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## Wisdom from Charles Wesley for Contemporary Songwriters

Calvin Symposium on Worship: Word, Music, Vision, Action

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## Wisdom from Charles Wesley for Contemporary Songwriters

As a positive example of integrating head and heart, theology and piety, theology and love, eighteenth century songwriter Charles Wesley offers several lessons for contemporary songwriters.

### Pearls of wisdom from Wesley

- Be taken up with a fundamental paradox of the Christian faith: the Incarnation.
  - The paradox in Christ's birth:
    - The appearance of the Invisible (see HNL 4)
    - The "start" of the Source of all existence (HNL 4)
    - The containment of the Uncontainable (HNL 4)
    - Heavenly glory in earthly humbleness (HNL 6)
  - The paradox and the crucifixion
    - A dying god (1780 Hymnal 26, 27)
    - The power of blood divine (CWPT)
- Juxtapose our personal story against a larger, more cosmic Story. ("And Can It Be")
- Incorporate a dynamic sense of time and remembrance.
  - The Resurrection as occurring *today*
  - Look *now* into the manger (HNL 5)
  - Seeing a crucified savior *before our eyes* (HLS 18)
  - Open wounds and warm blood (HLS 122)
  - Evocative theology: our participation in the biblical story (1780 Hymnal 24)
- Sing a biblical story from the inside out.
  - Example: Peter's imprisonment and release from "And Can It Be"
  - Jacob's (The Christian's) wrestling match from "Come O Thou Traveler Unknown"
  - The really good Samaritan (CWPT)
- Put the emphasis upon divine activity. Let God have good, strong verbs.
  - Piling up verbs for Jesus (1780 Hymnal 31)
  - O for a thousand verbs (O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing)
- Be mesmerized by the Trinity.
  - Structuring the Persons (1780 Hymnal 6)
  - The Holy Spirit & the Son in the economy of salvation from "Spirit of Faith Come Down"
  - The Father and the Son in the economy of salvation from "Arise My Soul Arise"

**Sources of hymns**

*Hymns on the Nativity of our Lord*=HNL

*A Collection of Hymns, for the Use of the People Called Methodist*=1780 Hymnal

*Hymns on the Lord's Supper*=HLS

S. T. Kimbrough, ed., *Charles Wesley: Poet and Theologian*=CWPT

To find these and other collection, see the website for the Duke Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition=

[http://www.divinity.duke.edu/wesleyan/texts/cw\\_published\\_verse.html](http://www.divinity.duke.edu/wesleyan/texts/cw_published_verse.html).