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S T Kimbrough, Jr.  
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## John and Charles Wesley Brothers in Arms

John A. Newton

In his life of Dr. Johnson, James Boswell records a conversation he had with the great man in 1778. Johnson, quite incidentally, provides an interesting comparison of the two Wesley brothers, in respect of their different temperaments. Boswell's account runs as follows:

Of John Wesley, he [Johnson] said, 'He can talk well on any subject.' BOSWELL [who, as usual, is keen to draw Johnson out by putting him to the question]. 'Pray, Sir, what has he made of his story of a ghost?' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, he believes it; but not on sufficient authority. He did not take time enough to examine the girl. It was at Newcastle, where the ghost was said to have appeared to a young woman several times, mentioning something about the right to an old house, advising application to be made to an attorney, which was done; and, at the same time, saying the attorney would do nothing, which proved to be the fact. "This (says John,) is a proof that a ghost knows our thoughts." Now (laughing,) it is not necessary to know our thoughts, to tell that an attorney will sometimes do nothing. Charles Wesley, who is a more stationary man, does not believe the story. I am sorry that John did not take more pains to inquire into the evidence for it.'<sup>1</sup>

Johnson's description of Charles Wesley as "a more stationary man" than John appears to mean that he is more fixed in his views, less volatile and subject to change in his convictions than his older brother. Vivian Green, in his *Young Mr. Wesley*, speaks of the Epworth ghost or poltergeist ("Old Jeffrey"), and similar events, as buttressing the adolescent John Wesley's "natural credulity."<sup>2</sup> John certainly held a lifelong belief in apparitions and witches—beliefs which were more common among educated people of the seventeenth century than those of the eighteenth.

Charles, on the other hand, though fervent, even passionate, in temperament, was much more hard-headed and skeptical than John in his attitude to allegedly supernatural or abnormal phenomena. His considered judgment (1743) about the convulsive paroxysms which accompanied the earliest Methodist preaching, from 1739, was that "some were counterfeit, others could be controlled, the remainder he could not accept as divine signs."<sup>3</sup>

We can perhaps gain a clearer impression of the temperamental differences between the brothers if we compare them with their parents. John's character bears an unmistakable likeness to that of his mother; he is, in the deepest sense, "Son to Susanna." Charles, for his part, shared many of his father's traits of char-

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<sup>1</sup>James Boswell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, 2 vols. (Oxford Standard Authors ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1924), 2:224. Wednesday, April 15, 1778.

<sup>2</sup>V. H. H. Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley: A Study of John Wesley and Oxford* (London: Edward Arnold, 1961), 59.

<sup>3</sup>*Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. Charles Wesley.

acter, both his strengths and his weaknesses. Despite his tendency to credit accounts of supernatural interventions more readily than Charles, John is generally as calm and reasonable as Charles is passionate and poetic. Susanna's prayers and meditations have a strongly rational and intellectual strain in them, as well as expressing a personal religious fervor and a lively faith. In the same way, John, as a mature theologian, insists that "All irrational religion is false religion," and continually addresses his earnest appeals to "Men of Reason and Religion." Even as a small child, he showed a strong inclination to reasonableness. When offered a second helping of food, Jacky, as he was known as a child in his family, would be quite likely to respond with the measured reply, "Thank you, I will think of it." Samuel, the rector and father of the family, seems to have found the child's eminent reasonableness irritating at times, and he once remarked to Susanna that he did not believe Jack would attend to the most pressing needs of nature, unless he could give a reason for it. The child is father of the man; and John retained this characteristic all through his adult life.

