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The Heart Experience: A Study of Poetry and Piety in Methodist Hymnody in the Eighteenth Century in Britain

by

Starr Worster

A thesis submitted for the degree of

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University of the Witwatersrand

Department of English

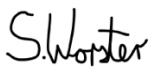
Supervisor: Professor Victor Houliston

February 2023

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work except where I have explicitly indicated otherwise. In this regard, I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others.

The thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.



February 2023

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My thanks go to the John Rylands Research Institute and Library (University of Manchester Library) for granting me access to their Special Collections where I was able to view some of Charles Wesley's manuscript items and other material in their Methodist archives and read Wesley's journal in the original.

I am profoundly grateful to my wonderful family – Edward, Luke, Adam, Skye, Amy, Rebecca and Stefan – for their unwavering encouragement and loving support. Special thanks go to my husband, Edward, for his love and motivation and for his constant interest in and engagement on the topic; and to my precious daughter, Skye, for her help in making the finished presentation of the thesis look as good as possible.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my mother who lived so completely a life of love and faith. Her light and beauty of spirit shine ever brightly.

Abstract

This study engages in an exploration of the poetics of Methodist hymnody of the eighteenth century in Britain focusing on Charles Wesley, William Williams and Ann Griffiths. Throughout, the reference point is that of the heart experience which shapes the hymns both in terms of poetic expression and theological belief. Methodism was – and is – above all, an experiential faith, a faith of not only knowing but also feeling God and it is in this confluence of knowledge and emotion that the hymnists of the eighteenth century gave voice to what was for all of them a spiritual pilgrimage. It is a confluence which inspired and informed the hymns, and which is brought to bear on the examination of what John Wesley calls the 'Spirit' of poetry and piety at the core of this study. The transforming power of Methodism on British society is universally accepted. John Wesley's preaching, ministry and organisational abilities were key, but as much as hearing the spoken word played a major role in evangelisation so, too, did the sung hymns of Charles Wesley and others like him. Their poetic expressions of spirituality served to inspire, to encourage, to teach but, most of all, to bring people together in shared worship of their God. The hymns were both a personal articulation of Christian faith and the spiritual journey and an inclusive means of expression for all believers. Charles Wesley, a founder of Methodism along with his brother, John, gave to the movement an enduring channel of evangelism, testimony and testament to the power and love of God through the creative output of his hymns. They emerge out of the context of a spirituality that was focused and devotional; the poetry in his hymns became a means to express praise and reverence to God, and the communication of his faith and religious experience was underscored, in every instance, by his linguistic, thematic and stylistic choices. Charles Wesley was at the forefront of hymnody as it manifested in eighteenth-century Britain although certain figures, namely William Williams and, at the end of the century, Ann Griffiths, became the voices of a Welsh hymnic expression. While Charles Wesley and Williams were evangelists as well as poets, Griffiths wrote to convey her deeply personal and mystic experience of God; all three, nonetheless, used the hymn form to articulate poetically the experience and intensity of emotion in the journey of faith. Methodism's religion of the heart is at the forefront of all its creeds, its mission, its ministry, but nowhere is this more evident than in its hymns. It is in the consideration of the manifestation and poetic functionality of that heart experience that the crux of this thesis lies.

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List of abbreviations

The following references are detailed in the bibliography section.

APHS	An Arrangement of the Psalms, Hymns, and Scriptural Songs of the Rev. Isaac Watts
CHPM	A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists
CHW	A Collection of Hymns for Public, Social and Domestic Worship
GE	Gloria in Excelsis: or Hymns of Praise to God and the Lamb
HBC	The Hymnary for Use in Baptist Churches
HGT	Hymns of Grace and Truth
HP	Hymns and Psalms
HSD	Hosannah to the Son of David
HSP	Hymns and Sacred Poems
MHB	Methodist Hymn-Book
MHT	The Methodist Hymn-Book with Tunes
OH	The Olney Hymns
PW	The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley
SHSP	Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures

Chronology

1674	Birth of Isaac Watts
1703	Birth of John Wesley
1707	Publication of *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* by Isaac Watts Birth of Charles Wesley
1717	Birth of William Williams
1728	Publication of William Law's *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*
1729	Establishment of the Holy Club by Charles Wesley
1731	Birth of William Cowper
1735	Departure of John and Charles Wesley for Georgia, America
1738	Conversions of John and Charles Wesley Conversion of William Williams
1739	Foundation of the first Methodist chapel in Bristol First open-air sermon by John Wesley Publication of *Hymns and Sacred Poems* by John and Charles Wesley
1749	Marriage of Charles Wesley to Sarah Gwynne
1776	Birth of Ann Griffiths
1780	Publication of John Wesley's *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*
1788	Death of Charles Wesley
1791	Death of John Wesley

Preface

My heritage is a missionary one with my great-grandfather leaving Sweden in the 1890s to take up a post at Rorke's Drift, in what is now known as Kwazulu-Natal, at the behest of the Swedish Missionary Society. My grandfather followed in his footsteps, continuing the work of the Society in South Africa, largely in rural Natal, and eventually becoming the Dean of the Swedish Church in Johannesburg. I was confirmed by my grandfather in the Swedish Church, although my upbringing has been Methodist, and my religious conviction was nurtured in the Methodist Church. Throughout my academic studies, focusing on English literature, my principal interest has been in the value and effect of poetry, particularly in terms of expressions of spirituality. Through singing hymns in church I became aware, not only of their integral role within worship, but of the poetry inherent in them, in their structure, rhyme and rhythm and in what Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his notes, 'Shakspeare, with Introductory Matter on Poetry, the Drama, and the Stage', describes as the essential qualities of poetry, 'that it be impassioned, and be able to move our feelings and awaken our affections' (2018, 40). Hymnody has, at its heart, the same intent to stir emotions, the same fervency of expression, albeit within the context of evangelism, Christian communion or devotions. As described in the 1933 preface to *The Methodist Hymn-Book with Tunes*, 'A hymn is only a hymn if in it men speak to the Most High and He to them' (1972, v). The communication between God and humanity forms the essence of hymnody and, indeed, much of religious poetry.

Literary scholarship, interpretation and understanding of any writing across the ages is ongoing as new critical voices come into play and as new perspectives from different historical contexts are brought to bear on the text in question. This thesis is my contribution to a particular focus; it presents my construct of the meaning and significance of Methodist hymnody. It is driven by my realisation of the richness of the poetic expression in the Methodist hymns of the eighteenth century and by my personal conviction that these hymns are worth engaging not merely as expressions of community worship in song – although their value in this function is not to be undermined – but within the genre of poetry as a whole, within the greater body of literature. In exploring the hymns, my aim, while recognising the value of hymnody as sung worship, is to put the emphasis back on the words – as in the time of John and Charles Wesley when the hymns both elucidated and highlighted the theology of the preached word – so that their full poetic expression may be appreciated and understood.

The study, for me, is as much a personal as an academic one given my roots in the church and spiritual life and my interest in the history of the Methodist hymn tradition. The story of John and Charles Wesley and the role they played in the Methodist revival, and the separate but equally vigorous flourishing of the revival in Wales, is a fascinating one, one which gains in significance because out of those revivals came the hymns of the mid to later years of the eighteenth century. Hymn-singing was a vital part of the evangelical revival in the 1700s, characteristic of Methodist worship both to express joy and praise of God and to teach scriptural truth, and was, and remains, integral to the missionising purpose of Methodism. Methodism has always been known for its hymnody, and music, especially as expressed in congregational song, is an important element of Methodist worship. Martin Luther, in one of his comments about music, stated that 'Music is next to theology'. In another context he wrote in a letter to composer Ludwig Senfl in 1530 that the prophets 'held theology and music most tightly connected, and proclaimed truth through Psalms and songs' (1883, 323).

Methodism and poetry are usually seen as the particular sphere of Charles Wesley and he can be credited with shaping the Methodist movement as much through his hymns and poetry as did his brother, John, through his preaching and writing. However, there is a gap in the field of literary criticism with regard to the hymnody of Methodism and its poetic expression which merits further exploration. In his preface to *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* published in 1780, John Wesley asks the question 'whether there be not in some of the following hymns the true Spirit of Poetry', emphasising, however, the priority of a spirit of piety (1791, v). John Wesley's question regarding 'the true Spirit of Poetry' is one that, in this study, requires consideration.

This thesis centres around three Methodist hymnists, Charles Wesley, William Williams and Ann Griffiths – Griffiths grew up in the latter part of the eighteenth century, composing her hymns between 1802 and her death in 1805. Given that her life was impacted by eighteenth-century influences and her output was in the very early years of the nineteenth century, for the purposes of this study, her work will be regarded as part of the body of eighteenth-century Methodist hymnody. The careful analysis in this thesis of the selected hymns of the above-named hymnists, locating the hymns in their poetic, ideological and theological context, adds to general studies on Methodist hymnody. However, a diverging point is in the dedication of the study to the distinct, discernible poetics of the hymns and their theological relation to Methodism.

Note on conventions

There are biblical references throughout this thesis, all of which come from the King James version of the Bible (1611). God is referred to in masculine terms since this is consistent with the expression of the time.

Hymn references are given in brackets indicated by the hymnbook abbreviation and the hymn number. Where reference to a hymn is by page rather than by hymn number, or to a source other than a hymnbook, this is indicated.

Chapter One: Introduction

The eighteenth-century surge in religious fervour in Britain, rooted largely in the conversion experiences of John and Charles Wesley, triggered a movement that spread all over the world to become one of the leading Protestant denominations today, Methodism. This was a movement noted for its enthusiastic sermons and hymn-singing, its open-air meetings. Members were often accused of fanaticism: Theophilus Evans, an early critic of the movement, wrote a description of 'the natural Tendency of their Behaviour, in Voice and Gesture and horrid Expressions, to make People mad'; the artist, William Hogarth, lampooned adherents in one of his satirical prints (1762) entitled 'Credulity, Superstition and Fanaticism' (Maseko 2008, 56). It was a movement that repelled revolution, unleashed renewal and revivalism and reframed Protestant Christianity. The manifesto of this extraordinary religious force was captured fundamentally, not in theological discourse, but in the exuberant and passionate poetry of Charles Wesley's hymn-writing.

The two Wesley brothers, John and Charles, were ordained priests in the Church of England. Within three days of one another, however, they each had a spiritual experience that was to change their lives and the course of Christianity in England. For both, this experience was a phenomenon of a new and profound interaction with God, engaging their hearts fully. John's famous words, 'I felt my heart strangely warmed' in the context of receiving assurance of his salvation in Christ and Charles's less known description of feeling 'a strange palpitation of heart', with a consequent sense of peace and joy, placed their experiences firmly within the context of emotive perception and spiritual transformation. Their conversion experiences, as personal, meaningful communion with God and realisation of his presence, manifested in lives of Christian devotion according to Jesus' injunction to his followers: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind' (Luke 10:27).

Methodist revivalism became a force in the years following the Wesley brothers' conversions, inflaming hearts and attracting thousands of followers. It flourished through the dynamism of its open-air meetings and the appeal of its preaching, the extent of its evangelism, the zeal of its societies and the strength and emotional value of its hymn-writing and congregational singing. John Wesley's *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (1780) had an evangelical thrust and, like the later collection *The Methodist Hymn-Book with Tunes* (1933), contained a large number of hymns that had proved 'their power both to deepen the spiritual life of believers and to inspire saving faith in

Christ' (MHT 1972, iv). This latter collection is an historic one as it was the first hymnbook since Wesley's, some one hundred and fifty years earlier, issued for the use of all the churches of Methodism. Since the late 1730s, the Wesley brothers had published hymnbooks and collections extensively, all with the purpose of kindling a spirit of devotion. There are many facets to Christian worship, among them being preaching, prayer, Bible-reading, but hymn-singing is specifically the congregational expression of worship and nowhere is this more marked than within Methodism as engendered by the early Methodist evangelists. As affirmed in the preface to *The Methodist Hymn-Book with Tunes*, 'Methodism has always been able to sing its creed' (1972, iii).

The importance of hymns in the eighteenth century cannot be overestimated. This was a time when most people participated in a form of collective worship, in a church or a chapel, in a prayer meeting or in the open air. According to James Sambrook, 'hymns were the common man's poetry and theology' (1986, 42). This statement reinforces the value of hymnody in eighteenth-century society, with theology and doctrine becoming manifest in poetic expression, for many perhaps the only poetry at their disposal. Donald Davie asserts that Isaac Watts's *Hymns and Psalms* was of greater influence than any other works of the eighteenth century (1978, 33–34). In a century that was overwhelmingly Christian in Britain in its intellectual, moral and social life, the most popular and widely used hymns of Charles Wesley and others had a major impact (Sambrook 1986, 43).

John Wesley's achievement of establishing the Methodist movement and then the church during his lifetime is an extraordinary one. In one of his sermons, he preached (Wesley 1984, sermon 10):

> The testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression of the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my Spirit, that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and gives himself for me; and that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God.

Sambrook writes of the orthodox perspective on such subjectivism represented in the adverse reaction of Bishop Joseph Butler in 1739: 'Sir, the pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost is a horrid thing, a very horrid thing' (1986, 42). Nevertheless, John Wesley's role in the revival continued to be firmly grounded in his belief in the authority of Scripture and through the assurance of personal experience. His credo, unlike that of the Calvinist Methodists such as George Whitefield, was that salvation is freely available to all. He also preached a doctrine of good works, one of the cornerstones of

Methodism, and one which can be encapsulated by the words from Matthew 7:16: 'Ye shall know them by their fruits'.

Isaac Watts's hymn *I'll praise my Maker while I've breath*, written in 1719, has appeared in every Methodist hymnbook since 1737 (MHT 1972, iv). The words of this hymn were uttered by John Wesley on his deathbed and they testify to the powerful nature of the personal relationship between the divine and human in the Christian walk and the force of hymnic expression, aspects so completely central to the Methodist faith.

Criticism and commentary

The subject of Methodism and its surge in the eighteenth century has long engaged critics, theologians and academics whether from a position of support, denunciation or objectivity. From the time when Methodism, led by John Wesley and George Whitefield, began to emerge in England from within the Anglican Church, anti-Methodist sentiment appeared in pamphlets, cartoons, poems, satiric works and theological polemic criticising the movement's beliefs and practices (Kelly 2008, 1). In 1732, an anonymous letter appeared in a London newspaper, *Fog's Weekly Journal*, attacking the men (members of the Wesleys' Holy Club) identified as 'Methodists'. This letter is, by all accounts, the first known anti-Methodist publication (McInelly 2014, 1). George Lavington, the Bishop of Exeter, who published four editions of his *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd* between 1749 and 1754, denounced Methodism with its persuasive methods 'considering how *inconsiderate and injudicious*, how *unlearned and unstable*, a large Portion of Mankind is' (1754, 1). Other men of letters such as Samuel Richardson (1689–1761), Henry Fielding (1707–1754) and Horace Walpole (1717–1797) also dismissed Methodism in various forms. All the anti-Methodist literature criticised Methodists for their enthusiasm and their supposed hypocrisy, self-righteousness and heterodoxy, with the charges and accusations coming from all levels of society as well as from the established clergy (McInelly 2014, 2).

In contrast to such criticism and ridicule, several writers, all of them Methodists, voiced their championship of Methodism in unequivocal and fervent terms. In what is believed to be the first published response, an anonymous pamphlet, 'The Oxford Methodists', was written in 1733 with the subtitle, 'Being some Account of a Society of Young Gentlemen … Setting forth their Rise, Views, and Designs' (McInelly 2014, 3–4). All the responses to the accusations of enthusiasm, which were seen to manifest in experiential faith, energetic preaching and hymn-singing, were reinforced by arguing biblical precedent.

John Wesley himself was prolific in countering the condemnation and validating the precepts and practices of Methodism. On beginning his itinerant mission in Bristol in 1739 he wrote what is called 'John Wesley's Earliest Published Defence of the Emerging Revival in Bristol'. Bristol was a major centre of early Methodist preaching with John Wesley informing the bishop, Dr Joseph Butler, that he could 'advance the glory of God and the salvation of souls better in Bristol than anywhere else' (Ward and Heitzenrater 1990, 472). In 1853, R. F. Shinn published his *A tribute to our fathers: being a vindication of the founders of the Methodist Protestant Church* while B. F. Tefft's *Methodism successful and the internal causes of its success* appeared in 1860. In the 1880s two books were published that made a clear case of support for Methodism, not the least being in the descriptiveness of their titles. The first was *The high-churchman disarmed: a defense of our Methodist fathers* (1886) by W. P. Harrison, the second was A. B. Hyde's book with its vividly expressive extended title, *The story of Methodism throughout the world, from the beginning to the present time; tracing the rise and progress of that wonderful religious movement, which, like the Gulf Stream, has given warmth to wide waters and verdure to many lands; and giving an account of its various influences and institutions of today* (1887).

The negative and positive responses to and descriptions of early Methodism focus in the main on a significant aspect of the Methodist faith, that of emotion, the experience of the heart. Eighteenth-century hymnody is an expression of that emotion, the affective quality that imparts a poetic value to many of the hymns. For both critics and proponents alike, emotion was the key element that provoked a response; the outpouring of emotion was either seen as unseemly or the benchmark of piety and spirituality.

The twentieth century began to see works appearing that dealt with the topic of Methodism and the Wesleys in a more academic fashion. The Wesley Works Editorial Project began in 1960, producing *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* planned as 35 volumes and presenting letters, sermons, journal entries and notes by John Wesley, which represent a valuable field of study relating to Methodism. Albert C. Outler's publication of *John Wesley* in 1964 marked the start of a growing interest in robust scholarship around the Wesleys, with Wesleyan and Methodist scholarly studies continuing to develop, in the form of academic writings, journals, books and conferences, throughout the second half of the twentieth century. The launch of the Kingswood Book series, dedicated to Wesleyan and Methodist scholarship, by Abingdon Press in 1988 and Henry Rack's *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (1989) formed part of a

growing interest among theologians, historians and scholars in the Wesleys and the wider issues of revivalism and Methodism (Maddox and Vickers 2010, 6).

As the century progressed into the twenty-first, the focus began to shift away from solely historical narrative to writings by a number of academics with particular interests in the history of religion and evangelicalism, which are valuable in providing an appreciation and understanding of the impact of Methodism and its founders on cultural, social and religious life. These writers include David Hempton, Mark Noll, Phyllis Mack and Richard P. Heitzenrater. W. R. Ward in his journal article 'The Protestant Frame of Mind' (1990) seeks to frame the cultural and religious context of Methodism through considering belief in eighteenth-century Europe and exploring the stimulus created by the juncture of the Reformation and the Enlightenment. Phyllis Mack's *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (2008), while contributing to Methodist scholarship as a whole, pertains to this study in her discussion of the role of the hymn in Methodist life. The growth of Methodism in Britain, the importance of its influence on community and social structure in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the nature of the Methodist experience is addressed in *The Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion c. 1750–1900* by David Hempton (2011).

In tracing a line of general criticism and scholarly study of the Wesleys and the rise of Methodism, hymnody necessarily fills a place of corresponding importance given its reflection of the theology and experiential heart religion of the Methodists. Despite the fact that the eighteenth century was the great age of the English hymn, hymnody as a body of literature is generally seen as peripheral to the traditional literary canon. Nevertheless, from as early as 1707 in the preface to his *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, Isaac Watts defined the congregational hymn as a poetic genre and emphasised its value.

A review of Madeleine Forrell Marshall and Janet Todd's *English Congregational Hymns in the Eighteenth Century* ('Albion' volume 15, 1983) puts the spotlight on the dearth of scholarly studies on hymnology. This is a long but illuminating quote:

> Hymns have provided a major source of religious expression in English-speaking countries for the past two centuries, but except for the monumental studies of hymnologists, they have been largely ignored by scholars except as occasional anecdotal evidence. Literary scholars have tended to dismiss them as a sub-genre unworthy of study – banal, jangly, didactic, and melodramatic. Historians tended to dismiss them as only about religion, for which subject they had better evidence

> in theology and church history. The growth of interest in social history and popular culture in the last few decades has kindled a scholarly interest in hymns, but for the most part, historians have studied them as artistic literary evidence, ignoring their religious and congregational contexts.

In their efforts to combine historical and literary scholarship, Marshall and Todd emphasise the role that hymn research can play in an improved understanding of the religion of the eighteenth century (2014, 3). They assert that while there has been some scholarship around the language, structure, rhetorical tools and biblical sources of hymns, 'intensely partisan criticism' has compromised 'the status of hymnology as a scholarly and objective discipline' (2014, 6).

From the middle of the twentieth century, there has been a growing body of work written about the nature of hymns as poetry and their place in literary tradition. Donald Davie in his book, *The Eighteenth-Century Hymn in England* (2007), seeks to spotlight work contributing to the body of literature of hymnody such as that by Charles Wesley, Isaac Watts and William Cowper and to contextualise it as poetry. In 'Poetry and Religion' (*A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry* edited by Christine Gerrard 2006), Emma Mason explores the nature of poetics of religious poetry more specifically, looking at the poetic expression of the hymn genre within the framework of eighteenth-century poetry in general. Richard Arnold's *Trinity of Discord: The Hymnal and Poetic Innovations of Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, and William Cowper* (2012) places the spotlight on these three writers in terms of the hymn's development. While they stand at the forefront of the genre of hymnody, Arnold conveys their very individuality and radical differences from each other in what he considers a multiform genre in itself. Placing them within their time and context, he delineates and explores their significance in building a new and lasting genre.

Charles Wesley can be said to be the voice of Methodist hymnody. Joanna Cruickshank in *Pain, Passion and Faith: Revisiting the Place of Charles Wesley in Early Methodism* (2009) and Randy L. Maddox in his paper '"Digging Deep into the mine": Charles Wesley and the Bible' presented at the *Proceedings of the Charles Wesley Society* (2011) look at particular aspects of Charles Wesley's hymns and their sources. Cruickshank explores the emotional range of the hymns in their depiction of the Christian journey. Maddox demonstrates how Wesley's engagement with the Bible is manifested in his hymns and his critical analysis supplements previous survey treatments of Wesley's biblical hermeneutics by scholars such as S. T. Kimbrough Jr. and J. Richard Watson.

Contemporary historians and scholars of religion or religious literature aim to contribute to the growing interest in hymnology, drawing on the previous literature, as is the stated intention of Christine Gerrard, editor of *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry* (2006). Despite increased efforts within the field of literary scholarship, hymns tend to remain an undervalued, perhaps even a largely unrecognised, contribution to English poetry. While there are studies which argue for the poetic value of hymns, Carl Price's *The Music and Hymnody of the Methodist Hymnal* and Austin Lovelace's *The Anatomy of Hymnody* being two particular examples, hymns, by and large, are not seen in the canon of poetry as evidenced in their general absence in anthologies.

Perhaps the damning description of hymns in the review above as 'banal, jangly, didactic, melodramatic' (although it must be recognised that there are many works which do conform to such a description) can, through this study, be reframed as meaningful, melodic, devotional and dramatic. Ultimately, my intention is to deepen an appreciation and understanding of eighteenth-century hymnody, specifically within the Methodist context, in the canon of English poetics. The emphasis, as a contribution to scholarship in this field, is on how subjective experience is conveyed poetically in eighteenth-century hymnody, on the ways in which the doctrinal focus on individual experience becomes poetically manifest in the hymns.

Overview

This study proceeds from an examination of the development of the hymn and how the English hymn-writing tradition arose out of the Reformation and religious traditions associated with or grounded within it. Biographical exploration leads on to the review and contextualisation of larger theological and poetic affinities of the hymnists and poets under study before centring on the examination of primary texts and the investigation of these affinities. My critical approach to this study encompasses comparison, evaluation and analysis of the texts, integrating personal interpretation with insights obtained from other sources through research. Primary sources include texts by the writers themselves, such as Watts's preface to *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* and John Wesley's preface to *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodist* as well as the hymns. There are numerous full-length studies of the hymnists under review; more general critical and analytical works; biographies, and articles in scholarly journals providing a body of secondary resources.

This study encompasses two specific areas: the historical context of hymnody as it developed through Methodism and key figures in Methodist poetry and hymn-writing in the

eighteenth century; and a critical analysis of selected Methodist hymns. Given the nature of the study, primary sources are of the utmost importance. Wherever possible, the earliest versions that I have been able to access of the hymns have been used; however, *The Methodist Hymn-Book with Tunes* has also served as a significant reference.

In the first instance, eighteenth-century hymnody is contextualised within the poetry of the time. This entails both an exploration of the central concerns of eighteenth-century religious poetry and the way in which poetry and religion merged in their development, and a consideration of the poetics of religious experience or the poetic nature of language used to convey spiritual experience and the scope of its meaning. An understanding of the concepts of poetry and piety and how they manifest in the meanings and usage of hymns and poems includes a brief look at the background to hymn-writing as it developed during the eighteenth century. This takes into account the Protestant Reformation and how it contributed to the English hymn-writing tradition and the shaping influences on Methodist theology. The religious and historical contexts of hymn-writing in the eighteenth century also require examination in terms of how hymnody was influenced by the circumstances and theological convictions of its writers. Isaac Watts and William Cowper contributed materially to the development and influence of hymn-writing which is taken into account, although neither Watts nor Cowper was Methodist.

Historical and biographical context plays a significant role within the framework of a study of hymnody. In this instance, this encompasses the emergence and spread of Methodism, with its central characteristics and tenets, and the connection between Methodist evangelism through its theological teaching, and the integral role of hymnody. Given the central part played by John and Charles Wesley in the Methodist Revival, an essential element to gaining insight into their work, particularly that of Charles's, is to provide context for their religious experiences, witness and outreach. Key to their roles are the circumstances leading to each of their spiritual awakenings – the experience of the heart, which impacted on the religious enthusiasm of the Methodists. Another aspect included in the biographical study is a review of the background of the Wesley family and the roles of Samuel and Susanna Wesley, parents of John and Charles, in bringing up and educating their children and in providing spiritual guidance.

Charles Wesley, as the foremost hymnist and poet of the Methodist creed, takes central place in the examination and interpretation of hymn texts, this in terms of the intent, themes and content of his hymns, as well as in the investigation of the interrelationship of hymnic and poetic expression in his writings. In gaining an understanding of Charles

Wesley's spirituality and religious belief, which manifested in his preaching, hymn-writing and commitment and devotion to God, I have taken into account the major sources of and influences on his Christian credo, including Jeremy Taylor, William Law and *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis.

Hymnody is one of the principal genres in Welsh literature with Methodists, William Williams and Ann Griffiths, being known not only as the country's two greatest hymn-writers but also as prominent literary figures in Wales. In consideration of the force, quality and impact of their poetic expression through their hymns, a separate chapter is assigned to each of them. The appraisal and analysis of selected hymns of Williams and Griffiths is necessarily based on a brief review of Methodism and revival in Wales in the eighteenth century. The Welsh evangelical hymns, in their emphasis on personal religious expression, are distinguished by passion and lyricism connected with Romantic lyric poetry in Wales.

Throughout this study, a central strand that weaves through the various explorations and analyses is that of emotion, the experience of the heart, or in John Keats's words, 'the holiness of the Heart's affections' (2002, 36). A focal question of the study, thus, is how emotion directs and shapes the meaning of and response to hymns. Taking into account the biographical, historical and religious influences that played a part in Methodist hymnody in the eighteenth century in Britain and its poetic expression, a personal perspective and concluding interpretations will be brought to bear on the subject of the effect and purpose of the poetic qualities of hymnody.

Chapter Two: The historical context of eighteenth-century hymnody

The Protestant context

The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century was a time of challenge, conflict, excommunication, persecution and, finally, separation from the Catholic church and division within Protestantism itself. The Reformation changed Christianity forever, birthing Protestant theological precepts and doctrines – such as the sole authority of the Bible and the central doctrinal position of justification by grace through faith for the sake of Christ – that were opposed to Catholic doctrines of papal primacy, purgatory, praying to the saints and the veneration of Mary. The Latin phrase *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda* (the church reformed, always requiring to be reformed), supposedly uttered by St. Augustine and used by Karl Barth, describes the spirit of the Protestant faith (Mahlmann 2010, 384). Both the two great reformers, Martin Luther and John Calvin, felt the conviction that the church needed continually to examine and purify itself in doctrine and practice. Prior to the Reformation, the Latin hymn – the Latin Gregorian chant – and plainsong had prevailed in Christian worship. Thereafter, the vernacular hymn came into prominence in both Catholic and Protestant worship. It is evident from the injunction in Colossians 3:16 from the Bible that the early Christians would have used song in their worship emanating from Jewish religious practices: 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord'.

An important benefit of the Reformation was the restoration of congregational song. Although hymnody within the context of newly developed Protestant forms of worship was unfamiliar to worshippers, congregational singing did, in fact, date back to the practice of the early church. According to Steve Mueller, the Reformation 'expressed itself in song'; however, rather than being revolutionary, this was a tradition originating in Old Testament times and in the early Christian Church (Concordia University Irvine 2017, 'Singing the Reformation'). Two different hymnodic traditions developed out of the Reformation, distinguished by diverging approaches to worship, and it was partly the differing views on the use of song and music in worship that caused the divide between Calvinists and Lutherans (Barber 2006, 1). The German hymnody of Lutheranism comprised hymns translated directly from Latin, metrical versions or paraphrases of psalms and canticles, and original hymns which came to form the greater part of the German chorale. The Lutherans also approved the use of musical instruments in services of worship, particularly the organ. Martin Luther, with

his conviction that music and song express faith and theology, himself wrote 38 hymns. His publication of hymns and hymnbooks in German gave congregants the opportunity to engage God in their own language in contrast to the Latin of the Catholic Mass and the Gregorian chant, which would have been incomprehensible to the congregation at large. Luther stated, 'I wish to compose sacred hymns so that the Word of God may dwell among the people also by means of songs' (Harrell 1980, 36). His best-known hymn, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*, based on Psalm 46, is an assurance of God's truth and love even in times of difficulty. Cardinal Cajetan (1469–1534), despite his opposition to and criticism of the Protestant Reformation and Martin Luther, said of him, 'He has conquered us by his songs' (MHT 1972, x). The second tradition of Protestant hymnody was the French metrical psalms of the Calvinists. Under the leadership of John Calvin, and with their emphasis on the authority of the Word of God, Calvinists believed strongly that only the psalms and hymns of the Old Testament, unaccompanied by musical instruments, were suitable for song in worship. Thus, in the Calvinist tradition, the Psalter predominated for centuries.

The entry on 'Hymnody' in *The Lutheran Cyclopedia* states, 'The Reformation of the sixteenth century is the mother of true evangelical church song' (Jacobs and Haas 1899, 235). The Reformation brought about a liturgical worship service with congregational hymn-singing at its very core (Anderson 1988, 71). By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as influenced by what was happening on the continent, congregational singing in England, not only in Lutheran but other reformed churches such as Nonconformist and Methodist, had begun to find expression in hymns, generating a new breed of hymnists including Isaac Watts, William Cowper, and the Methodists, John and Charles Wesley.

Religious change and the growth of different spiritual perspectives engendered by the Reformation gave form to the evangelical revival and the emergence of Methodism as a movement in the eighteenth century. The essential belief systems, principles and behavioural codes of Puritanism and Pietism provided a foundation for a growing evangelicalism with regard to proclamation of the Gospel and conversion in Britain. Given that they feature throughout this study, the terms Puritanism, Pietism, evangelicalism and Methodism are briefly defined and contextualised.

Puritanism denotes a religious reform movement of the late sixteenth century, which arose from within the Church of England. Puritanism has historically been seen as a 'devotional reformation' following on from the Protestant Reformation set in motion by Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin (Schwanda 2016, introduction). Puritans

emphasised personal experience and a spirituality of the heart and preached against the hierarchy and ceremonies of the church.

Puritans were greatly influenced by Calvinist theology regarding predestination – that one is chosen before birth by God to be saved or damned – and Original Sin – that humanity is innately sinful because of the sins of Adam and Eve. The belief in predestination was consonant with the credo of God's grace – that a member of the elect cannot resist salvation. The doctrine of predestination was one over which John and Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield differed, and it became the cause of the split between Calvinist Methodists and Arminian or Wesleyan Methodists, the latter believing that any and all might be saved. The influence of Puritanism on Methodism is clearly evidenced in certain facets of their faith and belief system. As the Methodists were to do, Puritans placed emphasis on direct personal religious experience and a covenant relationship with God in order to be redeemed from sin.

Pietism arose in the seventeenth century as a movement to revive piety in the Lutheran Church. It merged the conviction of the priority of biblical doctrine with a belief in the importance of individual piety and holy living, a life wholly consecrated to God. The foundations for Pietism were laid through the work of the Lutheran theologian Philipp Spener (1635–1705) who stressed the importance of a spirituality rooted in a personal transformation through spiritual rebirth and of sanctification through the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Although Spener was a Lutheran, Pietists were not confined to Lutheranism or to a single context but came from such diverse groups as the Reformed and Catholic. Rudolf Sohm describes the Pietism of the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries as 'the last great surge of the waves of the ecclesiastical movement begun by the Reformation; it was the completion and the final form of the Protestantism created by the Reformation' (1895, 194–195). Much of Methodism shares doctrines of faith and belief with earlier Pietism which was seen as a religion of the heart movement; according to Sohm, with its central idea of a spiritual rebirth and emphasis on community and charitable work, Pietism can be principally acclaimed for giving impetus to the great Protestant missions (1895, 193).

Evangelicalism, in its purely denotative meaning, comprises proselytisation and conversion. It refers directly to a tradition within the Protestant Church concerning particular doctrines and practices including the belief in the importance of a personal experience of conversion, in the authority of the Bible as God's word and in salvation and redemption through faith. Evangelicalism is not denominationally specific but operates within various

spheres of Protestant Christianity be they Anglican, Methodist, Moravian, Presbyterian, Congregationalist or Baptist (Hindmarsh 2018, n. pag.).

Movements of the seventeenth century advocating devotion and holy living such as Puritanism, Pietism and certain traditions of Anglicanism coalesced in engendering a spiritual awakening from which evangelicalism originated in Europe and then in Britain (Hindmarsh 2018, n. pag.). According to Randall Balmer, evangelicalism absorbed particular features from diverse theological movements – 'warm-hearted spirituality from the Pietists, doctrinal precisionism from the Presbyterians, and individualistic introspection from the Puritans' (2002, vii–viii). Mark Noll adds to this the legacy of 'rigorous spirituality and innovative organization' of High Church Anglicanism (2004, 50). The belief that a return to the primitive Christianity of the early church could best express Christian faith was a determining influence on evangelicals, resulting in more frequent practice of Holy Communion, an emphasis on personal morality and the establishment of societies to encourage piety and to minister to the poor and needy (Schwanda 2016, introduction).

David Bebbington gives a definition of evangelicalism as having four distinctive elements of evangelical faith: conversionism, biblicism, crucicentrism and activism (1993, 3). For the purposes of this study, conversionism will be dealt with more fully but suffice it to say that biblicism refers to the acknowledgement of the Bible as the authoritative Word of God and its central place in faith. Crucicentricism has as centrally important the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ through which is offered to humanity the forgiveness of sins and salvation. Activism is that aspect of evangelicalism that involves the spreading of the Gospel whether this be through preaching or through social outreach.

Conversionism is the belief in the need for a transforming conversion experience which embraces repentance of sin and a change to a godly life; Methodist conviction is rooted in a personal conversion experience. Unlike the common understanding of conversion to mean either a formal change of allegiance or the inner change of orientation that is associated with salvation, the conversion experiences of John Wesley and others of the same time and religious persuasion referred to a particular personal encounter with God leading to repentance, a sense of assurance and a renewed faith. The notion of assurance is an important one in evangelicalism. As Bebbington states, 'The dynamism of the Evangelical movement was possible only because its adherents were assured in their faith' (1993, 42). John Wesley describes his experience of assurance in his journal (1832, 74):

> About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation: and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away my sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.

The conversion experiences of the Wesley brothers were not of a nature requiring the commitment and adherence to church law and creed that comes with a spiritual rebirth since they were already practising Christians. However, their religious experience connoted divine intervention, and transcendence. John Wesley makes the issue clear in his account of his mother, despite already being a committed Christian, receiving the assurance of salvation while attending the Eucharist. He called this a 'converting ordinance' (Heitzenrater 2009, 46). For Wesley, the transformative experience of conversion led to a growing pneumatological epistemology and understanding with regard to matters of justification, sanctification, faith and assurance (Heitzenrater 1989, 146–149).

It was from the conversion experiences of men such as John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, who preached on the need for spiritual renewal and a heartfelt experience and knowledge of God, that the compulsion to spread the Gospel arose. Through their influence, evangelicalism became synonymous with revivalism, the expression of a religious fervour characterised by an emphasis on conversion (Hindmarsh 2018, n. pag.). Of note is the difference between evangelism and evangelicalism. In the context of this thesis, evangelism refers simply to the proclamation and dissemination of the Gospel; evangelicalism encompasses commitment to the evangelical precepts of personal salvation, acceptance of the authority of the Bible and belief in the Atonement, humankind's reconciliation with God through Christ's atoning sacrifice. It also includes evangelism, which historically has always been a pillar of Methodism.

Apart from the influences of Pietism, Puritanism and evangelicalism, early Methodism took shape during the onset of the commonly, although controversially, called – since the movement, in fact, covers a broad set of cultural and intellectual values routinely grouped together – Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The relationship between Methodism and the Enlightenment is a complex one. Methodism's Christian focus on the supernatural activities of God was contrary to the Enlightenment yet it shared similar conceptions of knowledge and progress (Oldstone-Moore 2021, para. 1). William Bristow asserts that, in fact, Protestantism, in its maintaining of individual liberty regarding issues of

faith against the paternalistic authority of the Church, played a significant role in the engendering of the Enlightenment (2017, section 2:3).

Enlightenment criticism of religion was usually aimed at particular features of religion such as 'superstition, enthusiasm, fanaticism and supernaturalism' (Bristow 2017, section 2:3). Enlightenment thinking also challenged religious belief in the authority of Scripture since, in the light of the development of natural science and the increasing importance placed on reason and the intellect, the acceptance of the Bible as literal truth was seen as implausible. From the mid-seventeenth century, authors such as Benedict de Spinoza in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* propounded scripture interpretation in terms of the 'true meaning' of a text rather than 'truth of fact' in order to preserve its genuine sense and a textual understanding (2007, xi). In fact, although the Enlightenment is often seen as the enemy of religion, this supposed opposition was directed more towards the Catholic Church than religion as a whole, particularly in France. The Anglican Church was mainly latitudinarian in the early eighteenth century, thus accommodating enlightenment and other currents of the time. Bristow highlights some important thinkers of the Enlightenment such as Jean Jacques Rousseau and William Shaftesbury who portray religion as being rooted in natural human emotions thus grounding their philosophies in feeling as much as in reason or science or metaphysics (2017, section 2:3). In *Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar*, Rousseau writes, '… my heart began to glow with a sense of gratitude towards the author of our being; and hence arose my first idea of the worship due to a beneficent deity. I adore the supreme power, and melt into tenderness at his goodness' (1889, 38). Rousseau's words resonate with John Wesley's description of his heart being 'strangely warmed' and Charles Wesley's 'strange palpitation of heart' on their experiences of spiritual awakening, resulting in a sense of peace and assurance and, in Charles's case, his rejoicing in 'hope of loving Christ' (Wesley 1849, 92).

Timothy Wayne Holgerson makes a case for John Wesley being a 'central figure' in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment in England in that he engaged with it in terms of social attitude, learning, media and religion (2017, 200). Holgerson acknowledges that many scholars, one of the chief being Dorinda Outram, see John Wesley as a counter-Enlightenment figure. However, Holgerson contends that Wesley held in balance the 'heart religion of Scripture and tradition' that informed Methodism with the characteristics of 'reason and experience of the English Enlightenment' (2017, 229). Wesley's consistent aim to forge a connection between the heart religion of Methodism and reason is revealed in his

published texts – sermons, journals, correspondence – which indicate his role in advancing the development of Wesleyan Methodists both spiritually and intellectually (Holgerson 2017, 200). According to David Hempton, Methodism displayed organisational and spiritual characteristics that allowed it to flourish in conjunction with the modern development of individualism and democracy (2009, 67).

Emergence and development of Methodism

Before Methodism became a movement and, ultimately, a denomination, a group was formed by Charles Wesley in 1729 at Oxford called the Holy Club, to hold religious meetings (although the Club was subsequently led by John Wesley). The Holy Club held regular meetings to pray, read and study the Bible, receive Holy Communion and perform charitable acts. It was called a variety of other names – Bible Moths, Sacramentarians, Enthusiasts and Methodists with the last coming to be applied because of the methodical habits in study and religious life and the disciplined, structured enactment of faith of the Wesley brothers and others. John Wesley himself used the term later to signify the methodical or systematic striving for scriptural piety and holiness; it became the name by which John Wesley's societies were known and from which the Methodist Church developed (Smith 1962, para. 1). The term 'Methodist' applied equally and variously to John Wesley's followers as well as to adherents of Whitefield, to Anglican evangelicals, Welsh Calvinists and to dissenters, all holding to different spiritual tenets (Clark 2009, 10). The link between all Methodists was their common purpose of evangelisation, to spread the Christian gospel.

John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield and other early Methodists were responsible for igniting the evangelical movement of the eighteenth century. In 1738, Charles Wesley underwent a conversion experience and in the same week, his brother, John, was converted after a long spiritual struggle. John Wesley was deeply influenced by Pietism – two years before his conversion, while he was on a voyage as a missionary to the colony of Georgia, he had been impressed by the faith and piety of a group of Moravian Brethren. His experience at sea in the company of the Moravians was to be life changing. After witnessing the calm assurance of the Moravian Brethren in the face of a devastating storm, John Wesley made a journal entry on 25 January 1736: 'This was the most glorious day which I have hitherto seen', writing on the following day of the 'mind calmed by the love of God' (Wesley 1795, 30). It was the influence of the Moravian, Peter Böhler, a German-English bishop and missionary, that prompted John Wesley's conversion experience and it was Böhler's establishment in 1738 of the Fetter Lane Society in London – a forum for intercession,

prayer, fellowship and the promotion of spirituality and accountability – which provided an impetus for the onset of the Methodist Revival in England (Podmore 1998, 1). The heart theology of the Moravians, in its focus on the inner life of the believer, was an important influence on the Methodist movement.

John Wesley left the Fetter Lane Society in 1741 after differences with the Moravian Brethren, particularly regarding ideas about sanctification. Unlike the Moravians, who held that it was Christ alone who brought about sanctification, Wesley's perception was that sanctification was engendered by the interactive relationship between Christ and humankind. Wesley established his Foundery Society but, despite his distancing himself from the Moravians, he retained some of their observances – the Love-Feast and the Watchnight Service – in Methodist worship.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones stresses that Methodism is an experiential religion that encompasses a way of living: it was not intended to reform theology (1987, 195). Methodist evangelical preachers placed importance on direct, personal knowledge of God, encapsulated in John 17:3: 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent'. Even more significant was the emphasis Methodism placed on 'feeling'. Lloyd-Jones describes the concern for what Whitefield called a 'felt' Christ, the desire of believers to 'feel and to experience the power of the Spirit in their lives' (1968, section III). However, feeling had to be coupled with reason. The Wesleys had a firm foundation in scriptural doctrine and Church discipline and, for John Wesley, a true evangelical faith consisted of both knowledge and feeling. In his *Standard Sermons* (Sermon I), he described the reasoned foundation of a Christian faith as 'a train of ideas in the head' which must exist alongside 'a disposition of the heart' (Lawson 2015, 7). Piety and high standards of morality were encouraged with devotion to God taking precedence over ritual and ceremony. Powerful preaching was characteristic of the evangelical revivals, centring on the need for salvation, 'personal accountability and guilt for sin, the realization of an eternal dimension to existence and destiny, an amazement at God's provision of forgiveness, reconciliation and acceptance to the believer in Jesus Christ' (Evans 2010, 38). Open-air preaching or field preaching became pivotal to the Methodist Revival with leaders such as the Wesley brothers and George Whitefield recognising the opportunity it gave to reach many working-class people who often felt unwelcomed in churches.

John Wesley, as one of the founders and great preachers of Methodism, believed that there were a number of key tenets underpinning the Methodist creed. He considered that all people need to be and can be saved. He stressed the human condition of sinfulness as

expressed in the Bible in Romans 3:23: ‘For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God’. Wesley’s sense of his own sinful state determined his theological perspective. While he yearned to live a holy life, devoted to a personal relationship with God, he suffered from a deep awareness of sin. However, Wesley believed that God offered salvation as a gift of grace; he saw this gift as one which could be accepted or rejected by individuals. All can be saved but not all may choose to be saved. Charles Wesley encapsulates this belief in one of his hymns (CHPM 2):

Come, sinners, to the gospel-feast,
Let every soul be Jesu’s guest;
Ye need not one be left behind;
For God hath bidden all mankind.

Calvinist Methodists, on the other hand, saw God’s grace as completely determinant. They believed that God had already chosen who would be saved, and this doctrine of predestination was, for John Wesley’s whole lifetime, antithetical to his theological stance. For him, because the idea of predestination meant that some were predestined to damnation, Calvinism led to fatalism and apathy towards growth in holiness. John Wesley viewed the Christian relationship with God as involving total commitment. He wrote of a Methodist as being ‘one who loves the Lord his God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength. God is the joy of his heart, and the desire of his soul …’ (1793, 7).

John Wesley saw Methodism as ‘an unplanned development’ of a religious society, its participants ‘all zealous members of the Church of England’ (Clark 2009, 7). His intention was not to establish an independent denomination. However, as J. C. D. Clark points out, Wesley’s image of Methodism did not accord with his practice of planning and what was, in fact, an ‘early implicit separation from the church’ (2009, 7). John Kent places the emergence of Methodism within the context of an evangelical revival in the English-speaking world, precipitated when ‘a small group of men returned to the primitive faith of Christianity and evoked a fervent response in a largely unconverted population’ (2002, 23–25). However, Clark argues that the Wesleys’ ministry, particularly in its early days, was able to reach large numbers of people because it relied on a religious infrastructure that was already in place (2009, 8). There is no doubt that Methodism was strongly rooted in the prevalence of Anglicanism and that John and Charles Wesley were shaped both by the Anglicanism and the Nonconformism of their lineage. Most Methodist converts remained in the Anglican church with early Methodism flourishing within Anglicanism. Indeed, Anglican religious sensibility

was increased by the Methodist revival rather than negated by it (Clark 2009, 12). John Wesley's intention was to bring about reform in worship from within the Anglican Church and both he and his brother, Charles, remained within the established Church of England to the end of their lives. The Wesleyan Methodists did not fully break away from the Church of England until 1795, four years after John Wesley's death.

The nature of the organisation of the Methodist movement under John Wesley's leadership was highly communal. Heitzenrater describes the composition of Methodism in the eighteenth century as being made up of societies – which John Wesley actively oversaw but led by laypeople – broken down further into weekly 'classes' for prayer and Scripture reading (2009, 40). The society meetings were characterised by a moral and spiritual zeal, perhaps best expressed in a maxim popularly attributed to John Wesley: 'Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can'. These words do not appear anywhere in Wesley's written work; however, there is a marked similarity to an injunction in several of his sermons (*Sermons on Several Occasions* 1799). One example is in Sermon CXXIII, 'On Worldly Folly', where he writes, 'Do good. Do all the good thou canst' (Wesley 1831, 453). Wesley began to publish his sermons, and, for Methodists, the printed word soon became as important as what was preached and sung. As well as publishing his own sermons with the intention of spreading Christian principles as widely as possible, John Wesley produced many collections of prayers, hymns, letters and religious writings.

Notwithstanding the complexities, the conflicts and the counterpoints within the Methodist movement as it developed through the eighteenth century, the Wesleyan features of faith and theology remained encompassed within a very distinctive spirituality and belief system. These are that salvation is for all, that God gives an assurance of his love, that adherence to Methodism involves living a holy life, that God's people enter into a covenant with him and that the laity are a significant part of ministry. Most important to the core of Methodism is that Scripture, tradition and a personal heart experience are foundational to Christian living, with song and hymnody expressing the very essence of the faith journey.

The Wesleyan heritage

The lineage of John and Charles Wesley is marked by an ecclesiastical tradition combining staunch Anglicanism and dissenting practice on both sides of their family. Their great-grandfather, Bartholomew Westley (1596–1680), was a puritan minister forced out of his position in the Church of England as a result of the Act of Uniformity in England in 1662.

His son, John Wesley (1636–1678), the grandfather of John and Charles, was also removed from his clerical position for being an Anglican dissenter, as was the Wesley brothers' maternal grandfather, Samuel Annesley (1620–1696). All three – Bartholomew Westley, John Wesley and Samuel Annesley – continued to preach as nonconformist ministers. Despite their dissenting backgrounds, John and Charles's parents belonged to the Church of England. The religious background of John and Charles Wesley had a formative influence on their spiritual growth; Wesley family life encouraged both a deep concern for 'individual conscience and spiritual independence' and an awareness of 'communal conformity and historic continuity' (Chilcote 2009, 17).

There are many biographies and studies of the lives of the Wesleys. Richard P. Heitzenrater in *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, and in his essay 'The Founding Brothers' in *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, offers biographical narrative within his account of the rise of Methodism. *The Asbury Journal* and *Methodist Review* publish scholarly essays and articles on Methodism and, particularly, on the Wesleyan tradition which provide different perspectives on the lives and theology of the Wesleys. John Wesley's own journal is a first-hand source for background history of the circumstances and influences that gave shape to the thought and writings of himself and his brother, Charles, as are Charles's journals. Within the framework of this study, a brief biographical account provides a broad overview of the formative factors of Charles Wesley's life, laying a foundation for the exploration of his poetic expression of the Methodist creed through his hymnody.

John and Charles Wesley were born to Samuel and Susanna Wesley, in 1703 and 1707 respectively, in the remote parish of Epworth, Lincolnshire, where Samuel Wesley was the rector of the Anglican church. Samuel Wesley's parishioners – simple country people – did not share his interests in philosophy, theology, politics and literature, and he was not a popular priest, being academic and rather authoritarian (Heitzenrater 2009, 31). The Wesleys had nineteen children – of which only ten survived – John being the fifteenth and Charles the eighteenth.

While both Wesley parents played a role in their children's educational, religious and theological upbringing, it was largely Susanna Wesley's influence that shaped the family's lives. Samuel Wesley had a large personal library providing religious and intellectual resources for the children and they attended church every Sunday morning to hear their father preach (Heitzenrater 2009, 31). However, Samuel Wesley spent decades of his life absorbed in the study and writing of an exegetical tract on the book of Job and had little time for his

family. Susanna Wesley educated all her children in their formative years, both boys and girls equally, at home, including in their studies classical and biblical learning along with academic schooling. She required her children to have full knowledge of the Apostles' Creed and the Ten Commandments as well as biblical backing for matters of doctrine (Laird 2018, n. pag.). Susanna Wesley imparted to Charles, as to all her children, high standards of articulation and thought, which stood him in good stead when he went on to study the classics and theology at Westminster and Oxford. Barrie W. Tabraham, Charles Wesley's biographer, writes that 'we should not underestimate the impact which the recitation of psalms in the Epworth rectory kitchen had upon the young Charles' (2003, n. pag.). Susanna Wesley herself was devout – even amid her complex duties as wife and mother, she never neglected to schedule time for her own devotions. Jackie Green and Lauren Green-McAfee describe how she would sit in a chair and throw her long apron over her head to form a 'tent in order to commune with God and study his Word' (2018, 208). Samuel Wesley was often away from home and substitute ministers would be brought in to preach. However, finding their sermons lacking in spiritual substance, Susanna Wesley began to hold services in her kitchen for the family. Her knowledge of the Bible was extensive, and she was gifted at imparting its truths to her listeners; soon, neighbours and others from the area began to attend (Green and Green-McFee 2018, 208).

Both John and Charles Wesley attended school in London, John at Charterhouse and Charles at Westminster, before going on, in turn, to Christ Church College at Oxford University. It was at Oxford, after receiving his baccalaureate degree, that John Wesley decided to become an ordained clergyman. He began to take religion more seriously, attempting to follow his vision of holy living. John moved north again to take up the curacy at Epworth while Charles, still at Oxford, began to follow the University's newly enforced statutes of study of the Scriptures and classic divinity and the practical implementation of religion in the lives of the students (Heitzenrater 2009, 32). John returned to Oxford and the Wesley brothers began a study group with a few friends. The group became involved in visiting prisons, teaching orphans and providing food to poor families and soon, under the leadership of John Wesley, had begun to take on a recognisable identity (Heitzenrater 1995, 6–14). This was the so-called Holy Club which became the origin of Oxford Methodism with a twin focus on piety and mercy, that is, following the precepts of the New Testament of loving both God and neighbour (Heitzenrater 2009, 34).

In 1735 Samuel Wesley died, and John and Charles Wesley embarked on a mission to Georgia in fulfilment of their father's unfulfilled wish to become a missionary in America. Despite the overall lack of success of this mission, it was significant in the way it contributed to the Wesley brothers' development and, thus, the shaping of Methodism. It brought them to a crisis point in their personal spirituality as well as introducing them to the Moravians who offered a solution with their own religious expression and convictions. As European Pietists under the leadership of Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf, the Moravians held to the precept of salvation by faith with an emphasis on a personal experience of and relationship with Jesus (Cruickshank 2009, 10). The Moravians stressed community over individualism and placed emphasis on assurance, joy and celebration (Podmore 1998, 17). Zinzendorf regarded music as the 'fifth gospel' and, indeed, the Moravian Brethren were known for their prolific hymn-writing and had been since 1457 (Knouse 2008, xii). Winifred Kirkland notes that the Moravians were known as 'the Easter People' for their 'sheer happiness which set them singing at all times, and never has a band of Christians sung so much, at their work and in their worship, as these Moravians' (1923, 73). The heart theology of the Moravians saw religious or theological knowing as being part of the inner person as a whole rather than existing only in the rational mind (Gubi 2016, n. pag.).

The brothers' contact with the Moravians during the mission to Georgia was to have a lasting impact. Charles Wesley began writing poetry and preached both on board the ship and in Georgia, while John Wesley developed and expanded his linguistic skills as well as his perspectives on theology and mission work (Heitzenrater 2009, 34). Despite his sense of despair at his lack of conviction, John Wesley was encouraged to continue preaching until he received an assurance of his salvation which, according to the Moravians, would occur with a resultant joy and peace. On their return, both John and Charles Wesley became active in religious societies in London, joining the Moravian fellowship, the Fetter Lane Society. Most members were Anglicans and, as well as the Wesley brothers, included George Whitefield who had also been a member of the Holy Club.

On 21 May 1738, Pentecost Sunday, Charles Wesley, while lying ill in bed, had an experience of the Holy Spirit which he described in his journal as 'a strange palpitation of heart' (1849 vol. I, 91). He continued writing, 'I now found myself at peace with God, and rejoiced in hope of loving Christ' (1849 vol. I, 92). Three days later, John Wesley attended a meeting in Aldersgate Street, London where, during a reading of Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans, he experienced God's transformative power which led him to write his famous words, 'I felt my heart strangely warmed'. In similar fashion to Charles, John wrote

in his journal on 24 May 1738, 'I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins …' (1832, 74). While the experiences of both brothers reflected the Moravian heart theology, there were theological differences between them and the Moravian Brethren such as the Moravians' inclination towards quietism as opposed to John Wesley's emphasis on works of piety and mercy in order to draw closer into God's presence. The Foundery Society, which he formed in London in 1740 after his break from the Moravians, became the first Wesleyan Methodist place of worship and an important meeting place for the early Methodist community.

Following his conversion, John Wesley stressed a religion of the heart and his new understanding of Christian faith was expressed largely in sermons and expositions of Scripture (Chilcote 2009, 15). Charles Wesley's conversion, on the other hand, was the catalyst for a joyous outpouring of poetry and hymnody that was to continue for the remaining fifty years of his life and which captured in verse the very heart of the Methodist message. Not long after his conversion experience on 21 May, Charles Wesley, on a horseback ride to Blendon, expressed the joy of his emotions and his zest for life in Christ in a journal entry (8 June 1738): 'In riding thence to Blendon I was full of delight and seemed in a new heaven and a new earth. We prayed and sang and shouted all the way' (1849 vol. I, 101). On July 2, 1738, he wrote, 'Being to preach this morning for the first time, received the strength for the work of the ministry in prayer and singing' (1849 vol. I, 115). For Charles Wesley, the power of song was significant, and he recognised that faith is inspired and strengthened as much by singing as by the preaching of preachers such as his brother, John. Hymn-singing and Bible reading were clearly a feature of Charles Wesley's everyday life, serving as his response to all events of spiritual or religious significance. After violent anti-Methodist riots in Bristol, he and other Methodists joined in praise to God, the Deliverer, as they sang the hymn, *Worship, and thanks, and blessing*; on the death of a Methodist friend, he wrote in his journal for 14 August 1744, 'We sang a song of victory for our deceased friend; then went to the house, and rejoiced, and gave thanks; and rejoiced again with singing over him' (1849 vol. I, 379). Cruickshank tells the story of how, during a service, the 'loudest clap of thunder' was heard causing the congregation to shriek out 'as if the day of the Lord were come'. Charles Wesley, also wondering 'if it should be the day of judgment' encouraged the congregation to sing one of his hymns (Cruickshank 2009, 33):

So shall the Lord the Saviour come
And lightnings round his chariots play!

