

THEOLOGY INSPIRING DOXOLOGY: The Hymnic Language of Anne Dutton and Anne Steele

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When faithful to Scripture, theology and doxology are noble, faith-filled endeavors offered by believers to the glory of God, in the name of Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Scholars have observed that a close, reciprocal connection exists between theology and doxology: Kevin Vanhoozer affirms that “praising God is a theological activity” while James Torrance states that “true theology is theology that sings.”² In the view of Teresa Berger, the topic warrants additional consideration because few works exist that fully explore the nature of the relationship between theology and doxology—and those that do are usually philosophically abstract and not built upon an examination of actual doxological material (such as hymns). This study will contribute such an analysis, utilizing the hymnody of two British hymn writers of the eighteenth century: Particular Baptists Anne Dutton (1692–1765) and her younger contemporary Anne Steele (1717–1778).³

In this article, I will illustrate that the hymnic language of Anne Dutton is more theological in nature (communicating doctrine) and the language of Anne Steele is more doxological (directly expressing praise).⁴ Neither

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²Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Pictures at a Theological Exhibition: Scenes of the Church’s Worship, Witness, and Wisdom* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 147, and James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community, and the Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 130.

³Anne Dutton’s collection of sixty-one hymns was first published in London as an addition to her large poetic work *A Narration of the Wonders of Grace* (1734). In 1743, Dutton published a treatise entitled *Discourse Concerning the New-Birth* that included her original sixty-one hymns plus three additional ones. Anne Steele’s original collection of 105 hymns appeared in her multi-volume work *Poems on Subjects Chiefly Devotional*, first published in London in 1760 and posthumously in 1780.

⁴For a more detailed discussion of this topic and appendices containing the hymn collections of Dutton and Steele (along with their original Scripture references), see Holly M. Farrow,

hymn writer, however, embraces one to the exclusion of the other, and accordingly, this article will also show the overlap between theology and doxology. For the analysis of Dutton I will utilize the research of S. T. Kimbrough, who identifies four criteria that indicate a hymn's theological nature, strength, and completeness.⁵ In the analysis of Steele, I will incorporate the research of Deborah Ruhl, who explains the dual nature of eighteenth-century hymnody by describing hymns in terms of either their exegetical function or their more experiential nature.⁶ Additionally, I will highlight the poetic devices used by Dutton and Steele to determine their expressive purpose within the differing styles of their hymn writing.

THE LANGUAGE OF THEOLOGY AND DOXOLOGY

As noted previously, Berger's thesis—which states that theological reflection and doxological speech are “closely related” and inseparable—points to the inherently interconnected relationship between theology and doxology. Both are seen as fundamental forms of the Christian response to the revelation of God and his salvific acts in creation, and both are statements of faith.⁷ Even so, notable distinctions exist between the two. Theology, which addresses the church and academy in disciplined, scholarly language, is “argumentative and descriptive” and “strives for coherence and lucidity.” Doxology, most often poetically expressed, is addressed to God and “strives for transparency.”⁸ Theological discourse seeks precision and clarity; doxology seeks the proper praise of God and is “without agenda.” Whereas differing theologies can divide, the doxological speech of praise can unite.⁹ When theology and doxology combine in song, the result can be termed “hymnic theology.”

“Theology Inspires Doxology: The Hymnody of Anne Dutton and Anne Steele” (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023).

⁵S. T. Kimbrough, “Hymns Are Theology,” *Theology Today* 42, no. 1 (April 1985): 59–68.

⁶Deborah Ruhl, “Feeling Religion: High Calvinism, Experimentalism, and Evangelism in William Gadsby's A Selection of Hymns for Public Worship,” *The Hymn* 65, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 14–22. As will be seen, authors Kimbrough and Ruhl provide a useful anchor for this examination of Dutton and Steele; the criteria of Kimbrough illustrate the more theological nature of Dutton's hymns while the criteria of Ruhl highlight the more experiential and directly doxological nature of Steele's hymns.

⁷Berger, *Theology in Hymns*, 171.

⁸Berger, *Theology in Hymns*, 23.

