'Simply resign'd and lost in God': Resignation and Sanctification in the hymns of Charles Wesley.

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Abstract

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Theology and Religion, Durham University.

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Sanctification is a central theme in the theology of John and Charles Wesley. Whilst John's theology of sanctification has received much scholarly attention, much less research has been conducted in relation to Charles. This thesis contributes to redressing the balance, drawing particularly on the evidence of the extensive and theologically rich corpus of Charles' poetic texts to do so.

In this analysis of Charles' theology of sanctification, the centrality Charles accorded to resignation is uncovered. Resignation is a positive attribute for Charles involving an act of intention, desire and offering to God. Part I of the thesis addresses three contextual issues: firstly Charles' frequently overlooked particular theological perspective on sanctification in comparison with that of his brother, also locating the thesis within the context of other scholarly work in the area; secondly an historical and spiritual context for Charles' understanding of resignation is set; and thirdly, the use of poetic texts to establish theological and spiritual truth claims is examined.

Part II comprises a detailed analysis of Charles' use of resignation, whether of Jesus or the believer, through an examination of each of its appearances in Charles' extant poetic corpus. These texts have been collated and form volume two of the thesis, the *Resignation Texts*.

Part III draws on the foregoing analysis and identifies two fundamental and distinctive ways in which Charles understood the relationship between resignation and sanctification which have not been recognised until now, but, being clearly evident, cannot be dismissed. Resignation is a lens through which Charles views holiness, a lens through which other aspects of his belief and understanding must now be viewed.

‘Simply resign’d and lost in God’: Resignation and Sanctification in the hymns of Charles Wesley.

Volume 1 of 2

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A thesis submitted to the University of Durham for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Introductory Notes

Charles Wesley's poetic texts and the editorial introductions to the various collections were accessed through the website of The Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition, Duke Divinity School. http:/www.divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/cswt/wesley-texts.

Volume 2, the *Resignation Texts*, is presented as an appendix and is a collection of all Charles Wesley's extant poetic texts which contain 'resign', 'resign'd' or 'resignation'. In this collection published versions of the texts are referenced first; manuscript hymns are cited where there is no published version of the text.

Poetic texts which appear in the *Resignation Texts* (*RT*) are referenced according to their number in this document, where full details of the original source of the hymn can be found. Original sources and locations of texts which do not appear in the *Resignation Texts* are identified in the footnotes. Full details of shortened forms of references are indicated on the abbreviations page. In general hymn references which are not present in *Resignation Texts* do not include a page number, unless they have no other numeric identification. Where a reference would be otherwise unclear a page number is included.

The original format of Charles Wesley's text is maintained throughout, as it appears in the Duke Divinity School resource, including the use of double quotation marks and uppercase letters which are not changed even if they appear in the middle of a sentence. The original spelling is similarly preserved with no editorial comment.

To prevent confusion with John Wesley, Charles is referred to using his Christian name, rather than Wesley.

Where gender exclusive language is used in quoted material the original is kept and unremarked.

Biblical quotations are either from the King James Version (with reference to texts Charles was familiar with), or the New Revised Standard Version. The version used is specified in the footnotes.

Short Titles and Abbreviations

References to some primary texts are abbreviated as shown in the following lists. Full reference details of Charles Wesley's Manuscript Hymns are available in the bibliography.

Poetic works by Charles and John Wesley.

HSP (1739)	*Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1739.
HSP (1740)	*Hymns and Sacred Poems*,1740.
HSP (1742)	*Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1742.
CPH (1741)	*Collection of Psalms and Hymns*, 1741.
Everlasting Love (1741)	*Hymns on God's Everlasting Love; To Which is Added the Cry of a Reprobate and the Horrible Decree*, 1741.
Everlasting Love (1742)	*Hymns on God's Everlasting Love*, 1742.
HSP (1742)	*Hymns and Sacred Poems*, Bristol: Farley, 1742.
Robert Jones	*Elegy on the Death of Robert Jones, Esq. of Fonmon Castle in Glamorganshire, South Wales*.
CPH (1743)	*Collection of Psalms and Hymns*, 1743.
HLS	*Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, 1745.
Nativity Hymns	*Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord*, 1745.
HSP 1 (1749)	*Hymns and Sacred Poems* Vol. 1, 1749.
HSP 2 (1749)	*Hymns and Sacred Poems* Vol. 2, 1749.
Earthquake Hymns I	*Hymns occasioned by the Earthquake, March 8, 1750* [Pt. I].
Earthquake Hymns II	*Hymns occasioned by the Earthquake, March 8, 1750* [Pt. II].

Scripture Hymns 1	*Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures* Vol. 1.
Scripture Hymns 2	*Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures* Vol. 2.
Family Hymns	*Hymns for the Use of Families*.
Trinity Hymns	*Hymns on the Trinity,* 1767.
Preparation for Death	*Preparation for Death, in Several Hymns,* 1772.
All in All	*Hymns for Those to Whom Christ is All in All*.

Prose works by Charles and John Wesley

Journal, vol. I	*The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, M.A.* Vol. I.
Journal, vol. II	*The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, M.A.* Vol. II.
Sermons	Newport, Kenneth G. C. *The Sermons of Charles Wesley: A Critical Edition with Introduction and Notes*.
Letters	Newport, Kenneth G.C., and Gareth Lloyd, ed. *The Letters of Charles Wesley: A Critical Edition, with Introduction and Notes*. Vol. I, 1728 – 1756.
Works, plus volume number	*The Works of John Wesley*, the Bicentennial Edition. Full details of each volume are available in the bibliography.
Works, Jackson	*The Works of the Rev. John Wesley A.M.* Vol. 11, ed. Thomas Jackson.

Statement of Copywrite

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To Mum and Dad

Who first set my feet upon the way.

“I know thy works.”—[Rev.] ii. 2.

1 Happy the man, who poor and low,
    Less goodness in himself conceives
Than Christ doth of his servant know;
    Who sav’d from self-reflection lives,
Unconscious of the grace bestow’d,
Simply resign’d, and lost in God.

2 Himself he cannot perfect call,
    Or to the meanest saint prefer,
Meanest himself, and least of all:
    And when the glorious character
His spotless soul with Christ receives,
His state—to that great day he leaves.

*RT*149. *Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures* Vol. 2 (Bristol: Farley, 1762), 415.

Introduction

Contexts for the Study of Resignation

Unconscious of the grace bestow'd,
Simply resign'd, and lost in God.

—Charles Wesley[1]

Resignation, the positive, deliberate act of intention and desire towards God, is a strong repeated theme in Charles Wesley's hymns. Clearly the meaning of resignation has changed significantly to the way it is used today. For Charles resignation is not a powerless, passive acquiescence or surrender, but rather a choice and an offering made to God of things, people, will, and even life itself. Moreover resignation is a lens through which Charles views the journey of the believer and he considers such resignation a fundamental attitude of one being sanctified. This thesis proposes that resignation and sanctification are intertwined for Charles Wesley. To date, the theological and spiritual significance Charles attributed to resignation has not been explored. Indeed research into the theology of Charles Wesley, evidenced in his hymn texts, has not been widely carried out, although some important work has been done on Charles' understanding of sanctification, which is acknowledged in chapter one. The intention of this thesis is to identify and examine Charles Wesley's use of resignation in his poetry, particularly in relation to his understanding of sanctification. It examines the use of resignation in each of its appearances in Charles' extant poetic corpus; the appended *Resignation Texts* is the resultant collection.

Hymn texts and authorship

Kenneth Newport in the introduction to his critical edition of the sermons of Charles Wesley rightly urges us to consider that Charles was not only an experiential theologian, but a 'creative theologian', and a logician who was 'able to appeal no less to the head than to the heart', although he continues, '[t]his aspect of his work

[1] *RT*149, st.1, lines 5-6.

may not appear with great frequency in his hymns, but this is perhaps at least as likely to be the dictates of the genre as the result of any imagined rational shortcomings on Charles' part.'[2] Undoubtedly this is the case. Hymn texts intended for use in public worship and private devotion are inevitably, if they are to be sung, restricted by metre, foot, rhyme and stanza and are intrinsically doxological and spiritually formative. The use of poetic texts as the primary source for this thesis is evaluated in part I as is Charles' use of resignation in his prose texts. Valid though Newport's point may be, Charles' poetic corpus is nonetheless vastly more extensive than his prose corpus; it was his preferred genre for writing; it continued throughout his life, unlike his journals which he concluded when he ceased itinerancy; and it consists not only of devotional hymns, but in poetic form Charles also comments on the social and political scene of his day,[3] writes polemically against Calvinism, and remarks on his brother's decision to ordain, for example.

As indicated in the introductory notes and citation acknowledgments the resource I have used for Charles' poetic texts is the Duke Divinity School online resource of Charles Wesley's original texts. As Maddox indicates in the editorial introduction to the first published collection, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), determining the authorship of the hymns published by the Wesley brothers is problematic.[4] In some cases other authors are identifiable, however as Maddox comments 'John occasionally fails to identify the source when drawing on other writers.'[5] Maddox continues, explaining the criteria used to determine Charles Wesley's authorship in the Duke hymn collections:

> We have tried to exclude below all items by other writers, but a few may remain unidentified. The thornier issue is determining the specific authorship

[2] *Sermons*, 52.
[3] Bett notes this practice of Charles and is not always impressed. He comments, 'Charles Wesley wrote many verses dealing with the political events of his time, and the affairs of the nations. These are generally uninspired, and sometimes they are singularly wrong-headed.' Henry Bett, *The Hymns of Methodism*, 3rd ed. (London: Epworth Press, 1945), 67.
[4] Attempts have been made to identify characteristics pertinent to each of the brothers, for example Bett in chapter 3 of *The Hymns of Methodism* sets out an elaborate argument identifying seven points of difference, to which Rattenbury responded: J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Evangelical Doctrines of Charles Wesley's Hymns*, 3rd ed. (London: Epworth, 1954), 22, 337. Whilst such a complex analysis appears overly prescriptive and definitive conclusions difficult to draw, not least because the hymns attributed to John were largely translations rather than original compositions, nonetheless there are theological and stylistic characteristics of Charles' poetry which suggest, even if they do not determine, his authorship.
[5] Maddox, editorial introduction, *HSP* (1739).

> of the original contributions in this collection, because the Wesley brothers agreed from the beginning not to indicate individual authorship in their shared collections. In some cases the question can be settled by the survival of a particular item in Charles Wesley's manuscript collections of his work…. Beyond that, scholars are reduced to debating internal criteria for discerning when a poem might be by John rather than Charles. Two broad generalizations have emerged from this debate. First, unless there is strong evidence to the contrary (such as appearance in Charles' manuscript collections), scholars concur that John should be considered the author of the translations of German (and one Spanish) hymns—so none of these are included below. Second, scholars concur that the vast majority of the original contributions were penned by Charles, thus he should be considered the author for the verse that follows unless compelling evidence emerges to indicate otherwise.[6]

In this thesis I am making the same assumption. In compiling the *Resignation Texts* however, five hymns appeared in the corpus containing 'resign' or 'resign'd', which were identified as having different authors.[7] Arguably two of them might have been included, given that they appear in a volume edited solely by Charles, *All in All*. It can be assumed therefore that Charles agreed with them even if he did not write them. I decided however, that I would omit these from the collection, including only hymns which are likely by Charles Wesley.

Structure of thesis

The thesis comprises three parts. Part I, consisting of chapters one to three establishes the context for the study. This is a theological thesis, not an historical one and so the first chapter establishes the areas of Charles Wesley's distinctive understanding of sanctification in comparison with the more widely known, and certainly more widely researched, emphases of John. Indeed if Charles' view is considered at all, a common assumption is that it largely coincided with that of John. It is important, therefore, to recognise from the outset that there were differences between John and Charles regarding sanctification, not least in this area of resignation. This chapter also locates the thesis within the context of other scholarly work on the theology of Charles' hymns in relation to sanctification. Chapter two

[6] Maddox, editorial introduction, *HSP* (1739).
[7] *HSP* (1740), 171-2, 'Seraphick Love. Alter'd from Mr. Norris.' 'Away, vain world! My heart resign'; *HSP* (1742), 14-17, 'God's Husbandry. From the German.' Zinzendorf, 'To Christ their goods and blood resign'; *All in All*, hymn XIV, Christian Friedrich Richter, 'In love be every wish resign'd'; *All in All*, hymn XXIII, Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, 'Our flesh, soul, spirit we resign'; *MS Richmond Tracts*, 23, Samuel Wesley Jr., 'The Saints, when He resign'd his Breath'.

introduces the concept of resignation as used by Charles and offers an historical, spiritual and literary background for the thesis, concluding with an examination of the use of resignation in the writings of both John and Charles Wesley. Chapter three examines the nature of poetry as literary text and the theological truth claims it can make, establishing the context for the use of Charles' poetic texts for this study. The chapter draws on philosophical, theological and doxological frameworks of knowledge for its quest.

Part II, comprising chapters four to eight, consists of a detailed analysis of the *Resignation Texts*. In chapter four the focus is on Charles' use of resignation in relation to Christ and in chapters five to eight the focus turns to his use of resignation in the life of the believer; each chapter examining a different facet of how the resignation of the believer is offered.

In part III the final two chapters of the thesis, nine and ten, draw on the conclusions of the research presented in part II and present two distinct and significant characteristics of the relationship between sanctification and resignation, discovered through the analysis of Charles' poetic texts.

The original and significant contribution of this thesis to academic study lies in the identification and analysis of the *Resignation Texts* and in the discovery of Charles' two-fold emphasis in his interweaving of resignation and sanctification. These contribute to scholarly research in Charles Wesley studies and to the understanding of sanctification in the Wesley brothers.

Part I

Chapter 1

Charles Wesley and Sanctification

One the Body Mystical
Is with its heavenly Head,
Therefore God vouchsafes to dwell
In all the faithful seed,
In the heart of man t' abide
When throughly cleans'd by Jesus blood,
By the Spirit sanctified,
And all resign'd to God.

—Charles Wesley[1]

Introduction

Charles Wesley was a theologian in his own right; so asserts Newport, referencing Tyson, Rattenbury, Hildebrandt, and Wiseman; though he notes Langford had a different view.[2] Newport continues, 'Charles did not simply reflect his brother's thoughts, as his views on ordination, lay-preaching, and eschatology, for obvious and easily documented examples, surely prove.'[3] We might add to this collection of views Charles' position on sanctification. Here too Charles was a theologian in his own right, though his distinct perspective has only been given recognition by a few. Those few, however, have made important contributions and this chapter outlines the key research undertaken in this area.

Inevitably there are many similarities in outlook between Charles and John arising from incidental or intentional means. Born and raised in the same family, inhabiting the same eighteenth century culture, imbibing the same moral, ecclesial, theological and spiritual climate, reading much of the same literature, sharing similar experiences - boarding school (though different schools), studying for the same degree at the University of Oxford, travelling as missionaries to Georgia - and even

[1] *RT*254, st.2.
[2] *Sermons*, 53.
[3] *Sermons*, 53.

their conversion experiences occurring within three days of each other. Add to these the deliberate emulation of his brother by the youthful Charles,[4] and any detected similarity in the brothers' thinking, faith and action is unsurprising. Nonetheless they were different people and had differences of opinion and emphasis; differences which became embedded and emerged more noticeably as they matured. As Charles' perspective is examined, it is unavoidable that John's voice will also be heard, but here, in the context of Charles Wesley research, John's position acts as a foil to illuminate Charles' distinctive position.

This chapter fulfils three functions. First, its task is to set a theological context. The question of this thesis might be 'is it possible to have a discussion of sanctification in the theology of Charles Wesley without discussing resignation?' To date this is precisely what has been done. The centrality of resignation to Charles' understanding of sanctification has not been recognised. The first task therefore is to establish what has been said to this point about sanctification in the Wesleys, and particularly in the thinking of Charles Wesley. Secondly, to undertake this task the chapter notes areas of difference between Charles and John regarding sanctification both to illuminate Charles' perspective and to construct a theological and spiritual framework within which Charles' understanding of the relationship between resignation and sanctification might be explored. The third function of the chapter is to provide a review of relevant literature in the area. This is accomplished by acknowledging the work of Charles Wesley scholars in the area of sanctification; however it is a limited exercise for two reasons: first, there are relatively few scholars working in the field, particularly of Charles' theology, even though interest in Charles Wesley has grown of late. Secondly, this is a thesis about *resignation* and yet the literature review material addresses *sanctification*; the reason is simple, there is nothing written yet which has focussed on resignation in Charles Wesley.[5] Furthermore, whilst material about sanctification is relevant - the thesis, arguing as it

[4] Gareth Lloyd, *Charles Wesley and the Struggle for Methodist Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), ch2.
[5] Tyson briefly notes the 'Wesleyan emphasis upon self-resignation as being vital to Christian perfection' in Charles' hymns in J. R. Tyson, *Charles Wesley on Sanctification: A Biographical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Press, 1986), 202.

does, that resignation and sanctification are interdependent for Charles - emphasis on sanctification needs to be restricted; it is not the main focus of this work.[6]

1. Theological approaches in Charles Wesley's concept of sanctification

In the work of Wesley scholars, it is possible to identify four fundamental theological approaches to John and Charles' understanding of sanctification: experiential, eschatological, liberationist and moral.

i. Experiential Theology

Charles and John are frequently considered to be experiential theologians. John Tyson[7] and Ernest Rattenbury[8] recognise sanctification as a theology emerging from religious life and experience for the Wesleys. Certainly for Charles the religious experience claimed by many in what became known as the Perfectionist controversy in the 1760's, significantly shaped his understanding of sanctification, and specifically *when* entire sanctification could be attained. For Charles, whose hymns frequently testify to his personal religious experience, this was the crucible from which his theology was known to emerge and by which it was tested. Rattenbury suggests that Charles' understanding of perfection is more reliable than John's, based as it was on his personal religious experience, whereas John's teaching on perfection was based on the experience of others. Rattenbury's claim is not immune to challenge, but evidence such as John's response to the Perfectionist controversy, and his arguably gullible attitude towards those claiming perfection for themselves lends weight to Rattenbury's position. Certainly Charles' experiences of God and life shaped his theology throughout. Tyson comments,

> First, his poetic and mystical temperament predisposed him to the quest after perfection.... Second, clinging tenaciously to his unqualified conception of Christian perfection, Charles increasingly adopted progress language or developmental models for describing his doctrine. Third, shaped by a certain sadness of the times and impressed by the testimonies of dying saints,

[6] In the review of literature I do not deal here with general biographical studies of Charles Wesley. Other authors have dealt with this area, for example Theresa Berger provides an excellent and comprehensive overview in Teresa Berger, *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)*, trans. Timothy E. Kimbrough (Nashville TN: Kingswood, 1995), ch1.
[7] Tyson, *Sanctification*.
[8] Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*.

> Charles became convinced that perfection was certain in "the article of death."[9]

Charles' progressive experience taught him that sanctification was a gradual journey, rather than the instantaneous sanctification John maintained and with which Charles had concurred in the beginning. Consequently Charles came to believe that sanctification could only happen in the article of death, rather than in this life, as John insisted was possible. Charles was keenly aware of the depth of his own sinfulness, and the necessity of humility before God which pushed him to an uncompromisingly high concept of perfection, and determined his attitude to those who claimed 'angelic perfection'; moreover, his considerable personal experience of suffering led him to reflect on its purpose in the process of sanctification.

ii. Eschatological theology

Monica Coleman develops an eschatological perspective of sanctification in the Wesleys.[10] Her aim is to reconstruct the differing views of Charles and John Wesley on sanctification within a framework of process theology, producing a synthesis within which their divergent views held together produce an eschatological construction of entire sanctification. This is a valuable contribution to the debate. The theology of the Wesleys is one of realised eschatology in their emphases on instantaneous sanctification (John), or in its realisation at death (Charles). Sanctification is also a realised eschatology in its embodiment in works of mercy. However for the Wesleys sanctification is also inaugurated, it is a journey begun in this life and continued into the next. There is an element of the 'not-yet'; sanctification can be lost, and for John, even in those perceived as sanctified, the possibility for mistakes and infirmities was allowed. The 'not yet' is evident in the reciprocal relationship of repentance and faith, of grace and forgiveness between humanity and God, through which the journey proceeds.

Robert Fraser's thesis, *Strains in the Understanding of Christian Perfection in Early British Methodism*[11] adds an interesting dimension. He argues that it was John's realised eschatology in his doctrine of instantaneous sanctification, along with the

[9] Tyson, *Sanctification*, 309.
[10] Monica Coleman, "The World at its Best: A Process Construction of a Wesleyan Understanding of Entire Sanctification," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 37, no. 2, Fall (2002).
[11] Robert Fraser, "Strains in the Understanding of Christian Perfection in Early British Methodism" (Vanderbilt, 1988).

increased millennial fervour which accompanied the various wars between 1739 and 1745 and the London earthquakes of 1750, which helped fuel the fanaticism resulting in the Perfectionist controversy of the early 1760's. Fraser contends that the increased a sense of millennial fervour drove John to a stronger emphasis on instantaneous perfection. With the dual conviction of an imminent *parousia* and that no one who was not sanctified would see the Lord 'the pressure became intense for many to become perfect very quickly.'[12] Whilst Charles' response to these events was to produce two volumes of hymns[13] in which strong themes of judgement, repentance and being shaken out of sin are evident, he also withdrew from an emphasis on instantaneous sanctification, preferring instead to see progression towards sanctification as a gradual, life-long journey which was not completed until death.

iii. Moral theology

R. Newton Flew in *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology,* and W. E. Sangster in *The Path to Perfection,* present the Wesleys' views on sanctification from the perspective of a moral theology. Sangster does not specifically deal with Charles Wesley's understanding of Christian perfection; he focuses on John Wesley's position, as stated in the subtitle of his book. He does however discuss the place of hymns in the doctrine of Christian perfection, particularly referring to the 1780 *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*.[14] He warns that due to John's editorial hand Charles' hymns reflect 'by judicious omission and occasional alteration' John's views more than those of Charles.[15] Whilst there may be some truth in this statement and it is well to be aware of the possibility, given that Charles wrote the majority of the hymns, and not all of his publications were edited by John, they undoubtedly reflect Charles' theology of sanctification. Even when John did edit, his hand was not necessarily determinative. There are numerous instances of John using underlining and exclamations marks and occasionally he crossed out complete stanzas in his own personal copies of the hymns once published, clearly indicating points of difference between them. Furthermore Charles' theology is deeply embedded within and entwined throughout his hymns, in

[12] Fraser, "Strains", 74.
[13] *Earthquake Hymns I and II.*
[14] *Works,* vol. 7.
[15] W. E. Sangster, *The Path of Perfection: An Examination and Restatement of John Wesley's Doctrine of Christian Perfection* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1943), 59.

words and structure, such that it is impossible for it to be erased by occasional editorial comment; and besides, the brothers did not disagree entirely in their understanding of sanctification.

For Sangster, the emphasis in a moral theological perspective is on the reality of sin and the necessity of its removal. Deliverance from sin must be here and now, it is to happen in this life; sanctification furthermore is attributed to the power of God by faith, and these two co-operate to enable sin to be destroyed. When this happens and sin is dealt with, normally at a definite moment, then 'holiness or perfect love is either "shed abroad" in the heart or "stamped" upon it', and as a result '...the devout soul is either described as now enjoying the life of the angels or restored to the innocence of Eden.'[16] This emphasis also asserts that love is the key to sanctification, that the attainment of sanctification carries with it an assurance, and also involves an ascetic detachment from the world. Whilst Sangster doesn't deal with Charles' position, clearly for Charles the same moral perspective applies, arguably more so, with the higher demand he made for an unqualified perfection, though the nature and timing of deliverance from sin differed in his view, as identified below.

For Flew there are two additional strands to this moral theological approach. First, the necessity of aiming at perfection, which Flew says was established for Wesley through his reading of Taylor, à Kempis and Law, and their teaching on purity of intention and affection, and the impossibility of being half a Christian. Secondly, this perfection, which is love, includes the keeping of all the commandments. For the Christian, 'Love hath purified his heart from envy, malice, wrath and every unkind temper. It has cleansed him from pride.'[17]

iv. Liberation Theology

The fourth perspective, a liberationist approach, is taken by Jennings in *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics.*[18] Jennings bases his thesis on John Wesley as a practical theologian for whom 'evangelical economics' constitutes

[16] Sangster, *Path of Perfection*, 63.
[17] R. Newton Flew, *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology: An Historical Study of the Christian Ideal for the Present Life* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 324.
[18] Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990).

the key feature of the evangelical revival. He sets John Wesley's understanding of holiness within the practical and corporate sphere of economic responsibility for the believers and towards the poor, citing his setting up of collectives, lending stock, free health clinics, access to cheap medical assistance through his *Primitive Physick*; and opposition to slavery. John Wesley's evangelical economics, according to Jennings, lie at the heart of his commitment to holiness of life and Jennings contends that the eschatological significance of Methodism is that the poor have good news preached to them.[19] John Wesley's 'theological realism' Jennings says, was an important counterbalance to 'the holiness project from evaporating into an invisible "spiritual" mist, not to say mysticism.'[20]

Jennings does not address Charles Wesley's position. However, S. T. Kimbrough attends to Charles' understanding of the relationship between poverty and sanctification. He develops two aspects of Charles' thought, first in relation to those who are physically poor in 'Perfection Revisited: Charles Wesley's Theology of "Gospel Poverty" and "Perfect Poverty"',[21] and second, in, 'Charles Wesley and the Journey of Sanctification'[22] where he introduces Charles' concept of self-divestment with reference to the spiritually poor. In this paper Kimbrough also recognises at the outset that sanctification was one area in which John and Charles Wesley did not agree. He notes the tension between gradual growth in holiness and holiness received instantaneously; but he also identifies contested ground within Charles' own view: 'Charles preferred to hold in tension the possibility of sanctification as realizable – a reality which will most surely transpire – with the humble affirmation that one cannot claim to have attained it in this life.'[23]

In the paper Kimbrough claims that the juxtaposition of sanctification and poverty are often overlooked. 'Nowhere else in the writings of the Wesleys, except in Charles Wesley's poetry have I found the phrase "perfect poverty" in connection

[19] Jennings, *Good News to the Poor*, 63.
[20] Jennings, *Good News to the Poor*, 152.
[21] Richard P. Heitzenrater, ed. *The Poor and the People Called Methodists 1929-1799* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 101-19.
[22] S.T. Kimbrough, "Charles Wesley and the Journey of Sanctification," *Evangelical Journal* no. 16, Fall (1998).
[23] Kimbrough, "Journey of Sanctification," 51.

with the concept of sanctification.'[24] In his analysis of perfect spiritual poverty Kimbrough sees the aim of the believer was to move 'toward the full divestment of self, to perfect poverty of self – forever lost in God.'[25] In this emphasis a liberationist theological perspective is evident.

These four theological emphases are interwoven throughout the Wesley brothers' grasp of sanctification; though sometimes with different prominence given to the different perspectives, shaped by their divergent views. From these four perspectives key aspects of sanctification for the brothers emerge. Their experiential theology roots sanctification in the experience of the believer and raises questions of its timing (during this life or at the point of death); its process (instantaneous or a gradual journey); and even its nature, Charles' high view, with its foundations in his keen awareness of his own sinfulness and the necessity of humility, or John's view that sanctification is attainable and allowing of inadvertent failures and sins. Realisable sanctification arises from the eschatological perspective too, though the possibility of instantaneous sanctification is tempered by the prospect that it could be lost, and realisation could be delayed until the point of death. The reality of sin is an attribute of the moral perspective along with the centrality given to works of mercy as an embodiment of sanctification, an essential feature of the liberationist approach in which holiness is manifest in commitment to the poor.

These emergent themes identify dominant issues for the Wesley brothers regarding sanctification. How they differed on these issues also begins to materialise. Their distinctive positions are analysed in detail next.

2. Distinctive emphases in Charles Wesley's concept of sanctification

John Tyson and Ernest Rattenbury have both given specific, scholarly and detailed attention to Charles Wesley's position regarding sanctification. Both identify points of difference between Charles and John. Rattenbury in *The Evangelical Doctrines of Charles Wesley's Hymns* identifies three differences between Charles and John Wesley regarding sanctification. First, whether perfection is qualified or

[24] Kimbrough, "Journey of Sanctification," 69.
[25] Kimbrough, "Journey of Sanctification," 69.

unqualified, recognising that John's emphasis was on qualified or relative perfection, attainable in this life, and Charles' on unqualified or absolute perfection, a striving for 'heavenly beatitude'.[26] Secondly, Rattenbury suggests John and Charles differed in their understanding of regeneration. For John regeneration was about a real change, 'reconstructed, re-shaped nature'[27] occurring concurrently with justification, and the beginning of sanctification.[28] Charles however differed, 'he did not believe that at his conversion he was re-born of God, because one who is does not sin.'[29] The third difference Rattenbury identifies concerns the experiential perspective noted above, viz. that John's teaching on perfection was based on the experience of others, whilst Charles' was based on his own.[30]

Tyson analyses in detail the disparity between the brothers and outlines five main areas of difference: first, does sanctification take place 'in the article of death',[31] (Charles), or can it take place earlier in life (John)? Second, does sanctification happen 'in a moment', (John), or is it a gradual process (Charles' later view)? Third, what was the connection between sinlessness and perfection, (the particular focus of the Bristol Conference of 1758)?[32] John was cautious about the phrase 'sinless perfection', but Charles less so.[33] Fourth, the place of suffering in sanctification; Tyson contributes to the debate his citation of the imagery used by Charles in his hymns about suffering, referenced below in the section on sanctification and suffering. Finally, Tyson addresses the issue of qualified perfection, (John), or unqualified perfection, (Charles). He notes too, the tension the brothers had to deal with concerning the claims to have attained the perfection of angels, led particularly by Maxfield and Bell, though neither brother agreed with this interpretation of sanctification.[34] In addition to these five points, Tyson notes that for Charles the dominating theological image of sanctification is the restoration of the *imago Dei* in

[26] Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, 299.
[27] Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, 303.
[28] Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, 302.
[29] Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, 303.
[30] Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, 306.
[31] Tyson, *Sanctification*, 240.
[32] Tyson, *Sanctification*, 255.
[33] Tyson, *Sanctification*, 259.
[34] Tyson, *Sanctification*, 268-301.

humanity, lost through the Fall, but which 'could be restored as Christ was formed within the Christian through the work of the Holy Spirit.'[35]

Tyson's taxonomy provides an invaluable framework for identifying the differences between the brothers. It has informed my own analysis, developed below, with a sixth category of my own, which incorporates *imago Dei* but within a wider category, to complete the structure.

i. Gradual sanctification

Sanctification envisaged as an instantaneous gift or a gradual process of growth was one of the most significant differences between the Wesleys. Both Charles and John located sanctification within a teleological model of salvation, a process theology, expressed by Charles as 'pardon and holiness and heaven'.[36] Within that process sanctification provides the goal towards which Christian life moves; a development of growth and movement, an important refutation of antinomianism and 'stillness', and interestingly a connection between the Wesleys and the theologians of the early church who used the metaphor of a ladder or a series of steps to describe the disciple's gradual progression towards holiness.[37]

Charles' prevailing intention in his two volume 1762 *Short Hymns* was to emphasise precisely this model and to counteract John's desire to leave open the possibility of instantaneous holiness which John robustly maintained simultaneously. For John the gradual work was both preceded and followed by the instantaneous moment when sanctification was given.[38] The possibility that sanctification might be received instantly, that the moment might be now, and that this should indeed be expected was fundamental for him; it was an important assertion of God's sovereignty; sanctification was the gift of God and could be given when and how God pleased. John wanted to maintain the possibility of realised eschatology, sanctification now,

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[35] Tyson, *Sanctification*, 297.
[36] *HSP* 1 (1749), hymn CXLIV, st.2, line 6. There are seven more instances of Charles' use of this phrase in his published works and none in his manuscript hymns.
[37] For example St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982). Kimbrough identifies six stages of the lifelong journey of sanctification: it is a gradual journey, a journey of humility, a journey of prayer, a journey of love, a journey of justice, and a journey of personal and social holiness. Kimbrough, "Journey of Sanctification," 54-68.
[38] Hannah discusses the balance between process and crisis in John Wesley's thought in the context of original sin and sanctification. Vern A. Hannah, "Original Sin and Sanctification: A Problem for Wesleyans," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 18, no. 2 (1983).

whereas for Charles the model of an inaugurated eschatology of gradual growth towards holiness is a closer fit.

Furthermore, the identification of the date and time of God's action in the life of a believer held great significance for John. God's action, for the justification or sanctification of a believer at a particular moment was clear evidence of the personal experience of faith which was a hallmark of the Methodist movement. Such experiential theology was of no less importance for Charles; however he came to reject the possibility of instantaneous perfection. An interesting comparison can be made between Charles' earlier and later hymns. For example in 1743 he could write:

> Like thy spotless Master thou,
> Fill'd with wisdom, love, and power,
> Holy, pure, and *perfect now*,
> Henceforth, and evermore.[39]

However, in 1762, when the Methodist movement was embroiled in the Perfectionist controversy his emphasis changed,

> Which of the *old* apostles taught
> Perfection in an instant caught,
> Shew'd *our* compendious manner how,
> "Believe, and ye are perfect *now*;
> This moment wake, and seize the prize;
> Reeds, into sudden pillars rise;"
> Believe delusion's ranting sons,
> And all the work is done at once![40]

Following the Perfectionist controversy an emphasis on gradual holiness became a recurrent theme in his hymns.[41] The issue was not about the nature of God and God's ability to give the gift, but about the nature of those who claimed to have received it. Charles, for whom humility was an essential component of sanctification, was horrified by the behaviour of those who considered themselves to have attained perfection and in whom he struggled to detect that essential virtue. Here a moral theological position which asserts the necessity of inhabiting the

[39] *CPH* (1743), Psalm CXXI, st.6, lines 5-8. My italics.
[40] *Scripture Hymns* 2, hymn 691.
[41] For example *Scripture Hymns* 1, hymns 7 and 901; *Scripture Hymns* 2, hymns 162, 288, 695, and 758.

virtues is evident. For Charles the situation was not helped by John's insistence that those who thought they had received sanctification were duty bound to tell others. John warned against the dangers of pride and self-deception, but considered that, '[t]o keep silent concerning so wonderful a blessing was dishonouring to God and impoverishing to one's neighbour.'[42] John Fletcher, it seems, agreed with John, reputedly believing that he had lost the state of perfection four or five times, though his failure to testify to it.[43] In his Journal, Charles notes the prominence given to sharing with others blessings received from God, for example he records the experience of one believer, '*Mary Connor* on Thursday night recovered that unspeakable peace which she first received some weeks ago, but lost by keeping it to herself'.[44] In this instance there is no indication that Charles disagreed with the necessity for bearing witness to such an experience, indeed he affirms it; however it is not a declaration of sanctification; when it came to proclaiming one's own perfection, it was a different matter. Whilst sanctification was, like John, considered by Charles to be a gift of God, the proclamation of this gift belied it because the essential humility was absent. For Charles, it is of the essence of sanctification that the one sanctified would not proclaim it but rather disclaim it. As he says in two hymns unedited by John:

> The purest saint that lives below
> Doth his own sanctity disclaim.
> The wisest owns I nothing know,
> The holiest cries, I nothing am.[45]

> Whene'er Thou dost Thy grace bestow,
> Lest *proudly* I the blessing *shew*,
> A second grace impart,
> "Tell it to none" – with vain delight,
> "Tell it to none" – in mercy write
> Upon my broken heart.[46]

Furthermore the place of the sufferings and trials of this life as possible means of growth towards holiness was an important emphasis for Charles, as point four below indicates. He insisted that there were no short cuts to heaven and responded with

[42] Sangster, *Path of Perfection*, 161.
[43] Sangster, *Path of Perfection*, 162-3.
[44] *Journal*, vol. I, 218.
[45] *Scripture Hymns* 1, hymn 721, lines 5-8.
[46] *Scripture Hymns* 2, hymn 100.

biting sarcasm to those who thought otherwise, as the following hymn demonstrates. Having cited Paul in stanza 1 as an example of labouring through fights, fears, sufferings and daily deaths yet still imperfect, Charles continues,

2 "But we now, the prize t' attain,
An easier method see,
Save ourselves the toil and pain,
And ling'ring agony,
Reach at once the ladder's top,
While standing on its lowest round,
Instantaneously spring up,
With pure perfection crown'd."

And his comment on such theology?

3 *Such* the credulous dotard's dream,
And *such* his shorter road,
Thus he makes the world blaspheme,
And shames the church of God,

Charles concludes,

4 Lord, thy real work revive,
The counterfeit to end.[47]

Needless to say, John didn't agree. He underlined several words in his personal copy; presumably those he considered a point of contention between himself and his brother; 'ling'ring', 'at once' and 'Instantaneously' in stanza 1; 'credulous dotard's' and 'shames the church' in stanza 3; and 'real work' and 'counterfeit to end' in stanza 4. Charles' meaning in this hymn and others like it is unequivocal and entirely opposed to John's view. Sanctification was a journey and Charles made use of the metaphor; the seven-times journey around Jericho being one example:

Then let us urge our way,
And work, and suffer on,
Nor dream, the first, or second, day
Will throw the bulwarks down:
We on the sacred morn
Our seven-fold toil repeat,

[47] *Scripture Hymns* 2, hymn 620, st.3, lines 1-4 and st.4, lines 1-2.

Expecting that the latest turn
Our labour shall compleat:[48]

John's distinctive conviction emerges however through an editorial comment at the end of the last line of this verse in his personal copy; he underlined 'the first, or second' in line three and 'the latest' and commented in the margin 'When he pleases.'[49] John tried to encourage Charles to preach instantaneous sanctification on more than one occasion, but seemingly without success.

The discussion continued beyond John Wesley's death, at least for a time. Both Adam Clarke (1760-1832) and Richard Watson (1781-1833) recording and expounding John Wesley's theology after Wesley's death, maintain the possibility of instantaneous sanctification in this life. Indeed Adam Clarke argues almost exclusively for instantaneous sanctification, '[i]n no part of the Scriptures are we directed to seek holiness *gradatim*. We are to come to God for as an instantaneous and complete a purification from all sin, as for an instantaneous pardon.'[50] Whilst Richard Watson does not give instantaneous sanctification such a strong emphasis, Rack notes that Watson 'concentrated on the element of gradual progress',[51] he nonetheless acknowledges that it has a place. Watson asserts that dying to sin and gradual growth in grace 'advance us nearer to this point of entire sanctity'; however he continues '(b)ut they are not at all inconsistent with a more instantaneous work, when, the depth of our natural depravity being more painfully felt, we plead in faith the accomplishment of the promises of God.'[52] Notwithstanding these exponents of John's theology, over time, in British Methodism at least, the notion of instantaneous sanctification was not pursued and the concept quietly dropped.

Sangster argues that the Wesleys' views on sanctification as either gradual or instantaneous are borne out by the linguistic tenses they use to describe sanctification. He notes that in the thirty texts John cites as the scriptural basis for

[48] *Scripture Hymns* 1, hymn 361, st.1.
[49] Maddox's notes on the text, *Scripture Hymns* 1, 117n26.
[50] Adam Clarke, *Christian Theology* (London: Philip Parker, 1861), 235.
[51] Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London: Epworth, 1989), 400.
[52] Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes*, vol. IV, Elibron Classics series (London: John Mason, 1862), 146-7.

his doctrine of sanctification, present and perfect tenses are used. In his sermon on Christian Perfection, published in 1741, John emphasises the point,

> Now, it is evident that the apostle ... speaks of a deliverance wrought in this world. For he saith not, The blood of Christ *will* cleanse (at the hour of death, or in the day of judgment), but it *'cleanseth,'* at the present time, us living Christians 'from all sin.'[53]

Sangster quotes W. F. Lofthouse to indicate that Charles does not advocate the same interpretation,

> ... perfection is a matter of divine command or human longing, rather than of attainment. Here Charles Wesley is at one with the language of the New Testament, and more especially of Paul, who, when he speaks of perfection, almost always will be found to be using the imperative or the subjunctive moods, or the future tense, but never the present or the perfect.[54]

John's use of the present tense is critical for his understanding of sanctification as a realisable, verifiable, instantaneous, and datable experience now. Writing to Arthur Keene he says,

> A gradual work of grace constantly preceded the instantaneous work both of justification and sanctification. But the work itself (of sanctification as well as justification) is undoubtedly instantaneous. As after a gradual conviction of the guilt and power of sin you was [*sic*] justified in a moment, so after a gradually increasing conviction of inbred sin you will be sanctified in a moment. And who knows how soon? Why not *now?*[55]

However, as these words confirm, John does not consider sanctification as a state. It is also a process of growth; it is not a static concept; it could be lost. Indeed Sangster suggests that for John instantaneous sanctification was a 'moment-by-moment' experience.

> The faith of the moment received the perfect love of the moment and that moment's deliverance from sin. It was *now,* and then *now*, and again *now,* and these "*now's"* become, as the disciple grows "in grace and faith, a ... continuous chain." That is why Wesley is concerned to impress upon his followers the need to expect the gift of love *every* moment.[56]

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[53] Sangster, *Path of Perfection*, 48.
[54] Sangster, *Path of Perfection*, 53.
[55] Sangster, *Path of Perfection*, 84-5.
[56] Sangster, *Path of Perfection*, 85-6.

For Charles however, certainly the later Charles, even momentary sanctification was inadmissible. His keen awareness of the reality and depth of human sinfulness along with his high view of sanctification made it so. The divergence in view on sin and sanctification between the Wesley brothers is a matter to which we will return.

ii. Sanctification before death or at the point of death?

A second issue concerning the timing of sanctification which divided the Wesleys was when was perfection attained? For both of the Wesley brothers sanctification was deemed possible in this life. The difference was whether sanctification was possible at any point during life, or whether it was only finally possible at the moment of death.

> Faithful I account thee, Lord,
> To thy sanctifying word;
> I shall soon be as thou art,
> Holy both in life and heart,
> Perfect holiness attain,
> All thine image *here* regain,
> Love my God entirely *here*,
> Blameless then in heaven appear.[57]

'Love my God entirely *here*', was the aim, but at what point in life here, was the issue.

In addition, both brothers recognised that sanctification was not always attained and one of the questions they had to address was whether perfection was *essential* before death. On the one hand John Wesley states, '[w]ithout it none can see God, but none who seek sanctification sincerely can or shall die without it.' But on the other hand, it was not something to be anxious about, as discussed in the Conference of 1747,

> Q.19 - Ought we to be anxiously carefull abt (about) Perfection, least we sho'd die before we have attained it?
> A In no wise. We ought to be thus carefull for nothing neither Spiritual nor Temporal[58]

[57] *Scripture Hymns* 2, hymn 638.
[58] John Bennet, *Bennet's Minutes 1744-8* (Archives of John Rylands University Library of Manchester), 1747, 59. Pages unnumbered in original. Early Conference minutes were recorded in question and answer form.

Nevertheless the same Minutes suggest that a little before death is the moment when most believers were in fact sanctified:

> Q.1 How much is allowed by our Brethren who differ from us with regard to entire Sanctification?
> A They grant 1st That every one must be intirely Sanctified in the Article of Death….
> Q.2 – But what do we allow them?
> A We grant 1st That many of those who have died in the Faith, Yea, the greater part of them we have known were not Sanctified thro'out not made Perfect in Love, till a little before Death.[59]

Perhaps Charles was considered to be one of those 'who differ from us with regard to entire Sanctification'; it certainly seems that Charles did differ with his brother on this matter even as early as this. On January 27, 1747, five months before the Conference from which the Minutes above are quoted, John wrote to his brother,

> As to time, I believe this instrument generally is the instant of death, the moment before the soul leaves the body. But I believe it may be ten, twenty, or forty years before death. Do we agree or differ here?[60]

Charles Wesley, whilst not denying that Christian perfection was possible in this life, grew more of the opinion that it was not received until a few moments before death. His focus for the moment of sanctification became the moment of resignation just before death.[61]

It was a difficult theological issue to resolve. On the one hand rejecting sanctification in this life might suggest Christ's sacrifice and God's grace insufficient. On the other hand, particularly important after the Perfectionist controversy, the need to avoid any grounds for spiritual pride was paramount. What is evident is that the possibility of being sanctified at the point of death was a theological position held by early Methodists. Deathbed testimonies indicating the state of soul of the dying believer therefore became very significant. Dying well, in peace and assurance of faith became distinctive of the early Methodists and was an important assertion both of Protestant and Arminian faith, denying the purifying fire of purgatory and defying the latent anxieties about election which emerged most

[59] Bennet, *Minutes*, 53. Pages unnumbered in original.
[60] Tyson, *Sanctification*, 247. Italics removed.
[61] See chapter 8, the resignation of the self in death.

strongly at death. Experiences of believers dying with an unfaltering assurance of faith in the risen Christ were highly valued, as were those who saw visions of heaven on their death beds. Christine Johnson in her thesis, 'Holiness and Death in the Theology of John Wesley' explores the centrality of the deathbed experience in eighteenth century Methodism and cites John Wesley's record of the experience of Mr. King, one believer who received the gift of entire sanctification on his deathbed,

> "Can this by dying!" he wondered? "It is like going to sleep.... My dear friends, it is not for want of matter, but want of breath that I do not continue speaking. I am full and abound! O the love of Christ! O the love of Christ! If anyone had told me, I could not have conceived what I feel." His last words were "Sanctified by faith!"[62]

Such experiential theology *in extremis* finds numerous references in the volumes of Charles Wesley's Journal,[63] and some of Charles' hymns were written as reflections upon deathbed testimonies. The following, written after the death of Mrs. Elizabeth Hooper, is one such example. Charles alludes to the themes of confidence and assurance in God; he also declares her sinlessness and perfection before death:

4 In her no spot of sin remain'd,
To shake her confidence in God,
The victory here she more than gain'd,
Triumphant thro' her Saviour's blood.

5 She now the fight of faith hath fought,
Finish'd and won the Christian race,
She found on earth the Lord she sought,
And now beholds him face to face.

6 She died in sure and stedfast hope,
By Jesus wholly sanctified,
Her perfect spirit she gave up,
And sunk into his arms, and died.[64]

In this hymn the importance of Mrs. Hooper's witness to her faith is evident. However so too is the gift of sanctification given by Jesus in this moment. Cunningham, when discussing this topic, states that in Charles' theology,

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[62]Christine Lynn Johnson, "Holiness and Death in the Theology of John Wesley" (Nazarene Theological College, 2014), 221. Johnson is quoting from John Wesley "A Short Account of the Death of Mr. King", Arminian Magazine (March 1789), 129.
[63] *Journal*, vol. I, 121, 133, 174, 194, 220, 280-81, 296, 303, 304, 313, 325 and *Journal*, vol. II, 417, 434, 444, 455, 475, 476, 480, 487, 514, 515, 558.
[64] *RT*36, sts.4-6.

> ... perfection was not *bestowed* at death; rather, death was the true believer's final opportunity to express perfection in a meaningful way. Sanctification *culminated* in death; but it was not somehow received 'instantly' just beforehand. ... Rather, to Wesley, entire sanctification found outward expression through the peaceful, joyful, and loving disposition of those confronted by the gravest of existential obstacles.[65]

The difficulty with this view is that it does not address the issue of when sanctification is given. If not instantly just before death, then the gift must have been given at an earlier point in a believer's life, as John maintained but Charles did not. Cunningham seems to suggest that Charles considered sanctification not so much the gift of God as a human disposition. Despite their differences over when this gift is given, for both Charles and John that it is a gift is not in dispute. Sanctification is not attained through the believer's own behaviour, assurance or witness; the witness offered is, rather, a response to the gift given; as Charles says, 'She died in sure and stedfast hope,/ *By Jesus wholly sanctified'*.

iii. Sanctification and sin

To what extent did the doctrine of holiness assert the eradication of sin in the life of the believer? Did it advocate the eradication of original sin as well as actual sin? In the early Conferences when sanctification was being discussed the question arose.

> Q.5 – Is not every Believer born of God, A Temple of the Holy Ghost?
> A In a low Sense he is, but he that is in the proper Sense, born of God, cannot commit Sin.
> Q.6 What is implied in being made Perfect in Love?
> A The Loveing the Lord our God with all our Mind, & Soul, & Strength, Deu: 6.5-30.6. Ezek. 36 -
> Q.7 – Does this imply that he who is thus made Perfect cannot commit Sin?
> A St. John affirms it expressly, he cannot commit Sin, because he is born of God, Ch. 3.10 – And indeed how sho'd he? Seeing there is now none Occasion of Stumbling in him. Chap. 2.10
> Q.8 – Does it imply that all inward Sin is taken away?
> A Without Doubt. Or how sho'd he be said to be saved from all his Uncleannesses.[66]

> Q.1 When does inward Sanctification begin?
> A In the Moment we are Justified the Seed of every Virtue is then instantaniously sown in the Soul. From that Time the Believer gradually

[65] Joseph Cunningham, W., "The Methodist Doctrine of Christian Perfection: Charles Wesley's Contribution Contextualized," *Wesley and Methodist Studies* 2(2010): 41.
[66] Bennet, *Minutes*, 1744, 9. Spellings and abbreviations are as in the original text, except for 'the' and 'that' which appear in the text as 'ye' and 'yt'. Pages unnumbered in original.

> dies to Sin & grows in Grace. Yet Sin remains in him, yea the Seed of all Sin, till he is Sanctified thro'out in Spirit, Soul & Body.[67]

Charles' view reflects that of these Minutes. Those who are perfect cannot commit sin; this is a process, in which from Justification, when 'the Seed of every Virtue is … instantaniously sown in the Soul', onwards, the believer gradually dies to sin until sanctified; and when a believer is sanctified throughout, the seed of all sin is removed. The image of his moral theology is twofold; on the one hand there is a gradual conquering of sin, and indeed the seed of sin, by the growth of the virtues; and on the other, the uprooting of sin from the life of the believer by Christ. In Charles' words, 'Thou wilt the root remove,/ And perfect me in love.'[68] Another word Charles uses for this sinless perfection is spotlessness, which is derived only from the cleansing blood of Christ:

2 Spotless, sincere, without offence
  O may we to his day remain,
Who trust the blood of God to cleanse
  Our souls from every sinful stain:
Lord, we believe the promise sure:
  The purchas'd Comforter impart,
Apply thy blood to make us pure,
  To keep us pure in life and heart.[69]

John was more uncomfortable with the notion of sinless perfection than Charles, and he accused Charles of setting the standard of perfection too high, so as to be unattainable. Charles did not have a problem with the seeming paradox of attaining the unattainable. Indeed Charles loved paradox and used it frequently in his hymns to express the inexpressible, to communicate something of the mystery of God; and the removal of sin in the life of the believer was one such paradox.

2 The most impossible of all,
  Is, that I e'er from sin should cease;
Yet shall it be: I know, it shall:
  Jesus, look to thy faithfulness!
If nothing is too hard for thee,
All things are possible to me.[70]

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[67] Bennet, *Minutes*, 1745, 33. Pages unnumbered in original.
[68] *Scripture Hymns* 2, hymn 826, st.1, lines 5-6.
[69] *RT*183, st.2.
[70] *HSP* 2 (1749), hymn CXII, st.2.

For John's more rational approach however the paradox needed an explanation. Flew says John Wesley uses the word 'sin' in two distinct ways,

> Sin means either any falling short of the divine ideal for humanity, or it means a voluntary transgression of a known law of God which it was within our power to obey. It was only in the latter sense that Wesley maintained we could be free from sin.[71]

The first definition allows for involuntary transgressions 'of a divine law, known or unknown', which in the Conference of 1759 was stated as Methodist doctrine. John comments, '(a) person filled with the love of God is still liable to these involuntary transgressions. Such transgressions you may call sins, if you please; I do not.'[72] For John, perfection does not mean freedom from ignorance or mistake, '[a]bsolute or infallible perfection I never contended for. Sinless perfection I do not contend for, seeing it is not scriptural.'[73] Rack refers to this as his 'paradoxical doctrine of a perfection which was not perfect'.[74] Ironically John seems to have replaced Charles' paradox with one of his own. The weakness of his argument is his failure to give sufficient weight to involuntary sins, his failure to allow unconscious sins or sins of omission. This defect arises from a second major weakness in John's understanding of sin, which Sangster identifies, and which was to see sin as a 'thing' rather than relational. Sangster comments, 'the concept of sin as a thing rather than a relationship carries with it the attendant danger that the removal of this sin happens by 'a stroke of omnipotence.'[75] John Fletcher articulates the crux of the matter, 'Can God take away the power of sinning without taking away our power of free obedience?'[76]

Charles' concept of sin was more complex and nuanced. He was more aware of the gravity of sin, and recognised the possibility of unconscious sin, 'Shew me, as my soul can bear/ The depth of inbred sin.'[77] Humility accompanied such an understanding of sin; and when sinless perfection was misapprehended by Maxfield and Bell, Bell claiming in 1761 that he had received sanctification, and his followers

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[71] Flew, *Idea of Perfection*, 326.
[72] Flew, *Idea of Perfection*, 327.
[73] Flew, *Idea of Perfection*, 325.
[74] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 399.
[75] Sangster, *Path of Perfection*, 63.
[76] Sangster, *Path of Perfection*, 63.
[77] *HSP* (1742), 'The Same', page 209, st.5, lines 1-2.

'thought themselves restored to the purity of Adam and Eve and incapable of falling'[78] and Maxfield preaching 'angelic perfection', and encouraging 'perfectionists who claimed visions and superiority to others,[79] Charles was appalled and as a result changed his emphasis:

> Charles had gone further than John in his claims for the gift as removing the 'root' of sin. But now Charles placed the achievement so high and saw it so much in terms of a prolonged and penitential discipline rather than as the result of a sudden act of faith that John complained he had made it impossible for anyone to achieve it.[80]

Tyson makes an interesting observation when commenting on Charles' refusal to leave Bristol to accompany John to (belatedly) quell the disturbance. Charles pleaded ill health, but Tyson remarks,

> One can only conjecture whether it was truly Charles's frail health that kept him out of the fray so long. He may have been avoiding an awkward ideological situation, since Maxfield's unqualified concept of perfection sounded rather like an extreme version of Charles's own![81]

It is important to note that neither of the Wesleys ever claimed to have attained sinless perfection themselves.

iv. Sanctification and suffering

Charles' high view of sanctification, including the sinlessness of the believer, was something suffering could assist,

> 4 Then let us still his cross sustain,
> A Father's chastisements receive,
> And waiting thus the prize to gain,
> We shall the life divine retrieve,
> And put thy sinless image on,
> Pure members of thy perfect Son.[82]

This verse is cited by Joanna Cruickshank in *Pain, Passion and Faith: Revisiting the Place of Charles Wesley in Early Methodism.*[83] Cruickshank's work focuses on

[78] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 338.
[79] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 338.
[80] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 340.
[81] Tyson, *Sanctification*, 269-70.
[82] *RT*145, st.4.
[83] Joanna Cruickshank, *Pain, Passion and Faith: Revisiting the Place of Charles Wesley in Early Methodism* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 86.

Charles' experience and theology of suffering which was very different to that of John. Nowhere is there clearer evidence of Charles' experience shaping his theology than in his understanding of suffering. Cruickshank identifies the following formational experiences:

> The hardships of his own life were certainly significant: a tumultuous childhood, lifelong ill health, years of physically and emotionally demanding itinerant ministry, serious conflicts with his brother John, the early deaths of five of his children, his son Samuel's emotional instability and conversion to Roman Catholicism and the (to Charles) heartbreaking movement of Methodism away from the Church of England.[84]

John however attributed Charles' emphasis on suffering to another influence, the early doctrinal influence of Thomas à Kempis and William Law.[85] John blamed the 'poisonous mysticism', which 'gave a gloomy cast, first to his mind, and then to many of his verses: This made him frequently describe religion as a melancholy thing.'[86]

Five strands can be detected in Charles' interpretation of the place of suffering in sanctification. First suffering was a means through which complete submission to God could be achieved. Suffering is sometimes therefore interpreted as chastisement from God, as in the verse quoted above, though Charles also sees it as a sign of God's fatherly love.

Taught obedience to my God,
By the things I have endured,
Meekly now I kiss the rod,
Wounded by the rod, and cured:[87]

Second, the character of Christ might be formed in the believer through suffering,

His love into the furnace cast,
His love attends and keeps me here,
That coming forth as gold at last,
Stamp'd with His name and character,

[84] Cruickshank, *Pain, Passion and Faith*, 17.
[85] Cruickshank, *Pain, Passion and Faith*, 17.
[86] Cruickshank, *Pain, Passion and Faith*, 21.
[87] Cruickshank, *Pain, Passion and Faith*, 87.

And perfected through sufferings I
May spotless to His bosom fly.[88]

Third, suffering is also accompanied by joy because it is part of the good work of God,

3 Jesu, my all in all thou art,
…….

4 In want my plentiful supply,
In weakness my almighty power,
In bonds my perfect liberty,
My light in Satan's darkest hour,
In grief my joy unspeakable,
My life in death, my heaven in hell.[89]

Fourth, Charles asserted that sometimes God withdrew his presence from the believer in suffering to test and strengthen their faith,

5 His face unless he hide,
We never can be tried:
Wherefore not in wrath but love
Jesus partially withdraws,
Leaves his own, our faith to prove,
Leaves us bleeding on his cross.[90]

Finally, Charles insisted on the necessity of extreme suffering as the means to perfection. Tyson notes his juxtaposition of the images of the cross and the crown in his connection of suffering with sanctification.[91] Charles considered suffering to be a participation in the suffering of Christ, and other imagery in his hymns encourages an imaginative contemplation of and identification with the bodily sufferings of Christ:

3 Five bleeding wounds he bears
Received on Calvary,
They pour effectual prayers
They strongly speak for me,
Forgive him, Oh! forgive, they cry,
Nor let that ransomed sinner die.[92]

[88] Cruickshank, *Pain, Passion and Faith*, 88.
[89] Cruickshank, *Pain, Passion and Faith*, 89.
[90] Cruickshank, *Pain, Passion and Faith*, 92.
[91] Tyson, *Sanctification*, 262.
[92] *HSP* (1742), 'Behold the man!', page 265, st.3.

6 Who Jesu's sufferings share,
My fellow-prisoners now,
Ye soon the wreath shall wear
On your triumphant brow,
Rejoice in hope, rejoice with me,
We shall from all our sins be free.[93]

Some early Methodist believers shared this identification of their suffering with the bodily sufferings of Christ. Mack suggests that pain 'made the theology of the atonement more real as the suffering person contemplated Christ's own bodily sacrifice',[94] but the experience went beyond contemplation. Mrs. Walters found comfort in her suffering through identifying what was happening to her, with what happened to Christ,

> The next day she was delivered of a child, which died the same night; and soon after she proved to be in a strong fever. Her sufferings were great and long, as she lived to the twenty-first day after her seizure ... when a blister was brought for her back, (by which she had formerly suffered much) she looked on it some moments, and said, My dear Saviour *gave his back to the smiters,* and so will I.[95]

It seems however, that Charles went beyond simply identifying the believer's suffering with that of Christ, offering comfort and sustaining strength; he seems to suggest that only those who suffer with Christ (the cross) obtain the crown; suffering and sanctification are connected, as Tyson notes, 'Shout all on earth, whom Jesus' love/ Hath call'd His cross and crown to share.[96] The two together entail full salvation.

3 In sorrow, as in grace, we grow,
With closer fellowship in pain,
Our Lord more intimately know,
Till coming to a perfect man
His sharpest agonies we share,*
And all His marks of passion bear,

4 Partakers of His bitterest cup,
And burden'd with His heaviest load,
We fill His after-sufferings up,

[93] *HSP* (1742), 'Another', page 184, st.6.
[94] Phyllis Mack, "Does Gender Matter? Suffering and Salvation in Eighteenth-Century Methodism.," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 85, no. 2 and 3 (2003): 169.
[95] Mack, "Gender," 171.
[96] Tyson, *Sanctification*, 262.

Conform'd to an expiring God;
And only such our Father owns,*
And seats on our appointed thrones.[97]

John disagreed. In the fifth line of each stanza above (at the place of the asterisk), he wrote 'No' in his copy, disagreeing with 'His sharpest agonies we share,*' and with 'And only such our Father owns.*' John argued that the biblical reference to trials through which believers may share the 'sufferings of Christ' did not refer to general sufferings ... but 'doubtless refers to martyrdom and the sufferings connected with it.'[98] Similarly John disagreed with Charles' contention that God sometimes deserted believers. He accepted that Christians could feel deserted by God, but asserted that God never deserts us, only we that desert him. John could however see some potential spiritual value in suffering and its possible contribution to sanctification in developing humility and assisting spiritual progress,

> Such a degree of sickness or pain as does not affect the understanding I have often found to be a great help. It is an admirable help against levity, as well as against foolish desires; and nothing more directly tends to teach us that great lesson, to write upon our heart, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt".[99]

Counteracting levity and foolish desires however does not begin to plumb the depths of suffering Charles Wesley had in mind, or indeed experienced. In the article just cited, Phyllis Mack argues that John's fundamental response to suffering was largely influenced by the Enlightenment emphasis on the rational dominance of mind over body and therefore John's overriding concern was to overcome suffering through healing, as his publication, *Primitive Physick*, an affordable, accessible means of medical advice for the poor, demonstrates. It would seem that Charles Wesley's response to suffering was in fact closer to that of the women portrayed in Mack's work than it was to that of his brother.

Cruickshank makes the important observation that the differences between the Wesleys regarding suffering were not only indicative of a divergence in theology, but also represent 'alternative normative narratives of the Christian experience',

[97] Cruickshank, *Pain, Passion and Faith*, 94.
[98] Cruickshank, *Pain, Passion and Faith*, 93.
[99] Mack, "Gender," 160.