Charles, by contrast, tended to be volatile, quick-tempered, impatient, like his father. It may well have been in part the reflex of his poetic nature. Certainly, the man who would leap from his horse after a journey, rush into the house, and demand at once pen and paper to scribe down the words of a hymn he had just composed while riding, was, on his own admission, not greatly endowed with the gift of patience. In an early letter to John, written from Christ Church, Oxford (January 20, 1727/28), Charles could admit, "'Tis an ill wind that blows nobody good! That same favourable blast, at which my father may say, *Ego in portu navigo* [I have reached port] has quite upset my patience, which as you know is but a slight vessel at best, and at present is sadly at a loss for ballast. 'Settled for life—at least for years!['] You can't imagine what a violent effect those few words had upon this gentle reader."<sup>4</sup> Charles's father had evidently been telling him that he was now comfortably off, with his scholarship at Oxford, and his future assured. Charles, in his letter to John, takes quite a different view, and proceeds to bemoan, in no uncertain terms, his acute lack of clothes and money—a student complaint by no means limited to the eighteenth century!

A year later, in another Oxford letter to John, dated January 5, 1728/29, Charles contrasts his own poor aptitude for study with John's avid gift for learning:

In my pursuit of knowledge I own I have this advantage of you in some things. My brothers were born before me, I start at twenty. But then I'm sure I'm less indebted to nature than you. I'm very *desirous* of knowledge, but can't *bear* the drudgery of coming at it near as well as you could. In reading anything difficult I'm bewildered in a much shorter time than I believe you used to be at your first

<sup>4</sup>*The Works of John Wesley* (Bicentennial edition, vol. 25, Letters I, ed. Frank Baker, London: Oxford University Press 1980), p. 230. Hereafter cited as *WJW*.

setting out. My head will by no means keep pace with my heart, and I'm afraid I shan't reconcile it in haste to the extraordinary business of thinking.<sup>5</sup>

Charles's confession, "My head will by no means keep pace with my heart," might well stand as the key to his life story, for good as well as ill. It is not a phrase that could easily be applied to brother John. Charles's impulsiveness and impatience challenge comparison with the same traits of character that we see in his father. Susanna Wesley, in her detailed letter to John (July 24, 1732), giving an account of her child-rearing and educational methods, lists the "bye-laws" or rules which she drew up for her large brood of children. Rule Number One, which stands out, both by pride of place and length of exposition, reads as follows:

1. It had been observed that cowardice and fear of punishment often lead children into lying; till they get a custom of it which they cannot leave. To prevent this, a law was made that whoever was charged with a fault, if they would ingenuously confess it, and promise to amend, should not be beaten. This rule prevented a great deal of lying; and would have done more, if one in the family would have observed it. But he could not be prevailed on, and therefore was often imposed upon by false colours and equivocations, which none would have used but one had they been kindly dealt with; and some in spite of all would always speak truth plainly.<sup>6</sup>

There is no prize for guessing who the "one in the family" was, who would not keep to the rule, and who punished the child, even when it had confessed. Such an enlightened, reasonable principle as Susanna's evidently could not withstand the sudden anger of Samuel. Even when he had broken the rule, "he could not be prevailed on," Susanna recalls,—no doubt by her own reasoned entreaty—but insisted on going his own headstrong way. Charles had something of the same hasty temper, just as John embodied the calm, reasoned attitude of his mother.

And her way of exploring the temperamental difference between the two brothers, is to look at their make-up in terms of masculine and feminine elements in their personal make-up. John's feminine side was highly developed. He related well to women as friends and colleagues, and was noted for his sensitivity and tact. Charles, by contrast, was much more the rough, blunt male, sometimes unbridled in his anger and vehement in speech, in a way that John rarely was. The same contrast emerges from a study of their preaching styles. There has survived, from the pen of a sympathetic Dissenter, a vivid account of Charles's preaching in the open air at Bristol in 1740. John Williams of Kidderminster writes of Charles:

He preached about an hour, from 2 Corin. V. 17–21, in such a manner as I have seldom, if ever, heard any Minister preach; that is, though I have heard many a finer sermon, according to the common taste, yet I have scarcely ever heard an Minister discover [*i.e.*, reveal] such evident signs of a most vehement desire, or labour so

<sup>5</sup>WJW, 25:236

<sup>6</sup>Adam Clarke, *Memoirs of the Wesley Family* (London, 1823), 266.

earnestly, to convince his hearers that they were all by nature in a state of enmity against God, consequently in a damnable state, and needed reconciliation to God.

