A number of recent studies have emphasized the centrality of religious emotion in John Wesley’s understanding of Christianity. Among these are Richard Steele’s comparison of Wesley with Jonathan Edwards and a study of Wesley’s theology of religious emotion by Gregory S. Clapper. Steele and Clapper agree that certain emotions acquired normative status for Wesley. This has led Clapper to coin the term “orthokardia” for Wesley’s emphasis on rightness of heart. If the emotional life is indeed normative in Wesley’s understanding of Christianity, then Methodist studies would do well to explore the history of this movement’s collective emotional standards. Although the methods of intellectual history might assist in this task, a history of Methodist ideas about emotion will not grasp the history of their shared emotional standards. Other approaches will be needed before this topic can be woven into the larger fabric of Methodist studies. This article will examine the Methodist habit of hymn quotation as an avenue toward a history of Methodism’s collective emotional standards. In this way, I hope to go beyond the study of Methodist ideas about emotion and approach the Methodist emotional discourse.1

A random leafing through almost any 19th century American Methodist publication reveals a distinctive turn of mind that engages brief quotations from Methodist songs and hymns. These hymn quotations occur at critical moments in their discussions of Christian experience. This is relatively distinctive to Methodism notwithstanding the importance of hymns, songs, and poetry within other American revival traditions. There is nothing like it in


the landmark modern revivalists of the Reformed tradition: Charles G. Finney, Dwight L. Moody, Billy Sunday, or Billy Graham. Indeed Charles Finney actually discouraged singing in his revival’s prayer meetings. Finney explained that “the spirit of prayer does not lead people to sing,” and that prayer “is more like anything else than it is like singing.” This must have deeply puzzled most Methodists. The Methodist bishop Matthew Simpson offered a different view when he urged the minister to draw the best singers to their prayer rooms and to intersperse their prayers “with a few verses of Christian song.”

Hymns and songs seem to function differently in Methodist revivalism than in other revival traditions. This is most apparent in the Methodist habit of hymn quotation. The prose of Presbyterian Charles Finney’s autobiography is not interrupted even once by quotations of poetry from the hymns and songs that flourished in his revivals. This is quite different from his contemporary, the Methodist James Finley. The prose of Finley’s autobiography is broken roughly once every thirteen pages with fragments of poetry from Methodist hymns and songs. This is common among early Methodist preachers, as seen in the journals of Francis Asbury, Benjamin Abbott, Freeborn Garrettson, Lorenzo Dow, Nathan Bangs, and, to a lesser extent, Peter Cartwright.

James Finley’s poem quotations assumed a common stock of literary culture with his readers. Most quotations are short passages of only a few lines given without explanation or comment and drawn from the growing body of English hymns and songs. In recounting his conversion experience, Finley broke into verse three times. One of the most striking of these appears, “Then did I realize the truth of that hymn I have so frequently sung,”

I feel that heaven is now begun;
It issues from the sparkling throne—
From Jesus’ throne on high:
It comes in floods I can’t contain;
I drink, and drink, and drink again,
And yet am ever dry.


These lines were widely invoked by American Methodists across a wide range of time, region, and social location. In 1781, similar lines appeared in the journal of Freeborn Garrettson, a frontier circuit rider. At mid-century, they appeared in the autobiography of Methodist folk-preacher G. W. Henry. New York City’s Phoebe Palmer applied the same lines to describe a service she held on the Isle of Man during the 1860s. And the Holiness Movement’s Advocate of Christian Holiness engaged the lines in 1874, a century after Garrettson.6

The source for Finley’s quotation is not found among the classic hymns of Methodism, but in the popular song books of the mid-19th century. These song books sought a middle ground between the “stern and elevated taste” of the church hymn books and the “light and irreverent style” of popular singing.7 One example was B. W. Gorham’s Choral Echoes, which integrated the complexly textured lyrics of the classic hymns with a variety of light songs.8 It included eighty-two Wesley hymns and forty-five hymns from Isaac Watts. These classic hymns represented almost a third of the collection. Smaller numbers of hymns came from other classical English hymnists, such as William Cowper, John Newton, and Philip Doddridge. But 136 of the collection’s 351 songs had no author identification, being largely drawn from a popular oral tradition. Gorham explained that he had edited these for grammatical propriety but without intending to change “their rustic dress as to disguise their identity.” Gorham’s songbook suggests that popular and cultured hymnody cannot be isolated from one another without hindering our understanding of the role of these texts within American Methodist culture.

