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## Introduction

In the article, “Charles Wesley’s Bristol Hymns and Poems,” the author addresses Wesley’s literary productivity during the years he lived in Bristol, England, which were some of the most productive of his life. Here it was that he settled after marrying Sarah Gwynne in 1749. From that time until they moved to London in 1771, he published more than one-fourth of his total poetic output during his entire lifetime. Among Wesley’s numerous works during this period are some poetical works of considerable length: *Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures* (1762), a two-volume devotional commentary on the Bible, *Hymns on the Trinity* (1767), and *Hymns for the Use of Families, and on various occasions*. One finds hymns and poems linked to the Christian year, to specific occasions, and others to natural occurrences, events (e.g., the earthquake of March 8, 1750), and persons (e.g., George Whitefield). In 1755 some of his poetry writing took on a different character. Moving beyond hymn writing, Wesley began composing lengthy poetic epistles to various friends on subjects which were of interest to him. Some of these hymns are extremely insightful as regards Charles Wesley’s theology, moral fiber, and personal relationships. This article is a careful chronological survey of Charles Wesley’s published and unpublished poetical works between the years 1749 and 1771.

Some years ago John A. Newton wrote an article, “The Ecumenical Wesley,” for the periodical *The Ecumenical Review*, which was concerned with John Wesley. In “Charles Wesley, Ecumenical Hymnographer” Newton turns to the poet-priest-brother, Charles, in whose hymns he finds the same ecumenical emphasis that characterizes John’s writings. Newton describes the political violence and religious turmoil in which Charles Wesley uttered the cry for tolerance, peace, and unity. While Charles Wesley is not viewed as a twentieth-century ecumenist, he is seen as a contributor to present-day ecumenism by creating a lyrical corpus of the central doctrines of the Christian faith, by emphasizing Christ-like love, or *agape*, as that which unifies, and by creating a lyrical theology that is sung world-wide.

Not very much has been written about Sarah Wesley (Sally, Jr.), daughter of Charles and Sarah (Gwynne) Wesley. She was one of the three children, of the eight born to the Wesleys, who survived the first year of life. Five died at birth or in the first year of infancy. We know more of her brothers, Charles, Jr., and Samuel, both musicians, than of Sally, Jr. In the article “Sarah Wesley, Woman of Her Times” Wilma J. Quantrille paints an interesting picture of this bright and talented woman, setting her in the family, literary, and intellectual contexts of her time. She was a gifted woman who circulated among some of the literary elite of her day, and who also wrote poetry. A significant debt is owed her for the care with which she preserved many of the Charles Wesley family papers.

In the article “Mon tres cher Ami” Peter Forsaith examines the letters of John Fletcher, friend and “Methodist” preacher, who was born in Switzerland. Forsaith

# Charles Wesley's Bristol Hymns and Poems

S T Kimbrough, Jr.

The title of this article, "Charles Wesley's Bristol Hymns and Poems," is intended to refer to the hymns and poems he published and those he wrote that remained unpublished during the years he lived in Bristol. It is a foreboding title because of the extensive amount of material published between 1749, the year he acquired a house in Bristol, and 1771, the year he moved to London.

The fact that these hymns and poems were published during the period he lived in Bristol does not mean necessarily that they were written at this time. For example, *Hymns for the Watchnight*, published in 1750, contains eleven hymns, ten of which first appeared in *Hymns and Sacred Poems 1749* (vol. 2) and one of which was published in *Hymns and Sacred Poems 1742*. Also *Hymns for Children*, published by Farley of Bristol in 1763, printed once again the first half of Wesley's 1746 *Hymns for Children*, which itself had been taken in large measure from the section "Hymns for Children" in *Hymns and Sacred Poems 1742*.

Felix Farley of Bristol was Wesley's primary Bristol printer until the former's death in 1753. Thereafter Elizabeth Farley, the printer's widow, and their son Samuel took over the printing responsibilities for the works of Charles Wesley entrusted to them. In 1760 William Pine became Charles's primary Bristol printer. From 1760 to 1779 Pine published fifteen of his works, including three editions of *Hymns for Those that seek, and those that have Redemption in the Blood of Jesus Christ* (henceforth, *Redemption Hymns*), first printed in 1747. Pine published the first edition of *Hymns for the Use of Families* (1767) and the first and only edition of *Hymns on the Trinity* (1767).

It is important to note, however, that Charles Wesley's works were not limited to Bristol printers during his Bristol years. William Strahan of London was used by Wesley six times during this period: (1) 1755—*An Epistle to the Reverend Mr John Wesley*; (2) 1759—(a) *Funeral Hymns*, (b) *Hymns on the Expected Invasion*, (c) *Hymns of Intercession for the Kingdom of England*; (3) 1760—*Reasons against a Separation . . . 1758*. With hymns for Preachers among the Methodists; (4) 1771—*An Epistle to the Reverend Mr George Whitefield*. Another London printer, Henry Cock, was used by Charles Wesley in 1753 for a reprint of *Redemption Hymns* (1747).

There were a number of reprints of previous works by the Bristol printer William Pine between 1760 and 1779: as mentioned above, three editions of *Redemption Hymns*, four editions of *Hymns for New Year's Day*, two editions of *Hymns for those to whom Christ is All in All*.

If we exclude non-hymnic poetry, such as *An Epistle to the Rev Mr John Wesley*, by Charles Wesley, *Presbyter of the Church of England* (1755), *An Epistle to the Reverend Mr George Whitefield* (1771), and *An Elegy on the late Reverend George Whitefield, M.A.* (1771), approximately 2,879 hymns were published by Wesley during the period of time he lived in Bristol, and many more were writ-

ten that remained unpublished. I reiterate, however, that the publication of these hymns during this period does not mean that they were written in Bristol, though it can be said without question that the majority of them were. *Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures*, published in two volumes by Felix Farley in 1762, was comprised of some 2,349 hymns on almost every book of the Bible, and undoubtedly most of these hymns were written during Wesley's Bristol years. Many were no doubt written in nearby Bath, where Charles went in 1761 to recuperate from an illness. This means that at least one-fourth of Charles's total hymn composition took place during the years he resided in Bristol. If we include the poems to John Wesley and the two Charles dedicated to George Whitefield, death poems, and other non-hymnic lyrics, it can be said unequivocally that well over one-fourth of his total poetical output was composed in the Bristol years.

The procedure for the remainder of this article will be to trace Charles Wesley's Bristol poetical publications chronologically, noting where possible appropriate and identifiable works which were written during his Bristol years that remained unpublished at the time or during his lifetime.

### 1750

The transitional publications for the Bristol residency were, one might say, companion pieces: *Hymns for the Watchnight* and *Hymns for New Year's Day*, both published in 1750. The former was a reproduction of previously published hymns: ten of the eleven hymns were first published as "Hymns for the Watchnight" in *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of 1749, volume 2. One hymn came from *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of 1742. *Hymns for New Year's Day* included seven hymns and was published anonymously. It contained two hymns that have endured: "Blow ye the trumpet, blow" (No. 3) and "Come, let us anew our journey pursue" (No. 5).

On February 8, 1750, Charles recorded in his *Journal*, "There was an earthquake in London." At this time he was in Bristol and his brother John, who was in London, recorded the following account of the earthquake.