⁹Berger, *Theology in Hymns*, 23. For example, Christians of different denominations might greatly disagree on various theological points, but they would still be able to stand together and sing “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow.”

CHARACTERISTICS OF HYMNIC THEOLOGY

Kimbrough identifies four criteria through which hymns demonstrate theological strength and completeness: First, hymns must be perceived and acknowledged as theology—as biblical reflections on the nature and character of God that become manifest in the life and faith of believers. Whether the text is confident or doubtful, questioning or affirming, expressing suffering or rejoicing, hymns must contain “a word about God.”¹⁰ Kimbrough observes that hymnbooks are the “lyrical, theological textbooks of Christendom” that find their greatest fulfillment of purpose when the hymns inwardly take root and are incorporated into daily devotional life.¹¹

Kimbrough’s theme—that theological knowledge of God leads to faithful enactment of what is sung—expands further in his remaining three points. He observes that hymns should display and express “a sense of the mystery of the incarnation and its effect on human life.”¹² Zeal for the gospel should be paired with wonderstruck recognition of God’s actions in creation and redemption; hymnic language should express an orientation toward the Cross—the “cruciform life.”¹³ Inagrace Dieterich concurs, stating that the infinite mystery of God “can only be known in and through the mystery of salvation.”¹⁴ Next, Kimbrough states that hymns should profess “a theology of newness.” Just as the psalmist admonishes the church to “sing to the Lord a new song” (Ps. 96:1), Kimbrough posits that hymns should communicate a theology of faith-filled “expectancy and anticipation” of new and powerful acts of God.¹⁵ Lastly, hymns should be a “liturgical bridge” moving toward the “enactment of faith.”¹⁶ In short, the song of the church both expresses and transmits the theology of believers so that it may be internalized and implemented, corporately

¹⁰Kimbrough, “Hymns Are Theology,” 60.

¹¹Kimbrough, “Hymns Are Theology,” 59–60.

¹²Kimbrough, “Hymns Are Theology,” 60.

¹³Kimbrough, “Hymns Are Theology,” 60.

¹⁴Inagrace T. Dieterich, “Sing to the Lord a New Song: Theology as Doxology,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 41, no. 1 (February 2014): 27.

¹⁵Kimbrough, “Hymns Are Theology,” 62. Kimbrough cites the example of Charles Wesley as a hymnwriter whose “experience of Christ was open to newness.” Kimbrough states that the rhetorical questions Wesley posed in his hymns (also frequently observed in Steele and occasionally in Dutton) indicate that his Christian experience was “never a final experience. It was an ongoing part of God’s creative process. His hymns reflect a maturing, growing faith. They are not dogmatic statements formulated for indoctrination. They are ever new because they lead into the questions of faith. They question the authenticity and validity of one’s faith, and result in a doxology: ‘Hark! How all the welkin rings, ‘Glory to the King of Kings!’”

¹⁶Kimbrough, “Hymns Are Theology,” 65.

and individually.

Correspondingly, Brian Wren notes that because hymn texts “carry” theology, those texts will also bring a degree of commentary and interpretation to that theology.¹⁷ Kimbrough concurs, asserting that “the hymns of the church are perhaps its finest commentary on faith and practice outside the Scripture.”¹⁸ Additionally, in a follow-up to his previously cited article, Kimbrough offers the term “lyrical theology” to indicate “theology that is couched in poetry, hymns, songs, and liturgy,” a composite of doctrinal concepts housed within an ordered and concise textual framework.¹⁹ In short, doxological hymn texts repeatedly sung by the church over time create its “theological memory.”²⁰

THE DUAL NATURE OF DOXOLOGY: EXEGETICAL AND EXPERIENTIAL HYMNODY

The eighteenth century saw the emergence of hymnody that was graced with a dual nature—hymns were regarded both as poetic instruments of resounding praise as well as teaching tools meant to instill a proper Christian theology. Particular Baptist pastor Benjamin Keach (1640–1704) acknowledged this dual nature by stating that “singing is not only sweet and raising to the Spirit, but also full of Instruction.”²¹ Madeleine Marshall and Janet Todd state that eighteenth-century hymns are “living texts” that carry both “expressive and didactic aims” which help prepare a congregation to offer a proper Christian response to any circumstance of life.²² Whatever their specific function in corporate worship, Richard Arnold concurs that these hymns were in fact “expected to educate” or edify a congregation as well as to “provide hope and assurance.”²³

