Environmental Action in Philippine United Methodist Church Songs: Ecological Discourse in Selected Hymnody of the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal

Jericho Amisola TRIO
Department of Social Development Services
College of Human Ecology
University of the Philippines, Los Baños
jatrio@up.edu.ph
https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8773-2054

ABSTRACT

The Methodist tradition utilizes hymns as a pathway to reinforce theology and doctrine. Within the context of the Philippine United Methodist Church, its hymnody is a product of Methodist Episcopal mission work during the twentieth-century American settlement. This colonial imprint is evident in the use of the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal, which is central to Philippine Methodist worship. The study focuses on identifying the ecological discourse in selected "social action" hymns of the 1989 Hymnal. The study is limited to evaluating hymns authored by Methodists. Using document and literary analysis of selected Methodist hymns, it was observed how Methodist spirituality diverges from the binary traditional Evangelical Protestant view where the Christian is welcomed to heaven and the sinner condemned to eternal punishment; instead, there is an emphasis on building heaven on earth and challenging systems of abuse. Pursuing the ecological gospel, United Methodists affirm the interconnectedness of issues concerning race, class, and the environment. A salient theme in selected Methodist hymns is the task given to the United Methodist Christian to strive for peace, justice, and turning darkness into light. The virtue of perseverance is celebrated. Since its beginnings in eighteenth-century England, Methodism has been deemed as a radical movement--- from challenging the social apathy of the Anglican establishment to its criticisms of how the market economy operates. United Methodism has contested the traditional Christian view of subjugating the earth for exploitation; rather, the Christian is understood to be in a covenant relationship with the Divine and entrusted to act as a steward. It can be observed that the 1989 Methodist hymnal subscribes to a big-tent approach, as reflected in its inclusion of Unitarian hymns. Under its social action hymns, 8.69% were identified as having Unitarian authorship. It is critical to recognize how the Unitarian Church does not subscribe to rigid Christian dogma and permits liberty in faith expression. The big-tent arrangements of the 1989 hymnal demonstrate the assimilative capacity of United

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Methodism to accommodate diverse perspectives within Protestantism. In its ministry to Filipino migrant communities in the United States, ecological social action hymns such as, "Where cross the crowded ways of life", reflect instances of United Methodist dissent particularly on red-lining of Filipino settlements in ecologically hazardous areas.

Keywords: *ecological gospel, United Methodist Church, mainline Protestant, hymnody, discourse analysis*

Introduction

"The Gospel of Christ knows no religion but social": The history of the United Methodist Church is a history of struggle forged initially from reformers who sought to change the apathy of the Anglican establishment on social realities; it is a voice of immigrants and slaves who sought liberty, and a continual strain to realize the Wesleyan mantra of seeing "the world as parish".[1] The following critical commentary centers on understanding institutional arrangements of the United Methodist Church and attitudes in environmental action through the discourse of Methodist hymnody. Within the context of Methodism, hymnody plays a critical niche in transmitting the doctrines of the church both to its members and as testament to society of whom the church is called to witness.[2] In the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal, the preface emphasized how hymnody must not only reflect the prayers, creeds, and rituals of the church--- rather it must be representative of the demographic profile of the church, considering Asian, Hispanic, and Native American ethnic heritage.[3] As such Methodist hymnody strays away from the conventional arrangements of her sister Protestant traditions; in the stead of constraining worship experience in praise and adoration (as what Lutherans would ascribe as *Soli Deo Gloria--- "to God alone be the glory"*), Methodist hymnody considered social action as a category in their acts of worship. It has been central to the social creed of Methodism to baptize the church in the crucible of pressing social and ecological realities. In this perspective, the church is inseparable from the realms of both nature and society upon which it exists.[4] The United Methodist Church within the context of the Philippines is a product of Methodist Episcopal Church missionary activity wrought by the 20th century American settlement. In terms of its hymnody, the Philippine Methodist mission utilized hymnals from parent United States-based churches. This is evident in the current

[1] Richard Morgan Cameron, "*Methodism and society in historical perspective*" (Abingdon Press, 1961), 326.

[2] John Richard Watson, An Annotated Anthology of Hymns (Oxford University Press, 2002).

[3] The United Methodist Hymnal Publishing House, "Preface" in the United Methodist Hymnal (1989)

[4] Cameron, *Methodism and society in historical perspective*, 317.

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1989 United Methodist Hymnal (which was published at Nashville Tennessee) used as central part of Filipino Methodist worship.[5]

The study aims to identify ecological discourses in social action hymns of within the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal of the Philippine United Methodist Church. Specifically, it aims to:

a. Identify the denominational affiliation of hymn-authors within the social action section of the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal
b. Describe the historical context of selected Methodist social action hymns in the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal
c. Identify expressed themes in selected Methodist social action hymns in the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal

A briefer on social institutions and social capital

Political economist John Stuart Mill emphasized that the role of social institutions hinges on social cohesion and the promotion of progress. Social institutions in Mill's view are not static organisms (in a linear exchange of profit and utility) but are critical for the development of human nature, participation in support efforts, and the forging of community commitments.[6] It can be said that an ideal society under Mill's political ecology serves as an antithesis to Adam Smith's economic arrangements, whose institutional intent is either to maximize profit (the firm) and increase utility (the consumer). In contrast, the Millian view has the following characteristics: (i) fairer means in the distribution of resources, (ii) technology for more dignified labor, and (iii) wealth is not the driver of socioeconomic life.[7] In the rhetoric of altruism, Mill construes institutions as predictable actors geared to the welfare of others. It is crucial to consider how Mill views humans as imperfect beings to be likened in the imagery of an incomplete puzzle piece; under such settings, social institutions have the burden in creating pathways which allow these incomplete beings to reach their full potential and capacitate them on achieving their desired aspirations.[8]

Considering Mill's view on how social institutions promote cohesion, the concept of social capital plays a vital part in comprehending such arrangements. For instance, Robert Putnam's social capital theory defines social capital as a feature of social organization---networks, norms,

[5] Luther J. Oconer and Rebecca C. Asedillo. "*The United Methodist Church in the Philippines.*" United Methodist General Commission on Archive and History. 2011.

[6] Laura Valladão de Mattos "*John Stuart Mill, socialism, and his liberal utopia: an application of his view of social institutions.*" History of Economic Ideas (2000): 95-98.

[7] de Mattos, *John Stuart Mill*, 115.

[8] de Mattos, *John Stuart Mill*, 119.

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knowledge production, and cooperation that aids for mutual benefit. Rather than construing social capital as something that benefits only specific groups, Putnam's approach emphasizes that it is a public good intended to serve the entire community.[9] Lyda Honifan defines social capital as mutual sympathy, which takes place through social exchanges among individual groups and families, which are treated as a social unit. The utility of Honifan's unit has been extended to Pierre Bourdieau's definition, in which he frames social capital as an aggregate of potential resources often associated with firm networks built either on mutual acquaintance or recognition.[10] In the lens of Elinor Ostrum, the benefits of social capital are construed as that which enhances the engagement and participation of committed groups having a sense of social belongingness with each other. For this to conceptualize, social capital exists in two categories, namely, (i) bonding social capital (which is termed as emotionally and geographically knitted ties; this can include friends, families, as well as established bonds to a specific group) and (ii) binding social capital (that which matures throughout an individual's interaction with civic society, organizations, and associated networks). [11]

Christianity, Mainline Protestantism and Ecology

Religion cannot be divorced from the environment and society on which it exists. It serves as a marker of ethnicity and an inventory of both culture and identity.[12] Within the context of Christianity and ecology, there are two discourses evident: (i) that of domination and (ii) ecological reformation.[13] The first discourse gears on Lynn White Jr.'s reproach with regards to the rhetoric of Genesis 1:28 (*"fill the earth and subdue it"*); according to White Jr., the dogmas and doctrine of the Judeo-Christian tradition are the source of the current ecological crisis as it frames the existence of the earth and creation solely for the purpose of humanity's means of subsistence and exploitation. [14] A reference to White Jr.'s remark on ecological apathy can be expressed in the domain of American Pentecostal denominations of which emphasize that Christians must not concern themselves with environmental protection since Christ will "destroy" the current world to pave for his "*new*

[9] Robert D. Putnam "*Bowling alone: America's declining social capital.*" In The city reader, pp. 188-196. Routledge, 2015.

