

S T Kimbrough, Jr., *Alphabetical Index to the First Lines of All Stanzas of Poetry
by John and Charles Wesley* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), xi–xii.
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Foreword

The reader holds in their hands a labor of love, that pulls together a lifetime of service in Wesley Studies.

Over the last thirty years there have been several major developments in the field of Wesley Studies. Among these, none is more significant than the recovery of Charles Wesley's distinctive voice and perspective, alongside that of his brother John. And no one has contributed more to this recovery than S T Kimbrough Jr. His passion for broader awareness of and benefit from the theological resources bequeathed by Charles Wesley to the whole church bore its initial fruit in the publication (with Oliver A. Beckerlegge) of three volumes of Wesley's verse that had neither been put in print by Wesley during his life nor included in the long-standard thirteen-volume collection, *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, edited by George Osborn (1868–72). In the midst of the appearance of these three volumes of *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley* (1988–92), Kimbrough was also a prime mover in forming The Charles Wesley Society, which took as its mission both the reproduction of Charles Wesley texts and the fostering of secondary scholarship upon these texts. Kimbrough served as editor of the facsimile reprints issued by the CWS, as well as the *Proceedings* of the society. And he authored over twenty scholarly essays himself, along with several books on Wesley's "lyrical theology."

Dwelling in this way on both sides of intersection between producing primary texts of a historic figure and writing interpretive essays about that figure, Kimbrough could not help but recognize the importance of resources that assist interpreters in accessing the full range of the texts of the figure whom they are studying. In the case of the massive body of Charles Wesley's verse, there has been a long-standing need for a comprehensive and reliable index.

This need is created by several factors. To begin with, most people encounter Charles Wesley's hymns initially in recent hymnals, where there is little sense of their original setting or notation of any editorial changes. We need a guide to this original setting, or a standard edition, if we want to engage the hymn with scholarly integrity. Again, if our interest in a particular theme in Wesley is awakened by some hymn, we could use help in locating other settings in which he might treat that theme. Then there are some specific problems (which Kimbrough describes in greater detail in his introductory remarks) created by Osborn's collection—particularly in its later volumes, where Osborn intermixes sources and often gives abridged versions. Kimbrough and Beckerlegge rightly include

complete versions of this same material in their volumes. But this creates the need for a resource that helps readers of Osborn to know when a more complete version of a hymn might be found elsewhere.

To highlight just one more situation where readers will particularly appreciate the current resource, anyone studying spiritual biographies knows that the formative power of hymnody is often reflected by persons invoking a phrase or stanza from a favorite hymn. But this favored stanza is often not the first stanza of a hymn (on which most indices are based). So how does one find the complete hymn for a citation? Perhaps Kimbrough has received as many inquiries for help on this problem as I have had to field. This may be what convinced him to accept the task—though it increased the amount of labor exponentially—of providing an index of the first line of *every* stanza in Wesley’s corpus of hymns and religious verse, not just of the first lines of the first stanza.

Whatever Kimbrough’s motivation for taking up this herculean task, the present volume stands as a fitting capstone of a lifetime devoted to helping foster among “the people called Methodists” and the church as a whole a deeper exposure to and appreciation for the rich contribution of Charles Wesley.

Randy L. Maddox
William Kellon Quick Professor of Wesleyan and Methodist Studies
Duke Divinity School