

# Transfiguration of Scripture: Charles Wesley's Poetic Hermeneutic<sup>1</sup>

JOHN R. TYSON

## INTRODUCTION

Charles Wesley (1707-1788), one of the patriarchs of Methodism and poet-laureate of the movement, was also a founder of the "Holy Club" at Oxford.<sup>2</sup> He was, as his classmate John Gambold remembered, "a man made for friendship; who, by his cheerfulness and vivacity, would refresh his friend's heart."<sup>3</sup> George Whitefield, future fiery evangelist, then student at Pembroke College, was one of the young men drawn into the circle of spiritual formation which gathered around the Wesleys, and Charles became the instrument of Whitefield's conversion. This triumvirate of men would later become the focal figures in a revival that shook the English Isles and American Colonies. Charles followed his older brother and George Whitefield in the innovation of open-air evangelism. Although it was an affront to his frail health and sense of ecclesiastical propriety, Charles "broke down the bridge and became desperate" on June 24, 1739, preaching to "near ten thousand helpless sinners waiting for the Word, in Moorfields."<sup>4</sup>

The younger Wesley became an effective evangelist, and the crowds that flocked to hear him soon found that a musician's voice and the poet's way with words made Charles Wesley a preacher to be preferred even over his more famous brother.<sup>5</sup> "Awake Thou That Sleepest," and "The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes," carried in John Wesley's published works, were Charles's compositions.<sup>6</sup> A collection of his early shorthand sermons have been recently discovered and published.<sup>7</sup> But Charles Wesley's homiletical corpus is dwarfed by that of his brother; this is due in part, to Charles's facility at preaching "extempore."

---

*John R. Tyson is a Professor of Theology at Houghton College in Houghton, New York.*

---

In most cases, after 1739, there simply were no written sermons or notes to mark the delivery of his many homilies.<sup>8</sup> Thus, hymns have become Charles's most lasting contribution.

While he wrote a few hymns during the Georgia experiment,<sup>9</sup> Charles did not begin writing hymns in earnest until after his own version of an "Aldersgate Experience," which preceded John Wesley's conversion by two days in the watershed month of May, 1738.<sup>10</sup> In his journal entry for Tuesday, May 23, Charles reported that: "At nine I began an hymn upon my conversion, but was persuaded to break off, for fear of pride."<sup>11</sup> Later that same day he finished the hymn, and when John Wesley visited Charles on his sick bed, Wednesday, May 24, they sang the hymn together in an impromptu celebration: "Towards ten, my brother was brought in triumph by a troop of our friends, and declared, 'I believe!' We sang the hymn with great joy, and parted with prayer."<sup>12</sup> From that inauspicious beginning would follow an unprecedented level of literary productivity.

Initially, Charles's hymn writing went hand in hand with the Wesleyan evangelism. His journal locates his hymns in the larger context of daily ministerial duties.<sup>13</sup> They were written to be sung with his preaching services, in fellowship with Christian friends, or as a portion of his own devotional life.<sup>14</sup> Many of his most famous hymns were written in the midst of a ministry that often included four or five sermons a day in as many towns.<sup>15</sup> After his marriage to the lovely Sarah Gwynne (1749) the increase of family responsibilities curtailed Charles's incessant travel; as his health also failed and broke repeatedly, he ceased to itinerate, turning more and more directly to the task of writing verse.<sup>16</sup> Over the course of his seventy-nine years, Charles Wesley composed more than 9,000 hymns and sacred poems; nearly 4,000 of which were published in his lifetime, although more than 2,000 of them remain unpublished today.<sup>17</sup> Well over half of his compositions (published and unpublished) were called "Short Hymns on Select Passages of Scripture." They were poetic expositions of Scripture passages, as much a biblical commentary and reflection of their writer's biblical hermeneutic as John Wesley's more famous *Notes Upon the Old and New Testaments*. Their role, however, was confined to the realm of religious verse, since few, if any, of the "Short Hymns" were sung in Wesley's lifetime.<sup>18</sup>

#### CHARLES'S POETIC DICTION

Charles Wesley's poetry was written during a very torrid time in the history of English literature. The great luminaries of English verse, including Shakespeare and Milton, though physically absent from the scene, were still influential through their successors—a host of equally popular "neo-classicists" or "Augustans."<sup>19</sup> Nor is it surprising that the phraseology of these literary giants found their way into Charles Wesley's hymns; Dryden, Prior, Cowley, Young, as well as Shakespeare and Milton, are echoed in Wesley's verse.<sup>20</sup> His letters voice his admiration for many of the same poets identified by echo or

allusion in Charles's hymns. Cowley, Spencer, Milton, Prior and Young are among the contemporary poets Wesley mentioned as being of interest to him.<sup>21</sup>

Charles and his brother, John, both received the Oxford A.M. in Classics, which was considered the appropriate degree for ministerial preparation. He was educated and wrote his poetry during a literary renaissance which looked to the classics for its style and mode of expression. James Johnson, who has written one of the standard treatments of the Augustan literature, identified the application of classical forms and philology as the unifying characteristic of the "neo-classicism" of mid-eighteenth-century English literature.<sup>22</sup> There are numerous reminiscences of classical forms and phrases in Charles Wesley's hymns. Henry Bett has identified clear applications of Virgil's *Aeneid*, as well as echoes of Horace, Homer and Plato.<sup>23</sup> But John Rattenbury aptly drew attention to the relatively slight occurrence of classical allusions in Wesley's verse: "One allusion in every 2,000 lines does not give more than a pleasant literary flavour to the total work."<sup>24</sup> The same could also be said of Charles's use of Patristic and Anglican religious resources<sup>25</sup>; biblical images and language overshadowed, by far, the allusions which Charles drew from other sources.

Thus it is appropriate to count Charles Wesley among those eighteenth-century writers, like Dryden, Swift, Pope and Addison, in whom the classical and Christian traditions happily merged. He was at home in the writings of Virgil, Augustine or Saint Paul, and in the original languages! Not only did Charles study the classics and allow their phrases to creep into his own verses, he also used classical etymology to refine the "purity of [his] diction."<sup>26</sup> As Donald Davie pointed out, "in Wesley, as in Johnson, the blunted meaning or blurred metaphor comes sharper and live again in a sort of latinate pun."<sup>27</sup> Charles's application of words like "virtue," "meek," "gentle" and "balmy," evidence this etymological "purity."<sup>28</sup>

#### CHARLES WESLEY'S HERMENEUTIC

It is hard to imagine anyone who has been as saturated with Scripture as the Wesleys were; biblical phrases seeped from them, not only in sermon and in song, but also in the course of their casual speech and private writings. Hence, Rattenbury wryly observed, "a skillful man, if the Bible were lost, might extract it from Wesley's hymns. They contain the Bible in solution."<sup>29</sup> Henry Bett has rightly called Charles's hymns "mosaics" of biblical allusions; Wesley selected, shaped and polished Bible words, phrases and images and cemented them together to form his own image laden works of art.<sup>30</sup>

Charles's favorite description for the Bible was "the oracles," a designation which emphasized the revelatory impact he felt in the Scriptures.<sup>31</sup> It was his persistent habit to use the Bible as the foundation for his religious epistemology; hence, he also called the Scriptures his "rule of faith."<sup>32</sup> Doctrine, creed and religious experiences were all evaluated according to the biblical standard:

Doctrines, experiences to try,  
 We to the sacred standard fly,  
 Assured the Spirit of our Lord  
 Can never contradict His Word:  
 Whate'er His Spirit speaks to me,  
 Must with the written Word agree;  
 If not—I cast it all aside,  
 As Satan's voice, or nature's pride.