It was about a quarter after twelve that the earthquake began at the skirts of the town. It began in the south-east, went through Southwark, under the river, and then from one end of London to the other. It was observed at Westminster and Grosvenor-square [at] a quarter before one. Perhaps, if we allow for the difference of the clocks, about a quarter of an hour after it began in Southwark. There were three distinct shakes, or wavings to and fro, attended with a hoarse, rumbling noise, like thunder.<sup>1</sup>

One month later, on March 8th of 1750, Charles Wesley was in London and John in Bristol. Charles recorded in his *Journal* on that day: "There was an earthquake in London." John was in Bristol at the time and on the same day Charles wrote to John:

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Jackson, *The Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A.*, 2 vols. (London: Published by John Mason, 1841), 1:549.

This morning, at a quarter after five, we had another shock of an earthquake, far more violent than that of February 8th. I was just repeating my text, when it shook the Foundery so violently, that we all expected it to fall upon our heads. A great cry followed from the women and the children. I immediately cried out, 'Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved, and the hills be carried into the midst of the sea: for the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.' He filled my heart with faith, and my mouth with words, shaking their souls, as well as their bodies.<sup>2</sup>

And on Wednesday, April 4th, he recorded:

Fear filled our chapel, occasioned by a prophecy of the earthquake's return this night. I preached my written sermon on the subject with great effect, and gave out several suitable hymns. It was a glorious night for the disciples of Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

In less than one month Charles Wesley had begun, if not completed, the hymns for his pamphlet of nineteen texts with the title *Hymns occasioned by the Earthquake, March 8, 1750* (London, 1750). Part 1 included six hymns, and Part 2 consisted of thirteen hymns.

The primary emphases of these hymns were: the power and sovereignty of God, God's mercy, and God's righteous dealing with humankind; divine forbearance and long-suffering, uncertainty of life, and earthly possessions. What endures is the joy which comes from Christ. The hymns are primarily devotional in nature and plead for serenity amid all the turmoil rampant in England.

In the 1750 collection see in particular Hymn 5, "From whence these dire Portents around" in relation to a poem, which begins with the identical first line, by Charles's brother Samuel in his *Poems on Several Occasions* (1736), pages 136–37. The poem is entitled "On the Passion of Our Saviour" and focuses upon the earthquake at the crucifixion. Charles takes his brother's first line and makes a connection with the experience of the 1750 earthquake.

Samuel:

1. From whence these dire Portents around,  
That Earth and Heav'n amaze?  
Wherefore do Earthquakes cleave the Ground?  
Why hides the Sun his Rays?

(p. 136)

Charles:

1. From whence these dire Portents around,  
That strike us with unwonted fear?  
Why do these earthquakes rock the ground,  
And threaten our destruction near?  
Ye prophets smooth, the cause explain,  
And lull us to repose again.

(*Poetical Works*, 6:24)

<sup>2</sup>Jackson, 1:549.

<sup>3</sup>Jackson, 1:550.

In the second edition of *Hymns occasioned by the Earthquake, March 8, 1750*, published in 1756 by Farley of Bristol, at the end of Part 1 was added “An Hymn upon the pouring out of the Seventh Vial, Rev. xvi. xvii, &c. Occasioned by the Destruction of Lisbon” (pp. 10–12). It is added at the conclusion of Part 1, following the heading “To which are added An Hymn for the English in America, and another for the Year 1756.”

While it is clear that the following stanzas from Part 2 of the poem on Lisbon would not have been intended for singing in local parishes, they illustrate the poetical eloquence of Wesley, almost forever lost in this obscure place.

3. Then let the thundering trumpet sound;  
     The latest lightning glare;  
     The mountains melt; the solid ground  
     Dissolve as liquid air;  
     The huge celestial bodies roll,  
     Amid that general fire,  
     And shrivel as a parchment scroll,  
     And all in smoke expire!

Notice the cascading alliteration in this stanza: the *th*—“Then let the thundering trumpet sound;” the *l*’s in line 2—“The latest lightning glare;” and the *m*’s in line 3—“The mountains meet.”

4. Yet still the Lord, the Saviour reigns,  
     When nature is destroy’d,  
     And no created thing remains  
     Throughout the flaming void.  
     Sublime upon His azure throne,  
     He speaks the’almighty word:  
     His fiat is obey’d! ’tis done;  
     And Paradise restored.
5. So be it! let this system end,  
     This ruinous earth and skies;  
     The New Jerusalem descend,  
     The new creation rise.  
     The power omnipotent assume;  
     Thy brightest majesty!  
     And when Thou dost in glory come,  
     My Lord, remember me!

It should be noted that Charles’s sister Mehetabel (Hetty) died on March 21, 1750, and was buried on March 26th in London, and Charles was present.

### 1753

While *Hymns and Spiritual Songs, intended for the use of real Christians of all denominations* (London: Strahan, 1753) was a publication of John Wesley and

included eighty-four hymn selections from *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of 1739, 1740, and 1742, it is important to mention it here, because of the Charles Wesley texts which are included. "By John Wesley, M.A." first appears in the tenth edition, which was published by William Pine of Bristol. In the 1771 edition, published also by Pine, one finds on the title page "By John and Charles Wesley" for the first time. This is the attribution of authorship for all succeeding editions during the lives of the Wesleys, except the Collins printing of 1771, in which was printed "By John Wesley, M.A."<sup>4</sup>

In December of 1753 Sally Wesley contracted smallpox. No sooner had she recovered, though gravely disfigured, than their first-born son, John Wesley, who was one year and four months old, became ill with the disease. He died not long after and had to be buried before Charles could return from London. To what extent these devastating family experiences contributed to a rather lengthy hiatus in Charles Wesley's publishing program, especially of new works, remains an open question. Note that after the three hymn pamphlets published in 1750, including a total of thirty-seven hymns, there is no other major publication until 1755.

Charles Wesley was, however, busy at other tasks as well during these years. From the entry in his *Journal* of July 12, 1754, we know that he was assisting John with the *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*: "We continued in our retreat, transcribing the *Notes*." And, of course, he continued with such pastoral duties as preaching and visitation of the sick and prisoners.

### 1755

One thing is certain, when he began the publication of new material once again in the year 1755, clearly his poetry took on a new character. His published poetry up to that time had been primarily hymns, but during that year he wrote extensive poetic epistles to diverse friends, on subjects which interested him. The largest collection of these poems is found in *MS Epistles* bearing the title "Epistles to Moravians, Predestinarians and Methodists. By a Clergyman of the Church of England." It includes eight such epistles in decasyllabic couplets. All of them appear to have been written in 1755, except for "Epistle to a Friend," which is also in *MS Shorthand*. Only one was published that year, namely, the one written to John Wesley. The one to George Whitefield was published after Whitefield's death. The remainder of the poems were never published until Oliver Beckerlegge and this author published them in volume 3 of *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley* (Nashville: Kingswood/Abingdon, 1992). The previously unpublished poems are:

1. *An Epistle to the Rev Mr John Wesley, by Charles Wesley, Presbyter of the Church of England*. In this poetic communiqué Charles declares his passionate

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<sup>4</sup>The 1771 edition of *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* was published by Isaac Collins (1796–1817) of Burlington, New Jersey, and was therefore probably not supervised by John Wesley.

devotion to the Church and his determination to die in its service. Nevertheless he is sharp, though affectionate, in his criticism of the ills of the Church, and he openly censures it for worldliness and lost spirituality. He also declares his unalterable friendship for his brother, confidence in his brother's faithfulness, and being of one heart with him.

