‘Above all sing *spiritually*’: musical reform and revival in Methodism

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The publication of a new hymnal is a major event in Methodism.[1] Such is the high regard for the heritage and perpetuation of congregational song that for generations of Methodists in many different parts of the world, hymnals have been treasured possessions that offer spiritual sustenance and encouragement, and devotional resource. The preparation and publication of a new hymnal is therefore commonly surrounded by a range of attitudes and emotions, some complementary, others conflicting, expressed both individually and collectively. Excitement at the prospect of discovering new hymns coexists with disappointment at the omission of old favourites; opportunities to embrace cultural diversity coexist with the unease at the introduction of unfamiliar musical styles; optimism over the potential for modernising worship coexists with dissatisfaction at the alteration of cherished, ingrained texts. Such reactions, whether positive or negative, testify that hymnody is anything but neutral in Methodism; both the hymn texts and, crucially, the participative act of singing them in congregational contexts, have a venerable place in the individual identity of many Methodist people, and collectively in the life of particular congregations, national churches, and the global Methodist family.

The strong sense of denominational identity long associated with official (or authorised) hymnals in Methodism means that any new hymnal represents a significant change in the life of the church. The desire for some sort of change necessarily lies behind the decision of a church’s governing body to commission a new hymnal, and themes of revival and reform in relation to the church’s worshipping life and liturgical practice are often cited as important factors. The impetus for change, however, is typically held alongside a wish to situate the new hymnal as a lineal descendant of earlier publications within a particular connexional or national context, and to emphasise that it retains the best of the inheritance of hymnody from previous generations. In Methodism, this concern is often felt with particular acuteness in relation to the hymns of Charles Wesley; successive hymnals serve as custodians of this rich corpus of hymns, which are both cherished and challenging to contemporary Methodism.

The official status given to hymnals in many Methodist traditions (referred to as ‘authorisation’ in British Methodism) gives hymns a dual status in Methodism. They are, both individually and collectively within an official hymnal, statements that are consistent with and representative of Methodist theology and doctrine, and, within the contexts of worship and personal devotion, part of the substance of people’s experience and expression of the Christian faith. This dual status demands that the words and music of Methodism’s hymnody are taken seriously in any attempts to analyse or interpret its functions or significance. Words alone provide precise insights into Methodism’s theological and doctrinal positions, including the affirmation of its essential Christian orthodoxy. Study of the musical repertoire and practices of congregational hymnody enables some understanding of the nature of corporate worship. Brought into dialogue, they enable a richer understanding of the interactions between reason and experience, corporate and individual,

[1] Throughout this paper, the terms ‘hymn’, ‘hymnal’, and ‘hymnody’ are not intended to indicate any particular genre or style, but rather to embrace the diversity of congregational song.

tradition and innovation, and doxology and pedagogy. This paper, therefore, examines both the ways in which hymnals have been shaped in response to Methodist theological and doctrinal emphases in different historical and cultural contexts, and how the musical selections and practices of Methodists from different times and places have sought to shape religious experience. It focuses primarily on examples from British Methodism, while also making reference to hymnals from other English-speaking Methodist churches, including the United Methodist Church and the Methodist Church of the Caribbean and the Americas. It concludes with some reflections on the role of hymnody in the future of revival and reform within Methodism.

The structure of hymnals

Since the eighteenth century, Methodism has paid particular attention not only to the contents of its hymnals, but also to the ways in which hymns are categorised and hymnals are thematically structured. While some categorisation of hymns according to liturgical season is common across the hymnals of many different denominations, Methodist editors have seldom resorted to headings such as 'General Hymns' or 'Miscellaneous Hymns' widely used in other traditions. Neither has the alphabetical arrangement favoured by compilers of series such as *Songs of Fellowship* been taken up. While the use of these broad headings or alphabetical organisation in other traditions should not be interpreted as a disregard for hymnody, Methodism's more exacting practice indicates the strongly-held conviction that hymns have an integral part to play in its worship, teaching, evangelism, and devotional practice.