The test of truth and righteousness,  
 O God, thy records we confess,  
 And who Thine oracles gainsay,  
 Have missed the right celestial way;  
 Their pardon sure they vainly boast,  
 In nature sunk, in darkness lost;  
 Or if they of perfection dream,  
 The light of grace is not in them.<sup>33</sup>

Charles Wesley had an unambiguous confidence in the accuracy of the biblical record, and his doctrine of Scripture had its basis in the revelatory connection between the Word and Spirit of God. For Charles, the Bible was the enlivened Word of God because of its proximity to Christ and the Spirit—and these more often than the Bible itself—were said to be infallible in the revelatory event:

Let all who seek in Jesu' name,  
 To Him submit their every word,  
 Implicit faith in them disclaim,  
 And send the hearers to their Lord;  
 Who doth His Father's will reveal,  
 Our only Guide Infallible.

Jesus to me thy mind impart,  
 Be thou thine own interpreter,  
 Explain the Scriptures to my heart,  
 That when the Church thy servant hear,  
 Taught by the Oracles Divine,  
 They all may own, the Word is Thine.<sup>34</sup>

It was precisely his emphasis upon the revelatory role of the Bible, expressed in the dynamic relation of Word and Spirit, that gave Wesley's hymns a direction that was so essentially biblical, and yet also so fresh and lively. He had an acute reverence for the Scriptures, but was unwilling to make the Bible an end in itself;

rather, it was a “means” to reach an end (such as reconciliation, sanctification, fellowship with Christ or humanitarian service). The following hymn, based on Matt. 9:20-21 (where a woman was healed of a hemorrhage by touching the hem of Jesus’ garment), expressed Charles’s reverence for the Scriptures (“I blush and tremble to draw near.”), as well as his willingness to use the Bible as “a garment” with which “to touch my Lord:”

Unclean of life and heart unclean,  
 How shall I in His sight appear!  
 Conscious of my invertinate sin  
 I blush and tremble to draw near;  
 Yet I through the garment of His Word  
 I humbly seek to touch my Lord.<sup>35</sup>

The goal of Charles Wesley’s hermeneutic was the actualization of the biblical text. In his comment on Rev. 1:3 (“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear...”), Charles reminds the reader that “the mystic words,” illuminated for us by the Holy Spirit (“Divine Interpreter”), become the “Words that endless bliss impart” when “Kept in an obedient heart.” His second stanza implies the blessings of the Word are found in the hearing and doing of it, since through our hearing and doing the Word the Kingdom of God comes upon the earth and the glory of Christ is revealed—both now and in the Lord’s return:

Come, Divine Interpreter  
 Bring me eyes Thy book to read,  
 Ears the mystic words to hear,  
 Words which did from Thee proceed,  
 Words that endless bliss impart  
 Kept in an obedient heart.

All who read, or hear, are bless’d,  
 If Thy plain commands we do,  
 Of Thy kingdom here possess’d,  
 Thee we shall in glory view,  
 (When Thou comest on earth to abide)  
 Reign triumphant at Thy side.<sup>36</sup>

T. S. Gregory, in an article entitled “Charles Wesley’s Hymns and Poems,” urges the modern reader to consider Wesley’s hermeneutic in its historical context.<sup>37</sup> Alongside of Charles’s easy conscience about a supernatural world-view, a characteristic he shared with the Augustan poets, stand Wesley’s attempts to apply sophisticated biblical scholarship. He read and applied the leading

resources of his day, however antiquarian they may seem today.<sup>38</sup> Nor should we imagine that John Wesley's *Notes Upon the Old and New Testaments* escaped Charles's attention, since he edited ("revised") the entire project.<sup>39</sup>

Charles Wesley was also a talented exegete. His study and application of the Bible was not limited to the renderings of the *Authorized Version* (KJV), the *Book of Common Prayer* or recent commentaries—though he utilized each of those resources. His dexterity in the Greek New Testament was exemplified in Charles's treatment of the so-called *kenosis* passage in Phil. 2:7. The Greek *heauton ekenose* is, literally, "he emptied himself"; referring to the condescension of Christ. The translators of the *Authorized Version* avoided the bold simplicity of the Pauline phrasing, and translated the *kenosis* with the words "he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant."<sup>40</sup> The Authorized reading avoids the "scandalous" phrasing of the Greek text, but Wesley would have none of this type of evasion:

He left His throne above,  
*Emptied of all but love,*  
 Whom the heavens cannot contain,  
 God, vouchsafed a worm to appear,  
 Poor, and vile, and abject here.<sup>41</sup>

Charles's bold and direct rendering of "emptied" pushed beyond the translations of his own day and prefigured the reading carried in more modern versions (such as the *Revised Standard*). Having felt the force of Wesley's biblicalism, one must also press through it to the hermeneutical processes Charles used to expound Scripture in his hymns and sacred poems.

#### *Christocentric Approach*

Charles Wesley's approach to the Bible was emphatically Christocentric. It mattered not where the passage began (Jacob wrestling with the angel, the assault on Jericho, a parable about a Good Samaritan), Charles's exposition of it found a christological center and preached full salvation through almost any biblical passage. Wesley's tendency was to "evangelize the Old Testament" and Charles "treated it as if it were contemporary with the Church of Christ."<sup>42</sup> John Rattenbury had Wesley's christological approach to the Bible in mind when he wrote that Charles "rarely deals with the primary meaning of Scripture."<sup>43</sup> Instead of paraphrasing or reporting the gist of a biblical passage, he poetically restructured it according to his own theological agenda. It was precisely this hermeneutical process that distinguished and distanced Charles Wesley from his hymnological precursors. He boldly wove Christology and commentary into every poem instead of simply trying to paraphrase the message of a particular biblical text.

Barbara Welch, examining Charles Wesley's poetry from a literary perspective, identified his Christocentricism as a characteristic that distinguished Charles from the Augustan poets who were his contemporaries, as well as from his hymnological precursors like George Herbert and Isaac Watts.<sup>44</sup> The Augustan mood meditated upon the wonders of nature in order to contemplate the greatness of God, "...but in Wesley, that is only holy, it seems, which was raised on the Cross; Christ redeemed men, not creation. This habit in Wesley of envisaging the world almost exclusively from a supernatural [as opposed to natural] viewpoint marks a central difference between him and that group of fashionable poets."<sup>45</sup> Bernard Manning, in his classic *Hymns of Wesley and Watts*, used Christocentricism to contrast the hermeneutics of those two poets of Scripture: "Watts, time and time again, set the faith of the incarnation, the passion and resurrection against its cosmic background. He surveys the solar system, the planets, the fixed stars, the animal creation, from the beginning to the end of time."<sup>46</sup> Watts followed the traditional Augustan poetic form in his application of imagery drawn from the natural world to explain biblical revelation, Wesley refined Augustan diction by structuring his poems around Christ and other leading biblical themes (like redemption, atonement, sanctification and self-giving).