> For John, the Christian life was not "a melancholy thing": severe trials were to be expected, but cheerfulness was the norm and the delights of perfection were a real possibility. Life was a demanding race, not a slow crucifixion. For Charles, however, the Christian should not expect perfection before the moment of death. In the meantime, life was a matter of intense and increasing suffering, involving physical and emotional pains as well as the spiritual pain of being abandoned by God. Joy was certainly a reality, but it was experienced as a loving intimacy with Christ in the midst of pain and as a confident hope of eternity ahead.[100]

These four points are the most clearly identifiable and recognised differences between John and Charles on sanctification. The following, the fifth, is a more obscure distinction between the brothers but a distinction nonetheless.

v. Sanctification and the language of mysticism

J. Brazier Green, in his chapter 'John Wesley and Mysticism', in *John Wesley and William Law,*[101] acknowledges the difficulty of offering a precise definition of mysticism; the quest to do so has, he says, baffled many writers. Ultimately, however, he uses Inge's definition:

> Religious Mysticism may be defined as the attempt to realise the presence of the living God in the soul and in nature, or, more generally, as *the attempt to realize, in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal, and of the eternal in the temporal.*[102]

He continues quoting Inge's three propositions on which he says mysticism seems to rest:

> 1. The soul (as well as the body) can see and perceive.
> 2. Man, in order to know God, must be a partaker of the Divine nature.
> 3. Without holiness no man may see the Lord.[103]

Whilst the Wesley brothers were initially influenced by the mystics it is clear from John Wesley's writings that he later retreated from that influence; notably even from the teachings of William Law, who had been deeply formative for both brothers through *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*.[104] Green in his discussion of John Wesley and William Law observes that Law's literary career falls into three phases,

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[100] Cruickshank, *Pain, Passion and Faith*, 95.
[101] J. Brazier Green, *John Wesley and William Law* (London: Epworth Press, 1945), 177.
[102] Green, *Wesley and Law*, 177.
[103] Green, *Wesley and Law*, 177.
[104] William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life Adapted to the State and Condition of All Orders of Christians* (London: Griffith Farran & Co., 1893).

'his dogmatic, ethical, and mystical periods'.[105] It was his ethical period which saw the production of his *Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection* and *Serious Call*, but the later mystical period, when Law embraced the philosophy of Jacob Boehme, was the point at which John Wesley diverged from him. Green indicates that John Wesley sets out his objection to the mystics in the preface to *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1739, for which objection there were three grounds: the first the primacy of justification by faith, holiness of heart and life is not the cause but the effect of justification; second, the mystics' advice 'to the desert! to the desert! and God will build you up', whereas John Wesley says Christ commands us to build up one another; and third, the mystics emphasis on solitary religion and a contemplation that 'consists in a cessation from all works', but says John, '[t]he gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness ...'[106] The Wesleys' opposition to 'stillness' is clearly rooted in this third objection. In John Wesley's response - justification by faith, mutual responsibility and accountability, and social holiness - the key tenets of his practical theology are abundantly apparent.

Of the writers on sanctification in the Wesleys, Harald Lindström stresses that John Wesley was committed to *practical* mysticism,

> ... the essence of Christian perfection he took to be love to God and our neighbour. Against the hermitic ideal of the mystics, however, he held that human fellowship was an attribute of holiness; and against Quietist mysticism he maintained that love of our neighbour was inseparable from love to God. Love must be expressed in actions. Thus, at variance with exclusively contemplative, but in agreement with practical, mysticism, Wesley contends that both inward and outward holiness are necessary.[107]

Rattenbury, discussing mysticism and John Wesley, expresses John's characteristic stance on Christian perfection as an 'attempt to synthesise the Lutheran doctrine of Justification by Faith with the ancient Christian doctrine of Holiness',[108] and similarly notes the outworking of the doctrine in practical and social love. Rattenbury states that John disliked mystical and emotional notions such as the

[105] Green, *Wesley and Law*, 35.
[106] Green, *Wesley and Law*, 180.
[107] Harald Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation* (London: Epworth Press, 1950), 130.
[108] Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, 302.

'relation of the soul to Christ, as of a bride to her husband ... he thought that they were smudged with sentimentality, and led to erotic extravagances.'[109]

Flew sees a parallel between the Wesleys doctrine and that of the mystics. He cites the numerous mystical writers to whom the Wesleys were in debt, whether or not they acknowledged it: Law, à Kempis, Taylor, Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, Plotinus, Aquinas, Antoinette Bourignon, Madame Guyon, Macarius, to name but some. With reference to John Wesley, Flew remarks, '[t]hese facts are overwhelming proof of his debt, whether avowed or unconscious, to the mystical tradition of the past', and continues quoting W.B. Pope, who said that the doctrine of Christian perfection was first presented to the Wesleys

> … in its mystical and ascetic form, as an object of ethical aspiration; it never afterwards lost this character; the grandeur and depth of Thomas à Kempis and the best Mysticism of antiquity are reflected in the hymns of Charles Wesley, and in all the writings of John Wesley, even the most controversial, on this subject.[110]

This is an interesting comment, suggesting that the theology and spirituality of the mystics is more deeply entrenched in John's own thinking than he was able to recognise or willing to admit whereas in Charles' writing the debt to mystical writers and thinkers is more obvious.

Charles' position in relation to the mystics is not as unequivocally distinct from John's as in the other four areas discussed above. Nevertheless it is possible to discern differences of interpretation and understanding. Undoubtedly for both brothers the primary tenets of faith were justification through the redemptive death of Christ and sanctification through the universal grace of God. Their building on these foundations however displays differences of approach and emphasis. Charles was more affective in his stance; he readily used language expressive of the emotional relationship of the soul to Christ; he was criticised by John for his 'fondling' language; hints of dispassion, or the 'ascetic detachment,' identified by Flew and Sangster, can be discovered in his texts; his language of being lost in God carries deep significance for him; his interpretation of imitating Christ through

[109] Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, 301.
[110] Flew, *Idea of Perfection*, 314-5.

conformity to his sufferings; his relationship with 'stillness' is not as unambiguous as it is for John; and language of union with God is a strong theme in his poetry, indeed it is possible to detect overtones of participation in God, divinisation or *theosis* in Charles' work, as will become apparent.

Returning to Inge's propositions, there is evidence for all three in Charles' poetry. The following example directly addresses Inge's first proposition that the soul (as well as the body) can see and perceive. Charles makes it clear that faith is rational, and yet that is not enough; neither does faith rely on vain imaginations, or natural feelings, but through reliance on grace the hidden treasure is discovered, the soul perceives the impulse of Jesus' love.

1 Faith, tho' rational, is founded
Not on man, but God alone,
On the great Jehovah grounded,
Persons Three in essence One:
.....

2 Not on vain imaginations
Do we, Lord, for proof depend;
Not on fancied inspirations,
When thou dost thy Spirit send:
Unenlighten'd reason leaves us
Nought to build our faith upon:
Evidence thy Spirit gives us
Brighter than the mid-day sun.

3 Slighting nature's every feeling
We on grace alone rely:
God in us his Son revealing
Makes us Abba Father cry:
When we find the hidden treasure,
Christ discover'd from above,
Then our souls perceive the pleasure,
Impulse sweet of Jesus' love.[111]

There are numerous accounts in the early Methodist movement of believers for whom, similarly, the soul's perception lay at the heart of faith. Phyllis Mack's illustrations provide a rich vein. Mack makes reference to Mary Bosanquet Fletcher's dream of the Divine shechinah reflected from her breast (in which she had

[111] *Trinity Hymns,* hymn XXXIV, 119, st.1, lines 1-4; sts.2 and 3.

a lump she tried to treat with goose-grass juice);[112] of Mary Taft, who through violent pain in her right side 'was as if filled with the fullness of God & the Room appeared full of Angels';[113] and Mary Matthews, for whom pain was a gift 'For... if I had not had pain, I should have slept. But instead of that, I had such a Divine visit from my Lord ... I would not have been without it for all the world'.[114] For these women the emphasis was not on mastering the pain in their bodies, but on allowing it to be a means of spiritual experience.

Inge's second proposition talks of humanity's partaking of the Divine nature. Berger comments that Christian perfection in Wesleyan hymnody 'cannot be limited to an ethical dimension alone – its mystical dimension is unmistakable. Humankind is made holy by union with the Holy God ... "Be Christ in me, and I in him,/ Till perfect we are made in one."'[115] Partaking in the divine nature, as we will see, is a significant theme in Charles' hymns 'Partakers of thy nature made,/ Thy tempers, Lord, we long t' express '[116]

The third proposition states that without holiness no one may see the Lord which is similarly reflected in Charles' hymns:

> 2 On thee, O God of purity,
> I wait for hallowing grace;
> None without holiness shall see
> The glories of thy face:
> In souls unholy and unclean
> Thou never canst delight;
> Nor shall they, while unsav'd from sin,
> Appear before thy sight.[117]

The appearance of Inge's propositions for indicating mysticism in Charles' texts suggests Charles' more willing embrace of such an approach and certainly poetic texts are more apt for expressions of mystical language. In this final section therefore, a further significant area of difference between John and Charles has been introduced; whilst both of the Wesley brothers were exposed to the writings of

[112] Mack, "Gender," 167 and 63.
[113] Mack, "Gender," 167.
[114] Mack, "Gender," 167.
[115] Berger, *Theology in Hymns*, 149.
[116] *RT*236, st.5, lines 1-2.
[117] *CPH* (1743), Psalm V, st.2.

mystics as young men, and reputedly refuted these influences later; it would seem that Charles did not refute the mystical influences upon him quite as comprehensively as John. In this study this claim is substantiated through the examination of Charles as poet, theologian, and author of spiritually formational texts who embraces not only the rational but the affectional and the doctrine of East as well as West, in his exploration of what sanctification means.

Conclusion

This chapter has set the theological context for the thesis, and has examined five key areas of difference between John and Charles regarding sanctification; timing, whether sanctification is gradual or instantaneous; sin and sinlessness; suffering and sanctification; and sanctification and the language of mysticism. One further area in which the brothers differed was in their use of resignation in relation to sanctification. The extent of this variance will become apparent, as will the significance resignation has for Charles and subsequently for all believers who sung, took to heart, and acted on his verse. In part II the analysis of Charles' resignation texts begins, but before that, in chapter two, resignation is introduced.

Chapter 2

Resignation in Charles Wesley: historical and spiritual context

Fond of his King, and to his Country true,
He paid to Cesar, and to God their due;
And soon experiencing the Saviour's grace,
Fought the good fight, and won the Christian race;
In every state, in every duty shin'd
Generous, and just, beneficent and kind
.....
He more than Conqueror in death appear'd,
And trampled on a Foe he never fear'd!
O that I might, like Him, my life resign
O might his soul's eternal state be mine!

—Charles Wesley[1]

1. Charles Wesley's understanding of resignation

'Resignation', when used by Charles Wesley, is an anagogic word. It has a spiritual intention; it is for Charles the predominant means by which a believer progresses towards sanctification. Ironically perhaps, the anagogic progression upwards to a heavenly realm is an act of resigning, letting go, divesting; a downward movement of the will, desires, and the self. The spiritual intention Charles invested in this word was familiar in his time and culture. The etymology of resignation indicates that from the thirteenth century in British sources it could mean '[t]he action or an act of relinquishing, surrendering, or giving up something;' or '[t]he action or fact of resigning from one's employment, from an office, as a member of an organization, etc.', originally particularly used 'with reference to the relinquishment of a benefice or office by a priest'.[2] However, from the early fifteenth century à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ,* (initially *De Imitatione,* written in Latin), introduced a new meaning of resignation, 'the action or fact of giving oneself up to God'.[3] Resignation as relinquishing something is evident in Charles' use of the word, but

[1] 'Epitaph for Mr. Richard Kemp', *RT*244, lines 1-6 and 17-20.
[2] *OED online*, s.v. 'resignation,' http://www.oed.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/view/Entry/163604#eid25632292, accessed May 17, 2015.
[3] '15th cent. in à Kempis *De Imitatione.*' *OED online*, s.v. 'resignation,' http://www.oed.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/view /Entry/#eid25632292, accessed May 17, 2015.

almost used exclusively within this framework of relinquishing to God. It is for Charles a spiritual matter.

Resignation, as a spiritual discipline, is a positive attribute for Charles Wesley, not a negative one. It involves an act of intention and desire; it is an offering given to God, of things and people, of the will and heart and even of life itself. Clearly its meaning in Charles' context is significantly different to the way it is used today. Resignation for Charles Wesley does not imply a powerless, passive acquiescence or surrender. Indeed surrender is not a word Charles uses. 'Surrender' only appears twice in the published and manuscript hymn texts with reference to the surrender of the self to God. One of these references is to Jesus surrendering his life, and the other to the surrender of the believer.[4] In these two examples Charles uses surrender in a similar way to resignation, however resignation and to be resigned for Charles, is an active, deliberate act, choice and state.

Resignation is therefore something of a paradoxical concept for Charles. It embraces an active passivity, and strength in abandonment, to God. As the following hymn establishes, strength and determination are inherent to the resignation Charles has in mind. This poem was written as Charles travelled to Wakefield to answer a charge of treason. His natural emotions are evident, yet his desire is for his face and heart to be fixed,

> 4 All of mine be cast aside,
> Anger, fear, and guile, and pride,
> Only give me from above,
> Simple faith, and humble love.
>
> 5 Set my face, and fix my heart,
> Now the promis'd power impart,

[4] Surrender, or derivative of it, appears four times in Charles' Manuscript verse, once in relation to surrender to troops (*MS Howe*, 3), once of a town surrendered (*MS Protestant Association*, 5). One refers to the Jesus surrendering his life, (*MS John,* 211) the final reference is to the surrender of the believer's will to God: 'His name with all my heart I praise,/ And cry, surrendring up his own,/ Father, thy only will be done.' (*MS Miscellaneous Hymns*, 141; *RT208*). In the published verse there are two references, one to the surrender of the town, as above, (*Protestant Association*, Canto II, 7); the second to Moses surrendering his command (*Scripture Hymns* 1, no.354, 115). Whilst 'surrender' is used from the early 16th century in the sense of resignation or abandonment especially for another, the predominant use at the time was the surrendering of goods, property, tithes etc. to the sovereign, the lord of the manor, or an enemy, who had a claim or made a demand for it. See *OED online*, s.v. 'surrender,' http://www.oed.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/view/Entry/195030?rskey=ZjKX85&result=2#eid, accessed May 18, 2015.

> Meek, submissive, and resign'd
> Arm me with thy constant mind.[5]

The frequent identification of strength with the state of being resigned is evident in early Methodist spirituality and denoted in a remarkable account related by Phyllis Mack. The account is of Mrs. Davis' mastectomy without an anaesthetic, accompanied by her friend Betty Duchesne. Betty reports, '[w]hile the surgeon went to put his dress on, I was left alone with her, she said I wish he would come and do it now, for I am quite ready, and I am sure the Lord will be with me; she was perfectly resigned and very composed ...'[6]

The paradox of active resignation and strength in abandonment finds a parallel in Mack's work on agency and passivity in early Methodism. Mack explores the two-fold characteristic of Wesleyan soteriology, '[i]n conversion, the sinner must be roused and actively willing to accept God, who then takes control of the individual and transforms him or her.'[7] Whilst Mack does not analyse Charles Wesley's role in great depth, she does refer to the complexity of agency and passivity as it appears in some Methodist hymns, Mack comments,

> ... their impact was to instill in the worshipper a movement toward self-effacement and surrender to God's power on the one hand, and a heroic energy, both in conquering the self and in serving God, on the other. In certain hymns the fusion between surrender and agency is total, both style and substance conveying the essential paradox of Methodist soteriology.[8]

The active resignation Charles promotes echoes the agency and passivity of the believer in Mack's analysis. But just as she sees this in relation to conversion, so the pattern is the same for sanctification. For Charles active resignation is the predominant process through which the believer can prepare herself to receive God's gift of sanctification. However for Charles resignation is not only the process towards sanctification, it is also an indication of the state of sanctification itself. There are two references in the first volume of his Journal where he clearly asserts as much. The first example is of Margaret Thomas when dying. 'Her hope was now

[5] *RT*97, sts.4-5.
[6] Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 194.
[7] Mack, *Heart Religion*, 49.
[8] Mack, *Heart Religion*, 48.

full of immortality. She had no desire of life or death, or ease in her great pain. God had finished his work, and her will was quite swallowed up in his. This is that holiness without which no one shall see the Lord.'[9] The second is his account of sister Hooper on her deathbed,

> The servants of Christ suffer nothing. I asked her whether she was not in great pain. "Yes," she answered, "but in greater joy. I would not be without either." "But do you not prefer life, or death?" She replied, "All is alike to me, let Christ choose, I have no will of my own." This is that holiness, or absolute resignation, or Christian perfection![10]

Resignation as process and goal of sanctification also parallels the way of suffering, one of the differences in relation to sanctification between Charles and John noted in chapter one. For Charles suffering embraces both of these conditions. The first chapter explored suffering as a means to sanctification. Evidently Charles considered suffering to contribute to sanctification. In his letter to his wife Sally when she was ill he wrote,

> The slightest suffering (received from Him) is an inestimable blessing; another jewel added to our crown. Go on then, my faithful partner, doing & suffering, his blessed will till out of great tribulation, we both enter His Kingdom & his joy, & his glory everlasting.[11]

Suffering - seen as a jewel in the crown - but the crown itself? One example in which Charles arguably considers the witness of the believer in extreme suffering as evidential of the state of sanctification is that of Mrs. Davis whose story was recounted above; Mack records that in her case Charles considered 'the patient's stoicism as a spiritual apotheosis'.[12]

Resignation is then seen by Charles as an active spiritual discipline; a discipline which can use the experience of suffering, and is both a means to and goal of sanctification. Inevitably Charles' understanding and use of resignation were shaped significantly by the milieu in which he lived. The influence of this context is the primary theme of this chapter.

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[9] *Journal*, vol. I, 281.
[10] *Journal*, vol. I, 304.
[11] *Letters*, 263.
[12] Mack, *Heart Religion*, 195.

2. Eighteenth Century Context

Historical context

The context of Charles' time was a culture which strongly emphasised obedience. The political situation following the Revolution of 1688 when James II was overthrown and William and Mary came to the throne precipitated the 'Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy Act' of 1688 which required clergy, amongst others, to swear allegiance and supremacy to William and Mary as the new king and queen. Albeit, as Gibson indicates, that the historically sworn oath to the king, recognising his divine right as 'right and lawful King', was set aside when William and Mary came to the throne, replaced instead with an oath to 'bear faithful and true allegiance' to them, some bishops and clergy (Archbishop William Sancroft, seven of his colleagues and about four hundred clergy) refused to take the oath and were removed from their bishoprics and livings.[13] The shift in allegiance to William and Mary was deeply significant and problematic for many. It occasioned wrestling with biblical authority for the divine right of kings and theological wrestling with God's authority to act to replace a monarch. Oaths were sacred; the issue could not be dismissed lightly. Furthermore, 'passive obedience' was expected:

> William himself expected that the providential divine right entitled him to the passive obedience of his new subjects. Post-revolutionary Anglicans promoted passive obedience as a biblical doctrine in part to promote non-resistance to William among Jacobites and non-jurors, who it was hoped could be persuaded to abandon military support for James II.[14]

As Gibson records, the relationship of the subject to the ruler was stated unequivocally in the 1745 edition of *The Whole Duty of Man*,

> The king is the fount of authority, from whence all power descends upon lower magistrates ... sovereigns are God's vice-regents, and do reign by his authority ... they bear God's character, and do shine with the rays of his majesty: and consequently it is an affront to God's own majesty for subjects to contemn (sic) and vilify their sovereigns ... [whose] commands are stamped with divine authority, and are thereby sacred.[15]

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[13] William Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832: Unity and Accord* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 35. I am indebted to Gibson, particularly his chapter 2, 'The Anglican Revolution' for the historical content of this section.
[14] Gibson, *Unity and Accord*, 44.
[15] Gibson, *Unity and Accord*, 46.

Charles and John Wesley as ordained clergy of the Church of England took the Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy. A footnote to the entry below from Charles' *Journal* indicates that this oath, 'signed by Charles on June 13, 1726, is still extant'.[16] Charles' loyalty to the oath is evident in his account of being summoned to appear in Wakefield on a charge of treason, the occasion reported here and noted earlier in this chapter. Following his acquittal he insisted on asserting his loyalty to the king:

> I asked if they were all satisfied. They said they were, and cleared me as fully as I desired. I then asked them again to administer to me the oaths. Mr. Zouch looked on my sermon, asked who ordained me (the Archbishop and Bishop of London the same week), and said with the rest, it was quite unnecessary, since I was a clergyman, and student of Christ-church, and had preached before the University, and taken the oaths before. Yet I motioned it again, till they acknowledged in explicit terms "my loyalty unquestionable."[17]

The 'Epitaph for Mr. Richard Kemp', an extract from which began this chapter, indicates the same culture of obedience to the state, 'Fond of his King, and to his Country true,/ He paid to Cesar, and to God their due'. However the eulogy also indicates how such obedience was an attitude which mirrored obedience to God,

> A Steward wise, a Doer of the word,
> An humble, faithful follower of his Lord,
> Close in his dear Redeemer's steps he trod,
> Took up his daily cross, and liv'd for God.[18]

Similarly, when writing about the relationship of servants to masters, Charles does not demur from acknowledging their difference in estate even if both were Christian, but encourages the servant to resign the will 'to God and man' and thus 'praise the doctrine of our Lord'.

> 5 But if the gospel we obey,
> Our will to God and man resign,
> All honour to our masters pay,
> And worship only not divine;
> His uncontested witnesses
> We praise the doctrine of our Lord,

[16] *Journal*, vol. II, 399n41.
[17] *Journal*, vol. II, 399.
[18] *RT*244, lines 11-14.

Prove to their hearts the truth of grace,
And sinners save without the word.[19]

In Charles' eighteenth century context obedience to earthly rulers in authority and to God is required and expected. The historical context thus merges with a spiritual one. In a chapter on the church and culture in the eighteenth century, Gibson notes that the culture of the time was unequivocally Anglican:

> The culture of eighteenth-century English society was infused – indeed drenched – with Anglicanism. Its politics and parishes were part of the institutional structures that were bulwarks of English society; and the medium for the expression and transmission of Anglicanism outside the Church was the popular culture of eighteenth century England.[20]

Gibson cites Jeremy Gregory who considers that 'the eighteenth century can be counted as a century in which English culture was almost exclusively Christian.'[21] Such a context determines attitudes, moral positions and ideals. 'Charity, civic humanism, politeness and Anglicanism were connected in an ideal of moderation and the social reconciliation of the affluent and disadvantaged.'[22] Even the satirical artist William Hogarth whose art lambasted church as well as society was not disassociated from this culture, 'Hogarth's intention to shock operated from within the framework of Christian morality.'[23]

The spiritual context was also shaped by the printed material available. With the rise of printing, in addition to the King James Bible and the Book of Common Prayer, two books in particular rose to prominence: Lewis Bayly's *The Practice of Piety* (1612) and *The Whole Duty of Man,* probably by Richard Allestree, (1658). Gibson comments, '[i]t was certainly an aspiration that every man, woman and child in the country would own a Bible, a Book of Common Prayer, a catechism and a copy of *Whole Duty of Man* and the *Practice of Piety.*'[24] The specific contribution of these works towards shaping a concept of obedience and resignation are surveyed briefly below.

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[19] *RT*177, st.5.
[20] Gibson, *Unity and Accord*, 148.
[21] Gibson, *Unity and Accord*, 149.
[22] Gibson, *Unity and Accord*, 151.
[23] Gibson, *Unity and Accord*, 150.
[24] Gibson, *Unity and Accord*, 162-3.

i. *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662)

Whilst there is no specific focus on obedience and no reference to resignation in the Book of Common Prayer, the tenor of Morning and Evening Prayer is an attitude of humility and awareness of sinfulness. In both services there are prayers for the king and royal family. Within the service of Holy Communion a similar emphasis on sinfulness and the importance of receiving worthily is evident, for fear of damnation if the elements were received unworthily. Notice had to be given a day in advance of those who intended to partake and an 'open and notorious evil liver' could not presume to partake until he had openly declared to have truly repented and recompense made; similarly with those 'betwixt whom ... malice and hatred' reigned.[25] In the final rubric at the end of the liturgy it is declared that communicants should receive the elements kneeling, '[w]hich order is well meant, for a signification of our humble and grateful acknowledgement of the benefits of Christ therein given to all worthy Receivers, and for the avoiding of such profanation and disorder in the Holy Communion, as might otherwise ensue'. However a note is added, lest any should construe a reference to Catholic practices, that such kneeling must not be mistaken for adoration of the sacrament '(for that were Idolatry, to be abhorred of all faithful Christians)'.[26] These emphases reinforce the culture of the time, a culture of submission, humility, and obedience.

ii. Richard Allestree, *The Whole Duty of Man* (1658)

The two literary works cited above are similarly focussed. *The Whole Duty of Man* was edited by John Wesley for publication in his Christian Library. In this edited form 'obedience' appears frequently; 'resignation' on the contrary, does not. In the earlier chapters Allestree concentrates on the believer's duty to God, with obedience to God clearly prominent. One example is chapter II, part II 'Of Submission to God's Will in Respect of Obedience,' '[t]he submission to his will is also of two sorts, the submission either of obedience or patience. That of obedience is our ready

[25] *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church According to the Use of the Church of England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1662), 241.
[26] *BCP*, 268.

yielding ourselves up to do his will, when God has, by his command, made known to us what his pleasure is, cheerfully and readily to set about it.'[27]

Later in the work, chapters X and XI, Allestree addresses duty in human relationships. In chapter X, the duty owed to 'parents', whether civil (magistrates), spiritual (pastors), or natural parents. His response to each of these categories is the same: we owe them obedience. The civil magistrate has been established by God, therefore obedience is due; the spiritual pastor is accountable to God, and obedience is to be paid to 'whatsoever they, out of God's Word, shall declare to us to be God's commands, these we are diligently to obey, remembering that it is not they, but God requires it'.[28]

In chapter XI the author deals with duty to 'brethren and relations', wives, husbands, friends, servants and masters. Of these categories obedience is required of two: wives and servants. Indeed the first duty of a wife is that 'she owes Obedience', which will 'serve to condemn the peevish stubbornness of many wives'.[29] The only caveat is if the husband commands anything contrary to the will of God. Similarly for servants; the duty of the servant is 'first, Obedience to all lawful commands' which is to be considered obedience paid to God.[30]

iii. Lewis Bayly, *The Practice of Piety* (1611)

In *The Practice of Piety* obedience is likewise a recurring theme: obedience to God, to God's law, commandment and will; obedience in word and deed. Christ's obedience is referenced, '[s]trengthen, O Christ my faith; that I may put the whole confidence of my salvation in the merits of thy obedience and blood.'[31] Securing obedience is a responsibility of those in authority, '[d]irect all the nobility, ministers,

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[27] Wesley Center Online, "An Extract from the Whole Duty of Man, Chap I-III," Northwest Nazarene University, http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/a-christian-library/a-christian-library-volume-12/an-extract-from-the-whole-duty-of-man-chap-i-iii/. Ch. II, II:2, n.p., accessed November 5, 2015.
[28] Wesley Center Online, "An Extract from the Whole Duty of Man, Part IX-XII," Northwest Nazarene University, http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/a-christian-library/a-christian-library-volume-12/an-extract-from-the-whole-duty-of-man-part-ix-xii/. Ch. X, I:9, n.p., accessed November 5, 2015.
[29] Wesley Center Online, "An Extract from the Whole Duty of Man, Part IX-XII." Ch. XI, II:6, n.p., accessed November 5, 2015.
[30] Wesley Center Online, "An Extract from the Whole Duty of Man, Part IX-XII." Ch. XI, V:22, n.p., accessed November 5, 2015.
[31] Lewis Bayly, "The Practice of Piety: Directing a Christian How to Walk, That He May Please God," (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1611), 289.

and magistrates of this church and commonwealth, to govern the people in true religion, justice, obedience, and tranquillity.'[32] The individual Christian is reminded of this obligation and encouraged to make the confession, '... I have carried myself contemptuously against thy magistrates and ministers, though I knew that it is thine ordinance that I should be obedient unto them.'[33] The reason for obedience is clear: God desires it. As the first of Bayly's '[r]ules in giving of Alms and doing Good Works' declares, '[t]hey must be done in obedience to God's commandments: not because we think it good, but because God requires us to do such and such a good deed; for such obedience of the worker God prefers before all sacrifices, and the greatest works'.[34]

Resignation also appears in *The Practice of Piety.* There are clear echoes with Charles Wesley's use of the word. for example resignation to God's will, in 'A Private Evening Prayer for the Lord's Day', '[a]nd now, O Lord, I resign myself to thy most holy will ...'[35] Again in prayers of resignation in sickness, when death was a possible outcome,

> Father, if it be thy blessed will, restore me to health again, and grant me a longer life. But if thou hast, according to thy eternal decree, appointed by this sickness to call for me out of this transitory life, I resign myself into thy hands, and holy pleasure; thy blessed will be done, whether it be by life or by death.[36]

The resignation of the soul, if death should come, is also cited in 'A Prayer Before Taking of Medicine', '... in the midst of all extremities, assist me with thy Holy Spirit, that I may willingly and cheerfully resign up my soul, the price of thy own blood, into thy most gracious hands and custody.'[37]

Whilst obedience - political, relational, and spiritual - is clearly a dominant expectation in eighteenth century English culture, the less emphasised but related, attitude of resignation is similarly evident. Although neither of these books appear

[32] Bayly, "Piety," 112.
[33] Bayly, "Piety," 240.
[34] Bayly, "Piety," 215.
[35] Bayly, "Piety," 206.
[36] Bayly, "Piety," 268.
[37] Bayly, "Piety," 272.

in Maddox's lists of the contents of Charles Wesley's libraries,[38] given their popularity it is likely that Charles read them. The references to resignation in *The Practice of Piety* may well have influenced his thinking. But these were not the only sources. Other literature we know or might deduce Charles read is likely to have contributed to the spiritual significance and use he made of resignation. These are the subject of the next section.

3. Spiritual literary influences on Charles Wesley

Resignation, compared to obedience, is a richer, more nuanced and almost exclusively spiritual concept in Charles Wesley's writing. At the beginning of this chapter the new, spiritual, meaning of resignation, introduced through à Kempis' work was noted. À Kempis, among others, is one of the writers known to have influenced Charles. Whilst it is not possible within the scope of this thesis to consider all such writers, here, with the focus purely on resignation, five writers who refer to resignation in their works and who are known or suspected to have influenced Charles are examined.

i. Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (ca. 1418-1427)

In his *Journal* Charles Wesley refers to à Kempis when speaking to 'Papists' on two occasions, Sundays 20th and 27th September 1747.[39] Maddox records versions of à Kempis' work in Charles Wesley's personal and family libraries,[40] one of which dates to the year prior to this journal reference, and is a tract written by John Wesley, printed in 1746.[41]

There are fourteen references to resignation in ten chapters of à Kempis' book. The thirty-seventh chapter, which focuses on resignation, 'Pure and Entire Resignation of Self to Obtain Freedom of Heart', has the most. The opening words of the chapter, articulated as a conversation between Christ and the disciple, establish the theme:

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[38] Randy L. Maddox, "Collection of Books Owned by the Charles Wesley Family in The John Rylands University Library," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 88.2 (2006). Randy L. Maddox, "Charles Wesley's Personal Library, ca. 1765," *Proceedings of the Charles Wesley Society* 14 (2010).
[39] *Journal*, vol. II, 510.
[40] Maddox, "Family Library," 156, 170, 171; Maddox, "Personal Library," 97.
[41] Maddox, "Family Library," Wesley, John (1703–91): *An extract of the Christian's pattern: or, A treatise of the imitation of Christ. Written in Latin by Thomas à Kempis* (Bristol: Printed and sold by Felix Farley, 1746), 156.

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, renounce self and you shall find Me. Give up your own self-will, your possessions, and you shall always gain. For once you resign yourself irrevocably, greater grace will be given you.

The Disciple

How often, Lord, shall I resign myself? And in what shall I forsake myself?

The Voice of Christ

Always, at every hour, in small matters as well as great—I except nothing. In all things I wish you to be stripped of self. How otherwise can you be mine or I yours unless you be despoiled of your own will both inwardly and outwardly? The sooner you do this the better it will be for you, and the more fully and sincerely you do it the more you will please Me and the greater gain you will merit.[42]

Resignation is of self-will and possessions, and is irrevocable. The chapter continues that 'a full resignation and a daily sacrifice' is required of disciples who want to make any progress in virtue.[43] Resignation of possessions is echoed in chapter thirty-two, but with a wider remit. The disciple is recognised still to have 'many things' which are yet to be given up, which includes resigning possessions, to buy of Christ 'gold, fire-tried,' in order to be 'rich in heavenly wisdom', and to put aside 'earthly wisdom, all human self-complacency.'[44] The resignation of the will is likewise repeated in other chapters. In the thirteenth chapter of book III the emphasis is on subjection to others, resignation wholly to the will of others for the sake of God, which is done in imitation of Christ who, (articulated in Christ's voice), 'humbly subjected Myself to man for your sake'.[45] Chapters five and twenty-seven of book III exhort the disciple to be resigned to the will of Christ; chapter five stating, '[h]e who is not ready to suffer all things and to stand resigned to the will of the Beloved is not worthy to be called a lover'.[46]

Three further areas of resonance with Charles' use of resignation are evident. Firstly, à Kempis addresses the situation of the loss of friends, and other

[42] Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, trans. Aloysius Croft and Harold Bolton (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1940), bkIII, ch37, 156.
[43] à Kempis, *Imitation*, bkIII, ch37, 157.
[44] à Kempis, *Imitation*, bkIII, ch32, 148.
[45] à Kempis, *Imitation*, bkIII, ch13, 111.
[46] à Kempis, *Imitation*, bkIII, ch5, 94.

consolations, material and spiritual, which are to be met with an attitude of resignation:

> So you, too, must learn to part with an intimate and much-needed friend for the love of God. Do not take it to heart when you are deserted by a friend, knowing that in the end we must all be parted from one another. ...
> For though I have with me good men, devout brethren, faithful friends, holy books, beautiful treatises, sweet songs and hymns, all these help and please but little when I am abandoned by grace and left to my poverty. At such times there is no better remedy than patience and resignation of self to the will of God.[47]

Secondly, à Kempis associates resignation with the virtues; here, with patience and humility, '[y]our progress in spiritual life does not consist in having the grace of consolation, but in enduring its withdrawal with humility, resignation, and patience.'[48]

Thirdly, resignation is a positive act of the will to the will of God. Chapter seven of book four urges the disciple to offer themselves entirely to God 'with complete resignation and with your entire will'[49] and chapter fifteen of book three, makes clear that resignation is to God's will, '[a]bove all, commit the whole matter to Me with true resignation, and say: "Lord, You know what is better for me; let this be done or that be done as You please."'[50]

ii. Henry Scougal, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* (ca. 1677)

Charles and John read *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* at Oxford whilst members of the Holy Club. Charles clearly considered it a significant book; one to be recommended to others. Kidd notes that Charles suggested the book to George Whitefield when he joined them; it proved to be the most important book he suggested, profoundly influencing Whitefield.[51] Later, in his *Journal*, Charles records reading this work to Esther Delamotte ('Hetty'), on Tuesday September 13th

[47] à Kempis, *Imitation*, bkII, ch9, 69-71. The reference here to being 'abandoned by grace' is an interesting one, which perhaps is reflected in Charles' view that in suffering the believer could be abandoned by God, though John denied that.
[48] à Kempis, *Imitation*, bkIII, ch7, 98.
[49] à Kempis, *Imitation*, bkIV, ch7, 230.
[50] à Kempis, *Imitation*, bkIII, ch15, 114. There are clear echoes in this passage of the Puritan covenant practice which John Wesley adapted for Methodist use, see Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 413.
[51] Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America's Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 28.

1737.[52] On the previous day he had read William Law to her, and following the reading of Scougal, Charles comments that 'her convictions were much deepened.'[53] It seems these two authors deeply affected Charles too at this time; on Thursday 15th September he records his 'earnest desires of resigning myself up entirely to God.'[54] The theme is clearly on his mind, as two weeks later he records talking to Mr. Wells on the new birth, and self–renunciation.[55]

Maddox indicates the presence of John Wesley's edited version of Scougal's book in Charles' family library,[56] though given that this was not printed until 1748, Charles clearly had a copy, or indeed copies, of the original work prior to that.

There are four references to resignation in Scougal's *Life of God.* These embrace the themes of Jesus' resignation, '[t]hat sincere and devout affection wherewith his blessed soul did constantly burn towards his heavenly Father, did express itself in an entire resignation to his will';[57] the formation of the soul and shaping of tempers, through continual resignation to the laws and desire of God, '... as inward acts have a more immediate influence on the soul, to mould it to a right temper and frame, so ought we to be most frequent and sedulous in the exercise of them ... let us resign and yield ourselves up unto him a thousand times, to be governed by his laws, and disposed of at his pleasure';[58] the winning attraction of God's love inspiring a response of resignation from the believer, '[t]he *love* of God is a delightful and affectionate sense of the divine perfections, which makes the soul resign and sacrifice itself wholly unto him, desiring above all things to please him ... '[59] and the passive/active paradox of resignation expressed through being humbled before God, yet also roused with 'ardent aspiration' for God, in the prayer with which Scougal finishes his book:

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[52] *Journal*, vol. I, 88. Charles also records reading Scougal's 'Few Saved', to Hetty - the fourth of Scougal's *Nine Discourses* - on Saturday 24th September, *Journal*, vol. I, 90.
[53] *Journal*, vol. I, 88. Kimbrough and Newport note that Hetty refers to Esther Delamotte, the sister of Charles Delamotte, 88n59.
[54] *Journal*, vol. I, 88.
[55] *Journal*, vol. I, 90.
[56] Maddox, "Family Library," 146.
[57] Henry Scougal, *The Works of the Rev. H. Scougal, A.M. S.T.P. containing The Life of God in the Soul of Man; with Nine other Discourses* (New York: Jonathan Leavitt, 1833), 24.
[58] Scougal, *Life of God*, 61.
[59] Scougal, *Life of God*, 22.

> Finally, O God! grant that the consideration of what thou art, and what we ourselves are, may both humble and lay us low before thee, and also stir up in us the strongest and most ardent aspiration towards thee. We desire to resign and give up ourselves to the conduct of thy Holy Spirit ....[60]

iii. Jeremy Taylor, *Holy Living and Holy Dying* (1650 & 1651)

In Charles' *Journals* there is only one reference to Jeremy Taylor, a prayer shown to Charles by Mrs. Delamotte. Despite this single reference, and that not initiated by him, Charles would have been familiar with Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying*. John published extracts from Taylor's works as part of the Christian library, volume nine. There are no references however to Taylor in Maddox's documents of the contents of Charles' libraries.

Taking into account the considerable size of *Holy Living and Dying*[61] there are only twenty four references to resignation. There are some important contexts however, in which Taylor encourages resignation in the Christian and which resonate with Charles Wesley's own use of the word. Taylor considers resignation a matter of a deliberate act and intention. He outlines how to make an 'Act of Resignation' to God's will;[62] sets out 'Rules for our Intentions', the ninth of which encourages a Christian's 'holy and pious intention' to be made actual 'by a special prayer or action, by a peculiar act of resignation or oblation, given to God';[63] and he offers 'An Exercise to be used at any time of the day,' part of which includes a prayer for 'contentedness in all estates, a resigned will and mortified affections'.[64] Taylor also recognises that the ability to resign the self is a gift of the Holy Spirit, 'give me thy Holy Spirit, that my understanding and all my facilities may be so resigned to the discipline and doctrine of my Lord'.[65] Taylor refers once to resignation to the will of others when talking about obedience to superiors, '[t]here is very great peace and immunity from sin in resigning our wills up to the command of others; for provided

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[60] Scougal, *Life of God*, 75.
[61] The edition cited contains 525 pages.
[62] Jeremy Taylor, *Holy Living and Dying: Together with Prayers containing The Whole Duty of a Christian, and the Parts of Devotion Fitted to all Occasions, and Furnished for all Necessities* (London: Bohn, 1860), 260.
[63] Taylor, *Living and Dying*, 15.
[64] Taylor, *Living and Dying*, 37.
[65] Taylor, *Living and Dying*, 252.

that our duty to God be secured, their commands are warrants to us in all things else'.[66]

In addition to these occasional incidences, there are two key contexts in which Taylor recommends resignation. The first is its juxtaposition with patience, which with similar tempers expresses the attitude to be evident in the life of a Christian; the second is the context of suffering. Both of these contexts feature significantly in Charles Wesley's account of resignation.

Patience

For Taylor resignation is closely aligned with an attitude of quietness, meekness, humility and patience. In a prayer 'For all Estates of People in the Christian Church' he prays for '[p]atience and resignation' for those with 'distressed and scrupulous consciences, to melancholy and disconsolate persons, to all that are afflicted with evil and unclean spirits'.[67] Similarly, he prays for 'a strong, a quiet, and a resigned spirit' for all condemned to death.[68] Elsewhere, in 'A Prayer for a contented Spirit, and the Grace of Moderation and Patience' his prayer is, ' ... in adversity to be meek, patient, and resigned; and to look through the cloud, that I may wait for the consolation of the Lord and the day of redemption'.[69] In 'Another Form of Prayer, for the Morning' resignation is associated with evenness of spirit and tranquillity, '[g]uide me, O Lord, in all the changes and varieties of the world; that in all things that shall happen I may have an evenness and tranquillity of spirit; that my soul may be wholly resigned to thy divinest will and pleasure ... '.[70] Such resignation and patience obviates murmuring against God, which is sin, and is the attitude to be embraced in times of suffering.

Suffering

In Taylor's 'Short Prayers to be said by Sick Persons', patience and resignation are prayed for,

> Lord, let thy mercy support me, thy Spirit guide me, and lead me through the valley of this death safely; that I may pass it patiently, holily, with perfect

[66] Taylor, *Living and Dying*, 133.
[67] Taylor, *Living and Dying*, 282.
[68] Taylor, *Living and Dying*, 282.
[69] Taylor, *Living and Dying*, 127.
[70] Taylor, *Living and Dying*, 33.

> resignation ... O take from me all tediousness of spirit, all impatience and unquietness: let me possess my soul in patience, and resign my soul and body into thy hands, as into the hands of a faithful Creator and a blessed Redeemer.[71]

In *Holy Dying* Taylor outlines advantages of sickness. He considers that God sends sickness and that it provides an opportunity for humanity to demonstrate the virtues, and the passive graces of patience and resignation: '[w]e may reckon sickness amongst good things, as we reckon rhubarb and aloes and childbirth and labour and obedience and discipline'.[72]

> None but suffering, humble, and patient persons can go to heaven; and when God hath given us the whole stage of our life to exercise all the active virtues of religion, it is necessary in the state of virtues, that some portion and period of our lives be assigned to passive graces; for patience, for Christian fortitude, for resignation or conformity to the Divine will.[73]

There is an indication that suffering is considered as conformity to the sufferings of Christ,[74] and Taylor also uses the language of the rod, ' ... if we take the rod of God in the infliction; and then the sickness, beginning and being managed in the virtue of repentance and patience and resignation and charity, will end in peace and pardon and justification and consignation to glory.'[75] Taylor provides 'An Act of Resignation to be said by a Sick Person in all the evil Accidents of his Sickness'.[76] Finally Taylor speaks of suffering as preparation for immortality, '[i]n sickness the soul begins to dress herself for immortality'.[77] The role of the minister at such times is to arrive before the sickness has reached crisis point, to 'pray for grace to the sick man for patience, for resignation, for health', but also to call upon the sick person to prepare for death.[78] When death, 'the resignation and delivery of our soul,'[79] is likely, Taylor refers to resignation as an antidote to the fear of death.[80]

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[71] Taylor, *Living and Dying*, 256.
[72] Taylor, *Living and Dying*, 371-2.
[73] Taylor, *Living and Dying*, 381-2.
[74] Taylor, *Living and Dying*, 403.
[75] Taylor, *Living and Dying*, 378.
[76] Taylor, *Living and Dying*, 414.
[77] Taylor, *Living and Dying*, 368.
[78] Taylor, *Living and Dying*, 464.
[79] Taylor, *Living and Dying*, 460.
[80] Taylor, *Living and Dying*, 391.

iv. William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1729)

In Maddox's lists of Charles' family library, there are references both to Law's original *Serious Call* and to John Wesley's abridgment of it.[81] The first volume of Charles Wesley's journal contains numerous references to William Law, though the second volume has none, an indication perhaps of the early influence in particular that Law had on Charles Wesley; in October 1736 Charles wrote, '[a]ll I know of religion was through him'.[82] Between May and November 1737, a flurry of references appear, Charles recommending Law to Charles and Dicky Graves on different occasions; reading it to family at Cheshunt and later to a 'gentlewoman' who was 'deeply struck, melted, conquered.'[83] Between 31st August 1737 and September 15th Law's influence upon Charles' own faith is evident. He met with Law, and 'talked at large upon my state .... The sum of his advice was, "Renounce yourself; and be not impatient."'[84] A few days previously Charles had been discussing the new birth and did so again on September 10th. On September 15th he notes his desire to resign himself up entirely to God.[85]

Following these occurrences Law is not mentioned again until 10th August 1739, when Charles again met with Law twice, taking with him first John Bray and then Henry Cossart. On Friday October 19th Charles records reading Law on regeneration to the society, but critiques Law's conclusion, maintaining that Law's 'knowledge of the new birth is mostly in theory.'[86] Charles' final reference to Law is in October 1740.[87]

In *Serious Call* there are twenty-six references to resignation. Not all refer to resignation to God: one speaks of those who resign themselves up to live 'by their own humours' rather than God;[88] two others speak of the dangers of resigning to 'worldly cares and concerns',[89] the danger being greater since the world's

[81] Maddox, "Family Library," 145, 156, 158, 171.
[82] *Journal*, vol. I, 58.
[83] *Journal*, vol. I, 95.
[84] *Journal*, vol. I, 87.
[85] *Journal*, vol. I, 88.
[86] *Journal*, vol. I, 216.
[87] *Journal*, vol. I, 283.
[88] Law, *Serious Call*, 119.
[89] Law, *Serious Call*, 39.

appearance of enmity to the Gospel has gone.[90] The majority of examples however, refer to resignation to God within the context of prayer. Various chapters of *Serious Call* encourage different emphases of prayer at different hours of the day; resignation to the will of God is embodied within the regular daily pattern. So, in chapter twenty-two, devotion at three o'clock, or the ninth hour of the day is described, at which time 'resignation to the Divine pleasure' is the focus. 'At this hour of the afternoon, you are desired to consider the necessity of resignation and conformity to the will of God, and to make this great virtue the principal matter of your prayers.'[91] Such conformity to the will of God is the sole business of the Christian:

> You are therefore to consider yourself as a being that has no other business in the world, but to be that which God requires you to be; to have no tempers, no rules of your own, to seek no self-designs or self-ends, but to fill some place, and act some part, in strict conformity and thankful resignation to the Divine pleasure.[92]

Thankful resignation consents to and accepts all that comes from God. Resignation is a positive, active response, not a passive submission, '[i]t is not enough patiently to submit, but we must thankfully receive, and fully approve of everything, that by the order of God's providence happens to us.'[93] This 'resignation to the Divine will' embraces 'a thankful approbation of God's general providence over the world' and 'a thankful acceptance of His particular providence over us.'[94] Thankfulness includes 'calamities and sufferings' as well as 'prosperity and happiness'.[95] Abraham is given as an example of Christian resignation, a person who even in adverse and unpromising settings had faith, trust and confidence in God; such makes resignation an act of piety.[96]

God's will is paramount. Everything which happens to us happens because God wills it; therefore all must work together for our good if we conform to God's will. Such resignation should be offered, not in thought or intention only, but in reality and in little things:

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[90] Law, *Serious Call*, 189-90.
[91] Law, *Serious Call*, 254.
[92] Law, *Serious Call*, 255.
[93] Law, *Serious Call*, 255.
[94] Law, *Serious Call*, 257.
[95] Law, *Serious Call*, 259.
[96] Law, *Serious Call*, 259.

> Now you must not reserve the exercise of this pious temper to any particular times or occasions, or fancy how resigned you will be to God, if such or such trials should happen. For this is amusing yourself with the notion or idea of resignation, instead of the virtue itself. ... Begin therefore in the smallest matters, and most ordinary occasions, and accustom your mind to the daily exercise of this pious temper, in the lowest occurrences of life. And when a contempt, an affront, a little injury, loss, or disappointment, or the smallest events of every day, continually raise your mind to God in proper acts of resignation, then you may justly hope that you shall be numbered amongst those that are resigned and thankful to God in the greatest trials and afflictions.[97]

Finally at the end of the day, Law advocates an imaginative prayer before sleep focussing on death. 'Represent to your imagination, that your bed is your grave; that all things are ready for your interment ... then commit yourself to sleep, as into the hands of God ... waiting for the judgment of the last great day.[98] Law concludes, 'Such a solemn resignation of yourself into the hands of God every evening, and parting with all the world, as if you were never to see it any more, and all this in the silence and darkness of the night, is a practice that will soon have excellent effects upon your spirit.'[99]

v. John Worthington, *The Great Duty of Self-Resignation to the Divine Will* (1675)

In his diary entries for Thursday September 2nd and Friday September 3rd 1736 and Thursdays March 10th and 17th 1737, John Wesley records reading *The Great Duty of Self-Resignation to the Divine Will,* by John Worthington.[100] John also edited Worthington's work for volume thirteen of the *Christian Library.* There is no textual evidence, however, in Charles Wesley's *Journals*, *Letters* or *Sermons* to indicate that he also read Worthington and there are no references to copies of this book on either of Maddox's lists detailing the contents of Charles' personal or family libraries. Nevertheless the substance of this book intimates that it might have had more influence on Charles' understanding of resignation than any of the literature considered above. There are three items of circumstantial evidence which suggest a likelihood of Charles reading this text. The first is that John Wesley read it while the

[97] Law, *Serious Call*, 264-5.
[98] Law, *Serious Call*, 276.
[99] Law, *Serious Call*, 276.
[100] *Works, v*ol. 18, appendix, *MS Journals and Diaries*, Georgia Diary 2, May 1, 1736-February 11, 1737, 481, 487, 490.

brothers were in Georgia. In his journal Charles records that for the visit to Georgia he 'brought clothes and books from England'.[101] The personal effects of both brothers for this voyage would have been limited; it is highly likely that they shared the books they had,[102] and that Charles therefore read Worthington too. Furthermore, John's inclusion of extracts of Worthington in the Christian Library would have meant Charles read, at the very least, these extracted parts. Finally, there is the argument from the text.[103]

Worthington's book is ordered into two sections and has two main themes. The first section examines what self-resignation is; the second gives directions for attaining it. 'Self-resignation' indicates purely the resignation of the self, not self-reliance in this task. Indeed, Worthington gives some prominence to self-resignation occurring by the power of God's grace although this is not a major emphasis in his writing. Worthington uses very few alternative words to 'resignation' or 'self-resignation', occasionally 'submit' and 'submission' appear,[104] or 'self-renunciation',[105] or 'subdue'.[106] As the title of the book indicates, self-resignation is a duty; it is God's 'high and holy commandment'[107] and at the same time the 'most acceptable way of glorifying God, and doing honour to him.'[108]

Worthington's two main themes are obedience and patience, the same two as those identified in *The Whole Duty of Man* written seventeen years prior to this. Worthington's focus is on personal spiritual life, and the establishing of God's kingdom within. Self- resignation is 'the essential character of a true Christian',[109]

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[101] *Journal*, vol. I, 16-17.
[102] Hammond comments on the commitment to common life shared by the Wesley brothers, Ingham and Delamotte on their journey to Georgia on the *Simmonds*. He also references John and Charles Wesley both reading 'Lawrence' in Georgia, indicating that the practice of sharing books occurred. Geordan Hammond, *John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 45-8, 69n114.
[103] It might seem surprising if this text had a significant impact on Charles that there is no mention of it in his journals, particularly given the references to and impact acknowledged of Law. However there is little of what must have been an extensive bibliography of reading which finds a place in his journals.
[104] John Worthington, *The Great Duty of Self-Resignation to the Divine Will*, 7th ed. (London: Rivington, 1778), 166.
[105] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 122.
[106] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, iv.
[107] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 8.
[108] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 15.
[109] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 12.

and 'the quintessence of religion.'[110] Worthington does not consider self-resignation as a detachment from the world, there are due objects of affections in the world,[111] but it does indicate an entire oblation to Christ.[112] Obedience and patience signify the activity and passivity of resignation noted previously and evident in Charles Wesley's use of the term. Obedience denotes an active submission of the will to God; patience indicates the passive submission to God's disposals.[113] Obedience is expressed in relation to the commands of God, particularly those which are difficult to obey, necessitating entire obedience to God's will. Such obedience opens the possibility of partaking of the divine nature, 'our wills become one with the Divine will',[114] bringing true liberty and freedom.[115] Resignation to the will of God is in absolute opposition to self-will which is 'the root of all sin and misery'.[116]

Patience is the necessary virtue in great sufferings and hardships, which God appoints to humble us and therefore self-resignation 'implies a meek patience, and quiet submission to the divine disposals'.[117] The tempers of resignation such as patience, perseverance, humility, quiet submission, and Christlikeness are the characteristics of the self-resigned person when suffering.[118] There is a close connection, whether deliberate or not, between the following words of Worthington and Charles Wesley's language of believers as a 'Transcripts of the Trinity',[119] '[t]he eternal characters of goodness and righteousness which are in the mind of God, are copied out and transcribed in the soul of a resigned Christian.'[120]

As in Charles' writings, there is considerable emphasis on humility, and a further connection in Worthington's exposition of humility as 'self-nothingness': '[e]ndeavour after the deepest humility, and sink thyself into the greatest self-

[110] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 7.
[111] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 126.
[112] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 45.
[113] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*. For examples of Worthington's reference to activity and passivity in resignation see 71, 75, 128, 185, 218.
[114] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 47, see also 56.
[115] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 39, see also 26, 34.
[116] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 57.
[117] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 4-5.
[118] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 27, 32, 63, 134. See also stillness and tranquillity 21-22, dispassion 23, 'sweet calm and composure of soul' 30, quietness and meekness 73, humility and modesty 18 and 128, temperance and sobriety 82, 'mercifulness', justice, truth, uprightness 83, and Christlikeness 28 and 164.
[119] *RT*26, st.7; *RT*109, st.5; *RT*184, st.2.
[120] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 21.

nothingness; if thou wouldst be truly resigned to the will of God.'[121] Such language is reflected in Charles' poetic texts, for example, Worthington's phrase 'less than nothing',[122] appears in Charles Wesley's hymn 'The Promise of Sanctification'.[123]

Further connections between Worthington and Charles can be discerned in Worthington's discussion of how self-resignation is attained: through 'humble and fervent prayer',[124] faith in God's goodness and grace,[125] humility,[126] abiding the power of the Spirit working within,[127] not through being merely passive, but by working with the Holy Spirit 'vigorously resisting and crossing thy Self-desires.'[128] Fasting and vows are additional means of 'subduing the body to the spirit'[129] and with the daily practice of self-resignation enable the gradual acquisition of the virtues, 'till Religion become our nature, the temper and constitution of our Souls.'[130] This is a process of growth towards restoration in the image of God; '[a]s the soul groweth in resignation, it returns more to its rest; it comes to be more as it would be, by being more restored towards its original constitution, its first state. Man was made after God's image....'[131]

Worthington is explored at greater length because of the close connections evident in his work with Charles' exposition of resignation through his poetry. Charles makes reference to resignation in some of his other writing too however, and so the last section of this chapter considers how resignation is used in the prose writings of both John and Charles Wesley.

[121] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 128.
[122] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 130.
[123] *RT*23, st.28, line 3.
[124] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, ch. II.
[125] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, ch. V.
[126] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, ch. VII.
[127] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, ch. III.
[128] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 93.
[129] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 99.
[130] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 96.
[131] Worthington, *Self-Resignation*, 29.

4. Resignation in John and Charles Wesley

In the first chapter the ways in which the Wesley brothers differed in relation to sanctification was examined. The conclusion noted that a further area of difference was evident in their use of resignation in relation to sanctification. This section begins by examining how John Wesley used resignation and subsequently how Charles uses the word, noting the difference in their use but then scrutinising more closely resignation in Charles' writing.

i. Resignation in John Wesley's writings

Hammond comments regarding John's use of Worthington, 'Wesley also utilized John Worthington's *The Great Duty of Self-Resignation to the Divine Will* (1675), whose theme of self-denial was of perennial interest to him.' He continues, noting that Worthington and Wesley shared 'a stress on ascetical discipline'.[132] This is true, which perhaps renders even more surprising the fact that John Wesley doesn't refer to resignation very frequently at all. In John's writings there are little over fifty references to resignation from his own pen. In addition there are just over twenty references which he records written or reported to him by others.

An analysis of John's use of resignation reveals some interesting trends. The majority of references in his journals and diaries appear in the context of the deaths of believers, some of which he witnessed, some he heard reports of. The language used most frequently here is of the believer resigning his or her spirit (or on one occasion, soul) to God. Other language, comprising approximately a quarter of the references across all the genres of his writing, denotes the resignation of the will to God.

John's most frequent use of resignation appears in his sermons and an overall theme identifying resignation as one of the virtues, or 'holy tempers', dominates.[133] In the sermons John frequently links resignation with other virtues, particularly patience, meekness, and humility or lowliness.[134] For example in sermon ninety-one 'On Charity', he repeatedly uses such combinations, 'with humble, meek, and patient resignation', 'with meekness and lowliness, with resignation and patient love',

[132] Hammond, *Wesley in America*, 146.
[133] *Works,* vol. 2, sermon 59, 429-30; vol. 3 sermon 92, 319; sermon 107, 506.
[134] See *Works,* vols. 1-4, sermons 24, 42, 44, 48, 59, 83, 92, 93, 107, 114, 119, 136.

'humility, gentleness, and resignation', 'lowliness, meekness, and resignation'.[135] These combinations are also evident in his journals.[136] In some sermons, a greater number of virtues are listed together, as for example in sermon ninety-two 'On Zeal', 'lowliness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, contentedness, resignation unto the will of God', 'patience, contentedness, and resignation', 'lowliness, meekness, resignation', 'long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, lowliness, and resignation'.[137] Such holy tempers provide the definition of true religion and indeed sanctification, 'religion is no less than living in eternity, and walking in eternity; and hereby walking in the love of God and man, in lowliness, meekness, and resignation',[138] and in sermon forty-two John exhorts the believer to,

> ... 'press' ye 'on unto perfection.' Daily growing in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and going on from strength to strength, in resignation, in patience, in humble thankfulness for what ye have attained and for what ye shall, run the race set before you, 'looking unto Jesus', till through perfect love ye enter into his glory.[139]

Evidence from a letter he received from 'W.B.' connects sanctification with resignation and suggests this was understood more widely in the Methodist movement, even if on this occasion W.B. bewails it's diminishing place, 'I thought the doctrine of perfection in all its parts (perfect love, meekness, humility, resignation) has not been so strenuously insisted on as in times past'.[140]

One other feature of interest to note is that John rarely uses resignation with reference to himself. He recognised it as a spiritual discipline, it appears five times in 'A Collection of Prayers for Families' on different days of the week,[141] and was a part of his spiritual exercise for Thursdays, when in Georgia.[142] However there are merely three references where John applies resignation to himself: the first in

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[135] *Works*, vol. 3, 301.
[136] For example, 'resignation, patience, meekness', *Works*, vol. 19, Journal 3, Wed 2 May, 1739, 55; 'lowliness, meekness, and resignation', *Works,* vol. 19, Journal 4, Fri 9 November, 1739, 121.
[137] *Works,* vol. 3, 315, 316, 319, 321.
[138] *Works,* vol. 4, sermon 119, 57-8.
[139] *Works,* vol. 2, 151.
[140] *Works,* vol. 20, Journal 6, Sun. 17 February, 1745, 52.
[141] Sunday evening, Tuesday morning, Tuesday evening, Wednesday morning and Friday evening. *Works,* Jackson, A collection of prayers for families, 229, 233, 235, 237, 245.
[142] Thursday's virtues for self-examination were resignation and meekness; editorial introduction to *MS Journals and Diaries*, *Works*, vol. 18, 306. This also appears in *Collections of Forms of Prayer for Every Day of the Week*, 'Thursday Evening. Particular Questions Relating to Resignation and Meekness', *Works*, Jackson, 215.

Georgia when he 'groaned under the weight of an unholy desire,' as 'his heart was with Miss Sophy'. He records that he was about to reluctantly 'take boat' and leave her behind, when 'one came to me and said, "You are still in doubt what is best to be done. First then cry to God that you may be wholly resigned, whatever shall appear to be his will." I instantly cried to God for resignation.'[143] Within the same context John continues, '[m]y heart was not wholly resigned to his will. Therefore, not daring to depend on my own judgment, I cried the more earnestly to him to supply what was wanting in me.'[144] The final reference appears in his journal a few years later, walking to Stanton Harcourt in heavy rain, '[b]eing wet and weary, and not well knowing my way, I could not help saying in my heart (though ashamed of my want of resignation to God's will), O that thou wouldst 'stay the bottles of heaven'![145]

That there are few personal references to resignation in his relationship with God indicates a difference between John and Charles. Perhaps not too much weight should be accorded to them as John was not given to speak about his relationship with God in general, but Charles was different. He frequently wrote his hymns as journal-style spiritual reflections and resignation features as a key element.

