

“from the deep of affliction, through all grades of doubt, fear, desire, faith, hope and expectation, to the transports of perfect love in the very beams of the beatific vision, furnishes him with everlasting and inexhaustible themes, celebrated with an affluence of diction and splendour of colouring rarely surpassed.”

The grand simplicity of Wesleyan hymnody is in harmony with its intense personality. In words of the utmost plainness and simplicity, strains of thought and feeling, rapt and elevated, find fitting expression—words so plain that a child in the Sunday-school can intelligently use them, and thoughts so lofty and comprehensive that an archangel might speak them—compositions which in private devotion the humblest Christian can profitably use, and which in the great congregation moves the soul like the “singing of a cathedral choir.”

Comparison has been instituted with but little of critical acumen between Charles Wesley, as “the poet of sensuous feeling,” taking the place in the sanctuary “that Byron takes amongst those who are not of the Christian Church,” and John Keble, who, as representing the highest culture, is, to the Church, what Tennyson is to all of this age—whether of Christ or not—the poet of lofty spirituality. We read the poems of the “Christian Year” as meditations of great sweetness and beauty—with all the charm of consecrated genius, cultured thought and classic purity of expression, but not as the language of public worship. We do not and cannot use them as hymns of praise. They are for closet meditation rather than sanctuary service. The compositions of Charles Wesley are eminently suitable for the closet; and yet, in style of thought and expression, they meet all the requirements of public service.

The only poem, perhaps, of Wesley which, from its structure, would fairly admit of comparison with the best productions of the author of the “Christian Year,” is that designated “Wrestling Jacob.” Unlike John Keble, who often bases his lines upon some solitary expression, and weaves his poem from some mere suggestion of the sacred writer, Charles Wesley grasps all the fulness and gathers up all the detail of the inspired narrative, dramatizes and spiritualizes the whole, and through all turns and transitions of the history makes the application to Christian life; and in that