Dr. Watts was a pioneer in the art of paraphrasing the Psalms and other biblical passages. His ideal was to follow the biblical text as closely as possible and restate its message in the best (Miltonesque) poetic diction he could muster.<sup>47</sup> Charles Wesley "paraphrases" (if that is even the appropriate term to use) by weaving biblical words and images from the passage and from all across the Scripture, together with extra-biblical words, phrases and images to form a new interpretative fabric. Thus, Manning aptly noted that Charles "...not only paraphrased, but also commented as he versified"; the "boldness" which he observed in Wesley's work was found in the poet's willingness to grapple with the biblical text artistically in order to form it along the lines of one of the Bible's central themes.<sup>48</sup>

Wesley was conscious of his penchant for looking beneath the "primary meaning of Scripture." His hymn based on Luke 9:33 (the Transfiguration account) gave a clue to its author's recognition of the method he used to transfigure biblical passages:

Who tastes the Truth and Jesus sees  
 In all the Scripture—mysteries  
 The Law and the Prophets' End,  
 Delights to meditate and many  
 Would gladly on the mountain stay,  
 And never more descend.<sup>49</sup>

The first three lines are especially significant for our inquiry since they point to Charles's willingness to find Jesus in all the "Scripture-mysteries," as well as in the Law and the Prophets. Commenting on Luke 16:31 ("If they hear not Moses

and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.") Wesley looked to the New Testament's redemptive core and identified "love alone" as "the sufficient proof of reconciling grace":

Taught by their incredulity  
The standing meaning vouchsafed by thee  
We thankfully embrace,  
The Scriptures search to find our Lord  
And listen to the joyful Word  
Of reconciling grace.

The sinner poor Thy Word believes,  
As full sufficient proof perceives  
What Thou are pleased to 'impart';  
But love alone can change the will,  
But only Gilead's balm can heal  
The blindness of my heart.<sup>50</sup>

These statements are not antithetical to those introduced above; "the standing meaning" of the text still prods the singer to "search the Scriptures to find our Lord," but Charles did not stop his commentary with Christology. He connected Christology with redemption and sanctification, and generally found the whole gospel in any biblical passage that came under his consideration.

Charles Wesley was conscious of his penchant for looking beneath the literal surface of the biblical text to find "the precious mine below." In the following verse he criticized the "proud (and no doubt superficial) learning" which is unable to discern even foundational biblical themes:<sup>51</sup>

Proud learning boasts, its skill in vain  
The sacred oracles to explain,  
It may the literal surface show,  
But not the precious mine below;  
The saving sense remains conceal'd,  
The Book is still unread, unknown,  
And open'd by the Lamb alone.

The verse is full of powerful images for describing Charles's hermeneutic. It shows his clear interest in "the precious mine below," the "literal surface" of Scripture. The hidden deposit is described as "the saving sense" which is revealed by the living Word; Christocentricity emerges again, as the Lamb opens "the Book" poetically as its central theme and redemptively as the Spirit opens "the saving sense" for the reader.

### Typology

Typology is a hermeneutical tool which finds a “deeper” meaning hidden beneath the literal surface of the biblical text. As we might expect, it provided Charles Wesley with one of his favorite devices for plumbing the depths of “the precious mine below.” His application of typology followed the general pattern of finding a New Testament or christological “type” lurking behind an Old Testament person, event or institution. Hence, Jesus was found “typified” or prefigured in the heroes of old. Charles’s typologies were often very direct: “Moses the meek man of God, / A type of Christ was seen....”<sup>52</sup> Wesley’s journal reports that types also emerged in his preaching, though his sermons now extant do not employ the device.<sup>53</sup>

Virtually any Old Testament hero could, in Charles’s hands, become an instrument for teaching about Christ, although Moses, Joshua, Samson and David were his favorite figures for typological identification.<sup>54</sup> The ark of the covenant, to which the Israelites fled for mercy, typified the wounds of Christ.<sup>55</sup> Jacob’s ladder, upon which angels ascended and descended from heaven (Gen. 28:12–13), became a powerful image for describing the work of Christ’s incarnation, death and resurrection,<sup>56</sup> as did Isaac carrying the wood of his own sacrificial death.<sup>57</sup>

Since 1841 and the publication of Thomas Jackson’s *Life of Charles Wesley*, students of Methodism have been amazed by Charles’s application of Matthew Henry’s commentary. “Few people,” mused Jackson, “would think of going to the verbose *Commentary* of Matthew Henry for the elements of poetry.”<sup>58</sup> At first glance Jackson’s amazement seems well founded; yet closer examination suggests that Charles Wesley and Matthew Henry shared a hermeneutical fondness for christological typologies. This common interest also explains why Charles repeatedly followed Henry’s comments and virtually ignored John Wesley’s *Notes* as he formed his *Short Hymns on Select Passages of Scripture*.<sup>59</sup> Numerous instances emerge where Charles’s poems prefer Matthew Henry’s comments and even borrow his phraseology instead of following the pattern of John Wesley’s *Notes*. An example of this sort of preference is found in their respective treatment of Josh. 20:7–8, where the seven cities of refuge were designated; Charles Wesley and Matthew Henry found typological meanings for each of the seven cities, but John’s *Notes* refused to venture beyond the boundary of Palestinian geography.<sup>60</sup>

Charles Wesley used typology extensively. He understood it as a valid poetical device for developing analogical or thematic connections across the broad expanse of Scripture. Often his typologies do not seem as grotesque as others of the age, since Charles took pains to make the element of connection (be it meekness, intercession or victory through death, etc.) transparent in his exposition. Often he used the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the text to bridge the gap between them through identification with their plight or with their emotions. Typology, while eschewed by John Wesley’s more modern type of commentary, formed an obvi-

ous corollary to Charles's Christocentric approach to the hermeneutical task. It meshed well with the practical situation of a poet who was also a hymnologist-evangelist; who deemed it his task to tell the whole gospel story in every hymn, and through any Bible passage.

### *Allegory*

Allegory is another "deeper identification" which appears in Charles Wesley's hermeneutic arsenal. Like typology, allegory makes a connection between two characters or incidents which on the surface of things seem quite separate. But where typology rests on a strong thematic or symbolic identification between two seemingly separate elements, allegory specializes in finding a spiritual identification for virtually every aspect emerging in the passage under consideration. Allegory, like typology, has a long history of application in the Church; yet, it has always had the inherent danger of the text being extended at the whim of the expositor. This danger becomes especially acute in allegory (as opposed to typology) since history is held in abeyance.<sup>61</sup> But for this same reason, allegory becomes a particularly versatile tool in the hands of a poetical commentator, who wishes to mine the depths of meaning "beneath the literal surface" of the biblical text.

Charles Wesley generally used allegory to expound and expand New Testament pericopes. It was a prominent literary device in his poems and in his preaching. An unpublished letter preserves a recollection of how he preached from the parable of the Good Samaritan:

I read prayers, and preached the pure Gospel from the Good Samaritan. Surely He was in the midst of us, pouring in His oil. Some seemed ready for Him; and it cannot be long before He binds up their wounds, and brings them into His inn, and takes care of them. He gave money to me the host, that I too might take care of His patients. I was greatly concerned for their recovery.<sup>62</sup>

This sustained imagery is also preserved in Charles's hymn on "The Good Samaritan."<sup>63</sup> The Bible passage (Luke 15) had long been the focus of allegorical attention, but where St. Augustine and other earlier expositors turned the parable into an epic of Christ's life, Charles Wesley saw it as a reconciling event applicable to the inner life of everyone.

