In 1847, he spent six hectic weeks in New York City getting the hymnal ready for publication. Though this exhausting experience further impaired his health, Summers continued his work on the hymns, and in 1851 he produced a supplement to the authorized hymnal.<sup>11</sup>

Summers moved to Nashville in 1855 to become the editor of *The Sunday School Visitor*. In 1858, he was chosen as editor for the *Southern Methodist Quarterly Review* and was asked to head *The Southern Christian Advocate*. He also served as general book editor of the southern Methodist Publishing House. In that capacity he wrote or edited over five hundred works on a variety of topics from church history to medicine.<sup>12</sup> Finally, in 1874, as the crown to his career, Summers took a position as professor of systematic theology and dean of the newly-formed Divinity School of Vanderbilt University where he taught until his death. Through these positions as chief editor for the church and dean of the divinity school, Summers, who had little formal education himself, became the most influential educator of both clergy and laity in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South of his day. Moreover, his influence was not limited to the Methodists. He was widely respected as a teacher and preacher, and his personal journal has numerous accounts of his preaching, both at Sunday worship and at revival meetings, in Presbyterian and Baptist churches.

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<sup>8</sup>Harmon states that Summers was appointed as a missionary in Buenos Aires. Although Summers was appointed to Buenos Aires, he never made the trip to South America, and was sent to the Texas mission field instead. See Fitzgerald, 96.

<sup>9</sup>None of the available biographical information lists his wife's Christian name.

<sup>10</sup>*World Methodist Encyclopedia*, 2276. Summers had spent his entire adult life in the South and his sympathies were clearly with the southern Methodists. Indeed, throughout his life, he blamed the division in the church on the northern Methodists whom he felt had forced the southerners into separation. See, T. O. Summers, *The Catholic Constitution and Relations of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1881), 21-22.

<sup>11</sup>Fitzgerald, 149-150.

<sup>12</sup>*World Methodist Encyclopedia*, 2276.

Summers died on May 6, 1882 during the meeting of General Conference. His death was sudden and shocking to the church which had depended upon his leadership for decades. Representative of the sentiments of the southern Methodists toward Summers were the remarks by O. P. Fitzgerald: "I cannot voice my nor the church's grief. A great and good man has fallen. We admire him because of his learning and talents. We loved him because he was good."<sup>13</sup>

### Summers' liturgical work

Summers' work as a preacher, teacher and editor left quite a legacy for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. However, it is his particular interest in liturgy which distinguished him from among his fellow Methodists of the nineteenth century and it is perhaps as a liturgist that Summers has had his most lasting influence.

As mentioned above, Summers edited two hymnals for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. He was especially proud of his work on the authorized *Hymn Book* (1849) which he fondly referred to as "the Liturgy" of the church.<sup>14</sup> Summers brought to this work on the hymnal a historian's concern for authenticity and, under his direction, the hymnal committee conducted extensive research on hymn texts, restoring many hymns to their original forms, recovering lost stanzas, and repairing corrupted passages wherever possible. A major feature of the 1849 *Hymn Book* was the proper attribution to authors and composers of sources that had long passed as anonymous. But, Summers balanced his concern for authenticity with a theologian's concern for orthodoxy. He was not above editing or omitting texts which did not meet his rigorous theological standards. Moreover, his aesthetic criteria were particularly strict. He had, for example, an intense dislike for erotic imagery in hymns, and passages which referred to the "Heavenly Lover" or to the "bosom of God" were changed to suit his more modest tastes—a concern about "sexual" rather than "sexist" language, we might say!<sup>15</sup>

Summers also had a pastoral concern for the accessibility of the hymnal to the laity. The new hymnal increased the number of common, long and short meters, while the number of 'particular meters' was kept to a minimum.<sup>16</sup> This greatly facilitated congregational singing, especially in learning new hymns. Summers further realized that the Methodist people had a desire for certain popular hymns that could not be included in the

<sup>13</sup>*Daily Christian Advocate*, May 6, 1881 [No. 4, New Series], 1.