There are three other areas of difference to note. The first is the quantity of references to resignation. Resignation appears more significantly in Charles' writing than in John's and Charles utilises it in a broader and more detailed way. Secondly, John does not refer to the resignation of Christ; Charles, as we will see, gives this great emphasis. Thirdly, John speaks of resignation as a passive virtue. This final point identifies a substantial area of difference between the brothers. John states that it is 'meet, right and our bounden duty', to 'devoutly resign both soul and body to thee, to be absolutely governed and ruled by God's will'.[146] When visiting Dr. Dodd, he comments, '[h]e seemed, though deeply affected, yet thoroughly resigned to the will of God.'[147] Recording a visit to Newgate John comments on two condemned prisoners, '[t]hey seemed to be in an excellent temper, calmly resigned to the will of

[143] *Works*, vol. 18, 471.
[144] *Works*, vol. 18, 480.
[145] *Works*, vol. 19, 181.
[146] *Works*, Jackson, A collection of prayers for families, Tuesday evening, 235.
[147] *Works,* vol. 23, Journal 18, Saturday Feb 15, 1777, 42-3.

God.'[148] In a sermon considering God's healing of the sinful soul, John says self-will is healed by resignation, 'a meek and thankful submission to the will of God.'[149] Sermon fifty-nine contains John's reflections on the benefits humanity can receive through suffering. One of those benefits is attaining 'passive graces' or 'passive virtues'; pain enables the attaining of holy tempers, 'resignation to God, confidence in him in times of trouble and danger, patience, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, and the whole train of passive virtues.'[150] In his sermon on the Lord's Prayer, expounding the words 'thy will be done', John seems to distinguish between passive resignation and active conformity to the will of God,

> It is probable many, perhaps the generality of men, at the first view of these words are apt to imagine they are only an expression of, or petition for, resignation; for a readiness to suffer the will of God, whatsoever it be concerning us. And this is unquestionably a divine and excellent temper, a most precious gift of God. But this is not what we pray for in this petition, at least not in the chief and primary sense of it. We pray, not so much for a passive as for an active conformity to the will of God in saying, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.'[151]

Finally, in John's use of resignation regarding himself his understanding of resignation is similarly passive; he cries to God for resignation, and for God to supply what is wanting, he expects to passively receive the gift of resignation from God. This is not an active resignation to God. For Charles whilst resignation is a gift of grace, primarily resignation is precisely 'an active conformity to the will of God'; it is an active virtue, a dynamic response of the believer to God in self-offering.

There are therefore several areas of difference between John and Charles in their use of resignation. To conclude the chapter, Charles' use of resignation in genres other than his hymns is the subject of the final section.

[148] *Works,* vol. 23, Journal 20, Mon 8 November, 1784, 335.
[149] *Works*, vol. 2, sermon 44, 184.
[150] *Works*, vol. 2, 432.
[151] *Works*, vol. 1, sermon 26, 583.

ii. Resignation in Charles Wesley's writings.

1. Sermons

Whilst the majority of references to resignation in John's writings appeared in his sermons, in Charles' case the opposite is true. In the collection of Charles Wesley's sermons compiled by Kenneth Newport[152] there are just two occasions when Charles uses 'resign' or 'resignation'. Both are in sermons which Newport considers highly likely to be Charles' own compositions, rather than transcriptions of others', particularly John's, sermons. The first appearance is in sermon four, the text preached on being 1 John 3:14. Newport records that this sermon was 'preached at least twenty-one times during 1738 and 1739'.[153] In the sermon Charles describes the three states of humanity, 'the two opposite states of nature and grace',[154] and a third, middle state, between the two. The first state comprises the wise and happy who, 'having found God, resign themselves up entirely to his service'.[155] The second example is in sermon eleven, with the text John 4:41. Charles is comparing false, forced devotion with the 'free spirit of true religion'.[156] Forced devotion, says Charles rather than leading a person to God drives them from God, '[w]hy, their gross and false apprehensions of God drive them from him, in the way of superstition and hypocrisy, instead of leading them to him in the way of sincere love and self-resignation.'[157]

Although there are only two references to resignation, related themes, such as humility, obedience, and practising the virtues are evident throughout the sermons. Newport identifies a divide between the pre-1738 Pentecost sermons, characteristic of soteriological uncertainty, and the post-1738 sermons which are more indicative of a soteriological confidence.[158] Sometimes Charles' soteriological uncertainty is attributed to his depressive personality, however, whilst his Pentecost experience and his personality are both important factors, a third needs to be considered, the significance of Charles' spiritual convictions must not be underestimated. Humility before God, obedience to God, the necessity to inhabit and deepen the virtues, all

[152] *Sermons*.
[153] *Sermons*, 130.
[154] *Sermons*, 133.
[155] *Sermons*, 135, Charles is quoting Pascal's *Thoughts*, another influence on him.
[156] *Sermons*, 265.
[157] *Sermons*, 266, Newport indicates that there is no conclusive dating evidence for this sermon.
[158] *Sermons*, 94.

essential characteristics of resignation, cannot be divorced from his soteriological perspective. Such virtues do not always cohere with soteriological confidence and these themes interweave his sermons, appearing repeatedly because they are the essential characteristics of a Christian and descriptive of the resignation which Charles considers a fundamental response of a believer to God.

2. Letters

In the known extant letters of Charles Wesley there are nineteen references to resignation in seventeen letters.[159] One reference refers to resigning a post and eighteen references mention resignation in the context of a spiritual quality; seventeen of these refer to the resignation of the believer and one is a reference to the resignation of Christ. Four of the references appear within hymn texts included within the letters.[160] Eight of the letters are written to Charles' prospective, and then wife Sarah Gwynne; a ninth in its reference to resignation refers to Sarah, and a tenth, to William Marriott on the death of his son by small-pox, conveys Sarah's sympathy, mentioning the loss of their own son by the small-pox. Seven letters are written without reference to Sarah; all of which refer to affliction, sickness or death. The journal letter of 1741 refers to the death of Hannah Richardson; the letter to Ebenezer Blackwell enquires how a friend of Ebenezer's 'takes her loss'; the hymn included in a letter to Thomas and Sally Witham refers to the death of their mother; Charles writes to Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, in her affliction; to Mrs. Berkin on the sickness of her child; to Joseph Cownley on the death of his partner; to Elizabeth Briggs on the death of her grandfather; and to William Marriott on the

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[159] The references are found in the following: Journal letter (18 April, 1741), MA 1977/503, Box 5, file 5; Ebenezer Blackwell (10 October 1747), *Letters*, 137; Thomas and Sally Witham (18 December 1747), *Letters*, 145; Sarah Gwynne junior (14 December 1748), *Letters*, 175; Sarah Gwynne junior (05 January 1749), *Letters*, 201; Sarah Gwynne junior (15 January 1749), *Letters*, 205; same letter, Sarah Gwynne junior (15 January 1749), *Letters*, 211; Sarah Gwynne junior (23 January 1749), *Letters*, 214; Sarah Gwynne junior (26 January 1749), *Letters*, 217; Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon (26 July 1755), *Letters*, 390; Sarah (Gwynne) Wesley (8? January, 1760), MARC, DDCW 7/14; Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon (16 June 1763); MARC, DDCW /15; Sarah (Gwynne) Wesley (16 July 1768), MARC, DDCW 7/15, Jackson *Journal, 2:250-51*; Mrs. Berkin (7 October 1769), Southern Methodist University, Bridwell Library, Manuscript collection; Joseph Cownley (9 June 1774), Wesley's Chapel (London), LDWMM/2000/7976; Elizabeth Briggs (20 May 1785), MARC, DDWes 4/90; William Marriott (24 September 1785), MARC, DDCW 7/116, Jackson's *Life* ii:435. I am grateful to Randy Maddox for references to and copies of letters not yet available in published form.

[160] *Letters*, Thomas and Sally Witham (18 December 1747), 145; Sarah Gwynne junior (05 January 1749), 201; Sarah Gwynne junior (15 January 1749), 211; Sarah Gwynne junior (26 January 1749), 217.

death of his son. All of these letters then are written within the context of a close relationship, or acute pastoral concern.

A further feature to note is that eight of these letters fall within a fifteen month period, between October 1747 and January 1749. This does not correspond with Charles' use in the *Journals*, nor is there any obvious correlation with his reading of those identified above who influenced his thinking. These occurrences do however correlate with the intense period of Charles' correspondence with Sarah Gwynne from 1747 to 1749 when she became his wife. It seems that it is within the context of an intimate or pastoral relationship that Charles most readily refers to resignation.

3. Journals

In his journals Charles refers to resignation seventeen times. One in relation to a person resigning a role,[161] but all others address the resignation of the self to God. They fall into three categories: resignation to God in life, resignation to God in death, and Charles' own experience of resignation. These provide a good cross-section and insight into Charles' use of resignation.

In the first category, those in whose lives resignation is a current experience as Charles writes, are Mrs. Elizabeth Delamotte (mother of Charles and Hetty referred to above),[162] a young woman, guilty of 'backslidings' but who had been healed of these and 'confidently resigned her spirit into the hands of Jesus,'[163] and some of the 'brethren' with whom Charles discoursed 'and found them entirely resigned to the will of God.'[164]

In the context of death examples range from one thought to be dying (Mr. Piers), a condemned prisoner facing execution, and believers who demonstrate how to die well.[165] A common theme throughout is one of 'calm' resignation. Of Mr. Piers Charles comments, 'I was much comforted by his calm resignation';[166] the

[161] *Journal*, vol. I, 77, January 1737.
[162] *Journal*, vol. I, 86, Thursday August 18, 1737.
[163] *Journal*, vol. I, 292, November 1740.
[164] *Journal*, vol. II, 384, Saturday February 4, 1744.
[165] In addition to those noted there are two further references: one to the death of Mr. Witham, *Journal*, vol. II, 380, Friday December 9, 1743; the second to an unnamed person 'supposed at the point of death', *Journal*, vol. I, 296, Monday April 6, 1741.
[166] *Journal*, vol. II, 371, Thursday August 25, 1743.

'malefactor', due to die that day 'appeared quite calm and resigned, and so continued to the last moment';[167] and sister Hooper (referred to in chapter two above), a believer in relation to whom there are four references to resignation: as she is dying, at her death and in her funeral service. Sister Hooper experiences calm resignation and so does Charles at her death. Charles records the experience:

> I spoke with her physician, who said he had little hope of her recovery. 'Only,' added he, 'she has no dread upon her spirits, which is generally the worst symptom. Most people die for fear of dying, but I never met with such people as yours. They are, none of them, afraid of death, but calm, and patient, and resigned to the last.' He had said to her, 'Madam, be not cast down.' She answered, 'Sir, I shall never be cast down.'[168]

Two days later Charles visited her again on the day of her death,

> I asked her whether she was not in great pain 'Yes,' she answered, 'but in greater joy. I would not be without either.' 'But do you not prefer life, or death?' She replied, 'All is alike to me, let Christ choose. I have no will of my own.' This is that holiness, or absolute resignation, or Christian perfection![169]

The death of this believer is an experience into which Charles is drawn and through which he too knows resignation:

> A few moments before her last, I found such a complication of grief, joy, love, envy, as quite overpowered me. I fell upon the bed and in that instant her spirit ascended to God. I felt our souls were knit together by the violent struggle of mine to follow her.
> When I saw the breathless temple of the Holy Ghost, my heart was still, and a calm resignation took place.[170]

The example of this dying saint is, furthermore, one for all believers. The hymn penned by Charles and sung at sister Hooper's funeral invites the congregation to similarly resign their parting breath into Jesus' hands:

> 7 Thus may we all our parting breath
> Into the Saviour's hands resign—
> O Jesu! Let me die her death,
> And let her latter end be mine![171]

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[167] *Journal*, vol. II, 622, Wednesday 21 August, 1751.
[168] *Journal*, vol. I, 303, Monday May 4, 1741.
[169] *Journal*, vol. I, 304, Wednesday May 6, 1741.
[170] *Journal*, vol. I, 304, Wednesday May 6, 1741.
[171] *Journal*, vol. I, 306, Friday May 8, 1741, *RT36*.

The application of the holy witness of a believer to other believers and himself is not unusual in Charles' writing. The third category of references to resignation in Charles' journals identifies Charles' own experience with several such references in addition to the one above. These afford us a glimpse into Charles' desires and intentions in his relationship with God: '[i]n the evening hour of retirement I resigned myself to God, in my brother's prayer for conformity to a suffering Saviour.'[172] 'Rose (at Sarney's) with earnest desires of resigning myself up entirely to God.'[173] On the day following his Pentecost conversion experience 1738, he notes the temptations he suffered, 'It was morning before I could get to sleep. Many motions of pride arose and were continually broken down by Christ my King. The devil also tempted me to impatience through pain, but God turned it into an occasion of resignation.'[174] Such self-identification with the experience and recording of it is markedly different to John's use noted above in his writings. Charles uses his poems in a similar way, they testify to his personal faith.

Through the various genres of Charles' writing his use of resignation spans the years. In the journals the majority of references appear in volume I and date primarily from 1736–1744, with one final reference in 1751. The dateable sermon was preached in 1738 and 1739. Charles' journal references to William Law lie between October 1736 and October 1740. An interconnection between these occurrences is extremely likely. The journals essentially cease to refer to resignation after 1744, but Charles continues to use the language elsewhere. The letters, as we have seen, particularly evidence the language of resignation between 1747-9 when he was writing to Sarah Gwynne. In the poetic texts however the references span the years of his ministry.

[172] *Journal*, vol. I, 6, Sunday March 21, 1736.
[173] *Journal*, vol. I, 88, Thursday September 15, 1737.
[174] *Journal*, vol. I, 109, Monday May 22, 1738. Two other references appear in Charles' *Journals* in which resignation is his own experience: *Journal*, vol. I, 161, Thursday February 13, 1739. *Journal*, vol. II, 386, February 7, 1744. In this latter reference Charles initially uses 'resignation' but changes it to 'recollection', '[i]n the way the mob assaulted us with dirt and stones, making us as the filth and offscouring of all things. My soul was caught up, and kept in calm ~~resignation~~ recollection.'

Conclusion

The historical and spiritual detail of this chapter has established a context within which Charles' hymn texts referring to resignation are located. Charles' prose writings have been examined, with a point to note that resignation appears less frequently in Charles' sermons and letters than in his journals and hymns. I suggest that this is due to its affective nature. Charles uses resignation as an expression of the state of his own soul, and the devotional lives of others. Resignation is a devotional word. It is unsurprising therefore that forms of literature which lend themselves more readily to affective language, to an emotional and devotional state – viz. the journals and hymns - should be the places where this word appears more frequently. Charles' poetic corpus is the genre through which he most thoroughly explores his understanding of resignation; by far the most references to resignation, over three hundred, appear here. For the final chapter of part I attention is focussed on poetic texts and the sort of knowledge such an aesthetic form can communicate.

Chapter 3

What is truth? Charles Wesley's poetic texts as bearers of theological and spiritual truth

God of all power, and truth, and grace,
Which shall from age to age endure;
Whose word, when heaven and earth shall pass,
Remains, and stands for ever sure

—Charles Wesley, 'The Promise of Sanctification'.[1]

Introduction

In the last chapter Charles Wesley's use of resignation in his prose writing was examined. For this thesis however, the primary textual source is Charles' poetry. It might be argued that poetic works are unsuitable for determining theological knowledge; they are not intended as a tightly argued treatise. The texts are constructed according to certain form, structure and technique, and for a specific purpose, within an overall theological and spiritual framework. The content of such texts is inevitably subjective; they rely on metaphor and imagery, they employ literary and stylistic techniques, they are constrained by the necessities of rhyme and metre, foot and stanza. Furthermore, hymns are sacred poetry and as texts used for worship are doxological in nature; their purpose is not generally either primarily or solely to make a theological point, albeit that for Charles theology is deeply imbedded and sometimes the principal intention of the poem. ST Kimbrough in 'Charles Wesley and the Journey of Sanctification' addresses the issue of poetic language:

> How we perceive the language of the Wesleys is extremely important for an understanding of the journey of sanctification, as they understood it. The theological science of central Europe and North America often has placed too strong an emphasis on a philosophical and/or systematic structure for Wesleyan theology. This tends to ignore that the theology of eighteenth-century England, and in large measure of later periods of English history, is couched in the miracle of language, a posture which, at least for the Wesleys and others, allows the mystery be the mystery. *The art of language functions*

[1] *RT*23, st.1.

> *as theology without structured analysis.* Language is art and we cannot understand the poetic theology of the Wesleys without a keen aesthetic sense. Without the willingness to let the mystery be the mystery we will hinder the depth perception of our vision which is so vital for the journey of sanctification.[2]

Choosing to use poetic texts for an analysis of a theological concept requires a recognition of the nature of this genre, a form of art, and as such its relationship to truth claims. Elsewhere Kimbrough refers to this genre as 'lyrical theology', which, he says, 'designates a theology couched in poetry, song, and liturgy, characterized by rhythm and expressive of emotion and sentiment.'[3] How are such texts bearers of truth? What sort of theological and spiritual knowledge about resignation and its correlation with sanctification is communicated through Charles' poetic texts?

Context and authorial intention are critical factors in this interpretation. Do the texts express truth for the author, the participative recipient, or do they convey an existential truth, eternally valid? Did the author employ artistic license? Is it possible to determine the intended meaning of the words chosen? To what extent is precise meaning hostage to the demands of poetic technique? Moreover, what is it possible to determine about the truth claims of poetry written almost three hundred years ago, in a different culture with a different world view, a different theological perspective, and a different social context? What innate understandings may be deduced when we know only a limited amount about what Charles Wesley read or of the people, conversations, events and experiences which influenced him? How can we determine the nature of his artistic temperament and the influence of his feelings and emotions in his writing? What is truth?

To attempt to determine a framework of knowledge for the use of Charles' poetic texts philosophical, theological, and doxological frameworks of such an art form are considered to address some of these questions. For each of the three sections scholars who have wrestled with the nature of truth for the arts are identified. Finally conclusions are drawn for the quest for theological and spiritual truth in Charles' hymn texts.

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[2] Kimbrough, "Journey of Sanctification," 52. Kimbrough's italics.
[3] ST Kimbrough Jr., *The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley: A Reader* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 3.

1. What is truth? A philosophical framework of knowledge: Hans-Georg Gadamer

Essentially for Gadamer, all interpretation is located within a context – social, cultural, historical, linguistic. My reading of Charles Wesley's hymns is located within a Methodist, twentieth and twenty-first century Western culture. This gives me a prejudice, a 'pre-judgement' - a particular perspectival position – it is a *relativist* hermeneutic, to use Westphal's phrase.[4] My reading of Charles Wesley is also influenced by the extent of my knowledge of his culture, social influences, understanding, education, poetic ability, faith, intentions, and such like. Another person from a different context would read differently. Gadamer recognises however that although we cannot escape from hermeneutic circularity, we can move from one circle to another; so I can learn about how poetry is constructed, about the purpose and place of hymns in the eighteenth century Evangelical Revival, or about how Charles Wesley was educated and the books he is likely to have read;[5] but it is impossible for me to escape the circle I inhabit, impossible for me to enter the hermeneutic circle Charles Wesley inhabited. Nevertheless it is important for Gadamer that texts are not examined alone in the search for truth, and that as much as possible of the hermeneutic circle Charles Wesley inhabited is understood. When dealing with historical texts, such as Charles' hymns, Gadamer indicates that the historian has to explore beyond hermeneutics to the 'expression' of the texts, by which he means not only their interpretation but also their hidden meaning, that which is expressed unintentionally. When dealing with historical texts, Gadamer says the historian,

> … will always go back behind them and the meaning they express to inquire into the reality they express involuntarily. Texts must be treated in the same way as other available historical material – i.e., as the so-called relics of the past. Like everything else, they need explication – i.e., to be understood in terms of not only what they say but what they exemplify.[6]

[4] Westphal discusses Gadamer's position in Merold Westphal, *Whose Community? Which Interpretation? Philosophical Hermeneutics for the Church* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2009). For his presentation of Gadamer's use of prejudice see 71.
[5] An invaluable resource for this task is Randy Maddox's work on the contents of Charles Wesley's family and personal libraries. Maddox, "Family Library." Maddox, "Personal Library."
[6] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Continuum, 2004), 336.

For Gadamer the interpretation is never just that of the author and the act of interpreting is a creative one:

> The real meaning of a text, as it speaks to the interpreter, does not depend on the contingencies of the author and his original audience. It certainly is not identical with them for it is always co-determined also by the historical situation of the interpreter and hence by the totality of the objective course of history. … Not just occasionally but always, the meaning of the text goes beyond its author. That is why understanding is not merely a reproductive but always a productive activity as well.[7]

It is a creative process which offers possibilities of new insights to contribute to those already gleaned, and it is a process which is never complete. In an examination therefore of the theological and spiritual concept of resignation in Charles Wesley's poetry through a twenty-first century interpretative lens, there will be an attempt to understand it as Charles understood it and to grasp what he intended by it; but such an inquiry is also a creative process, holding the possibility of a fresh perspective on Charles' hermeneutic of salvation, perhaps through a fresh correlation of Charles' insights, or appropriating the understanding for a twenty-first century Christian setting; either way it will go beyond the meaning of the author.

It is generally considered that Gadamer's work, *Truth and Method* would have been more aptly entitled *Truth Beyond Method*, given his conclusions that scientific method is an insufficient determinant of truth. Gadamer is not opposed to scientific method per se, he sees a place for it, but hermeneutics is more than scientific method. Gadamer is interested in the truth of art. To look for truth *beyond* method Gadamer draws upon the humanist tradition and the truth to be discovered through visual and literary art. There are five key features of Gadamer's truth of art, identified in Westphal's analysis of Gadamer's work and from which insights may be drawn for a framework of interpretation for Charles Wesley's texts: community, truth claims, performance, application and conversation.

Community for Gadamer is rooted in the notion of *Bildung*. As Westphal indicates *Bildung* is often translated as 'education', but a closer meaning is 'formation' or

[7] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 296.

'socialization', because it is about a communal sense of what is true and right.[8] The truth which emerges from a community, truth which is communally recognised and acknowledged, is an important part of a structure for interpreting Charles' hymns. The hymns were meant for and emerged from the experiences of the community. The 1780 *Collection* has a section for the Society - when meeting, giving thanks, praying and parting - and for believers interceding for the world, an expression of social holiness;[9] these hymns playing a significant role in the formation of the nascent communities. But more than that, the truth of a concept or belief is acknowledged, assimilated and affirmed through communal confirmation and practice of it. Christine Johnson has a fascinating analysis of the expectations which surrounded Methodist believers at death in her thesis 'Holiness and Death in the Theology of John Wesley'.[10] She describes the concept of a 'good death' and explains that there were clear expectations of what constituted a good death, characteristics believers were expected to exhibit, and were scrutinised for at death if they were to die a good death.[11] When these signs were evident, then not only did the believer 'die well' but the truth claim, that Christians were to do so, and could do so was reaffirmed, and the community of believers encouraged. If sanctification was, as Charles believed, given at the point of death, then the community were encouraged not only to follow the example they witnessed, but to hope for the gift of sanctification for themselves too. Resignation is similarly owned, recognised and reinforced by the practice of the community, expressed frequently though the medium of Charles' hymns at death, and at numerous other points in the Christian journey.

Secondly, Gadamer asserts that art makes *truth claims* upon us. There is always a possibility when we engage with art, whatever its form, that it will arrest us, challenge us and demand of us. The hermeneutic process draws the interpreter in and through that engagement we are shaped and potentially changed. Charles Wesley's hymns are evangelical texts, the Gospel in poetic form, and the truth

[8] Westphal, *Whose Community*, 91.
[9] *Works*, vol. 7, contents page.
[10] Johnson, "Holiness and Death".
[11] Johnson, "Holiness and Death", 201ff.

claims of the Gospel are inherent to them. 'Come sinners to the Gospel feast',[12] is not a genteel invitation to afternoon tea, but a Gospel demand Charles articulates to all who sing or hear his hymns; an explicit truth claim for all; which was not only articulated but embodied in the Wesleys' social concern such as visiting prisons, praying with the prisoners, offering testimony, exhorting them to receive the good news, and accompanying the condemned to Tyburn. Truth claims are not always as explicit. In chapter four, texts which speak of the resignation of Christ are not only a cause of wonder, worship and praise, but their implicit truth claim draws the believer to imitate Christ and to offer the resignation of heart, will and life to God. Art's truth claims are liable to change us and they offer the possibility of transformation. Sanctification for Charles is the culmination of this possibility of transformation. His hymns proclaim the possibility, embody it in their structure, and provide resources, including almost an instruction manual, for the journey.[13]

Gadamer's third point is that the *performance* or *presentation* of art communicates truth. Gadamer uses examples of a play, a picture and literature. The work of art is presented, for example, a play is performed, and otherwise hidden truth is revealed. The work of art becomes more truly itself, its essence is revealed, and in the performance the observer is drawn in to participate in the truth made known. 'To participate in this event by opening oneself to the work of art is to understand. It is to be nourished by truth.'[14]

The efficacy of creative performance is similarly expressed by Alasdair MacIntyre. MacIntyre discusses the role of 'practice' in the primary definition of the virtues and as 'providing the arena in which the virtues are exhibited';[15] although he adds two caveats: virtues are not only exercised in the course of practices; and he is using practice in a particular way,

> By a 'practice' I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal

[12] Hymn L. The Great Supper, Luke xiv. 16–24. Wesley, Charles. *Hymns for Those that Seek and Those that Have Redemption in the Blood of Jesus Christ* (London: Strahan, 1747), 63-66.
[13] The arrangement of the hymns in the 1780 Collection which addressed believers at the various stages of spiritual pilgrimage is an example.
[14] Westphal, *Whose Community*, 97.
[15] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 1985), 187.

> to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended.[16]

Hymn singing is a creative practice, a 'socially established cooperative human activity', whether practiced communally and collaboratively, or individually. 'Co-operative' in this context necessarily comprises co-operation with God, the internal goods or standards of excellence are a co-operative venture between God and the individual.[17] As a communal event such proclamation made, say, in the face of hostile mobs not only sang out the truth of the Gospel, but affirmed and encouraged faith in the believers. John Wesley's 'Directions for Singing' were intended to ensure that congregational singing was a collaborative performance, that some did not run ahead of others, or lag behind; and that they sang spiritually.[18] Spiritual truth was to emerge both from the text and the manner of the performance of it, an internal good of the practice. The creative performance of hymns with their contingent effects is also rendered within the context of the individual believer using hymn texts in their personal prayers at home. The Wesleys' objective was for their hymn books to be accessible to all; large enough to have a good range of material, but small enough to be affordable and easily carried, neither 'cumbersome or expensive', to use John's words.[19] The personal reading of text for Gadamer is a private performance. In the private praying of hymn texts, as in communal performance, God is the audience. Resignation texts, with their spiritual emphasis naturally belong in such a setting.

MacIntyre's development of his argument for the internal goods contingent to practices clarifies the nature and role of internal goods and extends the significance of participation in the truth revealed through performance. MacIntyre contrasts external and internal goods. He uses the example of playing chess. Once the game is mastered external goods, such as 'prestige, status and money' may be attached to chess-playing. These however can always be realised through other means. The

[16] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 187.
[17] For a comprehensive account of the Wesleyan emphasis on co-operant or responsible grace see Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994). The relationship between grace, resignation and sanctification is discussed in chapter nine.
[18] *Works*, vol. 7, 765.
[19] *Works*, vol. 7, preface, 73.

internal goods of playing chess however, such as 'analytical skill, strategic imagination' can only be had through the practice of playing chess.[20] The 'internal goods' of hymn texts, outwardly focussed in praise of God and inwardly focussed in developing virtues, affections, and attitudes characteristic of relationship with God, are contingent upon creative performance; they are 'practiced' through singing and prayer, they are established, rehearsed, and reinforced. It is interesting that Charles Wesley's objection to those who proclaimed sinless perfection, during the perfectionist controversy of the 1760's was on the grounds that he could not detect the necessary virtue of humility in their proclamation; there was a disconnect between creative performance and internal goods.

Resignation and sanctification are internal goods to the creative performance of hymn texts, whether in a communal or private setting. Theologically, if participation in this creative performance means inhabiting the internal goods of the practice then when we sing 'Yes, Lord, we are thine,/ And gladly resign/ Our souls to be fill'd with the fulness divine',[21] we actualise the resignation of our souls and participate in *theosis* , 'fill'd with the fulness divine'. Not only then is the performance of hymns a practice through which truth claims are asserted, acknowledged and absorbed; but 'standards of excellence', such as transformation, inhabiting the virtues and affections are realisable and the journey towards resignation and entire sanctification both encouraged and enabled. The creative performance of hymn texts extends the human conception of what entire resignation to God and entire sanctification through God's grace might look like and participation in the truth revealed has the potential for actualising transformation.

The fourth key feature of Gadamer's understanding of the truth of art is *application.* Here McIntyre's 'practice' and 'internal goods' finds echoes. For Gadamer authorial meaning 'is *a proper but penultimate object* in the service of *the proper object*, namely, what the text has to say to us here and now.'[22] Even 'historical hermeneutics … has a task of application to perform … it explicitly and consciously bridges the temporal distance that separates the interpreter from the text and

[20] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 188.
[21] *RT*57, st.4.
[22] Westphal, *Whose Community*, 112.

overcomes the alienation of meaning that the text has undergone.'[23] An argument perhaps for the rendering of Charles' text in modern form. Westphal identifies two strands to application in Gadamer: practice and making meaning concrete.[24] The experiential nature of the hymn texts ensures they are practical and applicable to the believer's experience of faith. John Wesley described the 1780 hymn book as 'a little body of experimental and practical divinity'.[25] Charles Wesley's hymns are intended to evoke a faith response and to form the person and the community in faith and spiritual development. The meaning of the texts is made concrete through an embodiment of the truth they proclaim in practical action, whether outwardly facing social action or an inward cultivation of the virtues.

Finally for Gadamer the truth of art is communicated through *conversation.* Conversation requires openness and vulnerability; being able to ask important and difficult questions; willingness to be led by the conversation; and 'being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were'.[26] Conversational encounters enable the collaborative sharing of ideas and insights with other seekers in the field. They facilitate and encourage the coincidence of the hermeneutic circle I inhabit with those of others. There is an expansion of perspective and the possibility of transformation; or as Gadamer puts it, the fusion of horizons.

> The concept of "horizon" suggests itself because it expresses the superior breadth of vision that the person who is trying to understand must have. To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion.[27]

A conversation with Charles Wesley, through the medium of his poetry, lies at the heart of this study. It is not a conversation which is held in isolation from others who have similarly engaged with Charles' work nor is it a dialogue which ends with the final word. The contribution of this thesis is not to be a definitive and singular interpretation of Charles' hymns, but to contribute to the ongoing conversation. It is a conversation with the text, bound to the text and therefore not arbitrary but valid.

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[23] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 311.
[24] Westphal, *Whose Community*, 109.
[25] *Works*, vol. 7, preface, 74.
[26] Westphal, *Whose Community*, 117; Westphal's summary of Gadamer's four points is on 115-117.
[27] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 305.

Such research through analysis, questioning, and probing offers a distinctive contribution to the ongoing conversation that together a superior horizon might be glimpsed.

2. What is truth? A theological framework of knowledge: Andrew Louth

In *Discerning the Mystery*[28] Andrew Louth, theologian and Orthodox priest, analyses the nature of truth in science and the humanities and contributes a theological perspective to the discussion. Louth traces the development of understanding through different eras of human history, specifically considering the early church Fathers and post-Enlightenment philosophers. He identifies much of the way we understand truth today as resulting from the Enlightenment: its one-sided perspective, the conviction that the sciences hold the key to the promises of the Enlightenment, and the fatalism of our times which constrain us to continue to think in this way. Louth's fundamental thesis is to challenge this fatalism and the assumption that a method is necessary in order to determine truth, whether that is the scientific method, or even the historical-critical method of the humanities. Louth wants to say that we do not need a method to determine truth, and instead points to the church Fathers for an insight into how truth may be understood in theology.

Louth's starting point is to identify the 'dissociation of sensibility', the 'yawning gulf, that penetrates into our very heart and mind…an inability to relate…characteristic of modern culture and society.'[29] He sees this division perpetuated and deepened in the search for knowledge and understanding, and that the humanities have been seduced into aping the sciences in this respect. Instead he suggests the humanities need their own approach to knowledge.[30] Louth sees evidence of this dissociation in the split between theology and spirituality, a distinction he maintains is cultural; it is not present in the Church Fathers, where '*theologia'* is used for both. In the Fathers theology and spirituality are not two separate realities; *theologia* 'is the apprehension of God by a man restored to the

[28] Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).
[29] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, 1.
[30] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, 132.

image and likeness of God, and within this apprehension there can be discerned two sides…what we call the intellectual and the affective…but the two aspects are not to be separated.'[31] Louth argues that faith is not simply a rational exercise, 'it involves, as an indispensable element, the response of the will or the heart to the One in whom we believe.'[32] Prayer does not compromise 'the "objectivity" of theology as a rational study.'[33]

Louth continues by clarifying the nature of the objective truth associated with science and subjective truth associated with the humanities: objective truth, which 'seeks to be detached from the subjectivity of the observer' and subjective truth, 'which cannot be detached from the observer and his situation: it is a truth which is true for me, and which cannot be expressed in such a way that it is true for everyone';[34] objective truth which seems to be 'real truth' and subjective truth which 'falls short of such ultimacy.'[35] This Louth says however is to oversimplify he continues,

> To say, then, that truth is subjective is to say that its significance lies in the subject's engagement with it; it does not mean that it is not objective in any sense: indeed if it were objective in no sense, if it were simply a collection of subjective impressions, there would be no engagement, and consequently no question of truth at all. If then, we concede that the humanities are concerned with subjective truth, as opposed to the objective truth sought by the sciences, this need not imply that they are concerned with what need not be true, what is not absolute, but it does imply (and this is the most important sense of subjective truth) that the humanities are not primarily concerned with establishing objective information (though this is important), but with bringing men into engagement with what is true. What is important is engagement with reality, not simply the discerning of reality: and if it *is* reality, then it has a certain objectivity, it cannot be simply a reflection of my subjective apprehensions. [36]

Charles Wesley's hymns are prime examples of such subjective text; their significance lies in the engagement of the believer with them; their purpose, to enable the believer through them to communicate with God who is absolute truth,

[31] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, 4.
[32] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, 3.
[33] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, 4.
[34] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, 27.
[35] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, 27.
[36] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, 27-8.

and thus be formed and transformed; their concern is with experiential theology and spirituality, embedded within the believers' lives of faith and living.

The importance of the experiential dimension of knowledge is explored by Louth with reference to Polanyi's tacit dimension. Knowledge is gained through experience, perception and interpretation. For Polanyi all knowledge is either *tacit* or *rooted in tacit knowledge.* It is not simply objective, but knowledge which has been grasped and understood by a person.[37] Louth points out Polanyi's drawing on Dilthey's idea of knowledge as 'indwelling', that all knowledge is derived from indwelling, so whatever we learn, a language or a skill, or anything else, we interiorise it and indwell it and through the indwelling new meaning is accessed.[38] The only difference between knowledge in the sciences and the humanities is the degree to which we indwell the subject of study. Louth explores the resonance of the tacit in Polanyi with the tacit in the Church Fathers. He argues that for the Fathers knowledge of God is found only in the tradition of the Church, which Louth claims is tacit, because this tradition 'was essentially *non-specificable,* or if specifiable, not simply by an indication of specific doctrines, but primarily as the bond of unity, the bond of love, which established the Church as the Body of Christ.'[39] Louth continues, suggesting that there is a deeper resonance of the tacit with the Fathers than in Polanyi. In the Fathers the tacit is interpreted as silence, '[t]he silence of the tacit makes immediate contact with the silence of prayer: and prayer is seen in the Fathers to be, as it were, the amniotic fluid in which our knowledge of God takes form.'[40] Louth closes his discussion of the tacit dimension saying that this challenges the assumption that theology must work within Enlightenment ideas of how knowledge is attained, which has been true for much theology since that time; except for 'a few notable exceptions…those who drank deep of the wine of the Fathers'.[41]

Finally Louth concludes with the nature of knowledge as mystery. He argues that the humanities are concerned with the human person, what a person says and does in

[37] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, 61-2.
[38] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, 63-4.
[39] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, 64-5.
[40] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, 65.
[41] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, 65.

the freedom of will, which points to the mystery of a person's being. This is not hard science. Theology 'holds before us, and holds us before, the ultimate mystery of God',[42] and if humanity is made in the image and likeness of God, we are ultimately mysterious.[43]

Louth's argument for the knowledge of the humanities as subjective truth, passionately apprehended and experienced, as tacit and mysterious truth, truth which cannot be limited by method and in which theology and spirituality cannot be separated is insightful for exploring a framework of knowledge for Charles Wesley's poetic texts. In the texts the combination rather than separation of theology and spirituality, of intellect and emotion, are evident. There is engagement, often passionate engagement, with God within the texts; these texts were, and still are to some extent, inhabited theologically and spiritually by those who learnt their faith, deepened it and expressed it through them, and these texts continue to indwell lives of some believers informing faith and shaping response to God. For Charles the engagement of the believer with the hymn texts is essential and integral. His hymns are written requiring a response and sometimes articulating that response. The majority of Charles' hymns are directly addressed to God, they function as prayer. In some texts it is possible to discern a change of voice, so for example in his hymn 'Desiring to Love' Charles asks a number of questions in the first four stanzas about how he should love God and articulates his desires to do so: 'What shall I do my God to love', I long to know, and to make known/ The heighth and depth of love divine', 'How shall I thank thee for the grace', 'O that my every breath were praise'. In the last stanza the approach changes and he responds to all his questions and desires by presenting himself and offering himself to God.

5 See me, O Lord, athirst and faint,
Me weary of forbearing see,
And let me feel thy love's constraint,
And freely give up all for thee.
True in the fiery tryal prove,
And pay thee back thy dying love.[44]

[42] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, 145.
[43] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, 146.
[44] 'Desiring to Love', *HSP* (1742), 24-5.

These are no longer academic questions; this is engagement in relationship through the hymn text.

The hymns are rooted in engagement with God; in the tacit, and sometimes explicit, dimensions of tradition, scripture and experience; in the mystery of humanity in relationship to self, others and God; and in the mystery of the tacit, of what is not said, of being 'lost in God'. Perhaps it can be said that Charles Wesley was one of those who 'drank deep of the wine of the Fathers'.

3. What is truth? A doxological framework of knowledge: Theresa Berger and Geoffrey Wainwright

Theresa Berger in *Theology in Hymns* addresses the primarily affective nature of Charles' poems examining the doxological purpose evident in his hymns in the 1780 *Collection.* Berger locates her definition of doxology between a narrow liturgiological one, where the concept is limited to an offering of praise or adoration to God, and the broader definition she recognises in some systematic theology, 'where it may include all prayer, whether lamentation, petition, thanksgiving, or praise.'[45] Berger states her own definition as 'the explicit and implicit speech of praise, confession of faith, prayer, and thanksgiving, as directed to God for God's glorification.'[46]

There are a number of characteristics of doxological texts identified by Berger, some of which have been noted already. These characteristics, indicative of hymn texts, include the engagement of the person in doxological speech; hymn singing is an active, participatory event on the part of the believer. Secondly doxology is the language of praise and devotion, and demonstrates intimacy of relationship with God, which Charles emphasised through affectionate language, 'My *dear* Redeemer's praise', (the sort of language John Wesley disapproved of, considering it sentimental or 'fondling') and the anaclitic language Charles used for God, 'My gracious Master and My God'.[47]

[45] Berger, *Theology in Hymns*, 17.
[46] Berger, *Theology in Hymns*, 17.
[47] Berger, *Theology in Hymns*, 158.

Thirdly doxology is directed to God, not from God or about God, 'the "naming of God" in doxological speech is not primarily descriptive but rather ascriptive'.[48] Charles' hymns are distinctive in this feature, being primarily addressed to God.[49] Berger in her analysis of Charles' first hymn in the *Collection* 'Glory to God, and praise, and love', notes that in this hymn the structure Charles uses is dialogical. In the first part of the hymn,

> [t]he speaker is the redeemed "I" who reflects on the day of his or her conversation. Thus, the first part of the hymn is directed towards God, beginning and ending with a doxology. ... The second part of the hymn is driven by proclamation and is directed to everyone who needs to hear the good news. Shifting dialogue partners is a literary device often employed by Charles Wesley.[50]

One of the shifting dialogue partners is usually God, addressed at some point in the hymn. This technique facilitates the doxological and spiritual purpose of the hymns; the language whether of private devotion or communal praise is addressed to God.

A fourth characteristic explored by Berger is the ability of doxology to transcend. Through the language of poetry doxology is able to transcend objective speech; 'by breaking into song',[51] it is even able to transcend poetic speech; and beyond that doxology transcends any and all speech though silence. The performance of the poetic text as Gadamer intimates, communicates truth which is otherwise hidden; through performance the hymn becomes more truly itself and participants partake of that truth. Kimbrough refers to the theology of Charles Wesley's hymn texts as 'sung' theology,[52] 'Lyrical theology is the experience of word and music and the

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[48] Berger, *Theology in Hymns*, 158.
[49] In researching the hymns almost certainly by Charles Wesley in the *Collection;* omitting those by other writers (seven by Isaac Watts, one by Samuel Wesley Senior, one by Samuel Wesley Junior, one by George Herbert, and two by Henry More) and the translations usually assumed to be by John Wesley, Charles uses 'thee' 950 times (none in the other writers), 'thou' 886 times, (again none in the other writers) and 'thy' 2399 times, (244 times in the 33 hymns of the other writers). The pronouns 'thee' and 'thou,' denoting God, reiterate Charles' emphasis on a personal relationship with God. 'Thy' on the other hand is a determiner, modifying a noun and not necessarily suggestive of same immediacy of relationship. Discussed in Julie A. Lunn, "Seeing and Singing: A Comparison of Structure and Effect in the Iconographic Tradition and the Hymns of Charles Wesley," Theology and Religion (Durham, University of Durham, 2007), 45-6.
[50] Berger, *Theology in Hymns*, 80-1.
[51] Berger, *Theology in Hymns*, 159.
[52] Kimbrough, "Lyrical Theology," 4.

sound thereof, which mediate the knowing of God, more directly and effectively than the words themselves are capable of doing.'[53]

Silence, as Berger notes, is also significant for Charles Wesley, for whom, 'silence emerges as a specific form of praise. In fact, some references in his hymns seem to indicate that he views silence as the highest form of praise. … "And silence heightens heaven."'[54] Frank Baker suggests silence, even if only a brief pause is significant in Charles' hymn structure. In long stanzas, and, as Baker says, in most of his eight-lined stanzas, Charles allows a 'stanzaic censura', a central pause.[55] Watson similarly speaks of the silence which exists between verses of hymns and around the singing which corresponds to the whiteness of the page surrounding the text.[56] The resonance of Charles' use of silence with Louth's point is obvious, '[t]he silence of the tacit makes immediate contact with the silence of prayer.'

Finally, Berger comments on paradoxical speech, referring to paradox as doxology's limitations in naming God, and capturing 'in its fullness both what is and what is beyond human imagination';[57] such paradox, of which Charles was fond and frequently expressed through his use of oxymoron, ('Into his Father's hands resign'd!/ Th' immortal God, he breath'd his last!)[58] is employed to signify what cannot be articulated and has much in common with the tacit dimension, the unwritten, unspoken, hidden reality beyond speech or knowledge.

Wainwright in his seminal work *Doxology*, which he describes as a 'liturgical way of doing theology',[59] emphasises the personal relationship of God and humanity, founded on humanity's being made in the image of God. This relationship is between creature and Creator, an unequal relationship and one which is properly expressed for the Christian in worship.[60] Wainwright identifies eight facets of this

[53] Kimbrough, "Lyrical Theology," 22.
[54] Berger, *Theology in Hymns*, 159.
[55] Frank Baker, *Charles Wesley's Verse: An Introduction* 2nd ed. (London: Epworth Press, 1988), 54.
[56] J.R. Watson, *The English Hymn: A Critical and Historical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 36-7. This point was noted in my unpublished MA dissertation.
[57] Berger, *Theology in Hymns*, 160. Quoting Casper, *Sprache und Theologie.*
[58] *RT*303, lines 4-5.
[59] Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 1.
[60] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 16.

relationship expressed in worship, a broader scope of doxology than Berger's. Wainwright includes adoration, confession of sin, proclamation and thanksgiving, commitment, intercession, expectation, absence and wrestling.[61] All these facets are present in Charles' hymn texts, even wrestling[62] and absence,[63] on which latter point Charles and John differed in perspective. For Wainwright absence 'presupposes what has been, or it anticipates what might become',[64] it indicates the eschatological now but not yet, and the hidden, unspoken, unknown, referred to above.

There are two further points to note from Wainwright's work which convey the nature of truth communicated through hymn texts. First they have an existential motif; hymns are able to express 'the whole existential intention of the Christian life towards the divine kingdom which is also human salvation.'[65] There are two ways in which Charles' hymn texts do this: through their structure, which frequently embodies the movement of the Christian life towards the life of heaven, the fulfilment of salvation, sanctification through grace; and in their role as formative texts; their memorability, their enshrining of biblical and theological truths, which, sung repeatedly, are absorbed and shape the faith and life of the believer.

Secondly, Wainwright closes his book by referring to the transformation which occurs through the reciprocal relationship of humanity with God through worship:

> In this personal exchange we are coming into the moral and spiritual likeness of our Lover. This transformation is our glorification in both the objective and the subjective senses: by grace we are being made partakers of the divine nature, and in humility God is being enriched by the requital of his love on the part of his creatures. Our being changed from glory into glory is itself for the greater glory of God.[66]

The contribution a doxological perspective offers is an exploration of the distinctively spiritual, affective and experiential nature of hymn texts. The broader compass of doxology in Wainwright's interpretation is appropriate. Charles' hymns

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[61] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 37-43.
[62] The most obvious example is Charles' 'Wrestling Jacob,' *HSP* (1742), 115-8.
[63] *RT*144, st.4, line 4. Charles uses the words 'Languish for an absent God' and as Maddox notes 'John Wesley underlined … "Languish for an" in line 4 in his personal copy.' *Scripture Hymns 2,* 371n98.
[64] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 42.
[65] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 204.
[66] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 462.

are essentially spiritually relational, expressive of an obedient, faithful, submissive relationship with God. Even when we sense that Charles might want to be questioning what he sees as God's act, his recognition of the sovereignty of God and the necessity for the believer to accept and obey God's will is clear.

1 And must I give him up?
  And doth the Lord recall
My only joy, my latest prop,
  My friend, my earthly all!
  I must—I will—comply…[67]

Even a characteristic such as this is nonetheless doxological; the intention of the hymns written for congregational use,[68] whatever experiences, feelings, attitudes and responses are communicated, is the praise and glory of God.

The hymn texts are a spiritual medium, they are doxological and affective.[69] Indeed the truth of hymn texts cannot be understood outside this doxological framework. Their validity is found in their dual direction towards God and spiritual life of the believer. They are written for this purpose.

Conclusion

'What is truth?' The truth communicated in Charles Wesley's poetic texts is a truth which embraces theological and spiritual reality, revealed through presentation and performance in communal singing or individual praying of the verse. It is an experiential, participative truth, rooted in lived experience of life and God, expressed sometimes in emotion, or the tacit, or in mystery or doxology. It is truth which arrests and makes challenging and demanding claims upon those who dare to engage with it. It is truth which extends beyond rational method, or analytical analysis of words and meanings. These are important to understand the texts, to recognise and attempt to unlock the truth Charles intended and assumed, but they are not the end in

[67] *RT*102, st.1, lines 1-5.
[68] Some of Charles' texts, written in the manner of a personal spiritual journal, or written, for example, to denounce Calvinists or even his brother when he dares to ordain might be considered exceptions.
[69] Their affective nature is apparent, not only through the doxological nature of the texts explored in this section, and that they were texts used for prayer and formation of faith, but also in the way Charles used them as a journal-type genre of writing; often they sound like an account of his personal journey of faith.

itself. The chapters of part II engage with just such an analysis of Charles' use of 'resign', 'resigned', and 'resignation', not for its own sake but to reveal the theological and spiritual intention these words were designed to communicate and particularly what this meant for the life of faith of the believer. Andrew Louth sums up well the task of approaching poetry for discerning its truth:

> Take the example of attempting to read, or understand, a poem. There is an element of problem-solving: the meaning of certain words no longer, perhaps, in current use, the detecting of allusions to the literary tradition to which the poem belongs – these can sometimes be 'solved' and a definitive answer produced. But having done all that, we have not finished: we have only begun – we have, as we might say, cleared the ground for an attempt to read, to understand, the poem. Here something else is involved: not a restless attempt to solve problems, to reach a kind of clarity, but rather an attempt to listen, to engage with the meaning of the poet, to hear what he has to say. We shall not do that if we misunderstand the meaning he attached to his words, or miss his allusion, but we do not necessarily hear the poet if we have simply solved all such problems. What is needed is a sympathetic listening, an engagement with the mind of the poet, and this sort of understanding has no end. There is no definitive solution: understanding is a matter of engagement, and constantly renewed engagement.[70]

Precisely the task of part II of this thesis.

[70] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, 67-8.

Excursus: 'The Resignation'.

1 And wilt thou yet be found?
And may I still draw near?
Then listen to the plaintive sound
Of a poor sinner's prayer.

Jesu, thine aid afford,
If still the same thou art;
To thee I look, to thee, my Lord,
Lift up an helpless heart.

2 Thou seest my tortur'd breast,
The strugglings of my will,
The foes that interrupt my rest,
The agonies I feel:

The daily death I prove,
Saviour, to thee is known:
'Tis worse than death, my God to love,
And not my God alone.

3 My peevish passions chide,
Who only canst controul,
Canst turn the stream of nature's tide,
And calm my troubled soul.

O my offended Lord,
Restore my inward peace:
I know thou canst: pronounce the word,
And bid the tempest cease.

4 Abate the purging fire,
And *draw* me to my good;
Allay the fever of desire,
By sprinkling me with blood.

I long to see thy face,
Thy Spirit I implore,
The living water of thy grace,
That I may thirst no more.

5 When shall thy love constrain,
And force me to thy breast?
When shall my soul return again
To her eternal rest?

Ah! What avails my strife,
My wand'ring to and fro?
Thou hast the words of endless life,
Ah! Whither should I go?

6 Thy condescending grace
To me did freely move:
It calls me still to seek thy face,
And stoops to ask my love.

Lord, at thy feet I fall,
I groan to be set free,
I fain would now obey the call,
And give up all for thee.

7 To rescue me from woe,
Thou didst with all things part,
Didst lead a suffering life below,
To gain my worthless heart:

My worthless heart to gain,
The God of all that breathe
Was found in fashion as a man,
And died a cursed death.

8 And can I yet delay
My little all to give,
To tear my soul from earth away,
For Jesus to receive?

Nay, but I yield, I yield!
I can hold out no more,
I sink by dying love compell'd,
And own thee Conqueror.

9 Tho' late, I all forsake,
My friends, my life resign,
Gracious Redeemer, take, O take
And seal me ever thine.

Come, and possess me whole,
Nor hence again remove,
Settle, and fix my wav'ring soul,
With all thy weight of love.

10 My one desire is this,
Thy only love to know,
To seek and taste no other bliss,
No other good below.

My life, my portion thou,
Thou all-sufficient art,
My hope, my heavenly treasure now,
Enter, and keep my heart.

11 Rather than let it burn
For earth, O quench its heat,
Then, when it would to earth return,
O let it cease to beat.

Snatch me from ill to come,
When I from thee would fly,
O take my wand'ring spirit home,
And grant me then to die![1]

This hymn of longing and desire charts the soul's journey towards entire resignation to God. It articulates with feeling the passion, desire and struggle to resign the self to God.

Two key emphases structure this hymn. The state of heart of the believer provides the framework. Three times Charles refers to the state of heart, at the beginning, middle and end of the hymn. These are staging posts on the journey of resignation. The first stanza is a prayer for help with the longing that God might still be found; at this point the heart is 'an helpless heart'. The helpless heart needs Christ to rescue it from the struggle and torment it experiences. Stanzas two to five express the struggle between the will, and desire for God, in dramatic expressive language: 'tortur'd breast', 'agonies', 'peevish passions', 'troubled soul', 'tempest', 'purging fire', 'fever of desire', 'strife', 'wand'ring'. Charles concludes this section with a scriptural reference 'Thou hast the words of endless life,/ Ah! Whither should I go?'

These words introduce the second key emphasis which structures this hymn, Jesus and his resignation, the central point, at stanzas six and seven. Stanza six is an affirmation of Jesus' 'condescending grace', calling and 'stooping to ask my love', followed by stanza seven which expresses the resignation of Christ: 'Thou didst with all things part,/ Didst lead a suffering life below,/ To gain my worthless heart.' In this central section the second reference is made to the heart. At this point the heart is 'worthless'. This is a pivotal point of the hymn; Charles indicates that it is so by repeating the line in an inverted form, 'My worthless heart to gain.' The repetition of these words emphasises their centrality to the hymn and at the same time their inverted order changes the emphasis; this marks the beginning of the salvation Charles is proclaiming; now the prominence is not given to the worthless heart at the end of the line, but to the words 'to gain' and thus the theme of the rest of the hymn is established.

[1] *RT*13. *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (London: Strahan, 1740), 76-79.

Stanza eight begins by asking what by now sounds like a rhetorical question 'And can I yet delay/ My little all to give …' and ends with resignation, 'Nay, but I yield, I yield!' The following stanza sees the believer's resignation of all, of friends and of life, of the whole being, 'Come, and possess me whole'. The resignation language Charles uses includes the words 'give', 'yield', 'sink', 'forsake', as well as 'resign'. It also embraces the notion of turning the focus of the soul from earth to heaven: 'To tear my soul from earth away', a conception which is reinforced in stanza eleven, the final stanza.

Stanza ten expresses the one desire only that the believer has, 'Thy only love to know' and the request for Jesus to 'Enter, and keep my heart.' This third and final reference to the heart, now being kept by God, indicates the climax of its journey, and in the last stanza the expressed desire of the believer is articulated that if the heart should burn for earth again, he would sooner die: 'when it would to earth return,/ O let it cease to beat.'

In this single hymn the major themes which appear in Charles' resignation hymns are comprehensively presented; primarily Christ's resignation, with the grace which allows resignation in the believer; and the orbit of resignation required of the soul which desires God with all the passion, feelings and struggle such an attitude of heart and soul entails.

Part II
Resignation in the Hymns of Charles Wesley

Introduction to the Resignation Texts

Resignation and related concepts are significant and recurrent images in Charles' hymns. It may not at first sight appear so, given that resignation or a derivative of it appears in 319 hymns out of approximately 8800. However, the word does not stand alone; resignation is not the only term used to describe the attitude towards God Charles is keen to communicate. Charles employs an array of corresponding terms to impart the spiritual and theological significance inherent in this theme.

In chapter two concepts were identified which convey a related *attitude* for Charles; words such as 'meekness', 'humility', 'calm', 'tranquillity', 'patience'. Such adverbs describe the nature of resignation as Charles understood it. In his hymn texts the attitude of humility is expressed through words such as 'humble', 'humbly', 'bow', 'stoop', 'bend', 'obeisance'; words derived from 'humble' appear frequently. There are also a variety of verbs (with their related nouns and adjectives) which Charles uses to communicate the act enshrined in resignation: 'obey', 'yield', 'submit', 'render up', 'comply', 'assent', and 'consent'. As noted in chapter two Charles rarely uses 'surrender'. There are several points worthy of remark. The number of alternative words used by Charles to convey resignation are limited; 'obey', 'yield', 'submit', and 'render' have a significant number of references, 'obey', 'yield' and 'submit' in particular. Other words which might have been employed are in fact used very infrequently, such as 'surrender' and 'acquiesce'. Additional words to consider but which have a weaker meaning to that inherent in resignation, are words such as 'accept', 'consent' and 'assent'. Charles' limited use of these weaker words is interesting and reinforces the importance for Charles of the strength of resignation which is by far the most frequently used word to articulate this response of the Christian to God.

The occurrence of the noun 'resignation' plus associated verb 'resign' and adjective 'resigned' ('resign'd' in Charles' spelling) also needs to be seen in context. Out of

the eighty-three collections of Charles Wesley's published hymns, 224 instances of resignation, resign or resign'd, appear in thirty-two of them. In Charles' manuscript verse, consisting of eighty-five collections, forty-seven contain, again, strangely, 224 instances. Removing overlapping instances between the published and manuscript verse leaves 319 occurrences in all. These statistics indicate the somewhat surprising breadth and frequency of use of this term. Holding alongside Charles' use of terms of similar meaning strengthens the case. This is a concept which was frequently employed by Charles. It is clearly a significant factor in his understanding of the soul's relationship with God. Indeed, the argument of this thesis is that for Charles this emphasis is a primary understanding of the soul's relationship with God.

Apart from a very few miscellaneous references Charles uses resign, resign'd, or resignation either in relation to Jesus or the believer. With regard to the believer, resignation is expressed as an attitude towards God or relates to the believer's sanctification. Charles' use of resignation was focussed and decidedly specific; there are surprisingly few occurrences, nine out of the 319 references, which are not used in this way. Of these exceptions four are used about others resigning to God: the beasts resigning their breath;[1] the Gentile world resigning glory and wealth;[2] the resignation of 'hosts and fleets';[3] and opposers to God resigning their weapons, 'Constrain'd to acknowledge the work is divine'.[4] The remaining five instances use resignation in incidental ways, and not within the context of a relationship with God and so are not relevant to our purpose here.[5]

[1] *RT*26, st.5.
[2] *RT*65, st.18.
[3] *RT*131.
[4] *RT*63, st.4.
[5] These references are: *RT*234, st.4, 'implicitly resign'd', written on the conversion of his son Samuel Wesley to Roman Catholicism. This is a negative use of resignation. Wesley is being critical of the Roman Catholic tradition and the danger of implicit resignation which accompanies the 'shibboleth of the sect', as he sees it. *RT*198, line 278, 'The Arbiters of Life and Death resign/ Their Power despotic, to be ruled by thine.' *RT*249 'The Revolution', written to address a political context 'Resigns his sceptre and his globe,/ And shouts for ever live KING MOB!' *RT*281, a reference to the Gadarene swine, 'He, for the pleasures of a beast/ Would all besides resign'. *RT*300, st.1, a reference to the cleansing of temple. Charles critiques clergy who trade dishonestly with spiritual things, 'The altar touch with hands impure,/ Present, collate, resign, restore,/ Imployments in the church procure,/ And change and barter less for more.'

In part II, chapters four to eight, the 319 instances of the use of ‘resign’, ‘resignation’ or ‘resign’d’ in Charles’ hymns are all evaluated. These chapters comprise the core textual research undertaken. In chapter four the analysis begins, examining Charles’ use of resignation in relation to Christ, with the particular theological themes which emerge from the investigation identified. Chapters five to eight examine the four constituent elements of Charles’ use of resignation in relation to the believer.

Chapter 4

Analysis of *Resignation Texts*: the resignation of Jesus

Me to redeem from sin and hell,
Thou didst thy precious life resign,
My pardon in thy blood to seal,
And God and man again to join.

—Charles Wesley[1]

Introduction

Forty of the 319 references to resignation in Charles' hymns refer to the work of Christ. Charles Wesley's emphasis when referring to the resignation of Jesus is essentially a soteriological one; almost all of his forty references appertain to Christ's death on the cross. There are only two exceptions. In these two cases the resignation Charles refers to is the resignation of a charge to God. The first refers to Christ the man resigning to God 'His kingdom and dominion here' at the end of time, whilst concurrently 'Christ the God maintains his throne'.[2] The second speaks of Christ resigning the charge of his flock and giving them over to destruction, until the time that they recognise him as the Saviour; Charles has Christ articulate: '"Lo, to yourselves I leave,/ "My flock forsake, my charge resign,/ "And to destruction Give!"'[3] There is a parallel with this use of resigning a charge; Charles speaks of himself resigning his charge to God as we will see below.

1. Jesus' Resignation: his death on the cross

Consonant with the emphasis noted in chapter two, the resignation of Christ is an active resignation, a positive, dynamic surrender, an offering given: 'For all the sins of all mankind/ He once a perfect offering made,/ For all his precious life resign'd'.[4] This positive, dynamic interpretation of resignation still has implications of acceptance, contentment with, and submission to, however these are not imposed but

[1] *RT*204, st.6.
[2] *RT*179, st.1, lines 2-3; st.3, line 1.
[3] *RT*301, st.1, lines 2-4.
[4] *RT*22, st.2, lines 1-3.

actively embraced. A more twenty-first century nuance of resignation, suggesting an enforced powerlessness to act, was not Charles' understanding. The powerlessness implicit in resignation was for Charles a means through which *active* submission to God could be expressed; moreover this was a quality to be aspired to, as will become evident in Charles' resignation hymns for believers.

The language Charles employs to speak of Jesus' resignation in death is predominantly that of resigning his life or his breath. Resigning breath appears five times and resigning life twenty-four. Two occurrences refer to Jesus' resignation of his *spirit*, one directly, 'O the depth of love redeeming!/ God his Spirit doth resign!';[5] and one obliquely; we resign our spirit as he did,

> 3 O could I then behold my God
> Arrayed in garments dipp'd in blood!
> As when thou didst the wine-press tread,
> And meekly bow thy dying head,
> That I my spirit may resign,
> Like thee, into the hands divine.[6]

A further reference to the moment of Jesus' death uses the language of resignation but not of spirit, 'Into his Father's hands resign'd!/ Th' immortal God, he breath'd his last!'[7]

Charles' near singular interpretation of Jesus' resignation as crucicentric and soteriological nonetheless embraces a variety of themes, reflecting their span across twenty-three of Charles' collections,[8] and diverse theological content.

