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## THE HYMNODY OF THE METHODIST REVIVAL\*

### I

#### ITS ANTECEDENTS AND BEGINNINGS

During the early decades of the XVIIIth century the *Hymns* and *Psalms imitated* of Watts were gradually but surely replacing the older metrical Psalms in the Non-conformist churches of England, and establishing themselves there as the norm of Congregational Praise. In the parish churches, on the other hand, the use of Hymns of any sort was sporadic and occasional, while the singing of metrical Psalms was the universal practice. In the countryside and villages the *Old Version* of Sternhold and Hopkins was still used, but in London and a few towns, the *New Version* of Tate and Brady was beginning to get a hearing. The hymns of Watts had given a new spiritual interest to Congregational Song in the chapels which the *New Version* failed to impart to that of the city churches introducing it. But in church and chapel alike the clinging to the old custom of lining out the Psalm and the dull and drawling rendering of the notes emphasized the continued indifference to the musical side of Psalmody. In London churches a disposition was manifesting itself to relegate the singing altogether to a choir made up of "charity children" or such others as were available.

Such were the conditions of Congregational Song at the beginning of the Methodist Movement within the Church of England toward the middle of the century. In connection with this Movement, the singing of Hymns gained not only a great extension but also a quite new power and import. It recovered the emotional fervor of the first singing of vernacular Psalms by the Huguenots, and repeated the spiritual triumphs of the Reformation Psalmody. In the same connection the English Hymn itself acquired a

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\* Being the fourth of the lectures upon "The Hymnody of the English-speaking Churches", delivered on the L. P. Stone Foundation at Princeton Theological Seminary, in February, 1910.

new development in several directions, and Hymnody was permanently enriched by a large body of available hymns, many of which remain in present use, and some of which attain the highest rank.

The leader who played the part in Methodist Hymnody which Calvin had taken in Huguenot Psalmody was, contrary perhaps to the general impression, John Wesley and not his brother Charles. He planned it, prepared the ground, introduced and fostered it, moulded and administered it, and also restrained its excesses. But Charles Wesley, by reason of the bulk and quality of his contributions to the new Hymnody, became distinctively the Poet of Methodism; and indeed contests with Watts the first place as a writer of English hymns. In the matter of dates and precedence it is convenient to remember that Charles Wesley was born at the Epworth rectory in 1707, the very year of publication of Watts' *Hymns*; his brother John three years earlier. John Wesley published his first hymn book in 1737, eighteen years after Watts had completed his System of Praise with the publication of *The Psalms of David imitated* in 1719. And two years later Charles printed his first hymns.

There was much in the inheritance and early training of the Wesley brothers which explains their interest in Hymnody, and which prepared them for their great work in it. There was, to begin with, in both a strong inherited bent toward poetry and the poetic expression of feeling. Samuel Wesley, the father, printed a volume of his verses (*Maggots*, 1685) before leaving Oxford, and followed it with a series of later poems of which *The Life of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (1693) is best known. Careless and too voluminous, these works are yet not wanting in imaginative and forceful expression. In the Psalm versions appended to his *The Pious Communicant rightly prepared* (1700), and elsewhere, Samuel Wesley showed himself as by no means an incapable hymn writer.<sup>1</sup> It was

<sup>1</sup> One of his hymns, "Behold the Saviour of Mankind", still has place in the Methodist hymn books of England and America. In the first

no accident that five of his children, Samuel, Jr.,<sup>2</sup> John, Charles, Emilia, and Mehetabel, exhibited in varying degrees the poetic gift, and cultivated the art of verse. We find the father in 1706 recommending his son Samuel to make "translations of the Bible into verse" in the effort to reconcile fancy and devotion; and in 1725 approving verses on the 85th Psalm by his son John, who was then contemplating an entrance into holy orders.<sup>3</sup>

It may be added that the children of Epworth rectory were trained to social singing of Psalms, and apparently of hymns, in the family circle; a somewhat unusual custom at the time, the neglect of which Samuel Wesley attributed to the general decay of piety and the uninteresting character of the Psalm versions and of their tunes.<sup>4</sup> The attitude of the Epworth household toward current Church of England Psalmody was the same that Watts had taken toward Non-conformist Psalmody. Before Watts' *Hymns* appeared, Samuel Wesley wrote to his son Samuel of the "sorry Sternhold Psalms",<sup>5</sup> and in a paper in the *Athenian Oracle* complains that most of the Psalm tunes are so vile that even Orpheus could not make good music of them. He describes the usual rendering of the Psalms as "the reading them at such a lame rate, tearing them limb from limb, and leaving sense, cadency, and all at the mercy of the clerk's nose".<sup>6</sup> In his *Advice to a young Clergyman*, referring to efforts to improve the singing at Epworth Church, he attributes the preference of the common people for Sternhold and Hopkins' version over that of Tate and Brady to their "strange genius at understanding nonsense".<sup>7</sup>

impressions of the *Dunciad* (1728), Pope pilloried S. Wesley along with Watts; both names being afterwards erased, perhaps owing to protestations from without. Cf. Geo. J. Stevenson, *Memorials of the Wesley Family*, London [1876], p. 68.

<sup>2</sup>Two of his hymns are retained in the English *Methodist Hymn Book*.

<sup>3</sup>L. Tyerman, *Life and Times of Samuel Wesley*, London, 1866, pp. 311, 392.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 311.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 310.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 311, 312.

<sup>7</sup>Thos. Jackson, *Life of Charles Wesley*, London, 1841, vol. ii, p. 509.

John Wesley, in his turn, ridiculed the Psalmody of the town churches as "the miserable, scandalous doggerel of Sternhold and Hopkins"; at first droned out, two staves at a time, by "a poor humdrum wretch", and then "bawled out" "by a handful of wild, unawakened striplings" "who neither feel nor understand" what they "scream", while the congregation is "lolling at ease, or in the indecent posture of sitting, drawling out one word after another".<sup>8</sup>

Our particular concern with these passages is in their exhibition of the young Wesleys as already in the accustomed exercise of social Psalmody, and of John especially as deeply moved by the degraded conditions of parochial Psalmody. For it was their love of social Psalmody that ultimately made Methodist Hymnody what it was, and it was the desire to better Parochial Psalmody that furnished John Wesley with the original motive of his work in Hymnody.

The social singing of Psalms and hymns passed naturally from the Epworth rectory to the meetings of the Holy Club that Charles Wesley founded at Oxford in the spring of 1729, for the cultivation of method in study, devotion and good works,<sup>9</sup> and of which John became the leader on his return to Oxford in November of the same year. He was an admiring reader of Dr. Watts<sup>10</sup> and of course familiar with Watts' work in Hymnody; and, in view of Wesley's later dealings with them, we may infer that Watts' *Psalms and Hymns*, in connection perhaps with Tate and Brady's *New Version*, furnished the materials for the singing of the Holy Club.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> S. Tyerman, *Life and Times of John Wesley*, 5th ed., London, 1880, vol. ii, pp. 282, 283.

<sup>9</sup> "This gained me the harmless name of Methodist." Chas. Wesley to Chandler (28 April, 1785).

<sup>10</sup> *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, ed. by Nehemiah Curnock, standard ed., London and New York, n. d., vol. i, p. 139, note. This edition of the famous Journal, with its decipherment of the unprinted Diaries, is indispensable to understanding the development of Wesley's mind and work in Hymnody as in other directions.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Journal*, vol. i, p. 243, note.

When John Wesley determined on the missionary life, and on October 14, 1735, embarked for the new colony of Georgia, he was accompanied by his brother Charles<sup>12</sup> and Benjamin Ingham; they being three out of thirteen Oxford "Methodists". And Wesley's account of their common life on board the "Simmons" reads much like a protracted meeting of the Holy Club. The minds of both brothers had come under the influence of Tauler, Law, and other mystical divines, but both were Anglican clergymen of the severe high church type. They aimed at a devotional and church life that was "primitive", and were scrupulous in the observance of rites and ceremonies, the weekly fasts and Eucharist, and Baptism by trine immersion; and were of a spirit too intolerant for missionary success.<sup>13</sup>

Wesley's kit included a considerable collection of books. Among them were some that became the sources of Wesleyan Hymnody: Tate and Brady's *New Version of the Psalms*, and apparently the *Supplement*, with its tunes; Watts' *Psalms and Hymns*; George Herbert's poems; Hickeys' edition of *Devotions in the ancient way of Offices*, containing John Austin's hymns; the *Divine Dialogues with Divine Hymns* of Henry More; Dean Brevints' *Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*; and some of the works of Norris of Bemerton. Hymns by others, including his father and brother Samuel, were among his manuscript materials.