In Wesley's hymn the reader or singer is the wounded traveler, robbed of true religion by thieves.<sup>64</sup> The mortal wound which has been inflicted is Adam's sin: "Dead in Adam, dead, within/ My soul is wholly dead."<sup>65</sup> The traveler is stripped naked, "Naked, helpless stripped of God."<sup>66</sup> He is bloodied, and his blood is his own guilt.<sup>67</sup> The priest who "Comes down in vain" symbolized the "patriarchs and prophets of old."<sup>68</sup> The Levite of the biblical account becomes one of the contemporary false teachers who "offers no relief/ All my wounds be open tears."<sup>69</sup> Jesus,

the Good Samaritan in Wesley's exposition, is full of grace and compassion; He "heals my spirit's every wound."<sup>70</sup> The recovery of the traveler is a recovery from sin, through the "Wine and oil of grace," at the hand of the "Good Physician."<sup>71</sup> The result of that healing prescription is not only health, but also "cleansing" and "wholeness"—Wesleyan euphemisms for sanctification or Christian Perfection: "Perfect then the work begun,/And make the sinner whole."<sup>72</sup> Similar allegorical exposition can be found in hymns which were based on Charles's favorite sermon texts, including "Blind Bartimaeus,"<sup>73</sup> "The Pool of Bethesedia,"<sup>74</sup> "The Woman of Canaan"<sup>75</sup> and "Wrestling Jacob."<sup>76</sup> Biblical events like, "The Taking of Jericho,"<sup>77</sup> "Jonah's Gourd,"<sup>78</sup> "The Children in the Fiery Furnace"<sup>79</sup> and "Daniel in the Den of Lions,"<sup>80</sup> were also allegorized into stories of redemption.

Seen against his literary context, once again Wesley broke with the style of his important precursors. Unlike Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and allegories of an earlier generation, Charles Wesley never narrated the allegorized account to the reader. The reader or singer is never a spectator to the unfolding redemptive events; rather, we become one of the actors in the narrative. We are the Wounded Traveler robbed of vital piety; or Jacob wrestling for "the blessing"; Blind Bartimaeus's affliction becomes our own sinful blindness; and we are the Woman Taken in Adultery—guilty, but by grace no longer accused. How different Wesley's allegories are from those of Bunyan or Milton! Where the Puritans narrate the account, the Methodist makes the singer participate in the biblical drama; where earlier allegorists used the device to communicate ideals or principles, Charles Wesley used the same tool to take the reader or singer to the core of the biblical passage by recreating the event afresh in the reader's imagination. It was for this reason that John Rattenbury found "with a very few exceptions, the allegorical interpretations of Charles Wesley are convincing, and rarely, as in the case of so many allegorists, grotesque."<sup>81</sup> Wesley took an old tool and reshaped it to fit the needs of a new age.

### *Drama*

There is a mythic or image-building process at work in Charles Wesley's hermeneutic.<sup>82</sup> He wove, blended and allegorized Scripture into a poetic form that communicated the gospel in a dramatic and participatory fashion. His poetic reconstructions were full of the Bible, and they communicated a sense of life-experience which drew the singer into the text. Wesley had a talent for taking a familiar passage and changing its context, or blending it with another passage or image to make it fresh and alive in the imagination of the reader. For example, the mournful call of Matt. 27:25, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children," which in its context was the shout of the crowd rejecting Christ before Pilate's judgment seat, became in Charles's poetic reconstruction, "the best of prayers, if rightly understood."<sup>83</sup> The shout of dereliction was transformed into a prayer for redemption through the "blood" (saving significance) of Christ.

Charles's process of recasting allusions or imagery into something new or startling, had as its goal recreating a sense of the drama or emotion which drew people into the hymn, and through it to Christian faith. Thus, the hymns, as with Charles's sermons, were weapons of Wesleyan evangelism; they had the not-so-subtle agenda of inviting people to come to vital faith. Charles often undertook this task by making the hearer or singer a contemporary of the crucifixion of Christ:

*"It is finished!" The love of Christ crucified so constrained me, that I burst into tears, and felt sympathy with Him in His suffering. In like manner, the whole congregation looked upon Him who they had pierced and mourned.<sup>84</sup>*

This same poetic device, hinted at through the journal's record of Charles's preaching, created a dramatic effect in his hymns:

My stony heart Thy wrath defies,  
And dares against Thy judgments rise,  
Self-hardened from Thy fear;  
What can'st Thou with Thy rebel do?  
Try me by love, and in my view  
With all Thy wounds appear.

Ah! Who that piteous sight can bear!  
Behold the Lamb hangs bleeding there!  
There, there! On yonder tree!  
Pierced are His feet, His hands, His side!  
My Lamb, My love is crucified!  
O God! He dies for me!<sup>85</sup>

The hymn, like the sermon described in Charles's journal, vibrates with emotion; it is peppered with exclamation points, cast in imagery and tense that demands participation in a new religious event orchestrated by the poet. Time and space are not boundaries to poetic imagination or to religious experience; Wesley's hymns used poetic hermeneutics to bridge the distance between the biblical past and the contemporary reader by involving us in the events and experiences of the text.

Wesley used many poetic devices to create this dramatic dialogue between the past and present. We shall mention but a few of them. The first method was to paint the picture of the crucified Christ on the canvas of the reader's mind. Charles's verses are full of graphic language. His phrases are short and well chosen—full of color and action—and they communicate in vivid word pictures the author's excitement or emotion. The poems are typically set in the present tense (as opposed to the more traditional narrative past); this breaks the bonds of time, and makes the readers contemporaries of the text.

Second, occasionally, the sense of spiritual need or culpability on the part of

the reader is heightened by the spokesperson in Wesley's hymns accepting blame or guilt for the death of Christ: "The covenant-blood/Underfoot I have trod/And again I have murdered the meek Son of God." In this example, formed on the pattern of Heb. 6:6, Wesley personified the seriousness of rejecting the reconciliation pro-offered in Christ's death. The present rejection of redemption is equated with the guilt of those who murdered Him in the historical past; by mythopoeic interpretation those who reject Christ now also "crucify" Him.<sup>86</sup> The poetic transition from past to present placed a sense of responsibility and onus for decision upon the singer of the hymn. As we saw in his application of allegory, Charles's spokespersons often transformed the reader into one of the actors in the biblical drama.

A third literary device which Wesley employed to create a sense of contemporaneity in his hymns was dialogue. In a few of his expositions of the atonement, Charles's poetical spokespersons enter into dialogue with Jesus as He hangs upon the ever present cross:

Saviour, I with guilty shame,  
Own that I, alas, am he!  
Weak, and wavering still I am,  
Ready still to fly from Thee:  
Stop me by Thy look, and say,  
'Will you also go away?'

You, whom I have brought to God,  
Will you turn from God again?  
You, for whom I spilt my blood,  
You, who felt it once applied,  
Can yet leave my bleeding side?

No, my Lamb, my Saviour, No!  
(Every soul with me reply)  
From Thy wounds we will not go,  
Will not from our Master fly:  
This is the life-giving word;  
Thou art our Eternal Lord.<sup>87</sup>

This dialogue reaches its climax in the thirteenth verse of this poem, where the poetic voice implores, "Speak Thyself into our heart."<sup>88</sup> Reconciliation, atonement and Christian Perfection were wedded in this dramatic dialogue with the crucified Christ.

Because of his reverence for the Bible, Charles Wesley reworked and applied it in ways we moderns might term "existential." T. S. Gregory has put it well by

saying that Charles Wesley wrote his hymns "not only to express, but to induce the experience they reveal."<sup>89</sup> The experiential expression was both doctrinal and didactic. It revolved around the central themes of the Christian faith, and sought to express those themes in ways that made them live in the reader's frame of reference. Wesley drew the singer into the action and experience of the biblical texts; rather than narrate the accounts through poetic spokespersons, Wesley made the reader into one of the actors in the drama he was directing. In Charles's hymns and poems the biblical text and the singer stand in an experiential dialogue that makes them contemporaneous. His affirmation of the theological connection of Word and Spirit lay at the foundation of Wesley's sometimes daring hermeneutical reconstructions. It allowed him to find Christ at the center of any passage, and yet gave Charles the freedom to allow the Spirit of God to speak through the passage as he shaped the text into a new context. Ironically, Wesley's traditional conception of the nature of Scripture gave him a hermeneutic that was far from traditional; his transfigurations of Scripture were fresh, lively and often a bit daring.