The influence of John Wesley's *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (1780) looms large over many subsequent Methodist hymnals. Widely regarded as his summative achievement in the field of hymnal publishing, its popularity and esteem is due in no small part to Wesley's memorable description of it as a 'little body of experimental and practical divinity.'[2] This points to a central aspect of that hymnal's rationale, and one that has pervaded Methodism's understanding of hymnody since; it is a book intended primarily to provide hymns to accompany the individual believer and the religious society to which they belong through the joys, challenges, temptations and triumphs of Christian life. Those hymns may be used in personal devotion or communally in any of the myriad different small-group meetings that characterised early Methodism, and many, of course, have been widely used in more formal liturgical contexts. However, the 1780 *Collection* was not intended as a liturgical hymnal. The Wesleys certainly understood the liturgical potential of hymnody, and sought to provide resources for it in multiple publications throughout the eighteenth century, including the various editions of the *Collection of Psalms and Hymns* and the series of smaller publications focused on specific liturgical festivals.[3] This had a major impact on the ways in which most nineteenth-century British Methodist bodies responded to this particular part of their inheritance; preserving Wesley's *Collection* essentially intact, but supplementing it with a substantial collection of hymns selected and categorised with liturgical and seasonal needs in mind was common practice. Later in the century, there was a general move to producing new, fully integrated hymnals, rather than supplementing the older collection,

[2] John Wesley, ed. (1780) *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists*, Hildebrandt, F. and Beckerlegge, O.A. (eds.), Oxford: Clarendon Press (this edition 1983): 74.

[3] For a detailed discussion of the two strands of hymnals in eighteenth-century Methodism, see Robin Leaver (2010) 'Psalms and Hymns and Hymns and Sacred Poems: Two Strands of Wesleyan Hymn Collections', in Temperley, N. and Banfied, S. (eds.) *Music and the Wesleys*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press: 41-51.

but even so, some of the key features of Wesley's structure were widely retained, especially the emphasis on hymns for different stages of the Christian life.[4]

The most striking aspect of the 1780 *Collection*'s structure is its clear focus on the path to salvation; throughout the book, but most especially in Parts II, III, and IV, hymns are provided to accompany every possible step of the way and to reflect the ongoing nature of the pursuit of holiness.[5] The relationship between the individual and the community of faith is especially important, and reflects the context of eighteenth-century Methodism. In attempting to encourage religious revival, Wesley's brand of Evangelical Arminianism was crucial; potential believers and those already committed to seeking salvation needed to understand that the grace of God knew no limits, and that the invitation was for each of them personally. Berger argues this cogently:

> The constant emphasis on God's will for universal salvation originates, in no small measure, by way of negative designs. It is meant to refute… a particularistic understanding of salvation as embraced by the Calvinist followers of George Whitefield. The "for me" that appears in Wesley's hymns is, on the other hand, a positive appropriation of Pauline and Reformation principles.[6]

[4] See, for example, Methodist New Connexion (1863) *Hymns for Divine Worship*, London: William Cooke; United Methodist Free Churches (1889) *The United Methodist Free Church Hymnal*, London: United Methodist Free Churches Book Room.

[5] For an extensive examination of this hymnal's attempts to provide explanation and guidance on the way of salvation as understood by the Wesleys, see Teresa Berger (1995) *Theology in Hymns? A Study of the relationship of Doxology and Theology according to* A collection of hymns for the use of the people called Methodists (1780), tr. Timothy E. Kimbrough, Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books.

[6] Berger, *Theology in Hymns?* 114-15.

Part/Section	**Title**		**Hymns**
Part I	**Containing Introductory Hymns**		
Section I	Exhorting Sinners to return to God		1-11
Section II	Describing:	1. The Pleasantness of Religion	12-21
		2. The Goodness of God	22-40
		3. Death	41-53
		4. Judgment	54-66
		5. Heaven	67-79
		6. Hell	80
Section III	Praying for a Blessing		81-90
Part II	**Convincing**		
Section I	Describing Formal Religion		91-94
Section II	[Describing] Inward Religion		95-98
Part III			
Section I	Praying for Repentance		99-107
Section II	For Mourners convinced of Sin		108-167
Section III	For Persons convinced of Backsliding		168-181
Section IV	For Backsliders recovered		182-188
Part IV	**For Believers:**		
Section I	Rejoicing		189-264
Section II	Fighting		265-290
Section III	Praying		291-304
Section IV	Watching		305-320
Section V	Working		321-328
Section VI	Suffering		329-339
Section VII	Seeking for full redemption		340-417
Section VIII	Saved		418-440
Section IX	Interceding for the world		441-477
Part V	**For the Society:**		
Section I	Meeting		478-487
Section II	Giving thanks		488-500
Section III	Praying		501-532
Section IV	Parting		533-540