[10] Daniel P. Aldrich and Michelle A. Meyer. *"Community Level Social Capital and Resilience.*" In Routledge handbook of environmental hazards and society. Routledge, 2022. 202

[11] Aldrich and Meyer, "*Community Level Social Capital and Resilience*", 203.

[12] David Herbert. *"Religion and society.*" In *The Routledge Handbook to Religion and Political Parties*, 31-43. Routledge, 2019. 41

[13] Ernst M. Conradie "*Christianity: An ecological critique of Christianity and a Christian critique of ecological destruction.*" In *Routledge handbook of religion and ecology*, Routledge, 2016. 70

[14] Michael Moody. "*Caring for creation: Environmental advocacy by mainline Protestant organizations.*" The quiet hand of God: Faith-based activism and the public role of Mainline Protestantism (2002). 237

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heaven and earth".[15] However, it is critical to notice that the remarks of White Jr. on the ecological apathy of Christianity are generalizations as they fail to consider Christian history and its associated institutions. Christianity cannot be solely limited within the vacuum of American Pentecostalism; to do so is to disregard Christian voices (as those expressed in the spirituality of the Franciscans and Benedictines) and alternative positions (as evident in the progressive theology of mainline Protestantism) which put into coexistence, the domains of faith and nature[16]

However, it is critical to notice that the remarks of White Jr. on the ecological apathy of Christianity are generalizations as they fail to consider Christian history and its associated institutions. Christianity cannot be solely limited within the vacuum of American Pentecostalism; to do so is to disregard Christian voices (as those expressed in the spirituality of the Franciscans and Benedictines) and alternative positions (as evident in the progressive theology of mainline Protestantism) which put into coexistence, the domains of faith and nature.[17] Conradie suggests that Christian communities interpret scripture by relating biblical narratives and stories to pressing ecological concerns of scarcity, landlessness, and environmental plunder.[18] A Christian feminist approach for ecological reformation, on the other hand, would place into necessity the need to challenge structures--- gender, race, class--- which persist to subjugate nature. Using the imagery of a mother's womb nurturing life within--- Christian feminism uphold an "integrity of creation" viewpoint--- just as Christ was delivered in the womb of a Nazarite peasant, so is Christ continually incarnated in the struggles of creation. Under this arrangement, the Holy Spirit is given feminine characteristics--- such as "*the Comforter*" and "*Breathe of Life*". [19]

Within the context of the United States of America, the following are considered as Mainline Protestant churches--- the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, the Disciples of Christ, the United Church of Christ, the Episcopal Church, and the Northern Baptist Convention.[20] The Mainline Protestant tradition has been a test-tube for the discourse of ecological reformation. In contrast to their Evangelical Protestant cousins which have been rigid in the

[15] Moody, *Caring for creation*, 241.

[16]Ernst M. Conradie "*Christianity: An ecological critique of Christianity and a Christian critique of ecological destruction.*" In *Routledge handbook of religion and ecology*, Routledge, 2016. 70

[17] Conradie, *Christianity: An ecological critique*, 71.

[18] Conradie, *Christianity: An ecological critique*, 73.

[19] Conradie, *Christianity: An ecological critique*, 75.

[20] Paul Lichterman and Rhys H. Williams. "*Cultural challenges for mainline protestant political progressives.*" Religion and progressive activism: New stories about faith and politics (2017),119

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preservation of historic Christian creeds and values, Mainline Protestantism has been flexible in terms of doctrine and has been flagged as a bastion of progressive and liberal theology.[21] Deriving from the "social gospel" approach of Baptist minister Walter Rauschenbusch, Mainline Protestantism seeks to respond on the excesses of industrial and urban societies--- including the widening gap between the rich and the poor, dire labor conditions, and poor settlements.[22] Similarly, the rhetoric for an "ecological gospel" was sourced on the understanding of Northern Baptists to "God's creation" as an affirmed covenant between the Divine and humanity for stewardship; such tone would later be adapted by the Methodists in the 1930s which has been critical on nuclear energy initiatives.[23] The Mainline Protestant approach on the ecological gospel seeks to link gender, race, and economics to pressing environmental problems. For instance, the Northern Baptists emphasized that ecological justice cannot be divorced with social justice in their ministry works; such holistic approach would be seen expressed by Reformed Mainline Protestant denominations such as the United Church of Christ and the Presbyterian Church. For the United Church of Christ (a union of Evangelical, Reformed, and Congregational churches (mostly of German and Scandinavian descent), the goal of having an "ecological gospel" is to widen the justice camp, seeing issues on hunger, poverty, and racism as associated with ecological arrangements; for the Presbyterian Church, the inter-weaving of the "social" and "ecological" led to the view of seeing nature as a co-victim with the marginalized---"*The vulnerability of the earth is the vulnerability of the oppressed*".[24]

American political scientist Robert Dahl construes power as feedback between a person's view and decisions pursued---- the greater is the response between the two variables, the wider is the scope of the person's influence.[25] In terms of power and scope of impact in social-ecological campaign efforts, Mainline Protestants perceive the efficacy of their institutions through the legitimacy of their voice. Michael Moody considers the following as sources on which Mainline Protestant derive their legitimacy: (i) "*the prophetic and moral authority of religious message*" and (ii) "*power to mobilize*".[26] For the Mainline Protestant environmental advocate and social activist, there is an inherent desire to frame the discourse of the ecological crisis in terms of

[21] Christopher R. Seitz, "*Nicene Christianity: the future for a new ecumenism*". Baker Books, 2002.
[22] Cameron, Richard Morgan. "*Methodism and society in historical perspective.*" Methodism and Society. Abingdon Press (1961). 285
[23] Moody, *Caring for creation*, 239.
[24] Moody, *Caring for creation*, 239.
[25] Rod Hague, Martin Harrop, and John McCormick. "*Comparative government and politics: An Introduction*". Red Global Press. 2019. 8
[26] Moody, *Caring for creation*, 253.

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prophetic witness---the church is called to proclaim salvation not only for the soul but for the ruined earth.[27]

The Methodist Social Creed and Hymnody

The Methodist Church in its early beginnings is to be understood not as a separate denomination but as a response to the excesses, corruption, and wealth of the Anglican church during the Hanoverian monarchs.[28] To account, the Hanoverian monarchy witnessed Whig dominance in Parliament, leading to patronage networks, bribery, and corruption as defining features of governance.[29] Relative to Max Weber's Protestant ethic, the Hanoverian monarchy (as imports from German Lutherans to succeed the Stuarts) focused more on trade, commerce, and the market--- as avenues for state-building. Such an approach has shifted the religious-centric regimes of the Tudors and Stuarts, which were characterized by wars and religious turmoil between Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Catholics, towards a more market-based economy. Under such an arrangement, it does not matter what your religious background is--- through the coin as a unit of exchange, all are welcome to participate in the market.[30] The Anglican church, as a state institution (the established Protestant church in England through the Tudor settlements) garnered similar tones relative to that of Whig dominance and commercial ventures of the Hanoverian monarchy. Sermons of clergy were flagged as dull and apathetic to 18th century social conditions---- the rampant vagrancy in urban areas, child labor in unsafe working conditions, and famines in the countryside. Rather than on charity and sanctuaries of relief, 18th-century Anglican clergy are to focused on the vices of "*fox-hunting, port-drinking, and securing their land-holdings*".[31]

The Methodist movement started from the work of Anglican pastors John Wesley and Charles Wesley whose ministry focused on the urban poor, the abolition of slavery, laborers in the coal mines, and peasants in the countryside. It is no wonder that British historian, Sir John Plumb flags Methodism not as a "*religion of the poor*" but a "*religion for the poor*". The same tone is also evident in the historiography of Robert Wearmouth, where Methodism (through its ministries) seeks to empower the labor class and

[27] Moody, *Caring for creation*, 259.