Williams goes on to describe how Charles then, having wounded the conscience of his hearers, proceeds to pour in the oil and wine of the gospel, “and used a great variety of the most moving arguments and expostulations, in order to persuade, allure, instigate, and, if possible, compel all to come to Christ and believe in him for pardon and salvation.”<sup>7</sup>

We note here the ardor and vehemence of Charles’s preaching, and his passionate longing to bring people to Christ. Nor does this account stand alone. It is corroborated by Thomas Jackson in his major life of Charles, where he assures the reader:

There was nothing artificial in his sermons. To a strictly logical arrangement, and the arts of secular oratory, he was indifferent. His discourses were effusions of the heart, rather than the offspring of the intellect, or of the imagination . . . [in his preaching] . . . the tears ran down his cheeks; his tongue was loosed; and he poured forth the truth of God, in the very phraseology of inspiration, with an effort that was overwhelming.<sup>8</sup>

If we turn to John’s preaching, we are immediately conscious of a markedly different style. Bishop Edward King, the Anglican Bishop of Lincoln (1829–1910), was a great admirer of John Wesley. King deplored what he called “tail-lashing” in the pulpit, that is, self-display, affectation, or exhibitionism in preaching. John Wesley was clearly of the same mind, as his instructions to his preachers reveal. Writing to a Lincolnshire Methodist in 1753, Wesley says, “I . . . advise all our preachers not to preach above an hour at a time, prayer and all; and not to speak louder either in preaching or prayer than the number of hearers requires.”<sup>9</sup> He deprecated the touch of “enthusiasm” which showed itself in William Brammah’s “screaming” in the pulpit.<sup>10</sup> He urged his preachers to speak “in the plainest manner”<sup>11</sup> possible—no exaggeration, no flowery language, no pseudo-learning. To Sally Mallet, one of his few women preachers, he urges:

“You are not to judge by your own feeling, but by the word of God. Never speak above a scream. Never speak above the natural pitch of your voice; it is disgusting to the hearers. It gives them pain, not pleasure. And it is destroying yourself. It is offering God murder for sacrifice.”<sup>12</sup>

Contemporary accounts of John’s own preaching make clear the force of his appeal to the heart as well as the head, and yet suggest a predominant tone of calm,

<sup>7</sup>Cited in F. C. Gill, *Charles Wesley, The First Methodist* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1964), 97.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas Jackson, *The Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A.*, 2 vols. (London, 1841), 2:468–469.

<sup>9</sup>John Telford, ed., *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 3:97. Hereafter cited as *Wesley, Letters*.

<sup>10</sup>*Wesley, Letters*, 5:347. Letter of November 28, 1772.

<sup>11</sup>*Wesley, Letters*, 6:186.

<sup>12</sup>*Wesley, Letters*, 8:190.

reasoned appeal. Horace Walpole's celebrated and unsympathetic description of his hearing Wesley preach at Bath in 1766 would seem to bear this out. Walpole records that Wesley "Spoke his sermon so fast, and with so little accent, that I am sure he has often uttered it, for it was like a lesson. There were parts and eloquence in it, but towards the end he exalted his voice, and acted very ugly enthusiasm."<sup>13</sup>

I turn now to the hymns of Methodism, in which Charles made his supreme contribution to the Revival and to the devotion of the whole Christian Church. In Henry Rack's words, Charles Wesley, like Isaac Watts, "Contrived to express profound religious ideas coupled with intense yet controlled religious feeling." Charles used his classical education and his profound knowledge of the Scriptures to the full; but he was also not afraid to use sensuous, personal, even erotic imagery to express his Christian experience. His evening hymn, "How do thy mercies close me round," for example, contains the verses:

Jesus protects, my fears be gone!  
Naught can the Rock of Ages move;  
Safe in thy arms I lay me down,  
Thy arms of everlasting love.