In a letter to Sally dated May 31st (1755) from London, Charles wrote:

Dearest Sally,—I count the days between us, and look towards Charles-street sleeping and waking. This evening I hope will bring sister Davis safe to Bristol. I have sent you a pound of tea, and half a pound to Sarah Jones, which I beg her to accept. Be sure, refuse her money. If you want any more, tell me so in your next.

Lady Huntingdon I expect at Clifton about the middle or end of July.

On Thursday I read my Epistle a second time to a crowded audience, and yesterday at the watch-night. Seven hundred are sent by this day's carrier.

George and I spent the morning at Mrs. Grinfield's, who sends her love and prayers after you. We dined at Mr. Waller's. The Lord preserve my dearest Sally!<sup>5</sup>

The epistle which he read was indubitably the one just mentioned, which Charles Wesley published just after his return from the 1755 conference.

2, 3. Two epistles to Howell Harris. Harris was in danger of losing his usefulness, and Charles sought to rouse him out of his lethargy with this stirring epistle in which he contrasts Harris' former energy with his now placid state. Apparently Harris did not know how to take what Wesley had written to him, and so Charles wrote a second epistle to him in which he describes the antichristian tendency of Quietism to which Harris had become receptive.

4, 5. Two epistles to George Stonehouse, ex-vicar of Islington. Stonehouse was already in retirement in Dornford. Wesley strikes a kind tone while attempting to rejuvenate Stonehouse's interest in active ministry. Charles mentions Stonehouse's first wife, which probably did not please the former vicar, since he made it clear that he did not approve of certain passages in the first epistle. Nevertheless, when he married a second time, he invited Charles Wesley to be the officiant.

6. An epistle to Count Zinzendorf is full of sincere rebuke. Wesley clearly finds the theological posture of Zinzendorf, as pertains to Quietism, unscriptural and dangerous. He is confident that Zinzendorf has misled Gambold and Stonehouse. This doctrine was a construct of Antinomianism and universal restoration in Wesley's view, and he fervently opposed alienating clergy from the Church of England and attracting them into another church. Charles was vigorously opposed to proselytism, especially when it was to silence and inactivity.

7. "An Epistle to a Friend" is from an earlier date.

Another poem first published in 1755 is entitled "Catholic Love," which was printed at the end of John Wesley's sermon on 2 Kings 10:15. The poem of seven stanzas expresses a strong evangelical piety coupled with a high ecclesiology, as expressed in stanzas 2 and 7 respectively:

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<sup>5</sup>Jackson, 2:81. "George" may refer to George Stonehouse (1714–1793).

2. Forth from the midst of Babel brought,  
 Parties and sects I cast behind;  
 Enlarged my heart, and free my thought,  
 Where'er the latent truth I find,  
 The latent truth with joy to own,  
 And bow to Jesu's name alone.

.....

7. Join'd to the hidden church unknown  
 In this sure bond of perfectness,  
 Obscurely safe, I dwell alone,  
 And glory in the' uniting grace,  
 To me, to each believer given,  
 To all thy saints in earth and heaven.<sup>6</sup>

### 1756

The years 1755 and following were a difficult period of history for England. In June 1755 the Seven Years' War began. Because of a plague among livestock, cattle were dying at a rapid rate. The French and British colonies in North America were moving toward confrontation. There were conflicts between Protestants and Catholics. France was becoming more and more hostile toward England, as opposition to Protestantism grew and France threatened to invade England. Lisbon was devastated by an earthquake on November 1, 1755. Yet, amid all this turmoil the British were lethargic about arming themselves.

February 6, 1756, was declared a National Fast Day and Methodists, to be sure, sounded the alarm. George Whitefield published his *Address to Persons of all Denominations, occasioned by the Alarm of an intended invasion*, which included strong opposition to the Roman Catholic Church. John Wesley wrote and printed *Serious Thoughts occasioned by the late Earthquake at Lisbon*. He contended that the best preparation for all calamities was true religion. Wesley called all to the repentance of personal and national sins and summoned the clergy to be leaders in shaping the nation.

Caught up in the spirit of these events, Charles Wesley composed and published seventeen hymns under the title *Hymns for the Year 1756* (Bristol, 1756). The hymns are a call to the observance of the National Fast Day and emphasize national guilt, need for repentance, God's impending judgment, and God as the only refuge. Three hymns in this small collection were published in *A Collection of Hymns for the use of the People called Methodists* (1780):

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<sup>6</sup>*The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, ed. George Osborn, 13 vols. (London: Wesleyan-Methodist Conference Office, 1868-72), 6:71-2.

“Righteous God, whose vengeful vials” (No. 15), four of six stanzas, vv. 1–2, 5–6, No. 59 in the 1780 *Collection*  
 “Stand th’omnipotent decree” (No. 16) No. 60 in 1780 *Collection*  
 “How happy are the little flock” (No. 17) No. 61 in 1780 *Collection*

Note a stanza of “Righteous God, whose vengeful vials” omitted by John Wesley in the 1780 *Collection*:

Earth, unhinged as from her basis,  
 Owns her great Restorer nigh;  
 Plunged in complicate distresses,  
 Poor distracted sinners cry:  
 Men their instant doom deploring,  
 Faint beneath their fearful load:  
 Ocean working, rising, roaring  
 Claps his hands to meet his God.

The last two lines seem to echo a passage in John Wesley’s “Serious Thoughts occasioned by the late Earthquake at Lisbon”:

Who can account for the late motion in the waters; not only that of the sea, and of rivers communicating therewith, but even that in canals, fish-ponds, cisterns, and all either large or small bodies of water? It was particularly observed, that, while the water itself was so violently agitated, neither did the earth shake at all, nor any of the vessels which contained the water. Was such a thing ever known or heard of before?<sup>7</sup>

This resonates also in Hymn 14, 5:

Outstretching His hand O’er mountains and seas,  
 He shakes the dry land, And watery abyss!  
 A marvelous motion Through nature is spread,  
 And *peaceable* ocean Starts out of his bed!

In this collection of 1756 one finds once again the influence of other poets. Compare stanza 1 of Edward Young’s *Night Thoughts* (vi. 744–49) with stanza 1 of No. 16 in *Hymns for the Year 1756*.

Wesley	Young
Stand th’omnipotent decree!	If so decreed, th’almighty will be done.
Jehovah’s will be done!	Let earth dissolve, yon ponderous orbs descend,
Nature’s end we wait to see,	And grind us into dust: the soul is safe;
And hear her final groan.	The man emerges; mounts above the wreck,
Let this earth dissolve, and blend	As tow’ring flame from nature’s funeral pyre;
In death the wicked and the just;	O’er devastation, as a gainer, smiles.
Let those pond’rous orbs descend	
And grind us into dust.	

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<sup>7</sup>Jackson, 2:101–102; see *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 14 vols. (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872; and later reprints), 11:5–6.