¹⁷Brian Wren, *Praying Twice: The Music and Words of Congregational Song* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 369. Kimbrough, when similarly referencing Wren’s viewpoint on this matter, notes that Wren rightly acknowledges “that hymns cannot do systematic theology, but they can offer a digestion of theological concepts, language, metaphors, and viewpoints” (Kimbrough, *The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley: A Reader*, expanded ed. [Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2014], 25).

¹⁸Kimbrough, “Hymns Are Theology,” 67.

¹⁹S. T. Kimbrough, “Lyrical Theology: Theology in Hymns,” *Theology Today* 63, no. 1 (April 2006): 22.

²⁰Kimbrough, “Lyrical Theology,” 22.

²¹In Joseph Van Carmichael, “The Hymns of Anne Steele in John Rippon’s *Selection of Hymns: A Theological Analysis in the Context of the English Particular Baptist Revival*” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 5.

²²Madeleine Forell Marshall and Janet Todd, *English Congregational Hymns in the Eighteenth Century* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 2, 4.

²³Richard Arnold, “A ‘Veil of Interposing Night’: The Hymns of Anne Steele (1717–1778),”

To further highlight the distinctions between straightforward theological language and emotive doxological language, I now turn to the research of Ruhl, who discusses the dual nature of the eighteenth-century hymn by using the terms “exegetical” and “experimental” (or experiential) hymnody.²⁴ Like Kimbrough, Ruhl also highlights the importance of hymns imparting a proper knowledge of God. She notes the theological function and value of exegetical hymnody, which “presents a logical discussion of doctrinal truths” in a “passive” and unadorned manner that does not attempt to spark emotions. High Calvinists such as Dutton “tended to be unassertive in matters of the heart,” trusting that if an individual were one of the elect, that person would come to a saving knowledge of Christ by a work of the Holy Spirit, not through an appeal to the emotions.²⁵

By contrast, experiential hymns contain an engaging “dramatic narrative” in which the singer embarks on “an emotional and spiritual journey.”²⁶ Ruhl lists six characteristics that can be used to identify an experiential hymn, all of which can be clearly seen and demonstrated in the hymnody of Steele. First, experiential hymns are usually written in first person. Second, these hymns express a desire to see, know, and be present with Jesus eternally in heaven. Third, they display a thematic focus on the tribulations of the believer, including the struggle with sin, doubt, and despair that could be an indication of the work of the Holy Spirit. Fourth, experiential hymns vividly, even graphically, recount Christ’s sufferings on the cross. Fifth, they teach that the paradoxes of the Christian faith are inevitable, even desirable.²⁷ Lastly, the narrative of an experiential hymn

Christian Scholar's Review 18 (June 1989): 374.

²⁴Ruhl, “Feeling Religion,” 14–22. Ruhl explains that William Gadsby (1773–1844) desired to overcome what he perceived as “dryness” in Calvinistic theology by turning to the “more romantic” ideas of English preacher William Huntington (1745–1813). Huntington advocated for “emotional reasoning, metaphors, paradoxes, and experiential knowledge rather than the mere engagement of the intellect,” a notion referred to in the nineteenth century as experimentalism (16). Although Ruhl uses this historical term to describe hymns that are more experience-based and emotive, I have chosen to use the synonymous (yet more immediately indicative) term “experiential.” Gadsby’s hymn collection (published 1814) represented the union of Enlightenment thought with an increasing sense of Romanticism and reflected his interest in “the emotional and psychological responses to the intellectual ideas of Christianity” (16). Befittingly, twenty-seven hymns by Anne Steele appear in his collection.

²⁵Ruhl, “Feeling Religion,” 20.

²⁶Ruhl, “Feeling Religion,” 17.