Table 1 Table of Contents of *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists* (1780)

In the nineteenth century, the need for Methodist bodies to establish and sustain themselves as independent institutions rather than movements within an existing organisation meant that hymnals were widely used to display the church's doctrinal orthodoxy, alongside distinctive Methodist elements such as those inherited from the 1780 *Collection*. Hymnals, including those from bodies most obviously aligned with a revivalist agenda, such as the Primitive Methodists, used their hymnal structure and contents to set out their Trinitarian orthodoxy, their understanding of the nature of God, the work and being of Jesus Christ, and the ongoing activity of the Holy Spirit. Smaller collections were published expressly for use in revival activities and camp meetings, and it is repertoire found in these that has created the greatest impression of Primitive Methodism's use of hymnody. However, it is important to note that alongside this, hymnody was also a key tool in the processes of establishing Methodist connexions as ecclesiastical institutions as rather than seeking revival and reform within the Church of England.

Some aspects of nineteenth-century Methodism's engagement with social reform are also evident in the organisation of its hymnals. Short sections devoted to Temperance Hymns can be found in

several hymnals from the latter part of the century, including *Methodist Free Church Hymns* (1889). The six hymns contained within the section cover both prayerful supplications for divine assistance in remaining abstinent and hymns advocating the furtherance of the cause. Frederick Sherlock's 'O thou who on the mountain height' is an example of the former, including a stanza explicitly dealing with the dangers of alcoholic excess:

> Strong drink makes many to offend,
> We therefore on thine arm depend
> To help us to abstain;
> Confirm our good resolves, we pray,
> That we may boldly, day by day,
> From its dread power refrain.[7]

Fanny Crosby's 1869 hymns 'Rescue the perishing' is also included in this section, and is a more general call for Christians to take action to help those in need around them:

> Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
> snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
> weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
> tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.
> *Rescue the perishing,*
> *care for the dying;*
> *Jesus is merciful,*
> *Jesus will save.*[8]

While Sherlock's hymn has not endured, Crosby's was included in the British *Methodist Hymn Book* (1933) and is also found in the Methodist Church of the Caribbean and the Americas' *Voices in Praise* (2013). The longevity of Crosby's hymn, more general in its subject matter but possessing considerable urgency through its use of imperatives, raises an interesting point about the role of hymnody in relationship to specific causes. Although the relationship between Methodism and the temperance movement in the nineteenth century varied over time and between different Methodist bodies, it was nonetheless a prominent feature of the social conscience of individual Methodists and the institutions to which they belonged.[9] While the association of Methodism and teetotalism is still active in the UK and the USA, even if less so in personal practice than in popular perception, over the course of the past century it has gradually declined in prominence in everyday Methodist life. It is thus unsurprising that hymns such as Sherlock's have disappeared in the same period, owing to their specificity. To sing such a hymn would seem incongruous and perhaps even hypocritical to many present-day Methodist congregations, whereas the sentiments of Crosby's text remain pertinent, and are echoed in many more recent hymns widely used in Methodist traditions where Crosby's own hymn has fallen out of use.[10] Its challenge remains real for Christians in the twenty-first century, and the recent upsurge in churches hosting and facilitating collection and distribution points for foodbanks, and penetrating criticism of changes to state welfare provision in the UK indicates that

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[7] Hymn 957 in United Methodist Free Churches (1889) *The United Methodist Free Church Hymnal*, London: United Methodist Free Churches Book Room.

[8] Hymn 959 in *The United Methodist Free Church Hymnal*.

[9] See Jennifer Woodruff-Tait, 'The Methodist Conscience: Slavery, Temperance and Pacifism' in *The Ashgate Research Companion to World Methodism*, ed. William Gibson, Peter Forsaith and Martin Wellings (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013): 365-86.