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[5] *RT*141, st.2, lines 5-6.
[6] *RT*188.
[7] *RT*303, lines 4-5.
[8] *Everlasting Love* (1741), *Everlasting Love* (1742), *HSP* (1742), *HLS*, *HSP* 1 (1749), *Scripture Hymns* 2, *Hymns for Children*, *Family Hymns*, *Trinity Hymns*, *Preparation for Death*, *All in All*, *MS Hymns for Love*, *MS Miscellaneous Hymns*, *MS Preparation for Death*, *MS Richmond*, *MS Richmond Tracts*, *MS Funeral Hymns* (1756-87), *MS John*, *MS Luke*, *MS Mark*, *MS Matthew*, *MS Scriptural Hymns OT*, *Verse in Manuscript Letters*.

2. Key theological themes

Six key theological themes emerge from an analysis of Charles' use of resignation in relation to Christ: the theology of Christ's death is a ransom for sin; the Arminian emphasis on Christ's death for all; the requirement of participation and response from the believer; a reference to the exchange formula, central to Eastern Orthodox *theosis*; the resignation of Christ means sanctification for the believer; and finally the assertion that in Christ's death it is God who dies.

i. Ransom

The predominant image in Charles' use of resignation in relation to Jesus is that of Christ's death as a ransom for the sins of the world. Given the prominence of the Evangelical Revival on salvation through the death of Christ, this is to be expected. Language of redemption and ransom is interwoven throughout these hymns but with a variety of nuanced interpretation. It is a *required* ransom, to satisfy and pacify God's justice and wrath: 'The Lamb his precious life resign'd,/ He died; and rigid justice smil'd';[9] 'Thou didst here thy life resign,/ Bear for every child of man,/ Pacify the wrath divine.'[10] The sacrifice offered by Christ is both temporal and eternal. It is a once-for-all sacrifice, 'All hail, Redeemer of mankind!/ Thy life on Calvary resign'd/ Did fully once for all atone,'[11] Yet at the same time it is an eternal sacrifice, pleaded daily, it is efficacious *now* for the believer; in the second stanza of the same hymn:

> 2 Yet may we celebrate below,
> And daily thus thine offering shew
> Expos'd before thy Father's eyes;
> In this tremendous mystery
> Present thee bleeding on the tree
> Our everlasting sacrifice;
>
> Father, behold thy dying Son!
> Ev'n now he lays our ransom down,
> Ev'n now declares our sins forgiven:
> His flesh is rent, the living way
> Is open'd to eternal day,
> And lo, thro' him we pass to heaven![12]

[9] *RT*24, st.16, lines 3-4.
[10] *RT*142, st.1, lines 4-6.
[11] *RT*54, st.1, lines 1-3.
[12] *RT*54, st.2.

A further emphasis in Charles' use of ransom language is that the ransom was *freely* offered by Christ; 'Thou who freely didst resign/ Thy own life to ransom mine'.[13] There is no sense of obligation under which Christ was powerless to act, except the constraint of love, 'Love only did my Lord constrain/ Thy life so freely to resign'.[14]

Finally, a central tenet of Charles' theology is that the ransom attained through Christ's death is in fact a ransom attained by God himself, 'My God for me resign'd his breath'.[15] There are numerous references to this key theological statement which is explored as a separate key theme below.

ii. For All, For Me, For Us

The second major theological strand evident in Charles' Christ resignation hymns expresses his Arminian emphasis on Jesus' death for all. The language of ransom is interwoven with his conviction that this sacrifice is both a personal and universal offer of salvation 'for all', 'for me' and 'for us'. His frequent repetition of such language makes his intention clear; 'My God *for me* resign'd his breath';[16] 'Who didst thy precious life resign/ To ransom the whole fallen race';[17] 'For *all* his precious life resign'd,/ For *all* a bleeding ransom paid'.[18]

Charles' emphasis on 'all' is prominent in his anti-Calvinistic hymns. One example appearing among his poetic texts on the resignation of Jesus is hymn nine in his 1742 Hymns on God's Everlasting Love. The first twelve of the twenty-two stanzas refute the 'Horrible Decree',

> 5 "He willeth" (so they judge their God)
> "That most should perish in their fall,
> He left them welt'ring in their blood,
> And mocks them with a fruitless call.[19]

The remaining ten verses reiterate salvation through the death of Christ, which is for all.

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[13] *RT*277, st.4, lines 1-2.
[14] *RT*268, st.2, lines 1-2.
[15] *RT*27, st.2, line 5.
[16] *RT*27, st.2, line 5. My italics.
[17] *RT*272, lines 5-6.
[18] *RT*22, st.2, lines 3-4. My italics.
[19] *RT*24, st.5.

13 "Since God might justly let *all* die,
And leave *all* to eternal woe,
Might he not justly *some* pass by?"
The wounds of Jesus answer NO.

……..

22 Surely thy dying prayer is heard,
God for thy sake hath all forgiven,
Grace hath to all mankind appear'd,
And all *may* follow it to heaven.[20]

Perhaps the most striking example however of Charles' Arminian application of Christ's resignation on the cross, is his hymn for James Hackman, the convicted murderer of Miss Ray, at his execution. Charles is convinced that even this murderer can be saved, indeed at the last moment, with no time to make amends, as long as he hasn't committed the 'one unpardonable sin',[21]

1 Jesus, was ever love like thine!
Jesus, remember Calvary!
Who didst thy precious life resign,
……...

3 The one unpardonable sin
Great God, if he hath never done,
We ask that blood to wash him clean,
Which did for murtherers atone;
Wash'd in that blood his soul require,
And save him—save him—as by fire![22]

iii. Participation of the Believer

For the death of Christ to become effective 'for all', 'for me' and 'for us', the response and participation of the believer is essential. The ransom attained by Christ demands such a response: 'Nor woudst Thou, Lord, thy life resign,/ Or bleed, and die in vain.' Subsequently the believer's response leads to Christlikeness, 'And stamp me with thy character'; and finally a place in heaven,

[20] *RT*24, sts.13 and 22.
[21] The sin against the Holy Spirit referred to in the synoptic Gospels: Matt. 12.32, Mark 3:29, Luke 12.10.
[22] *RT*241, st.1, lines 1-3; st.3.

10 Accomplish'd see thy own desires,
And O, be satisfied,
When singing with th' immortal quires
I triumph at thy side.[23]

The *structure* of Charles' hymns sometimes specifically demands the believer's response to the gift of grace offered.[24] It is a model of the dialogical structure noted in the previous chapter. There are two key characteristics to be noted; the first is the response of love, indicated by virtuous living. The following hymn demonstrates this characteristic well: love is proved by 'antipathy to ill'; the heart given entirely to God abhors sin and wickedness; through aversion from sin and an inclination to good the believer strives after the nature of Christ; which, when God's will is done, leads to sanctification, 'holiness divine'.

1 Jesus, my Lord, my God,
Who didst thy life resign
To buy with all thy sacred blood
This worthless heart of mine;
If now thy grace I feel,
O may I always prove
By pure antipathy to ill,
That Thee I truly love!

2 With sin and wickedness
I wage eternal war,
And all vain thoughts, and all false ways
I utterly abhor:
My heart to my dear Lord
I woud intirely give,
I woud be govern'd by thy word,
And in thy Spirit live.

3 I only live to win
Thy pure and heavenly mind,
Like Thee averse from every sin,
To every good inclin'd:
O that I now with Thee
Thy nature might possess,
Thy hatred of iniquity,
Thy love of righteousness!

4 I will not let Thee go,
But wrestle on in prayer,
Till Thou the gracious token show,

[23] *RT*199, sts.8-10.
[24] This was discussed in Lunn, "Seeing and Singing."

Till Thou thy will declare:
And when thy will is done,
I live intirely thine,
For ever sav'd, for ever one
With Holiness Divine![25]

The second key characteristic of the believer's participation is that Jesus' resignation is a model for the believer. Jesus as the pattern for humanity resonates strongly in these Christ resignation hymns and is implicit in the one quoted above, 'Like Thee averse from every sin'. It is notable that particularly, and almost exclusively, the pattern offered by Jesus extends to suffering and death.

Saviour, on Thee my soul is cast,
To suffer all thy pangs with Thee,
Participate the death Divine,
And live thro' endless ages thine.[26]

Charles' theology of suffering with Christ is a strong recurrent theme, as explored in the first chapter.[27] One Christ resignation hymn, particularly worthy of note, offers an unusual perspective on the believer's participation in the suffering of Christ, through the suffering of Jesus' mother at his death:

1 Prince of life, for sinners slain,
Grant us fellowship with thee,
Fain we would partake thy pain,
Share thy mortal agony,
Give us now the dreadful power,
Now bring back thy dying hour.

2 Place us near th' accursed wood
Where thou didst thy life resign,
Near as once thy mother stood;
Partners of the pangs divine,
Bid us feel her sacred smart,
Feel the sword that pierc'd her heart.

3 Surely now the prayer he hears:
Faith presents the crucified!
Lo! The wounded Lamb appears
Pierc'd his feet, his hands his side,

[25] *RT*200.
[26] *RT*294, st.3, lines 3-6.
[27] Joanna Cruickshank explores this theme in depth in *Pain, Passion and Faith*.

Hangs our hope on yonder tree,
Hangs, and bleeds to death for me![28]

This hymn is particularly visual and experiential in emphasis. It makes several references to partaking in the suffering of Christ, but also includes a rare allusion to the mother of Jesus[29] and an even more unusual identification with her and the desire to feel the pain *she* also suffered; 'Bid us feel her sacred smart,/ Feel the sword that pierc'd her heart.' Given that this hymn appears in Charles' *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, it is likely that Charles had in mind his understanding of the real presence of Christ in the Sacrament and that through the experience of partaking in the Eucharist the believer expresses a desire to share the sufferings of Christ, particularly those suffered in his dying hour.

The theology of believers participating in the death of Christ is similarly evident elsewhere in Charles' hymns. In these hymns about the resignation of Jesus however, prominence is given to appropriating the pattern of Christ. Charles' hymns on preparation for death take up the theme, for example: 'That I my spirit may resign,/ Like thee, into the hands divine'[30] and,

3 O might I thus my Warfare end,
Meekly to GOD my Soul resign,
Into my Father's Hands commend;
O Jesus, let thy Death be Mine.[31]

Moreover it is important to stress that Christ's example of *resignation* to suffering and death is the offered pattern for the believer, to be like him in attitude towards suffering and death is the goal to aspire to:

The speechless Lamb; resign'd unto
The utmost earth and hell could do.

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[28] *RT*53.
[29] There are very few references in Charles' hymns to Mary the mother of Jesus. The following are the only exceptions in addition to the instance cited above. From the Manuscript hymns: *MS John*, 21, John II, st.1, line 1, 'Mother of Purity Divine'; *MS John*, 23, II, st.2, line 1, 'Harshly Thou dost thy mother treat'; *MS Luke,* 174, st.1, lines 1-2, 'Angels the virgin-mother bless,/ All ages her renown declare'. From the Published hymns: *Nativity Hymns*, 21, XV1, st. 5, line 3, 'No wonder the mother should worship the child'; *Scripture Hymns* 2, hymn 1231, lines 3-4, 'Mary held him in her womb/ Whom heaven could not contain!' In addition Jesus is referred to as 'Son of Mary' seven times in both the Published and Manuscript hymns.
[30] *RT*188, st.3, lines 5-6.
[31] *RT*228, st.3.

10 O that I might like him *withstand*,
Like him mine innocency *clear*,
Like him *resist* the ruffian-band,
Like him *refuse* the cross to bear,
Like him the persecutor *fly*;
Like him submit to live, and die?[32]

Such likeness to Christ means taking on the character of Christ; following the example of submission Christ modelled, 'Like him submit to live and die,' and 'I bow me to the will divine,' elsewhere in the same hymn;[33] and his meekness, also referred to twice in this hymn.[34] Likeness to Christ in his suffering and death can even lead the believer also to die for others, even 'my deadliest foe'.[35]

Imitating Christ in his suffering and death is not only a matter of resignation, submission and meekness however, but also of reassurance and of reward.

3 The death Thou didst for me sustain,
O let it sooth my dying pain,
Or into bliss convert;
Then as the Lamb of God resign'd,
Rest to my weary soul I find,
And joyfully depart.[36]

Death is a joyful thing for the believer, for death means seeing Christ:

As when thou didst the wine-press tread,
And meekly bow thy dying head,
That I my spirit may resign,
Like thee, into the hands divine.

……..
I gladly to the sentence bow;
I die to see my Saviour now.[37]

For Charles then, Jesus' resignation is of his life or breath to death, which is the means of salvation for all people. Such self-giving is offered as an invitation for participation and as a pattern to be imitated, even to the point of suffering and death,

[32] *RT*83, sts.9, lines 5-6, and 10.
[33] *RT*83, st.3, line 5.
[34] *RT*83, st.4, line 3 and st.7, line 6.
[35] *RT*210, st.8, line 4.
[36] *RT*222, st.3.
[37] *RT*188, st.3, lines 3-6 and st.4, lines 5-6.

in response to the gift of salvation received. But most importantly this is no slavish martyrdom, but also requires inhabiting the attitude and mind of Jesus, imitating the virtues he lived and having the same approach and inclination of heart.

iv. The Exchange Formula.

Participatory action of the believer in the life of Christ is exemplified in the theological concept of the exchange formula. This movement is expressed through the 'wonderful exchange' of Athanasius' dictum, as Louth refers to it, '[h]e [the Word of God] became human that we might become God'.[38] Exchange is suggestive of Patristic influence on Charles Wesley; this relationship and the centrality of this strand of theological thought in Charles' resignation texts is considered in detail in chapter ten.

The concept of exchange in the hymns of Jesus' resignation is expressed most concisely in the line, 'Him who did his Life resign,/ That we his Life again might share'.[39] It is a notion which has already been introduced in the analysis of ransom imagery, as another of the ransom hymns plainly establishes,

> 3 All souls are thine: and thou for all
> The ransom of thy life hast given,
> To raise the sinner from his fall,
> And bring him back to God and heaven,
> Thou all the world hast died to save,
> And all may thy salvation have.[40]

One of Charles Wesley's hymns for children which references Jesus' resignation and ours, is of particular interest as it embodies a form of the exchange formula, both in its content and structure. Given that this hymn is catechetical in nature, it indicates that exchange is fundamental in Charles' theology.

> 1 Thee, Maker of the world we praise,
> The end of our creation own,
> Being thou gav'st the favourite race,
> That man might love his God alone,

[38] Andrew Louth, "The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology," in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, ed. Michael J. Christensen and Jeffrey A. Wittung (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 34.
[39] *RT*318, st.5, lines 5-6.
[40] *RT*27, st.3.

With knowledge fill'd, and joy, and peace,
And glorious, everlasting bliss.

2 But man his liberty of will
Abus'd, and turn'd his heart from thee:
His fault on us intail'd we feel,
While born in sin and misery,
We from our God with horror fly,
And perish, and forever die.

3 We must have died that second death,
Had not the Son of God been man:
Jesus for us resign'd his breath,
For us reviv'd, and rose again,
He purg'd our sin, he bought our peace,
And fills us with his righteousness.

4 We now, by his good Spirit led,
Our own desires and will forego,
Delight in all his steps to tread,
And perfect holiness below,
Our ransom'd souls to God resign
Fill'd up with peace and joy divine.

5 In Jesus join'd to God again,
To all thy saints in earth and heaven,
We triumph with the sons of men,
Thy utmost grace to sinners given
Sure at his coming to receive,
And blest with thee forever live.[41]

There are two overlaid structures in this hymn. First there is a structure of progression, from God's intention in the creation of humanity, to the conclusion - humanity's coming to share in everlasting bliss with the saints. In stanza one Charles uses words reminiscent of the first question and answer in the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

> Q. 1. *What is the chief end of man?*
> A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.[42]

Charles writes of owning the 'end' or purpose of our creation, through praising the Maker, and that being was given to humanity so that humanity might love God and be filled with knowledge, joy, peace and everlasting bliss. Stanza two deals with the Fall, its impact for the rest of humanity 'intail'd' in this sin, and ensuing

[41] *RT*152.
[42] The Westminster Shorter Catechism, 1647, http://opc.org/documents/SCLayout.pdf, accessed January 1, 2014.

consequence of original sin which is death. Stanza three initiates the exchange formula, indicating the Son of God becoming human. It continues, encapsulating the heart of the gospel, with Jesus' resignation to death and his resurrection.[43] In these lines Charles' use of the word 'reviv'd' ('For us reviv'd and rose again') in relation to the resurrection is an intriguing one. It is possible that Charles selected this word to fit poetically; it forms an alliterative companion to 'resign'd' and 'rose'. Perhaps Charles understood its meaning to be that indicated by the *Oxford English Dictionary* which records that the etymology of 'revive' in thirteenth century Anglo-Norman and Middle French included the restoration of a dead person to life.[44] Maybe however, Charles had another meaning of 'revived' in mind. A definition in use at his time, generally in relation to chemical substances, is defined as follows, '[o]f a metal or other substance: restored to a pure or uncombined state.'[45] If Charles had this meaning in mind, we might speculate an intention on his part to communicate the restoration of Christ to his divine status, to the 'pure or uncombined state' of pre-Incarnate Word following his resurrection. Such a meaning would emphasise the downward and upward movement embodied in exchange and *theosis*.

The lines referring to Jesus' death and resurrection are followed by one which mentions 'bought our peace'. This is a reference to ransom and to the *imputed* righteousness of Christ which leads to justification, he 'fills us with his righteousness'. This first core element of the economy of salvation for Charles is followed by the second in stanza four, the *imparted* righteousness of Christ through the leading of the Spirit, enabling the believer to forego her own desires and will, to tread in Christ's steps and to perfect holiness below. Impartation enables the believer to participate in Christ and become a partaker in the nature of God. Through the resignation of 'Our ransom'd souls to God' believers are 'Fill'd up with peace and joy divine.' Such partaking in the divine nature is a key feature of *theosis* in the Eastern Christian tradition.[46]

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[43] Charles Wesley's hymns are predominantly crucicentric, and the resurrection is not a primary focus. There are approximately twice as many references to resignation in his hymns as to resurrection.
[44] *OED online*, s.v. 'revive,' http:// www.oed.com/ view/ Entry/ 164913, accessed January 25, 2014.
[45] *OED online*, s.v. 'revived,' http://www.oed.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/view/Entry/164914?redirectedFrom=revived#eid, accessed January 25, 2014.
[46] The relationship of resignation to *theosis* is discussed in chapter 10.

Finally in stanza five the upward movement of the exchange formula is fulfilled and humanity is 'join'd to God again'. The emphasis here is suggestive of union with God; there is no mention of the divinity of humanity, as we might expect with the exchange formula, however union with God is, arguably, a valid interpretation of the same concept.[47]

Within this catechetical progressive structure the pattern of the exchange formula is clear to detect; the pattern of downward then upward movement of the Son of God becoming human, effecting redemption, which is brought to completion - to holiness - through the participation of the believer enabled by the Holy Spirit, and final restoration to the state of everlasting bliss, which was God's original intention for humanity.

The second structure in this hymn is a chiastic one. Chiasm is a technique Charles sometimes employed to articulate spiritual and theological truth. This structure pivots around Jesus' resignation to death and his resurrection, the central lines of stanza three. These lines indicate the core theology of the Evangelical Revival located at the heart of the hymn; justification through the death and resurrection of Christ, 'Jesus for us….' Following this structure it is possible to detect parallelism in the lines of stanzas two and four, and stanzas one and five. Each line in these verses mirrors the other, expressing contrasting movements of the soul; so, humanity acting through 'his liberty of will' contrasts with being led by Jesus' 'good Spirit', and so on.

2 But man his liberty of will	→	4 We now, by his good Spirit led,
Abus'd, and turn'd his heart from thee:	→	Our own desires and will forego,
His fault on us intail'd we feel,	→	Delight in all his steps to tread,
While born in sin and misery,	→	And perfect holiness below,
We from our God with horror fly,	→	Our ransom'd souls to God resign
And perish, and forever die.	→	Fill'd up with peace and joy divine.

The line dealing with the resignation of the ransomed human soul to God, contrasts with 'We from our God with horror fly', and whilst this results in perishing and death, resignation of the soul results in being filled with 'peace and joy divine.'

[47] Union with God is similarly discussed in chapter 10.

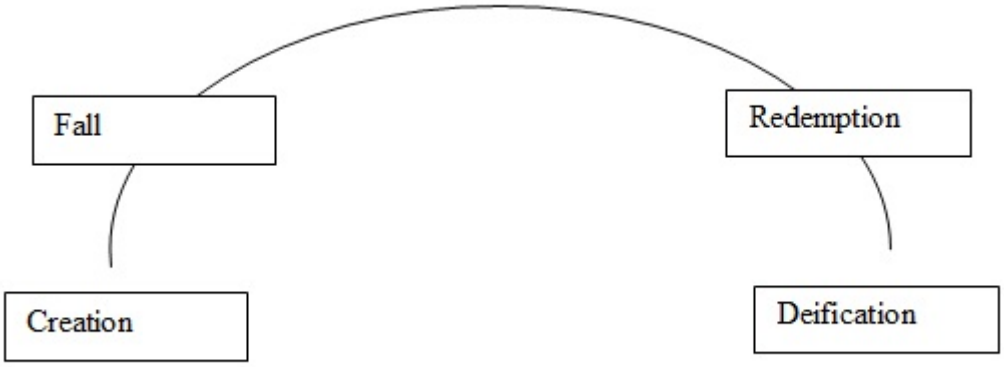
Stanzas one and five are also paralleled, although in a different way. The final stanza, stanza five, represents the fulfilment of God's original intention for humanity, expressed in the first stanza. The act of Christ - becoming human, dying and being raised - is the central and pivotal event which effects the change in humanity's relationship to God (stanzas two and four) and enables the final outcome and fulfilment of God's intention (stanza five). Charles' use of chiasm draws attention to this pivotal event, both in the hymn and in salvation history.

Charles does not only refer to the exchange formula in hymns which focus on the passion and death of Christ; it is also evident in his Incarnation hymns. Exchange in Charles' Christ resignation hymns has a different emphasis to its use in his Incarnation hymns where it is much more prominent, with the formula integral to almost every hymn and embracing a broader perspective. Exchange in the Christ resignation hymns has a narrower focus, the emphasis clearly on Jesus' passion and death for the salvation of humanity. Andrew Louth has argued that the framework of salvation in the West, with a loss of the concept of deification, is a much more restricted one than in Eastern theology, in which *theosis* acts as the comprehensive structure. He uses the image of an arch to illustrate his point.

> One way of putting this is to think in terms of an arch stretching from creation to deification, representing what is and remains God's intention: the creation of the cosmos that, through humankind, is destined to share in the divine life, to be deified. Progress along this arch has been frustrated by humankind, in Adam, failing to work with God's purposes, leading to the Fall, which needs to be put right by redemption. There is, then, what one might think of as a lesser arch, leading from Fall to redemption, the purpose of which is to restore the function of the greater arch, from creation to deification. The loss of the notion of deification leads to lack of awareness of the greater arch from creation to deification, and thereby to concentration on the lower arch, from Fall to redemption; it is, I think, not unfair to suggest that such a concentration on the lesser arch at the expense of the greater arch has been characteristic of much Western theology.[48]

[48] Louth, "The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology," 35.

A visual representation of these arches would be:



Deification is not the same as redemption, but a broader concept rooted in the whole economy of God, and expressive of God's vision for all creation; '… deification is the fulfillment of creation, not just the rectification of the Fall.'[49]

On one level Charles Wesley's Christ resignation hymns would seem to affirm Louth's point; they focus on the death of Christ for the redemption of the world. This was the emphasis of the Evangelical Revival; the lesser arch is emphasised. However, as the first and last stanzas of the hymn above indicate, Charles is concerned with God's vision for all creation and the fulfilment of that vision, which is effected by Christ's resignation to suffering and death, and his resurrection from death; the broader vision which embraces the greater arch. Nevertheless, it is important to note that even in the resignation hymns the end goal, whether described as deification, sanctification, or union with God, is incorporated within Charles' use of the exchange formula. Charles goes beyond the metaphor of debt paid and ransom made and declares the outcome of this exchange for humanity: union with God, the restoration of the first state, 'Him who did his Life resign,/ That we his Life again might share'.[50] And similarly,

> 6 Me to redeem from sin and hell,
> Thou didst thy precious life resign,
> My pardon in thy blood to seal,
> And God and man again to join.[51]

[49] Louth, "The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology," 34.
[50] *RT*318, st.5, lines 5-6.
[51] *RT*204, st.6.

Christ's resignation to death enables, through participation, humanity's sharing in the life divine.

v. Sanctification

There are five hymns in particular which connect Jesus' resignation in his death with the *sanctification* of the believer.[52] Within these hymns there are three recurring themes. First, that sanctification, 'final full salvation', or 'holiness unspotted' comes through Jesus' blood, 'The holiness unspotted/ Which comes with Jesus' blood!/ Its virtue sanctifying'.[53] In this hymn 'faith and purity' are the preparation for 'final full salvation' but the 'virtue' of Jesus' blood is the means of sanctification. Charles concludes the hymn by emphasising Jesus' resignation through which heaven is attained,

> With Jesus' resignation
> With Jesus' perfect love
> I finish my oblation,
> And take my seat above. [54]

The same point is made in Charles' Trinity hymn which states unequivocally that the blood which sanctifies is that of God himself, 'Wash'd in the sanctifying blood/ Of an expiring deity:/ Who did for us his life resign'.[55]

A second recurring theme is that of spotlessness. Spotlessness appears three times in these hymns in which the spotlessness of the believer is gained through Jesus' blood[56] and his omnipotence.[57] In the *Resignation Texts* as a whole 'spotless' appears fourteen times, three of which refer to the spotlessness of Jesus and eleven to the spotlessness of believers. These examples are significant given their relationship to sinless perfection as discussed in chapter one and the reticence John Wesley had towards this term. From these hymns it is evident that for Charles Wesley

[52] *RT*171, sts.2-4; *RT*183, sts.1-2; *RT*200, st.4; *RT*204, sts.1, 6-8; *RT*305, st. 2.
[53] *RT*171, st.2, lines 7-8; st.3, line 1.
[54] *RT*171, st.4, lines 5-8.
[55] *RT*183, st.1, lines 3-5.
[56] *RT*171, st.2, lines 7-8; *RT*183, st.2, lines 1-4.
[57] *RT*305, st.2, lines 1-2.

sanctification incorporated spotlessness. Furthermore this spotlessness is the gift of God; purity belongs to God and, in an attractive phrase, is 'caught' by the believer.[58]

2 My hope of spotless righteousness
I build on his omnipotence:
He now my prostrate spirit sees,
He soon my evil heart shall cleanse:
Confiding in his gracious will
Who did for me his life resign,
I wait, the sovereign touch to feel,
I catch the purity divine.[59]

The third recurring theme is union with God. 'For ever sav'd, for ever one/ With Holiness Divine!' In *Resignation Texts* 204 there are multiple references: 'And re-unite my soul to Thee', 'And God and man again to join', 'To buy for me th' uniting grace', 'And live one spirit with my Lord', 'Might in that vital union prove'.[60] Union with God is one of the two primary models which describe the relationship between resignation and sanctification in Charles' poetic texts; this is examined in detail in chapter ten. Essentially God's grace, embodied in the Incarnation is the means of sanctification, as the exchange formula states, and the relational mutual indwelling of God and humanity the union to which humankind aspires.

vi. God's resignation in Jesus

The final key theological theme in Charles' Christ resignation hymns identifies Jesus' resignation with the act of God. Of the forty Christ resignation hymns thirty-eight associate Jesus' resignation with his death. Seventeen of these thirty-eight identify Jesus as God, either implicitly or explicitly indicating that in Jesus' resignation to death it is God who dies. One other of the thirty-eight affirms both Christ's humanity and divinity, but rather than identifying God dying in Jesus, it expresses a split in Jesus' humanity and divinity in relation to his death. There are two points to make: first to note the importance of Charles' identification of Jesus with God; and second, to examine this theologically controversial hymn.

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[58] Calvin Samuel in his thesis discusses the idea of holiness as contagion in Scripture. Calvin Timothy Samuel, "Holiness and Holy School: What is Wesleyan Holiness according to Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience and what might a Methodist Holy School be?" (King's College, 2008), 33-4, 62-4.
[59] *RT*305, st.2.
[60] *RT*204, st.1, line 4; st.6, line 4; st.7, lines 1 and 4; st.8, line 2.

First then, almost half of the hymns which cite Jesus' resignation, equate this with the work of God.

> Beneath my sins He bow'd his head,
> My sins, and those of all mankind!
> His soul a victim in our stead
> Into his Father's hands resign'd!
> *Th' immortal God, he breath'd his last!*
> The sight all earth and heaven amaz'd:
> Their silent harps aside they cast,
> And angels trembled as they gaz'd.[61]

This emphatic theme is repeated in daring, dramatic language using words such as: 'My God for me resign'd his breath',[62] 'Our sins which murder'd God shall die!',[63] 'The hands, that had his murtherers made,/ He stretches out; he lets them bind/ The hands that could unmake mankind',[64] 'When God resigns his parting breath',[65] 'Into his Father's hands resign'd!/ Th'immortal God, he breath'd his last!',[66] 'The man who did his life resign,/ Was proper, true, eternal God',[67] 'When God resigns his parting breath,/ All nature should at once expire',[68] and 'Wash'd in the sanctifying blood/ Of an expiring deity'.[69] In this last hymn Charles continues, 'For all the plenitude divine/ Resides in the Incarnate Son.'[70] The divinity of Jesus in these hymns is unambiguous; Jesus is identified with God. In another example the resignation of Jesus is referred to as the resignation of his crown; God is identified as dying in the death of Jesus, but viewed from the perspective of Christ's *kenosis* in the incarnation.

> The King whose glorious face ye see,
> For us his crown resign'd;
> That fulness of the deity,
> He died for all mankind![71]

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[61] *RT*303. My italics.
[62] *RT*27, st.2, line 5.
[63] *RT*55, st.3, line 6.
[64] *RT*83, st.8, lines 4-6.
[65] *RT*294, st.2, line 1.
[66] *RT*303, lines 4-5.
[67] *RT*182, st.1, lines 3-4.
[68] *RT*294, st.2, lines 1-2.
[69] *RT*183, st.1, lines 3-4.
[70] *RT*183, st.1, lines 7-8.
[71] *RT*186, st.4, lines 5-8.

Although this is only one example, it is an important one. It introduces an additional theological theme and reminds us that resignation is not solely about resignation in death: Christ resigned his crown.

The second point about God's resignation in Jesus in Charles' hymns examines the remarkable hymn in which Charles seems to express a split in the two natures of Christ. Charles seems to suggest that Jesus was not God when he suffered, but Jesus the man suffered and died. The hymn is an unusual interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:3 'The head of Christ is God'. Charles uses the heel and the head to correspond to Christ's humanity and divinity:

1 The partner of our flesh and blood,
As man, inferior is to God:
The lower part of Christ, the heel
Was bruis'd, and did our sorrows feel:
But though he would his life resign,
His part superior is divine,
And doth, beyond the reach of pain,
God over all for ever reign.[72]

This stanza seems to hint at the impassibility of God, yet in the hymns considered previously, it is clear that Charles believes God suffered and died in Jesus. Charles identifies the heel with the Son of Man, and the head with the Son of God, affirming Christ's equality with the Father, 'In essence, substance, nature One':

2 Great fountain-head of Deity,
Father of Christ, we worship thee,
Thy sovereign majesty maintain
As greater than the Son of man:
Yet thee, O Christ, of God the Son,
In essence, substance, nature One,
Thy Father's equal we proclaim
With God eternally the same.[73]

This hymn does not express the theology we usually expect from Charles' pen. There is however a reason. The hymn appears as forty-two in *Trinity Hymns*. Maddox indicates in his editorial introduction to this publication that the first 136

[72] *RT*181, st.1.
[73] *RT*181, st.2.

hymns of this work were based on another work, and indeed emphasises that Charles was keen to promote the full divinity of the Son:

> … part of Charles's concern was to resist the tendency in some contemporary writers to restrict claims about the full divinity of the Son or the Spirit, adopting implicit Arian or Unitarian understandings of God.
> In 1756 William Jones, a fellow Anglican priest, published *Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity, proved by above an Hundred Short and Clear Arguments*, which offered a vigorous defense of the full divinity of all three Persons of the Trinity. Both John and Charles Wesley welcomed the book, though they shared a concern that its academic style limited the scope of its impact. In *Hymns for Children* (1763), Charles Wesley had made the lessons in John's *Instructions for Children* more accessible by rendering the central points in verse. He decided to do the same with Jones's exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity. The result was published in 1767 as *Hymns on the Trinity*.
> The majority of this volume (the first 136 of the 188 hymns included) was essentially the exposition of Jones put in poetic form. It follows the structure of Jones's book, using the same scriptural references, etc. Many of the articulations are very effective. Jones might have appreciated them himself, if Charles had sought his input (or permission!) for the work.[74]

This hymn is therefore one of those through which Charles was expounding Jones. Jones' commentary on the text of 1 Cor 11:3 'The head of Christ is God', on which Charles' hymn is based reads as follows:

> The name of *Christ* does here stand, as in other places out of number, for the *man* Christ, otherwise it must follow, that as Christ is *God,* God is the head of *himself*; which is a contradiction or that *one* God is the *head* of *another* God, which is also a contradiction.
> This Text is capable of a good illustration from *Gen.* III. 15 where we read, that the *heel* of the promised seed should be *bruised*: by which, the church has always understood the sufferings of his *human* nature, metaphorically represented by the *inferior* part in man. So in this place, his *Divinity,* or *superior nature,* is as aptly signified by the *head* or *Superior* part of the human body.[75]

Whilst therefore Charles' hymn echoes Jones' interpretation, notably he ends his hymn with an unequivocal declaration of the equality of Christ and God, not present in Jones, affirming Charles' intention to affirm the full divinity of the Son:

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[74] Maddox, editorial introduction, *Trinity Hymns* (1767).
[75] William Jones, *The Catholic Doctrine of a Trinity, proved by above an hundred short and clear arguments, expressed in the terms of the holy scripture. A discourse to the reader, on the necessity of faith in the true God*, Gale ECCO Print ed. (Dublin: R. and E. Maturine and H. and E. McMahon, 1776), 45.

Yet thee, O Christ, of God the Son,
In essence, substance, nature One,
Thy Father's equal we proclaim
With God eternally the same.

There is one other hymn in the corpus of Charles' poetic works which states a similar division, assigning Christ's death to his humanity and his rising to his divinity:

3. Alone the dreadful Race He ran,
Alone the Wine press trod,
He died and suffer'd as a Man,
He rises as a GOD.[76]

This has not been included in the *Resignation Texts* however as Samuel Wesley Jr. is identified by Maddox as the original source.[77] The theology, contrary to what we would expect from Charles would support an argument against Charles being the author were there any question of the authorship of this text.

In general, through both structure and content Charles values paradox. These hymns, seeking to determine the relationship between Jesus and God, particularly with reference to suffering and the cross, are clear examples of it. Paradox is used to communicate mystery, here the mystery at the heart of the *homoousios* of Christ.

Conclusion

The six key theological themes identified in Charles' use of resignation in relation to Christ are indicative of the key themes which constituted Charles' theology. Christ's death as a ransom for sin and for all; the necessity of response and participation on the part of the believer, the nature of God in Christ in relation to humanity, echoes of Orthodox theology in exchange and *theosis*; God's suffering and death in Christ; the emphasis on sanctification; these themes emerge repeatedly in Charles' texts, they are at the heart of faith for him. The resignation of Christ in this cosmic drama relates to all of these themes. They all signify aspects of the economy of salvation,

[76] *MS Richmond Tracts*, 23, st.3.
[77] *MS Richmond Tracts*, 23n23. 'First appeared in *CPH* (1741), 36. Original source: Samuel Wesley Jr., *Poems on Several Occasions* (London: S. Birt, 1736), 240.'

which for the Wesleys incorporated both justification and sanctification. For Charles Wesley it is Christ's willing resignation that sets in motion and accomplishes this salvation. In the following chapter the focus shifts, to the resignation of the believer in Charles Wesley's hymns and yet echoes of these themes still resound alongside distinctive theological themes associated with the resignation of the believer.

Chapter 5

Analysis of *Resignation Texts*: the resignation of the believer

> *The language used by Mrs. Reynalds to describe her Christian faith and experience is clearly influenced by the phrasing of that day, yet the reality of her experiences cannot be denied for the effects are manifest in the concrete history of a changed life. ...*
>
> *Anna Reynalds often uses the terms "resignation", "melting", "closet" and "primitive nothingness". "Resignation" refers to the ideal Christian response to any personal difficulty, loss or hardship and implies complete thankful acceptance of the event as God's gracious will for her eternal benefit.*
>
> —Full Salvation: A Descriptive Analysis of the Diary of Anna Reynalds of Truro, 1775-1840.[1]

Introduction

Charles Wesley's overwhelming use of resignation is in respect of the believer's response to God. As noted in the previous chapter, Jesus' resignation is emphatically expressed as a tenet of belief, with an almost exclusively soteriological emphasis on his death on the cross; although on occasion Jesus' resignation also acts as a model for the behaviour of the believer, shifting the focus again to the believer's response. Of the 319 references to resignation in texts by Charles Wesley, forty refer to the work of Christ. Deducting the nine miscellaneous references leaves 270; all of which focus directly on an aspect of the believer's relationship with God characterised by resignation. This is an interesting statistic given Charles' christocentricity; over six times as many texts referring to resignation address the disposition of the *believe*r towards God. Such a statistic demonstrates the importance attributed to the hymns for the spiritual formation of the believer. These texts are spiritual, formational writing, encouraging and enabling both behaviour and attitude toward God. In this and the remaining chapters of part II the response of the believer in resignation to God is examined through an analysis of these texts. There

[1] Frank Baker, "Full Salvation: A Descriptive Analysis of the Diary of Anna Reynalds of Truro, 1775-1840," in *Frank Baker Collection* (Durham NC: Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library, Duke University), 2.

are four areas in which Charles sees resignation required: the first addresses resignation of the other, of earthly things and people. The three remaining pertain to the resignation of the self: resigning the will and heart; resigning everything, the whole being, even life itself; and finally resignation of the breath in death. Inevitably there is overlap; the resignation of life often equates to the resignation of the breath in death for example. There is however sufficient distinction for these categories to provide a useful framework for the textual analysis which comprises part II.

Resignation of the other: resigning earthly things and people

Fifty-six of the *Resignation Texts* speak of resigning earthly things and/ or people. The majority of them reference the resignation of people in one form or another. There are very few examples in Charles' poetry of the resignation of objects, in fact only twelve instances. The resignation of objects and people are presented together as both indicate the resignation of that which is, to some extent at least, exterior to the self.

1. Resigning earthly things

Charles addresses the resignation of the things of earth: 'We must the things of earth resign,/ Put off thy thoughts of all below';[2] which encompasses the resignation of belongings, 'Whate'er I fondly counted mine';[3] of the delights of earth, 'All earthly delights I forego,/ All creature enjoyments resign';[4] of 'Pleasure, and wealth' and 'fond pursuits';[5] and of worldly gains, expressed specifically in his hymn based on the call of Matthew (Matt. 9:9),

1 Vanquish'd by the word Divine,
Drawn by One they never knew,
Worldlings still their gains resign,
Still our heavenly Lord pursue;
Hate the money-getting vice,
Only for salvation care,

[2] *RT*253, lines 3-4.
[3] *RT*3, st.14, line 1.
[4] *RT*127, lines 5-6.
[5] *RT*84, st.3, lines 1 and 3.

Seek a kingdom in the skies,
Lay up all their treasure there.[6]

Such earthly pleasures are relinquished in pursuit of heaven and the wealth of God's kingdom. This is the context for the resignation of earthly things, including the earth itself. In a hymn for children Charles encourages the resignation of 'every other' with 'just and holy scorn', and the pursuit instead of the promised land and God.[7] A poetic text on the Beatitudes affirms a glad resignation of earth, 'Glad this earth thou canst resign', within the framework of the greater blessing, 'The new heavens and earth are thine'.[8] This is not an indication of an ascetic detachment[9] or life-denying rejection of the things of earth as evil, or even undesirable, but rather an assertion of where the focus must lie. Charles acknowledges that things of earth are good gifts, 'I every other good resign,/ Of all thou hast in earth or heaven';[10] they are blessings, but must be resigned.

The language of loan

To assist the act of resignation, emphasis is given, either implicitly or explicitly, to the language of loan and the restoration to God of that which has been lent by God, when God requires it:

14 Whate'er I fondly counted mine,
To thee, my Lord, I here restore:
Gladly I all for thee resign:
Give me thyself, I ask no more![11]

On four occasions Charles speaks of resigning a charge, of giving back to God a task, a group of people, or a responsibility given. One of these refers to Jesus resigning a charge,[12] and another St Paul;[13] however the remaining two emerge directly from Charles' own experience. Both are located in the context of increasing

[6] *RT*297, st.1.
[7] *RT*157, st.2.
[8] *RT*66, lines 83-4.
[9] Sangster's argument for ascetic detachment in John Wesley's understanding of sanctification was referenced in chapter 1.
[10] *RT*64, st.3, lines 4-5.
[11] *RT*3, st.14.
[12] *RT*301, st.1, line 3.
[13] *RT*265, st.2, line 5.

tension between himself and his brother over the use of lay preachers[14] and the threat of separation from the Church of England. In 1755 Charles wrote 'An Epistle to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley'[15] responding to this threat which at this point arose from two lay preachers, Charles Perronet and Thomas Walsh who unilaterally celebrated Holy Communion in 1754 in Reading and London. Three others later, in Norwich, followed their example; Charles considered this tantamount to separation from the Church of England, to which he was utterly opposed. His frustration was compounded when John Wesley refused to act to address the matter. In his Epistle Charles reminds his brother how they began,

> When first sent forth to minister the word,
> Say, did we preach ourselves, or Christ the Lord?
> Was it our aim disciples to collect,
> To raise a party, or to found a sect?
> No; but to spread the power of Jesus' name,[16]

He appeals to his brother to continue in this vein, that in the end they might faithfully return to God the charge he has given them,

> Gladly into his hands our children give,
> Securely in their mother's bosom leave,
> With calm delight accept our late release,
> Resign our charge to God, and then depart in peace![17]

The second occurrence of resigning a charge arising from Charles' experience is a poem written twelve years later in 1767. Charles retired from itinerancy in 1765 and it seems that from this time his focus in relation to the Methodist movement shifted. He became the chief protector of Methodist unity with the Church of England and fought for it for the rest of his life, increasingly in tension with his brother.

> 2 Thrust out from them I serv'd so long,
> I dare not strive against the wrong,

[14] Charles was dismayed over John's willingness to use lay preachers whom Charles thought had neither the gifts nor graces for the calling. He was not alone, Lloyd records the words of John Newton, writing of Methodist preachers in Liverpool, 'I have been quite pained & ashamed to see what empty ignorant pretenders have undertaken to speak to the people in the name of God at that place.' Lloyd, *Struggle for Methodist Identity*, 155.
[15] *RT*104. Maddox gives a more detailed background to this epistle and the context of tension out of which it emerged in his editorial introduction to the epistle.
[16] *RT*104, lines 252-6.
[17] *RT*104, lines 268-271.

But silently resign
The charge I never *could* forsake,
And give my dearest children back
Into the hands divine.[18]

Such resignation is the fitting and desired end of his work. The same fitting end he detected in the life of St. Paul, 'And when, no more for Christ employ'd,/ The parting saint his charge resign'd'.[19]

The resignation of the blessing of things or responsibilities is as nothing however compared to the resignation of people, friendships and relationships. Whether the loss was through death, estrangement, or other manner of parting, it was no less keenly felt.

2. Resigning people

The overwhelming emphasis (forty of the fifty-six references to the resignation of earthly things and people) falls on the resignation of people. This resignation takes different forms. Occasionally the sense is of relinquishing relationships with others in order to be wholly dedicated to God, as in the case of the Maiden's Hymn, a prayer for 'unsullied purity' which seems to address chastity and possibly celibacy, 'Every creature I resign,/ Thine, both soul and body, thine.'[20] Another in a similar vein, articulates dedication to God through the resignation of 'every creature', 'An alien to my mother's sons/ … / And every creature I resign/ To find my All in Thee.'[21] Other hymns refer to the resignation of those who are God's instruments, God's servants, that God himself might be apprehended. Charles explores here the initial tendency of the believer to hold on to the preacher's words and deeds, as the lame man at the beautiful gate clung to Peter and John, but the movement must be to encourage the believer to cling to Christ instead.[22] Similarly in a hymn based on the biblical text of Peter's visit to Cornelius and his household, and their desire for Peter

[18] *RT*178.
[19] *RT*265, st.2, lines 4-5.
[20] *RT*174, st.2, lines 3-4.
[21] *RT*307, lines 1, 7-8.
[22] *RT*252, st.1, lines 7-8.

to stay longer, Charles expresses that the servant must be resigned, in the sense of released, so that they may, 'Closer then to Jesus cleave'.[23]

Four further categories are more significant; the number of hymns in each is greater, and the language Charles uses has more passion and feeling. They frequently sound like personal testimony, and particularly when dealing with parting from friends, resemble the emotional entries of a spiritual journal, resulting from struggle and prayer, as Charles wrestles with God over his loss. These four categories are resigning those he loves into God's care, resignation which occurs through estrangement, resignation in parting from friends, and resignation of friends through sickness and death.

i. Resigning in trust into God's care

The resignation of friends incorporated for Charles their resignation into the care of God. Two examples demonstrate this resignation. In the first Charles refers to resigning his friends as a pastor should leave the flock, following the example of Paul, 'My pious friends, like Paul, resign,/ Commend to Christ in faithful prayer,/ And leave them in the hands Divine!'[24] In the second Charles speaks of the resignation of a persecuted Christian in prison, entrusting him into God's hands:

> Our brother, whose burthen we bear,
> Whom into thy hands we resign,
> Preserve with thy tenderest care,
> And seal him eternally thine. [25]

Charles' family were his closest friends; sometimes therefore language about resigning friends refers to them, particularly resigning them into the care of God. An incomplete manuscript letter to his wife, written as a prayer for himself, his wife and his children before sleep, prays,

> 2 With thy kind Protection blest,
> Calm I lay me down to rest;
> All I have to Thee resign,
> Lodge them in the Arms Divine:[26]

[23] *RT*256, st.2, line 4.
[24] *RT*261, lines 6-8.
[25] *RT*92, st.1, lines 5-8.
[26] *RT*319, st.2.

Charles continues with a prayer for his wife, his 'dearest earthly friend', and his 'Little ones'. Charles' manuscript *Miscellaneous Hymns* contains a collection of fifteen hymns written as prayers of a father for his children, in the majority of cases, for his son. Some address specific occasions, 'For a child in the Small-Pox'; 'On sending a son to School'; 'For the same in grave danger'. These are personal hymns written for his children, though undoubtedly his experience of loss with regard to his children gave him an empathy with others in the same situation.[27] Two of the fifteen hymns use resignation language to commit his children into God's care, resigning his children to live for God

> The children by thy grace bestow'd
> I unto Thee resign;
> O may they fear, and serve their God,
> And live for ever thine![28]

The second occurs at the close of Charles' poem 'For the same in grave danger'. This hymn was dated by Charles in the margin 'Oct '83' and refers to his deep concern and grief when his son chose to become Roman Catholic, formally converting the following year. Charles' grief is evident in the poem, but he closes with this desire:

> 6 Might I live to see him freed,
> Nothing more woud I desire,
> Glad to bow my hoary head,
> Happy on thy cross t' expire,
> Life and all my friends resign,
> Leave them in the hands Divine.[29]

ii. Resignation through estrangement

Charles' personal suffering in parting is evident in his hymns of resignation of friends. Particularly poignant are those which occur as a result of estrangement. The estrangement of his son Samuel and his brother John are causes of particular grief. Charles' grief at Samuel's attachment to Roman Catholicism was noted above and

[27] Lloyd describes how Charles empathised with others through his letters. He gives the example of Charles' letter to Thomas Marriott on the death of his son, 'Jesus wept – to see his creatures weeping: therefore he does not disapprove your feeing your loss; neither do you offer God a sacrifice which costs you naught … My partner sympathizes with yours. We lost our only son by the smallpox'. Lloyd, *Struggle for Methodist Identity*, 153.
[28] *RT*212, st.1, lines 5-8.
[29] *RT*213, st.6.

Maddox expresses the significance of this pain for Charles in his introduction to the collection of thirteen poems written in response to this event:

> In his later years Samuel would deny having been a real convert, attributing his interest only to the Gregorian music, but at the time it was a grievous blow to his father. Charles poured out his pain and fears in verse, composing a total of thirteen manuscript poems. Their tone, indicative of his initial response, is sharp and bitter—accusing his son of parricide and treating him as essentially dead. Perhaps more than anything else that survives, these poems should be read as expressions of Charles's inner state. There is no indication that he shared them with Samuel, and he certainly did not intend their publication. It is also important to note that Charles's bitterness softened over time. Samuel continued to live with his parents and on his deathbed Charles said to Samuel: "I shall bless God to all eternity that ever you was born; I am persuaded I shall." This, despite the fact that Samuel forsook the Roman Catholic faith only after Charles's death.[30]

The third hymn in this collection uses resignation language of this broken relationship. Charles' resignation is patiently, calmly and freely offered:

> 3 Yet since he from my heart is torn,
> Patient, resign'd, I calmly mourn
> The darling snatch'd away:
> Father, with thee thy own I leave;
> Into thy mercy's arms receive,
> And keep him to that day.
>
> 4 Keep (for I nothing else desire)
> The bush unburnt amidst the fire,
> And freely I resign
> *My* Child for a few moments lent
> (My Child no longer!) I consent
> To see his face no more.[31]

The contributory factors to the increasing estrangement between John and Charles, encompassing their ministry and their personal lives, is comprehensively analysed by Lloyd.[32] The anguish of this estrangement is evident in a poem which Baker suggests designates Charles' resignation on the loss of his brother at his marriage to

[30] Maddox, editorial introduction, *MS Samuel Wesley, R.C.*
[31] *RT*233, sts.1-4.
[32] Lloyd, *Struggle for Methodist Identity*.

Mary Vazeille in February 1751,[33] the evidence for which seems clear within the poem,

4 O could I to the Desart fly
Till pain with life should end,
And ah! my *faithless Brother* cry
And ah! my faithless Friend!

5 The dearest Sharer of my heart,
Ah! whither is he fled!
My Friend, whom death could never part,
To me is doubly dead.

6 In simple innocency drest
The soft Ephesian's charms
Have caught him from my honest breast
To her bewitching Arms.

7 My other Self, but more belov'd
In youth in manhood tried,
Faithful for 30 winters prov'd—
Is ravish'd from my side.

8 O what a mighty Loss is mine!
The anguish who can tell,
The more than anguish, to resign
A Soul I lov'd so well!

9 But shall a sinful man complain
Or murmur at the Rod?
I yield, I yield him back again
Into the Arms of GOD.[34]

Baker makes the same argument for the poem which follows in *MS Richmond*.[35] The references to sworn friendship and estrangement in stanza five support such a suggestion, as do the lines of stanza four which state 'And fondly made my friend my God,/ And sought my all from Him,'[36] a sentiment entirely cognisant with his high regard for his brother, especially in their earlier years. Yet this language is startling. Charles seems to accuse himself of making an idol of his friend, thus forcing God to remove the friendship from him:

[33] Maddox's editorial comment states: 'Frank Baker suggests that this and the following poem reflect Charles's distress over John Wesley's marriage to Mary Vazeille in February 1751.' *MS Richmond*, 142n46.
[34] *RT*229, sts.4-9.
[35] *RT*230.
[36] *RT*230, st.4, lines 3-4.

4 The Blessing more than once bestow'd
I grasp'd with joy extreme,
And fondly made my friend my God,
And sought my all from Him.
Object of all my love and trust,
I woud not let him stay,
But forc'd the jealous GOD and just
To snatch his gift away.[37]

There is a certain pathos in the poem; Charles' longing for friendship is clearly apparent,

The world and all its joys resign'd,
Might I but apprehend
The only good for which I pin'd,
The blessing of a Friend.[38]

Perhaps the most poignant example however is a poem in which Charles expresses his resignation of 'his brethren and companions near', not only his brother, but also his companions in ministry. This poem is written in the style of a journal and is deeply personal. The title, 'Written After the Conference in Aug. 1780, The last which the Writer was present at', suggests perhaps Charles' intention that this would be the last Conference he attended, though Lloyd indicates that Charles in fact also attended the Conferences of 1782 and 1783.[39] It is significant however that it seems Charles was not present at the Conference of 1784, where the Deed of Declaration was agreed, taking Methodism closer to separation from the Church of England, a course of action sealed by the subsequent ordinations by John of Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey as deacons on September 1, 1784 and as presbyters a day later.[40] Charles' sense of frustration and futility about the direction of the movement, and his powerlessness to effect change is unmistakable; so too is his sorrow, despair and quiet humility.

1 Why shoud I longer, Lord, contend,
My last, important moments spend
In buffetting the air,
In warning those who will not see,

[37] *RT*230, st.4.
[38] *RT*230, st.3, lines 5-8.
[39] Lloyd, *Struggle for Methodist Identity*, 195.
[40] Lloyd, *Struggle for Methodist Identity*, 197.

But rest in blind security,
And rush into the snare!

2 Prophet of ills why shoud I live,
Or by my sad forebodings grieve
Whom I can serve no more?
I only can their loss bewail,
Till life's exhausted sorrows fail,
And the last pang is o're.

3 Here then I quietly resign
Into those gracious hands divine
Whom I receiv'd from Thee,
My brethren and companions dear,
And finish with a parting tear
My useless ministry.

4 Detach'd from every creature now
I humbly at thy footstool bow,
Accepting my release,
If Thou the promis'd grace bestow,
Salvation to thy Servant show,
And bid me die in peace.[41]

iii. Resignation in parting from friends

Similar sentiments of grief, pain, struggle and constraint are articulated in Charles' hymns of parting from friends. This parting is frequently, though not entirely, through death and as indicated above sometimes includes his family. Such parting caused Charles spiritual turmoil; his poetry expresses gratitude for the friendship, his resistance to the resignation he sees required, and his acquiescence to the will of God in humility and trust. Charles' self-accusation of idolatry through friendship, introduced above, is again evident here; sometimes he sees the loss of friends as God's punishment for having given the friend too high a place in his affection.[42] In the following hymn his struggle with both the theology and his perceived motivation behind his love for his friend is evident:

1 O holy, holy, holy Lord!
Righteous in all thy ways art thou!
I yield and tremble at thy word,
Beneath thy mighty hand I bow,
I own, while humbled in the dust,
I own the punishment is just.

[41] *RT*207.
[42] See also *RT*87.

2 Joy of my eyes the creature was;
Desired;—but O! Desir'd for thee!
Why feel I then th' imbitter'd loss?
Late in thy judgment's light, I see
Whom now thy stroke hath far remov'd,
I lov'd—alas! Too dearly lov'd![43]

His reference to resignation appears in stanza seven,

7 O let your prayers the Saviour move,
In love my spirit to renew!
O could I taste the Saviour's love,
Gladly I then should part with you;
My all triumphantly resign,
And lodge you in the arms divine.[44]

In part III of this hymn Charles' anguish is uttered in the twice repeated line, 'Oh! I have lost my friends, my friends!'[45]

A hymn on the resignation of friends with a different emphasis is one which intimates the treachery of friends who have deserted him, thrusting him back onto a reliance on God alone.

1 Take these broken reeds away!
On the Rock of Ages I
Calmly now my spirit stay,
Now on Christ alone rely,
Every other prop resign,
Sure the sinners' friend is mine.

2 Fly, my friends, with treacherous speed,
Melt as snow before the sun,
Leave me at my greatest need,
Leave me to my God alone,
To my help which cannot fail,
To my friend unchangeable.[46]

[43] *RT*10, sts.1-2.
[44] *RT*10, st.7.
[45] *HSP* (1740), 52.
[46] *RT*86, sts.1-2.

iv. Resignation of friends through sickness and death

The majority of Charles' references to the resignation of friends are located within the context of sickness and death.[47] Again these hymns are expressive of the passion, anguish and pain felt at such loss. The tension between the struggle to resign and the possibility that the person prayed for might live, between the desperate longing for a child to recover and the equally strong desire to be obedient to the will of God, between nature and grace, is palpable. These hymns simultaneously communicate the extremes of heart wrenching sorrow and absolute devotion. An analysis of them reveals two key points: first, that subsequent to the death of his first son the expression of passion, grief and empathy intensifies in Charles' hymns; and second, that in the majority of these texts there are a number of significant common recurring features.

A comparison of hymns written prior to and following January 1754, when Charles' first child died, demonstrates the increased intensity of feeling and emotion in hymns following this event. In the following hymn entitled 'On the Death of a Child' written in 1749 Charles could write:

> 2 Where is the passionate regret,
> The fond complaint, and lingring smart?
> Can I my sucking child forget,
> So freely with my Isaac part,
> So chearfully my all resign,
> And triumph in the will divine!
>
> 3 Son of my womb, my joy, my hope,
> He liv'd, my yearning heart's desire,
> Yet lo! I gladly yield him up,
> No longer mine, if God require,
> And with a sudden stroke remove,
> Whom only less than God I love.[48]

Following the death of his son, however, he uses language of grief, weeping, tears, sacrifice and struggle. These themes will become apparent in the broader examination of the common recurring features, but one poem in particular which demonstrates both the intensification of feelings and these recurrent themes is

[47] The hymns which fall into this category and which are referenced in this section are the following: *RT*9, *RT*10, *RT*77, *RT*78, *RT*101, *RT*102, *RT*107, *RT*108, *RT*109, *RT*113, *RT*163, *RT*165, *RT*166, *RT*227, *RT*240, *RT*242, *RT*247.

[48] *RT*77, sts.2-3.

Charles' poem written for the death of his son John, in 1754, 'A Prayer for a Dying Child.'

1 Father, Lord of earth and heaven,
Spare, or take what thou hast given;
Sole disposer of thine own,
Let thy sovereign will be done.

2 When thou didst our Isaac give,
Him we trembled to receive,
Him we call'd not ours, but thine,
Him we promis'd to resign.

3 Lo! We to our promise stand,
Lo! We answer thy demand,
Will not murmur or complain,
If thou claim thine own again.

4 Life and death depend on thee,
Just and good is thy decree,
Safe in thy decree we rest,
Sure whatever is, is best.

5 Meekly we our vow repeat,
Nature *shall* to grace submit,
Let him on the altar lie,
Let the victim live, or die.

6 Yet thou know'st, what pangs of love
In a father's bosom move,
What the agony to part,
Struggling in a mother's heart.

7 Sorely tempted and distrest,
Can we make the fond request?
Dare we pray for a reprieve?
Need we ask that he may live?

8 God we absolutely trust,
Wise, and merciful, and just,
All thy works to thee are known,
All thy blessed will be done.

9 If his life a snare would prove,
Rob us of thy heavenly love,
Steal our hearts from God away;
Mercy will not let him stay.

10 If his life would matter raise
Of thine everlasting praise,
More his Saviour glorify;
Mercy will not let him die.[49]

[49] *RT*107.

Intensity of emotion is apparent in the 'pangs of love', 'agony', and 'struggling' language of stanza six in particular. The language of loan is similarly evident, along with an acknowledgement of the vow made to God when the child was received, 'Him we promis'd to resign', and which is now, in stanza five repeated. There is a clear declaration of trust in God, who is 'Wise, and merciful, and just', and whose decrees are not only just but good (stanza four). The language of sacrifice, stanza five, 'Let him on the altar lie,/ Let the victim live, or die', expresses the parents' willingness to submit meekly to God's will already stated in stanza three, 'Lo! We answer thy demand,/ Will not murmur or complain', and in stanza five, 'Nature *shall* to grace submit'. Finally there is an acknowledgement that it is in God's power to choose whether the child lives or dies, and interestingly Charles sees the choice connected with the outcome of the child's life, whether he would hinder their relationship with God, 'Steal our hearts from God away', or live to bring praise to God, (stanza ten). This is based on the biblical text in which the potential sacrifice of Isaac is set within the context of proving Abraham's faith.

These themes comprise the majority of the recurring features in the resignation hymns dealing with loss through sickness and death. Furthermore Charles frequently pairs these features. Charles liked to use paradox in his hymns and something of the contrast of paradox is discernible the couplings. There are four discernible pairings, explored below.

a) Sacrifice and silent weeping

The first coupling is of the language of sacrifice, of rendering up the one who is sick or dying, with an attitude of not daring to complain, of silent weeping. The language of 'rendering up' is used regularly in these hymns and is another means through which Charles expresses resignation. The imagery of sacrifice is frequently expressed through language of 'altar' and 'Isaac', referring to the biblical account of the near sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham.[50] Examples from these hymns include phrases such as 'Let him on the altar lie,/ Let the victim live or die';[51] 'render

[50] Genesis 22:1-14, KJV and NRSV.
[51] *RT*107, st.5, lines 3-4.

back',[52] 'yield',[53] 'While he on the altar lies,/ We to thy decree submit,/ Offer up our sacrifice,/ Weep in silence at thy feet';[54] 'Her Isaac on the altar lies'.[55]

Such sacrifice, heart-wrenching, deeply painful sacrifice, is however paired with an attitude of not complaining, of *silent* weeping.