#### WESLEY'S HERMENEUTIC IN LITERARY CONTEXT

Charles's hymns and sacred poems have an Augustan sense of propriety about them. James Dale and Barbara Welch have made the literary connections between Wesley's work and the Augustan poets the foci of their Ph.D. dissertations.<sup>90</sup> Dale's summation of Wesley's participation in Augustan poetic form is representative of their conclusions:

Charles Wesley is an indubitable Augustan in his controlled expression of emotion, his unashamed didacticism, his clear precision of statement, his forceful compression of meaning, his constant allusions to a hallowed canon of reference familiar to his readers, his diction, cast in the mold of Dryden, Prior, and Pope.<sup>91</sup>

Wesley's interaction with contemporary poetic genre indicates that his hymns were studied more than popular piety's picture of a mystical little man who wrote *always* under the heat of emotion. His hymns possess both spontaneity and overflowing emotion, but those feelings were tools in the hands of a poetical craftsman. Charles was not *merely* a sentimentalist; his sentiment, while genuine, was an instrument of his poetic diction. And we do him a disservice if we think "emotionalism" when we read of the importance the role of "experience" played in his hymns and sacred poems. The fusion of doctrine and experience was as foundational to Charles's poetic method as it was to Wesleyan theology; it created a lived theology. Hence in his hymns "doctrine and experience march in step," forming an "indivisible unit."<sup>92</sup>

Welding experience and theology together in hymns with emotive references was basic to Charles's pattern in religious verse. His brother, John Wesley, rec-

ognized it and his "Preface" appropriately described their 1780 *Hymn Book for the Use of a People Called Methodists*: "a little body of experimental and practical divinity."<sup>93</sup> "Experimental" and "practical" are good synonymms for the Wesleyan conception of the role of religious experience. It had to do with the interconnection of life and thought.<sup>94</sup> John's preface indicated that this fusion of doctrine and vital experience that was found in the makeup of the hymns even extended to the organization of the hymn book: "The hymns are not jumbled together, but carefully ranged under proper heads, according to the experience of real Christians."<sup>95</sup> Thus, Charles's poetical use should not be confused with the "geysers of warm feelings" found in the Romantic verse that came after him; yet, as Donald Davie suggests, "Feeling *is* there. We respect its integrity, and we take its force. Just because it is not offered in isolation but together with its occasion, an occasion grasped and presented with keen and sinewy intelligence."<sup>96</sup> There was a Lockean sense of practicality about the Wesleyan approach to religious language; hence, John's preface also assured the reader, "We talk common sense...both in prose and in verse."<sup>97</sup>

The same preface hinted at the Wesleys' tastes in poetry. John found the hymns to be good poetry since in them "there is no doggerel, no botches, nothing put in to patch up the rhyme, no feeble explicatives. Here is nothing turgid or bombastic...no cant expression, no words without meaning."<sup>98</sup> A champion of plain words for plain folks, John believed the Wesleyan hymns possessed "both the purity, and the strength and elegance of the English language, and at the same time, the utmost simplicity and plainness, suited to every capacity."<sup>99</sup> He also recognized the genuine creativity of Charles's muse, distinguishing between an artist and an imitator: "By labour, a man may become a tolerable imitator of Spencer, Shakespeare or Milton, and may heap together pretty compound epithets, as *paleeyed*, *meekeyed*, and the like; but unless he be born a poet, he will never attain the genuine spirit of poetry."<sup>100</sup>

The similarities between Charles Wesley's poetry and Augustan form are sustained and striking. But it is also clear that the literary evaluation of the Augustan or Neo-Classical period is currently undergoing pervasive revision.<sup>101</sup> Donald Wesling's fine survey "Augustan Form: Justification and Breakup of a Poetic Style," concludes by suggesting that "Augustan Form" was actually a poetic artifice created by the emergent Romantics who, wishing to straighten out the logic, rejected or reversed or reinvented by distortion the entire list of postulates. So doing, they involved themselves in new problematics of a premeditated spontaneity which have not to this day been unraveled.<sup>102</sup>

John Sitter observes this same sort of revisionist tendency by suggesting that the literature of the mid-eighteenth century is more intelligibly understood if one avoids the temptation to consider it either "Pre-Romantic" or late "Post-Augustan."<sup>103</sup> Sitter argues that the mid-century poetry is characterized by a "literary loneliness" which sought detachment from contemporary history through the

creation of an "alternative history." This recreation or "conversion" of history, most apparent in the graveyard poets of the 1740s (Thomas Gray, Thomas Wharton and Edward Young) marked an assimilation of romantic-type material into Augustan Form.<sup>104</sup> David Morris detects a similar sort of fusion of poetic styles occurring even earlier (c. 1700) in the writings of the literary critic and poet, John Dennis.<sup>105</sup> Dennis not only wrote religious poetry, he also published several important contributions to poetical theory.<sup>106</sup> The significance of these books is found in Dennis's growing appreciation for the role of personal experience or "passion" in poetry; "Poetry he believed, is 'an Art, by which a poet excites Passion'."<sup>107</sup>

The significance of this literary context for Charles Wesley's poetical hermeneutic is clear: Wesley, like a few of his contemporaries, stood on the brink of a literary revolution that erupted in the poetry of the middle of the eighteenth century. He continued the poetic diction, inherited from Dryden, Pope and Prior, that emphasized classical forms and pure meaning and yet, like his fellow mid-century poets, Wesley sought to "convert" or transfigure history by creating an "alternative" history by the use of "passion." In Charles's poems, biblical history was transfigured into a contemporary experience which drew the reader or singer into the core of the biblical event.<sup>108</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Charles Wesley's hymns and sacred poems are mosaics of biblical phrases and allusions. They are constructed with the care and attention of a man who was both a gifted classicist and a Methodist evangelist. His poetic hermeneutic was characterized by a persistent christological focus. It utilized typology and allegory, along with less standard devices, to set the message of faith and comfort in the life experience of the singer or reader.

Wesley had a rather traditional conception of the nature of the Bible, and yet his penchant for turning biblical texts into poetic dramas recreated those same passages in startling ways. Charles's hermeneutic also showed that he stood on the cutting edge of an important literary movement that shook the mid-eighteenth century. Using a diction that was biblical and yet uniquely his own, Wesley sought to transfigure the Bible and contemporary history by setting them in an experiential dialogue. In his hymns, the biblical past and the eighteenth-century present stood together in a sort of eucharistic timelessness which set Christ before the reader or singer, and which made the gospel past into a contemporary experience.