[28] Ted A. Campbell. "*The Origins and Early Growth of Methodism, 1730–91.*" In *The Ashgate research companion to world Methodism.* Routledge, 2016. 14

[29] Heng-Fu Zou." *Whig Oligarchy, Corruption, Growth, and Challenges to New Institutional Economics.*" No. 718. China Economics and Management Academy, Central University of Finance and Economics, 2025. 2.

[30] Tim Blanning. "*The Hanoverian Monarchy and the Culture of Representation.*" In The Hanoverian Succession, pp. 129-146. Routledge, 2016.

[31] Campbell, *The Origins and Early Growth of Methodism, 1730–91.*", 13.

marginalized sectors of British society.[32] John Wesley has been critical to the excesses of capitalism during the Hanoverian monarchy. Wesley, throughout his sermons, admonishes on the dangers of gaining surplus wealth and the prevalence of scarcity in provisioning services of the Hanoverian establishment despite being considered an age of elite decadence.[33] The rigidity of the Anglican establishment for reform led to the eventual separation of the Methodists in the latter part of the 18th century.[34] During the mass migration movements of European settlers to the American colonies, the demographic profiles of colonial Methodists were immigrants from Northern Ireland, of low income, and were often small tradesmen.[35] Emulating the ministry of their Wesleyan predecessors, American Methodist pioneers such as of Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury were vocal on the issue of slavery--- flagging it as an abomination in the sight of God. To account, both Methodist ministers sought a petition to the General Assembly of Virginia for the emancipation of Negro slaves in 1785.[36] During the American settlement, Methodist ministries geared toward education, placing it within the burden of the "Methodist institution" to expand the intellectual horizons of young minds.[37]

Relative to its hymnody, Methodist hymns depart from the Anglican and Presbyterian practice of utilizing the metrical version of the Psalms in worship, which was often sung monotonous and have impersonal rhetoric. The nature of early Methodist music is characterized by substance, lustful singing, and personal experience in the congregation.[38] Methodist hymns were considered as a reinforcer of Methodist belief and doctrine through the use of text and music. It has the intent to transmit Methodist ideology and unify worship participants.[39] The Methodist hymn, as a part of liturgy, seeks to "alarm on carelessness" and provide consolation amid pain and affliction.[40] It is crucial to consider how Methodist hymnody carries an approach to ecumenicity—John Wesley translated German Lutheran and Moravian Brethren hymns into the English language and incorporated them within early Methodist band gatherings. For instance, a document analysis of the current United Methodist Hymnal (1989) would reveal German-and-Moravian hymns integrated such as: "*A Mighty Fortress is Our God*" (Hymn

[32] Campbell, *The Origins and Early Growth of Methodism, 1730–91.*", 27.
[33] Campbell, *The Origins and Early Growth of Methodism, 1730–91.*", 28.
[34] Martin Wellings. "*The Long View of Anglican–Methodist Unity.*" In Anglican-Methodist Ecumenism. Routledge, 2021. 12 - 13
[35] Cameron, *Methodism and society in historical perspective*, 85.
[36] Cameron, *Methodism and society in historical perspective*, 96 – 99.
[37] Cameron, *Methodism and society in historical perspective*, 193.
[38] Scott Shaw. "*Music of the early Methodist Church.*" Reihai to Ongaku Autumn (2004).
[39] Michael J. Luzinski. "*Hymnody: A Critical but often overlooked aspect of Methodist Revivalistic Expansion.*" Emory University (2012).
[40]David Creamer. "*Methodist Hymnology: Comprehending notices of the Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*". Longking Printer. (1848)

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No. #110), "*Now Thank We All Our God*" (Hymn No. 102), "O Sacred Head, wounded" (Hymn No. 286), and "*Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying*" (Hymn No. 720). [41] In the context of the Philippine United Methodist Church, the hymnic spectrum has been expressed from solemn liturgical tones, and indigenous context to the charisma of Pentecostalism.[42]

The social gospel movement of Baptist minister Walter Rauschenbusch during the late 19th century has been critical in cementing the Methodist social creed. Relative to rapid trends in modernity and industrialization, institutions of the Methodist church have been framed to address pressing social ills; for instance, Methodist hospitals and educational centers in urban areas are advised to target "*all classes*" and provide support for immigrants---"*to shelter the stranger*". Under such arrangements, Methodist institutions are called to be "*closer to pressing problems and realities*".[43] The cramped spaces and dense population in downtown areas compelled the establishment of Methodist churches (and associated church institutions) to cater to the demands of social service on a rising urban population.[44] Under the influence of Rauschenbusch, Methodist minister Stitt Wilson called for a socialized church—a church that is integrated in every aspect of human dimension--- a church geared for the development of man, giving him the capacity to reach his full potential. As such, the Methodist church within this period of rapid change has been flagged as the religion of laborers, immigrants, and common men.[45]

As testament to Rauschenbusch and Wilson, Methodist institutions in urban areas such as the 122-year-old Tindley Temple United Methodist Church continues to this day in offering hospital-care and public health services for Philadelphian urbanites.[46] Established during the United States influx in the 1930s, Glide Memorial United Methodist Church focused its ministry to immigrants, the urban poor, and members of the LGBTQ+ community; Glide Memorial Methodists have been vocal on the issues of gentrification, the red-lining of Asian immigrants in environmentally hazardous areas of San Francisco, and homophobia; to this day, the Memorial Urban Center has addressed socio-economic challenges affecting urban

[41] The United Methodist Hymnal 1989, Hymns No. 110, 102, 286, 720.
[42] Oconer & Asedillo, *The United Methodist Church in the Philippines*, 14-15.
[43] Cameron, *Methodism and society in historical perspective*, 317.
[44] Cameron, *Methodism and society in historical perspective*, 315.
[45] Cameron, *Methodism and society in historical perspective*, 327.
[46] Kristin E. Holmes. "*Religious agency in the dynamics of gentrification: Moving in, moving out, and staying put in Philadelphia.*" In The Routledge handbook of religion and cities. Routledge, 2020. 259

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communities in San Francisco.[47] In the context of the Philippines, churches in urban areas such as Central United Methodist Church in Kalaw-Ermita, Manila has been setting up food pantries as a ministry during the COVID-19 pandemic to "*attend on people's needs.*[48]

In terms of the ecological gospel, Mainline Protestantism during the mid-1980s has framed the discourse on how toxic wastes are being dumped on areas whose demographic profile is predominantly poor and belonging to minority groups (Asian, Latino, Native American, and African-American).[49] Relative to the Brundtland Commission, the World Council of Churches (of which the United Methodist Church is a member denomination) pioneered its policy program, *"Just, Participatory, and Sustainable Society"*, as means to mainstream environmental concerns and address issues on the lens of the *"oikos"* (Greek word for household); as such, the World Council of Churches as a broad fellowship of Protestant and Orthodox churches, the following pillars of the *oikos* were considered: (i) ecology (the logic of the household), (ii) economy (management of the household), and (iii) ecumenical fellowship (co-existence in the household).[50]

It is within these settings that the spirituality of Methodism concerning the environment is to be understood--- it did not occur in a single vacuum but in a continuous exchange between churches and response to pressing ills. For instance, in 1995, United Methodists have been critical in the Republican move to revise the Endangered Special Act; utilizing the biblical imagery of Noah's ark, the United Methodist Church emphasized that the Endangered Species Act is a "*refuge for the conservation of endangered species*"; revisions for hunting and gaming will only place death sentence.[51] The ecological gospel within the Philippine United Methodist Church has focused on environmental stewardship and sustainable agriculture as expressed in the Christian ministerial programs of the Filipino Methodist-and United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) theological institution, the Union Theological Seminary.[52] Moreso, the Philippine United Methodist Church in the banner of ecological justice has been critical to coastal reclamation projects and its detrimental consequences to the environment as evident in Negros Occidental.[53]

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[47] Heather R. White *"Protestant urban ministry and the "homosexual ghetto" in the 1960s.*" In *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Cities*, pp. 346-357. Routledge, 2020.