Ye lightnings, fly to make him room,
Ye glorious storms prepare his way!

Charles Wesley's decision to have the congregation sing a hymn at such a time substantiates the value of hymns in Methodist meetings and worship. The hymn in question is one of drama, with the eschatological theme couched in cosmological terms, aimed at invoking a response of jubilation, of glorying in the coming of the Lord (Jackson 1848, 176). In the context of the incident, Wesley brings home forcefully a Christian message of faith and assurance by way of his choice of response and choice of hymn with its imagery of God's might and glory.

John Wesley began his itinerant ministry in 1739 after hearing George Whitefield preaching in the open air. At that time, the Act of Toleration of 1689 decreed that worship could only occur in a registered place of worship, be this in an Anglican church or a dissenting meeting place. Wesley was taken to task by the bishop of Bristol for contravening this law shortly after he began outdoor preaching. His journal entry for 31 March 1739 reads (1832, 126):

> In the evening I reached Bristol, and met Mr. Whitefield there. I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church.

The early years of the itinerant preaching of the Wesley brothers were marked by intense upheaval within the revival, with the Wesleys separating from the Moravians and then the Calvinist Methodists. Charles Wesley played an active part in these divergences with polemical hymns and sermons (Cruickshank 2009, 11). Nine of his polemical poems were published by John Wesley in the *Arminian Magazine* of 1778, all of them delivering a message against predestination:

Ye weak, mistaken worms, believe
Your God, who never can deceive;
Believe his word sincerely meant,
Whose oath confirms his kind intent:
Believe his tears: believe his blood:
Both for a world of sinners flowed;

For those who nailed him to the tree
For those who forged the dire decree,
For ev'ry reprobate—and me!

Charles Wesley's use of the word 'reprobate' is significant referring as it did in Calvinism at the time to one who is predestined to damnation. The choice of word, thus, highlights the extent and inclusivity of God's grace, even to those supposedly excluded from being of the elect and this is further enhanced by the exclamatory personal pronoun.

During the apex of the open-air preaching revivals of the mid-1740s, John Wesley published the first volume of his sermons with the central themes of salvation, faith and justification. At this time, his mother, Susanna Wesley, who had moved between her adult children after her husband's death, was staying with John at the Foundery. She was John Wesley's mentor in his adult religious life and her spiritual impact on her children remained with them all their lives; she continued to engage with them in correspondence on several theological issues (Newton 2003, 163). Susanna Wesley died at the Foundery in July 1742 at the age of seventy-three. At her death, John Wesley wrote of 'that holy and heavenly wisdom' that his mother had given the family (Ward and Heitzenrater 1991, 30). Rebecca Laird writes of Susanna Wesley that she 'lived and died believing that forming the family as a local faith community and extending care beyond it to the surrounding community could lead to reformation of the nation. The Wesleyan movement and its methodical way of living can be traced directly back to her firm hand, sound mind, and persistent faith' (2018, n. pag.).

In 1749 Charles Wesley married Sarah Gwynne, known as Sally, the daughter of a Welsh Methodist landowner, and nineteen years his junior. He spent a few more years as an itinerant minister before beginning to spend more time with his family at home in Bristol, finally giving up itinerancy in 1756. There is controversy, particularly among Wesley's early biographers, over the reasons for his ceasing to preach as an itinerant and the possible associated causes of his illness and depression in later life. Charles Wesley remained active in Methodist leadership in Bristol and elsewhere for the following thirty-three years of his life. John Telford and others attest to the apparent happiness of his marriage and family life throughout these years, much of it evident from the extensive correspondence between Charles and Sarah Wesley. Charles and Sarah had eight children, only three of whom survived beyond infancy. According to Telford, Charles Wesley was an admirable parent, encouraging and guiding his children about the blessing of being a true Christian and 'his humility, his freedom from all self-seeking, his affection, and his hearty interest in everything

that concerned his friends' are apparent throughout his writing and teaching (1900, xiii). John Tyson describes him as his brother's opposite; where John Wesley was the public person, the extrovert, Charles Wesley was shy, retiring and humble (2007, x). In Telford's words, John was the statesman; Charles was the poet, 'with all a poet's emotion and impulsiveness' (1900, xiii). In a letter to his brother in 1766, John Wesley refers to himself as 'the head' and Charles as the 'heart of the work' (1997, 152).

Despite their joint and cooperative efforts in evangelistic endeavour, John and Charles Wesley came into conflict over various issues. Charles Wesley was determined that the Methodists should remain within the Church of England, following its customs and ordinances. His followers were often termed 'Church Methodists' in reference to their choice to stay within the structure of the Anglican Church (Campbell 2008, 17). While John Wesley, too, placed importance throughout his life on his association with the Anglican Church and was unwilling to separate, he was prepared, in fulfilment of his mission, to embark on actions that were in opposition to edicts and canons of the Church. In 1784, as a result of the paucity of ordained ministers, John Wesley, in opposition to Charles, decided to ordain clergy so that they could perform baptism and administer Holy Communion (Campbell 2008, 17). The brothers, too, had conflicts over their differing views on the relative importance of suffering to spiritual growth and on the transformative power of the Holy Spirit with regard to works of mercy and of social transformation (Maddox 2014, 30). Charles disagreed with John's view that perfection or holiness may be attained through waiting on the grace of God, arguing that since perfection was absolute, it was only attainable at death (Lawson 2015, 41).

The public doctrinal disagreements between Charles and John Wesley were underlined by personal conflicts which caused much tension between them; John in a letter to Charles in 1766 urged him to cooperation, writing 'And are we not jointly engaged in such a work as probably no two men upon earth are? Why then do we keep at such a distance? It is a mere device of Satan' (1958, 130). The movement of Methodism away from the Church of England was a matter of great distress to Charles Wesley; so great was the importance he attached to his being a member of the Anglican Church that he requested to be buried as such. Shortly before his death on 29 March 1788, he wrote to the rector of the St Marylebone Parish Church: 'Sir, whatever the world may have thought of me, I have lived, and I die, in the communion of the Church of England, and I will be buried in the yard of my parish church' (Newport 2001, 27).

On the day that he heard the news of his brother's death, John Wesley poignantly lined Charles's hymn *Come, O Thou Traveller unknown* (MHS 339) for the congregation to sing:

Come, O Thou Traveller unknown,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see!
My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with Thee;
With Thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.

John Wesley, who had always enjoyed good health, remained active to the end of his life, preaching his last sermon at an open-air meeting four months before his death in March 1791. It has been said that 'when John Wesley was carried to his grave, he left behind him a good library of books, a well-worn clergyman's gown and the Methodist Church' (Hurst 1903, 298). John Wesley instilled love of God and neighbour as being at the core of the Methodist movement with equal focus on faith and works as revealed in the relationship between its religious belief, its methodisation and its evangelicalism. It is the emphasis on religion of the heart over the intellect and the accompanying experience of the presence of God in the believer's life that underpins the Wesleyan heritage.

Almost ninety years after the death of Charles Wesley, a marble memorial to the two brothers was unveiled in Westminster Abbey. John and Charles Wesley appear in a profile portrait in a roundel with the words of John below: 'The best of all is, God is with us'. Charles Wesley's words appear on the base: 'God buries his workmen, but carries on his work'.

Chapter Three: The poetic context of eighteenth-century hymnody

Hymnody, psalmody and poetry

It is not the aim of this study to determine whether hymns can be or are indeed poetry since there is enough evidence in support of their poetic expression. Although literary historian W. J. Courthope opined in the late 1900s that 'the critical world is yet to be half-persuaded that a hymn can be poetry', hymnody can be seen, particularly in the eighteenth century, as a literary counterculture as Jan Anderson puts it (1991 n. pag.), a distinctive poetic genre. The terms 'poem' and 'hymn' specifically in reference to hymnody often appear to be interchangeable. A hymn can be a poem, even though the aim of the hymnist might not be poetic. In this regard, intention plays an important part. Thus, a component of the study is to consider these terms as used in various sources in order to establish the difference between them as well as their correlation, particularly with regard to the subject matter at hand.

Typically, a hymn, from the Greek word *hymnos*, is a religious congregational song sung in praise to God that is metrical and stanzaic in nature and that uses similar devices to poetry such as rhyme, rhythm and metaphorical language. A definition by Harry Eskew and Hugh T. McElrath is that a hymn should be 'simple and metrical in form, genuinely emotional, poetic and literary in style, spiritual in quality, and in its ideas so direct and so immediately apparent as to unify a congregation while singing it' (1995, n. pag.). Its intent is to draw humankind closer to God in theological teaching and worship. St. Augustine, as quoted in the preface to *The Methodist Hymn-Book with Tunes*, defines a hymn simply as 'a song with praise of God' (MHT 1972, 5). Thomas Aquinas, in the introduction to his commentary on the Psalms, gives his insight into the value of singing hymns as being, 'the exultation of the mind dwelling on eternal things, bursting forth in the voice' (2012, para 25). According to Mark DeGarmeaux's description, hymns are not only songs to praise God and to teach but are also of 'high poetic and musical quality' (78th Annual Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod 1995).

Definitions of poetry abound: Rita Dove, on being appointed the U.S. Poet Laureate, 1993, asserted that 'Poetry is language at its most distilled and most powerful' while William Wordsworth famously referred to poetry as being 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings (1835, 237). Put simply, poetry is a written composition that combines features of both speech and song, usually containing rhythm, figures of speech and other elements such as metre, rhyme and structure, often stanzaic. The arousal of strong emotion in the reader is also associated with poetry. Salvatore Quasimodo's statement that 'Poetry is the revelation of

a feeling that the poet believes to be interior and personal which the reader recognizes as his own' (Bracker 'New York Times' 1960, 47) coheres with the intention behind many hymns where the hymnist portrays personal spiritual thought relatable to common religious experience. Some of the greatest poetry in the world is found in the King James version of the Bible, which, although presented as prose, remains rich with the eloquence and cadences of poetic expression. In line with the understanding of genre as intertextual, a key question relating to this study is how poetic expression adds to the spiritual and liturgical value of hymns. John Wesley, himself, discusses the value of the existence of the 'true Spirit of Poetry' in some of the hymns in his preface to *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (1791, v). This value is qualified, however; he writes that when poetry remains 'the handmaid of Piety' it attains 'a crown that fadeth not away'. Thus, for Wesley, piety or devoutness is the principal quality of the hymnist and the poetic articulation of God's praise. The question of the correlation of poetry and piety in hymnic form is addressed by Gunkel: the hymn is 'the genre in which the foundational thoughts of pious poetry were generally expressed' (2020, 22).

Hymns are an age-old means of expressing praise, usually within a religious context, to the divine. Spiritual expression – and indeed cultural expression – in the form of hymns is embedded in the earliest musical articulations of humankind. The Bible makes reference to the singing of hymns in a number of texts, with Paul in his letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, for example, exhorting followers to engage in 'psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord' (Ephesians 5:19). Pliny the Younger (Plinius Minor), governor of Bithynia at the time of the Roman emperor, Trajan, writing in his letters of the behaviour of the early Christians, observed that when they met they would 'recite a hymn among themselves to Christ, as though he were a god' (1900, Book 10: letter 96). While there is no specific reference to hymns in the Old Testament in the King James version of the Bible, the celebration through song of God's might and majesty is mentioned in connection with various events. David delivers a 'psalm to thank the Lord' on the day that the Ark of the Covenant is brought back to Jerusalem: 'Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works' (1 Chronicles 16:9). On their deliverance from Pharaoh, 'sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously' (Exodus 15:1). There are countless references to singing, dancing and praising God in the Old Testament and many passages throughout the Bible are hymnic in nature, including the prophetic books.

Various references in the New Testament reveal that the first Christians used the Psalms as hymns for worship. It is manifestly clear that they were written as songs for singing as is evident in psalms such as Psalm 33: 'Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song …' (2–3). Gunkel, in his development of form-criticism in the early twentieth century, sought to categorise the book of Psalms into genres (2020, 19). Of the five primary types, he identified one as hymns. Typically, these hymns are songs of praise to God for his work in creation and throughout history with an opening and closing veneration of God. Psalms 145 to 150, with their encouragement to 'sing praises unto our God', provide clear examples of such hymns. The last two psalms, 149 and 150, are paeans in celebration of God's 'mighty acts' and his 'excellent greatness' with the psalmist calling for the coming together of song, music and dance in worship.

An essential aspect of hymnody is the significance of music. Hymnody, at its best, can be defined as sung poetry. The principal difference between a hymn and a poem lies in the expression of the former through singing and the latter through reading or speaking. A hymn is written to be sung. Although hymns date back to ancient times such as in Egyptian, Hurrian and Hindu worship, hymnody as it developed through the Christian church can be said to have been birthed, to a large degree, from the Psalms of the Old Testament, many of which are inscribed to 'the chief Musician' signifying their purpose for singing.

Gunkel has traced and analysed the tradition and nature of the hymnic features in the Bible which are pertinent to the development of psalmody (as in the arrangement or interpretation of the Psalms) and hymnody. The hymns of the Bible generally begin with an introduction in the form of a call or summons to rejoice and sing praises to God. Thus, Jeremiah 31:7 exhorts, 'Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations' and Psalm 113 begins, 'Praise ye the Lord, Praise, O ye servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord'. In several books, including Psalms, Isaiah and Jeremiah, the cohortative is used as a means of encouragement, for example, phrases such as 'Let us exult', 'Let us rejoice', 'Let us bow down' and 'Let us thank, praise'. Similarly, particular words repeated throughout hymns signify the tenor and tone of their poetic expression – these words include 'rejoice', 'exult', 'praise', 'worship'. Other phrases are instructive concerning the performance such as 'sing', 'play', 'strike the drum,' 'blow the horn', 'clap your hands', 'raise your hands' (Gunkel 2020, 23–24). All these elements are reflected in hymn-writing as

it developed from the earlier renditions or paraphrasing of the familiar scriptural texts to the poetic expression in hymns of the eighteenth-century hymnists.

Christians have composed hymns since the earliest days of the church. One of these – the first known hymn outside of the Bible still sung today – is *Phos Hilaron*, or in its English translation *O Gladsome Light*, from the late third or early fourth century (Vassiliadis 2012, 5). However, the singing of psalms was preferred by the early church and was engaged in almost exclusively until the end of the fourth century. The Psalms remained the principal form of church song through the Middle Ages and the Reformation of the sixteenth century with John Calvin, in particular, advocating psalm singing for church worship (Johnson 2011, ch. 3). In his preface to the 1543 Genevan Psalter (Garside 1951, 571), he wrote,

> When we have looked thoroughly, and searched here and there, we shall not find better songs nor more fitting for the purpose, than the Psalms of David, which the Holy Spirit spoke and made through him. And moreover, when we sing them, we are certain that God puts in our mouths these, as if he himself were singing in us to exalt his glory.

Although Calvin and Luther diverged in their perspectives of congregational song, for both of them its value was grounded in the express aim to praise God and 'to exalt his glory'. While Luther's hymns played an important part in the development of singing in Protestant churches, the tradition of congregational psalm singing largely remained at the forefront of Protestant worship until Isaac Watts emerged in the early years of the eighteenth century as a prolific hymnist.

Poetics and spiritual experience in the eighteenth-century context

Eighteenth-century poetical theory was embedded in the expression of the 'truth' of the emotions. This was true throughout the emergence and development of various literary trends, influences and genres including that of the Romantic movement in the latter part of the century and into the nineteenth. However, unlike for the Romantics of the nineteenth century, the poet of the eighteenth century was not seen as a creator, but rather as an interpreter, portraying the familiar reality of life and nature, the 'common experience of men' (Hill 1977, 87). The hymn, as possibly the most distinctive and well-known genre of religious poetry to survive from the eighteenth century, can be said to reflect both emotion and this common experience of men, albeit in spiritual terms.

The emphasis on feeling, which began to be a feature of most Romantic poetry and theories of poetics later in the century, can be seen as emerging from the earlier culture of sensibility. Alexander Pope, in his satirical poem 'Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot' (1735), describes his father in telling terms (2003, 185):

> Unlearned, he knew no schoolman's subtle art,
> No language, but the language of the heart.

This 'language of the heart' defines not only eighteenth-century religious poetry in general but the expression in hymnody by Methodist hymnists. The character of Methodist hymnody, expressing as it does both topics of magnitude and subjective spiritual experience within an urgent evangelical context, exhibits an intensity of feeling and conviction.

The intrinsic value of hymns for Christians is their ability to draw the worshipper closer to God, although their didactic purpose through their theological and doctrinal authority, particularly during the evangelical revival of the eighteenth century, is a significant factor. The hymnody of the day reflected prevailing theologies and religious debates manifested in the different understandings and approaches of hymn-writers. Although hymnists of the eighteenth century used different modes of expression, the common focus was always soteriological – salvation in Jesus Christ. Various themes emerge from this focus including awareness of sin, repentance, acceptance of Christ, faith, life as a Christian, eternity and, above all, praise to God.

The function of both the hymnody and the poetry of the eighteenth century was to translate common experience into specific expression. Marshall and Todd argue that 'impersonality, commonality and orthodoxy limited the "originality" of the hymn writers' (2014, 149). Despite this, however, the stylistic and thematic possibilities of the hymn engendered texts that were as different as Watts's articulations of common devotional feelings, Wesley's personal and evangelical expressions and Cowper's poetic and dramatic depictions. Hymns explore the full range of human religious experience from darkness of the spirit to affirmations of faith and joy. The congregational hymn of the eighteenth century, in integrating poetic expression with religious direction, gives rise to personal and affective involvement. The hymnists' use of injunctions to worshippers to 'see' or 'behold' or 'look' or 'hark' allows for dramatic, descriptive and visual effect to come to the fore, intensifying the emotional experience of the singers (Marshall and Todd 2014, 150).

The genre of hymnody fulfils the purposes of praise to God and instruction, offering theological perspectives on faith, religious identity and relationship with both God and his

created world. John Wesley expresses his hope in his preface to *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* that the hymns therein will serve as a means to the reader 'of raising or quickening the spirit of devotion, of confirming his faith; of enlivening his hope; and of kindling and increasing his love to God and man' (1791, vi) through the 'true Spirit of Poetry' discerned by him in many hymns, the poetic sensibility that invests the expression of the heart experience. Watts, the 'Father of hymnody', emphasised that the English congregational hymn was a poetic genre with 'the breathings of our piety expressed according to the variety of our passions, our love, our fear, our hope, our desire, our sorrow, our wonder, and our joy' (1791, iv). Not only can hymnody be poetry, but its poetic expression inspires a spirit of piety that both illuminates and enriches spiritual experience, taking worshippers into an exalted space, a transcendent space, expressive of their devotion to Christ. The hymnic voice articulates the believer's experiential and theological faith in public worship to God.

Poetic theory also puts focus on poetry as the genre most suitable to convey what Pope described in his 'Essay on Criticism' as 'things unknown' whether emotional or cognitive (2003, 36–54). The subject of God, the inexplicable, for example, can best be considered through the genre of poetry which allows the reader freedom from the constraints 'of reason and into the realms of religious experience' (Mason 2006, 55). Poetry in the eighteenth century was regarded as a powerful instrument because of its ability to portray the experiential and the transcendent (Sitter 2001, 140). More specifically in terms of spirituality, poetry, in its function of inducing both feeling and reflection, was considered to bring the mind closer to religious contemplation (Mason 2006, 56). Eighteenth-century religious poetry – by such poets as Christopher Smart, Edward Young and William Cowper – was concerned, first and foremost, with evoking an emotional experience of faith, and the mode of hymnody within this framework was aimed at inspiring an emotional response as much as an intellectual one. In its approach to religion, evangelical dissent placed primacy on feeling in the believer's personal experience of faith.

The conviction of the heart brings to the forefront the fundamental role that emotion can, and often does, play in religion. The way in which it manifests in religious poetry and hymnody – the area that is of particular interest in this study – can be examined in three essential areas: the characterisation of emotion, the structuring of emotion and the sharing and application of emotion. According to John Corrigan, the study of religion and emotion 'provides a way to discuss religion as a human activity that is embedded in everyday life in

the felt relations individuals experience with other persons, nature, and the holy personages to whom they are devoted' (2007, 8).

In the first instance, emotion in religion is characterised by enthusiasm, devotion and intuition, by feelings such as guilt, repentance, love and joy. Emotion in religious life is realised through ritual, music, song, collective and individual worship, and relationship with others and with God. In the eighteenth century it was, generally, the concept of enthusiasm, manifesting in a culture of the sublime and the expression of sensibility and feeling, which brought together varying elements such as emotion, religion and language. As John D. Morillo explains, enthusiasm literally means 'the god within' thus pointing to a connection with the divine which inspires and empowers all written and spoken discourse (2006, 69). The concept of enthusiasm can be said to have long been linked with poetic creation. Plato's *Phaedrus* (circa 370 BCE) suggests that *enthusiasmos* is synonymous with *poein* (Morillo 2006, 70). Enthusiasm in the eighteenth century was, however, often equated with religious fanaticism, a charge which was frequently levelled at Methodism. The religious excitement which attended the preaching of John Wesley and other preachers was not discouraged by Wesley, but he was outspoken about the more extreme forms of enthusiasm such as uncontrolled zeal and pride (Ryder 1985, 217–218). Wesley described such demonstrations of enthusiasm as 'religious madness' or 'fancied inspiration' (1764, n. pag.) untempered by reason. The enthusiasm of the Methodists was not simply a manifestation of intense emotion and response within worship but also exhibited in a poetic expression both in their preaching and in their hymns.

Enthusiasm and Methodism, as an approach and a movement, unite in the heart experience of experiential faith, which can be said to characterise religious emotion. The link between knowing and feeling that was so significant to John Wesley is described in 'the trope of the "thinking heart", an important alternate paradigm to that of the thinking brain from the ancient world through the early modern period' (Erickson in Keith 2006, 129). The juncture of emotion and thought appears in the tradition of religious poetry where a heart consciousness is uppermost in theme and imagery. George Herbert (1593–1633) in his poem 'Prayer (1)' defines the act of prayer as 'The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage' for the believer (2015, 48). The final stanza of William Cowper's *The Contrite Heart* underlines the place of the heart in a journey of spiritual faith (Cowper 1869, 363):

Oh make this heart rejoice or ache;
Decide this doubt for me;

And if it be not broken, break–
And heal it, if it be.

In the eighteenth century, the themes and concepts of religious poetry were familiar to the public, with the connection between poetry and religion having long been established (Mason 2006, 53). Scriptural paraphrases were much favoured in the period, largely because they attested to the authority of the Bible, which had been considered as the ideal for all religious poetry since Longinus's 'On the Sublime' dating back to the first century AD (Mason 2006, 56). Longinus (the traditionally named although unlikely author) commends writing representing 'the divine nature in its true attributes, pure, majestic, and unique' and makes reference to Genesis chapter one (1890, 18):

> And thus also the lawgiver of the Jews, no ordinary man, having formed an adequate conception of the Supreme Being, gave it adequate expression in the opening words of his "Laws": "God said" – what? – "let there be light, and there was light: let there be land, and there was."

The mode of the sublime in poetry addresses the aesthetics of infinity and eternity, and much of devotional poetry in the eighteenth century utilised this idiom. Edward Young (1683–1765) can perhaps be said to be the clearest voice of the concept of the sublime with his long devotional poem *Night Thoughts* displaying rhetorical and stylistic extravagance such as conceits, paradoxes and elevated language as the sinner, Lorenzo, is persuaded to a life of 'moral reform and Christian faith' (Irlam 2006, 526). Young's work features themes of magnitude including immortality, death, judgement, heaven, hell and eternity. The ideas of infinity and eternity also featured thematically in hymnody as it developed across the century, but it is in hymnists such as Isaac Watts with his direct paraphrasing of biblical texts that the sublime is fully apparent. The poet and hymnist William Cowper, too, exhibited the sublime in his 67 *Olney Hymns* published in 1779 (Irlam 2006, 521). Many of Cowper's hymns reflect the themes of human sin and guilt and God's judgement that are characteristic of the sublime in eighteenth-century English poetry. Along with the culture of the sublime there was a growing esteem for sentiment, sensibility and feeling (Woodman 2006, 479). James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730) reveals his identification with the movement of the religious sublime although this work is predominantly a secular one, centred as it is on nature rather than on the Creator (Woodman 2006, 477). The structure of Thomson's poem with its focus on subjective associations became an influencing factor in poetry by the middle of the

century (Cohen 1957, 465–474). Thomson writes in impassioned terms in his ‘Hymn’ of his relationship with God: ‘But I lose/ Myself in him, in Light ineffable!’ (1805, 166).

Apart from religious poetry, hymn-writing flourished in the eighteenth century alongside poetic genres such as the satire, epic, ode, elegy and song. Alexander Pope’s ‘An Essay on Man’ (1733–1734) was influential in the growing popularity of didactic poetry while, in the latter half of the century, individualism and enthusiasm began to hold more sway. Hymnody, with its function of instruction and inspiration within religious life, reflected both the didactic trend and the growing emphasis on the individual in the sense of personal spiritual experience. In the same way as literature reacted against the rationalism of the age through an increasing emphasis on emotional intensity, the evangelical revival, both within and without the Anglican Church, prompted a reaction to doubt and deism through its focus on spiritual passion and salvation by a God who interacts with humankind. From the middle of the eighteenth century, and particularly in the latter years, more attention began to be placed on feeling and most Romantic definitions of poetry were concerned with emotion. John Keats, in writing of poetry in language that could just as well reflect the essence of hymnody, attested that ‘I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections’ (2002, 36).

Regarding the second area of examination around emotion, its expression in eighteenth-century Methodism was structured, in part, by means of the hymns through form, language, intent and biblical expression or reference. Emotional response, then and now, is directed through climactic progression musically, thematically and linguistically and it is the very experiential inclusivity of these hymns that allows such a response to be shaped. The hymn form, thus, functioned to reveal the inner workings of the religious heart as much as to direct its outer emotional demonstration. Eighteenth-century hymnody almost always presented a journey, either in the form of a narrative such as the Israelites’ wanderings recounted in the Bible or in the evocation of spiritual progress from guilt and despair to joy, from sin to salvation. This progression is given force and significance by the very structure of the hymn with its metrical and rhythmical regularity – conducive to singing. The eighteenth-century hymn was influenced by literary and philosophical trends of the time and displayed common devices and forms of religious and other poetry such as the rhyming couplets typically used by many eighteenth-century poets like Alexander Pope. Hymns commonly conformed to the stanzaic form with a strict metrical structure and varying rhyming patterns, most typically abab or abcb.

The frequent use of a refrain or chorus also adds to the particular quality of emotion resonant in hymns. Charles Wesley uses the refrain to great effect in his hymn *O Love Divine! what hast Thou done?* (HSP 1742, p. 26) where the line 'My Lord, my Love is crucified' is repeated at the end of each stanza. The build-up of emotional intensity through the refrain heightens the overall stirring quality of the hymn with Wesley drawing the reader/singer into an eternal present at the foot of the cross.

Poetic structure is always, although not only, defined by the style and genre of poetry. Robert Lowth stresses the importance of structure – of measure and rhythm – to reinforce religious truth; the metre, style and form of poetry, 'captivate the ear and the passions' assisting memorisation and infusing these religious truths 'in the mind and heart' (1829, 40). Poetics is thus allied to meaning, with Lowth's perspective pertaining to a central function of this study: the exploration of how the structure and sense of hymns correlate. Mason presents a corresponding viewpoint to Lowth; the hymn as a form that is repeatedly sung captures 'aspects of faith within the memory to increase their emotional impact and intensity' (2006, 58). A deeper interrogation of the role of structure in hymnody will be addressed in the analysis of selected hymns in later chapters.

The congregational function of the hymn brings to the forefront the third aspect of emotion and religion as seen in the context of hymnody – that of sharing and application. Hymnody encompassed many different modes of expression including narrative, praise, prayer, entreaty, proclamation and instruction. The common element of these different modes is that they were all sung expressions and were in the main written for congregational use. Communal worship generates a shared emotional response on the part of congregants, drawn together by the harmony and force of words and melody. Unlike poetry, a core aspect of the hymn is its communal function in which private religious emotion is transmuted into public worship. However, it is the poetic sensibility effected through various elements of expression such as word choice and phraseology, figurative language, rhetorical devices and rhythm that allows the personal heart experience to be expressed in such a way as to make it available for the congregation while at the same time integrating spiritual teaching. Poetic language engenders emotion, and emotion in the hymnic context acts to draw worshippers together in collective song. A hymn such as Charles Wesley's *Love divine, all loves excelling* (CHPM 374) provides an example of the way in which a community or congregation can be bound together. There is a steady rise through each stanza to a climax of conviction until the final rousing quatrain of affirmation and adoration:

Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Although many hymns use the first person singular creating a sense of immediacy, in hymns such as this, the inclusive 'we' serves to reinforce a shared experience. The communal singing of hymns acts to arouse feeling and sensibility, both in a spiritual sense and as instinctive reaction which transmute into a personal offering to and interaction with God.

Voicing the Christian creed in song

The power of hymns to inspire, encourage, enliven gives credence not only to their value in eliciting the 'delightful and divine sensations' that Watts describes (1791, i) when singing praises to God but in strengthening spiritual commitment. Gunkel, in writing of hymnody, states that 'Religious thought becomes stronger if it is powerfully expressed' (2020, 48) while Augustine writes of religious texts that when they are sung 'our souls are moved and are more religiously and with a warmer devotion kindled to piety than if they are not so sung' (2008, 207).

The people of God have always been moved to sing in celebration, in praise and in worship. The songs and hymns communicating the Christian message minister to both mind and heart, encouraging faith and hope in God. The knowledge and experience of Jesus Christ in the life of the believer – the joy that comes from believing in the forgiveness of sins and the assurance of eternal life in Christ – are voiced through the singing of the great hymns.

The eighteenth century, according to J. R. Broome, 'has never been equalled in the quantity and quality of hymns produced' (2013, 7). Isaac Watts, in the early eighteenth century, and many hymn-writers in the second half of the century, published volumes of hymns. John Wesley's publication of *Collection of Psalms and Hymns* in 1737 (published in Charleston, South Carolina) was one of the first to introduce congregational hymns into formal Anglican worship. Charles Wesley quickly displayed a talent for writing hymns and religious verses but it was John Wesley, recognising the potential of the hymnic genre to instruct and guide, who began to publish a number of hymnbooks for Methodist worship, the most significant perhaps being *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* of 1780 (Maddox 2014, 26). Apart from the Wesley brothers, other hymnists who published hymn collections include Philip Doddridge (1755); Joseph Hart (1759); Anne

Steele (1760), the only well-known female hymn-writer of the century aside from Ann Griffiths, whose oeuvre extended into the very early years of the nineteenth century; John Newton along with William Cowper (1770); and Augustus Toplady (1776) (Broome 2013, 6). Many of the hymns by these hymnists are still sung by Christians all over the world testifying not only to their enduring message but to the accessibility of the form with its strict metrical patterns. Some of these are Watts's *Our God, our help in ages past*, Newton's *Amazing Grace*, Cowper's *God moves in a mysterious way* and Toplady's *Rock of Ages, cleft for me*. Music, too, plays a major role in the memorability and popularity of hymns with their associated melodies resonating in people's minds, not always solely in a Christian context. An example is William Williams's *Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah* sung to the well-known tune 'Cwm Rhondda' composed in 1907 by John Hughes (1873–1932) and used often as a Welsh rugby anthem. Little is known as to what hymn tune was used in Williams's time prior to 'Cwm Rhondda'; alternative hymn tunes date back only to the early 1800s. Hymns in Wales were often set to well-known secular tunes or to ballad tunes; it was only after 1790 and the emergence of the hymnbook, however, that the tunes as well as the words to hymns were included (Munday 2018, 163).

It is beyond question that the apathy that prevailed in worship in the Church of England in the middle decades of the eighteenth century was overcome by the revivalist spirit of the Wesleyan Methodist movement, not only regarding hymn-writing, but also indirectly in terms of the music. Although many hymn tunes familiar today were written in the nineteenth century and were only conjoined to eighteenth-century hymns later, there were rich musical resources that the Wesleys could draw on. In certain instances, a hymn was set to an already existing melody as can be seen, for example, in Isaac Watts's *Our God, our help in ages past* published in 1719 and sung to the tune of St. Anne which had been published in 1708 (UCLA 1977, 3). Some of the later eighteenth-century composers wrote tunes such as 'Duke Street', 'Truro' and 'Amsterdam' which were used by the Wesley brothers. Charles Wesley's hymn *Meet and right it is to sing* was set to the tune 'Amsterdam' from the *Foundery Collection* of 1742 while *Ye that do your Maker's will* was accompanied by the tune 'Truro' composed by W. E. Miller (1766–1839). The tune 'Duke Street' composed by John Hatton in 1793 was used to accompany the hymn *What shall we offer our good Lord* written by August Gottlieb Spangenberg and translated by John Wesley. These later melodies, unlike those of the earlier 1700s, 'show a much greater variety of musical rhythm and a more frequent use of two or more notes to one syllable, which gave greater

elasticity but less solidity to the melody' (Price 1919, 177). The paper, 'The eighteenth-century hymn tune' (UCLA 1977), details the usage of melody and metre in an account of its history, which reveals the progress and development of hymnody in conjunction with its music. In the first third of the century, common metre or C.M. (8.6.8.6.), long metre or L.M. (8.8.8.8.), and standard metre or S.M. (6.6.8.6.) were overwhelmingly the metrical structures that were favoured by hymnists. The custom of naming tunes – and renaming them – that had first been established in 1621, was one that continued (UCLA 1977, 8). Robert H. Young identifies many composers of hymn tunes of the second half of the eighteenth century such as James Nuttall and Reuben Hudson and gives a description of their music-making that is concordant with the spirit of revival of the times (1959, 145):

> Like many late eighteenth-century composers elsewhere throughout England, they revelled in Handel's oratorios, and so far as their resources allowed tried imitating his style. Their tunes invariably go with a swing, teem with runs and repetitions, and often finish with a few bars of rousing chorus. Dauntless enthusiasm and robust joyousness were the keynotes of their religion, and their tunes correspondingly burst with strength and vitality.

Given the more subjective hymn texts of the dissenting voice, hymn tunes after 1750 tended to become more complex and emotional, using such features as operatic graces and melisma (UCLA 1977, 10). John Wesley gave his emphatic approval to the music of certain composers like the seventeenth-century Samuel Akeroyde and Jeremiah Clarke with their highly expressive tunes and ornamentation. He used one of Akeroyde's tunes, naming it 'Crucifixion', for his brother's 1738 hymn *And can it be that I should gain*, although today the hymn is almost universally sung to the tune 'Sagina' published in 1825 by Thomas Campbell. John Wesley was very clear about the kind of music he wanted to accompany his and his brother's hymns. In his preface to *Select Hymns*, he stated (1761, iv):

> I have been endeavouring for more than Twenty Years to procure such a Book as this. But in vain: Masters of Music were above following any Direction but their own. And I was determined, whoever compiled this, should follow *my* Direction: Not *mending* our Tunes, but setting them down, neither better nor worse than they were. At length I have prevailed. The following Collection contains all the Tunes which are in *common Use* among us. They are pricked *true*, exactly as I desire all our Congregations may sing them: …

Perhaps the most salient fact in terms of the musical and poetical expression of the Methodist faith and Methodist evangelism is that it was Methodism that actively sought new tunes between the years 1742 and 1788, the year that Charles Wesley died (UCLA 1977, 18). One of the reasons for this was the growing tendency of Methodist writers, particularly Charles Wesley himself, to use metrical combinations other than the three most common metres, C.M., L.M. and S.M., traditionally used for psalm tunes. Wesley's metrical versatility can be seen in many hymns, for example, *Open, my Lord, my inward ear* (7.6.7.6.7.7.7.6.), *All thanks to the Lamb* (5.5.5.5.6.5.6.5.) and *Let earth and heaven agree* (6.6.6.6.8.8.). William Williams's *Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah* is written in six-line stanzas of 8.7.8.7.4.7.; John Cennick, an earlier Methodist hymn-writer, shows his deviation from the conventional metrical structure in his *'Ere I sleep for every favour* with its four-line stanzas of 8.3.3.6.

John Wesley's emphasis on the importance of congregational singing and his directive to all those who attended Methodist meetings to participate in worship through song provided further impetus for new tunes for Methodist hymn collections (UCLA 1977, 18). Other factors prompted an increase in the emergence of a Methodist musical tradition including Charles Wesley's fondness for the work of composers such as George Frideric Handel; the appropriation by both Wesley brothers of good tunes (known as the parody hymn tune) from various sources from opera to German hymn tunes; Charles Wesley's interaction and friendship with the German composer J. F. Lampe who wrote 24 tunes for Charles Wesley's hymns; and the usage of particular tunes by the Wesley brothers across various hymn collections until they became entrenched within the Methodist musical tradition (UCLA 1977, 19–21). Lampe and another composer Thomas Olivers (1725–1799), who wrote tunes for Methodist hymns, were both Methodists but many tunes also came from secular sources such as from English folk or art-music (Temperley and Banfield 2010, 10–11). One example is the tune for 'Fairest isle, all isles excelling' from William Purcell's opera *King Arthur* (a poem with the same title originally written by John Dryden) which Charles Wesley used for *Love divine, all loves excelling* (Temperley and Banfield, 2010, 14). However, the Wesleys were always highly selective in the tunes that they used, adamant that they should enhance the function and effect of the texts.

One of their sources, the parody hymn tune, proved to be of great value in contributing to the ongoing music tradition of Methodist hymnody. These religious parodies took different forms, some of them using unfamiliar tunes without reference to their secular

contexts while, more commonly, others were borrowings of well-known secular tunes in the anticipation that the new religious words would supplant the old secular ones (Temperley and Banfield 2010, 14). This practice was advantageous in getting new hymns sung since the tunes were already familiar. Nicholas Temperley points out a third type of parody, the pointed parody, in which the original secular words play a part in the composition of the hymn (2010, 14). He cites as an example Charles Wesley's *Thou Shepherd of Israel, and mine* which is a parody of 'My fond Shepherds of late were so blest' from Richard Rolt's opera *Eliza* and set to its tune. Wesley's interpretation is that the joys of pastoral life are truly to be found only when the Lord is our Shepherd (Temperley and Banfield 2010, 15).

While the development of music for hymnody within the musical history of Britain makes for a fascinating exploration, in the context of this study the important question is how music played a pivotal part in the purpose and impact of Methodist hymnody. Not only is emotion engendered by singing the words of the hymns but often there is a musical journey across each stanza (and sometimes into the refrain) that supports the narrative arc of the hymn. That both John and Charles Wesley placed great emphasis on the importance of music can be seen in their writings and the insistence of John Wesley on directing the singing of hymns in Methodist societies. In an appendix to *Select Hymns: with Tunes Annext* John Wesley wrote, 'Sing all. See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can' and 'Sing lustily and with a good courage … lift up your voice with strength' and 'strive to unite your voices together, so as to make one clear melodious sound' (1761, 265). John Wesley's instruction to 'sing all', which conveys the distinctive Methodist perspective on congregational participation and approach to the evangelical purpose of hymnody, is manifested in Charles Wesley's hymn *All praise to our redeeming Lord* (MHT 745):

All praise to our redeeming Lord;
Who joins us by his grace;
And bids us, each to each restored,
Together seek his face.

The polysemy of the first two words, pointing to both the communal act of praising and to the all-encompassing nature of that praise, reinforces the Wesleyan theological perspective.

John Wesley's directions speak to both his theological position and his attitude to musical participation; while they very much deal with the community in worship, they also place emphasis on the importance of the individual in terms of participation and commitment. Theologically, John Wesley's system in his Methodist societies and his structure of worship

were intended not only to convey 'the offer of salvation to every believer, but also to encourage a rigorous and active commitment to the ethos of the movement from each member' (Clark 2009, 198). However, it is the seventh point of John Wesley's directions that provides insight into the ultimate end of hymn-singing and the use of music in worship. John Wesley writes (1761, 265):

> Above all sing *spiritually*. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your *Heart* is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the *Lord* will approve of here, and reward when he cometh in the clouds of heaven.

Robin A. Leaver explains the significance of congregational singing within this context in that music and song form part of the theological structure of worship. He argues for both the scriptural example of the use of music in the dissemination of God's message and also its historical relevance in Christian worship (1985, 47–48). John Wesley's instruction to 'sing spiritually' reveals his understanding of the important role hymn-singing plays in the presentation and exposition of theology. His seventh point reinforces the significance of the text 'attend strictly to the sense of what you sing' but, in his emphasis on the sound being offered to God, he affirms the value of music in heightening spiritual worship and praise 'such as the Lord will approve of here, and reward when he cometh in the clouds of heaven' (Clark 2009, 202). The inclusion of the words, 'when he cometh in the clouds of heaven' taken from Matthew 26:64, as also the direct quote from Isaiah 40:9 to 'lift up thy voice with strength' in the fourth point, provides scriptural grounding but also establishes hymn-singing and music firmly within theological doctrine and Christian belief and understanding. Carlton R. Young aptly describes the effect and significance of John Wesley's work and accomplishment: 'Wesley's lifelong efforts to standardize the rhetoric and music of congregational song – the unity of emotion and the cognate – the heart and the head – became a distinctive mark of the eighteenth-century Methodist revival in Britain' (1995, 74).

The value of music to hymnody, with its mnemonic effect, its encouragement of communal participation and its generation of emotional response, is indisputable. The power and impact of the music enhance the effect of the words, the poetic vigour and energy of hymns. The rising melody and soaring modulations of the 'Blaenwern' setting (composed by William Penfro Rowlands, 1860–1937) to Charles Wesley's *Love divine, all loves excelling*

and the triumphal progression of the tune 'Cwm Rhondda' for William Williams's *Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah*, with its rousing bass line in the refrain, are instances when music and words combine to powerful effect. However, it can be argued that music can sometimes be a barrier to a full appreciation and understanding of the poetry in hymns, the power of their words. The musical structure often works against the poetic structure, for example against the enjambement of the poetic line as in Charles Wesley's hymn *And can it be that I should gain* (HSP 1739, pp. 117–119):

And can it be, that I should gain
An int'rest in the Saviour's blood!
Dy'd he for me?—Who caus'd his pain!
For me?—Who him to death pursu'd.
Amazing love! How can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

The musical metre in hymnody mitigates against hearing or conveying the nuances of poetic expression and the very nature of hymn-singing as congregational activity makes it difficult for such niceties as the questions in the above hymn, or the cadences of the poetic lines, to be expressed. Further, the melodic line often extends the metrical structure of the stanza. The lines above are written 8.8.8.8. whereas when sung to the tune 'Sagina' the lines are rendered as 10.11.13.14.

And can it be that I-I shou-uld gain
An i-in-tre-est in the-e Saviour's blood!
...
Amazing love! How-ow ca-an i-t be-e-e
That thou-ou-ou, my Go-o-od, shouldst di-i-ie for me?

Links to sung versions of the above three hymns, *Love divine, all loves excelling*, *Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah* (*Redeemer*) and *And can it be that I should gain* are given in the footnote below as examples of the impact of the music on the poetry.[1] When a hymn is read as a piece of poetry, an entirely different interpretation is given than when it is sung. For many, the music of the hymns and the functional purpose of hymn-singing in church has

[1] https://youtu.be/8q3jmXn6HTQ
https://youtu.be/Ofp6rdAgRrY
https://youtu.be/sQeIGbKqiw8

overshadowed the meaning and impact of the words; this study aims to bring to the fore the 'hidden treasure', in Charles Wesley's own words (2012, 89), of the poetic expression inherent in so many of the hymns. Nevertheless, the significance of the singing of hymns cannot be gainsaid; as it states in *The Methodist Hymn-Book with Tunes*, 'In the manifold ministries of Divine worship, song is specifically the people's part, and in Methodism, in particular, the whole congregation has always been called to sing the hymns' (1972, iv).

The language of poetry and hymnody

A consideration of the language of hymnody and religious poetry in the eighteenth century provides a useful poetic context for later analyses of particular Methodist hymns. The hymnody of the eighteenth century, such as that of Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley and William Cowper, while demonstrating the standard characteristics of the genre and communicating its purpose, gives voice to thematic expression in language that embraces common Christian experience (Marshall and Todd 2014, 147).

In his introduction to *The New Oxford Book of Christian Verse*, Donald Davie writes of the most appropriate language to use in addressing God, whether it be in song or prayer – 'stripped of fripperies and seductive indulgences, the most direct and unswerving English' (1998, xxix). Davie's stance coheres with the words of John Wesley in his preface to *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* written some two hundred years before. In describing the hymns included in the collection, Wesley writes, '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 every capacity' (1791, v). Despite – and frequently because of – the simplicity and directness of their style and expression, hymns often display a vividness of imagery or phraseology that gives them merit comparable to some of the best literature of the time.

Most hymnists engage on the topic of Christ's suffering and death, imbuing their writing with the dramatic power of visceral, often graphic phraseology. Thus, Charles Wesley writes of '… Thy painful agony/ Thy bloody sweat, thy grief and shame' in *Would Jesus have the sinner die?* (CHPM 32) and similarly in his hymn *Lamb of God, whose dying love* (MHT 181), echoing the words of the litany, 'By your agony and bloody sweat' from *The Book of Common Prayer* (1762 publication of the 1662 version):

By thine agonizing pain
And sweat of blood, we pray

An earlier hymn written by the Wesleys' father, Samuel Wesley, *Behold the Saviour of mankind* (MHT 193), uses the exclamatory and injunctive language common to eighteenth-century hymnists to convey sensory experience for the reader or singer: 'Hark, how he groans! while nature shakes'. Isaac Watts, too, elicits an emotive experience through exclamations and verbal strength in *He dies! the Friend of Sinners dies!* (MHT 195):

> The Sufferer, bruised beneath your load;
> He poured out cries and tears for you,
> He shed for you His precious blood.

William Cowper's hymn *There is a fountain filled with blood* (OH XV) fully evokes in dramatically metaphorical terms the overwhelming nature of Christ's sacrifice:

> There is a fountain fill'd with blood
> Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
> And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
> Lose all their guilty stains.

The imagery of blood and suffering not only appears in crucifixion hymns but in hymns relating to aspects of the Christian life. Charles Wesley writes, 'Sprinkle Thy blood upon my heart' in *O Jesus, full of truth and grace* (MHT 346), a hymn centred on the theme of repentance and forgiveness while John Newton conveys the value and importance of prayer in the believer's life in the context of the sinner being 'blood-bought' by Christ in his hymn *Come my soul, thy suit prepare* (MHT 540):

> Let Thy blood, for sinners spilt,
> Set my conscience, free from guilt.

The diction that is prevalent in all these hymns – many of the words appearing repeatedly – emphasises the central place of the Crucifixion in Christianity. Such description as 'agony', 'sweat', 'pain', 'shame', 'anguish', 'groans', 'pangs', 'gall', 'wounds', 'disfigured', 'spilt', 'plunged', 'bruised' foregrounds Christ's suffering in unequivocal terms.

As with all poetic expression, there is a causal connection between subject and diction. The very nature of the thematic content of hymnody – from the great biblical narratives such as the journeyings of the Israelites in the desert to the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus; from the Christian doctrine of awareness and repentance of sin to that of salvation and forgiveness; and from the expression of personal spiritual experience in the

Christian journey to certainty in eternal life – necessitates articulation of dramatic force that has powerful, emotive impact. The tone is always one conveying depth of emotion – awe, wonder, entreaty, wretchedness, praise – realised through exclamation, rhetorical questions and repetition.

John Newton achieves emotive impact through a catalogue of appellations of Jesus, some of which are metaphorical, in his hymn *How sweet the name of Jesus sounds* (MHT 99):

> Jesus, my Shepherd, Brother, Friend,
> My Prophet, Priest, and King,
> My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
> Accept the praise I bring.

The use of these names conveys a shift from devotion to emotion within the hymn. The repeated possessive adjectives emphasise the depth of religious commitment and, thus, of feeling. The terms, testifying both to Christ's humanity and divinity build climactically, encompassing the entirety of Jesus' role and presence within the believer's life. Charles Wesley's hymn *Christ, whose glory fills the skies* (MHT 924) also presents a sequence of descriptors; Jesus, however, is represented in more symbolic, esoteric terms: 'Light', 'Sun of Righteousness', 'Day-spring', 'Day-star'. The practice of capitalising relational and titular nouns is common throughout eighteenth-century, and indeed nineteenth-century hymnody, and is evident also in the use of the apostrophe frequently appearing in hymns – for example, in Charles Wesley's *O Love Divine! what hast Thou done?* – and in Romantic poetry as can be seen particularly in many odes such as Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind': 'O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being' (Shelley in Hayward 1976, 284). The language of the hymns is one of heightened feeling and eloquence, manifested in the use of the exclamation 'O' in direct address such as in entreaty to or praise of God; the apostrophe, most commonly 'Love'; and connotative and emotive words – 'wretched' and 'bound', for example, to describe the state of the sinner and 'extol', 'praise', 'exalt' with regard to one aspect of the believer's interaction with God on the Christian journey.

Both thematically and linguistically, there are certain similarities and differences between the writing of the Methodist hymnists and other eighteenth-century poets. The work of Edward Young, particularly his *Night Thoughts*, was much read by the Wesleys and other evangelicals (Tyson 1989, 110). Young refers to the Crucifixion in highly figurative language that diverges from the less complex diction used by the hymnists (1880, 99):

Sun! didst thou fly thy Maker's pain? or start
At that enormous load of human guilt,
Which bow'd His blessed head; o'erwhelm'd His cross;
Made groan the centre; burst earth's marble womb,
With pangs, strange pangs! deliver'd of her dead?
Hell howl'd; and heav'n that hour let fall a tear;
Heav'n wept, that men might smile!
Heav'n bled, that man
Might never die! —

His is a poem of sublimity and grandeur with imagery that is distinctive in its vividness and originality, a poem that, according to George Gilfillan, is as much a 'searching, powerful sermon' (Young 1863, xxiii). In this and in his dramatic eloquence – 'burst earth's marble womb' and 'Hell howl'd' – he attains the religious intensity and emotional quality of the hymnists who were his contemporaries. From the poignancy of 'and heav'n that hour let fall a tear' to the effectively pointed, synecdochical imagery of '… that nail supports/ The falling universe …' Young poetically encapsulates the Christian message. Despite the similarity of the articulations of suffering and death, and the common use of words such as 'groan', 'burst', 'pangs' and 'howl'd', Young's work in blank verse is much different to the strict metrical structure of the hymn genre.

Many of the contemporaries of the Wesleys publishing in the mid-eighteenth century, such as Edward Young, Thomas Gray, Oliver Goldsmith, William Cowper and Christopher Smart, were what became known as 'graveyard poets'. Graveyard poetry emerged out of a time of religious unrest and revival with shared themes of mortality, the finality and sublimity of death and the afterlife becoming of interest, with a vocabulary often featuring tombs, graves, hell. Christopher Smart (1722–1771) in his religious poetry exhibits a relation with the hymnists of his time through his diction which includes phrases such as 'everlasting burnings' ('Jubilate Agno') and 'Glorious the martyr's gore' (*Song to David*).

Thomas Gray (1716–1771) in his 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard' presents a meditation on death (1891, 42):

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

In this opening stanza, mood is created through a vocabulary that evokes mourning ('tolls', 'knell', 'parting', 'darkness') with the end of life being implicit in the ending of the day.

The elegy was a popular genre in the eighteenth century reflecting, with its tenor of melancholic reflection or lament, an aspect of the preoccupation with death, whether philosophically or spiritually, of the time. This was only one aspect of eighteenth-century considerations of death, however, contrasting particularly with the Methodist writers' perspective in their work where the subject of death was allied to themes of sin, forgiveness, salvation, judgement and eternal life. Charles Wesley wrote several funeral hymns on the death of close friends or family members. While the language may evoke melancholy or sorrow as in the lines from his last hymn (CHW 1037):

> In age and feebleness extreme,
> Who shall a helpless worm redeem?

or in his despairing mourning in his hymn on the death of his son, 'Who weeping build our infant's tomb' (1759, Hymn XXIII) this is usually overlaid with a sense of poignancy and, ultimately, hope. This is exhibited in a lexicon that affirms life in Christ, in this world and the next: 'To joy celestial rise'; '… gain'd the port of peace'; 'And soar to worlds on high':

> He bursts yon ambient azure shell,
> He flies from us, with God to dwell.

Rarely did hymnody of the time articulate or describe death or suffering – specifically, that of Jesus Christ, but also of sinners – without conveying the Christian completion of such an experience. Thus, the Crucifixion is followed by the joy of the Resurrection, death leads to the bliss of eternal life for the Christian and sorrow gives way to praise and exaltation of God. As Edward Perronet (1726–1792), a Methodist hymnist who at one time worked closely with the Wesleys, voices (MHT 91):

> Join in the everlasting song
> And crown Him Lord of all!

Augustus Toplady (1740–1778), a Reformed Anglican minister, deals in a similar way to hymnists such as Charles Wesley and Philip Doddridge with the development of subject from death to eternal life in his hymn *Object of my first desire* (MHT 90). In this stanza, his double use of the oxymoron underlines the soteriological creed of the Christian Church:

Lord, it is not life to live,
If Thy presence Thou deny;
Lord, if Thou Thy presence give,
'Tis no longer death to die.

The use of blood imagery associated with the Crucifixion, with its theological pertinence to the Christian precepts of love, sacrifice, forgiveness of sin and salvation, is particularly present in hymnody. This can be attributed to the rise of evangelicalism and the fervour of Methodist writers in proclaiming a soteriological message. Although the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ are themes frequently present in the works of other religious poets, their language and treatment often diverge from that of the hymnists. An exception is the Methodist poet, Agnes Bulmer (1775–1836), who considers the Passion and Resurrection in her epic poem *Messiah's Kingdom* within the context of a full narrative of Scripture, from the fall of humankind to the evangelical mission of Christianity. As with all Methodist writing, her focal point is the presentation of the message of salvation. In dealing specifically with the crucifixion in Book VI of her poem, Bulmer uses biblical symbolism to great poetic effect (1833, 205):

Yes; there the meek mysterious Sufferer bleeds!
Pang urges pang, and groan to groan succeeds,
Fierce bulls of Bashan furious round him close,
And ravenous dogs their wrathful rage oppose,
Wild on his prey the ramping lion roars,
Its purple current life retiring pours,
Impervious Heaven returns his piteous moan,
Messiah drinks the dreadful draught alone;
Nor vents his loud, his last expiring cry,
Nor yields to Death the shrine of Deity,
Till Love's stupendous ransom price is paid,
For guilt, the free, the full atonement made

Bulmer conveys the agony of the Cross in imagery rooted in Scripture – '… strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion' (Psalm 22:12–13) – achieving an emotional and dramatic intensity. In her poem, as in Scripture, the choice of language and image to describe threat and torment is that associated with beasts. Similar linguistic and metaphoric associations can be seen in some of

Charles Wesley's work such as in his hymn *On the Death of W. H—ll, Aged Fourteen* (1769, Hymn XI):

Before the yawning cavern close
Its mouth on its devoted prey

Edward Young's work had a great influence on Bulmer, particularly his *Night Thoughts.* Bulmer, although admiring of Young's poem, nevertheless shows a more Wesleyan influence in her expression of the upheaval of the earth on Christ's crucifixion in the lines below (1833, 206):

Death, sullen, stern, tremendous, grasps his prey;
Hell, earth, and heav'n, recoil in dread dismay;
With throes convulsive frighted Nature heaves;
The mountains tremble, and the dark rock cleaves

Charles Wesley's descriptions of nature in turmoil can be seen in his earthquake hymns (*Hymns occasioned by the Earthquake, March 8, 1750* and *Hymns of Intercession for All Mankind* [1758], for example) where the references are from the Book of Revelation concerning judgement. Wesley writes with dramatic description: 'And thunders roll and lightnings shine'; 'Jehovah shakes the shattered ball' and (1750, 4):

Earth did to her centre quake,
Convulsive pangs her bowels tore

The similarity that Bulmer shows with Wesley's imagery with its verbal and adjectival force is clear. The regularity of her metre (10.10.10.10.) and rhyme, and the treatment of her subject matter give her verses a hymnic quality although her work is not a hymn. While much of poetry has lyrical qualities which makes it suitable for song, verses such as those of Agnes Bulmer's, with their particular subject matter and diction, are particularly suited to hymn transcription.