²⁷Ruhl, “Feeling Religion,” 17. As a similar point, Teresa Berger notes that the language of paradox must also include an acknowledgement of “human limitations in naming God” (*Theology in Hymns*, 160). The ineffability of God and the inability of fallen human language to perfectly offer praise to God is a recurrent expression in the hymns of Steele.

begins with despair and concludes with hope.²⁸

Another point of convergence is the “dual aim” of the experiential hymn, which was directed toward believers and non-believers alike; both were challenged to introspectively consider the condition of their hearts. For the non-believer, the hymns ideally led to salvation; for the believer, the hymns offered assurance. In either case, experiential hymns were “tools for spiritual response.”²⁹ Advocates of the experiential hymn believed that the Christian faith needed to be “felt” and experienced, not merely “known intellectually.” The main objective was the “stirring of the affections,” meaning that the mind and the heart must both be engaged—truth must be felt in addition to being understood.³⁰

Cynthia Aalders similarly describes a dichotomy that exists within eighteenth-century hymnody, noting that some hymns are more “subjective” in nature while others are clearly “didactic.” In her discussion of the highly emotive hymns of Steele, she also briefly mentions Dutton and contrasts her body of hymns as “decidedly doctrinal” in nature.³¹ The following discussion of the poetic language of Dutton and Steele and accompanying hymn analysis illustrate these distinctions and also provide a significant representation of the theology and doxology of this era.

ANALYSIS OF SELECT HYMNS BY DUTTON AND STEELE

With these literary characteristics firmly in mind, a direct textual comparison between the two hymnwriters will clearly show that the poetic language of Dutton is more exegetical, doctrinal, and theological in nature, while the language of Steele is more experiential, emotive, and directly doxological in nature. Befittingly, the very first hymn of Dutton’s collection is clearly communicating and explicating Trinitarian theology, which fulfills the first theological criteria of Kimbrough: that a hymn be recognizable as biblically faithful theology that comments upon the nature of God. Accordingly, Dutton’s choice of long meter for this hymn provides ample poetic space in which to present her theological exposition. Additionally, Aalders remarks that because Dutton included the doctrinally “weighty”

²⁸Ruhl, “Feeling Religion,” 17.

²⁹Ruhl, “Feeling Religion,” 21.

³⁰Ruhl, “Feeling Religion,” 16. Ruhl adds that according to this viewpoint, the “raising of the spiritual affections through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit was the only sure evidence of salvation.”

³¹Cynthia Aalders, *To Express the Ineffable: The Hymns and Spirituality of Anne Steele* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 56.

word “co-equal” in this hymn, its overall artfulness may have suffered but “theology has triumphed.”³² Dutton’s meticulous scriptural references in the margins also attest to her careful theological intent.

EXAMPLE 1. DUTTON, “THE MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY REVEALED IN CHRIST,” STS. 1–3.

| | |
|--|--------------|
| The glories of Jehovah shine | Heb. i. 3. |
| In his own Son, who is Divine, | Rom. ix. 5. |
| Well he could tell the Father’s name, | John i. 18. |
| <i>Because his nature is the same.</i> | Chap. x. 30. |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| The Father, Son, and Spirit be | |
| One God most High, yet One in Three; | 1 John v. 7. |
| The Godhead’s glory jointly share,. | John v. 23 |
| Because that they co-equal are. | Phil. ii. 6. |

| | |
|---|----------------|
| This is a mystery too bright, | |
| To be beheld by nature’s light; | |
| From men of reason ’tis conceal’d, | 1 Cor. ii. 14. |
| Though in the gospel it’s reveal’d. ³³ | |

Whereas Dutton’s first hymn inclines toward theology, the first hymn in Steele’s collection is clearly oriented toward doxology by expressing a longing to praise God, indicated by its title: “Desiring to Praise God.” The hymnist questions whether she has the capability to join the angelic doxologies of heaven, and prays that God would tune her instruments of praise—her heart and tongue—to enable her very life to be a symphonic song of praise to him. Steele, like Dutton, chose long meter for the first hymn in her collection, perhaps in order to provide the fullest possible length and depth for her humble and grateful doxology.