<sup>14</sup>Fitzgerald, 168.

<sup>15</sup>From a recollection of fellow hymnal committee member, Whitefield Smith. See Fitzgerald, 167.

<sup>16</sup>William N. Wade. "A History of Public Worship in the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, from 1784 to 1905." (Ph.D. dissertation. University of Notre Dame, 1981) 157-158.

official hymnal for various reasons. To address this need, he published a supplement to the *Hymn Book*, titled *Songs of Zion*, which contained many of these popular hymns.<sup>17</sup>

Summers' interests in liturgics, however, were much broader than his work on the hymnals. He produced three books on explicitly liturgical topics: *Baptism: a Treatise on the Nature, Perpetuity, Subjects, Administration, Mode and Use of the Christian Church* (1852); *The Golden Censer* (1859), a book of devotional resources which included an essay on prayer and worship; and a *Commentary on the Ritual of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (1873). His broad interest in worship can be further documented in the numerous references to liturgical theology and practice in many of his shorter writings and in his published lectures on theology. These works allow us to examine his understanding of worship and sacrament.

For Summers, worship was essentially prayer, and prayer was the Christian's response to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. As he stated in the introductory essay in *The Golden Censer*:

*[A]ll our efforts to pray will be abortive unless we secure the influences of the Holy Ghost. . . . It is only when the Holy Ghost moves upon our hearts, and we respond to his operations, that we can with propriety be said to pray.*<sup>18</sup>

The Wesleyan influence in Summers' theology can be clearly seen here: prayer is co-operation with the grace of God. Furthermore, since worship as public prayer is the response of the *believing* heart, it is necessary for the mature Christian as well as for the newly-converted. While this may seem obvious to most United Methodists in the late twentieth century, the revivalist movement tended to view worship as a vehicle for effecting conversion in unbelievers and almost everything done in worship was calculated to produce such a conversion experience. Summers, however, insisted that worship was not primarily for the beginners in the faith; rather, "the worship of the Church is designed for a perpetual thank-offering of believers."<sup>19</sup> It is the life-long privilege and responsibility of the Christian.

Summers was especially interested in the form of worship. He believed that attention to form was necessary because Christ through the Holy Spirit had founded a *visible* church which conducted *visible* worship. Therefore, worship ought to reflect in its outward form its spiritual significance. As with his work on the hymnal, Summers' understanding of authentic form

<sup>17</sup>T. O. Summers, editor. *Songs of Zion. A Supplement to the Hymn Book of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Richmond: John Early, 1851).

<sup>18</sup>T. O. Summers, *The Golden Censer: an Essay on Prayer with a selection of Forms of Prayer Designed to Aid in the Devotion of the Sanctuary, Family, and Closet* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1859) 33-35.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 46-47.

for worship demonstrates a concern for orthodoxy and a sensitivity to the pastoral aspects of liturgy. Orthodox prayer, for Summers, was prayer firmly grounded in the languages and images of the scriptures. He especially liked the scriptural emphases in *Book of Common Prayer*, even going so far as to state: "There is nothing equal to it [the Prayer Book] outside the Bible."<sup>20</sup> Summers was not opposed to the use of the *Book of Common Prayer* by Methodists and in *The Golden Censer* the prayers which he provided for use in public worship were exclusively from the Prayer Book. Nevertheless, Summers believed that liturgy of the Prayer Book was simply too long to be used for regular Sunday worship. He preferred the abbreviated form of the *Book of Common Prayer* which John Wesley had provided for Methodists in the *Sunday Service* of 1784, although he thought that even the *Sunday Service* ought not to be used invariably. The problem with the exclusive use of such printed liturgies was that it could lead to formalism, or even worse, to ritualism. To counter this, he strongly advocated the use of extemporaneous prayer, which had been a hallmark of Methodist worship since the beginning of the Methodist movement. One great strength of Methodism was that it provided a *via media* between formless worship and ritualism and Summers unabashedly claimed that the Methodist style of worship was the best possible.<sup>21</sup>