The brothers had as fellow-voyagers twenty-six German Moravian colonists, with their new bishop, David Nitschmann. The Moravians made much of hymn singing on

<sup>12</sup> Though Charles went as secretary to Governor Oglethorpe, he was ordained just before starting, that he might officiate in the colonies. *Dict. of Nat. Biography*, art "Chas. Wesley"; Thos. Jackson, *Life of Charles Wesley*, London, 1841, vol. i, p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> The claim of some modern Anglicans that the Wesleys were high churchmen is successful enough as to this early period of their lives (1725-1738), and within those limits freely admitted by Methodist writers. Cf. Jas. H. Rigg, *The Churchmanship of John Wesley*, rev. ed., London [1887], "chap. ii, Period of ritualistic high churchmanship". For a more carefully discriminating statement, see *Journal*, vol. i, p. 167, note.

board in all weathers, and in the stress of storm it became the characteristic expression of an unruffled faith.<sup>14</sup> On the third day John Wesley began the study of German, "in order to converse with" the Moravians,<sup>15</sup> and soon took part in their daily worship.<sup>16</sup>

This intercourse with the Germans marks the beginning of Moravian influence upon the spiritual life of both Wesleys, and was to have a marked effect on Wesleyan Hymnody. Its immediate effect was to make an indelible impression of the spiritual possibilities of the Hymn and of a fervid type of hymn singing far removed from the dull parochial Psalmody or congregational praise of Non-conformist chapels. The fervor and spontaneity of this Moravian song was ultimately to be reproduced in the hymn singing of Methodist meetings. A secondary effect was to turn John Wesley to the study of the German Moravian Hymnody, and to set him to the making of English translations.<sup>17</sup> The *Journal* for October 27, 1735, has the entry, "Began *Gesang-Buch*". This has been identified<sup>18</sup> as the first of the hymn books for the congregation at Herrnhut, published that same year by Count Zinzendorf: *Das Gesang-Buch der Gemeinde in Herrnhut*. Wesley had also access, either on shipboard or in Georgia, to the pietistic hymn books of Johann Anastasius Freylinghausen, *Geist-reiches Gesang-Buch, den Kern alter und neuen Lieder*, &c. (Halle, 1704), and its second part, *Neues Geist-reiches Gesang-Buch*, &c., appearing in 1714.<sup>19</sup> These became the German sources of the Wesleyan Hymnody, and are of decided import.

<sup>14</sup> *Journal*, vol. i, p. 142.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 110.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Sermon cxxi in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. New York, 1831, vol. ii, p. 443.

<sup>18</sup> *Journal*, vol. ii, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> The two parts, combined into one under the title of the first, by G. A. Francke, appearing at Halle in 1741, remain the best expression of the Hymnody of the Pietistic Revival, from which the Methodist Revival drew not only some of its hymns but also some of its earliest tunes.

One of the disclosures of Wesley's newly deciphered diary is the grip which hymns took upon his mind and heart, when once he had caught the fervor of Moravian Hymnody; the share of his daily life given over to hymn singing; his assiduous study of hymns, sometimes continuing through the working hours of successive days. The English Hymn, that had found so capable a tutor as Watts, had been waiting for so devoted a lover as Wesley. He at once began, and pursued with extraordinary carefulness, the selection, revision, translation and composition of hymns for the varied uses of his ministrations. He introduced hymn singing into those "companies" formed at Savannah and Frederica, which were the prototype of the Methodist "society",<sup>20</sup> and even into the Sunday church services. In the list of grievances against Wesley presented by the Grand Jury for Savannah in August, 1737, the first was his alterations of the authorized metrical Psalms, and the second his "introducing into the church and service at the Altar compositions of psalms and hymns not inspected or authorized by any proper judicature".<sup>21</sup>

These Psalms and hymns were at first a manuscript collection,<sup>22</sup> and Wesley tested them by repeated readings and discussions with friends, as well as in the sick-room and in social devotions.<sup>23</sup> He then arranged with Lewis Timothy of Charleston to print a selection of them.<sup>24</sup>

This, Wesley's first hymn book, appeared as *Collection of Psalms and Hymns. Charles-town, 1737*, without his name; a roughly printed little volume of 74 pages.<sup>25</sup> Of

<sup>20</sup> *Journal*, vol. i, pp. 228, 229.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 385.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230 n.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, pp. 243, 259, 269 n.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, pp. 257 n., 275, 347. Wesley was reading the proofs in April, 1737: p. 349.

<sup>25</sup> Long lost to sight, it was reprinted (though not in facsimile as stated) by Dr. George Osborn in 1882, from what was supposed to be the only surviving copy. For the history of this copy, see Rev. R. Green, *The Works of John and Charles Wesley: a Bibliography*, London, 1896, p. 12, and additional note in the 2nd ed., 1906, p. i. There is another copy in the Lenox Collection of the New York Public Library.

its pieces, numbered as 70, one half are from Watts, 7 from John Austin, 6 adapted from George Herbert, 2 from Addison; and the Wesleys are represented by 15:—5 of Samuel, Sr., 5 of Samuel, Jr., and 5 translated from the German by John himself. There is none by Charles Wesley,<sup>26</sup> who had returned to England. The pieces are grouped in three divisions, as "Psalms and Hymns for Sunday" (hymns of general praise); "for Wednesday or Friday" (suitable for fast days); and "for Saturday" (hymns especially addressed to God as the Creator of all things). Beyond the "primitive usage" recognized in this grouping, there is little or nothing to suggest high church views, and no provision for festivals or sacraments. The outstanding feature of the collection is indeed the submission of Wesley's churchliness to his good judgment in giving the foremost place to Dr. Watts, the dissenter.

Wesley reached England on February 1, 1738; bringing from Georgia a sense of spiritual and ministerial defeat. He came into close affiliation with London Moravians, and, under Peter Böhler's advice, he, with his brother Charles and others, formed "our little society" on May 1, 1738, at the home and book-shop of James Hutton. It afterwards removed to Fetter Lane, and, though in connection with the Church of England, became the nucleus both of organized Methodism and of organized English Moravianism.<sup>27</sup>

It was no doubt for the use of this, and like societies at Bristol and Oxford,<sup>28</sup> that John Wesley printed, without editor's or publisher's name, his second hymn book: *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns*. London: printed in the year 1738.<sup>29</sup> The little book is eclectic. The threefold

<sup>26</sup> "Probably the explanation is that . . . his MSS. were not at his brother's disposal." A. E. Gregory, *The Hymn-book of the Modern Church*, London, 1904, p. 156.

<sup>27</sup> *Journal*, vol. i, p. 458.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 458.

<sup>29</sup> The only known copies are in the Didsbury College Library and the Archbishopal Library at Lambeth. There is a full description of its contents in *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, ed. by G. Osborn [13 vols.], London, 1868 seq., vol. ii, pp. 35-42.

grouping of the hymns, intended to represent the usage of "antiquity", is retained from the 1737 book. Watts still leads, with 36 numbers out of a total of 76. The Church Psalmody is represented by 16 of Tate and Brady's versions; the Prayer Book by the *Veni Creator*; and Bishop Ken's three hymns may be included with these. Mysticism is represented by four selections from Norris of Bemerton, and Moravianism by four translations from the Herrnhut collection: English poetry by Herbert, Dryden, Addison and Roscommon.

With this little book, the earlier and preparatory stages of Wesley's work for Hymnody are brought to a close. Its contents illustrate and embody most of the influences that played upon Methodist Hymnody or became its sources; except indeed that it contained nothing of the work of Wesley's father and brothers; of Charles, notably, whose great gift waited for the deepening of his spiritual experience and the inspiration he drew from the stirring scenes of the coming revival.

## II

### THE METHODIST HYMNODY

While living in London, in close association with Moravians and under their influence, the Wesleys passed through those remarkable spiritual experiences which brought to both the rest and joy of faith, and determined their future careers. Charles dated his evangelical conversion as on Whitsunday (May 21) 1738; John his as on the Wednesday following (May 24).

Charles began at once to proclaim his new hope to such friends as would hear him, and to preach in the churches, as long as they would receive him. In the summer of 1739 he entered that itinerant ministry, in Whitefield's way, that during seventeen years carried him through England and Wales, and twice into Ireland. John first visited the Moravians at Herrnhut. Returning in September, 1738, he found his immediate sphere in the "Religious Societies",

more or less Moravian in complexion, which in London and elsewhere supplemented the Church services with less formal devotions. To these meetings he preached his new way of "saving-faith"; teaching them to sing the hymns he had gathered and translated. The first word in his resumed diary, under the date of September 20, 1738, is "Singing".<sup>30</sup> In the spring of 1739 he went to Bristol at Whitefield's entreaty, to carry on the work already begun there, and on May 12 laid the corner-stone of "The New Room," really the first Methodist Chapel. Late in the same year he founded at London his own "United Society", and on November 11 first preached in the disused King's Foundry in Moorfields, which, purchased and refitted, became the headquarters of Methodism. From this year Wesley ordinarily counted the foundation of the Methodist Societies.

In this memorable year appeared the third of the Wesleyan hymn collections, the first to bear the name of either brother, as *Hymns and sacred Poems. Published by John Wesley, M.A. Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford; and Charles Wesley, M.A. Student of Christ-Church, Oxford.* [Colossians iii. 16]. *London: printed by William Strahan; . . . MDCCXXXIX.* Of this there were three editions within the year, and two subsequently.<sup>31</sup> Its contents are in two parts, containing 64 and 75 pieces, some of them hymns for singing, and some poems for reading. No less than 42 are adaptations from George Herbert, and there are 22 of Wesley's renderings from the German. Some "Verses" were included which "were wrote upon the Scheme of the Mystick Divines", and the preface of eight pages is a renunciation and exposure of their errors.