While Thou art intimately nigh,  
Who, who shall violate my rest?  
Sin, earth and hell I now defy;  
I lean upon my Saviour's breast.<sup>14</sup>

Of course, scriptural echoes are present here—the Old Testament assurance that "Underneath are the everlasting arms"; and the portrait in St. John's Gospel of the Beloved Disciple leaning back, during the Last Supper, on the breast of Jesus. Yet Charles has unmistakably heightened the emotional force of the language.

John Wesley, as the critical editor of his brother's hymns, and as one who kept his own feelings on a much tighter rein than did Charles, could not approve this kind of emotional language. He was always on the lookout, like a rigorous censor, for what he called "fondling" terms of endearment, as applied to the believer's relationship with the Lord Jesus. It is well known that he omitted the hymn "Jesu, Lover of my soul" from the 1780 hymnbook, though he did include it in some of the shorter, less official collections. It was the opening couplet to which he took exception, with its, to him, over-intimate and personal plea,

Jesu, Lover of my soul,  
Let me to Thy bosom fly.

Charles, with the inspiration of a major religious poet, and with the experience of the ecstasy of happy love, could give powerful expression to his deepest feel-

<sup>13</sup>Cited in H. D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1989), 346.

<sup>14</sup>WJW, 7:353.

ings. John, who had not the same poetic gift, who never knew happy married love, and who was so eminently reasonable in character, never found it easy to come to terms with his deepest feelings. At Aldersgate Street, at the turning point of May 24, his familiar Journal entry deserves close scrutiny in this respect. What did he mean by the phrase, "I felt my heart *strangely* warmed"? Was he merely saying that this experience simply heightened feelings he had known before—that is, they were strange in a matter of degree, rather than of kind? Or does "strangely" imply that here was a radically new experience of powerful religious feeling, which shook him to the depths, precisely because he had never experienced the like before?

Certainly, John does not seem to have found it easy to come to terms with his emotional depths, either in his personal relationships or in his personal religion. To take a specific example: though he consistently encouraged his people to press on to entire sanctification, or Christian perfection, he never claimed to have reached that state himself. He was once present at a Methodist Love Feast in Yorkshire, at which several members freely testified to having been made perfect in love. Wesley said nothing; so that one layman, with typical Yorkshire bluntness, was bold enough to draw attention to their leader's silence on the matter. John Wesley, drawing himself up to his full height of five feet three inches or so, permitted himself only an oracular statement from St. Paul, "By the grace of God, I am what I am!"—and sat down again without another word. That incident was typical, not only of his notorious unwillingness to claim personal experience of entire sanctification, but also of his diffidence in expressing publicly—either in speech or writing—his own most profound and personal religious feelings.

Again, in churchmanship, we can readily detect a notable difference between John and Charles. Both had been brought up in the High Church atmosphere of the Epworth parsonage, by parents who were not cradle Anglicans but had joined the Church of England from personal choice and conviction. Both brothers were deeply attached to their mother Church, in which they had been baptized, brought up, and ordained. John's ringing declaration, "I live and die a member of the Church of England," has become as much part of the Methodist tradition as his missionary avowal, "I look upon the whole world as my parish." And yet, when it came to specific policy decisions, involving the Methodist Societies and their relation to the Church of England, John and Charles often disagreed. Charles once sharply and epigrammatically pointed up the basic difference between them, when he made the explicit claim that "All the difference between my brother and me was that my brother's first object was the Methodists and then the Church; mine was first the Church and then the Methodists. Our different judgement of persons was owing to our different tempers, his all hopes and mine all fears."<sup>15</sup> Of course, ideally, neither brother would have wanted to make a choice between

<sup>15</sup>Wesley, *Letters*, 8:267.

the interests of the Mother Church and those of the Methodist Connexion. Yet sometimes events constrained John, as leader of the Methodist people, to make some very hard choices indeed. It might just conceivably have been different had the Church of England not been, from 1717 to 1852, without its “vocal organs”; that is to say, lacking the active leadership and guidance of its Convocation. For political reasons, that body was in abeyance for the whole of the adult lives of the Wesleys—and far beyond. In other words, during the entire period of the rise and progress of the eighteenth-century Methodist movement in England, the Anglican Church had no means of coming to terms with it in a corporate, considered, formal way. That may well be accounted as one of the tragedies of eighteenth-century church history; but such was the fact.