The balance between form and freedom was important for Summers' concept of worship; however, he recognized that nineteenth century Methodists were more likely to err on the side of freedom. In the preface to his *Commentary on the Ritual of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* Summers bemoaned the fact that some Methodist ministers had been neglecting the "beautiful, appropriate, and impressive forms," of the Ritual and had wandered into "carelessness and slovenliness in conducting the worship of God."<sup>22</sup> He maintained that the liturgy deserved solemn care in order to be the appropriate worship of the people of God, and this meant that the minister must be aware of the aesthetic dimension of public prayer. But giving attention to the aesthetic aspects of the liturgy was not just saying the beautiful words; it also meant paying attention to how the liturgy was performed.

Summers' concern about the form of public worship is directly related to his understanding of the communal nature of public worship. Proper form kept worship from becoming idiosyncratic. He insisted that the work of worship does not belong to the minister alone; rather, ". . . it is 'common prayer' which the minister offers; and everyone is, or ought to be, as much interested in it as the minister himself."<sup>23</sup> This emphasis on the

<sup>20</sup>T. O. Summers, *Why I am not an Episcopalian*. (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1881) 21.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 21-22.

<sup>22</sup>T. O. Summers, *Commentary on the Ritual* (Nashville: A. H. Redford, 1873) 23.

<sup>23</sup>*Golden Censer*, 47-48.

communal nature of public worship and it further served to keep his aesthetic sensitivities in check. For him, the purpose of worship was not just beauty, private devotion, or conversion; it was first of all the common work of the people of God. Given the individualistic and revivalistic climate of nineteenth-century American Methodism, this stress on the communal nature of public worship is quite remarkable.

Summers' baptismal theology can be found in his *Baptism, a Treatise* . . . and in references to baptism in his other apologetic works.<sup>24</sup> Methodists had a foot both in the Prayer Book tradition and in revivalism and were criticised from the right and the left wings of the Protestant church on their theology of baptism. Summers, as well as other Methodists of his day, attempted to articulate a theology and practice of baptism which reconciled infant baptism and affusion (sprinkling) with the stress in the revivalist movements on conversion and holiness.<sup>25</sup> In *Baptism, a Treatise* . . . he makes several points. First of all, he stated that children are appropriate subjects for baptism, not because of the faith of their parents (against the Presbyterians), but because God's grace is freely offered to all people in Jesus Christ. Thus, children are born into sin, but at the same time into Christ's universally-effective redemption. Though all children inevitably fall again into personal sin as they grow older and must be converted in order to be saved, this does not negate the universal work of Christ which is signified in baptism. Summers' views here are close to those of John Wesley who always maintained that a post-baptismal conversion was necessary to salvation.<sup>26</sup> Secondly, Summers noted that infant baptism was widely practiced in the early church and was generally approved by the patristic theologians. He was aware of Tertullian's criticism of infant baptism, but he believed that Tertullian's critique was based on a faulty view of post-baptismal sin. Thirdly, Summers argued that infant baptism is coherent with scripture even though it is not specifically mentioned in scripture. He supported his position that children ought to be recognized as members of the community of faith by quoting Jesus (i.e., Mark 10:18ff, ". . . let the children come to me. . .") and by referring to the baptism of households in Acts which he believed certainly must have included children.<sup>27</sup> Thus, reason, tradition, and scripture, were all brought in to support the Methodist practice of infant baptism.

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<sup>24</sup>T. O. Summers, *Baptism, a Treatise on the Nature, Perpetuity, Subjects, Administration, Mode and Use of the Christian Church* (Nashville, A. H. Redford for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1873, reprint of first edition, 1852).

<sup>25</sup>E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians. American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1978) 166ff.

<sup>26</sup>Although Wesley believed that infant baptism effected regeneration, he thought that later conversion was necessary to make it effective for the adult believer. See Ole Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press of Zondervan Publishing House, 1985) 144.