The “floods we can’t contain” verse appears in number 133 of Gorham’s Choral Echoes, a hymn of unknown authorship. It is preceded by a Charles Wesley hymn and followed by another of unknown authorship. Number 133 develops a mix of biblical themes that were also common to the classic hymnody. It presents the soul as a dry and barren ground which then blooms with lilies and desert roses under the gracious watering of the divine gardener. Suggestions of the Song of Songs are subtly present from the opening lines, “The Lord into his garden comes / The spices yield a rich perfume.” The sense of smell is then extended to another physical sense in which the soul tastes the gracious work underway before culminating in the “drinking” that occurs in the often quoted sixth verse.


8 Gorham, Choral Echoes (Boston: Degen, 1864), 133.
With verse six, heaven itself issues from the shining throne "like floods we can't contain." No longer merely tasting, we now "drink and drink and drink again." The whole is sung with a striking immediacy due to a voice in the first person which uses active present tense verbs of the tactile physical senses. Although drinking insatiably from the overwhelming supply, the singer remains dry and thirsting for more. These intense desires are then resolved a little too easily in the last verse with the promise of satisfaction in heaven.

But when we come to reign above,  
And all surround the throne of love,  
We'll drink a full supply.

The sixth verse, quoted by James Finley, Phoebe Palmer, and others; clearly offers the most interesting lines of the hymn. It is easy to see why it flourished in the culture of Methodist quotation.

Such verse fragments often developed a life of their own apart from any connection to their hymns. Indeed, the static and repeated formulas of these quotations were often creatively applied by Methodists to construe changing and varied religious experiences. Out of the almost limitless possibilities for quotation from the thousands of lines in the English hymns, Methodists seem to have selected a reduced number of basic lines as foundational for repeated quotation. This vastly reduced stock of texts then provided the material for an exegetical enterprise to overcome the reduction and to reintroduce interest and variety. Through creative application, the common stock of hymn quotations managed a wide range of changing experiences and situations. Although the words remained unchanged from one statement to the next, the statements themselves hardly ever did the same work. Greater sensitivity to the habit of hymn quotation in Methodist discourse may prove helpful to any history of Methodist emotional culture.

To demonstrate, we might look at two quotations which Methodists repeatedly cited across more than a century. The first quotation is, "'Twas worse than death my God to love / And not my God alone." And the second is, "That sacred awe that dares not move / And all the silent heaven of love." The "worse than death" lines originated in Wesley's *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of 1740, but they do not seem to have survived into the sung hymnody of Methodism. Their transmission into American Methodist piety occurred

---

9This sixth verse seems to extend an image found in a hymn by Bernard of Clairvaux as published in the American Methodist hymnal of 1849, "Of Him who did salvation bring." The fifth verse of St. Bernard's hymn begins, "Insatiate to this spring I fly; I drink, and yet am ever dry." This is the line quoted by Freeborn Garrettson, as mentioned above. *Hymns For the Use of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, rev. ed. (New York: Carlton and Lanahan, 1849), Number 292.

primarily through the culture of quotation rather than through the sung hymnody." The "silent heaven of love" passage appears in another hymn of Charles Wesley. These lines can be found in the American Methodist hymnal of 1849, but do not appear in the more popular song books. They are found in a hymn of repentance, whose first line begins, "Come, O ye sinners, to the Lord." 12

The Methodist quotation of both these hymn texts began with John Wesley's *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Wesley's *Plain Account* sought to clarify his distinctive teaching of sanctification as a second work of grace following justification. It compiled excerpts from a variety of other writings, one of which was Jane Cooper's narrative of her sanctification experience, dated 1761. Cooper turned to hymn quotations four times in six pages. At one point she stated, "I was so much tempted, that I thought of destroying myself or never conversing more with the people of God; and yet I had no doubt of His pardoning love; but

'Twas worse than death my God to love,
And not my God alone." 13

Cooper employed these lines to evoke her experience of a formal stage in the progression of the Wesleyan Christian life. This stage lay in that liminal moment between her experiences of justification and sanctification. Cooper loved God and she had no doubt of having received pardoning grace, but in this unsanctified moment she did not yet love God alone. This imperfect love proved a disturbance "worse than death." She was tempted to destroy herself or to break fellowship with the church. These mixed affections would be resolved in the pure love of her sanctification experience.