3 Fain we would obedient prove,
Here on rugged Calvary
Render back the son we love,
Yield our only son to thee:
While he on the altar lies,
We to thy decree submit,
Offer up our sacrifice,
Weep in silence at thy feet.[56]

For Charles there is a tension between wanting to weep, justifying this desire by citing the biblical reference to Jesus weeping in the following stanza, 'Jesus wept! And so may we',[57] and his discomfort, even fearfulness of suggesting that such weeping might indicate a lack of obedience to God, or reluctance to submit to his will. In another hymn he speaks of not daring to complain, 'I dare not deprecate the cross,/ Or of my loss complain'.[58] Similarly in his 'Prayer, for the Mother, of a Son in the Small-pox' written for Mrs. Elizabeth Vigor and most likely her son Francis, the fear of opposing God's will is explicit, and again the tears are silent, 'With pity mark her silent tears,/ Her pious prayers, and tender fears/ T'oppose the Sovereign will'.[59] Elsewhere Charles suggests that his grief at the loss of his friend should be concealed,

4 The fatal blow I feel
Of his almighty hand,
My grief commanded to conceal,
I bow to his command.

[52] *RT*84, st.9, line 5; *RT*99, st.9, line 3; *RT*163, st.3, line 3.
[53] There are numerous references to 'yield' in the resignation texts. Those which apply to the resignation of friends or family appear in: *RT*10, st.1, line 3; *RT*77, st.3, line 3; *RT*87, st.2, line 4; *RT*88, st.10, line 2; *RT*101, st.4, line 5; *RT*113, st.2, line 7; *RT*163, st.3, line 4; *RT*229, st.9, line 3; *RT*309, st.2, line 6.
[54] *RT*163, st.3, lines 6-8.
[55] *RT*242, st.1, line 2.
[56] *RT*163, st.3. My italics.
[57] *RT*163, st.4, line 5.
[58] *RT*78, st.3, lines 1-2.
[59] *RT*242, st.2, lines 1-3.

But thou hast not forbid
My secret tears to flow,
And all my griefs, from mortals hid,
Thou dost with pity know.[60]

Charles consistently however reinforces throughout these texts an acquiescence to God's will:

5 Father of our patient Lord,
Strengthen us with him to grieve,
Prostrate to receive thy word,
All thy counsel to receive:
Tho' we would the cup decline,
Govern'd by thy will alone
Ours we struggle to resign:
Thine, and only thine be done.[61]

b) Loan and the fulfilment of a vow

The second coupling of images in these hymns is the connection of the language of loan and the fulfilling of a vow. The imagery of loan was introduced above; Charles' reference to friends and particularly children being a loan from God is strong and occurs frequently, with the associated acknowledgement that God can take back that which is already his; God has both the power to do so, 'Life and death are in thine hand:/ In thine hand our child we see/ Waiting thy benign command',[62] and the right, 'Who lent the blessing first to me;/ Lent, and resumes, it is the Lord!'[63] And elsewhere, 'Calls for his beloved child,/ Who on me himself bestow'd/ Claims the purchase of his blood.'[64]

The task for the believer is to resign the loan, back into the hands of God. Sometimes this resignation is offered in the spirit of a resolution to obey, even though the sacrifice is costly,

3 Spite of myself resolv'd t' obey,
I tear the dear right-eye away,
If it my Lord offend;
I bow me to the will divine,

[60] *RT*102, st.4.
[61] *RT*163, st.5.
[62] *RT*163, st.6, lines 1-3.
[63] *RT*77, st.4, lines 4-5.
[64] *RT*165, st.1, lines 4-6.

My life, and more than life resign,
I give thee back my friend.[65]

Frequently however, Charles describes the resignation as cheerful, 'And kindly bids us weep no more,/ But chearfully his loan resign,/ And leave him in the arms divine.'[66]

The resignation of the loan is coupled with the fulfilment of vows made to God; it is clear that underpinning the relationship of loan, vow and resignation, lies an intimate relationship with God. The vow usually refers to a promise made to God on the birth of a child, with the recognition that the child is the gift of God and whose life might be required of God again at any time:

3 'Twas on these terms alone
That first I call'd him mine,
And vow'd without a murm'ring groan
The blessing to resign:[67]

The loan is returned in faithfulness to the vow previously made, a vow made in love and reverence to God, 'Son of my womb, my joy, my hope,/ … / Whom only less than God I love. … The sacrifice long since was o'er,/ I stand to what I gave before.'[68]

c) Trust in God's goodness and obedience to God's will

The third pairing of recurring features in these hymns is the expression of absolute trust in God's goodness, that God's will is good, and the believer's meekness and obedience to God's will. There are a multitude of references to God's will being done, to utter trust that God knows what he is doing and that God's will is best, his 'benign command',[69] because God is love,[70] however it feels to the anxious or bereaved parents or friends:

[65] *RT*101, st.3.
[66] *RT*108, st.2, lines 4-6.
[67] *RT*102, st.3, lines 1-4.
[68] *RT*77 st.3, lines 1 and 6; st.5, lines 5-6.
[69] *RT*163, st.6, line 3.
[70] *RT*167, st.1, line 1.

4 Life and death depend on thee,
Just and good is thy decree,
Safe in thy decree we rest,
Sure whatever is, is best.[71]

Charles in his prayer for their dying child prays, 'God we absolutely trust,/ Wise, and merciful, and just'.[72] Elsewhere similar statements of faith and trust are articulated, 'Life, or death from thee is best',[73] 'Stript of all, we trust in thee',[74] 'Thy love must send whate'er is best',[75] 'Thy will be done, whate'er it be,/ Thy blessed will concerning me.'[76] Not only is God's will to be done in complete trust, but God's divine will is blessed by the believer, 'I bless the will divine'.[77]

The tension lies in the necessity for the believer to submit to this will, believing it to be good, when to do so requires the costly sacrifice referenced in the previous sections. A trusting response and confidence in the goodness and power of God is articulated repeatedly throughout these texts through words of meekness, obedience, and submission, expressions of the attitude of resignation. Words and phrases used are such as: 'Meekly we our vow repeat',[78] 'Fain we would obedient prove,/ Here on rugged Calvary/ Render back the son we love',[79] 'Obedient to the word divine,/ She woud her more than life resign./ If Thou her Son demand',[80] 'Would to thy decision bow,/ Would be meekly willing now',[81] 'Her wish with meekness to submit,/ And weep, afflicted at thy feet./ Till Thou thy mind reveal',[82] 'I bow me to the will divine'[83] and on the death of a child, 'Peace, my heart, be calm, be still,/ Subject to my Father's will!'[84]

[71] *RT*107, st.4.
[72] *RT*107, st.8, lines 1-2.
[73] *RT*163, st.7, line 8.
[74] *RT*166, st.7, line 1.
[75] *RT*242, st.6, line 1.
[76] *RT*101, st.4, lines 1-2.
[77] *RT*78, st.4, line 2.
[78] *RT*107, st.5, line 1.
[79] *RT*163, st.3, lines 1-3.
[80] *RT*242, st.3, lines 1-3.
[81] *RT*166, st.5, lines 3-4.
[82] *RT*242, st.2, lines 4-6.
[83] *RT*83, st.3, line 5.
[84] *RT*165, st.1, line 1.

So frequent are these references that it is clear that this attitude of heart, mind and will is of central importance to Charles' understanding of the fundamental relationship between humanity and God.

d) Nature and grace

The fourth pairing of ideas in these hymns is the connection of nature and grace. As noted above, these hymns express the struggle of human nature which wants to weep, grieve, and cling to the one who is sick or who has died, with the desire to be obedient to the perceived will of God in the event, which is accepted as sovereign and as all-powerful to affect the outcome of the circumstance. Charles' theology asserts that by grace this resignation to the will of God is possible. Nature can submit to grace by the power of the Holy Spirit. Without the grace of God however this is not possible; there is honesty about the struggle,

> 2 *Can we of ourselves resign*
> The most precious loan divine?
> With thy loveliest creature part?
> Lord, thou seest our bleeding heart.
>
> 3 Whom thyself hast planted there,
> From our bleeding heart to tear,
> This, most sensibly we feel,
> *This we own impossible.*
>
> 4 Dearest of thy gifts below,
> Nature cannot let her go,
> *Nature, 'till by grace subdued,*
> *Will not give her back to God.*[85]

Charles recognises not only the necessity but also the wonder of grace which enables resignation, even cheerful resignation, and that he might still live, even though he knows his child is dead, 'Glory to that victorious grace,/ Thro; which a worm can all things do!'[86] 'And lo, thro' grace I ready am/ … / Thy blessings chearfully resign'.[87] The resignation which can be offered cheerfully, thankfully and freely is possible through the strengthening of the Spirit, 'Strengthen'd by thy Spirit's power,/ Him I chearfully resign'.[88]

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[85] *RT*166, sts.2-4. My italics.
[86] *RT*77, st.1, lines 1-2.
[87] *RT*113, st.2, lines 3 and 6.
[88] *RT*100, st.2, lines 3-4.

However, in addition to reliance on the grace of God there is an implicit determination of the believer to ensure this happens; in his hymn for his own dying child Charles' use of italics indicates his resolve, 'Nature *shall* to grace submit'.[89] The same tenacity is found in a hymn for Christian friends, 'I must—I will— comply/ With Jesus' just demand,'[90] and in a hymn on the death of a child,

> 3 Father, we make thy deed our own,
> Submissive to thy wisest choice,
> Tho' nature give a parting groan,
> Our spirits *shall* in thee rejoice,[91]

The believer's participation is important. Whilst trusting in the grace and sufficiency of God to those who are grieving, 'Equal is God to all thy wants',[92] Charles sounds a note of warning: the 'fear to lose a gracious God.'[93] The grief and tears are not to be wallowed in but the loved one resigned to God, through the strength of God's grace, and with unswerving trust in the life of heaven where loved ones will be seen again and the suffering of loss will be no more,

> There plaintive grief no more shall weep,
> Remembrance there shall vex no more;
> Nor fond excess, nor pining care,
> Nor loss, nor parting shall be there! [94]

Conclusion

Resigning earthly things and people is, for Charles Wesley, a significant and necessary feature of the spiritual discipline of resignation to God. Charles recognised that this was not easy however. His own experience of the loss of friends and family taught him just how demanding such a discipline could be. The technique he uses in pairing words, illustrated in the four sets of pairings considered above, highlights the tension which resignation of others to God creates for the believer: the tension between the desire of human nature, and obedience to God's perceived will; between the costly nature of resignation, and yet the intention to fulfil

[89] *RT*107, st.5, line 2.
[90] *RT*102, st.1, lines 5-6.
[91] *RT*108, st.3, lines 1-4.
[92] *RT*9, st.1, line 3.
[93] *RT*9, st.2, line 4.
[94] *RT*9, st.7, lines 3-6.

vows made to God; the struggle of submitting to God's will with an appropriate attitude of resignation, and trust that God's will is good; the incongruence between human capacity to achieve this resignation, and God's grace through which it might be accomplished. It is clear that the resignation of things and others, others in particular, is sometimes painful, costly, and demanding, however in preparation for the life of heaven Charles considered that such resignation was necessary. In addition to this resignation, however, the resignation of the self was also required. Charles' understanding of the resignation of the self is examined in the remaining three chapters of part II.

Chapter 6

Resignation of the self: resigning the will and heart

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

—Charles Wesley[1]

Introduction

In this, and the remaining chapters of part II three aspects of the resignation of the self in Charles' resignation texts are discussed. These deal with the framing of attitude towards God in terms of resignation. This is by far the dominant use of resignation for Charles Wesley.

In this chapter the resignation of the will and heart is addressed. There are twenty-five examples of the believer resigning will and heart. The subject is the believer and the resignation emerges from a variety of contexts. Sometimes resignation is a response to the love and care of God, or an acknowledgement of the authority of God over the believer. Sometimes the resignation is a penitent response following an acknowledgement of resistance to God; on other occasions resignation is related to sanctification or to the experience of suffering in a believer's life; on others it is a daily offering located amidst the activity of ordinary life.

Resignation is always, however, an expression of faith and frequently associated with God's will. Therefore, alongside this classification of the believer's resignation of will and heart another is aligned, and that is resignation to God's will. Within this classification God is the subject rather than the believer, but resigning to God's will similarly entails the believer's resignation of will and heart. There are a further eighteen instances which fall into this category and which add emphasis to Charles' use of the resignation of the will.

[1] *RT*211, st.7.

In chapter three it was noted that in Charles' hymns the addressee is usually God. Charles' language of the resignation of the will and heart is essentially language expressive of the relationship between the believer and God. Of the twenty-five instances which refer to the believer resigning the will and heart to God only five do not directly address God. Of these five, two are written in response to biblical verses and both are declarations of faith. The first, in response to Acts 17:7, the context of which is Paul preaching in Thessalonica accompanied by Silas; the crowd are in uproar saying they were preaching another king (rather than Caesar).[2] Charles' response to this passage is written as a testimony to those challenging Paul and Silas, and asserts Jesus as King. The second example is similar; this time Charles writes in response to Philippians 1:29 and this is a poem in which Charles avows his happiness to both live and die for Jesus.[3]

The remaining three hymns which do not address God directly deal with subjects Charles is offering a reflection upon. One is a poem written for children before or during work, from the perspective of one among them, and offers a model of the right attitude of a Christian towards work.[4] The second is a theological and spiritual reflection on the appropriate attitude of a servant or possibly a slave to his/her master when that master is Christian, or in fact a reflection on how everyone should behave toward those who are masters over them.[5] The third is a eulogy, reflecting on the life of Mrs. Anne Wigginton and written on her death.[6] Whether the style is one of testimony, eulogy or of theological and spiritual reflection, even the hymns which do not address God directly indicate a personal relationship with God.

Three other hymns do not address God at their beginning but end addressing God.[7] This technique is one used by Charles to embody the movement frequently embedded in his hymns. The hymn with the first line, 'Who furious for the truth contend',[8] opens with a reflection on a biblical text, (John 18:11), moves to exhortation to believers to accept the cup of suffering and ends with a prayer for the

[2] *RT*260.
[3] *RT*311.
[4] *RT*156.
[5] *RT*177.
[6] *RT*106.
[7] *RT*28, *RT*73, *RT*274.
[8] *RT*274.

writer to be similarly able to accept this cup. The other two hymns begin with a desire and end with a request of God. [9]

Of the eighteen hymns which speak of resignation *to* God's will, two do not address God but take the form of journal like reflections, both indicating an experience of difficulty; the first one of suffering, under the 'heavy hand and rod' of God,[10] and the second, entitled 'For One, under a prospect of Want', hints at loss through 'rapine', 'avarice', 'envy', the 'seeming friend' and 'open foe'.[11] Two further hymns combine reflection, and prayer which addresses God: one expresses movement from being blessed by God as a child, through rebellion against God and finally returning to God in penitence; addressing God directly in stanzas four to seven.[12] The other is Charles' hymn on the death of William Hitchins, which is not addressed to God except for one verse, stanza four, when Jesus is called upon, by the dying man.

On the Death of W[illiam] Hitchins,
Oct. 29, 1773.

1 Rejoice, who bow to Jesus' Name!
The righteous man by God approv'd
Meek follower of the patient Lamb,
If from our Vale of tears remov'd;
His days of pain and grief are o're:
Rejoice for Him who weeps no more.

2 Void of offence toward God and man
With care he kept his Con[science] here,
Good works industrious to maintain,
A simple Israelite sincere
Thro' life he Israel's King confess'd
God over all for ever blest.

3 Faithful to death he own'd his Lord,
An heir of sure salvation seal'd,
The kingdom to his soul restor'd

[9] *RT*28, *RT*73.
[10] *RT*146.
[11] *RT*208. The precise nature of the 'want' Charles had in mind is not clear, but is it likely that he was feeling under attack from a number of directions. As Lloyd makes clear the decade of the 1750's was one rife with tensions in which Charles was embroiled (Lloyd, *Struggle for Methodist Identity*, ch.7). Beginning with those which emerged in the relationship between himself and his brother through John's marriage in 1751 to Mary Vazeille, of which Charles did not approve; his unhappy relationship with the preachers; and his gradual withdrawal from itinerant ministry to settle into domestic life, a course of action of which John did not approve. This hymn deals with a sense of the affliction of loss whether as a result of 'Female revenge, or fraud in man', or instigated by 'A seeming friend, or open foe,/ A stranger's, or a brother's hand.' Charles concludes that his eye is faithfully fixed on God and 'Whatever is from God is best!'
[12] *RT*18.

The earnest in his heart reveal'd
By more than words he testifies,
And gasps for Jesus in the skies.

4 Come my beloved Saviour, come,
Thou seest me to thy will resign'd
Made ready for my heavenly home
Lover of Thee and all mankind,
Conqueror of hell and death and sin,
Open thine arms and take me in.

5 Bright kindred saints around his bed
To catch his parting spirit stay,
Angels their golden pinions spread
And Jesus beckons him away:
I come, I come, with smiles he cries
[ ] dies!

6 He lives to God he greatly lives,
And thro' the merits of his Lord
According to his works receives
The labourer's hire, the full reward,
The promis'd crown, the purchas'd Grace
The Heaven of heavens—in Jesus Face.[13]

The prayer of stanza four is interesting for two reasons. First, it is a witness to all who stand around his bed, and who later read this eulogy, to how Christians should die; it is a prayer to be emulated. Second, this prayer is situated in the extant version of the poem as stanza four out of six. Maddox in his annotation to this poem notes that the poem was incomplete. He comments that the last line of stanza five is unfinished, and between stanzas four and five, 'Wesley left space at the top of this page, presumably to add later a couple of stanzas before the last two'.[14] The current numbering of stanzas five and six was added by the editors but is not present in Charles' text. Given that the exhortatory verse addressed to Jesus is stanza four, it is reasonable to suggest that Charles intended to add *one* more verse rather than a couple, so that three stanzas follow stanza four, mirroring the three which precede it. Structure was important to Charles, and one additional stanza following stanza four would make stanza four central to the poem, emphasising its distinctive nature and central importance.

[13] *RT*246.
[14] *MS Death of William Hitchens*, 2n7. The variation in spelling of 'Hitchins' reflects the different practice of Charles and John; as Maddox notes in an editorial comment to this text Charles favoured 'Hitchins' and John, 'Hitchens', 1n2.

To speculate further, from the pattern of the hymn we have, if Charles were using a chiastic model, it would seem more likely that the missing stanza is stanza seven. This suggestion is based on the echoes found in stanzas two and six: Hitchins' good works, a Gospel reference ('simple Israelite sincere'), and reference to God as King in stanza two; mirrored in stanza six by Christ's works, another Gospel reference ('labourer's hire'), and reference to a crown. We might then expect the final stanza to have mirrored the first and to have focussed on rejoicing in heaven over this saint received into God's kingdom.

The foregoing analysis of hymns in this chapter demonstrates that they are primarily addressed to God, and even if not, they still essentially address the believer's relationship with God. The resignation examined in this and succeeding chapters is rooted in, emerges from, and responds to the relationship between God and the believer. This resignation is concerned with the development, strengthening and deepening of relationship with God and is both symptomatic of and a contributor to the attitude towards God which leads to sanctification.

1. Resignation of the will

i. Will and nature

For Charles the will belongs to, and is identified with, a person's nature; it is 'my nature's will'.[15] The resignation of the will is therefore the resignation of the natural state. Resigning the will is closely allied with obedience and submission. Charles' poem, 'The Prayer of a Daughter for her Father',[16] explicitly aligns the resignation of the will with obedience and speaks of obeying Christ through obedience to another. The first part of the poem portrays a woman who prays, wrestles and weeps for her father's salvation; in part two the focus shifts to her tender care of him, and the conviction that it is through such daily acts of loving care that her obedience to Christ is manifest. Her resignation to God's will is accomplished through her resignation to another's will. 'My will I woud to his resign/ … / And Thee in Him obey.'[17]

[15] *RT*274, st.3, line 3.
[16] *MS Miscellaneous Verse* 1786, 5-8.
[17] *RT*216, st.2, lines 1 and 6.

The resignation of nature and will extends to the desire to be without will: 'To nature's will entirely dead',[18] and 'Meekly my nature's will resign'.[19] Stanzas two and three of Charles poem 'Submission', contain some dramatic phrases establishing the point:

> 2 Take my nature's strength away,
> ……
> All *my* power to act or move,
> Fain I would be truly *still*,
> Fain I would be without will,
> ……..
>
> 3 Weaken, bring me down to nought,
> Captivate my every thought,[20]

The desire expressed to Christ at the outset is to be 'perfectly resign'd to thee',[21] which for Charles entails such submission.

The reference to being 'truly still' is fascinating, given the context of the time of writing[22] and the growing disagreement of the Wesley brothers with the Moravians over the issue of stillness; a controversy which meant a split in the Fetter Lane society in 1740 with the departure of those who were against stillness and the feared antinomian consequences. Maddox's editorial introduction to *MS Cheshunt* indicates that the Countess of Huntingdon helped Charles to overcome a brief attraction to the stillness doctrine in 1741,[23] and it would seem that this hymn may be indicative of that brief dalliance. Alternatively it may be that Charles is referring to a stillness of the passions as in the following lines, published at the same time,

> 4 O respite me from self and pride,
> Curb, and keep down my will,

[18] *RT*109, st.8, line 4.
[19] *RT*274, st.3, line 3.
[20] *RT*39, st,2, lines 1, 4-6; st.3, lines 1-2. Charles' italics.
[21] *RT*39, st.1, line 2.
[22] Maddox indicates in his editorial introduction to *HSP* (1742) its earlier release date, 'advertising makes clear it was actually released in late December 1741'.
[23] Maddox, editorial introduction, *MS Cheshunt*; see also n2 indicating John Wesley's journal entries, correspondence, and Charles' hymn 'Stillness' rejecting the doctrine, also denoted in Maddox's footnote in *MS Shorthand Verse* 30n1.

My appetites and passions chide,
And bid the sea be still.[24]

However such an interpretation would seem unlikely given the context of 'Submission' is a request that God remove 'All my power to *act or move*', rather than any reference to the passions.

ii. Resignation of the will to God's will

In his letter to his soon to be wife, Sarah Gwynne, Charles writes, 'Lift up the hands that hang down, & strengthen the feeble knees! The God of all consolation look upon you, & inspire you with faith, patience, love & entire resignation to his blessed will.'[25] For Charles, the purpose of the resignation of the human will is for it to be resigned to God's will, 'Yet do I this resign,/ Thy will be done, not mine;'[26] 'Yet let thy sovereign will be done,/ My own I patiently resign'.[27] There are numerous similar examples.[28]

To be obedient, submissive, resigned to God's will is an essential task and attitude for the believer. Charles unequivocally indicates why this is to be through his use of adjectives describing God's will in these resignation hymns. They fall essentially into one of two categories. God's will is to be done both because God is 'sovereign', 'divine' and 'omnipotent'; and because his will is 'good', 'perfect', 'welcome' and 'blessed'. The most frequently used adjective is 'sovereign', God's 'sovereign will'. This appears eleven times in the eighteen hymns dealing with resignation to the will of God. 'Will divine', 'Father's will' and 'blessed/ blest will' are also used frequently.

Elsewhere, however, Charles makes it clear that he is not afraid to express earnest human desire, for example in prayer for the recovery of a sister in the faith who is sick. However, the supplication made to God is done so *before* God's will has become known. When God's will is known then the attitude of the believer is one of resignation to it.

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[24] *RT*33, st.4.
[25] *Letters*, 205.
[26] *RT*81, st.11, lines 1-2.
[27] *RT*135, lines 3-4.
[28] For example *RT*11, st.4; *RT*40, st.12; *RT*56, st.2; *RT*177, st.5.

7 Humbly prostrate at thy feet,
We our will to thine submit;
Yet, before thy will is shown,
Trembling we present our own.

8 'Till thy love's design we *see*,
Earnest, but resign'd to thee,
Suffer us for life to pray,
Bless us with her longer stay.[29]

A similar attitude is evident in the following hymn, but here the attitude of resignation to God is hinted at further through the words 'tender fears/ T' oppose the Sovereign will'. God's sovereignty is clearly acknowledged and the believer has no desire to oppose God.

2 With pity mark her silent tears,
Her pious prayers, and tender fears
T' oppose the Sovereign will;
Her wish with meekness to submit,
And weep, afflicted, at thy feet,
Till Thou thy mind reveal.

5 Now, Lord, a gracious token give,
And let us with the Parent grieve,
Resign'd to thy decree,[30]

Human desire is subservient to the will of God, which is submitted to humbly, meekly and patiently,

1 Saviour, 'till thou declare thy will,
Thy providential mind reveal,
And charge us to submit,
May we not humbly persevere
In pleading for a life so dear,
In weeping at thy feet?

2 Foolish, and blind to what is best,
We urge, yet check our fond request,
With resignation cry,
Save him—the vessel of thy grace,
Save him—and for thy glory raise,
While at the point to die.[31]

[29] *RT*167, sts.7-8.
[30] *RT*242, st.2; st.5, lines 1-3.
[31] *RT*173, sts.1-2.

That God's will is 'sovereign' and 'good' are the fundamental theological principles which undergird the resignation of the believer to God. These principles determine and shape the characteristics of the resignation to be acquired by the believer. These characteristics are the subject of the next section.

iii. Characteristics of the unresigned will

The characteristics of the resigned will are cognate to the characteristics of the unresigned will. Charles allocates various characteristics to the will. It is wayward,[32] untamed and rebellious,[33] headlong,[34] it needs curbing and keeping down,[35] it is perverse,[36] carnal,[37] and stubborn.[38] There is often therefore a struggle to overcome these innate characteristics and resign the will to God. Charles articulates the struggle, 'I do at last comply,/ My stubborn will resign'.[39] An earlier manuscript precursor of this hymn differs slightly; rather than 'I do at last comply,/ My stubborn will resign', the earlier version reads, 'I would, I would, comply,/ My stubborn will resign'.[40] The later version was published in 1749 in volume one of *Hymns and Sacred Poems*. The earlier version was part of a manuscript collection, which as Maddox indicates, was probably sent to Lady Huntingdon in 1744.[41] It is possible therefore that there was a gap of several years between these two versions during which time and for a reason no longer possible to identify, the line was changed. One possible explanation might be that the later version was more appropriate for the audience who would use it, but this seems unlikely. In *Hymns and Sacred Poems* it appears as hymn twelve of a series of thirty-six hymns in the category 'Hymns for One Fallen from Grace'. These largely focus on the sinfulness of the one fallen from grace; a deep sense of helplessness and worthlessness pervades, of the deserving only of hell, the only glimmer of hope being hope in Jesus' death. Indeed it would seem that the expressed desire and possibly almost futile helplessness of the earlier version 'I would, I would comply' would be more appropriate in this setting rather than the accomplished compliance of the latter, 'I do

[32] *RT*18, st.4, line 7.
[33] *RT*66, line 55.
[34] *RT*220, st.3, line 6.
[35] *RT*33, st.4, line 2.
[36] *RT*232, st.4, line 2.
[37] *RT*88, st.6, line 2; *RT*281, line 4.
[38] *RT*73, st.5, line 6.
[39] *RT*73, st.5, lines 5-6.
[40] *RT*73.
[41] Maddox, editorial introduction, *MS Cheshunt*.

at last comply'. It is perhaps most likely that the difference refers to a changed experience in Charles' own relationship with God which he attests to in the hymn. Nevertheless both versions indicate a sense of struggle. The repeated 'I would' of the first and the 'at last' of the second suggest the acquiescence finally achieved has not been an easy one.

The struggle of the will is clearly recognised by Charles. He acknowledges the more difficult emotions and the demand resignation to God's perceived will can require,

> Tho' we would the cup decline,
> Govern'd by thy will alone
> Ours we struggle to resign:
> Thine, and only thine be done.[42]

In Charles' hymn 'The Resignation' Charles uses strong words to communicate the experience of torture and agony which characterise the 'strugglings' of the will:

> 2 Thou seest my tortur'd breast,
> The strugglings of my will,
> The foes that interrupt my rest,
> The agonies I feel:
>
> The daily death I prove,
> Saviour, to thee is known:
> 'Tis worse than death, my God to love,
> And not my God alone.[43]

The innate characteristics of the will discussed so far are not the only ones Charles recognises however. In one poem written from a female perspective he describes characteristics of a quite different nature. The poem is written 'For One about to marry' and the example below is to be found in the third of the three parts in which this poem is constructed.

> 1 Father of Jesus Christ, and mine,
> Accept my humble prayer,
> And let thy child her will resign
> To thy paternal care:
> Weakest of all thy children me
> Into thy keeping take,

[42] *RT*163, st.5, lines 4-8.
[43] *RT*13, st.2.

And shelter my infirmity
For my Redeemer's sake

2 Thou knowst with humble heart sincere
My helplesness I own,
And pierc'd with self-mistrusting fear
I hang on Thee alone:
Thou only canst in danger hide,
And shield me with thy hand,
Thro' life's rough sea the vessel guide,
To that celestial land.

3 Thou art my confidence, and power,
My unprecarious peace,
My safeguard in the prosperous hour,
And refuge in distress;
Thee only wise I own, and true
And rich in sovereign grace,
And Thou, whose love I keep in view,
Shalt order all my ways.[44]

In this poem, there is no sense of the will being stubborn, perverse, untamed or rebellious; the emphasis rather is on weakness, infirmity, helplessness, self-mistrust, and fear. The will here is being resigned to God's paternal care. The confidence and power in this relationship are in God not in 'Thy trembling, sinking handmaid'.[45] Resigning the will in this instance is a commitment into the protection and keeping of God and also a commitment to obedience, 'And Thou, whose love I keep in view,/ Shalt order all my ways.'

iv. Characteristics of the resigned will

Whilst recognising the characteristics of the unresigned will, Charles also identifies characteristics of the will resigned to God. A number appear in these hymns. First, he identifies an attitude of faithfulness and commitment,

Jesus, on thy word and name
I stedfastly rely:
……
4 To thy blessed will resign'd,
And stay'd on thee alone,[46]

[44] *RT*206, sts.1-3.
[45] *MS Miscellaneous Hymns,* 67.
[46] *RT*161, st.3, lines 3-4; st.4, lines 1-2.

Faithfulness is characteristic even in adversity as one of Charles' *Earthquake Hymns* testifies; particularly pertinent as earthquakes were seen by Charles as a warning from God of the wrath, doom and punishment to come:

> 4 Blessed are the servants, Lord,
> Whom thou shalt watching find,
> Hanging on thy faithful word,
> And to thy will resign'd;[47]

A second characteristic can be discovered in the following two hymns in which Charles describes the state of resignation and uses the image of passivity:

> 2 Jesus, thy sanctifying will
> No longer I withstand,
> But lie as clay, resign'd and still
> And passive in thy hand[48]

> 9 Thee in all thy Ways confessing
> Gracious still,
> In thy Will
> Gladly acquiescing.
> 10 Blest with perfect Resignation
> Till we prove
> All thy Love,
> All thy great Salvation![49]

There is a suggestion of movement from the active struggle of human will and desire to a passive humble, obedient resignation to God's will and desire. This does not mean however that the act of resignation is a passive one; indeed, on the contrary, as noted in chapter two, resignation is an active response to God; it requires faithfulness, commitment, perseverance and struggle, which is balanced by the power of Christ, here through his experience and example, to effect resignation,

> Abandon'd to the will of man,
> Jesus, Thou dost for me obtain
> A power my spirit to resign
> Intirely to the will Divine.[50]

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[47] *RT*103, st.4, lines 1-4.
[48] *RT*314, st.2, lines 1-4.
[49] *RT*317, sts.9-10.
[50] *RT*289.

The *telos* of the believer's resignation is simultaneously kept in view. In a hymn on the death of William Hitchins Charles indicates that resignation to God's will is the state of being which prepares a person for heaven.

> 4 Come my beloved Saviour, come,
> Thou seest me to thy will resign'd
> Made ready for my heavenly home
> Lover of Thee and all mankind,
> Conqueror of hell and death and sin,
> Open thine arms and take me in.[51]

Elsewhere Charles articulates resignation to God as an attitude which brings union with God. This emphasis is explored thoroughly in chapter ten. Two of the texts expressing resignation to God's will convey Charles' theological conviction:

> 5 The sav'd and Saviour now agree
> In closest fellowship combin'd,
> We grieve, and die, and live with thee,
> To thy great Father's will resign'd;
> And God doth all thy members own
> One with thyself, for ever one.[52]

Similarly in a hymn which expresses the heart's desire, the whole delight, of the Christian that the reciprocal act of God's will being done in the one who is perfectly resigned to God, results in union with God:

> 1 O that I, Lord, in Thee alone
> Coud seek my whole delight, and find!
> Thy perfect will on me be done,
> Who to thy perfect will resign'd
> In faith for full salvation pray,
> And for thy promis'd Coming stay!
> ……
>
> 3 Give then, Thyself, Jehovah, give
> The glorious Partner of thy throne
> In a poor, ransom'd worm to live,
> That with thy Son, and Spirit One
> One I may live with LOVE—with Thee,
> And reign thro' all eternity.[53]

[51] *RT*246, st.4.
[52] *RT*55, st.5.
[53] *RT*215, sts.1-3.

Finally, for Charles a central purpose of resigning the will is to enable the Christian to become more like Christ. This is communicated through an alignment of the believer with the experiences of Christ, particularly in his passion, and through inhabiting the attitudes of Christ. So for example, echoing the words of Christ in Gethsemane: 'Meekly I my will resign,/ Thine be done, and only thine',[54] and elsewhere 'Nail to the cross my will',[55] indicating the intention to lose life for the sake of Christ.

Inhabiting the attitudes of Christ is found in characteristics such as meekness, to which there are numerous references, as for example in the quotation above and 'Put up the controversial sword,/ Nor stain the meekness of your Lord.'[56] Lowliness, humility and meekness are similarly important characteristics, 'My spirit meek, my will resign'd,/ Lowly as thine shall be my mind,/ The servant shall be as his Lord.'[57] But the alignment with Christ is not solely in relation to meekness. In both of the hymns cited in this paragraph the alignment goes further. In the first Charles expresses the desire to embrace with joy Christ's 'portion here', and his 'patient grace' and even the cross:

> 3 Jesus, I would with joy embrace
> Thy portion here, thy patient grace,
> Meekly my nature's will resign,
> Accept the precious gift divine,
> Thy sacred cup of grief unknown,
> Thy cross, which mounts me to thy throne.[58]

In the second the same sense of joy in resignation is expressed as 'gladly we our will resign'.[59] Patient faith is also noted and in this stanza Charles identifies that it is through the grace bestowed by God, which is the 'second gift' of God that resignation and following in the steps of Christ can happen.

> 2 Thanks upon thanks to God we owe
> Who did a second gift bestow,
> The grace in Jesus steps to tread,

[54] *RT*56, st.2, line 5.
[55] *RT*41, st.5, line 2.
[56] *RT*274, st.1, lines 5-6; cf. *RT*83, st.7, lines 5-6.
[57] *RT*40, st.12, line 6.
[58] *RT*274, st.3.
[59] *RT*311, st.2, line 5.

And meekly suffer with our Head,
While gladly we our will resign,
And prove our patient faith, divine.[60]

The characteristic of patience emerges from these hymns. Patience imitates the patience of Jesus, 'Father of our patient Lord,'[61] which is known in the believer, 'Arm'd with thy love and patient mind,/ I come, to thy blest will resign'd',[62] and 'To make thy righteous will our own,/ We patiently resign'.[63] These characteristics of Christ are evident in Charles' hymns relating to the will and heart. There are many others however; these are considered in chapter nine.

2. Resignation of the heart

The conjunction of will and heart

Charles' emphasis on the resignation of the will does not stand alone. For him, the will and the heart are intrinsically connected. He uses the terms together in several of the resignation texts, sometimes almost interchangeably; both heart and will are resigned, 'My heart, my will I here resign'.[64] Maddox notes that sometimes John Wesley similarly equates will and heart, 'Wesley often used "heart" in a metaphorical sense when discussing human volition',[65] but Maddox continues that this was not the only way John used 'heart', using it also to indicate inner 'thoughts' or equating it with 'tempers'.[66]

In Charles' poetic texts it is possible to detect two distinct ways in which he juxtaposes will and heart for the act of resignation. The first draws on common characteristics in the way 'will' and 'heart' are used. The resignation of both heart and will can indicate an intention, purpose and desire; both words can embrace features of an intentional act, disposition or attitude. It is likely that Charles

[60] *RT*311, st.2.
[61] *RT*163, st.5, line 1.
[62] *RT*160, st.7, lines 1-2.
[63] *RT*235, st.1, lines 2-3.
[64] *RT*11, st.4, line 1.
[65] Maddox, "A Change of Affections: The Development, Dynamics, and Dethronement of John Wesley's Heart Religion," in *"Heart Religion" in the Methodist Tradition and Related Movements*, ed. Richard Steele, (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 14.
[66] Maddox, "A Change of Affections," 15.

employed such interchangeability, evidence for which can be discerned in his reference to the resignation of wishes.

In the eighteenth century the definition of 'wish' to mean 'desire' was in use. Desire is a strong word, although as the *Oxford English Dictionary* notes, as a noun 'wish' is 'less emphatic than *craving, longing, or yearning*'. As a transitive verb however, the *OED* records that in earlier use 'wish' had the strong sense of '*covet*, *crave*, *long* (*for*), *yearn* (*for*)'.[67] Charles uses 'desire' and 'wish' in relation both to the will and the heart, 'We now, by his good Spirit led,/ Our own desires and will forego, …/ Our ransom'd souls to God resign';[68] 'Cease, foolish heart, thy fond complaints,/ …/ Gladly thy every wish resign'.[69] Similarly, in trying to discern God's will regarding marriage to Sarah Gwynne, Charles pens words in which 'wish' embraces both the desire of the heart and intention of the will to seek and do God's will,

> 6 Jesus, thro' thy orepow'ring Grace
> I every Wish resign,
> Nor can I, till Thou shewst thy Face,
> To this, or that incline:
> Thy Face obscur'd, thy Mind unknown,
> Preserve the Balance even,
> And makes me cry Thy Will be done
> On Earth as tis in Heaven.[70]

The second juxtaposition of will and heart in Charles' hymns is a complementary one. The will has to be resigned so that the heart may become the place in which the right attitude of a believer in faith, devotion and love toward God can be formed; and conversely, the relationship of the heart with God enables the resignation of the will to God. For example the conjunction of the will and the heart in Charles' words, 'Touch his heart with heavenly love,/ That he may his will resign'.[71] This poem is a prayer for someone who is '*Wilful, ignorant, and blind*;'[72] 'Full of sin, and void of God.'[73] Resignation of his will is required for him to be a witness of God's saving power which is reliant upon his heart being moved through God's touch of love

[67] *OED online*, s.v. 'wish,' http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/229511?rskey=4Os7OT&result=1#eid, accessed July 4, 2015.
[68] *RT*152, st.4, lines 1-2, and 5.
[69] *RT*9, st.1, lines 1 and 5.
[70] *RT*218, st.6.
[71] *RT*214, st.7, lines 3-4.
[72] *RT*214, st.2, line 1. Charles' italics.
[73] *RT*214, st.6, line 6.

within it. Elsewhere the conjunction is expressed in the words, 'Pure my heart, my will resign'd!'[74] Indeed in this hymn the mind also has its part. Together, mind, heart and will form the *attitude* required of a Christian, 'Meek and lowly be my mind,/ Pure my heart, my will resign'd!'

A final comparison of Charles' use of will and heart can be found through the concept of obedient submission. The obedience required of the will has already been discussed. The heart too is required to be obedient, to which six of the resignation texts being considered in this chapter testify. One is a very rare hymn in which Charles speaks of serving God through labour. In this hymn for children Charles speaks of resigning heart and hands; the work of the children he addresses in the hymn is a service to God,

> 4 Our hearts and our hands
> He justly demands,
> And both to our Lord we resign,
> Overpaid, if he smile
> On our innocent toil,
> And accept as a service divine.[75]

A second example speaks of the resignation of the heart as a daily and hourly act; the act of obedience is a spiritual discipline:

> Thus I keep with utmost care
> The heart I every day resign,
> Every hour, by faith and prayer
> Into the hands divine.[76]

Obedience to God expressed through the resignation of the heart acknowledges God's rule over the life of the believer: 'All our hearts to Him resign/ Ruled by love's resistless power,'[77] and 'Thou wilt direct my tongue, and guide/ My heart resign'd to Thee.'[78] Furthermore such submissive obedience attests to the attitude of the heart:

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[74] *RT*4, st.4, lines 1-2.
[75] *RT*156, st.4.
[76] *RT*129, st.2, lines 5-8.
[77] *RT*260, st.2, lines 3-4.
[78] *RT*286, lines 7-8.

2 An heart resign'd, submissive, meek,
My dear Redeemer's throne,
Where only Christ is heard to speak,
Where Jesus reigns alone.[79]

Two concluding hymns which speak of the resignation of the heart focus on the characteristics of a heart resigned to God. Charles expresses the desire for a heart which is tender, resign'd, pure and filled with faith and love,

10 The hatred of my carnal mind
Out of my flesh at once remove;
Give me a tender heart, resign'd
And pure, and fill'd with faith and love.[80]

And finally he simply speaks of the 'willing heart entire' being filled up with Jesus:

2 Might we now with pure desire
Thine only love request,
Now with willing heart entire
Return to Christ our rest;
When we our whole heart resign,
Jesus, to be fill'd up with thee,
Thou art ours, and we are thine
Thro' all eternity.[81]

Conclusion

The resignation of the will and the heart are connected, but they are also differentiated. Whilst the resignation of the will conveys a sense of struggle and sometimes a reluctance to submit to God, the resignation of the heart often speaks from the perspective of the believer who has already submitted to God. The adjectives associated with the resignation of the heart are also markedly different to those Charles uses for the resignation of the will. They differ firstly in number; there are many more adjectives used of the heart than of the will. The will is given few characteristics in these hymns, only the nine characteristics noted earlier, of being wayward, untamed, rebellious, headlong, perverse, carnal, stubborn, and needing curbing and keeping down. The heart however is given seventy-seven characteristics

[79] *RT*28, st.2.
[80] *RT*23, st.10.
[81] *RT*132, st.2.

in these same texts.[82] These characteristics are all drawn from texts which speak of the heart, but they are not necessarily specifically allied to the resignation of the heart. What they do is to note the characteristics Charles applies to the heart in the context of these hymns and indicate the disposition of the resigned heart, or the heart yet to be resigned.

For Charles, the heart is the place of feelings and emotions, the place where faith and God reside and the place where the attitudes which form a believer are located. For Charles the heart therefore plays a complementary but different function. It demonstrates the characteristics of what it is to resign the will to God. Such characteristics point to the nature of resignation as an attitude of being of the believer in relation to God. Resignation of the will and the heart is more than a single act of submission in response to God, or even a daily act of obedience to God; it is much more about inhabiting an attitude of being as a Christian.

[82] The adjectives Charles uses characterising the resigned heart can be divided into four categories: positive virtues, negative characteristics, states of heart, and those indicative of the work of Christ. The adjectives used are as follows. Positive virtues: tender glad, meek and pure, simple, contrite, sincere, stedfast, faithful, loving, clean, gentle, attentive, holy, sincere, believing, willing, pastor's heart, thankful, obedient, peaceful, undivided, listening, upright, chearful, grateful, unsuspicious, capacious, happy, humble, lowly, fond unwary, generous, feeling, childlike, joyful, unopposing. Negative, indicative of sinfulness: foul, stony, narrow, heart of virtue void, filthy, unrenew'd, faithless, rebellious, treacherous, worthless, bigoted, feeble, weak, flinty, deceitful, stubborn, evil. States of heart: yearning, restless, bleeding, fluttering, broken, wretched, foolish, troubled, burthen'd, slow, rocky, sad, pleading, desolate, longing, mournful, aspiring. Work of Christ: inlarg'd, hallow'd, pardon'd, ransom'd, sprinkled.

Chapter 7

Resignation of the self: resigning the whole being, resigning life, resigning the soul.

Father, thy will be done!
To thee I all resign,
The sole disposer of thine own,
Dispose of me, and mine:
At thy command I go,
Or quietly attend,
'Till all my rests, and toils below
In rest eternal end.

—Charles Wesley[1]

Introduction

This chapter surveys Charles' use of resignation for the whole being, of life, and of soul. Some references from the previous chapter, for example to the resignation of the 'whole heart' herald this focus, and similarly references to the resignation of the 'whole soul' preface the chapter to follow, where the emphasis is resignation at death. Here the emphasis is Charles' indication of the entire resignation of the believer in life.

In total sixty-eight examples comprising between a quarter and a fifth of the total number of resignation texts express the resignation of the whole person, to God, in this life. This is a significant emphasis for Charles. Two further examples express resignation of life, but not in relation to God. One of these occurs in a hymn written about the office of bishop, being made not by the laying on of human hands but by the Holy Spirit.[2] This hymn was published in 1762, two decades before the controversy caused by John Wesley ordaining Vasey and Whatcoat as deacons then presbyters and commissioning Coke as superintendent for America; about which Charles wrote later, in caustic vein, and with marked contrast, critical of his brother

[1] *RT*115, st.4.
[2] *RT*136.

for 'making a bishop' by laying hands on Coke.[3] Charles' earlier text, about the office of a bishop speaks of the bishops' task, the pastoral care of 'precious souls', and of bishops as those who, in following Christ, 'the shepherd good', are willing to resign their lives for the sake of their flock; 'And cheerfully their lives resign/ To save the purchase of his blood.'[4]

The second example of the resignation of life but not in relation to God, is a personal one, written with reference to a woman, and giving a rare glimpse into Charles' private life, feelings and desires: 'To catch her feeling Soul would Life resign/ Rush to the Grave and die to call her mine'.[5] This appears in a shorthand manuscript, which Maddox has entitled 'Autographical Reflections', commenting that the first sheet appears lost and thus the original title missing. The shorthand has been deciphered by Beckerlegg, Underhill and Heitzenrater, and Beckerlegg identifies the woman being addressed as Aspasia, who was Mary (Granville) Pendarves. As Maddox notes, Beckerlegg suggests that Charles tries to disguise the identity of the female in question by changing the first 's' of Aspasia to an 'r', Arpasia.[6] The poem clearly demonstrates a passionate intensity of feeling towards the woman and indicates an interlude in Charles' life which challenged his faith, desiring to resign his life for a woman, and distancing himself from God: 'Disclaim'd my Reason, and threw off my GOD'.[7]

1. Resigning all, resigning the whole being to God

The predominant motif in these hymns which speak of resigning the whole being is to resign *all*; twenty-three of the seventy hymns use this language. In addition, the same understanding is also communicated through Charles' use of 'whole' (five hymns), 'entire/ intire/ intirely' (six hymns) and 'perfect' - perfect resignation (three hymns). Occasionally the 'all' Charles speaks about is closely identified with another person, a relationship he is required to relinquish, particularly through death. For example, a hymn written 'Upon Parting with His Friends',

[3] *MS Ordinations*, V, Epigram, st.1. 'So easily are Bishops made/ By man's, or woman's whim?/ W[esley] his hands on C[oke] hath laid,/ But who laid hands on Him?'
[4] *RT*136, st.2, lines 7-8.
[5] *RT*231, lines 256-7.
[6] *MS Shorthand Verse*, Autobiographical Reflections, 6n21.
[7] *RT*231, line 265.

7 O let your prayers the Saviour move,
In love my spirit to renew!
O could I taste the Saviour's love,
Gladly I then should part with you;
My all triumphantly resign,
And lodge you in the arms divine.[8]

The loss of the relationship is gathered up with everything else he offers to God.

3 Spite of myself resolv'd t' obey,
I tear the dear right-eye away,
If it my Lord offend;
I bow me to the will divine,
My life, and more than life resign,
I give thee back my friend.[9]

This offering is one of grief and loss and also an act of obedience. In chapter five Charles' naming of an association with a friend as idolatrous was noted. The death of a friend might even then be considered a blessing because God has thwarted the idolatrous relationship and he now gives his all to God:

7 Joy of mine eyes, and more belov'd
(Forgive me, gracious God) than thee,
Thy sudden stroke far off remov'd,
And stopp'd my vile idolatry,
And drove me from the idol's shrine,
And cast me at the feet divine.

…….

10 See then at last I all resign,[10]

As well as hymns on the death of a friend, Charles wrote a number of hymns on the death of a child, sometimes specifically for a grieving mother,[11] sometimes for himself.[12] In the acute pain of such loss Charles uses the language of resignation not only in terms of resigning the child back to God but also in the resignation of the grieving person to God. But these are hymns written for believers and in the

[8] *RT*10, st.7.
[9] *RT*101, st.3.
[10] *RT*88, sts.7, 9-10.
[11] *RT*165, A Mother's Act of Resignation on the Death of a Child.
[12] *RT*107.

language Charles uses this is not a new resignation, rather it is a reassertion of the believer's entire commitment to God given on becoming a Christian.

With all my soul, O Lord, I give
The child thy love hath snatch'd away;
On earth I would not have him live,
With me I would not have him stay;
The sacrifice long since was o'er,
I stand to what I gave before.[13]

Sacrificial language is common, as is the language of loan, discussed in chapter five and which is frequently expressed using Isaac imagery.[14] Charles uses the same language of sacrifice and of giving back to God what God has first given, not only of the offering of others, but also of self-offering to God, 'Tho' I to thee the whole resign,/ I only give thee back thine own'.[15] 'Living sacrifice', a biblical and liturgical phrase, is one Charles also uses to indicate this intention, 'Resign'd to God the child of man,/ A living sacrifice, restor'd/ Entire, devoted to the Lord'.[16] Reciprocity of giving is a significant theological theme in Charles' language of self-sacrifice. The reciprocity is one of love,

Because thou lov'dst, and dy'dst for me,
Cause me, my Jesus, to love thee,
And gladly to resign
Whate'er I have, whate'er I am;[17]

Reciprocity is also here established in response to Christ's death. In chapter four the second theological theme identified in the resignation of Christ was that his death was 'for all, for me, for us'; the self-giving of the believer is made in response to that giving, and is to be as entire and complete as was that of Christ:

Thus woud I live, intirely thine
Who gav'st thyself for me,
And then my spotless soul resign
A sacrifice to Thee.[18]

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[13] *RT*77, st.5.
[14] Isaac imagery appears in ten of the resignation hymns: *RT*14, *RT*77, *RT*78, *RT*84, *RT*99, *RT*102, *RT*107, *RT*113, *RT*196, RT242.
[15] *RT*14, st.6, lines 3-4.
[16] *RT*117, lines 2-4.
[17] *RT*68, st.10, lines 1-4.
[18] *RT*310, st.2, lines 5-8.

Furthermore the language of resignation extends beyond reciprocity into the semantics of *kenosis* and the exchange formula discussed earlier.[19] In these texts, articulating the resignation of the whole being, the mutual self-emptying of Christ and the believer is evident; indeed Christ's is mirrored by the believer. Christ's words in Gethsemane, for example, are echoed in the following, 'Father, thy will be done!/ To thee I all resign'.[20] Elsewhere the desire to be conformed to Christ even in his passion and death is clear:

1 Thou Man of Griefs, I fain would be
Perfectly conform'd to thee:
……
9 Happy, forever happy I,
Sentenc'd on thy cross to die!
But shall a sinner dare
Aspire to such a glorious grace?
Thou knowst I *would* thy passion share,
And die to see thy face.
10 I would for thee my life resign,
Suffer in the strength divine;
Thro' love's almighty power;
Would tread the path my Jesus trod,
And calmly meet the fiery hour,
Resisting unto blood.[21]

The exchange formula finds echoes in Charles' verse which explores the synthesis of self-giving and the gift of God, 'And intirely resign/ My whole soul to be fill'd with the fulness Divine.'[22] Or, as elsewhere, 'Into thy hands my all resign,/ And wait—till all thou art is mine!'[23] The offering of the whole being to God, the emptying of the self, enables God to fill the believer with 'fulness Divine' or in different language, to become like Christ:

5 To thee, the only wise, and true,
See then at last I all resign;
Make me in Christ a creature new,
The manner, and the time be thine.[24]

[19] Chapter 4.
[20] *RT*115, st.4, lines 1-2.
[21] *RT*89, st.1, lines 1-2, sts.9-10.
[22] *RT*279, st.2, lines 7-8.
[23] *RT*12, st.6, lines 5-6.
[24] *RT*8, st.5.

Two further examples connect being like Christ with the imagery of having the mind of Christ, which is meek, quiet, patient and perfectly resigned:

> 4 Give him thy meek and quiet mind,
> Patient, and perfectly resign'd
> In all things let him be,
> Nothing desire above, beneath,
> Nor ease, nor pain, nor life, nor death,
> But to be all like thee.[25]

> 14 I shall suffer, and fulfil
> All my Father's gracious will,
> Be in all alike resign'd;
> Jesu's is a patient mind.[26]

This latter is part of a hymn of twenty stanzas; stanzas one to nine focus on the mind of the believer, wavering, easily distracted, prone to fall away, with the prayer for the mind of Christ to be planted, rooted and fixed within the believer. Stanzas ten to twenty are then shaped around different attributes of the mind of Christ; patience is the attribute which accompanies resignation.

Whether the corollary to the resignation of the whole being is attaining the mind of Christ, being like Christ, or being filled with the fullness of God, other than one instance which suggests to the contrary, Charles doesn't lose sight of the fact that both resignation and God's gift of salvation, entire sanctification, or the 'fulness Divine', are gifts of God's grace. In the following lines Charles talks about *purchasing* God's nature and name. The imagery of transaction Charles is using here is inherent within the exchange formula, 'God became human, so that humanity might become God'; and of course such imagery pervades Charles' atonement theology. This context of interchange is the one in which these lines should be located. Here there is evidence of a reciprocal purchase:

> 3 Whate'er I have, or can, or am,
> I now would fain resign,
> And lose my nature, and my name,
> O God, to purchase thine.[27]

[25] *RT*75, st.4.
[26] *RT*42, st.14.
[27] *RT*41, st.3.

The following two examples, however, locate the power to effect resignation in God and recognise that perfect resignation is a blessing received.

> Abandon'd to the will of man,
> Jesus, Thou dost for me obtain
> A power my spirit to resign
> Intirely to the will Divine.[28]

> 10 Blest with perfect Resignation
> Till we prove
> All thy Love,
> All thy great Salvation![29]

The mutuality of relationship as the believer resigns all and as God fills the believer with 'fulness Divine' does not disclaim an utter dependency on God both for the ability to resign the whole being to God and for God to bestow his divine life upon the believer; this is not a transaction automatically applied, for this the believer can only wait, 'And wait—till all thou art is mine!'[30] But when God bestows the divine life upon the believer then the believer partakes in the Godhead, participates in the life divine.

Finally, it is possible to discern a hint of another dimension to the participation in God inherent in these hymns of Charles'. Within the texts which appear in the category of resignation hymns being considered in this section, there is only an intimation of this dimension, though it will be dealt with in more detail later.[31] This dimension is one of the entire resignation of the whole being, expressed as loss of the self, and without even the expectation or need for the response of being filled with the life divine.

> 11 Wherefore to thee I all resign,
> Being thou art, and good, and power,
> Thy only will be done, not mine;
> Thee, Lord, let earth and heaven adore,
> Flow back the rivers to their sea,
> And let our all be lost in thee.[32]

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[28] *RT*289.
[29] *RT*317, st.10.
[30] *RT*12, st.6, line 6.
[31] Chapter 10.
[32] *RT*84, st.11.

The argument may be made, and would have been heard from the lips of his brother John, that the mystical language of the final two lines is indicative of the influence of the mystics upon Charles in the early years of his adulthood. However when Charles speaks of being 'lost in God' he is coupling the resignation of the whole being with an attitude of complete humility, expressing the offering of the whole of himself, his essential self, his 'nature and name' with no demand made of God in return; a spiritual understanding expressing the height of resignation.

2. Resigning life, resigning the soul

Two ways in which the resignation of the whole being is articulated is through the language of the resignation of life and of the soul; for Charles these are used to represent the ultimate offering a person can make to God. It will become evident in the chapter to follow, that resigning the life and soul are primarily used by Charles to designate the resignation which happens at death. However there are occasions when Charles uses both of these terms to indicate the resignation required of a believer in this life. In the collection of resignation hymns there are seven themes which emerge from Charles' use of resigning the life and soul. Four reflect themes noted earlier in this chapter, these are considered first; the three following offer new insights into Charles' thinking about the resignation of the whole person to God.

i. Resignation of the whole being

There are three hymns in which Charles speaks of resigning life or the soul in order to be wholly God's. The two are interconnected, and the resignation of life or soul equivalent to resigning the whole being.

9 Tho' late, I all forsake,
My friends, my life resign,
Gracious Redeemer, take, O take
And seal me ever thine.
Come, and possess me whole[33]

Similarly,

5 Come thou, my dear Redeemer, come,
Let me my life resign,

[33] *RT*13, st.9, lines 1-5.

O take thy ransom'd servant home,
And make me wholly thine.[34]

In another hymn the resignation of the soul is coupled with being wholly employed for God: 'Our souls we resign/ To be wholly employ'd in the service divine'.[35] There is a wider context to be considered with this hymn, but that will be examined in the final point below.

ii. Resignation: a reciprocal relationship

The reciprocity inherent within the giving of the whole person to God, identified above, emerges strongly in Charles' use of life and soul to indicate this resignation.

a) Reciprocity because of God's mercy

First, the reciprocity is articulated as the giving back to God of that which was given. In the one instance of this use, the remnant of the believer's days is resigned, the earthly life yet to be lived. The context of the hymn is Psalm 118:18, 'The Lord hath chastened and corrected me, but he hath not given me over unto death.' The emphasis is not on the restoration of life to the Creator, but the context of being chastened for sin and spared through God's mercy. God has not taken life when he might have, but given it, and to God the spared life is offered back,

1 My merciful God hath chasten'd his son,
His fatherly rod I thankfully own,
He hath not rejected, or left me to die,
But gently corrected, and laid the rod by.

2 O how shall I praise the goodness divine?
My remnant of days to him I resign,
My life to the giver I gladly restore,
And praise him for ever when time is no more.[36]

b) Reciprocity because of Jesus' death

The predominant theme governing Charles' reciprocal imagery of the offering of life and soul is the context of Jesus' death, as evident in the examination of this theme earlier. The imagery is recurrent. Jesus is God, through whom the lives of all were purchased; these lives belong to him, so Charles asks, should he not have them? His response uses language of resignation and yielding,

[34] *RT*15, st.5.
[35] *RT*155, st.7, lines 2-3.
[36] *RT*128.

4 Yes, Lord, we are thine,
And gladly resign
Our souls to be fill'd with the fulness divine.
5 We yield thee thine own,[37]

and ends with the exhortation, 'But Oh! Let us live, let us die unto thee!'[38] The hymn cited here is one written for the Lord's Supper (1745) as is the following, which echoes the same theology of life through Christ's death.

2 He justly claims us for his own
Who bought us with a price:
……..
4 Our souls and bodies we resign,
With joy we render thee
Our all, no longer ours, but thine
Thro' all eternity![39]

That Jesus came to redeem humanity through love is reflected in three of the hymns. Two speak of the love of God or of Jesus initiating salvation:

1 Out of himself the God of love
Went forth in his creating grace:
Again he left his throne above,
Made flesh to save our fallen race:[40]

8 The love which brought thee from the skies,
And made thy soul a sacrifice,
Jesu, on me bestow;
Or let me, Lord, my life resign
That these, who once were counted thine,
Again thy voice may know.[41]

One hymn also emphasises the love of the believer, a reciprocity of love:

10 Because thou lov'dst, and dy'dst for me,
Cause me, my Jesus, to love thee,
And gladly to resign
Whate'er I have, whate'er I am;

[37] *RT*57, sts.4 and 5, line 1.
[38] *RT*57, st.6, line 3.
[39] *RT*58, st.2, lines 1-2 and st.4.
[40] *RT*299, st.1, lines 1-4.
[41] *RT*80, st.8.

My life be all with thine the same,
And all thy death be mine.[42]

A further hymn emphasises that the soul is 'Jesus' due'.[43] It is an unusual hymn, largely taking the form of an allegory of the parable of the workers in the vineyard, particularly in the first two stanzas. In his allegorisation Charles identifies the vineyard owner with Jesus, who is God, 'made flesh to save our fallen race'. He hires the 'ransom'd sons of men' for his vineyard, which is the church. The church is a fruitful vineyard, where God is 'known, rever'd, ador'd.' The vineyard is cared for by the 'Planter', who is God and watered 'from the skies'. Charles' characteristic Arminian emphasis on *all* is present, 'And all are call'd to labour there'; and the earliest hour the workers may come to the vineyard is identified with childhood; the various stages of entering into the vineyard in the parable, relating to the different stages in life of coming to faith and entering into God's kingdom. The structure of this hymn testifies to Charles the preacher. These first two stanzas expounding the biblical narrative; the second two, stanzas three and four, move to the application of this exposition to the life of each of his hearers. Charles states unequivocally that the soul belongs to Jesus and should be resigned to him, 'The soul of man is Jesus' due,/ And should to Him itself resign', and indicates the purpose of such resignation, 'That Jesus in our hearts may reign.' He concludes in stanza four with a reiteration that this is for all, 'He calls so loud, that all may hear', and an affirmation of the promise of no mere earthly reward but heaven's.

iii. Resigning life for the sake of another

There are two hymns which speak of the resignation of life for another, in life rather than death. Another two speak of resignation of life for the sake of another in death, and so they appear in the following chapter. The distinction is a fine one, and two similar hymns which speak of a woman's resignation for the sake of 'Another', in one case and her father in the other would also be appropriate here but they do not use the precise language.[44]

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[42] *RT*68, st.10.
[43] *RT*299, st.3, line 1.
[44] *RT*238. Blackwell's resignation of 'all' rather than 'life'. *MS Miscellaneous Verse* 1786, 'The Prayer of a Daughter for her Father', 'Fain woud I weep my life away,/ My life for his a ransom pay', st.6, lines 1-2.