In consequence, John Wesley, in guiding and directing the Methodist movement, found himself time and again in an ambiguous set of circumstances, in which he deemed compromise, however distasteful, to be inevitable. To take one or two of the most obvious examples: John was as adamant as Charles that the Methodists were not Dissenters. Their leaders had no desire to break away from the Established Church. They encouraged their followers to attend its services, and, where possible, to receive its sacraments. Yet as the Methodist movement spread, meeting-houses were built for purposes of shared prayer, fellowship, exposition of the Scriptures, and, as for example at the New Room, Bristol, from 1739, for providing a school for poor children and a dispensary with free medicines for the poor.

These buildings were used for Methodist worship, but they were neither Anglican nor Dissenting meeting-places. They were not licensed by law as Dissenting chapels, and therefore had no legal protection against the depredations of the mob, who might break in and cause damage with impunity. John Wesley was therefore driven, with extreme reluctance, but nevertheless conscientiously, to license them as Dissenting meeting-houses under the Toleration Act. Charles was incensed and wrote on the back of the license for the New Room, Bristol, his angry protest against a legal document which he held to be absurd and unnecessary. He did not make clear, however, what alternative course of action he would have taken, had he been in John Wesley’s shoes and seeking to protect the humble preaching houses where the Methodist Societies gathered.

Charles’s opposition to John’s Bristol ordinations in 1784 was entirely predictable and equally emphatic. He not only lampooned John’s action in verse dashed off for the occasion—“Wesley his hands on Coke has laid, But who laid hands on him?”—but also coined the pithy, memorable judgment that “Ordination is separation.” In this instance, I believe it is true that Charles was more realistic and far-sighted than his brother. That John, in Anglican priest’s orders, should have taken to himself the episcopal prerogative of ordination, was a clear breach of the discipline and order of the Church. Yet he did so only in what he perceived to be a situation of acute pastoral and missionary need, in

terms of the severe lack of clergy in America, and having unsuccessfully appealed to the Bishop of London, in whose diocese North America lay, to take such remedial action himself.

Charles, then, was much more the stiff High Churchman than John. In this regard, as in others, he resembled his father, Samuel, the rector of Epworth. John, though a loyal churchman, proved in practice much more flexible with regard to Anglican order. Here, I think, he was the son of his mother, and may be seen as reverting—perhaps unconsciously—to his Puritan, Nonconformist ancestry. Susanna was prepared to withstand her husband when, during his absence from the parish at Convocation, she began to hold simple services of worship in her kitchen, to which a considerable number of local people came. To Samuel, informed by his curate of what was happening, she was usurping a clergyman's prerogative, and he pressed her in his letters to stop holding the meetings. She defended her action courteously but vigorously; claimed she was meeting a spiritual need; and argued that genuine benefit was resulting from these meetings for prayer; denied that she was preaching; and finally refused to desist unless Samuel explicitly ordered her to do so. When it came to the crunch, the rector gave way, and Susanna continued her lay ministry, no doubt to the chagrin of the curate.

Again, when Thomas Maxfield, one of John Wesley's young lay helpers, began to preach without Mr. Wesley's authorization, it was Susanna who intervened on his behalf. John had ridden posthaste from Bristol to London on hearing of this new development of lay preaching, and greeted his mother on his arrival with the curt words, "Thomas Maxfield has turned preacher, I find." Susanna's reply is well-known, and represents again her willingness to sanction a modification of strict Anglican Church order, for the sake of the furtherance of the gospel. She calmly admonished her son: "John, you know what my sentiments have been. You cannot suspect me of favouring readily anything of this kind. But take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him also yourself."<sup>16</sup> John listened to this wise counsel, heard the young man preach, and acknowledged, "It is the Lord!" So began the order of Methodist lay preachers. One can well imagine what Samuel Wesley's advice would have been in the same circumstances! He would surely have cracked the whip of discipline and insisted on the requirements of Anglican Church order.