The "silent heaven of love" quotation then appeared long after Cooper's sanctification in the narrative of her death-bed experience. In a brief recovery of consciousness, she described having experienced a mystical transport to heaven and a union with God. "I have been worshipping before the throne in a glorious manner: my soul was so let into God!... it was all

That sacred awe that dares not move,
And all the silent heaven of love." 14

---

11The "'Twas worse than death" lines can be found in Wesley's hymn whose first line begins, "And wilt thou yet be found." Historian John Julian explained that the hymn was unknown in its full form after 1740. The 1849 American Methodist hymnal did contain three segments of this hymn, but as three separate hymns and omitted the "worse than death" lines from all of them. However, the Wesley hymn was published in its entirety as #243 in Gorham's campmeeting song book, *Choral Echoes*. John Julian, *Dictionary of Hymnology* (London: John Murray, 1908), 67.
12*Hymns For the Use of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, rev. ed. (New York: Carlton and Lanahan, 1849), No. 353.
Almost three decades later, Hester Ann Rogers, another paradigmatic Methodist, turned to these same two quotations in her sanctification narrative. Rogers knew Wesley’s *Plain Account* well, and she undoubtedly encountered these quotations in Jane Cooper’s narrative. Like Cooper, Rogers used the “worse than death” verse to evoke her experience of mixed affections between rebirth and sanctification. She even repeated Cooper’s longing for death, although not Cooper’s explicit thought of suicide. There is little difference between the two applications of the “worse than death” verse. Rogers wrote, “[I] longed for nothing so much as to die; yea I was impatient to be gone, that I might be freed from sin; for I truly felt, and more so every day,

’Twas worse than death my God to love,  
And not my God alone.”15

However, Hester Ann Rogers differed from Jane Cooper in her use of the “silent heaven of love” verse. Cooper applied it to her mystical dying experience of heaven; Rogers applied it to her experience of God in sanctification. Both applications of these lines would become exemplary for American Methodist religious experience in the 19th century. Rogers exclaimed, “O the depth of solid peace my soul now felt! but not so much rapturous joy as at justification. It was

The sacred awe that dares not move,  
And all the silent heaven of love.”16

Here, Hester Ann Rogers distinguished the emotional experience of justification from that of sanctification. Justification involved rapturous joy; sanctification involved the serenity of solid peace, unmoving sacred awe, and a “silent heaven of love.”

The Cooper–Rogers applications of these hymn quotations did not become influential until a literate middle class culture emerged in American Methodism by the middle of the 19th century. Before this, the “worse than death” lines had already found other applications. In the 18th century, Bishop Francis Asbury had applied these lines in his private diary to deplore his lack of religious fervor.17 In 1827, the young Phoebe Palmer applied the lines similarly: “I feel that I am surrounded by mercies. But, O, what a lack of religious experience: I am so often fearful and unbelieving. . . . Too painfully do I know the meaning of the poet.

15Thomas O. Summers, ed., *Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Hester Rogers, with Corrections and Additions* (Nashville: Stevenson and Owen, 1854), 54.
16Summers, ed., *Hester Ann Rogers*, 65. The sanctification passage in Rogers’ autobiography is quite similar to that in her diary which stated, “I find a momentary power now to pray and believe. I live by faith; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and my humbled soul is filled with praise. Yet I do not find so much rapturous joy as ‘That sacred awe which dares not move. And all the silent heaven of love.’”
Palmer wrote this well before settling the problem of her justification and well before she earnestly began her pursuit of sanctification. There is no parallel between Phoebe Palmer’s 1827 use of these lines and the formal holiness usage of either Cooper or Rogers.

However, by the middle of the century, two citations of the “worse than death” lines did closely follow the examples of Cooper and Rogers. In both instances, they expressed an experience of that time between justification and sanctification wherein the mixed affections of the reborn Christian longed for the pure heart of sanctification. The Cooper–Rogers application of this verse now seemed well positioned to shape Methodist experience. But it did not work out that way. The Cooper–Rogers experience soon lost favor and became objectionable to American Methodists. The reason for this runs contrary to many interpretations of American Methodist revivalism. Here, it seems, American Methodist revivalism tamed the intense religious passions of classical 18th century English Methodism.

Two sources offer insights into the growing disfavor with the Cooper–Rogers application of the “worse than death” quotation. In T. O. Summers’ introduction to an 1854 edition of Rogers’ autobiography, the “worse than death” longing was not seen as exemplary but as spiritually immature. “Some persons stumble” at this passage for sounding almost suicidal, stated Summers. He dismissed this sentiment as occurring “just after her conversion, when her mind was singularly immature in religious matters.” Rogers’ application of the “worse than death” verse no longer seemed a positive spiritual example. Summers assured his readers that Rogers soon acquired the correct views on this subject and “qualified her passionate longings for home” with a willingness to await the Lord’s leisure.