The two hymns which speak of resigning life for the sake of another use shepherd imagery. One is that quoted earlier referring to the role of bishops as overseers, followers of 'The bishop great, the shepherd good,/ And cheerfully their lives resign/ To save the purchase of his blood.' [45] The second is one of Charles' 'Hymns for a Preacher of the Gospel', and draws upon the biblical imagery of John chapter twenty-one, identifying the role of the preacher as one called to feed Christ's sheep, with a particular concern for those who have swerved from the narrow way,

1 Shepherd of souls, if thou indeed
Hast rais'd me up thy flock to feed,
(Thy meanest servant me)
O may I all their burthens share,
And gently in my bosom bear
The lambs redeem'd by thee.

……

8 The love which brought thee from the skies,
And made thy soul a sacrifice,
Jesu, on me bestow;
Or let me, Lord, my life resign
That these, who once were counted thine,
Again thy voice may know.[46]

iv. Resignation through God's grace and power

Charles' poetic response to Mark 8:35, 'Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it', acknowledges that resignation is possible through the grace God gives, in particular, lines five to eight of this single stanza poem,

What but the love of truth and Thee
From nature's love can set me free,
The just contempt of life bestow,
Of all the goods and ills below?
Saviour, infuse into my heart
The grace with all for Thee to part,
And lo, I chearfully resign
My life, to find it hid in thine![47]

Resignation through grace was discussed in chapter five within the context of the tension between nature and grace. Indeed grace is a re-emergent theme in each

[45] *RT*136, st.2, lines 6-8.
[46] *RT*80, sts.1 and 8.
[47] *RT*291.

chapter of part II; such is its importance to resignation. In the lines quoted above however, grace is not the only gift of God Charles mentions. In the first four lines he states that the love of truth and God sets a person free from nature's love and bestows a just contempt of life, goods and ills below; a potentially problematic attitude when held in tension with the Wesleys' social conscience.[48]

A second example of the resignation of life to God accomplished by God is found in the following, based on Luke 1:38 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word.'[49]

1 God of Israel, see
Thy servant in me,
Who humbly approve,
Tho' I cannot conceive, the design of thy love,
With obedience sincere
Thy will I revere,
And expect from thy word
The mystical life of my heavenly Lord.

2 The birth of thy Son
To sinners made known,
Manifested in man,
Manifested in me, shall the secret explain,
While made willing by Thee
To thy work I agree,
And intirely resign
My whole soul to be fill'd with the fulness Divine.[50]

This is a very unusual hymn, written as a response of Mary. It is unusual in two respects; first that the focus is entirely on Mary, and second that it is written in her voice. Here the resignation of her soul 'to be fill'd with the fullness Divine' is made possible by God, 'While made willing by Thee'. However the human response and acquiescence to God's request and enabling is also clear: 'To thy work I agree'. The biblical account of the annunciation embodies a reciprocity of respect, request and response between God and humanity; the humble, reverent, resignation of Mary to the will of God, which Charles captures, is in essence a model for resignation in the lives of the believers.

[48] The claim of a perceived 'ascetic detachment' in John Wesley's understanding of sanctification was discussed in chapter 1 and also referenced in chapter 5.
[49] KJV.
[50] *RT*279.

There is one final comment to make about this hymn. No doubt, given the context, Charles had a specific interpretation in mind of Mary being 'fill'd with the fullness Divine', evidenced through the paralleling of final lines of each stanza: 'The mystical life of my heavenly Lord' with 'My whole soul to be fill'd with the fullness Divine'. The fullness with which she was to be filled was the divine life of the Son of God. Parallelism is evident in each line of these stanzas however, as demonstrated below:

	STANZA ONE	STANZA TWO
1	*God of Israel*, see	The birth of *thy Son*
2	*Thy servant in me*,	*To sinners made known*,
3	*Who humbly approve*,	*Manifested in man*,
4	*Tho' I cannot conceive,* the design of thy love,	Manifested in me, *shall the secret explain*,
5	With *obedience sincere*	While *made willing by Thee*
6	*Thy will I revere,*	*To thy work I agree,*
7	And *expect from thy word*	*And intirely resign*
8	*The mystical life of my heavenly Lord*.	*My whole soul to be fill'd with the fulness Divine*.

'God of Israel' parallels 'thy Son'; through the parallelism there is an allusion to the divinity of the Son. In the second lines, Mary's humanity as a servant is referred to; she is one with the sinners to whom God is made known. In the third lines Mary's approval of the divine plan enables the manifestation in a human person. Line four of stanza one contains a play on the word 'conception', Mary's inability to understand is matched in stanza two with God explaining the secret of her conception of his Son. 'Obedience sincere' in line five is paralleled with 'made willing by Thee' in stanza two, emphasising that God enables the obedience. Lines six of both stanzas are also paralleled, articulating assent to God's will, 'Thy will I revere' with 'To thy work I agree'. Lines seven and eight need to be taken together: 'And expect from thy word,/ The mystical life of my heavenly Lord' paralleling 'And intirely resign/ My whole soul to be fill'd with the fulness Divine.' In the paralleling of these last two lines of each stanza resignation and expectation of God are related. It is a clear reference to participation in the mystical divine life and it is to be expected. This is important to Charles' understanding of resignation. Resignation, far from being a reluctant compliance, is a positive, affirmative, expectant act of obedience and eschatological hope.

v. Resignation and the putting to death of sins

The relationship of resignation to the putting to death of sins is a new theme within this context of resigning the whole. Although there are only two hymns to cite as examples in this section the theme is a recurrent one for Charles. As noted in the first chapter, the issue about sinless perfection was one which caused some disagreement between Charles and his brother. The two hymns cited below both express the desire to be 'intirely dead' to sin, in these cases expressed in relation to the resignation of life and of the soul.

1 With full indignation fir'd
Now my hateful sins I see,
Sins that Jesus' death requir'd,
Sins that nail'd him to the tree:
All the sins which I have done
Call'd and clamour'd for his blood:
Dying, by his blood alone
God could quench the wrath of God.

2 Shall I suffer them to live
Jesus murtherers abhor'd?
No; to daily death I give
Sins that crucified my Lord:
Let the fleshly Adam bleed,
Nature, self, its life resign,
Till I rise intirely dead,
Fill'd with purest life Divine.[51]

Resigning life in this hymn has the deeper connotation identified above,[52] of the resignation of the self (here through death to sin), so that the believer might be filled with divine life. In this language the imagery of *theosis* and exchange examined earlier are evident. Incidentally there is an interesting insight into Charles' Christology and atonement theology in this hymn: 'by his blood alone/ God could quench the wrath of God.'

The second example also introduces the section to follow. This hymn is written within the context of a backsliding believer. Charles speaking from this context articulates the desire for assurance of sins forgiven.

[51] *RT*302.
[52] The end of section entitled 'Resigning all, resigning the whole being to God'.

1 O that his wrath were turn'd aside
O coud I know him pacified,
Again with pardon blest,
How gladly then shoud I resign
My soul into the hands divine,
And trust him for the rest![53]

He continues to ask for the assurance that he is 'to sin intirely dead', even 'From every thought of evil freed,' that Jesus' sanctifying work might begin in him.[54] The assurance he is seeking is the ground for his trust in God 'for the rest'. The relationship of resignation to trust in God is explored more fully next.

vi. Resignation and trusting to God

There are two hymns in addition to the one cited above, which speak of resigning the soul as an act of trust in God. In the first self-mistrust is named and God is the 'Guide Infallible' who is trusted for leading the soul in God's way:

5 Wherefore in self-mistrust I flee,
My Guide Infallible, to Thee,
To Thee my soul resign,
And while for light I humbly pray,
Thou wilt not let me miss my way
Who woud be led in thine.[55]

The second illustration is a poetic funeral eulogy written 'On the Death of Mr. John Matthews, Dec 28, 1764'. It is also however, written in the wake of the perfectionist controversy and in the first part of this poem, which doesn't appear in the *Resignation Texts*, it is clear that John Matthews was approached by those claiming instantaneous perfection, demanding his assent; yet it seems he recognised the claims for what they were:

8. Five hundred witnesses arose,
In proof of instantaneous grace,
And each his own perfection *knows*,
And *simply* utters his own praise!
Th'impeccable, immortal band
Intirely pure, intirely new
His sudden, full assent demand
"And he shall then be perfect too!"

[53] *RT*308, st.1.
[54] *RT*308, sts.2-3.
[55] *RT*232, st.5.

9. Cautious their saying he receiv'd
Nor fondly fed their secret pride
Nor weakly every spirit believ'd,
Till in the sacred balance tried:
The language of their lives he heard,
Their sufferings, and their tempers *prov'd*,
And waiting till the fruit appear'd,
He saw them short; yet still he lov'd.[56]

Charles' own opinions of the perfectionist claims are apparent throughout. To counter the argument of the perfectionists he emphasises the importance of the spiritual virtues which he considered offered evidence of the indwelling life of Christ: humility, meekness, wisdom and discerning love; not putting trust in people or leaning on verbal goodness, showing faith by doing not talking, longing to express the tempers of Christ, considering oneself to be nothing, being conformed to Christ and sharing in his passion. Having established this spiritual framework, Charles concludes the poem in part III, with an expression of the 'lowly confidence' and trust in God, within which our souls are resigned to God:

8 In lowly confidence divine
That Thou wilt never let us go,
We now into thy hands resign
Our souls so dearly bought below;
With Thee we trust them to that day
When summon'd, from the flesh we part,
And drop our corruptible clay,
And soar to see Thee as Thou art.[57]

vii. Resignation and the Trinity

One final instance of Wesley's use of resigning life and soul is the language he employs to communicate this concept in his Trinity hymns. Charles reflects the theology of three persons in one God through the threefold expression 'spirit, soul and flesh'. But this is more than a stylistic technique. The reflection of the three-fold nature of God through the three-fold resignation of the person in response to God, makes an intentional theological point. The believer is both stamped with the three-fold nature of God and expected to reflect that nature in the way she or he lives. That this is Charles' intention is evident in his remarkable language of

[56] *MS Funeral Hymns* (1756–87), 'On the Death of Mr. John Matthews, Dec 28, 1764', sts.8-9.
[57] *RT*236, st.8.

believers as 'transcripts' of the Trinity, or of holiness divine. This is more than aspiration to be like God, or to attain the mind of Christ. This is tantamount to being filled with the fullness divine. A transcript of God's holiness carries the meaning of being a reproduction or representation, even an authentic, physical copy of God's holiness. It is this Charles is claiming for the Christian; the resignation of spirit, soul and flesh are a means of acknowledging that reality and of bringing glory to God.

> Transcript of holiness divine,
> The Tri-une God proclaim,
> And spirit, and soul, and flesh resign
> To glorify his name.[58]

The same imagery is present in the following Trinity hymn:

> 4 O that we now in love renew'd
> Might blameless in thy sight appear,
> Wake up in thy similitude,
> Stampt with the Tri-une character,
> Flesh, spirit, soul to thee resign,
> And live, and die entirely thine![59]

Here Charles uses 'similitude' rather than 'transcript', but the meaning is much the same, bearing the likeness of, resembling, being in the image of the triune God. Perhaps it is also possible in this hymn to see a reflection of the oneness of God in the oneness of the offering in the final line, 'And live, and die entirely thine!' Whilst living and dying might seem like two separate entities, for Charles they coincide as two aspects of the one offering of the whole being, so, for example, 'Alike resign'd, to live, or die,/ As most thy name may glorify,/ To live or die to thee.'[60] Live or die, body, soul, spirit; the intention is the same, the believer resigns the whole of themselves to God in entirety, for now and eternity.

The combination of body, soul and spirit appears in a further text, from a collection other than his *Trinity Hymns*, though no doubt Trinitarian echoes reverberated in Charles' mind as he penned the words.

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[58] *RT*184, st.2, lines 5-8.
[59] *RT*185, st.4.
[60] *RT*69, st.5, lines 4-6.

7 Our bodies are thine,
Our souls we resign
To be wholly employ'd in the service divine,
Our spirits we give
For thee to receive:
O who would not die, with his Saviour to live![61]

Conclusion

In the above analysis several theological themes are apparent, themes which are mirrored in other resignation texts. These themes focus on absolute trust in God and reliance on God alone; patient waiting for God to act or speak when God pleases; the theme of participation in Christ, wanting to be like Christ, even the desire to suffer to be like Christ; the reciprocity of partaking in Christ, as he gave his all 'for me', so the desire is to give 'my all' to him; the *kenosis* of resignation, the self-emptying in order to be filled entirely by God; humility which is glad to acknowledge that the servant is not above his Lord, and the believer's utter dependency on God; the expectation and promise of God for the one resigned to God, that God will indwell the resigned person, that God will give the resigned person the power to speak, and that the resigned person is made new in Christ; Charles' understanding that the resignation of the whole being to God includes a losing of nature and name, of being lost in God; and finally the Trinitarian mirroring of the resignation of body, soul and spirit with the expectation that in such mirroring the believer bears a similitude to God, a transcript of the Trinity, and intimates a sharing in the divine life.

These are important themes to note. They point to the qualities and virtues Charles attributes to the one who is resigned wholly to God, and also to the nature of the relationship with God of such a resigned person. These themes will be returned to in part III. Resignation of the whole being however also includes resignation to God in death. This is the subject of the final chapter of part II.

[61] *RT*155, st.7.

Chapter 8

Resignation of the self: in death

4 This, this is all my heart's desire,
When mercy doth my soul require,
By Jesus found mature in grace,
In full conformity divine
My spotless spirit to resign,
And see my Saviour face to face.

—Charles Wesley[1]

Introduction

The final task of the believer is to resign him or herself to God in death. This is an event of particular moment. As discussed in chapter one Charles grew more convinced that at death, or the few moments before death, sanctification was realised in the believer. The nature of this resignation is important therefore. In his resignation texts there are two ways in which Charles speaks of this task: resigning the flesh and resigning life, including the breath, the spirit and the soul.

1. Resignation of the flesh

Resignation of the flesh, letting go of the body at death, is far less significant for Charles than the resignation of soul, spirit, life or breath. Only two of the *Resignation Texts* refer to resigning the flesh, 'And spirit, and soul, and flesh resign',[2] and 'Flesh, spirit, soul to thee resign'.[3] In both cases 'flesh' designates the physical body, and not carnal desires, as he occasionally uses the word, for example, 'The lusting flesh, the carnal mind'.[4] Interestingly, in this example flesh is opposed to resignation, it is that 'Which never can submit to Thee'.[5]

[1] *RT*192, st.4.
[2] *RT*184, st.2, line 7.
[3] *RT*185, st.4, line 5.
[4] *RT*211, st.3, line 1.
[5] *RT*211, st.3, line 4.

In Charles' use of 'body' his language is that of laying the body down.[6] Once he speaks of being loosed from his body's chain,[7] and elsewhere he uses 'clay' to describe the body, with language of 'dropping' the clay in death, 'How gladly woud I drop my clay'.[8]

In the majority of Charles' hymns there is clear evidence of a dichotomy between flesh/body/clay and spirit/soul/life/breath. The dichotomy denotes a theological position; Charles frequently suggests the immortality of the soul in his understanding of post-death existence.[9] However the two instances cited which speak of resigning the flesh, offer a different perspective. They are both from *Trinity Hymns* and they present flesh, soul and spirit as a single unity; the three-fold offering of the person reflecting, through Charles' use of parallelism, the three-fold nature of the Trinity:[10] 'Stampt with the Tri-une character,/ Flesh, spirit, soul to thee resign'[11] and 'The Tri-une God proclaim,/ And spirit, and soul, and flesh resign'.[12]

It is significant that there are only two such examples. Charles' primary view, that at death body and soul are separated, accentuates that it is the state of the soul or spirit which is all-important. Furthermore, the predominant notion for Charles was that the resignation of the flesh at death was outside human control. The death of the body is God's act, 'When *summon'd*, from the flesh we part.[13] Charles can only talk about leaving the flesh, removing from the flesh, or parting from the flesh, 'But, O! Before the flesh I leave',[14] 'This coward flesh I leave',[15] 'But, while I from the flesh remove'.[16] Charles frequently spoke of a wish to die to be with Christ but has no

[6] *RT*111, st.5, line 4. Other examples can be found at *RT*189, st.4, line 3; *RT*223, st.1, line 1; and *RT*282, st.1, line 2.
[7] *RT*224, st.6, line 4.
[8] *RT*225, st.2, line 3. Other examples can be found at *RT*193, st.3, line 2; *RT*236, st.8, line 7; *RT*243, st.7, line 7.
[9] The Wesleys lived in an era before historical critical biblical theology and the understanding of the immortality of the soul was typical of their era in Western theology.
[10] This point was noted in chapter 7 above. I discuss Charles' use of parallelism in Lunn, "Seeing and Singing."
[11] *RT*185, st.4, lines 4-5.
[12] *RT*184, st.2, lines 6-7.
[13] *RT*236, st.8, line 6. My italics.
[14] *RT*189, st.2, line 6.
[15] *RT*222, st.2, line 3.
[16] *RT*190, st.3, line 7.

power to obtain it.[17] One hymn in particular suggests this struggle; the interesting word to note here is 'lawfully',

> 4 O blessed hope of lasting peace!
> Let me *lawfully* decrease,
> And sensibly decay:
> Welcome whate'er my Lord ordain,
> Disease, or weariness, or pain,
> To hasten me away.[18]

Perhaps 'lawfully' is a reference to the illegality of suicide, considered then a spiritual and civil offence. Blackstone's four volume *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, states:

> And also the law of England wisely and religiously considers, that no man hath a power to destroy life, but by commission from God, the author of it: and, as the suicide is guilty of a double offence; one spiritual, in invading the prerogative of the Almighty, and rushing into his immediate presence uncalled for; the other temporal, against the king, who hath an interest in the preservation of all his subjects; the law has therefore ranked this among the highest crimes …[19]

Desire for death is a common theme in the resignation hymns, not least in those discussed in this chapter. Charles sees the flesh as a chain binding the soul to earth,[20] and expresses the desire for this fleshly chain to be broken and the spirit or soul to go to God, re-emphasising the duality of flesh and soul/spirit noted earlier. But it is God who must break the chain, 'I cannot break my fleshly chain,/ Or overtake my death';[21] 'Come, and dissolve this fleshly chain'.[22] The primary sphere for resignation at death therefore, is of the will, soul or spirit; these concern attitudes of mind and heart which a believer is free to choose to resign, or not.

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[17] Charles speaks of putting to death the fleshly nature so that Christ might indwell, for example, *RT*41, st.4, lines 1-2 and st.11. Similarly he articulates a need to deny the flesh in life, subduing it, foregoing pleasures so that the will might be submitted to God's, *RT*84, sts.2-3.
[18] *RT*90, st.4. Charles' italics.
[19] William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 1st ed., 4 vols., vol. IV (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1765-1769), ch14, 189.
[20] *RT*1, st.1, line2; *RT*2, st.9, line 2; *RT*29, st.1, line 3; *RT*46, st.7, line 5; *RT*108, st.4, line 4; *RT*191, st.4, line 4; *RT*224, st.6, line 4.
[21] *RT*46, st.7, lines 5-6.
[22] *RT*191, st.4, line 4.

Charles' language of resignation in death focusses on the resignation of the closely interrelated spirit, soul, life and breath. These immaterial aspects of the human person are the foci for the remainder of this chapter.

2. Resignation of life, breath, spirit and soul

Depending on the poetic context, Charles sometimes used the terms life, breath, spirit and soul interchangeably in reference to their resignation at death.[23] This close interconnection means that a number of common recurring themes emerge in Charles' use of these terms. One example was introduced above; death occurs at the instigation of God: 'When mortal man resigns his breath,/ 'Tis God directs the shafts of death',[24] and similarly, 'If thou hast pleasure in my death,/ I had long since resign'd my breath;/ I had in Egypt died.'[25] Elsewhere Charles' prayer is that '…chearfully I would resign/ …/ … when thou dost my soul require',[26] and, 'But *how* thou wilt my soul remove,/ And *when* I leave to thee.'[27] Or 'The flaming host shall soon descend/ Our spirits to remove'.[28]

A second recurring theme is Charles' attribution of anthropomorphic characteristics to God to which resignation is directed, such as into the hands, arms, or bosom of God. In the thirty hymns referring to the resignation of the *breath*, nine use this language. The biblical language evident in Luke 23:46 of resigning the *spirit* into God's hands is apparent in those hymns and of the seventeen examples, eight make reference to resignation into God's *hands*;[29] one other speaks instead of the *arms* of God.[30] Six of the references to resigning the spirit into God's hands or arms are used for rhyming purposes, rhyming 'resign' with either 'divine' or 'thine': for example, 'Till my spirit I resign/ Breath'd into the hands divine',[31] 'And when our spirits we

[23] See for example, *RT*192, st.4; *RT*47, st.9; *RT*126, st.2, lines 1-6.
[24] *RT*119, lines 1-2.
[25] *RT*74, st.6, lines 4-6.
[26] *RT*124, lines 3 and 6.
[27] *RT*125, st.2, lines 7-8. Charles' italics.
[28] *RT*235, st.4, lines 2-3.
[29] *RT*56, st.4, lines 5-6; *RT*60, st. 6, lines 1-2; *RT*154, st.5, lines 1-2; *RT*170, st.4, lines 6-7; *RT*188, st.3, lines 5-6; *RT*190, st.4, lines 3-4; *RT*192, st.2, lines 2-3; *RT*224, st.1, lines 5-6.
[30] *RT*313, st.6, lines 5-8.
[31] *RT*56, st.4, lines 5-6.

resign/ Into those gracious hands of thine'.[32] The commendation of the soul into the hands or arms of God appears particularly strongly in the hymns which speak of the resignation of the soul. Of the thirty-seven hymn texts, twenty-eight use such imagery, including references to the embrace, bosom, breast and face of God. In twenty-three of the texts a reference is made to resigning the soul into the hands or arms of God. The intimacy of relationship between believer and God is important in these expressions. The emphasis drawn out in Charles' rhyming of resign and divine, or thine, is that at death the believer resigns their life, soul, spirit and breath directly into the care of the God with whom they are in relationship.

A third recurring feature in all four expressions of resignation of the self at death is Charles' rich choice of adverbs, which contrasts with his descriptions of Jesus' resignation, as we will see. The spirit is resigned 'chearfully',[33] 'meekly',[34] 'willing',[35] with joy',[36] 'calm and undismay'd'.[37] Similar characteristics appear in the resignation of soul, which is resigned 'quietly',[38] 'calmly',[39] with 'resign'd tranquillity',[40] 'meekly',[41] following the pattern of Jesus the 'Meek, patient Lamb', 'calm in death'.[42] The soul is also resigned 'chearfully',[43] 'gladly',[44] willingly, 'our willing souls resign,'[45] and joyfully, 'With joy my hallow'd soul resign'.[46] Texts referring to the resignation of the breath similarly evidence the underlying approach of cheerfulness, thankfulness and gladness, and the calm, silent, tranquillity with which the offering is made.[47] These characteristics distinguish the faithful believer at death and describe their state of heart in extremis.

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[32] *RT*154, st.5, lines 1-2. See also, *RT*170, st.4, lines 5-8; *RT*188, st.3, lines 5-6; *RT*224, st.1, lines 5-6; *RT*313, st.6, lines 5-8.
[33] *RT*140, st.2, line 8.
[34] *RT*188, st.3, line 4; *RT*193, st.1, line 5.
[35] *RT*193, st.1, line 6.
[36] *RT*170, st.4, line 6.
[37] *RT*190, st.4, line 3.
[38] *RT*105, st.6, line 2; *RT*134, line 5.
[39] *RT*87, st.4, line 3; *RT*124, line 8.
[40] *RT*293, st.2, line 5.
[41] *RT*228, st.3, line 2.
[42] *RT*228, st.2, line 1; st.1, line 2.
[43] *RT*124, line 3; *RT*148, st.2, line 1.
[44] *RT*282, st.2, line 1.
[45] *RT*284, st.2, line 5.
[46] *RT*315, st.4, line 5.
[47] *RT*112, st.6, line 5; *RT*123, st.1, line 5; *RT*293, st.2, line 5; *RT*139, line 5.

There are therefore a number of recurring features in this language of resignation at death. Synonymity is not always intended however; the different words have different meaning and significance for Charles. Resigning the life and breath, for example, frequently equates to physical death, whereas this is not as often the case with the resignation of the spirit and soul. Indeed in relation to the soul, this was not Charles' understanding. The distinctive features appearing in Charles' use of life, breath, spirit and soul in the *Resignation Texts* are now considered below.

i. Resignation of life

Charles' use of the resignation of life sometimes refers to death and at other times refers to the dedication to God of this life. There are essentially three contexts in which the resignation of life is discussed: Christ's resignation of his life in death; Christ and the saints as models for the believer; and the resignation of life for another.

1. Christ's resignation of his life in death

There are forty-four instances of resigning life in the *Resignation Texts*. The most notable point is that twenty-four, over half, refer to Christ resigning his life. These were considered in chapter four. Recurrent imagery noted in Charles' use of Christ's resignation of his life is that Christ is divine, his life was given 'for me'/ 'for us', it was offered as a ransom or a sacrifice to effect the salvation of humankind, and his life was resigned 'freely'. This adverb is used on three occasions[48] and provides a marked contrast with Charles' exposition of the believers' resignation at death, as noted above. Other than his use of 'freely' in relation to Christ, there is not a single case in which Charles designates an attribute to the resignation of Jesus' life, rather it is simply stated. The same is true of hymns which refer to Christ resigning his breath, spirit or soul. In these no adverbs are used to describe Christ's resignation, not even 'freely'. This omission might suggest Charles' unwillingness to presume to know or to attribute to Christ states of mind and heart at the point of death. An exception is found in the following hymn, which does not strictly speak of Christ *resigning* his life, but of giving up his parting spirit (stanza one) and laying down his life (stanza two), though the parallel with the resignation of the believer (stanza

[48] *RT*268, st.2, line 2; *RT*273, st.2, line 4; *RT*277, st.4, lines 1-2.

three) indicates that the same notion is intended. Attributes of Christ in his dying are named, particularly providing an example to the believer:

1 The Holy Jesus rests in Hope,
  And *calm* in Death on GOD relies,
His parting Spirit He gives up
  Into his Father's Hands, and dies.

2 *Meek, patient* Lamb, for Us He gives
  The Life which None could take away,
He lays it down, and GOD receives
  His Soul into eternal Day.

3 O might I thus my Warfare end,
  Meekly to GOD my Soul resign,
Into my Father's Hands commend;
  O Jesus, let thy Death be Mine.[49]

2. Christ and the saints as role models for the believer's resignation of life

The theme of following the pattern of Christ, and that of faithful Christians, is a significant distinguishing feature of the hymns referring to the believer's resignation of life. Three hymns speak of the believer imitating Christ, with the theme of suffering commonly recurring, as in these two: 'I would for thee my life resign,/ Suffer in the strength divine;/ … / Would tread the path my Jesus trod'.[50]

Be this, dear Lord, our constant care,
  Not how the destin'd cross to fly,
…….
And calm, like Thee, our lives resign,
  And grasp thro' death the martyr's crown.[51]

As well as Christ, other believers, saints of the past or the present, are role models for the task of resignation in death. St Paul is cited twice, as is John the Baptist, though implicitly. Paul is held up as one 'Who freely would his life resign,/ To save his murtherers',[52] and also offers a model of faithful immovability,

3 From all the power of passion free,
Against the soft infirmity
  Immoveable he stands;
No cross, no suffering he declines,

[49] *RT*228, sts.1-3. My italics.
[50] *RT*89, st.10.
[51] *RT*292.
[52] *RT*264, st.1, lines 5-6.

But chearfully his life resigns,
When Christ his life demands.[53]

John the Baptist is alluded to through a poem which centres on his words recorded in John 3:30, 'He must increase, but I must decrease.'[54] The poem is written from the standpoint of the believer who follows this pattern, becoming less through the renunciation of the self, 'I would be less and less/ That Jesus may increase'; being a voice, 'Jesus' harbinger'; and culminates in the resignation of all things – including life – 'to serve the cause Divine'.[55]

The testimony of ordinary saints, of dying believers, was highly valued by the Wesleys and their contemporaries. Reference to this witness also appears in Charles' texts on the resignation of the soul, both the general witness of parting saints and that of specific individuals.[56] Two texts among those referring to the resignation of life, express the desire to resign life in the way these faithful believers have:

Bless me, ev'n me, my friend, in death,
And ask that I thy bliss may share,
May soon like thee my life resign;
O let thy latter end be mine![57]

The second, Charles' epitaph for Richard Kemp, concludes with words which undoubtedly reflected Charles' own desire, and under which he signed: 'O that I might, like Him, my life resign/ O might his soul's eternal state be mine!/ C.W.'[58]

3. Resignation of life for another

Integral to the model of following the pattern of Christ and the saints is a readiness to die for another. Five texts referring to the resignation of life identify with this context: the preacher concerned for his flock, particularly those 'swerving from the narrow way', his prayer 'Or let me, Lord, my life resign/ That these, who once were counted thine,/ Again thy voice may know';[59] the parent for a child who is feared

[53] *RT*263, st.3.
[54] KJV and NRSV.
[55] *RT*266.
[56] *RT*191, st.1; *RT*96, st.8; *RT*105, st.6, lines 1-4.
[57] *RT*48, st.6, lines 3-6.
[58] *RT*244, lines 19-21.
[59] *RT*80, st.8, lines 4-6.

'Eternally undone';[60] or for another child in great danger;[61] the husband for an unconverted wife;[62] or the Christian for 'my deadliest foe'.[63] Resigning life for others is inherent to Christlikeness, a predominant theme to emerge from Charles' texts on the resignation of life in death, and learned from the model of Christ and his faithful followers. These witnesses are to be emulated as the believer herself approaches death that she too may stand in the tradition of faithful saints and martyrs, and respond like Christ.

ii. Resignation of the breath

Charles' references to the resignation of breath, multi-faceted though they are, always refer to death; the words are a poetic equivalent to dying. In the *Resignation Texts* there are thirty examples of resigning the breath, five of which refer to Christ's resignation of his breath.[64] In addition to the death of Christ, a number of texts designate the physical death of others. One example refers to the death of witnesses[65] and another to the death of a friend, 'Another and another goes/ Thro' the dark vale to his repose,/ And glad resigns his breath'.[66] A further example expounds the account in Luke of the death of the rich man who fed himself but failed to feed Lazarus (Luke 16:22-23) 'Gripp'd by th' arresting hand of death,/ The glutton too resigns his breath.'[67]

Three of the texts which refer to Christ's resignation of his breath in death contain a poetic coupling of Christ's dying breath with that of the believer who is called to respond to Christ's death: with praise, 'My God for me resign'd his breath,/…/ O that my every breath were praise';[68] expressing happiness, for the life of earth whilst also looking forward to heaven

2 We believe, that Christ our head
For us resign'd his breath,
……..
Happy while on earth we breathe,

[60] *RT*159, st.2, line 8.
[61] *RT*213.
[62] *RT*176.
[63] *RT*210, st.8, lines 3-4.
[64] *RT*27, st.2, line 5; *RT*37, st.2, line 2; *RT*152, st.3, line 3; *RT*290, line 2; *RT*294, st.2, line 1.
[65] *RT*44, st.5, line 3.
[66] *RT*46, st.7, lines 1-3.
[67] *RT*285, st.1, lines 1-2.
[68] *RT*27, st.2, line 5; st.4, line 3.

Mightier bliss ordain'd to know,
Trampling upon sin and death
To the third heaven we go.[69]

And by putting sin to death,

2 When God resigns his parting breath,
All nature should at once expire,
But to prevent the sinner's death,
He doth the death of sin require,
He wills that sin should lose its power,
And move, and live, and be no more.

3 O that it now might breathe its last,
Transfixt with Jesus on the tree!
Saviour, on Thee my soul is cast,
To suffer all thy pangs with Thee,
Participate the death Divine,
And live thro' endless ages thine.[70]

The remaining references to the resignation of breath are aspirational for the believer. Charles expresses the position of the believer being 'ready' to resign the breath,[71] the willingness to,[72] hastening to,[73] and the attitude toward the resignation of the breath as something done gladly,[74] silently,[75] with tranquillity,[76] and with praise and thanksgiving;[77] characteristics recognised earlier in this chapter.

A final feature to emerge from texts referring to the resignation of breath concerns language expressive of the desire to sink into 'the Depths of GOD',[78] or to be 'resorb'd' into God.[79] This evocative imagery is examined in detail in chapter ten; suffice it to say that such imagery underlines Charles' intention that the resignation of the breath is more than a simple factual reference to death. These hymns also indicate a spiritual resignation inherent in the dying of the believer, and whilst such

[69] *RT*37, st.2, lines 1-2; st.6, lines 5-8. My italics.
[70] *RT*294, sts.2 and 3.
[71] *RT*189, st.1, line 3; *RT*245, st.7, line 6.
[72] *RT*43, st.11, line 3.
[73] *RT*304, st.4, line 8.
[74] *RT*112, st.6, line 5.
[75] *RT*123, st.1, line 5.
[76] *RT*293, st.2, line 5.
[77] *RT*139, line 5.
[78] *RT*47, st.9, line 4, *MS Thirty* version.
[79] *RT*123, st.1, lines 4-6; st.2, lines 4-6.

an intention is only hinted at here, the resonance is much stronger in the following sections on resigning the spirit and the soul, to which we now turn.

iii. Resignation of the spirit

Seventeen of the *Resignation Texts* refer to resigning the spirit in death. One of these refers to the resignation of Christ, the rest refer to believers. Three of the hymns pertain to the resignation of the believer's body, soul, and spirit and were dealt with earlier in the section on the resignation of the flesh, so are not re-examined here. There are two distinctive features of the texts to note here.

a) Language of resigning the spirit

An immediate resonance with Charles' use of the resignation of the spirit is its biblical foundation in Jesus' resignation of his spirit on the cross. However, the King James Version does not render this translation. In Luke's account of the crucifixion, resignation is expressed through the language of commendation and giving up: 'And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.'[80] The other three Gospels similarly speak of Jesus giving up the ghost, but omit the reference to the commendation of his spirit.[81] The Coverdale version of the Psalms in the Book of Common Prayer echoes the Lukan phrase, 'Into thy hands I commend my spirit: for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth'.[82] Moreover in 'A commendatory Prayer for a sick person at the point of departure' the prayer is made, 'We humbly commend the soul of this thy servant, our dear brother, into thy hands.'[83] Charles would have been very familiar with both of these references.

Charles clearly has the biblical references in view in his use of the resignation of the spirit in death, which he communicates through a variety of terms: commend, give up, give back, give or yield up the ghost, dismiss, as well as resign. It is surprising however, particularly given Charles' crucicentric approach, that there are not more examples directly referring to the death of Jesus. There is only one reference to Jesus resigning his spirit, 'God his Spirit doth resign',[84] and no references to Jesus commending his spirit or soul. There are seven references to the *believer*

[80] Luke 23.46, KJV.
[81] Matt. 27.50, Mark 15.37, John 19.30, KJV.
[82] *BCP*, Psalm 31:6, 388.
[83] *BCP*, 328.
[84] *RT*141, st.2, line 6.

commending a dying friend to God,[85] or commending their own parting breath,[86] spirit,[87] or soul,[88] and even 'mould'ring dust',[89] but not of Jesus. Similarly with language of giving up the ghost; in the body of the *Resignation Texts* there are merely five references to giving or yielding up the ghost; none of them in relation to Jesus. Three appear in the title of the poem only, citing the text on which the poem is based. One of these refers to the death of Jacob,[90] and the other two to the death of Jesus, one taking its text from Mark 15:37,[91] and the other from Matthew 27:50.[92] None of these however use language of giving up the ghost in the body of the poem, Charles' composition. In two places alone does Charles use such language and both of these refer to the death of believers rather than that of Jesus: the first in a funeral hymn written on the occasion of the death of the Rev. Mr. John Meriton, 'And hath he bow'd his head,/ And rendered up the ghost';[93] the second, a prayer of a believer, 'Now, let me Now give up the ghost,/ Now let my Nature's Life be o're'.[94]

Whilst not explicitly using the biblical idiom when referring to the death of Jesus, there are two additional hymns which are written on the basis of this text of giving up or yielding up the ghost. In each of these hymns the reference is to Jesus dying; the first 'when God resigns his parting breath',[95] and the second speaks of Jesus' *soul* being resigned into God's hands, 'His soul a victim in our stead/ Into his Father's hands resign'd!'[96]

Giving, giving up, giving back or yielding the spirit is evident in a small number of hymns; in the holy death of Elizabeth Hooper, 'By Jesus wholly sanctified,/ Her perfect spirit she gave up,/ And sunk into his arms, and died';[97] in a hymn for children stating that it is better to die than to live and grieve God, 'But rather than live/ Thy goodness to grieve,/ Back into thy hands we our spirits would give', and in

[85] *RT*100.
[86] *RT*276, st.2, lines 5-6.
[87] *RT*111, st.7, line 6; *RT*192, sts.2 and 4.
[88] *RT*192, st.3; *RT*225, st.2; *RT*228, st.3.
[89] *RT*192, st.3.
[90] *RT*114.
[91] *RT*294.
[92] *RT*303.
[93] *RT*105, st.1, lines 1-2.
[94] *RT*228, st.6, lines 1-2.
[95] *RT*294, st.2, line 1.
[96] *RT*303, lines 3-4. Resignation of the soul is examined in the following section.
[97] *RT*36, st.6, lines 2-4.

stanza seven, ‘Our spirits we give/ For thee to receive:/ O who would not die, with his Saviour to live!’;[98] in a hymn for one preparing for death, ‘Thou never wilt thine own forsake,/ Till pure I give my spirit back/ Into those blessed hands of thine’, expressed in resignation language in stanza four, ‘My spotless spirit to resign’;[99] and, finally, the desire for death expressed by one fallen from grace,

O that the hour were come!
That I my head might bow,
And gain the harbour of the tomb,
And yield my spirit now![100]

In the title of the hymn which uses Matthew’s text on the death of Jesus another possible synonym is suggested. The title notes that in Greek, the translation of yielded would be dismissed, ‘[“Jesus when he had cried again with a loud cry, yielded up the ghost (Gr., dismissed his spirit).”—Matt. 27, v. 50].’[101] Dismissed however is not used any more frequently by Charles, there being one example only, which appears in his hymn on the death of Mrs. Lefevre,

9 Like him, her *thirty years and three*,
She finish’d on the sacred tree,
In sacrificial prayer,
Calmly without a lingring sigh,
Dismiss’d her spirit to the sky,
And clasps her Jesus there![102]

Despite then the liberal interchangeability of synonyms used to express the resignation of the spirit at death following the pattern of Christ, taking all the variations considered above together, there are still, unpredictably, only three occurrences in Charles’ resignation hymns where the reference is to the death of Jesus.[103]

[98] *RT*155, st.3, lines 1-3; st.7, lines 4-6.
[99] *RT*192, st.4, line 5.
[100] *RT*81, st.2, lines 5-8.
[101] *RT*303.
[102] *RT*110, st.9. Charles’ italics.
[103] *RT*141, *RT*294, *RT*303.

b) Conformity to God or Christ

A second emphasis to be drawn from the hymns referring to the resignation of the spirit is that of conformity to God or to Christ. This conformity includes suffering with Christ. Four hymns annex the believer's resignation to suffering with Christ, or to conformity to Christ through suffering.[104] Of these hymns John Wesley seems to have objected to several points in the first:

> 2 If tempted in death, and forsook
> Thy burthen unknowing I bear,
> To God with astonishment look,
> Nor find a return of my prayer;
> Assure me, my anguish is thine;
> This hope to a sinner afford,
> And lo, I my spirit resign,
> And chearfully die—with my Lord![105]

Maddox notes the annotations in John's personal copy of the hymn book, which in relation to this verse read, 'John Wesley underlined "and forsook" in line 1, "with astonishment" in line 3, and "chearfully die" in line 8 in his personal copy, drawing an exclamation point in the margin after line 1.'[106] John Wesley did not believe God forsook the believer; Charles differed with him on this.[107] Whilst for Charles a sense of Godforsakenness might well have been his own experience, he is also clearly referencing the Bible, particularly the account of Jesus' cry from the cross, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'[108] Furthermore resignation is 'chearfully' offered, with the assurance that the suffering experienced is Christ's. However, surprisingly, in the following stanza Charles uses language which indicates that the suffering of the believer contributes to and even fulfils the suffering of Christ, 'Fill up thy afflictions below':

> 3 Or let me in sorrow remain,
> So thou my Redeemer art nigh,
> Thy marks in my body sustain,
> And daily in agonies die,
> Fill up thy afflictions below,
> So thou to my conscience reveal

[104] *RT*140, *RT*188, *RT*193, *RT*275.
[105] *RT*140, st.2.
[106] *Scripture Hymns* 2, 658n76.
[107] As noted in chapter 1.
[108] Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:34, KJV.

Thou dost my infirmities know,
My griefs thou art troubled to feel.[109]

This is unexpected language to read from the pen of a Protestant evangelical, for whom emphasis on the complete and sufficient nature of Christ's death on the cross for the salvation of sinners is paramount. Similarly unexpected is the identification of the believer with Christ in suffering and even participation in Christ's suffering which can be expressed in words such as 'Thy marks in my body sustain'.[110]

Resignation is used twice in this hymn, in the verses immediately preceding and following stanza three above. Whereas in stanza two resignation was 'chearfully' offered, the suffering experienced being that of Christ himself; in stanza four the nuance hints at resignation as endurance. Here the context has changed. Now it is not the *suffering* which is the common experience of the believer and Christ, but the *sorrow*, felt by believer and Christ alike. And resignation in this context means endurance through the shared sorrow caused by the shared suffering.

4 Sustain'd by the pity divine,
That pants in Immanuel's breast,
My sorrow uniting to thine,
In calm resignation I rest:
Thy word to the members is sure,
The joy is annext to the pain:
With thee to the end I endure,
With thee I in glory shall reign.[111]

This emphasis on conformity to Christ is allied to sanctification, being made perfect, pure, spotless, and mature in grace; 'By Jesus found mature in grace,/ In full conformity divine/ My spotless spirit to resign';[112] and earlier in the same hymn, 'Till pure I give my spirit back/ Into those blessed hands of thine,'[113] and similarly elsewhere, 'Till my spirit I resign/ Pure into the hands divine.'[114]

[109] *RT*140, st.3.
[110] *RT*140, st.3, line 3.
[111] *RT*140, st.4.
[112] *RT*192, st.4, lines 3-5.
[113] *RT*192, st.2, lines 2-3.
[114] *RT*224, st.1 lines 5-6.

iv. Resignation of the soul

The final expression to examine is Charles' use of language of resigning the soul in death. Some hymns in this category express the entirety of the offering; the soul given to God in both life and death, in words such as 'And let us to thy glory live,/ And in thy cause expire./ Our souls and bodies we resign;'[115] or 'Flesh, spirit, soul to thee resign,/ And live, and die entirely thine!'[116] Or,

> Thus woud I live, intirely thine
> Who gav'st thyself for me,
> And then my spotless soul resign
> A sacrifice to Thee.[117]

Similarly in a funeral hymn on the death of Fanny Cowper, the resignation of her soul to Christ in life and death is acknowledged, 'Thy resign'd, and Christ-like soul,/ Started forth, and won the race'.[118] The majority of texts in this category however do not refer to life but to the resignation of the soul at the point of death.

In the *Resignation Texts* there are thirty-seven examples of resigning the soul in death. Of these, only one refers to Christ, which is based on the text from Matthew's Gospel, 'Jesus when he had cried again with a loud cry, yielded up the ghost'.

> Beneath my sins He bow'd his head,
> My sins, and those of all mankind!
> His soul a victim in our stead
> Into his Father's hands resign'd![119]

The remaining texts indicate the believer's resignation of the soul and two key features emerge.

a) Desire for death

A desire for death is apparent in four texts, though with different motivations. The motivation of the first is a desire to escape pain and suffering. It occurs in a funeral hymn in which Charles is clear that the dead are blessed, 'O blessed estate of the

[115] *RT*58, st.3, lines 3-4 and st.4, line 1.
[116] *RT*185, st.4, lines 5-6.
[117] *RT*310, st.2, lines 5-8.
[118] *RT*62, st.7, lines 4-5.
[119] *RT*303, lines 1-4.

dead,/ The dead that have died in the Lord!/ From trouble and misery freed',[120] he continues,

> 4 Ah! Give me to bow my faint head,
> My sorrowful soul to resign,
> From pain everlastingly freed,
> To sink on the bosom divine;[121]

His appeal to God is to 'Come quickly, and bear me away'.[122] The second text expresses a desire for death in order to escape 'the hell of sin':

> 5 O that I could my soul resign,
> ……
> And snatch the death, for which I call,
> Or let me into nothing fall,
> To 'scape the hell of sin.[123]

This hymn is written for 'One Fallen from Grace'. It is a bleak hymn, consisting almost entirely of an overwhelming sense of sinfulness, '… all my soul is sin'. Charles uses the word 'sin' twelve times in the eight stanzas of the hymn, six of them in stanza two alone, and five times he refers to 'the hell of sin'. He does however plead salvation from 'the great offence', presumably the sin of blasphemy, the unforgivable sin named by Jesus,[124] and that he might not die in this state of sin, 'But save me from the great offence,/ And let me keep my innocence,/ And without sin expire.'[125] The only, yet absolute, expression of hope appears in the last line. In the penultimate line Charles asks a question which opens the door to hope, 'What then can make thy burnings cease?' The last line, a tiny proportion of the whole, a mere drop, and yet the climax, brilliantly tips the balance of the whole hymn; the overwhelming sinfulness expressed throughout the hymn is outweighed by that which might seem minute and insignificant, yet for Charles' theology is of ultimate and absolute significance: 'A drop of Jesu's blood.'[126]

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[120] *RT*59, st.2, lines 1-3.
[121] *RT*59, st.4, lines 1-4.
[122] *RT*59, st.2, lines 1-3, st.4, lines 1-4 and 7.
[123] *RT*70, st.5, lines 1, and 4-6.
[124] Matt. 12:31.
[125] *RT*70, st.4, lines 4-6.
[126] *RT*70, st.8, line 6.

In the third text desire for death has a positive motivation. The desire for death here is located within the context of the desire to see God. 'Life cannot bear the bliss divine:/ Then let me, Lord, my soul resign,/ To see thy heavenly face.'[127] This positive association is not as common as the desire to escape suffering and sinfulness. However there is a significant strand in Charles' theology which embraces a mystical sense of incorporation into God, of which this is an example, located within the broader spiritual context of desire for God.

The final text expresses the longing to be delivered from sin and denotes this broader context of desire for God. The hymn is one for 'Those that Wait for Full Redemption'.[128] Desire for God is expressed as the desire for 'purity within',[129] which will allow the believer to resign his soul, to be 'Receiv'd into the arms divine'.[130] The yearning to cease from sin is expressed strongly in this hymn; the desire to 'sin no more' appears as the last line of stanza three, the stanza preceding these below:

> 4 I ask nor joy, nor life, nor ease,
> I ask not earthly happiness,
> But purity within;
> On others, Lord, those gifts bestow,
> But let me cease from sin below,
> But let me cease from sin.
>
> 5 Hasten to grant my sole request,
> Take me into that second rest,
> That glorious liberty,
> And let me then my soul resign,
> Receiv'd into the arms divine,
> Forever lost in thee.[131]

b) Sanctification

The relationship of sanctification to conformity to Christ was noted in the section above on the resignation of the spirit. The second and final point to be drawn from texts referring to the resignation of the soul in death, and which is of particular pertinence to this thesis, is to note the references Charles makes to perfection,

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[127] *RT*191, st.1, lines 4-6.
[128] *RT*94.
[129] *RT*94, st.4, line 3.
[130] *RT*94, st.5, line 5.
[131] *RT*94, sts.4 and 5.

maturity, purity, sanctification and spotlessness. These hymns on the resignation of the soul have a much greater focus on these qualities than in any of the sections so far considered, and particularly on spotlessness.

A text which employs a variety of words to communicate the state of sanctification is another hymn for 'Those that Wait for Full Redemption'.[132] It uses purify,[133] sanctified,[134] holy,[135] pure in heart,[136] saints,[137] filled with God or 'his love and power',[138] perfected, [139] and likeness to Christ,[140] which is the 'highest point of love divine'.[141] This state, Charles suggests we arrive at here on earth; and at death, when we 'our parting souls resign', growth in sanctification ceases:

> 9 That highest point of love divine,
> To all that heaven we here arrive,
> And then our parting souls resign,
> And cease at once to grow, and live.[142]

Interestingly Charles' text on Whitefield's death intimates a different perspective.

> Mature in grace, and ready to depart,
> The Spirit cries all-powerful in his heart,
> "O that to day might close my ministry!
> O that I might to day my Saviour see!"
>
> He speaks—and dies! Transported to resign
> His spotless soul into the hands divine!
> He sinks into his loving Lord's embrace,
> And sees his dear Redeemer face to face![143]

Charles seems to suggest Whitefield's transportation from earth to heaven, so that he might, in heaven, resign 'His spotless soul into the hands divine'. This is unusual. Usually the resignation of the soul is the last act of the Christian before death, and indeed indicates death. But here the resignation of Whitefield's soul is envisaged

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[132] *RT*95.
[133] *RT*95, st.2, line 3.
[134] *RT*95, st.4, line 3; st.6, line 4.
[135] *RT*95, st.10, line 2; st.15, line 2.
[136] *RT*95, st.16, line 2.
[137] *RT*95, st.16, line 2.
[138] *RT*95, st.6, line 3; st.11, line 4.
[139] *RT*95, st.4, line 4; st.7, line 4; st.11, line 1; st.15, line 2.
[140] *RT*95, st.7, line 2; st.8, line 3; st.15, line 4; st.16, line 4.
[141] *RT*95, st.9, line 1.
[142] *RT*95, st.9.
[143] *RT*187, lines 459-466.

occurring beyond death. This may be an indication of Charles' theology; Johnson has indicated that John Wesley believed that growth in sanctification could continue beyond death, 'Wesley maintained that souls in paradise employed and grew in the holy tempers.'[144] Alternatively it might be an example of Charles' poetic creativity.

Three further texts connecting sanctification and the resignation of the soul clearly articulate sanctification achieved before death. The first is a funeral hymn on the death of Mrs. Fanny Cowper which asserts that her perfection was arrived at through suffering and in a 'short space'. This is an early hymn of Charles', first appearing in *Funeral Hymns* published in 1746, well before the perfectionist controversy which changed his position on perfection in this life or it being achieved in a 'short space'.

7 Thy chearful soul obey'd,
Thro' sufferings perfect made,
Perfect made in a short space,
Thy resign'd, and Christ-like soul,
Started forth, and won the race,
Reach'd at once the glorious goal.[145]

The concepts of sanctification, maturity and purity all appear in Charles' hymn written 'On the Death of Mrs. Anne Jenkins'. In this hymn too, published in 1749, Charles speaks of the sanctification of this Christian in this life. Before her death she is 'wholly sanctified', mature in faith, 'fully ripe for heaven', and her soul is pure, resigned into the hands of God at death:

7 Thou in Jesu's words and ways
Exhortedst us t' abide,
Witness of the perfect grace,
And wholly sanctified:
All his promises fulfill'd,
All his gifts to thee were given,
Pardon'd here, renew'd, and seal'd,
And fully ripe for heaven.

8 Pure into the hands of God
Thou didst thy soul resign[146]

[144] Johnson, "Holiness and Death", 72.
[145] *RT*62, st.7.
[146] *RT*96, st.7 and st.8, lines 1-2.

The third text outlines a process of growing in grace and holiness until the point of death, the resignation of our souls, when we are 'mature' for the glory of heaven. This is a later text, written between 1763 and 1764,[147] and reflects Charles' developed view.

3 Our implacable foe
We daily o'rethrow,
To the evils submit,
And the goods upon earth we tread under our feet;
With Jesus endure,
Till for glory mature
Our souls we resign,
And ascend, to partake of the triumph Divine.[148]

Finally, Charles' use of spotlessness in the texts referring to the resignation of the soul is particularly significant. In chapter one a difference was identified between Charles and John regarding their understanding of sanctification in relation to sinless perfection. Whilst John was unhappy with such a term, Charles was more ready to use it, as evident from the hymns.[149] The word 'spotless' is closely associated with the use of 'sinless perfection', and from the writings of John Wesley it would appear that he used it infrequently.[150] John's unhappiness with the word 'spotless' is indicated in the margins of his personal copy of Charles' 1762 volume of *Scripture Hymns*. As Maddox notes, regarding the verse below, 'John Wesley underlined all of line 4 and "spotless soul" in line 5 in his personal copy, drawing an exclamation point in the margin after line 4.'[151]

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[147] Maddox, editorial introduction, *MS John*.
[148] *RT*271, st.3.
[149] There are 145 instances of 'spotless' used in Charles Wesley's published verse and 109 in his Manuscript verse. Whilst there will be some overlap, in hymns which appear in both collections, it is clear that this was a word Charles used on numerous occasions.
[150] There are 39 references to 'spotless' in the Bicentennial Edition of John Wesley's Works. The majority of those (31) are found in hymns, of which Charles Wesley is most likely the author. Several refer to the spotlessness of God or Christ. Others occur in a story from Ephraem Syrus which John records in his journal, (*Works*, vol. 21, Journal 12, Thur. 21 May, 1761, 323), and letters he received, their authorship now unknown (*Works*, vol. 19, Journal 3, Tues. 5 December, 1738, 25; and *Works,* vol. 21, Journal 13, Tue. 21 June, 1763, 420). Evidence of John's own use of the word is found only in four sermons: sermon 15, 'The Great Assize' (*Works* vol. 1, 374), where he encourages his hearers to come 'by faith to spotless love'; sermon 20, 'The Lord our Righteousness' (*Works* vol. 1, 458 and 462), where John Wesley speaks of putting on the 'spotless righteousness of Christ', and also cites those who claim 'spotless righteousness' but are using Christ's righteousness as a cover for their own unrighteousness; sermon 34, 'The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law' (*Works* vol 2, 11), in which John refers to the spotlessness of 'the wisdom from above'; and sermon 45, 'The New Birth', (*Works*, vol. 2, 188), where the reference is to God, who is 'spotless purity'.
[151] *Scripture Hymns* 2, 393n113.

4 Then let me thee my pattern trace,
With thee cry out, and faint and bleed,
'Till partner of thy last distress,
I taste the gall, and bow my head,
Calmly my spotless soul resign,
And die into the arms divine.[152]

In the *Resignation Texts* there are fourteen references to spotlessness, plus one which appears in Charles' *Elegy on the Death of Robert Jones* which is not included in the extract quoted in the *Resignation Texts*, but is indicated in the footnote below.[153] Of these fifteen, only three refer to the spotlessness of Jesus;[154] the remaining twelve pertain to the spotlessness of the believer. There are enough examples to demonstrate that this was not just a mistaken or careless use, but rather a deliberate choice of word on several occasions. Of the twelve references to the resignation of the believer, one is used without an accompanying noun, 'Spotless, sincere, without offence';[155] one refers to spotless righteousness;[156] two refer to the spotless purity of believers who have died, Robert Jones[157] and Mrs. Fanny Cowper.[158] The remaining eight refer to 'spotless soul',[159] or in one case 'spotless spirit'.[160] Of these eight, six explicitly use language of the *resignation* of the spotless soul (or in the one case spirit). Sometimes the state of spotlessness is expressed as a desire: 'My hope of spotless righteousness',[161]

4 This, this is all my heart's desire,
When mercy doth my soul require,
By Jesus found mature in grace,
In full conformity divine
My spotless spirit to resign,
And see my Saviour face to face.[162]

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[152] *RT*147, st.4.
[153] *RT*42, st.16, line 4; *RT*62, st.10, line 2; *RT*109, st.5, line 2; *RT*142, st.1, line 3; *RT*147, st.4, line 5; *RT*149, st.2, line 5; *RT*168, st.6, line 7; *RT*183, st.2, line 1; *RT*187, line 464; *RT*192, st.4, line 5; *RT*202, st.4, line 3; *RT*255, line 3; *RT*305, st.2, line 1; *RT*310, st.2, line 7; *Robert Jones*, line 281.
[154] *RT*42, st.16, line 4; *RT*142, st.1, line 3; *RT*202, st.4, line 3.
[155] *RT*183, st.2, line 1.
[156] *RT*305, st.2, line 1.
[157] *Robert Jones*, line 281.
[158] *RT*62, st.10, line 2
[159] *RT*109, st.5, line 2; *RT*147, st.4, line 5; *RT*149, st.2, line 5; *RT*168, st.6, line 7; *RT*187, line 464; *RT*255, line 3; *RT*310, st.2, line 7.
[160] *RT*192, st.4, line 5
[161] *RT*305, st.2, line 1.
[162] *RT*192, st.4.

The texts written on the deaths of Robert Jones, Fanny Cowper, George Whitefield and Mrs. Lefevre referenced above, indicate that the spotlessness of the soul is evident before death. Of Lefevre Charles states,

> 5 She *was* (what words can never paint)
> A spotless soul, a sinless saint,
> In perfect love renew'd,
> A mirror of the deity,
> A transcript of the One in Three,
> A temple fill'd with God.[163]

A further six hymns, written as articulations by or on behalf of the believer, suggest a spotlessness in the believer before death, even if the context is only just before death, and the hymn a preparation for death: 'Calmly my spotless soul resign';[164] 'Spotless, sincere, without offence/ O may we to his day remain';[165] Of heavenly origin divine,/ Of water and the Spirit born,/ We shall our spotless souls resign';[166]

> By holy confidence divine
> Made ready to depart,
> I then my spotless soul resign,
> And see thee as thou art.[167]

> Thus woud I live, intirely thine
> Who gav'st thyself for me,
> And then my spotless soul resign
> A sacrifice to Thee.[168]

Finally, the text from which the title of this thesis is taken indicates the spotless state of the believer described, even though he or she would not recognise it:

> 2 Himself he cannot perfect call,
> Or to the meanest saint prefer,
> Meanest himself, and least of all:
> And when the glorious character
> His spotless soul with Christ receives,
> His state—to that great day he leaves.[169]

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[163] *RT*109, st.5.
[164] *RT*147, st.4, line 5.
[165] *RT*183, st.2, lines 1-2.
[166] *RT*255, lines 1-3.
[167] *RT*168, st.6, lines 5-8.
[168] *RT*310, st.2, lines 5-8.
[169] *RT*149, st.2.

This hymn, written between 1760-1761[170] demonstrates Charles' quintessential response to the current perfectionist crisis, and articulates the heart of his understanding of sanctification in a believer.

Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the final stage of the resignation of the believer to God, at the point of death. All other acts of resignation culminate in this ultimate offering. Charles' association of resignation with sanctification is clearly evident in the hymns discussed in the final section of this chapter; this is a critical connection and particularly significant for the discussion of part III. Part III draws conclusions from the analysis of the last four chapters to ascertain how Charles understood resignation in relation to sanctification.

[170] Maddox, editorial introduction, *Scripture Hymns* 2.

Excursus: Funeral Hymn on the Death of Mrs. Elizabeth Blackwell, March 27, 1772.

VI.
On the Death of Mrs Elizabeth Blackwell,
March 27, 1772.
Part IV.

1 Soon as th' appointed sickness came,
And *promis'd* her departure near,
She welcom'd death in Jesus name,
Nor weakly dropt a lingring tear:
Let those lament with conscious dread
Who teach "Ye must in darkness die:["]
She knew her Advocate had sped,
Her place was ready in the sky.

2 "How can I doubt my blisful end,
"How can I tremble to remove,
"When Jesus, my almighty Friend,
"Is the great God of faith and love?
"Him God supreme for ever blest,
"Sole self-existing God I own,
"Who purchas'd my eternal rest,
["]And calls me up to share his throne.

3 ["]Surrounded by his power I stand
["]Whom day and night his mercies keep,
["]He holds me in his chastning hand,
["]He gives to his beloved sleep;
["]While in his mercies I confide,
["]He keeps my soul in perfect peace
["]He comforts me on every side,
["]And pain is lost in thankfulness.

4 ["]Who for so poor a creature care
["]My friends are with his kindness kind,
["]My burthens for his sake they bear;
["]The Fountain in the stream I find;
["]I magnify my Saviour's name,
["]I praise Him with my parting breath,
["]And sinking into dust, proclaim
["]The everlasting Arms beneath.["]

5 In words like these the dying saint
Her humble confidence exprest,
Or calmly sigh'd her only want
And languish'd for that endless rest:
Rest after toil and pain how sweet
To souls whose full reward is sure,

Who their last wish, like her, submit,
Like Jesus, to the end endure.

6 Induring, with that patient Lamb
Th' appointed years of sacred woe,
She comes, as gold out of the flame,
To triumph o're her mortal foe:
Sweet peace, and pure, celestial hope,
And humble joy the bride prepare,
While waiting to be taken up,
She whispers soft her final prayer.

7 The witness which thro' life she bore,
When now made ready to ascend,
Loving, and meek, resign'd, and poor
She bears consistent to the end;
No sudden starts with nature mixt,
No violent extacies of grace,
Her eye on Him, her heart is fixt,
And silence speaks her Saviour's praise.