[48] Gladys P. Mangiduyos. Filipinos Join Massive Pantry Movement. United Methodist News

[49] Moody, *Caring for creation*, 242.

[50] Conradie, *Christianity: An ecological critique*, 74.

[51] Moody, *Caring for creation*, 249.

[52] Jericho Trio. "*Predicting Anti-Coastal Reclamation Engagement: A Logistic Regression Analysis of Philippine Mainline Protestant Church-Members in Bacolod City.*" Social Science Lens: A World Journal of Human Dynamics and Social Relations 4, no. 1 (January 20, 2025): 1–15. https://doi.org/10.62718/vmca.ssl-wjhdsr.4.1.sc-1224-040.

[53] Oconer & Asedillo, *The United Methodist Church in the Philippines*, 16.

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During the Kyoto Protocol, the United Methodist presence has been critical for holding to account coal-producing areas and greenhouse gas emissions in industrialized nations.[54] As observed by Michael Moody in the United Methodist newsletter, *"Environmental Justice"*, the following article themes are present namely--- virgin forests, safe standards for air and water quality, conservation of endangered species, reform in the use of electricity, environmental health of the youth, urban settlements, and consumption lifestyles.[55] Considering how education has been the primary institution of the Methodists since its inception, the Office of Environmental Justice was eventually established in 1995 as a policy instrumental to foster awareness and education for an environmentally responsible Methodist institution.[56] During the 2024 United Methodist General Conference, the United Methodist Social Principles were expanded as policy to further include pressing issues in ecological arrangements recognizing: (i) creation in peril, (ii) destruction of ecosystems, (iii) global warming and climate change, (iv) dependence on fossil fuels, (v) stewardship of creation, (vi) environmental racism, (vii) sustainable policies and practices, (viii) food justice, (ix) caring for all creatures, (x) protecting space, and (xi) affirming science and indigenous wisdom.[57]

The preface of United Methodist ecological principles begins with a quotation from its movement pioneer--- John Wesley, which alludes to the Divine as present within every frame and visage of creation. Similar to the tone of the Nicene Creed, *"I believe in,"*, the United Methodist charter for ecological principles entitled "*Community of all creation*", utilized the phrase "*We affirm,*"; the title of the ecological principle has similitude to the *"oikos"* language of the World Council of Churches policy on mainstreaming environmental justice--- *"Just, Participatory, and Sustainable Society"*; the use of "of all creation" as a phrase can be construed that the Earth as a domain of existence is not to be constrained for humanity's exploitation but considers the inherent right of other organisms to live, breathe, and flourish. In the rhetoric of 1 Chronicles 29:15, *"For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding*", humanity's existence is but a sojourn when compared to Earth's 4.5 billion geologic history. It is interesting how the preface departs from the "dominion" perspective that man has the authority to govern over nature; based on the rhetoric of the preface, the niche of humanity in Earth's complex

[54] Moody, *Caring for creation*, 250.
[55] Moody, *Caring for creation*, 252.
[56] Moody, *Caring for creation*, 246
[57] The United Methodist Publishing House. United Methodist Social Principles. 2024.

and interconnected systems is stewards--- *"to lovingly tend that which God has wrought"*.

Scope and Limitation

The following study is limited only in the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal. The scope is on the "Social Action" category of the said colloquium. In terms of the inclusion and exclusion criterion, the following commentary focuses only on hymns authored within the Methodist tradition; hymn texts authored by other Protestant denominations that are found in the social action category shall be excluded from the analysis. Liturgical responses and spirituals in the "Social Action" category of the United Methodist Hymnal shall also be excluded.

Methodology

The study utilizes a qualitative research design as it seeks to understand and analyze the discourse of the selected hymn texts. In pursuing analysis of documents, the selected Methodist hymns shall be analyzed in terms of their historical context, use of rhetoric and syntax, as well as development of the theme.

Results

Referencing to the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal as the primary document source of analysis in this commentary, it can be observed that variation exists in terms of the denominational background of social action hymns in the 1989 Hymnal--- out of the 23 social action hymns, five are only written by Methodists. Such a diverse arrangement of Presbyterian, Anglican, Unitarian, Roman Catholic, Congregational, and Lutheran authors mirrors the ecumenical nature of Methodist hymnody as explained by Creamer (1848) and the 1989 Methodist Hymnal preface in the introductory sections of this commentary.

Table 1. Hymns under the social action category of the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal

Hymn Title	Hymn Number	Author	Author's denomination/ affiliation
O Crucified Redeemer	Hymn No. 425	Timothy Rees	Anglican
Behold a Broken World	Hymn No. 426	Timothy-Dudley Smith	Anglican
Where Cross the Crowded Ways	Hymn No. 427	Frank Mason North	Methodist

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Hymn Title	Hymn Number	Author	Author's denomination/ affiliation
of Life			
For the Healing of the Nations	Hymn No. 428	Fred Kaan	Reformed
O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee	Hymn No. 430	Washington Gladden	Congregational
Let there be peace on Earth	Hymn No. 431	Sy Miller and Jill Jackson	N.A.
Jesu, Jesu	Hymn No. 432	Tom Colvin	Presbyterian
All who love and serve your city	Hymn No. 433	Erik Routley	Reformed
When the Poor Ones	Hymn No. 434	J.A. Olivar and Miguel Manzano	Roman Catholic
O God of Every Nation	Hymn No. 435	William W. Reid	Presbyterian
The Voice of God is Calling	Hymn No. 436	John Haynes Holmes	Unitarian
This is my Song	Hymn No. 437	Lloyd Stone and Georgia Harkness	Methodist
Forth in Thy Name O Lord	Hymn No. 438	Charles Wesley	Methodist
We Utter our Cry	Hymn No. 439	Fred Kaan	Reformed
Let there be light	Hymn No. 440	Frances W. Davis	Anglican
What does the Lord Require	Hymn No. 441	Albert F. Bayley	Reformed
Weary of All Trumpeting	Hymn No. 442	Martin Franzmaan	Lutheran
O God who shaped creation	Hymn No. 443	William W. Reid	Presbyterian
O Young and Fearless Prophet	Hymn No. 444	Samuel Ralph Harlow	Congregational
Happy the Home when God is there	Hymn No. 445	Henry Ware Jr.	Unitarian
Our Parent by Whose Name	Hymn No. 447	Francis Bland Tucker	Episcopalian

Hymn Title	Hymn Number	Author	Author's denomination/ affiliation
Our Earth We Now Lament to See	Hymn No. 449	Charles Wesley	Methodist
Creator of the Earth and Skies	Hymn No. 450	Donald Hughes	Methodist