Compare also Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, xv. 391–407 with No. 16, stanza 2, lines 5–8:

## Wesley

Lo! the heavenly Spirit towers,  
Like flames, o'er nature's funeral pyre,  
Triumphs in immortal powers,  
And claps his wings of fire!

## Ovid

So when the new-born phoenix first is seen,  
Her feathered subjects all adore their Queen,  
And, while she makes her progress through the east,  
From every grove her numerous trains increase:  
Each poet of the air her glory sings,  
And round him the pleased audience clap their wings.

*Hymns for the Year 1756* was quickly reprinted in a second edition, which omitted the reference to the National Fast Day, since it was already past.

At this time Charles Wesley thought it was timely to revive his *Hymns for Times of Trouble and Persecution*, which were written at the time of the 1745 rebellion, so he brought out a new edition.<sup>8</sup> Then he published another edition of *Hymns on the Earthquake of 1750* with three additions: a prayer for the English in America, a hymn on the destruction of Lisbon, and a hymn for the year 1756 (the year of this edition of the pamphlet). Part of the hymn concerning the destruction of Lisbon was included in the 1780 *Collection*: No. 62, "Woe to the men on earth who dwell" from "Hymn upon the pouring out of the seventh vial" with the title "Revelation 16, 17, etc. Occasioned by the Destruction of Lisbon" (Nov. 1, 1755). This hymn follows "How happy are the little flock," Nos. 62 and 63 in the *Collection* respectively. John Wesley grouped the three hymns from the 1756 publication together in the *Collection*.

In the early part of 1756 Charles Wesley was in Bristol, and it was there that he printed the hymn pamphlets on the state of the nation that have just been discussed. On his way to Ireland John Wesley came to Bristol and Wales, where he stayed until August. It is possible that Charles was in London at the time, for he would have considered it important that he be there in John's absence to administer the sacrament.

Just two weeks after the conference Charles left to itinerate among the societies of Staffordshire, Yorkshire, and Lancashire. His goal on this journey, which would be his last itineration, was to correct whatever was amiss that he encountered, stay the course in Christian living and remaining within the Church of England, to preach, and to extend the work of the societies wherever possible. His record of this trip is extremely valuable for a description of the state of the societies at the time.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup>*The Journal of the Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A.*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 2 vols., 1849 (Hereafter cited as "CW, *Journal*"), 2:119, October 1, 1756: "We sung the 'Hymns in a Tumult,' with great calmness and consolation." Perhaps they sang from the new edition.

<sup>9</sup>See CW, *Journal*, 2:114–139, September 17–November 5, 1756.

## 1758

There were apparently no publications during 1757. The following year, 1758, John Wesley published *Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England*. He described twelve reasons and presented them in a rather conciliatory tone. "Whether it be *lawful* or no, (which itself may be disputed, being not so clear a part as some imagine,) it is by no means *expedient*, for us to separate from the Church of England."

To his hymns which concluded John's publication Charles prefixed a much stronger statement:

I think myself bound in duty to add my testimony to my brother's. His twelve reasons against our ever separating from the Church of England are mine also. I subscribe to them with all my heart. Only with regard to the first, I am quite clear that it is neither *expedient* nor *lawful* for me to separate; and I never had the least inclination or temptation to do so. My affection for the Church is as strong as ever; and I clearly see my calling; which is, to live and die in her communion. This therefore, I am determined to do, the Lord being my helper.

I have subjoined the hymns for the lay-preachers; still further to secure this end, to cut off all jealousy and suspicion from our friends, or hope from our enemies, of our having any design of ever separating from the Church. I have no secret reserve, or distant thought of it. I never had. Would to God all the Methodist preachers were, in this respect, like-minded with CHARLES WESLEY.<sup>10</sup>

In these seven hymns Charles addresses the fallen state of the established Church as regards doctrine and views discipline, morality, devotion, and self-denial as important characteristics of Methodist preachers. Interestingly here one finds a high ecclesiology and a fervent evangelical spirit. Note, for example, Hymn 5:5, and 4:5:

We pray these dry bones may live:  
 We see the answer of our prayer!  
 Thou dost a thousand tokens give,  
 That *England's* Church is still thy care,  
 Ten thousand witnesses appear,  
 Ten thousand proofs, that God is here!<sup>11</sup>

Here let us spend our utmost zeal,  
 Here let us all our powers exert,  
 To testify thy gracious will,  
 Inform the world how kind thou art,  
 And nothing know, desire, approve,  
 But Jesus—and thy bleeding love.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>John Wesley, *Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England* in *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design*, ed. Rupert E. Davies, vol. 9 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, 35 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 341–42.

<sup>11</sup>*Poetical Works*, 6:104.

<sup>12</sup>*Poetical Works*, 6:103.

During the year 1758, Wesley also completed *Hymns of Intercession for All Mankind*, published by Farley of Bristol, which is a collection of forty hymns, a miscellany of devotional poetry. Such a collection might have been motivated by the fact that generally at 12 noon on Friday the main Methodist societies held intercessory prayer services the subjects of which were usually church, nation, and world.

Wesley's collection is quite an eclectic array of intercessory subjects. He recalls well in these texts the cause of faith and the church, and the welfare of the people, nation, and world at a time when England was still at war with France, and Austria and France were at war with Prussia. Here one catches a glimpse of Charles's political views and how he seeks to balance allegiance to the Crown and to God. A few of the themes indicate the breadth of his intercessions: for all mankind, peace, the church catholic, the Church of England, the ministers of the gospel, his Majesty King George, the King of Prussia, the Prince of Wales, the British nation, the Magistrates, the nobility, the Parliament, the fleet, the army, the universities, Socinians, Deists, Pelagians, heathen, Jews, and Turks.

Hymns 32 and 33 no doubt would be found extremely offensive today, the former perhaps labeled anti-Semitic and the latter anti-Muslim.

*For the Jews*

Outcasts from Thee, and scatter'd wide  
 Through every nation under heaven,  
 Blaspheming whom they crucified,  
 Unsaved, unpitied, unforgiven,  
 Branded like *Cain*, they bear their load,  
 Abhor'd by men, and cursed of God.

But hast Thou finally forsook,  
 For ever cast thine own away?  
 Wilt thou not bid the murderers look  
 On Him they pierced, and weep, and pray?  
 Yes, gracious God, Thy word is past,  
 All *Israel* shall be saved at last.

(No. 32:2, 3)

*For the Turks*

The smoke of the infernal cave,  
 Which half the Christian world o'erspread,  
 Disperse, thou heavenly light, and save  
 The souls by *that impostor* led,  
 That *Arab-thief*, as Satan bold,  
 Who quite destroy'd thine *Asian* fold.

(No. 33:2)

Each title in the first thirty-five hymns in *Hymns of Intercession* begins with the word "For," generally followed by a name, title, or designation of a group. However, hymns 36 through 40 have the title "Thy Kingdom Come!" Of these John Wesley included number 37 "He comes! He comes! the Judge severe!" in the 1780 *Collection* (No. 55). Note how Wesley draws on Henry Carey's poem:

Song in *Britannia*

He comes, he comes, the hero comes,  
Sound your trumpets, beat your drums,  
From port to port let cannons roar  
His welcome to the British shore.