The experience of death occupied a significant place in Methodist thought and tradition since it allowed for the testimony of faith by the dying and focused attention on the afterlife of the Christian. Accounts of 'holy dying' in the *ars moriendi* tradition dating back to the fifteenth century are often echoed in Methodist literature with Protestant reformers having adapted the tradition following the Roman Catholics (Hindmarsh 2005, 256–257). Both Wesley brothers were much influenced by the genre of *ars moriendi* and Jeremy

Taylor's *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying* published in 1651 had a great impact on Charles Wesley's thoughts and writings. The influence of Taylor's work on Charles Wesley is discussed in some detail in chapter five. As a genre of Christian writing, the *ars moriendi* tradition continued well into the eighteenth century; Bulmer evidenced an interest in the genre in much of her writing through a powerful poetic expression. In her elegy on the death of Hester Ann Rogers, 'Thoughts on a Future State' (1794), she addresses the moments of dying, specifically of dying well (Bulmer in Rogers 1840, 175):

> Is such thy knowledge of thy glorious Lord?
> Then sure thy love in measure must accord;
> Possessing now the end thy soul pursued,
> In near fruition of its perfect good

Inasmuch as Methodist hymnody and poetry of the eighteenth century encompassed the *ars moriendi* tradition, a vocabulary of triumph, joy and praise particularly relating to the Resurrection and Ascension featured equally significantly and prominently. Bulmer writes of 'the lambent glory' as 'The Son triumphant to his seat returns' (1833, 164). The eloquent words from 1 Corinthians 15:55, formed as rhetorical questions, which affirm the victory of Christ on the cross: 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' are articulated frequently in hymnic expression. Luther's reference to 'His sting is lost for ever' in his hymn *Christ Jesus lay in death's strong bands* (MHT 210) is given fuller expression in Charles Wesley's *And let this feeble body fail* from his *Funeral Hymns* (1759, Hymn III):

> O'er death, who now has lost his sting,
> I give the victory

and in his hymn proclaiming the Resurrection, *Christ the Lord is risen today* (HSP 1739, pp. 209–210):

> Lives again our glorious King,
> Where, O death, is now thy sting?
> Dying once he all doth save:
> Where thy victory, O grave?

Earlier in 1712, Alexander Pope directly referenced the words from Corinthians in his poem 'The Dying Christian to his Soul' (2003, 32):

O Grave! where is thy victory?
O Death! where is thy sting?

In all these examples, it is the emotive impact of the word ‘sting’ with its connotations of pain and grievousness and the juxtaposition of the metonym ‘grave’ and the abstract noun ‘victory’ that add point to the concept of death as being conquered in the Christian tradition. The poetic nature of the English translation of the King James Bible – which owed much to the beauty of William Tyndale’s earlier translations of the Bible – as exemplified in the above lines from Corinthians has, thus, provided inspiration across centuries for poets such as Luther, Pope and Charles Wesley. Its significance as linguistically influential manifests in diction, phraseology, allusion. This is not the place to discuss the impact of the King James Bible on literature, however; suffice it to say that in its translation from the original Hebrew, a concrete, figurative language, every general truth ‘is rendered with the utmost directness, and in phraseology as pictorial, as elemental, as transparent, as stimulative to imagination and feeling, as could possibly be. Such a language is the very language of poetry’ (Cook 1909, 33). For the Wesleys, the Authorised Version or King James Version of the Bible ‘functioned as a “given” text in language, diction and authority as God's Word’ (Kimbrough 1988, 142). However, Charles Wesley was cognisant of the texts in their original languages and there are instances in his hymns and poems when he uses ‘transliterated forms of Hebrew and Greek words for emphasis, rhyme, alliteration, assonance or meaning’ instead of the phraseology of the King James translation (Kimbrough 1988, 142). He was also much influenced by the language of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Anne Steele (1716–1778), a Baptist hymn-writer and poet, was also inspired by the lyrical and emotive writing of the Bible, bringing into prominence the necessary role of Scripture in the Christian life (MHT 302):

Teach me to love Thy sacred word,
And view my Saviour there.

Steele’s hymns are resonant with the phraseology of the King James version of the Bible. Her hymn *When I resolv’d to watch my thoughts* (Steele 1760 vol. II, 168–171), which is based on Psalm 39, echoes, for example, the words of the psalmist: ‘Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am’ (Psalm 39:4):

Almighty Maker of my frame,
Teach me the measure of my days!

Teach me to know how frail I am,
And spend the remnant to thy praise.

Steele consistently uses a vocabulary of death, suffering and sin, writing of 'sin and sorrow, fear and pain', 'gloomy thoughts and boding fears' in the life and heart of the sinner. Her descriptions of death align with eighteenth-century spiritual thought and, particularly, with the Methodists' focus on sin and death in terms of the need for redemption (1760 vol. I, 107):

Death! 'tis a name with terror fraught;
It rends the guilty heart,
When conscience wakes remorseful thought,
With agonizing smart.

At the same time as highlighting some of the bleaker aspects of Christian pilgrimage, Steele also shows her preoccupation with the physicality of the Passion of Christ (1760 vol. I, 179):

Stretched on the cross, the Saviour dies;
Hark! His expiring groans arise!
See, from His hands, His feet, His side,
Runs down the sacred crimson tide!

There is an intertextual link between her line, 'See, from His hands, His feet, His side' and the words from Isaac Watts's earlier hymn, *When I survey the wondrous cross*, 'See, from His head, His hands, his feet' (APHS 515). This link reinforces the common Christian focus in both hymnody and doctrine on the suffering Christ. The verbal echo is so distinct that it is reasonable to suppose that it is a conscious imitation of Watts's line. While it is not possible to establish whether Steele expected her readers/singers to be aware of the echo, hymn-singers would be reassured and edified by a sense of resonance with church tradition and Scripture.

The use of the imperative 'see' so typical of hymnic language as evidenced in other instances such as 'behold' and 'hark' draws attention to the physical reality of Christ's crucifixion. Steele's verbal and adjectival choices – 'stretched', 'expiring' – and her use of asyndeton, as in Watts's hymn, for added linguistic and dramatic impact – 'His hands, His feet, His side' – bring a graphic element to her depiction. However, in keeping with the evangelistic spirit of other hymnists of her times, she presents the message of salvation, proclaiming Jesus as the Saviour of humankind. Her proclamations gain greater traction

through the use of repetition: ‘He lives, the great redeemer lives’. Death, the ‘pale destroyer’ is overcome, encapsulated by Steele in biblical imagery in the diction of other eighteenth-century hymnists: ‘To heav'n-born souls thy sting is lost’.

Sin and salvation may be the didactic thrust of eighteenth-century hymnody, but many hymns of the period encapsulate the joy of believers in following the way of Jesus Christ and their exultation in song. Charles Wesley writes with fervour, *O For a thousand tongues to sing*; Edward Perronet expresses the Christian’s desire to ‘join the everlasting song’ (MHT 91); Robert Robinson ‘Call[s] for songs of loudest praise’ (MHT 417). These hymns, and many more, all commonly use derivatives of the words, ‘sing’ and ‘song’, with terminology and intention – to praise God – coalescing. The words written by nineteenth-century Anglican hymnist William Chatterton Dix (1837–1898) perfectly articulate the spirit of the hymn (MHT 964):

To Thee, O Lord, our hearts we raise
In hymns of adoration,
To Thee bring sacrifice of praise
With shouts of exultation

This is the heart of the evangelical message of eighteenth-century poets expressed in the hymnic genre; through sin, suffering and death, the Christian experience leads to salvation and eternal joy as Charles Wesley communicates simply in his hymn of praise *Head of Thy Church triumphant* (MHT 411):

With heart and voice
In Thee rejoice,
The God of our salvation.

Chapter Four: An evolving legacy

The development of the hymn tradition

Throughout the history of hymnody, hymn-writers have inevitably been influenced, to some degree, by the writing of their predecessors. However, the writers also bring into their work the influence of their particular historical circumstances and their own theological principles. They all use the hymn somewhat differently as a means to convey their own message, shaping their hymns according to their personal paradigm and the poetic context of their time (Marshall and Todd 2014, 147).

Three hymnists, Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley and William Cowper, contributed significantly and singularly to the development of hymnody in the eighteenth century, although others such as John Newton also played a role. Each of them mastered and utilised the genre in their own ways and for their own purposes. Chronologically, Watts's greatest output was during the first half of the eighteenth century; the life span of Charles Wesley is across most of the century, while Cowper wrote his hymns largely during the early 1770s. Charles Wesley's contribution to hymnody will be looked at in chapters five and six.

As the so-called 'Father of English Hymnody', Watts (1674–1748) played an important part in the development of hymnody as the author of around 750 hymns, some of which are still widely sung today. In fact, Watts is the only hymnist of the eighteenth century whose hymns are comparable with the number of Charles Wesley's hymns found in many modern hymnbooks, and certain hymns such as *When I survey the wondrous cross* and *Our God, our help in ages past* are among the most well-known and loved of English hymns. Watts played a significant role in the reform of Protestant hymnody by introducing poetry that was not solely based on scriptural paraphrasing into Christian worship. He believed that spiritual devotion and piety had fallen into decline in his age and his aim was to advance a dynamic Christianity that was rooted in personal experience, an expression of the religious feelings of the people (Beynon 2016, 49).

Despite his criticism of the Calvinists' turgid adaptation of the Psalms for congregational singing, Watts wrote in the preface to his *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1791, iii–iv):

> Far be it from my thoughts to lay aside the Book of Psalms in public worship; few can pretend so great a value for them as myself: It is the most noble, most

> devotional, and divine collection of poesy; and nothing can be supposed more proper to raise a pious soul to heaven than some parts of that book.

Watts's desire was to bring Christ into the Psalms, to rewrite them in the Messianic style of the New Testament and, accordingly, he wrote paraphrases of most of the Psalms. These were published in 1744 as a psalter entitled *Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament*. Watts used powerful traditional imagery that his Independent congregations could easily understand, and avoided Calvinist niceties; he brought the New Testament into texts that were already familiar. In his own words in the preface to *The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament* (1719, xvii):

> Where the Psalmist describes Religion by the Fear of God, I have often joyn'd Faith and Love to it. Where he speaks of the Pardon of Sin thro' the Mercies of God, I have added the Merits of a Saviour.

Many of Watts's paraphrases still appear in hymnbooks today and are sung in church worship. *Our God, our help in ages past* (APHS 616) is a paraphrase of the first few verses of Psalm 90 and was written in 1714 when England was going through a period of political turbulence and religious intolerance. The forces of Catholicism and Protestantism were locked in a spiritual struggle for domination of the nation and, in this hymn of assurance and faith, Watts writes powerfully of God providing hope, help, shelter, a home. The hymn expresses in poetically fluid and evocative lyrics the words from the first part of Psalm 90: for example, 'For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night' (90:4). The corresponding stanza in Watts's hymn demonstrates the power and impact of his poetical expression through his use of simile, rhyme and rhythm:

> A thousand ages in Thy sight
> Are like an evening gone;
> Short as the watch that ends the night
> Before the rising sun.

Watts stands as an influential force in the development of hymnody in England regarding aspects of style and theme, breaking from traditional views of hymnody in his poetic composition of original songs of Christian experience for use in worship. Stylistically, he uses figures of speech to add emphasis and richness to his message as well as employing such devices as alliteration, paradox, rhetorical questions and antithesis. He wrote numerous

hymns that were not based on the Psalms although many of them were derived from New Testament passages. Watts, to a large degree, extended past practice in his approach to hymn-writing, an approach which can also be seen as anticipating Charles Wesley's. Anne W. Kuhn illustrates this in her discussion on the influence of the German hymnist Paulus Gerhardt (1607–1676) on English hymnody. Gerhardt's most famous hymn is *O sacred Head once wounded* (MHT 202), in German *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*, a translation of a hymn apparently by Bernard of Clairvaux (1091–1153) entitled *Salve caput cruentatum*. Kuhn writes that the spirit of this hymn was captured by Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley with 'their themes and their style reflect[ing] its mood and its message' (1948, 22). The hymn is informed by the subjective experience, devotion and piety characteristic in Gerhardt's writing and portrays the love of the dying Saviour and the immeasurable indebtedness of humanity to him (Kuhn 1948, 22):

I read the wondrous story,
I joy to call Thee mine.
Thy grief and Thy compassion
Were all for sinner's gain;
Mine, mine was the transgression,
But Thine the deadly pain.

Gerhardt, like Watts and Wesley following him, evokes the close relationship between the soul and God and between God and his world (Kuhn 1948, 26/28). From the perspective of style, diction and message he influenced the spirit of eighteenth-century hymn-writing with his spontaneity, simplicity and purity of expression, qualities which Watts shared. Thus, although Watts forged a new era in hymn-singing in England – prior to the early seventeenth century, very few hymns had been available that were suitable for congregational use and the period following the English Reformation was largely unproductive in terms of hymn-writing – he also embraced a particular approach to hymn-writing that was demonstrated in the work of German Pietists such as Gerhardt. This approach, manifesting in a subjective and spiritual warmth of expression, influenced, too, the thought and writing of John and Charles Wesley. John's translations of Gerhardt's hymns are such that they are often absorbed into the Wesleyan tradition (Kuhn 1948, 28).

Watts describes his perception of hymnody and devotional worship very clearly in his preface to *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*: 'While we sing the praises of God in His church, we are employed in that part of worship which of all others is the nearest akin to heaven …

which should elevate us to the most delightful and divine sensations …' (Watts 1791, i). These sensations, when spiritually and emotionally disciplined, become expressions of piety, which are practised and made manifest through articulation. Watts's conviction was that the Christian faith should feature in the songs of the church, thus, not only did he bring the New Testament into the Psalms but also focused on Christ in many of his hymns.

Marshall and Todd argue that the impersonality of the hymn is one of its restraints with the personal convictions of the hymn-writer being largely absent from the process of selection of material and composition. They cite Watts as an example – although acknowledging his engagement with the passions – in his focus on common devotional feelings in his hymnic expression rather than on introspection (2014, 147). Benjamin A. Kolodziej, too, avers that while Watts's hymns are personal, they are not introspective since they aim to illuminate the Christian in relation to God and to others (2004, 248).

While it is largely true that the hymn is impersonal due to its use in congregational worship, the assertion that Watts's hymns are not introspective bears further consideration. In his preface to *Hymns and Spiritual Songs,* Watts describes his hymns as being of 'the most common affairs of christians' but with the hope that they may all be adapted to 'private or public worship' (Watts 1791, iv). His introduction of personal religious experience, of the subjective – in terms of his use of the first person singular in his hymns – allows each member of the congregation an opportunity to appropriate his (that is, Watts's) spiritual experience for themselves. This spiritual experience is a universal one which each person is expected to have in the evangelical tradition. Watts's approach caused some controversy in an age where hymnody appeared to be largely based on doctrinal and scriptural texts. Thomas Wright asserts that the value of Watts's hymns can be attributed, in the main, to the fact that they give the impression of being a true reflection of his personal religious experience or what he calls his 'soul experience' (1914, 88). Watts's description of the extent of God's love and his response to it in *When I survey the wondrous cross* (APHS 515) – 'Demands my life, my soul, my all' – are evidence enough of the personal voice that characterises his writing. *When I survey the wondrous cross* is the first known hymn to be written in the first person (Kondolo 2015, 156). By using the first person singular, Watts allows the congregant to own the sentiment; he places the worshipper directly at the foot of the cross. Watts infuses his hymns with the fire of his religious passion. The rapture of his spirituality manifests in hymns such as *There is a land of pure delight* (APHS 626) which is visually powerful and poetically expressive in its description of eternity in heaven: 'Infinite day'; 'everlasting spring'. The

hymn has an epic quality engendered by its narrative impact. In stanza three, for example, the references to Canaan and Jordan,

> So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
> While Jordan rolled between

reach back into ancient history, evoking a sense of timelessness and continuity in the continuing narrative of religious faith.

It is John Coffey's view that Watts's *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* was one of the pre-eminent books of the eighteenth century, transmitting the emotive religious devotion that was marked in the puritan tradition – from which the Congregationalist church of which Watts was a member descended – to subsequent Protestant worship, particularly that of the evangelicals (Beynon 2016, 6). Coffey's viewpoint provides a lens for understanding how principles of pastoral theology and worship played a part in hymnody as it developed. The Puritans, in their desire to advance the English Reformation, urged piety in worship and an adherence to doctrine both individually and collectively. Experiential piety was manifested in Puritanism and, later, in the religious expression of the eighteenth-century evangelical Protestants such as the Wesleys, who, unlike the Puritans, considered the assurance of salvation that came from conversion experiences entirely necessary.

It was Watts's hymns and his move away from the traditional psalter which encouraged other new voices in England to write original hymns, particularly during the years of revival and evangelical hymn-writing. The pioneering work of Watts in hymnody was expanded during this revival of the mid-eighteenth century by John and Charles Wesley, and it was due to their influence that hymnody was fully instituted in both England and America. Watts's establishment of hymn-singing as normative within the church laid the foundation for Charles Wesley's numerous hymns, and the publication in 1737 of John Wesley's first hymnal to be used in worship in the Church of England*, Collection of Psalms and Hymns*. Eric Routley writes of Charles Wesley, 'The gates that Watts had opened, Wesley joyously entered; and the field that Watts sowed he reaped, literally, a hundredfold'. The 'gates' and 'field' are representative of church congregational song in its fullest expression (Kauflin, 2006, 8).

Both John and Charles Wesley were familiar with Watts's hymns; John Wesley had read Watts at Oxford and respected him as a theologian, writing of his positive relationship with Watts and other dissenters in a 1765 journal entry (Kolodziej 2004, 236). That there was a relationship of mutual respect between Watts and the Wesleys is evident in part of John

Wesley's obituary tribute to his brother at the Methodist Conference of 1788, recounting Watts's words about Charles Wesley's hymn *Wrestling Jacob* that it was worth all that he himself had ever written (Manning 1942, 60). John Wesley's admiration for the writing of Watts is confirmed by the fact that half of his first hymnal consisted of hymns by Watts (Kolodziej 2004, 245).

The hymns and writings of Watts, and John and Charles Wesley following him, exhibit a scriptural piety: their thought is very much centred on the form and power of godliness, with faith being the 'substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen' (Hebrews 11:1). Watts stresses the importance of 'Faith and obedience to his [God's] word' (APHS 301) while Charles Wesley writes of faith which 'lends its realizing light' (MHT 362). Watts and Charles Wesley, in their hymns, focus alike on themes significant in Christian thought, themes touching on or examining the relationship between God and the souls of humanity. For both, the Cross – with all the corresponding implications and consequences of the Incarnation and the Passion – is central to their expression (Manning 1942, 63). Their hymns are similarly scriptural; however, Watts expresses his thoughts and persuasions largely through his practice of paraphrasing Scripture (Manning 1942, 82). Watts's version of Psalm 23, *My Shepherd will supply my need* (HPS 166), is one of his more familiar imitations conveying in it his Christological focus. The first line of the hymn is based as much on Philippians 4:19, 'But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus' – a New Testament reference which would have been known to eighteenth-century congregants – as it is on Psalm 23. Watts echoes the convictions of the psalmist within a poetic structure, giving, however, a greater emphasis and clarity to certain facets of Christian belief. The lines from the Psalm read, 'He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake' which Watts writes as:

> And leads me, for his mercy's sake,
> In paths of truth and grace.

By contrast, Charles Wesley, rather than paraphrasing, uses the language of the Bible in his hymns to convey his creed. As stated by J. E. Kalas, he 'had only one language, the language of Zion. The scriptures were his native tongue' (1984, 25). Although he and Watts differ in the form and style of biblical expression, Manning stresses the central affirmation of faith in both writers (1942, 82–83) conveyed clearly in the last lines of Watts's doxology to the Holy Trinity, *I give immortal praise* (APHS 677):

Where reason fails, with all her powers,
There faith prevails, and love adores.

Richard Arnold considers the impact of Watts, Charles Wesley and Cowper on the development of hymnody and, in doing so, explores what distinguishes them even though they were all writing in the same genre. The publisher synopsis (2012) states, 'When considered in their poetic-historical contexts, it is noteworthy that Watts can be seen as an archetypal Neoclassicist (not unlike Pope and Johnson), Wesley as a transitional pre-Romantic (not unlike Gray and Collins), and Cowper a thoroughgoing Romantic (not unlike Wordsworth and Coleridge)'. All three hymnists chronologically precede their counterparts mentioned by Arnold. Cowper, as a poet and hymnist, is seen as one of the forerunners of Romantic poetry and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, according to numerous sources, described him as 'the best modern poet'. In the best of his hymn-writing, Cowper exhibits many of the norms that had become accepted into hymnic tradition in the previous decades such as the use of material from Scripture, doctrinal didacticism, expressions of devotion and the use of visual and dramatic effect (Marshall and Todd 2014, 119).

Cowper, born in 1731, wrote 67 hymns that formed part of *The Olney Hymns* published in 1779 as a collaboration with John Newton. That the book gained such immediate traction can be attributed partly to the religious context in which it was written and published: the growing popularity of the evangelical movement in England in the late eighteenth century. Methodism was experiencing significant growth and evangelicalism was gradually spreading into the Church of England. The principal purpose of the hymns was for use by Newton's congregation at Olney; as such they were written in 'plain' language. However, while Newton uses simple rhythm and rhyming structures to convey his personal relationship with God, Cowper's hymns display a more poetic expression although also written in a natural style. *The Olney Hymns* communicate both the central principles of evangelicalism including humanity's sinfulness, atonement, the authority of the Bible, spiritual conversion and the belief in eternal life after death, as well as Newton and Cowper's personal Christian faith and experience. Cowper's hymn *My song shall bless the Lord of all* (OH 25) reveals a personal focus that has affinities with Charles Wesley:

A cheerful confidence I feel,
My well-placed hopes with joy I see;
My bosom glows with heavenly zeal
To worship him who died for me.

The use of the possessive adjective ‘my’; the personal statements, ‘I feel’ and ‘I see’; and the last line, ‘To worship him who died for me’, all serve to ground devotional and spiritual response in subjective experience as did Charles Wesley (Marshall and Todd 2014, 130).

A number of Cowper’s hymns are still in congregational use today, with nine of them appearing in *The Methodist Hymn-Book with Tunes*. Many exhibit his fusion of poetry and hymn; the evocativeness and graphic power of poetry is enhanced by the clarity of the stanzaic hymn form inherited from Watts (Marshall and Todd 2014, 146). Cowper’s hymns, characterised by his poetic expression of the oscillations of faith, often span the gap between questioning and assurance, as do those of Watts and Charles Wesley. In *O for a closer walk with God* (OH 1), Cowper’s use of rhetorical questions in the second stanza brings to the fore a measure of his despairing soul:

Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is that soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?

Marshall and Todd assert that, although Cowper’s faith appears to be rooted in Wesleyan subjective experience of ‘longing, conversion and ecstasy’ (2014, 139), his Calvinist concern with human depravity, ‘the vile, the lost’, and divine wrath – expressed in his hymns as ‘impending doom’ and ‘vengeance at the door’ – reveals the ambivalence of his outlook. However, one of his best-known hymns, *God moves in a mysterious way* (OH 68), expresses the trust and faith in God that sustained Cowper during bouts of depression:

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

Despite his frequent questioning and his preoccupation with sin, many of Cowper’s hymns are invested with a sense of faith in and knowledge of God’s authority. He is cognisant of

Christ's 'redeeming love', the 'sanctifying light' of the Holy Spirit, the healing wings of the risen Lord, God's salvation.

Cowper's hymns show a clarity of diction reminiscent of Watts, but they also have the subjective passion typical of Charles Wesley's hymns; Cowper exhibits a combination of 'Watts's visual power, Wesley's exemplary sensibility, and Newton's vitality' which serves to demonstrate the role of 'poetic imagination' in hymns (Marshall and Todd 2014, 11). His lyrical exclamation in his hymn *Lovest Thou me?* (OH 18), for example, 'Hark, my soul! it is the Lord' introduces the tenor of the hymn with an emotive simplicity, which moves to an impassioned Wesleyan entreaty: 'Oh for grace to love thee more!' In his hymn entitled *Temptation* (OH 37), he uses strongly visual, metaphoric language – images from nature – to convey his psychological and spiritual state:

> The billows swell, the winds are high,
> Clouds overcast my wintry sky

Cowper extends the poetic nature of his hymns through his rich use of symbolism such as the cross, the thorn, the lamb, the fountain and the worm, this last, 'thy feeble worm' (OH 5), an image accordant with his emphasis on his own sinful state and one also employed by Charles Wesley.

With the growing evangelical sentiment in England and the spiritual fervour beginning to emanate from the revival, Cowper, like Charles Wesley, became a voice of – in Manning's description of a feature of the evangelical movement – 'the intense examination of the human soul' (1942, 64). The vigorous style of hymnody as it developed in the eighteenth century was consonant with the hymnists' distinct purpose of expressing the feelings of worshippers towards God.

John Wesley: 'Famed leader of the Methodists'

The significance attached to hymnody by Methodism is far-reaching as described by Kimbrough: 'The hymns of the church are theology. They are theological statements: the church's lyrical, theological commentaries on Scripture, liturgy, faith, action, and hosts of other subjects which call the reader and singer to faith, life and Christian practice' (1985, 59). In their two functional aspects of transmission of doctrine and emotional participation in song, the hymns act to bring together the mind/heart polarity, the knowing and feeling, of the Methodist creed and Christian experience as exemplified by John Wesley.

George Whitefield was one of the leading evangelists of the eighteenth century, a man who was often in conflict with John Wesley, and yet who, in 1763, described Wesley as 'the famed leader of the Methodists' (Clark 2009, 11). Whitefield's designation is a testament to the pre-eminent role which John Wesley played in the emergence and shaping of Methodism. His 'heart-warming' experience of 24 May 1738 set in action a course of events which was to change church history. Methodism does not have holy days, but Wesley Day has become an occasion to remember and give thanks for the work of the Wesley brothers and the Methodist Church. It is significant that 24 May does not commemorate a birth or a death but a spiritual experience (The Methodist Church: Johannesburg West Circuit 2016, 3).

Although he wrote some original hymns, John Wesley's role in the development of hymnody lies largely in the translation, editing and publication of hymns that he collected. While Charles is the hymn-writer of the family, indeed of Methodism, and is a focus of this study, John's place in the history of hymnody is critical. In publishing various hymnodies, he expressed the desire for 'the people called *Methodists* to have the *best Hymns* which we have printed' (MHT 1972, x). A consideration of some of his original and translated hymns assists in illuminating the Methodist context – in terms of its doctrine – in which hymnody plays a central role. As well as offering biographical insights from his journey as a missionary to Georgia in 1735, *The Journal of John Wesley* (1832) provides a window into his religious convictions and theology, which found expression in his hymns, until his last entries in 1790. The Duke Centre for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition brings together resources for the study of John and Charles Wesley, giving bibliographical guides to specific areas of scholarship, while two publications, one from the nineteenth century and one recent, Robert Southey's *The Life of Wesley and the Rise and Progress of Methodism* (1820) and Roy Hattersley's *John Wesley: A Brand from Burning: The Life of John Wesley* (2002), give full accounts of the events and circumstances influencing John Wesley's spiritual development.

The theological impact of John Wesley on Methodism and Christianity in general is significant; his soul-searching and spiritual questioning led to a notable and momentous conversion. Wesley's conversion is all the more significant from a personal perspective given, as he writes it, his 'indifference, dulness, and coldness' and 'his frequent relapses into sin' (1832, 74). On the morning of 24 May, he records in his journal: 'I think it was about five this morning, that I opened my Testament on those words … "There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that ye should be partakers of the divine nature," 2 Pet. i, 4'. Just before he went out again, he opened his Bible once more and read, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God' (Wesley 1832, 74). While John Wesley did not

experience the joy described by the Moravians, he wrote that 'I have now peace with God' and 'the victory over sin' that is essential to faith (Wesley 1832, 74). In the aftermath of his spiritual conversion, Wesley embarked on preaching the message of salvation and the repentance and forgiveness of sins, speaking of God's love and elucidating scriptural passages in prisons, workhouses, societies and churches. Stephen Tomkins writes that during Wesley's lifetime he 'rode 250,000 miles, gave away 30,000 pounds, ... and preached more than 40,000 sermons ...' (2003, 199). Indeed, his journal entry for 28 July 1757 reads, 'I do indeed live by preaching!' (1832, 639). In June 1739, he recorded in his journal an extract of a letter he had written to a friend (1832, 138):

> I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation. This is the work which I know God has called me to; and sure I am that His blessing attends it.

In this extract, Wesley reveals his continued attachment to the Anglican tradition in his use of the words 'I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty' which reflect those from the communion service in *The Book of Common Prayer* (1762 publication of the 1662 version) of the Church of England: 'It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God'.

As industrious as he was as a preacher, Wesley was also a prolific writer and he published thousands of items including sermons, tracts, pamphlets and books. He shared in the eighteenth-century appreciation of the power of poetry to communicate faith and belief, arouse emotion and bolster moral determination. Specifically, he became aware of the valuable contribution hymns made to inspiring and moulding a Christian lifestyle. In consequence, Wesley gave a large proportion of time to the selection, editing and publication of collections of poetry and hymns. Both John and Charles Wesley made determined efforts to place congregational songs into the hands of their congregants resulting in the publication of various Methodist hymnals. *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns* was published in 1737 with a reissue in 1741; *Hymns and Sacred Poems* appeared in 1739 with a republication under the same title in 1740 and again in 1742 and *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* was published in 1753. In 1780, John Wesley published an abridged version of *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns* (1741) as *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (Lim 2009, 332).

In his preface to this hymnbook, John Wesley writes that he has resisted the pressure to 'publish such a Hymn Book as might be used in all our Congregations throughout Great Britain and Ireland'. He believed this unnecessary considering the 'various Hymn Books which my Brother and I have published within these forty years last past; so that it may be doubted whether any religious Community in the world has a greater variety of them' (Wesley 1791, iii). However, John Wesley did publish such a hymnbook, writing of it in the preface (1791, iv–v):

> In what other publication of the kind have you so distinct and full an account of scriptural Christianity? Such a declaration of the heights and depths of Religion, speculative and practical? So strong cautions against the most plausible Errors; particularly those that are now most prevalent? And so clear directions for making your calling and election sure; for perfecting holiness in the fear of God?

While John Wesley was heavily involved in editing and publishing hymns, particularly his brother's, although he included many others in his collections, he also wrote hymns of his own. John and Charles Wesley, in their early shared collections, did not record which brother composed specific hymns, although from 1749 Charles Wesley began publishing most of his own work independently of his brother. In the hymn collections published jointly by the Wesleys, scholars generally agree that all the adaptations of hymns by other authors were done by John Wesley as well as the translations of German and Spanish hymns while the authorship of most of the original contributions are ascribed to Charles. John Wesley's editorial hand can be seen in his editing of Charles's poem 'For the Anniversary Day of One's Conversion' which was first published in 1740. The original poem consisted of eighteen stanzas; John Wesley reduced these to ten in his 1780 *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*, choosing the hymn, known as *O For a thousand tongues to sing*, to be the first in the collection (Campbell 2008, 22–23).

John Wesley's hymns reveal his theological understanding, his spiritual perspective and his doctrinal teaching. As a High Churchman turned evangelical, his translations and writing are invested with a feeling that distinguishes him from mere formalism and orthodoxy (Lawson 2015, 18). Wesley went beyond literal translation and made his translated hymns his own. In his vibrant translation of the German hymn by Gerhard Tersteegen (MHT 433), he shows a depth of spiritual understanding (stanzas one and six):

Thou hidden love of God, whose height,
Whose depth unfathomed, no man knows,
I see from far Thy beauteous light,
Inly I sigh for Thy repose;
My heart is pained, nor can it be
At rest, till it finds rest in Thee.

Each moment draw from earth away
My heart, that lowly waits Thy call;
Speak to my inmost soul, and say,
I am Thy love, Thy God, Thy all!
To feel Thy power, to hear Thy voice,
To taste Thy love, be all my choice.

In this first stanza and in stanza four, Wesley's words echo those of St. Augustine: 'Our heart is restless until it rests in you' (2008, 3). There is great emotional intensity in this translated hymn which is rooted in a sense of spiritual longing. Wesley's amended fourth stanza places emphasis on a God of action – 'The Lord of every motion there!' – rather than, as previously, on humankind's endeavour that 'From earthly loves I must be free' which is replaced with the more forceful, 'Then shall my heart from earth be free':

Is there a thing beneath the sun
That strives with Thee my heart to share?
Ah, tear it thence, and reign alone,
The Lord of every motion there!
Then shall my heart from earth be free,
When it hath found repose in Thee.

It is divine love that 'tear[s]' out the attachment of the heart to things of the earth: as Lawson says, 'The action is from God, not man' (Lawson 2015, 27).

Perhaps John Wesley's theology is best encapsulated in a hymn in which he conveys his conviction that salvation and redemption are for all (HSP 1742, pp. 275–277):

Father of All, whose powerful Voice
Call'd forth this Universal Frame,
Whose Mercies over All rejoice,
Thro' endless Ages still the same;

Thou by Thy word upholdest All;
Thy bounteous Love to All is shew'd,
Thou hearst Thy Every Creature's Call,
And fillest every Mouth with Good.

The constant repetition of the words, 'All' and 'every' reveals a strongly salvific and Wesleyan perspective: God shows 'bounteous love to All'; his 'word upholdest All'; he hears 'Every Creature's Call'. Wesley taught that the goal of the Christian was to live a holy life, to strive always for sanctification, a goal that was a cornerstone of Methodist spirituality. He saw perfection and holiness as the essential objective in life for any serious follower of Christ (Lawson 2015, 18). He expresses this in a later stanza which appears as a separate hymn *Eternal, spotless Lamb of God* in *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (227):

Thine Lord, we are, and Ours Thou art;
In Us be all Thy goodness shew'd.
Renew, enlarge, and fill our Heart
With Peace, and Joy, and Heaven and God.

This last line, with its use of polysyndeton in the repetition of the conjunction 'and', serves to give an accumulative effect, emphasising the abundance of gifts for the believer in knowing God. Polysyndeton is used extensively in the King James Bible creating a rhythmic lyricism – 'And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith …' (1 Corinthians 13:2), for example – and Wesley's employment of the device marks the influence of scriptural writing on his work. For John Wesley, one of the abundant gifts for the believer is love. His sense of Christian perfection is having a heart filled with love for God through sanctifying grace, a spiritual growth towards perfect love in response to the invitation of Jesus in Matthew 5:48: 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect'. Wesley did not refer to the concept of perfection in the sense of sinlessness: humanity in temptation should always look to God for strength and deliverance:

To Thee, in fierce Temptation's hour,
From Sin and Satan let us flee.

The hymn moves from a proclamation of God's might and saving power to an evocation of God's grace and providence. Stanza six makes reference to Luke 12:24–27 and God's provisioning of his children just as he does the lilies and the ravens:

Thou cloath'st the Lilies of the Field,
And hearest the young Ravens cry

The last two lines of this stanza have both a denotative and a connotative meaning. God 'know'st our every Need' but, although physical need is implied in the scriptural references to clothing and food in Luke, the prime need is a spiritual one. Thus, our souls are fed with 'living bread'; Jesus is the spiritual bread that brings eternal life:

O feed us with Thy grace, and give
Our souls this Day the Living Bread.

In John 6:35 Jesus makes a metaphorical statement: 'I am the bread of life'. This metaphor, as with his other 'I am' statements, expresses his saving relationship with humankind. Later in the chapter in verse 51 Jesus says, 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven'. John Wesley's lines in his hymn are important regarding grace for, to him, grace was central to Christian belief as exhibited in the salvation of sinners through the beneficence of God.

In another hymn *Eternal Son, eternal Love* (MHT 794), also written as *Father of everlasting love* in other sources, Wesley focuses again on themes of grace, love and the omnipotence of God. As in the previously discussed hymn, his constant repetition of the word 'all' brings to the fore a key feature of Methodist theology, expressed by Wesley in the words, 'Let all Thy saving grace adore'. The hymn is a panegyric to the 'Eternal Son, Eternal Love', to Jesus Christ, 'Thrice Holy'. The word 'love' appears frequently both in terms of imagery relating to Christ – 'Fountain of light and love' – and to humanity's response. John Wesley's entreaty to God is for the fulfilment of his evangelistic mission through faith, love and obedience:

Inflame our hearts with perfect love,
In us the works of faith fulfil;
So not heaven's host shall swifter move
Than we on earth, to do Thy will.

Wesley's poetic cataloguing – again using polysyndeton – adds richness and emphasis to his hymn as well as fluency of expression. He describes Christ's attributes in stanza three:

Spirit of grace, and health, and power,
Fountain of light and love below

In stanza five, Wesley writes, ‘Blessing and honour, praise and love’ in his description of the ‘Co-equal, co-eternal Three’, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The enumeration of abstract nouns conveys a sense of abundance, in accordance with the joyous, laudatory tone of the hymn. A central tenet of John Wesley is manifested in the concisely epigrammatic last line of stanza two: ‘And glory ends what grace began’. God’s gift of grace to the believer through salvation and the redemption of sins in Jesus’ death on the cross for humanity is realised finally in the glory of eternal life, in the union with God in heaven where ‘Thy never-ceasing glories shine’.

In the above hymn, Wesley creates a juxtaposition between ‘created nature’ which dies and ‘never-ceasing glories’. His sermons, journal entries and hymnic expression, in general, focus on the practicalities of Christian living, piety and devotion, descriptions of personal endeavour, theological didacticism and praise to God. However, his writings also evince an active appreciation of the natural world with his perception of nature being a revelation of God’s creativity and omnipotence (Haas 1994, 92). In his 1782 sermon ‘God's Approbation of His Works’, Wesley draws attention to the greatness of God as Creator and humanity’s limited understanding of his works: ‘How small a part of this great work of God is man able to understand! But it is our duty to contemplate what he has wrought, and to understand as much of it as we are able’ (1831, 25). His sermon ‘Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount III’ of 1748 expresses his conviction that, as the great Creator and Sustainer of life, God is in all things and that all in nature is connected and dependent on him. Beauty is derived from God in a great interconnectedness of things (1836, 202):

> The great lesson that our blessed Lord inculcates here … is that God is in all things, and that we are to see the Creator in the glass of every creature; that we should use and look upon nothing as separate from God … but with a true magnificence of thought survey heaven and earth and all that is therein as contained by God in the hollow of his hand, who by his intimate presence holds them all in being, who pervades and activates the whole created frame, and is in a true sense the soul of the universe.

Wesley’s perspective resonates with that of Watts who conveys his consciousness of the supremacy of God in nature imagery (APHS 103):

Ere the blue heavens were stretched abroad
From everlasting was the Word.

Bernard Manning describes Watts's expression of the universality of faith in his hymns through his attitude towards the glories of nature (Kolodziej 2004, 248):

Nature and grace, with all their powers,
Confess the Infinite unknown.

Many of Watts's hymns are set against a cosmic background with imagery evoking the vastness of space and time (Manning 1942, 32). In his hymn *God is a name my soul adores* (MHT 41), he writes of God the Creator:

A glance of Thine runs through the globe,
Rules the bright worlds, and moves their frame,

a description with which John Wesley accords in his representation of God 'who pervades and activates the whole created frame'. Watts's consciousness of nature and creation in his hymns was influential on Methodist hymn-writing, as indeed on other hymn-writers.

Cowper, too, illustrates the sovereignty of God within a cosmic context using metaphoric language to demonstrate God's interaction with nature (OH 68):

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sovereign will.

He includes imagery of nature and figurative language in his hymns just as does Watts. In the hymn above, the vastness of the sea and the depth of the mines evoke a sense of God's immensity and, thus, sovereignty in the world.

The beauty of creation is not only evidence of God's greatness and glory but has a particular significance in Christian tradition. Richard Brantley writes of medieval, Renaissance and puritan natural theology which held that the natural world could be read like

a book, illustrative of spiritual themes and moral symbolism (1975, 143). John Wesley's sermons and hymns are reflective of eighteenth-century religious thinking, which was grounded in scriptural texts, and he used metaphors of nature from the Bible in his preaching such as 'grace seasoned with salt' and 'he maketh the clouds his chariots' (Haas 1994, 87). Wesley saw a connection between faith and nature, writing in his Notes on the New Testament (1755), 'We will learn a lesson of faith and cheerfulness from every bird of the air, and every flower of the field' based on Matthew 6:31. His *Survey of the Wisdom of God in Creation* brings into focus the power, wisdom and goodness of God (Haas 1994, 87).

The connection between faith and nature can be seen in many of John Wesley's translated hymns in which God's 'sovereign sway' over his creation is brought to the fore. Another example makes God's supremacy over all the universe clear: 'Sovereign of earth, hell, air and sky' (MHT 67), a use of diction to convey immensity typical of Watts. In a hymn written in German by Paulus Gerhard, Wesley translates his words in reference to the God 'Who heaven and earth commands' (MHT 507):

> Who points the clouds their course,
> Whom winds and seas obey

In characteristic Christian and biblical phraseology and typology, the language employs natural elements to describe aspects of the Christian faith:

> Through waves, and clouds, and storms
> He gently clears thy way:
> Wait thou His time; so shall this night
> Soon end in joyous day.

The way of the Christian pilgrim with its attendant difficulties and 'storms' is often described in terms of nature just as the overcoming of sin is seen with reference to night and day. The image of light is one that is associated with the trinitarian God in Scripture: John declares in his first epistle that 'God is Light' (1 John 1:5). In hymnody and other Christian writings, imagery of light is used in a number of associated ways. The German hymn *O Gott, du Tiefe sonder Grund*, written by Ernst Lange and translated by Wesley (MHT 42), refers to the 'undiminished ray' of God's greatness. Again, in another hymn translated from German, *Jesu, Lover of Mankind* 'shin'st with everlasting rays' while a hymn that Wesley translated from an unknown Spanish source describes 'the sovereign light' of God 'within my heart'.

Wesley translates the closing lines of a hymn by Gerhard Tersteegen in terms of light and fire (MHT 683):

> Thou beam of the eternal Beam,
> Thou purging Fire, Thou quickening Flame.

Many of Wesley's translations have a poetic expressiveness, articulating thematic features such as the glory and infinity of God (MHT 42):

> Thou wast ere time began his race,
> Ere glowed with stars the ethereal blue.

John Wesley's translation of the German in Johann Scheffler's hymn *O God, of good the unfathomed sea!* (MHT 67) uses the apostrophic exclamation 'Primeval Beauty!' evoking the perpetuity and perfection of nature since the Garden of Eden, as well as manifesting the impassioned spirit and evocation of beauty similarly and frequently apparent in the writings of the Romantics. A lyric quality is also present in the hymn *Gott ist gegenwärtig* (MHT 683) by Gerhard Tersteegen. Wesley expresses the interaction between believers and their Maker metaphorically in terms of nature:

> As flowers their opening leaves display,
> And glad drink in the solar fire,
> So may we catch Thy every ray,
> So may Thy influence us inspire

John Wesley, in his preface to *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*, asserts that the 'Spirit of Poetry' present in many of the hymns comes, not from 'art and labour' but as the 'gift of nature' (1791, vi). This natural gift of poetic ability is one which he appeared to recognise in his brother, Charles, and which manifests in the hymns he selected for his collections, such as the 525 he published in his *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*, which included those he viewed as the best by Charles and others by Watts (Reynolds 1991, n. pag.). As stated before, it was John Wesley's desire for Methodist hymnody and sermons to show 'the purity, the strength, and the elegance of the English language' while also displaying 'the utmost simplicity and plainness, suited to every capacity' (1791, v). This accords with the linguistic simplicity, the more commonplace language of 'ordinary men' that William Wordsworth commended later on. Wordsworth's aim was to forge a more natural language than the poetic diction of much of eighteenth-

century poetry, avoiding ‘arbitrary and capricious habits of expression’ (1835, 252). In this regard, Wesley was economical in his use of rhetorical devices such as metaphor and typology, writing to his preachers in his *Minutes* for 1749 to ‘Beware of allegorising or spiritualising too much’ (1980 [Outler], 175–176).

The poetic imagination, which John Wesley refers to as the ‘Spirit of Poetry’, is brought to bear in the expression of devotion in hymns such as many of Charles Wesley’s; it is the demonstration of this poetic imagination through structure, language and theme that forms the basis of an exploration in the next chapters of the hymns of Charles Wesley, William Williams and Ann Griffiths.

Chapter Five: The 'Sweet Singer of Methodism'

From Charles Wesley's conversion experience in 1738 came an outpouring of religious verse unparalleled in the history of English hymnody. Wesley was preacher and hymnist, theologian and poet, committed as much to the progress of his personal spiritual connection with God as to ministering and evangelising through sermons and song. A preface written in 1933 to *The Methodist Hymn-Book with Tunes* states that the Methodists' 'characteristic poet is still Charles Wesley' and that 'He is the poet of the Evangelical faith' (1972, iii). Some ninety years later, these statements continue to hold true but Wesley's contribution goes beyond Methodism. As hymn-writer and poet, his contribution was – and is – not only to hymnody but to literature, notwithstanding 'the curious reluctance of English critics to consider hymns as literature at all' (Davies 1973, 94). Mark A. Noll, too, in 'Romanticism and the Hymns of Charles Wesley' acknowledges that Wesley's hymns are not taken seriously as poetry.

The intention in this chapter is twofold: first, to contextualise Wesley's experience and writings to enhance insight into his thought and creed and then to explore his hymns regarding the relationship between their theological significance, emotional content, language and structure. The discussion of various thematic, structural, semantic and affective elements and emphases combines to add insight into the particular quality of Charles Wesley's hymns, especially their emotional range and intensity. The chapter addresses and explores the intersection of hymnody and poetry through Wesley's expressions of spirituality and theology; the aim is to identify and analyse the poetic conventions at work in Charles Wesley's hymns as part of my overall focal exploration of the poetic mode of hymns, how piety, exhibited in theology, conviction, belief, devotion, is expressed in poetry.

'I believe, I believe!': Sources and influences

Much has been written about the influence of John Wesley over his brother. In writing of the relationship between Charles and John, a member of the Holy Club, John Gambold, commented, 'I never observed any person having a more real deference for another, than he constantly had for his brother … He followed his brother entirely. Could I describe one of them, I should describe both' (Cruickshank 2009, 9).

It was John Wesley who, in 1735, persuaded a reluctant Charles to take Holy Orders and join him and James Oglethorpe on a mission to Georgia, America. In this regard, Charles noted in his journal that his older brother always had the 'ascendancy' over him (Heitzenrater

2001, n. pag.). On Charles's leaving Georgia nine months later, ill and depressed, Oglethorpe, recognising his social temperament and needs, advised him that he 'would find in a married state the difficulties of working out your salvation exceedingly lessened' (Cruickshank 2009, 10). Wesley's entire life was characterised by his need for close social interaction demonstrated by his love of family, the intensity and intimacy of his friendships, the anguished hymns he wrote on their loss and in the pleasure he took in the Methodist community and fellowship (Cruickshank 2009, 10).

Wesley's encounter with Zinzendorf's Moravians on board the ship to Georgia was instrumental in shaping his spiritual development and his perspective on hymnody. Zinzendorf, himself, wrote hymns, five of which appear in John Wesley's translated form in *The Methodist Hymn-Book with Tunes*, and, as stated in chapter two, the emphasis on hymn-singing of the Moravians had much influence on the Wesley brothers. On matters theological, on his return to England, Charles Wesley recorded repeated entries in his journal of intense debates with the Moravian communities about the credos of justification by faith and personal assurance.

The formation of the Holy Club in Oxford in 1729 with its disciplined religious system was significant in directing the personal belief of Charles Wesley as well as the broader practices of the Methodist movement. These practices were rooted in the reading and literal application of scriptural texts (Tyson 2007, 15). It was a particular determination of the Oxford Methodists to re-enact the spiritual vigour of the early church '… with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God … ' (Acts 2:46–47) and to follow its beliefs and traditions (Tyson 2007, 15). The Wesley brothers and the Oxford Methodists read widely, including the early Church Fathers, in particular the Eastern Church Fathers, which had a major impact on their doctrine of Christian perfection.

The influence of the Church Fathers on the hymns of Charles Wesley is displayed in the many allusions to their writings. Wesley makes reference to 'The Epistle to the Romans' by Ignatius of Antioch in his hymn *O Love Divine! what hast Thou done?* (Whitaker 2006, n. pag.), for example. Ignatius writes, 'My love is crucified' (1834, 20), which Wesley echoes in his hymn in the line, 'My Lord, my Love is crucified' (HSP 1742, p. 26). Augustine of Hippo, too, proved inspirational for Wesley, notably his *Confessions* and *Soliloquies* (Bett 1913, 46). In chapter five of the *Confessions*, Augustine writes, 'Do not hide your face from me. Lest I die, let me die so that I may see it' (2008, 5). These lines resonate in Wesley's *O Thou, who know'st what is in man* (HSP 1742, p. 21) in which he expresses the plea:

Live only Christ in me, not I;
O let me see Thy face and die!

and again in the hymn *To Thee, great God of love! I bow* (CHW 1007) in the lines:

I cannot see Thy face and live!
Then let me see Thy face and die!

Eastern Orthodoxy contributed to Wesley's view of Christian perfection and he reveals his desire for holiness in his hymn *God of all Power, and Truth, and Grace* (HSP 1742, p. 261) in which he entreats 'And perfect Holiness in me' and, later, 'Give me a New, a Perfect Heart'. St. Symeon Metaphrastis says of spiritual perfection: '… it is the purification and sanctification of the heart that comes about through fully experienced and conscious participation in the perfect and divine Spirit. "Blessed are the pure in heart … for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8); and again: "Become perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48)' (2015, I:2). Wesley was also influenced by the mysticism of the Eastern Orthodox tradition, showing suggestions of this in his hymns, particularly in *Come O Thou Traveller unknown* as noted by J. Dale (1956, 4), where he reveals the depth of his desire for spiritual union with Christ (HSP 1742, pp. 115–118):

In vain Thou strugglest to get free,
I never will unloose my hold;
Art Thou the Man that died for me?
The secret of Thy love unfold:
Wrestling, I will not let Thee go,
Till I Thy name, Thy nature know.

Wesley describes the union with God, as expressed by the Church Fathers such as Clement of Alexandria in his assertion that [man] '… knowing God, he will be made like God' (2016, III:1), in his hymn *Let earth and heaven combine*: 'And man shall then be lost in God' (MHT 142).

There is a similarity in Wesley's hymns to the hymns of the thirteenth-century St. Thomas Aquinas, notably the hymn *Adoro te devote* (Aquinas 2000, 69):

Unclean I am, but cleanse me in Thy blood!
Of which a single drop, for sinners spilt,
Can purge the entire world of all its guilt.

Wesley takes up the same mystical idea of the potency of Christ's blood in his hymn *God of all Power, and Truth, and Grace* (HSP 1742, pp. 261–264)(Bett 1913, 57):

> Sprinkle it, JESU, on my Heart!
> One Drop of Thy All-cleansing Blood
> Shall make my Sinfulness depart,
> And fill me with the Life of God.

In these hymns, both Aquinas and Wesley refer to the single drop of blood in terms of the purification of sinners, the removal of guilt that Christ's crucifixion enables. The affirmation of the potency of a single drop of Christ's blood in redeeming sinners conforms to the importance attached to blood which became a commonplace of mediaeval spirituality as part of blood piety (Bynum 2007, 36).

The Wesleys' scriptural study was supplemented by the reading of devotional classics such as the works of Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471) and Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667), which inspired the Wesleys' aspirations to a purity of heart (Tyson 2007, 15–16). Jeremy Taylor, a theologian and a cleric in the Church of England, played a significant role in the Wesleys' understanding of holy living and, particularly, the believer's purity of intention. Taylor, of the Laudian High Church tradition, and anti-Puritan, places emphasis on the beauty of holiness and the cultivation of the inner life. That Charles Wesley was familiar with and influenced by Taylor's writings is beyond question. He refers to Taylor in his *Journals* – in a prayer – but of greater importance is the fact that John Wesley published excerpts from Taylor's texts in 1752 as part of his multi-volume *Christian Library* (Lunn 2016, 52).

Exhibiting a desire to live a life of piety and devotion, Taylor points to resignation of the soul to God as a key element (Lunn 2016, 52). In *The Rules and Exercises of Holy Living* (1650), he writes of the place of the Holy Spirit: 'Give me thy Holy Spirit, that my understanding and all my facilities may be so resigned to the discipline and doctrine of my Lord' (Taylor 1865, 250). Charles Wesley expresses this same thought in *Jesus, we on the word depend* (MHT 275):

> And give the Spirit of Thy grace,
> To teach us all Thy perfect will.

For Wesley, as previously for Taylor, the emphasis on resignation is primary in understanding and explaining the soul's relationship with God (Lunn 2016, 95). Wesley reiterates this concept of resignation and submission of one's whole being to God – 'I bow

me to my God's decree' (SHSP vol. I, p. 10) – throughout his hymns. He reinforces the concept of resignation, for example, in his hymn *The Means of Grace*: 'I wait to learn Thy will' (HSP 1740, p. 38).

For Taylor, resignation was associated with the virtues of patience, humility and obedience, themes which appear across Wesley's work (Lunn 2016, 53). In 'A Prayer for a contented Spirit and the Grace of Moderation and Patience', Taylor asks 'in adversity to be meek, patient, and resigned; and to look through the cloud, that I may wait for the consolation of the Lord, and the day of redemption' (1865, 127). Following Taylor's example, Wesley articulates in his hymns, through language denoting meekness, obedience and submission – all expressive of resignation – trust in the greatness and goodness of God (Lunn 2016, 137):

The patient, meek, and heavenly mind
The lowly heart, the will resign'd,
The primitive simplicity,
The true, eternal Life in Thee

Resignation of the self leads to a rebirth in Christ, to allowing oneself to be filled with the grace of God (HSP 1740, p. 40):

To thee, the only wise, and true,
See then at last I all resign;
Make me in Christ a creature new,
The manner, and the time be thine.

Several theological themes emerge in these examples from Taylor and Charles Wesley, themes which focus on complete trust in and dependency on God, the striving to achieve Christlikeness, the indwelling of God and the reciprocal relationship with Christ (Lunn 2016, 178); and which, concisely, are expressed in Wesley's hymn *Come, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost* (CHW 794):

Flesh, spirit, soul to thee resign,
And live, and die entirely thine!

Another major influence on Charles Wesley was the writing of the theologian William Law (1686–1761), a Church of England priest until his conscience forbade him from taking an oath of allegiance to the Hanoverian king, George I. Despite being a non-juror and a High Churchman himself, Law exerted much influence in the evangelical, Low Church

tradition. Law, in his work *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, emphasises the necessity of personal religion and the pursuit of holiness through practising the virtues of morality, meditation and self-denial. Such was Law's influence that Charles Wesley wrote in his journal that he was 'like an Oracle to us' (Tyson 2007, 16).

It was Charles Wesley's belief that he was lacking in the piety or holiness emphasised by Law, and the stress he laid on holy living – with an accompanying awareness of sin – remained a feature all his life, just as it formed the theme of many of his hymns (Cruickshank 2009, 10). Before his conversion experience in 1738, Charles Wesley made an entry in his journal for 21 March 1736 while he was in Frederica, America: 'Faint and weary with the day's fatigue, I found my want of true holiness, and begged God to give me comfort from his word. I then read, in the evening lesson, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness"' (1 Timothy 6:11) (Wesley 1849 vol. I, 5).

Law stresses the importance of Christian devotion in the opening chapter of *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*: 'Devotion signifies a life given, or *devoted* to God' (2001, 7). He goes on to emphasise the nature of the believer's devotion to God (2001, 7):

> He therefore is the devout man, who lives no longer to his own *will*, or the *way* and *spirit* of the world, but to the sole will of God, who considers God in everything, who serves God in everything, who makes all the parts of his *common* life, parts of piety, by doing everything in the name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to his Glory.

Charles Wesley, too, expresses the same ideal of devotion and holy living in many of his hymns, one of which is *Inspirer of the ancient seers* (CHPM 87):

> The sacred lessons of Thy grace,
> Transmitted through Thy Word, repeat,
> And train us up in all Thy ways,
> To make us in Thy will complete;
> Fulfil Thy love's redeeming plan,
> And bring us to a perfect man.

Wesley's lines echo the Bible: in writing of the connection between faith and works, between piety of heart and action, the epistle of James avers, 'If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man' (3:2). The above passage from Law forms only part of his writing that had

an effect on Charles Wesley's thought and expression but it serves as an example of how Wesley's perspective echoes Law's. Wesley's 'perfect man' is the 'devout man' of Law who 'considers God in everything, who serves God in everything', who does 'everything in the name of God', the man described by Wesley who has been 'train[ed] up in all Thy ways'. Law's devout man no longer lives to his own will but 'to the sole will of God', just as Wesley entreats God 'To make us in Thy will complete'. His expression of 'The sacred lessons of Thy grace' resonates with Law's 'rules as are conformable to his Glory', both articulating the submission to and veneration of God in his authority, majesty and holiness.