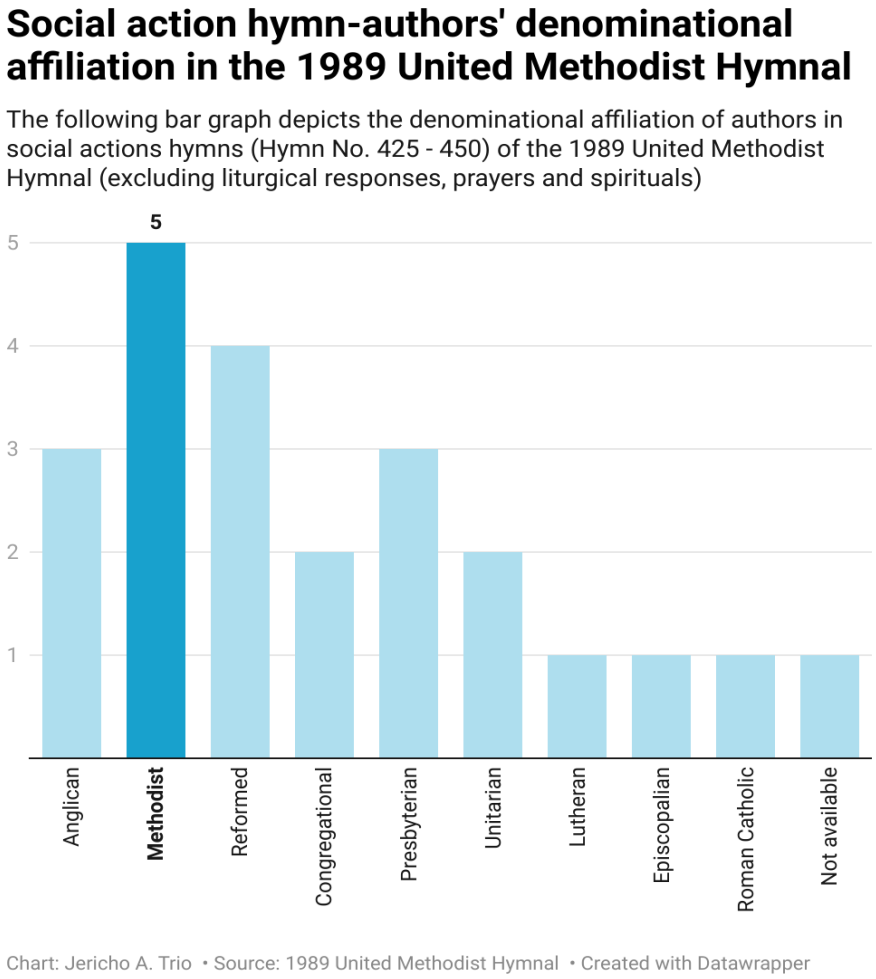

Figure 1. Denomination background of authors in Methodist social action hymns

Where cross the crowded ways of life

In terms of literary discourse, the first stanza of Frank North's hymn mirrors the imagery of Genesis; the first chapter of Genesis begins with chaos of waves and matter churned by the voice of the Divine--- similarly, North's hymn implies that the voice of the peasant Nazarite is heard within discord and "the crowded ways of life". The rhetoric of the first stanza carries

a similarity to the language in Matthew 9:36 ("But when he saw the crowd, he was moved with compassion on them"). Interestingly, the line used the word "crowd"---- a crowd is not an orderly arrangement, it is characterized so often by random arrangements of whom have conglomerated; such feature of "crowds" is evident in ecology---- as forests which are in equilibrium may experience the shock of disturbance, a river on which a community is dependent for a water source may run dry on the succeeding seasons, or a sea cave which a population of mussels would consider as home may be submerged with increasing water levels. The language of "Crowd" affirms that the domain of nature is both uncertain and unpredictable.

The second stanza of North's hymn, carries with it a grim tone as it construes the tears of Christ as an aftermath of fear, greed, and apathy to human need; vivid images in the third stanza were utilized by North to capture such grim state---- "a child's helplessness", "human grief", and "being famished"; the rhetoric of both second and third stanzas carries the message of John 11:35--- "Jesus wept. The discourse of the second stanza may imply that the weeping of the peasant Nazarite continues through the prevalence of systems and structures that continue to permeate abuse and exploitation. For instance, an eco-Marxist criticism of land under capitalist arrangements would contend that profit and yield are emphasized rather than ecological health. This is evident on the use of extensive fertilizer, the displacement of indigenous communities, and the conversion of forest areas for farm-based utility. Clearly, under such profit-oriented arrangements, both the intrinsic worth of the land to exist and its metabolism to replenish are utterly jeopardized.

The fourth stanza of the hymn directs the discourse on "water" where it is described as the "freshness of Christ's grace". The United Methodist Book of Worship (1992), uses water as a simile of Christ's sacrifice, which renews both the individual and society. This is evident in the Exodus narrative, particularly how the rhetoric of "water" was framed on the Hebrew slaves entering the waters of the Red Sea, traversing the desert wilderness both as free individuals and a community unshackled from the chains of their Egyptian masters.[58]

Observed in the fifth stanza are two environments --- the mountainside and the city street. In Methodist liturgy, the mountainside is alluded to a comfort zone and a place of refuge. Its imagery in the biblical lexicon is visioned as a site where the Divine and humanity commune--- in the Exodus narrative, it is where God stretched out visions of an "ordered society" through the

[58] The United Methodist Publishing House. Book of Worship. 1992

Commandments to Moses; throughout the book of Psalms, there is a longing for the Hebrews to dwell on "Mount Zion" to escape the turmoil of their earthy realm; and in the New Testament, it is within the mountainsides of Mount Olive where Jesus discovered retreat and solitude. On the other hand, the environment of the city street provides a stark contrast to the comforts of the mountainside--- the city street is a chaotic domain—where people from all walks of life randomly cross by--- a market vendor selling his goods, a student rushing to her class, a vagrant begging in the street corners. The fifth stanza anchors on the Methodist mantra of "s*eeing the world as parish"*. It challenges the Methodist Christian to not be solely constrained on the mountainside of church pews but to immerse themselves in the city streets of pain, struggle, and woe. Just as Christ walked in the "city streets" of Jerusalem to feed the hungry, heal the sick, and bear the burden of cross for his crucifixion---Frank North challenges Methodist Christians to do ministerial work that aids in pressing struggles and conditions.

The discourse on the final stanza of Frank North's hymn also provides two environments-

-- Earth and Heaven. Such rhetoric is anchored on The Lord's Prayer, "in earth at is it in heaven". The Methodist view on heaven is not constrained to an after-death experience or a future expectation to escape dire realities--- heaven is a mission field to be realized in the present reality of hellish systems of greed and corruption. This departs from the binary traditional Evangelical Protestant view where the "expectant" faithful Christian is welcomed with angelic choirs to the doors of heaven and the unrepentant sinner to the brimstone fires of hell. (Balmer, 2014). Clearly, the Methodist mission is on providing Elysium fields where hellish values of hatred, discrimination, and prejudice continue to permeate.

For historical context, "Where the cross the crowded ways of life" was written in an era of amplified class violence, the influx of Asian immigration to the United States, and the exclusion of civil rights to Negroes. Throughout the theology of Frank North is an attempt to link socialism and Christianity. In his articles in the "Zion's Herald", North emphasized that the core intent of socialism is akin to the Christian message of kinship and solidarity. Such an axiom of kinship has been reflected in North's dismay at racial antagonism, which continues to plague the church communities. The church, to realize its ecumenical witness, must break down attitudes of prejudice toward those being flagged as strangers.[59]

[59] Frank Mason North. "*There is No Substitute for the Missionary Passion: A Study of the Present Situation in the United States.*" *International Review of Mission* 15, no. 1 (1926): 93-105.

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This is my song

The hymn of Lloyd Stone and Georgia Harkness begins with a prayer of peace to the "God of the nations". Stone, as the author of stanzas one and two of the said hymn, declares that his prayer of peace is not constrained to his own soul but a shared plea of humanity throughout Earth's landscape ravaged by war and conflict. In the second stanza of the hymn, Stone mentions the following resources: the pine, the clover, and sunlight; using repetition, Stone reiterates how these resources must be shared for mutual benefit rather than be constrained as origins of resource-based conflicts.

A political ecology approach to war recognizes the linkages between power, geography, and economy. Resources are construed as drivers of conflict, may it be in a territorial claim, their level of abundance and scarcity, as well as opportunities that they can provide.[60] There are two perspectives offered in understanding the political ecology of war: (i) the scarce resource war hypothesis and (ii) the abundant wars argument. Under the first proposition, war is understood as an aftermath for a struggle over scarce resources. It is the necessity for survival that drives episodes of conflict and violence. On the other hand, the abundant wars argument posits that plentiful resources would result in elite factions targeting such resource pools. This provides an incentive for the state to assert territorial control over areas rich in natural resources, as a means of preventing elite competition.[61] In a Panglossian rhetoric, it can be said that Stone's first two stanzas' drifts away from Le Billon's political ecology of war; Stone is optimistic on that day in Isaiah 2:4, when swords will be traded for plowshares, where the lion shall sleep with the lamb, and nation shall neither rise against nation.