Prepare, prepare, your songs prepare  
Loudly rend the echoing air;  
From pole to pole your joys resound,  
For virtue is with glory crown'd.

Wesley

He comes! He comes! the Judge severe!  
The seventh trumpet speaks Him near!  
His lightnings flash, his thunders roll,  
How welcome to the faithful soul!

From heaven angelic voices sound,  
See the Almighty Jesus crowned!  
Girt with omnipotence and grace,  
And glory decks the Saviour's face!

(37:1, 2)

Hymn 39 in *Hymns of Intercession* is the well-known "Lo! He comes with clouds descending," which John Wesley added to the second edition (1765) of *Select Hymns with Tunes Annexed* (1761).

### 1759

In 1759 Charles published a second series of *Funeral Hymns*. He had printed his first series under the title *Funeral Hymns* in 1746 (London: Strahan). It contained sixteen hymns. The second publication bearing this title was different in these primary respects: (1) it was much larger, including forty-three hymns, and (2) in the 1746 publication only three hymns were dedicated to specific individuals, as indicated in the title, while in the 1759 publication sixteen of the hymns were dedicated to specific individuals. It was often Wesley's practice to celebrate the lives of others in poems occasioned by their deaths. Of special interest are the poems dedicated to Rev. John Meriton, John Hutchinson, Grace Bowen, Thomas Walsh, and the Rev. James Hervey. Many of these poems are quite lengthy and have numerous parts, which receive hymn numbers, though one cannot imagine they were to have been sung as hymns.

The 1759 publication also began with three eloquent texts of Wesley which have endured: "Come, let us join our friends above," "How happy every child of grace," and "And let this feeble body fail."

George Osborn created some confusion, when, in the sixth volume of *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, he gave the title "Funeral Hymns. Third series." to a group of poems, of which he was careful to note: "most of which were not published during the author's life."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Two of the poems had actually been published previously, as Osborn states in his footnotes: (1) "On the death of Mr. Thomas Hogg, June 29, 1750," which was published in 1750 at the conclusion of a biographical tract. See *Poetical Works*, 6:290-91. (2) "An Hymn on the Death of the Rev. George Whitefield," which was printed at the end of John Wesley's sermon preached in Whitefield's London chapels on November 18, 1770. See *Poetical Works*, 6:316-17.

Rev. James Hervey was one of the Oxford Methodists who later became a predestinarian. After his death a Mr. Cudworth published an heretical indictment of John Wesley by Hervey. Charles wrote the two tender and affectionate hymns about Hervey just after his death and before the Cudworth publication was released. He was later asked to write an epitaph for Hervey but declined. In his MS verse are the following lines:

O'erreach'd, impell'd by a sly Gnostic's art,  
 To stab his father, guide, and faithful friend,  
 Would pious Hervey act the' accuser's part?  
 And *could* a life like his in malice end?

No: by redeeming love the snare is broke;  
 In death his rash ingratitude he blames;  
 Desires and *wills* the evil to revoke,  
 And dooms the' unfinish'd libel to the flames.

Who then for filthy gain betray'd his trust,  
 And show'd a kinsman's fault in open light?  
 Let *him* adorn the monumental bust,  
 The' encomium fair in brass or marble write.

Or if they need a nobler trophy raise,  
 As long as Theron and Aspasio live,  
 Let Madan or Romaine record his praise;  
 Enough that Wesley's brother can *forgive!*<sup>14</sup>

On May 5, 1759, Lord Ferrers, a cousin of Lady Huntingdon, was executed, having been tried and convicted of murder. Charles wrote three hymns of petition for him under the title "Prayer for the Conversion of a Murtherer, The E[arl] of Fer[rer]s," which he left in MS form<sup>15</sup> and which may be found in volume 1 of *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley*.

In 1759 Britain lived under the threat of invasion by the French, which never transpired, and

To assist the devotions of the praying remnant, in this crisis, as he had done upon former occasions, he published "Hymns on the expected Invasion, 1759." [eight hymns] At a subsequent period, Mr. John Wesley endeavoured to encourage the people of England, by referring to the revival of true religion which was everywhere manifest; saying that he could not find in all history, that a nation was ever given up to ruin, when the Spirit was poured out upon the people, and large numbers were turned to God by a true conversion. Charles dwells upon the same thought in this tract.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Jackson, 2:159–160.

<sup>15</sup>See *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley*, ed. S T Kimbrough, Jr., and Oliver A. Beckerlegge, 3 vols. (Nashville: Kingswood/Abingdon, 1988, 1990, 1992), 1:246–251, for all three poems.

<sup>16</sup>Jackson, 2:166.

On November 20 the French fleet was engaged by Admiral Hawke and defeated between Belleisle and Cape Quiberon. Thereafter public thanksgivings were offered to God for deliverance and once again Charles Wesley composed his poetical response in *Hymns to be used on the Thanksgiving-Day, Nov. 29, 1759*. This publication of sixteen very patriotic hymns bore no date of publication nor place of publication. Note the tone which Wesley gives to “The Song of Moses” (Hymn 12):

3. The Lord, He is a man of war,  
     In every age the same:  
 Let Britain saved, with shouts declare  
     The great Jehovah’s name:  
 Jehovah on our foes did frown  
     Amidst their furious boast,  
 And cast their chosen captains down,  
     And drowned half their host.
  
4. Into the depths they sunk as lead,  
     Who Thee and Thine opposed,  
 They sunk at once, and o’er their head  
     The mighty waters closed!  
 Thine own right hand with power supreme,  
     With glorious, dreadful power,  
 In pieces dash’d their ships and them,  
     And bade the gulf devour.<sup>17</sup>

### 1761–1762

In 1761 Charles Wesley became very ill and went to Bath for the sake of the waters. There he worked on the material for *Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures*, which he published the following year, 1762. However, in 1761 there was another major publication by John Wesley which included a number of Charles Wesley’s hymns: *Select Hymns with Tunes Annext*. All of the selections were from previous publications, 133 texts and 102 tunes, but only eighteen were from the 1753 *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*. *Select Hymns* included over eighty texts by Charles Wesley.

Interestingly, during a long illness (1754–55) John Wesley had prepared *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, and now during a long illness (1761–62) Charles Wesley prepared *Short Hymns*, in one sense the counterpart to his brother’s *Notes*. It was his last major publishing project. Some of the hymns and poems are expositional, some exegetical, and they are in a wide variety of meters.

Volume 1 contains 1,160 hymns and poems on the Old Testament.

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<sup>17</sup>*Poetical Works*, 6:178.

Volume 2 contains 318 hymns and poems on the Old Testament and 871 hymns and poems on the New Testament, for a total of 2,349.

Charles continued to rework poetry in the 1762 edition, as is illustrated by a poem in volume 2 on John 19:26–27, which appears in a later manuscript (*MS John*) in identical form with the exception that the word “mankind” in line seven has been changed to “thy saints.”

These two volumes comprise one of largest lyrical commentaries on Holy Scripture in the English language, and Charles did not let John edit them. John's notes in his own copy, which is found in his house next door to Wesley's Chapel in London, indicate what he probably would have edited, particularly as regards sanctification, perfection, and mysticism.