The second objection to the Cooper–Rogers “worse than death” experience arose from the example of Phoebe Palmer. In the middle of the 19th century, New York City’s Palmer established a new model of religious experience through her book *The Way to Holiness* and the “Tuesday Meetings” held in her home. She presented her experience as a shorter and more efficient way to holiness. One merely needed to lay their all on the altar, which “was Christ, and the altar would sanctify the gift according to the promises of God. In Palmer’s experience, it was no longer necessary to endure the step of passion-
ate longing that occurred between justification and sanctification.\textsuperscript{21} When one minister described his aching desire for sanctification with the "worse than death" verse, he was opposed by the\textit{Advocate of Christian Holiness} using Palmer's terminology. "We trust the blessed Holy Ghost will show him the simple way of faith," stated the\textit{Advocate}, "Let him lay all on the altar—the altar that sanctified the gift—Christ—and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, he may exclaim with joy unspeakable:

\begin{quote}
'Tis done, the great transaction's done,  
I am my Lord's, and he is mine."
\end{quote}

The hymn quotation, which was made popular by Phoebe Palmer, came from Philip Doddridge's "O, happy day that fixed my choice," another classic English hymn. In time, this quotation supplanted the "worse than death" lines. However, Doddridge was not a Methodist, and his hymn clearly did not refer to the Wesleyan experience of sanctification, in spite of Phoebe Palmer's use of it. The application of these lines to sanctification seems another indicator of the American transformation of Wesley's teaching to a second revival conversion experience. The American holiness movement later lifted Doddridge's lines for use in its own hymn on sanctification. Both the original and the American holiness versions of the quotation appear twice in an early campmeeting text of the holiness movement which contains no citation of the "worse than death" verse.\textsuperscript{23}

These American revivalists had no time for the 18th century English passions of Cooper and Rogers, preferring instead to fix the spiritual problem "in a moment" and move on. By 1873, the "worse than death" verse appeared only once in George Hughes' campmeeting text, \textit{Days of Power in the Forest Temple}, while the "silent heaven of love" verse appeared four times.\textsuperscript{24} This pattern is confirmed in the \textit{Advocate of Christian Holiness}, which offered only a single and derogatory quotation of the "worse than death" quote, while the "silent heaven of love" quote appeared favorably three times in its first

\begin{quote}

\textsuperscript{22}"Longing for Rest," \textit{The Advocate of Christian Holiness} 5, No. 11 (May 1875), 262.

\textsuperscript{23}Alexander McLean and J. W. Eaton, eds., \textit{Peniel; or Face to Face with God} (New York: W. C. Palmer, Jr. 1869), 120, 193, 279, 299.

seven volumes. The “worse than death” verse failed to maneuver the transitions of Methodist emotional culture and quickly lost its status within the canon of Methodist hymn quotations, serving as an indicator for the history of Methodist emotional standards.

Applications of the “silent heaven of love” verse also illuminate the history of Methodist religious experience. Its early American use owed little to the examples of either Cooper or Rogers. Methodist minister J. S. Mitchell used it to describe his encounter with early revivalism’s ferocious experience of being slain in the Spirit. On the way home from a quarterly meeting he reported receiving “a shock which extended throughout the system, as though a quantity of ice water had been thrown upon me.” A second “shock of divine power” prostrated him on the floor of the carriage leaving him helpless and speechless. After getting into a chair at home, he was “again, by the power of God, stricken to the floor,” where he lay for four hours “lost to all below, and completely absorbed in contemplations of the divine glory,” being under the influence of “the speechless awe that dares not move” and filled “with all the silent heaven of love.” There is no similarity with the serenity of the application made by Cooper or Rogers in the 18th century. Other Methodist texts also applied these lines to be slain in the Spirit. Nathan Bangs applied a similar verse to construe the puzzling campmeeting phenomenon in which whole crowds were stricken to the ground at once:

O’erwhelmed with His stupendous grace  
They did not in His presence move:  
But breathed unuttered praise  
In rapturous awe and silent love.