The third stanza of the hymn was written by Methodist theologian and pacifist, Georgia Harkness. Hailed as the first woman ordained in the Methodist Episcopal Church, Harkness geared her theology as an act to address the turmoil and conflict of the 1930s (Miles, 2010). In terms of her advocacy, Harkness has been an advocate for racial equality both within the Methodist church and the realm of society; Harkness has also been steadfast in her efforts on vehemently opposing World War II.[62] Reflective of these campaigns is Harkness's contribution to Hymn 437 of the United Methodist Hymnal, "This is my song". With a pragmatic tone to conclude Hymn 437, Harkness utilized the auxiliary verb "may" for episodes of peace and freedom

[60] Phillippe Le Billon. "*The political ecology of war: natural resources and armed conflicts.*" *Political geography* 20, no. 5 (2001): 561

[61] Le Billon, *Political ecology of war*, 546.

[62] David Donald Bjorlin. *"" Hope of the World": the liturgical work and witness of Georgia Harkness."* PhD diss., Boston University, 2018.

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to realize in nations ridden by strife and conflict. The last stanza makes no mention of Divine but carries the uncertainty of the truth in conflict resolution, which Harkness has realized throughout her campaigns--- the odds of peace versus the escalation of war.

Although not included in the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal, Harkness has written other hymns concerning the environment, such as *"God of the Fertile Fields,"* which emphasizes Christian stewardship of the earth's resources.[63] (Bjorlin, 2018, p. 167). In *"God of the Fertile Fields"*, the Divine is considered as the source of fertility within the soil together with its yield--- from the wheat's grain to the tree bearing its fruit. Throughout the hymn, the text is a salient tone of God belonging to the countryside, a God of the peasantry not divorced from their struggles of landlessness and rural poverty. To account, *"God of the Fertile Fields"*, appears as Hymn No. 714 in the (2013) Presbyterian Glory to God Hymnal. [64]

Forth in Thy name, O Lord

A Methodist hymn framed by its hymnic pioneer, Charles Wesley, *"Forth in Thy name, O Lord,"* begins as an affirmation rather than as a prayer. It is structured as a response of the Methodist Christian whose labor and acts are an expression of the Divine. Within Methodism, there is an understanding to see God's name throughout all aspects of life. Repetition of an affirmation for God's guidance in Christian labor is repeated in the first phrases of the succeeding stanzas, "the task Thy wisdom hath assigned", "Thee, may I set at my right hand", and "For Thee delightfully employ". Editor of the United Methodist Hymnal, Rev. Carlton Young alludes to the Wesleyan hymn as a reflection of Max Weber's Protestant work ethic.[65] To account, the Protestant work ethic has a tendency to construe labor as a *"Divine calling"* rather than as a means for survival; in terms of values, diligence and productivity are celebrated while laziness is deemed as sin.[66]

It is critical to notice that the following adverbs are used by Charles Wesley to portray the Protestant attitude to labor, *"cheerfully"* for the verb *"fulfill"*, *"delightfully"* for *"employ"*, and *"closely"* for walk. The utility of these optimistic adverbs mirrors the Methodist approach to Christian service. Referencing in Micah 6:8, Methodist service and stewardship can be construed on the following acts--- *"to do justice"*, *"to love mercy"*, and *"to walk humbly with Thy*

[63] Bjorlin, *Hope of the World*, 167.
[64] . Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal. 2013.
[65] Ting-Ting Lai. History of Hymns: "*Forth in Thy Name, O Lord*". Discipleship Ministries. The United Methodist Church. (2013).
[66] Adrian Furnham. "*The Protestant work ethic: A review of the psychological literature.*" European Journal of Social Psychology 14, no. 1 (1984): 87-104.

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God". In the performance of these acts, the Methodist Christian is instructed to perform these duties with due diligence and with a cheerful spirit.

Our earth we now lament to see

"Our Earth we now lament to see" is one of the two Wesleyan hymns in the Social Action category of the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal together with *"Forth in Thy Name, O Lord";* the rhetoric of the 1758 Methodist hymn carries a grim tone as it uses the verbs *"lament"*, *"mangle"*, *"sink"*, *"plunge"*, and *"constrain"*. The following nouns were utilized to depict the lamenting tone--- *"fields of blood"*, *"violence"*, *"war"*, *"murderer"*, *"prey"*, and *"grave"*. In terms of allusion as a figure of speech, these phrases were brought into utility by Charles Wesley, *"Abaddon's side"* and *"Tophet is moved";* referencing in Revelation 9:11, Abaddon is the name of the angel who delivers torment and locusts to humanity; there is an association for Abaddon as a harbinger of war and destruction. For the line, *"Tophet is moved and opened wide"*, is referenced in Jeremiah 7:31 -32 as a place of child sacrifice in open fire.

The first stanza recognizes the earth and its landscape as the setting of the hymn. Wesley uses cognitive acknowledgement to declare, "Our Earth we now lament to see" through geographies ridden by "floods of wickedness" and "fields of blood". For historical context, Europe during the 1750s experienced successive episodes of war and bloodshed, particularly in the Austrian War of Succession (between Austria, Prussia, France, Spain, and Bavaria), and the Seven Years War (between the Prussian-British alliance versus the Anti-Prussian coalition).[67] In the second stanza, through the allusions of Abaddon and Tophet, it can be inferred that during the 18th century, there was a prevalence of episodes of famine and dearth, as evident in the Great Frost of the 1740s in Ireland, which decimated crops and human settlements.[68] (Engler et al., 2013). It is within these settings that Wesley constructs the first and second stanzas of his hymn--- a war-scorched earth and children left sacrificed as families fend themselves for survival in episodes of famines.

The third stanza of the Wesleyan text can be interpreted as a plea for Divine intervention amid all the strife and woe that the author laments about. Wesley flags the Divine as a "universal Friend", whom he recognizes as having the power to bid all conflicts cease. Such Millian altruistic view of the

[67] John Merriman. *A history of modern Europe: from the Renaissance to the present.* Vol. 1. WW Norton & Company, 2010.

[68] Steven Engler, Franz Mauelshagen, Jürg Werner, and Johannes Luterbacher. "*The Irish famine of 1740–1741: famine vulnerability and" climate migration*"." Climate of the Past 9, no. 3 (2013): 1161-1179.

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Divine, concerned with the welfare of humanity, departs from the "sinners in the hands of an angry God" understanding around Reformed circles. Wesley comprehends God as a "universal Friend" who heralds peace and reconciliation across humanity. This theme is expressed in other Wesleyan hymns such as "*Hark the Herald Angels Sing*" (Hymn #240 in the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal)[69] and "*Light of those whose dreary dwelling*" (Hymn #567 in the 2012 Baptist Hymnal)[70] --- both hymns use the phrase "*Prince of Peace*" as a form of reverence:

Hark the Herald Angels Sing	**Light of those whose dreary dwelling**
Hail the heaven-born **Prince of Peace**! Hail the Sun of Righteousness! Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.	Show Thy power in every nation, O Thou **Prince of Peace** and Love! Give the knowledge of salvation, Fix our hearts on things above.

Similarly, on "Where cross the crowded ways of life" concludes the Wesleyan hymn. "Our Earth we now lament to see", recognizes "the paradise of perfect love" not as a future expectation in the afterlife, but that which is to be pursued by nations by "follow after peace". Referencing in Isaiah 52:7, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who proclaim peace". Wesley affirms the niche of the Methodist church to act as peace-makers amid the political ecology of war.