APPENDIX A

BIBLICAL ALLUSIONS IN CHARLES WESLEY'S HYMN  
 "O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing"<sup>109</sup>

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1. O for a thousand <b>tongues</b> to sing<br/>                 My great <b>Redeemer's</b> praise,<br/>                 The <b>glories</b> of my <b>God</b> and <b>King</b>,<br/>                 The <b>triumphs</b> of His <b>grace</b>.</p>              | <p>A. Acts 2:11; Phil. 2:11<br/>                 B. Luke 24:21; Isa. 53:10f<br/>                 C&amp;D. Exod. 15:1-3; Luke 9:33<br/>                 2 Cor. 2:14; Ps. 145:1</p> |
| <p>2. My <b>gracious Master</b> and my <b>God</b><br/>                 Assist me to <b>proclaim</b><br/>                 To <b>spread through all the world</b><br/>                     <b>abroad</b><br/>                 The <b>honors of Thy name</b>.</p> | <p>A. Luke 4:22<br/>                 B. Isa. 61:1-2<br/>                 C. Mark 1:28; I Thess. 1:8; Matt. 9:31<br/>                 D. Ps. 66:2</p>                              |
| <p>3. Jesus! the name that <b>charms</b> our fears,<br/>                 And <b>bids our sorrows cease</b>;<br/> <b>Tis music in the sinner's ears</b>,<br/> <b>Tis life and health and peace</b>.</p>   | <p>A. Greek for "grace."<br/>                 B. John 16:20<br/>                 C. Luke 15:25<br/>                 D. John 1:4; Ps. 42:11; Eph. 2:11</p>                         |
| <p>4. He speaks and listening to His voice,<br/> <b>New life the dead receive</b>,<br/>                 The <b>mournful</b>, broken hearts rejoice,<br/>                 The <b>humble poor believe</b>.</p>   | <p>ALL: Isa. 61:1f; Matt. &amp; Luke 4:18</p>   |
| <p>5. He breaks the power of <b>canceled sin</b><br/>                 He sets the <b>prisoner free</b>;<br/>                 His <b>blood</b> can make the <b>foulest clean</b><br/>                 His blood <b>availed for me</b>.</p>                      | <p>A&amp;B. Rom. 7 &amp; 8; esp. Rom. 7:14; 8:11<br/>                 C. Heb. 9:14; I Tim. 1:15<br/>                 D. James 5:16; Gal. 2:20</p>                                 |

APPENDIX B  
A HERMENEUTICAL COMPARISON<sup>110</sup>

<u>Biblical Text</u>	<u>C. Wesley</u> <sup>111</sup>	<u>Matthew Henry</u> <sup>112</sup>	<u>J. Wesley</u> <sup>113</sup>
Josh. 10:26	Joshua = Jesus	Yes	No
Josh. 10:40	Joshua = Jesus	Yes	Yes
Josh. 11:18	Joshua = Jesus	No	No
Josh. 11:21	Joshua = Jesus	Yes	No
Josh. 11:23	Joshua = Jesus	Yes	No
Judg. 15:14	Samson = Jesus	Yes	No
Judg. 16:29	Suffering of Saints	No	No
Judg. 16:29	Samson = Jesus	Yes	No
Job 9:21	Suffering of Saints	No	No
Job 12:2	Anti-Arian	No	No
Job 13:15	Chastening = Blessing	No	No
Job 33:24	Ransom = Jesus	Yes	No
Job 42:8	Christ's Intercession	Yes	No
Psa. 42:2	Font of Calvary	Yes	No
Psa. 118:18	Chastening	No	No
Psa. 119:96	Christian Perfection	No	Yes
Isa. 36:7	Altar = Christ	No	No
Jer. 2:13	On "double sin"	No	No
Zech. 12:8	The Angel = Jesus	Yes	Yes
Mal. 1:8	Inward Sacrifices	Yes	No
Matt. 2:11	Gifts are symbols	No	No
John 5:2	Pool = Jesus' blood	Yes	No
Acts 7:8	OT heroes = Types	No	No

APPENDIX C: THE GOOD SAMARITAN

1. Woe is me! what tongue can tell  
My sad afflicted state?  
Who my anguish can reveal,  
Or all my woe relate?  
Fallen among thieves I am,  
And they have robb'd me of my God,  
Turn'd my glory into shame,  
And left me in my blood.

2. God was once my glorious dress,  
And I like Him did shine,  
Satan of His righteousness  
Hath spoil'd this soul of mine;  
By the mortal wound of sin,  
'Twixt God and me the parting made:  
Dead in ADAM, dead within,  
My soul is wholly dead.

3. I have lost the life Divine,  
And when this outward breath  
To the Giver I resign,  
Must die the second death,  
Naked, helpless, stripped of God,  
And at the latest gasp I lie:  
Who beholds me in my blood,  
And save me ere I die?

4. Lo! the PRIEST comes down in vain,  
And sees my sad distress  
Sees the state of fallen man  
But cannot give me ease:  
Patriarchs and prophets old  
Observe my wretched, desperate case;  
Me expiring they behold,  
But leave me as I was.

5. Lo! the LEVITE me espies,  
And stops to view my grief,  
Looks on me, and bids me rise,  
But offers no relief.  
All my wounds he open tears,  
And searches them, alas! in vain;  
Fill'd with anguish, griefs, and fears,  
He leaves me in my pain.

6. O Thou GOOD SAMARITAN,  
In Thee is all my hope;  
Only Thou can'st 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 to Thee.

7. Still thou journey'st where I am  
And still Thy bowels move;  
Pity is with Thee the same,  
And all Thy heart is love.  
Stoop to a poor sinner, stoop,  
And let Thy healing grace abound;  
Heal my bruises, and bind up  
My spirit's every wound.

8. 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.

9. Pity to my dying cries  
 Hath drawn Thee from above,  
 Hovering over me with eyes  
 Of tenderness and love:  
 Now, e'en now I see Thy face,  
 The balm of GILEAD I receive!  
 Thou has saved me by Thy grace,  
 And bade the sinner live.

10. Surely now the bitterness  
 Of second death is past:  
 O my Life, my Righteousness,  
 On Thee my soul is cast.  
 Thou has brought me to Thine inn,  
 And I am of thy promise sure;  
 Thou shalt cleanse me from all sin,  
 And all my sickness cure.

11. Perfect then the work begun,  
 And make the sinner whole;  
 All Thy will on me be done,  
 My body, spirit, soul.  
 Still preserve me safe from harms  
 And kindly for Thy patient care;  
 Take me, Jesu to Thine arms,  
 And keep me ever there.

## NOTES

1. This article had its inception as a presentation to the Society of John Wesley Fellows, at their annual conference, Shakertown, Kentucky, Christmas, 1985. I am grateful to the society and to Dr. Ed Robb for their support and encouragement in my research.

2. Cf. Ms. *Ordinations*, where Charles's unpublished letter "To Dr. Chandler" (headed, "London, April, 28th., 1785,") described the beginnings of the Holy Club in this way:

My first year at College I lost in diversions. The next I set myself to study. Diligence led me to serious thinking. I went to the weekly sacrament, and persuaded two or three young scholars to accompany me, and to observe the method of study prescribed by the statutes of the University. This gained me the harmless nickname of a 'Methodist.'

There is some debate as to whether Charles was literally the first Methodist. Frederick Gill (*Charles Wesley the First Methodist* [London: Epworth Press, 1964]) believes he was; Richard Heitzenrater (*The Elusive Mr. Wesley* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1984], 2:206) doubts that was the case. It is clear that Charles's recollection, at a distance of nearly sixty years, locates himself at the head of the Holy Club at its inception (cf. "Letter to William Chandler"). Perhaps more important than determining who was the first Methodist, is the task of examining and replicating the piety and function of the Holy Club. For the full text of Charles's "Letter to William Chandler" cf. John R. Tyson, *Charles Wesley: A Reader* (London: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 58-61.