Steele’s use of the poetic device of anadiplosis (the repetition of words shared between two stanzas) that appears at the end of stanza one and the beginning of stanza two effectively communicates and emphasizes a doxological theme of praise that demands the poet’s whole heart, life, and

³²Aalders, *To Express the Ineffable*, 56.

³³Dutton, Hymn 1, *Selected Spiritual Writings of Anne Dutton*, vol. 2: *Discourses, Poetry, Hymns, Memoir*, ed. JoAnn Ford Watson (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 176. Emphasis added.

voice.³⁴ Additionally, stanza one utilizes parenthesis, which provides Steele's "explaining, qualifying, or completing information" about the praise of God.³⁵ The hymn also fulfills the first experiential hymn characteristic listed by Ruhl by being penned in first person. The subject of doxology in this hymn takes the form of a personal prayer, expressing Steele's longing to somehow unite her songs of praise with those of the angels in heaven—to offer her humble voice in doxology along with those who dwell in the joy and praise of God's eternal kingdom.

EXAMPLE 2. STEELE, "DESIRING TO PRAISE GOD," STS. 1, 2, 4, 5

Almighty author of my frame,
 To thee my vital pow'rs belong;
 Thy praise, (delightful, glorious theme!)
 Demands my heart, my life, my tongue.

My heart, my life, my tongue are thine.
 Oh be thy praise their blest employ!
 But may my song with angels join?
 Nor sacred awe forbid the joy?

Yet the great Sovereign of the skies
 To mortals bends a gracious ear;
 Nor the mean tribute will despise,
 If offer'd with a heart sincere.

Great God, accept the humble praise,
 And guide my heart, and guide my tongue.
 While to thy name I trembling raise
 The grateful, though unworthy song.³⁶

³⁴See Austin C. Lovelace's discussion of poetic devices in *The Anatomy of Hymnody* (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 1965), 91–102. For his definition of anadiplosis, 94–95.

³⁵Lovelace, *The Anatomy of Hymnody*, 101. Lovelace notes here that "Charles Wesley was fond of putting in parenthetical phrases as a means of expressing wonder or shock at the boldness of the gospel." The same notion could be similarly applied to Steele's usage of parenthesis, indicating her amazement about the glory and delight found in the praise of God.

³⁶Steele, Hymn 1, in J. R. Broome, *A Bruised Reed: The Life and Times of Anne Steele* (Wiltshire, UK: The Cromwell Press, 2007), 258.

The second piece in Dutton's hymn collection continues her theme of theologically explicating holy mysteries—in this case, the glory of Christ's divine and human natures. This passage demonstrates the first and second of Kimbrough's theological criteria for hymns—it provides theological commentary regarding the nature of Christ and simultaneously expresses the mystery of the incarnation and its effect on the life of believers. As is typical with an exegetical hymn, the language is matter-of-fact and declarative, although Dutton does increase the emotive impact in stanzas one and two with the use of epiphonema (the use of exclamation points “for emphasis”), which serves to express her amazement.³⁷ Additionally, as is her custom, the inclusion of Scripture references within the poetic lines also ensures that the theology is biblically sound.

**EXAMPLE 3. DUTTON, “THE MYSTERY OF GRACE
IN CHRIST’S PERSON,” STS. 1, 2, 4, 5.**

| | |
|---|------------------|
| Of all God's wonders Christ's supreme, | Isa. ix. 6. |
| Immanuel is his glorious name; | Mat. i. 23. |
| Two natures in his person be, | Rom. ix. 5. |
| Divine, humane; O mystery! | 1 Tim. iii. 2. |
| Of all contrivements this was high, | |
| The project of eternity; | 1 Cor. ii. 7. |
| When God ordain'd his only Son, | 1 Pet. i. 20. |
| To be with human-nature, One! | |
| Here righteousness and peace do meet; | Psal. lxxxv. 10. |
| Mercy and truth each other greet; | |
| All attributes love's glory wear, | 1 John iv. 8. |
| As they, in Christ, for us appear. | |
| Bright beams of love, thro' Christ, do shine | |
| On Saints, as in a direct line; | Eph. i. 6. |
| Here we are warm'd, and kept alive. | |
| His quick'ning rays do us revive. ³⁸ | Mal. iv. 2. |

³⁷Lovelace, *The Anatomy of Hymnody*, 98.