8 Exempt from nature's agonies,
Who now is able to conceive
What with her closing eyes she sees,
She cannot bear the Sight and live:
In sweet communion with her God,
She glides insensibly away,
Quietly drops the smiling clod
And mingles with eternal day![1]

Charles penned this poem, a eulogy for Elizabeth Blackwell, on her death in 1772. The poem is remarkable in that it comprehensively encapsulates the characteristics of resignation embedded within and exemplified through the life of one Christian believer. The words 'resign' and 'resign'd' appear once each in this poem, and yet the whole witnesses to the attitude of resignation lived by Mrs. Blackwell.

The poem is structured in four parts; part four only is quoted here. Part one refers to Blackwell's early life, her dedication to God from a child. Part two addresses her life as a mature Christian, justified and desiring sanctification, her faith shown in works of love among the sick and suffering. Part three attends to her dedication and spiritual care for her husband. Here it is noted that Elizabeth Blackwell resigned all for her husband's sake: 'Did she not all with ease resign,/ To make Another's bliss

[1] *RT*239. *MS Funeral Hymns* (1756–87), 55-57.

secure?'[2] In part four, the poem deals primarily with her relationship with God in response to her imminent death. It is evident in this section that Blackwell's Christian disposition of being 'Loving, and meek, resign'd, and poor', remains. As the whole of her life testifies, her heart is now fixed on Jesus. This way of living is not altered by the reality of imminent death; she has become who she is. There are no violent 'extacies', no sudden changes, she remains consistent to the end.

7 The witness which thro' life she bore,
When now made ready to ascend,
Loving, and meek, resign'd, and poor
She bears consistent to the end;

The phenomenon of the deathbed testimony is demonstrably present in the Blackwell eulogy. Charles quotes Blackwell's words, '"I'll praise Him with my parting breath/ And sinking into dust, proclaim/ The everlasting Arms beneath."' Similarly, the characteristics which at death were believed to indicate sanctification, are in evidence; a "good death" meant the individual possessed a definite testimony of God's work in their soul, freedom from the fear of death (assurance), the characteristics of holiness (happiness, love, gratitude, peace, joy, etc.) and utter resignation to God's will.'[3] These characteristics of sanctification evident in Elizabeth's life, along with qualities of meekness, submission, humility and obedience, are apparent in almost every stanza of this poem. Indeed there are only five stanzas of the twenty-eight comprising the complete poem in which there is no reference to these qualities in Blackwell.[4] Two of these appear as two of the three stanzas in part four written as Elizabeth's own testimony, as though in her words (stanzas two and four). Stanza three refers to the perfect peace of her soul but recognizes that this is Jesus' gift, 'He keeps my soul in perfect peace'. The qualities Charles identifies in the life of this saint include innocence, purity, wisdom, lowliness, goodness, faithfulness, the fear of God, an unopposing heart, meekness, reverential joy, peace, humble assurance, lowliness, fear of offending God, kind zeal, humility, care, affection, virtuous happiness, affability, generosity, sweetness, calmness and poverty. These virtues are summed up by Charles in his summary statement in the penultimate stanza, which captures her attitude of being, 'Loving,

[2] *RT*238, st.1, lines 3-4.
[3] Johnson, "Holiness and Death", 202.
[4] The exceptions are part I st.1, part II st.8, part IV sts.1, 2 and 4.

and meek, resign'd, and poor'.[5] His message is clear; this dying saint embodies the characteristics of resignation which lead to the sanctification of the believer.

[5] *RT*239, st.7, line 3.

Part III
Resignation and Sanctification

Introduction

In part II the analysis of Charles' resignation texts identified a number of significant recurring theological themes inherent to the nature of resignation for the believer. These themes frequently reflect the resignation seen in Christ and encompass topics such as the response of the believer to God's grace, participating in the saving work of God within, the pattern of emptying and filling of the exchange formula, the emphasis on suffering and death, the balance of sacrifice and absolute trust in God's will, and the goal of sanctification.

It was also noted in part II, with reference to the resignation of the will and heart, that the heart, in addition to being the place where feelings and emotions are recognised and acknowledged, is also the location for the formation of attitudes in the believer, where characteristics of resignation are accepted, embraced and habituated.

From the resignation of the whole of life, themes such as the desire for participation in Christ emerged, even participation in his suffering, indicative of reciprocity of giving: the believer giving of the self to Christ who gave himself for the believer. Here also is the recognition that the resignation of the whole self to God includes elements such as being lost in God, being formed in the similitude of the Trinity, and participating in the divine life. Finally, at the point of death, the resignation of the believer is summed up and culminated in this final offering.

The third and final part of the thesis draws conclusions from this foregoing research to identify the nature of the relationship between resignation and sanctification for Charles Wesley. There are two fundamental conclusions to draw. First, for Charles resignation was essentially about an attitude within the believer which was of the nature of being sanctified. The habituated affections formed in the heart; the attitude

of body, soul, spirit, heart and mind; the disposition of the emotions as well as the attitude of mind; all lie at the heart of this perspective for Charles. This is the essence of chapter nine.

Secondly, chapter ten explores the interconnected nature of resignation and sanctification. The significance of resignation explored in this final chapter for the sanctification of the believer is a key distinctive feature in the theology and spirituality of Charles Wesley, and indeed indicates a fundamental perspective of Charles' view which influences his attitude towards other matters of theology, spirituality and practice.

Chapter 9

Resignation: an attitude of being and foundational temper for sanctification

2 Ever careful to abound
In fruits of righteousness,
Still thou labour'dst to be found
In God's appointed ways,
Walking on with Christ in white,
Virtues thy companions were,
Praise thy permanent delight,
And all thy business prayer.
……...
8 Pure into the hands of God
Thou didst thy soul resign

—Charles Wesley[1]

Introduction

The analysis of Charles Wesley's resignation texts to this point has examined the nature of the act of resignation, both the resignation of Jesus and the resignation of the believer. Yet for Charles resignation is not simply an act, however entire in its self-sacrificial nature. For Charles resignation is an attitude of being for the Christian. The introduction to chapter six, prefacing the resignation of the self, introduced this perspective, the resignation of the self, pertaining to the framing of attitude towards God. The phrase 'attitude of being' is intended to communicate more than simply an act of will, although it requires this; more also than an attitude of mind, or even intention of heart, though both of these are incorporated within it. 'Attitude of being' denotes the disposition of the whole person and integrates the emotions as well as the rationality of mind and intentionality of will. It embraces the spiritual disposition towards God and the inherent virtues which form and shape the response of the believer to God. This attitude of being is hard to articulate. Zimany speaks of habitual grace, which he says is 'the infused, God-assisted habit of doing what God approves.'[2] Whilst this is part of it, resignation as an attitude of being is

[1] 'On the Death of Mrs. Anne Jenkins', *RT*96, st.2 and st.8, lines 1-2.
[2] Roland D. Zimany, "Grace, Deification and Sanctification: East-West," *Diakonia* 12 (1977): 123.

more than doing what God approves; it denotes an impulse of alignment of the person with God in all things; an intention to be godly and Christlike in body, soul, mind and spirit, in the entire approach and response to life and death.

Such inherent qualities, or constant and enduring dispositions, have been identified as an important strand of John Wesley's understanding of the formation of the believer. Given the paucity of research on Charles Wesley's views in this area to this point, a consideration of John's views at this point is illuminative. Collins, in his paper, 'John Wesley's Topography of the Heart: Dispositions, Tempers and Affections',[3] considers John's use of 'dispositions' and 'tempers'. He comments that John uses the two terms synonymously in his writings, though has a preference for the language of 'temper'.[4] Collins suggests that what John understands by dispositions or tempers are qualities which, quoting Gregory Clapper, 'characterize a person over time'. Collins continues, 'Dispositions, then, are not as ephemeral as one might initially suppose. They are more constant and enduring than the vagaries of feelings and emotions. They are to use John's own words, "inherent qualities".'[5] Later in the paper Collins differentiates between dispositions or tempers, and affections. He states that these are often considered to be equivalent too, but, that in fact for John affections, including the passions, which Collins describes as 'intensified affections', are transient in nature whilst tempers are abiding.[6] 'Thus, Wesley's use of the term "temper" (and "disposition" for that matter) indicates that it, unlike the affections, depicts a "fixed posture of the soul."'[7] Later in the same paragraph, Collins also notes an ambiguity in John, in that he 'seems to indicate … that the affections flow from the tempers.'[8] Maddox, in his earlier *Responsible Grace,* notes that for John, the assumption was 'that these motivating affections were not simply transitory, but can (and should) be habituated into enduring dispositions.'[9] He also connects this understanding with the Eastern Orthodox distinction between the Image and the Likeness of God. 'The capacity for affections

[3] Kenneth J. Collins, "John Wesley's Topography of the Heart: Dispositions, Tempers, and Affections," *Methodist History* 36, no. 3 (1998).
[4] Collins, "Topography," 166.
[5] Collins, "Topography," 163.
[6] Collins, "Topography," 171.
[7] Collins, "Topography," 171.
[8] Collins, "Topography," 171.
[9] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 69.

is part of the Image of God. The proper enduring orientation of these affections would constitute the Christian tempers (or inward holiness) which is the Likeness of God. From the motivating disposition of these tempers would then flow holy words and actions.'[10] The affections indeed flow from the tempers. Furthermore Maddox notes John's use of 'will' and 'heart'. John uses the will 'as an inclusive term for the various affections – the responsive motivating inclinations behind all human action.'[11] 'Heart' on the other hand is used interchangeably with 'affections' and Maddox expresses the relationship between these and 'tempers' for Wesley in the following way, 'Thus, in [Wesley's] terminology the capacity for simple responsive love is an affection, while a developed enduring disposition to love (or to reject love!) is a temper. And the heart is the seat of the tempers.'[12] Examples of the dispositions for John Wesley are given by Collins: faith is a disposition of the heart,[13] so are the following, '[f]or Wesley …, the inward qualities of love, lowliness, and gentleness are the very *substance* of holiness or sanctification whether initial or entire.'[14] Poverty of spirit, humility and meekness are another three Collins mentions as essential dispositions, as 'principal traits of holiness'.[15] The heart is the seat of the tempers; the tempers, or dispositions are the essential, inherent qualities which characterise a person and are formed by the constant, enduring, intentionality of the affections turned to God.

Charles clearly understood the same distinction.[16] One example from Charles' letters, writing to his brother John, on 23rd October 1740, which relates to the temper of humility illustrates the point:

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[10] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 69.
[11] Maddox, "A Change of Affections," 14.
[12] Maddox, "A Change of Affections," 15.
[13] Collins, "Topography," 162.
[14] Collins, "Topography," 164. In chapter 2 of this thesis John Wesley's use of these characteristics in relation to resignation in his sermons was identified.
[15] Collins, "Topography," 164.
[16] In 'A Change of Affections' Maddox identifies a shift in John Wesley's moral psychology from his pre-Aldersgate model, shaped through his childhood, of 'habituated rational control' moral psychology. Post-Aldersgate, Maddox argues John adopts instead 'a self-conscious commitment to an empiricist-inspired "affectional" moral psychology.' Maddox, "A Change of Affections," 11-13. The same argument, unsurprisingly perhaps, can be made for his brother Charles. The brothers' shared experiences in the home environment during childhood years, in Oxford (particularly the Holy Club), of 'conversion' experiences within three days of each other, and John's early influence over Charles suggest that, at this point at least, they thought alike; an assumption which is confirmed through the evidence of their writing. Nevertheless it is clear that not everyone in the movement understood the Wesleys moral psychology, as illustrated in a reference below; Bradburn cries on the

> I cannot but think we agree in the general, that everyone who is settled but not on Christ should be unsettled again. When God *has* given faith, I am firmly persuaded He gives *some measure* of true humility, *before* He gives me a rooted love; that is *before* I am in Christ a new creature, I shall feel myself in Adam a fallen spirit.
> Take it in other words; although I never shall have a *habit* of humility till I love Jesus Christ yet *must* I be so far humbled *first*, as to *see* myself as to give up all confidence in the flesh, as to lie like clay in the hand of the potter. This is the way of God's dealing with me, and O! That I may not resist, but patiently wait till He has stripped me of all, removed my every false rests and made me poor in spirit![17]

This demonstrates several points. First, that the affection of humility (in this case) comes before the habit is established. Second that it is given by God, (the place of God's grace in the disposition of resignation is considered below). Third, that Charles' desire is not to resist, another way of expressing resignation to God's will; and finally Charles' articulation of his giving up all confidence in the flesh indicates that, unsurprisingly, the process of justification and sanctification are similar for him. There are numerous references in Charles' journals to believers who first needed to know and acknowledge that they were sinners, and deserved hell, before they could receive justification. Charles likewise recognises that there can be no reliance on self, but that all is dependent on God, for sanctification; and the abandonment of personal striving after sanctification is expressed for Charles through the term resignation.

This chapter asserts that resignation, as understood by Charles Wesley is a temper or disposition of the heart. It is an enduring orientation of the believer towards God; it is a fixed posture of the soul, an inherent, habituated quality from which affections flow; it is an attitude of being. Moreover, the chapter argues that in relation to sanctification, and on the evidence of the *Resignation Texts*, resignation is a key primary temper or disposition for Charles and that from this primary disposition other dispositions or affections which lead to sanctification flow.

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death of his spouse 'O! Regulate my affections!' a cry indicative of an 'habituated rational control' moral psychology.

[17] *Letters*, 88.

To explore this significant, foundational quality and position of resignation in Charles' writing, this chapter examines firstly, its nature as an enduring disposition of the heart. To do this the affections, or virtues, characteristic of resignation in Charles' poetry are examined; how they are acquired, and their embodiment in the resigned person. Secondly, the chapter addresses resignation as a distinctive primary temper or disposition for Charles, examining the specific affections which are characteristic of the resigned believer and indicative of resignation as an habituated temper. Finally, three distinctive means which Charles suggests as either essential or contributory to the attainment of resignation are presented: the gift of God – grace; the experience of life – suffering; and the spiritual discipline of detachment.

1. Resignation: an enduring disposition of the heart

Resignation as an enduring disposition of the heart is established through the gradual acquisition of affections conducive to resignation as well as the repeated practice of resigning things, people, the will and heart, and the self to God. It is a process of gradual development and growth which leads to sanctification, a process which is forming a habit of holiness.

i. Habituating affections through iteration

In chapter one Charles' paradigm of sanctification as a gradual journey was highlighted. The iterative process of the acquisition of affections and tempers is a central feature of this journey. Such an emphasis is evident in the textual analysis of part II through the various facets of human life and experience which need to be resigned, but also in Charles' emphasis on repeated acts of resignation, 'The heart I every day resign'.[18] As noted in Maddox's work above, through repetition affections can be fashioned into tempers. The work of sanctification in the believer is, in part, a matter of developing the habit of holiness. This iterative process was facilitated particularly through Charles' hymns. They were sung repeatedly, their theology and spirituality absorbed and reinforced on each occasion; they are memorable - parts, if not the whole, were committed to mind and heart; they were used for prayer, intentionally forming the believer's relationship with God. As explored in chapter three, hymns are performed, either privately or corporately, and through the

[18] *RT*129, st.2, line 6.

performance of this art the truth they embody apprehends, is recognised, rehearsed and responded to; it is a participative and transformative activity and a lived doxology. Such repetition encouraged acquisition of the desired affections and the inhabitation of the desired tempers. In this manner affections and tempers were imbibed until they were embodied in the lives of the believers.

ii. Affections and the response of the heart

Acquiring the affections, or habituating the tempers of holiness was not simply a matter of repetition however. The iterative process is a process of response. The model at work, evident in both Charles and John Wesley, is that of a 'responsive heart', to use Maddox's phrase. Maddox comments, 'The key value of the strange warming of our heart in Wesley's mature heart religion was that it created the possibility of a *responsive heart.*'[19] Maddox notes that John Wesley's mature model of moral psychology is one of 'habituated holistic affections', and that in this John is closely aligned with the 'virtue ethic of Aquinas and Aristotle'. Maddox adds however, that whilst the interpretation of John's model as a virtue ethic is helpful 'it does not highlight the *responsive* aspect of Wesley's moral psychology as clearly as does using his own more typical language of the affections.' He continues, 'If "heart" refers to our inner motivating inclinations, then a "heart religion" must highlight the importance of these inclinations to proper outward religious/moral activity.'[20] Charles' position can be described in a similar way. The importance of the response of the heart is something he understood well and frequently requires in his hymns. Clearly hymns of the believer's resignation to God amply demonstrate the point.

The believer's responsive heart, desiring to love, groaning for full redemption, along with the willing of the will, is an essential aspect of God's work of sanctification within the believer. Tyson provides a succinct account of Charles' position:

> … sanctification is directly linked to moral and spiritual renovation (holiness), since God replicates His image in those who "desire to love" or "groan for full redemption." Perfection is the goal (teleios) of the process of sanctification; it is both the end and the means toward it, as those who resolutely forsake self-will and resign themselves into heavenly hands. This

[19] Maddox, "A Change of Affections," 16.
[20] Maddox, "A Change of Affections," 16.

> inner transformation is perfection of a sort, since the individual's divided mind is *gradually overcome* by willing the will of Him who made us and who desires to remake us in His image.[21]

It is important to note however, that for Charles Wesley the desire, the groaning, the willing, are also the work of God. God's grace is prevenient, both for justification and for sanctification; the responsive heart of the believer is enabled by the grace of God at work within. This interaction of grace and response are the necessary conditions for God's work of sanctification. Resignation, then, is a continual act of the will and heart toward God, enabled by grace, which shapes and forms the believer, and through repetition and response draws the believer ever more deeply into holiness.

iii. Embodying the affections: the disposition of the whole person

The response of resignation to God in all things is, furthermore, the disposition of the whole person, as evident in the analysis of part II above. Charles sees resignation as an inherent temper, or an attitude of being. An investigation of resignation texts which are indicative of resignation as an attitude of being reveals that of the 319 resignation hymns, 215 indicate this disposition. This is a striking statistic; clearly such a concept is integral to Charles' understanding of resignation. Two examples of believers illustrate the point; first, Elizabeth Blackwell on her death, introduced in the excursus preceding part III. At the stage of the Christian journey attained by Mrs. Blackwell her heart is fixed on God. This established way of living and being is not altered by the reality of imminent death; rather it has become who she is. There are no 'violent extacies', no sudden changes, she remains constant:

> 7 The witness which thro' life she bore,
> When now made ready to ascend,
> Loving, and meek, resign'd, and poor
> She bears consistent to the end;[22]

A contrast can be discerned in the experience of Bradburn on the death of his wife. Of course, the experience of a dying spouse and one's own death are entirely different. Mack notes, that Bradburn is troubled by his 'inability to sustain the

[21] Tyson, *Sanctification*, 307. My italics.
[22] *RT*239, st.7.

appropriate attitude of resignation' because his wife is dying, 'Alas, how can I be resigned? The wife of my youth expiring before me'[23] and he cries to God, 'O! Regulate my affections!'[24] Inhabiting the disposition of resignation was an indication of maturity of faith and frequently characteristic of deathbed experiences when sanctification was hoped for.

Resignation is then an attitude of being, a temper for the believer to habituate at all times and in all circumstances, a disposition of the whole person, disposing the believer to sanctification. In the resignation hymns however, it would seem that for Charles, resignation is not simply one of the tempers of sanctification among others, but that it has a unique place and other tempers and affections are, in fact, characteristics of resignation. The following analysis examines this bold claim.

2. Resignation: a primary disposition of the heart

i. Characteristic tempers and affections of resignation

A Poor Sinner.

1 How *happy* is the man
Who sees his misery,
Who ever feels his nature's chain,
Nor murmurs to be free.

Who *waits* in *patient* hope,
And *languishing* for home
With *chearful confidence* looks up,
And says, My Lord will come.

2 He neither hopes nor fears
Evil, or good below,
But sighs for God, and lets his tears
In secret *silence* flow.

Stript of his joy, he grieves
Quiet, *and meek*, *and still*;
The matter to his Father leaves,
And bids him work his will.

3 In *calm*, *submissive* grief
He suffers his distress,
He cannot snatch undue relief,
Or wish his misery less:

[23] Mack, *Heart Religion*, 103.
[24] Mack, *Heart Religion*, 102.

"My Father's will is good,"
(The patient mourner cries)
"He never gives a stone for food,
Or slights his children's sighs."

4 O that I thus *resign'd*
Might bear my nature's load,
O that in me were such a mind
To leave the whole to God!

With him to trust my cause,
And *quietly endure*,
Till he remove the hallow'd cross,
And all my sickness cure.

5 I would (but thou canst tell)
I would be *humble*, Lord,
My burthen every moment feel,
And tremble at thy word:

I would be *stript* of all,
And *calmly wait* thy stay,
Poor at thy feet, and helpless fall,
And weep my life away.

6 I would be truly *still*,
Nor set a time to thee,
But act according to thy will,
And speak, and think, and be.

I would with thee be one,
And till the grace is given,
Incessant pray, thy will be done
In earth, as 'tis in heaven.[25]

In this hymn the italicised words indicate affections characteristic of resignation: 'wait', 'patient', 'chearful', 'confidence', 'silence', 'quiet', 'meek', 'still', 'calm', 'submissive', 'humble', 'poor', 'still'. 'Resign'd' appears at the centre of the hymn and the hymn pivots at this point. The first three verses reflect on the situation of 'A Poor Sinner' whose 'happy' state is one of resignation, 'O that I thus resign'd'. This state of resignation is characterised by words such as the above mentioned, and others: 'languishing for home', 'neither hopes nor fears/ Evil or good below', 'sighs for God', 'stript of joy', 'grieves'. For the final three verses there is a change of voice, the focus shifts to the one who is singing or praying with the hymn, and represents Charles' voice too. The imagery from the first three verses is echoed in the second, so the words 'waits', 'stript', 'still', 'calm', 'quiet' are echoed.

[25] *RT*29. My italics.

Moreover the deep heartfelt desire for this resignation, the yearning of the heart's response is emphasised through the five times repeated 'I would' in the final two verses.

This hymn confirms the centrality of resignation for Charles, and that it is from this temper that other affections flow. The structure is in fact more specific than the simple mirroring of the affections of the first three stanzas in the last three. Charles also uses here the more complex chiastic mirroring structure already noted above. In this hymn chiasm indicates the centrality of resignation. The chiastic mirroring is evident in the following pairings: 'waits in patient hope' stanza one with 'Nor set a time to thee' (indicative of patient waiting) stanza six; 'tears', stanza two, with 'weep', stanza five; 'stript of his joy', stanza two, with 'stript of all, stanza five; 'In calm, submissive grief/ He suffers his distress', stanza three, with 'And quietly endure,/ Till he remove the hallow'd cross', stanza four; and finally '"My Father's will is good,"/ (The patient mourner cries)', stanza three, with 'To leave the whole to God!/ With him to trust my cause', stanza four. These pairings progressively bring our focus to the central point of the hymn, stanza four, line one, 'O that I thus resign'd'.

In addition this hymn incorporates the majority of affections repeatedly referred to by Charles in his resignation hymns. Four strands of these have been identified through the frequency of their appearance in these texts.[26] Each strand comprises a group of comparable words communicating a particular quality inherent to resignation. The strands are, first, meekness, humility, submission, and obedience; second, stillness, waiting, patience, endurance, quiet, calm, and silence; third, simplicity, poverty, ('stript'), and purity; and finally, cheerfully, joyfully, gladly, ('happy'), triumph, and holy confidence ('hope').

Combinations of these characteristics appear in other hymns though not with the same intensity as in 'A Poor Sinner'.[27] These hymns, however, also reinforce a perception of resignation as a deep-seated disposition, rather than the more ephemeral affection. Three examples will have to suffice:

[26] Such characteristics of resignation appeared in chapter 8, the resignation of the self in death.
[27] For example see *RT*75, st.4; *RT*125, st.3; *RT*138, st.3; *RT*151, st.4; *RT*153, sts.4-5; *RT*190, st.4.

3 Whate'er the members must endure,
Resign'd thro' life I undergo,
Not grace or pardon to procure,
But Jesu's patient mind to shew[28]

Rooted in humility,
Still in every state resign'd,
Plant, Almighty Lord, in me
A meek and lowly mind.[29]

Finally in a hymn for children,[30] Charles Wesley teaches children about resignation, rooting it in the theology of the Incarnation, emphasising the patterning of life upon that of Christ, obedience to those in authority and the embodiment of meek submissiveness, humility, obedience, freedom and cheerfulness. In this hymn the structure is again important. Charles begins with the desire to be like Christ, 'Fain I would thy follower be,/ Live in every thing like thee.' He then acknowledges the pattern Christ gave in being subject to his parents on earth, (stanza two) and the necessity of obedience to those in authority under God. The stanzas then progress, in language reminiscent of Allestree and Bayly[31] emphasising obedience to parents, then 'masters' and 'ministers' (stanza three) and finally 'betters' (stanza four). Stanza five cites Christ's humility and 'obedient heart', and expresses the desire to freely and cheerfully fulfil God's will. The hymn concludes with its climax, 'Keep me thus to God resign'd'. All the preceding stanzas lead to this; they describe the resignation made explicit at the end of the hymn (and indeed the Christlikeness this resignation embodies).

6 Keep me thus to God resign'd,
'Till his love delights to find
Fairly copied out on me
All the mind which was in thee.[32]

[28] *RT*138, st.3 lines 1-4.
[29] *RT*151, st.4, lines 5-8.
[30] *RT*153.
[31] See chapter two, sections on *The Whole Duty of Man* and *The Practice of Piety*.
[32] *RT*153, st.6.

Resignation is then a primary temper, embodied in related qualities, affections or virtues.[33] These characteristics clarify what resignation as an attitude of being looked like and the four strands are now explored in more detail to illuminate how Charles envisaged the foundational temper of resignation.

ii. Four strands of affections

a) Meekness, humility, submission, obedience

The first strand of affections consists of words indicative of submission, humility, and obedience.[34] Resignation as a positive attitude of commitment to God includes the relinquishing of all things, even the whole self in obedience and submission, accompanied by attitudes of meekness and humility, to be one in whom Christ reigns.

> 2 An heart resign'd, submissive, meek,
> My dear Redeemer's throne,
> Where only Christ is heard to speak,
> Where Jesus reigns alone.[35]

The poem cited in chapter two written by Charles on the way 'to answer a charge of treason',[36] illustrates the complex combination of his own natural emotions and feelings, the 'Anger, fear, and guile, and pride'; the task his commitment to Christ demands, 'Call'd thine honour to maintain'; and his determination to fulfil that commitment, 'Set my face, and fix my heart'. His state of resignation to Christ is strong and fixed; his desire is to have the mind of Christ, and to embody the affections of humble love, submissiveness and meekness. A comparison of Charles' journal account and his poetic account reveals an interesting difference of attitude. In his journal he is determined, emphasises his loyalty to the king and is not satisfied

[33] Scholarly research has identified love as the overriding temper for the Wesley brothers. With reference to John Wesley Maddox comments, 'He considered love to be the central temper from which all other tempers (and eventual actions) follow. As he once put it, "From the true love of God and [other humans] directly flows every Christian grace, every holy and happy temper. And from these springs uniform holiness of conversation." Thus he could summarize God's desire for our sanctification as a desire for love to become the constant ruling temper of our soul.' Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 178.

[34] Obedience considered as a prized and necessary virtue in the eighteenth century was considered in detail in chapter two. In the same chapter patience, meekness and humility were identified as characteristics John associated with his use of resignation in his sermons. This emphasis was also evident in the analysis of texts in chapter 6 referring to resignation to the will of God.

[35] *RT*28, st.2.

[36] *RT*97.

until he is entirely cleared of the charge. The charge of treason threatens his life and his outward disposition is of self-defence. 'I cannot depart till my character is fully cleared. It is no trifling matter. Even my life is concerned in the charge.'[37] In the poem however, Charles addresses Christ, and his words indicate his inner state, his disposition as meek, submissive and resigned towards Christ, though, in stanza three, he also reveres Christ through the earthly rulers before whom he is brought.[38]

The affections of meekness, submission, humility and obedience demonstrate that within the temper of resignation characteristics of passive acquiescence towards God are evident. 'I will, I will obey thy word,/ To thee my all resign,'[39] 'Her soul obedient and resign'd,'[40] 'With humble resignation/ Our latest death we die'.[41] The anguish of such an attitude of being however is also evident. Charles' poignant hymns on the death of a child, or for a child in sickness are heart-wrenching in their pain as the grieving parents struggle to be obedient to God, to remain faithful to the vow they have made to God, to the state of resignation they have embraced before God. Similarly in hymns written as prayers for sick friends, the wrestling between active, offered resignation and the passive acceptance of what is seen as the will of God is manifest:

> 7 Humbly prostrate at thy feet,
> We our will to thine submit;
> Yet, before thy will is shown,
> Trembling we present our own.
>
> 8 'Till thy love's design we *see*,
> Earnest, but resign'd to thee,
> Suffer us for life to pray,
> Bless us with her longer stay.[42]

The approach is made to the sovereign God with trembling; the petitioners are fearful to question the will of God, and to be found to be disobedient, and yet the passivity is balanced with agency, they dare to pray. Meekness, humility,

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[37] *Journal*, vol. II, 398.
[38] *RT*97, st.3.
[39] *RT*76, st.8, lines 1-2.
[40] *RT*106, st.5, line 3.
[41] *RT*312, st.3, lines 3-4.
[42] *RT*167, sts.7-8.

submission and obedience represent a strand of affections of resignation in which agency and passivity are balanced.[43]

b) Stillness, waiting, patience, endurance, calm, quiet, silence

The tension between passivity and agency is occasionally detected in the second strand of affections which illuminate the temper of resignation. Alongside stillness, waiting and patience the antitheses, of restlessness and earnestness, are held. Restlessness is an active word; in the funeral hymn on the death of Mrs. Mary Naylor, Charles writes of her 'active restless soul'.[44] The juxtaposition of restless, resign'd, and waiting is a combination Charles repeats.[45] It is surely a deliberate play on words, communicating this same tension when Charles writes, 'That *still* my soul may *restless* be',[46] and in his juxtaposition of 'vehement soul' with 'stands still': 'For this my vehement soul stands still,/ Restless—resign'd—for this I wait.'[47] Entreaty is balanced with stillness in Charles' moving prayer for a Moravian minister friend of his, 'A Prayer for the Revd. Mr. La-Trobe, Given over by the Physicians.' The prayer is that if it is not too late, God would spare their minister's life and return him to them. The people are active in their entreaties to God, 'If Thou mayst intreated be', but having made their prayer, they wait, 'Wait we now, resign'd and still,/ …/ Execute thy own design'.[48]

The majority of references in this strand of characteristics however are indicative of a passive, submissive, quiet, calm and silent state, a state of obedience to God's will. 'Rest' might be added, 'Stedfast in faith, I rest resign'd',[49] or 'My sorrow uniting to thine,/ In calm resignation I rest'.[50] 'Rest' and 'calm' are indicative of comfortable or peaceful states, however 'stillness' is more nuanced; whilst often descriptive of a passive state, it does not necessarily have the same comfortable connotation as 'rest';

[43] Mack writes, 'How can the historian write about the agency of people who claimed that obedience was their greatest achievement and weakness and passivity their greatest virtues?' Mack, *Heart Religion*, 8.
[44] *RT*111, st.2, line 3.
[45] *RT*20, st.19, line 6; *RT*202, st.5, line 7; *RT*137, st.2, line 2.
[46] *RT*33, st.12, line 3. My italics.
[47] *RT*20, st.19, line 6.
[48] *RT*217, sts.4-5.
[49] *RT*120, line 1.
[50] *RT*140, st.4, lines 3-4.

the edge of the sovereignty and judgement of God on the one hand and the resignation of the believer on the other, are also implicit.[51]

'Patience' is similarly repeated frequently and used predominantly in a passive sense, though sometimes, as in the 'Epitaph for Mr. Richard Kemp', it is contrasted with activity: 'Active to do, and patient to endure'.[52] Patience when used in conjunction with suffering and pain is sometimes expressive of a response to chastisement, and sometimes indicates the attitude and action of Christ, which the believer desires to imitate.

3 The good, which we could never find
  Untroubled, unchastiz'd by thee,
We feel, in pain and grief resign'd,
  The patient, meek humility,
The mind which in our Saviour was,
And all the bearers of his cross.[53]

In such words emphasising passivity, references to the imitation of Christ are clear; phrases 'like him',[54] and 'like thee'[55] appear. The quiet mind is to be attained because it is the mind of Christ, 'Jesu's is a quiet mind.'[56]

In Charles' description of the attitude of the believer in the face of suffering and adversity, in seeking after the likeness of Christ, and indeed all the affections characteristic of resignation, the reality of the feelings is not denied. Pain, grief, sorrow, frustration, a sense of futility, for example, are acknowledged, but the state of resignation overrides all; everything else is determined by this state of being. A mother's 'Act of Resignation on the Death of a Child', is clear example:

1 Peace, my heart, be calm, be still,
Subject to my Father's will!
…….

2 Child of prayer, by grace divine
Him I willingly resign.[57]

[51] See for example 'A Poor Sinner' above, st.2 lines 5-8; st.6 lines 1-4.
[52] *RT*244, line 8.
[53] *RT*145, st.3. See also st.4.
[54] *RT*105, st.6, line 1.
[55] *RT*134, line 5.
[56] *RT*42, st.10, line 4.

The same is true of Charles' moving reflection on his own ministry, in his response to feelings of frustration and futility following his attendance of the Conference of 1780,

> 3 Here then I quietly resign
> Into those gracious hands divine
> Whom I receiv'd from Thee,
> My brethren and companions dear,
> And finish with a parting tear
> My useless ministry.[58]

The quiet resignation of the believer is valued and frequently referred to at death. Charles' eulogy to Elizabeth Blackwell, noted above, demonstrates the point. She displayed no 'violent extacies',[59] but calm, tranquil, silent, quiet resignation. The death of the Christian should mirror the death of Christ, also characterised by quiet resignation into the hands of God.[60] Christine Johnson's thesis notes that quietness, patience and resignation are central features of Methodist dying. 'The dying were expected to … display endless grace and patience in what was often described as "violent pain."'[61] Johnson quotes the testimony of a physician, who observed to Charles, 'Most people die for the fear of dying; but I never met with such people as yours. They are none of them afraid of death, but calm, and patient, and resigned to the last.'[62]

c) Simplicity, poverty, purity

The third strand of affections indicates the spiritual state of resignation, which is one of simplicity, poverty and purity. Charles uses the phrase 'resigned simplicity',[63] and 'primitive simplicity',[64] or, in the hymn from which the title of this thesis was taken, 'Simply resign'd, and lost in God.'[65] Such a state involves patience, meekness, a heavenly mind, lowliness of heart, a resigned will, spiritual poverty, an

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[57] *RT*165, st.1, lines 1-2; st.2, lines 1-2.
[58] *RT*207, st.3.
[59] *RT*239, st.7, line 6.
[60] See for example *RT*105, st.6, lines 1-4; *RT*134, line 4-6; *RT*293, st.2, lines 4-6; *RT*147, st.4, lines 4-6; *RT*292, lines 7-8.
[61] Johnson, "Holiness and Death", 197.
[62] Johnson, "Holiness and Death", 224.
[63] *RT*158, st.3, line 1; *RT*259, st.1, line 2; *RT*296, st.2, line 4.
[64] *RT*187, line 515; *RT*211, st.7, line 3.
[65] *RT*149, st.1, line 6.

ignorance of one's own goodness and a lack of concern with self, but instead being absorbed in God.

The same spiritual qualities are evident in Charles' use of 'poor'. Some references in the resignation hymns are to the materially poor, for example, in Charles' epitaph for Richard Kemp 'Friend of distress, and Father to the poor';[66] and in a hymn about the poverty of Christ's life on earth and the disciple embracing that lifestyle,

1 Saviour, how few there are
Who thy condition share,
Few who cordially embrace,
Love, and prize thy poverty,
Want on earth a resting-place
Needy and resign'd like Thee!

2 I dare not ask thy pain
And sorrow to sustain:
But if Thou vouchsafe me power
Thee by want to glorify,
Blest with love I ask no more,
Poor I live, and patient die.[67]

Other references are to the poverty of those who are afflicted, the persecuted and the suffering, 'See thy poor afflicted child,/ Patient, and resign'd in pain'.[68] The majority, however, refer to spiritual poverty, which is the result of sin, unworthiness, or humility, 'Poor at thy feet, and helpless fall',[69] and describes the believer's lowliness, passivity, and helplessness. The same sentiments are expressed in Charles' use of language of being made nought; spiritual poverty for Charles means the desire to be brought to nothing, 'Weaken, bring me down to nought'.[70] Such spiritual poverty is a characteristic of the temper of resignation and intended to enable the believer to embrace the both the depths and heights of human being in God,

Fully in my life express
All the heights of holiness,

[66] *RT*244, line 7.
[67] *RT*283.
[68] *RT*38, st.3, lines 1-2. For an example of those being persecuted see *RT*93.
[69] *RT*29, st.5, line 7.
[70] *RT*39, st.3, line 1.

Sweetly in my spirit prove
All the depths of humble love.[71]

Purity is a final characteristic of the spiritual state of resignation, and one which addresses the desire for the heights of holiness. Many of the references to purity refer to purity of heart, clearly an allusion to the beatitude in Matthew 5:8. The resigned heart is a pure heart, 'Give me a tender heart, resign'd/ And pure, and fill'd with faith and love.'[72] Charles also, however, expresses purity of desire and hope,[73] and purity of soul, or spirit, and conscience,[74] to the extent of spotless purity, or sinlessness: 'From love's soft witchcraft free/ Her spotless purity/ Liv'd to only Christ below',[75] and 'We shall the life divine retrieve,/ And put thy sinless image on,/ Pure members of thy perfect Son'.[76]

d) Cheerfully, joyfully, gladly, triumph and holy confidence

At first sight this final strand emphasises very different affections to those discussed above. It comprises characteristics which are affirmative, active and which denote an optimistic disposition. However, even characteristics of joyfulness, cheerfulness, and such like are mitigated and, to some extent at least, dispassionate. Indeed the context within which the cheerful, glad, joyful resignation happens in the majority of cases indicates that this expression of resignation was never an unmitigated occasion of rejoicing, for example, the context of the death of a child.

2 The child, of whom we seem bereav'd,
Whom feeble flesh would still deplore,
Our heavenly Father hath receiv'd,
And kindly bids us weep no more,
But chearfully his loan resign,
And leave him in the arms divine.

3 Father, we make thy deed our own,
Submissive to thy wisest choice,
Tho' nature give a parting groan,
Our spirits *shall* in thee rejoice,

[71] 'Submission', *RT*39, st.5, lines 5-8.
[72] *RT*23, st.10, lines 3-4. See also *RT*4, st.4, line 2; *RT*28, st.4; *RT*95, st.16, line 2; *RT*205, st.4, line 4.
[73] *RT*132, st.2, line 1. *RT*239, st.6, line 5.
[74] *RT*96, st.8, lines 1-2; *RT*224, st.1, lines 5-6; *RT*315, st.4, lines 1-2; *RT*94, st.4, 1-3.
[75] *RT*62, st.10, lines 1-3.
[76] *RT*145, st.4, lines 4-6.

The poem continues in stanza seven, 'Thy call we joyfully obey,/ And hasten to our friends above'.[77] Even in such a tragic context the resignation of this child is offered 'chearfully', 'thankfully' and 'joyfully'. The natural feelings of grief, anger and sorrow are not accentuated, but a subdued version of them hinted at, 'parting groan', 'weep'. The passions are quietened, eased by the state of resignation adopted by the believing parents towards God, submissive to the will of God, 'thy wisest choice'. Furthermore, this state of resignation was adopted and inhabited through a promise and commitment made to God, which henceforth determines everything else. Two prayers, one on the death of a child and one for a dying child, demonstrate this prior and overriding commitment, 'Lo! We to our promise stand,/ .../ Meekly we our vow repeat,/ Nature *shall* to grace submit'.[78] 'The sacrifice long since was o'er,/ *I stand to what I gave before.*'[79]

Whilst however, the passionate feeling might not be expressed through the subdued, mitigated and sometimes dispassionate words chosen, such hymns as those just cited are still heart-rending. The feeling Charles Wesley experienced, personally and empathetically, is evident; feeling which is passionate and filled with desire, longing and struggle. Sometimes it cries out fervently to God, daring to plead or make a request, but always, by the end of the hymn, allegiance to God, obedience to God's will, willingness to abide by God's desire, indeed, the inhabitation of the state of resignation is accepted, acknowledged and affirmed.

> Tho' we would the cup decline,
> Govern'd by thy will alone
> Ours we struggle to resign:
> Thine, and only thine be done.[80]

Charles' communication of feeling is particularly recognisable through his indication of the affections through which resignation is offered: contentedly,[81] 'silently',[82] 'quietly',[83] with thanks,[84] 'willingly',[85] with 'holy confidence', or 'lowly confidence

[77] *RT*108, st.2; st.3, lines 1-4; st.7, lines 2-3.
[78] *RT*107, st.3, line 1; st.5, lines 1-2.
[79] *RT*77, st.5, lines 5-6. My italics.
[80] *RT*163, st.5, lines 5-8.
[81] *RT*116, st.2, line 2.
[82] *RT*123, st.1, line 5.
[83] *RT*134, line 5; *RT*207, st.3, line 1.
[84] *RT*139, lines 5-6.

divine',[86] 'patiently',[87] 'ready',[88] in a state of self-mistrust and humility relying on God as his infallible guide,[89] obediently,[90] 'freely',[91] 'meekly',[92] with 'joy',[93] and in one instance, 'delightfully'.[94] The most commonly used adverbs however are 'chearfully',[95] or 'gladly'.[96] The most positive disposition is found in expressions of triumph and holy confidence. These are nonetheless still expressions of humility, acknowledging that the confidence is rooted in God, 'By holy confidence divine/ Made ready to depart',[97] or that the triumphant resignation comes from a faithfulness which led to death, 'Their souls triumphantly resign'd,/ And died into the arms of God'[98] and 'Resign'd, triumphant in the mortal pain,/ He lays his earthly tabernacle down/ In confidence to grasp the starry crown'.[99]

Indeed all four of the strands considered above have a common theme of humility, which gladly embraces poverty of spirit, quietness and calmness, a patience which is strong and enduring, and which is also deeply joyful, even in suffering, and expressive of a quiet confidence in God. Such qualities are indicative of the temper of resignation; an attitude of being towards God which involves the whole person, body, soul, mind, spirit, both in life and in death.

Resignation then is an attitude of being for the Christian believer. It is more than an affection, it is not a transitory condition but a state, an abiding temper which the believer is to habituate at all times and in all circumstances. Furthermore this state of resignation is foundational for the life of the believer. Resignation is a key

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[85] *RT*165, st.2, line 2; *RT*193, st.1, line 6.
[86] *RT*168, st.6, lines 5-8; *RT*236, st.8, lines 1-3.
[87] *RT*135, line 4; *RT*256, st.2, line 3.
[88] *RT*189, st.1, line 3.
[89] *RT*232, st.5, lines 1-3.
[90] *RT*242, st.3, lines 1-2.
[91] *RT*247, st.8, line 4; *RT*264, st.1, line 5.
[92] *RT*274, st.3, line 3.
[93] *RT*58, st.4; *RT*170, st.4 line 6; *RT*280, line 7; *RT*315, st.4, line 5.
[94] *RT*174, st.2, line 2.
[95] *RT*100, st.2, line 4; *RT*180, st.2, line 5; *RT*113, st.2, line 6; *RT*124, line 3; *RT*136, st.2, line 7; *RT*140, st.2, lines 7-8; *RT*148, st.2, line 1; *RT*150, st,4, line 2; *RT*164, st.2, line 7; *RT*263, st.3, line 5; *RT*291, line 7; *RT*316, st.3 line 6.
[96] *RT*3, st.14, line 3; *RT*9, st.1, line 5; *RT*10, st.7, line 4; *RT*46, st.7, line 3; *RT*57, st.4, line 2; *RT*66, line 83; *RT*68, st.10, line 3; *RT*112, st.6, line 5; *RT*128, st.2, line 3; *RT*176, st.4, line 3; *RT*282, st.2, line 1; *RT*308, st.1, line 4; *RT*311, st.2, line 5.
[97] *RT*168, st.6, lines 5-6.
[98] *RT*5, st.3, lines 3-4.
[99] *RT*45, lines 8-10.

primary disposition for Charles, as the characteristics considered above demonstrate; characteristics which denote a resigned heart, which emerge from the resigned state of the faithful believer, and demonstrate the attitude of resignation within the believer. These various affections exemplify the paradigm of a resigned believer, and indeed a sanctified believer, someone such as Elizabeth Blackwell; the model of her life illustrates the argument of the whole.

This chapter so far has explored how resignation as a temper or attitude of being becomes embedded in the life of a believer through an iterative process and the response of the heart; through the distinctive affections which indicate the presence of this temper, and its foundational nature for the believer. In the remainder of the chapter three significant features are attended to, which Charles sees as either essential to or contributory towards the temper of resignation. These serve to further substantiate the centrality of the disposition of resignation for Charles Wesley.

3. Three distinctive, contributory means to the attainment of resignation

i. Resignation and Grace: the gift of God

In the opening section of this chapter resignation was identified as the essential response to God which the believer can make; a sign of mature faith and a state of being which disposes the believer to sanctification. It was also indicated that resignation is acquired through the reiteration of resigned response to God of a receptive heart. That the believer's resignation is a *response* is critically important. Charles' resignation texts make it apparent that the resignation of the believer is enabled by God's grace. Just as prevenient grace enabled the response of the believer to God for justification in the Wesleys' Arminian theological world view, so prevenient grace enables the response of the believer in resignation to God for sanctification; the second thread in God's economy of sanctification for the Wesleys.

There are 263 occurrences of the word grace in the resignation hymns which appear in 151 of the 319 texts. The majority of these texts express a theological connection between grace and resignation, within which God's grace as enabling resignation

emerges as a significant theme. A number of hymns indicate this, for example: 'Jesus, Thou dost for me obtain/ A power my spirit to resign/ Intirely to the will Divine';[100] or, in the context of the command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac,

> And lo, thro' grace I ready am
> To answer all thy awful will,
> By faith I climb the mountain-top,
> Thy blessings chearfully resign,[101]

or a mother's act of resignation at the death of her child, 'Child of prayer, by grace divine/ Him I willingly resign;[102] or on the death of a faithful believer, here Alexander Harford,

> 4 Long in affliction's furnace tri'd,
> But still with heav'nly grace suppli'd,
> He bow'd beneath the rod;
> Resign'd to his Redeemer's will,
> Desirous always to fulfil
> The pleasure of his God.[103]

In Charles' hymns grace does not only enable resignation however. There is also a broader reciprocity of grace and resignation, a mutuality of relationship. So, for example in the following hymn regarding the gift of children, 'The children by thy grace bestow'd/ I unto Thee resign.[104] Maddox's image of the co-operant nature of God's grace and the believer's response as a dance is an engaging one and applies well within this context: 'Perhaps a good image (even if traditionally un-Wesleyan) to capture salvation's co-operant nature is that of a *dance* in which God always takes the first step but we must participate responsively, lest the dance stumble or end.'[105] Grace and resignation are partners in the dance. To push the metaphor further, as the dance continues dancers gain greater familiarity with the steps, deeper sensitivity to their partner's style, and more absorbed in the dance. The reciprocity of grace and resignation is an ongoing dance, the process through which the believer is drawn

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[100] *RT*289, lines 2-4.
[101] *RT*113, st.2, lines 3-6.
[102] *RT*165, st.2, lines 1-2.
[103] *RT*194, st.4, lines 1-4. For further examples see *RT*77; *RT*112, st.6; *RT*115, st.1; *RT*129; *RT*151, st.4; *RT*212, st.1; *RT*244.
[104] *RT*212, st.1, lines 5-6. Hymns which indicate reciprocity between grace and resignation are the following: *RT*105; *RT*107; *RT*209; *RT*212; *RT*218; *RT*223; *RT*243; *RT*251; *RT*293; *RT*306; *RT*298.
[105] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 151.

towards deeper holiness and greater conformity to the moves and rhythm of her or his partner.

In *Responsible Grace* Maddox argues that John Wesley's understanding of grace as co-operant correlates his theology more closely with Eastern theologians rather than those from the West. The same can be said for Charles Wesley. Maddox identifies the Eastern interpretation of salvation as a gradual process, and indeed progress. Salvation is identified 'with the therapeutic transformation of sin-distorted human life' for which 'most early Greek and later Orthodox theologians have considered gradualness to be essential to its nature – we are progressively *being* saved.'[106] Maddox states that for the Wesleys sanctification was about transformation, quoting from John, 'a thorough change of heart and life from sin to holiness.'[107] Maddox continues '[s]uch transformation of a person's tempers or character would seem to entail a gradual process, provided that God was amenable to working in a gradual manner.'[108] However growth towards holiness was not to be assumed, '... while Wesley understood growth in holiness to be gradual, it was not automatic – we must nurture a continuing responsiveness to God's progressive empowering grace.'[109] As indicated in the first chapter Charles favoured gradual sanctification over instantaneous; in this chapter the *process* of sanctification through the acquisition of the affections, and the response of the believer's heart has been investigated. Identifying *progress* however in sanctification through resignation, is more contentious, particularly when, as we will see in the final chapter, humility is a mark of sanctification.

Two further themes which emerge from Charles' hymns about grace and resignation are worth remark. The first concerns the conjunction of grace, resignation and obedience. The grace which enables resignation sometimes has a hard edge. Sometimes this grace is needed to subdue human will and desires, bringing them to obedience to the will of God, 'Nature, 'till by grace subdued,/ Will not give her back to God',[110] and revokes as well as bestows blessings, 'We would our earthly bliss

[106] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 152.
[107] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 152.
[108] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 152.
[109] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 153.
[110] *RT*166, st.4, lines 3-4.

resign,/ Bestow'd, revok'd, by grace divine'.[111] From a twenty-first century Western perspective human nature *subdued* by grace is negative in implication. A contemporary theological vantage point would emphasise maturity of faith expressed through becoming truly human, liberated rather than subdued by grace. For Charles however, as explored in chapter two, the world view was one of obedience; for him maturity of faith is expressed in the extent of the believer's submission to God. Sanctification is expressed through perfect resignation to God.

The second theme addresses Charles' language of the believer's unconsciousness of grace received. Perhaps a more accurate rendition of his intention would be to speak of 'unselfconsciousness' of grace received. Charles certainly does not imply that believers are unaware of God's gracious acts towards them, but rather articulates the humility of believers who do not flaunt, or boast of the grace they have received. As the following extracts from Charles' funeral hymn on the death of Mrs. Anne Wigginton illustrate, Charles not only remarks on the qualities of this exceptional Christian but also clearly denotes a theology of sanctification which has nothing in common with his observation and perception of the arrogant, noisy, false claims to instantaneous perfection which emerged particularly strongly shortly after this hymn was written:

2 A Christian good, without pretence,
…….
And *shew'd* her faith by humble fear.

3 By works of righteousness she shew'd
The gracious principle within,
…….

4 Memorial of her faith unfeign'd

5 ……
Her soul obedient and resign'd,
Did darkly safe with God remain,
……....

6 Unconscious of the grace receiv'd,
She mourn'd, as destitute of grace,
A pattern to believers liv'd,
And labour'd on with even pace,
…….

[111] *RT*172, st.4, lines 1-2.

7 No noisy self-deceiver she,
No boaster vain of faith untry'd:
Her own good deeds she could not see,
…….
And when her glorious race was run,
Complain'd, "She never yet begun."[112]

The hymn from which the title of the thesis is drawn is another example expressing the same humble, self-effacing spirituality and unconsciousness of grace received. Interestingly Maddox notes that John Wesley underlined 'Unconscious of' in his own personal copy – a practice which generally indicated that he had something to say about the words Charles had chosen - frequently that he disagreed with them. This hymn appeared in Charles' *Scripture Hymns* 1762, volume two, written by Charles in response to the Perfectionist controversy, to which John and Charles responded differently. In Charles' preface to his two volumes of *Scripture Hymns*, which he published independently of his brother, Charles comments,

> Several of the hymns are intended to prove, and several to guard, the doctrine of Christian perfection. I durst not publish one without the other.
> In the latter sort I use some severity; not against particular persons, but against enthusiasts and antinomians, who by not living up to their profession, "give" abundant "occasion to them that seek it," and "cause the truth to be evil spoken of."[113]

The full hymn text reads:

1 Happy the man, who poor and low,
Less goodness in himself conceives
Than Christ doth of his servant know;
Who sav'd from self-reflection lives,
Unconscious of the grace bestow'd,
Simply resign'd, and lost in God.

2 Himself he cannot perfect call,
Or to the meanest saint prefer,
Meanest himself, and least of all:
And when the glorious character
His spotless soul with Christ receives,
His state—to that great day he leaves.[114]

[112] *RT*106, st.2, lines 1 and 6; st.3, line 2; st.4, line 1; st.5, lines 3-4, st.6, lines 1-4; st.7, lines 1-3 and 6.
[113] *Scripture Hymns* 1, 2.
[114] *RT*149.

ii. Resignation: suffering and sanctification

The second significant feature of the resignation texts which contributes towards the temper of resignation is suffering. In chapter one Charles' emphasis on the place of suffering for sanctification was examined in detail, the matter being one on which Charles and John differed. The argument will not be rehearsed here, but points which relate directly to resignation texts are delineated.

Firstly, the theological and spiritual emphases on sharing the sufferings of Christ, and suffering providing a means to sanctification, feature in the resignation texts. Christ is the model – which is not only a comfort in suffering but also the paradigm of how suffering and sanctification are connected.

1 The sufferings which the body bears,
  Are still the sufferings of the head,
While every true disciple shares
  The cross on which his Saviour bled,
The members all his cup partake,
And daily die for Jesu's sake.

……

3 Whate'er the members must endure,
  Resign'd thro' life I undergo,
……..
Thro' sufferings perfected in love.[115]

Other hymns make the same point. Of Miss Fanny Cowper Charles asserts in her funeral hymn she was 'Thro' sufferings perfect made'[116] and of ministers, and the office they are called by Christ to fulfil Charles writes,

2 The office we from Thee receive
For this a few short days we live,
We only live the fiends to chase,
And minister thy healing grace,
And then our willing souls resign,
By sufferings perfected, like thine.[117]

Secondly, this chapter began with an investigation of the acquisition of affections. In his resignation poetry Charles intimates that another way in which the affections

[115] *RT*138, st.1; st.3, lines 1-2 and 6.
[116] *RT*62, st.7, line 2.
[117] *RT*284, st.2.

are encouraged is through suffering, and furthermore, response in suffering is an illustration of how the virtues were inhabited by the believer. In the verse below patience and meek humility are developed through the chastisement which comes from God,

> 3 The good, which we could never find
> Untroubled, unchastiz'd by thee,
> We feel, in pain and grief resign'd,
> The patient, meek humility,
> The mind which in our Saviour was,
> And all the bearers of his cross.[118]

Endurance, among other affections, is evident Elizabeth Blackwell's eulogy.[119] Blackwell's endurance through suffering served to demonstrate her Christlikeness, 'Like Jesus, to the end endure. .../ Induring, with that patient Lamb'.[120] And in Charles' funeral hymn for Hannah Butts her 'companion' in whose voice the poem is articulated finds encouragement to endure in 'affliction and pain' through the remembrance of Hannah's voice,

> It bids me a moment endure,
> Resign'd in affliction and pain,
> To make my inheritance sure,
> A share of her glory to gain.[121]

Finally, in chapter two a number of writers were identified who had or who were likely to have influenced Charles Wesley in his thinking about resignation. Among them Taylor and Worthington particularly emphasised the place of suffering. It was also noted in chapter one that John Wesley considered Charles' emphasis on suffering was due to his melancholic nature. In this broader spiritual and theological context however, it would appear that John Wesley is not in tune with the relationship of suffering to resignation and the contribution of suffering towards sanctification, as Charles and these others saw it. It is possible that Charles' attitude towards suffering was not in fact primarily the result of a melancholic nature, nor even predominantly an expression of his personal experience of pain and distress,

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[118] *RT*145, st.3.
[119] *MS Funeral Hymns* (1756-87), 'On the Death of Mrs. Elizabeth Blackwell, March 27, 1772', 48-57. Parts III and IV appear at *RT*238 and *RT*239.
[120] *RT*239, st.5, line 8; st.6, line 1.
[121] *RT*237, st.2, lines 5-8.

but rather, that it was an expression of his fundamental spiritual conviction about resignation. The spiritual issue for Charles was that resignation concerned the orientation of a person's whole being to God in all things, and this spiritual attitude interpreted everything else – including, and perhaps especially, suffering.

iii. Resignation: freedom and detachment

Detachment is the final distinctive feature to note from the *Resignation Texts* which Charles considers contributes to the attainment of resignation. Inherent to the temper of resignation is a detachment and dispassion which allows freedom for a person to live wholly to God, and in obedience to God's will. As with resignation and grace there is a reciprocity in this relationship: resignation enables detachment and detachment, resignation. Detachment is primarily from the will of the believer, who is then free to obey the will of God, submitting all objects, people, desires, one's very self, in life and death, to the will of God. The resigned temper is an attitude of obedience to God in all things. Resignation in its 'letting go' enables a detachment which progresses the journey towards sanctification.

The resignation hymns which speak of freedom, when they are not focussing on freedom from sin or suffering, speak of the resignation freely offered to God, the detachment from 'all that is not thee',[122] freedom from will, 'Fain I would be without will,/ Simple, innocent, and free,'[123] freedom for obedience to God, 'Free and chearful to fulfil/ All my heavenly Father's will',[124] and freedom from passion:

> 3 From all the power of passion free,
> Against the soft infirmity
> Immoveable he stands;
> No cross, no suffering he declines,
> But chearfully his life resigns,
> When Christ his life demands.[125]

Such freedom enables the resignation of life when God requires it, and emulates the free offering of his life seen in Christ.[126]

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[122] *RT*39, st.2, line 8.
[123] *RT*39, st.2, line 6-7.
[124] *RT*153, st.5, lines 3-4.
[125] *RT*263, st.3.
[126] For example, *RT*268; *RT*273; *RT*277.

This attitude of dispassion is not a detachment from the world, which might be inferred from Charles' hymn, 'What but the love of truth and Thee/ From nature's love can set me free,/ The just contempt of life bestow';[127] or the description of lay preacher and ascetic, Thomas Walsh,

> [H]e was so shut in with God, that all places became alike to him.... Curious sights, elegant furniture...fine shows, the ringing of bells, firing of guns... were no more to him than the chirping of a sparrow, or the buzzing of a fly. To all which, the constant government which he had over his senses greatly contributed. The difference of tastes, harmony of sounds, and whatever his eyes could behold, were as nothing to him....[128]

In *The Path to Perfection* Sangster argues that the Wesleys' understanding of sanctification is seen as 'ascetically detached from the normal life of man',[129] due, he argues, to their attention being directed to the state of the believer's soul, and their eternal destiny. It is likely that Sangster was influenced in his understanding of asceticism in early Methodism by Newton Flew, acknowledging in his own preface his indebtedness to Flew's *The Idea of Perfection*.[130] In this book Flew claims that it is possible to discern an 'intra-mundane asceticism' in the Wesleys' doctrine of Christian perfection, which he considers 'curiously similar and yet distinct' from the pre-Reformation emphasis on turning away from common things of human life in quest for God.[131] 'Intra-mundane asceticism' is a more helpful expression than 'ascetic detachment'; Charles clearly uses language of asceticism, for example, 'Implung'd in the glorious abyss,/ And lost in the ocean of love.'[132] However if there is an asceticism in the early Methodist movement it is an ascetical *engagement*; an asceticism to be found in the arena of work, through experience of suffering and grief, in the social commitment to the poor, where love for God was outworked through visiting the sick and prisoners, 'By faith from every creature free,/ But subjected to all by love';[133] and in 'heaven begun below'.[134]

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[127] *RT*291, lines 1-4.
[128] Quoted by Mack, *Heart Religion*, 196-7.
[129] Sangster, *Path of Perfection*, 91. Sangster's argument is briefly referenced in chapters 1, 5 and 7 above.
[130] Sangster, *Path of Perfection*, 7.
[131] Flew, *Idea of Perfection*, 338-9.
[132] *RT*61, st.6, lines 7-8.
[133] *RT*298, lines 7-8.
[134] *RT*52, st.4, line 8.

The detachment resignation encourages then, is chiefly a detachment from the will of the believer, so that she or he might instead be attached to the will of God, whether that meant dealing with the loss of the child she believed had been taken back to God, or the loss of a friend of whom he was in danger of making an idol, or a willingness to face a mob without concern for his own safety, or to protect a preacher from a mob without any concern for hers. It manifests itself in an indifference to the self, which, both in life and death, is entirely at the disposal of God,

> 4 Father, thy will be done!
> To thee I all resign,
> The sole disposer of thine own,
> Dispose of me, and mine:
> At thy command I go,
> Or quietly attend,
> 'Till all my rests, and toils below
> In rest eternal end.[135]

The dispassion Charles understood to be at the heart of resignation, the 'nothing desire', is one rooted in the model of Christ, 'But to be all like thee';[136] particularly like Christ in his passion. Jesus' patience, meekness, tranquillity and calm were to be emulated by believers also facing loss, pain or death.

> 1 With such tranquillity of mind,
> So mild, dispassionate, and meek,
> So calm, and perfectly resign'd
> I would of my betrayers speak:[137]

Dispassion, detachment, disengagement are affections Charles identifies as contributing to the temper of resignation. These affections enable a focus on resignation in the life of the believer; they allow the believer to embrace an attitude of being entirely resigned to God in all things and all circumstances, the freedom to be entirely God's.