The Wesleys and Law agreed that the pursuit for holiness and righteousness is God's purpose for everyone (Baker 1941, 94). Law said that 'I know of only one common Christianity, which is to be the Means of Salvation to all Men': that 'there is but one Piety and one Perfection, that is common to all Orders of Christians' (2001, 5–6). The universality of God's offer of grace, which is pivotal in the Wesleyan evangelical message, is expressed throughout the Methodist hymns, as in Charles Wesley's *What is our calling's glorious hope* (CHPM 394) (Baker 1941, 96):

What is our calling's glorious hope
But inward holiness?
For this to Jesus I look up,
I calmly wait for this.

This is the dear redeeming grace,
For every sinner free:
Surely it shall on me take place,
The chief of sinners, me.

The belief in God's inclusivity, in contrast to the exclusivity of the Calvinist view of the elect, is clearly demonstrated in the concept of God's redeeming grace 'For every sinner free'.

Law's doctrine of Christian Perfection was based on the importance of conversion. He saw Christianity as an entire change of life; chapter two of his book *A Practical Treatise Upon Christian Perfection* is entitled 'Christianity requires a change of nature: a new life perfectly devoted to God'. He writes, 'There is no alteration of life, no change of condition, that implies half so much, as that alteration which Christianity introduceth' (Law 2001, 24). As Charles Wesley puts it in his hymn *The thing my God doth hate* (CHPM 331):

Thy creature, Lord, again create,
And all my Soul renew.

In terms of conversion, of becoming a new being in Christ, Law's concept of being born again in the likeness of the Holy Spirit is a theme that recurs frequently in Charles Wesley's hymns, as in *Hail! Father, Son, and Spirit great* (CHPM 248):

And when we rise, in love renewed,
Our souls resemble Thee
An image of the Triune God
To all eternity

That Wesley borrowed the idea from Law, of the Holy Trinity manifesting in humankind, is made evident in a letter he wrote to his wife in 1752: '"A transcript of the One in Three" is the definition of man unfallen, and of man restored to the divine image. The expression is Mr. Law's, not mine; who proves a trinity throughout all nature' (1849 vol. II, 207). Law's thought of the redeemed soul reflecting the Holy Spirit appears in his *An Appeal to all who doubt, or disbelieve the Truths of the Gospel* (1740, 78/80–81):

> How could the Holy Trinity be an object of Man's worship and adoration, if the Holy Trinity had not produced itself in Man? … Our Redemption consists in nothing else but in the *Bringing forth* this new Birth in us, and that, being thus born again in the *Likeness* of the Holy Trinity, we may be capable of its threefold Blessing and Happiness.

The influence of Law's spirituality on Charles Wesley – a daily intimacy with God, the practice of the presence of God – is illustrated in the hymn *Come, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost* (CHW 949), similar in theme to the one above:

Wake me in Thy similitude,
Stamped with the Triune character;
Flesh, spirit, soul, to Thee resign.
And live and die entirely Thine!

Herman Hanko writes of union with God as being 'the epitome of the godly and pious life' (2001, 391). Thomas à Kempis saw union with God through a godly and pious life as being the core of Christian devotion. In his book *The Imitation of Christ*, written between 1420 and 1427, he asserts that 'These are the words of Christ, by which we are taught to

imitate His life and manners, if we would be truly enlightened, and be delivered from all blindness of heart' (1887, 1). Thomas placed great emphasis on the virtue of humility like the later writers, Taylor and Law, encouraging trust in God and a yielding to his will. It was Thomas who, in the early fifteenth century, redefined resignation as 'the action or fact of giving oneself up to God' (Lunn 2016, 38).

In 1735, John Wesley published an edition of Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*, following it up with a publication of extracts in 1739. Wesley's edition, which came to be called *The Christian Pattern*, was published to promote scriptural holiness; with Wesley's 'lifelong desire that à Kempis, Taylor and Law should contribute a permanent element to the devotional life of Methodism', it was his determination that every Methodist household should own a copy (Jeffery 2006, 9). Charles Wesley, himself, referred to Thomas à Kempis in his *Journal* in his entries for 20 and 27 September 1747 when preaching to what he called 'Papists': 'I spoke with great freedom to the poor Papists, urging them to repentance and the love of Christ, from the authority of their own Kempis, and their own Liturgy' (Wesley 1849 vol. I, 460). However, it is Charles Wesley's hymns that resonate, in particular, with the thoughts of Thomas – the pursuit of holiness, communion with God and self-renunciation.

The breadth of study undertaken by the Wesleys, which includes Church Fathers, medieval doctors and reformation divines, demonstrates the eclectic nature of their inspiration, drawing on sources common to the Christian tradition throughout the ages. The three theological writers – Thomas à Kempis, Taylor and Law – in particular, had a profound impact on Charles Wesley's spirituality; their influence reveals his openness to a wide range of spiritual and ecclesiastical traditions. Of Law, Wesley averred that he had been his 'schoolmaster to bring him to Christ' (Baker 1941, 84). Wesley's personal conversion led him to the conviction that this experience, with its accompanying assurance of salvation, should be offered to all through the evangelistic spreading of God's Word through preaching but, especially for Wesley, through hymnody.

'We lift up our voice': Modes of hymnody

John Lawson describes Charles Wesley as 'the man of poetic fire' (2015, 27). He penned various kinds of hymns for different occasions and with different intentions; he composed hymns to use as congregational song and as individual devotion, serving to teach about a life of Christian faith and theology (Cruickshank 2009, 34). He wrote to exhort and encourage crowds to hear the gospel message as the evangelistic revival gathered momentum. Wesley

wrote hymns for all the Christian festivals: Christmas hymns centring on the Incarnation and Easter hymns on Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, hymns to commemorate the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and hymns to celebrate the season of Advent. Many of Wesley's hymns were composed to mark important occasions in his own life, notably his conversion, his marriage, the death of friends and for other personal contexts and situations. One of these expresses his sorrow at the conversion of his son, Samuel, to Roman Catholicism (Wesley 1870 vol. VIII, 422):

Farewell, my all of earthly hope,
My nature's stay, my age's prop.
Irrevocably gone!

In its echoing of Ben Jonson's sonnet on the death of his son, 'Farewell, thou child of my right hand, and joy', Wesley's poem underscores his grief at what he would see as the spiritual loss of his son. In another example, Wesley, in a letter to a Methodist widow, enclosed a hymn entitled *The Widow's Hymn* (HSP 1742 vol. II, p. 195):

O Thou, who plead'st the Widow's cause
Who only canst repair my loss.

In all, Wesley wrote twenty hymns for women 'in travail' (Cruickshank 2009, 34).

Other hymns reflect the political and social issues of his time. In his hymn *Where shall my wondering soul begin?* (CHPM 29), Wesley references some of the ills of the age as he makes an appeal to sinners, reaching out to those who feel unworthy before God (Watson 1997, 227–8):

Outcasts of men, to you I call,
Harlots, and publicans, and thieves!

The inclusivity of the gospel message preached by Wesleyan Methodists can be seen in the hymn with Wesley's catalogue of 'guilty brethren' – 'outcasts of men,' harlots', 'publicans', 'thieves' – receiving God's grace: 'He spreads his arms t' embrace you all'. In this hymn, based on Mark 2:15–17 in which Jesus shows himself as the friend of sinners, Wesley draws attention to the ills of prostitution, financial exploitation and petty crime, securing them 'to the Bible as a point of moral, as well as religious, reference' (Watson 1997, 228).

Events of the time such as the earthquakes of 1750 also inspired hymns, with Wesley publishing *Hymns occasioned by the Earthquake, March 8 1750* in which the destruction

caused by the earthquake prompts a call to sinful humanity to repent and embrace 'God most merciful, most high' (Wesley 2017, 10). The defeat of Prince Charles Edward and the Jacobites at Culloden in 1746 preceded by persecution of the Methodists – who were broadly assumed to be Jacobites – occasioned *Hymns for Times of Trouble* and *Hymns in Times of Persecution* while the anti-Catholic Gordon riots of 1780 resulted in *Hymns to be Sung in a Tumult*. Although not necessarily related to topical events, Wesley drew on scriptural texts that were apocalyptic in tone, linking occurrences and descriptions from the Bible generally 'to the drama of political and natural events' in creative expression to offer hope and bolster faith (Maddox 2011, 38). This was particularly evident through the 1740s and 1750s. Maddox notes Wesley's proclivity towards the apocalyptic and eschatological, expressed in a journal entry (1849 vol. II, 98):

> Monday, December 3, 1753. I was at a loss for a subject at five when I opened the Revelation and, with fear and trembling began to expound it … What is any private or public loss, or calamity; what are all the advantages Satan ever gained or shall gain, over particular men or churches; when all things, good and evil, Christ's power and Antichrist's, conspire to hasten the grand event, to fulfil the mystery of God, and make all the kingdoms of the earth become the kingdoms of Christ?

In Wesley's entry, his references to 'the grand event' and 'the kingdoms of Christ' appear to point to his belief in the ultimate realisation of the kingdom of God on earth and a Judgement Day. His eschatological outlook finds expression in a thematic thrust which underlines the importance of believers living a life for Christ and establishing his kingdom in their hearts and of witnessing to that kingdom.

Wesley's enthusiastic revivalist spirit needed to find a new mode of expression in communicating a subjective and an emotional, personal consciousness of God, and many of his hymns direct the singers from simply expressing devoutness and reverence to God to a more emotional response in their worship (Marshall and Todd 2014, 152). This shift elevates hymn-singing to the performance of an act of love, piety and religious practice, which engenders the natural instinctive state of deep spiritual feeling. The heart experience, thus, comprises both commitment and its resultant emotional response, illustrated in Wesley's hymn *My soul, through my Redeemer's care* (CHPM 237):

> Wherefore to him my feet shall run;
> My eyes on his perfections gaze;

My soul shall live for God alone,
And all within me shout his praise.

Benjamin Kolodziej compares Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley, describing Watts as expansive, Wesley as deep in the way that he brings the scale of universal grandeur down to the faith of each individual, entreating Christ to, 'Fix in us a humble home … Formed in each believing heart' (*Hark the herald angels sing*) (2004, 248). Kolodziej illustrates Charles Wesley's depth of feeling and the introspection of his evangelical fervour in the hymn *Depth of mercy! can there be* (CHPM 162) (2004, 248):

Depth of mercy! can there be
Mercy still reserv'd for me?
Can my God his wrath forbear?
Me, the chief of sinners, spare?

I have spilt his precious blood,
Trampled on the Son of God;
Fill'd with pangs unspeakable!
I, who yet am not in hell.

His well-known conversion hymn *Where shall my wondering soul begin?* (CHPM 29) expresses with intensity that same fervour and his sense of awe and wonder that he, 'a child of wrath and hell' should be called 'a child of God'.

In the mid-eighteenth century, hymn-writing largely took the form of poetic paraphrase of Scripture – as can be seen in the hymnody of Isaac Watts, for example – a form with which Charles Wesley would have been familiar from his early years. A letter from his father to his brother, Samuel junior, in 1706 makes the viewpoint of Samuel Wesley senior clear: 'Rob not yourself of so much pleasure and profit as you will find in your translations of the Bible into verse, and Sunday exercises of the same nature' (Stevenson 1876, 99). It was during his contact with the Moravians that Wesley was introduced to an alternative form of hymnody which, while still grounded in Scripture, moved away from biblical paraphrasing. The Moravians took as their inspiration the 'new song' of the Lamb from Revelation 14:3 in their writing of original hymns in thanksgiving to God and to witness to the need for God's grace (Maddox 2011, 36).

Randy Maddox notes that, in the first few years after his conversion, Charles Wesley showed a proclivity towards a blend of Anglican and pietist traditions (2011, 36) as displayed

in his hymns in John Wesley's 1739 collection, *Hymns and Sacred Poems*. While these are largely still biblical paraphrases, they exhibit the pietist strain derived from the Moravians. His poetic paraphrases are both lyrical – those based on Isaiah 53 and the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55), for example, where the expression is emotional – and evangelical or Pietist where the theme is soteriological (Maddox 2011, 36). In such pietist hymns, the scriptural message is articulated with fervency. Wesley wrote the hymn *Rise my soul with ardor rise* (HSP 1739, p. 219) based on John 16:24: 'Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full':

Rise my soul with ardor rise,
Breathe thy wishes to the skies;
Freely pour out all thy mind,
Seek, and thou art sure to find;
Ready art thou to receive?
Readier is thy God to give.

In this hymn, the message is suggested by the biblical text and elaborates on the theme of salvation, the readiness to receive God and be delivered from sin and its consequences. The poetry of the first two lines moves effectively into an affirmation of theological conviction.

Although Wesley's conversion precipitated a flow of creative output with the composition of many original hymns, he spent time during the 1740s producing paraphrases. This is evidenced by his attempt to reproduce the whole of the psalter in verse; in all, Wesley paraphrased 109 of the 150 psalms (Maddox 2011, 37). Notably, in the preface to the *Genevan Psalter* of 1543, as mentioned earlier, John Calvin wrote: 'We shall not find better songs nor more fitting for the purpose [of worship], than the Psalms of David, which the Holy Spirit spoke and made through him' (Garside 1951, 571). Wesley's paraphrasing of the Psalms also formed a continuity with the Anglican tradition of using metrical psalms in church worship.

Within the debate around hymn-writing and singing that blazed in the early to mid-eighteenth century, many critics of the time denounced hymn-writing – that is, of original hymns such as Wesley's compositions – as a decline in the Church. There is an interesting review in the 1762 edition of 'The Monthly Review' ('Wesley's *Hymns'* 1768 vol. 38, 55) on Wesley's *Short Hymns on Select Passages of Scripture*:

> Indeed the irreverent treatment which the bible continually meets with, IN THIS PROTESTANT COUNTRY, from the swarms of Hackney commentators,

> expositors and enthusiastic hymn-makers, would almost provoke the rational Christian to applaud even the *Church of Rome* for the care she has taken to secure it from vulgar profanation.

The unnamed author refers to the hymn-writers as 'rhyming enthusiasts' and, while describing 'the dexterity with which a Methodist or Moravian can typify, turn and twist the plainest passages of holy writ, to adapt them to their mystical system', censures the 'liberties' they take with the Bible, 'nay, with the GREAT CREATOR HIMSELF!' (1767, vol. 38, 55). Nevertheless, the publishing of hymnbooks continued to increase, particularly as hymn-singing began to play such an important role in the evangelical revivals.

By 1750, there was a transition from Charles Wesley's role as an Anglican priest to the evangelistic theologian of the Methodist movement. Wesley's thematic and stylistic method of hymn-writing is described by J. Richard Watson: 'His technique is that of a poet, but his practice is also that of a preacher, expounding a text rather than just reading or reproducing it' (2007, 80). According to Watson, in his hymns from 1750 onwards, Wesley used a particular biblical text to provide an illustration or example of a situation or experience, rather than producing a paraphrase. In his imaginative use of Scripture, he transforms what is written into a part of human experience (Watson 2007, 80). To give an example, Wesley describes what is a typical experience in the Christian walk, that of being prey to temptation and conflict, grounding his hymn *Jesus, my Saviour, Brother, Friend* (HSP 1742, p. 217) in scriptural texts. His line, 'On whom I cast my every Care', is based on 1 Peter 5:7, 'Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you', while 1 Peter 2:3 – 'If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious' – is the basis for the line, 'If I have tasted of Thy Grace'. Wesley takes verses from Deuteronomy, Proverbs and Isaiah, all communicating the same idea – 'And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left' (Isaiah 30:21) – conveying his message of Christian experience poetically and powerfully:

> When to the Left or Right I stray,
> His Voice behind me may I hear,
> "Return, and walk in CHRIST, thy Way;
> "Fly back to CHRIST, for Sin is near.

The power in this stanza exists both in its diction and in the immediacy of the direct speech. The entire stanza in written in one-syllable words, except for the words, 'behind' and 'return'

which are thus given added weight within the context of Christ's protection.

Wesley's writing is characterised by his experiential response to Christian doctrines such as the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation and the Atonement through Jesus Christ, a subjectivity which is grounded in the Methodist theological conviction of the importance of emotional and experiential response (Cruickshank 2009, 27). Donald Davie writes of the depth of moral and spiritual significance that for Wesley was inherent in emotion; he describes his reaction after reading Wesley in comparison to earlier hymn-writers such as Isaac Watts as 'a steep rise in the emotional temperature assumed or extracted of us as readers (or singers)' (1993, 57). In the light of this, Wesley's verse needs to be interpreted with regard to both his own intense personal experience and to the spiritual value he imparted to such experiences.

Wesley makes use of literary devices such as varying metres, metaphors, rhetorical questions to convey emotional effect and to add coherence to his message. He also commonly uses the first-person singular in his verse, a feature which heightens the emotive quality. His use of the first person functions in different ways: at times it is clearly vicarious, at others it is personal and specific to Wesley and, in many hymns, it is used generally to describe experiences and emotions that would be common to any devout Methodist (Cruickshank 2009, 30). Always, however, its use imparts a sense of intimacy and community, allowing the singer (or reader) to identify with a particular context from their own spiritual perspective and experience.

Wesley's hymns narrate conversion experiences as well as spiritual experiences encompassing the broadest range of emotion and condition from joy to suffering. Cruickshank describes the way in which all these hymns 'deliberately move the reader or singer from one emotional or spiritual state to another: from unbelief to faith; from apathy to fervor; from overwhelming grief to resignation; from faith to "speechless ecstasy"' (2009, 31). They enact a transformation of the inner person, of the spiritual state. This brings to the fore the operating of hymns within a performative, rather than a merely representational framework, which, according to Anna Proskurina, can be identified through their semantic-communicative component as songs of praise to God (2020, 74). The performative functions through its combination of word and act (Austin 1966, 427–440); thus, in Charles Wesley's hymn *Ye servants of God* from *Hymns for Times of Trouble and Persecution*, for example, the words operate as a call to action: 'Then let us adore, and give him his right' (1744, 43).

As ‘collective public performance within the context of worship’, the singing of hymns allows congregations to ‘engage in a unique activity’, that of ‘hymnic performativity’ (Roberts 2014, 217/i). This performative quality of the hymns was central to the evangelising mission of early Methodism.

In the same way as Charles Wesley’s preaching had great impact on his listeners in drawing them to Christ, his hymns, too, played a significant role in motivating people to the conversion experience. Wesley’s first original hymns after his 1738 conversion experience are decidedly evangelical in nature, particularly *Where shall my wondering soul begin?* with the impassioned call of the closing line, ‘Come, O my guilty brethren, come’. In *And can it be that I should gain*, the evangelical appeal is framed in the subjective language of personal experience: ‘I rose, went forth, and follow’d thee’. However, the inclusivity of Christ’s salvific actions remains at the fore, illustrated by lines such as ‘And bled for Adam’s helpless race’. This evangelical passion always remained a focus of Wesley’s writing, but his hymns gained in creative dimension, that of the profound exploration of the heart experience in the love relationship between God and humanity. Wesley’s hymns, however, always display a doctrinal orthodoxy necessitating an evaluation of their theology as much as of their poetic treatment of themes and their emotional substance. His articulation of the Christian, particularly Methodist, creed finds expression in his common use of quotations from and allusions to the Bible with his presentation of themes and testimony frequently couched in metaphorical language and subjective experience.

For the Wesleys, hymns were instrumental in conversion, with hymnody playing a large role in evangelistic theological formation or instruction (Ginn 2009, 262). James F. White emphasises the significance of the fact that, for the Methodists, worship is ‘the primary form of mission rather than education, social action, or charitable service’ (1989, 178). Wesley’s hymns decidedly fulfil a theological function with his texts preserving doctrine; White, in fact, refers to the ‘theological authority’ of the hymnal (1989, 271). George Harris affirms how much Methodism owes to the hymns of Charles Wesley stating ‘that, in general, theology has a deeper life in hymns than in creeds, because hymns are sung’ (1879, 746). Hymns, and therefore the doctrine they impart, become ingrained in the memory.

Much has been written about the theological value of hymnody by Carl F. Price (1911), Erik Routley (1959), S. T. Kimbrough (1992) and Mark A. Noll (2001) and, given that Wesley’s hymns served to evangelise and convert as well as deepen the faith of believers, it is pertinent, indeed imperative, to engage with his texts from a theological point of view. Although written regarding American Protestantism, Craig Warryn Clifford Ginn’s

description is apposite to Wesleyan mission: '… through singing penitents converted to a life of faith and, throughout that life of faith, converts expressed their piety in song. In evangelism and mission, they trusted hymns to do the same for others' (2009, 35). Wesley's lyrical theology almost always appears within the framework of spiritual love, expressed about or to God in apostrophic or nomenclative form, or metaphorically, or in exclamatory phraseology. The expression of love, of the innermost feelings in the context of Christian devotion, using such rhetoric devices gives much poetic value to his hymns.

'The precious mine': A consideration of themes

Certain topics in line with Wesley's outlook appear characteristically in his hymns – redemption, inner renewal, suffering, love and comfort. The movement from death to life is a salient metaphor, in the shift 'from being dead in sin toward being alive through faith in Christ' (Wesley 1989, 19–20). The subjects treated by Wesley throughout his hymns serve as principal categories from which apposite themes and concepts emerge. Some of these particular themes – the place of the Holy Spirit and the importance of the Trinity, the value of the Bible, the 'model of Christian life in the early Church' in Maddox's terms, the theology of suffering and of the Cross, and the Christological focus are dealt with here in order to discern and elucidate the poetics, theology and spiritual purpose of Charles Wesley's hymns.

After Wesley's conversion in 1738, the emphasis in both his preaching and hymn-writing moved towards the experiential grace and assurance of God through the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Tyson 2006, 25). All his mature writings show his belief in the role of the Holy Spirit in humankind's being convinced of and understanding scriptural truth (Maddox 2011, 23), such as in the following hymn (Wesley 1992, 175):

His Spirit in these mysterious leaves
Unerring testimony gives
To Christ the Lord most high:
O would He take of Jesus' blood,
Blood of the true, eternal God,
And to my heart apply!

Maddox highlights Wesley's insistence on the role of the Holy Spirit in the interpretation of biblical texts, especially in its 'saving sense' and on the contribution of the Holy Spirit towards 'enabling personal embrace of the saving truth in Scripture' (2011, 23). This is seen in the following hymn (SHSP vol. I, p. 324):

Proud learning boasts its skill in vain
The sacred oracles t' explain,
It may the literal surface shew,
But not the precious mine below;
The saving sense remains conceal'd,
'Till by the Spirit of faith reveal'd,
The book is still unread, unknown,
And open'd by the Lamb alone.

In another hymn (SHSP vol. II, p. 249), Wesley writes once again of

… breathing in the sacred leaves
If on thy soul the Spirit move

He consistently emphasises the empirical as a theme in encountering the triune God, the significance of not only knowing or hearing but feeling: 'The sinner hears and feels restor'd'. Maddox encapsulates this: Wesley's 'emphasis on experiencing the Holy Spirit's movement in Christian life was connected directly in his mature writings to the possibility of understanding, believing, and personally embracing biblical revelation' (2011, 24). While Wesley's hymns concerning the Holy Spirit offer a theological message with regard to the content, they are expressed in rather mystical terms. There is an emphasis on words such as 'sacred', 'soul' and 'mysterious', lending these hymns a tone of devotion and veneration.

It is not only Wesley's phraseology that gives his hymns a particular quality and thematic slant but his stanza structure, rhyme scheme and rhythmic changes across various hymns, bringing a different tenor to each, often reinforcing the theme. In the first-quoted hymn above, the stanza is made up of six lines with an aabccb rhyme scheme, while the second hymn (*Proud learning boasts its skill in vain*) has a stanza structure of eight lines with an aabbccdd pattern. In the first hymn, the structure serves to put the focus on the third and sixth lines of each stanza – 'To Christ the Lord most high' and 'And to my heart apply!' The second hymn uses rhyming couplets, thus communicating its message in a direct and focused manner. The symmetry of metre and rhyme in stacked couplets serves to give point to each couplet as a finite narrative, an idea or thought that is completed. This function is further enhanced by the use of the conjunctions in the second lines of the couplets, 'but', ''till', 'and'.

The doctrine of the Trinity took central place in Wesley's soteriological theology. In his hymn *The sacred three conspire* (PW vol. VII, p. 338) he makes it clear that the work of redemption in humankind is realised through Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

The Father's grace allures me,
And to my Saviour gives;
The Saviour's blood assures me,
That God His child receives;
The Comforter bears witness
That I am truly His,
And brings my soul its fitness
For everlasting bliss.

This hymn achieves textural richness through stylistic features and language that convey the theme of the distinctive nature of the Trinity. The repetition of the word 'me' in the abab rhyme scheme, as well as the perfect rhyme in the cdcd pattern ('witness' and 'fitness'), gives a musical unity which is apposite to the theme of the triune God – the three in one, connoting the perfection of completeness. The use of assonance ('allures', 'assures'), the proximity of the possessive phrases, 'Father's grace' and 'Saviour's blood' and the reiterative designation 'Saviour' add to the rhythmic quality of the hymn.

That the working of redemption through the Trinity was seen by Wesley as a dynamic principle is exhibited in a hymn of praise and reverence, *Hail! holy, holy, holy Lord!* (CHPM 251). The hymn, with emotive intensity, acclaims the 'glorious name' of the 'One undivided Trinity', declaring that 'Thy universe is full of Thee'. Wesley's glorification of the 'co-eternal Three' is manifested in stanza three with lines made all the more effective by the simplicity of the declaration of feeling:

Thee, holy Father, we confess;
Thee, holy Son, adore:
Thee, Spirit of truth and holiness,
We worship evermore.

The worshipful acknowledgement of each of the 'co-eternal Three', Father, Son and Spirit in this stanza, is the realisation of the triple acclamation in the opening line, 'Hail! holy, holy, holy Lord!'

Wesley emphasises the theme of the soteriological connection between Christ and the Holy Spirit in his later hymns. He uses biblical references of growth, such as fruits, vines and branches, to highlight his pneumatological approach in which Christlikeness or Christian Perfection can be achieved in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. One of his short hymns (Wesley 2012, 303) illustrates this:

But freely justified
In Christ if we abide,
The Spirit's fruits we show,
In true experience grow;
Daily the sap of grace receive,
And more and more like Jesus live.

Again, Wesley uses rhyming couplets to achieve a directness of thought and meaning, with the last couplet increasing in length to allow for the final line, 'And more and more like Jesus live', with its reiteration, to carry the emphasis of the message. The augmentation of the line length corresponds to an increase in grace. Structurally, therefore, the hymn is indicative of growth through the Holy Spirit as articulated in the words, 'The Spirit's fruits' and 'In true experience grow'. Wesley's technique is similar to that of Herbert's in his poem 'Easter Wings' where the decreasing and increasing length of lines conveys the suffering of sinful humanity and the redemption or victory through Christ.

Tyson draws attention to Wesley's tendency to connect terms such as 'blood', 'virtue' and 'grace' with the work of the Holy Spirit as he does in the above stanza with the word 'grace' (1989, 45). The hymn is based on John 15 where the 'fruit' that the Christian bears in exhibiting Christ-like qualities is what gives God glory. There are many references in the Bible to the fruit or fruits of the Spirit; it seems evident in the above stanza that 'the sap of grace' is the life and vigour of the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer to grow 'more and more like Jesus'. In Wesley's *Short Hymns on Select Passages of Scripture* of 1762, there is a change from his earlier view of sanctification as a manifest experience, often in crisis, to its association with growth and maturation (Tyson 1989, 45). Hence, the significance of the growth images in these hymns, particularly from John 15.

In his hymns, Wesley interprets the tenets and convictions of the Methodist movement through his personal experiences, and he illuminates and emphasises principal doctrines of Methodism – the union of intellect and grace – that are grounded in the Bible. He

elucidates the connections between concepts inherent in Methodist beliefs in the following stanza from *Come Father, Son and Holy Ghost* (CHW 794):

Unite the pair so long disjoined;
Knowledge and vital piety;
Learning and holiness combined,
And truth and love let all men see
In these, when up to thee we give,
Thine, wholly thine, to die and live.

These conjunctive pairs – 'knowledge and vital piety', 'learning and holiness', 'truth and love' – all convey the essence of Wesleyan faith. The paradox of the last line, 'to die and live', encapsulates a complexity of meaning: it implicitly refers to the Crucifixion and Resurrection that, in dying on the cross, Jesus rose to live in eternity with the Father; and it describes both the transformative experience of coming to know Christ, a dying to sin and the consequent spiritual renewal; and the promise of eternal life after death.

Ultimately, the process of spiritual renewal is rooted in an ongoing experience of Christ, the Christ who is revealed through personal relationship and, by the guiding light of the Holy Spirit, through Scripture. After a time of illness in Bristol during the years 1760–1761, Wesley wrote a hymn, *Christ himself the precept gives* (2012, 88–89), revealing the value of the Bible for him as inspiration for his creativity and a source of spiritual truth:

Who with true humility
Seek Him in the written word,
Christ in every page they see,
See, and apprehend their Lord;
Every scripture makes Him known,
Testifies of Christ alone.

Wesley used all except four books of the Old Testament as reference in his hymns, these being Ezra, Nehemiah, Nahum and Zephaniah, and only excluded 3 John of the New (Ryan 1998, n. pag.). His use of scriptural excerpts and allusions adds textural richness to his hymns as does his employment of metaphor, typology and allegory. This is evident in the third stanza of the hymn where the comparison of the wealth found in the Bible to 'hidden treasure' conveys the depth of the spiritual worth of God's word and of his promise of life:

Here I cannot seek in vain;

Digging deep into the mine,
Hidden treasure I obtain
Pure, eternal Life Divine,
Find Him in his Spirit given,
Christ the Way, the Truth of heaven.

It is Christ who directs us to search the 'sacred leaves' (*Christ himself the precept gives*). The hymn demonstrates how Wesley coalesces form and content to convey meaning through his able use of the sexain, the ababcc rhyme scheme. With the use of iambic pentameter, the hymn is given a degree of rhythmic formality, reflecting the essence of his topic – the Bible as the source for spiritual truth – with the last two rhyming lines making the focal statement, as can be seen below in stanza two:

Every scripture makes Him known,
Testifies of Christ alone.

The theme of the value and necessity of the Bible is demonstrated further in the opening stanza of a hymn written in 1765 where Wesley affirms the priority of the Bible in Methodism as the 'rule of faith' (Maddox 2011, 18):

The written word, entire and pure,
The word which always shall endure

Wesley's popular hymn *Come, let us anew* (CHPM 45) is nuanced with allusions and analogies to and from biblical texts. It was first published in 1750 in a penny tract entitled 'Hymns for New Year's Day' containing seven hymns and is commonly used at Methodist Watchnight services. It is a hymn of hope and optimism, celebrating the advent of the new year in the knowledge of Christ's coming: 'And never stand still, Till the Master appear'. Wesley's descriptive abilities emerge in his metaphorical lyricism, which adds a reflective quality to the lines:

Our life is a dream, Our time as a stream
Glides swiftly away,
And the fugitive moment refuses to stay

This stanza has strong resonance with Watts's lines from *Our God, our help in ages past* (APHS 616):

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

In both hymns, the evocation of the transience of life is marked by a sense of poignancy. Wesley's hymn gains in meaning through a loose, irregular rhythmic structure of 10.5.11./12.10.6.12. or 12.6.12.12.6.12., although the rhyme scheme is based on couplets. The internal rhyme – 'Our life is a dream, Our time as a stream' and 'The arrow is flown, The moment is gone', for example – highlights the theme which emerges through the mystic quality of Wesley's description of the transitory nature of life – 'Our life is a dream' – contrasted with the certainty of the advent of Christ as highlighted by the concluding assertion of each stanza: 'Rushes on to our view, and eternity's here' and 'I have finished the work Thou didst give me to do!'

Wesley's hymn alludes to the powerful words in 2 Timothy 4:7: 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith'. Wesley parallels these words in poetic expression:

"I have fought my way through,
I have finish'd the work Thou didst give me to do."

The biblical allusion is taken further in the penultimate line of the hymn, 'Well and faithfully done', in reference to the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 in which a master rewards his servants for their faith and works with the words, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant' (21). Wesley's hope in his hymn is for all who believe in Christ to receive commendation and hear the glad word from the Lord: 'Enter into My joy, and sit down on my throne'.

In addition to Charles Wesley's underscoring of the importance of the Bible in his own writing, in devotional practices, in congregational gatherings, he and John both gave prominence to 'the model of Christian life in the early church', most particularly in the continuance of the weekly celebration of the Eucharist as a primitive norm (Maddox 2011, 21). That they believed the earliest Christian community was the purest manifestation of Christian life, that that time was the 'age of golden days', is revealed in Charles Wesley's earlier hymn, *Primitive Christianity*, published in 1743 (John Wesley 1743, 52–55):

Happy the souls who first believ'd,
To Jesus, and each other cleav'd,

Join'd by the unction from above,
In mystic fellowship of love.

The reference to the 'Lamb' in the second stanza, the sacrificial Lamb of the Passion, contiguous to the phrases, 'the commemorative bread' and 'drank the Spirit of their head' highlights the spiritual significance of the Eucharist.

Much of Wesley's hymn-writing was underpinned by both his theology of suffering and his theology of the Cross. For Wesley, the burden of Christ's Cross is one shared by all Christians, a burden that is part of the process of selflessness in following Christ, a part of the pilgrimage to attaining eternal life. Wesley describes this journey from 'cross' to 'crown' in poetic terms in his hymn *How long, Thou suffering Son of God* (1749, 16):

The man that Thy Follower be,
Thou bidd'st him still himself deny,
Take up his daily cross with Thee,
Thy shameful death rejoice to die,
And choose a momentary pain,
A crown of endless life to gain.

He powerfully connects the soteriological doctrine with Christian service. In *The Good Samaritan* (MHB 335), he draws together typology of the Passion and the Eucharist to reinforce the image of the giving Christ, the 'Good Samaritan'. References to the 'dying cry', 'wounds', 'gasp for help' of the sinner, individualised in the first person, implicitly point to Christ's suffering and the affiliation between the suffering Christ and suffering humanity, as sinners 'at the point of death' and as followers of Christ. Through Jesus, 'the wine and oil of grace pour in', healing the 'soul of sin':

O thou good Samaritan!
In thee is all my hope;
Only thou canst succour man,
And raise the fallen up:
Hearken to my dying cry;
My wounds compassionately see;
Me, a sinner, pass not by,
Who gasp for help from thee.

Saviour of my soul draw nigh,

In mercy haste to me,
At the point of death I lie,
And cannot come to thee;
Now thy kind relief afford,
The wine and oil of grace pour in;
Good Physician, speak the word,
And heal my soul of sin.

The connection in this hymn between the connotations of 'Samaritan' and 'Physician' and the images of suffering, exemplified in the person of Jesus Christ, convey in dramatic terms the Christian creed of generosity, love, selflessness and service.

Wesley's theology of suffering became more evident in his later years and although many explanations have been given as to the reasons for his emphasis on pain, such as his ongoing bouts of illness, the demands of his itinerant ministry, grief within his family, conflicts with John and, particularly, his distress at the increasing move of Methodism away from the Church of England, there is no straightforward answer (Cruickshank 2009, 17). Wesley was also much influenced by the emphasis on the value of self-denial and suffering of Thomas à Kempis and Law (Cruickshank 2009, 17). In his hymns, he invests much meaning and power into his evocation of Christ's suffering. Typologically, he uses the word 'blood' not only in physical terms but to signify Christ's sacrificial work. His short hymn *Is there no balm in Gilead?* (SHSP vol. II, p. 15) employs the word metaphorically in terms of atonement, healing, cleansing and baptising:

Yes, there is, there is, my God,
Balm, abundant balm in Thee,
Rivers of atoning blood,
Streams of living purity!
Pour the blood upon my soul,
Plunge me in the cleansing wave,
Close my wounds, and make me whole,
Show forth all Thy skill to save.

The force and vigour of the words, 'rivers', 'streams', 'pour' and 'plunge' reinforce the physicality and reality of Christ's death on the cross and the dynamism of God's work. The title *Is there no balm in Gilead?* comes from Jeremiah 8:22 in the Old Testament; in the context of the hymn the balm of Gilead refers to salvation and healing through Jesus Christ.

This image also appears in the previous hymn, *The Good Samaritan*, where Wesley refers to 'The balm of Gilead I receive' in terms of Christ, the 'Physician'.

The overarching theme of suffering through the crucifixion and atonement of sins is exhibited within the context of graphic physical imagery of blood, disfigurement, agony, sweat, 'bleeding feet', grief and shame (Wesley 2022, 235):

I see Him sweat great drops of blood,
I see Him faint beneath my load!
The thorns His temples tear!
He bows His bleeding head and dies!

In this framework, Wesley's poignant questioning, 'Jesus, Lord, what hast Thou done?' and:

Will He forsake His throne above,
Himself to me impart?

imparts a sense of reflection arising from deep emotional engagement with Christ's sacrifice. The hymn *Father, Son and Holy Ghost* (CHPM 418) depicts the baseness of the sinner – 'so poor a worm as I' – to illuminate the significance of the sacrificial act of Christ for the redemption of humanity:

Vilest of the sinful race,
Lo! I answer to Thy call

Watts, too, uses worm imagery in his hymn *Alas! and Did my Saviour Bleed* (APHS 311), a concept placing emphasis on the lowly state of the sinner that was prevalent at the time:

Would he devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?

Worm imagery frequently appears in Charles Wesley's hymns, as in the work of other eighteenth-century poets such as Cowper, to represent sinful humanity, or Edward Young in his depiction of the frailty of mortals.

In *And can it be that I should gain*, Wesley writes that Christ 'bled for Adam's helpless race'. This is a significant aspect of his doctrine – that the sin of Adam is the cause of the suffering of all humanity (Cruickshank 2009, 51). Wesley frequently allies imagery from the Genesis narrative and the fall of Adam with that of the sinful nature of man, 'False and full of sin I am', but also emphasises that Christ takes on the sin of Adam and is, in fact,

called the ‘last Adam’ and the ‘second man’ (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47). Thus, Wesley can proclaim in presenting heaven and Eden as one (SHSP vol. I, p. 11):

He lives! He mounts above the skies,
He claims my Eden there!

Wesley’s hymns around suffering and the Cross are often characterised by his use of rhetorical questions and ejaculations which enhance the mood of sorrow appropriate to their thematic nature. Rhetorical questions frequently appear throughout a stanza, functioning to give form to the physical structure and the diction – the hymnic voice is almost expressing an incredulity, a sense of incomprehensibility, at the magnitude of Christ’s sacrifice. This is particularly poignantly articulated in the line, ‘Jesus, Lord, what hast Thou done?’

Wesley’s hymn *And can it be that I should gain* (HSP 1739, pp. 117–119), written soon after his conversion, portrays the faith and new life of the believer in commitment to Christ, demonstrating the Christian’s response to the Cross. The hymn is entirely Christological in focus, bringing together the concepts of love, grace, forgiveness and atonement through the blood of Christ. Wesley imparts a textural richness to the hymn with the use of figurative language and devices, typically rhetorical questions and paradox – ‘Th’ Immortal dies’. He addresses in a powerful way – such as the effect of the verbal strength of ‘empty’d’ and ‘bled’ – the significance of sacrifice and salvation:

He left His Father’s throne above,
(So free, so infinite His grace!)
Empty’d himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam’s helpless race:
’Tis mercy all, immense and free!
For O my God! It found out me!

The magnitude of Christ’s action is accentuated by the exclamation marks in this stanza particularly in the final lines. As he frequently does, Wesley uses the sexain structure in this hymn, with the thematic emphasis thereby being placed on the last two lines; the main thrust of each stanza is encapsulated in these lines as can be seen in the above example.

The fourth stanza, based on the account of Peter in prison in Acts 12:6–7, contrasts images of ‘nature’s night’ and ‘a quick’ning ray’ to convey the darkness and bondage of sin and the liberation that comes in following Jesus. In the last stanza, Wesley gives praise to God as he ‘approach[es] th’ eternal throne’, ‘cloath’d in righteousness divine’. This image is

from Isaiah 61:10: 'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness'. As seen in Isaiah, the image of being clothed in righteousness is intrinsic to the concept of salvation and the attainment of eternal life; in Wesley's hymn he can 'claim the crown, thro' Christ, my own'. Salvation is implicit in Wesley's phraseology, the promise of eternal life in accepting the call of Jesus Christ. The hymn is vigorous in its lexicon – 'bold', 'claim', 'adore' – achieving a celebratory tone in the sureness of its soteriological theme:

Jesus, and all in him, is mine:
Alive in him, my living head

In contrast, Wesley's last hymn before his death centres around the line, 'Jesus, my only hope Thou art' (CHW 1037). His assertion comes from his perspective of frailty – spiritual as well as physical – and full recognition of himself as a weak sinner, able only to trust in Jesus to fill his infirm heart:

In age and feebleness extreme,
Who shall a sinful worm redeem?
Jesus, my only hope Thou art,
Strength of my failing flesh and heart;
O could I catch a smile from Thee,
And drop into eternity.

The image in the rhetorical question, 'Who shall a sinful worm redeem?', by its very connotations of lowliness and unworthiness, points by implication to the immensity of Christ's sacrifice. It is an echo of the image previously mentioned in the hymn *Father, Son and Holy Ghost*: '… so poor a worm as I'. The use of this image is strengthened by its foundation in Scripture: 'But I am a worm and not a man, A reproach of men and despised by the people' (Psalm 22:6). That this was Wesley's last hymn is all the more poignant considering the joy and assurance of *And can it be that I should gain*. However, in the lyricism and poetry of the last two lines there is a glimpse of hope, a gentleness of quality that is almost prayer-like in tone:

O could I catch a smile from Thee,

And drop into eternity.

The rhythmic and rhyming (aabbcc) conventionality functions in this hymn to convey the theme: that of life as it contracts with approaching death. The two hymns capture the essence of Charles Wesley: the sinner and the devoted disciple, the uncertain sufferer and the believer, the proselyte and the proselytiser, the hymn-writer and the poet.

'The music of the heart'

While Charles Wesley's hymns range in theme, form and function, it is ultimately their emotional quality that knits together their evangelical character, worship of God and communal response. Wesley wrote in the language of the heart, expressing sometimes lyrically, sometimes dramatically, but always affectively, the spiritual experiences of those who come to follow Christ. While he often uses the first-person singular, which adds intensity to his hymns, his Christian expression is always inclusive, addressing a social holiness. His particular themes concern concepts of life, death, grace and love within a religious context. In his emphasis on salvation and a personal Christian experience he manifests a strong awareness of sin, writing hymns that are intense in nature. By all accounts, with his creative personality, he was passionate and melancholic; in Tyson's terms, 'impetuous, short-tempered, and given to outbursts of feeling' (Wesley 1989, 4). The intensity of his emotion was such that John Wesley found some of his sentiments in his hymns offensive, sometimes editing the content for this particular reason (Tyson in Wesley 1989, 24). John Wesley was opposed to the use of the word 'dear' since it connoted too much familiarity with Christ and was also critical of what he felt was over-emotional language such as the line, 'The desire of our eyes' and weak sentimentality in phrases such as 'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild' (Tyson in Wesley 1989, 23–24). At his conversion, Charles Wesley exclaims with rapture, 'I believe, I believe!' and he writes hymns of resounding joy. His emotional expression of his conversion in *Where shall my wondering soul begin?* written shortly afterwards conveys his sense of gratitude and delight: 'Blest with this antepast of heaven!'

One of Wesley's most celebratory hymns is *Praise the Lord who reigns above* (1870, vol. VIII p. 262). In these words of homage to God, his poetic powers come into full play. It is in this celebration that Wesley encompasses all of creation, attributing every breath, every movement – all life – to God:

Him in whom they move and live,

Let every creature sing;
Glory to their Maker give,
And homage to their King!
Hallow'd be His name beneath,
As in heaven on earth adored;
Praise the Lord in every breath;
Let all things praise the Lord!

God is acknowledged as the 'Maker' to whom all glory must be given, as the triune God in the reference to 'their King'. Wesley evokes the ardency of worship of God in the musically descriptive second stanza. There are manifold references to the praise of God through music and song in the Old Testament: the Israelites exulted in their victories over their enemies through God, they affirmed their trust in God, they paid homage to their covenant with God represented by the Ark of the Covenant: 'And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets' (1 Chronicles 13:8). So, too, the Methodists lift their voices in praise of the holy God of love, the God of 'noble deeds', of 'matchless power' (Wesley 1870, vol. VIII p. 262):

Celebrate the eternal God
With harp and psaltery,
Timbrels soft, and cymbals loud
In His high praise agree;
Praise Him every tuneful string,
All the reach of heavenly art;
All the powers of music bring,
The music of the heart.

The use of enjambement heightens the depth of joyous emotion in this stanza, emotion which plays into the very creed of Methodism with its emphasis on the experience of the heart. In his referencing of Psalm 150, Wesley echoes the eloquence of the psalmist in his worship of God, bringing together in the imagery of music both action and feeling. It is not simply knowledge of Christ that shapes the life of the believer but experiential, heartfelt faith (*And can it be that I should gain*):

I feel the life his wounds impart;
I feel my Saviour in my heart.

Many of Charles Wesley's hymns of praise and worship articulate the theme of God's revelation of himself through his created world, although nature, that created world, does not itself feature strongly in his work. While he, most commonly, delineates God as being revealed through grace rather than through nature he, nevertheless, affirms and celebrates the Creator God in a number of hymns (Maddox 2011, 26) such as in his poetic expression of Psalm 19 (PW vol. VIII, p. 35):

Our Souls the Book of Nature draws
T' adore the First Eternal Cause,
The Heavens Articulately shine,
And speak their Architect Divine,
And all their Orbs proclaim aloud
The Wisdom and the Power of God.

Wesley is at pains to point to God, the Creator, rather than to his creation. Herbert can be looked to here for comparison; in his poem 'The Pulley', he writes of God withholding the gift of rest from humans thus, in this, ensuring that they 'rest' in him, the Creator, rather than in creation (Herbert 2015, 153):

He would adore my gifts instead of me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature.

Again, in terms of his focus on God himself who created the world, Wesley frequently uses a conjunction of opposites in creation: earth and skies, day and night, light and dark. Thus, he writes (MHT 661):

Come, let us with our Lord arise,
Our Lord, who made both earth and skies

and (MHT 934):

All praise to Him who dwells in bliss,
Who made both day and night

In setting God within the universe he created, Wesley can convey his glory and might and elicit an emotional response of praise from the readers or singers. This same aspect of immensity is evoked in another hymn in relation to Christ through the use of celestial and light imagery (MHT 924):

Christ, whose glory fills the skies,
Christ, the true, the only Light,
Sun of Righteousness, arise,
Triumph o'er the shades of night;
Day-spring from on high, be near;
Day-star, in my heart appear.

In this hymn, poetic expression is melded to the theological doctrines of the Resurrection and the Ascension, the exaltation and glory of Jesus Christ after the accomplishment of God's work: 'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name' (Philippians 2:9). The interweaving of images of 'Light', 'Sun', 'day-spring', 'day-star' connotes the divine in conjunction with words such as 'arise' and 'triumph'. Just as Christ revealed his deity through his metaphorical 'I am' statements, so Wesley uses metaphor and symbolism to enrich meaning; thus, Christ, the 'Radiancy divine', is the 'day-spring', with its connotations of sunrise, and 'day-star'. The latter metaphor is from 2 Peter 1:19 ('… and the day star arise in your hearts') referring to the light that Christ brings into the hearts of those who have accepted him; once again, the emphasis in Wesley's hymn is on an experience of the heart.

In his hymn *Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire* (CHPM 85) Wesley uses biblical imagery, comparing the new birth of a convert with the creation of the world. He draws the believer into the Alpha and Omega of God's infinite grace – the Holy Spirt was present in the beginning, is present at conversion and is present again as the believer 'drop[s] into eternity' to be united with God. The hymn carries references to both the Old and New Testaments in relation to the Holy Spirit:

Expand Thy wings, celestial Dove,
Brood o'er our nature's night;
On our disorder'd spirits move,
And let there now be light.

The hymn resonates with the creation story as a whole. Genesis 1:1–3 reads, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light'. God's words, 'Let there be light' as his Spirit hovers over the waters in the darkness are echoed in Wesley's hymn; in relation to 'our disorder'd spirits' Wesley presents a parallel between creation and

conversion. The light that came into the world on the first day of creation is symbolically aligned here with the illumination that the Holy Spirit provides to the believer; as Wesley puts it,

> Source of the old prophetic fire,
> Fountain of light and love.

He also employs the scriptural symbolism of the dove as represented in all four of the Gospels. These record the Spirit of God descending upon Jesus at his baptism like a dove. Matthew bears witness to this saying, 'And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him' (3:16). Wesley expresses this in poetic form but expands the image to encompass the work of the Holy Spirit within 'our disorder'd spirits', the darkness of our nature as signified by 'nature's night'.

Wesley coalesces imagery from the Old and New Testaments to add richness to his text. The first line of the hymn *Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire* almost exactly parallels the line from an anonymous ninth- or tenth-century hymn *Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire* (MHT 779), translated from the Latin by John Cosin. Given its similarity, Wesley would almost certainly have known this hymn and his echoing of it points to the continuity of theological tradition in hymnody. References to the Holy Spirit working in and through humankind abound, but it is Wesley's use of the word 'hearts' rather than souls that is most significant, given the Methodist emphasis on the experience of the heart, reflecting the well-known biblical verse: '… the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us' (Romans 5:5). The Holy Spirit is addressed in the hymn in the form of an invocation or prayer, resonating with praise:

> Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire,
> Let us thine influence prove;
> Source of the old prophetic fire,
> Fountain of light and love.

The hymn is written in common metre using slant rhyme in an abab structure ('prove' and 'love'; 'spoke' and 'book'; 'Dove' and 'move'). This allows these particular words – and thus their meanings – to gain in emphasis. However, 'Dove' forms a perfect rhyme with 'love', which adds a further dimension to the symbolism in the hymn in that the dove as the spirit of God, the embodiment of love (1 John 4:16), descended upon Jesus at his baptism.

Wesley's hymns convey a range of emotions from the despair and guilt of the sinner to the rapturous joy of the 'converted'. Their very energy and passion became a vehicle through which the heightened emotions engendered by the revivals could be expressed; there was 'a renascence of religious sensibilities underway in England, a rebirth in the totality of Christian conviction that required the means wherewith to run, and jump, and shout' (Noll 1974, 205). J. Ernest Rattenbury asks the question 'Did not the mighty emotion, the ecstatic joy of the Great Revival which was daily emancipating people from spiritual tyrannies need some exceptional vent?' (1954, 40). That exceptional vent was provided by Wesley who conveyed and encouraged an intensity and profundity of emotion through his lack of formalism, his use of a variety of metres, the tone of his hymns and the richness of his employment of allusion and metaphor. It was his focus to 'stress the importance of feeling in religion' (Kay 1958, 10). One of Wesley's hymns which can be regarded as quintessentially emotive in nature, inspiring joyous worship, is *O For a thousand tongues to sing* (CHPM 1):

O For a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise!
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of his grace!

This is a hymn of great emotional, theological and evangelical impact conveying, within the framework of its intensity of feeling, the Methodist doctrines of the 'unlimited atonement for sin in Christ crucified' and 'the saving union of justification and holiness' (Lawson 2015, 37). The first line evinces a strong yearning with the emotionally resonant 'O' but also signifies rapture and, again, the evangelical injunction is clear:

My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim;
To spread through all the earth abroad
The honours of thy name.

Wesley's intent to proclaim 'The honours of thy name' is realised through the poetic dimension that directs and gives power to his hymnody. All his impassioned credo is encapsulated in his articulation of his worship of God as he gives expression to 'the music of the heart'.

Chapter Six: 'Digging deep into the mine': Five case studies

Charles Wesley's deep love of God manifests in the worship and praise that are a habitual component of his hymnody. His injunction to 'Lift up your heart, lift up your voice' as the repeated refrain in his hymn *Rejoice, the Lord is King!* (MHT 247) underlines the importance that he placed on singing as an expression of the heart experience of Methodism, and which is reinforced in the first stanza:

> Mortals, give thanks and sing,
> And triumph evermore

While Wesley's hymns clearly show both descriptive and dramatic ability, and his interpretation of elevated themes gives his work poetic resonance, the direct simplicity and clarity of expression in hymns such as *Rejoice, the Lord is King!* seem to give credence to the criticism of some that Wesley lacked artistic sophistication (Noll 1974, 197). However, T. S. Gregory writes: 'His neglect of art is the essence of his greatness as a poet … He realized the mystery of the divine incarnation, in the flesh of his own time with a vision so single and entire that his language needs no wings' (1957, 253). Herbert raises the idea in his 'Jordan' poems of the artlessness and thus sincerity of sacred poetry; he makes the claim that ultimately all his 'quaint words and trim inventions' and 'thousands of notions' are a 'long pretence' and all that is needed is to 'copy out' the 'love in sweetness already penned' (2015, 98). In 'Jordan (I)', Herbert is dismissive of elaborations, artifice, ambiguities in poetry, what he – elaborately – terms 'fictions', 'false hair', 'a winding stair', a 'painted chair' (2015, 53). Ironically, Herbert's poems are, in fact, defined by their linguistic and metaphoric virtuosity, their 'art'; however, through the complexity of his poems he reaches a fundamental simplicity of subject and language, summed up in the closing phrase of 'Jordan (I)', '*My God, my King*'. The point that Herbert is making in his 'Jordan' poems is that art must be subordinated to experience. Gregory's comment about Charles Wesley can be better applied perhaps not to a neglect of art as such but to an artlessness such as Herbert propounds, notwithstanding the fact that, in Herbert's case, it is a self-conscious artistry to divest himself of flashy techniques in order to focus clearly on a powerful articulation of the love of God in Jesus Christ. Wesley's writing is reflective of Wordsworth's 'spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions', not uncontrollably, not melodramatically, but inspired by his true passion for his Lord Jesus Christ. Given the largeness of his oeuvre and the fact that, over

time, some of his hymns have undergone revision and refinement by others, Wesley's poetic merit, artless or otherwise, is of necessity, not pervasive across all his hymns.

The following detailed study of the poetic quality inherent in Charles Wesley's writing focuses on five hymns which are centred around the heart experience and the theme of love since it is the affective dimension that is a cornerstone of Christian faith and the core of so many Wesleyan hymns. It is also this dimension that largely provides the interface between hymns and poetry and, thus, speaks to the heart of this study. These five hymns give ample evidence to support the idea that they have been written from the depths of the heart, that Wesley's verses are stamped with the 'true Spirit of Poetry' (John Wesley 1791, v). As George Herbert aptly describes in 'A True Hymn' from *The Temple* (2015, 161):

> The fineness which a hymn or psalm affords,
> Is, when the soul unto the lines accords.

These lines introduce a useful measure: how personal experience authenticates a hymn's doctrinal purpose. Wesley wrote hymns to teach and to inspire his congregations to praise his God of love. Imparting theology was an important element, but didacticism did not supersede poetic and emotional expression; Wesley's hymns are paradigmatic of poetry elucidating and enhancing theology, as is evident in the selected hymns. These hymns are illustrative of a particularly Wesleyan voice illuminating the expression of, in John Keats's terms, 'the holiness of the heart's affections' (2002, 36) with thematic and linguistic interconnections and variations in nuance demonstrating a poetic or hymnic cohesion.

The terms of analysis include thematic continuity, rhetorical expression, Wesley's didactic purpose, the metrical form of the hymns and their theological foundations. Emphasis is given to the emergence of Wesley's poetic voice informed by his experience of the heart and his expression of 'heart' or the dimensions of love. The full texts of the hymns can be read in the appendix; as far as possible, the original published versions are the texts used for critical examination.

Come and let us sweetly join

From the early days of Wesley's evangelical hymn-writing, the theme of love took a central place. Throughout the turbulent and formative years of the 1740s, as the Methodist revival got underway, Wesley established himself as a poet of the heart, with the emotional dimension and the evocation of the relationship between God and humankind being abiding features. Methodism focuses on both spiritual rebirth and the Christian way of life as being a

heart experience. Wesley infused all his writing, his sermons and his hymns, with a heartfelt passion as he expressed the inner spiritual life of the believer but also in his exhortations to unbelievers to accept Christ into their hearts and, thereby, to experience forgiveness, assurance and joy. In his 1740 Love Feast hymn, *Come and let us sweetly join*, the word 'heart' is threaded throughout the hymn connoting different meanings. Within the framework of the theme of the Love Feast, 'heart' refers to heightened emotion – love for God and for others, humanity, tenderness of feeling – to fervour and spirit, and to the very core or essence of one's being. These understandings of heart, captured in this one hymn, are integral to a full perception of Wesley's – and, indeed, Methodism's – religion of the heart, which he expressed in his hymnody. Both Wesley brothers loved George Herbert's poetry and would have understood the significance of the triumphant ending after the lines, 'Come, my way, my truth, my life' from Herbert's poem 'The Call' (2015, 149): 'Such a heart, as joys in love' (Watson in Young 1995, ix).