3. Gill, *The First Methodist*, p. 36.
4. C. W. *Journal*, 1:155.
5. Frank Baker, *Charles Wesley as Revealed by His Letters* (London: Epworth Press, 1948), p. 35, reports that Charles's sermon "Awake, Thou That Sleepest," headed the best-seller list among Methodist publications during the Wesleys' life time.
6. The text of Charles's sermon "Awake, Thou That Sleepest" is carried in J. W. *Works*, 5:25-37; the sermon "The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes," (#129) located in J. W. *Works*, 7:386-400, shows such strong similarity to Charles's *Hymns Occasioned by the Earthquake* (2 collections, 1750) that it should probably be traced to his pen.
7. Thomas Albin, "Charles Wesley's Earliest Evangelical Sermons," *Methodist History*, 21 (October 1982): 60-63, gives an account of the discovery of these sermons—a process in which Albin and the present writer played a part. These sermons have recently been published by Thomas Albin and Oliver Beckerlegge, *Charles Wesley's Earliest Evangelical Sermons* (Wesley Historical Society, 1987).
8. C. W. *Journal*, 1:132.
9. One of these was "While Midnight Shades the Earth O'erspread," which was subsequently published in the Wesleys' *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739). Cf. Tyson, *Reader*, pp. 64-66.
10. C. W. *Journal*, 1:90-98.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
13. John R. Tyson and Douglas Lister, "Charles Wesley Pastor: A Glimpse Inside His Shorthand Journal," *Quarterly Review*, 4 (Spring 1984):9-22.
14. C. W. *Journal*, 1:131; 134; 138; 139; 140; 141; 142; 145; 146; 150; 154; 166; 2:214.
15. Thomas Jackson, *A Life of Charles Wesley*, (London: John Mason, 1892),1:332.
16. Cf. Charles's "Preface" to the 1762 *Short Hymns on Select Passages of Scripture*, (*Poetical Works*, 9:vii-x) and C. W. *Journal*, 2:91.
17. Frank Baker, *Representative Verse of Charles Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1962), p. xi. The estimate of the number of Charles's compositions could run as low as 6,000 if one excludes the lyric poems which were rarely (if ever) sung. Baker's estimate of 9,000 compositions is slightly higher than the traditional ascription (compare J. E. Rattenbury, *The Evangelical Doctrines of Charles Wesley's Hymns* [London: Epworth, 1948], p. 19-20, which suggests 7,300 as an apt count). But recent documentary evidence supports Baker's larger estimate, and in fact suggests that 9,000 may be a rather conservative figure. Other critical issues like the distinguishing the compositions of Charles Wesley from those of his brother, John also have rather direct bearing on this count. I have given the matter of identification thorough treatment in my Ph.D. dissertation, "Charles Wesley's Theology of the Cross: An Examination of the Theology and Method of Charles Wesley as seen in his Doctrine of the Atonement" (Drew University, Madison, NJ, 1983). Cf. Baker *Representative Verse*, pp. 1viii-1xi. These hymns are being published by Oliver Beckerlegge and S.T. Kimbrough under the title *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley* (Abingdon: Kingswood Books).
18. *Poetical Works*, vols. 9-13 carry the text of 3,491 of these "Short Hymns." Nearly two thousand more of them remain in manuscript form.
19. The English "Augustan" period came to flower during the reign of Queen Anne. It received that designation because of its literary similarity to the golden age of Latin verse. The parameters of the period are often set with the work of John Dryden (1660) and

Samuel Johnson (1780). Cf. Emilie Legouis and Louis Cazamain, *A History of English Literature* (New York: MacMillan, revised 1957), pp. 690-870; Hugh Holman, *Handbook of Literature* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1980), pp. 83-84. Yet, as we shall see below, these boundaries are a matter of convenience and recent literature has reopened the whole discussion of Augustan form.

20. Henry Bett, *The Hymns of Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1913) remains the standard published source on these literary allusions in Charles Wesley's verse. James Dale, in his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, "The Theological and Literary Qualities of the Poetry of Charles Wesley in Relation to the Standards of His Age" (Cambridge, 1960), treats this matter well. Barbara Welch's unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, "Charles Wesley and the Celebrations of Evangelical Experience," locates Wesley's poetry squarely within the Augustan literary milieu (University of Michigan, 1971). Donald Davie, *The Purity of English Diction* (London: Chatto and Windrus, 1952), pp. 70-82, also offers a helpful discussion of the same topic.

21. Baker, *Charles Wesley Letters*, pp. 129-142; Cf. Dale, "Literary Qualities," p. 127ff.

22. James William Johnson, *The Formation of English Neo-Classical Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 87. Johnson gives an excellent survey of the various segments of classical literature applied in the Augustan period: Greek Antiquity, pp. 69-90; Roman Antiquity, pp. 91-105; and Christian Antiquity, pp. 106-121.

23. Bett, *Hymns of Methodism*, pp. 124-127.

24. John E. Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, p. 47.

25. Johnson, *Neo-Classical Thought*, pp. 107-115; Bett, *Hymns of Methodism*, pp. 98-107. The most obvious Anglican resource which appears in Charles's hymns is the *Book of Common Prayer* (cf. *Poetical Works*, 9:284-293) where many of his "Short Hymns" are based on the "Prayer Book Version."

26. Davie, *Purity of English Diction*, pp. 70-81, see chap. 5, "The Classicism of Charles Wesley," where Davie demolishes the wall between "lyrical" (or secular) and "didactic" (religious) poetry and sets Wesley's verse in its larger literary context.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 77. Davie pointed to Charles's application of words like "seer," "signify," "canceled" and "meritorious," as examples of Wesley's remaking colloquial words with their classical root in mind.

28. Tyson, "Charles Wesley's Theology of the Cross," pp. 94-106; 176-180.

29. Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, p. 48.

30. Cf. Appendix A, for an example of this mosaic-making process as exemplified in the biblical allusions behind Charles's "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing."

31. *Poetical Works*, 12:411, #2934, 9:380, #1074.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*, 9:380, #1074; cf. 10:24-25, #1314.

34. *Ibid.*, 13:183, #3372.

35. *Ibid.*, 10:224-225, #216.

36. *Ibid.*, 13:219.

37. T. S. Gregory, "Charles Wesley's Hymns and Poems," *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, 182 (1957):255.

38. *Poetical Works*, 7:204, 9:vii; *C. W. Journal*, 1:285.

39. Nehemiah Curnock, ed. *The Journal of John Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1938), 4:361, discusses Charles's editorial role in the preparation of John's *Notes (Explanatory*