[10] Fred Pratt Green's 'The Church of Christ in every age…' and Graham Kendrick's 'Beauty for brokenness' are two examples.

the Methodism's commitment to social reform remains.[11] Methodism's hymnody continues to reflect this commitment; the *United Methodist Hymnal* includes a selection of hymns under the heading 'Social Holiness', while *Singing the Faith* explores similar themes under the heading 'Justice and Peace'.[12] Recent themes including ecology, the environment, and inter-faith relationships have also found expression in hymnody.

Methodism's abandonment of hymns specifically advocating temperance or abstinence, and the more general reduction in the attention it gives to questions about alcohol consumption is not without irony. On the one hand, reports of the health risks associated with excessive drinking are regularly disseminated in the media, along with statistics concerning the number of alcohol-related deaths each year.[13] However, there is also some evidence of changes in society's attitudes towards alcohol; data published in 2016 by the UK's Office for National Statistics showed a decline in the number of adults drinking regularly, alongside a 2% rise since 2005 in the number of adults reporting complete abstinence.[14]Alongside this, individual accounts such as journalist Amelia Hill's article on the social stigma of giving up alcohol in the context of a particular culture of parenthood, and the legal challenges against the Scottish Government's efforts to impose minimum pricing on alcoholic drinks, which was approved in 2012 but did not become law until May 2018, indicate that negotiating cultural attitudes towards drinking or abstaining from alcohol remain challenging and contentious.[15]

That Methodism remains on the side-lines of such debates is indicative of its diminished status, and that of institutional Christianity more generally, in the British public consciousness at large. The presence or absence of hymns on this particular topic makes no material difference to the church's ability to contribute to society's broader conversations about the use and misuse of alcohol. While continuing to sing hymns challenging congregations to pursue social justice is vital internally in the context of Methodism's worshipping life and the engagement of its members with the communities in which they live, it would be foolish to suggest that new hymns dealing with contemporary social issues head-on might increase the church's visibility or ability to exercise popular influence. Among the many reasons for this are several connected to music, including attitudes towards and familiarity with communal singing, and the priorities of different, and sometimes competing, musical styles. These issues are considered as part of a more general examination of the relationship between music, reform and revival in Methodism in the second part of this paper.

Musical reform and revival

Methodism's musical repertoire has long been characterised by a series of tensions, sometimes competing sometimes complementary: tradition and innovation, art and popular music, and centralised authority and localised preference. Behind these lies the complex issue of Methodism's engagement with the broader cultures in which it exists, and the extent to which it should conform to or stand apart from contemporary cultural practices and preferences. Brief discussion of a

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[11] See, for example, http://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/latest-news/all-news/universal-credit-is-driving-families-to-food-banks/.

[12] The United Methodist Church, *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 1989): hymns 425-50; Methodist Church of Great Britain, *Singing the Faith: Music Edition* (London: Hymns Ancient and Modern, 2011): hymns 693-723.

[13] See, for example, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-43738644 and https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-42894513.

[14] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-43492043.

[15] https://www.theguardian.com/global/2018/jun/10/the-secret-shame-of-being-a-sober-mother. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-43948081.

selection of historical examples serves to establish a context for thinking about the challenges facing contemporary Methodism with regard to its worship and the role and types of music used within it.