John Wesley first experienced Love Feasts through his association with the Moravians and he incorporated this communal activity into Methodist practice. The Love Feast revolves around Christian fellowship and represents the meals Jesus shared with his disciples during his ministry. It was established as a service of sharing food, prayer, Scripture readings, testimonies, thanksgiving and hymns by the Moravians in 1727 and became characteristic of the evangelical revival and of Methodist society meetings.

Throughout Charles Wesley's hymn there are references to the 'feast' or 'banquet', as much as to singing and praising, all within the context of love. Wesley's invitation to believers is for 'Christ to praise in hymns divine', to 'rise, and sing', but his invitation to Christ is to the 'feast':

> Jesu, dear expected guest,
> Thou art bidden to the feast:
> For thyself our hearts prepare:
> Come, and sit, and banquet there.

Thus, he makes the nature of the Love Feast very plain. He alludes to Luke 14:12–24 and the parable of the banquet and, as is clear in the stanza above, it is Jesus himself who is the 'dear expected guest'. The invitation, however, is not simply to the banquet but into 'our hearts'. Implicit in the allusion to the parable of the banquet is that the grace that Jesus extends is to all – as Luke says, metaphorically 'the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind' (14:21). There is also a reference to 'the marriage of the Lamb' from Revelation 19:7–9.

Christ, the lamb, is the bridegroom and the Church is his bride. It is at the marriage feast that each believer will be called to join in the celebration of what is, ultimately, the fruition of God's plan of salvation. All will be made 'in thee complete'; all will be 'Partners with the saints in light' at the 'endless feast'.

The issue of the relation and connection between faith and works is also addressed in this lyrical hymn of praise:

Plead we thus for faith alone,
Faith which by our works are shewn

The Wesleyan holiness tradition emphasises the vital link between faith and works as a manifestation of obedience to God; faith not only establishes the believer's relationship with God but, of necessity, has demonstrable moral and social consequences. *Come and let us sweetly join* is concerned with the principal tenets of the Methodist conviction of salvation by God's grace, of the holiness of heart and life of the believer being founded on faith, and of sanctification through the Saviour. Chilcote notes that Wesley affirms God's paramount position in the experience of salvation (2009, 28): 'God it is who justifies'. The Wesleyan doctrine of salvation through faith which necessarily manifests in a life of good works and holiness – in conflict with Calvinist teaching of salvation by God's grace and mercy alone – is at the heart of the Wesleys' understanding and proclamation of the gospel. Their understanding and teaching are grounded in the dynamic balance of knowing and living the faith. Wesley writes, 'Speak we by our lives his praise' reinforcing Methodist teachings of not just feeling the heart experience but of enacting it in living a Christian life in word and deed as detailed also in Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living*. The progression from faith to works is crucial:

Let us then as brethren love,
Faithfully his gifts improve;
Carry on the earnest strife,
Walk in holiness of life

The affective dimension of action is reflected in the hymn in the expressed desire to manifest love to community, to live a life of holiness and virtue and to preach the salvation message, the message of faith, to unbelievers, 'the earnest strife' which resonates with Paul's 'good fight' in 1 Timothy 6:12.

There is a conjunction of force of action and encouragement throughout the hymn 'representative of how a complex sense of spirituality was incorporated into Methodist practice' (Farley 2015, 106). This is seen particularly in the exhortation 'Come' that begins this hymn and which is qualified by the word 'sweetly', tempering the force of the call. The use of verbs such as 'come', 'give', 'sing', 'breathe', 'prepare', 'claim' and 'plead' as encouragement to the body of believers – and as performative instructions – reinforces the dynamic experiential quality of Wesleyanism with its process of action and acceptance.

Chilcote presents Wesleyan theology as being conjunctive and dynamic and this can be seen in three couplets (2009, 18):

Let us join, ('tis God commands,)
Let us join our hearts and hands

Still forget the things behind,
Follow Christ in heart and mind

Plead we thus for faith alone,
Faith which by our works are shewn.

Charles Wesley makes connections between 'hearts and hands' – the emotional and the physical – 'heart and mind' – the spiritual and the intellectual – and 'faith [and] works' – belief and service. In the second couplet, there is a polarity in the two lines with 'the things behind' suggesting past lives of sin and unbelief and 'Follow Christ in heart and mind' referring to a present and future commitment to faith in Jesus Christ. Wesley frequently made use of this conjunctive technique usually to emphasise the unity of two concepts or their duality. The above illustration of Chilcote's view of Wesleyan teaching and practice is an interesting one since the syntactical technique resonates with a spiritual perspective of unity: unity amongst believers, unity of knowledge and feeling within the believer and unity within the creed of being a Christian or, more specifically, a Wesleyan Methodist. Given that Methodism is rooted in revival and spotlights the realities of the personal experience of salvation, it stands to reason that Wesleyan theology is, by its very nature, dynamic and spiritually charged.

The theme of community and commonality, with its inherent spirit of sharing and fellowship, is threaded through *Come and let us sweetly join* in Wesley's phraseology – 'join', 'accord', 'mutual'. This theme of unity is reinforced by the structure of the hymn with

its syllabic regularity of 7.7.7.7. and its couplet form, a regularity and simplicity of poetic feature which accords with the purpose for which the hymn was written – shared singing at Love-Feasts. The use of the imperative at the start of some of the stanzas – 'Come', 'Sing', 'Call' – signifies the devotional and performative nature of the hymn as well as its intention to encourage fellowship and communal expression of praise for God. The connection of the imperative to devotion is made clear in God's calling on the lives of humankind displayed, as an example, in Watts's hymn *When I survey the wondrous cross* (APHS 515):

> Love so amazing, so divine,
> Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Biblically, there are countless commands to worship God: 1 Chronicles 16:29 states, 'Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name', while the psalmist in Psalm 29:2 enjoins, 'Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness'.

Yvonne Farley draws attention to another recurring thread in this hymn: that of time (2015, 106). This is particularly seen in terms of past history and the continuum of time: 'Sing as in the ancient days'. The suggestion of ancient ritual in this stanza underlines the sense of constancy and tradition that the Wesleys wanted to preserve (Farley 2015, 106). The lines,

> Sing we then in Jesu's name,
> Now as yesterday the same

enhance the sense of timelessness and continuity through the juxtaposition of 'now' and 'yesterday', and this bringing together of the past and present unifies the ongoing tradition of Christian faith.

Farley also points to the significance of the line, 'Thou thyself within us move', which registers the potency of individual experience. It indicates the desire in Methodism for a conversion experience that is evidence of genuine belief and assurance accentuated further by the use of the phrase 'Manifest thy presence' (2015, 107).

The hymn is strongly underpinned by the theme of love. The exhortative phrase 'Celebrate the feast of love' is repeated throughout the hymn in different ways suggesting both the love of humankind for others and the love of God. In the last stanza, love is equated with heaven: 'Lord we ask no other heaven'. The three exclamations in this stanza serve to highlight love as an essential virtue in the believer's life and faith and in Methodist teaching:

Love, thine image, love impart!
Stamp it on our face and heart!
Only love to us be given;
Lord we ask no other heaven.

The impassioned evocation of love, giving as it does an affective dimension to the hymn, goes to the core of an expression of the heart experience.

The line 'Hands, and hearts, and voices raise' signifies the dedication of the believer's whole being to the praise and worship of God. The hymn is reflective of Wesley's conversion fervour – personal, communal, spirit-filled – and his burgeoning poetic expression rich in affective content. The poeticism of one stanza in particular expresses the emotion and the drama of revival of the spirit:

Strive we, in affection strive:
Let the purer flame revive;
Such as in the martyrs glow'd,
Dying champions for their God

As a Love Feast hymn, part of this hymn appears in the section on 'The Communion of Saints: Christian Fellowship' in *The Methodist Hymn-Book with Tunes* (MHT 713). It is also a prime example of what S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. characterises as 'lyrical theology' (Young 1995, 28) encompassing as it does the doctrines of justification, sanctification, grace and new life in Christ, and personal and social holiness, in song. The hymn is jubilant in tone, evangelical – 'Call, O call us each by name' – in character and illuminated with the motif of love that is a thread throughout, emphasised by the petition, 'Write Thy law of love within'.

O for an Heart to praise my God

The 1742 hymn *O for an Heart to praise my God* conveys a similar concept to the petition in *Come and let us sweetly join*, ending with the words:

Write Thy New Name upon my Heart,
Thy New Best Name of Love.

This concept of God's name of love being inscribed on one's heart, or of God being fully known in one's heart, is paradigmatic of Charles Wesley as a believer, preacher and hymnist. In this instance, Wesley's reference to the 'New Name' of God registers his coming to a new assurance and recognition of God after his conversion. Wesley voices this recognition in

enumerative fashion placed within the framework of an impassioned plea to be able to offer praise to God with all his heart. His enumeration of the qualities of the heart to bring to God,

An humble, lowly, contrite Heart,
Believing, true, and clean

are ultimately pinpointed in the single line, 'A Copy, LORD, of Thine'. It is a heart 'full of Love Divine'; once again, the theme of love is at the forefront and it is the connection between heart and love that is at the root of Wesley's poetic and doctrinal expression. John Fletcher (1729–1785), one of Methodism's first great theologians, wrote of *O for an Heart to praise my God*, 'Here is undoubtedly an evangelical prayer for the love which restores the soul to a state of sinless rest and Scriptural perfection' (1835, 264). The theme of the renewal of the heart – 'An Heart from sin set free' – is common in Scripture: 'Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit …' (Ezekiel 18:31).

The hymn underlines the significance of the heart experience in loving God. It reveals absolute dedication to God in its prayer for purity of heart. The heart of the sinner coming to Christ is described in synonymic terms – it is resigned, submissive, meek, humble, lowly, contrite, true, right, pure – in order to emphasise the need for repentance to receive renewal. This descriptive enumeration of the qualities of the Christian heart offers clarity and fullness of meaning providing as it does subtle nuances of difference of implication. As he frequently does, Wesley uses the technique of synecdoche with regard to heart, to reiterate the necessity of spiritual, experiential conviction. The heart – as the emotional and cognitive centre – in its full engagement in religious conversion, becomes representative of the whole being, the soul, the mind, the body, in its commitment and praise to God. Like in many of his hymns, it is the repetition of the word 'heart', widely used here, that shows the intensity of Wesley's longing 'for an Heart to praise my God'.

There are three central ideas that can be discerned within the thematic narrative of the hymn: the first is that the Christian heart is a heart set free from sin, through the blood of Jesus Christ. In his description of the 'Heart that always feels Thy blood', Wesley points to the divine-human covenant, implying a heart relationship between God and his people. Secondly, the Christian heart, in its renewal through Christ, becomes 'A Copy, LORD, of Thine':

An Heart in every Thought renew'd,

And full of Love Divine;
Perfect, and right, and pure, and good,
A Copy, LORD, of Thine.

In *The Imitation of Christ*, Thomas à Kempis invites believers to pattern their lives on that of Christ. He writes, '"He that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness," saith the Lord. These are the words of Christ, by which we are taught to imitate His life and manners, if we would be truly enlightened, and be delivered from all blindness of heart. Let therefore our chief endeavour be to meditate upon the life of Jesus Christ' (1887, 1). Thomas Merton, homing in on the concept of God as love, describes the correlation between the heart as the quintessence of humankind, and love: 'To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence, for God is love' (2003, 63). Likewise, Thomas à Kempis illuminates the passion of the heart for his Lord: 'Ah, Lord God, thou holy lover of my soul, when thou comest into my heart, all that is within me shall rejoice' (1887, 77). Wesley, after Thomas, exhorts believers to embrace whole-heartedly a Christ-centred life. Lastly, the third concept of significance refers to Mark Noll's 'supernatural transaction' or 'human-divine transaction' in which there is an interplay between Jesus as human and as divine, acting upon and transforming the heart of the believer (1974, 209/217). Christ's sacrificial love for humanity engenders a devotional love in return, a heart full of 'love divine'. The indwelling of Christ, as signified by the heart vocabulary, the Christological dimension, is the core of Christian living.

The references to Revelation in the hymn, in the three symbols of the hidden manna, the tree of life and the white stone, embody the life-giving Christ, granting peace, love and absolution to those who accept him. The allusion to Revelation 2:17 where the Spirit gives to everyone who 'conquers' sin a white stone with a 'new name' inscribed upon it is repeated in the final stanza. This name that 'no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it' is, in Wesley's hymn, not simply known but felt as 'Love' in the inner depths of the believer, the heart.

It is in the hymns foregrounding the heart and the love evident of Christian commitment that the influence on Charles Wesley of Thomas à Kempis, Jeremy Taylor and William Law can particularly be seen. All three men place emphasis on holy living, on the purity of the heart, on the importance of a life devoted to God, and Wesley upholds the supremacy of love within this framework. *O for an Heart to praise my God* can be said to be quintessentially an articulation of the virtues required for a holy life, as presented by Thomas

à Kempis, Taylor and Law, in the context of the Christian heart. The holy heart reveals itself in love, as expressed in the earlier hymn, *Come and let us sweetly join*:

> Hence may all our actions flow,
> Love the proof that Christ we know.

Come, O Thou Traveller unknown (Wrestling Jacob)

As seen, Wesley wrote his hymns to express core tenets of faith, to present Wesleyan teaching on concepts that opposed those of Calvinist Methodism such as election and limited atonement, and to communicate certain specific doctrines, including the notion of sanctification or perfection (Bradley 1997, 8–9). *Come, O Thou Traveller unknown* serves to illustrate the Wesleyan opposition to the concept of predestination in the inclusivity of the phrase, 'Jesus, the feeble sinner's Friend'. The line, 'Hell, Earth, and Sin with Ease o'ercome', implies that Christian perfection is achievable in life through an increasing love for God, a love that manifests in a faith working outwardly:

> I leap for Joy, pursue my Way,
> And as a bounding Hart fly home,
> Through all Eternity to prove
> Thy Nature and Thy Name is Love.

The fact that Wesley's hymns are so filled with biblical references and allusions – here, the 'bounding Hart' which relates to the image of the lame man that 'leap[s] as an hart' in Isaiah 35:6 – attests to their particular purpose of expressing doctrine from a scriptural foundation. Wesley also communicates the soteriology of evangelical Protestantism in his hymn texts, describing and explaining the message of salvation in the formation of faith (White 1989, 271). In *Come, O Thou Traveller unknown* he declares, ''Tis Love! 'tis Love! Thou diedst for me!'

Published in the same year as *O for an Heart to praise my God* (1742), *Come, O Thou Traveller unknown* is a spiritual-autobiographical hymn often seen as part of a conversion trilogy including *And can it be that I should gain* and *Where shall my wondering soul begin?* It is frequently referred to as a poem rather than a hymn although the interchangeability of the terms with regard to hymns is a given. Entitled *Wrestling Jacob* in *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (HSP 1742, pp. 115–118), this hymn was one of John Wesley's favourites and he frequently chose it to be sung at his services (Stevenson 1894, 118). In fact, he attempted to

teach this hymn at a service two weeks after his brother's death and is said to have broken down at the lines (Hawn 2020, ch. 5):

> My company before is gone,
> And I am left alone with thee.

Come, O Thou Traveller unknown is generally perceived to be unsuitable for congregational purposes and, as such, appears very rarely in any hymnals other than those of the Methodist church. Its length would seem to obstruct its popularity for use within church services as well as its unique nature as lyrical/narrative drama rather than traditional hymn. Wesley relates the narrative of Jacob wrestling at the ford with God to the drama of personal salvation. The hymn provides an 'insightful psycho-drama of the human soul … the message of the evangelical revival' (Watson 2007, 79–80).

In Wesley's treatment of spiritual conflict, comparisons can be drawn with John Donne, George Herbert and William Cowper. While Donne and Cowper address the question of faith and doubt, Herbert's spiritual conflict, revealed in his poetry, lies in the contradiction between his commitment to his vocation as a priest with all its worldly restraints and his rebellion against those restraints. He most fully expresses this conflict in his poem, 'The Collar': 'I struck the board, and cri'd, No more' (2015, 146–147). Herbert's struggle is not one of questioning his faith, but of living that faith as a man of God, as a cleric. Ultimately, his conflict is resolved in surrendering his soul fully to God:

> Me thoughts I heard one calling, *Child*
> And I repli'd, *My Lord*.

Wesley's struggle, allegorised as the physical wrestling with God in *Come, O Thou Traveller unknown*, is to come to a clear knowledge and understanding of God, to accept God's love and assurance. He declares his 'Misery, or Sin' in the dramatic terms of his battle with God. Herbert's struggle, too, is one of coming to an acceptance and peace along with an acknowledgement of sin; as recounted by Izaak Walton, he described his collection of 162 poems, *The Temple*, to a friend three weeks before his death as 'a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have past betwixt God and my Soul, before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus my Master, in whose service I have now found perfect freedom' (1670, 109). This subjection of the Christian soul, the heart, to God's will is an important facet of Wesley's expression.

Donne reveals his spiritual uncertainties in his religious poems, particularly his Holy Sonnets which demonstrate the ongoing struggle between good and evil in the souls of humankind, through his personal expressions of doubt and faith. In his Holy Sonnet IX, he disputes with God about sin and damnation, challenging both God and then himself through rhetorical questions. Both Donne and Wesley, the latter in *Come, O Thou Traveller unknown*, are insistent in their questioning of God; both come to a recognition, in their consciousness of sin, of the need for God's mercy. Donne closes his sonnet with the plea, 'I think it mercy if thou wilt forget' (2004, 312) while Wesley's less complex rendition of challenge of and struggle with God unites the yearning for mercy with God's love:

> But stay and love me to the end,
> Thy mercies never shall remove

Cowper, too, is a poet who wrote of spiritual struggle in emotive terms in his poetry. His is a conflict between faith and doubt, a doubt not in God, but in his own salvation. He cries to God for help in *The Contrite Heart*: 'Decide this doubt for me' (OH 9). Spiritual conflict, however, gives way to expressions of faith, as the poet articulates in *Walking with God* (OH 1): 'So shall my walk be close with God', an affirmation consonant with Wesley's declaration of knowing Jesus: 'I know Thee, Saviour, who Thou art'. For Wesley, as for Herbert, Donne and Cowper, the doubt and uncertainty do not stem from unbelief in God but are part of the spiritual struggle to know and accept God's love in the context of a recognition of sin and failure.

Come, O Thou Traveller unknown is Wesley's testimony, an apparent account of personal experience – his conversion – within narrative form. Although both *And can it be that I should gain* and *Where shall my wondering soul begin?* are considered to be his principal conversion hymns, *Come, O Thou Traveller unknown* gives another layer and meaning to Wesley's encounter with God. As narrative rather than the more typical hymn of worship, Wesley's poetic hymn is powerfully emotional. His use of biblical narrative to recount a deeply personal narrative through allegorical interpretation captures the force of the feeling and the mood, giving the hymn a depth of meaning with which each believer can identify. It addresses the important question of the interface between the private and the public; it is illustrative of the interface between poetry and hymnody.

A central feature of the Wesleys' preaching and Charles Wesley's hymn-writing is the all-encompassing love of God for humankind revealed through his son, Jesus Christ, a theme which Wesley addresses to its fullest in this hymn. The intensity of the emotion inherent in

the hymn, particularly in the declaration of the line, ‘’Tis Love! ’tis Love! Thou diedst for me!’ heightens the poetry of the words. Indeed, *Come, O Thou Traveller unknown* received high praise as a poem of great power and finish with Isaac Watts describing it as ‘worth all the verses he himself had written’ (Julian 1892, 250). James Montgomery in *The Christian Psalmist*, 1825 (Julian 1892, 250), characterised *Come, O Thou Traveller unknown* as one of Wesley’s greatest achievements in which,

> with consummate art, he has carried on the action of a lyrical drama; every turn in the conflict with the mysterious Being against whom he wrestles all night, being marked with precision by the varying language of the speaker, accompanied by intense, increasing interest, till the rapturous moment of discovery, when he prevails, and exclaims, ‘I know Thee, Saviour, Who Thou art’.

Montgomery’s description of Wesley’s hymn as a lyrical drama signifies its nature as ‘unacted drama [which] has as its content the expression of the inner being of the author’ (Wang 1990, 28). This is certainly so of Wesley’s hymn, giving as it does full expression to his inner consciousness. While Montgomery’s description asserts the drama of the narrative of the hymn through its language where feeling becomes animated by action, it also points the way to a consideration of the question of lyrical theology. This is a term introduced by S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. in 1984 to characterise theology that is communicated through poetry and song. Carlton Young refers to Methodism as a lyrical religion of the heart which brought into existence evangelistic hymns and, following Isaac Watts, the ‘hymn of Christian experience’ (1995, 27–28). The doctrines that were taught to congregations were also sung in the hymns.

While largely narrative in nature, *Come, O Thou Traveller unknown* follows the conceptual pattern of the other selected hymns in this section in expressing the quality of divine love and the Christian experience of it. Although Wesley in his hymns frequently conveys his subjective experience, using the first person as a means to relate his own Christian journey as well as to depict that journey as inclusive and participatory for all believers or those seeking God, in *Come, O Thou Traveller unknown* he presents his engagement with God at a uniquely personal level. There is a different weighting of the personal and public dimensions from the other hymns in which his subjective experience and response become universal. The ‘I’ becomes functional as a ‘we’ with the hymnist providing each member of the congregation an opportunity to appropriate this experience for themselves. In *Come, O Thou Traveller unknown*, Wesley gives full expression of his inner life. His spiritual interaction, in fact, struggle with God, is portrayed in physical terms where

the intimacy, in terms of connectedness, in lines such as 'I never will unloose my hold' voices his innermost and unshakeable yearning to know God.

In *Come, O Thou Traveller unknown*, poetic verse and Scripture are intrinsically linked. In allegorical fashion, Jacob's spiritual struggle becomes Wesley's own personal struggle and then, inclusively, that of all humankind; through the use of the first person the struggle is brought into the realm of personal experience. In the struggle imagery, there is a phrasal parallel between Wesley – in the role of Jacob, identifying himself through his 'Misery, or Sin' – struggling with God as an adversary and God's struggle to win the sinner and offer his grace as the counterpoint. The biblical verse '... he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him' (Genesis 32:25), with its emphasis on the physical, underlines the might and the force of the God with whom the hymnist struggles:

'Tis all in vain to hold Thy Tongue,
Or touch the Hollow of my Thigh;
Though every Sinew be unstrung,
Out of my Arms Thou shalt not fly

Wesley also refers to his 'shrinking Flesh' and his 'Pain':

What tho' my shrinking Flesh complain,
And murmur to contend so long,
I rise superior to my Pain,
When I am weak then I am strong,
And when my All of Strength shall fail,
I shall with the God-man prevail.

In the same way as Jacob is affected – physically as much as spiritually – by his encounter with God, so are redeemed sinners marked by their experience for the remainder of their lives (Watson 2002, 184). The dislocation of Jacob's thigh is a sign of God's superiority despite, or perhaps in the light of, Jacob's determination to prevail, to refuse to give in until he is blessed by God. Wesley's use of the word 'prevail' reflects, through the physical, his full trust in God – he prevails with God, embodied in Jesus, rather than over him. In overcoming sin and receiving forgiveness, Wesley responds with pure exultation:

I leap for joy, pursue my Way,
And as a bounding Hart fly home

Jacob's words, 'I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved' are paralleled in joyous celebration in Wesley's hymn:

Through faith I see Thee Face to Face,
I see Thee Face to Face and live!

The dramatic emotion and vitality in these lines exemplify the tenor of the hymn as a whole.

The word 'come' in the imperative mood appears frequently in Wesley's hymns as an invitation or request such as in *Come and let us sweetly join* where the summons is to the body of believers to join in communal worship of God. The first lines of each of the selected hymns articulate an impassioned utterance in the form of an entreaty or exhortation or exclamation. In *Come, O Thou Traveller unknown* the call is to God which, considering the context and the allegorical interpretation of the narrative, is almost issued as a challenge. The language denotes single-mindedness and tenacity seen in the expressions of constraint: 'whom still I hold'; 'I never will unloose my Hold'; 'Wrestling I will not let Thee go'; 'Out of my Arms Thou shalt not fly'; 'I shall with the God-man prevail'; 'I stand, and will not let Thee go'. From the intentness and force of grappling with God – allegorically Wesley's conversion experience – the tone changes to one of entreaty:

Nor wilt Thou with the Night depart,
But stay, and love me to the End

A central feature of the poem is the concept of identity through names. On a semantic level, Jacob named the place where he struggled with God, Peniel, meaning 'Face of God' and God changed Jacob's name to Israel, meaning 'He who struggles with God'. However, there are deeper considerations of the importance of a name. Wesley insistently asks the unknown being his name:

But who, I ask Thee, who art Thou?
Tell me Thy Name, and tell me now.

The interrogative statement is repeated twice more:

Wrestling, I will not let Thee go,
Till I Thy Name, Thy Nature know.

The first half of the hymn demands to know the 'Name' and the 'Nature' of the unknown traveller; the second half is exultant at the knowledge that ''Tis Love! 'tis Love!' The

epizeuxis of this line marks a change in the tone and mood of the hymn, a change also registered by the refrain from this stanza onwards: Wesley's passionate declaration six times in recognition that, 'Thy Nature, and Thy Name is Love'. Wesley can claim, 'I know Thee, Saviour, who Thou art'. His acknowledgement of God's nature in the words, 'Pure, universal Love Thou art', reveals a primary tenet of Wesleyan theology in opposition to the Calvinist teaching of the elect (Hawn 2020, ch. 5).

The allusions and direct references to Jesus Christ, particularly as realised in the dramatic narrative of salvation, are a significant thread running through the hymn. The crucified Christ is first suggested by the line, 'Look on Thy Hands, and read it there' and then explicitly stated in the question, 'Art Thou the Man that died for me?' The line 'I shall with the God-man prevail' connotes both the mysterious traveller and God, who took on human form in the person of Jesus to enact the salvation of humankind. Further on in the poem, Wesley addresses his adversary directly as 'Saviour' and 'Jesus'.

In stanza seven, Wesley writes:

I sink beneath Thy weighty Hand,
Faint to revive, and fall to rise;

I fall, and yet by Faith I stand,
I stand, and will not let Thee go

Here is the apparent paradox of the Christian faith, encapsulated within Wesley's dramatic narrative and conveyed in Philippians 1:21 where Paul asserts, 'For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain'. In other words, in dying to oneself, one is able to live in Christ through God's grace. The opposites, 'faint' and 'revive' and 'fall' and 'stand', with the repetition of key words in the stanza, 'fall' and 'I stand', work as rhetorical devices to emphasise the paradox of faith. However, it is Wesley's structural use of parallelism, the cornerstone of biblical poetry, that most forcibly and effectively communicates theological precepts. In this stanza, both synonymous parallelism, in the lines:

Faint to revive, and fall to rise;
I fall, and yet by Faith I stand

and synthetic parallelism can be identified. Synonymous parallelism occurs as a repetition of one idea in a line, in the following line, seen here in the recurrent expression of 'fall' and the variation of the words 'rise' and 'stand'. Synthetic parallelism relates ideas across two or

more lines by contrasting or correlating them or by developing to a conclusion. In this stanza, the series of lines and thoughts in the stanza builds up to completion:

My Strength is gone, my Nature dies,
I sink beneath Thy weighty Hand,
Faint to revive, and fall to rise;
I fall, and yet by faith I stand

Synonymous and synthetic parallelism was first identified by Robert Lowth in 1753 in his book *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* in which he delineates poetry in the Bible as balanced conformation of thought (1829, 157).

The concluding lines of each stanza are significant, revealing as they do both the personal, in Wesley's spiritual state and stance, and the theological in the statements of doctrinal faith. A systematic look at the conclusion to each stanza demonstrates the impact of the hymn as a lyrical drama. As stated above, at the end of the second stanza, 'wrestling Jacob' demands imperatively:

But who, I ask Thee, who art Thou?
Tell me Thy Name, and tell me now.

Wesley's insistence is reinforced by the strength of his assertion in the concluding words of stanza six: 'I shall with the God-man prevail'. The traditional use of the word 'shall' in the first person singular gives added emphasis to the statement as well as consonantal ease and flow. His determination to fully know and understand God is a focal point in the hymn with his use of repetition deepening his feeling and the import of his struggle. Four times he finishes a stanza with the words:

Wrestling I will not let Thee go
'Till I Thy Name, Thy Nature know.

The hymnist comes to an acknowledgment of his own weakness, 'Yield to me now; for I am weak', with his imperative question becoming one of quieter entreaty: 'And tell me if Thy Name is Love'. The forceful statement of belief, 'Thy Nature and Thy Name is Love' which concludes each of the remaining six stanzas, links with the ultimate doctrinal thrust of the hymn – that God is love, stated in Scripture in 1 John 4:16: '… God is love: and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him'.

In the penultimate stanza, the hymn comes to the crux of the message: ‘On Thee alone for strength depend’. ‘Wrestling Jacob’, in knowing God fully, recognises his own weakness and the necessity to trust wholly in God’s strength, love and grace. All need is captured in the passionate appeal, ‘But stay, and love me to the End’. The hymn provides an undeniable assurance to the hymnist’s longing, expressed in physical conflict, to know the name and nature of God and emphatically advances the message, already featured by Wesley in previous hymns, of God’s divine love being offered to and acknowledged by the believer: ‘Thy Nature and Thy Name is Love!’

O love divine, how sweet thou art!

Wesley’s hymn *O love divine, how sweet thou art!*, published seven years later in 1749, shows how hymn-singing becomes an act of love to God through worship but also how the specific words fulfil a distinct purpose and how the metre, length of phrase, rhythm and rhyme play a role in the import and thrust of the hymn.

The hymn has a cadenced quality with its sestain stanza form of 8.8.6.D. and rhyming pattern of aabccb – it has two rhyming couplets followed by a tail line whereby the rhyme (b) returns to an earlier line (b):

O love divine, how sweet thou art!
When shall I find my longing heart
All taken up by thee?
I thirst, I faint, and die, to prove
The greatness of redeeming love,
The love of Christ to me.

The tail lines in each stanza are also the shorter lines with syllables of six providing impact to the hymn as a whole with their force and simplicity: ‘The love of Christ to me’ and ‘The length, the breadth, and height’, for example. The pattern of couplets with tail lines adds cohesion that enhances the theme of love and communion. It develops Wesley’s perspective, directing the questioning, the entreaties, the prayers of the hymnist to the focal point of the declamatory opening line. The focus remains on love but here it is a ‘mystery’, something to be ‘sigh[ed]’ and ‘pine[d]’ for by the human heart.

This is Wesley at the height of his itinerant mission, and the figurative nature of this hymn points to the complexity and richness of his thought. The hymnist states in quiet recognition that ‘God only knows the love of God’ and yet emotion and force animate the

hymn in his continually articulated desire ‘to prove/ The greatness of redeeming love’. In an edition of *The Methodist Hymn Book, illustrated with biography, history, incident, and anecdote*, George John Stevenson wrote of *O love divine, how sweet thou art!* (1894, 129):

> This hymn contains an extraordinary depth of feeling and desire, eager, impatient, resolute, combined with an extended view of the love of God, such as only a poet of much heart experience like Charles Wesley could write.

The use of the exclamatory apostrophe in the opening line serves to underline the all-encompassing nature of Jesus as love: ‘O love divine, how sweet thou art!’ This employment of the apostrophe in such a manner is characteristic of other poets of the eighteenth century, particularly the Romantics, where typically such concepts as beauty, love, elements of nature are addressed directly in personified form. Shelley, for example, addresses the wind in his ‘Ode to the West Wind’, ‘O Wind/ If Winter comes can Spring be far behind?’ (Shelley in Hayward 1976, 284). For both Romantic poetics and the articulation of spiritual conviction and faith in Wesley’s hymns, the expression of strong emotion was a focal element. However, Wesley’s use of the apostrophe in reference to God as love also has poetic resonance with the religious texts of poets such as Herbert. Herbert’s three poems, ‘Love’ I, II and III, particularly, are paradigmatic of the apostrophe being used for rhetorical effect. God is addressed as ‘Immortal Love’ and ‘Immortal Heat’ in ‘Love’ I and II (2015, 51); in ‘Love III’ he is not only addressed as ‘Love’ but is identified throughout the poem as ‘Love’. Herbert’s attribution of the name ‘Love’, which goes to the essence of God’s nature – ‘And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?’ (2015, 181) – correlates to Wesley’s later representation of God’s identity in *Come, O Thou Traveller unknown*: ‘Thy Nature and Thy Name is Love’. Herbert and Wesley’s choice of the apostrophe as a literary device adds emotional weight to their verse, but the concept of God as love is, of course, rooted in Scripture. In 1 John 4:16, the author writes, ‘God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in him, and he in God’.

Wesley’s apostrophic declaration is a heartfelt one, evidencing a direct, personal relationship with Christ – in getting to the crux of the heart experience and its measure, it is essentially the rhetorical and poetic devices that convey a sense of emotion. Wesley both invests the abstract quality ‘love’ with sacredness and uses it metaphorically with reference to God or, more specifically in this hymn, to Jesus. The theme of divine love being exhibited through an emotive lexicon invests the hymn with poetic value – Wesley’s responsiveness manifests in ‘poetic representation as personal experience’ (Bela n.d. 78). The love of Christ

for humankind is portrayed in terms of limitless value and extent through the words ‘riches’, ‘unsearchable’ and ‘depths’, and the lines:

> They cannot reach the mystery,
> The length, the breadth, and height.

It is a love that is stronger than ‘death or hell’, thus overcoming all evil. The poetry of the lines is resonant with emotion, with the hymnist’s ‘only care, delight, and bliss’, his ‘joy’, his ‘heav’n on earth’ being the experience of God’s transforming work in him. Wesley introduces emotions of intensity in the manner of the expression of profound feeling of eighteenth-century poetry into this hymn – ‘I thirst, I faint, and die’; ‘I sigh’, ‘I pine’, ‘Desire in vain its depths to see’. Edward Young’s long poem *Night Thoughts* serves as an example of the emotional force of the poetry of the period seen here in ‘Night I’ (1880, 11):

> A worm! A god! – I tremble at myself,
> And in myself am lost! …

As equally intense are Wesley’s feelings of joy at the desired or expected realisation of his hope to ‘hear the Bridegroom’s voice’. The terms used by Wesley in the hymnic mode communicate intense personal as well as shared experience. His expression of affective religion is commensurate with the tradition of eighteenth-century poetry although in a different way to Watts, the other great hymn-writer of the century. Watts, while also conveying personal feeling, assumes a larger, more general perspective (Spacks 2009, 19–20).

The reference to the ‘Bridegroom’ in the fourth stanza brings together a complexity of meaning and significance:

> My joy, my heav’n on earth, be this,
> To hear the Bridegroom’s voice!

John 3:29 states: ‘He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled’. Jesus Christ is the bridegroom made clear in the synoptic gospels by the suggestion of his coming death: ‘… but the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast’. Imagery of the bridegroom in the Bible describes the relationship of Christ to the Church, his bride: references to the bridegroom imply a covenant relationship with the Church, being all those who believe in Jesus Christ

and have accepted his atoning grace and gift of salvation. In the verse from John referenced in the hymn, the writer, in indicating himself as playing a best man role, implies that 'the friend of the bridegroom' is everyone who is a true believer of the Gospel and lover of Christ. Wesley's choice of image evokes a sense of the personal while conveying the inclusivity of Christ's love and adds to the textural richness of the hymn by drawing in scriptural allusion. The hymn is also questioning in tone, conveying Wesley's profound longing to know the love of Christ which, in much of late eighteenth-century poetry, translates into a melancholic yearning for the abstract, the natural or the inexplicable. A case in point is Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* and his call to 'O thou great arbiter of life and death!/ Nature's immortal, immaterial Sun!' (1863, 65). In 'Night Fourth' he presents God's love as manifested in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Wesley's hymn clearly indicates the object of his longing. This longing is reiterated, along with the hymnist's acknowledgement in the third stanza of the hardness of heart engendered by sin:

God only knows the love of God.
O that it now were shed abroad
In this poor stony heart!
For love I sigh, for love I pine:
This only portion, Lord, be mine,
Be mine this better part!

In four stanzas, Wesley expresses his yearning through the exclamatory 'O' and the subjunctive mood. In stanza three, he declaims of God's love, 'O that it now were shed abroad', expressing a wish for the present. Stanza four describes his desire for a constant relationship with Christ, and he employs the modal verb 'could', as he does in the next two stanzas as well, to indicate possibility: 'O that I could for ever sit' (stanza four):

O that with humbled Peter I
Could weep, believe, and thrice reply (stanza five)

O that I could, with favour'd John,
Recline my weary head … (stanza six)

The exclamations instil a depth of emotion into Wesley's cries, acting as prayers to God. The theme of love becomes fully realised in the yearning of the hymnist to 'recline' his head upon

the ‘dear Redeemer’s breast’ just as the Beloved Disciple did. The reference bears witness to the closeness of the divine-human relationship, that ‘we are in Christ and Christ is in us’ (Smith 1991, 190). The three stanzas focusing on Mary, Peter and John, three distinctive figures in the New Testament narrative, instil a very human, heartfelt element into the hymn. Each of the three was loved by Jesus and, in Wesley’s expression of his desire to draw close to his Saviour in the same way they did, he establishes the personal nature of the divine-human relationship. Peter denied Christ three times as recounted in all four of the Gospels; it was only through the grace of tears that he was healed: ‘And Peter went out, and wept bitterly’ (Luke 22:62). Just as Peter denied Christ three times so Wesley, by contrast, longs to prove his faithfulness three times. Three times in his hymn, he reiterates ‘Thou know’st’ in emphatic affirmation of his love for Christ.

The final stanza brings together an expressive articulation of Wesley’s understanding and recognition of the Christian longing for God’s love. The rhythmic flow and emphasis of the repetition add poetic weight to the theme and emotion, with the simplicity of the repeated phrase ‘Give me thine only love’ eliciting emotional response. Love is at the very centre of the heart experience of the believer and, in this hymn of passion, Wesley gets to the crux of Christian spirituality. It is Christ who resides in the heart of the believer, it is through his act of love that the Cross gains its redemptive value, and it is love that informs the reciprocal relationship between God and his people. Wesley’s lexicon of emotion, the tone of yearning and need that permeates the hymn and which is also realised in the direct address, and the use of repetition imparting an accumulative emotional effect, all contribute to demonstrating the connection between poetry and feeling.

Far off we need not rove

Wesley’s affirmation of Christ’s redeeming love is given full expression in his hymn *Far off we need not rove*. The God of love is revealed in ‘his providential care’, in all his ‘various works’ with the crux of the heart response to him being in the words, ‘Thee with all our being love’. The hymn appears in John Wesley’s 1780 publication of *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*; however, with no other source details to hand, the probability is that the hymn was written in Charles Wesley’s latter years, an assured recognition of God’s ever-loving presence. Two lines from the hymn encompass the Wesleyan creed of whole-hearted life in God, written with a simplicity that defines its poetic aesthetic and gives complete meaning to Wesley’s phrase, ‘Alive in him’ (*And can it be that I should gain*) from his early conversion hymn:

Who live O God in Thee,
Entirely Thine should be

In *Far off we need not rove*, the metrical structure of 6.6.7.7.7.7. imparts a stanzaic coherence with each stanza functioning thematically as a united whole. The first two shorter lines – a rhyming couplet – form an assertion of the idea, with an exposition or clarification rhymed alternately as bcbc following in the next four lines:

Far off we need not rove
To find the God of love;
In His providential care,
Ever intimately near,
All His various works declare,
God, the bounteous God is here.

A clear distinction is made between the two parts by the metre, the rhyme and the punctuation – the use of a semicolon or colon – although they operate in balance with each other. The 'response' to or explanation of the initial statement is even clearer in the third stanza where the shift is more emphatic:

Who live O God in Thee,
Entirely Thine should be:
Thine we are, a heaven-born race
Only to Thy glory move.

The impact of the assertion that humankind, reborn in the Spirit, belongs fully to God, living in him and praising him is reinforced by the structure and punctuation.

Wesley makes use of slant rhyme throughout this hymn but particularly with the 'love' rhyme sequences – he pairs 'rove' and 'love' and 'move' and 'love'. This forces attention on the actual word and its import rather than merely its sound and in the context of this particular hymn highlights the spectrum of meaning attached to the concept of living in and loving God.

Love is central to Christian belief and God's love for all as revealed in Jesus Christ is a central component of the Wesleyan message. Despite the apparent simplicity of the theme of this hymn and its expression – that it is the God of love, the 'bounteous God' of 'various works' who gives us life – it is invested with a poetic resonance. The hymn presents its theology, grounded in the scriptural message of Acts 17, particularly verse 28, 'For in him we

live, and move, and have our being', in lyrical evocation of passion and feeling rather than in merely communicative expression. The hymn is written in the first person and, while God is referred to in the first two stanzas in the third person, he is addressed in the second person in the final stanza eliciting a deeper emotional response from both hymnist and singer:

Thee with all our powers we praise,
Thee with all our being love

The affective impact is made all the stronger by contrast with the first two stanzas.

Wesley begins his hymn by portraying the omnipresence of the God of love:

Far off we need not rove
To find the God of love

The concept of distance is conveyed with the opening words 'far off' which, together with the use of the word 'rove', with its connotations of lack of specific or fixed destination or direction, creates a sense of immeasurability. The action is immediately counteracted by the negative use of the semi-modal verb 'need not', effectively highlighting the precept of God's grace and the believer's acceptance. Wesley's dextrous and creative use of syntax in the first two lines evokes both the expansiveness of God and the nearness of his presence. Acts 17:27 states that people 'seek the Lord' 'though he be not far from every one of us'. This is an instance of God being both close at hand and yet far away, resonating with the concepts of *Deus absconditus* and *Deus revelatus* in Lutheran theology (Stopa 2018, 658). The immediacy and approachability of God are framed in terms of love: God's love for humankind, his 'providential care', his 'preserving care' and his presence that is always 'intimately near'. The all-encompassing love of God is exhibited in movement and life and breath derived from the evocatively poetic text from Acts 17:28: 'For in him we live, and move, and have our being' given in this hymn as 'We live, and move, and are'. This, as a theme, is threaded throughout the hymn with an emphasis on expressions of life through the use and repetition of words such as 'moves', 'lives', 'breath', 'being'. All these expressions of life are wholly and inextricably bound up with God. Believers are commanded to love God 'with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength' (Mark 12:30). Wesley's entire existence is of and within God; the hymn is a paean of praise to God that is fully expressed in the final declaration:

Thee with all our powers we praise,
Thee with all our being we love.

The third stanza brings home the message that God's divine love is effected in those who not only turn to him but 'live O God in Thee'. The hymnist declares in this hymn of love and praise that 'Thine we are, a heaven-born race'. The phrase 'a heaven-born race' brings to the foreground the biblical understanding that humankind, in their acceptance of God's grace and love, are born again to spiritual life. Christ 'gives us back our breath again'; however, it is not physical life that he gives, but spiritual life. Within the lyrical and poetic quality of the hymn, there is a strong doctrinal thrust illuminating one of the key convictions of faith, that of being born again in Christ. The hymn starts and ends with love – it is God's love, exemplified in the text, John 3:16: 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son …' which is the core of Christian belief, that inspires our love.

'Lift up your heart'

Wesley's verses demonstrate the power of hymnody to uplift and strengthen the Christian life and calling of the Methodist. The thematic and emotional content of his hymns, as with many, articulate some of the 'most deeply felt [spiritual] longings and aspirations' of humankind, providing 'access to the beautiful, the hopeful, even the ineffable' (Dudley-Smith in Watson 2002, 1). The exploration of the poetry inherent in these five case studies, representative of the expression of the heart that permeates Wesley's work, brings the representation of his faith as affective religion to the fore; the analysis reveals the art that provides the impetus to lift the heart of the congregation or reader. As particular selected hymns across an extended period of time in Wesley's life, the case studies reflect his thought and belief within his oeuvre but also give prominence to that aspect of his hymnody that fully conveys the conjunction between poetry and piety in varying expressions.

Come and let us sweetly join and *Come, O Thou Traveller unknown* illustrate Wesley's extending his hymnody into new, or at least expanded, territory, one being an evocation of a particular ritual, the other a narrative of conflict. *O for an Heart to praise my God* concentrates on the transformation of the heart in communion with God. The last two hymns treat of love slightly differently: *O love divine, how sweet thou art!* emphasises purity of heart, *Far off we need not rove* calls for community celebration. These hymns can be said to present five facets of love, as if they were, indeed, extracted from the 'precious mine' of Wesley's hymn *Proud learning boasts its skill in vain*. Across the spectrum of the hymns he

depicts the love exemplified in the martyrs, the love within the body of Christ, the external evidence of God's love in believers, but the different strands of representation of love are drawn together in his passionate affirmation of God: 'Thy Nature and Thy Name is LOVE', and in humankind's entreaty in response: 'Give me thine only love to know'.

Wesley's hymns reveal his intent to worship, to inspire, to evangelise, to educate, bringing together language, form, structure and literary techniques to impart a message, that of the Christian creed. That they provided joy, inspiration, comfort and teaching during his lifetime and after is evident in George John Stevenson's *The Methodist Hymn Book, Illustrated with Biography, History, Incident, and Anecdote* (1894). In his book, Stevenson relates many anecdotes of first-hand accounts from Methodists. Wesley's hymns were used by preachers to illustrate or emphasise their sermons; they were sung in community worship and they were quoted in devotions. A certain Mary Lowe, for example, was said to frequently quote the lines from *O love divine, how sweet thou art!*, uttering them on her deathbed in western Australia in 1872 (Stevenson 1894, 130):

> God only knows the love of God;
> O that it now were shed abroad

Likewise, Thomas Carter, Methodist prayer leader, class leader and steward, sang the same hymn, his favourite, just hours before he died peacefully in 1858. There are other similar accounts of the impact and imprint of these hymns on Methodist adherents; there are many reports of 'the departing spirit entering paradise' with the words of Wesley's hymns, such as *O for an Heart to praise my God!* on their lips (Stevenson 1894, 248). Edward Hare, a Methodist preacher, asked for *Come, O Thou Traveller unknown* to be read to him during his illness before his death in 1818. Stevenson writes that to have heard 'that poet's (Wesley's) sermon on this mighty wrestling …, and then to have closed that discourse with the singing of part of that grand hymn, must have been a privilege of surpassing interest and delight' (1894, 119).

In the words of his brother, John, in Charles Wesley's hymns are 'no words without meaning ... Here are, allow me to say, both the purity, the strength, and the elegance of the English language …' (1791, v). In the very clarity and intensity of description, the inclusivity of the I/we representation and the emotion of portrayal of his spiritual journey and conviction, Charles Wesley gives authenticity to the poetic expression of his heart experience.

Chapter Seven: Voices from Wales: William Williams

'Land of song'

The spiritual heritage of Wales is deeply embedded in music. The Old Testament psalms have been sung since about the fourth century when the Welsh started practising the Christian faith. Through times of persecution, conquest and spiritual apathy, the Welsh sang of Christian truth and faith in pious chants and psalms and, later, in hymns. Indeed, A. M. Allchin asserts that the place of hymns within the literary heritage of Wales is beyond question (1976, 3).

Prior to the Methodist revival in the first half of the eighteenth century, metrical psalms dominated in Wales as they had done in England until the emergence of Isaac Watts as a major hymn-writer in the latter years of the seventeenth century. In Wales, there was a prevalence of carol or *plygain* literature – long religious poems, or what can be described as sermons in song, featuring in Welsh Protestant Christmas services – along with metrical psalmody, although a few hymns were written such as those by the Anglican priest, Ellis Wynne (1671–1734). Collections of Welsh hymns by Nonconformists began to be published in the early eighteenth century, hymns that were characterised by scriptural paraphrasing particularly from the Song of Solomon. These hymns were largely Christocentric in nature revealing the love of Christ for his church and for humankind, a focus which was carried on into Methodism (James 2019, 314).

The Welsh evangelical revival from around 1735, led by Daniel Rowland, Howell Harris and William Williams Pantycelyn, arose from within the established Church of England in Wales. The evangelicalism – in the sense of the tradition in Protestantism that stresses the authority of the Bible, personal conversion and the doctrine of salvation by faith – of the Welsh revival propounded Calvinist theology, unlike its counterpart in England which was Arminian in nature. The Arminians were of the view that humanity had the free will to accept or reject God's offer of salvation while the Calvinists taught that salvation was entirely in God's hands and part of his divine purpose. Calvinism stressed 'the sovereignty of God, divine predestination and the election of the saints in the theology of redemption' with a twin emphasis on individual experience and personal accountability (Munday 2018, 5). Despite the apparent and often assumed contradiction in understandings of Wesleyan or Arminian Methodism and Calvinist Methodism, Martyn Lloyd-Jones clarifies that 'Methodism was not primarily a theological position and it was not a movement designed to

reform theology. It was essentially experimental or experiential religion and a way of life' (1987, 195). On this point, however, a critical function of Methodist hymnody is its relationship to theology. The experiential form of religion often relates to mysticism which, according to Munday, is indicative of a relational knowledge of God. This involves not only intellectual but also heart experience (Munday 2018, 4). A personal experience of God signifies an individual evangelical conversion experience such as that undergone by William Williams and Ann Griffiths, both Calvinistic Methodists, and by John and Charles Wesley. Arminian and Calvinist Methodism alike affirmed a 'Trinitarian, Protestant and evangelical faith' and assumed a scriptural authority for issues concerning faith and behaviour (Munday 2018, 5). The evangelical revival sweeping through England and Wales from about 1730 was grounded theologically in Wales in the Calvinist strand of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. In this, evangelical understanding of New Testament Christianity with its three principal beliefs – 'Scripture over tradition', 'faith over works', 'grace over merit' – became foregrounded once more (Munday 2018, 4). The development of the spirituality and piety of the revival 'tended to be more individualistic and experiential, stressing the cultivation of an inward religion of the heart' (Jones, Schlenther and White 2012, 1).

Traditional Welsh hymnody is rooted in the Methodist societies or *seiadau* which began to form during the revival (Roberts 2011, 142). Methodist converts would meet in *seiadau* to share spiritual experiences, to pray and to sing hymns in praise of God. The growth of Welsh Methodism and the popular influence of leading Welsh preachers led to the building of new chapels and meeting houses, stimulating a great enthusiasm for congregational singing. Some Methodist leaders were inspired to write their own hymns in order to express the common, yet personal, experiences of Methodist adherents and small collections of hymns began to be published for use by Methodists in the early 1740s (James 2019, 315). In 1744, a pamphlet of nine hymns written by William Williams and entitled *Aleluia* was published (James 2019, 315).

The traditional Welsh hymn is concerned with familiar and common themes which include the reality of sin and the reconciliation of God and humankind through Jesus Christ, salvation and the Cross, God's work of grace, and praise for the blessings he bestows. With the Bible being regarded as central to the practice of Christian faith, interpretation of Scripture was the chief means of expression for hymnists (Roberts 2011, 147). Biblical phraseology, references and allusions pervade the hymns; significantly, the typology of the Bible was well understood by believers. The Old Testament was read in metaphorical terms concerning Christ's work in the New. Bernard L. Manning asserts that 'the greatest [Welsh]

hymns have a solid structure of historical dogma, the passionate thrill of present experience, and the glory of a mystic sunlight coming directly from another world' (Sell 2015, 144).

The Welsh Methodist revival had an impact on other nonconformist churches such as the Baptists and Independents, so that by the middle of the nineteenth century Wales was principally Nonconformist. The fervency of hymn-singing in the life of nonconformist faith and worship led to Wales being designated 'the Land of Song' by the mid-1870s (James 2019, 306). Welsh Calvinist Methodism was characterised by the enthusiasm of worshippers as they expressed the joy of the assurance of their faith in singing.

'The sweet singer of Wales'

William Williams, often called Williams Pantycelyn, or sometimes Pantycelyn, after the farm in the parish of Llanfair-ar-bryn where he spent much of his life, was born in 1717 into a nonconformist family. According to James, with Williams's life extending over most of the eighteenth century, he represents, to some degree, the far-reaching changes that took place in the religious life of Wales (2019, 316).

Williams's father, John, was a leading elder of one of the oldest nonconformist churches in Wales at Cefnarthen before leaving, after disputes, to establish a new Calvinist fellowship. Williams himself practised a formal, rather than a personal, religion believing himself to be one of the elect. His spiritual awakening came in 1738 – coincidentally, in the same year as both Charles and John Wesley – after hearing Howell Harris preaching about the sinful state of humankind, the atonement of Jesus Christ and the need for reconciliation with God. This life-changing moment when Williams's heart was touched by the Holy Spirit was recorded in one of his hymns (Jones and Morgan 2008, 223):

O soul! what preparations, what thought, what clear intent,
Dwelt in you on that morning, when heaven's call was sent?
That unexpected moment my foolish heart was drawn,
By unexpected measures, my very life reborn
'Twas God's decree in action, His pure and holy plan,
All unbeknown, drew near me, His grace towards me ran

In this hymn, God's 'call' on Williams's life is clearly seen in Calvinist terms: his conversion is part of 'God's decree in action, His pure and holy plan'. Williams's spiritual life and belief came to epitomise the lines from the hymn of Joseph Hart (Charmley 2017, part 1):

True religion's more than notion,

Something must be known and felt.

Despite his nonconformist background, Williams, after his evangelical experience, joined the Anglican church, becoming a deacon and then a curate. He soon came into conflict with his superior, Theophilus Evans, for preaching outside his parishes, his frequent exclusion of parts of the liturgy in his worship services and the fact that he did not make the sign of the cross in baptism (Williams 1998, 63). Williams's application for ordination as priest was refused; nevertheless, his abilities ensured his demand as a preacher and counsellor for the Methodist Church, and he joined Harris and Rowland in leading the Methodist revival in Wales (Charmley 2017, part 1).

At a meeting in 1744 of early Methodists including Williams and Rowland, a discussion was held on the use of hymns and spiritual poetry as a means to spread the gospel. It was agreed that the members would compose some verses to be considered and judged at a second meeting at which it was formally recognised that Williams, who early in his spiritual journey had begun expressing in poetry his own state and the glories of God, had been given the gift of poetry (Jones and Morgan 2008, 230). Lloyd-Jones, in commenting on the three great leaders of the Calvinist Methodist Church in Wales in the eighteenth century, describes Rowland as 'the outstanding preacher', Harris as 'the great exhorter and organiser' and William Williams as the poet, hymn-writer and theologian (1987, 191). Williams's hymns had much impact, particularly considering that many of the Welsh people did not have access to Scripture and were illiterate; theology was learned through song.

Williams was appointed as Rowland's assistant, a task which he would fulfil for the remainder of his life and under which he was responsible for superintending many of the Methodist societies in the southern part of Wales. He spent almost fifty years evangelising and leading meetings, travelling either on horseback or by foot. Williams's spiritual journey and evangelical travels are reflected in his hymns in the frequent imagery of travel and pilgrimage that he used. According to Cliff Knight, his most famous hymn *Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah*, based on the wanderings of the Israelites through the wilderness, was inspired by Williams's own journeyings through Wales, often facing opposition and persecution (1994, n. pag.). It is also believed to have been written at a time of conflict between Harris and Rowland, pertinent in Williams's entreaties for help and guidance in the hymn.

The split in Welsh Methodism between Harris and Rowland was followed by a fresh revival in 1762. This also coincided with the publication of a new collection of Williams's hymns translated poetically as *The songs of those who stand on the sea of glass* alluding to

the ‘sea of glass’ references in the book of Revelation in the New Testament. Within Welsh Methodism, this was a period of refreshing as a new excitement swept through the church and hearts were set on fire, with Williams’s work providing momentum to the revival. In his biography of Williams, Thomas Charles writes of Williams’s hymnody at this time in language as lyrically descriptive as Williams’s own in his hymns: ‘He would frequently mount on very strong wings which would lift him to the heights of splendour – some verses of his hymns are like coals of fire warming every passion when sung’ (Clarke 2016 lecture).

Williams read widely and was well-versed in philosophy and science; he was much inspired by the writing of John Bunyan, viewing himself also as a pilgrim to the heavenly city of Zion (Charmley 2017, part 2). Derec Llwyd Morgan writes of him, ‘There was no other Methodist author to compare with him in the richness and depth of knowledge of the new life in Christ which he displayed in his writings’ (1988, 87). Williams, as well as composing other poems and hymns in Welsh, produced two English collections, *Hosanna to the Son of David* (1759), also called *Hymns of Praise to God, for our glorious Redemption by Christ*, and *Gloria in Excelsis* (1772) or *Hymns of Praise to God and the Lamb*. The titles of these collections are significant with Williams maintaining his focus on the themes of salvation and redemption through Christ. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke both describe the genealogical line of Joseph, the husband of Mary and the father of Jesus Christ, as descending from David and, thus, both Joseph and Jesus are called ‘the son of David’. However, for the New Testament Jews, the title ‘Son of David’ (capitalised) also served to identify Jesus as the Messiah. The Bible makes it clear that Jesus, the son of David, was the Messiah promised by God to the people of Israel: ‘He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David’ (Luke 1:32). The title of the collection, *Hosanna to the Son of David,* retains the relevance of the Old Testament alongside the central message of the atoning work of Jesus Christ and the glory in the salvation he offers. It implies – and addresses in the hymns – the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies in the New. Williams’s *Gloria in Excelsis*, which translates from the Latin to ‘Glory (be to God) on high’, again brings the two concepts of God, the Father, and God, the Son, together in the alternative title, *Hymns of Praise to God and the Lamb*. Christ is referred to as the ‘Lamb of God’ in John 1:29 and various other biblical references, including the many in the book of Revelation, symbolise Christ’s redemptive work. The frequent mentions of the lamb in Revelation are made within the context of victory, which is in line with the sense of joyous triumph marking so many of Williams’s hymns.