Charles Wesley did not, of course, deny the right of lay men and women to preach; but he was exceedingly jealous of their pretensions, and continually concerned lest they should exceed the limits which John Wesley, as their leader, had prescribed for them. He was furious when some of the preachers in Yorkshire began to celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion. He resented it deeply when a number of them advocated separation from the Church of England when

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<sup>16</sup>H. Moore, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.*, 2 vols., 1824–25, 1:506.

this issue surfaced in the Conference, as it did more than once. He was of the opinion that his brother John deferred far too much to the views of the preachers, and wanted them kept under much tighter control. In all this, we may say that Charles is the son of his father, and a stiff Church of England man, who lacked the flexibility and pragmatism we see both in John and in their mother, Susanna. It is fittingly symbolic that both Samuel and Charles lie buried in Anglican consecrated ground; Susanna and John do not. Samuel was buried in Epworth churchyard, and Charles was interred in the graveyard of St. Marylebone parish church in London. Charles's body was carried to its grave by eight Anglican clergy who acted as his pall-bearers. Susanna's body, on the other hand, was laid to rest in the great Puritan burial-ground of Bunhill Fields, across the road from Wesley's Chapel, London, where John's own earthly remains were buried.

The differences in temperament between the two brothers, and the friction that arose when so often they did not see eye to eye, are both illustrated by a letter from John to Charles, written on October 31, 1753. John upbraids Charles for not acting "in connexion" with him over the course of the previous ten years, because, says John, Charles has repeatedly failed to keep him informed as to his plans and his preaching journeys. John asks: "In journeying, which of us lays his plans according to reason? Either you move (quite contrary to me) by those impressions which you account divine, or (which is worse) *pro ratione voluntas* [taking your own will for reason]."<sup>17</sup> The implications of John's complaint seem plain. He, John, plans his preaching journeys carefully, on a rational scheme. Charles, in John's view, simply takes off on impulse, or because of what he accounts—without any consultation with John, the director of the whole Methodist mission—as a divinely-given leading or inspiration. We do not have Charles's view of the matter, but John's strictures are in keeping with what we know of Charles's nature from other sources.

As early as their Oxford days, they recognized that, though brothers and close friends, they were unlike in temperament and in outlook. Charles, writing to John from Oxford on January 20, 1727/28, comments: "I wish the person who says I'm like you had [mo]re reasons for so saying."<sup>18</sup> They certainly were two very different men; and yet, for all their differences, they needed each other, for in many ways their gifts were complementary. John had outstanding gifts of organization and pastoral care; but he also had a very strong will; liked his own way; and had a marked tendency to authoritarianism. He was not nicknamed "Pope John" for nothing. He himself needed, what he insisted every Christian should have, namely, a "candid friend"; that is to say, someone who would, as and when necessary, speak plainly to him; challenge his actions, and perhaps constrain him to think again about what he was planning to do. This is precisely what Charles was able to do

<sup>17</sup>WJW, 26, Letters, 2:528.

<sup>18</sup>WJW, 25, Letters, 1:230.

for John. Again, John's calm rationality was complemented by Charles's emotional fire and poetic temperament. On the other hand, Charles, who suffered from poor health—Henry Rack describes him as “almost a manic depressive personality”<sup>19</sup>—needed John's steadying support in his darker moments. Both the calm rationality and the emotional passion were essential to the work of the Revival, and each brother would have been profoundly the poorer without the other.