- Notes Upon the New Testament* [San Francisco: E. Thomas, n.d.]. A few echoes of John's commentary can be heard in Charles's "Short Hymns on Select Passages of Scripture." The poetical treatment of Gal. 5:21 is a good example; compare *Poetical Works*, 13:76, #3163, with *Notes*, p. 485. In Charles's poem and John's *Notes* the phrase "weaker and weaker" predominates the commentary. Cf. *Poetical Works*, 13:60 and *Notes*, p. 471.
40. Bett, *Hymns of Methodism*, p. 81.
41. *Poetical Works*, 1:148, a hymn which Charles called "Hymn on the Titles of Christ." More recent hymnals have shortened it and name it by the first line, "Arise My Soul, Arise."
42. Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, p. 92.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Barbara Welch, "Charles Wesley and the Celebrations of Evangelical Experience," pp. 113-114.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Bernard Manning, *The Hymns of Wesley and Watts* (London: Epworth Press, 1943), pp. 42-43.
47. *Ibid.* Cf. R. Newton Flew, *The Hymns of Charles Wesley: A Study in Their Structure* (London: Epworth Press, 1953), p. 60.
48. Manning, *Hymns of Wesley and Watts*, pp. 42-43.
49. *Poetical Works*, 11:184, #1330.
50. *Ibid.*, 11:248, #1463.
51. *Ibid.*, 9:395-396.
52. *Ibid.*, 12:165, #2441; cf...
53. C. W. *Journal*, 1:172, 177.
54. *Poetical Works*, 9:35, 42, 43, 46, 50, 51, 75-76, 119, 121, 126, 139, 142.
55. *Ibid.*, 6:412, #7.
56. *Ibid.*, 9:27, #86; cf...
57. *Ibid.*, 11:299, #1570.
58. Jackson, *Life of Charles Wesley*, 2:199f.
59. A. Kingsley Lloyd, "Charles Wesley's Debt to Matthew Henry," *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, 171 (1946):334-335; and Erik Routley, "Charles Wesley and Matthew Henry," *The Congregational Quarterly*, 33 (1955):345-351. Both authors identify Charles's hermeneutical posture as the basis of his appreciation for Matthew Henry's comments. Appendix B offers a comparison of twentyfour biblical texts expounded by the Wesleys and Henry. At least seventeen of those passages received typological interpretation from Charles Wesley; Henry used typology in eleven of the same passages; whereas John Wesley gave only two comments that bear any resemblance to typological interpretation.
60. Compare *Poetical Works*, 9:128-129, with Matthew Henry's *Concise Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.), p. 193, and contrast with John Wesley's *Notes*, 1:744.
61. Dale, "Literary Qualities," pp. 70-74.
62. Baker, *Charles Wesley Letters*, p. 39.
63. *Poetical Works*, 2:156-158. This hymn is given in its entirety in Appendix C.
64. *Ibid.*, 2:156, v. 1.
65. *Ibid.*, v. 2.
66. *Ibid.*, v. 3.
67. *Ibid.*
68. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-157, v. 4.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 157, v. 5.

70. *Ibid.*, v. 6.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 158, v. 8.
72. *Ibid.*
73. Compare *Poetical Works*, 4:378f with C. W. *Journal*, 1:208.
74. Compare *Poetical Works*, 2:153ff with C. W. *Journal*, 1:294.
75. Compare *Poetical Works*, 2:150 and C. W. *Journal*, 2:185.
76. Compare *Poetical Works*, 2:173ff and C. W. *Journal*, 2:278.
77. *Poetical Works*, 5:44f.
78. *Ibid.*, 5:190f.
79. *Ibid.*, 2:267f.
80. *Ibid.*, 2:266f.
81. Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, p. 93.
82. Dale, "Literary Qualities," p. 185.
83. C.W. *Journal*, 1:410.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 271.
85. *Poetical Works*, 5:2-3; Cf. 7:335, #36; 8:143, #9; 10: 36, #1342; 9:388, #1095.
86. *Ibid.*, 4: 367; cf. :422, 1357; 12:86.
87. *Ibid.*, 5:13-14.
88. *Ibid.*
89. Gregory, "Wesley's Hymns and Poems," p. 261.
90. James Dale, "The Theological and Literary Qualities of the Poetry of Charles Wesley in Relation to the Standards of His Age," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (Cambridge University, England, 1960). Barbara Ann Welch, "Charles Wesley and the Celebrations of Evangelical Experience," an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1971).
91. Dale, "Literary Qualities," p. 149.
92. A. S. Gregory, *Praises With Understanding* (London: Epworth Press, 1936), p. 76; cf. Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, pp. 106-107.
93. J. W. *Works*, 14:340.
94. Frederick Dreyer, "Faith and Experience in the Thought of John Wesley," *The American Historical Review*, 88 (Feb. 1983):12-30, points to a Lockian sort of empiricism at work in John Wesley's understanding of religious experience. Donald Green, "Augustinianism and Empiricism: A Note on Eighteenth Century English Intellectual History," *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 1 (1967):33-68, sees a similar synthesis of practical experience and intellectual inquiry at work in many of Charles Wesley's poetical contemporaries.
95. J. W. *Works*, 14:340.
96. Davie, *Purity of Diction*, p. 79.
97. J. W. *Works*, 14:341.
98. *Ibid.*
99. *Ibid.*
100. *Ibid.*
101. James Sutherland, *A Preface to Eighteenth Century Poetry* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), and Josephine Miles, *Eras and Modes in English Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), represent the older scholarly consensus about the existence of a rather standard Augustan Form. John Butt, *The Augustan Age* (London: Hutchinson University Press, 1965); Ralph Cohen, "The Augustan Mode," *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 1(1967-1968):3-32; Northrop Frye, "Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility," *English Literary*

*History*, 23 (1956):144-152; Donald Green, "Augustanism and Empiricism," *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 1 (1967-1968):33-38; David Morris, *The Religious Sublime*, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1972); C. J. Rawson, "Order and Misrule: Eighteenth Century Literature in the 1770's," *English Literary History*, 42 (1975):471-505; John Sitter *Literary Loneliness in Mid-Eighteenth Century England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982); and Donald Wesling, "Augustan Form: Justification and Breakup of a Period Form," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 22 (Fall 1980):394-428, each urge a reexamination of the Augustan period and offer suggestions for rethinking Augustan form.

102. Donald Wesling, "Augustan Form," p. 422.

103. John Sitter, *Literary Loneliness*, p. 79f.

104. *Ibid.*

105. David Morris, *The Religious Sublime*, p. 47f.

106. *Remarks on a Book Entitled Prince Author* (1696), *The Advancement and Refutation of Modern Poetry* (1701), and *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry*, (1704) were all written by John Dennis.

107. Morris, *The Religious Sublime*, p. 48. Dennis goes on to distinguish between "Ordinary" or "Vulgar" passion and "Enthusiastic Passion." The former was direct and immediate sensation, whereas the latter resulted from ideas which matured and were complicated through meditation. Morris suggests that Dennis' distinction may have been borrowed from John Locke's discrimination between sensation and reflection as resources for human knowledge (cf. pp. 49-50).

108. Thus it is not so surprising that Charles Wesley had almost unbounded admiration for the Night Thoughts of Edward Young: "No more writings but the inspired are most useful to me," he wrote of them. Young and Wesley were contemporaneous religious poets who both used "passion" melancholy and religious experience to defend and revitalize classical Christianity. Cf. John R. Tyson, "Charles Wesley and Edward Young," *Methodist History*, 27 (January 1989):110-119.

109. Adapted from John W. Waterhouse, *The Bible in Charles Wesley's Hymns* (London: Epworth Press, 1957). Five of Charles's original eighteen verses are given here as an example of the way he wove biblical phrases and allusions into a poetical fabric of his own design.

110. In this schemata, Charles Wesley's poetic exposition of the biblical passage was used as the standard of comparison. In the adjoining columns the question was asked whether or not Matthew Henry and John Wesley, in their respective commentaries, conformed to the hermeneutical pattern found in Charles's verse. The biblical passages chosen for consideration were selected because of the rather curious exposition Charles gave them in his "Short Hymns on Select Passages of Scripture."

111. From Charles Wesley's "Short Hymns on Select Passages of Scripture," *Poetical Works*, vols. 9-13.

112. Matthew Henry, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* (New York: Towar and Hogan, n.d., first edition published in 1710, in England).

113. John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Old and New Testaments* (New York: Carlton & Lanahan, n.d., repr. Salem, Ohio: Schmul, 1976.)