But Summers also employed the category of “experience” to argue his case. One of the main criticisms that the Baptists made of infant baptism was that it presupposed baptismal regeneration *ex opere operato* since the infant did not actively participate in the sacrament. Summers, as most Methodists of his day, did not believe that baptism effected regeneration *ex opere operato* (that is, it does not remove the marks of original sin automatically). He quoted a long list of patristic sources and later theologians which did support a doctrine of baptismal regeneration, but then he refuted the doctrine by an appeal to experience, observation, and common sense: “universal experience and observation demonstrate that the grace of regeneration is not tied to the ordinance of baptism; and it is simply an absurdity to say that it can be.”<sup>28</sup> In other words, it is clear that all baptized person do not show the marks of the regenerated life; therefore regeneration could not possibly be automatic in baptism. In the little book, *Why I am not an Episcopalian*, he stated the problem in Zwinglian terms:

If a sacrament is an outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace, how can the inward spiritual grace be a part of the sacrament? Is the sacrament both the thing and the thing signified? What confusion and contradiction here!<sup>29</sup>

A sacrament is a sign; therefore, it cannot be the thing signified, or it would no longer be a sign. Likewise, baptism is a sign of regeneration, but is not itself that regeneration.

What good, then, is baptism for infants or even adults if it “does not really impart what it typifies?” In the treatise on baptism Summers offered three answers: 1. “As it is the sign of Gospel covenant, it [baptism] signifies to us the mercy and grace of God.” It is a divine pledge to the Christian. 2. On the other hand, “baptism ratifies our title to the covenant blessing which it symbolizes and pledges our discharge of corresponding obligation.” Thus, baptism is a human pledge to God as well. 3. And finally, in accomplishing these first two points, baptism “ministers to our sanctification”; that is, it helps us to grow in Christian faith. Therefore, while baptism does not have ontological effect, it has immense *psychological* effect, not only for the one being baptized, but for the *community which witnesses the baptism*, by showing clearly God’s grace toward us. Because this psychological effect was very real, Summers could say that baptism “ministers materially to our sanctification and final salvation,” with “our” referring both the baptizand and the baptizing community.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Baptism, a Treatise*, 21-52. He uses a similar historically- and theologically-mixed argument for the practice of baptism by affusion. In the *Commentary on the Ritual* he even states that sprinkling, which is a kind of pouring is a better symbol of the “out-pouring” of Holy Spirit than is immersion. See *Commentary on the Ritual*, 40.

<sup>28</sup> *Baptism, a Treatise*, 148.

<sup>29</sup> *Why I am not an Episcopalian*, 13.

<sup>30</sup> *Baptism, a Treatise*, 153-159.



Even though Summers' theology of baptism is rather low, he was quite scrupulous in his understanding of baptismal practice. He was, for example, adamantly opposed to rebaptism. He pointed to what he believed to be the indiscriminate practice of rebaptism by some Episcopalians as a reason why he could not join the Episcopal Church.<sup>31</sup> He also was opposed to the practice of confirmation through the laying-on-of-hands as a sign of the giving of the Holy Spirit, or as the necessary preparation for first communion. He argued that confirmation as an act separate from baptism was simply not scriptural. Of course, in the nineteenth century, neither branch of episcopal Methodism had a rite of confirmation, so there was little problem with the practice among Methodists.<sup>32</sup> However, in 1870 the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, recognizing the need for some sort of rite to signify the receiving of persons who were baptized in childhood into full membership in the church, established a "Form for the Reception and Recognition of Church Members." Summers was part of the 1870 General Conference committee which prepared this new rite. While Summers admitted that the rite was in some ways parallel to the rite of confirmation in the Protestant Episcopal Church, he insisted that it did not suggest an imparting of the Holy Spirit as in the Prayer Book rite of confirmation. In his *Commentary on the Ritual*, he carefully pointed out that in this Methodist rite the "right hand of fellowship" is given rather than a "laying-on-of-hands."<sup>33</sup> This, for him, was the important distinction.