I have dwelt at some length on the differences between John and Charles, because these are part of the fascination of their joint story. Yet for all their differences, at the deepest level they were united, as brothers in arms. Both were committed to the preaching of the gospel; to reaching the unchurched; to making known to all the unsearchable riches of Christ. Both had a keen compassion for the poor, and were ardent in their desire to relieve both spiritual poverty and physical destitution. John Wesley in 1747 advised the London Methodist Stewards, “Put yourself in the place of every poor man, and deal with him as you would God should deal with you”;<sup>20</sup> and as an old man, he could be seen, in one bitter winter season, tramping the streets of London through snow and slush, collecting from friends and colleagues money to relieve the sufferings of the poor members of the London societies. He once preached, in one of the parish churches of the city, to a well-to-do congregation, on the text: “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” One angry member of the congregation confronted him after the service, and demanded to know how Mr. Wesley had dared to preach such a sermon to so eminently respectable a congregation. If Wesley had been going to preach on that text, urged his critic, he should have preached it to the riff-raff of Spitalfields, one of the poorest and roughest parts of the capital. Not at all, Wesley responded, “If I had been preaching to the poor of Spitalfields, my text should have been ‘Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’!”

Likewise, Charles's hymns express the same evangelical concern for the poorest of the poor. Indeed, he makes such compassion one of the supreme tests of whether a professing Christian really does have the Spirit of Jesus at work in his or her heart and life. Take, for instance, one of his hymns which is a prayer for the gift of the Spirit of Christ to be poured out upon the believer:

Jesus, the gift divine I know,  
The gift divine I ask of thee;  
That living water now bestow  
Thy Spirit and thyself, on me;  
Thou, Lord, of life the fountain art;  
Now let me find thee in my heart.

He goes on to pray that the fruit of the Spirit may be manifest in his whole life, but especially in a caring, sacrificial ministry to those in greatest need:

<sup>19</sup>H. D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 252.

<sup>20</sup>N. Curnock, ed., *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: Robert Culley, 1909–1916), 3:301.

Thy mind throughout my life be shown,  
While listening to the sufferer's cry,  
The widow's and the orphan's groan,  
On mercy's wings I swiftly fly,  
The poor and helpless to relieve,  
My life, my all, for them to give.

Thus may I show thy Spir't within,  
Which purges me from every stain;  
Unspotted from the world and sin,  
My faith's integrity maintain;  
The truth of my religion prove  
By perfect purity and love.

(*Hymns and Psalms* [London:  
Methodist Publishing House, 1983],  
No. 318)

John and Charles also, despite differences of interpretation and emphasis, shared a longing to attain to Christian perfection, to have the mind that was in Christ; to walk as he walked; to grow into perfect love. When it came to the deepest things of God, to justice and mercy and the love of the Lord, they were of one mind. They shared so much in their lives and in their faith. They had known a common upbringing in a loving home at Epworth; they were together at Oxford in the Holy Club; they had ventured to America in the service of Christ; they had experienced an evangelical conversion of heart and mind; they were both evangelists to the people of England and beyond; they both sang of the good news of Jesus Christ in an abundant outpouring of hymns. ✓

It is, fittingly enough, in the setting of one of Charles's greatest hymns, that we gain a final glimpse of how close to each other the brothers were. The year is 1788. Charles, though the younger brother, has recently died. John, now an old man of eighty-five, is conducting a service at Bolton in Lancashire. There is a children's choir, whose sweet voices touch the heart of the old apostle, and he confesses that he has not heard better singing anywhere in the Kingdom. Then he gives out the first lines of Charles's hymn, "Wrestling Jacob." With the loss of his brother still fresh in his experience, he recites the opening lines: ★

Come, O thou Traveller unknown,  
Whom still I hold, but cannot see!  
My company before is gone,  
And I am left alone with thee.

And then the old man—all his lifelong calm self-control forgotten—breaks down in tears in the sight of the whole congregation. Those tears set the seal on a partnership of a lifetime, of two brothers in arms, a partnership which was central to the Methodist Revival, and one which, by the mercy of God, still bears fruit.