Williams died in 1791, the last survivor of the early Methodist leaders in Wales. His work and witness have continued, however, through the legacy of his hymns which appear in various hymnbooks and continue to be sung today.

The Welsh hymnic link to a Romantic aesthetic

One of the greatest cultural and literary achievements between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries in Wales is the body of evangelical hymnody, which is seen as a forerunner of the Romantic lyric poetry proliferating in Wales in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (James 2019, 307). These hymns, with their articulation of a deeper, more personal religious experience, can be seen as a new genre, a new form of 'religious expression in song', functioning to 'combine effectively the theological and the experiential, the objective and the subjective' (James 2019, 307). The lyricism and expression of the sublime and the divine in the simpler, more home-spun language of Welsh hymnody shows the shift away from excessive poetical enthusiasm to the 'plainer and more emphatic' idiom later commended by Wordsworth (1835, 251). The verse of mid-eighteenth-century Welsh hymnists reveals the inner, affective life of the writer as connected with a personal sense of salvation and closeness with Christ. There is a personal, experiential sense of God, a God of sublimity who is viewed with awe and wonder; a similar disclosure of inner feeling and more restrained recognition of the sublime became inherent in the Romantic lyric poetry of Wales.

Writers, both Christian and secular, had their imaginations stirred by the rugged grandeur and mystery of Wales. Preachers and hymnists such as Howell Harris and William Williams were inspired by the wildness and beauty of the landscape as they journeyed through Wales on their evangelical missions, and much of Williams's hymnody reflects the vigour of nature and the countryside as he saw it, in his use of figurative language and simplicity of sentence structure. R. S. Thomas, a Welsh poet and Anglican priest (1913–2000), in his poem 'The Minister', writes lyrically of Williams (Pantycelyn) and hymnist, Ann Griffiths, evoking a particularly Welsh context. Thomas and Williams both fulfilled roles as poet and priest although Williams never actually received ordination, and for both, poetry was 'how the communication of religious experience best operated' (Thomas 1963, 9). There is a strong relationship between Thomas and Williams – Thomas was much influenced by Williams – with Williams's hymns resonating throughout Thomas's work, particularly in the image of the pilgrim 'who seeks after an experiential knowledge of God – a God who can be known and felt' (Munday 2018, 1). Thomas's poem portrays, in part, a heart-felt

spirituality that is to be found in nature commensurate with Williams's emphasis on experiential knowledge of God (Munday 2018, 8):

> O, but God is in the throat of a bird;
> Ann heard Him speak, and Pantycelyn.
> God is in the sound of the white water
> Falling at Cynfal. God is in the flowers
> Sprung at the feet of Olwen, and Melangell
> Felt His heart beating in the wild hare.
> Wales in fact is His peculiar home,
> Our fathers knew Him.

In Welsh and Arthurian legend, Olwen, as a giver of life and death, has white flowers springing from the ground wherever she treads; Melangell was an Irish virgin of the 6th century who became the abbess of a community of women and, in legend, the protector of the hare. The references to Olwen and Melangell contribute to evoking a cohesive timelessness woven into the fabric of Wales: its religion, its history, its legend, its literature – a timelessness that is the very essence of God in his immanence. Wales, in Thomas's poem, is God's 'peculiar home'; as Nathan Llywelyn Munday describes it, Wales is 'a theologically-charged space … a country marked by centuries of Christendom [affecting] the physical landscape, the metaphorical territories, and the hearts and minds of the pilgrims'. In R. S. Thomas's symbolic representation, Wales is where 'God is *experienced* in one way or another' (Munday 2018, 393). Thomas's words draw together the spiritual and the natural in the portrayal of Wales, invoking a Romantic aesthetic. For both Williams and Griffiths as poets, the God who 'is in the throat of a bird', 'in the sound of the white water', 'in the flowers' is the personal but omnipresent God who speaks, the God of creativity and inspiration. Reality and meaning are found in an intuitional spirituality that is inspired by the natural world, just as it is in Romantic terms (Munday 2018, 9).

The Romantic movement in Wales developed and progressed separately to that in the rest of Britain, with Welsh literature seldom being translated or known outside of Wales. Religion was a factor in the renewal of Welsh literature in the eighteenth century, a literature that expressed many Romantic elements. Saunders Lewis (1893–1985), in his study 'Williams Pantycelyn' (1927), argues that Williams could be described as the first Welsh Romantic poet, given the intensity, strength and emotion with which he conveyed the religious experience of the Methodist movement in his writings (Charmley 2017, part 1).

Another leading authority on the Welsh hymn, E. Wyn James (1950–), also asserts that the hymn was a forerunner of Romantic lyric poetry in Wales, establishing a continuity of verse that was impassioned and subjective in nature; Felicia Dorothea Hemans (1793–1835), Welsh by affiliation after having grown up there although English born, wrote sacred and secular poems and was highly regarded by English Romantic poets such as Wordsworth and Shelley. Three poets, all with distinct bardic associations pointing to a tradition which links to the Romantic aesthetic, wrote their verses in Welsh continuing a verse-making convention from the Welsh historic love of hymns: Richard Llwyd (1752–1835) was described as the 'Bard of Snowdon', John Blackwell (1797–1840) wrote under his bardic name, Alun, and Ebenezer Thomas (1802–1863) was known as the bard, Eben Fardd. This last named also wrote many hymns as well as poetry.

Williams is pre-eminently a poet for the Church, the body of Christ, and yet his hymns forcefully convey the experience of the individual in communion with the divine, the immediacy and intimacy of the conversion encounter and the assurance of salvation. It is through his 'totality of response to the feelings of the moment' that a Romantic aesthetic is projected (Conran 2003, 64).

Review of existing scholarship

In accordance with other critics, Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981), a major figure in evangelical circles in the 1960s, claims, in his chapter 'William Williams and Welsh Calvinistic Methodism' from *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors* (1987), that Williams is the greatest of all Welsh poets. Lloyd-Jones discusses the merging of 'truly great poetry and theology' in Williams's hymns and the emphasis he placed on the faith of experience and feeling, characteristic of both English and Welsh Methodism. Lloyd-Jones avers (1987, 203):

> You get greatness, and bigness, and largeness in Isaac Watts; you get the experimental side wonderfully in Charles Wesley. But in William Williams you get both at the same time, and that is why I put him in a category entirely on his own. He taught the people theology in his hymns; as they sang the hymns, they were becoming familiar with the great expressions of the New Testament doctrines of salvation and the glory of God.

Kathryn Jenkins (1961–2009), during a plenary lecture entitled '"Songs of Praises": The Literary and Spiritual Qualities of the Hymns of William Williams and Ann Griffiths' which

she delivered at the York International Hymn Conference in August 1997, claimed that 'The four hundred or so hymns produced [by William Williams of Pantycelyn in the decade between 1762 and 1772, when he was at the height of his powers] have a significance in modern Welsh literature second only to the translation of the Bible' (James 2019, 61). In terms of Williams's hymnic impact, Jenkins and Dafydd Glyn Jones (1951–) agree in their opinion that Williams engendered a 'preoccupation with spiritual experience and personal salvation' that became a prevalent feature of Welsh revival hymnody (James 2019, 65).

E. Wyn James has devoted many years of study to the work of Williams and his book, *Flame in the Mountains: Williams Pantycelyn, Ann Griffiths and the Welsh Hymn* (2017), and his numerous articles, amongst them 'The Longing and the Legacy: Liturgy and Life in the Hymns of William Williams of Pantycelyn' (2019) examine the power of the passion at work in Williams's hymn-writing. He considers Williams's use of a poetic diction that gives to his hymns lyrical, dramatic and spiritual strength and depth. James's critical study – given as a lecture in 2017 – reiterates and complements the plenary lecture given by Kathryn Jenkins almost twenty years earlier. James, as Jenkins did, identifies the spiritual and emotional intensity in Williams's poetic voice, providing a framework in which to expatiate on the heart experience, the importance and manifestation of the experiential, in this study on selected hymns of Williams. To use a phrase from Munday (2018, 50), the 'theologically charged poetics' of Williams's hymns will be explored in this chapter, building on previous scholarship and employing a largely formalist, analytical reading informed by scriptural and theological context.

James acknowledges the presence of pre-Romantic elements in Williams's work, alongside strong Enlightenment influences. Tony Conran (1931–2013) places more emphasis on the connections with Romanticism, describing aspects of Williams's style and oeuvre as a Romantic poet in his comprehensive introduction to *Welsh Verse: Fourteen Centuries of Poetry* (2003). R. M. (Bobi) Jones (1929–2017), although placing his critical focus on Ann Griffiths, gives consideration to Williams as a Calvinist Welsh mystic which is pertinent to this study in terms of recognising Williams's expression of both his cognitive and emotive experience of Christ.

Saunders Lewis (1893–1985), although emphasising the interconnection between religion and poetry as do other critics such as R. M. Jones, approaches his critique, *Williams Pantycelyn* (1927), from a Catholic mystic aesthetic rather than the Protestant context, and from a psychological perspective centred on the importance of 'the inner world, the world of

the experience of the individual soul' (Morgan 2017, 53–54). D. Densil Morgan appraises Lewis's critique as 'the most exciting and controversial work of literary criticism to appear in twentieth century Welsh letters' (2017, 51). Despite the controversy it provoked, for the next thirty years Lewis's theological and psychological approach became the convention in the scholarly study of Williams (Morgan 2017, 51). According to Morgan, this psychological-Catholic interpretation of Williams's work began to lose sway from the 1960s with the work of D. Gwenallt Jones (1966), an Anglican orthodox Protestant, and Alwyn Roberts (1972), a sociologist, who interpreted Williams's work from these perspectives (2017, 51/63). While recognising the significance of Williams's subjective experience of 'objective Gospel', both Jones and Roberts emphasise the primacy of that 'objective Gospel' (Jones in Morgan 2017, 63).

D. Densil Morgan is also the author of *Theologia Cambrensis: Protestant Religion and Theology in Wales, Volume 2: 1760–1900*. His chapter, 'The Theology of Calvinistic Methodism', primarily explores Williams's longer poems within the context of the Methodist spiritual awakening of 1762. This exploration illuminates Williams's Calvinist conviction of the concept of election and his Christological emphasis in his work. While a discussion of Williams's longer poems falls outside the brief of this study, Morgan's observations pertain to the analysis of the interface between poetry and theology in that they provide insight into the knowledge base, thought processes and spiritual convictions that informed Williams's hymn-writing.

Munday in 'Pursuing God: Poetic Pilgrimage and the Welsh Christian Aesthetic' (2018) interrogates the characteristics of a Welsh Christian aesthetic, among them being the yearning for experiential religion. In offering a brief survey of critical commentary on Welsh poetry and religion he makes the point that any argument over a tradition of poetry is informed by the critic's own religious convictions, such as the Roman Catholicism of Lewis or the Calvinism of R. M. Jones (2018, 32). Munday addresses the link between religion and poetic language in Wales, noting that, in his view, there is a lack of critical work relating to Welsh poetry and religion. As Munday located a context for the identification and exploration of a Welsh Christian aesthetic in his selection of a cross-section of religious poets, so this chapter hopes to contribute – through its focus on Williams – to a growing critical oeuvre on Welsh poetics. Within the context of exploring the balance of poetry and piety in eighteenth-century Methodist hymnody, this chapter aims to build on the premise that Williams should be treated as a poet in his own right. The focus is on the affective

dimension that makes up the heart experience, Williams's 'totality of response' as spoken of earlier, within the framework of an exploration of the poetics of the hymns.

'Gloria in excelsis'

Williams wrote hymns in both English and Welsh thus, in this chapter, the distinction has been made between those written in English and those written in Welsh and translated into English. Where possible, use has been made of contemporaneous translations of the Welsh hymns; where sources have not been available, later translations known for their accuracy have been used. Many of the selected hymns are English hymns by Williams; where they have been written in Welsh and translated into English, this has been made clear. Given the fact and complexities of translation relating to Williams, care needs to be taken when evaluating imagery, language and poetic expression; I have tried, as far as possible, to compare translated texts to confirm that phraseology and style being commented on correlate.

Pertinent to the issue of poetry and piety, Williams gave guidelines for aspiring hymnists in their composition of hymns in the prefaces to some of his hymn collections such as *Gwaith Prydyddawl* (1811, vii–xii). These are in Welsh, but they have been delineated – in English – by Faith Cook (2016, n. pag.); they are given in full here since they provide insight into both the character of Williams as a man of faith and his perspective of the expression of faith and belief through song. Williams states that hymn-writers ought always:

> 1) To seek for real grace themselves and a saving knowledge of God in his Son, for without such qualification it is a most daring presumption to touch the ark
> 2) To read every work of poetry they may obtain to enlarge their understanding, to know poetry well, to perceive where its excellence exists
> 3) To read over and over again the works of the Prophets, the Psalms, Solomon's Song, the Lamentations, the Book of Job and the Revelation which are not only full of poetical flights, figurative speech, rich variety, easy language and lively comparisons, but also a spirit that enkindles fire, zeal, and life in the reader
> 4) Never attempt to compose a hymn till they feel their souls near to heaven, under the influence of the Holy Spirit and then the Spirit will be ready to bless his work

Williams emphasises the importance of reading poetry to increase 'understanding' and to discern 'excellence' and his recommendation is for hymn-writers to study those books of the Bible that are rich in poetic expression. The entire Bible was published in Welsh for the first time in 1588, serving to establish Protestantism strongly in Wales, and it was this Bible in

Welsh that would have been the scriptural source for Williams although he was also versed in Greek and Hebrew. In his guidelines, Williams reveals his perspective of the balance of the theological, the poetic and the experiential that he demonstrates in his own hymns.

Williams has been designated in many sources as a natural poet. Chris Clarke describes him as a hymnist who wrote 'with a degree of inspiration that has always characterised the work of the most gifted poets' (2016 lecture). Williams's hymns express heartfelt emotion manifesting from experience of profound spiritual communion with God and made available to fellow believers. While he was a preacher and a leader, his great legacy is his body of hymnody – over 850 hymns were published in Welsh and 120 in English. His hymns in Welsh allowed the Welsh people to give utterance to their religious faith and experience in their own language while the familiar folk and ballad melodies which often accompanied them would have resonated with the populace at large (Munday 2018, 3). His poetic expression was always evangelical in nature, communicating both his individual and the common experience of the Welsh revival.

Williams's hymns focus on spiritual joys, his experiential conviction of the assurance of God's grace towards believers, praise to the Lord, and the Christian life as a journey or, more specifically, a pilgrimage towards eternity in heaven. His imagery relates to pilgrims, freed prisoners, the crossing of the Jordan River, the tree of the cross, rock, streams of living water. Jesus is the Second Adam, the Bread of Life, the Lamb, all of these metaphors in Scripture that were recognisable to the people through church teachings (Roberts 2011, 150). Thematically and typologically, Williams's most common sources were Exodus, the Prophets, Job, the Song of Solomon, the Psalms, the Gospels and Revelation (Roberts 2011, 150).

Williams's poetic, emotional and theological expression is evident in his manipulation of themes, imagery and scriptural allusion as revealed in detailed analysis. In a single hymn, *Hark! the voice of my Beloved* (GE XLIII), Williams presents his primary thematic focus and theological premise through the use of synecdoche, figurative language and allusion. The beloved, Jesus Christ, expressed as 'the voice', is always present 'in greatest need'. The use of synecdoche connotes the divinity of Jesus through a non-physical representation and is allied to the many references in the Bible to 'a voice from heaven' in all four of the Gospels and in Acts. The non-physical representation of Jesus in the first line is offset by a description of exuberant physicality articulated in the figurative language of the Song of Solomon 2:8 ('… behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills'):

Leaping on the lofty mountains,
Skipping over hills with speed

The stanza is charged with an energy conveyed by the rhythm, and by the euphony and immediacy of the present participles 'leaping' and 'skipping'. These lines are almost Wordsworthian in their descriptive simplicity, but the fact that they reference the words from the Song of Solomon underscores Williams's use of biblically poetic expression to convey theological belief. The aesthetic is Romantic, the source is scriptural.

The second stanza encapsulates the bondage of sin in vivid imagery. The associations with prison communicate the heaviness of the condition, which point to the immense price Christ paid to save the souls of humanity and contrast strongly with the joy of deliverance:

In a dungeon deep he found me,
Without water, without light,
Bound in chains of horrid darkness,
Gloomy thick Egyptian night.

The stanza has close resonance with the 'dungeon' and 'chains' of Charles Wesley's *And can it be that I should gain*, alluding to the imprisonment of the disciple, Peter, in Acts 12:7. The use of the trochaic word 'gloomy', with an accented syllable followed by an unaccented one contributes, through the falling rhythm, to the sombre tone. This stanza, written in trochaic metre, gains in effect with its long, accented vowel sounds. The last two stanzas proclaim Christ as Redeemer as believers and angels join in songs of praise and worship. References to music and song are common in hymnody: here, 'believers raise their anthems' to their Lord, accompanied by angels:

Choirs of seraphims elected,
With their golden harps of love

Love is central to the covenant relationship between God and his people, a message that is communicated throughout the Bible: 1 John 4:16 articulates that 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him'. Williams, in his hymns, draws attention to the depth of God's love (*Hark! the voice of my Beloved*):

Love eternal, love eternal,
Unconceivable, unknown.

This emphasis, as with his focus on praise and worship, on the redemptive nature of Christ, serves to imbue Williams's writing with an intensity of expression and affirmation of Christ. Love is communicated not only as a theme but is enacted in semantic choice and diction and in how these are structured. The two defining metaphors related to love and pilgrimage discussed in this chapter both express the experience of the heart through the language of the heart.

In relation to the form, the question needs to be asked whether the message, the theology of the hymn, is served by the poetry, or whether the poetic diction puts pressure on the hymn-writing. According to Roberts, Williams's purpose in creating poetry was practical and in terms of both his craft and content he was limited by his audience and his responsibility (Roberts in Morgan 2017, 64). James, too, writes of the practical reasons for the production of Williams's hymns, writings that he avers are 'not the polished products of a conscious "man of letters"' (2019, 5). However, as this chapter aims to show, while Williams's hymns may have been written for didactic and functional purposes, he engages a poetic voice to express his spiritual conviction and journey, deploying literary techniques that give his hymns a lyrical fluidity and flexibility within the fusion of content and form. The poetic mode enables the hymns to transcend the didactic purposes.

Williams characteristically used the quatrain stanza form in his hymns, usually with a rhyming scheme of abcb. However, he did not always conform to the convention of alternating iambic tetrameter and trimeter in what is often called the hymnal stanza. His common usage of a trochaic metric pattern of 8.7.8.7., putting the stress on the first syllable of every line followed by an unstressed one, gives conviction and vigour to the force of his message, seen both in his English hymns, such as *Hark! the voice of my Beloved* and his Welsh hymns such as *Marchog Jesu, yn llwyddiannus* (*Ride on, Jesus, all-victorious*). *Hark! the voice of my Beloved* and *O'er those gloomy Hills of Darkness*, discussed later in the chapter, both illustrate how the rhythmic structure and purport combine to create meaning although there are many more examples, some of which appear in this chapter. Williams's habitual, although not exclusive, use of an abcb rhyme scheme places emphasis on the second and fourth lines. The rhyme pattern is often indicative of a progression, that of the destination of heaven or eternal life for the believer, and the rhyming nature of the last line emphasises the hope of and for the pilgrim: 'Enter now the promised land' from *Ride on, Jesus, all-victorious*. The effect of this rhyme scheme can be seen in two examples from *Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah*: the second line of the opening stanza 'Pilgrim through this barren land' rhyming with the fourth line 'Hold me with Thy powerful hand' and the second and fourth

rhyming lines of the second stanza, ‘In this barren wilderness’ and ‘Be my robe of righteousness’ show an emotional shift from metaphorically expressed spiritual hardship to trust in God’s presence. The rhythmic strength and flow of Williams’s writing elicits a heightened response on the part of the reader/singer – his verse gains as much resonance in being read as poetry as being sung as a hymn.

The poetics of Williams’s hymns, his lyricism, the impact of the emotional dimension, the mnemonic effect of the rhythm and rhyme scheme give shape to their purpose. The evangelical impetus that drives so many of his hymns is served by the force of the poetic content and form and correlates to the expression of the theme of pilgrimage and the heart experience of the Christian. The individual evangelical conversion experience so much a part of Calvinist Methodism is both the source and subject of Williams’s expression of the gospel message. It is the driving force for his evangelical zeal, a zeal which is evident in the expression of desire or hope for the expansion of the Christian faith through the imperative ‘fly’ and the subjunctive ‘may’ (GE XXXVII):

Fly abroad thou mighty gospel
Win and conquer never cease
May thy lasting wide dominion
Multiply and still increase.

His many hymns on pilgrimage reference both his own evangelical travels through Wales as well as the Christian journey through life. Pilgrimage is a significant theme – Munday notes that ten of Williams’s hymns begin with the word *pererin* (Welsh) or pilgrim with more than half of the hymns alluding to or specifically mentioning a facet of spiritual pilgrimage (2018, 32).

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah was published in Williams’s collection, *Aleluia*, in 1745 with the Welsh title *Arglwydd, arwain trwy'r anialwch* translating to *Lord, guide me through the wilderness*. The well-known English version of the text and the translation of the original Welsh text are not quite the same, although the thematic and semantic expression correlates. The translation from the original Welsh reads as follows:

Lord, guide me through the wilderness,
A pilgrim weak of aspect,
There is neither strength nor life in me,
As though lying in the grave,
Almighty,

It is Thou who shalt take me to that shore.

The Welsh word *arglwydd* corresponds closely to the English word, 'Lord' which appears in both the Old and New Testaments to express the tetragrammaton (YHWH) and for Jesus Christ. In his 1771 version of *Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah*, which is commonly sung, Peter Williams (no relation) uses the word 'Jehovah', God's unique name as expressed in certain versions of the Bible, including that of the King James since William Tyndale's translation of the Pentateuch in 1530. It is usually thought to be a mistranslation of the Hebrew 'Yahweh' (YHWH). Any attribution of significance to the use of the word 'Jehovah' which appears in *The Methodist Hymn-Book with Tunes,* or in fact to the 'Redeemer' of many contemporary versions, should be treated with circumspection, since neither of these words appears in Williams's (Pantycelyn's) original text. Precise information on the text of this hymn appears to be confusing; Williams apparently made his own translation after Peter Williams's version was published, retaining Peter Williams's first stanza. Given this ambiguity, both the literal translation from the Welsh (as given in Gomer M. Roberts's *Gwaith Pantycelyn*, 1960, and appearing first here) and Peter Williams's translation – where the first stanza accords with William Williams's own later translation – have been provided.

The subjective voice with the use of the first person 'I' in conjunction with the many biblical references and metaphors expressing Christian theological beliefs underscore Williams's merging in his hymns of theology and experience. The imagery of travelling and pilgrimage is juxtaposed with conveying a need for and recognition of the guidance and provision of God. Both in the use of the imperative and in the jussive subjunctive the expression is supplicatory:

Lord, guide me through the wilderness, A pilgrim weak of aspect	Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah, Pilgrim through this barren land

and

Give Thou a pillar of fire to lead me in the night, And a pillar of mist in the day	Let the fiery, cloudy pillar Lead me all my journey through

The hymn interweaves references from both the Old and New Testaments to create a richness of texture and imagery in its expression of God's grace through times of struggle and

difficulty. The imagery is from the story of the Israelites travelling through the wilderness in the book of Exodus. There is the reference to manna, the 'bread of heaven' in Peter Williams's translation, relating to the manna in the Bible: 'Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you …' (16:4); the 'sweet springs' refers to the water from the rock from which the people of Israel were able to drink: 'Behold I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink' (17:6):

Open the sweet springs	Open Thou the crystal fountain,
Which gush forth from the rock	Whence the healing stream doth flow

God's guidance and leadership are seen most completely with the connotations of shepherding and accompanying: 'And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light' (Exodus 13:21). Williams's hymn, thus, gets to the very root of the understanding of God's presence for a Christian; however, this is in terms of the application of the experience of the children of Israel to the eighteenth-century Christian individual. Williams adds a Christocentric focus, which is apparent alongside the Old Testament allusions. Jesus Christ, too, is the 'bread of heaven' or 'bread of life' as he refers to himself in John 6:35 and he is the one holding 'the keys of hell and of death' (Revelation 1:18) correlating to 'Thou conquered death, Thou conquered hell' or 'Death of death, and hell's destruction' of the hymn.

The union of God the Father, and God the Son, gains traction in the line, 'Thou Thyself suffered this before'. Christ is identified with Jehovah, the God of Israel who led the Israelites to the Promised Land. The stanza below ends in triumph with the stated conviction of the overcoming of death for the Christian through the redemption of Christ Jesus gaining resonance with the reference to the Israelites crossing the river Jordan to the promised land of Canaan (Joshua 3:17):

When I go through Jordan –	When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Cruel death in its force –	Bid my anxious fears subside;
Thou thyself suffered this before,	Death of death, and hell's destruction,
What shall I fear further?	Land me safe on Canaan's side:
Victory!	Songs of Praises
Let me cry out in the torrent.	I will ever give to Thee.

This stanza bears comparison with John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* where, at the end, Mr Stand-Fast goes down to the river, having set things in order for his death. He says that despite the 'terror' of the river, what lies for him on the other side is 'as a glowing coal at my heart'. For Mr Stand-Fast, death means that he 'shall be with Him in whose company I delight myself' and the whole region was filled with 'trumpeters and pipers, with singers and players on stringed instruments' to celebrate with joy as the pilgrims went in at the 'Beautiful Gate of the City' (Bunyan 1853, 191–192).

The imagery and allusions in *Lord, lead me through the wilderness/ Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah* are repeated in the following hymn by Williams, *A pilgrim in a desert land* (Clarke 2016 lecture), translated into English by Robert Maynard Jones (1929–2017):

A pilgrim in a desert land,
I wander far and wide,
Expecting I may sometime come
Close to my father's side.

Ahead of me I think I hear
Sounds of a heavenly choir,
A conquering host already gone
Through tempest flood and fire.

Come Holy Spirit, fire by night
Pillar of cloud by day:
Lead for I dare not take a step
Unless Thou show the way.

Both hymns display a regularity of rhythm and rhyme throughout with, however, different structures. *Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah* is written in sestains, with a single word or epigrammatic phrase towards the end of each stanza, achieving a poetic grandeur and force of expression while the shorter-lined quatrains in *A pilgrim in a desert land* give it a compact simplicity and energy. The hymn has the same line structure and rhyming pattern in English and in Welsh as can be seen in the first stanza:

Pererin wyf mewn anial dir,
Yn crwydro yma a thraw;
Ac yn rhyw ddisgwyl bob yr awr

Fod ty fy Nhad gerllaw.

This hymn expresses both the yearning for heaven, a yearning which is coherent with Williams's articulated passion for Jesus Christ, and the sense of victory – 'a conquering host' – typical of his vision. The mention of the Holy Spirit is significant, bringing the trinitarian concept of the New Testament into unity with the Old Testament references. The lines,

Come Holy Spirit, fire by night
Pillar of cloud by day

allude, once again to Exodus 13:21 but it is the Holy Spirit, often referred to in relation to fire – such as the tongues of fire of the Holy Spirit on the disciples' heads (Acts 2:3–4) – who, in this hymn, leads by fire at night and in a pillar of cloud by day. The Holy Spirit and fire are also strongly associated with Jesus Christ in biblical passages: 'He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire' (Matthew 3:11). Thus, Williams weaves a Christocentric element into his hymn through layers of meaning and reference. The salvation message is brought to the fore in the final stanza:

I have a yearning for that land
Where the unnumbered throng
Extol the death on Calvary
In heaven's unending song.

Christ's atoning sacrifice is celebrated in 'heaven's unending song', an eternity of joy for the believer.

Pilgrimage is a common theme in Christian writing and appears consistently in many hymns. References in such hymns to Zion and the new Jerusalem, which take on additional theological and spiritual meaning in the New Testament, point to God's spiritual kingdom and life eternal for the Christian in heaven: 'But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels' (Hebrews 12:22). Charles Wesley writes (CHPM 484):

Come, all whoe'er have set
Your faces Sion-ward,
In Jesus let us meet,
And praise our common Lord

Like Williams, Wesley's focus is on pilgrimage and guidance, always within the context of the Christian life and the journey towards eternal rest:

Nearer, and nearer still,
We to our country come,
To that celestial hill,
The weary pilgrim's home:
The new Jerusalem above,
The seat of everlasting love.

Similarly, Williams's hymns featuring pilgrimage look to the ultimate heavenly reward for the Christian. For both, representations of heaven or often, more accurately, the Kingdom of God are couched in abstract, conventional terminology: 'celestial hill'; 'happy Zion'; 'Paradise'; 'a sweet, unending rest'. The journey, the way of the Christian to eternity, is seen as an experiential one, an experience of feeling and knowing. Williams's hymn *Saviour, lead us by Thy power* (HGT 140) requests Christ to guide his people 'Safe into the promised rest'. The hymn, like Wesley's, indicates the perseverance through exhaustion, difficulty and danger that is required of the pilgrim:

Be our guide in every peril,
Watch and keep us night and day,
Else our foolish hearts will wander
From the strait and narrow way.

Both Williams and Wesley convey the conviction of the love that is pivotal in the Christian faith; Williams's hymn concludes with the line, 'Let Thy love, Lord, keep us nigh', making clear the link between love and pilgrimage. The pilgrim is drawn Godwards by the attractive power of God's love. Dante Alighieri can be looked to for an example of this: in *Paradiso*, the third and final part of his *Divine Comedy*, he gets closer and closer to the divine love until his own will aligns itself with 'the Love which moves the sun and the other stars' (1998 Canto XXXIII, line 145).

Williams's lines,

I need, each step along the way,
My God to be my guide

encapsulate the significance and necessity of God's guidance for the Christian pilgrim which is foregrounded in scriptural teaching. A verse from the Old Testament which is alluded to, 'This is the way, walk ye in it' (Isaiah 30:21), typifies God's instruction and assurance of guidance and anticipates Christ's words in the New Testament: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me' (John 14:6). Jesus makes it clear in these words that knowledge of him is not only the 'ultimate meaning and fulfilment of life on earth' but points the way to a true knowledge of God, the Father (Charmley 2017, part 2).

Hymns of pilgrimage invariably express praise and a sense of joy at the coming into the glory of the Lord at the end of life's journey and triumph at the redemption 'from sin and wrath' (Charles Wesley). Thus, Wesley writes about 'the bliss to which I tend' in *How happy every child of grace* and Watts describes the 'joys divinely great' on coming before 'the glory of His face' (*To God, the only Wise*). Williams's *Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah* ends with the words:

Songs of praises
I will ever give to Thee.

The words translated directly from his original version read, more dramatically and forcefully, 'Victory!/ Let me cry out in the torrent'.

The theme of victory is a constant one in Williams's hymns, with Jesus being proclaimed as the conqueror over hell, the deliverer of souls from bondage, the vanquisher of foes of his redemption message. In *Ride on, Jesus, all-victorious* (HP 272), translated from the Welsh by Gwilym Owen Williams (1913–1990), the use of martial imagery – 'ride on'; 'sword'; 'foe'; 'take the field'; 'war'; 'conquest'; 'marching' – reinforces the might and glory of Jesus Christ as the 'heirs' of his redemption hail his 'triumph in the war' (stanza one):

Ride on, Jesus, all-victorious,
Bear thy sword upon thy side;
None on earth can e'er withstand thee,
Nor yet hell, for all its pride:
At thy mighty name tremendous
Every foe is forced to yield;
Hushed in awe, creation trembles:
Come then, Jesus, take the field.

Similar wording and expression appear in an 1879 translation by W. Edwards, *Ride triumphant, blessed Jesus.* This is a war against evil, against death and sin, a war for the souls of humanity, a war that was waged and won, ultimately, through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. This sacrifice is alluded to in the line, 'Palms of conquest in each hand', which carries layers of meaning and significance:

Clad in robes of shining glory,
Palms of conquest in each hand

Palms are emblematic of pilgrimage; the Palmer is a pilgrim who travels to the Holy Land out of piety and religious devotion as depicted in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*: 'He seemed to be a sage and sober sire' (II i 7.61). Palms are symbols of victory or triumph, awarded as an honour or accolade, and also refer to Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem when the people waved palm branches and shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest' (Matthew 21:9). However, this triumph associated with Palm Sunday was ultimately delayed until Easter adding complexity to the image. The palms reference gains further significance when it is related to the description of the celebration of Jesus Christ in Revelation 7:9 where 'a great multitude' will stand before 'the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands'. Williams, thus, achieves multi-layered connotative meanings which enrich the poetic expression in his hymn.

The strength of the imperative statements of the first two lines and elsewhere in the hymn communicates not only an exhortation to Jesus Christ but also a proclamation of assurance of his triumph:

Ride on, Jesus, all-victorious,
Bear thy sword upon thy side;
None on earth can e'er withstand thee,
Nor yet hell, for all its pride

In the second stanza, the use of an alliterative translation provides cohesion in the portrayal of the theme of liberation and deliverance, particularly in the force inherent in the alliterative verbs, 'batter' and 'break':

Rescue now our souls from bondage,
In thy morn of victory,

Batter down the doors of Babel,
Break the bars and set us free

In both these stanzas, the syntactical structure is relevant to meaning and expression. In the first stanza there is a grammatical shift from the imperative mood to the indicative while in the second, the imperatives, placed at the beginning of the lines with the stressed syllable first, add vigour to the hymnist's expression. The reality of spiritual enslavement is highlighted by the physical imagery in the hymn which expresses the dominant concepts of bondage and freedom. The role of Christ as deliverer is made clear in the use of the terms, 'rescue'; 'set us free'; 'troop to freedom'; 'save'. It is only in the last two lines of the hymn that the release represented in physical terms here becomes equated with the release into eternity after life's journey:

Joyful hosts, to freedom marching,
Enter now the promised land.

The extent of God's power over the universe becomes evident in Williams's employment of natural imagery such as in the line, 'Hushed in awe, creation trembles', and the use of the simile 'Like the surge of mighty waters' in describing the impetus of movement of the exulting 'rescued hosts'. The drama and the energy of the imagery is reminiscent of the descriptive expression of what is commonly considered as Romanticism, underscored, however, by Williams's Christian perception of and praise to an Almighty God.

In contrast to the imperative opening of *Ride on, Jesus, all-victorious*, Williams's hymn *Can I forget bright Eden's grace* in the version translated by H. A. Hodges (1905–1976) (HP 417) begins with the interrogative injecting a plaintive note as the hymnist laments the Eden lost to him:

Can I forget bright Eden's grace,
My beauteous crown and princely place,
All lost, all lost to me?

The hymn is also known as *In Eden – sad indeed that day –* according to a translation by Robert Maynard Jones (1929–2017) with its first line carrying the same note of melancholy. From the regret of the first three lines the tone of the hymnist's song changes as he celebrates his restoration in Christ:

Long as I live I'll praise and sing

My wondrous all-restoring King,
Victor of Calvary.

The mention of Calvary leads on in the second stanza to the crucifixion narrative where Christ 'was nailed' to 'the tree', and the fight against evil:

One here has crushed the dragon's might,
Two fell, but One has won the fight

Satan, the embodiment of evil, is depicted here as a dragon. The equation of dragons with sin adds symbolic emphasis since in Western mythology dragons are seen as malevolent, the enemy of humanity, as well as, in Christianity, carrying connotations of evil in their metaphorical association with Satan. Revelation 20:2 says, 'And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years'. For ecclesiastics in the Middle Ages, the dragon was the symbol of both sin and paganism (Vinycomb 2009, 70). Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* represents the dragon, 'swolne with wrath, and poyson, and with bloudy gore' (I xi 8.72), as evil and the introductory stanza to Book I Canto XI provides a connection with Williams's later depiction:

The knight with that old Dragon fights
two dayes incessantly:
The third him overthrowes, and gayns
most glorious victory.

The success of the knight in slaying the dragon represents Christ's victory over death and Satan through his crucifixion and resurrection, and the overcoming of the temptation to sin by the Christian. Sin in Williams's hymn is represented as a terrifying and malign power, which must be overcome by force and might. Jesus Christ died on the cross but through his sacrifice emerged victorious. The victory over sin, either in terms of the crucifixion or in battle imagery, is a major theme in Williams's writing. The use of the homophone in the line 'Two fell, but One has won the fight' stresses the unique sovereign power of Christ. The last line, 'Christ Jesus has prevailed', is simple and direct as an emphatic statement of praise and affirmation. For Williams, his view is always one of an all-conquering Jesus.

This hymn, with the translated English version correlating with the use in the Welsh of the sestain stanza with a rhyming structure of aabccb, clearly demonstrates the significance of form to subject and meaning. The form is very particular with a couplet followed by a tail

– a line that does not rhyme with the couplet but with the tails rhyming with each other within the stanza. This is demonstrated in Welsh:

Yn Eden, cofiaf hynny byth,
Bendithion gollais rif y gwlith;
Syrthiodd fy nghoron wiw:
Ond buddugoliaeth Calfari
Enillodd hon yn ôl î mi;
Mi ganaf tra b'wyf byw.

The tail lines, as well as the rhythmic structure of 8.8.6.D., are significant in that they create the tone and bring the focus onto the emotional and thematic core of the hymn: the two lines of grief and lament – 'All lost, all lost to me?' and 'All innocent was nailed' – and the two lines of joy and triumph – 'Victor of Calvary' and 'Christ Jesus has prevailed'. The rhyme scheme aabccb in the first stanza is followed by bbdeed in the second which gives cohesion to the hymn not only in terms of the rhyme but in following the line of thought established by the references to 'Calvary' and 'the tree'. Williams's choice of form becomes crucial to an understanding of the full effect of his hymns.

In *Speak, I pray thee, gentle Jesus!* (HBC 331), translated by Richard M. Lewis (1849–1918), the abcb rhyming pattern, again in both the translated English and the original Welsh, drives Williams's emotional response as a sinner reaching out to God directly and effectively. Although Williams's hymns reveal a close communion with God, they show a very real spiritual experience through days of darkness as much as through times of joy and assurance. He writes in *Speak, I pray thee, gentle Jesus!:*

Tell me thou art mine, O Saviour,
Grant me an assurance clear;
Banish all my dark misgivings,
Still my doubting, calm my fear.

Like all the Methodist hymnists, Williams speaks of the trials and tests of faith, faith which ultimately overcomes the darkness through the believer's consciousness of the presence of Jesus Christ. The tradition of doubt, as articulated here by Williams, is a prevalent strand in mysticism and in autobiography; faith is often accompanied by doubt (Munday 2018, 137). In Williams's experiential religion, feeling covers the full range from uncertainty and despair to assurance and joy.

Williams's hymns are intimate in tone, with the use of personal pronouns frequent in his expression; his hymns are given a sense of immediacy and inclusivity in the personal reality of his thought and experience, which is at the core of his merging of the theological and the experiential. Williams was a Calvinist; however, he does not dwell on the concept of the elect, rather writing in his hymns of Jesus dying on the cross for the sins of humanity and taking on 'The enormous load of human guilt' (Charmley 2017, part 1). Calvinism supposedly expels all doubt of salvation. According to Article seventeen of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, 'Of Predestination and Election', the thought of predestination and election is 'full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons' who, through the working of the Spirit of Christ, can draw up their minds to 'high and heavenly things'. Nevertheless, Williams repeatedly confesses himself as a sinner, 'Miserable me', for whom Christ died and it is only by grace that he is saved. It is paradoxical that the Calvinist mindset is so often paralysed by doubt as can be seen in the hymns and poems of writers such as Williams and Cowper. With a poet's eye, Williams conveys with emotional intensity the cruelty of the Cross and Christ's suffering (HSD 3):

And in the horrid pangs of death
He wept, he pray'd for me;
Loved and embraced my guilty soul
When nailed to the tree.

As can be seen in the lines above, Williams's Christocentric focus is not only on the Christ of the resurrection, the victorious Christ, but also emphatically on the Christ of the Passion. Always, the hymnist looks to Jesus, the Son of God, through whom all knowledge of the Father comes (Munday 2017, 16):

Be still, my Soul, love and behold
The Victim on the Tree;
The God, the Saviour, groans and dies,
For Miserable me.

The hymn *Be still, my Soul* (HSD 1) appeared in *Aleluia*, a collection of poems in Welsh, published in one volume in 1749; it was later included in the publication of Williams's English collection of poems of 1759, *Hosannah to the Son of David*, from which this text is taken. The opening phrase of the hymn appears in the 1855 English translation of Katharina von Schlegel's 1752 German hymn *Stille, mein Wille, dein Jesus hilft siegen*, 'Be

still, my soul; the Lord is on your side'. The biblical reference is to Psalm 46:10: 'Be still and know that I am God'; in this verse it is God's voice that speaks directly, while, inversely, in Williams and Von Schlegel's hymns, the hymnists address the soul in apostrophic form. Meaning is imparted, in all three references, by the command, the need to be still, to draw into stillness in order to contemplate and know God. The phrase 'Miserable me' is a significant one echoing as it does church doctrine; the general Confession of the Order for Morning Prayer in *The Book of Common Prayer* (1762 publication of the 1662 version) is offered to God in the following words, 'But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us miserable offenders'. The term 'miserable' refers, not to a feeling, but to the pitiable state of humankind (Lewis 1970, 120–126). It is a recognition of the moral condition of humanity, in need of God's mercy.

The frequent descriptions in Williams's hymns of Christ's suffering underline the enormity of humankind's guilt that Christ takes upon himself. However, in the agony of the Cross the reconciliation of God and humankind is effected and manifested through an evocation of love and joy. Williams often references Christ's crucifixion through the use of metonymy – in this instance, the place name, Calvary, becomes representative of the last hours of Christ, deepening the meaning of the whole experience of the Passion and achieving emphasis through the conciseness of the single word. This can be seen in the following hymn (Munday 2017, 16):

I cast my burden when I view
His anguish on the tree;
The enormous load of guilt is turned
To song at Calvary.

Calvary, however, is also an allegory of the state of the sinner's soul. There cannot be redemption for the sinner without allegorically reaching Calvary. As Henry Dowson describes it, 'No man is a christian till he has gone to Calvary; if he stops short of the cross, though there may be some change of opinion, and even of conduct, it is the work of the flesh, not of the Spirit' (1846, 140).

Williams continues with his message of redemption through the suffering of Jesus Christ in many of his hymns (GE LXV):

Awake, my soul, and rise
Amazed, and yonder see,

How hangs the mighty Saviour God,
Upon a cursèd tree!

There is an intertextual connection with Thomas Ken's *Awake, my soul, and with the sun* written in 1695. The evocation in Ken's hymn of awakening and dawn is echoed in Williams's 'Awake, my soul, and rise', particularly with the connotation of sunrise, providing commonality in terms of a Christian thematic and metaphorical dimension. Ken's hymn was, and is, so well known that it can be treated as part of the common Christian inheritance. It is the reference to sunrise that clinches the verbal echo.

Williams's acknowledgement in his hymn of the glory of the fulfilment of God's 'ancient plan' – Christ's sacrificial act for the salvation of humankind – gains a further dimension of renewal with the fulfilment of the line, 'Before the world began' suggested in 'Here free salvation reigns/ And carries all before':

How gloriously fulfilled
Is that most ancient plan,
Contrived in the eternal Mind
Before the world began!

Williams's first stanza, centring on Christ's offering of himself in the crucifixion, finds implicit connection in terms of the understanding of the mutual 'sacrifice' (that of Christ for humanity, that from the sinner for Christ) in Christianity with Ken's words about the soul: 'and early rise/ To pay thy morning sacrifice'. This intertextuality opens up a new perspective with the interplay between the connotations of 'sacrifice' and 'rise' which implicitly embrace the Resurrection.

Williams's characteristic reference to the cross as a tree leads to a consideration of the underlying meanings and analogies in his poetry. In literary use, the cross is commonly referred to as a tree; in the twelfth century the legend of the Tree-Cross, the *arbor crucis*, appeared, revolving around Original Sin, punishment and redemption (Simor 2000, 45). The first tree mentioned in the Bible is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden, thus, a connection is made between sin – the sin of Adam as representative of all people – and Jesus' sacrificial and atoning death. The Cross was linked with the Tree of Life in the thirteenth century by St. Bonaventure in his *Lignum vitae* (Simor 2000, 46). There are also intertextual links between Williams's hymn and John Donne's poem 'Hymn to God my

God in my sickness': the speaker in Donne's poem connects the Garden of Eden before the Fall with Calvary, the place of Jesus' death (2004, 347):

> We think that Paradise and Calvary,
> Christ's cross, and Adam's tree, stood in one place

uniting both the 'first' Adam, the man who brought sin into the world and Jesus, the 'last Adam' who brings salvation from sin: 'Look, Lord, and find both Adams met in me'.

Symbolically, the tree represents fruitfulness and life; Williams, therefore, in his hymn implies the new life that Christ brings with his death on the cross, the 'cursèd tree'. Another layer of meaning concerns the genealogy of Jesus. A prophecy in Isaiah 11:1–2 regarding the coming of Jesus reads, 'And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him'. Matthew 1:1–17 tells of the sequence of generations of the Bible narrative from Abraham and through Jesse and David, culminating with the coming of Jesus Christ. With these layers of meaning, Williams is able to weave together symbolic associations with the Old Testament, the significance of lineage in conveying monotheistic faith from the Abrahamic and Davidic heritage, and ideas of kingship. The concept of many generations over time, from Abraham to Christ, connects with the Christian belief in God's sovereignty through eternity. His 'ancient plan',

> Contrived in the eternal mind
> Before the world began

is 'gloriously fulfilled' in Jesus Christ.

The hymn *Beneath thy cross I lay me down* (GE XVI) is an example of the impact on and the reality of the crucifixion for the hymnist. The images are forcefully conveyed with the use of the word 'blood' or derivatives of it, underlining the agony of Christ's sacrifice. There is an emphasis in this hymn on 'pain', 'bleeding wounds', 'woes' in the first two stanzas, which is, however, offset by the depiction of the truth and actuality of love, a love that is entirely and inextricably bound with Christ's redemptive action:

> Love drops in blood from every vein;
> Love is the spring of all thy pain.

It is clear in the line, ‘Here, Jesus, will I ever stay’, that the Cross becomes, for the hymnist, not only a reminder of the Passion but also his place of safety; metaphorically, his bulwark against the spiritual dangers of the world: ‘Secured from harms beneath Thy shade’. Poetically, Williams in this hymn, as in others, uses devices such as metaphor – as in the above two quoted lines on love – and metonymy. The reference to ‘Sinai, with its thundering noise’ alludes to the Ten Commandments being received by Moses from God on Mount Sinai: ‘And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking …’ (Exodus 20:18). The sentiment that not even the ‘thundering noise’ of Sinai’ can disturb the ‘happier joys’ of the hymnist, secure under the protection of the Cross, recalls the summarising of the Ten Commandments by Jesus in the New Testament into the two great commandments about love: loving God and loving one’s neighbour. The concept of love is mentioned three times in the hymn evoking both the great sacrifice of Christ for humanity and union with the Almighty. Unlike other hymns in which Jesus is depicted as the victor, here Williams writes of his own ‘conquering soul’, strengthened and protected as he is in the ‘shade’ of the Cross from

The rage of Satan and of sin,
Of foes without, and fears within

There are several indications of a kind of exchange between Saviour and sinner: as Christ bleeds from the cross, so can the sinner feel his love; as Jesus endures long hours of suffering, so does the hymnist contemplate that suffering; as the Redeemer offers salvation and security through the Cross, so can the ‘shade’ of the Cross become the place of ‘unmolested happy rest’ for the sinner. The last two lines of the hymn suggest that it is because of the acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross that the hymnist himself can endure his own ‘cross’. The message of the redemptive love of Jesus Christ is clear in the meeting point of the physical and the metaphorical:

Here I shall love, and live secure,
And patiently my cross endure.

While Williams’s hymns featuring the crucifixion typically express love or grace or the joy of redemption as well, *Jesus, Jesus, all sufficient* (1996, 30) translated by Robert Maynard Jones (1929–2017), focuses entirely on the glory of God. It is an exaltation of Jesus, of the ‘greater treasures’ found in him ‘than the richest found on earth’. The contrast between spiritual and physical wealth and the associations conjured by the language, in this translation

the words, ‘worth’, ‘treasures’, ‘richest’ and ‘abundance’, emphasise the significance of the believer’s affective response to Jesus Christ; in the Welsh original, the word ‘treasures’ (*trysorau* or *thrysorau*) is repeated twice. The hymn is a paean of praise to God, the creator of ‘all the earth’s great wonders’ with the enjambement of the first four lines of the second stanza giving a fluidity that adds to the rapture of the hymnist’s praise:

In Thy gracious face there’s beauty
Far surpassing every thing
Found in all the earth’s great wonders
Mortal eye hath ever seen.
Rose of Sharon
Thou Thyself art heaven’s delight.

The enjambement carries a further function in adding a richness of quality to the description of God’s ‘gracious face’ with the noun ‘beauty’ followed by various phrasal adjectival constructions. Williams metaphorically compares Jesus to the Rose of Sharon, with reference to the declaration of the Shulamite woman to her beloved, Solomon: ‘I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys’ (Song of Solomon 2:1). Jesus is often symbolically referred to as the Rose of Sharon although there is no actual mention of this association in the New Testament. The rose, however, attained significance in Byzantine liturgy from writings such as those of Andrew of Crete (650–740 AD) and Tarasios of Constantinople (730–806 AD) with the morphology and symbolism originating in the Song of Solomon (Galofaro 2020, 157). The narrative of love in this book is an analogy of Jesus, the bridegroom – as was seen earlier in Charles Wesley’s *O love divine, how sweet thou art!* – and the Church, his bride, as described in such verses as Revelation 19:7: ‘Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready’. The lover analogy is used in the New Testament to convey the personal covenant relationship that God wants humanity to have with his Son. The rose is only mentioned in one other place in the Bible in Isaiah 35:1: ‘The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose’. The chapter provides a prophetic description of the flourishing of Christ’s kingdom when all shall see ‘the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God’ (Isaiah 35:2). Inherent in the symbolism of the rose of Sharon blooming in the desert, then, is the wonder of the fruition of Jesus’ work in humankind. Just as the rose is representative of beauty, so Jesus represents spiritual beauty and perfection. Ultimately, too, the fruition of Jesus’ work in humankind is love.

Williams's hymns are often redolent of contemplative wonder and awe at the presence of Jesus; for him, the purpose of his hymns was to bring Scripture and emotion together (Evans 1996, n. pag.). An overarching theme in his writing, as previously mentioned, is that of love – love of Jesus for humankind: 'And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us …' (Ephesians 5:2) – and love of the hymnist for his Lord and Saviour. As with other Welsh hymnists, Williams often draws on thematic imagery from the Song of Solomon, imagery which ideally articulates and emphasises the emotional depth of the heart experience in loving and knowing Christ. *Jesus, Jesus, all sufficient* described above is typical as is the hymn entitled, *White and ruddy is my Beloved* (GE XIX). Christ is prefigured in the Song of Solomon 5:10: 'My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand' and 'yea, he is altogether lovely' (5:16): the two aspects of Christ are denoted by the 'white and ruddy' – the white is symbolic of his divinity, his holiness and purity, while the red alludes to his human nature and his bloody agony. As a testament to Christ's beauty, the hymn is strongly reminiscent of the previous one, particularly in the lines:

Nature can't produce an Object,
Nor so glorious, so divine

The hymn attests to Jesus Christ as a complete and firm foundation for the believer throughout life:

In my Saviour,
I have found a glorious Whole.

In both hymns, the structure plays an important role in driving the message. The short lines of four syllables appearing only once in each stanza gain force and emphasis: 'In my Saviour' and the emotionally charged 'My Beloved' from *White and ruddy is my Beloved* and 'Rose of Sharon' and 'Such abundance' from *Jesus, Jesus, all sufficient*, for example. Both hymns convey a deep sense of quietude and the joy that comes from being in the presence of Jesus Christ. Such lines as 'Be still, my soul, love, and behold', from the hymn previously mentioned, resonate with the descriptive phrase of Jesus as 'Deep, mysterious, and unknown' which introduces a mystic quality. Such sentiments are the epitome of the experiential nature of Methodism, the heart experience.

Williams's vision is all-encompassing and cosmic, venerating an omniscient, omnipotent Creator God. His journeyings across Wales imprinted upon him an awareness of

the grandeur of nature, which was often evoked in his hymns. Morgan draws attention to Williams's assurance of the sovereignty of God in his plan of creation and redemption and Williams's perception of its corroboration in astronomical and biological findings (2017, 15). 15). According to Morgan, Williams was in agreement with the standpoint of Edmond Halley (1656–1742) – of the eponymously named comet – who believed that 'the latest scientific discoveries underscored rather than undermined orthodox theology and the biblical revelation of Christ as the mediator of creation' (2017, 15). In his hymns, Williams writes about stars, planets, the cosmos. His perception of the wonders of nature evidencing an active Creator God emerges particularly in his hymn *O'er those gloomy Hills of Darkness* (GE XXXVII) in which a description of the stars and the night sky, and the juxtaposition of dark and light elicit a sense of worship (Munday 2018, 19):

O'er those gloomy Hills of Darkness,
Look, my Soul, be still, and gaze,
All the Promises do travel
On a glorious Day of Grace:
Blessèd Jubilee!
Let Thy glorious Morning dawn.

Kingdoms wide that sit in Darkness,
Let them have the glorious Light;
And from Eastern Coast to Western
May the Morning chase the Night,
And Redemption,
Freely purchas'd, win the day.

The images of light in this hymn are significant since they are symbolic of the truth of the gospel message brought by Jesus Christ and presaged in Isaiah 9:2: 'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined'. The Benedictus from the Order for Morning Prayer in *The Book of Common Prayer* (1762 publication of the 1662 version) has similar words: 'To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death: and to guide our feet into the way of peace'. In John 12:46, Jesus is recorded as saying, 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life'. In *O'er those gloomy Hills of Darkness*, the repetition of the adjective, 'glorious' to describe the morning, the day,

the light, serves to evoke the beauty of the hours of daylight and the light that is Jesus, and to particularise his glory. The hymn expresses the magnitude of God's realm and his handiwork exemplified in the 'glorious Light' that extends from 'Eastern Coast to Western'. The redemption of humanity in Christ's crucifixion on the cross is allied to the coming of light. Just as morning chases the night, so does Christ, the light of the world, overcome the darkness of sin. The dawning of daylight from night described in the next stanza, 'From eternal Darkness dawn', suggests metaphorically the narrative of the resurrection of Jesus Christ when Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went to the tomb to find it empty: '… they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun' (Mark 16:2) and on entering, an angel said to them, '… he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him' (Mark 16:6).

O'er those gloomy Hills of Darkness was written as a missionary hymn in 1772, at the height of the Welsh Revival. Both the rhyme scheme (abcbde) and the metre (8.7.8.7.4.7.) are uncommon – there is a minimum of rhyme and the enjambement of the last two lines of each stanza enhances the lyric effect of the rhythmic structure. The lack of rhyme across each sestain is congruent with the function of the hymn as a missionary one; it attains a fluidity and flexibility that appertain to the evangelical theme, particularly evident in lines such as 'Fly abroad, eternal Gospel'. The crusading nuances of the hymn are echoed by Reginald Heber's later missionary hymn *From Greenland's icy mountains* (MHT 801) written in 1819:

Salvation! O salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim,
Till each remotest nation
Has learned Messiah's name.

Both these hymns allude to Christ's command to the disciples, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature' in Mark 16:14, which has become a bedrock of Christian theology in its ministry and evangelism. Williams was a preacher and an evangelist but it was the power of the poetry in his hymn-writing that invigorated his gospel message.

Williams's place in the history of religious poetry in Britain

Williams, in the foreword to *Ffarwel Weledig, Croesaw Anweledig Bethau* ('Farewell Seen, Welcome Unseen Things'), entreats hymn-writers only to write if 'their souls are near heaven, under the breezes of the Holy Spirit; and that the Spirit will be ready to bless their work' (Pantycelyn 1891, 193). This, in essence, can be said to sum up Williams's own work

for in his intensity of feeling and response, in his expression of spirit-filled experience and interaction with God, he sings his Calvinist Methodist theology, a theology of the heart.