In the mid-eighteenth century, the Wesley brothers became well acquainted with the German-born composer Johann Friedrich [John Frederick] Lampe (1703-51), who had moved to London in the 1720s, and earned his living as a harpsichordist and bassoonist, and composer of several popular comic operas. Through the influence of Priscilla Rich, Methodist convert and wife of the proprietor of Covent Garden theatre, Lampe was introduced to the Wesleys; his name appears several times in their diaries in the 1740s, during which time Methodism garnered a notable following among theatre workers, opening a chapel in West Street, London. In 1746, Lampe published *Hymns on the Great Festivals and Other Occasions*, in which he provided original musical settings for 23 texts by Charles Wesley and one by his older brother, Samuel. Lampe's music follows the conventions of fashionable art music of the period; the settings are intended for solo singers and exhibit significant musical challenges and dramatic gestures that betray Lampe's background in theatrical music. Nonetheless, almost all of them were subsequently included in the two collections of tunes overseen by John Wesley and intended for use across the connexion: *Sacred Melody* (1761) and *Sacred Harmony* (1781). John Wesley's firm advocacy of the repertoire contained in these publications is most clearly seen in the first of his 'Directions for Singing': 'Learn these tunes before you learn any others'.[16] Wesley's journals make clear, however, that local societies were making use of other repertoire, and the eventual inclusion of a selection of set-piece anthems demonstrates that Wesley's own musical preferences were not shared across the connexion. Lampe's tunes quickly faded in the nineteenth century, and while a small number have persisted, they have generally been heavily modified and simplified in more recent times.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, a type of tune emerged that has been characteristically associated with Methodism, especially in Britain. Lively melodies, with robust harmonies and rhythms, ideally suited to being sung in parts, many have become strongly associated with texts by Charles Wesley, and have played a significant part in establishing and maintaining their popularity. Tunes such as SAGINA for 'And can it be', LYDIA and LYNGHAM for 'O for a thousand tongues to sing' and MILLENNIUM for 'Let earth and heaven agree' are strongly bound up as part of the identity of those hymns in British Methodism. Carl Gläser's AZMON, arranged by Lowell Mason, has acquired a similar status in association with 'O for a thousand tongues to sing' in the USA. The British tunes were originally disseminated in small-scale publications, and were gradually included in a few official denominational collections later in the century, although often confined to appendices of additional tunes, as, for example, in *The Primitive Methodist Hymnal* (1889). The tunes paired with the hymns in the main part of the book tended to be drawn from Anglican sources, indicating the strong ecumenical musical influence of *Hymns Ancient & Modern* (first edition, 1861).

The most thorough attempt to reform Methodism's musical repertoire in light of contemporary trends in art music was *The Methodist Hymn Book* (1904), a joint publication by the Wesleyan Conference and the Methodist New Connexion. Its musical editor was Sir Frederick Bridge, organist at Westminster Abbey, who took on the role having had his application to join the committee preparing a new edition of *Hymns Ancient & Modern* rejected. Bridge used his considerable network of high-profile musical contacts to elicit a large number of new tunes from cathedral organists, university professors and other luminaries, as well as composing several himself. These tunes were of a fundamentally different character from those that had emerged from within Methodism itself; many employed the chromatic harmonic idiom that had become fashionable, while others, including

[16] John Wesley, 'Directions for Singing', reprinted in *The United Methodist Hymnal*: vii.

some by Bridge himself, went out of their way to avoid any hint of formulaic approaches. Significantly, the majority of these tunes were jettisoned by the committee responsible for the successor volume, also titled *The Methodist Hymn Book* (1933), which was published soon after Methodist Union in 1932. Anniversaries such as the centenary of John Wesley's death (1891) and the centenary of the first camp meeting in Britain (1907) were used to revive some of the congregational music popular among earlier generations. Commemorative publications included selections of tunes celebrated as the 'old tunes' of Methodism, and reports of special services and meetings recount how they were enthusiastically sung by the large crowds who gathered. It seems likely that, despite the attempts of successive hymnal editors, many of these tunes had remained in local use across the connexions, and had acquired a popular status as the authentic tunes for particular hymns.

More recently, the tension between centralised authorisation and localised preference has been heightened by the growing number of hymnals produced by commercial publishers, and the ready accessibility of an ever-increasing repertoire of hymns and songs online, made available through a range of licencing schemes. These also point to another major shift in Methodist music-making in recent decades, as bands have gained in popularity and enthusiasm for organ- and choir-led hymnody has waned in a number of congregations. This shift features prominently in the final section of the paper, as it draws together a range of important factors concerning Methodist hymnody and worship, including ecumenical influences, attitudes towards and strategies for revival and reform, and the relationship between style and content.

Methodist worship present and future

In terms of its comments on practice, this section is mostly focused on British Methodism, although recent hymnals from other Methodist traditions are also considered.

The worship, and in particular the music, of evangelical-charismatic Christianity has exerted a strong influence on Methodism since the last quarter of the twentieth century. The large congregations attracted to some churches in this mould, the highly professional quality of their musical provision, and the music's apparent reflection of contemporary secular popular musics have all appealed to some Methodist congregations for a wide variety of reasons, including cultural familiarity and perceived relevance, a desire to reform worshipping practices, and as a potential instigator of localised revival in a context of numerical decline.