³⁸Dutton, Hymn 2, *Selected Spiritual Writings*, 2:177.

The second piece in Steele's hymn collection is a continuation of the theme of offering doxological praise found in her first hymn. Steele addresses God directly, expressing that while her lowly state prevents her praise from attaining the height that her heart longs for, she still finds joy in adoration. Though she often questions her ability to offer elevated praise, in a very real sense, Steele poetically achieves what she feared was completely beyond her grasp. Nancy Cho notes that the tension of Steele's "painful efforts to articulate praise to God" is relieved only by the "successful and evocative" expression of her devotion.³⁹

Steele's expression is enhanced by her effective use of the poetic device synecdoche, in which "a part" of something is referred to "instead of [the] whole."⁴⁰ In stanzas two, three, and five, Steele implores one attribute of God—his grace—to condescend to her and inspire her languid heart; in the last stanza she reveals it is also this grace that tunes the immortal strings resounding in heaven and that looks with kindness upon mortal man. As a final point, and consistent with Ruhl's first and sixth criteria of an experiential hymn, Steele's verse is written in first person, begins with despair, and concludes with hope.

EXAMPLE 4. STEELE, "IMPLORING DIVINE INFLUENCE," STS. 1–5.

My God, whene'er my longing heart
Thy praiseful tribute would impart,
In vain my tongue with feeble aim,
Attempts the glories of thy name.

In vain my boldest thoughts arise,
I sink to earth and lose the skies;
Yet I may still thy grace implore,
And low in dust thy name adore.

O let thy grace my heart inspire,
And raise each languid, weak desire;

³⁹Nancy Jiwon Cho, "Widening Perspectives on Theodosia's Legacy: The Divergent Responses of Three Eighteenth-Century Dissenting Woman Writers to Anne Steele's Exemplary Authorial Identity," *English Language and Literature* 63, no. 2 (2017): 240.

⁴⁰Lovelace, *The Anatomy of Hymnody*, 102, 101.

Thy grace, which condescends to meet
The sinner prostrate at thy feet.

With humble fear let love unite,
And mix devotion with delight;
Then shall thy name be all my joy,
Thy praise, my constant blest employ.

Thy name inspires the harps above
With harmony, and praise, and love;
That grace which tunes th' immortal strings,
Looks kindly down on mortal things.⁴¹

The next hymn from Dutton conveys scriptural truth about the eternal boundlessness of God's love and kindness, and in keeping with a theological hymn, it professes the "theology of newness" as articulated in Kimbrough's third theological criteria. In stanza six, Dutton states that the loving-kindness of the Lord provides strength and enables the corporate praise of the faithful, which she indicates by employing the first-person plural form "us" ("our" and "we" appear in earlier stanzas). Interestingly, the language of this hymn is more poetically expressive, utilizing the poetic device of metaphor to liken the Father's love to "a boundless sea." Stanza six shifts from theological description to a direct address to the Lord; Dutton's theological reflections direct the poet's thoughts toward doxology, as conveyed in the concluding line, "to give thy name the praise." Here Dutton appropriately references Psalm 115:1, which (in the KJV) directly joins together the truth, mercy, and glory of God: "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."

⁴¹ Steele, Hymn 2, in *A Bruised Reed*, 258.

EXAMPLE 5. DUTTON, "THE LOVE OF THE FATHER," STS. 4, 5, 6.

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| The Father's love's a boundless sea, | Ep. iii. 17, 18. |
| Whence all our blessings flow; | Chap. i. 3, 4. |
| Its depths unfathomable be, | Job. xi. 7. |
| Beyond what we can know! | |
| | |
| His love's eternal, infinite, | Jer. xxxi. 3. |
| Unchanging, full and free; | Mal. iii. 6. |
| In this he rests with great delight, | Zeph. iii. 17. |
| And joys in such as we. | |
| | |
| With loving-kindness draw us, Lord, | Hos. xi. 4. |
| To live to thee always; | 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. |
| <i>New strength to us</i> , this will afford, | Cant. i. 4. |
| To give thy name the praise. ⁴² | Psal. cxv. 1. |