Summers' theology of the Lord's Supper, like his theology of baptism, is quite low. Regarding the so-called prayer of consecration, he stated in the *Commentary on the Ritual*: "There is indeed no necessity of any special consecration of bread and wine for this ordinance . . . But it is not unmeet to offer such a prayer before partaking of the sacred emblems, especially as we 'say grace' over our ordinary meals."<sup>34</sup> Absent from Summers' eucharistic theology is the rich sacrificial imagery of Charles Wesley's eucharistic hymns. For him, the consecration is little more than a table blessing. For this reason, Summers was opposed to the "manual acts" (i.e., elevating the bread and cup) during the words of institution which he construed to be a "mimicry" of Jesus' own sacrifice. Indeed, the "manual acts" had been dropped from the Ritual in 1854 and it is possible that Summers was influential in the decision to omit them.

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<sup>31</sup> *Why I am not an Episcopalian*, 27-28.

<sup>32</sup> John Wesley had omitted confirmation in the *Sunday Service* of 1784.

<sup>33</sup> *Commentary on the Ritual*, 55-56. The Methodist Episcopal Church had established a similar rite in 1864 which also included the "right hand of fellowship". It is interesting that in 1886 the Methodist Episcopal Church, South did include a rubric in the Order for Infant Baptism which allowed the laying-on-of-hands following the baptism. Summers may have been responsible for this change.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

Yet, even though he opposed the "manual acts" on theological grounds, he was not insensitive to the value of ritual action in the Lord's Supper. He particularly stressed the action of the distribution of communion:

Every act is significant: the bread should be broken to represent the breaking of Christ's body on the cross—the wine poured out to represent the shedding of his blood—both should be placed into the hands of the communicants, who should eat and drink them, to show their personal appreciation by faith of the merits of that sacrifice which is here symbolized.<sup>35</sup>

Clearly, for Summers the way in which the sacrament was performed was part of the spiritual and theological meaning of the sacrament. For this reason Summers was set against the practice of using grape juice in place of wine. Of this "recent" innovation he remarked, "Slops at the Lord's table! Slops! I would not consent to such nonsense—no not for one moment."<sup>36</sup> What was at stake was the integrity of the act.

Summers believed deeply, and taught his students to believe, that the Ritual of the Lord's Supper was not to be tinkered with casually. It was probably through his influence that the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was spared some of the rather unorthodox liturgical revisions in the Ritual that the northern branch of the church adopted in the 1860s.<sup>37</sup> The one revision in the order for the Lord's Supper that was adopted by the southern Methodists, in addition to the omission of the "manual acts" mentioned above, was the moving of the Lord's Prayer from after the communion of the people to just after the communion of the minister. Summers commented that the reason for this alteration was that "many ministers feel the need of some prescribed form after they have communed."<sup>38</sup> However, it is unclear whether he actually approved the change himself.

Summers' conservatism regarding the Ritual is reflected in his appreciation of John Wesley's *Sunday Service* of 1784. The *Sunday Service* had not been used since the General Conference of 1792 when it was replaced by the Ritual. At the 1866 General Conference, a memorial (motion) was presented by the Francis Street Church of Mobile, Alabama, asking permission for the congregation to use the *Sunday Service* in addition to the Ritual. Summers had been a pastor of the Francis Street Church

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>36</sup>Fitzgerald, 226. The southern church did not have a rubric mandating the use of grape juice until the merger with the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Protestants in 1939.

<sup>37</sup>For example, in the 1864 *Discipline*, The Methodist Episcopal Church placed the Preface and the Sanctus between the communion of the minister and the people, and even rewrote the Gloria in Excelsis!

<sup>38</sup>*Commentary on the Ritual*, 26.

and was at least partially responsible for the memorial.<sup>39</sup> Though the proposal met with some opposition from Methodists who feared that the *Sunday Service* was too Anglican and ritualistic, it was finally passed. The Conference further called for a reprint of the *Sunday Service* to be published with the current Ritual of the church, and Summers was asked to be the editor.<sup>40</sup>