In some cases, churches adopting such models have thrived, and continue to do so. Often, this has meant that the authorised hymnal has been supplanted, either by collections dominated by newer genres, such as the *Songs of Fellowship* series, or by subscription to online resources such as *Worship* Together, both of which are updated far more frequently and regularly than authorised hymnals are replaced. In many cases, such services have been devised and promoted as additional to or separate from the existing worship services held by the church, and often have a distinctive branding. While some churches are able to maintain this style of worship on a weekly basis, in many cases, they occur less frequently, often on a monthly basis and organised either at a circuit-wide level or in conjunction with local ecumenical partners. Several pragmatic, organisational and cultural factors have a bearing on such matters of the frequency and status of services. In contrast to the large and highly visible evangelical-charismatic churches that have attracted so much attention, musicians in British Methodist churches typically offer their services on a voluntary basis. While for services requiring organ or piano accompaniment only, this need only involve one person for any given service (although even then, many churches struggle), the typical make-up of a band involves multiple persons, including guitarists, drummer, singers, and other instrumentalists, which inevitably brings additional burdens in terms of organising rehearsal time and oversight and coordination of

the band's activities. The week-by-week availability of a larger group of volunteers is therefore affected by a greater number of variables, which the lack of any type of formal agreement makes it very difficult to adjust.

Coupled to this, the circuit plan, as the organising principle for the leadership of worship in British Methodist churches, operates a model for the leadership of worship that is markedly in contrast to that found in independent evangelical-charismatic churches. The Methodist Church's standing orders make clear that full responsibility for the content and conduct of any given act of worship lies with the named person on the circuit plan, who is customarily an ordained minister or local (lay) preacher. Such individuals are appointed to those roles on a circuit-wide basis, and thus worship in local churches is routinely led by different people from around the circuit on a weekly basis. With specific regard to hymns, this form of organisation and statutory responsibility has customarily meant that the named person takes sole responsibility for their selection. By contrast, the music minister or worship leader in evangelical-charismatic churches usually has a significant amount of responsibility in this area, often in consultation with others in leadership roles. Although the specific lay ministry of Worship Leader, exercised at local church level, has emerged and grown within British Methodism over the past few decades, it remains comparatively unusual for responsibility for hymn selection to be delegated to Worship Leaders by the named person on the plan, and there is no particular requirement for musical expertise associated with becoming a worship leader, or, in fact, a local preacher or ordained minister. Organising evangelical-charismatic influenced services outside of the weekly schedule and on a level broader than a single church circumvents such challenges, and permits greater autonomy to those leading them. Nonetheless, these various factors contribute to situation and a perception that such services are not normative in British Methodism at large. That these services often do not take place weekly fits with a broader trend in evangelical-charismatic Christianity observed by Martyn Percy: 'Worshippers have become consumers, and church not a place to belong to, but an event that can be visited and sampled.'[17]

Normative Methodist services, however, have also changed in terms of their musical repertoire, as evidenced by the contents of British Methodism's most recent authorised hymnal, *Singing the Faith* (2011). Though not labelled as such, Robert Webber's concept of blended worship has become the default in many Methodist congregations; in musical terms, this broadly equates to some balance of traditional metrical hymnody and more modern repertoire in other styles, most obviously songs from the evangelical-charismatic tradition (though often well-established rather than genuinely contemporary), but sometimes too from distinctive traditions such as that of the Taizé Community. While every new hymnal inevitably departs in some ways from its predecessor, there is a far greater difference in stylistic breadth between *Singing the Faith* and its predecessor, *Hymns & Psalms* (1983) than between any earlier hymnals.