Numerous hymns penned by Steele demonstrate the first and third of Ruhl's experiential attributes by acknowledging, in first person singular, human tribulations such as fear and sorrow. In the following example, the hymnist begins with a direct doxological address to the Father, rejoicing in his "blissful name." With humility, gentleness, and poetic decorum, she questions whether she may have the assurance of truly belonging to him. In addition to its doxological praise of God's goodness, justness, and wisdom, this hymn succinctly references several theological convictions derived directly from Scripture, such as divine providence and the submission of the will to God's sovereignty. Joseph Carmichael also notes that Steele's hymns uphold not only the Christian doctrine of grace, "but the application of that grace to human experience."⁴³

EXAMPLE 6. STEELE, "HUMBLE RELIANCE," STS. 1-3, 6, 7.

My God, my Father, blissful name!
 O may I call thee mine,
 May I with sweet assurance claim
 A portion so divine?

⁴²Dutton, Hymn 4, *Selected Spiritual Writings*, 2:179-80. Emphasis added in stanza 6.

⁴³Carmichael, "The Hymns of Anne Steele," 149.

This only can my fears control,
 And bid my sorrows fly;
 What harm can ever reach my soul
 Beneath my Father's eye?

Whate'er thy providence denies,
 I calmly would resign,
 For thou art just, good, and wise;
 O bend my will to thine.

If cares and sorrows me surround,
 Their power why should I fear?
 My inward peace they cannot wound,
 If thou, my God, art near.

Thy sovereign ways are all unknown
 To my weak, erring sight;
 Yet let my soul, adoring, own,
 That all thy ways are right.⁴⁴

The following excerpt from Dutton fulfills the final criteria listed by Kimbrough: that the theology of hymns should serve as an impetus toward the enactment of faith. Dutton begins the first stanza below by explicating how the Holy Spirit reveals to the faithful that Christ's sacrifice is eternally complete; while Christians serve upon earth, each believer receives not only the merciful forgiveness of sins, but also the imputation of Christ's righteousness. This joyous theological realization prompts Dutton to admonish the church toward the doxological action of praising the Triune God for all that he has done in perfect holy love. The hymn's theology leads to doxology.

⁴⁴Steele, Hymn 62, in *A Bruised Reed*, 280–81.

**EXAMPLE 7. DUTTON, "THE REVEALING
WORK OF THE SPIRIT," STS. 3, 6, 8.**

| | |
|---|------------------|
| The Spirit reveals Christ's sacrifice | Heb. x. 15. |
| Infinitely compleat; | Chap. ix. 12. |
| And he presents unto faith's eye, | |
| Christ as our mercy-seat. | Chap. iv. 16. |
| | |
| He gives us prospects while we're here, | |
| Of Christ's bright righteousness; | Isa. lxi. 10. |
| And doth enable us to wear, | Gal. iii. 27. |
| By faith, this glorious dress. | Ex. xxviii. 2. |
| | |
| Let's praise the Father, and the Son, | Psal. cxlvii. 1. |
| And bless the sacred Dove, | Mat. iii. 16. |
| For all that he for us hath done, | |
| In application-love. ⁴⁵ | Rom. xv. 30. |

The next example from Steele displays the third and fifth characteristics of experiential hymns articulated by Ruhl: a focus on the believer's inner struggle with sin and doubt (that could be a sign of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit), as well as an expression of an inevitable paradox of faith. Steele marvels that a gloriously holy God could love, dwell within, and sanctify believers who will ever incline to sinfulness while still sojourning on earth. Steele wrestles through this paradox by honestly expressing her doubt—by earnestly asking the Lord if the Holy Spirit could truly dwell in such a "wretched heart" as hers. In lines three and four, she employs the poetic devices of repetition (the gathering of words in a similar form) and the exclamation of ecphronesis, both of which serve to punctuate the juxtaposition of her unworthiness and the Spirit's gloriousness.