This book reflects the spiritual experiences of the year, and is itself memorable as the first printing of hymns from Charles Wesley's pen. The second part opens with a hymn beginning, "Where shall my wond'ring Soul begin?" This is probably the hymn he commenced the day after his conversion, broken off "for fear of pride", but finished under

<sup>30</sup> *Journal*, vol. ii, p. 75; and see p. 71, note.

<sup>31</sup> Green, *Bibliography*, p. 15.

the encouragement of Bray the mechanic, and sung with "great joy" when, on the Wednesday evening, John came to announce his own faith in Christ.<sup>32</sup> It was thus the first hymn of the Methodist Revival. Toward the close of the volume appeared the fine group of festival hymns which afterwards helped to recommend Hymns to the Church of England.<sup>33</sup>

Charles Wesley had written hymns already, but with his new experience the fountain of spiritual song opened within, which was never to fail him. Thenceforward he became distinctively the poet of the new Movement, and poured forth Psalms and hymns in a stream uninterrupted until his death. But his hymns did not come from the cloisters. In the early years of the Revival, he was as active and ardent an evangelist as John himself. "He loved the stir, the tumult, the triumph of those great outdoor gatherings, where testimony must be borne before mobs which might at any time endanger the property and even the lives of preacher and hearers . . . [He] was moved to his highest flights of praise by hard-won victories amongst his wild hearers in Cornwall, or Moorfields, at Kingswood, or Walsall."<sup>34</sup> The composition of the hymns was thus closely related to the progress of the Revival, which they in turn did much to foster; and the long series of books and tracts in which they appeared are an essential part of the Revival records.

The poetical publications of John and Charles Wesley, jointly or separately, cover a period of fifty-three years, and number fifty-six (excluding tune-books); and the contents of not less than thirty-six of these are exclusively original, with much original work appearing in the collective volumes. The majority of these publications appeared with-

<sup>32</sup> Chas. Wesley's Diary, May 23, 24, 1738.

<sup>33</sup> "Hark how all the Welkin rings" (*Christmas-Day*); "Sons of Men, behold from far" (*Epiphany*); "'Christ the Lord is ris'n to Day'" (*Easter-Day*); "Hail the Day that sees Him rise" (*Ascension-Day*); "Granted is the Saviour's Prayer" (*Whitsunday*).

<sup>34</sup> Gregory, *The Hymn Book of the Modern Church*, p. 160.

out the name of author or editor; eight under John's name, three under Charles', and six under the joint names of the brothers.<sup>35</sup>

The custom afterward grew up of ascribing to Charles Wesley's pen not only the hymns published under his name but also all those published under the joint names or anonymously, excepting only the translations and very few originals admittedly written by John. Such a conclusion never rested on solid ground, and is gradually yielding to the conviction that John's share in the hymn writing was greater than had been supposed; a conviction which the recently published notes of his diary tend to strengthen. The editors of the Wesleyan Methodist hymn book of 1875 went so far as to affix merely the letter "W" to "those hymns which first appeared in publications for which the Wesleys were jointly responsible" (including "Jesu, Lover of my soul" under this category); on the ground that "it cannot be determined with certainty to which of the two brothers a hymn should be ascribed".<sup>36</sup> This course proved very unwelcome to Methodists,<sup>37</sup> and has since been departed from. But the uncertainty remains none the less. There is some evidence that the brothers agreed not to distinguish their several contributions of the hymns published jointly.<sup>38</sup> It is however to be noted that this uncertainty pertains chiefly to the early publications, and that as the Revival progressed, John grew content to leave the hymn writing to his brother, and also that, in giving its permanent form to Methodist Hymnody, he admitted that "But a small part of these hymns is of my own composing".<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Of the numerous short-lists of these publications, none seems to be both accurate and complete. The best bibliography is Green's; and he contributed to Telford's *The Methodist Hymn Book illustrated* (2nd ed. rev., London, n. d. [1909], pp. 497 ff.) a convenient list of the works in which the hymns therein included first appeared.

<sup>36</sup> Note prefixed to "Index to the Hymns".

<sup>37</sup> See Telford, *The Meth. Hy. Bk. illus.*, p. 12.

<sup>38</sup> See David Creamer, *Methodist Hymnology*, New York, 1848, p. 18; Osborn, *The Poetical Works*, vol. viii, p. xv.

<sup>39</sup> John Wesley's preface to the Large Hymn Book of 1780. On the

The brothers cooperated again in a second collection of *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1740. Its title-page, barring the date, is identical with that of 1739, with whose later editions it was incorporated. It added to English Hymnody three famous hymns, usually ascribed to Charles Wesley: "Jesu, Lover of my soul", "O for a thousand tongues to sing", and "Christ, whose glory fills the skies". While not formally a hymn book for the societies, this, with the 1739 volume, contributed not less than 100 hymns to the permanent Methodist Hymnody. Its contents are distinctively Methodist. The preface sets forth Wesley's doctrine of Christian Perfection. There is a "Hymn for the Kingswood Colliers", one "To be sung in a Tumult", one "On admission of any person into the Society", and a group on "The Love-Feast". Wesley had taken an impassioned stand against the doctrine of Election in a sermon published as *Free Grace* in the autumn of 1739, after Whitefield had gone to America. Appended was a long hymn on "Universal Redemption". This hymn, with another on the same theme, were now included in the new book, adding to the great offense already taken by Whitefield.<sup>40</sup> The sermon and the hymn led to the separation of the Revival forces into two camps, the Calvinistic under Whitefield, the Arminian under Wesley, to the organization of Lady Huntindon's Connexion and of Calvinistic Methodism in Wales.<sup>41</sup>

In deep depression at the defection from the inmost circle and the consequent confusions, the Wesleys printed at Bristol early in 1741, and then in London, a tractate of eighteen hymns, as *Hymns on God's Everlasting Love*.

whole subject consult Osborn, *The Poetical Works*, vol. viii, pp. 15, 16; Telford, *Meth. Hy. Bk. illus.*, pp. 8-12; *Journal*, vol. i, p. 477, note.

<sup>40</sup> "My dear, dear Brethren,—Why did you throw out bone of contention? Why did you print that sermon against predestination? Why did you, in particular, my dear brother Charles, affix your hymn, and join in putting out your late hymn-book?" Letter of Whitefield, Feb. 1, 1741. Tyerman, *Life of Geo. Whitefield*, New York, 1877, vol. i, p. 465.

<sup>41</sup> Tyerman, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. i, p. 317.

*To which is added the Cry of a Reprobate, and the Horrible Decree*, followed by a second tractate with the same title; the two being afterwards combined. The hymns mingle most tender appeals with scathing satire of the doctrines of the opposition, described as "hellish" and "satanic", and presented with little fairness. The hymns are on fire with excitement and indignation at what threatened to undo the prospects of the Movement. The Wesleys had the precedent of the Reformers in employing satire and invective in their Hymnody. We may nevertheless count it fortunate that their work, immensely effective as it was at the time, was not of such a character as to establish a new precedent for the Controversial Hymn.

The success of these hymn tracts, scattered broadcast, read and sung in Methodist homes and societies, is probably responsible for the long series of hymn tracts in which further Wesleyan hymns were published. Capable of being printed quickly to meet the occasion, sold for a few pence and readily bought, the hymn tract became a favorite instrument for the inspiration and instruction of the early Methodists, and for cultivating their spirit of devotion. The series of hymn tracts ran for fifty years (1741-1791), numbering not less than thirty.

A small group offers hymns for times of civil disquiet and Methodist persecution:—*Hymns for times of trouble and persecution* (1744); *Hymns for times of trouble* (n. d.), *Hymns written in the time of the tumults* (1780). Another for national occasions and passing events:—*Hymns for the public Thanksgiving-Day* (1746) *Hymns for New Year's Day*, (1750), *Hymns occasioned by the Earthquake, 1750* (2 parts), *Hymns for the Year 1756*, *Hymns on the expected Invasion* (1759), and for *Thanksgiving, Nov. 29, 1759*, *Hymns for the National Fast, 1782*, and two numbers of *Hymns for the Nation in 1782*. Another provided for the festivals of the old Church Year:—*Hymns for the Nativity* (1745); and *Hymns for our Lord's Resurrection, for Ascension Day, Hymns of Petition and Thanks-*

giving (Whitsunday), and *Gloria Patri* (Trinity), all of 1746. With these we may group *A Hymn at the Sacrament* (1744), two numbers of *Funeral Hymns* (1746, 1759), and *Hymns for the Watch night* (1746). For the household were *Graces before Meat* (1746), *Hymns for children* (1746, 1791), and *Preparation for Death* (1772). More general in character were a little *Collection of Hymns* (1742) for the poor, *Hymns for those that seek, and those that have, Redemption in the Blood of Jesus Christ* (1747, 10 editions), the most important of them all; and *Hymns of Intercession* (1758).

Charles Wesley (for the bulk of the work was his) was thus the poet-laureate of Methodism, with an ode for every occasion. Such a companionship of hymns through passing years was never provided before or since, and was an unique feature in the upbuilding of Methodist character. In the extension also of the Revival, these hymn tracts, widely distributed among the poor and degraded, played a considerable part.