The periodic refreshing of a church's repertoire through new hymnals is, of course, desirable for many reasons, and some degree of congruence between the church's hymnody and the broader culture of which it is a part is important. The demand for consideration of and reflection upon changes in attitude, knowledge, understanding and practice on a diverse range of matters (e.g. politics, ecology, science and technology, race, sexuality, religious pluralism) can benefit from new artistic expressions, including hymnody. Attentiveness to the global nature of the Christian Church is but one area of significant change in hymnody; for the Methodist Church of the Caribbean and the Americas hymnal *Voices in Praise*, this meant an explicit engagement with and expression of the

[17] Martyn Percy, 'Symbiotic Alchemy: Mapping the Futures of English Revivalism and Evangelicalism' in *The Wisdom of the Spirit: Gospel, Church and Culture*, ed. Martyn Percy and Pete Ward (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 31-50: 37.

musical and linguistic variety of the peoples and territories it sought to serve, alongside inherited and much-treasured Anglophone repertoire of earlier generations. For the UMC and the Methodist Church of Great Britain, this has manifested itself in selections that acknowledge (even if in limited fashion) the polyglot nature of their membership, and an openness to learn from the worshipping practices and resources of other cultural expressions of Christianity.

The elision of ideas about the modern (repertoire and performance practice), the popular, the desire for growth and the need to appeal to younger generations has, in some cases, brought about genuine revival in particular local contexts. In many other cases, however, it has not. An uncritical assumption of the inherent appropriateness of a blended approach to worship too easily leads to an over-reliance on the familiar that inhibits engagement with the diversity of both Methodism's heritage of hymnody and contemporary material. The high volume of evangelical-charismatic songs from the 1990s (or earlier) included in *Singing the Faith* suggests that blended worship's engagement with genuinely contemporary repertoire is somewhat inconsistent. While the experiential aspect of worship has always been afforded importance in Methodism, the prioritisation of stylistic balance risks setting a narrowly-focused view of experience apart from its proper place in creative tension with other factors of a more rational nature.

The hymnal structures outlined above emphasise Methodism's historic understanding of the connection between the expression of ideas through poetry and music and their embodiment in individual and corporate discipleship. Hymns about social justice have a rich pedigree in Methodism, for they align well with its mission. Marty Haugen's 'Let us build a house where love can dwell', with its powerful refrain 'All are welcome… in this place' has rapidly become popular in British Methodism since its inclusion in *Singing the Faith*. Its emphasis on hospitality and justice, as well as the Wesleyan echo in the repeated use of 'all', combined with a bold and memorable melody explain its popularity. However, the experience of LGBT+ persons and the ponderously slow consideration of the institution's position on equal marriage and relationships indicates that the message of the hymn remains, at best, an aspiration. More generally, it has become clear that there is no direct correlation between the use of a specific musical style (or a blend of styles) and congregational growth.

Shifting the primary focus of attention away from stylistic matters may be a constructive exercise in evaluating hymnody's present and future place within Methodist worship, and the ways in which it might contribute to revival and reform. This is not to claim that style, and its impact on the experience of faith, is unimportant, but to temporarily set it aside in order that other factors may be foregrounded and brought into dialogue with it. The arguments that follow are applicable to all forms and style of hymnody, and should not be regarded as prioritising one over another.

James C. Logan's 'Offering Christ: Wesleyan Evangelism Today' offers several thought-provoking principles that can be usefully applied to hymnody, not least because of the historically close relationship between hymnody, doxology, evangelism and pedagogy. Logan offers three key principles that he argues should characterise evangelism in the Wesleyan tradition: theological integrity, personal accountability, and social conscience. His call to evangelism with theological integrity draws on Wesley's overt theological emphasis on the process of salvation; those who responded to Methodism's call to repentance could expect to encounter the truths of scripture interpreted through preaching, and would themselves be expected to play an active part in interpreting and evaluating their own life of faith in relation to them. Hymns and the hymnal were, of course, intended as a companion and source of inspiration, encouragement and expression at each stage of the way. Hymnody might also be seen to have a large part to play in ongoing Methodist evangelism, as a way of fulfilling Logan's claim that 'Maintaining with integrity the logic of

grace which was his message, we have to find new words and ways to tell the same canonical story of grace.'[18] Despite its rich heritage of hymnody, few Methodists are at the forefront of contemporary church music, whether as authors, composers or singer-songwriters. This has inevitably meant that much of the recent repertoire used by Methodist churches has been borrowed from other traditions; while such ecumenical diversity is enriching, and has provided repertoire that is consistent with and even expressive of Methodist theological and doctrinal emphases, Methodism's relative lack of creativity may nonetheless be inhibiting.[19] The website *Singing the Faith Plus*, designed as a companion to the 2011 hymnal, does enable Methodist and other hymn-writers to have their work disseminated, but it is an online publishing platform rather than being equipped as a resource for teaching, mentoring, probing peer review and evaluation. If Methodism is serious about the continued place and relevance of hymnody in its life of worship and evangelism, and believes that it can contribute to reform and revival, then institutional and localised support, encouragement and provision of opportunities for Methodist people to develop and enhance their creative skills (textual and musical) must find a place in Methodism's programme of theological education.