The hymns and poems are usually brief consisting of one or two stanzas. Some are longer. The poems tend to focus on central ideas, words, and phrases of a biblical passage, which is quoted immediately prior to the poem. At times he wrote more than one poem on a passage. Though he used the word “hymns” in the title, many of the texts could not possibly have been intended for singing. Here are some of the ones which have endured:

Captain of Israel's host and guide, 1:133, p. 41  
 Thy causeless, unexhausted love, 1:169, p. 53  
 O thou who camest from above, 1:183, p. 57  
 A charge to keep I have, 1:188, p. 58  
 Lord, in the strength of grace, 1:621, p. 194  
 Thou Shepherd of Israel, and mine, 1:931, p. 294  
 'Tis finished! the Messiah dies, 2:387, p. 234  
 Come then, and dwell in me, 2:569, p. 298  
 Come, let us use the grace divine, 2:1242, p. 36

In *Short Hymns* Charles Wesley demonstrated how the art of poetry often gets to the heart of a biblical passage without the advantages or disadvantages of biblical criticism. He achieved this frequently by the turn of a phrase or by his ingenious use of alliteration, assonance, repetition, structure, and rhyme. Unquestionably his knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin provided him with a reservoir of linguistic resources which not only helped him grasp the meaning of Holy Scripture but which also enriched his poetical vocabulary. This strong linguistic background and a vast knowledge of the Authorized Version of the Bible are reflected in his diction, language style, and thought. His frequent preference for the older Coverdale version of the Psalms was no doubt due to its inclusion in the Book of Common Prayer and Wesley's regular use of it in the worship of the Church of England and in private meditation.

The *Short Hymns* clearly illustrate, however, that Wesley was not slavishly bound to the Authorized Version (1611), which was already 150 years old at the time. His knowledge of biblical languages helped him to see its disadvantages, imperfections, as well as its beauty. Therefore, he often made notations enclosed

in brackets within biblical verses which he cited in *Short Hymns*, e.g., [Heb.] or [Gr.], in which he indicated a more accurate or alternate translation. Hence, there are three sources for the verses from the Psalter which he cites: the Authorized Version (King James), the Coverdale Version (Book of Common Prayer Psalter), and his own translations.

In volume 2 in the New Testament section he also made occasional reference to his brother John's *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, on which he had collaborated seven years earlier (1755). It is significant that in hundreds of instances John Wesley anticipated, in the volume just mentioned, translation changes that were made in the revision of the Authorized Version in 1881. Both brothers produced major works on the Bible: (1) John—*Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, (2) Charles—*Short Hymns* on the Old and New Testaments.

The following is a tabulation of Charles Wesley's literary output in *Short Hymns*.

	Lines of Poetry	Stanzas
Vol. 1 (Old Testament)	10,903	1,241
Vol. 2 (Old Testament)	3,320	446
Vol. 2 (New Testament)	8,912	1,306
Total	23,135	2,993

According to Frank Baker's calculations Wesley wrote approximately 180,000 lines of poetry and 27,000 stanzas.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, *Short Hymns* contains some 12.8% of the total number of lines and 11% of the total number of stanzas he produced.

The two volumes of *Short Hymns* are filled with a variety of theological themes, but two in particular must be mentioned: spiritual darkness and Christian perfection. (1) Spiritual darkness: No doubt influenced by the mystics, Charles believed that spiritual darkness was a reality which resulted from divine initiative. God permits or initiates distressing uncertainty in our lives in order to lead us toward holiness. Perhaps this fit him and his physical problems well. Charles concludes one poem by saying:

The Lord may crush a sinless saint,  
As once he left his Son to faint  
And die beneath his load.

John did not believe that the children of God could ever be "forsaken" by God, as was Christ in the garden of Gethsemane and upon the cross. Christ was delivered up for the world's guilt and pain. People may be tempted by Satan and experience forsakenness, but they may always know that God has adopted them through love.

<sup>18</sup>Frank Baker, *Charles Wesley's Verse* (London: Epworth, 1988, first published 1964), 7.

(2) Christian perfection: Charles no longer contended for the necessary continuance of indwelling sin until death; rather he maintained that Christian perfection is a loftier matter than either he or his brother had affirmed.

In his estimation, it is not to be obtained by a present act of faith in the mercy, truth, and power of God; but is rather the result of severe discipline, comprehending affliction, temptation, long-continued labour, and the persevering exercise of faith in seasons of spiritual darkness, when the heart is wrung with bitter anguish. By this painful and lingering process he [Charles] believed that the death of "the old man" is effected, and a maturity is given to all the graces of the Christian character.<sup>19</sup>

So no one could say that he or she had attained this state. No one could say he or she had been made perfect in love in this life.

Even though Wesley published the two volumes of *Short Hymns* in 1762, he continued to work diligently on scriptural hymns in the style developed in the 1762 publication. Almost none of these additional scriptural hymns was published during his lifetime. At his death hundreds of hymns on the four Gospels and the Book of Acts remained unpublished.<sup>20</sup> When George Osborn published his thirteen-volume work of Wesley poetry, he published hundreds of these hitherto unpublished scriptural hymns. In fact, he published them as though they were a part of *Short Hymns*, which continues to create the false impression that the original two volumes of *Short Hymns* included some 5,000 hymns, when they included only 2,349. Unfortunately Osborn gave no indication of the previously unpublished material he had printed. In addition, Osborn often printed only selected stanzas, rather than complete hymns. In spite of the large number of Charles Wesley's unpublished scriptural hymns published by Osborn, until 1990 there still remained over 800 hymns and poems on the four Gospels and the Book of Acts alone, that had not yet been published and which Oliver A. Beckerlegge and this author published in volume 2 of *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley*.

It was generally not Charles Wesley's custom to affix dates to his manuscript poetry. He broke this pattern, however, when he continued his work on scriptural hymns. He dated the manuscripts on the four Gospels and the Book of Acts as follows (in each instance the notations come at the end of the manuscripts):

MS John:	begun Dec. 3, 1763 and finished Apr. 30, 1764
MS Acts:	begun Nov. 13, 1764 and finished Apr. 24, 1764
MS Matthew:	here he gives only the date finished—March 8, 1766
MS Mark:	here he gives only the date begun—March 8, 1766
MS Luke:	begun Apr. 8 and finished Apr. 29, 1766.

<sup>19</sup>Jackson, 2:208.

<sup>20</sup>See *Unpublished Poetry*, vol. 2.

## 1763

In 1763, the year following the publication of *Short Hymns*, Charles Wesley published *Hymns for Children*. The printer was once again Farley of Bristol. Published anonymously, this volume contained 100 hymns. Wesley published once again the first half of his 1746 *Hymns for Children*, which was largely borrowed from the section "Hymns for Children" in *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of 1742. In a letter to his wife dated January 5, 1760, Charles expressed his intent regarding the 1763 publication: "I am going to print my Hymns for Children." This new publication of children's hymns also included versifications of some of his brother John's *Instructions for Children* (1745), as well as of the Westminster Assembly's *Shorter Catechism* (1647), which John had abridged for his *Christian Library*.<sup>21</sup>

*Hymns for Children* expresses a fervent evangelical spirit filled with strong and terse language about lying, cheating, sin, and hell.