Returning now to the date at which the series of hymn tracts began, we find that the Wesleys again cooperated in publishing a third volume of *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1742, whose preface and "many of the following verses" dealt with Christian Perfection. This volume contributed a hundred hymns to the permanent Methodist Hymnody. A special interest attaches to the joint publication of *Hymns on the Lord's Supper. With a preface concerning the Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice. Extracted from Doctor Brevint* (Bristol, 1745). Its 166 hymns testify to the deep reverence for the sacramental side of religion that characterized both brothers, and the demand for ten editions shows how much those views influenced the earlier Methodist worship.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup>In 1871 the whole book (together with John Wesley's earlier *Companion to the Altar*) was reprinted as *The Eucharistic Manuals of John and Charles Wesley*. The aim of the editor (W. E. Dutton) was to make it appear that the Wesleys held sacramental views in accord with those of the modern Catholic party.

Independently of John, Charles Wesley published by subscription in 1749 *Hymns and Sacred Poems. In two volumes. By Charles Wesley, M.A., Student of Christ-Church, Oxford* (Bristol). His friends took 1145 copies of these volumes,<sup>43</sup> which contain many acceptable hymns, and whose profits helped him to set up housekeeping at Bristol. While partly laid aside, Charles Wesley occupied himself with writing versified comments on Scripture texts, often original, sometimes following earlier commentators. These, to the great number of 2030, he published as *Short Hymns on select passages of the Holy Scriptures* (2 vols., 1763), from which nearly a hundred were taken into Methodist Hymnody. Four years later he printed *Hymns for the use of families, and on various occasions*, many of which relate to his own household and friendships, and hallow the daily life of the home.

Charles Wesley wrote hymns to the very end, and left behind him in manuscript three small quarto volumes of hymns and sacred poems, an uncompleted metrical version of the Psalms and five quarto volumes of hymns on the Gospels and Acts.<sup>44</sup> The Psalms were printed in *The Arminian Magazine*, and all have been printed with pious care in Dr. Osborn's edition of *The Poetical Works*. It is the great number of the short hymns on Scripture texts that accounts for the vast total of Charles Wesley's work.

Most of the books and tracts we have enumerated as those in which the Wesleyan Hymns first appeared were used to sing from in the revival services, societies, bands or classes. A number are to be regarded as hymn books. But from the first establishment of Sunday, as well as weekday, services Wesley felt the necessity of providing hymn books that should be cheap, compact, and sufficiently inclusive. The earliest of these was *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns. Published by John Wesley, M.A.* (London, 1741); sold at one shilling in binding, and containing 152 pieces. This was kept in print during the whole of Wes-

<sup>43</sup> J. Telford, *Life of Charles Wesley*, rev. ed., London, 1900, p. 248.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Jackson, *Life of Charles Wesley*, vol. ii, p. 457.

ley's life, remaining in use till superseded by the *Supplement* of 1831. An abridgment of it was bound up with *The Sunday Service* of 1784, and used in congregations employing that service.<sup>45</sup> In 1753 he published *Hymns and Spiritual Songs, intended for the use of real Christians of all denominations*, made up entirely of selections from the *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of 1739, 1740 and 1741. This became distinctively the Methodist hymn book, remaining in common use till the appearance of "The Large Hymn Book" of 1780, and in poorer societies long afterward. A volume of *Select Hymns* was also published in 1761 with tunes, and in 1773 printed without the tunes. In Wesley's judgment the societies were thus amply supplied with hymn books; "so that it may be doubted whether any religious community in the world has a greater variety of them".<sup>46</sup>

Yet this very variety was an inconvenience to people who could not afford to buy so many books, but wished for more of the hymns than any one volume contained. An urgent demand arose for a more inclusive collection. Wesley resisted it for years. But after the opening of the City Road Chapel in 1778, he yielded and began his preparations. The new book was announced on the cover of *The Arminian Magazine* for October, 1779, and appeared in 1780 as *A Collection of Hymns for the use of the People called Methodists*. London: printed by J. Paramore, at the Foundery: with the now famous preface, dated Oct. 20, 1779, and signed by John Wesley. It was published at three shillings, and contained 525 hymns; all taken from the brothers' previous publications, and all but ten written by members of the Wesley family. They were grouped under the heads of Christian experience, and designed to form "a little body of experimental and practical divinity".<sup>47</sup>

This collection became at once the book of common song in Methodist congregations. After Wesley's death it was

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Green, *Bibliography*, nos. 30, 376, 378.

<sup>46</sup> Preface of 1779.

<sup>47</sup> Preface.

tampered with by the manager of the Methodist Publishing House, who made a succession of alterations, beginning with the 1793 edition, and culminating in that of 1797,<sup>48</sup> which dropped 24 hymns Wesley had chosen, and added 65 (including "Jesu, Lover of my Soul") which he had not included. The Conference of 1799 appointed a committee "to reduce the large Hymn Book to its primitive simplicity as published in the second edition",<sup>49</sup> which was attempted, partly then, and partly later, but never carried out in strictness. In 1831 some changes were made, and a "Supplement" added. This served until 1875, when the book was revised, and "A new Supplement" added, nearly as large as the original *Collection*. It was not until 1900, one hundred and nine years after Wesley's death, that steps were taken, even then reluctantly, for a thorough revision and remodelling of Wesley's *Collection*. The revision was made largely in the spirit of catholicity, to which even the fervor of Wesleyanism has been compelled to bow, and the new book appeared in 1904 as *The Methodist Hymn Book*.<sup>50</sup> For the first time the name of John Wesley disappears from the title of the hymn book, but even so nearly one half of the contents is ascribed to Charles.

As Charles Wesley wrote hymns, so John compiled hymn books, to the end of his life. *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for the Lord's Day* (1784), has been referred to as bound up with *The Sunday Service*. In spite of the fulness of the *Collection* of 1780, it appeared, to Wesley's vexation, that societies were using hymns he had not authorized. This was largely through the agency of Robert Spence, a York bookseller. He published in 1781 *A Collection of Hymns from various Authors*, enlarged as *A Pocket Hymn Book, designed as a constant companion for the pious: collected from various Authors*. A large proportion of the hymns were taken without authority or acknowledgment

<sup>48</sup> For the editions, see Green, *Bibliography*, No. 348.

<sup>49</sup> Wesley had, however, made "corrections" for the 3rd ed., 1782.

<sup>50</sup> For an interesting account of the method of revision, see Telford, *The Meth. Hy. Bk. illus.*, pp. 12-14.

from various Wesley publications. Apparently to offset it, and also to include some good hymns omitted from the 1780 *Collection*, but widely called for,<sup>51</sup> Wesley published in 1785 *A Pocket Hymn Book, for the use of Christians of all denominations*. It was not reprinted, but under the advice of Conference Wesley reprinted the Spence book (with the same title as that of 1785), expunging 37 hymns as dull and prosaic, or "grievous doggerel". Spence submitted to Wesley's authority,<sup>52</sup> but his little book afterward became a favorite in America.

In extreme old age, Wesley published his last collection, *Hymns for Children* (1790), chosen from his brother's *Hymns for Children and others of riper years* (1763). These hymns show that the Wesleys were minded to carry on the Children's Hymnody Watts had begun, but many are beyond a child's comprehension. In an interesting little preface Wesley contrasts Watts' method of writing down to the child's level with his brother's efforts to lift up the child to his own:—his brother's hymns are "in such plain and easy language as even children may understand; but when they do understand them they will be children no longer".

### III

#### THE METHODIST SINGING

Wesley gave the same forethought and attention to the musical as to the literary side of Methodist Song, keeping its direction in his own hands. His equipment for this undertaking was his sound musical feeling, a very limited technical knowledge, and an unusual practical sense. Perceiving the importance of the Hymn Tune to the purpose he had in view, he provided a body of "authorized" hymn tunes, and expected that none other should be sung by his followers. His cardinal principle was that the tunes should invite the participation of all the people; and, next,

<sup>51</sup> Preface.

<sup>52</sup> Tyerman, *John Wesley*, vol. iii, p. 539.

should keep within the limits of sobriety and reverence. The tunes were to express the words, avoiding "vain repetitions" to fill out the music. Florid and fuguing tunes he likened to "Lancashire hornpipes".<sup>53</sup>

Wesley prepared four Methodist tune books, and perhaps consented to the use of two more. As early as 1742 he printed *A Collection of Tunes, set to music, as they are commonly sung at the Foundery*.<sup>54</sup> The hymns set are those of the three volumes of *Hymns and Sacred Poems*. Its price of six pence was intended to make it available to the poor; and in printing the melody alone he appealed to the unskillful. The book was so full of musical errors as to defeat its own end, but is interesting as showing the tunes first used at the Foundery. There are only three of the *Old Version* Psalm tunes. Very few of these remained in actual use, and these were inevitably associated with the dull, drawling parochial Psalmody. The tunes of the *Supplement to the New Version* were freely drawn upon; six German melodies, which Wesley had sung with the Moravians, were taken from Freylinghausen's *Gesang-Buch*; and some eleven tunes were apparently new.<sup>55</sup>

The conversion in 1746 of Mrs. Rich, wife of the proprietor of Covent Garden Theater put Charles Wesley in touch with the London musical circle in which J. F. Lampe, Handel and others moved.<sup>56</sup> Handel set three of Charles' hymns to music. Lampe published a musical setting of twenty-four as *Hymns on the great Festivals, and other occasions* (London, 1746; 4to). Handel's tunes were not printed: Lampe's were generally admired, and their use was "allowed" in Methodist services. The store of Methodist tunes was increased by the adaptation of popular melodies and by local tunes which Wesley came upon in his travels.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *Minutes of Conference, 1768.*

<sup>54</sup> A reprint was bound up with that of the Charleston collection of 1737.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. J. T. Lightwood, *Hymn Tunes and their story*, London, n. d., pp. 121-125.