The influential Phoebe Palmer was familiar with the experiences of both Cooper and Rogers, but she did not appropriate either the “worse than death” nor the “silent heaven of love” quotations for any of her own sanctification narratives. Even so, Rogers’ “silent heaven of love” experience seems implicit to Palmer’s way to holiness. Palmer firmly discarded the intense ecstatic release of revivalistic experience, by taming its exuberance to a Rogers-like experience of “standing still” before God, of a listening or waiting attitude, and of an experience of sacred or solemn awe.
Thus, Phoebe Palmer's "Way to Holiness" supported the Rogers experience of "the silent heaven of love." This hymn quotation became frequently cited among the rising middle class Methodists of the 1870s, appearing in testimonies, sermons, and sanctification narratives. Moreover, Rogers' experience seems the model for R. S. Foster's discussion of the emotional differences between sanctification and conversion in his work *Christian Purity*, which served as standard reading in the Methodist course of study. Following the example of Rogers' experience, expressed in a quotation from the classic hymnody, a refined serenity became associated with sanctification and then contrasted to the epic conflict and release of conversion.29

However, the Rogers use of the "silent heaven of love" verse was modified in two significant ways by the Holiness campmeetings of the mid-19th century.30 Rogers' application of the verse no longer represented an exemplary experience but became part of a growing Methodist terminology of religious experience, much of which was also drawn from the hymnody. In the closing address to an 1868 campmeeting, William McDonald urged, "Do not take your particular experience as the standard for others. One enters into the most holy place rapturously exclaiming,

O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise,"

while another reaches the same point, but with feelings best expressed by

A speechless awe that dares not move
And all the silent heaven of love.

"One shouts lustily; another feels deeply, but says nothing." McDonald urged each to not complain of the other, saying that "While there are different manifestations, it must be remembered that all is by the same Spirit." The Rogers application of the "silent heaven of love" verse had become merely part of the growing Methodist discourse of religious experience, rather than the paradigmatic experience.

The holiness campmeetings also made another modification to Rogers' application of this verse. "The speechless awe that dares not move" was extended from the sphere of the individual's personal sanctification experience to the public collective experience of the holiness campmeetings. In the campmeeting text, *Days of Power in the Forest Temple*, George Hughes


And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which was upon the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hands.

Here, Wallace overlaid Jane Cooper’s dying experience of the heavenly court with Rogers’ experience of sanctification, and then associated this experience with a moment of corporate worship in the holiness campmeeting. This association recurs in Ellen T. H. Harvey’s versified campmeeting text, Wilderness and Mount,

---

32 Hughes, Days of Power in the Forest Temple, 322–23.
33 Adam Wallace, A Modern Pentecost; Embracing a Record of the Sixteenth National Campmeeting for the Promotion of Holiness, Held at Landisville, PA July 23rd to August 1st, 1873 (Philadelphia: Methodist Home Journal, 1873), 73–75.
Methodist campmeetings were notoriously noisy, and the holiness movement continued this trait for several generations. Nevertheless, the emotional pallet of American Methodist revivalism held a variety of colors and textures, and its experiences of silence could be as startling as its more noisy occasions. One of the most intense corporate experiences of "solemn awe" occurred in the 1869 campmeeting at Manheim, Pennsylvania. "At one time there seemed a tremendous sweep of power from the upper world which brought every head to the ground," said one present. Another described it similarly, "Wave after wave of sacred influence seemed to roll in upon the people, until the entire audience was prostrate before the Lord. . . . The power came. The people fell." A minister later said he found himself without voice to break the silence for leading in prayer. "Over all the ground the people were in the dust," reported George Hughes, "A solemn awe rested everywhere." Here, the ferocious corporate experience of early Methodist revivalism seems seasoned with the "silent heaven of love" of the Cooper–Rogers experience.

Methodist revival culture attributed its experiences to direct supernatural encounters with God. This conviction, however, did not prevent their recognition of shared religious experiences. To communicate these shared religious experiences, Methodists commonly drew upon a stock of verse fragments selected from the vast pool of Methodist hymns and songs. These stock quotations were then creatively applied to make sense of changing experience and practices. Thus, the shared emotional life of Methodist culture had a subtle history, even when the formulas of its words remained unchanged across more than a century. Changes in Methodist sensibility caused the "worse than death" quotation to lose favor and be replaced by other quotations when it failed to manage changed experiences. Applications of the "speechless awe that dares not move" proved more creative, allowing it to serve both the ferocious revival experience of being slain in the spirit and the Anglo-Methodist religious serenity, and to serve both of these in both corporate and personal experience. Thus, our attention to the Methodist habit of hymn quotation may open one window beyond Methodist ideas about emotion to encounter the actual discourse of their emotional lives. Given the centrality of religious

---

34Ellen T. H. Harvey, Wilderness and Mount: A Poem of Tabernacles (Boston: John Bent, 1872), 36.
emotion to Methodist spirituality, a fuller appreciation for the discourse of its emotional life would clearly benefit any understanding of American Methodism as a whole.