The characteristic themes of Williams's hymns are in keeping with the zeal of the revival spirit as much as they are expressed with the poetic lyricism and emotional quality typical of what is known as Welsh Romanticism. Welsh revivalism is frequently described by scholars in terms of fire, with hearts set newly ablaze as waves of religious fervour swept through Wales. In relation to this, Charmley asserts that Williams's hymns are not content to express propositional truths but are 'theology set on fire by the Holy Spirit' designed to 'raise a thirst after Christ in the hearts of the Lord's people' (2017, part 1).

J. C. Philpot declared that '…there is a force and originality breathing through his uncouth language, which shows that he knew and felt what he said …' (1902, 259). The description of Williams's language as 'uncouth' points to a lack of sophistication and perhaps to a lack of polish in his expression. The judgment is rather condescending, certainly critical of Williams's linguistic or possibly poetic ability. However, the simplicity of his hymns, with their vigour of rhythm and language, was intended to make theology more accessible to the common people. Philpot's evaluation was of Williams's English hymns since he was unable to read Welsh, yet criticism of Williams's hymns in English or Welsh alike confirms the energy and 'heart' in his verse. Poetic expression gives force and meaning to 'theology set on fire by the Holy Spirit' (Charmley 2017, part 1).

Williams conveys his spiritual longing and his passionate love for God through his use of form and metre, the intensity of his diction, and the richness of his imagery and scriptural allusion or reference. His evangelical purpose and experiential faith are manifested in the metaphors of love and pilgrimage which gain in effect through his chosen metre. His frequent use of the trochaic with its stressed first syllable places emphasis on the theme: 'Love, eternal, love eternal' or on the significance he put on evangelism: 'Fly abroad Thou mighty Gospel'; or creates mood: 'Gloomy thick Egyptian night'. In other hymns, his employment of iambic metre marks the thrust of the hymn: 'A pilgrim in a desert land' and 'Come Holy Spirit, fire by night' with the emphasis falling on the experience of the pilgrim and on the Holy Spirit. Williams brings together the different elements of form and content to communicate emotion and purpose.

The sentiments in Williams's verse speak to the real personal experience of God's people, with all the challenges and dangers that arise in the 'desert land' – the difficulties of the realities of the world facing the Christian – which the believer navigates with faith in the

mercy, grace and protection of God. Williams's poetic voice is grounded in theology, in his message of this grace and mercy for sinners according to God's plan of salvation (GE LXV):

How gloriously fulfilled
Is that most ancient plan,
Contrived in the eternal Mind
Before the world began!

Now hell in all her strength,
Her rage and boasted sway,
Can never snatch a wandering sheep
From Jesus' arms away.

The way in which poetry governs doctrine in the hymns is evident in the personal, emotional response of the believer. Williams speaks with the voice of the individual while articulating the religious experience of the people of Wales; as H. E. Lewis poetically puts it, 'It is himself speaking; but in his voice we hear the sobs and cries, the joys and transports of a thousand hearts' (1889, 42). Even as Williams sought to bring humankind closer to God, to present the gospel message as reality, he brought his poetic voice to bear on theology to engender both emotional and spiritual response.

An important dimension in critiquing Williams's work is that of intertextuality. A facet of the close connection of his hymns with George Herbert's poems can be seen in his emotional and spiritual shifts from despair and questioning to joy and assurance. His hymns abound in imagery of heat and cold, light and dark yet James is careful to point out that these extremes only manifest experientially; in his theology he was balanced (2019, 5). Williams's concept of pilgrimage and the pilgrim's quest to know God is also aligned with Herbert's 'The Pilgrimage' – to a lesser degree – and particularly with John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* charting, through the landscape, the journey of the soul. R. S. Thomas, writing some two hundred years later than Williams, draws on Williams's Methodist pilgrim, with both writers using the pilgrim persona 'to distance and ventriloquise themselves in their work' while, nevertheless, writing 'directly out of their own spiritual quests' (Munday 'International Journal' 2018, 1–2). R. S. Thomas was a great admirer of Herbert, so his poetic tribute to Williams – to the man who 'heard him [God] speak' – is very much apropos in terms of the richness and significance of intertextual connections. Thomas both draws on Williams's work and mentions Williams in two of his poems, and Williams's hymns reflect

in Thomas's writing (Munday 'International Journal' 2018, 2). The intertextuality that is evident between Williams's writing and the work of poets and hymnists such as George Herbert, Thomas Ken, Katharina von Schlegel, Reginald Heber and R. S. Thomas plays a part in the construction of a contextual framework contributing to a common popular Christian heritage. The resonance with writers such as Herbert, Ken and Von Schlegel also suggests much about Williams's reading. Bunyan's influence, in the figure of the pilgrim and the symbolism of journeying, can be discerned through much of Williams's work: *Pilgrim's Progress* was first translated into Welsh in 1688 with subsequent editions appearing later. Both Williams's debts and his legacy advertise his place in the tradition of British religious poetry and hymnody.

The poetic nature of Williams's hymn-writing in form, language and emotional intensity gives credence to the significance of his own set of criteria regarding the role of poetry in hymnody. That Williams attained 'the true Spirit of Poetry' but as 'the handmaid of Piety', in John Wesley's words (1791, v), can be seen in the lyricism of his verses grounded in the poetry of Psalms and the Song of Solomon, the dramatic force of his figurative language and the affective quality of the communication of his spiritual experience. In Williams is combined both poetic and theological expression, an articulation of his profound spiritual experience of the triune God in the context of the personal and the scriptural. On his tombstone in the churchyard of Llanfair-ar-y-bryn are the words in Welsh from the epitaph composed by the central character in Williams's epic poem, *Theomemphus* (Charmley 2017, part 3):

> No darts, no frights, no fears, no sorrow and no pain,
> Sounding forth the glory of the Lamb that once was slain;
> One of a throng of myriads who sing with endless praise,
> A love-song as the anthem, a song they'll ever raise.

These lines encapsulate Williams's poetic affirmation of faith, his creed of love as a central tenet of the Christian experience. They reveal the hope and joy that is present in the Passion and Resurrection and that is both a characteristic feature of his hymnody and, quintessentially, the spirit of the Welsh Methodist Revival.

Chapter Eight: Voices from Wales: Ann Griffiths

Ann Griffiths of Dolwar Fach: Mystic religious poet

In the small village of Llanfihangel-yng-ngwynfa, which means 'the church of Saint Michael in a pure or beautiful place', near the farm Dolwar Fach where the hymn-writer Ann Griffiths spent the whole of her brief life, stands the church in which she was christened, married and buried. Displayed in the church are printed, framed copies of Griffiths's hymns. A little further on, at Dolanog, is the Memorial Church, rebuilt in 1903 to commemorate Griffiths along with memorials in various forms of individuals who are associated with her narrative: John Hughes, the minister of Pontrobert who wrote down her hymns; and Ruth Evans who memorised the hymns that her mistress sang or recited as she worked at Dolwar Fach. Griffiths composed most of her hymns in her farm kitchen between 1802 and 1805 when she died; these hymns, although well-known and loved in Wales, are little known elsewhere. Despite this, Griffiths has become an iconic figure of Wales, the subject of many works including dramas, films, novels and poems. The musical *Ann!* which was performed in 2003 at the National Eisteddfod at Meifod was also televised and released as a CD. The poet R. S. Thomas (1913–2000) devoted one of his long poems to Ann Griffiths, 'A Fugue to Ann Griffiths', as well as a shorter one, 'Ann Griffiths'. Fascinated with Griffiths's passion and mysticism and the intensity of her personal union with God, she became for Thomas a spiritual guide (Dafydd 2008, n. pag.). In 2013, a documentary produced and directed by Emlyn Davies, *Ann Griffiths – Y Ferch o Dolwar Fach* (*Ann Griffiths – The Girl from Dolwar Fach*), was aired on Welsh television. The story of the ordinary, yet extraordinary, girl, as Griffiths is described in the documentary, her poetic achievement and her tragic early death at the age of 29 is a fascinating one for laypeople and scholars alike. However, it is not for her hymns that Griffiths holds such wide appeal – certainly outside of Wales – but for her person and her life story.

Ann Griffiths's lifetime in the last quarter of the eighteenth century was in an age of transformation and awakening engendered, in great part, by the French Revolution and the Methodist Revival. War between Britain and France prevailed during most of her adult life, which greatly concerned her, and she attended weekly prayer meetings held by the Calvinist Methodists to pray about the war (James, *gwefan Ann Griffiths* website). Although it is a stretch to say that these concerns emerged in her writing, it is certain that the political and religious issues of the time influenced her.

Ann Thomas, as she was, was born at Dolwar Fach in 1776, the fourth of five children, to John Evan and Jane Thomas. Her parents were devout Anglicans and Griffiths's father led family devotions every morning and evening, reading from the Welsh translation of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Griffiths's familiarity from her early years with the Bible and other religious works was manifested later in her hymns and letters (*gwefan Ann Griffiths* website). The community's cultural life centred around a strong music and poetry tradition and Welsh was the language spoken despite the county's proximity to the English border. Griffiths composed her first known poem, an *englyn*, in 1786, when she was ten years old. This is a poem in a traditional Welsh strict-metre form with complex alliteration and internal rhyme, and these features of the *englyn* can be seen to influence her later poetic expression in her hymns (*gwefan Ann Griffiths* website).

By the 1790s, Methodism had only been established to a limited extent in the area where she lived and many Methodist preachers faced persecution, verbally and sometimes physically, with Griffiths, herself, viewing the converts in the locality with contempt and scorn. Griffiths's older brother, John, was the first member of the Thomas family to convert and begin attending Calvinist Methodist gatherings followed by her two other brothers and her father, her mother having died in 1794. During a powerful revival at Pontrobert in 1796, the Anglican minister there, John Hughes, became a Methodist, a conversion of much importance in terms of leadership of the cause locally and nationally.

Griffiths, herself, felt her faith challenged on hearing Benjamin Jones preaching in the open air while visiting her sister in Llanfyllin. After a talk on Christmas Day with the curate of the church at Llanfihangel-yng-ngwynfa, Thomas Evans, who made disparaging remarks about the Methodists which deeply offended her, Griffiths joined her family in membership of the Methodist society at Pontrobert. Their farm, Dolwar Fach, became a meeting place for Methodists in the area to pray, read the Bible and offer encouragement and support to each other while the main gathering place remained at Pontrobert. A friendship between Griffiths and John Hughes developed when he lodged at Dolwar Fach during 1799, with Griffiths coming to regard Hughes as a spiritual advisor. Hughes was responsible for writing down Griffiths's hymns after her death and it is in Griffiths's letters to him that the first records of her spiritual feelings are to be found. One such example is the longing she expresses in a letter for the full effect of God's power in herself and the wider community (Letter VII *gwefan Ann Griffiths* website):

> All awakened souls are under obligation to wrestle much with the Lord, that he may send his winds upon his withered garden, 'that the spices thereof may be spread abroad', so that hell and all its subjects may lose their breath through the strength of the perfume.

Griffiths referred to herself at the close of one of her letters to Hughes (Letter I, 28 November 1800 *gwefan Ann Griffiths* website) as 'your fellow-pilgrim on the journey to eternity'. This phrase points to a common theme of hymnists and religious writers; indeed, of the work of Welsh hymnists as we have seen in Williams's hymns. Griffiths was much influenced theologically by discussions with Hughes as well as, later on, by his preaching and that of other Methodist preachers such as the influential minister, Thomas Charles of Bala. Each month, Griffiths, in a group of Methodists, travelled over the Berwyn mountains to Bala in order to receive Holy Communion from an ordained minister. The opportunity these monthly visits provided Griffiths to experience preaching of scriptural profundity added to her own insight into the Christian faith engendered by her knowledge of Anglican creeds and her private scriptural meditation (Pike 2018, n. pag.). Although the evangelical revival had started in south Wales in the 1730s through the work of Daniel Rowland, Howell Harris and William Williams, it was largely through the efforts of Thomas Charles that Methodism spread rapidly into north Wales. Charles described the spiritual revival in the area, and particularly in the town of Bala, from 1792 as 'a very gracious work: Grace abounds towards the chief of sinners, unsought for, unexpected and unthought of … Convictions are deep and overpowering' (Rhys 2007 address). Charles's abounding grace makes direct reference to Bunyan's spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, detailing God's mercy and beneficence as Bunyan, the sinner, journeyed to conversion.

Griffiths's conversion was of particular spiritual intensity, characteristic of the passion she brought to her whole religious life (*gwefan Ann Griffiths* website). It is thought that she began composing hymns in 1802 when she was twenty-six years old; her known output of around seventy stanzas displays a mature and profound theological knowledge and spirituality. Griffiths never wrote down any of her hymns for viewing; for her they were personal expressions of her relationship with the triune God and not intended for public use. Rather than being congregational hymns, they are praise poems reflecting her devotion to God and her profound evangelical Christian faith within the context of her knowledge and study of Scripture. According to John Hughes, Griffiths often wrote in her letters to him of something – a Scripture reading or a personal meditation – that 'gripped [her] mind' and

provided inspiration for her hymns (Pike 2018, n. pag.). Many sources indicate the remarkable nature of her spiritual experiences; in the context of her letter to Ruth Evans's sister, Elizabeth, her spiritual confidante, Saunders Lewis states: 'She knew of spiritual experiences and "visitations" which pertain to a very high level of contemplative prayer' (Pike 2018, n. pag.). Griffiths reflected and meditated deeply after her conversion; she was much given to ecstasy, often communing with God in a trance-like manner (Sell 2015, 263). As a mystic, she wanted nothing more than unity with God through her surrender of self. In an extract from one of her letters (VIII *gwefan Ann Griffiths* website), Griffiths writes of God:

> One who is Divine, all-present, all-knowing, all-powerful to bring forward and perfect the good work which He has begun, according to the conditions of the covenant of grace, according to the decree of Three in One on behalf of the objects of heaven's morning Love! Oh! to be in their number! I thirst to rise higher in the belief that there is a personal indwelling of the Holy Ghost in my soul – a belief brought through revelation …

According to Pike, the letters Griffiths wrote convey 'a soul drawing ever closer into an intimacy with God such as is found in the writings of some of the great Christian mystics' (2018, n. pag.). H. A. Hodges is in agreement that Griffiths was a mystic; he writes that with a 'penetrating vision ... Ann sees what so many Christians half-hesitatingly believe, the depth of her insight into the sea of wonders, and the intensity of her aspiration to union with Christ' (Sell 2015, 263).

Towards the end of 1804, some months after the death of her father, Ann married Thomas Griffiths, an elder in the Methodist society of Meifod. In the following year, Griffiths gave birth to a daughter, Elizabeth, who died after two weeks, followed by Griffiths herself less than a fortnight later. Both were buried in the churchyard at Llanfihangel-yng-ngwynfa and both funerals were conducted by the local Anglican clergyman, Thomas Evans, who had been the cause of Griffiths's distress with his comments after the Christmas Day service nearly nine years earlier. A week later, at a memorial service for Griffiths at Pontrobert, John Hughes preached, taking for his text Philippians 1:21: 'For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain', a conviction which encapsulates Griffiths's religious experience and perception (Rhys 2007 address).

On the death of Griffiths, Ruth Evans, who had married John Hughes, dictated to her husband the hymns that her mistress had recited. Hughes recorded the hymns in a journal and

in 1806 they were published by Thomas Charles. While they continued to be published throughout the nineteenth century, these were versions edited by Thomas Charles, John Hughes and Robert Jones and it was only in the early twentieth century that the original manuscripts, as collated by John Hughes, were published. Although the various versions – as well as more recent translations – often were, and are, different to the originals, the 1905 version, *Gwaith Ann Griffiths* (*The Work of Ann Griffiths*), by O. M. Edwards and a later one published by H. A. Hodges (1976) are both faithful translations of the originals. H. A. Hodges's translation is particularly noted for its accuracy. Hodges's collection is out of print; however, his translations of all 30 of Griffiths's hymns are included on the webpage, 'Hymns of Ann Griffiths' (*gwefan Ann Griffiths* website). Translation is an important dimension; on the question of translation, Robert Lowth says, 'much depends upon preserving not only the internal meaning, the force and beauty as far as regards the sense, but even the external lineaments, the proper colour and habit, the movement, as it were, the gait of the original' (1829, 36). Given their acknowledged accuracy, the hymn translations by Hodges on the *gwefan Ann Griffiths* website provide the textual sources for this chapter. The Welsh originals come from the same website as edited by E. Wyn James.

Review of scholarship and approach

The Welsh evangelical revival engendered a burgeoning of the hymn genre with thousands of hymns being written in Welsh in the second half of the eighteenth century, powerful expressions of the spiritual movement happening at the time. Griffiths, as a poet composing in her home language, contributed, along with William Williams, extensively to the body of Welsh poems. Although not nearly as prolific as Williams, Griffiths followed in his footsteps, ranking as one of the greats in Welsh literature. Tony Conran states that she is 'the greatest of Welsh women poets' while A. M. Allchin describes her as 'a central figure in the Christian tradition of vision and song' (*gwefan Ann Griffiths* website).

It has proved impossible to source early critical reviews of Griffiths's work. Much, though, has been written about her life with her earliest biographer being Morris Davies who wrote *Cofiant Ann Griffiths gynt o Dolwar Fechan, Llanfihangel yn Ngwynfa, Swydd Drefaldwyn Ynghyd a'i llythyrau a'i hymnau* (translated loosely as *The biography of Ann Griffiths of Dolwar Fechan, Llanfihangel yn Gwynwyn, Montgomeryshire along with her letters and hymns*) which was published in 1865. There are several texts (not all of them available) from the early twentieth century onwards that deal with various aspects of Griffith's life and hymnic expression by writers such as H. Elvet Lewis (1903), D. Morgan

Lewis (1924), G. M. Roberts (1955) and Sian Megan (1982). These, and others, are listed on the *gwefan Ann Griffiths* website. Contemporary biographies include Robert Rhys's *The Life and Hymns of Ann Griffiths* (2007) given as an address, which provides critical analysis of Griffiths's work, and David Edward Pike's 'In Search of Ann Griffiths' (2018). However, while biographical works are valuable in providing context for the spiritual, emotional and cognitive development of the poet, examination of scholarly response is of much greater importance. Jan Montefiore points out that with regard to Griffiths, 'Biography does tend to prevail over the poems' (Munday 2018, 122). Much in the field of literary criticism about Griffiths has been written in Welsh, limiting the availability of resources for this particular study.

The Cardiff University website is an invaluable resource including articles by E. Wyn James, 'Introduction to the Life and Work of Ann Griffiths', and 'Bala and the Bible: Thomas Charles, Ann Griffiths and Mary Jones', and a translation of all Griffiths's hymns by H. A. Hodges, as well as the original Welsh versions of her hymns. James's articles offer much insight into Griffiths's religious upbringing and her conversion to Methodism. James considers the influences on Griffiths and the characteristics and themes of her hymns and gives full weight to the significance of the passion and intensity of Griffiths's spiritual experiences. However, given the context of where the articles appear, they are limited in terms of any in-depth critical study – James himself states that this is not 'the place to elaborate on' either the characteristics or themes of her hymns – and James makes little mention of Griffiths's mysticism, an important aspect of her character and writing. In his *Flame in the Mountains: Williams Pantycelyn, Ann Griffiths and the Welsh Hymn* (2017), James collates the work of H. A. Hodges on these two significant hymn-writers and the Welsh hymn.

Griffiths's writing has been explored by a number of scholars, chiefly Saunders Lewis (1893–1985), H. A. Hodges (1905–1976), A. M. Allchin (1930–2010), R. M. (Bobi) Jones (1929–2017) and E. Wyn James as mentioned. These scholars all provide a valuable base for arguing the distinct, discernible poetics of Griffiths's hymns. Patrick Thomas's chapter, 'Donald Allchin, Welsh Holy Places and the Saint from Dolwar Fach' in *Boundless Grandeur: The Christian Vision of A. M. Donald Allchin* (2015) edited by David G. R. Keller considers Griffiths's writing in terms of her symbolic language, scriptural allusions and the complexity of her theological ideas. Allchin was a twentieth-century theologian dedicated to the study of Welsh literature, particularly that of Ann Griffiths. Thomas's chapter deals with

Allchin's experience of and analytical approach to Griffiths's work, an experience which contributes to considerations of the interaction of spirituality and poetry in Welsh literary criticism. Allchin's particular importance in relation to this study is within the context of his interest in sung theology and the affinity he felt with the 'dimension of wonder' captured in Griffiths's work (Keller 2015, xxxi).

Hodges and Allchin both argue that 'Ann at her best is a poet of imagery, especially paradoxical imagery, rather than of reflective thought'. This places her in the imaginative mode, which expresses 'a certain exaltation of feeling' (Hodges 2017, n. pag.). Saunders Lewis, on the other hand, emphasises in his noted lecture, 'Ann Griffiths: Arolwg Llenyddol' ('Ann Griffiths: A Literary Overview'), published in 1976, that Griffiths is 'a poet of contemplation, a poet of the intellect'. These viewpoints lend themselves to an inquiry about the Methodist perception of the importance of both knowing and feeling God, which Griffiths brought to bear on her poetry, and which is a major line of pursuit in this study. In his lecture, Lewis highlighted the fact that criticism has been levelled at her for what some consider as a mere composite of biblical texts rather than original expression. This scriptural intertextuality is a particular feature of her work, but it is through the rich complexity of her use of biblical allusion and reference that her theological conviction emerges. E. Wyn James argues that Griffiths's biblical references are clearly chosen with careful consideration and woven into accomplished and impassioned stanzas (2005, 87).

Felicity Leng in *Invincible Spirits: A Thousand Years of Women's Spiritual Writings* (2006) considers particular perceptions and convictions of Griffiths's regarding the path to salvation, her sense of her own transience and sin, God's transcendence, and union with God. Similarly, Manon Ceridwen James in *Women, Identity and Religion in Wales: Theology, Poetry, Story* (2018) investigates features in Griffiths's work such as the intensity of her relationship with God and of her longing for Christ, and the 'mystical tradition of Welsh religious poetry where God is experienced powerfully in ordinary life' (2018, 99).

Her mysticism is a significant aspect of Griffiths's character and writing, and the work of the above two authors prompts scrutiny in this chapter of Griffiths's manifestation and expression of her mysticism in her hymns. R. M. Jones describes Griffiths as 'a more genuine mystic, indeed, the most genuine and certainly the most fascinating mystic in Welsh history' (1997 part 1, 40). In his two parts of 'Another Celtic Spirituality – The Calvinistic Mysticism of Ann Griffiths (1776–1805)', he looks critically at what defines biblical

mysticism, particularly in relation to Griffiths and the expression of her profound spirituality (1997, part 2, 36):

> Ann Griffiths' central attention was directed at everything about the Lord Jesus, – His incarnation, His death, His resurrection, His intercession, His wonderful Person. She praised Him. She adored Him. He was absolutely everything to her. She could never fathom His love. She was driven to proclaim in majestic verse her longing for His company.

Arthur L. Johnson argues in *Faith Misguided* (1988) that the goal of spiritual life in mysticism becomes union with God rather than 'salvation and Christian maturity' (Jones 1997, 44). Johnson's perspective is part of a Reformed tradition that has an unfavourable view of mysticism. An investigation of Griffiths's hymns, however, shows her perception of the significance of salvation, of Christ's redeeming action in the spiritual journey. S. P. Pretorius in his article 'Understanding Spiritual Experience in Christian Spirituality' contextualises and elucidates spiritual experience: 'Transcendence of the physical reality in order to attain contact with the superhuman, the sacred or ultimate reality with the aim of transformation is central to a spiritual experience' (2008, 151). His exposition provides a lens into the nature of spiritual experience on which an understanding of and insight into Griffiths's intensity of interaction with God can be based. Griffiths's writing is completely intrinsic to her very individual religious experience and it is her 'experiential lively Christian pilgrimage' (Munday 2018, 60) that gives rise to the poetic expression of her religion of the heart. Nathan Llywelyn Munday's study, "'Pursuing God': Poetic Pilgrimage and the Welsh Christian Aesthetic' (2018), which engages with Griffiths's poetry as '*part of* rather than a *product* of her spiritual experiences' (2018, 63), provides a foundation for a detailed look at the heart experience informing her hymns. Like Bridget of Sweden and Julian of Norwich, both mystics of the Middle Ages, Griffiths knew direct, intense experience of the divine.

Munday references Saunders Lewis and R. M. Jones and illuminates their engagement with the interrelationship between religion and poetry. He draws attention to Jones's critical work being centred in a strongly Welsh Calvinist aesthetic, an aesthetic which frames the Calvinist mysticism of Griffiths that so informed her life, her religious experiences and her poetry. Munday broadens Jones's perspective by identifying and exploring the features of a Welsh *Christian* aesthetic. According to Munday, this allows for a study of the diversity of Christian experiences which forms part of the Christian tradition. Munday's perspective on the importance of a Christian aesthetic has bearing on the interface between poetry and

hymnody, between religion and emotion. In this regard, John Corrigan's examination of scholarship in his 'Introduction: The Study of Religion and Emotion' in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion* (2007) serves as a springboard for a consideration of the poetics of hymnody impinging as it does on the linguistic expression of emotion.

Munday demonstrates the impact that Griffiths has had and continues to have particularly within the Welsh poetic tradition; her hymns and her character as a Christian have invited numerous responses. He draws attention to poets such as Sally Roberts Jones (1935), Mererid Hopwood (1964), Rowan Williams (1950) and R. S. Thomas (1913–2000) who were inspired, in different ways, by her mysticism, her spiritual convictions and her iconic status. All these poets, and others, have responded to Griffiths's work through translations or through poems of their own about Griffiths or in dialogue with her or in her voice (Munday 2018, 121). Griffiths's hymns combine, in R. M. Jones's words, 'truth and beauty', or doctrine and theological teaching with personal poetic expression and articulation of the beauty of Christ (1997 part 1, 43). Her songs convey praise and wonder, her passionate faith, her sense of holiness in the ordinary. It is through them that she explores her spiritually and emotionally intense relationship with God and it is through them that is heard her unique poetic voice, a voice which has earned her a place as a figure in Welsh iconography.

This chapter on Ann Griffiths explores the extent to which her verse expresses her mysticism, based on a discussion of salient features in her work – themes, imagery, style and form – and the way in which her mystic spirituality and her theological convictions are conveyed through a poetic voice. As with Williams, the argument is not about the determination of her hymns as poetry but about the nature of the hymns as essentially poetic and the manner in which the poetry serves the meaning. The study on these two Welsh poets contributes to the overall substance of this thesis in the identification of the heart experience in Methodism and its poetic and theological expression in hymnody. The approach in this chapter, as with Wesley and Williams, is one of close textual analysis.

Gwaith Ann Griffiths (The works of Ann Griffiths)

Griffiths's output was relatively small. It is generally recognised that only 73 stanzas, which form 30 hymns, can be confidently attributed to her. Some of her hymns consist of a single stanza while her longest is made up of seven stanzas; it is unknown whether her single-verse hymns were fragments to be developed further and whether her multi-verse hymns were individual stanzas combined into longer hymns by Griffiths herself or by Ruth or John Hughes after her death (*gwefan Ann Griffiths* website). Despite the small extent of her

oeuvre, Griffiths's reputation has come to be one of both national and international standing in the Christian world and in the field of hymnology.

Themes

Griffiths is a hymnist of great spiritual and theological insight and conviction; Allchin describes her as having an ardent longing to 'share in the vision and the song of the angelic hosts' (1995, 89). As is evident from her hymns, Griffiths uses biblical imagery and language to convey her own spiritual ideas and experiences and to give life to her themes. Scripture was the chief source of her reading as well as being central to her meditation and she had extensive knowledge of the Bible. According to James, she saw the Bible 'as one rich tapestry worked by one divine Author. She also saw the whole as turning around the person of Jesus Christ. He is the key to every part of the Bible; to Him it all refers, sometimes overtly, sometimes in parable and type' (*gwefan Ann Griffiths* website). Griffiths's Calvinism, with its insistence on the supreme sovereignty of God, was foundational to her expression, a belief which she articulated with passionate conviction. Morris Davies, her biographer, described Calvinist Methodism as a religion of heat as well as light (*gwefan Ann Griffiths* website), a perception to which Griffiths gives credence in certain declarations (Hymn VIII):

Wonderful to come out living
From the fiery furnace-blast

The longing for Jesus Christ, characteristic of her mystical nature, is a theme that pervades Griffiths's work and which is expressed with the connected themes of the rejection of worldly vanities, the desire for holiness and to conform to the image of Christ, and the struggle against sin. These themes are discussed largely in their relation to one another and as characteristic in Griffiths's verse.

The most frequently sung hymn of Griffiths in modern Wales is *There he stands among the myrtles* (Hymn XIII) which is found in various translations, although one of the reasons for its popularity is the tune 'Cwm Rhondda' to which it is set. This well-known hymn tune accompanies, in English, Williams's *Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah*. Griffiths, as with Williams, draws richly from the Old Testament but always with a focus on salvation. In the first stanza of *There he stands among the myrtles*, Griffiths references Zechariah 1:8 – 'I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle

trees …' – but for her, it is Jesus Christ, identified with the angel of the Lord, who is standing among the myrtle trees:

There he stands among the myrtles,
Worthiest object of my love;
Yet in part I know his glory
Towers all earthly things above

Griffiths makes two aspects clear here: first, her knowledge of Christ is 'in part' and it is only in the final days when the veils are 'rent asunder' as seen in Hymn IX discussed below that Christians can come to full grace and, secondly, Christ's glory is all-encompassing and limitless. The boundless love that Griffiths feels for her Saviour and which is conveyed in hymns such as this – reflected, for example, in her ardent desire expressed in the last two lines of the hymn to dwell 'in his love through all my days' – is a characteristic feature of Welsh Methodist hymn-writers (Keller 2015, 151). The articulation of her desire for Christ, however, is more than Christian commitment to the divine; it is the very essence of the mysticism – complete union with Christ – that pervades her thought and feeling.[2] This is evident in the transcendent quality of lines such as 'Cling to him, my soul, for ever' (Hymn I) and (Hymn XXI):

And his right hand, filled with blessings,
Tenderly my soul enfolds.

Griffiths achieves a poetic depiction of her Christ-centred experience of God through a diction of adoration and emotional intensity: she gazes upon the beauty of Christ, she 'feast[s] on love', she uses strong emotive verbs such as 'clasped', 'burns' (in terms of love) and 'flame' ('with zeal'). Her employment of figurative devices such as her tautological, 'loving ardour' emphasises the depth of her spiritual passion.

Griffiths's theme of her longing for Christ is interlinked with her rejection of worldly vanities. She extols the glories of Christ, proclaiming his 'high worth' above all else. She uses the same imagery as Williams does from the Song of Solomon (2:1; 5:10) in her second stanza:

He's the beauteous Rose of Sharon,

[2] Throughout her work, Griffiths articulates her desire for Christ in her references to the Song of Solomon; for some critics this elicits an erotic characterisation of her relationship with Jesus given the nature of the Songs. However, this is an area I have chosen not to investigate since it opens up a new and complex line of study.

White and ruddy, fair to see;
Excellent above ten thousand
Of the world's prime glories he.

This stanza, in the vein of much biblical writing, is chiastic granting it a lyrical unifying pattern, with the reversal of the central idea functioning to emphasise and reiterate the beauty and glory of Christ. In the third stanza, Griffiths asks the question:

What have I to do henceforward
With vain idols of this earth?

a question which Allchin finds troubling in what Keller defines as its 'world-denying aspect' (2015, 152). This would appear to refer to a renunciation of the things of this world. Allchin describes Griffiths's spirituality as encompassing an 'acute sense that if God can occupy the first place in man's heart and man's mind, then it is a betrayal of his love, a denial of the very source of life and meaning, to allow anything else to take that first place' (Thomas in Keller 2015, 153). However, the reference in the hymn is an Old Testament one, to Hosea 14:8 – 'What have I to do any more with idols?' – alluding to the repentance of Israel, pointing again to Griffiths's rich biblical knowledge. I would argue that Griffiths's hymn refers to a denial of worldly vanities as represented by the 'idols' of the Hosea reference, rather than to a denial of the world at large as seen by Allchin.

Griffiths's view is of a God who is transcendent, but sentiments such as Allchin's regarding her 'world-denying' tendency do not necessarily point to a denial of God's immanence as some of her poetic and spiritual expressions show. In this particular hymn, the metaphorical 'He's the beauteous Rose of Sharon' refers to Jesus, an inferred (although traditional) symbol since nowhere is this image explicitly applied to Jesus in the Bible. However, since Sharon in the time of Solomon was a wild, fertile plain in Palestine known for its many beautiful flowers, Griffiths's use of the image seems to encompass an acknowledgement of the beauty of God's creation, rather than denying or rejecting it. Her reference to 'vain idols' perhaps more readily suggests the things to which humankind ascribes importance, leading to worldliness rather than to godliness – possessions, riches, status, for example. In the Acts of the Apostles, Paul and Barnabas say, 'We … preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein' (14:15). Griffiths's lines – and the sentiments in Acts – echo Watts: 'All the vain things that charm me most' from *When I*

survey the wondrous cross (APHS 515). The resonance with Watts reiterates the futility of placing importance on the worldly rather than the godly.

The recognition that God is a Creator God underpins the Christian faith and the devotion to a God of beauty and love, a devotion which ineradicably informed Griffiths's life. In another translation of the hymn, the word used is 'wretched vanities' – in either translation the embracing of 'idols' is indicative of a resultant futility or ignobility. Griffiths's rejection of 'vain idols' refers to anything that displaces the supreme importance of God in her life and her complete dedication to service of him. Always, her gaze is fixed upon him, as the lines from Hymn XIV show:

Earth cannot, with all its trinkets,
Slake my longings at this hour

It is Griffiths's love of and devotion to Jesus Christ that consume her:

Let my days be wholly given
Jesus' blood to glorify

In the expression in her work of her longing for Jesus Christ, Griffiths articulates her desire to be as like him as possible, for holiness. This she expresses in a blend of scriptural allusions and nature imagery which add credence to the viewpoint that Griffiths was very aware of God's creation, although only inasmuch as her spiritual consciousness was furthered by it (Hymn XXIV):

God, make me like a tree well planted grow
In fertile ground where living waters flow,
Wide-rooting, ever green, and fruiting free
'Neath showers from that dire wound on Calvary.

God's promised land is good; it knows no woe;
In all its borders milk and honey flow;
Fine clusters thence are brought on desert ways;
A heavenly land, and none can speak its praise.

The association of Old Testament imagery with Christological reference in the first stanza functions to convey that new life, the abundance of life in God – the 'tree well planted', the 'fertile ground', the 'living waters' – is brought about through the blood of Jesus Christ, just

as the rain, the 'showers', nourish the earth. The image of Christ's blood as rain is a striking one that resonates with Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: 'See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!' (Marlowe 2007, 66). Faustus's desperate cry, 'One drop would save my soul' brings forcefully to mind the concept of the saving power of Jesus' blood that was so vitally a part of the spirituality of the eighteenth-century Methodists. While it is not conducive to suggest a conscious literary awareness on Griffiths's part, the imagery is part of a common Christian language which gains in traction through recurrent application.

The image of 'living waters' is one that appears frequently in Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments. In Jeremiah 17:13, for example, the Lord is referred to as 'the fountain of living waters' while John writes of the rivers of living water that will flow from those who believe in the Lord (7:38). The term 'promised land' has both a physical and theological meaning referring to the place, Canaan, promised to the Israelites and to the kingdom of heaven reached through salvation in Jesus Christ. In both literal and metaphorical senses, it is a land of blessing and bounty: in Numbers 13:27 it is described as a land that 'floweth with milk and honey'. In Griffiths's hymn, the 'heavenly land' is of such glory that 'none can speak its praise'.

Griffiths not only proclaims her wish to imitate Christ, to be as like him as possible, metaphorically in the above hymn, but expresses plainly this wish to be 'clothed in thine own likeness' in Hymn V. This wish encompasses her entreaty to be, like Christ, a force against 'Hell, ungodliness, corruption' and to be filled with holiness which, in this hymn, is implicit in the 'fragrance' of Christ'. Griffiths's desire for holiness stems clearly from her first encounter with Christ on hearing Benjamin Jones preaching. Reputedly, she felt 'such a pricking of the conscience' that she rejoiced, shouting out, 'I have been saved' (Jones in Munday 2018, 65). She seems to refer to her conversion experience in her first two hymns. As Munday points out, being 'born again', or 'being converted' lies at the heart of experiential religion which is generally linked with mysticism; this, in its earliest and implicit meaning, is suggestive of Thomas Aquinas's *cognitio Dei experimentalis* or experiential knowledge of God (2018, 87). This was a term used by Geert Grote (1340–1384) to define mysticism, the mystical union with God (Koonce 2014, 4). Aquinas writes in his *Summa Theologica*: 'The other knowledge of God's will or goodness is effective or experimental and thereby a man experiences in himself the taste of God's sweetness …' (1947, 3667). Individual experience of, and personal union with Christ, is a vital cornerstone in the Methodist belief of salvation from sin and the resultant rebirth into new life. Griffiths, by all accounts, attained a high level of contemplative prayer which informed her spiritual and

devotional life; her mystic Christian experience was one of living wholly in and through Christ. John Calvin called the state of being in Christ the *unio mystica* to illuminate the concept that salvation and mystic union with Christ went hand in hand for a Christian (1960, 2046). Griffiths expresses the wonder of her individual experience of grace in the context of her conversion (Hymn II):

In the Presence here – O wonder! –
God receives me tranquilly

This same sense of wonder is evident in Griffiths's longest hymn *Wondrous sight for men and angels!* (Hymn XXII), which was described by Saunders Lewis as 'one of the majestic songs in the religious poetry of Europe' (Keller 2015, 154). This hymn clearly shows the wealth of allusion to and reference drawn from Scripture, which reveals again the depth of Griffiths's biblical knowledge. The second stanza refers to the narrative in the book of Exodus when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, while also directly mentioning or alluding to verses from Isaiah, Ephesians, John, Colossians, Psalms, Ezekiel and Hebrews (James 2019, 326). In seven stanzas, the hymn addresses the different stages of Christ's narrative from birth through crucifixion to resurrection and union with the Father in heaven. It bears the influence of the traditional Welsh *plygain* carol in its subject matter and in its stylistic use of alliteration. The repetition of 'thanks' in the lines below functions to emphasise the word and with the alliterative 'th' – 'thanks' and 'thousand' – highlights the magnitude of the thanksgiving and praise bestowed by the hymnist on God 'who all his wonders/ For my worship here displays':

Thanks for ever, thanks ten thousand,
While I've breath, all thanks and praise

In the Welsh, the same function is carried by the three-times repeated *diolch*, meaning 'thanks'. The hymn, a deeply personal one, is concerned not only with the message of salvation but has a decidedly eschatological theme. The last two stanzas draw the hymn to an affirmation of eternity in heaven with God expressed in strongly mystical terms:

Clasped in close eternal union
And communion I'll remain.

Griffiths expresses the fulfilment in heaven of her striving on earth to be like Jesus: 'There, new-fashioned in his likeness'. Her language is elevated and exulting, articulating 'all

thanks and praise' to the 'King of Kings'; she writes with passion and intensity as she pays the 'highest homage' to him. Griffiths's repeated use of the adjective 'fiery' – 'fiery splendour' and 'fiery hosts' – not only intensifies the emotive quality of the hymn but adds metaphorical significance to the descriptions; in the Bible, fire symbolises the presence of God, his radiant glory and holiness. The word 'wonders' – again in alliterative use – appears three times in this hymn and the opening line refers to God as a 'Wondrous sight for men and angels!' This use of the word 'wonder' in its various associated forms – *rhyfedd* and *rhyfeddod* in Welsh – is a thread that runs through Griffiths's hymns (Rhys 2007 address). In its application in her verses it denotes both a feeling and a quality thus serving subjectively and objectively to create a sense of awe.

With all Griffiths's longing for holiness, she was very conscious of her sinful condition. The recognition of her sinful state is articulated in *Wondrous sight for men and angels!* in the descriptive 'body of corruption'. This image refers both to mortal flesh which decays and the sin into which humankind so often falls (Hymn XXII):

In my nature tried and tempted
Like the meanest of our race

The 'body of corruption' becomes transformed into spirit amidst 'the fiery hosts on high'. Griffiths uses the imagery to counterpoint the life of the flesh as opposed to the life of the spirit as expressed in Galatians 6:8: 'For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting'. The sinner who 'soweth to the Spirit' can claim, in Griffiths's hymn, 'close eternal union' with Christ.

However, the Christian path is not always an easy one. In the hymn below, the reality of Griffiths's inner struggle is clear (Hymn VI):

Each day from the fierce conflict
I long to turn aside –
Not leave the ark, or Israel,
But turn from human pride,
And come to the King's table,
Who bids me go up higher,
When in the dust to love him
Was all I durst desire.

This is a recurrent theme in Griffiths's hymn-writing and is a component of the yearning for heaven that she expresses. In a letter to Elizabeth Evans, she writes of death being a gain for her since she will 'be able to leave behind every inclination that goes against the will of God, to leave behind every ability to dishonour the law of God' (*gwefan Ann Griffiths* website).

The juxtaposition in this hymn between her state of sinfulness and the holy law of God is paradoxical, a device that is common in many of Griffiths's hymns as, indeed, in the mystical tradition. Griffiths uses a paradox to convey the concept of life and death through Jesus:

He, creation's life and movement,
Of the grave a tenant made.

The verbal opposition inherent in the following lines with the words 'walk', 'run' and 'stand' is expressed in relation to the Cross and salvation: (Hymn XXIX):

And as I walk, my course I'll run,
And as I run I'll stand and see

This opposition contains, within it, a figurative meaning in the phrase 'my course I'll run' to refer to a continuous process of time or a natural progression, in this case, the Christian journey. Griffiths juxtaposes, with great effect, the process of life on earth 'as I run' with the end in eternity when 'full salvation' is wrought.

Imagery

Griffiths was always concerned with the tension between the struggle against sin and the striving for holiness and union with Christ. She describes the struggles to attain righteousness and eternal life in terms of battle. In a letter to Elizabeth Evans about 'the efficacy of secret prayer', she writes, 'I am fully convinced that it much surpasses a host of armed men for facing enemies. I know from experience of finding myself surrounded by enemies and having nothing to do but that: "And I give myself unto prayer"; and that answering the purpose by causing them to fall backwards'. Writing to John Hughes, her friend and spiritual counsellor, she voices her concern that 'the warfare is as hot now as ever, enemies within, enemies without' and writes of 'these turbulent days of the winnowing of Zion' (*gwefan Ann Griffiths* website).

Her hymns, too, frame her spiritual journey as a battle as is common among hymnists and poets. However, Griffiths's hymns attain an intensity born of her exceptional spiritual or

mystical experiences – in the degree of their force and in physical manifestation – both in her consciousness of her own sinfulness and in her extreme joy of salvation. She writes of Christ's Passion as 'that battle' (Hymn I) while her own battle is 'the conflict sore' (Hymn V) and 'the fierce conflict' (Hymn VI). Griffiths refers to the many warlike descriptors in the Bible to convey God's might and protection, and Christ's victory over sin, associating images of battle with herself:

There my stronghold in the war;
There I find my warlike harness,
Arming me to face the foe;
There my life is safely hidden
When to conflict forth I go.

In Hymn VIII, she uses imagery of winnowing, as she did in her letter to John Hughes:

Time of cleansing! Time of winnowing!
Yet 'tis calm, without dismay;
He who soon shall be my refuge
Holds the winnowing-fan today.

The references to winnowing are significant depicting as they do, in this context, God's judgement but also adding a richness of meaning in connection with the Calvinist belief in God's elect. God who holds the 'winnowing-fan' is the 'Judge of the earth' (Psalm 94:2), the God of righteousness and justice but also the God who, in Calvinism, saves or damns. The dual forces of revolution and revival in her time clearly had an effect on Griffiths, the one directing many of her themes, scriptural allusions and images, the other feeding her passionate religiosity. Such was her exultant spirituality that John Hughes said of her nearly forty years after her death that she 'shone with greater intensity and prominence in spiritual religion than anyone I saw during my lifetime' (*gwefan Ann Griffiths* website).

Griffiths's imagery and symbolism resonate with scriptural significance. Sacred Hebrew writings are, by and large, inherently poetic according to Robert Lowth, both in their construction and in the 'more exquisite mode of expression' (1829, 37). Lowth attributes poetic language to the manifestation of 'vehement affections of the mind', to enthusiasm and, regarding the Song of Solomon in particular, describes its anthropopathic nature as being 'derived from the passions' (1829, 38/255). Griffiths draws on the poeticism of biblical

imagery to imbue her own poetry with force and energy; in her use of the language of the Bible to convey the depths of her own experience her hymns are animated with a poetic spirit. The following hymn draws strongly on images from the Old Testament (Hymn X):

Lord, thy fainting bride remember,
As a hart leap to her side;
Let not Amalek o'erthrow her
Utterly in warlike pride;
Prowling foxes wander through her,
Spoil her clusters day by day;
The Shekina of God's presence
Slowly, slowly draws away.

The first line, within the context of the whole stanza, holds a rich complexity of meaning. The bride, as denoted many times in the Bible, particularly in conjunction with the symbolism of Christ as the bridegroom, alludes to the Church, seen in hymns of Charles Wesley's discussed earlier. The imagery of the 'fainting bride' carries suggestions of the Song of Solomon where the 'bride' is sick with love (5:8). In this Bible chapter, the symbolism centres on Christ awakening the Church, thus, the hymn is a plea for God's presence and strength to overcome foes. The metaphor of the hart also comes from the Song of Solomon (2:17); just as the beloved is likened to a hart offering protection until the night shadows flee, so the Lord is urged to defend his 'bride'. With the reference to Amalek, the image of the bride takes on further significance. Amalek, as described in the Bible, was an enemy nation of the Israelites which 'smote the hindmost of thee' and 'feared not God' (Deuteronomy 25:18). The 'fainting bride', thus, also connotes the Israelite nation in the face of attack by the Amalekites. A further dimension emerges in the lines,

Prowling foxes wander through her,
Spoil her clusters day by day

which, again, are a reference to the Song of Solomon: 'Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes' (2:15). The bride in the hymn – both the Church and the Israelite nation – is beset by 'prowling' enemies; nevertheless, the imagery in both the hymn and the corresponding scriptural verse is suggestive of beauty and bounty.

The stanza ends on a sombre note as God appears to withdraw. Shekinah, although not specifically referred to in the Bible, denotes in literal terms the dwelling of the divine

presence of God; connotatively it alludes to God's glory. In Exodus 24:16, 'the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai' while later in chapter 40, 'the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle' (34). In the New Testament, Paul describes 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Corinthians 4:6). And yet, despite the withdrawal of the Shekinah, of God's glory, within the context of the Old Testament allusions in the hymn, his ongoing presence becomes apparent in the New Testament promise of salvation through Jesus Christ:

Thou who art the Resurrection,
Speak the word, and they shalt rise,
Thy new Name inscribed upon them,
Radiant as the morning skies.

In Hymn IX, Griffiths marries the theme of corruption with that of the transcendent grace of God. The image of the veil is used to effect to convey the actions of concealment and revelation:

Since I'm so corrupt by nature,
Straying from thee constantly,
'Tis for me a grace transcendent
On thy holy mount to be;
Here the veils are rent asunder,
All concealment done away;
Thou thine all-excelling glory
Over all things dost display.

The veil in the above instance carries implications not only of concealment of God's glory which is finally 'rent asunder' but of covering corruption as in the 'whited sepulchre' in Matthew 23:27 where inner wickedness is masked by outer virtue. Conversely, the veil image reveals the way to God. There are many references to veils in the Bible, most of these showing the use of the veil as a symbolic curtain, protecting a holy place. Of these, the most significant are found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke describing how the veil in front of the temple was torn apart when Jesus died on the cross. The implication is that Christ, by his sacrificial death, opened the way for believers to reach God directly. Hebrews 10:19–20 makes it clear that the entrance to the holy place is Christ himself: 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and

living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh'. In *Wondrous sight for men and angels!* the removal of the veil denotes not only the coming into the presence of God in heaven, but also Griffiths's assumption of a new self in everlasting communion with Christ:

There, new-fashioned in his likeness,
Veils and fancies done away

With the removal of the veil and the transformation of the self in Christ's likeness, comes a new awareness and knowledge of Christ, an end to 'fancies'.

In all Griffiths's hymns, 'Christ, our precious Mediator' is the source of the wonder which is such a characteristic of her writing (*gwefan Ann Griffiths* website). He is 'creation's life and movement' (Hymn XXII). This particular depiction of Christ, his bestowing of salvation, is allied in Griffiths's hymns to images of water. While water is used metaphorically in the Bible in various ways, Griffiths in her writing uses it to poetic effect to convey the power of salvation – the 'streams of our salvation' flow, and salvation is a 'mighty flood'. In John 4:14, Jesus says, 'But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life'. The image of 'living waters' is a common one; in Griffiths's verses it highlights her thirst for God, her desire to 'drink for ever deeply'.

Griffiths adds to her sense of wonder and joy at the beauty and glory of the Lord through descriptive language laden with scriptural meaning. In a single-verse hymn, she references pomegranates, a multi-layered allusion to the Bible in which she draws the Old and New Testaments together (Hymn XXVI):

The bells are sweetly ringing
Great Jesus' robes around;
The odour of pomegranates
Suffuses all the ground

The direct source of the stanza is Exodus 28:33 in which the robes of Aaron as High Priest are described: 'And beneath upon the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about'. Jesus is referred to as the High Priest particularly in the epistle to the Hebrews which demonstrates the correlation between the traditional roles of the Jewish High Priest and Christ's fulfilment of these roles such as teaching the law and being a mediator between God

and the people. Pomegranates have a significance in both Jewish tradition and the Christian religion representing righteousness and eternal life, while the seeds are often seen as epitomising the people of the Church. The 'odour of pomegranates' carries connotations of the presence of Christ, the High Priest, spreading throughout the earth. The imagery Griffiths employs to convey the omnipresence of Christ is corroborated in another hymn where it is the fragrance of his name that is 'diffused in every place' (Hymn V).

Griffiths uses fragrance to liken Christ to a precious and costly ointment (Hymn X):

Thy new Name is precious ointment,
Fragrant, powerful and free

and (Hymn V):

Sweetly spreads my spikenard's fragrance
While I feast on love unbought

The reference to ointment deepens the theological significance since it holds multiple meanings and refers to various incidents in the Bible. An 'oil of holy ointment' was used to anoint the tabernacle in Exodus 30:25–26; Aaron, as High Priest is described as being anointed with 'precious ointment' in Psalm 133:2; Mary, the sister of Martha anointed Jesus' feet with 'ointment of spikenard, very costly' (John 12:3). Ointment connotes healing and holiness as well as unreserved love such as on the part of Mary. It also points to the gift, by one of the wise men, of myrrh, a key ingredient for making holy anointing oil and for preparing bodies for burial; the references from the two hymns above, thus, hold implications of Christ's priesthood and his sacrificial death.

Another characteristic trope in Griffiths's hymn-writing is that of radiance. Griffiths was known for her passionate spirituality that manifests in her hymns in images of light and fire, which convey the glory and might of the triune God. God, the Father, is described as 'glad and radiant', bidding his incarnate Son to sit at his right hand; the God of love is evoked as having 'peace and reconciliation/ Gently radiant in his face'; Christ's 'new Name' – something to which Griffiths often refers and which is mentioned in Philippians and Revelation – inscribed upon his slain witnesses is 'radiant as the morning skies'. Radiance both emanates, such as from fire or light, or is an attribute, therefore, the radiance of God as Griffiths describes it in her hymns is an active force and a quality of being. Through biblically based imagery, Griffiths displays her conviction and passion stemming as much from her inner consciousness as her doctrinal and scriptural knowledge of God.

Style and form

Griffiths's voice is, at many times, a bardic one, emanating from the influence of her Welsh literary and cultural heritage. In terms of poetic and religious expression she was much impacted by the form of the *englyn* and the *plygain* carol, featuring, as her hymns do, strong biblical content, the full narrative of Christ rather than only the Christmas story, and joyful celebration (Allchin 1995, 96). According to James, she was also immersed in the local poetry of her time, which flourished under the bardic poet, Harri Parri, and her hymns show the legacy of this poetic context (*gwefan Ann Griffiths* website). They sweep from the epic grandeur of lines such as:

Principalities, dominations,
He their overthrow procured

to the lyricism of 'Sweetly spreads my spikenard's fragrance'. In impassioned terms, Griffiths's verse articulates the range of human emotion from the depths – 'Weeping ever, day and night' (Hymn X) – to the heights – 'Gaze with joy upon his person' (Hymn XIV).

Rhys draws attention to Griffiths's expression of her yearning and supplication for and to God through her use of the exclamation 'O' (2007 address). Although this is a characteristic feature of hymn-writing, Rhys shows the frequency of this use relative to the small body of Griffiths's work. Griffiths's exclamations always operate to communicate her deep hunger to draw nearer to God, to know him more closely (Hymn XIX):

O to pierce into the knowledge
Of the one, true, living Lord

Her expressions of longing are within the context of her Christocentric creed, her acknowledgement that Jesus Christ, at once God and man, the 'two natures in one Person', is the way to knowing God, the Father (Hymn XIV):

O to gaze upon his Person,
God in man made visible.

In this and the previous quotation, Griffiths moves from interjection to a statement of the divine truth.

Griffiths makes effective use of the word 'see' – in variations of the Welsh *weld* or *gweld* – as a trope that is threaded throughout her hymns, giving cohesion to the form. The

imperative ‘see’ is used in the English translation for emphatic effect as can be seen in Hymn I in its exclamatory repetition:

When I think upon that battle,
My sad soul leaps up with glee;
See! the law is held in honour,
Yet transgressors walk forth free;
See! our Resurrection’s buried,
And our Life laid underground;
See! our earth with highest heaven
In eternal peace is bound.

In the Welsh version of this hymn, rather than a repetition of ‘see’, the word only appears in the first instance with the other two corresponding lines beginning with the words ‘give’ and ‘bring’. This imparts a somewhat different, more gentle quality although the sense of the whole in both English and Welsh versions is the same. The verb ‘see’ functions in other places in Griffiths’s hymns in an instructional sense rather than in the imperative mood – ‘See him there, his law fulfilling’ and ‘See the golden sceptres shine’ – pointing to the way to God for sinners. In the frequency of its use and its function, the verb ‘see’ takes on particular consequence with regard to its connotations of perception and vision. This is significant in the context of Griffiths’s intense awareness of God and spiritual mysticism.

Griffiths’s imagery and vocabulary feature terms of celebration of and exultation in her mighty Lord. Her language conveys heightened emotion in her constant use of words such as ‘glad’, ‘joy’, ‘glory’, ‘worship, ‘wonder’ with all their derivatives. In one sense, her gaze is an objective one; Saunders Lewis describes her as ‘… a poet who gazes outwards in wonder at the panorama of biblical truth’ (*gwefan Ann Griffiths* website). Nevertheless, she most often wrote in the first person singular and the subjective permeates her writing as she expresses her love for her Saviour (Hymn XIV):

Let my days be wholly given
Jesus’ blood to glorify
…
Gaze with joy upon his Person,
And unceasingly adore.

For Griffiths, this is the primary thrust of her hymn-writing: the personal expression of her adoration of Jesus Christ through all her spiritual thought and experiences.

As a stylistic feature, the repetition of particular words in Griffiths's hymns communicate and accentuate certain truths for her. She uses the Welsh word *dyma* five times in one stanza in the hymn *Here within the tent of meeting* (Hymn II) meaning 'here' or 'this' to emphasise the nearness and reality of God:

Dyma babell y cyfarfod,
Dyma gymod yn y gwaed,
Dyma noddfa i lofruddion,
Dyma i gleifion feddyg rhad;
Dyma fan yn ymyl Duwdod
I bechadur wneud ei nyth

Hodges's translation reads as follows:

Here within the tent of meeting
Is the blood that can atone,
Here the slayer's place of refuge,
Here a healer's power made known;
Here a place, hard by the Godhead,
For the sinner's nest to lie

Similarly, Griffiths's frequent use of the word *ffordd* meaning way or road referring to the way that Christ points to and, therefore, the way that the Christian follows, places the focus on her single-minded spiritual commitment. Again, this is seen in repetition in Hymn IV, *Wholly counter to my nature*:

Ffordd heb ddechrau, eto'n newydd,
Ffordd yn gwneud y meirw'n fyw;
Ffordd i ennill ei thrafaelwyr,
Ffordd yn Briod, Ffordd yn Ben,
Ffordd gysegrwyd, af ar hyd-ddi

The English translation of the hymn expresses this in terms of 'the path', 'the Way' and the verbs 'tread' and 'goes'.