## Hymn 56—Against Lying

1. Happy the well-instructed youth  
Who in his earliest infancy  
Loves from his heart to speak the truth,  
And, like his God, abhors a lie.
2. He that hath practised no deceit  
With false, equivocating tongue,  
Nor even durst o'erreach, or cheat,  
Or slanderously his neighbour wrong:
3. He in the house of God shall dwell,  
He on His holy hill shall rest,  
The comforts of religion feel,  
And then be number'd with the bless'd.
4. But who or guile or falsehood use,  
Or take God's name in vain, or swear,  
Or ever lie, themselves to' excuse,  
They shall their dreadful sentence bear.
5. The Lord, the true and faithful Lord,  
Himself hath said that every liar  
Shall surely meet his just reward,  
Assign'd him in eternal fire.<sup>22</sup>

Need I say that no doubt relational psychologists today would find Wesley's approach too archaic and harsh?

<sup>21</sup>See vol. 31 (1753).

<sup>22</sup>Hymn 56, "Against Lying," *Poetical Works*, 6:425.

The hymns are also very devotional in nature and stress the values of personal religion, as the following examples illustrate:

Hymn 63:                    O Father of all,  
                                   The great and the small,  
                                   The old and the young,  
 Thanksgiving accept from a stammerer's tongue:  
                                   Thy goodness we praise,  
                                   Which has found us a place,  
                                   Has planted us here,  
 To be mildly brought up in Thy nurture and fear.<sup>23</sup>

Hymn 65:                    Young men and maidens, raise  
                                   Your tuneful voices high;  
                                   Old men and children, praise  
                                   The Lord of earth and sky;  
 [God] Three in One, and One in Three,  
 Extol to all eternity.<sup>24</sup>

Hymn 66:                    Our minds to unbend,  
                                   We need not offend,  
 Or our Saviour by idleness grieve:  
                                   Whatsoever we do,  
                                   Our end is in view,  
 And to Jesus's glory we live.

.....  
                                   In our useful employ  
                                   We His blessing enjoy,  
 Whether clearing or digging the ground;  
                                   With songs we proclaim  
                                   Our Immanuel's name,  
 And our angels attend to the sound.<sup>25</sup>

1767

*Hymns for the Use of Families, and on various occasions* followed in 1767, published by William Pine of Bristol. This was a sizable volume of 176 pages including 166 hymns. Interestingly the hymns for “various occasions” made up about three-fourths of the volume, which received high praise from Henry Moore and Thomas Jackson. This was the last of Charles Wesley’s truly creative publications. Here one finds him writing from the perspective of a father, husband, and family member. He is particularly concerned with how members of a family

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<sup>23</sup>Hymn 63, stanza 1, *Poetical Works*, 6:431.  
<sup>24</sup>Hymn 65, *Poetical Works*, 6:433.  
<sup>25</sup>Hymn 66, stanzas 2 and 5, *Poetical Works*, 6:434–5.

respond to anxiety, sorrow, and joy within the family. It is not surprising to find him addressing subjects to which he has turned his thoughts and pen across the years: birth, baptism, marriage, sickness, recovery, bereavement, etc. He also treats what would seem to be a rather trivial subject, namely, a child's brushing his teeth, but apparently Charles knew the value of that even in the eighteenth century. Extremely timely is a poem about abusive husbands, and he expresses his own inner musings about whether, as some of his letters to his wife Sally indicate, they should move to another house in Bristol, possibly on Michael's-hill or move to London. Note these stirring lines:

1.           The Son of man supplies  
              My every outward need,  
Who had not, when he left the skies,  
              A place to lay his head:  
              He will provide my place,  
              And in due season show  
Where I shall pass my few sad days  
              Of pilgrimage below.
2.           No matter where, or how,  
              I in this desert live,  
If when my dying head I bow,  
              Jesus my soul receive:  
              Bless'd with thy precious love,  
              Saviour, 'tis all my care  
To reach the purchased house above  
              And find a mansion there.
3.           Saviour, I would not take  
              One step in life alone,  
Or dare the smallest motion make,  
              Without thy counsel known:  
              Thee I my Lord confess,  
              In every thing I see,  
And thou, by thine unerring grace,  
              Shalt order all for me.
4.           Surely thou wilt provide  
              The place thou know'st I need,  
A solitary place to hide  
              Thy hoary servant's head:  
              Where a few moments more,  
              Expecting my release,  
I may my father's God adore,  
              And then depart in peace.

1.           What matters it to me,  
              When a few days are past,  
Where I shall end my misery,  
              Where I shall breathe my last?  
              The meanest house or cot  
              The hoary hairs may screen  
Of one who would be clean forgot,  
              And live and die unseen.
  
2.           Exposed I long have been  
              In this bleak vale of tears,  
Midst scenes of vanity and sin  
              Consumed my threescore years:  
              I turn my face aside,  
              Sick of beholding more,  
And wish the latest storm t'outride,  
              And reach the happy shore.
  
3.           As dead already here,  
              Without desire or hope,  
Till from this earth I disappear.  
              I give the creature up;  
              In temporal despair  
              Contentedly abide,  
And in my flesh the tokens bear  
              Of Jesus crucified.<sup>26</sup>

It is also not surprising that the poet-priest would bring his poetical gifts to bear upon subjects which engaged him so intensely during his Bristol years as a Christian parent. How can parents instill in their children the values of faith which will sustain them throughout life? How can a Christian family be sustained in joy and tribulation and praise its Creator and Redeemer in thought, word, and deed? These concerns are consummate during Wesley's Bristol years, and they come to full expression in *Hymns for Children* and *Hymns for the Use of Families*. As terse and as strong as Charles's language sometimes is, by no means is it trite.

When Frank Baker some years ago wrote an article regarding the fifty years of Charles Wesley's poetry writing, he maintained that in every period Charles reached the heights of poetic genius that one often attributes only to the poet's early years. I should like to illustrate only one example of his masterful use of alliteration from the 1767 *Hymns for the Use of Families*. It comes from poem No. 92 of the volume and consists of five stanzas. I note only stanza 4.

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<sup>26</sup>Hymn CXIII, Stanzas 1–2, p. 121; Hymn CXIV, Stanzas 3–4, pp. 122–123; Hymn CXXV, Stanzas 1–3, p. 123.

The manifested favour  
 Better than life I feel  
 When conscious that my Saviour  
 Doth in His servant dwell:  
 The rapturous sensation  
 Restores my paradise,  
 Prepares for my translation,  
 And wafts me to the skies.  
 (*Poetical Works*, 7:111)

Notice how the *s*'s provide an entrance into Charles Wesley's rapturous sensation.

Another distinctive publication of 1767 was *Hymns on the Trinity*. This volume of 188 hymns was divided into two primary parts. Part 1 contains 136 hymns and was essentially Charles's poetical response to William Jones's work *The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity, proved by above an hundred short and clear arguments, expressed in terms of the Holy Scripture*. As in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* (1745), Wesley records his lyrical response to a theological treatise, which is written in prose. There are four sections of Part 1 with the following headings: "Hymns on the Divinity of Christ," "Hymns on the Divinity of the Holy Ghost," "Hymns on the Plurality and Trinity of Persons in the Godhead," and "On the Trinity in Unity." Part 2 consists of fifty-two hymns under the heading "Hymns and Prayers to the Trinity."