Logan's emphasis on evangelism with personal accountability is primarily concerned with the methods of individual and small-group discipline and accountability that characterised early Methodism, pointing to the communal nature of the church as critical in making such accountability plausible. Communal singing pervaded all levels of early Methodism, and accounts from leaders and members indicate that many participants were adept at selecting hymns to match the religious tenor of a particular meeting, no doubt assisted by the careful thematic organisation of the hymnals. Similar, his focus on social conscience seeks to remind contemporary Methodism that Wesley saw personal salvation as inextricably bound up with a commitment to address broader social issues of his day, and that we ought to do likewise. Hymns of social justice have long been sung by Methodists, but, as noted above in the case of 'Let us build a house where love can dwell', singing can never be taken as a substitute for practical action, and the same might be similarly applied to questions of personal accountability. While the enthusiastic singing of hymns of praise will always have devotional and spiritual value, Methodism must also guard against reducing hymnody to being an uncritical form of spiritual placebo or mere entertainment. The words of hymns, old, new, and in a variety of styles and from a variety of sources, remain a rich resource for the encouragement of these two characteristic Methodist values. Through careful use by individuals and those in leadership roles at all levels of Methodism, hymnody may have a renewed role to play in connecting worship with personal and social responsibility. The memorability of words and music enhances this potential, as recognised and exploited by Charles Wesley in particular.

Methodism's historic emphasis on committed vocal participation in hymnody is also worth revisiting in light of the influence of evangelical-charismatic worship. The latter's emphasis on electrically-amplified sound – both instrumental and vocal – fundamentally alters the relationship between musical leaders and congregation. Congregational participation, while still strongly encouraged and often lively, can nonetheless be overwhelmed by the amplification of leaders, and cannot be regarded as essential in the same way as historical modes of congregational singing. This shift is often interpreted positively, as allowing participation without making individuals feel self-conscious,

[18] James C. Logan, ''Offering Christ: Wesleyan Evangelism Today' in Randy L. Maddox (ed.) *Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1998), 113-28: 123.

[19] Exceptions may be found; the 2018 meeting of the Methodist Conference in the UK included a hymn text written by its president, Michaela Youngson, set to music by another Methodist minister, Nicola Morrison, who has also contributed original settings to *Singing the Faith*.

and it reflects the ready availability of professional-quality recorded music in everyday life, and conforms to assumptions about the reduced popularity of communal singing in public life. To be sure, large-scale communal singing is scarcer than in previous generations (the gradual erosion of hymn-singing in many British schools is a related factor), but should not be regarded as synonymous. The considerable rise in popularity of voluntary amateur community choirs, both for adults and children, counters the argument that there is no longer an appetite for singing together among those without professional musical training. The terms of engagement, however, are rather different, and rely less on commonly-held knowledge and more on a willingness to learn. Churches cannot complacently rely on newcomers or occasional attenders knowing hymns and thus feeling able to participate in singing them. Musical style is not the significant barrier here – Christian soft rock of the 1990s onwards is as likely to be as far from the knowledge and experience of such attendees as the metrical hymnody of previous centuries. Proactive opportunities to teach hymns, old and new, and through them to encourage, embed and develop the Christian faith must be sought if Methodism's heritage of congregational singing is to continue to have a vital role in our churches' ongoing life.

Hymnody has long had a powerful role in revival and reform within and beyond Methodism. Institutional and individual understandings of the place of hymns in encouraging and articulating personal and corporate spirituality and theology have combined to make it one of the denomination's most treasured and recognised features. If it is to continue to exercise such a powerful role, it cannot be taken for granted, but demands careful and prayerful engagement.