<sup>56</sup> Telford, *Charles Wesley*, pp. 150-154, 230-234.

<sup>57</sup> Lightwood, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

Some of these tunes, with others, were gathered together by Thomas Butts, a companion of the Wesleys, in his *Harmonia Sacra* (c. 1753). Wesley commended this book, but objected to its more florid tunes, which he thought irreverent, and its old Psalm tunes, which he thought dull. Wesley's own *Sacred Melody*, published in 1761, to bind up with the *Select Hymns* of that year, is little more than an amended reproduction of Butts' book, omitting the objectionable tunes. The 102 tunes of *Sacred Melody* represent all those in use with Wesley's approval.<sup>58</sup> A class of tunes of a more florid type, and characterized by much repetition of the words and breaking up of the lines, came into such wide popularity later that they were known in time as "The Old Methodist Tunes." As a matter of fact these tunes represented the taste of the later eighteenth century in general and not of the Methodists in particular as distinguished either from Churchmen or Dissenters.<sup>59</sup>

In speaking of the actual Methodist tunes Wesley says in the preface to his *Sacred Melody* of 1761 that he had been engaged for twenty years endeavoring to persuade musicians to follow his directions in setting down the tunes, but in vain. He has at last prevailed, and the tunes are here "pricked true, exactly as I desire all our congregations may sing them". In this book appeared Wesley's "Directions for Singing", to be observed carefully in order that "this part of Divine worship may be the more acceptable to God, as well as more profitable" to singer and hearer. These seven rules became canonical, and are, briefly: "Learn *these* tunes before any others; sing them exactly as printed; sing all of them; sing lustily; sing modestly; sing in time; above all sing spiritually, with an eye to God in every word". They exhibit the practical mind and indomitable will of Wesley covering the minutest details of Methodist

<sup>58</sup> "All the tunes in *common use* among us." Wesley's preface. For a good characterization of the contents of *Sacred Melody*, see "Early Methodist Psalmody" in *A new History of Methodism*, ed. by J. W. Townsend *et al.*, London, 1909, vol. ii, appendix C, pp. 558-560.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Lightwood, *op. cit.*, chaps. v and viii.

song. And both Wesley's Journal and the minutes of the Annual Conferences show how closely the observance of these rules was looked after, and any breach of them in spirit or letter detected.

Behind these regulations there was a marked spontaneity in the early Methodist Singing. It was the utterance of simple and unlettered hearts in whom the Wesleyan evangel had awakened a great happiness. They sang because their overcharged feelings could not keep from singing. The new hymns both fed and expressed the new feelings; and the thrill of spiritual passion leaped from heart to heart of a great concourse singing together "Blow ye the trumpet, blow", "O for a thousand tongues to sing", or "Soldiers of Christ, arise".

This Methodist song in its spiritual spontaneity, its fervor and its gladness, fulfilled to a remarkable degree the Apostolic ideal of Christian Song; and the injunctions of Wesley inevitably recall the figure of St. Paul, striving not to stimulate so much as to regulate the "tongues", and dealing prudently with their excesses and infelicities. The Methodist excesses at the first were simply the noise of too much physical exuberance and the confusions inevitable to singers musically ignorant. Wesley instructed his preachers to interrupt the noisy hymn, and interpolate questions to the congregation:—"Now do you know what you said last? Did it suit your case? Did you sing it as to God, with the spirit and understanding also"?<sup>60</sup> The ignorant, he insisted, should be taught to sing by note and acceptably.<sup>61</sup> On their behalf he himself published two tractates: *A short Introduction to Music*, and *The Grounds of vocal Music*. Refined, scholarly, of Anglican training and with churchly sympathies, neither of the Wesleys conceived or abetted congregational song that was vulgar in its literary contents or flippant in music or indecorous in expression. They cultivated a Hymnody that should be reverently and decently ordered without any sacrifice of its heartiness.

<sup>60</sup> *Minutes of Conference*, 1746.

<sup>61</sup> *Minutes*, 1765.

As time went on the excesses of exuberance naturally lessened, and were followed by the creeping in of formality. Wesley thought slow singing in itself tended to formality, doubtless having in mind the droning of the Psalms in parish churches of the time.<sup>62</sup> But a new danger arose with the formation of a body of "Singers" to lead the worship of the chapels. The singing originally had required little leadership. Until the hymns were familiar or the people could read, the lines were read out, and the tune started by the preacher or any one available. As hymn and tune grew familiar, they sounded forth impulsively. But with church organization came the choir; and, with the choir, first the more intricate tune, then the anthem, and finally the organ. The Minutes of 1768 protest against the florid tunes. Those of 1787 prohibit the introduction of anthems, as not properly joint worship. In 1796 an exception was allowed on special occasions. On such occasions, it appears from the Minutes of 1800, even "theatrical" singers had been introduced into the chapels to sing elaborate solos and choruses. A few years later Richard Watson printed a pamphlet on *Singing Men and Women*, rebuking them as a class for unduly magnifying their office.<sup>63</sup>

The question of instrumental music perhaps hardly arose during Wesley's life. In the open air meetings the great volume of sound would have drowned out any accompaniment, as it often drowned out the voices of those sent to break up the meetings. And in none of the chapels were the circumstances of the people such as to make likely any proposal to install an organ. The bass-viol seems to have been first introduced, as a support to the leader's voice. The clarionet and other instruments followed, as was the custom in the parish churches also. The Minutes of 1796 prohibit organs until proposed by the Conference. The Minutes of 1808 show that some had already been introduced, but consent is refused to the erection of any more. The introduction of an organ in Brunswick Chapel, Leeds,

<sup>62</sup> *Minutes*, 1768.

<sup>63</sup> Curwen, *Worship Music*, 1st series, p. 57.

produced bitter controversy and a secession of "Protestant Methodists", whose protest was against instrumental music. Daniel Isaac's *Vocal Melody, or, Singing the only music sanctioned by divine authority, in the public worship of Christians* (York, 1827), reveals in its title the ground of this protest; although Isaac himself refused to join the seceders. In this, as in much beside, the Church Song of Methodism has since yielded to modern influences. Practically all of the 9,000 churches of Wesleyan Methodism in England to-day have their organ and choir;<sup>64</sup> and in 1910 a monthly periodical, *The Choir*, was established in the interests of Methodist church music. The Congregational Singing of present day Methodism has also exchanged something of its early fervor for the more tempered enthusiasm that comes with years and educational progress. But it still retains a certain characteristic flavor of its own; a certain potentiality also of regaining the old warmth and volume under the stimulus of revival preaching.

#### IV

### THE PLACE OF THE WESLEYS IN THE HISTORY OF THE HYMN

It is evident that a place must be given to the Wesleyan Hymnody in the history of religion itself. The Wesleys inaugurated a great spiritual revival; and their hymns did as much as any human agency to kindle and replenish its fervor. They conducted the propaganda of a new theology: we scan Wesley's sermons to discover its contents, but in the hymns it was sung by multitudes; and of the two media of its dissemination, the song was probably the more effective. John Wesley led an ecclesiastical revolt, and, failing to conquer his own Church, established a new one of phenomenal proportions: the hymns prefigured the constitution of the new Church and formed the manual of its spiritual discipline. The Wesleyan Hymns are thus deeply written into the religious history of English-speak-

<sup>64</sup> *The Choir* for January, 1910, p. 1.

ing peoples. We might sum up the Wesleys' work in Hymnody by saying that they perceived the spiritual possibilities of Hymns and of Hymn Singing, and that they realized them, apparently to the full.

With this glimpse toward the wider bearings of their work, it remains nevertheless to estimate more precisely the place and importance of the Wesleys in the history of the English Hymn and the extension of Hymn Singing. It will be convenient to regard their work as:—

I. *A great enrichment of the stores of English Hymns.*—The work of Charles Wesley as a hymn writer attained vast proportions, including some 6,500 hymns. In distinguishing major from minor poets, it is customary to regard the mere bulk of an author's production as an evidence of power and an element of impressiveness. The same consideration doubtless applies to hymn writers. But in Charles Wesley's case his inventiveness and facility were coupled with a total inability for self-criticism. The inward impulse to give rhythmical expression to convictions and feelings hardened into a habit. And this, stimulated by the assurance of an eager welcome for anything he might publish, led him to produce a considerable body of material in no way worthy of his own powers.