While the demand for the new edition of the *Sunday Service* was not great, its publication symbolized a renewed interest in liturgy among southern Methodists which can be further documented through the changes in the *Discipline* regarding worship.<sup>41</sup> Two important directions concerning the Lord's Supper were placed in the 1866 *Discipline*. For the first time monthly communion was mandated wherever possible, that is, wherever there was an elder to preside at the service; and the 1866 *Discipline* required that the Ritual of the church be used invariably for all sacramental services. Summers chaired the Committee on Revisals and was a motivating force behind these changes.<sup>42</sup> As noted above, he was concerned about the "slovinliness" of some of the clergy in the leadership of worship, and the rule regarding the invariable use of the Ritual was directed at this problem. The second rule which required monthly communion became established a distinctive pattern in the southern church, while the northern Methodists continued a pattern of communion only four times a year, usually tied to quarterly conference.

During Summers' tenure on the Committee on Revisals, other significant additions were made to the rites of the Church. In 1870, along with the "Form for the Reception and Recognition of Church members," the *Discipline* added a "Form for the Laying of a Cornerstone of Church members," and a "Form for the Dedication of a Church."<sup>43</sup> Even more important was the establishment in 1870 of an order for public morning and evening worship:

Quest. 1. What directions are given for uniformity in public worship?

Ans. 1. The morning service shall be conducted in the following order:

- (1) Singing—the congregation standing.
- (2) Prayer—the congregation kneeling.

<sup>39</sup>Wade, 274-275.

<sup>40</sup>T. O. Summers, ed., *The Sunday Service of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Nashville: Published by A. H. Redford for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1867).

<sup>41</sup>Nolan B. Harmon, Jr. *The Rites and Ritual of Episcopal Methodism, with Particular Reference to the Rituals of the Methodist Episcopal Church and Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Respectively*. (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1926) 55.

<sup>42</sup>*Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1866*. (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1866) 118-120. See Wade, 275-276.

<sup>43</sup>The Methodist Episcopal Church had established similar rites in 1864.

- (3) Reading a lesson out of the Old Testament and another out of the New.
- (4) Singing—the congregation sitting.
- (5) Preaching.
- (6) Singing—the congregation standing.
- (7) Prayer—the congregation kneeling.
- (8) Benediction.<sup>44</sup>

The stated purpose of this order was to provide a “uniformity in public worship.” But this was a uniformity that allowed for a great deal of freedom since the order did nothing more than prescribe an outline of morning and evening worship without any specified texts. Still, it may be said that this brief order quite simply expressed the *via media* which Summers believed Methodist worship was at its best: form and freedom in creative tension.

### Conclusion

As this brief account of his work has shown, T. O. Summers contributed to virtually every aspect of the liturgical practice of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in the nineteenth century. The hymnals that he edited served the church for more than four decades and continued to shape the musical tastes of the church for many years. Through his work on the *Discipline*, he helped standardize an order for morning and evening worship that enjoyed wide use and he was influential in establishing a pattern of monthly communion. Furthermore, as Dean on the Divinity School at Vanderbilt, Summers impressed upon a generation ministerial students his concern for the dignity of worship and brought to their attention the simple beauty of the Methodist Ritual.

Some of Summers' contributions to the church have had a long lasting effect. His conservation approach to the liturgy was reflected in the attitudes of southern Methodists until well after the merger of 1939. Indeed, the southern Ritual for the Lord's Supper remained virtually unchanged until the 1964 Book of Worship. The 1866 order for morning and evening prayer is followed by many United Methodist churches today with only slight revision although kneeling is no longer practiced and most churches sing a hymn before the benediction rather than after the sermon. Moreover, the pattern of monthly celebrations of the Lord's Supper is still kept by many southern United Methodist Churches, while the typical pattern in the north has continued to be quarterly.

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<sup>44</sup>*Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1870*, as quoted in Wade, 281-289. Wade does not actually state that Summers was responsible for this pattern, though he must have had some influence on its development.

But, of all that Summers achieved through his diverse ministry to the church, perhaps his most amazing accomplishment may be summarized as follows: this self-educated British immigrant loved the Ritual, wrote and taught about the necessity of good liturgical practice, and yet managed to die deeply revered by southern Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians. No small feat, that.