Creator of the Earth and Skies

The discourse in the British Methodist hymn, "Creator of the Earth and Skies", invites the Methodist Christian to immerse themselves within the episodes of environmental uncertainty and political turmoil during the 1960s. While the first stanza of Donald Hughes's text recognizes the Divine as the source of truth and wisdom, there is a tone of alienation experienced by Hughes to such Divine being. This is expressed in each of the first phrases of stanzas two to four---- "We have not known you", "We have not loved you", and "We long to end this worldwide strife". Such alienation from the Creator of the earth and the sky is evident in environmental disasters which plagued Britain during the 1950s - 1960s. For instance, in 1952, London experienced the Smog of 1952, killing an estimated 12,000 people for five days; the source of the smog was derived from the intensive burning of sulfur

[69] The United Methodist Publishing Hymnal 1989
[70] American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. The Baptist Hymnal. Judson Press. (2012)

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coal.[71] Moreso, the 1960s experienced a boom on urban jungles leading to pressing concerns on landfill management. The prevalence of a throwaway culture led to the expansion of landfills, compromising public health standards in urban settlements.[72] (Cooper, 2009). In terms of political turmoil during the 1960s, Britain is caught between the polarized arrangements of the Cold War, within the interim of 1964 – 1968, for instance, debates on whether or not Britain should involve itself in the Vietnam War triggered peace demonstrations and anti-war campaigns from the British public.[73]

Such historical contexts are to be considered in Hughes' rhetoric of alienation as expressed in stanzas two to four of the Methodist hymn. The metaphor, "*to the skies Our monuments of folly soar*," could describe the urban jungles that have dominated the British landscape during the 1960s and its associated miseries (such as the Smog of 1952 and the landfill crisis the phrases "*wreckage of our hatred spreads*" and "*long to end this worldwide strife*" may be construed as Hughes' commentary on the political unrest of the Vietnam War. The hymn ends to the similar fashion of the Advent chant "*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*" (Hymn No. 211 in the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal)[74]: "*Dispel the shadows of the night, and turn our darkness into light*"; Hughes in a similar tone uses the words, "*Speak to mankind your words of life, until our darkness turns to day.*" Clearly there is an expectant hope for Hughes on that day when heaven shall be realized in the strife and miseries of earth.

[71] Barbara J. Polivka, "*The great London smog of 1952.*" *AJN The American Journal of Nursing* 118, no. 4 (2018): 57-61.

[72] Timothy Cooper. "*War on waste?: The politics of waste and recycling in post-war Britain, 1950–1975.*" Capitalism Nature Socialism 20, no. 4 (2009): 53-72.

[73] Sylvia Ellis. "*British public opinion and the Vietnam war.*" Journal of Transatlantic Studies 18, no. 3 (2020): 314-332.

[74] The United Methodist Hymnal 1989, Hymn No. 211

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Discussion

The Big Tent approach within United Methodism: On the inclusion of Unitarian social action hymns

It is critical to consider that the 1989 United Methodist hymnal exists not in a vacuum but a broad tent--- a spectrum where the diverse facets of Protestant Christianity are expressed.[75] This is visible on the results (see Figure 1) how the social action hymns of the 1989 hymnal included two church songs authored by Unitarians (a Christian denomination which does not subscribe to the Nicene dogma of the trinity). The hymns are as follows, "*The Voice of God is Calling*" (written by John Haynes Holmes) and "*Happy the Home when God is there*" (written by Henry Ware Jr.). It is vital to recognize how Unitarianism has been flagged as a radical form of Protestant Christianity as it does not require subscription to specific creeds and doctrine; rather the Unitarian Church acknowledges the universality of faith stirring up members of their faith community on finding their own spiritual truths and expression.[76]

Within the context of the United States, the United Methodist heritage is an aftermath of two confluences, namely, the United Brethren (a union denomination of German Evangelical, Reformed and Peace immigrant churches) and the Methodist Church.[77] The 1968 union between both churches wrought into conception the current United Methodist Church recognizing the assimilative capacity of the denomination to express diversity in polarizing issues such as the inclusion of LGBT individuals, ordination of women, and within the milieu of social-and-ecological justice.[78] It can be said that the big tent approach in United Methodism is a compromise pathway which acknowledges that the Divine cannot be caged within a single theological creed as the church itself is a reflection of groups and individuals coming from diverse walks of life shaped by their respective histories and experiences. In respect to Philippine arrangements, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) has been mirroring the big tent approach of United Methodism. UCCP is a union of several Protestant denominations namely of which derive origin in the 20th century American missions of the Presbyterians, the Congregational Church, the United Brethren, and the Disciples of Christ; in terms of its Filipino stream, it

[75] Glen Messer, "*Methodism 'a big tent' from its beginnings*", United Methodist News. (2016)

[76] John A. Buehrens and Forrest Church, A Chosen Faith: An Introduction to Unitarian Universalism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998).

[77] David Oberlin. *Two Separate Unions Formed One United Church.* 1979. Lycoming College Archives. https://umarch.lycoming.edu/chronicles/2004/oberlin.pdf.

[78] Messer, "*Methodism 'a big tent' from its beginnings*",

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includes the indigenous churches of the Philippine Methodist Church and segments of the Evangelical Methodist Church of the Philippine Islands.[79]

The Methodist heritage has not always been tolerable towards other Protestant denominations particularly with the Unitarian Church. For instance, founder of the Methodist movement, John Wesley has flagged the Unitarian Church as a form of heresy due to its rejection on the deity of Jesus Christ. Being critical to Unitarianism, John Wesley has considered Unitarian minister, Joseph Priestley as "*one of the most dangerous enemies of Christianity.*" 18th-century Methodist pioneers such as John Fletcher also voiced out their respective commentaries against Priestley's Unitarianism; instance, in "*A Rational Vindication of the Catholic Faith*", Fletcher reiterated the divine nature of Christ and his eternal Sonship as expressed in the Nicene and Chalcedonian creeds.[80] Under contemporary permutations, conservative evangelicals within the United Methodist Church have been critical to the big tent approach as it carries the odds to jeopardize essential Methodist doctrines leading to loss of theological identity and dilution of normative values expressed in the Methodist Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith relative to the challenge of an ecumenical and inclusive church.[81]

The Philippine General Conference of the United Methodist Church has been utilizing two primary hymnals for its English and Tagalog worship services; for the English worship, the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal is used and for the Tagalog worship, the 1994 "*Mga Awit sa Pagsamba*" (Hymns for Worship). Such has been arrangements has been observed by the author of this paper on three United Methodist Churches (having separate Tagalog and English worship) within Metropolitan Manila, namely, (i) Central United Methodist Church, (ii) Knox Memorial United Methodist Church, and (iii) St. Paul United Methodist Church. It is important to recognize that the 1994 "*Mga Awit sa Pagsamba*" is not a sole effort of the Philippine United Methodist Conference but an initiative of the National Council of Churches of the Philippines (NCCP) to conceptualize a "common hymnal" for Filipino Protestant denominations (as expressed on its preface); this has led for broad collaboration between the Evangelical Methodist Church of the Philippine Islands, the Disciples of Christ, the United Evangelical Church of Christ, and

[79] Valentino T. Sitoy, Jr., Several Springs, One Stream: United Church of Christ in the Philippines, Volume I: Heritage and Origins (1898-1948) (Quezon City: United Church of Christ in the Philippines), 252.

[80] Mark K. Olson, "Early Methodist Christology After the Wesleys," in Methodist Christology: From the Wesleys to the Twenty-First Century, ed. Jason E. Vickers and Jerome Van Kuiken (London: Foundary Books, 2020)

[81] Thomas Lambrecht, "A New Direction for the UMC?," Firebrand Magazine, November 2022.

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the United Church of Christ in the Philippines to collect and prepare the common hymnal.[82]

While the Filipino hymnal does not have a category for environmental social action songs, as a pathway in providing a neutral avenue to assimilate the diverse nature of evangelical Protestantism, it can be observed that two Unitarian hymns are present within the 1994 Tagalog common hymnal, namely, (i) *Ako ay Ilapit* (Hymn No. 119: Nearer My God to Thee) and (ii) *Hating Gabing Maluningning* (Hymn No. 283: It Came Upon a Midnight Clear); both hymns were written by prominent Unitarians such as Sarah F. Adamas (for Hymn No. 119) and Edmund Sears (for Hymn No. 283). The inclusion of such hymns within the Filipino common hymnal is suggestive on the influence of the big-tent approach.