But for all practical purposes the contribution of Charles Wesley to devotional poetry was confined to the limits of the selection made by his brother John for the *Methodist Collection* of 1780, and its supplements. The pamphlets and volumes in which the hymns originally appeared were allowed to go out of print, and dropped out of sight; and some part of his work remained unpublished. The Methodists were so well satisfied with their hymn book as to be incurious as regards the outlying material. Moreover, Charles Wesley had remained a consistent churchman to the end. He had controverted many of his brother's opinions, and protested against his whole course in establishing an independent Methodist Church. Loyalty to John Wesley's memory left the Methodists indisposed toward any

attempt to magnify the name or reputation of Charles. His family deemed it prudent to keep his manuscripts and family papers in careful custody, and it was not till after Miss Wesley's death in 1828 that they passed into the possession of the Wesleyan Conference.<sup>65</sup> No adequate biography of Charles Wesley was written until 1841. No attempt was made to collect the numerous poetical publications, or even to prepare any connected account of them, until 1848, when an American, Joseph Creamer of Baltimore, published his *Methodist Hymnology*.<sup>66</sup> The whole body of the Wesleyan Hymns was not collected and printed until in 1868-1872 the London Conference Office published *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley* in thirteen 12mo volumes.

But while in this way the presentation of Charles Wesley's work as a whole was deferred, and his actual contribution to Hymnody narrowed down to the contents of the *Methodist Collection*, even so that contribution was unprecedentedly large. Even in the first edition the number of hymns regarded as his was about as large as in the entire "System of Praise" of Dr. Watts, and in the revision of 1875 it attained the great total of 724 hymns. The whole number of these hymns must be regarded as having come into actual use. If any escaped being sung, it was nevertheless read devotionally. After a century and a quarter the revisers of 1904 speak of "the delicate task of removing hymns from Wesley's original book",<sup>67</sup> and their new *Methodist Hymn Book* retains 429 hymns ascribed to Charles Wesley. His whole contribution to English Hymnody cannot therefore be estimated in figures smaller than these, and the number of his hymns in actual use to-day has been estimated as 500.<sup>67a</sup>

<sup>65</sup> See Jackson, *Life of Charles Wesley*, preface.

<sup>66</sup> The *Wesleyan Hymnology* of Rev. Wm. P. Burgess (London, 1845, 2nd ed. 1846), was simply "A Companion to the Wesleyan Hymn Book", with brief remarks on the hymns, intended to promote their profitable use.

<sup>67</sup> Preface to the *Meth. Hy. Bk.*, p. iv.

<sup>67a</sup> Gregory, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

Beside such figures the contribution of John Wesley is relatively small. His share in writing the original hymns cannot now be determined. In the *Collection* of 1780, twenty-seven numbers are admittedly his, mostly renderings from the German. These, though few, give him an unique place as a hymn writer at the head of the still small band who have transferred foreign hymns so deftly that they live and breathe naturally under English skies. A number of these versions may fairly be included among the classics of English Hymnody.

But John Wesley stands related to the whole body of the Wesleyan Hymns as their editor. The editor's function is at all times essential to the well-being of Congregational Praise, and Wesley was the first of note in the long line of English hymnal compilers. He exercised his function autocratically, but on the whole with distinguished success. Charles Wesley's hymns owe much to the strong hand of his brother, not only for the winnowing they so much needed, but for the verbal revision to which he subjected them insistently, before their first appearing and after it. His entire freedom in this respect has been regarded as inconsistent with the protest in the preface of the *Collection* against the alteration of his own or his brother's hymns by other hands. "I desire," he says, "they would not attempt to mend them; for they really are not able. None of them is able to mend either the sense or the verse."<sup>68</sup> There is nothing in the protest inconsistent with the practice. Wesley sincerely believed he could improve other people's hymns, whether Watts' or his brother's, and along with this self-confidence had a total lack of confidence in the ability of other "hymn-tinkerers". The results in his case went far to justify the self-confidence. Unhappily the practice rather than the protest established a precedent for an editorial custom of "tinkering" hymns which afterward went to great lengths, and only too often failed to justify itself.

II. The work of the Wesleys *modified the ideal of the*

<sup>68</sup> Both Whitefield and Toplady were among those who in their published hymn books had already offended in this direction.

*English Hymn itself*, both on its spiritual and literary sides, and *established new types of hymns*.—No one can turn from the earlier hymns to the Wesleyan without being conscious of a change of atmosphere, a heightening of emotion, a novelty of theme, a new manner of expression.

(1). This change reveals itself, first, through a *new evangelistic note in the hymns*. In the quiet of his study Watts had aimed to improve the character of the Service of Praise. The Wesleys struck a new note,—the proclamation of an unlimited atonement and free gospel, with the yearning cry of the field preacher to “all that pass by”. They sounded it in revival hymns, directly addressed to sinners, and glowing with the exhorter’s excitement. They aimed to bring the unchurched and unsaved within the sound of the gospel, and to use song as a means of his conversion and upbuilding. And so, when the hymns were gathered into the *Methodist Collection*, the first section of the book bore the title, “Exhorting and Entreating to return to God”.

The Wesleys may be said to have introduced the Evangelistic Hymn, as we use that term to-day. Their lead was more or less followed through the whole breadth of the Evangelical Revival, and by the extending line of latter-day revivalists. There will always be some to contend that evangelistic hymns should be confined to revival meetings as distinguished from the Church’s stated worship, and that a rhymed appeal to sinners is not a hymn in any true sense. But the quickened sense of responsibility for evangelization which spread from the Methodist Movement into all the Churches has learned to regard such questions as largely academic. The Evangelistic Hymn has a secure place not only in the ordinary church hymnal but even in the collections of the strictest Anglicans. For this the Wesleys are responsible, even though the evangelistic hymns of Charles Wesley have not as a class come into much use beyond Methodism. Each subsequent revival has tended to develop its own Hymnody. But for the character of too much of this later Hymnody the Wesleys cannot justly

be regarded as responsible. The Evangelistic Hymn as conceived by them is simple, direct and tender; expressed in rippling measures that would catch the ear of the passer-by and assist his memory. But from triviality, and no less from vulgarity, the Wesleyan hymns are characteristically free.

(2). The work of the Wesleys, notably of Charles, greatly affected the *Hymn of Christian Experience*. At his hands this becomes the predominating theme of Hymnody. He felt an impulse to translate every new spiritual experience into song; and the spiritual needs of the converts, as disclosed in the class-meetings, broke through his natural reserve, and called upon him to bare the deepest feelings of his soul, and lay them at the feet of those who needed his sympathy and guidance. The hymns are frankly autobiographical. They portray, without any effort to tone down his own heightened emotions to the average level, his personal spiritual history:—his unrest and even agony under bondage to the law, his instantaneous conversion and the assurance of faith, the period of ecstatic joy, the ups and downs of the pilgrim progress to the “second rest”, his delight in the anticipation of death.

In this way the Methodist Hymnody developed into something more than a body of Church Song. As finally gathered into the *Collection* of 1780, it constituted what John Wesley called the fullest account of Scriptural Christianity in existence. The whole area of the operations of the Spirit in the heart is there charted out with firmness and precision. The experiences are primarily the Wesleys' own. But it was a feature of their method to anticipate, and in a remarkable degree to evoke, in their converts a repetition of their own experiences. And the Hymnody did much in developing the type of piety we still describe as Methodist. Methodist though it was, Dr. Martineau, the Unitarian, wrote of it in 1869:<sup>69</sup>—“After the Scriptures, the Wesley Hymn Book appears to me the grandest

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\* *Life and Letters of James Martineau*, New York, 1902, vol. ii, p. 99.

instrument of popular religious culture that Christendom has ever produced."

This conception of the Hymn, and this turning of the congregational praise book into a manual of spiritual discipline, were not the expression of the Wesleys' theory of worship imposed upon the Revival. They were rather the result of the Revival experiences with the poor and unlettered, the observation of the great educative power that lay in the use of hymns which the Revival itself had called forth and shaped. In the fulness and precision of its dealings with the Christian life, the *Methodist Collection* remains unique, but its new emphasis on the Hymn of Experience became a precedent, and was extended through the various channels of Hymnody that more or less directly had their source in the Revival.

The value of the precedent thus established will be variously appraised. From the liturgical point of view the Hymn of Experience seems to violate the traditions, and to create a new standard of Church Praise. Instead of a congregation uttering its corporate praise with a common voice, we have a gathering of individuals conducting their private devotions in audible unison. And when the Hymn of Experience becomes autobiographical, it gives rise to the double question, how far its writer's individual experience is fitted to be a norm of Christian experience in general, and how far putting another's experience into the mouth of a promiscuous congregation lends itself to the promotion of religious insincerity.