The *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* is primarily a direct response to Daniel Brevint's work on Holy Communion. Wesley often turned what he read in prose (Brevint, Matthew Henry, William Jones) and poetry (Dryden, Young, Ovid, Juvenal) into verse. In one sense, one might say he sometimes wrote his own theological treatise in poetry. And, of course, in the process he does more than versify: he interprets, embellishes, accentuates, amplifies, expounds. What is extremely important here, however, is that though one might set such verse to music for singing, there is serious question as to whether Wesley intended the bulk of the verse to be sung at all. Charles Wesley's thought process was a poetical one. He processed his thought in verse, which is much more puzzling to the prose-oriented discipline of theology, which delights in "turning a phrase" but not necessarily a poetical one. Theology today often categorizes such versification as "doxological," as well much of this material may be. But in the case of the first 136 hymns in the 1767 *Hymns on the Trinity* Wesley's primary concern is a response with theological integrity to Jones's work and, if there is something therein worthy to be sung, praise be to God, and John Wesley will make that decision!

Earlier in his life Charles Wesley had published a small pamphlet comprised largely of doxologies to the Holy Trinity, which is the nature of some hymns in Part 2 of the 1767 volume. Of *Hymns on the Trinity* (1767) Thomas Jackson had this to say:

There is not in the English language a volume that, in so small a compass, shows more clearly the scriptural doctrine on this subject, with its practical importance; and it has this peculiar advantage, that it proposes the subject, not as a matter of controversy, but of faith, and adoration, of prayer, thanksgiving, and praise.<sup>27</sup>

For Charles Wesley the Holy Trinity is the key to a relationship with God, that is, the Trinity in unity. We are redeemed through the Creator's Son who intercedes for us, and the Holy Spirit sustains, regenerates, and sanctifies those who repent and believe.

The following hymns from *Hymns on the Trinity* were included in the 1780 *Collection*:

- Jesus, my Lord, my God! (No. 13; No. 244 *Collection*)
- Jesus, thou art the mighty God (No. 24; No. 245 *Collection*)
- The day of Christ, the day of God (No. 56; No. 246 *Collection*)
- Spirit of truth, essential God (No. 64; No. 247 *Collection*)
- Hail, Father, Son, and Spirit, great (No. 87; No. 248 *Collection*)
- The wisdom owned by all thy sons (No. 98; No. 249 *Collection*)
- Jehovah, God the Father, bless (No. 104; No. 250 *Collection*)
- Hail, holy, holy, holy Lord (No. 109; No. 251 *Collection*)
- Holy, holy, holy Lord (No. 11 of "Hymns and Prayers to the Trinity"  
[henceforth cited as "HPT"]; No. 252 *Collection*)
- Come, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (No. 14 HPT; No. 253 *Collection*)
- A thousand oracles divine (No. 17 HPT; No. 254 *Collection*)
- Thee, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (No. 44 HPT; No. 255 *Collection*)

This series of hymns concludes the section "For Believers Rejoicing" in the 1780 *Collection*.

One of the most memorable is unquestionably No. 109 in *Hymns on the Trinity*:

1. Hail, holy, holy, holy Lord  
Whom One in Three we know;  
By all thy heavenly host adored,  
By all thy Church below.
2. One undivided Trinity  
With triumph we proclaim;  
Thy universe is full of thee,  
And speaks thy glorious name.
3. Thee, holy Father, we confess;  
Thee, holy Son, adore;  
Thee, Spirit of true holiness,<sup>28</sup>  
We worship evermore.

<sup>27</sup>Jackson, 2:235.

<sup>28</sup>1780 *Collection*: "Thee, Spirit of truth and holiness."

4. Thine incommunicable right,<sup>29</sup>  
Almighty God, receive,  
Which angel choirs, and saints in light,  
And saints embodied give.
5. Three Persons equally divine  
We magnify and love;  
And both the choirs ere long shall join  
To sing thy praise above.
6. Hail, holy, holy, holy Lord  
(Our heavenly song shall be),  
Supreme, essential One, adored  
In co-eternal Three!<sup>30</sup>

There were numerous other poems written by Charles in the 1760s which were never published. For example, a series of poems bearing the title "Written before a trial at Taunton, April—1767."<sup>31</sup> The specific trial to which he refers has not been identified. Another hitherto unpublished poem of this period is one entitled "Hymn for Peace, Occasioned by some Public Troubles, Feb. 1766."<sup>32</sup> Quite a number of the poems give us a further glimpse into some of Wesley's political views, such as two poems with the title "Written in the Year 1770/March 22" which begin with the lines: "Huzza for Wilkes and liberty!" and "Huzza for liberty and laws."<sup>33</sup>

He continued to write poems on the occasions of persons' deaths, as in the case of his mother-in-law: "On the Death of Mrs. Gwynne, Jan. 3, 1770."<sup>34</sup>

### Summary

Clearly Charles Wesley's Bristol years are extremely important in the overall picture of his literary productivity.

1. He is busy producing reprints of previous works, particularly between 1760 and 1779.

<sup>29</sup>1780 *Collection*: "The incommunicable right."

<sup>30</sup>*Cf.* Samuel Wesley, jun., "An Hymn to the Trinity," *Poems on Several Occasions* (London: E. Say, 1736), 6–7. Charles has borrowed three lines from the identical stanzas 1 and 7 of his brother's poem which read:

Hail! holy, holy, holy, Lord!  
Be endless Praise to Thee!  
Supreme Essential One, ador'd  
In Co-eternal Three.

Interestingly the line which Charles replaces he puts in parentheses.

<sup>31</sup>*Unpublished Poetry*, 3:133f.

<sup>32</sup>*Unpublished Poetry*, 3:329.

<sup>33</sup>*Unpublished Poetry*, 3:149, 150.

<sup>34</sup>*Unpublished Poetry*, 3:329.

2. He produces significant creative new works during the Bristol years, such as *Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures; Hymns for the Use of Families, and on various occasions; and Hymns on the Trinity*.

3. Unquestionably the roles of husband, father, and priest/pastor influence greatly his poetical themes, and the pastoral insight reflected in the texts of the Bristol years has been greatly enriched over against his earlier years. As Wesley matures in these roles and as his family grows, many of his concerns have even greater depth than earlier.

4. As in 1745, when he responded to Daniel Brevint in writing *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, in 1767 he recorded a lyrical response to a theological treatise by William Jones on the Holy Trinity, in composing *Hymns on the Trinity*. Once again, many of these texts were no doubt not intended for singing but for theological reflection.

5. During the Bristol years some of Wesley's poetry writing takes on a new character, namely, the innovation of extensive poetic epistles to diverse friends, and a variety of other subjects which interested him. These poems have yet to be studied adequately for their poetical, historical, theological, and pastoral value. They provide interesting insight into the inner workings of the Methodist movement. They introduce us often to a repertory of persons we do not meet in John Wesley's writing.

The Bristol years of Wesley's writing are rich indeed. It is hoped that this brief introduction will serve the need to subject them to more careful scrutiny.