According to Berger, the usage of emotive language paired with repeated use of question marks throughout reflects the growing influence of Romanticism; on a more personal and experiential level, however, Steele's inquiry becomes a form of fervent prayer.⁴⁶ As Joseph Carmichael observes, Steele regarded hymns "as both theology and poetry written for

⁴⁵Dutton, Hymn 14, *Selected Spiritual Writings*, 2:189–90.

⁴⁶Berger, *Theology in Hymns*, 82.

the purpose of piety.⁴⁷ Steele concludes that only God's divine power and his Word can elevate her heart to a faithful trust in him, granting her a sweet foretaste of the eternal joys of heaven.

EXAMPLE 8. STEELE, "THE INFLUENCES OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN THE HEART," STS. 1, 2, 5, 6, 8.

Dear Lord, and shall thy Spirit rest⁴⁸
 In such a wretched heart as mine?
 Unworthy dwelling! glorious guest!
 Favor astonishing, divine!

When sin prevails, and gloomy fear,
 And hope almost expires in night,
 Lord, can thy Spirit then be here,
 Great spring of comfort, life, and light?

Whene'er to call the Saviour mine,
 With ardent wish my heart aspires,
 Can it be less than power divine,
 Which animates these strong desires?

What less than thy almighty word
 Can raise my heart from earth and dust,
 And bid me cleave to thee, my Lord,
 My life, my treasure, and my trust?

Let thy kind Spirit in my heart
 Forever dwell, O God of love,
 And light and heav'nly peace impart,
 Sweet earnest of the joys above.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Carmichael, "The Hymns of Anne Steele," 160.

⁴⁸In the original manuscript, Steele provides a prefacing Scripture reference just before the first stanza of this hymn, John 14:16–17: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

⁴⁹Steele, Hymn 27, in Broome, *A Bruised Reed*, 270.

Although human expression will never be sufficient when theologically contemplating and doxologically addressing the Divine, the forms, devices, rhyme, and meters of poetry serve to elevate and beautify language into a heightened state that brings it closer to accomplishing its holy task. This comes distinctly into view within the hymnody of Dutton and Steele. Although Dutton composed hymns with primarily unadorned language and utilized far fewer poetic devices than Steele, Dutton's use of metaphor elegantly accomplishes both her instructive theological purposes and inclinations to praise. Steele's richly embellished poetic language is enhanced through her creative use of the more technical devices of poetical rhetoric, such as anadiplosis and ephonesis. Her figurative language and poetic charm express both the heights and depths of the Christian experience while faithfully offering direct doxology to God. Notwithstanding these notable differences in overall poetic style, both Dutton and Steele skillfully employ a hymnic vocabulary that aligns faithfully with themes and principles found in Scripture.⁵⁰

CONCLUSION

By using criteria put forth by Kimbrough and Ruhl, distinctions in the poetic language of Dutton and Steele become apparent: Dutton's hymns are more exegetical, doctrinal, and theological in nature while Steele's are more experiential, emotive, and directly doxological. In short, the hymnody of Dutton can be suitably characterized as poetic theology and the hymnody of Steele as theological poetry.

While the overarching purpose of this article is to highlight the differences in their poetic expression, the overlap and kinship between theology and doxology have also become visible, for well-written hymns such as these incorporate poetic language that is a vehicle for both doctrinal soundness and the vocative nature of praise. As Berger profoundly observes, "the encounter of praise with God" is simultaneously "an encounter with truth."⁵¹ The hymns of Dutton and Steele clearly display an unswerving devotion to both truth and praise—theology inspiring doxology. The

⁵⁰Although the scope of this study is limited to an examination of eight hymns, the biblical faithfulness of Dutton and Steele can be clearly seen throughout their entire corpus of hymnody. The reader is invited to consult Appendices 1 and 2 of Farrow's previously referenced dissertation, which contain the complete hymn collections of both writers (as well as the full texts of their original Scripture references). The expanded discussion also details that both Dutton and Steele received great support from pastors within their circle of friends, who encouraged them to publish their works and enabled their significant contributions to the Evangelical Revival.

⁵¹Berger, *Theology in Hymns*, 174.

significance of this kinship is clear: biblically faithful theological reflections of the mind paired with doxological engagement of the heart enable Christians to present a more complete and more excellent offering to God.