In applying these tests to Charles Wesley's autobiographical hymns, there is no occasion to separate the body of them from the Wesleyan Method, of which they became the effective instrument. In the case of a great majority of them, their use has been confined within the limits of Methodism. Of the remainder some, by reason of their emotional intensity and spiritual exaltation, are clearly unfitted for general and indiscriminate use.<sup>70</sup> Others have

<sup>70</sup> "They are too good for such purposes." Burgess, *op cit.*, p. 266.

awakened a response in the common heart of English-speaking Christendom; though even in the case of some of these there is no unanimity of opinion as to the fitness of such intimate strains for general worship.<sup>71</sup>

(3). The work of the Wesleys led the way toward a *churchly or Liturgical Hymnody*. The idea of celebrating the Christian festivals in verse had of course been held in common by many devotional poets: even that of a "Christian Year" which should be a poetic illustration of the Prayer Book began with Bishop Ken rather than with Keble. But in the Wesleys' time the thought of a "Hymnal Companion to the Prayer Book" was not in men's minds, and the work of Wither in that direction had been long forgotten.

The Wesleys had planned to carry on their work in the Church of their fathers, and as late as 1750 printed hymns under their names as "Presbyters of the Church of England".<sup>72</sup> The group of hymn tracts for various festivals of the Christian Year contains some of the best hymns of that type in the language, and perhaps indicates the line on which the Wesleyan Hymnody would have developed apart from revival influences. Even after the Church proved inhospitable to the Wesleys' work and their hymns, the brothers remained in its ministry, churchmen at heart and to a great extent in practice.

The *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* of 1745 would seem a strange intrusion into the body of their experimental Hymnody, if we did not understand how the Church service and the Methodist meeting continued, in the mind of both brothers, to exist side by side, each complementing the other. They regarded the Lord's Supper as the crown of Christian worship, and held it in profoundest reverence. This book of 1745 is the witness of their desire that their

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<sup>71</sup> E.g., of "Jesu, Lover of my soul", Canon Ellerton, the hymn writer, has said: "Most clergymen, I suppose, would hesitate before selecting it as the vehicle of the ordinary worship of a mixed congregation." H. Housman, *John Ellerton*, London, 1896, p. 237.

<sup>72</sup> *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* (title pages of some editions).

followers should share their views. It is a "hymnal companion" to the Prayer Book "Order of the Administration of the Lord's Supper", by no means neglectful of the "Catholic" aspects of that service. John Wesley required of his people frequent communions in their parish churches; and, after the permanent organization of Methodism as a separate church, arranged for it a liturgical and sacramental scheme of worship, modified from the *Book of Common Prayer*, with its own Hymnody "for the Lord's Day" services. The churchly and sacramental proclivities of the Wesleys permanently impressed themselves on English Methodism, and, as embodied in its Hymnody, differentiate that Hymnody from the early Nonconformist "System of Praise", and no less from later types of Revival Hymnody, which give scant recognition to Church or sacrament. "Never at any time was there a danger of the Methodist Societies cutting themselves off from the Catholic Church by neglect of the Sacraments, or of their becoming an exclusively evangelistic organization on the plan of the Salvation Army."<sup>73</sup> There was thus nothing anomalous in the fact that the Wesleys should be the first within the bounds of the Church of England to celebrate its festival days in adequate songs and to provide a Sacramental Hymnody.

(4). The work of the Wesleys set up a *new standard in Hymnody on its literary side*. Their hymns are in line with the earlier devotional poets rather than with Watts. They controverted Watts' canon of hymn writing and laid down a new one,—a hymn should be a poem.

John Wesley's taking to Georgia a copy of Herbert's Poems, and his repeated efforts to utilize its verses in his hymn books, are significant. The brothers had been trained in the very atmosphere of sacred poetry. Samuel Wesley's preface to his *An Epistle to a friend concerning Poetry* (1700) was a vigorous, even violent, phillipic against the profligary and "infidel principles" of current letters, espe-

<sup>73</sup> Gregory, *Hymn Book of the Modern Church*, p. 177.

cially poetry; and all the poets of the Epworth rectory aimed to rebut the prevailing notion that religion offered no fit themes to poetry. So far the standpoint of Watts and the Wesleys was one, but only so far.

Watts insisted that the Hymn must be kept outside the realm of poetry, stripped of poetic suggestiveness, and be written down to the level of the meanest capacity. Wesley maintained that the Hymn should be a religious lyric and create the impression of lyrical poetry; that the masses must be lifted up to the level of the Hymn, and made to feel the beauty and inspiration of poetry. By this standard he tried not only the work of Watts, but of his brother Charles, of a group of whose hymns he said, "Some are bad, some mean, some most excellently good".<sup>74</sup> And when his Methodist "System of Praise" was finally complete, he made the proud boast:<sup>75</sup>—

"May I be permitted to add a few words with regard to the poetry? . . . In these Hymns there is no doggerel, no botches, nothing put in to patch up the rhyme, no feeble expletives. Here is nothing turgid or bombast on the one hand, or low and creeping on the other. . . . Here are (allow me to say) both the purity, the strength, and the elegance of the ENGLISH language: and at the same time the utmost simplicity and plainness, suited to every capacity. Lastly, I desire men of taste to judge (these are the only competent judges;) whether there is not in some of the following verses the true Spirit of Poetry: such as cannot be acquired by art and labour; but must be the gift of nature. By labour a man may become a tolerable imitator of SPENSER, SHAKESPEAR, or MILTON, and may heap together pretty compound epithets, as PALE-EYED, WEAK-EYED, and the like. But unless he is born a Poet, he will never attain the genuine SPIRIT OF POETRY."

In the judgment of a recent historian of English Poetry,<sup>76</sup> Wesley "was fully justified" in making this boast, and his brother Charles was "the most admirable *devotional* lyric poet in the English language".

Incidental to the poetic freedom with which Charles Wes-

<sup>74</sup> *Journal*, December 15, 1788.

<sup>75</sup> In preface to the *Collection* of 1780.

<sup>76</sup> W. J. Courthope, *A History of English Poetry*, vol. v, London, 1905, p. 343.

ley wrote was the marked metrical development he gave to the English Hymn. Tate and Brady in the new Psalmody, and Watts in the new Hymnody, had confined themselves to the simple metres of the old Psalmody. This was with a view of meeting the musical limitations of the congregations, but not without a thought for the quasi-sacredness acquired by these metres as the traditional vehicles of praise, Charles Wesley cast aside all such scruples, and wrote freely in the rhythms and measures most natural or effective; some suggested by German originals, some his own. He wrote hymns in some thirty metres, whose freshness and variety became a marked feature of the Methodist *Collection*. He rather neglected the familiar Iambic metres of the Psalm books, purposely no doubt, and excelled in his handling of trochaic metres. Some of his irregular or "peculiar" metres have less reason for being there.

The early Methodists, always under the pressure of John Wesley's schooling, seem to have had little trouble with the novel metres. But their ability to handle the less simple metres gradually lessened. By the XIXth century a considerable part of the *Collection* had, for that reason, become practically obsolete. Toward the middle of the century the matter was taken up, and some of the hymns restored into actual use. On the other hand, a variety of metres introduced by the Wesleys have now become familiar and standard measures in English Hymnody.

Upon the writing of hymns Charles Wesley's influence was less immediate and less clearly marked than that of Watts. He cannot be said to have established a school of hymn writers. His poetic inspiration and even his peculiar style discouraged imitation. Of the associates of the Wesleys who remained Methodists, Thomas Olivers<sup>77</sup> and John Bakewell<sup>78</sup> are each remembered as the author of a single hymn. In the generation immediately following the Wesleys, there were virtually no Methodist hymn writers at all. No need was felt of adding to the Wesleyan Hymns,

<sup>77</sup> Author of "The God of Abraham praise".

<sup>78</sup> Author of "Hail! Thou once-despised Jesus".

and certainly there was no hope in any Methodist mind of improving upon them. Of the Wesleys' associates who became Moravians, those who wrote hymns show the influence of Herrnhut rather than of Charles Wesley. On the Calvinistic side of the Revival there was more opportunity for hymn writers than on the Methodist. And it is one of the humors of the situation that the polemic and indignant Toplady so "evidently kindled his poetic torch at that of his contemporary, Charles Wesley". Montgomery's remark<sup>79</sup> that if Toplady's "Deathless principle, arise" had appeared without name, it might have been confidently set down as the production of Charles Wesley, may be extended to cover a number of Toplady's hymns. Upon hymn writers in general Charles Wesley's influence operated less by way of furnishing models for imitation than by gradually enlarging their conception of the Hymn, in its themes, its methods and its metrical structure.

## V

## THE WESLEYAN HYMNS IN THE CHURCH AT LARGE

We have yet to consider the part of the Wesleys in the Extension of Hymn Singing. And perhaps it needs to be emphasized that their immediate work in this direction was effected within the ranks of their own followers. It was effected by developing among them a new type of fervid song learned from the Moravians, and by establishing a great denomination of which Hymn Singing was the characteristic note.

When we come to "The revolution in Church Psalmody" which the editor of Wesley's *Journal* foresees in his work in Georgia and his hymn book of 1737,<sup>80</sup> we need to remember that Watts and not Wesley was the leader in that revolution. Even the familiar statement of Green that by the Wesleys "a new musical impulse was aroused in the

<sup>79</sup> *The Christian Psalmist*, 1825, preface, p. xxvi.

<sup>80</sup> *Journal*, vol. i, p. 229.

people which gradually changed the face of public devotion throughout England",<sup>81</sup> needs to be qualified. The fervor of Methodist song was evoked by Methodist experience. It does not appear to have passed over even to the Calvinistic side of the Revival itself. The influence of the Wesleys in "changing the face of devotion" was somewhat indirect, and to a great extent it was deferred.