As noted above, while Griffiths articulated her faith in her hymns, they were largely intended for private devotional use and her own comfort and exultation, not for congregational singing. According to James, they are praise poems or songs and their form and structure – even in their English renditions according to Hodges's translations – are of corresponding importance to their content. The majority of her hymns are in an 8.7.8.7.D. metre popular in Welsh hymnic history, which is described by James as a 'majestic' metre (*gwefan Ann Griffiths* website). This is clearly seen in the exultant nature of Hymn I, which can metrically be sung to 'Blaenwern', a popular setting for Charles Wesley's *Love divine, all loves excelling*:

When on high he reascended,
All his work fulfilled below,
Lofty gates their heads uplifted,
All their wondering joy to show;
Doors flew open, choirs sang welcome
To the Incarnate in that land,
And the Father, glad and radiant,
Bade him sit at his right hand.

However, there are notable exceptions which provide variety to Griffiths's work and lend added significance or emphasis to the theme or content. There is the regularity of the single stanza hymn *O wonder always happy bride* where the double couplets and the metrical structure of 8.8.8.8. give a rhythmic musicality that enhances the exultant tone and theme of the Church, the bride of Christ, 'in love allied' to him. Griffiths also occasionally moves away from her most habitual eight-line stanza to a six-line one with a metrical pattern of 8.7.8.7.4.7. or 8.7.8.7.6.7. This variation from the 8.7.8.7.D. form serves to place emphasis on the shorter line, thus foregrounding the more important message of the verse. This can be seen in the hymn *I shall tread the Vale of Weeping* (Hymn XI), for example, in the line 'If his light pierce the night' where the hymnist articulates her longing for Christ, the source of 'life immortal':

I shall tread the Vale of Weeping
Till the blood divine is seen
Pouring from the Rock, a river
That has made ten thousand clean;
If his light pierce the night

I shall find my way aright.

So, too, in a hymn of joy in and praise for Christ's love, *There he stands among the myrtles* (Hymn XIII), the lines of four syllables in each stanza stand out: 'One glad morning', 'Friend of sinners' and 'Be my dwelling'; in Welsh, *Henffych fore*, *Ffrind pechadur* and *O! am aros*. The one-stanza hymn *Let not any, for my blackness* (Hymn XVII) also has an 8.7.8.7.4.7. structure where the four-syllable line – 'Yet I'm covered' with its image of shelter, *Mae a'm cuddia* in Griffiths's Welsh, connoting being hidden – is distinctive. The structure of the stanza helps to carry the message and to emphasise the conviction of the assertion that stands conversely – because of the use of the conjunction, 'yet' – to the preceding lines:

'Tis the sun that, high in splendour,
Shoots his fiery shafts at me;
Yet I'm covered –
Solomon's curtains give me shade.

The punctuation, with the use of the dash, adds emphasis to the concluding line of the hymn, although this only seems to appear in English translations. Griffiths's frequent syllabic irregularity was not only influenced by the very Welshness of her musical context and experience but also served to enhance the individuality of her experiential spiritual passion through her poetic expression.

In contrast with the hymns with shorter or irregular syllabic structures, there are others with a different composition. The hymn *God, make me like a tree well planted grow* (Hymn XXIV) almost reads like lyrical prose due largely to longer lines than are customary for Griffiths – 10 syllables per line:

God, make me like a tree well planted grow
In fertile ground where living waters flow,
Wide-rooting, ever green, and fruiting free
'Neath showers from that dire wound on Calvary.

This achieves a rhythmic flow that enhances the descriptive nature of the hymn, with the rhythm also being driven by the regular couplet rhyming pattern apparent in both English and Welsh. Stanza one has been given above; here is stanza two in Welsh:

Gwlad dda, heb wae, gwlad wedi ei rhoi dan sêl,
Llifeirio mae, a'i ffrwyth o laeth a mêl;

Grawnsypiau gwiw i'r anial dir sy'n dod;
Gwlad nefol yw, uwchlaw mynegi ei chlod.

The form of Griffiths's hymns, most frequently in octave stanzas which allow her themes to develop, serves an essential and particular function as a conduit of emotion. Robert Lowth said of poetry but particularly in the context of the sacred poetry of the Hebrews, 'Poetry itself is indebted for its origin, character, complexion, emphasis, and application, to the effects which are produced upon the mind and body, upon the imagination, the senses, the voice, and respiration, by the agitation of passion' (1829, 137). Griffiths, a poet of passion, gives expression to a spiritual mysticism that is embedded in the very roots of her heart experience. Her hymns are imbued with personal, and with theological and biblical fervour. To quote Lowth again (1829, 140), biblical poetry

> excels in exciting the passions, and in directing them to their noblest end and aim; how it exercises them upon their proper objects; how it strikes and fires the admiration by the contemplation of the Divine Majesty; and, forcing the affections of love, hope, and joy, from unworthy and terrestrial objects, elevates them to the pursuit of the supreme good.

The composition of Griffiths's hymns illuminates her mode of thinking, with poetic technique conveying her innermost being; through the energy of her language, the animation of tone, the rhetoric, Griffiths gives form to her contemplation of the Almighty.

Griffiths's life was one of unswerving faith and Christian dedication. Allchin wrote a description of coming into a state of prayer: 'In prayer we come more intimately into touch with those unconscious levels of our being which seem to be less tied to the time sequence than our consciousness is. Beyond them, we begin to enter into the deep places of the Spirit' (Keller 2015, 157–158). This description can most fittingly be applied to Griffiths, one who unquestionably entered 'into the deep places of the Spirit'. In Hymn V, Griffiths herself exhorts:

Let me only live to hallow
God's pure name till life shall end

Williams and Griffiths: Passion in poetry

William Williams's life spanned most of the eighteenth century while Ann Griffiths's years were brief, unfolding in the last two decades or so of the century and the bulk of her creative

output taking place during the last four years of her life, after Williams's death. Griffiths's oeuvre is small particularly in light of the reputation she later achieved whereas Williams wrote some 950 hymns across his lifetime. There are also differences between the two hymnists, contextually, functionally and stylistically as James notes (2019, 322).

According to Allchin, Williams and Griffiths had very different views of themselves as hymn-writers. Williams's intent to reach his audience was deliberate, with his hymns being published in affordable booklets and distributed by him on his travels to different Methodist societies (Thomas in Keller 2015, 150). Williams wrote his body of hymns as a leader of the evangelical revival in Wales largely to articulate the spiritual journey and experiences of the Methodist converts. His hymns were informed by his preaching both in content and in purpose; they are didactic, theologically and doctrinally based, and expressive of an experiential, evangelical spirituality. In contrast to Williams's evangelical motivation, Thomas records a remark made by Griffiths to Ruth Evans that she composed her hymns 'for my own comfort' (Keller 2015, 150). Her hymns were expressions of her deepest thoughts, feelings and convictions; emerging often out of meditation or periods of trance-like ecstasy they conveyed heartful experience that was largely subjective in nature. This is not to say that Williams did not write from heartful experience, but the thrust of his hymnody was rooted in his intention to instruct and uplift. Williams's hymns were published during the years of the revival and sung by Methodist congregations. However, although some of Griffiths's stanzas were circulated through visiting Methodist preachers to Dolwar Fach and at least one was included in a letter to Elizabeth Evans, she remained relatively unknown until after her death when her hymns were written down, published and later translated (*gwefan Ann Griffiths* website).

The difference in the religious upbringings of Williams and Griffiths played a significant part in the character of their hymnody – before their conversion experiences, Williams's family was Nonconformist while Griffiths was brought up in the Anglican Church. Although the work of both hymnists shows a wide familiarity with Scripture, Griffiths's hymns are also informed by extensive knowledge of Anglican creeds and doctrine, and *The Book of Common Prayer* had as much effect on her writing as the Bible. Her biblical interpretation was of a very traditional form based on the unity of the Old and the New Testaments (Thomas in Keller 2015, 151). In addition, Griffiths was much influenced by Welsh poetic and musical tradition such as the *plygain* carol mentioned before. Williams was not familiar with earlier Welsh poetic tradition, and his directness of style as well as his

regular metre was quite different from Griffiths's frequent syllabic irregularity, a feature of traditional Welsh folk songs (*gwefan Ann Griffiths* website).

The external aspects that affected the character of their writing had an influence on the articulation of the religious experiences and convictions of Williams and Griffiths in their hymnody. They contribute to the more profound differences, the innermost spiritual and emotional feelings that coloured the nuances, content and tone of their work. Griffiths's bent for a more mystic approach to Christianity influenced her poetic expression. The intensity with which her hymns are permeated reflect the depth of her spiritual experience, an intensity heightened by the deep range of her biblical references which, according to James, sets her apart from other hymnists (2019, 327). The articulation of her profound Christian faith and her use of such phraseology as 'close eternal union/ And communion …' with God and her references to Christ as 'Husband' seem to highlight Griffiths's mysticism. Central to all her writing is her deep devotion to God – union with Christ is uppermost in all her thought, beliefs and emotions (James 2019, 327). Her words clearly express her desire not merely to remain near Christ but in him – as she expresses it, 'In his love through all my days', a longing for Christ that comes from the depths of her soul (Hymn I):

Cling to him, my soul for ever,
Follow him, and never tire

Thomas identifies two features of religious mystic poets that are shared by Griffiths as being a profound knowledge of Scripture and a deep prayer life that is grounded in an awareness of the sinfulness of humanity and Christ's forgiving love (Keller 2015, 154). In the same way, earlier religious poets, St. John of the Cross (1542–1591) and John Donne (1572–1631), both display their fundamental basis in mysticism through their concern with sin and judgement, and the way of redemption.

The impetus for Griffiths and Williams's hymnic expression, with Griffiths's verses often emerging from deep states of spiritual meditation while Williams's were written with a consciousness of purpose, can be seen in the following examples. Williams shows a mindfulness of the importance of evangelism (GE XXXVII):

Fly abroad thou mighty gospel
Win and conquer never cease
May thy lasting wide dominion
Multiply and still increase.

Griffiths, while denominationally and doctrinally evangelical, focuses on the dedication of her life to sacred communion with and obedience to God (Hymn V):

Let me only live to hallow
God's pure name till life shall end,
Bow before his will, and welcome
All his providence may send

Her hymn focuses on God's acting upon her life and her own principal spiritual determination while the thrust of Williams's hymn is of God acting upon humankind. Griffiths's lines are an inward response to God, Williams's are an expression of the manifestation of the work of God.

For both Williams and Griffiths, life on earth for the Christian was a pilgrimage to the ultimate reward: eternity in heaven. However, Williams refers to pilgrims or pilgrimage numerous times in his hymns while Griffiths only directly mentions the pilgrim once. Williams specifically sets his pilgrim in 'a desert land' or 'a barren land', contextualising such verses within the Exodus narrative of the Israelites in the wilderness. In his most famous hymn *Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah*, the imagery throughout is strongly embedded in the Old Testament. The hymnist's journey – the pilgrim's – is enacted through a direct correspondence with the experiences of the Israelites' journey: 'When I tread the verge of Jordan' and 'Land me safe on Canaan's side'. The pilgrimage to Canaan, the Promised Land, becomes symbolic of the Christian's progress to heaven. Griffiths's single use of the term, 'pilgrim', evokes an immediate soteriological connection with Jesus Christ while the Old Testament allusions to the clothing of a High Priest serve to underline Christ's fulfilment of the role of the High Priest in the New Testament (Hymn III):

Pilgrim, faint and tempest-beaten,
Lift thy gaze, behold and know
Christ the Lamb, our Mediator,
Robed in vestments trailing low;
Faithfulness his golden girdle;
Bells upon his garments ring
Free salvation for the sinner
Through his priceless offering.

Griffiths's hymn, like Williams's and Charles Wesley's verse in other instances, resonates with Herbert's use of biblical sources. Herbert writes of Aaron, the first High Priest (2015, 166):

> Holiness on the head,
> Light and perfections on the breast,
> Harmonious bells below …

Aaron as High Priest in Herbert's poem points to Christ's role just as he does in Griffiths's hymn, although once again the resonance between the two instances underlines common biblical reference rather than literary awareness on Griffiths's part.

Although both Williams and Griffiths use the personal pronouns 'I' and 'my', Williams more commonly expresses his thoughts in terms of 'our' and 'us'. Not only did he write his hymns for congregational use but, always, he wanted to encompass the experiences and convictions of the Methodist community at large. Both often address the second person directly in their hymns as in Griffiths's verse, 'Pilgrim, faint and tempest-beaten' and frequently their hymns are a communication in the form of a prayer or entreaty to God. They display a balance between the objective and the subjective view (James 2019, 327). Both gaze outwards in contemplation of biblical truth, using words such as 'behold' and 'look' and both write from an experiential spirituality. Nevertheless, Griffiths displays more intimate personal expression in her hymns, coming as they do from passionate private reflection and meditation. Her cry to God in acknowledgement of her sinful state is always from the depths of her soul (Hymn X):

> O that all my head were waters,
> Weeping ever, day and night

Despite the differences between Williams and Griffiths, James notes common characteristic themes. These include an awareness of God's glory and majesty; an acknowledgement of their own weakness and sinfulness and, alongside this, a yearning for holiness; and the 'centrality of the cross in Christ in the plan of salvation' (2019, 327). As well as these thematic similarities, there are others, the chief of these being that they were both evangelicals and Calvinist in doctrine. These two factors underpin the theological nature of their hymnic expression; the Bible was, for both, the source of their inspiration and typology, and both make strong use of Old Testament allusion although their hymns have a Christological focus. Reference to the Song of Solomon, in particular, for example, occurs

throughout their work as well as Exodus, Psalms and the prophets. The following two examples sourced in the Song of Solomon, the first from Griffiths and the second from Williams, display a common lyricism and fervent emotional expression in praise of Christ, the 'Rose of Sharon':

He's the beauteous Rose of Sharon,
White and ruddy, fair to see;
Excellent above ten thousand
Of the world's prime glories he.
Friend of sinners.
Here's their pilot on the deep.

In Thy gracious face there's beauty
Far surpassing every thing
Found in all the earth's great wonders
Mortal eye hath ever seen.
Rose of Sharon
Thou Thyself art heaven's delight.

The trochaic metre in both hymns places focus on the word 'Rose'; in Griffiths's hymn, however, the theme is introduced in the first line and enhanced with laudatory adjectival phrases while Williams's four lines of enjambement build to his acclamatory 'Rose of Sharon'. Both hymnists use the same form and metrical pattern with the shorter four-syllable lines, 'Friend of sinners' in Griffiths's hymn and 'Rose of Sharon' in Williams's, two specific aspects or descriptors of Jesus, being given emphasis. Williams returns to this imagery in another hymn, 'White and ruddy is my Beloved', a descriptive biblical image also used by Griffiths. Williams and Griffiths's devotion to the triune God displayed in their longing for Christ, the Beloved, is undeniable; James describes their hymns as 'love-songs to God Incarnate' (Hodges 2017, n. pag.). They shared the faculty of rooting their hymns in biblical chronicle with heartfelt experience of the love and grace of God.

Williams and Griffiths employ the term, 'Zion' which occurs frequently in the Old Testament but only seven times in the New. The richness of meaning associated with the name adds a layer of significance to the verses in which it appears. Zion in the Old Testament was a physical place, one of the two hills of ancient Jerusalem, but also often used as a synonym for the city of Jerusalem itself. In Isaiah 8:18, Mount Zion is referred to as the dwelling place of Yahweh, the God of Israel. In the New Testament, Mount Zion is a metaphor for God's holy city, his heavenly kingdom. These strata of meanings inherent in the name serve to encompass the historical narrative of the Bible from Old Testament to New within the hymns of Williams and Griffiths. They both draw on the imagery from Exodus 13:21: 'And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and

by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night'. Williams refers to 'the fiery, cloudy pillar' in *Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah* and in another hymn, he states,

Come Holy Spirit, fire by night
Pillar of cloud by day

Griffiths writes in her hymn,

O to come, like smoky pillars
From the desert to the throne

The significance of employing Old Testament experience connoting the manifestation of the presence of God serves to gives a sense of immediacy to the hymns. Although Griffiths and Williams express a desire for the Holy Spirit, they articulate this desire in different rhetoric. Williams uses the imperative; Griffiths injects a note of yearning through the emotive interjection and an implicit subjunctive.

While the Bible is central to the writing of Williams and other hymn-writers, notably Charles Wesley, Griffiths's use of Scripture in imagery, allusion and direct reference in her hymns is particularly dense and complex, suffusing them with her characteristic intensity of expression. Hodges, comparing Watts and Williams with Griffiths and their use of the Song of Solomon as a source, writes about how Griffiths, in contrast to the other two, weaves the language and images into her own devotional thinking – she uses the Song of Solomon 'as one of the many sources for the rich web of imagery which evidently filled her mind and formed much of the substance of her thought' (2017, n. pag.).

To mention again, Williams has been called the first Welsh Romantic poet, communicating the religious experience and theology of Methodists with perceptiveness and intensity of emotion. Accordingly, he exerted significant influence on his contemporaries as well as his successors. The evangelical hymns of the eighteenth century in Wales, in their personal religious expression, are distinguished by passion and lyricism. Both theological and poetic, they exhibit many affinities with the verses of Welsh Romantic poets, perhaps chief of these being the perception of nature, a prevailing sense of joy – even a recurrent use of the term – and the intensity of emotional expression. In the verses of the Welsh hymnists and Welsh Romantic poets, nature is seen as a symbol of eternity or God's promise of eternity (Prothero 2013, 13). Both Williams and Griffiths describe the 'living waters' of the Bible and Griffiths writes symbolically of Jesus as the 'tree of life immortal'. Goronwy Owen, a Welsh poet who lived across the lifetime of Williams, describes in his eschatological poem, *The Day*

of Judgement (*Cywydd y Farn*), the last days with humankind coming before its maker, in terms of nature (Owen n.d. translator unknown):

> The roaring ocean from its inmost caves
> Shall send forth thousands o'er the foaming waves;
> From earth the countless myriads shall arise,
> Like corn-land springing 'neath benignant skies

In Romantic terms, the concept of joy 'signifies the conscious accompaniment of the activity of a fully living and integrative mind' (M. H. Abrams in Prothero 2013, 6). Williams and Griffiths's hymns exhibit this consciousness of joy, engendered by their knowledge and experience of the presence of God. Not only is the word 'joy' – as well as associated words – used in the abstract denoting a state of feeling but the hymns themselves are songs expressing joy, songs of praise and worship to a mighty God. The quality of joy corresponds to a Romantic emphasis on emotion and inspiration; for Williams and Griffiths, inspiration is God-given, manifesting in a deep expression of the spiritual side of humanity.

In terms of their impact, Williams and Griffiths have each left a lasting legacy – they take their places as two of the most pre-eminent hymnists in Wales. However, they also hold a predominant position in Welsh literature as a whole. Due to the efforts of translators such as H. A. Hodges, they have achieved international renown as important figures in the cultural and religious life and history of Wales. As Methodist hymnists, Williams and Griffiths not only communicate the creeds and beliefs of the Christian faith but articulate those beliefs from an experiential perspective. The emphasis of Methodism, as exemplified in the hymns of Williams and Griffiths, on not just knowing the truths of the Christian faith but on fully feeling them is perfectly captured in Griffiths's articulation of the 'soul most ardent' burning 'with living fire'.

Conclusion: Singing the faith

'Poetry is religion. Religion is poetry'. So said R. S. Thomas in a 1972 interview for a BBC documentary. Such a sentiment, assuming the co-existence of religion and poetry and thus, by extension, often of theology and poetry, has been the subject of many a critical study, including various articles published in 'Religion & Literature' by the University of Notre Dame, Indiana; Mark Knight's *An Introduction to Religion and Literature* (2009) and Eric Ziolkowski's study on 'Religion and Literature: History and Method' (2019), for example. This thesis, however, offers a consideration of the significance of poetic expression as it pertains specifically to hymnody.

Carl F. Price, in writing of what he calls 'the literary beauties of the hymns', describes the relation of a hymn to a poem (1919, 146):

> It is not enough that a hymn be wrought out of some intense emotional experience; it must have the power to reproduce emotion, and, from the very nature of a true hymn, its appeal to the emotions must be more or less universal. When we add to this emotional quality the necessity of meter and rhythm, and these especially restricted to the most regular forms because of the demands of the music, we cannot escape the conclusion that good hymns must be poems.

His conclusion that 'good hymns must be poems' is significant; a hymn gains in value when it has recognised poetic merit. However, a hymn is a new or different kind of poem given its hymnic purpose; its intention and function is to teach, encourage and inspire and, of course, it has a communal function whereby private religious emotion is transmuted into public worship, affirming a shared understanding of God. The Methodist hymns of the revival both in England and Wales offered heartfelt expression of personal spiritual experience, a personal experience that was universally relevant, a voice that was both individual and representative. The personal 'I' contains, according to Lisa Diane Needs, 'the individual author of the hymn, the individual "singer" of the hymn and the communal company of the faithful' (1983, 258). In their singing, believers are drawn into praxis, which is at the heart of the hymns. The hymns of Charles Wesley, Williams and Griffiths embrace both converts and unbelievers, both flock and lost sheep welcomed into the fold. From the subjective voice of the hymnist, the hymns both address and set out to convene within the public arena.

The correlation of poetry and piety in hymnic form lies in the lyrical and emotional expression of theology and doctrine. It is the power of the language of faith and the language

of the heart (phrases used by, amongst others, Don E. Saliers in *The Soul in Paraphrase: Prayer and Religious Affections*, 1980) that comes to the fore in the expression of spiritual experience, of the relationship between humankind and the divine. The impetus for this study to engage with the expression of the heart experience, of the junction of poetry and piety, in eighteenth-century Methodist hymnody, has been realised in the examination of the style, function and intention of the hymns particularly of Charles Wesley, William Williams and Ann Griffiths. The interrogation of the poetic qualities of selected hymns, and how these enhance the meaning and impact of their theological message, provides for a fuller measure of eighteenth-century Methodist hymnody and contributes to developing interpretative perspectives. There are important foundational questions that come into play in investigation, discussion and conclusion in this particular study: is it the poetry of the hymns that elicits and directs the emotional response; in what way does the poetry bring richness and added meaning to the theology; and to what extent does the fact that this was poetry written to be sung – and its singing thereof – enhance its hymnic purpose? Two stanzas from one of Charles Wesley's most well-known hymns *O For a thousand tongues to sing* (CHPM 1) provide an answer:

Jesus, the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease:
'Tis music in the sinner's ears;
'Tis life, and health, and peace.

He breaks the power of cancell'd sin,
He sets the prisoner free:
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood avail'd for me.

This hymn embodies, in its function, form and content, the concept of lyrical theology, a concept which describes the interpretation of the religion of the heart in song. As we have seen, Wesley, in his hymns, sought effective lyrical form for his articulation of theology in scriptural and poetic language. Central theological tenets, in the first stanza above the saving power of Jesus Christ's name, are given shape within poetic form and language: the repetition of the elided word ''tis' maintains the rhythm and metre and places emphasis on the subject, the name of Jesus, while the use of polysyndeton with its repetitive function to connect the abstract nouns, 'life and health and peace', adds weight to the theological

conviction of God as Saviour, as the giver of life. The core message of a Christ who delivers, who cleanses, who sacrifices himself is highlighted in the second stanza that appears above. The impact of the junction of text and music both conveys and generates emotional response; the hymns become a 'powerful combination of belief and song' (Watson in Young 1995, x). Albert C. Outler's comment holds true: 'The brothers Wesley set great store by the fact that their people *sang* the same doctrine in their hymns as they heard and read in their sermons' (Wesley 1984, 102).

Hymnists such as Charles Wesley grafted doctrine to poetic expression, presenting their theology in a language that touches the heart. However, many other hymns were written, not to evangelise or instruct, but simply to inspire and elicit praise. In such hymns, the poetry rings out in a pure expression of worship and devotion to God. This is illustrated in Charles Wesley's hymn *Praise the Lord who reigns above* (1870, vol. VIII p. 262):

Celebrate the eternal God
With harp and psaltery,
Timbrels soft and cymbals loud
In His high praise agree:
Praise Him every tuneful string;
All the reach of heavenly art,
All the powers of music bring,
The music of the heart.

The 'music of the heart', the expression of the heart's emotions through poetry in song takes the believer into an exalted space – a transcendent space and one in which the believer can commune with God.

The profound connection of humanity to divinity is illustrated by John Donne in a sermon he preached at St. Paul's Cathedral, London based on Psalm 90:14 (LXXIX, probably in the period 1626–1627): '… for, I know nothing, if I know not Christ crucified, and I know not that, if I know not how to apply him to myself' (2011, 807). Donne makes a significant distinction that is applicable to all the hymnists under discussion in this study – the saving role of Christ through his sacrifice on the cross is the means to his work in the hearts of humankind. It is humankind's connection with the crucified Christ that is of the greatest importance. The emphasis and the context of the hymns are always soteriological. For both the Wesleyan and the Calvinist Methodists, an experiential faith encompassing personal knowledge of the Saviour was central to their Christian journey and their hymn-writing. As

Munday asserts, poetry becomes the arena for this experiential form of religion encompassing theological concepts such as conversion, interaction with or experience of God, prayer, devotion, doubt and faith (2018, 388).

George Herbert in his poem 'A True Hymn', perhaps a hymn within a hymn, considers the question of offering his poetic art to God in praise. Herbert makes it clear that it is sincerity and passion – that is, 'heart' – that are predominantly important (2015, 161):

My joy, my life, my crown!
My heart was meaning all the day,
Somewhat it fain would say:
And still it runneth mutt'ring up and down
With only this, *My joy, my life, my crown*.

Yet slight not these few words:
If truly said, they may take part
Among the best in art.
The fineness which a hymn or psalm affords,
Is, when the soul unto the lines accords.

He who craves all the mind,
And all the soul, and strength, and time,
If the words only rhyme,
Justly complains, that somewhat is behind
To make his verse, or write a hymn in kind.

Whereas if th' heart be moved,
Although the verse be somewhat scant,
God doth supply the want.
As when th' heart says (sighing to be approved)
O, could I love! and stops: God writeth, *Loved*.

Herbert's final heartfelt cry relates strongly to Charles Wesley's subjunctive expression of his yearning:

God only knows the love of God;
O that it now were shed abroad

and ‘O that I could for ever sit’ (HSP 1749, vol. I no. 5). The sealing of aspiration with the divine response in Herbert’s poem – the powerful single word ‘Loved’ – is a reversal of his poem ‘The Collar’ with his response to God’s calling (2015, 147):

> Me thoughts I heard one calling, *Child!*
> And I repli’d *My Lord*.

Herbert, in his poem, expresses the necessity for the soul to be engaged when worshipping God: ‘The fineness which a hymn or psalm affords,/ Is, when the soul unto the lines accords’. This is the same ‘knowing’ and ‘feeling’ of the heart experience of the Methodists that was expressed in their hymns and is described in 1 Corinthians 14:15: ‘I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also’. The heart experience of the hymnists, their experiential spirituality, is communicated poetically in their hymns through this symbiosis of knowledge – knowing God through the Bible and doctrinal truths – and emotion – a personal experience of God. The interconnection between poetry and hymnody that has been explored in this study is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in the verses of George Herbert, four of which appear in *The Methodist Hymn-Book with Tunes*. One of these is entitled ‘Antiphon (I)’ – or in the hymnbook, *Let all the world in every corner sing* – thus clearly intended as a liturgical poem since an antiphon is, traditionally in Western Christianity, sung or recited before or after a psalm or canticle; another is Herbert’s poetic expression of Psalm 23. Herbert offers his poems as songs of praise, using the metaphor of ‘singing’ to convey worship of God (Needs 1983, 248). His line from ‘Antiphon (I), ‘Let all the world in ev’ry corner sing’ (2015, 50) is hymnic in character, exhorting worship of God. The hymnists, too, ‘with Angels above [We] lift up our Voice’ ‘to Thine honour’ (Charles Wesley HSP 1942, p. 119). Herbert’s second stanza in ‘Antiphon (I)’ places emphasis on the heart in continued praise to God, an emphasis which was foundational for Methodist hymnists:

> The church with psalms must shout,
> No door can keep them out:
> But above all, the heart
> Must bear the longest part.

The voice of the eighteenth-century hymnist emerged as the hymn tradition progressed and developed. Isaac Watts and William Cowper – examined briefly in this study – contributed significantly to this progression which fed into the nature of hymnody as it manifested in Methodism, although neither of them was Methodist. The role of Watts cannot

be underplayed, with his principal contribution to the reform of Protestant hymnody being his introduction of non-biblical poetry (that is, not paraphrases) into Christian worship. Watts's hymns are infused with passion and spiritual conviction, anticipating the enthusiasm of the revival spirit and the profundity of the heart experience that inform Charles Wesley's verses. In his hymnody, Watts harnesses traditional biblical imagery with poetic language and devices to reinvigorate devotion and in reaction to the lack of fervour that he saw in the congregational psalm singing of his time. Like Watts, Cowper displays poetic qualities in his use of hymnic norms but also exhibits an individuality in his hymnody (Marshall and Todd 2014, 147). His employment of visual and dramatic effect serves to heighten the overall impact while the personal statements, the 'I' experience which he presents in his hymns, foster a sense of immediacy. All Cowper's hymns were written specifically for his congregation, directing devotional and spiritual response from a subjective context as does Charles Wesley.

Notwithstanding the contributions of Watts and Cowper, it was Charles Wesley, in his poetry, who brought to full realisation congregational song as it came to encapsulate the historical phenomenon that was the evangelical Methodist revival. The emergence and development of Methodism with its influences of Pietism, Puritanism and evangelicalism gave impetus to a religion of the heart which characterised the spiritual conviction and expression in hymn-writing of its hymnists. The evangelical Methodist revival in England can be said to be largely synonymous with the work and Christian vision of John and Charles Wesley. In their disciplined devotion, their structured enactment of faith through the establishment of societies and their preaching, the two Wesley brothers carried the message of salvation by faith in Christ across England as the onset of evangelical revivals began to change the way people thought about worship. However, while a recognition of the significance of the Wesleyan legacy is a factor in a consideration of eighteenth-century Methodist hymnody, it is the poetic expression of the heart experience which is core to the Methodist message that is of concern in this study. The hymn-writers of the eighteenth century display a poetic sensibility that combines an evangelical quality with an affective sense engendered by the heart experience that was emphasised by Methodist writers and leaders. Carlton Young writes of the eighteenth-century Wesleyan revival – although it is as true of the Methodist Calvinist revival in Wales – that it was 'a distinctive heart movement with a unique theology – a heart repentant, assured, and forgiven; a heart overflowing in joyous response; a heart of love, and a heart of perfect intention' (1995, 12).

The emotional response that is invoked in the hymns is not just an attestation of the individual heart experience of the hymnist but the emotional response that it elicits in others. The early Methodist hymn-writers, in their eighteenth-century context, employed the conventions of the verse of the time and earlier but stamped them with an affective approach that came with the enthusiasm of the revival spirit. This brings to the fore the central question of how poetic technique enhances the emotional impact of the hymns, a question which is answered in certain key facets that are explored in this study in relation to hymnic expression.

The investigation of the poetics of the hymns serves to establish their nature within a rhetoric of transcendence and evangelism. In its simplest form, the question of the nature of a hymn can be clarified by the consideration of what is meant by a hymn that has a poetic quality. Clearly, it is not merely the structure of a hymn – the stanzaic form, the metre, the rhythm – that makes it poetry but when the poetic form contributes materially to the meaning, when the use of an affective mode transforms or interprets the theological or devotional message so that the 'experience' of the hymn is enriched.

As is evident from my analysis, for the eighteenth-century hymnists, structurally the use of the stanza form, in its thematic and rhythmic sequence or progression, functions to reinforce word choice, syntax and rhetoric; linguistically, the hymns display such poetic devices as imagery, repetition, parallelism and rhyme contributing to their power. In fact, the device of repetition, at times, can be seen as a structural principle (Hughes 1983, 120). Williams uses the word 'glorious' as a motif in three lines in his hymn *O'er those gloomy Hills of Darkness* (GE XXXVII) – 'On a glorious Day of Grace'; 'Let Thy glorious Morning dawn' and 'Let them have the glorious light' – while the word 'love' functions both thematically and linguistically to add unity in *Beneath thy cross I lay me down* (GE XVI):

Love drops in blood from every vein;
Love is the spring of all thy pain.

Griffiths, too, uses repetition for structural cohesion and emotional effect, seen in the repetitive function of the Welsh word *dyma* translated as 'here' (Hymn II):

Here within the tent of meeting
Is the blood that can atone,
Here the slayer's place of refuge,
Here a healer's power made known;
Here a place, hard by the Godhead,

For the sinner's nest to lie,
While the righteousness of heaven
Smiles on him perpetually.

The lineation, phrasing and punctuation of hymns – enjambement conveying an outpouring of feeling, exclamation marks indicating intensity of emotion, pauses such as dashes often signifying hesitation, for example – all contribute to denoting the hymn-writer's experience with God, from moments of doubt or questioning to expressions of praise.

The language, imagery and even the poetic structure of the hymns had their foundation in the Bible. For Charles Wesley, Williams and Griffiths, the poetics of their hymns were deeply rooted in Scripture. As Glyn Tegai Hughes describes it, 'Revealed truth was reinforced by revealed stylistics' (1983, 86). Indeed, Williams makes it quite clear in his preface to *Aleluia* (1745) that his hymns are composed 'to the sound and language of the Scriptures' (Hughes 1983, 123). Donne said in his *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* that God is 'A *God* in whose words there is such a height of *figures*, such *voyages*, such *peregrinations* to fetch remote and precious *metaphors*, such *extensions*, such *spreadings*, such *Curtaines* of *Allegories* …' (2014, 113). Donne's representation is significant for it is in figurative language, the language of metaphor and allegory that the inexpressible, the ineffable is best expressed. Donne, like Herbert, was a metaphysical poet, both displaying linguistic virtuosity in their poetry. Herbert, while propounding an artlessness or lack of artifice and, thus, sincerity in sacred poetry, paradoxically arrives at an ultimately direct, simple acclamation or affirmation of God through his very poetic, metaphoric and structural complexity. The evangelical message of hymns calls humankind to God, the didactic thrust instructs people about God, but it is the poetry that allows believers to touch the mystery of God. For many people across the centuries who may not otherwise have been exposed to poetry, hymns have served to connect them to a poetic voice, 'satisfy[ing] their sense of rhythm and form', expressing some of their deepest emotions and being their 'guide in moral thought, their instruction in theology' (Dudley-Smith in Watson 2002, 1).

Charles Wesley's poetic expression in his hymns, explored in chapters five and six, was grounded thematically, linguistically and typologically in Scripture, but he was also deeply influenced by the writings of the Church Fathers and Christian scholars. These influences, which significantly shaped his Christian perspective and his hymnic expression, emerge particularly in the principles of holy living, principles which informed Wesley's life and the character of his hymns. His poetic voice is animated by his experience of the heart

which finds expression through the correlation of emotion and theology – poetry and piety – in his hymns. A particular feature of Charles Wesley's hymns is the clarity of his interpretation of Scripture; he expounds the doctrines of saving grace, of the Incarnation and Atonement and of the enabling and mediating role of the Holy Spirit. His hymns reveal a man passionate about Jesus Christ and he expresses with heartfelt fervour his individual sense of salvation. A closer exploration of the poetics of some of his hymns shows how a composite of structural, grammatical, rhythmic, metrical and linguistic elements governs and enhances the meaning. The use of paradox is a central feature of Wesley's writing as it is, as Donald Davie points out, 'of any writing in the centrally Christian tradition' (1978, 51). The paradoxical themes of Christianity – of life through death, of God becoming man, for example – that Charles Wesley expresses through oxymoron give his hymns an emotional intensity. In *And can it be that I should gain* (HSP 1739, pp. 117–119) he exclaims, ''Tis myst'ry all! Th' immortal dies!' encompassing both emotion and doctrine. Wesley also employs extended scriptural images to take theology into drama such as in *Come O Thou Traveller unknown* and *Captain of Israel's host and guide* (Hughes 1983, 90). His manipulation of literary devices serves to convey a broad range of emotion and condition from joy to suffering as he narrates both the conversion experience and the spiritual journey.

The experiential faith of Methodism, so compellingly articulated by Charles Wesley, is exhibited alike in the hymns of William Williams and Ann Griffiths. Williams's hymns fervently express, as seen in my chapter on him, the immediacy and totality of his response to conversion, acceptance of salvation and communion with the divine. His characteristic themes are in keeping with the zeal of the revival spirit in Wales in the eighteenth century, but they are also expressed with the poetic lyricism and emotional quality typical of what is known as Welsh Romanticism. Williams's concern in his poetry is with the anatomy of the Christian soul, an aspect which, according to Hughes, is characteristic of the Protestant Reformation (1983, 123). These states of the soul include the dichotomies between relapsing into sin and renewal, doubt and assurance, questioning and faith. Williams expresses such opposites poetically, often in metaphorical language where he invokes images of day and night, storm and sunshine, earth and heaven, for example, to give added effect to his spiritual perception. Ultimately, Williams's themes and imagery speak to the hope and certainty of a Christian journey that is spirit-filled; his theology is invested with the passionate intensity of revivalist feeling. The impact of the invocatory openings of many of his hymns – *Speak, I pray Thee, gentle Jesus!*; *Saviour, lead us by Thy power*; *Lord, lead me through the wilderness* – add to the force of his articulation of his heart experience. As Williams sought

to bring humankind closer to God, to present the gospel message as a personal reality, he brought his poetic voice to bear on theology to engender both an emotional and spiritual response. Perhaps nowhere is his Christian conviction, his 'thirst after Christ' as Charmley describes it (2017, part 1) more apparent than in those hymns expressing lyrically his longing for Christ (*Speak, I pray Thee, gentle Jesus!* HBC 331:

Tell me Thou art mine, O Saviour,
Grant me an assurance clear;
Banish all my dark misgivings,
Still my doubting, calm my fear.
O, my soul within me yearneth
Now to hear Thy voice divine

Ann Griffiths, explored in chapter eight, articulates a similar intensity of longing for Christ, but in her poetry this longing is charged with a mystical force. Her mysticism is exhibited through her expressions of desire for Christ, the Beloved, 'Him who is my glorious Love' (Hymn XXI). Griffiths repeatedly conveys her spiritually and emotionally intense relationship with God in expressions of ardent faith and love through which her poetic voice is revealed (Hymn V):

Sweetly spreads my spikenard's fragrance
While I feast on love unbought

She articulates her sense of wonder at the beauty of Christ, but she as passionately declares her struggle against sin and her desire for holiness. Griffiths's hymns are not evangelical or congregational in purpose but they serve to give poetic expression to emotional and spiritual experience. The heart feels joy or despair or love; the hymn expresses that joy, despair, love, both as emotional states of mind and as spiritual conditions. The authenticity of the feeling is affirmed by the very fact of the reader/singer's engagement and identification with the truth or universality of the experience being conveyed.

The examination of the poetics of hymns within the eighteenth-century literary context implies the evaluation of their importance to literature as a whole. Hymnody, with its conveying of doctrinal beliefs and spiritual conviction as mediated through language and imagery and, more specifically, song, has not always been accorded significance proportionate to its characterisation as a genre of poetry. Tudur Hallam writes, 'The hymn, as a genre, especially in England, is undervalued. Charles Wesley and John Newton are studied

by theologians or historians, not literary critics, and such notable literary achievements as Wesley's "Come, O Thou Traveller" are rarely anthologised, though inferior secular poems will happily be selected' (2015, 227). *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* (2005) edited by M. Ferguson, M. J. Slater and J. Stallworthy does include two hymns by Charles Wesley but, by and large, hymns as a genre of poetry are side-lined. There are many hymns of the eighteenth century that bear comparison with some of the most lauded poetry produced by English poets of the same era. William Blake's 'Tyger Tyger, burning bright' published in 1794, resonates with creative force, symbolism and passion (2012, 37):

In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

No less emotive are the sentiments of Ann Griffiths in her hymn of victory (Hymn I), rich in mystic passion and scriptural imagery:

'Tis enough 'mid flooding waters,
'Tis enough 'mid flames of fire;
Cling to him, my soul, for ever,
Follow him, and never tire

Written shortly after his conversion, Charles Wesley's hymn *Jesu, Lover of my soul* (MHT 110) is said to be the finest hymn in the English language:

Jesu, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high:
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide,
O receive my soul at last.

With its purity and clarity of emotion, perfect rhyme and metaphorical language, this hymn stands beside some of the celebrated poems of the eighteenth century. The hymn-writers,

with their emphasis on the expression of feelings grounded in the experiential, display an affinity with other poets, especially religious poets of the time.

Charles Wesley's last hymn before his death, *In age and feebleness extreme* (CHW 1037), exhibits a lyricism of expression and a poignant portrayal of feeling that epitomise the very quality of beauty and intensity of emotion characteristic of poems:

In age and feebleness extreme,
Who shall a helpless worm redeem?
Jesus, my only hope Thou art,
Strength of my failing flesh and heart:
O could I catch a smile from Thee,
And drop into eternity.

The poignancy of this particular hymn of Charles Wesley's stands in contrast to the poetic vigour in other hymns of his such as *Jesus comes with all His grace* (CHPM 388):

Let the living-stones cry out!
Let the sons of Abraham shout:
Praise we all our lowly King:
Give Him thanks: rejoice, and sing.

or in the triumphantly expressive and descriptive lines of William Williams (HP 272):

Ride on, Jesus, all-victorious,
Bear thy sword upon thy side;
None on earth can e'er withstand thee,
Nor yet hell, for all its pride:
At thy mighty name tremendous
Every foe is forced to yield;
Hushed in awe, creation trembles:
Come then, Jesus, take the field.

In their reflection of the full range of human emotion, from despair to hope, from sadness to rejoicing, the hymns give voice to the experiences of believers as they gather in worship of God. Just as the Psalms plumb the very depths of the soul in song and text, so too hymns offer the means for the articulation of every experience of the heart – in both the expression and in the shaping of emotion. The lines of verse written by those such as Charles Wesley, Williams and Griffiths that form part of the body of hymnody through which faith is

expressed, are words that are worth engaging, and re-engaging, not only in song but in study and not only as song but as poetry. Given the nature of hymnody, the power and beauty of the words are expressed in song but within a poetic mode; the Methodists, Calvinist and Arminian alike, sang their creed through the words of poetry. The religious function of hymnody stirs devotion, a sense of holiness in worship – Augustine writes of religious texts that when they are sung 'our souls are moved and are more religiously and with a warmer devotion kindled to piety than if they are not so sung' (2008, 207).

Charles Wesley and William Williams wrote hymns to charge and revitalise people; Wesley's theology, in particular, was concise and considered in each word, each image, expressing his religion of the heart. Week in and week out as the evangelical revival took fire, thousands of people across Britain sang Charles Wesley's poetry and, Sunday upon Sunday, worshippers today continue to give voice to his verse. The power of Charles Wesley's poetry within his time and context was transformative as Methodists gathered in multitudes for open-air services and in meetings and societies to worship God. For Wesley, the act of 'lift[ing] up your voice', of singing in praise to God, corresponded to 'lift[ing] up your heart' (MHT 247):

Rejoice, the Lord is King!
Your Lord and King adore;
Mortals, give thanks and sing,
And triumph evermore:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
Rejoice; again I say, Rejoice.

It is true to say that no other poet has transformed or made as big an impact on English society and the world as Charles Wesley did with his hymn-writing. The poet Robert Southey wrote of him, 'Perhaps no poems have ever been so devoutly committed to memory as these, nor quoted so often upon a death bed' (1847, 101). No other poet can lay claim to such a legacy. Charles Wesley is secondary to his brother in history; John Wesley's role in the transforming power of Methodism on British society and his preaching and organisational abilities are well-known. And yet, Charles Wesley's contribution to the Methodist revival was both substantial and vital. It is ironic that the majority of people singing Charles Wesley's words today are most likely ignorant of whose hymns they are, other than possibly one or two of the more well-known ones such as *O For a thousand tongues to sing*, although some of his hymns such as *Love divine, all loves excelling* have become part of the British

nation's musical lexicon in worship. The latter is evident in its use at various State occasions including the funeral of Her Majesty Elizabeth II in 2022, which was broadcast live to the world.[3] As we have seen, the act of worship through hymn-singing is immediate, performative and communal. This should not preclude hymnody from being judged as literature, nor as separate study to that of other eighteenth-century poetry but as part of it.

In 2016, the Swedish Academy awarded Bob Dylan the Nobel Prize in Literature for, according to their official statement, 'having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition' (Ellis-Petersen and Flood 2016, n. pag.). Sara Danius, permanent secretary of the Swedish Academy, said in an interview in explanation of his award for literature that 'He can be read and should be read'. She went on to say, 'He's a great poet in the great English tradition, stretching from Milton and Blake onwards. And he's a very interesting traditionalist, in a highly original way' (Ellis-Petersen and Flood 2016, n. pag.). Although Dylan's award was highly controversial, it does signal a new appreciation for the poetics of the sung word. Dylan, who described how literature has influenced and informed his understanding of his 'poetic sensibilities', said in his acceptance speech, 'Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story', quoting *The Odyssey* (Wardle 2021, n. pag.). Throughout the centuries, poets have been telling the stories of themselves, their people, their culture, their heritage. The Methodist hymnists of the eighteenth century tell their story, the story of Christ and his redemptive love, as they sing their poetic expression of their creed. While hymns may not be narrative in nature – although they can be, such as in some of Watts's and Williams's hymns and Charles Wesley's *Come, O Thou Traveller unknown* – they access powerful narrative, the narrative of the Christian drama from the birth of Christ to his crucifixion and resurrection through which he offers salvation, which resonates immediately and emotionally in the mind of the receiver.

Students of English literature, Christian and otherwise, read and appreciate religious poets like Donne and Herbert, not because of religion or spirituality but for the nature of their poetry. Perhaps, finally, the premise that this study has followed should lead to the recognition that the greatest of Methodist hymns of the eighteenth century, those that are truly poetic expressions of faith, should become part of the pantheon of British poetry.

[3] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQ5tA-2atkw

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Appendix to chapter six

The Love Feast: (Come and let us sweetly join)

This hymn, originally consisting of 22 double stanzas divided into five parts, was later separated into five hymns. It was first published in *Hymns and Sacred Poems* in 1740; the stanzas quoted here are from *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* appearing as four separate hymns (505–508). I have not able to source the fifth.

Hymn 505

1. Come, and let us sweetly join,
Christ to praise in hymns divine!
Give we all with one accord,
Glory to our common Lord;
Hands, and hearts, and voices raise:
Sing as in the ancient days;
Antedate the joys above,
Celebrate the feast of love.

2. Strive we, in affection strive:
Let the purer flame revive;
Such as in the martyrs glow'd,
Dying champions for their God:
We like them may live and love;
Call'd we are their joys to prove;
Saved with them from future wrath:
Partners of like precious faith.

3. Sing we then in Jesu's name,
Now as yesterday the same;
One in every time and place,
Full for all of truth and grace:
We for Christ our master stand,
Lights in a benighted land:
We our dying Lord confess:
We are Jesu's witnesses.

4. Witnesses that Christ hath died;
We with Him are crucified:
Christ hath burst the bands of death
We his quickening Spirit breathe:
Christ is now gone up on high;
Thither all our wishes fly:
Sits at God's right-hand above;
There with Him we reign in love.

Hymn 506

5. Come, thou high and lofty Lord:
Lowly, meek, incarnate Word:
Humbly stoop to earth again;
Come, and visit abject man!
Jesu, dear expected guest,
Thou art bidden to the feast:
For thyself our hearts prepare:
Come, and sit, and banquet there.

7. Let the fruits of grace abound;
Let in us thy bowels sound,
Faith, and love and joy increase,
Temperance and gentleness;
Plant in us Thy humble mind,
Patient, pitiful, and kind:
Meek and lowly let us be,
Full of goodness, full of thee.

6. Jesu, we thy promise claim:
We are met in thy great name;
In the midst do thou appear,
Manifest Thy presence here!
Sanctify us, Lord, and bless:
Breathe thy Spirit, give thy peace:
Thou thyself within us move;
Make our feast a feast of love.

8. Make us all in thee complete;
Make us all for glory meet;
Meet t' appear before thy sight,
Partners with the saints in light:
Call, O call us each by name!
To the marriage of the Lamb:
Let us lean upon Thy breast!
Love be there our endless feast!

Hymn 507

9. Let us join, ('tis God commands,)
Let us join our hearts and hands;
Help to gain our calling's hope,
Build we each the other up:
God his blessing shall dispense;
God shall crown his ordinance;
Meet in his appointed ways,
Nourish us with social grace.

11. Plead we thus for faith alone,
Faith which by our works are shewn:
God it is who justifies!
Only faith the grace applies;
Active faith that lives within,
Conquers earth, and hell, and sin;
Sanctifies, and makes us whole,
Forms the Saviour in the soul.

10. Let us then as brethren love,
Faithfully his gifts improve;
Carry on the earnest strife,
Walk in holiness of life:
Still forget the things behind,
Follow Christ in heart and mind;
Toward the mark unwearied press,
Seize the crown of righteousness!

12. Let us for this faith contend:
Sure salvation is its end:
Heaven already is begun,
Everlasting life is won.
Only let us persevere,
Till we see our Lord appear;
Never from the rock remove,
Saved by faith, which works by love.

Hymn 508

13. Partners of a glorious hope,
Lift your hearts and voices up:
Jointly let us rise and sing,
Christ our Prophet, Priest, and King:
Monuments of Jesu's grace,
Speak we by our lives His praise:

15. Still, O Lord, our faith increase!
Cleanse from all unrighteousness:
Thee th' unholy cannot see:
Make, O make us meet for Thee:
Every vile affection kill;
Root out every seed of ill:

Walk in him, we have received:
Shew, we not in vain believed.

14. While we walk with God in light,
God our hearts doth still unite:
Dearest fellowship we prove,
Fellowship in Jesu's love:
Sweetly each with each combined,
In the bonds of duty joined,
Feels the cleansing blood applied,
Daily feels that Christ hath died.

Utterly abolish sin:
Write thy law of love within.

16. Hence may all our actions flow,
Love the proof that Christ we know:
Mutual love the token be,
Lord, that we belong to thee:
Love, thine image, love impart!
Stamp it on our face and heart!
Only love to us be given;
Lord we ask no other heaven.

O for an Heart to praise my God

This hymn was first published in 1742 in *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (31) in eight stanzas of four lines but only five stanzas appear in the later *The Methodist Hymn-Book with Tunes*.

O for an Heart to praise my GOD,
An Heart from sin set free!
An Heart that always feels Thy blood,
So freely spilt for me!

An Heart resigned, submissive, meek,
My dear Redeemer's throne;
Where only CHRIST is heard to speak,
Where JESUS reigns alone.

An humble, lowly, contrite Heart,
Believing, true, and clean,
Which neither Life nor Death can part
From him that dwells within.

An Heart in every Thought renew'd,
And full of Love Divine;
Perfect, and right, and pure and good,
A Copy, LORD, of Thine.

Thy tender Heart is still the same,
And melts at Human Woe:
JESU, for Thee distrest I am,
I want Thy Love to know.

My Heart, Thou know'st can never rest,
Till Thou create my Peace,
Till of my Eden repossest,
From Self, and Sin I cease.

Fruit of Thy gracious Lips, on Me
Bestow that Peace unknown,
The Hidden Manna, and the Tree
Of Life, and the White Stone.

Thy Nature, dearest LORD, impart,
Come quickly from above,
Write Thy New Name upon my Heart,
Thy New, Best Name of Love.

Come, O Thou Traveller unknown

First published in *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1742) in fourteen, six-line stanzas, this hymn more usually appears in other hymn books such as *The Methodist Hymn-Book with Tunes* with some verses omitted.

Come, O Thou Traveller unknown,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see!
My Company before is gone,
And I am left alone with Thee;
With Thee all Night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the Break of Day.

I need not tell Thee who I am,
My Misery, or Sin declare,
Thyself hast called me by my Name,
Look on Thy Hands, and read it there,
But who, I ask Thee, who art Thou,
Tell me Thy Name, and tell me now?

In vain Thou strugglest to get free,
I never will unloose my Hold:
Art Thou the Man that died for me?
The Secret of Thy Love unfold;
Wrestling I will not let Thee go,
Till I Thy Name, Thy Nature know.

Wilt Thou not yet to me reveal
Thy new, unutterable Name?
Tell me, I still beseech Thee, tell,
To know it Now resolv'd I am;
Wrestling I will not let Thee go,
Till I Thy Name, Thy Nature know.

'Tis all in vain to hold Thy Tongue,
Or touch the Hollow of my Thigh:
Though every Sinew be unstrung,
Yield to me Now— for I am weak;
But confident in Self-despair:
Speak to my Heart, in Blessings speak,
Be conquer'd by my Instant Prayer,
Speak, or Thou never hence shalt move,
And tell me, if Thy Name is LOVE.

'Tis Love! 'tis Love! Thou diedst for Me!
I hear Thy Whisper in my Heart.
The Morning breaks, the Shadows flee:
Pure UNIVERSAL LOVE Thou art,
To me, to All, Thy Bowels move,
Thy Nature, and Thy Name is LOVE.

My Prayer hath Power with God; the Grace
Unspeakable I now receive,
Thro' Faith I see Thee Face to Face,
I see Thee Face to Face, and live:
In vain I have not wept, and strove
Thy Nature, and Thy Name is LOVE.

I know Thee, Saviour, who Thou art,
JESUS the feeble Sinner's friend;
Nor wilt Thou with the Night depart,
But stay and love me to the End;
Thy Mercies never shall remove,
Thy Nature, and Thy Name is LOVE.

The Sun of Righteousness on me
Hath rose with Healing in His Wings,
Withered my Nature's Strength; from Thee

Out of my Arms Thou shalt not fly;
Wrestling I will not let Thee go,
Till I Thy Name, Thy Nature know.

What tho' my shrinking Flesh complain,
And murmur to contend so long,
I rise superior to my Pain,
When I am weak then I am strong,
And when my All of Strength shall fail,
I shall with the God-man prevail.

My Strength is gone, my Nature dies,
I sink beneath Thy weighty Hand,
Faint to revive, and fall to rise;
I fall, and yet by faith I stand,
I stand, and will not let Thee go
Till I Thy Name and Nature know.

My Soul its Life and Succour brings,
My Help is all laid up above;
Thy Nature, and Thy Name is LOVE.

Contented now upon my Thigh
I halt, till life's short Journey end;
All Helplessness, all Weakness I,
On Thee alone for Strength depend,
Nor have I Power, from Thee to move,
Thy Nature, and Thy Name is LOVE.

Lame as I am, I take the Prey,
Hell, Earth, and Sin with Ease o'ercome;
I leap for Joy, pursue my Way,
And as a bounding Hart fly home,
Thro' all Eternity to prove
Thy Nature, and Thy Name is LOVE.

O love divine, how sweet thou art!

This hymn first appeared in *Hymns on the Great Festivals* in 1746 (*Festival Hymns* XIX) in seven stanzas of six lines under the name, *Desiring to love*. The first four stanzas alone were published in the *Wesleyan Hymn Book* (1780) and these four stanzas remain in common use and appear as such in *The Methodist Hymn-Book with Tunes.*

O love divine, how sweet thou art!
When shall I find my longing heart
All taken up by thee?
I thirst, I faint, and die, to prove
The greatness of redeeming love,
The love of Christ to me.

Stronger his love, than death or hell;
Its riches are unsearchable:
The first-born sons of light
Desire in vain its depth to see;

O that with humbled Peter I
Could weep, believe, and thrice reply,
My faithfulness to prove!
Thou know'st, for all to thee is known,
Thou know'st, O Lord, and thou alone,
Thou know'st, that thee I love.

O that I could, with favour'd John,
Recline my weary head upon
The dear Redeemer's breast!
From care, and sin, and sorrow free,

They cannot reach the mystery,
The length, and breadth, and height.

God only knows the love of God.
O that it now were shed abroad
In this poor stony heart!
For love I sigh, for love I pine:
This only portion, Lord, be mine,
Be mine this better part!

O that I could for ever sit,
With Mary, at the Master's feet!
Be this my happy choice!
My only care, delight, and bliss,
My joy, my heav'n on earth be this,
To hear the Bridegroom's voice!

Give me, O Lord, to find in thee
My everlasting rest.

Thy only love do I require,
Nothing on earth beneath desire,
Nothing in heaven above:
Let earth and heaven, and all things go,
Give me thine only love to know,
Give me thine only love.

Far off we need not rove

The earliest available text for this hymn appears to be in the 1877 publication of *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (661) although it was first published in the 1780 edition.

Far off we need not rove
To find the God of love;
In His providential care
Ever intimately near,
All His various works declare,
God, the bounteous God is here!

We live, and move, and are,
Through his preserving care;
He doth still in life maintain
Every soul that moves and lives;
Gives us back our breath again,
Being every moment gives.

Who live, O God, in thee
Entirely thine should be:
Thine we are, a heaven-born race,
Only to thy glory move,
Thee with all our powers we praise,
Thee with all our being love.