> 4 Meek and lowly be my mind,
> Pure my heart, my will resign'd!
> Keep me dead to all below,
> Only Christ resolv'd to know,

[135] *RT*115, st.4.
[136] *RT*75, st.4, lines 4 and 6.
[137] *RT*270, st.1, lines 1-4.

Firm and disengag'd and free,
Seeking all my bliss in thee.[138]

Conclusion

In this chapter the essential nature of resignation as an attitude of being has been explored, looking at process, distinctive identifying characteristics and important contributory factors to attaining this habituated temper. This chapter also asserts that for Charles resignation is a unique key, a cardinal temper or disposition for the believer's relationship with God; it is a foundational attitude of being, and other affections, such as humility, meekness, and patience flow from, lead to, or are characteristic of resignation. Furthermore, resignation is the temper which leads to sanctification. As evidenced in Charles' hymn on the death of Mrs. Anne Jenkins, habituating the virtues and the resignation of the soul to God in death as one wholly sanctified, coalesce. Charles describes Jenkins' life of holiness; at the end of her life she was 'fully ripe for heaven', the conclusion of a life in which she had been 'Ever careful to abound/ In fruits of righteousness', in which 'Virtues thy companions were,'...'And all thy business prayer.'[139] Abiding in the virtues, deepening acquaintance with the affections, inhabiting resignation, all lead the believer to a maturity of faith and the *telos* of sanctification. Charles' prayer is that at death he will be 'By Jesus found mature in grace,/ In full conformity divine/ My spotless spirit to resign'.[140] The final chapter directly addresses the relationship of resignation to sanctification within which conformity to the likeness of Christ is a fundamental defining feature and the theme with which chapter ten begins.

[138] *RT*4, st.4.
[139] *RT*96, st.2, lines 1-2, 6 and 8.
[140] *RT*192, st.4, lines 3-5.

Chapter 10

Resignation and Sanctification

Yes, Lord, we are thine,
And gladly resign
Our souls to be fill'd with the fulness divine.

—Charles Wesley[1]

Introduction

The previous chapter concluded that for Charles Wesley resignation is a unique key, a cardinal temper, in Charles' understanding of sanctification and that this temper leads to sanctification. There is, however, more to say. For Charles Wesley resignation is not simply an attitude of being, not even a vital fundamental attitude of being, which leads to sanctification; but rather, resignation and sanctification exist in an inextricably intertwined relationship. This final chapter addresses this relationship directly and argues that for Charles Wesley resignation and sanctification in fact exist in a relationship which can be described using the metaphor of symbiosis, *συμ βίωσις,* they live, exist, together, in companionship;[2] theirs is a relationship of mutuality and reciprocity.[3] 'Yes, Lord, we are thine,/ And

[1] *RT*57, st.4.

[2] See *OED online*, s.v. 'symbiosis,' http://www.oed.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/view/Entry/196194?redirectedFrom=symbiosis#eid, accessed February 18, 2016.

[3] The reciprocity of resignation and sanctification has been alluded to at various points throughout the thesis. In chapter 1, Tyson was referenced, identifying the key theological image of sanctification in Charles Wesley's theology as the restoration of the *imago Dei* in the life of the believer; or in christocentric language, establishing Christlikeness in the believer. Chapters 3 and 4 indicated that reciprocity is inherent to the structure of Charles' hymns which require a response on the part of the believer. In chapter 7, several references were made; Charles' use of the language of reciprocity as a language of love and giving was investigated, as was his use of 'loan' imagery and the significance of reciprocity in relation to self-sacrifice; finally the language of resignation extending into semantics of *kenosis* and the exchange formula was noted - in the believer's being conformed to Christ, the mutual self-emptying of Christ and the believer is evident. In chapter 8 the Trinitarian hymns which appear in the *Resignation Texts* were examined, in which Charles emphasises the believer's likeness to God, asserting the Triune nature of God and the response of the believer through resignation of spirit, soul and flesh (*RT*184, st.2; *RT*185, st.4). It was noted in response to these hymns that the similitude of God, or transcript of holiness, is God's act of sanctification in the believer and the resignation of spirit, soul and flesh, the corresponding response of the believer. Finally in chapter 9 the reciprocity of grace and resignation were discussed. Sanctification through grace is a key theme in Charles' poetic texts. Sanctification is only possible through God's grace and the believer must cooperate with God's sanctifying grace and divest him or herself of pride, sin, the things of the world, the desires of the flesh, and embrace humility, even nothingness, the emptying of *kenosis*, so that God's work of sanctification through grace might be accomplished.

gladly resign/ Our souls to be fill'd with the fulness divine.[4] The corollary of such a claim is that it is only through resignation that entire sanctification can be received. This chapter argues furthermore, that the interconnected nature of resignation and sanctification is denotative of, and indeed rooted in, the influence of Eastern Christian theology on Charles.[5] The theological framework of *theosis* is a particularly significant indicator of this relationship. Within this framework Charles' symbiosis of resignation and sanctification can be located. It is with this foundational influence that the chapter begins.

1. Establishing the framework: *theosis* in Eastern Orthodox theology

In Orthodox theology *theosis* is considered to be the foundational structure within which the whole economy of salvation is built.[6] *Theosis* however eludes definition. For Orthodoxy *theosis* is essentially a mystery which, as Clendenin quotes Maximus the Confessor saying, 'cannot be perceived, conceived or expressed';[7] neither is there agreement between Christians of different theological and ecclesiological traditions; most specifically between Christians East and West. Key elements in the development of thinking about *theosis* are however important to determine.

Vladimir Kharlamov notes that for Gregory of Nazianzus, deification 'is more than merely salvation; it is an ontological, transformative, spiritual process that perfects beyond the salvific restoration of the image of God in a human being.'[8] Christensen is clear nevertheless that *theosis* does not mean becoming divine, '[w]e cannot take on the nature of God.'[9] Norman Russell identifies four fundamental approaches characteristic of Christian thinking on *theosis* throughout history, 'nominal,

[4] *RT*57, st.4.
[5] Such an influence was not discussed in chapter two as this dealt specifically with those who are likely to have contributed to Charles' thinking specifically in relation to resignation.
[6] See chapter 4 above.
[7] Daniel B. Clendenin, "Partakers of Divinity: The Orthodox Doctrine of *Theosis*," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37 no. 3 (1994): 373.
[8] Vladimir Kharlamov, "Rhetorical Application of *Theosis* in Greek Patristic Theology," in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, ed. Michael J. Christensen and Jeffrey A. Wittung (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 127.
[9] Michael J Christensen, and Jeffrey A. Wittung, ed. *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 28.

analogical, ethical and realistic'.[10] The latter two are of particular relevance to this study. The ethical approach, broadly speaking, emphasises *homoiosis,* attaining the *likeness* of God. Characteristic of this strand is the concept of ascent through the practice of virtue. The image of a ladder of ascent features here. This strand focuses on the attainment of the soul, through such means as knowledge, prayer and contemplation. It tends to an individualist focus. This understanding of *theosis* is characteristic of Clement of Alexandria and Origen of the second to fourth centuries; the Cappadocians, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa (fourth century); and Macarius, Evagrius, and Diadochus of Photice of the fourth to fifth centuries. It was Gregory of Nazianzus who coined the word *theosis.* Dionysius and Maximus established *theosis* as the goal of the spiritual life in Byzantine monasticism.[11] The realistic approach emphasises *participation* in God. Central to this view is the role of the Incarnation in enabling the transformation of humanity. Adam and Eve were called to be gods, affirmed by the biblical witness of Ps. 82:6, 'I say, "You are gods, children of the Most High, all of you"';[12] however through their sin they died as mortals. Christ re-established God's intention for humanity. *Theosis* necessitates an ontological change, a transformation, which is encouraged and enabled through participation in the sacraments. This concept of *theosis* can be found in Irenaeus, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa (in his development of the role of the Eucharist in deification), and Cyril of Alexandria (fifth century). Finally the two strands, the ethical and the realistic, come together in Maximus the Confessor (seventh century) and Gregory Palamas (fourteenth century). Russell comments that Maximus introduces the theme of 'the reciprocal relationship between the incarnation of the Word and the deification of man.'[13] This theme developed as the co-operative participation between God's grace and human free will for the ultimate goal of *theosis*. Gregory Palamas concurred with this teaching that the transformation of humanity is accomplished through the Incarnation. Deification is more than the achievement of moral virtue; it requires an ontological transformation offered by God which the believer must appropriate.[14] Palamas' most significant contribution however, was to distinguish between the essence and the energies of

[10] Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, ed. Gillian Clark and Andrew Louth, Oxford Early Christian Studies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 3.
[11] Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 15.
[12] NRSV.
[13] Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 267.
[14] Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 305.

God. Lossky comments that Palamas was not the originator of this doctrine, and that in fact it was found in many of the Greek Fathers 'though with less doctrinal precision.'[15] Nonetheless Palamas' emphasis and clarification of the concept was deeply formative for the understanding of *theosis*. The distinction between God's energies and essence clarified that humanity could never *become* God because humanity can never share in the essence of God, which is ultimately unknowable and cannot be participated in. The energies of God on the other hand, he argued, are able to be participated in, and through that participation humanity is deified.[16] Finally, Christensen and Wittung note that Luther's vision of *theosis* is believers becoming 'little Christs' for the world,[17] and Stephen Finlan speaks of the concept of deification rather as a Christification, the believer becomes Christlike in substance and character.[18] Christensen suggests that concepts such as Christian perfection, entire sanctification and Christification, are a dilution, domestication or attempt to modernise *theosis* by those who object to an ontological interpretation of *theosis,* viz. that human nature takes on divine nature.[19] It is however, it is hard to imagine how 'entire sanctification' or 'Christification' can be a dilution or modernisation. These terms attempt to express, albeit through inadequate human language, the ultimate possibility of a human being in God; the same possibility *theosis* attempts to describe. *Theosis*, as the overview demonstrates, has been a developing idea throughout Christian history, furthermore it describes an experience and not a doctrine; an experience of God and in God, which has been known in the Christendom of East and West, including in the theology of Charles Wesley.

2. Charles Wesley and the influence of the Eastern Fathers

There is some, though at present limited, evidence to suggest that Charles was influenced by the early Church Fathers. His sermons, letters and journals cite some early Greek, Latin and Syriac sources. In the sermons reference is made to Justin

[15] Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991), 71.
[16] Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 305.
[17] Christensen, ed. *Partakers*, 14.
[18] Stephen Finlan, "Can We Speak of *Theosis* in Paul?," in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, ed. Michael J Christensen and Jeffrey A. Wittung (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 73.
[19] Christensen, ed. *Partakers*, 28-9.

Martyr[20] and Tertullian.[21] In his letters Charles uses the same quote from Ignatius of Antioch twice, with slight variation, 'It is now that I *begin* to be a disciple of Christ'.[22] The journals make reference to Augustine of Hippo,[23] St. John Chrysostom,[24] and Ephraem Syrus.[25] In the work of other scholars, Tyson compares Charles' concept of sanctification with that of the Eastern Fathers[26] and recognises that Charles' description of holiness 'as the result of an infusion of God or His love into the life of the Christian', is 'not unlike the *theosis* doctrine of the Eastern Fathers.'[27] He also notes a connection between Charles' theology and the theology of exchange, '[t]his simple yet daring idea was not lost upon Charles Wesley; it became the centerpole of his theology.'[28] Kimbrough has similarly written of a theology of *theosis* in Charles Wesley.[29]

Christensen, on the other hand, has written of *theosis* in John Wesley.[30] Research into the relationship between John Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy theology is more extensive and Maddox in particular has developed the area. In *Responsible Grace* Maddox identifies parallels between the theology of John Wesley and the East. He does however sound a warning and states, '[i]n noting these parallels I have purposefully avoided attempts to demonstrate Wesley's specific dependence upon early Greek theologians for the point in question. Strong historical demonstration of such reliance would be extremely difficult'.[31] Collins, however, considers the relationship between John Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy a myth. He maintains that

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[20] *Sermons*, 284.
[21] *Sermons*, 285.
[22] *Letters*, 53 and 64. In the latter Charles changes the quote to ''[t]is *now* that you begin to be a disciple of *Christ*.' Charles' italics.
[23] *Journal*, vol. I, 191.
[24] *Journal*, vol. I, 223. Charles quotes Chrysostom as saying, '[h]ell is paved with the skulls of Christian priests.' However Kimbrough and Newport comment, '[t]his quotation was apparently attributed broadly to St John Chrysostom. John Wesley cites it too …. However, it has not been located in the works of Chrysostom.' 223n7.
[25] *Journal*, vol. II, 432.
[26] Tyson, *Sanctification*, 66.
[27] Tyson, *Sanctification*, 186. Tyson comments that language of being filled with God, which is used by Charles is very close to a concept of *theosis*, and Charles' earliest hymns, he says, are full of such phraseology.
[28] Tyson, *Sanctification*, 61.
[29] ST Kimbrough Jr, "*Theosis* in the Writings of Charles Wesley," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (2008).
[30] Michael J Christensen, "*Theosis* and Sanctification: John Wesley's Reformulation of a Patristic Doctrine," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31 (1996).
[31] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 23. In the index to this work Maddox cites numerous references to connections between John Wesley and Eastern Christianity and cites a number of scholars who have worked in this field, see 260n42. See also Randy L. Maddox, "John Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy: Influences, Convergences, and Differences," *Asbury Theological Journal* 45, no. 2 (1990).

whilst John Wesley appealed to the writings of certain Fathers, he did not appeal to the tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy itself.[32] The important project undertaken between 1999 and the early 2000's between the United Methodist Church and St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary which resulted in three books exploring commonalities in spirituality, scriptural understanding and practice, and ecclesiology between Orthodox and Wesleyan traditions demonstrates that there is indeed much common ground to be discovered here, not least between Charles Wesley and Orthodox theology.[33]

Although, as indicated, little work has been carried out in relation to Charles Wesley in this area, the analysis of this present chapter contributes to the weight of this research. Yet Maddox's warning is apposite. Strong historical evidence of Charles' reliance upon specific Eastern theologians is not currently available.[34] Nevertheless theological and spiritual evidence suggests a close correlation between Charles' theology and the theology of the Eastern Church. Whilst both draw on the biblical tradition, arguably the common source, Charles' presentation of resignation and sanctification as interrelated factors in the sanctification of believers resonates with Orthodox theological and spiritual emphases and suggests Charles' knowledge of and drawing upon those sources. The resonance of themes which have arisen in this study with those inherent to *theosis* may already have been discerned: attaining the likeness of God, acquiring the virtues, partaking in God, transformation, the co-operative participation between God's grace and human free will, becoming 'little Christs' or Christification, and mirroring the Trinity. For this final chapter however, examining the claim that for Charles resignation and sanctification exist in a symbiotic relationship, there are four primary models inherent to *theosis* through which this mutuality is demonstrated: image and likeness; incarnation and exchange; participation; and union with God.

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[32] Kenneth J. Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003), 195-6.
[33] ST Kimbrough Jr, ed. *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002). ST Kimbrough Jr, ed. *Orthodox and Wesleyan Scriptural Understanding and Practice* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005). ST Kimbrough Jr, ed. *Orthodox and Wesleyan Ecclesiology* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007). Several papers appear in these volumes which discuss Charles Wesley's perspective.
[34] I am grateful to my colleague Geordan Hammond, for the indication arising from his own current research that there may be more references to early Greek Fathers in the body of Charles' texts which have not yet been identified. Phrases which are not attributed but which nonetheless are drawn from his knowledge of these sources. The textual work has not yet been carried out to either confirm or disaffirm this possibility, but the possibility opens an important area for future research.

i. Image and likeness: Christlikeness

The biblical and theological conviction that humanity was created in the image of God and intended for likeness to God underlies this model. This model emphasises acquiring characteristics of God and is the context which frames the discussion of chapter nine; the poetic texts examined there are illustrative of acquisition of the habits, affections and tempers of God. This model is also suggestive of gradual progress, or deepening growth; the symbiosis of resignation and sanctification is a daily, lived reality; each offering of resignation, of things, people, will, heart, life, opens the believer in that moment to the possibility of experiencing sanctification, the perfect love demonstrated through the denial of self, embodied in the resignation offered. It is the model of a moment-by-moment sanctification, such as Sangster suggests was John Wesley's understanding of instantaneous sanctification, identified in chapter one. The mutuality of symbiosis is evident not only in the whole-hearted resignation of the self, through which sanctification can be given and received, but the sanctification of the moment of perfect love also confirms, strengthens, embeds more deeply the temper of resignation and its associated affections. The mutuality of resignation and sanctification offers the possibility of deepening growth into the likeness of Christ.

The moment-by-moment, every day experience of resignation and sanctification is therefore also progressive. These experiences can be cumulative; they are intended to be. This model promotes the gradual acquisition of the virtues, the characteristics of the Godhead, expressed frequently and specifically as Christlikeness. Charles' funeral hymn on the death of Mrs. Lefevre demonstrates remarkable language of identification of this believer with Jesus.[35] Charles indicates her mirroring of the characteristics and state of Christ; but he also takes the identification further, using language which directly parallels Mrs. Lefevre's experience with Christ's experience of suffering and death. Not only is she 'A spotless soul, a sinless saint, … A mirror of the deity,/ A transcript of the One in Three,' who 'His nature visibly express'd,' through her 'even life'; but the language of her suffering and death partners her death with that of Christ, from the simple fact of matching their ages, 'Like him, her *thirty years and three*,/ She finish'd on the sacred tree,' to the complex theological

[35] *RT*109.

assertion that 'She fill'd her Lord's afflictions up,/ Together crucified'.[36] This line is followed by 'To nature's will entirely dead', a hint at the resignation Mrs. Lefevre embraced in life, and now her sanctification is expressed through her sinlessness, her reflection of the Trinity and the congruence of her life and death with that of Jesus her Lord.

Sanctification through such accordance with the life of Christ, and remaining in this state is frequently articulated by Charles as conformity to Christ.[37] In the *Resignation Texts* there are nine instances of the use of 'conform', 'conform'd', or 'conformity'. In all but one of these texts,[38] a four-fold pattern is apparent: the believer is described as being like Christ or conformed to Christ; there is a reference to the believer's resignation; the soul is in some manner handed over to God - swallowed up in God/resigned/joined to Jesus/commended to God - and finally Charles articulates an expression of heaven attained. Moreover it is clear that Charles deliberately connected these four themes. Sometimes the elements occur in a different order, and sometimes the reference to resignation is joined to the reference to the soul - the soul is resigned into God's or Christ's hands. Frequently conformity to Christ is expressed as conformity to his suffering or death. Two examples follow; the remaining texts are given in the footnote.[39] The first example is from a hymn based on the text, 'Into thy hands I commend my Spirit':

3 O might I thus my Warfare end,	
Meekly to GOD my Soul resign,	*Resignation*
Into my Father's Hands commend;	*The soul commended into God's hands*
O Jesus, let thy Death be Mine.	
4 I long with Thee to bow my Head,	
Offer'd upon thy Sacrifice,	
With Thee to sink among the Dead,	
And in thy Life triumphant rise.	*Heaven attained*

[36] *RT*109, st.5, lines 1-2 and 4-5; st.6 lines 4-5; st.9 lines 1-2; st.8, lines 2-3. Charles' italics. Charles expresses a similar theological conviction in his hymn based on Colossians 1:24, "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ." *RT*138.

[37] In chapter eight it was noted that hymns appertaining to the resignation of the spirit in death indicate that conformity to Christ and sanctification, perfection, purity, spotlessness and maturity in grace are connected.

[38] The exception is *RT*198, written as an epistle 'To the Rt. Hon. and Rt. Revd. C[ount] Z[inzendorf]'.

[39] *RT*49, st.3, line1; st.4 lines 4–5 and 12; *RT*89, st.1, line 2; st.10 line 1; st.11, lines 5-6; st.12, lines 5-6; *RT*130, st.4, lines 3, 7 and 8; *RT*143 st.1, line 5; st.2, lines 4 and 8; *RT*192, st.3, lines 1-3; st.4, lines 4-6; *RT*236, st.6 line 5; st.8 lines 3-4 and 8.

5 Father of Jesus Christ my Lord,
Conform me to thy Suffering Son, *Conformed to Christ*
And let my Spirit be restor'd
And let me breathe my latest Groan.

6 Now, let me Now give up the ghost,
Now let my Nature's Life be o're,
Now let me all in Christ be lost,
And die with Christ to die no more.[40] *Heaven attained*

The second example is from one of Charles' 'Hymns for Love':

3 For this a dying life I live,
For this I in a dungeon mourn,
Till Thou the pure affection give;
And then I to thy arms return, *Heaven attained*
To Thee conform'd my soul resign, *Conformed to God; resignation*
And plunge in depths of Love Divine.[41] *Heaven attained*

Charles' consistent association of conformity to Christ with the other three elements outlined above is no coincidence. These elements together describe the sanctified state for Charles: resignation, commending the soul to God, being conformed to Christ and attaining heaven. Commending the soul to God is an aspect of resignation as demonstrated in chapter seven above; similarly being conformed to Christ and attaining heaven are both indicative of sanctification. We are then left simply with the two essential elements in Charles' eyes: resignation and sanctification. The state of sanctification is inextricably bound to resignation.

ii. Incarnation and exchange: symbiosis through content and structure

The second model inherent within *theosis* which demonstrates the symbiotic relationship of resignation and sanctification is that of Incarnation and exchange. *Theosis* is the answering movement to the *kenosis* and *sarcosis* of the divine Son in becoming incarnate. Humanity responds to this downward movement, and God, through grace, facilitates the upward movement of humanity to become a partaker in God, or participator in the life of God, sharing in the nature of God, filled with the life divine. This movement is expressed through the 'wonderful exchange' of Athanasius' dictum, as Louth refers to it, '[h]e [the Word of God] became human

[40] *RT*228, sts.3-6. My italics.
[41] *RT*203, st.3. My italics.

that we might become God'.[42] This exchange formula was central to the theology of Irenaeus (second century), Athanasius (fourth century), and later still Maximus (seventh century).[43] Chrestou elaborates saying that the lowest point of the Incarnation, the extreme of *kenosis,* is the death of Christ; the highest point is the Ascension, in which Christ prepares humanity's ascension, *theosis*, also.[44] This is a mystery which is subversive as well as paradoxical and incomprehensible. Chrestou talks of the Incarnation as an antinomian process 'which transfers the Creator to the position of the creature.'[45] The truth of the hypostatic union is that through the integration of the two persons, 'God was incarnate and man was endivinized.'[46] The context of Incarnation and exchange is more dramatic; rather than suggestive of gradual progress towards sanctification it is more indicative of the possibility of the instantaneous sanctification John Wesley held onto, although within Charles Wesley's poetic texts the theology of exchange is also unquestionably embodied, as will be established.

The foundation of exchange is the Incarnation; it is not therefore surprising that Charles' hymns on the Nativity[47] are the ones in which this theology is most frequently, though not exclusively, expressed.[48] A number of hymns in the *Resignation Texts* also indicate *theosis*. In nine of these texts Charles pairs 'resign' and 'divine', associating the two terms in a synergistic relationship. 'Resign' and 'divine' are the two foci of exchange: resignation, the human response to the downward movement of Christ in becoming incarnate; and divinity, God's response to the person who through resignation accepts the salvation Christ offers. One of these texts began this chapter.[49] This pairing of 'resign' and 'divine' raises an

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[42] Louth, "The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology," 34.
[43] The exchange formula was introduced in chapters 4 and 7 above.
[44] Panagiotes K. Chrestou, "The New Creation," in *Partakers of God (Patriarch Athenagoras memorial lectures)* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1984), 43.
[45] Chrestou, "The New Creation," 35.
[46] Chrestou, "The New Creation," 40.
[47] *Nativity Hymns*.
[48] Kimbrough has written on both *theosis* and *kenosis* in Charles Wesley using the Nativity hymns exclusively in his paper on *kenosis*, and as one of his three sources in the paper on *theosis*. Kimbrough, "*Theosis*." ST Kimbrough Jr, "*Kenosis* in the Nativity Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian and Charles Wesley," in *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality*, ed. ST Kimbrough Jr (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002).
[49] The nine references are: *RT*57, st.4, lines 2-3; *RT*95, st.9, lines 1-3; *RT*192, st.4, lines 4-5; *RT*203, st.3, lines 5-6; *RT*271, st.3, lines 7-8; *RT*279, st.2, lines 7-8; *RT*302, st.2, lines 6-8; *RT*305, st.2, lines 6-8; *RT*315, st.4, lines 5-6. In *RT*305 it is Jesus' resignation which is referred to and 'divine' relates to the believer, in all the other examples both 'resign' and 'divine' apply to the believer.

interesting question when attempting to determine the theological implications Charles intended, to which chapter three alerted us. Are these rhyming couplets chosen for their poetry, their expression of theology, or both? Undoubtedly the fact that they rhyme would have influenced Charles' choice of these words, however Charles' theological asperity would have ensured that words were not chosen purely for their rhyme if they did not also convey the theological and spiritual meaning he intended. The broad spectrum of evidence demonstrating Charles' connection of resignation with sanctification means we can assert with confidence that these couplets similarly indicate a theological and spiritual pairing.

In addition to this pairing of words the descent and ascent imagery of *kenosis* and *theosis* is further substantiated by Charles through the overarching structure of his poetic texts. Frequently the structure of the entire hymn illustrates his argument. One example from the *Resignation Texts* illustrative of the downward and upward movement of Christ in Incarnation and Ascension is *Resignation Texts* 141. The hymn has five stanzas. The first and last proclaim Jesus, praised in heaven. Stanza two focusses on Jesus' *descent*, 'From his heavenly throne descending' to the point of the cross, and the resignation of his spirit in death. The central stanza elaborates on the meaning of the death of Christ for sinners, as ransom and for the forgiveness of sin. Stanza four mirrors stanza two and speaks instead of Jesus' *ascent*, 'Rose our Lord no more to die/ To his heavenly realms returning'. Such a structure emphasises both the central focus of the hymn, here the death of Jesus, and the wider theological context of God's economy of salvation. An alternative structure of descent is evident in *Resignation Texts* 186. In this hymn there is a repeated motif of descent, first of the Trinity into the faithful hearts of the believers.[50] Secondly a request that the 'seraphs nearest to the throne', should 'On us, poor, ransom'd worms look down'.[51] Finally the descent of 'God made flesh'[52] is proclaimed who, 'For us his crown resign'd;/ That fullness of the deity,/ He died for all mankind!'[53]

[50] *RT*186, st.2, lines 7-8.
[51] *RT*186, st.4, lines 1 and 3.
[52] *RT*186, st.3, line 5.
[53] *RT*186, st.4, lines 6-8. Charles also frequently uses a structure of ascent in hymns which express upward movement from earth to heaven, and a structure of descent to proclaim the incarnation. These are most obvious in his Nativity hymns.

The movements of descent and ascent, in these instances that of Jesus, are embodied in the structure Charles chooses for these hymns. The symbiosis of resignation and sanctification is similarly evident in Charles' chiastic structure. For example, the following 'Scripture Hymn', '*When we our whole heart resign,/ Jesus, to be fill'd up with thee,/ Thou art ours, and we are thine*/ Thro' all eternity.'[54] The three lines italicised in this verse comprise a concise construction of the chiastic form Charles frequently uses in his poetry. The first two lines indicate, from the believer's perspective, the movements of emptying and filling, of resignation and sanctification: 'When we our whole heart resign,/ Jesus, to be fill'd up with thee'; the third line does the same but in reverse, filling and emptying. 'Thou art ours, and we are thine'. The essential integration of resignation with sanctification through the movement of *kenosis* and *theosis* is expressed not only through the words used, but also through Charles' ordering and shaping of them.

iii. Participation and perichoresis

The third model through which Charles demonstrates the symbiosis of resignation and sanctification is one of partaking or participating in God, in the nature of God, or Christ, including partaking in Christ's suffering. This language of participation applies both to the paradigm of gradual acquisition of the characteristics of God ('O that I now with Thee/ Thy nature might possess',[55] 'Come, and bring thy nature in',[56] 'Partakers of thy nature made',[57] 'Partakers with the Man of Woe,/ And bear our lot of sacred pain,/ Thy nature, and thy throne t'obtain'[58]) and the paradigm of exchange.[59]

Participation is an essential feature in the Fathers' exploration of *theosis*. Kharlamov identifies that for Athanasius the process of deification is often analogous with a process of participation, '[i]n Athanasius, we can see the general tendency to depict

[54] *RT*132, st.2, lines 5-8; see also *RT*279, st.2, lines 7-8.
[55] *RT*200, st.3, lines 5-6.
[56] *RT*158.
[57] *RT*236, st.5, line 1.
[58] *RT*145, st.1, lines 4-6.
[59] Scougal's influence on Charles was noted in chapter two; a further illustration of his influence might be found in his following words about religion which sound much like Charles' own, '…religion being a resemblance of the divine perfections, the image of the Almighty shining in the soul of man: nay, it is a real participation of his nature; it is a beam of the eternal light, a drop of that infinite ocean of goodness; and they who are endued with it, may be said to have *God dwelling in their souls and Christ formed within them*.' Scougal, *Life of God*, 18. Scougal's italics.

activity flowing from God to humanity in terms of deification language while the movement of human being toward God is in terms of participation. God deifies, while we participate.'[60] Elena Vishnevskaya speaks poetically of the concept of the mutual interpenetration of God and humanity in the work of Maximus the Confessor, 'divinisation as perichoretic embrace.'[61] 'God, in charity, enters the human realm and fulfils his economy, the human being reciprocates by embracing the preordained divine plan and partaking of the Triune life.'[62] Human response is necessary, *perichoresis* is dynamic. Maximus the Confessor sees the reciprocity between God and person as one of love; love draws God and humanity together in a 'single embrace.'[63] 'For the Confessor, the mutual interpenetration in ecstatic love is inseparable from the concurrence of the divine gift of the image and the human response in appropriation of divine likeness.'[64] Vishnevskaya continues, '[o]nly a restored image can communicate to the soul divine perfection; realization of likeness to God in fulfilment of divine-human reciprocity becomes, therefore, an existential endeavour.'[65] Martikainen emphasises the retaining of the individual wills of the human and God in *perichoresis*, but emphasises that these are interpenetrative.[66]

Within this context of exchange Charles' emphasis on the response of the believer has already been noted. Indeed the symbiosis of resignation and sanctification is essentially rooted in this movement, the perichoretic interaction between God and the believer. The image of a dance, suggested by *perichoresis* and adopted by Maddox in relation to co-operant grace, is similarly apposite here. God's initial gift of prevenient grace enables the response of the believer in resignation of all things and the self to God and God responds with God's gift of sanctifying grace. The movement is one of reciprocity and mutuality. The Orthodox image of deification being a dynamic, participative, mutual interpenetration of God and humanity is

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[60] Kharlamov, "Rhetorical Application of *Theosis* in Greek Patristic Theology," 120.
[61] Elena Vishnevskaya, "Divinisation as Perichoretic Embrace in Maximus the Confessor," in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, ed. Michael J Christensen and Jeffrey A. Wittung (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 133.
[62] Vishnevsakya, "Divinisation," 133.
[63] Vishnevskaya, "Divinisation," 135.
[64] Vishnevskaya, "Divinisation," 136.
[65] Vishnevskaya, "Divinisation," 136.
[66] Jouko Martikainen, "Man's Salvation, Deification or Justification? Observations on Key-Words on the Orthodox and the Lutheran Tradition," *Sobornost: the journal of the fellowship of S. Alban and S. Sergius* 7 (1976): 183.

therefore recognisable in the image of resignation and sanctification in symbiotic relationship in Charles' poetry. Similarly Charles echoes Maximus' emphases that this reciprocity is one of love and the realisation of the likeness of God, the restoration of the image of God. Charles uses language of 'retrieving' divinity, 'We shall the life divine retrieve/ And put thy sinless image on',[67] and language suggestive of the regaining of humanity's paradisal state, before the likeness of God was lost, returning to 'our native place'.[68]

iv. Union with God

In chapter three the place of poetic texts in relation to truth claims was scrutinised. There it was recognised that poetic texts, as art forms, have a different purpose and can take the reader beyond concepts which might be grasped through other forms of writing. In his hymn texts Charles does just that, drawing on language of doxology, paradox and mystery as he tries to express sanctification as the state of a believer united to God; doing as he recorded Robert Jones to have done, 'Explain'd the glorious mystery divine/ How God and man may in one spirit join'.[69]

Union with God is the final model discussed in this chapter. Whilst existing within the overarching framework of *theosis* in Orthodox theology however, union with God contributes a different perspective on Charles' integration of resignation and sanctification.

The title of the thesis began with a hymn quote, 'Simply resign'd and lost in God'. In Charles' poetic texts union with God is frequently expressed through language such as being lost, absorbed, plunged or swallowed up, and language expressive of dissolution, nothingness, hiddenness, self-divestment and humility. With poetic lines such as: 'To Thee conform'd my soul resign,/ And plunge in depths of Love Divine',[70] 'And let me then my soul resign,/ Receiv'd into the arms divine,/ Forever lost in thee,'[71] and,

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[67] *RT*145, st.4, lines 4-6.
[68] *RT*255, line 4.
[69] *Robert Jones*, 23, lines 276-7.
[70] *RT*203, st.3, lines 5-6.
[71] *RT*94, st.5, lines 4-6.

5 To thy only will resign'd
One with Thee in heart and mind:
Then matur'd for joys above
Swallow up my soul in LOVE.[72]

The sanctification of the believer is seen as culminating in a mystical union with God, the crowning state of one who has participated in God during their life time. Charles says of Elizabeth Blackwell at death, 'She glides insensibly away/ Quietly drops the smiling clod/ And mingles with eternal day.'[73]

The language of *mingling* in the Blackwell poem, from one immersed in a thoroughly Protestant heritage and context, is challenging to interpret, alluding even perhaps to a loss of individuality, rather than the justified and sanctified believer taking his or her place in God's eternal kingdom. Whilst language of mystical union is suggestive of the influence of Orthodox theology of *theosis* upon Charles, writers from an Orthodox perspective emphasise that union with God does not mean a loss of individuality. Kinghorn, citing Kallistos Ware in support, emphasises that union does not mean absorption. Individual identity is maintained. Ware states, 'In the age to come, God is "all in all," but Peter is Peter and Paul is Paul.'[74] The same illustration is also offered by Clendenin,[75] and Louth states, 'our final encounter with God is an encounter, an engagement, with an Other; it is not to be dissolved in the Ultimate.'[76] Flew remarks on the 'intense concentration on individual salvation' in the homilies of Macarius the Egyptian, the reason for which is because 'God made the human soul in His own image.'[77] Certainly it seems unlikely that Charles would believe or propound anything different, although his use of 'dissolv'd'[78] and 'absorb'd' or 'resorb'd'[79] in God might be interpreted otherwise. Clearly there is some ambiguity about how Charles understood union with God. At points he

[72] *RT*205, st.5.
[73] *RT*239, st.8, lines 6-8.
[74] Kenneth Kinghorn, "Holiness: The Central Plan of God," *Evangelical Journal* 15, no. Fall (1997): 59.
[75] Clendenin citing Macarios, Clendenin, "Partakers," 374.
[76] Louth, "The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology," 40.
[77] Flew, *Idea of Perfection*, 180.
[78] For example, *RT*47, 'O that I were dissolv'd in thee' and *RT*81 'Jesus, thee my soul requires,/ Gasps to be dissolv'd in thee.'
[79] *RT*126, st.2, line 8, 'As quite absorb'd in heavenly love'; *RT*123, st.2, line 6, 'Restor'd, resorb'd, and lost in thee'.

indicates that such union is of the nature of communion, or fellowship, of the person with God, for example:

> 5 The sav'd and Saviour now agree
> *In closest fellowship combin'd,*
> We grieve, and die, and live with thee,
> To thy great Father's will resign'd;
> And God doth all thy members own
> *One with thyself, for ever one*.[80]

However, at other points, as already noted, language suggesting dissolution, being lost in God, nothingness and loss of self is evident. Maddox has indicated that John Wesley was aware of Charles' use of language expressing an apparent desire for the loss of 'self' and was uncomfortable with it.[81] It is then possible to identify elements of both communion mysticism and union mysticism in Charles' poetry. The ambiguity remains and is no doubt indicative of the various influences on Charles' theology and spirituality, including his experience of his own relationship with God and his witness of that of others.

The interdependence of resignation and sanctification within Charles' use of union mysticism is explored through the four subthemes developed below.

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[80] *RT*55, st.5. My italics.

[81] I am grateful to Randy Maddox for pointing out the following references where John alters Charles' poetic texts, substituting alternative words for those expressive of a desire for loss of self. References are to volume number and page number. These details are given in footnotes to the works cited in The Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition web resource:
'HSP (1749)
1:35 John Wesley substituted "Pride, self-will" for "Pride, and self"
1:37 John Wesley substituted "Pride alas is" for "Pride and self are"
1:39 John Wesley substituted "from every sin" for "from self and sin"
1:71 John Wesley substituted "men and myself" for "and man and self"
1:291 John Wesley substituted "wrath" for "self"
2:154 John Wesley substituted "wrath" for "self"
2:170 John Wesley substituted "wrath" for "self"
Scripture Hymns (1762)
1:326 John Wesley substituted "wrath" for "self"
1:336 John Wesley substituted "sin" for "self"
2:7 John Wesley substituted "wrath" for "self"
2:10 John Wesley substituted "Sin" for "Self"
2:27 John Wesley substituted "wrath" for "self"
2:55 John Wesley substituted "wrath" for "self"
2:399 John Wesley substituted "wrath" for "self".'

i) Dissolution

The indication noted above of Charles' language of being absorbed or dissolved in God is particularly evident in his images of fluidity. Indeed the conclusions of Mack's research on women's spirituality in early Methodism might indicate one such case. Mack clearly interprets in women's experience a dissolution of the self and union with Christ, which these women describe 'as a literal dissolving into liquid.'[82] Mack cites Mary Langston's experience 'I see fountains upon fountains. O what rivers of pleasure are there! How shall I swim in those oceans of love to all eternity! I am overcome with love!' Mack continues '[t]his language of self-transcendence and fulfilment animated both men's and women's writing at the time of conversion, but women sustained and amplified this language over time.'[83] The situation is the same regarding language about being nothing. Mack cites Lobody who remarks that 'the elements of sanctification – dependence, self-emptying, and ecstatic fulfilment, expressed in images of fluidity, childhood, and romantic love – were especially congenial to a female sensibility.'[84]

It seems that Charles' use of such language is much more in accord with this female perspective. In his journals Charles frequently uses language of 'melting' for those who came to faith; indeed it is his most frequently repeated metaphor.[85] Other imagery of fluidity reverberates in phrases such as plunging into 'depths of love divine',[86] or 'depths above,/ The ocean of thy heavenly love!'[87] or 'Implung'd in the glorious abyss,/ And lost in the ocean of love'.[88] Similarly his articulation of being swallowed up in God, 'Swallow up my soul in LOVE',[89] and reference to rivers, sea, and ocean reflect the same use of images of fluidity, 'Flow back the rivers to their sea,/ And let our all be lost in thee.'[90] In this study it has been noted that Charles wrote some of his poetic texts from a female viewpoint; clearly he had an ability to

[82] Mack, *Heart Religion*, 131.
[83] Mack, *Heart Religion*, 131.
[84] Mack, *Heart Religion*, 132.
[85] There are thirty-three examples of 'melted' or 'melting' in the journals, found on the following pages: 117, 129, 132, 144, 152, 161, 166, 173, 192, 214, 225, 232, 254, 306, 319, 326, 328, 368, 422, 433, 444, 447, 450, 461, 463, 483, 504, 516, 522, 532, 550, 557, 561.
[86] *RT*203, st.3, line 6.
[87] *RT*87, st.4, lines 5-6.
[88] *RT*61 st.6, lines 5-8.
[89] *RT*205, st.5, line 4.
[90] *RT*84, st.11, line 6.

empathise with the experiences of others, including women, and it is not surprising that he should have been able to share a similar spiritual perspective.

Whether through imagery of fluidity or individuality, language suggestive of dissolution, conveys an ultimate loss of self, entire resignation, and the corollary, of sanctification, articulated as being one with God, expressed through such expressions as 'dissolv'd', 'absorb'd' or 'resorb'd', 'implung'd', swallowed up, or lost in God. This latter phrase is explored further next.

ii) Lost in God

Language of being lost in God is used by Charles on several occasions to communicate union with God. The following are examples from the *Resignation Texts,*

> Our heaven of heavens be this
> Thy fulness of mercy to prove,
> Implung'd in the glorious abyss,
> And lost in the ocean of love.[91]

> 11 Wherefore to thee I all resign,
> Being thou art, and good, and power,
> Thy only will be done, not mine;
> Thee, Lord, let earth and heaven adore,
> Flow back the rivers to their sea,
> And let our all be lost in thee.[92]

> 5 Hasten to grant my sole request,
> Take me into that second rest,
> That glorious liberty,
> And let me then my soul resign,
> Receiv'd into the arms divine,
> Forever lost in thee.[93]

> 2 This earth without regret I leave,
> Impatient for my heavenly rest:
> Saviour, my weary soul receive,
> Take a sad pilgrim to thy breast,

[91] *RT*61, st.6, lines 5-8.
[92] *RT*84.
[93] *RT*94.

Who only live, and die, to be
Restor'd, resorb'd, and lost in thee.[94]

1 Happy the man, who poor and low,
Less goodness in himself conceives
Than Christ doth of his servant know;
Who sav'd from self-reflection lives,
Unconscious of the grace bestow'd,
Simply resign'd, and lost in God.[95]

These hymns are quoted within their context to illustrate the integration of resignation and being lost in God which is the 'heaven of heavens', 'second rest', 'glorious liberty', 'the arms divine', and 'heavenly rest'. Sanctification in this context is the state of being one with God; lost in God.

Scholars who have considered Charles' use of this language of lost in God, have offered different interpretations about what he might have meant. Rattenbury deems the context from which this language emerges to be that of hell. Sin is hell, 'the endless continuation and intensification of the torment of sin to a soul which sees itself in the searching light of God's Holiness'.[96] Rattenbury suggests that in some moods Charles prayed for annihilation to escape this hell, 'O let me into nothing fall/ To 'scape the hell of sin.'[97] He continues, saying that Charles 'thought of hell, in the eschatological sense, as the eternal state of unconquered sin'[98] and that for him 'to be lost means to be in hell'. However, he says, Charles believed that the 'everlasting arms' were beneath, and Rattenbury asks 'Would these arms not be beneath hell itself?'[99] Therefore the following verse implies 'that to be in hell is to be lost in His love.'[100]

Here, Jesus, am I
Determined to lie,
Thy goodness to prove,
And if I am lost, to be lost in Thy love.[101]

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[94] *RT*123.
[95] *RT*149.
[96] Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, 132.
[97] Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, 131.
[98] Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, 131.
[99] Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, 131.
[100] Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, 133.
[101] Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, 133.

The torment of sin was indeed a state Charles desired to be released from, and sanctification was seen by him as a state of sinlessness. However the annihilation Rattenbury suggests Charles prayed for to escape the hell of sin does not address the theme of all these texts; the context is not always one of sin. Furthermore, Rattenbury's claim that for Charles 'to be lost means to be in hell' is not substantiated. In this study it has been made apparent that for Charles resignation is a positive, not a negative act. Falling into nothing, being lost in God, are expressions of this act of resignation, entire resignation. It is a positive, proactive, intentional state and one which is coupled with sanctification, interpreted as union with God. Falling into nothing, or being lost in God are not simply states which, in a depressive state of mind, Charles expresses a desire to inhabit in order to avoid the hell of sin. Rather he sees being 'lost in God', 'plunged into the Godhead's deepest sea', 'swallowed up in God', as expressions both of the believer's act of utter humility in resigning the entirety of the being to God and God's gift in return of union with God. In phrases such as these the inseparable symbiosis of resignation and sanctification is clearly evident.

Tyson, writing from the context of the eschatological hope of sanctification recognises language of being lost in God in Charles' poetry ('Sweetly set the prisoner free,/ Swallow up my soul in Thee') and essentially makes four points: first, that 'such sentiments (were) often expressed in illness or the contemplation of death'; second, that Charles 'seemed to follow Hellenistic or Eastern thought more directly than the biblical record, since the New Testament vision of afterlife is resurrection of the body and not absorption into God'; third that 'Charles' correspondence to such mystical ideologies in this respect may be attributed to poetic license'; and finally he identifies the place of resignation: 'the heart of the matter irrespective of the imagery employed, was the Wesleyan emphasis upon self-resignation as being vital to Christian perfection.'[102] Tyson's second and final points accord with this thesis. His second, that such language is expressive of Hellenistic or Eastern thought, is being argued here in relation to Eastern theology but the Hellenistic emphasis on the immortality of the soul was a common understanding at the time and is clearly evident elsewhere in Charles' hymns.[103] Tyson's first point,

[102] Tyson, *Sanctification*, 202.
[103] This point was noted in chapter 8 above, n8.

regarding Charles' experiences of illness or the contemplation of death is in danger of suggesting that language of being lost in God reflects morbid or negative experiences. Indeed, in his poetic texts Charles frequently evidences the contemplation of death, often in relationship to the death of another, but it is a *desire* for death; he yearns for it to be him who is dying, not arising out of morbidity, but from a deep desire to be with Christ. Again it is a positive and not a negative expression. Language of being lost in God is similarly language of hope and desire, not of depression or dread. Finally, Tyson's third point, that the correspondence of such language to mystical ideologies may be attributed to poetic license is inadequate. As discussed above in relation to Charles' use of 'resign' and 'divine', obviously poetic technique was inherent to the creation of his poetry; however, his theology was intentional too. Poetic license is too easily an excuse for difficult language emanating from the pen of an evangelical Protestant, and yet this language is present, occurs repeatedly, and Charles' use of it has to be taken seriously. The same criticism can be levelled against Fraser's comment in his thesis on Christian perfection in early Methodism. Fraser refers to Charles' line 'Glory in dissolution near',[104] and later quotes, 'O that all I am might cease!/ Let me into nothing fall,/ Let my Lord be all in all.'[105] He does not examine the area in any detail but suggests that that in this language Charles is simply using 'mystical hyperbole'.[106] It is far from being simply 'mystical hyperbole'. As argued above and as Fraser's chosen quote demonstrates perfectly, resignation and sanctification are interrelated. Sanctification for the believer is expressed in the desire that I might cease, and fall into nothing (resignation), so that Christ might be all in all.

iii) Self-divestment

A third theme in Charles' texts, used within the concept of the believer's union with God is that of self-divestment. Self-divestment is conspicuously contiguous to resignation. The resignation of things and people, of the will and heart, of the life, soul, breath and the whole being is a divesting of the self. Self-divestment is closely aligned with the *kenosis* of the Incarnation through which, as we have seen, sanctification becomes possible. In the words of Lossky, 'the perfection of the person consists in self-abandonment: the person expresses itself most truly in that it

[104] Fraser, "Strains", 107n57.
[105] Fraser, "Strains", 132.
[106] Fraser, "Strains", 132.

renounces to exist for itself. It is the self-emptying of the Person of the Son, the Divine *κένωσις*'.[107] In Charles Wesley's poetic texts self-divestment is implicit in the other three subthemes of union with God, 'dissolution,' 'lost,' and 'nothingness,' discussed here. Self-divestment involves a disengagement, a letting go which enables the person to be 'lost', 'dissolv'd', 'absorb'd', in God.

One scholar who has explored Charles' imagery of self-divestment is S.T. Kimbrough. Kimbrough notes two different emphases. In his chapter on *kenosis* in the nativity hymns of Ephrem[108] and Charles Wesley, he connects self-divestment with *kenosis*. Humans, he says, 'must be shorn of majesty, as the divine in the Incarnation. Self-divestment is a pre-requisite to participation in the life of holiness.'[109] He then interprets self-divestment as becoming 'a stranger for God's sake … isolated, misjudged and rejected'.[110] His second interpretation occurs in his papers 'Charles Wesley and the Journey of Sanctification'[111] and 'Perfection Revisited: Charles Wesley's Theology of "Gospel Poverty" and "Perfect Poverty."'[112] In these Kimbrough associates self-divestment with poverty: spiritual poverty, '… Charles perceived that one should move toward the full divestment of self, to perfect poverty of self – forever lost in God';[113] and material poverty, which, as Kimbrough states, represents another point of disagreement between John and Charles. Kimbrough comments on Charles' hymns on the ethic of sharing in Acts chapter four,

> They are uncompromisingly difficult and are unquestionably the basis of an essential difference between Charles and his brother John on economic theory and practice. Charles moves much closer than John to an ascetic view of life that affirms the divestment of all possessions.[114]

Kimbrough refers to Charles' text on the widow's mite, and makes the point that the widow is free to give, 'because she has been "disengaged by grace"; disengaged

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[107] Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 144.
[108] 'Ephrem' is spelled in two ways in this thesis, as here, and earlier 'Ephraem'. This is to reflect the spelling used by the authors cited in each case.
[109] Kimbrough, "*Kenosis*," 281.
[110] Kimbrough, "*Kenosis*," 281.
[111] Kimbrough, "Journey of Sanctification."
[112] S. T. Kimbrough, "Perfection Revisited: Charles Wesley's Theology of 'Gospel Poverty' and 'Perfect Poverty'," in *The Poor and the People Called Methodists, 1729-1999*, ed. Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2002).
[113] Kimbrough, "Journey of Sanctification," 69.
[114] Kimbrough, "Perfection Revisited," 108.

from all the trappings of possessions in this world.'[115] The stanza which follows (not in the *Resignation Texts*) demonstrates Kimbrough's suggestion that for Charles, being lost in God is an expression of self-divestment; but further, it also makes a direct connection between perfect poverty and being lost in God, equating them through Charles' parallelism of the first and second halves of the verse:

> Thus, thus may I the prize pursue,
> and all the appointed paths pass through
> to perfect poverty:
> thus let me, Lord, thyself attain,
> and give thee up thine own again,
> forever lost in thee.[116]

Self-divestment which leads to union with God is expressed in key lines from the second half of 'A Poor Sinner', considered in detail in the previous chapter. There it was noted that this hymn has a chiastic structure centring on resignation, in stanza four 'O that I thus resign'd'. Other key lines follow, expressing humility, 'I would be humble, Lord'; divestment, 'I would be stript of all'; stillness, 'I would be truly still'; and finally union with God, 'I would with thee be one'. [117] The context of these desires is one of patient, expectant waiting for God to give the necessary grace for such union to occur, again *kenosis* and *theosis*. Inhabiting resignation, humility, and self-divestment prepare the believer to receive such grace.

Self-divestment therefore is indicative of *kenosis*, and integral to the emptying and filling metaphor of *kenosis* and *theosis*. This is not the only metaphor appropriate to Charles' use of the imagery of self-divestment however. Through this imagery Charles also articulates a resignation of the self which leads to nothingness, to absolute humility, which (as chapter seven noted) does not look for, expect or need the response of being filled with the life divine. Zimany reflects that Bernard of Clairvaux is close to the Orthodox position 'by regarding deification as the divestment of self-will and the alignment of one's will with God's, so that God is all in all.'[118] These words might have been written about Charles. This alternative metaphor offers an additional dimension to the symbiotic relationship between

[115] Kimbrough, "Perfection Revisited," 107.
[116] Kimbrough, "Perfection Revisited," 113.
[117] *RT*29, st.5, line 2; st.5, line 5; st.6, line 1; st.6. line 5.
[118] Zimany, "Grace, Deification and Sanctification," 130.

resignation and sanctification to that expressed through the paralleling of *kenosis* and *theosis*. In this metaphor sanctification or *theosis*, is expressed simply and entirely through the utter resignation of the believer. In the final section on becoming nothing, this metaphor is considered further.

iv) Nothingness

Kallistos Ware, in 'The Understanding of Salvation in the Orthodox Tradition' cites a traditional story of Abba Sisoes, a deeply holy man, but who at the end of his life expressed that he was not even sure that he had begun to repent.[119] Charles Wesley recounts a similar testimony, of Anne Wigginton,

> 7 No noisy self-deceiver she,
> No boaster vain of faith untry'd:
> Her own good deeds she could not see,
> But wrought, and cast them all aside;
> And when her glorious race was run,
> Complain'd, "She never yet begun."[120]

The humility expressed in these examples is a key affection in Charles' spirituality, a lived illustration of resignation. Within the context of resignation, humility is expressed in the language of nothingness, 'let me into nothing fall',[121] of being brought down to nought, 'Weaken, bring me down to nought'.[122] This is the attitude of being to be attained and it is indicative of a desire for absolute humility. If there is any sense of progression on a journey towards sanctification, it has to be seen in Charles Wesley's works within the context of the downward progression of humility.[123]

Being nothing as an expression of utter humility is evident in Charles' 'Elegy on Whitefield' which includes the words, 'At Jesus' feet to catch the quickning word,/ And into nothing sink before his Lord.'[124] Meek humility and being nothing are

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[119] Kalistos Ware, "The Understanding of Salvation in the Orthodox Tradition," in *For Us and Our Salvation: Seven Perspectives of Christian Soteriology*, ed. Rienk Lanooy (Leiden: Utrecht: Interuniversitair Instituut voor Missiologie en Oecumenica, 1994), 107.
[120] *RT*107, st.7.
[121] *RT*23, st.28, line 2; *RT*70, st.5, line5.
[122] *RT*39, st.3, line 1.
[123] In chapter nine, spiritual poverty and the desire to be made nought were associated.
[124] *RT*187, line 374.

tempers of godliness; followers of Christ are to exhibit the tempers of Christ, as Charles articulates in his poem 'On the death of Mr. John Matthews':

> 5 Partakers of thy nature made,
> Thy tempers, Lord, we long t' express,
> And show throughout our lives display'd
> The power of real godliness,
> As followers of the silent Lamb
> To breathe thy meek humility
> And always feel "I nothing am
> "But a poor worm redeem'd by Thee."[125]

Associated images in Charles' poetic works for the desire for nothingness, are the loss of self, losing 'my nature, and my name';[126] and a desire for weakness and helplessness, 'Weak and helpless may I be,/ To thy only will resign'd,/ Ever hanging upon thee.'[127] The loss of self, weakness, helplessness, nothingness are not however an indication of hopelessness. The following stanza, indicating the believer's lowliness, 'I nothing have, I nothing am', begins with a question,

> 8 What have I then wherein to trust?
> I nothing have, I nothing am:
> Excluded is my every boast,
> My glory swallow'd up in shame.[128]

The hymn answers the question, describing the death of Jesus which was (affirmed through an insistently repeated) 'for me'. The humility this state describes is one in which the believer might be 'humbly of thy favour sure'.[129] There is therefore a humble confidence, or 'holy confidence'[130] appropriate in this lowliest state, which is 'confidence divine', founded in God alone. The contrast Charles is drawing between God who is everything and the believer who is nothing is stark; the extremes are complete. This is the essential point Charles is making. Nothingness expresses a state of not needing to be filled in return, but has only one aim, and that is that God should be all in all. The final stanza of 'The Promise of Sanctification' states it explicitly,

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[125] *RT*236, st.5.
[126] *RT*41, st.3, line 3.
[127] *RT*18, st.6, lines 5-7.
[128] *RT*14, st.8.
[129] *RT*315, st.4, line 3.
[130] *RT*168, st.6, line 5, 'By holy confidence divine'; *RT*236, st.8 line 1, 'In lowly confidence divine'.

28 Now let me gain perfection's height!
Now let me into nothing fall!
Be less than nothing in thy sight,
And feel that Christ is all in all.[131]

Declaring that God, or Jesus, is all in all is Charles' primary aim through his use of language of being nothing; within this context resignation and sanctification are as one, combined in the desire, aim and practice of counting the self as nothing and God as all in all. Charles' hymn on John the Baptist, based on the Gospel words 'He must increase but I must decrease', models it,

1 I would be less and less
That Jesus may increase,
Would myself renounce, despise,
Till on earth no longer seen,
Least of all in my own eyes,
Least of all esteem'd by men.

2 A voice, and nothing more,
I only go before;
Jesus' poorest instrument,
Jesus' harbinger I am,
Live to spend and to be spent,
Live to glorify his name.

3 My life is not my own,
Bestow'd for Him alone;
Ready at the Master's call
Every blessing I resign,
Fame, and strength, and life, and all,
Die, to serve the cause Divine.[132]

Conclusion

In this final chapter the culminating argument of this thesis has been presented. For Charles Wesley resignation and sanctification exist in a symbiotic relationship. Resignation is the gift believers offer to God, and sanctification the gift of grace God offers to believers. One does not happen without the other. The symbiotic tension of resignation and sanctification evident in the *Resignation Texts* has been demonstrated through their expression of Charles' theological and spiritual understanding and in their structure and patterning. Four models of this symbiotic

[131] *RT*23, st.28.
[132] *RT*266.

relationship have been presented, each offering a dimension on this relationship. The complementarity of resignation and sanctification is clear, whether evidenced through attaining the virtues and congruence of life with that of Christ; whether through exchange, through emptying and filling; whether through participation in the life of God through grace, and the interpenetration of the human and divine in perichoretic dance; or whether through union with God requiring the dissolution, loss, self-divestment, nothingness of the person so that God is all in all. All these facets demonstrate the conjunction of resignation and sanctification for Charles Wesley; they exist in symbiotic unity. In the absolute self-giving of the believer the goal of both is achieved; in such a person resignation and sanctification are both fulfilled.

Conclusion

The introduction to the first chapter of this study suggested that the question of this thesis might be whether it is possible to have a discussion of sanctification in the theology of Charles Wesley without discussing resignation. The conclusion is that it is not. The correlation of resignation and sanctification has uncovered a spiritual and theological truth at the heart of Charles Wesley's faith and belief. Undoubtedly his conviction about these critical components of faith was shaped by his upbringing, the context in which he lived and worked, his reading, the people who influenced him, and his personal experience of faith. The perfectionist controversy which so horrified him, focussing and strengthening his conviction that sanctification was not received until a few moments before death, indeed in the moment of final resignation just prior to death. The suffering he experienced personally and witnessed in the lives of many others; the devastating loss, heart-wrenching pain, tentative hope and desperate prayer, were held alongside the struggle for sanctification, the earnest desire to be faithful, to be obedient to the will of the sovereign God, which was gracious and good. The positive, active, spiritual discipline of the resignation of everything to God drew the heart closer to God for Charles, and enabled even suffering to be transformed. There is no divorce between theology and spirituality, between belief and its expression, in this faithful, experiential, grace-reliant, sacrifice and yearning for holiness. Neither can there be a divorce between the two components. For Charles resignation and sanctification are inextricably joined.

Charles' poetic texts capture and communicate this spiritual and theological truth. The nature of their art enables this truth to be learned, reiterated, and rehearsed, with doxological intent towards God and formational intent towards steadfast believers. The goal of sanctification, the necessity of resignation, the encouragement to gain and deepen virtues and affections, the underpinning of God's grace, the means of progress for the Christian, individually and communally, along the path towards holiness, are all embedded here. These texts also have the ability to transcend. As texts of poetry they have the capacity to point to that which is beyond, to embrace the mystery of the tacit. Their performance, whether through corporate singing, public testimony or private praying allows the possibility of transformation; the

words embody, yet point beyond the experience; they are means of grace through which the community and the individual believer can be changed, enabling the practice of resignation as well as teaching what it is to resign all to God. The validity of Charles' poetic texts is located in this doxological, affective, intentional, transformational framework. It is beyond doubt that Charles Wesley's poetic texts were foundational for this spiritual formation.

The evidence of the *Resignation Texts* indicates that Charles sees resignation and sanctification as conjoined in two ways. The first is both a process and state. Resignation is envisaged as a foundational temper for sanctification. This temper becomes rooted in the believer through a process of iterative practice of resignation. The continual choice to resign all things, people and self to God and through doing so, gradually habituating appropriate tempers, acquiring the virtues, until resignation is embedded as an attitude of being, indicative of an appropriate attitude of heart, mind and will for the believer, through grace, to receive the sanctification which is God's gift.

The second conclusion, identifying the symbiosis of resignation and sanctification, is not primarily about process but gift. The believer offers their utter resignation as a gift to God and God offers sanctification to believers; both are required. The symbiotic relationship of resignation and sanctification emphasises intimacy of relationship with God; the mutuality of this relationship enables a deepening growth into Christlikeness, reflecting the Trinity, participation in and unity with God; it is a model of transformation. The corollary of this symbiosis is that is it only through resignation that sanctification can be received. If a person desires to be sanctified the desire must first be resigned; all things must be resigned, even life, soul, and breath; only then is sanctification possible. The absolute self-divestment of resignation is the pattern of Christ's *kenosis* and the corresponding possibility of sanctification mirrors his ascension; theologically and spiritually the pattern of Christ is also the pattern for the believer.

Sanctification, therefore, if it is to occur, can only do so when the believer is entirely resigned in all things to God. It is only through resignation that sanctification can be received; the two are symbiotically joined. Ironically perhaps, the goal of sanctification is only reached when the believer in fact desires nothing for herself,

but only desires that God is everything. There is only one ultimate purpose for Charles Wesley of the utter self-giving of the believer, who resigns everything to God – things and people, friends, the will and heart, the soul and breath in death – all is resigned so that God might be all in all.

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The Resignation Texts studied in this thesis have shed a particular light on sanctification in the understanding of Charles Wesley. The now ready availability of Charles' poetic texts allows for such an analysis and has opened up a wealth of potential future research from a close examination of them. It is possible that such research will examine other significant terms which appear in the texts and draw different conclusions. Alternatively the ongoing conversation might be continued through an analysis of how concepts discussed here are used elsewhere in Charles' poetic corpus, or how they might be appropriated for a twenty-first century Wesleyan context, for example. The potential for new discoveries and fresh insight is significant, and worth anticipating.

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