Congruence of Methodist ecological social actions hymns with the Reformed hymnody of Rev. Fred Kaan

Referencing on the results of Table 1, it can be observed that the discourse of Methodist ecological social action hymns on Chrisitan solidarity, prayers of peace, and lamentations on the current political ecology of the Earth carries congruence to the Reformed hymnody of Rev. Fred Kaan. Under the social action hymns of the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal, the following were Rev. Kaan's hymns present within the said collection, namely, (i) *For the Healing of the Nations* (Hymn No. 428) and (ii) *We utter our cry* (Hymn No. 439). To account, Rev. Fred Kaan is a hymn-writer and minister within the United Reformed Church of the United Kingdom.[83] Similar on the big-tent confluences which shaped the United Methodist Church and the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, the United Reformed Church is a union of two Protestant churches in the United Kingdom namely, churches within the Presbyterian (The Presbyterian Church of England and the Reformed Association of Churches of Christ) and Congregational (The Congregational Church in England and Wales and the Congregational Union of Scotland) traditions.[84]

[82] National Council of Churches of the Philippines, Common Hymnal Committee. Mga Awit sa Pagsamba. 1994.

[83] Emily R. Brink, "When in Our Music God Is Glorified: Classic Contemporary Protestant Hymnody," Choral Journal 53, no. 9 (2013): 17.

[84] Alan P. F. Sell, One Ministry, Many Ministries: A Case Study from the Reformed Tradition (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014)

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A responsibility for ecological stewardship is evident on the following stanzas of *For the Healing of the Nations* and *We utter our cry:*

For the healing of the nations (Hymn No. 428)	**We utter our cry (Hymn No. 439)**
For the healing of the nations, Lord, we pray with one accord; for a just and equal sharing of the things that earth affords; To a life of love in action help us rise and pledge our word	We utter our cry that peace may prevail, That earth will survive and faith must not fail. We pray with our hearts for the world in our care, For people whose lives are filled with despair.

It can be observed that the said hymn stanzas of Rev. Kaan were constructed as prayers similar to the discourse in *This is our Song*; a tone of despair for "earth's survival" and "a just and equal sharing of earth's resources" bears similitude to the grim tone of *Our Earth we now lament to see.* The salient themes of Rev. Kaan's hymnody on equal access to the ecological commons serves as a witness on the influence of Christian socialism within Great Britain. Instance, during the peak of the Cold War, the Christian Socialist Movement was wrought into conception among Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian clergy and lay-people; under such movement, theology was framed for redistribution of wealth towards groups and individuals within the margins of society as well as common ownership of productive resources.[85] The Christian Socialist Movement of Great Britain has been critical on the Christian ethics grounded on the exploitative nature of capitalism, it suggests a paradigm shift towards social equality and the universal brotherhood of humanity within the visage of the crucified Christ.[86]

[85] Anthony A. J. Williams, Christian Socialism in Britain: An Introduction (Religious Socialism, 2020).

[86] Anthony A. J. Williams, "Christian Socialism as a Political Ideology" (PhD diss., University of Liverpool, 2016).

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Methodism and Filipino migrant settlements in the United States

The first accounts of Filipino migration in the United States are witnessed during the 1830s upon the arrival of Spanish trading ships in the Louisiana settlement.[87] During the 19th century U.S. colonization of the Philippines, Filipinos were seen as a source of cheap labor for agricultural and industrial jobs; such episodes of migration were concentrated in plantation and industrial centers of 19th century America whose proximity is within Hawaii, California, and Alaska.[88] The settlement of Filipino migrant communities are often prone to red-lining. Red-lining is the practice where people are racially segregated to settlements prone to environmental hazards and economic marginalization. These areas often experience higher pollution burdens, elevated urban heat temperatures, and an increased exposure to flooding.[89] Instance, Filipino settlements in San Diego and Los Angeles were spatially cramped in areas with minimal ventilation to regulate urban heat.[90]

As expressed in the introductory section of this article and the discourse analysis of Frank North's hymn, "*Where cross the crowded ways of life*", the mission of the American Methodist church during the 1930s geared towards providing ministry (including public health, food, and education) in response to Asian migration within urban settlements. In the *Methodist Social Creed and Hymnody* section of this article, it has been explained Methodist churches such as Glide Memorial United Methodist Church in San Francisco, California have been steadfast in picketing and protest activities in response to red-lining measures and episodes of state-sponsored eviction to Filipino migrant settlements.

Conclusion

The United Methodist Hymnal (1989) is a capsule of the stories and experiences of Methodist Christians—social reformers who challenged the apathy of the Anglican establishment, pacifists who deplored war, and environmental activists who struggled for a just and sustainable society. This has been reflective on the 2024 ecological principles of the United Methodist Church and its 1989 social action hymns from Methodist authors.

[87] Carl L. Bankston, "Filipino Americans," in Asian Americans: Contemporary Trends and Issues, 2nd ed., ed. Pyong Gap Min (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2006)

[88] Monica Boyd. "Oriental immigration: The experience of the Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino populations in the United States." International Migration Review 5, no. 1 (1971): 48-61.

[89] Christian O. Estien, C. E. Wilkinson, Rachel Morello-Frosch, and Christopher J. Schell, "Historical Redlining Is Associated with Disparities in Environmental Quality across California," Environmental Science & Technology Letters 11, no. 2 (January 19, 2024): 54–59, https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.estlett.3c00870.

[90] Rudy P. Guevarra Jr., "'Skid Row': Filipinos, Race and the Social Construction of Space in San Diego," The Journal of San Diego History 54, no. 1 (2008): 26–38.

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Throughout the analyzed hymn texts, there is an expectant diligence from Methodist Christians to realize heaven on earth by challenging structures that continue to breed exploitation. Departing from their Evangelical brethren in seeing heaven as an after-death experience, Methodists perceive paradise as there is of coexistence in creation. Moreover, Methodism has contested Lynn White Jr.'s argument of Christian apathy to the ecological crisis through its ecological gospel—a gospel that recognizes a covenant between the Divine and humanity for stewardship rather than dominion. Through the ecological gospel, Methodist ministry has geared its trajectory on linking issues of race, gender, and poverty as not divorced from environmental concerns and problems.

Similar to its early movement, the United Methodist Hymnal (1989) has an ecumenical tone. Just as Wesley translated German Lutheran and Moravian hymns to the English language, incorporating them into 18th-century Methodist worship, so did the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal committee consider diverse Christian perspectives in social action by taking into account hymns within the Lutheran, Presbyterian, Unitarian, and Roman Catholic traditions. Such an approach to hymnody reflects ecumenical fellowship as a core pillar of the ecological gospel in the United Methodist Church social institution. Further studies can be conducted on these social action hymns, particularly on the ecological discourse that they offer. The United Methodist Church, as a union of the United Brethren and the Methodist tradition, offers a big-tent approach to catering diverse expressions of Protestantism; this is indicative of the inclusion of Unitarian hymns in the collection, which may be considered deviant in other traditional Christian circles.

Overall, the ecological discourse in the United Methodist Church, as reflected in its social action hymns, posits an effort to realize the world as a parish. As a Filipino United Methodist minister, when asked about the church's response to environmental problems has emphasized, *"to turn religion into a solitary one is to destroy it"*.[91] For the Methodist Chrisitan, it is an industrious struggle to persevere in turning darkness into day. Results obtained in this study can help both policy-makers and non-government organizations in understanding the spirituality of the United Methodist Church, particularly as partners in campaign measures for environmental justice. ✷

[91] Trio, *Predicting anti-coastal reclamation engagement*, 10.

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