When we think of the contagion of Methodist fervor as inoculating the ranks of the Psalm singers outside with its love of the Wesleyan Hymns and its passion for hymn-singing, we are far away from real XVIIIth century happenings. The actual relation of the work of the Wesleys in Hymnody to the Churches outside of Methodism involves some very peculiar features. Perhaps there is no readier way of understanding it than that of pointing the contrast in this respect between their work and that of their predecessor, Dr. Watts.

To-day it is a commonplace to couple the names of Watts and Charles Wesley at the head of English Hymnody, with little disposition to ask which name is the greater. But this attitude of the modern Church toward them has been attained very gradually. It involved a complete readjustment of the claim of the two men upon the Church's favor; and this readjustment became possible only after a gradual enlargement of the Church's heart, in affecting which the Wesleys have been among the chief agents. Historically there was the sharpest contrast between the Church's reception of Watts' Psalms and Hymns on the one hand and of Charles Wesley's on the other. Two features of the original situation sufficiently explain this.

*First.* The contrast existed already in the actual work of the two men, judged from the point of view of availability for general use. Watts' felicity lay in his gift for locating the common level and his refusal to soar. He embodied the theology of his surroundings, and kept within the average range of spiritual experience. This self-

<sup>81</sup> *Short History of the English People*, ed. London, 1884, p. 719.

restraint gave his work something like a universal appeal. When he had once persuaded Nonconformist Churches that they wanted Hymns, the Churches felt that his hymns were just what they wanted. His entire System of Praise, without sifting or retrenchment, commended itself alike to Independents, Presbyterians, and Baptists. Thus it could happen that in many quarters what now is called the "Hymnal" was referred to simply as "Watts".

Nothing of this kind could have happened to Charles Wesley. His work did not commend itself to current taste as poetry. To the average worshiper it would hardly suggest itself as adapted for singing. He had no experience of the use of anything like this as material of praise, and knew no tunes in these strange metres. Its theology was aggressively in the opposition, and heated by the controversial spirit. Its spiritual tone was strange and unreal to the man who had not come under Methodist training. Moreover the high spiritual levels on which Charles Wesley moved were immeasurably above the average experience or even ambition. And, at a time when the churches expected to receive their materials of praise as a unit, if not indeed from a single hand, no one of the successive collections of the Wesleys' hymns could have been a candidate for adoption in any branch of the Church, or by any company of Christians outside of Methodism. The very necessity of selecting the available hymns, imbedded in a mass of material not attractive to general taste or conviction, was tantamount to a postponement of the rightful claims of the Wesleys to a share in the Hymnody of the Church at large.

*Second.* There was the same contrast in the extent of the opportunity for the general diffusion of their hymns afforded by the respective circumstances and surroundings of Watts and Charles Wesley.

Watts moved on the social uplands of English Nonconformity. He was universally looked up to by dissenters, and he freely met "Bishops and other clergy" on their own

level. His position could not have been more favorable for disseminating that System of Church Praise he regarded as his great work. But while Watts advanced by the highways, seen and respected of all, the Wesleys worked behind the hedges separating them from both Church and dissent. In so far as either had any real knowledge of the Wesleys and their work, they were regarded by churchmen as schismatics and ranters, and by socially respectable dissent as sentimentalists and sensationalists. They sought to reach the masses neglected by Church and dissent alike, and by methods disapproved of by both. They forsook the conventional order, aroused intellectual contempt, awakened intense theological bitterness and incurred social ostracism, and even personal violence. It is difficult now to reproduce, even to the imagination, "the Reproach of Methodism," and to appreciate the isolation of the Methodist Movement from contemporary religious activity or stagnation.

It would be idle to deny that the Wesleyan Hymns suffered from these associations. The contagion of this fervid Methodist song could not be felt, so long as the Methodists and the Churches were not brought into contact. The real charm of the Wesleyan poetry could not be perceived, so long as men regarded it as the mere vehicle of Methodist errors, or failed to regard it at all, as unworthy of attention. There resulted an inevitable postponement of any use of the Wesleyan Hymns by the Churches outside. And even more permanently the hymns retained a Methodist taint, from which nothing but the change of feeling that time brings could wholly free them.

Whitefield's use of some of the Wesleyan Hymns at his Tabernacle helped a few of them across the wall separating Arminianism from Calvinism. But the Countess of Huntingdon Connexion and the Moravian Methodists developed their own hymn writers and their own Hymnody. One and another of the choice spirits among the Church of England clergy who caught the glow of the Revival, introduced some of the Wesleyan Hymns into their new hymn

books, and gave them their first opportunity for a wider use. Some of these hymns passed from one collection into others, and were gradually added to. They made their way on their own merits, as it is evident that many compilers knew nothing of the source of the materials they used. Even so, the Wesleyan Hymns thus used in the latter part of the XVIIIth century were few, and their use itself limited. The Independents were under the spell of the Watts tradition. In the first outstanding Baptist collection (Ash and Evans, 1760) the infusion of Wesleyan Hymns was very trifling: in that of Dr. Rippon (1787) it was larger. In the early XIXth century the inclusion of some Wesleyan Hymns became the general rule, and their number has gradually increased to its present proportions. But in such use, through the first half-century and beyond, there was a very common feature which every student of hymn books has observed; that is to say, that even where compilers have been careful to give the names of other authors, the hymns of the Wesleys were frequently printed as anonymous, or ascribed to some other author. Doddridge, Toplady, De Courcey, Cennick, Cowper and Montgomery, were among the names given as the authors of Wesleyan hymns in English and American collections of note. Of Wesleyan hymns, given without any name, or with a wrong name appended to them, Mr. Burgess<sup>82</sup> found 27 in Rippon's *Selection* (18th ed.), 15 in Willcock's *Collection*, 24 in Montgomery's *Christian Psalmist*, 22 in Bickersteth's *Christian Psalmody*, and 29 in Conder's *Congregational Hymn-Book*. It is not surprising that Burgess saw in this coincidence a furtive use of Wesleyan materials, and something like a conspiracy to suppress the truth, due to Calvinistic prejudice. And yet, among the compilers Burgess arraigns, James Montgomery was influenced by no such motive, and in the pages of the very book referred to he paid tribute to Charles Wesley's genius, ranking him next to Watts. An explanation of the situation must include Montgomery as well as Rippon.

<sup>82</sup> W. P. Burgess, *Wesleyan Hymnology*, 2nd ed., London, 1849, p. 9.

The explanation of the manner of Wesley's treatment lies largely, if not wholly, in the general ignorance of hymn book compilers concerning their materials. It must be remembered that Daniel Sedgwick, a shoemaker's apprentice and second-hand book dealer, not born until 1814, was the first to make a collection and systematic study of English hymn books. And only when in middle life he began to put his knowledge at the service of compilers, was there a beginning of the lifting of the dense cloud of ignorance covering the sphere of minor letters now appropriated to what we call Hymnology. This ignorance was well distributed over the whole extent of Hymnody. But it must be admitted that as regards Charles Wesley there was something like a concentration of ignorance. In the 13th number of *Notes and Queries* (Jan. 26, 1850), established as "a medium of inter-communication between literary men", etc., a correspondent asks:

"Can any of your readers inform me who was the author of the well-known Christmas-Hymn, 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing', which is so often found (of course without the slightest shadow of authority) at the end of our Prayer Books? In the collection of poems entitled *Christmas-Tyde*, published by Pickering, the initials 'J. C. W.' are appended to it; the same in Bickersteth's *Hymn Book*. In the last number of the *Christian Remembrancer*, it is incorrectly attributed to Doddridge. . . . If the author of the hymn cannot be determined, it would be interesting to know its probable date. . . ."

It may be noted that the writer in *The Christian Remembrancer* who in 1850 attributed the hymn to Doddridge was none other than John Mason Neale, a diligent student of the old Church Hymnody.

Three weeks after the appearance of the inquiry in *Notes and Queries*, came a reply (the only one) from another correspondent:

"I believe [the hymn] to be the composition of the Rev. Charles Wesley, the younger brother of the celebrated John Wesley. He was the author of many of the hymns in his brother's collection, which are distinguished for their elegance and simplicity. I am not able to find out, for certain, whether he had another name; if he had, it was probably the occasion of the initials (J. C. W.) your correspondent mentions."

The need for such an inquiry in such quarters sixty-two years after Charles Wesley's death, and the uncertainty of the only reply, fully explain the failure of the editors of hymn books to give him proper recognition. There was no conspiracy among them to suppress the facts. But there was a common ignorance concerning Charles Wesley and his work. And it may be that in his case there was an element of wilfulness in this ignorance that had its roots in theological or ecclesiastical prejudice. Whatever the motives to disassociate his name from his hymns may have been, the net result was in his favor. A number of these unfathered hymns gained a sure place in the affections of the Churches. And when they came to realize the actual extent of Charles Wesley's contribution to the common stock, the time had come when the fact could be accepted even gladly, as an evidence of the large area of Christian truth and feeling which all the Churches hold in common.

*Philadelphia.*

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